

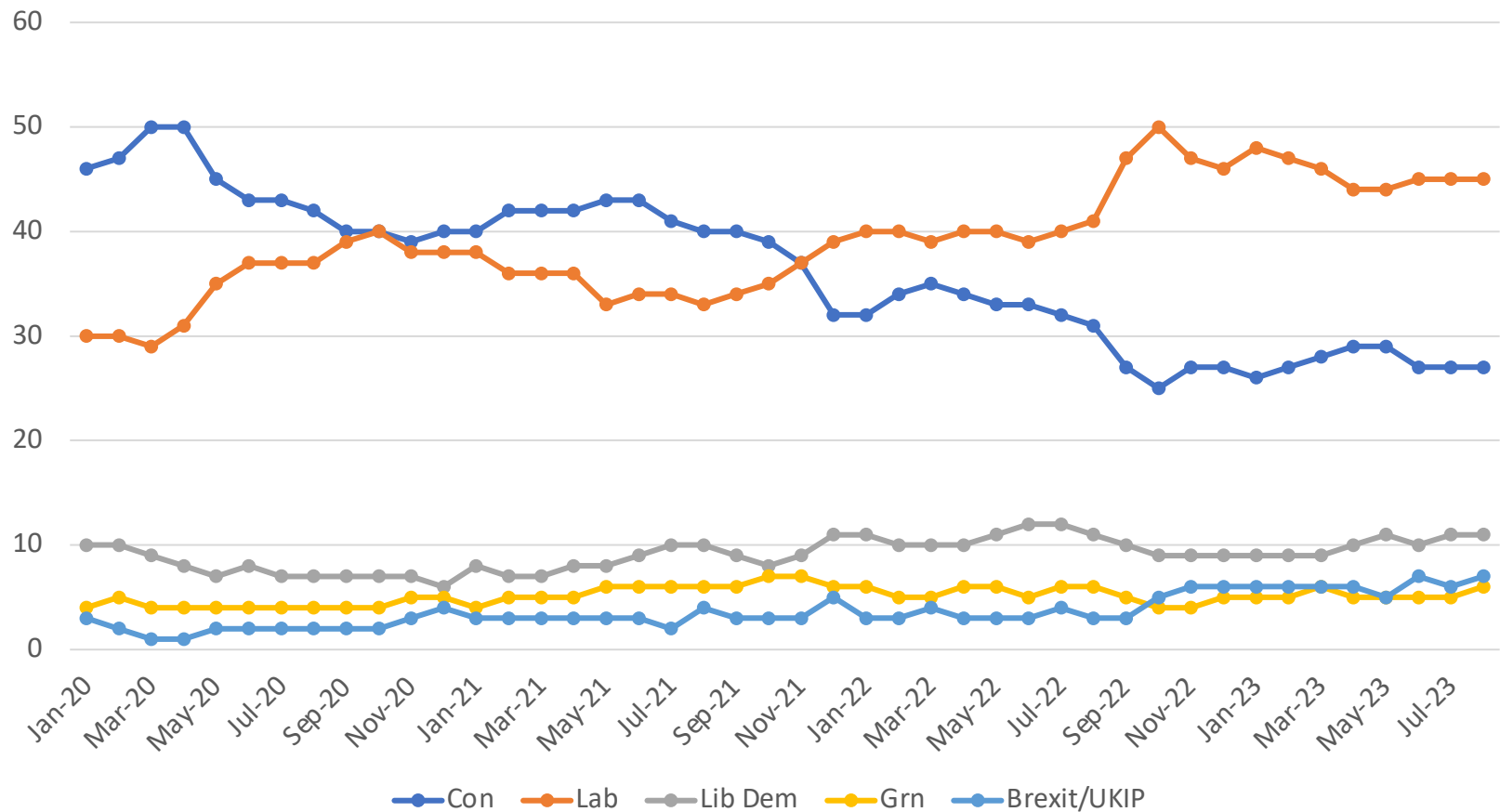
# Liberal Democrat Electoral Performance since 2019: A Critical Evaluation

John Curtice

# Structure

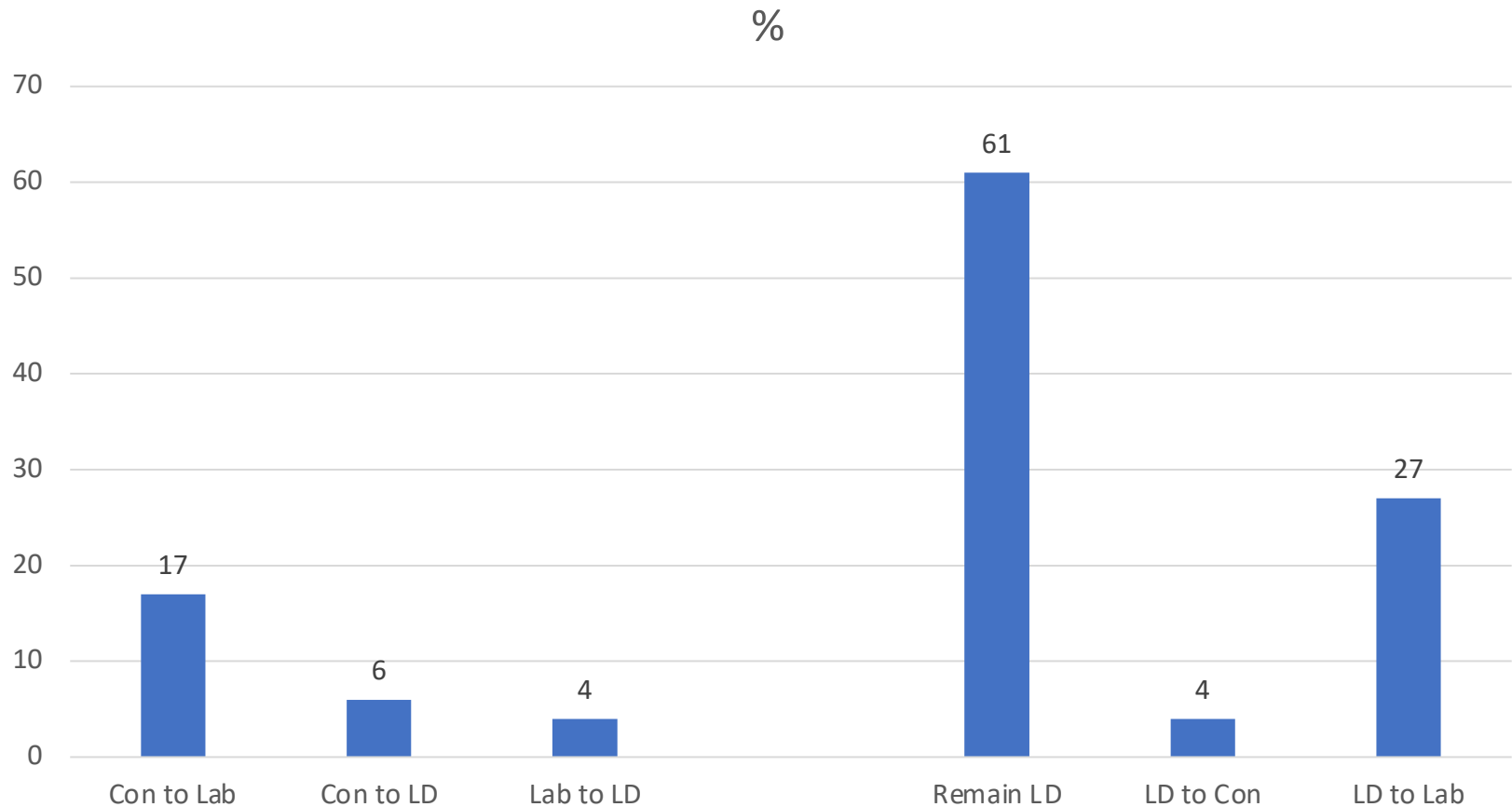
- How Well/Badly is the Party Doing?
- The Prospects for Tactical Voting
- Local Concentration
- Patterns of Party Support and Brexit

