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Acceptance, backlash or revolution: how did the public respond to five years of coalition government?

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Talk outline

- Consider the attitudinal changes we might have expected over last 5 years
- Look at what shifts actually occurred in following areas:
 - Attitudes to welfare
 - Attitudes to the NHS
 - Attitudes to Britain's membership of Europe
- Reflect on why these changes occurred in each case and consider where attitudes might go next.



**The last five
years.....**



1.

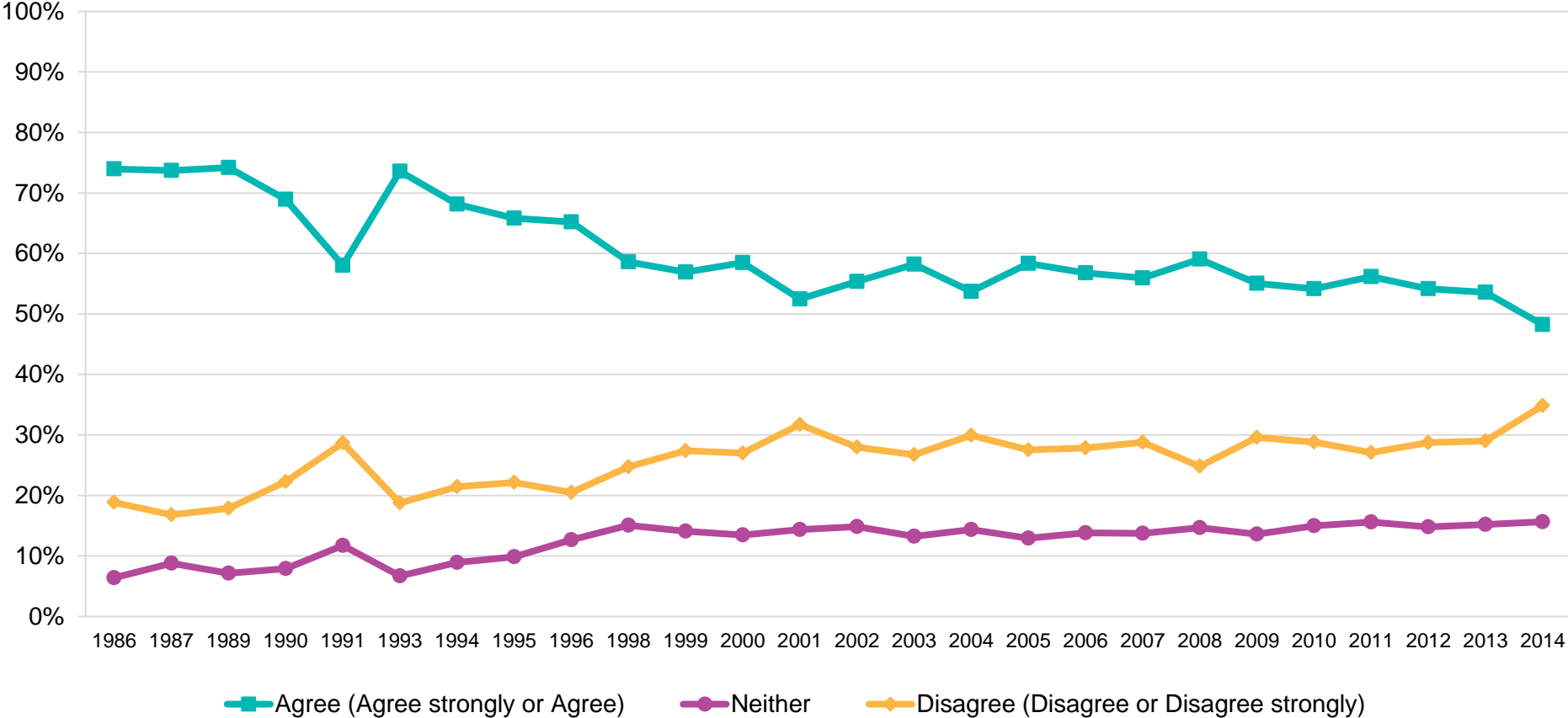
Some notable characteristics of the last 5 years

