Hearts, minds, votes

A summary of UK voting demographics, social attitudes and approaches to mapping values
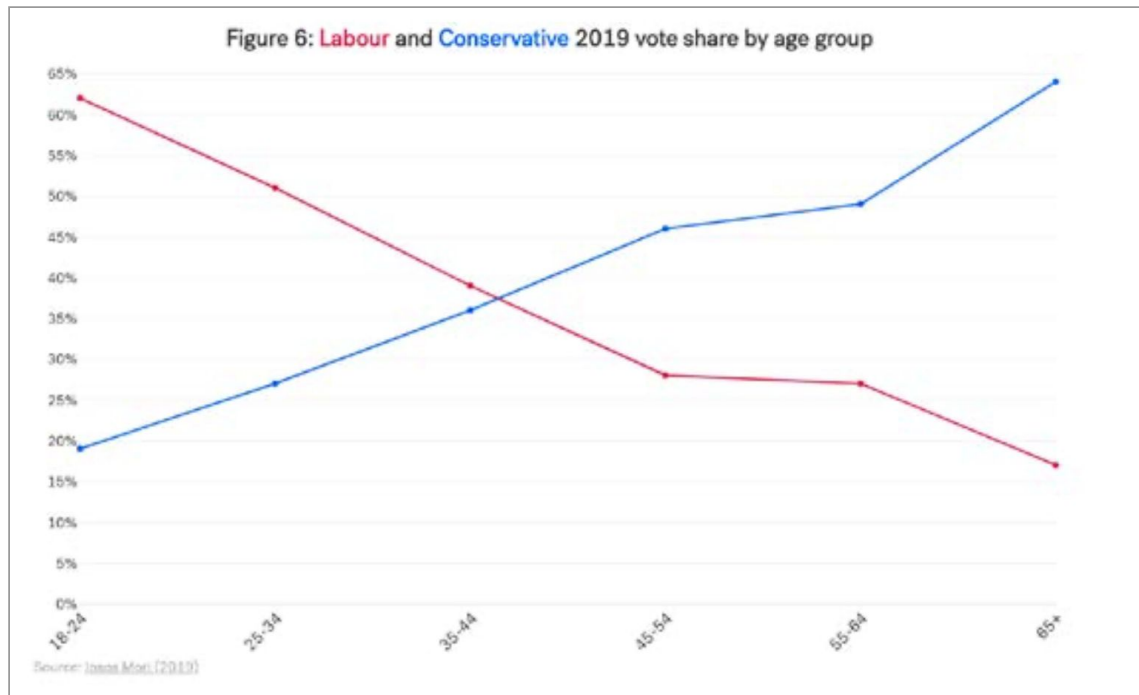
Clifford Singer • September 2020

Contents

Note: I created this as a personal project because I wanted to collect relevant data and think about how we might combine research on demographics, social attitudes and values to inform messaging and campaigning. I hope you find it useful and welcome any feedback.

@cliffordsinger

1. Demographics and wealth

Age was the biggest divide in the 2019 election.

Figure 6: Labour and Conservative 2019 vote share by age group

Source: Ipsos Mori (2019)

This level of polarisation only emerged in the last five years.

Figure 8: Labour and Conservative vote share by age group 1992-2019

Sources: Ipsos MORI (2019), Ipsos MORI (2017), Ipsos MORI (1972-2010)
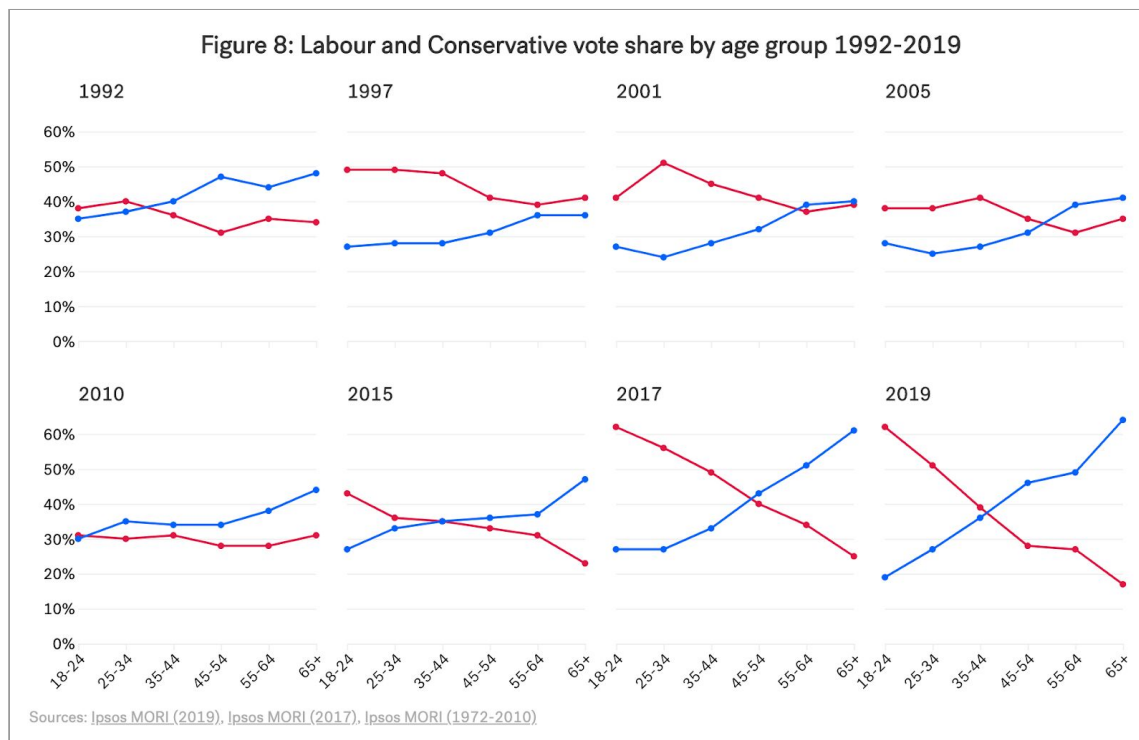
(Note: Most charts in this section are from Labour Together's 2019 Election Review unless otherwise attributed.)

