

Attitudes to Welfare: are views on disability benefits shifting?

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Disability benefits out of control?

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Britain's soaring sickness bill is leaving experts baffled

Broken system serves neither taxpayers nor those it is intended to help

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Press release

Biggest shake up to welfare system in a generation to get Britain working

All this has driven the spiralling health and disability benefits bill, forecast to reach £70 billion a year by the end of the decade, or more than £1 billion a week. This is equivalent to more than a third of the NHS budget, and more than three times as much as is spent on policing and keeping communities safe.

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Urgent action needed to tackle the spiralling costs of the health benefit trap

20 January 2025



Disability benefits out of control?

Andy Burnham suggests stricter benefit conditions to cut welfare bill

Conservatives call on the Government to cut the benefits bill

Under Labour welfare spending has spiralled out of control, and it isn't slowing down.

At the end of their term in Government, the number of people getting Personal Independence Payment disability benefit is expected to reach nearly 4.7 million.

This will cost us £20 BILLION more by 2029.

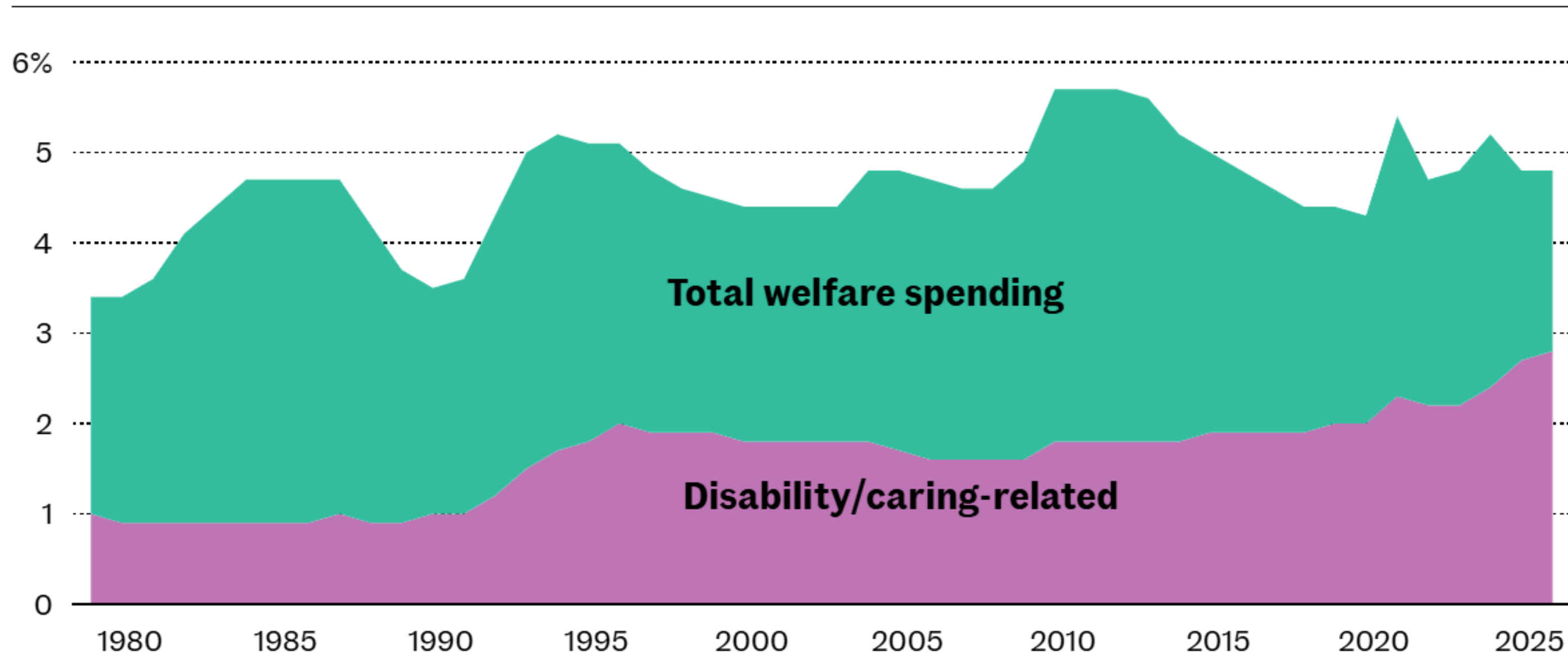
This cannot go on. While PIP support is vital for many with disabilities, so many who can work are refusing to do so whilst claiming taxpayer-funded benefits for mild conditions.