- Large cuts to public spending
- Wholesale reform of the benefits system
- Radical reform of the NHS
- Rise of UKIP and heightened European membership debate
- Scottish independence referendum
- Same Sex Couples Marriage Act passed



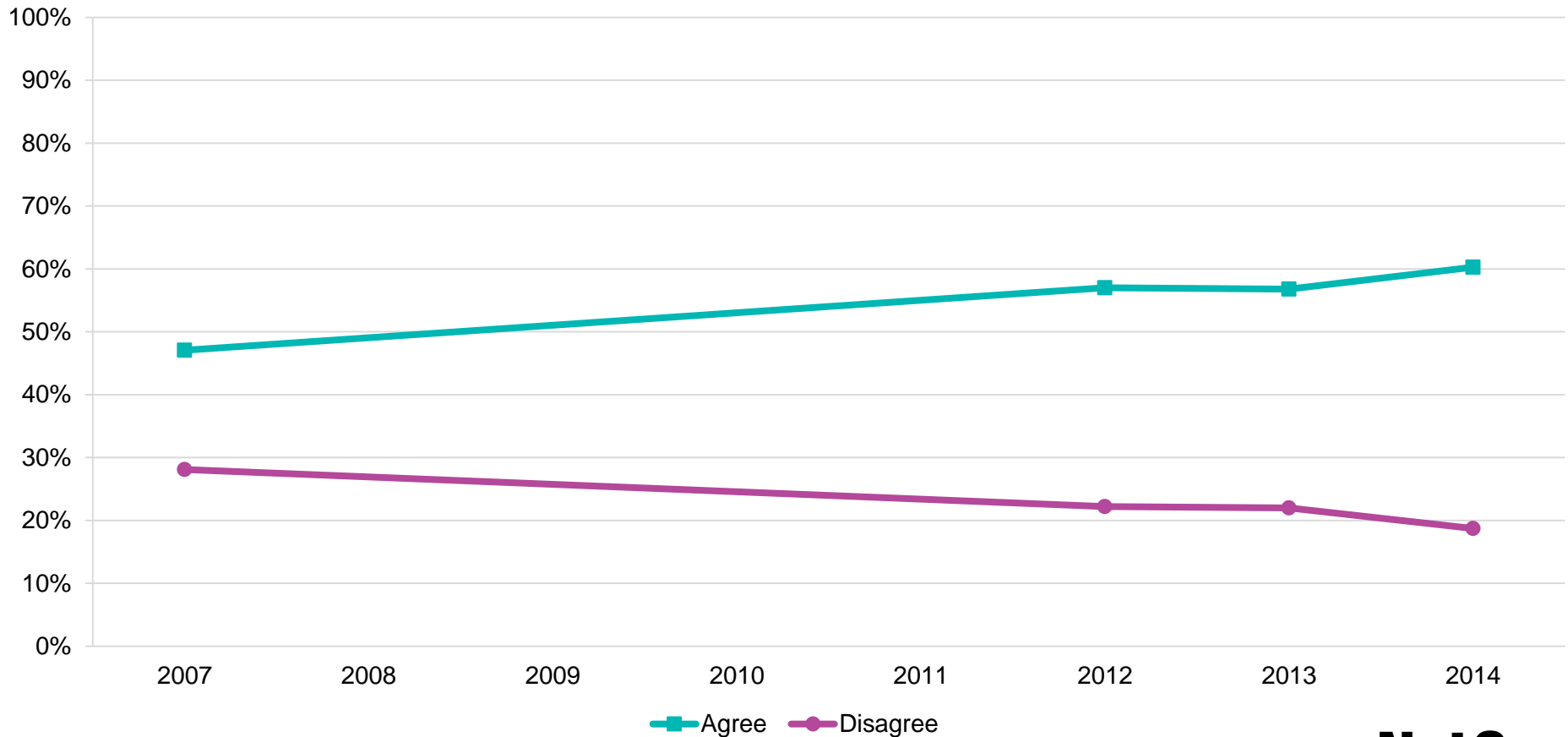
Attitudes to the death penalty

For some crimes death penalty is appropriate



Support for gay marriage

Gay or lesbian couples should have the right to marry one another if they want to