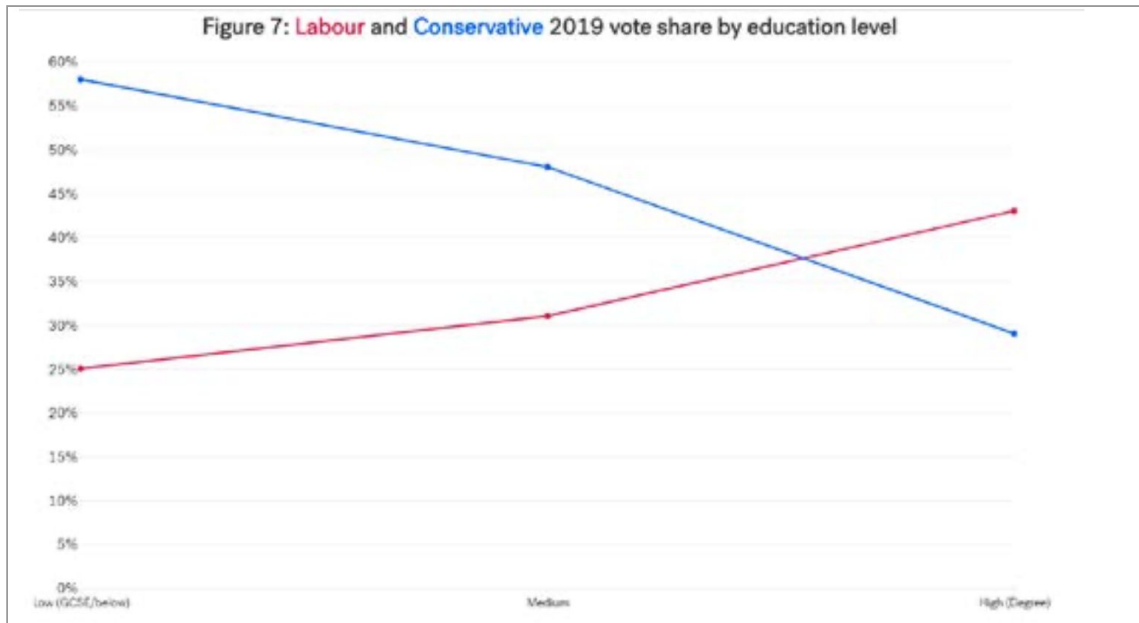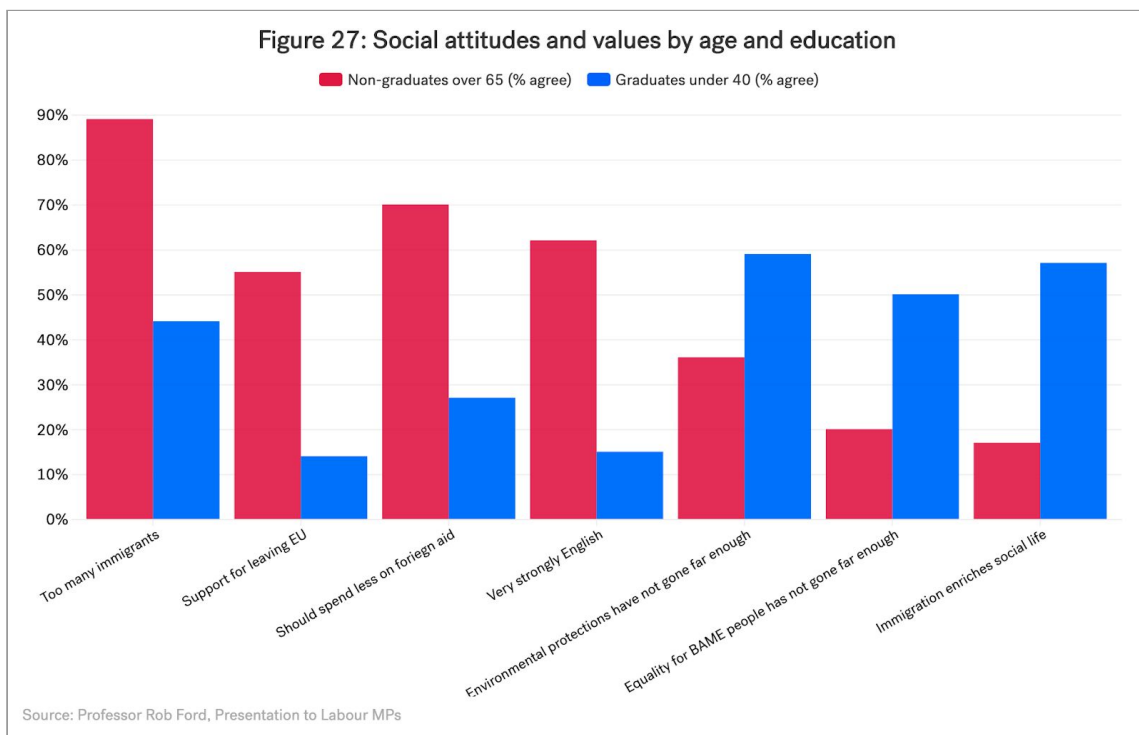This pattern is reflected in the divide between youngest and oldest constituencies, as visualised by [Resolution Foundation](#). In 2019, the Conservatives gained 9 of 137 Labour seats among the youngest 30% of constituencies but a massive 14 of 23 Labour seats in the oldest 30%.