The screenshot shows the top of The Guardian website. The navigation bar includes links for Sport, Culture, Lifestyle, and a menu icon. The main headline reads: "Labour must stop just writing a cheque for benefit claimants, says McFadden". Below this, a sub-headline states: "Exclusive: Work and pensions secretary signals possible reform to welfare as ministers await key reviews". To the right of the headline is an advertisement for the Welsh Revenue Authority. Below the main headline, there is a section for "NEWS" with a list of categories: Home, UK, World, Business, Culture, Politics, Health, Tech, InDepth, BBC Verify, and C. The "Politics" category is highlighted. Below the "NEWS" section, there is a large headline: "Reform proposes £50bn welfare bill cut with changes to disability payments for millions".

Overall welfare spending has not risen

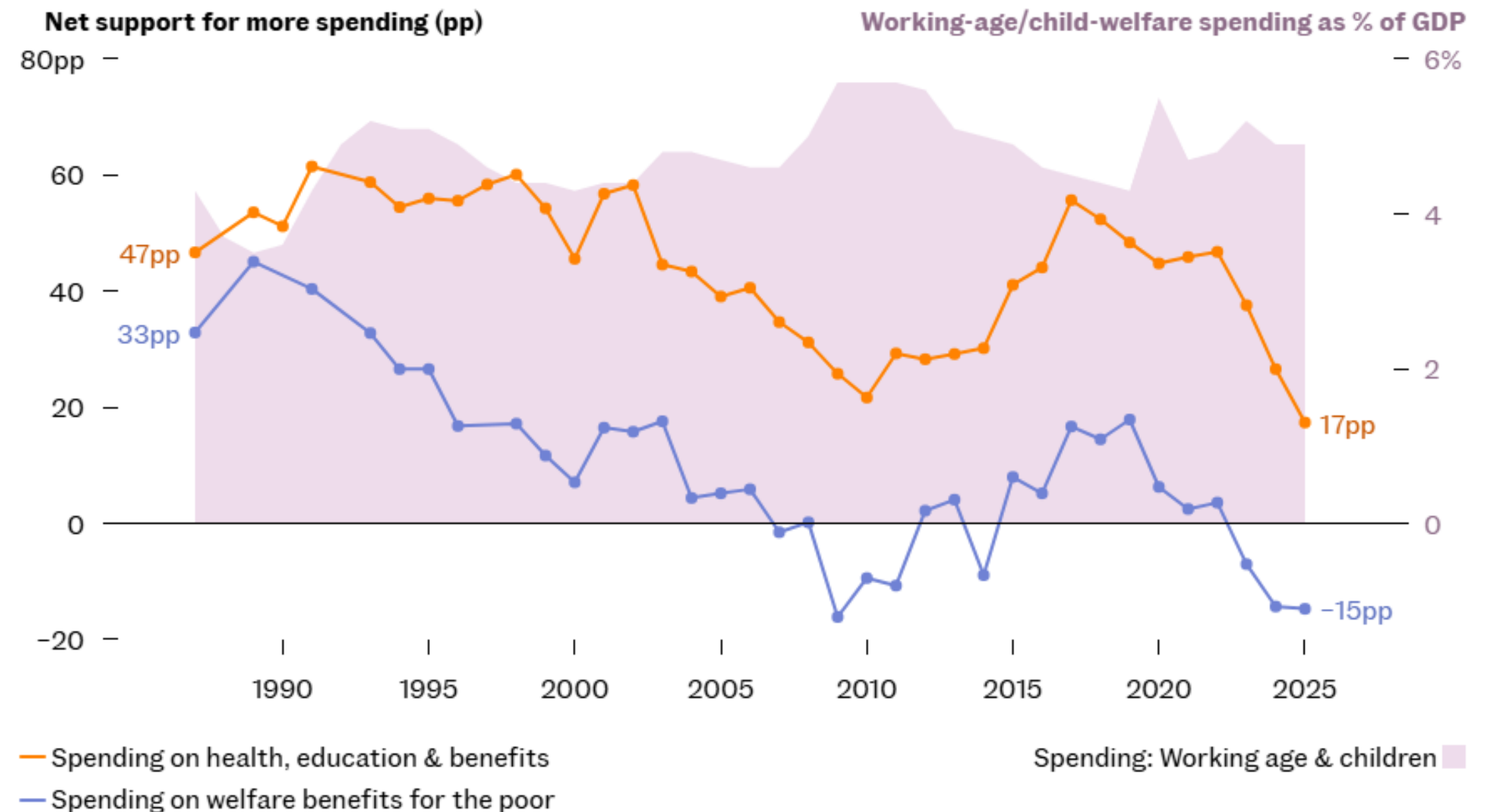
Spending on working-age adult & child welfare benefits as a share of GDP (%)