# The Trajectory of UK Party Support since Dec 2019



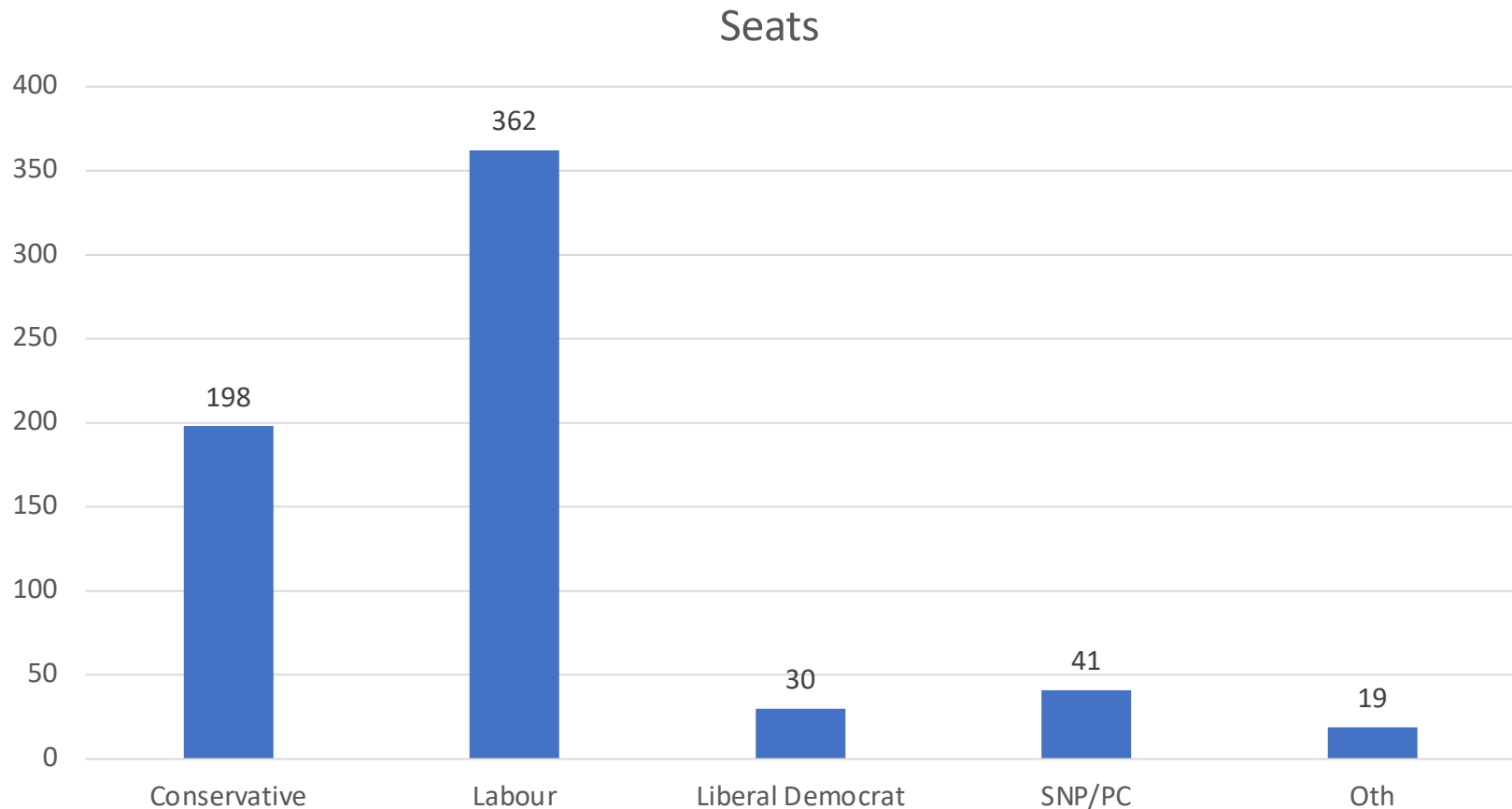
Source: Average of most recent poll in each month by each polling company. Not all companies polled each month..

# Flows and Eddies since 2019



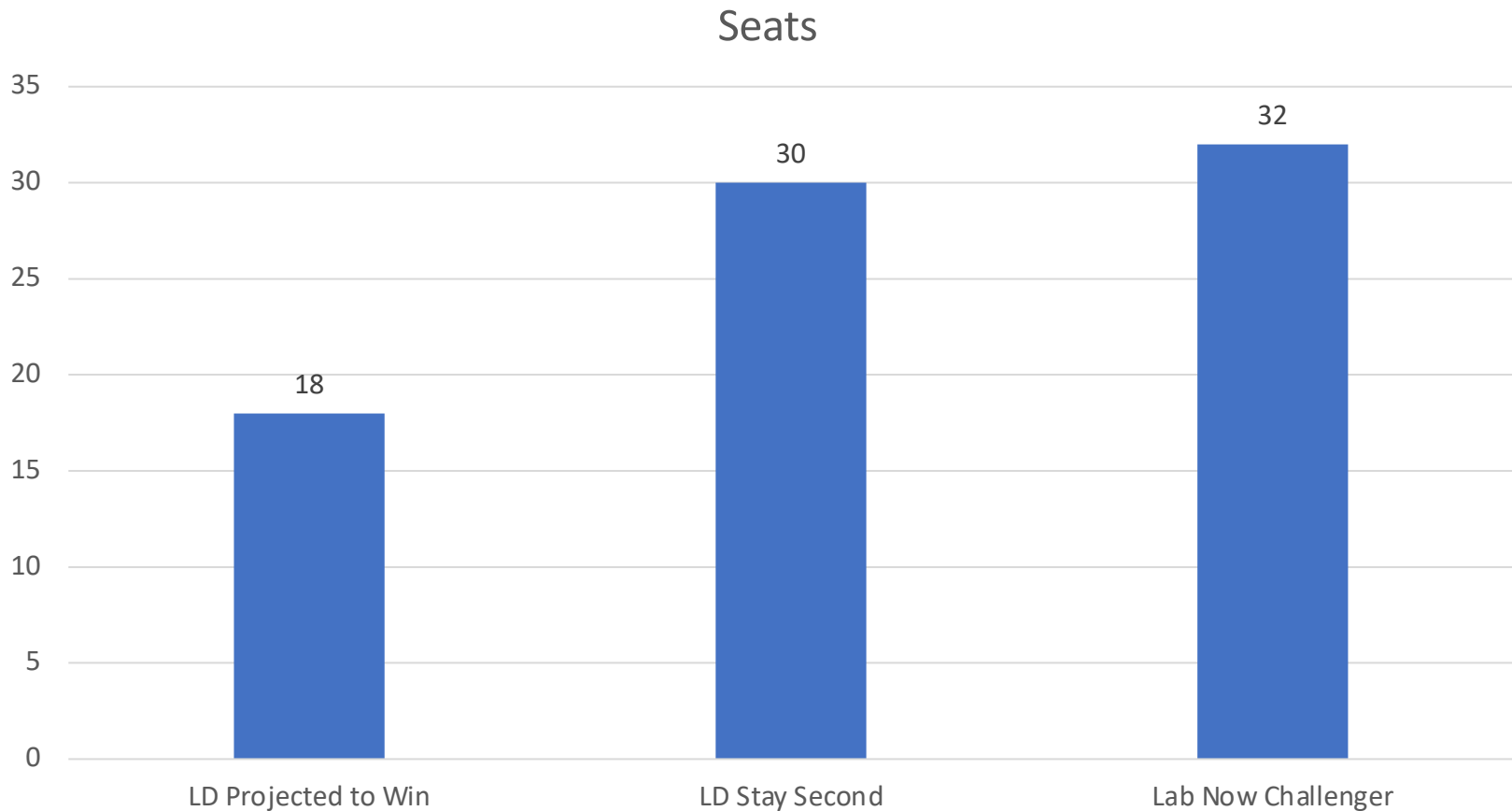
Source: Average of last poll in Aug 2023 by BMG/Deltapoll/FindOutNow/More in Common/Opinium/Redfield & Wilton/Savanta/Techne/WeThink/YouGov.