Constituencies by party and average age: Great Britain, 2019 result

Birmingham, Ladywood is Great Britain's youngest consitutency

Darker shades of the colour indicate the seat has changed to that party e.g. dark blue indicates a Conservative gain in the **2019 General Election**

Glasgow central

Brighton, Pavillion

Thurrock

Youngest

North Dorset

Wirral West

Inspiration taken from **Alasdair Rae**

Sefton Central

Christchurch is Great Britain's oldest consitutency

Christchurch

Oldest

LAB CON SNP LD PC GREEN SPEAKER

Notes: The colours relate to which party won the seat in 2019 General Election. Source: RF analysis of ONS, Mid-year Population Estimates; General Election 2019

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resolutionfoundation.org

Education reveals a divide that is almost as stark as age.

Figure 7: Labour and Conservative 2019 vote share by education level

Combining age and education highlights a huge divide in social attitudes.

Figure 27: Social attitudes and values by age and education

Non-graduates over 65 (% agree) ■ Graduates under 40 (% agree)

Source: Professor Rob Ford, Presentation to Labour MPs

But this only partly explains voting trends. Keir Milburn argues the formative experience of the 2008 crash and its aftermath created "Generation Left". And the data below suggests that while the class divide in voting has shrunk, wealth and home ownership are more significant.
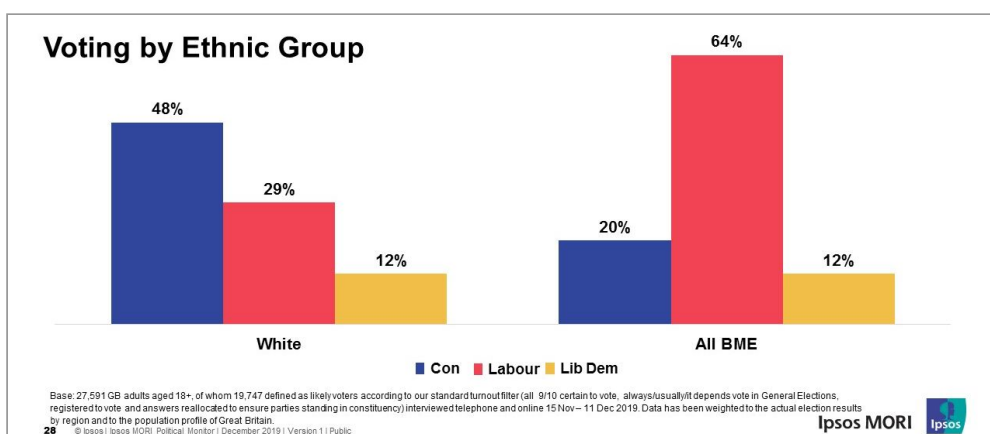
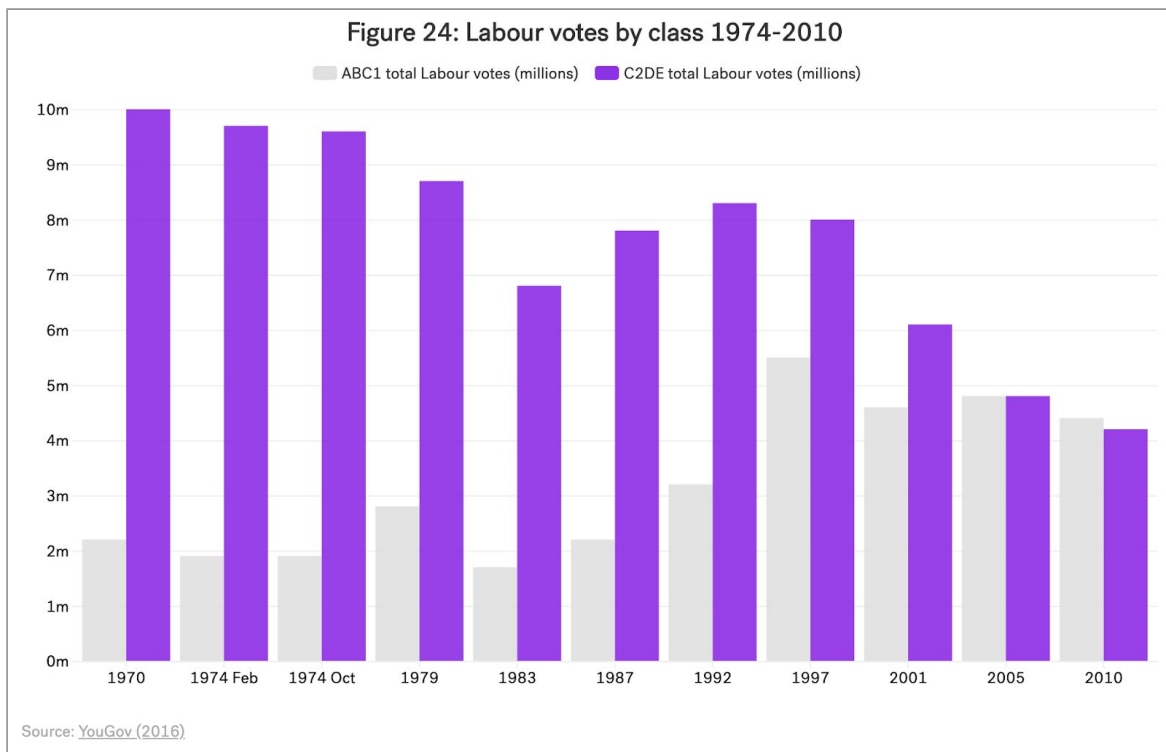Labour's vote is increasingly based in cities, not towns.