Note: Disability/caring-related spending includes extra-cost disability benefits (e.g. PIP), incapacity benefits (e.g. people receiving UC LCWRA, and including the standard allowance component for consistency with ESA), carers benefits (e.g. Carer's Allowance), children's disability benefits, and housing benefits for disability related claims. Source: Ben Geiger's analysis of DWP Benefit and Expenditure Tables, Spring Forecast 2026

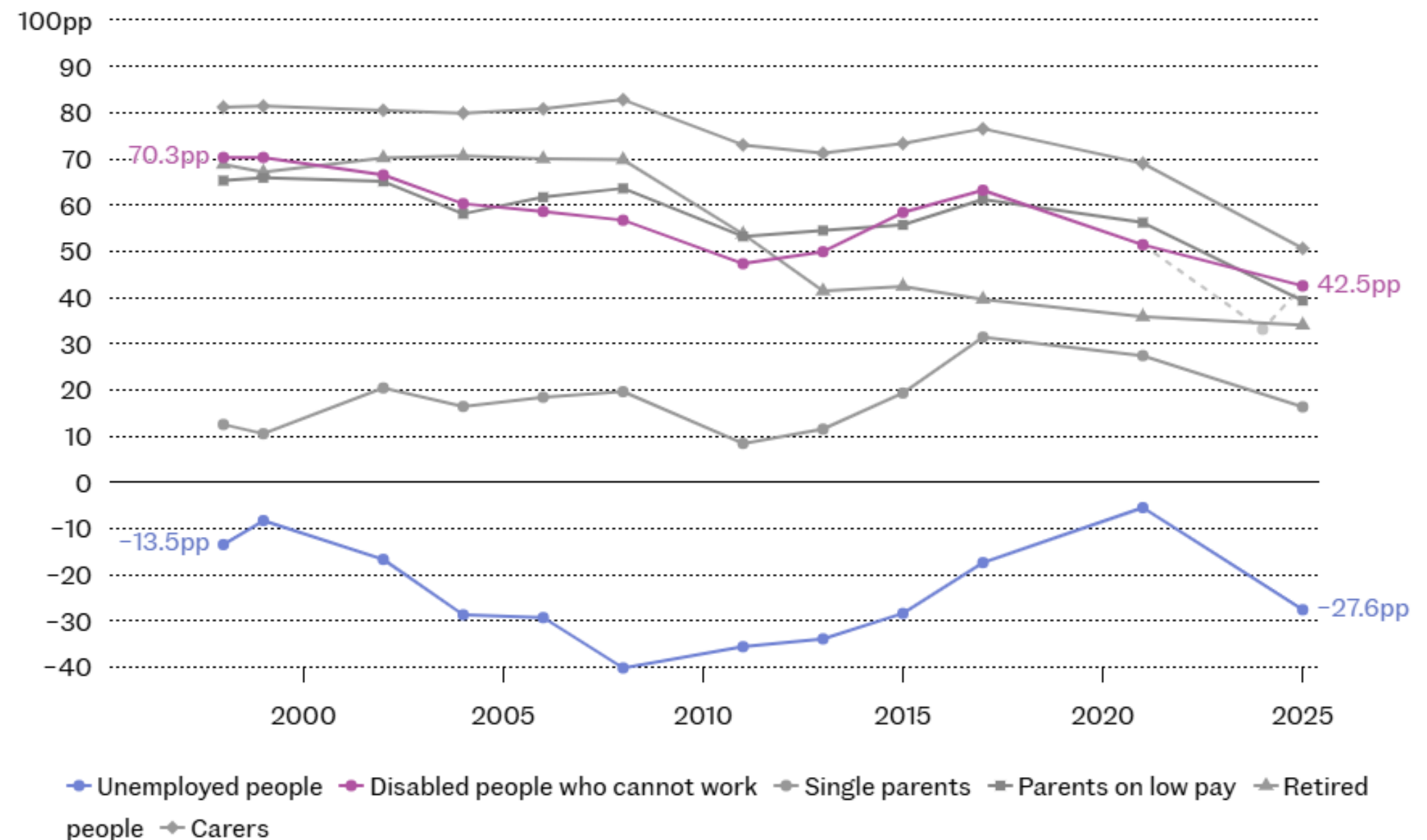
Support for welfare spending at historic lows

- 28% of British people agree that the government should spend more on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes...
- ...42% disagree