# Seat Projection (Current Boundaries)



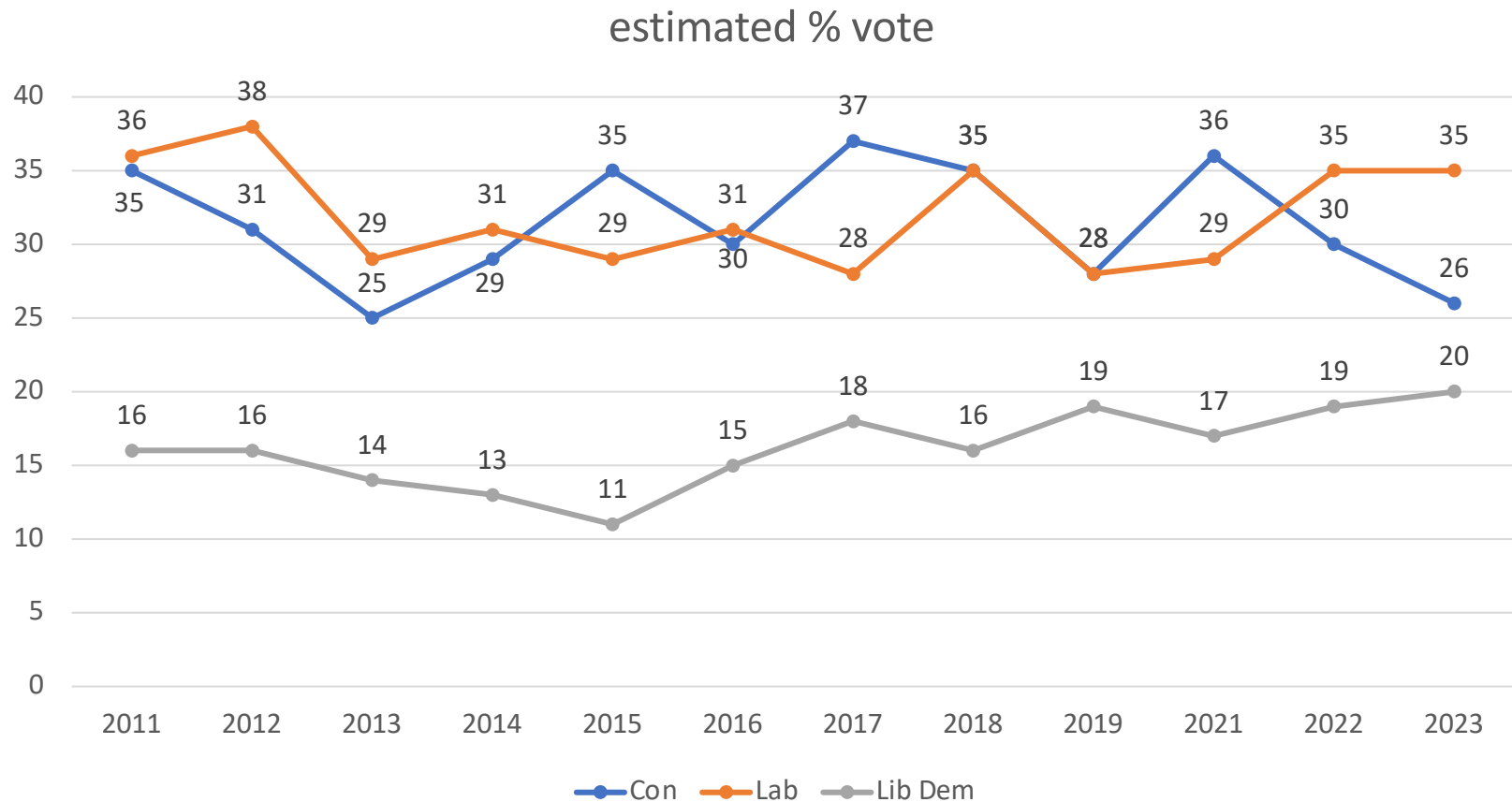
Source: Author's calculation of impact of uniform movement of support since 2019, including for SNP in Scotland.

# What Might Happen in LD Second Places to Con?



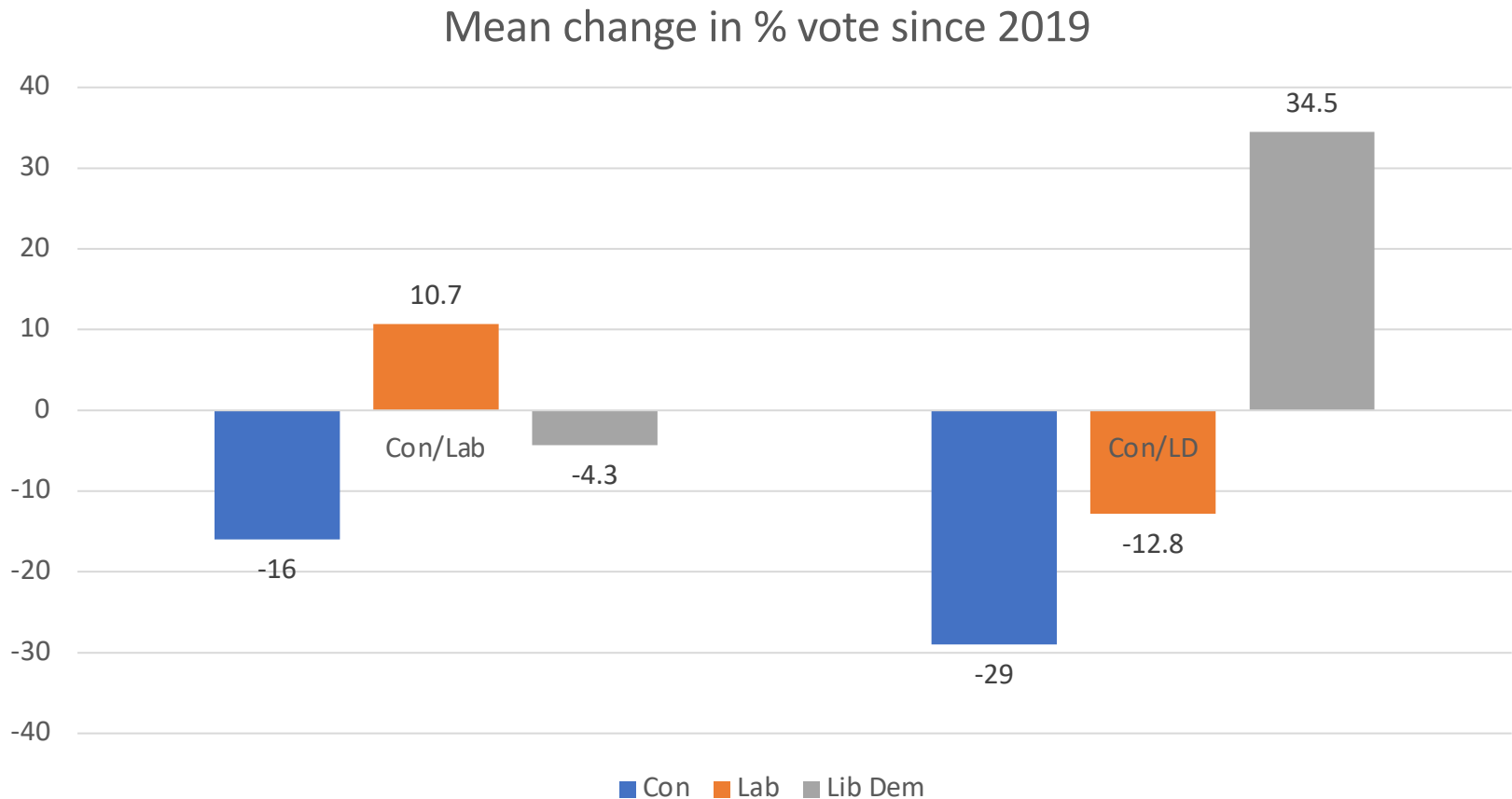
Source: Author's calculation of impact of uniform movement of support since 2019.