Figure 10: 2019 General Election vote share by place type

Source: Ian Warren, Centre for Towns (2019) • ("Community" indicates rural or "village" areas)
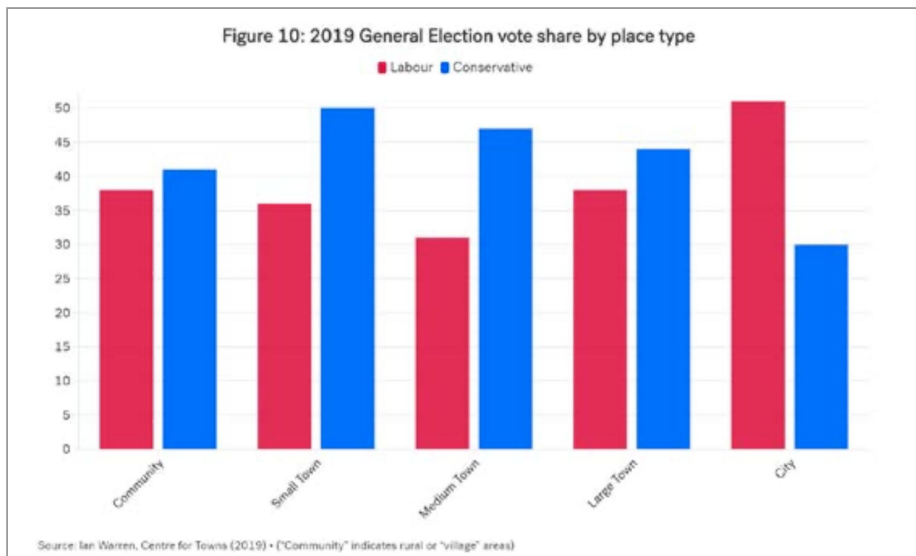
Again, this may be partly explained by age. Ian Warren and Will Jennings note the aging nature of towns which switched from Labour to Tory:

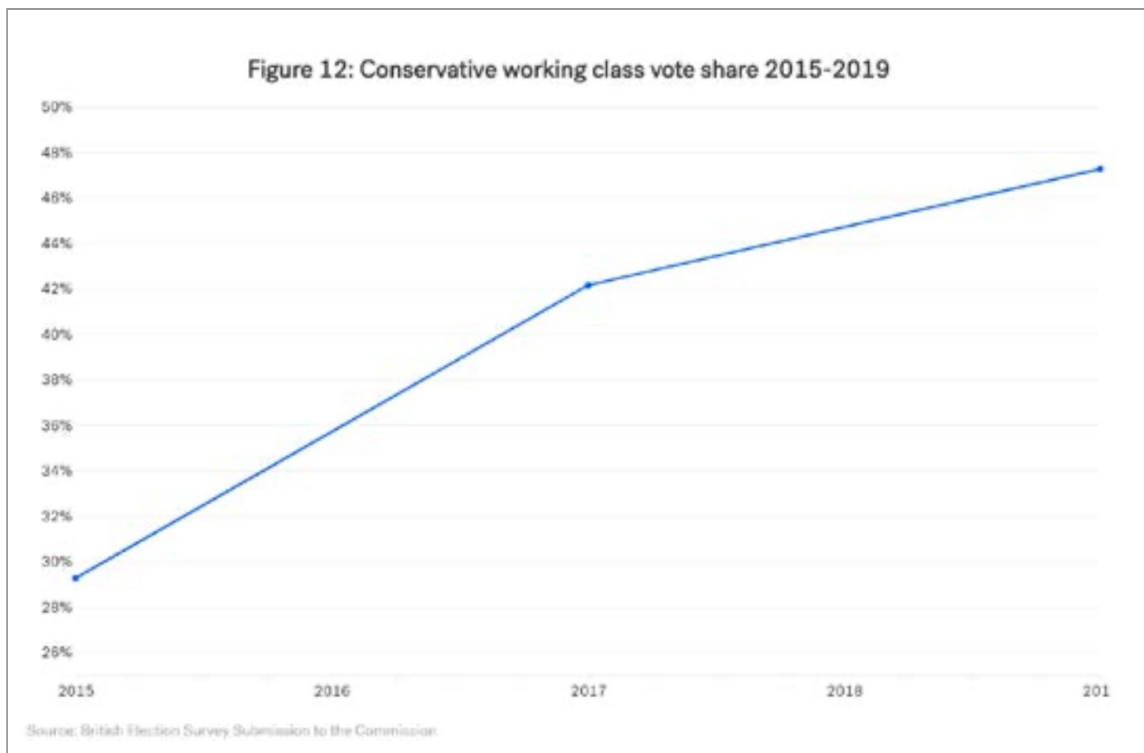| Town	Change in over 65s population	Change in 18 to 24 yr olds population
Workington	Up 14.0%	Down 28.4%
Bury	Up 27.3%	Down 7.3%
Southport	Up 12.4%	Down 21.8%
Bishop Auckland	Up 34.8%	Down 24.9%
Darlington	Up 21.1%	Down 16.6%
Hartlepool	Up 26.9%	Down 24.5%
Redcar	Up 29.6%	Down 24.3%
Grimsby	Up 8.9%	Down 19.1%
Scunthorpe	Up 39.6%	Down 21.0%
Wakefield	Up 29.0%	Down 10.5%
Mansfield	Up 30.3%	Down 14.4%
Kirkby-in-Ashfield	Up 41.3%	Down 15.5%
Bolsover	Up 35.2%	Down 16.1%

It also reflects the greater ethnic diversity of many cities, with BAME voters much more likely to vote Labour in 2019 than white voters.

Voting by Ethnic Group

Base: 27,591 GB adults aged 18+, of whom 19,747 defined as likely voters according to our standard turnout filter (all 9/10 certain to vote, always/usually/it depends vote in General Elections, registered to vote, and answers reallocated to ensure parties standing in constituency) interviewed telephone and online 15 Nov – 11 Dec 2019. Data has been weighted to the actual election results by region and to the population profile of Great Britain.

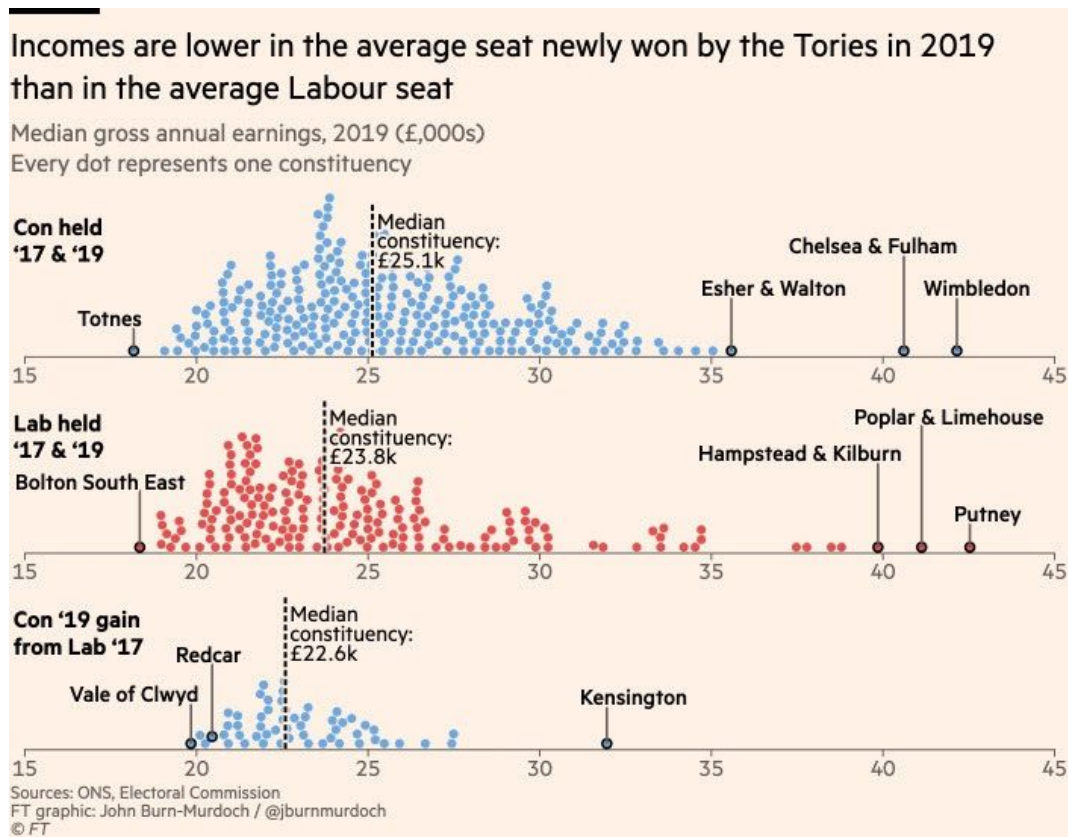28 © Ipsos | Ipsos MORI Political Monitor | December 2019 | Version 1 | Public