What we expected

- A backlash against the cuts – or at least appetite for increased tax and spend
- Concern or dissatisfaction about the NHS given the level of changes
- Increased Euroscepticism on the back of UKIP's meteoric rise and political calls for a referendum/renegotiation of powers in Europe



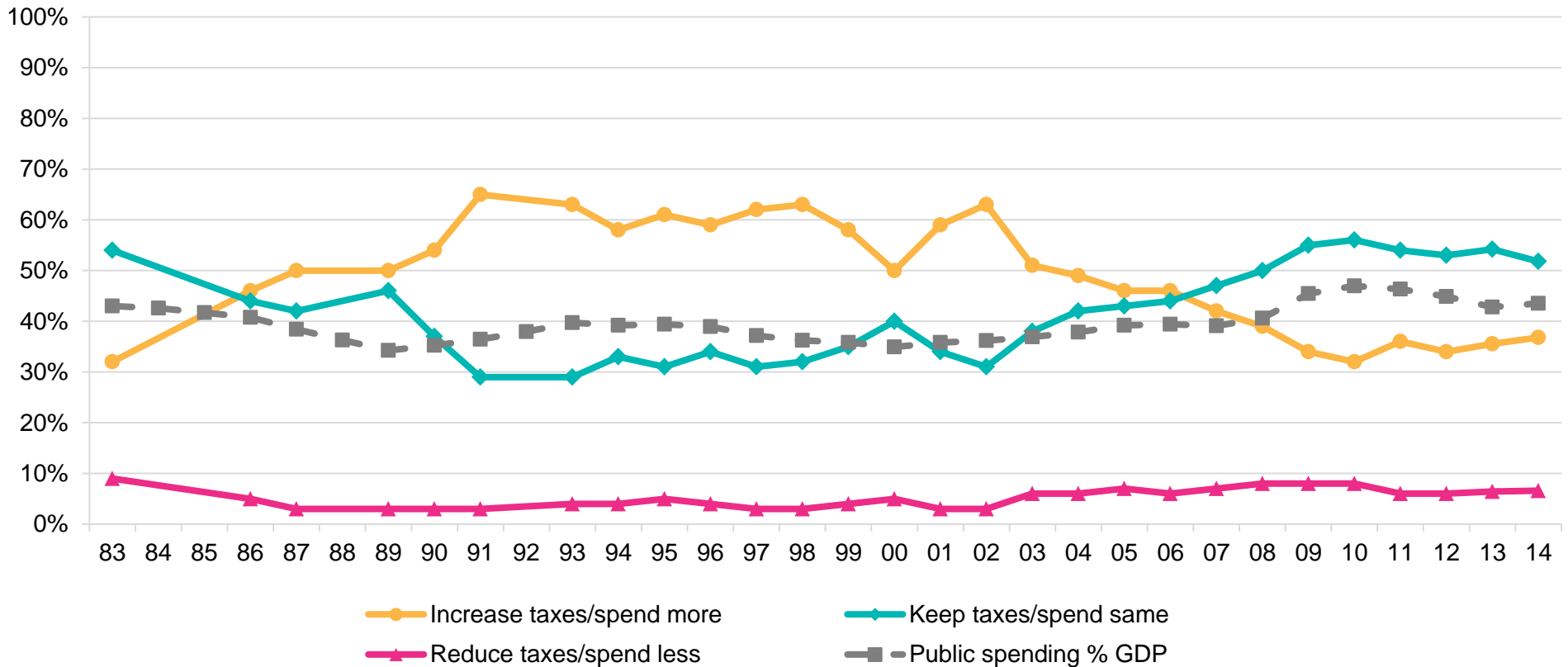
**What we saw:
Welfare**



2.