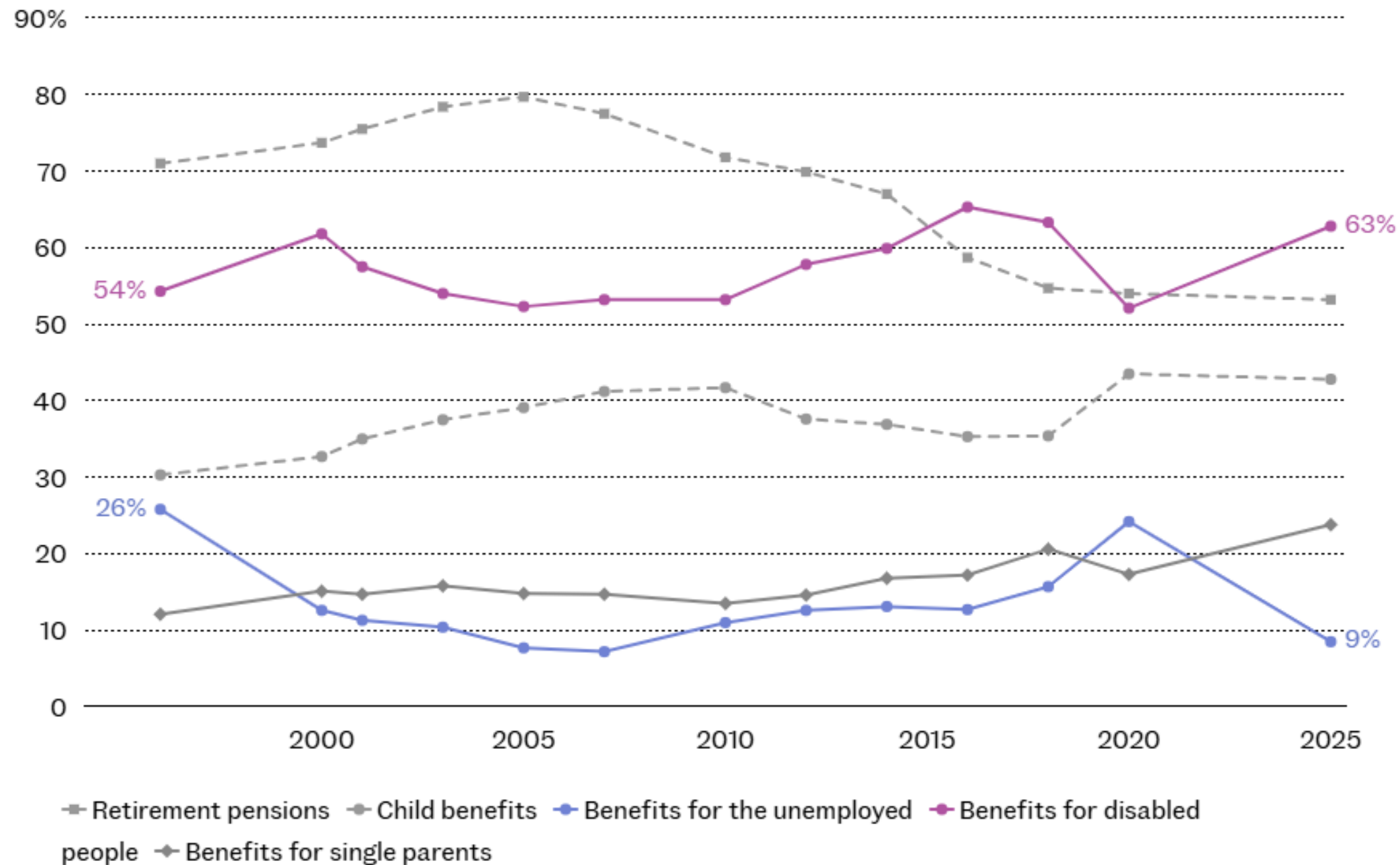


Support for spending on all claimant groups has declined – **but the public don't support cuts to spending on disabled people**