Ipsos MORI

In contrast, voting no longer divides on class lines, at least when measured by the prevalent NRS social grade system of ABC1/C2DE.

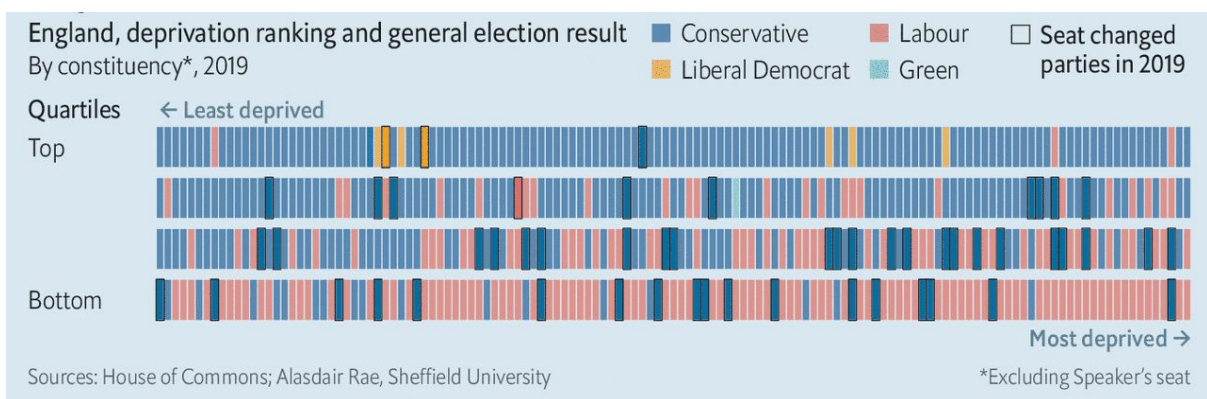**Figure 24: Labour votes by class 1974-2010**

□ ABC1 total Labour votes (millions) ■ C2DE total Labour votes (millions)

Source: YouGov (2016)

In particular, the Conservative working class vote grew significantly in 2017 and 2019.

Figure 12: Conservative working class vote share 2015-2019

Source: British Election Survey Submission to the Commission

Median incomes were [lower in seats won by the Tories](#) in 2019 than in the average Labour seat...

Incomes are lower in the average seat newly won by the Tories in 2019 than in the average Labour seat

Median gross annual earnings, 2019 (£,000s)
Every dot represents one constituency

Con held '17 & '19
Median constituency: £25.1k
Totnes
Chelsea & Fulham
Esher & Walton
Wimbledon

Lab held '17 & '19
Bolton South East
Median constituency: £23.8k
Poplar & Limehouse
Hampstead & Kilburn
Putney

Con '19 gain from Lab '17
Redcar
Vale of Clwyd
Median constituency: £22.6k
Kensington

Sources: ONS, Electoral Commission
FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch
© FT

...though seats with the highest deprivation levels are still mostly Labour, notwithstanding Tory inroads in 2019. (Labour seats, eg in inner London, tend to have higher levels of inequality which skews the median.)

England, deprivation ranking and general election result
By constituency*, 2019

Conservative   Labour   Seat changed parties in 2019
Liberal Democrat   Green

Quartiles   ← Least deprived
Top

Bottom
Most deprived →

Sources: House of Commons; Alasdair Rae, Sheffield University
*Excluding Speaker's seat