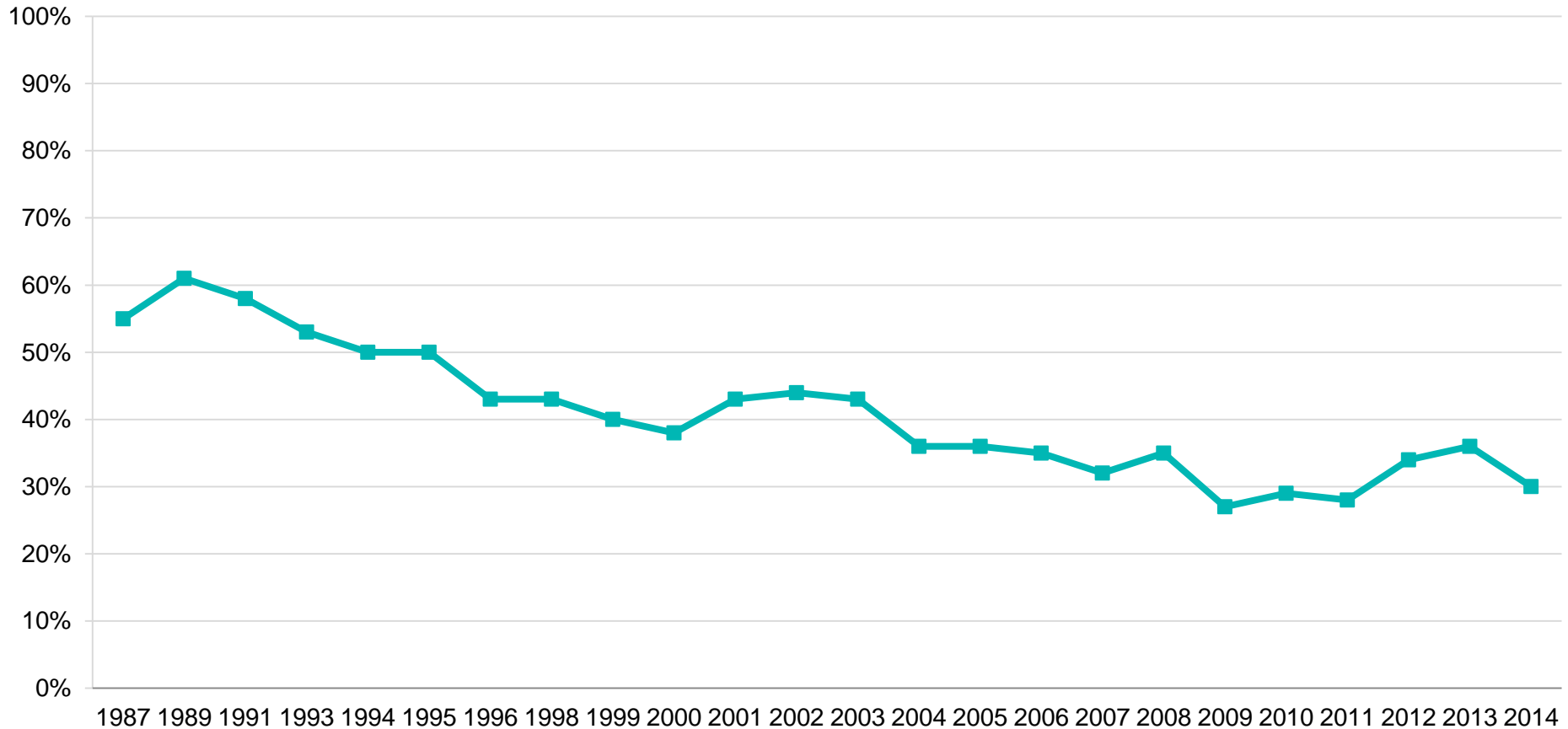
What we saw: Tax and spend

Attitudes to taxation and spending on health, education and social benefits, 1983 - 2014, and public spending as a percentage of GDP



What we saw: Welfare

Agree government should spend more money on welfare benefits



Why not as expected?