# A Measure of English Local Election Performance since 2011



Source: BBC Projected National Share

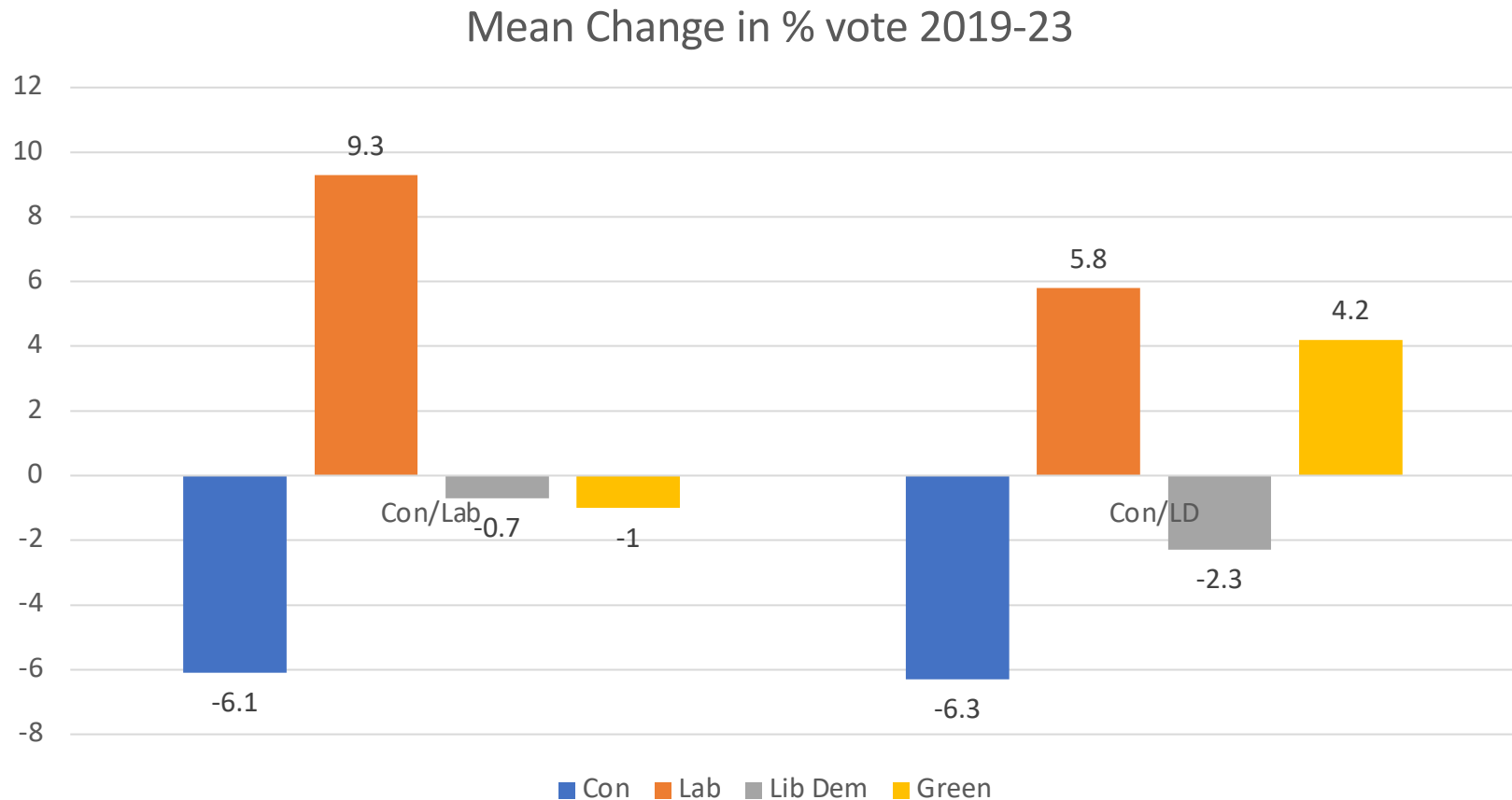
# Contrasting By-Election Performances



Source: By-elections in Conservative-held seats since Dec. 2021

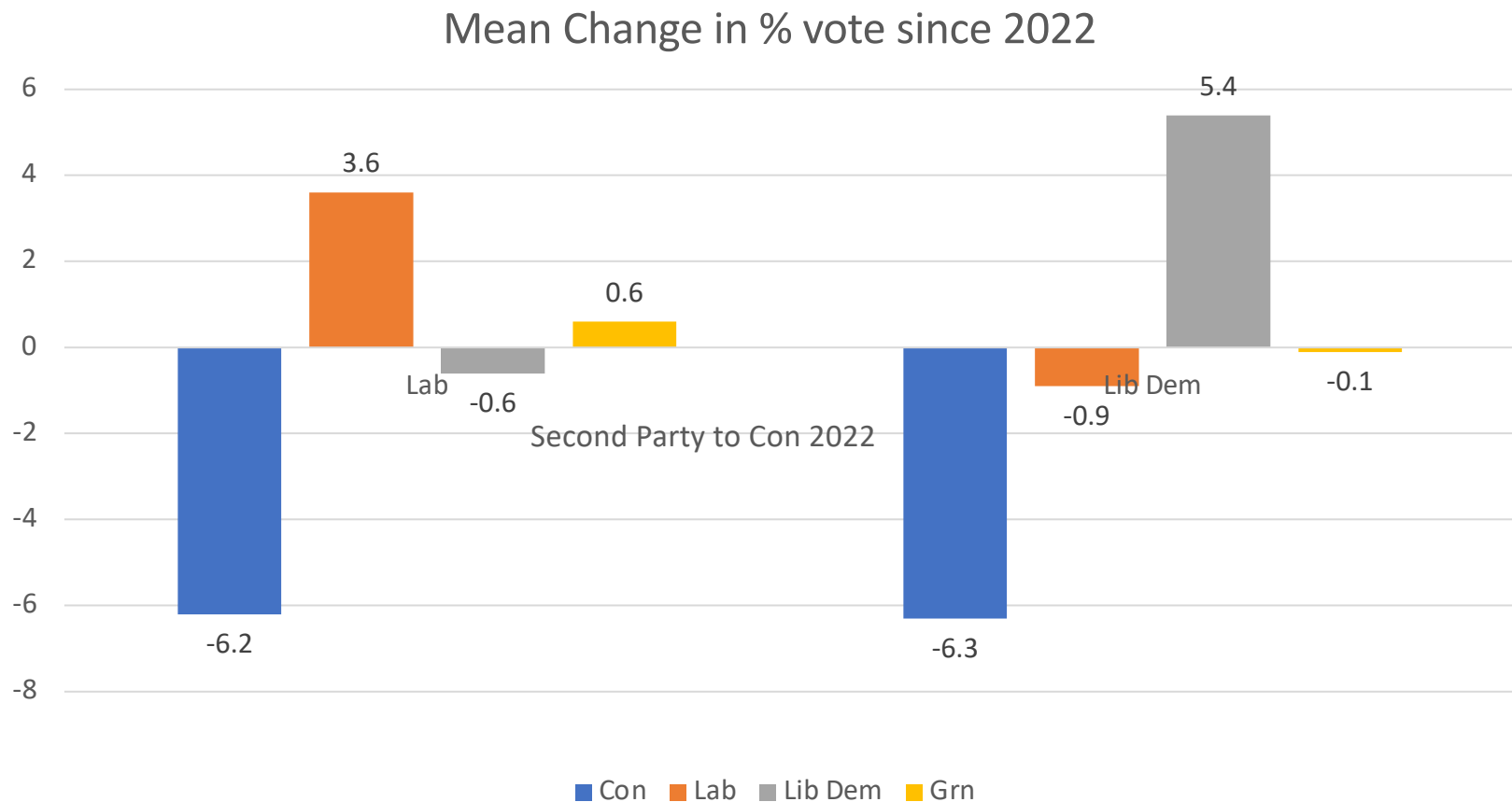


# LE 23: Anti-Conservative Tactical Voting? - 1



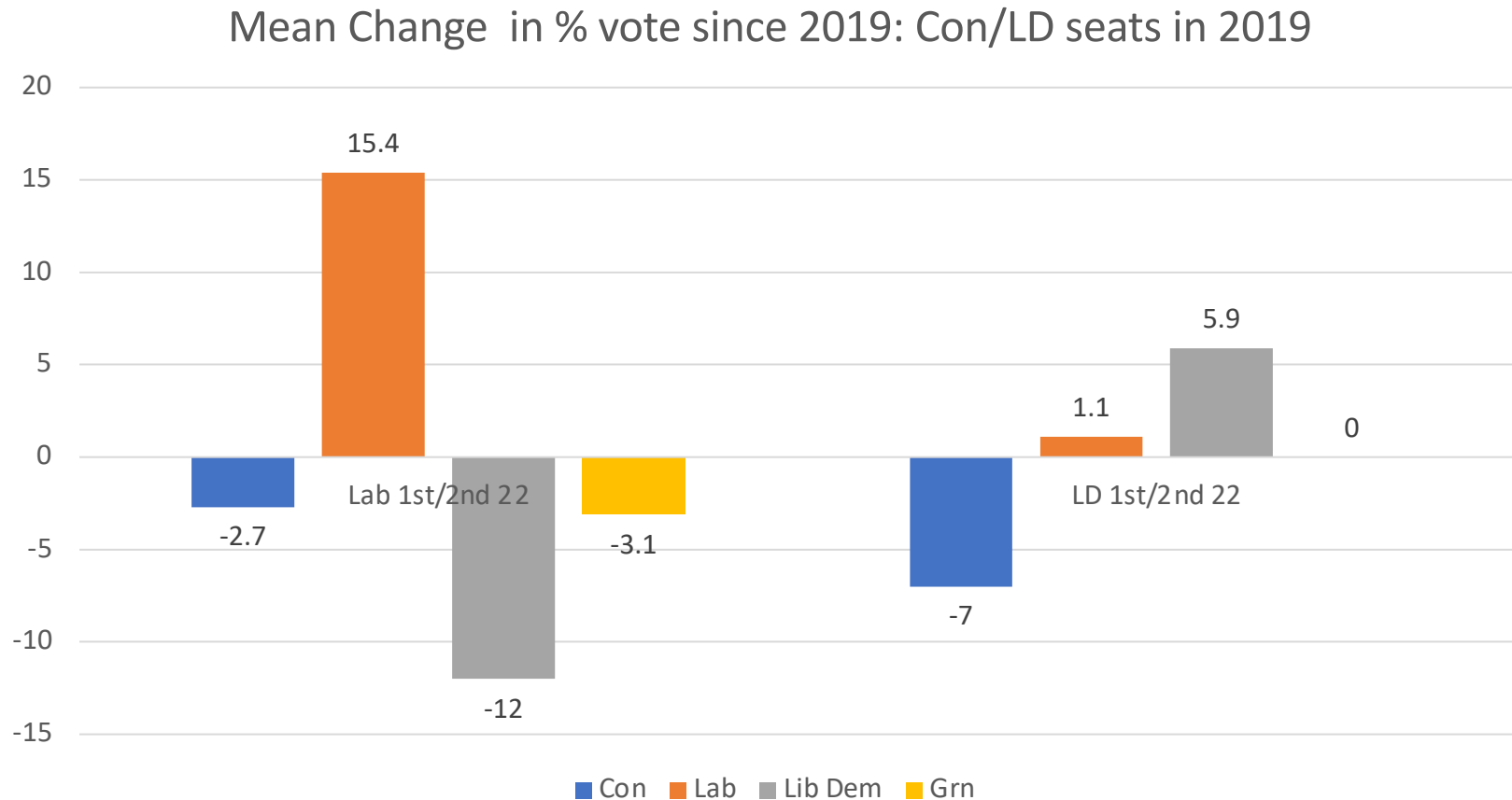
Source: Con held wards in BBC sample of wards fought by all 3 main parties in 2019 and 2023