The Economist

[Paddy Bettington](#) argues that while Tory gains look similar to Labour holds in terms of social grade and deprivation, age distribution and home ownership patterns are closer to long-held Tory seats.
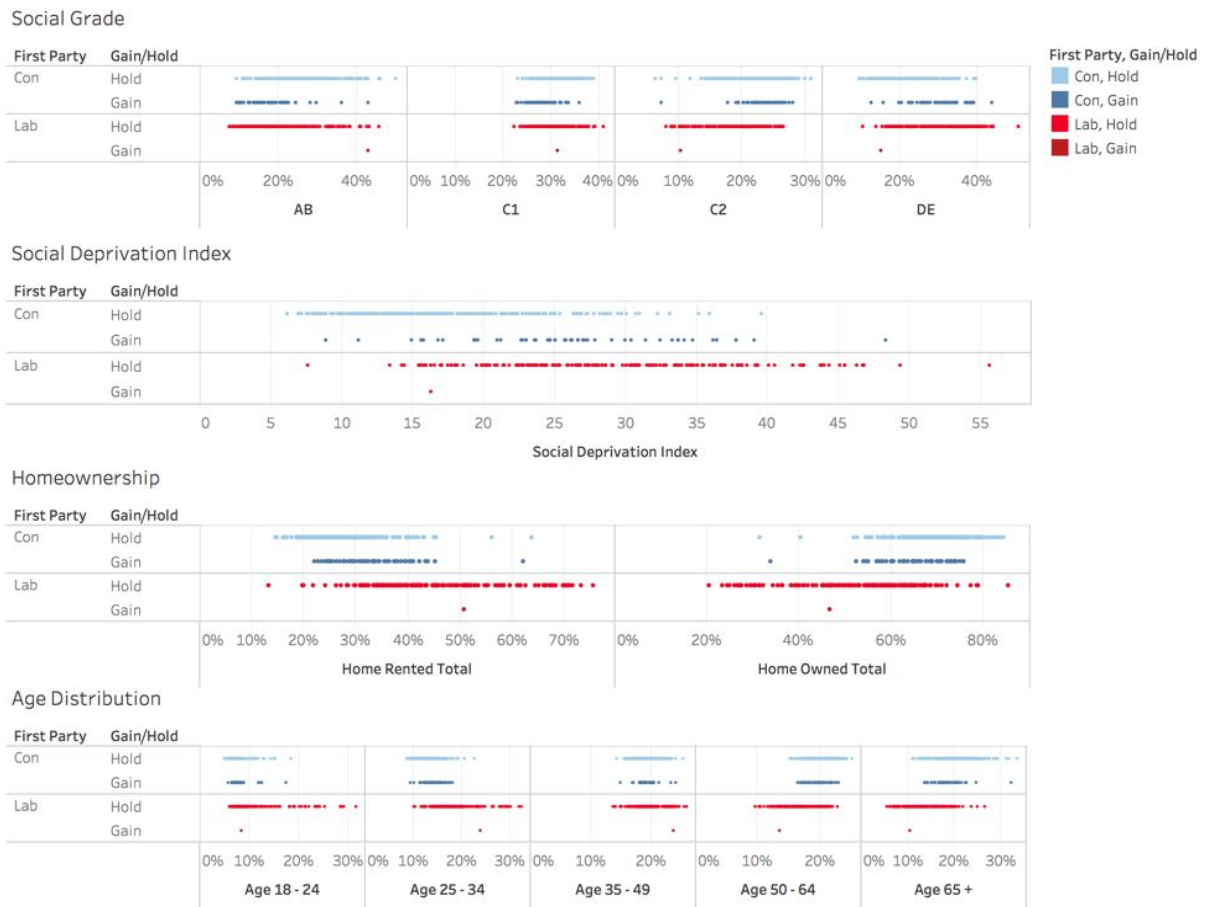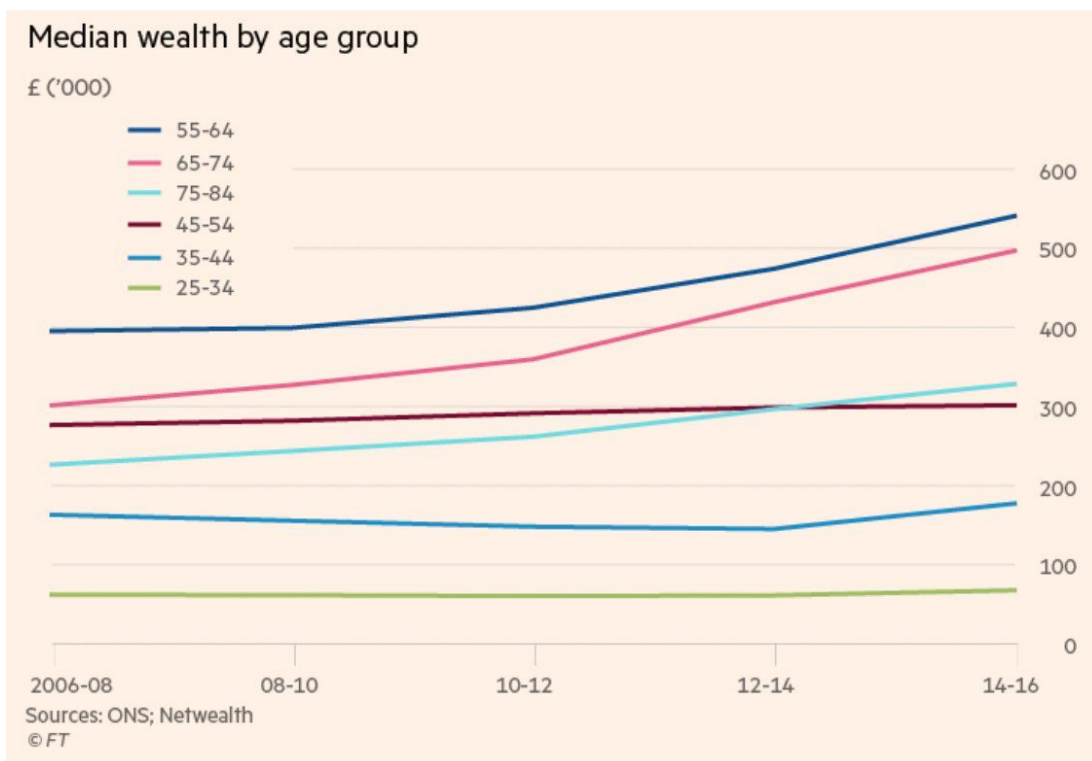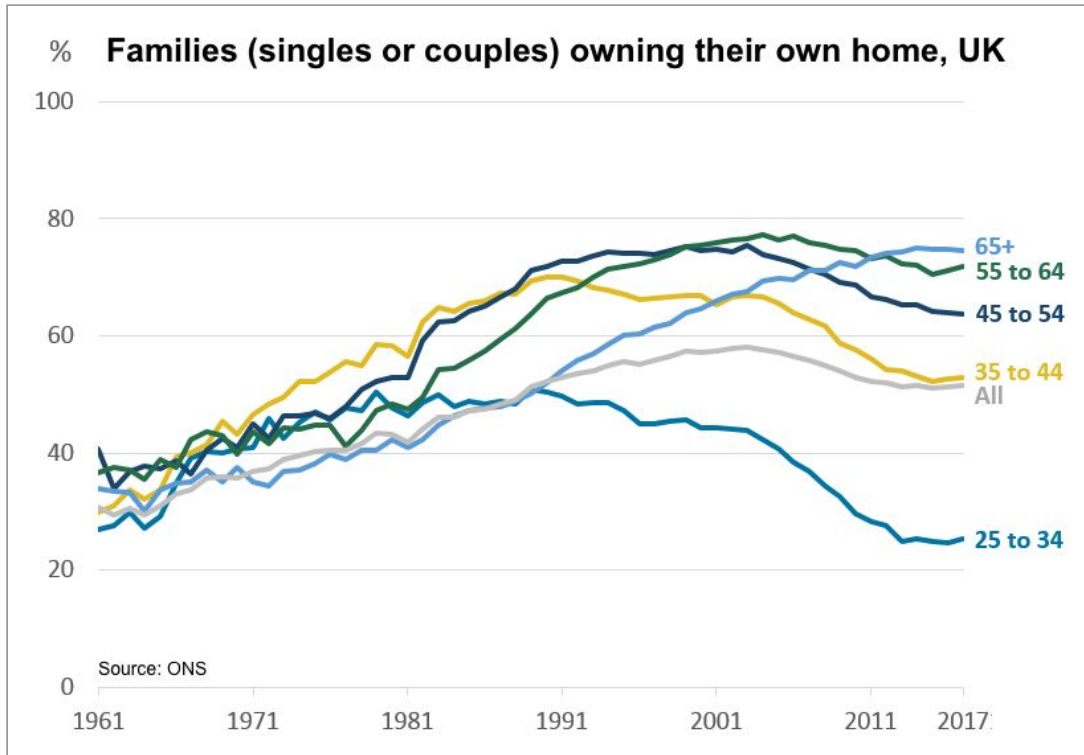