- Attitudes to benefits system:
 - A majority of people (59%) in Britain believe that most unemployed people in their area could find a job if they really wanted one.
 - More than half (52%) think that benefits for the unemployed are too high and discourage work.
 - And although 56% think the current benefits system supports people on low pay, only 18% of people believe that the benefits system effectively encourages people to move off benefits.
- But is there also just a broader public acceptance of austerity?



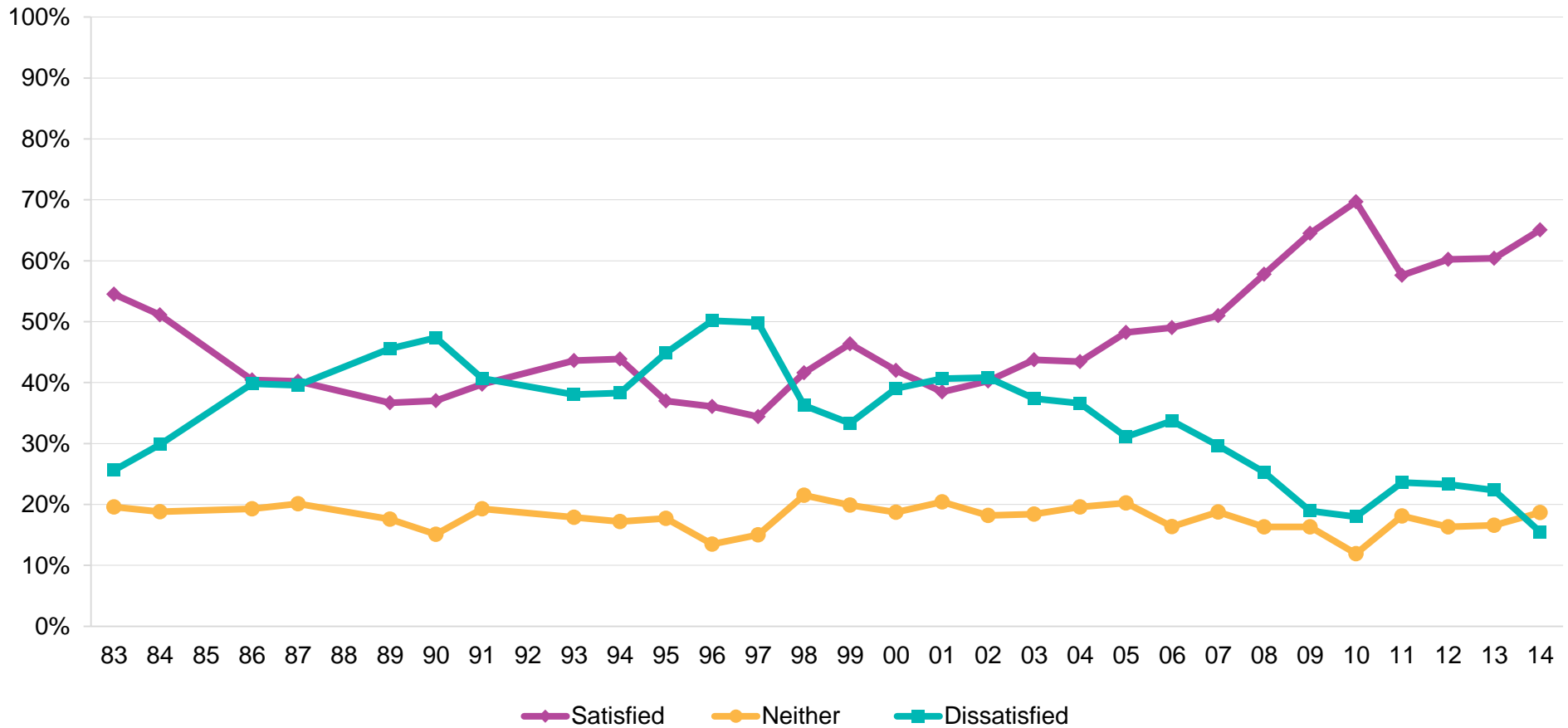
**What we saw:
NHS**



3.