# LE23: Anti-Conservative Tactical Voting? - 2



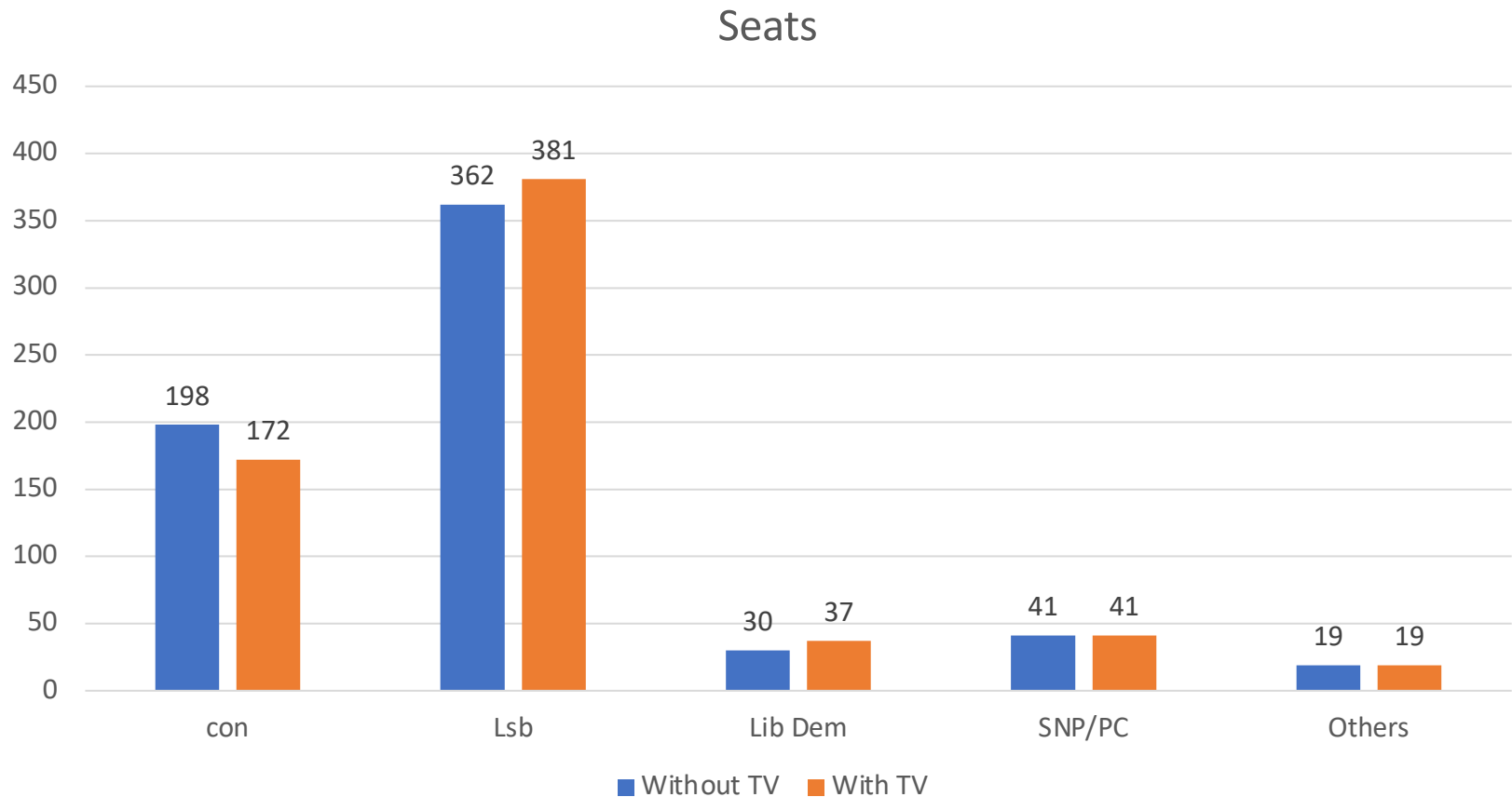
Source: Wards won by Con in 2022 in BBC sample of wards fought by all 3 main parties in 2022 and 2023

# LE 23: More Recent History Mattered



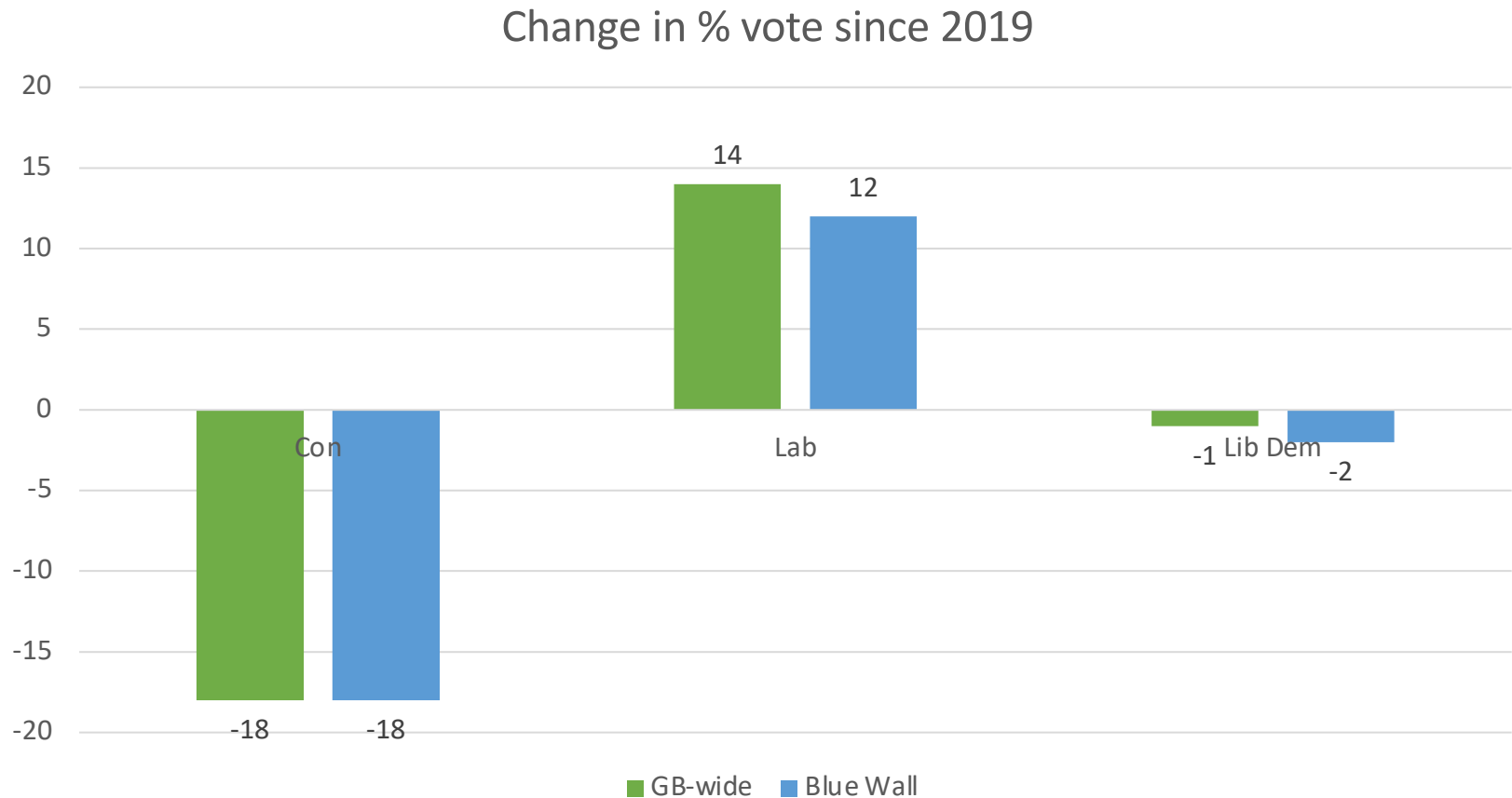
Source: Wards where Con were 1<sup>st</sup> and LD 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2019 in BBC sample of wards fought by all 3 main parties in 2022 and 2023