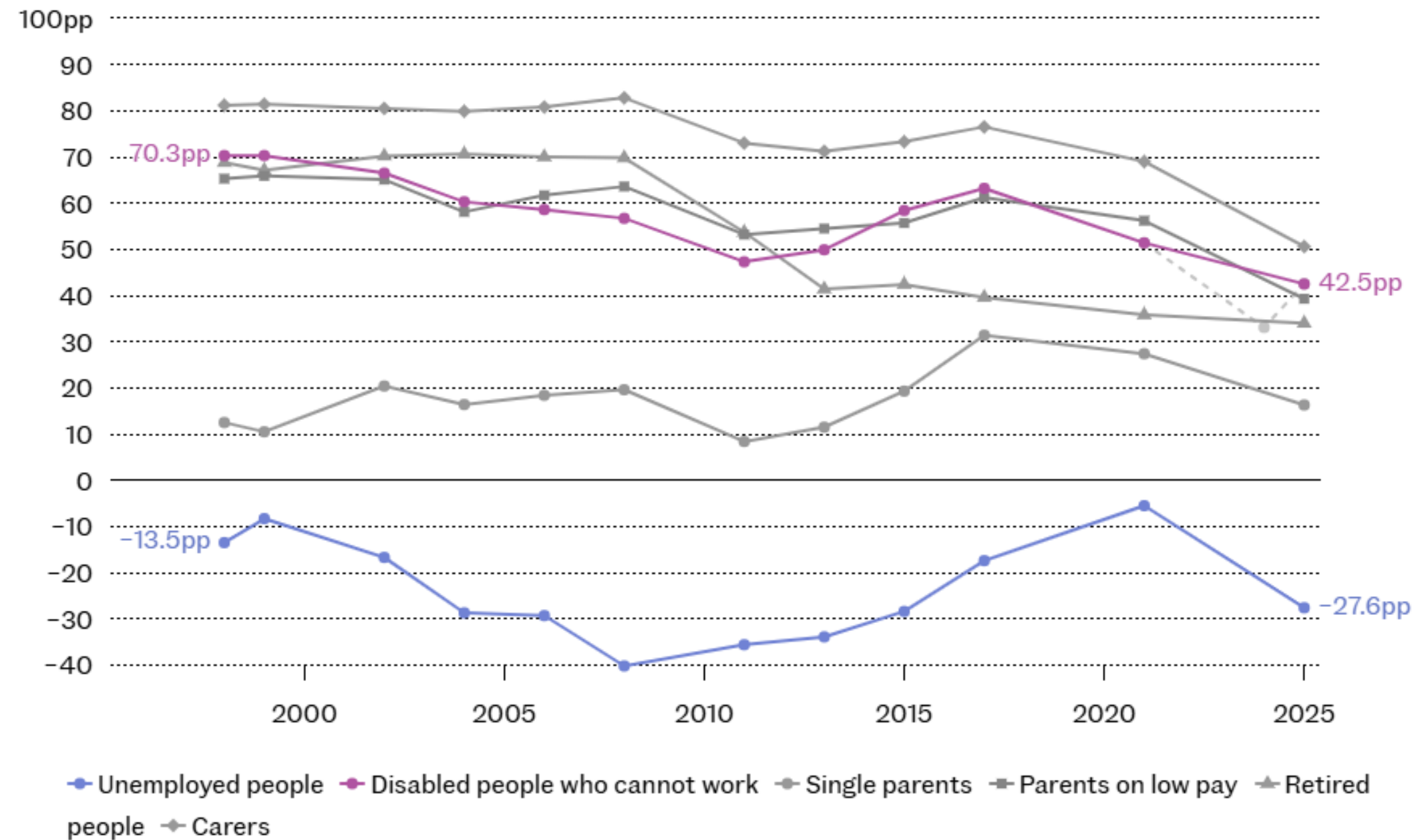
- 7% support spending less money on “disabled people who cannot work”...
 - 11% of Reform voters
 - 7% of Conservative voters
 - 5% of Labour voters
 - 3% of Lib Dem voters
 - 1% of Green voters



Disabled people are now the highest priority for extra spending



The public don't support cuts to spending on disabled people “who cannot work”



Broad support for extra-cost benefits (e.g. PIP)

- Only small minorities oppose extra-cost benefits in all circumstances (3%)
- Attitudes are similar across political spectrum

Broad support for extra-cost benefits (e.g. PIP)

Cooking		Washing		Budgeting	
They can cook for themselves, but they need to use an aid or appliance when cooking, such as a stool to sit on	19%	They can make easy decisions about budgeting, but need help or advice from someone else with more difficult ones	14%	They can wash themselves, but they need to be reminded to get washed	14%
They can cook for themselves, but they need someone to supervise or help them	32%	They need help or advice from someone else to make any decision about budgeting	30%	They can wash themselves, but they need help with washing between their shoulders and their waist	29%
They need someone to cook for them	32%	They need someone else to make decisions about budgeting for them, because they cannot do it themselves	36%	They need someone to wash their entire body	44%
Nobody should get additional money to help with this task	9%	Nobody should get additional money to help with this task	12%	Nobody should get additional money to help with this task	6%

What does this mean for disability benefit reform?

- Unsafe to assume strong public appetite for cuts to disability benefits (including PIP)
- The public may support some cuts, but a lot will depend on framing and perceived 'victims'
- Cuts are likely to be politically risky for any party

Thank you