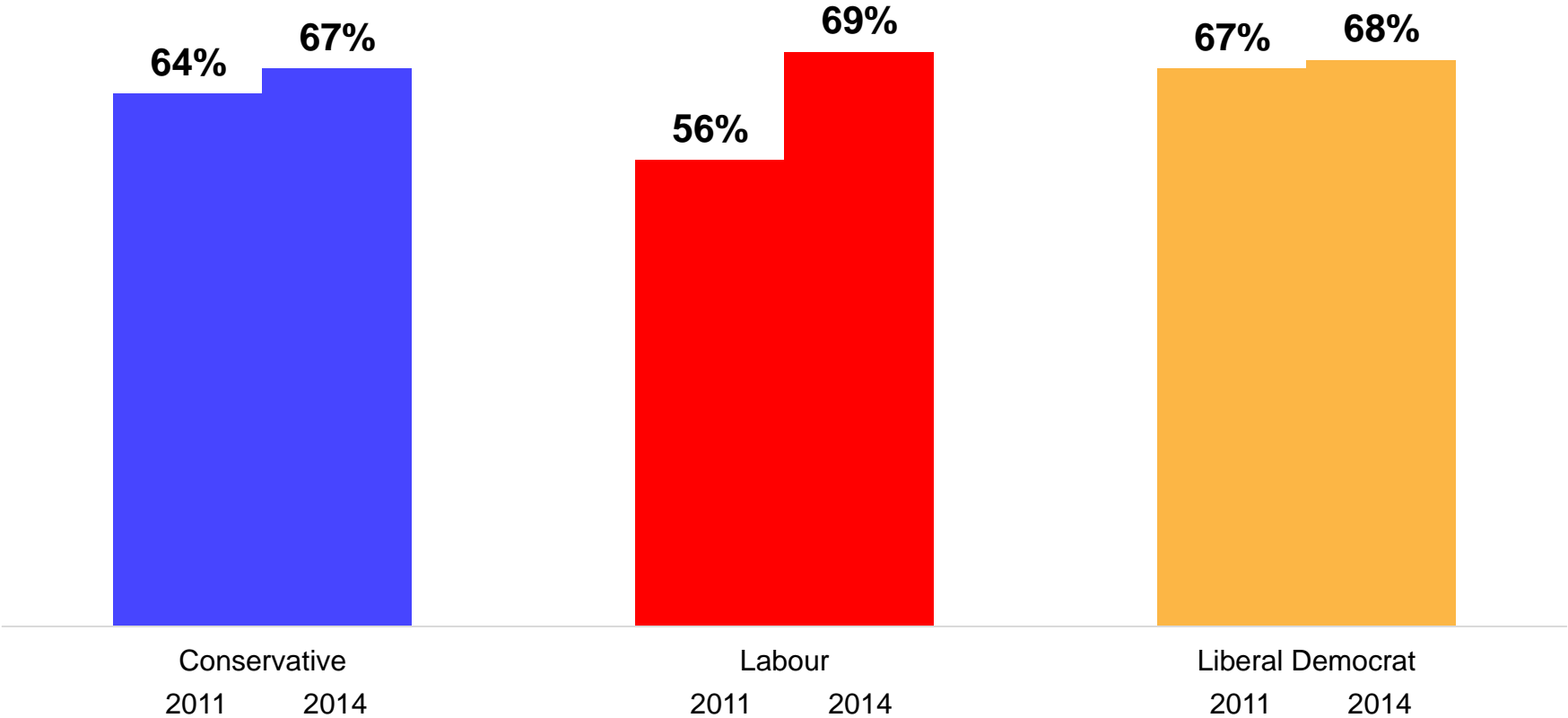
What we saw: NHS

Satisfaction with the NHS, 1983–2014



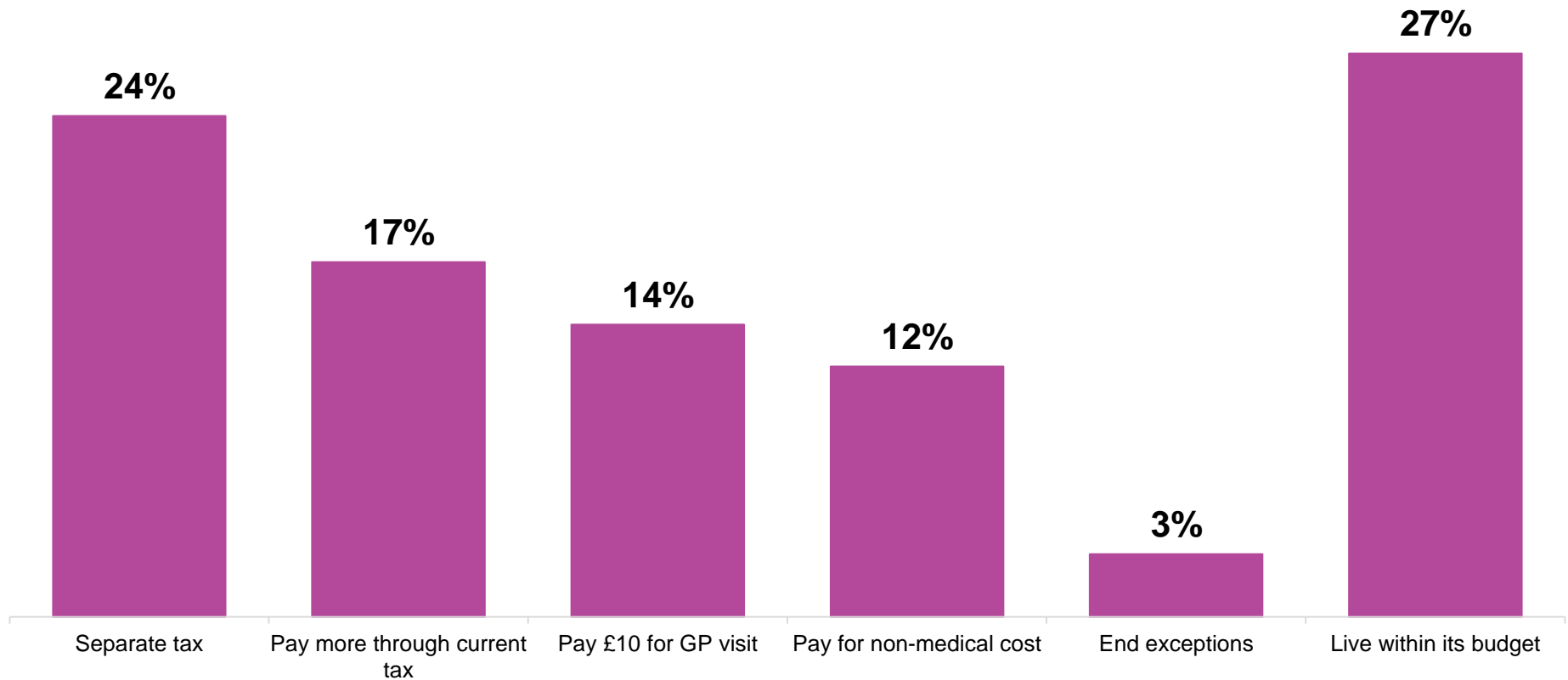
What we saw: NHS

Satisfaction with the NHS by party id



NHS funding options

If the NHS needed more money, which of the following do you think you would be prepared to accept?