# The Possible Impact of Tactical Voting



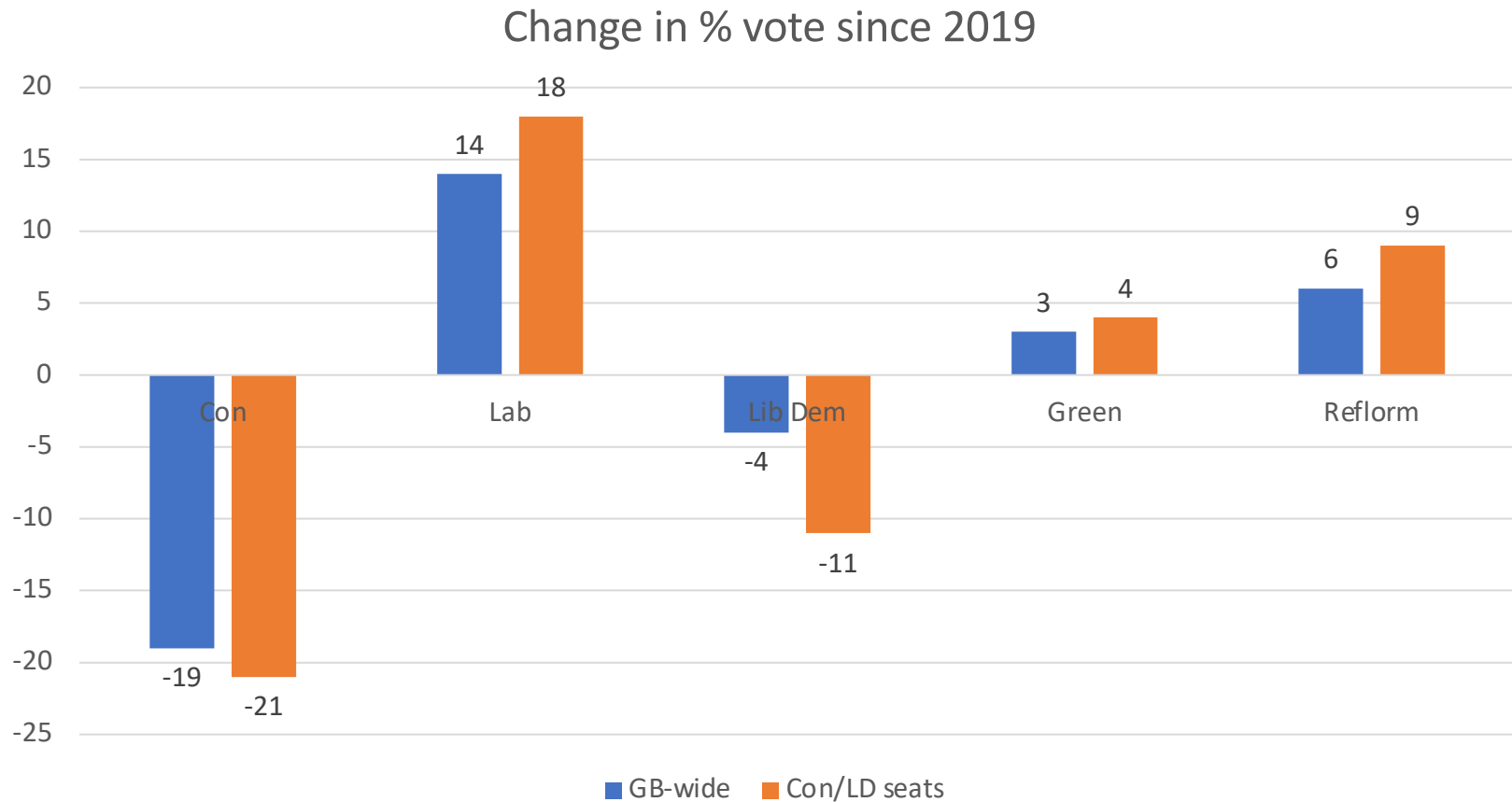
Assumes 3% swing from Lib Dem to Lab in Con/Lab seats and a 4% swing from Lab to Lib Dem in Con/Lib Dem seats

# Redfield & Wilton's Blue Wall Polls



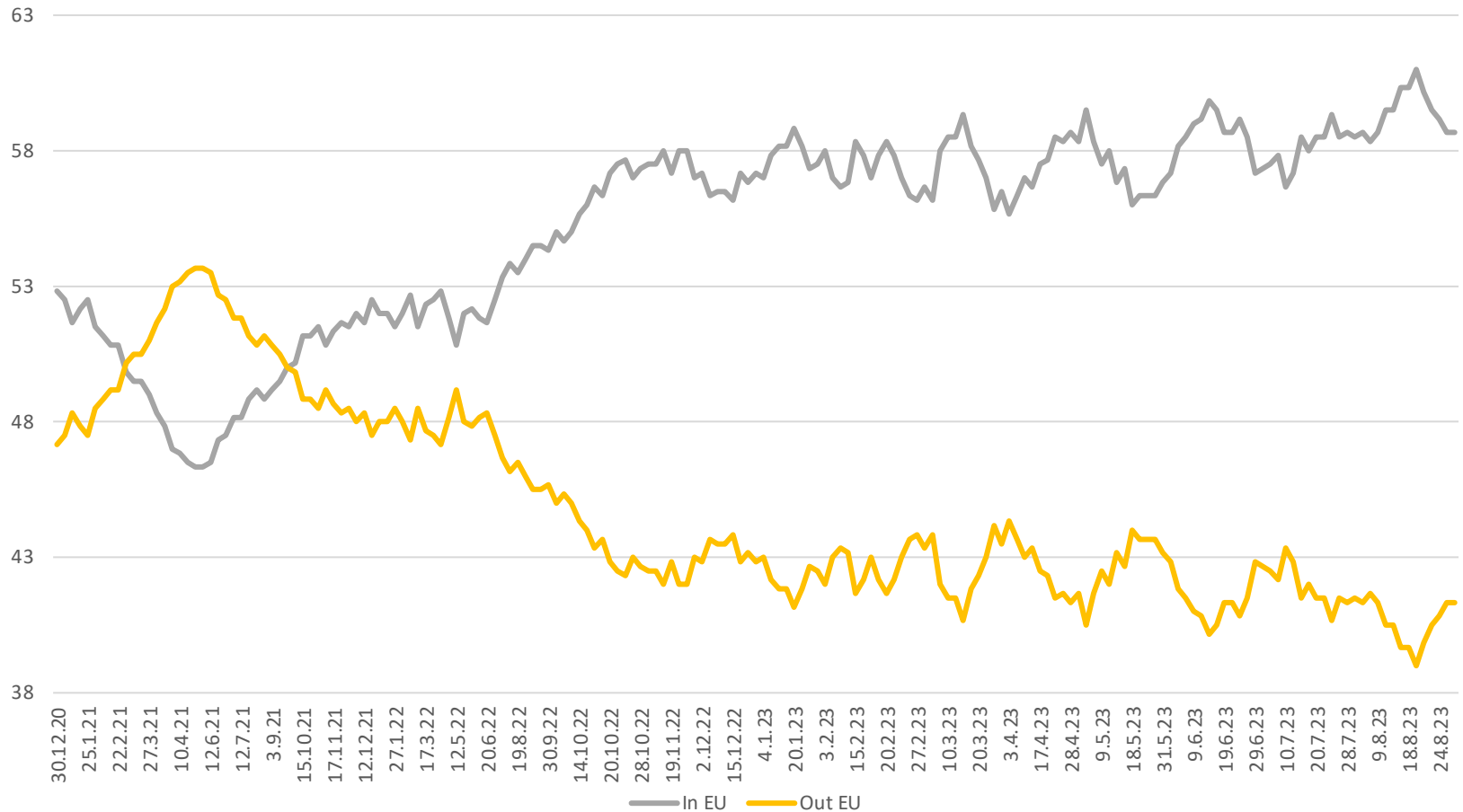
Source: Average of Redfield & Wilton GB and Blue Wall polls 1.8-11.9.23.

# British Election Study Internet Panel (December 2022)



Source: British Election Study Internet Panel wave 24; GB-wide based on 10,304, and Con/LD seats 1,303, respondents who expressed a current vote intention. Comparison is with reported vote in 2019.

# Post TCA Brexit Poll of Polls



Source: Running average of last half dozen polls of EURef2 vi posted at [whatukthinks.org/eu](https://whatukthinks.org/eu)

# 2016 Brexit Vote and Vote Choice

	Remain Voters				Leave Voters			
	% Now	+/- 19	+/- 17	+/-15	% Now	+/-19	+/-17	+/- 15
Con	16	-4	-9	-14	42	-32	-21	-5
Reform	1	+1	+1	0	14	+9	+9	-7
Labour	53	+5	+2	+11	30	+13	+5	+10
Lib D	14	-7	+2	+2	7	+4	+3	+2
Green	7	+3	+3	+0	4	+2	+2	+2

Source: Average of most poll conducted to 31.8.23 by BMG, Deltapoll, FindOutNow, Omnisis, Opinium, Savanta, Techne and YouGov for which relevant tables available. Comparison is with average of post-election polls conducted by YouGov and Lord Ashcroft



# Current Brexit Preference and Party Support

	Rejoin (%)	Change since 2019	Stay Out (%)	Change since 2019
Conservative	17	+2	45	-35
Brexit/Reform	2	+2	14	+10
Labour	56	+8	26	+14
Liberal Democrat	14	-9	8	+6
Green	6	+1	4	+2