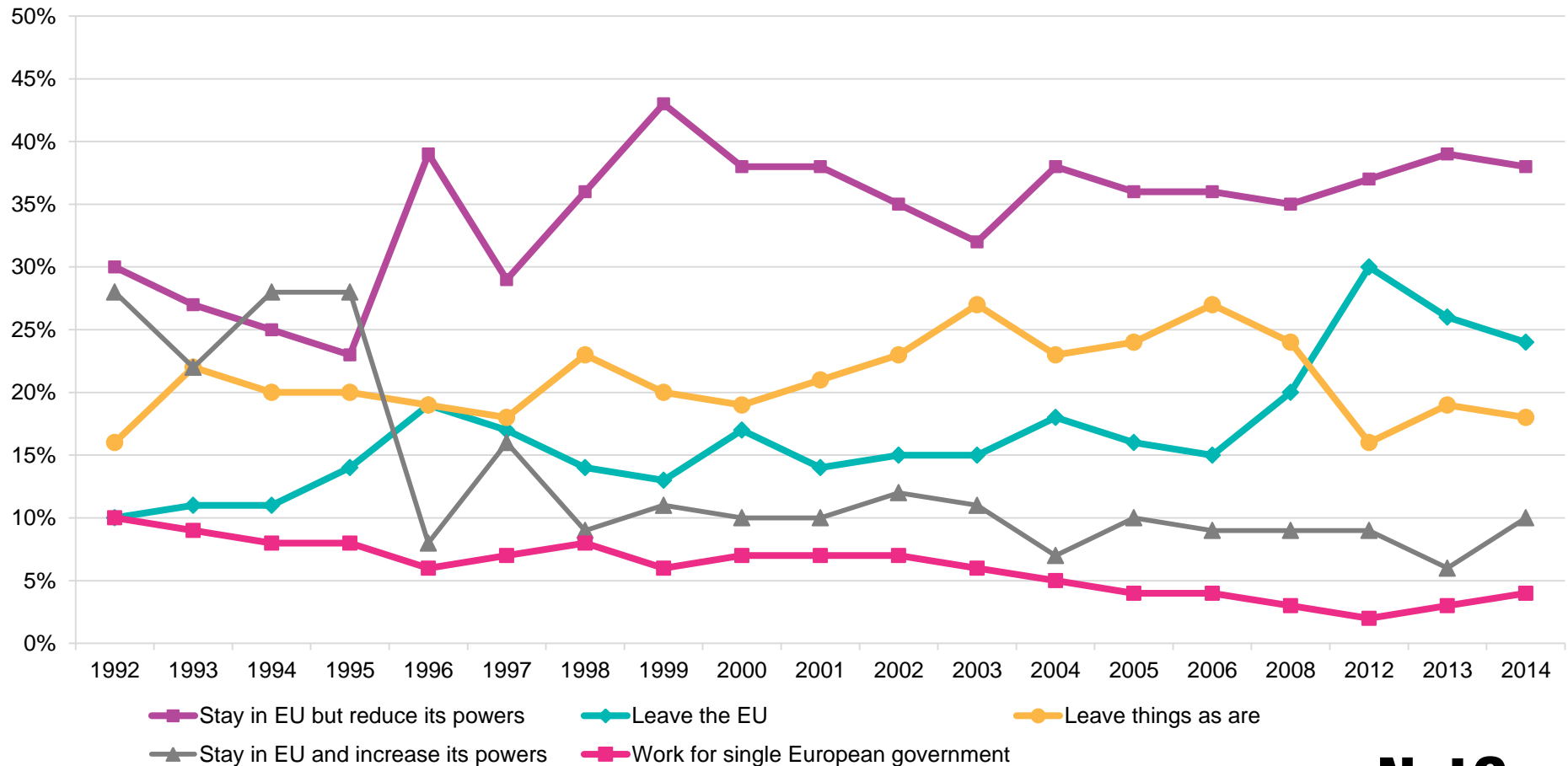
**What we saw:
Europe**



4.

Should we stay or go?

Attitudes to Britain's relationship with the European Union



Where next?

- **Welfare** – The new government has announced a further round of cuts and they may represent tipping point on public acceptance of austerity
- But it's clear that there are still fundamental concerns about the benefits system and its efficacy
- **NHS** – Government will need to be brave and find a potentially controversial solution to the funding crisis
- **EU** – even though we're highly Eurosceptic, when it comes to the crunch we're a long way from a vote to withdraw, unless there's a wildcard....



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