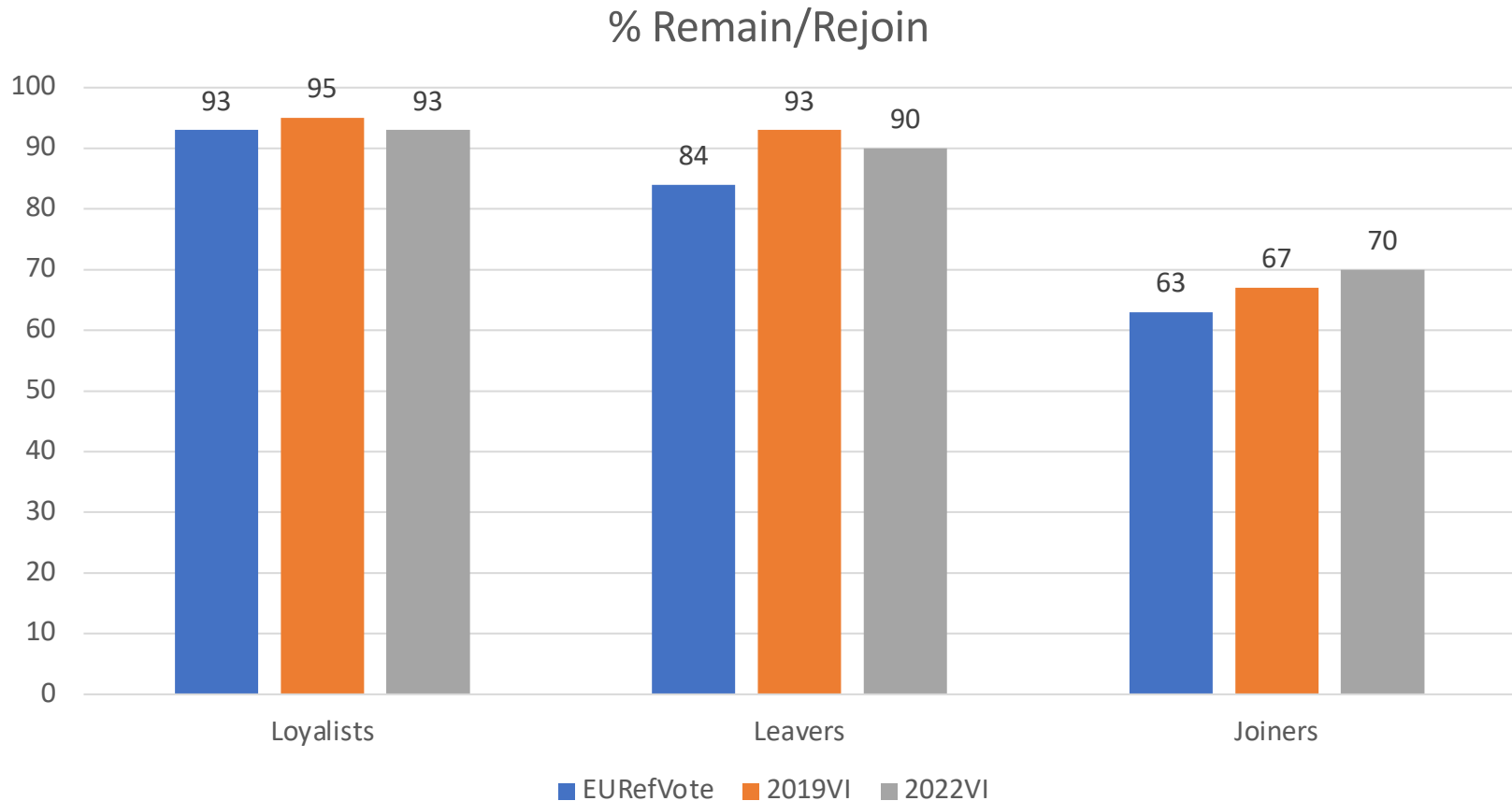
Source: Average of most recent poll to 31.8.23 by BMG, Omnisys and Redield & Wilton for which information available. Comparison is with average of NatCen Panel survey and British Election Study random probability survey of 2019 election.

# Brexit Preference and Party Support – BES Panel

	Remain/Rejoin	Change since 2019	Leave/Stay Out	Change since 2019
By 2016 vote				
Conservative	14	-4	41	-32
Labour	59	+9	29	+15
Liberal Democrat	12	-9	3	+0
By Dec 22 pref				
Conservative	7	-4	51	-29
Labour	65	+10	20	+11
Liberal Democrat	11	-11	3	+1

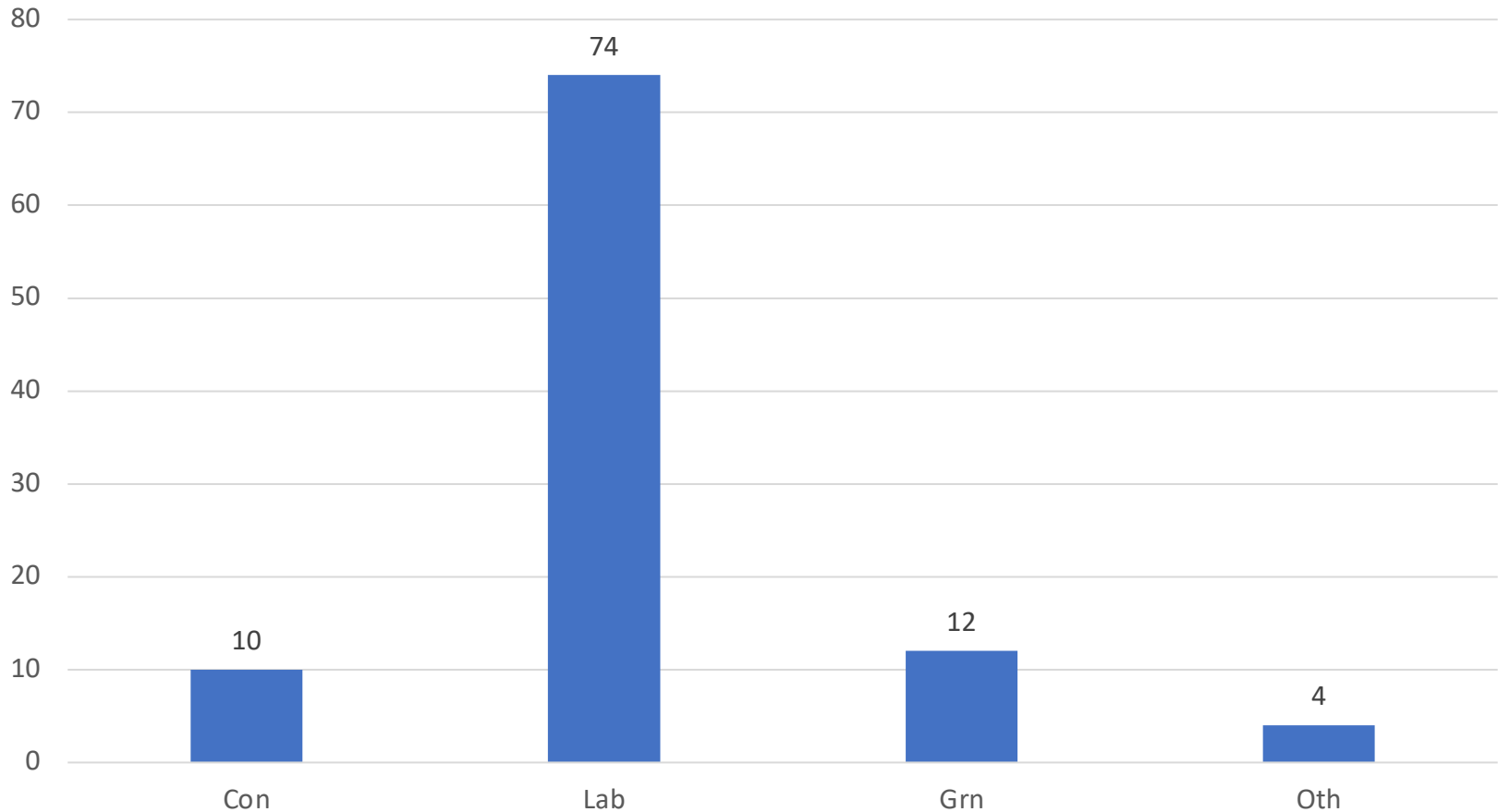
Source: British Election Study Internet Panel wave 24 (Dec. 22). Comparisons are with wave 19.

# Brexit and Turnover of Liberal Democrat Support



Sources: EURefVote, 2022VI: BES Internet Panel wave 24; 2019VI: BES Internet Panel waves 19 & 24 combined. Those without a EU preference excluded from the denominator. Redfield & Wilton polls show a similar pattern of differences.

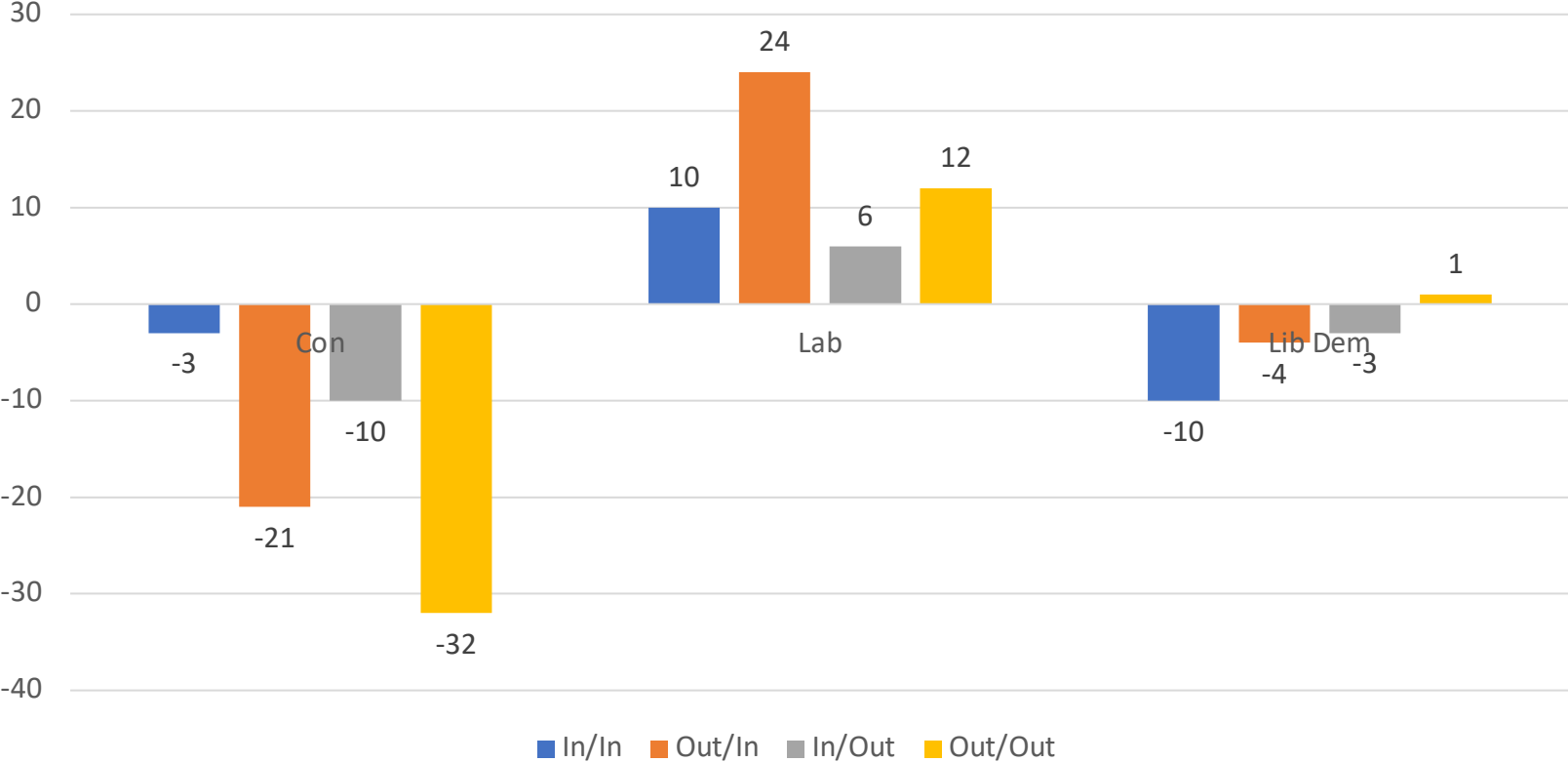
# Where Remain Voting Defectors Have Gone



Source: British Election Study Internet Panel w 24 (Dec. 22). Remain = 2016 vote. Analysis for 2019 Remain supporters shows similar figures – 14/71/11/4

# Comparing Trends in Party Support by Brexit History

Change in % vote share 2019-Dec 22



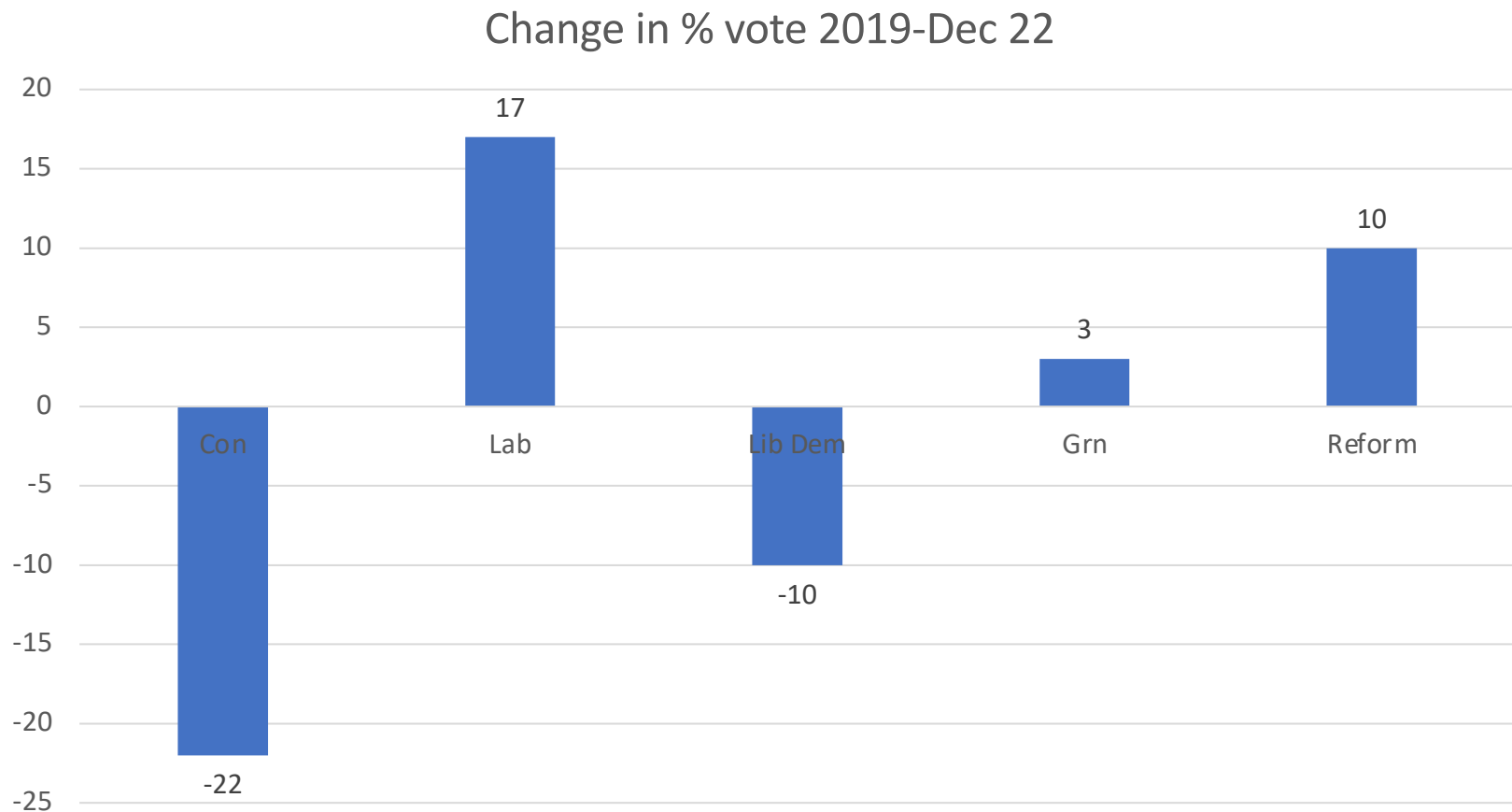
Source: British Election Study Internet Panel wave 24; In/In = voted Remain 2016/would now vote Rejoin, etc.

# LE23: The Brexit Story

	Con	Lab	Swing	Lib Dem
Change since 2019				
Less Leave	-2.6	+4.3	-3.5	+0.2
More Leave	-0.0	+7.4	-3.7	-0.1
Change since 2021				
Less Leave	-7.9	+2.8	-5.4	+4.1
More Leave	-11.9	+6.3	-9.1	+3.7
Change since 2015				
Less Leave	-13.3	+7.4	-10.3	+10.2
More Leave	-4.4	+7.0	-5.7	+6.5

Source: BBC sample of wards fought by all 3 main parties both years

# Former Liberal Democrat Leave Voting Seats



Source: Calculated from BES Internet Panel wave 24. Respondents in seats won by Lib Dems in 2010 where a majority voted Leave in 2016

# Conclusion

- A lack of progress nationally could restrict the places where the party can profit locally from anti-Conservative tactical voting.
- Local election results suggest the likely extent and impact of tactical voting in a general election should not be exaggerated.
- There is little sign in current polling of the party doing better in Con/LD seats.
- The party has enjoyed a limited advance among Leavers (even less in Leave voting areas of past strength), while losing ground to Labour among Remainers and not profiting (unlike Labour) from the swing against Brexit.