Further, the C2DE social grade measure of working class is out-of-date and skewed towards older, male workers and pensioners.

In fact DE voting for Labour is exceptionally high below 55 and then plunges (though C2 is in line with ABC1).
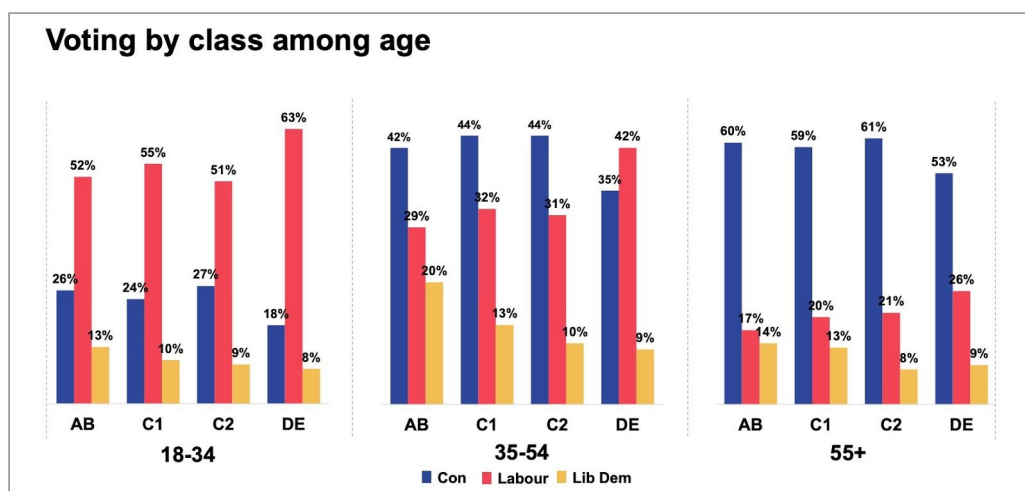
Certainly, the last decade has been marked by a growing disparity in levels of home ownership and wealth between young and old. Joe Chrisp and Nick Pearce found that "older people have distinct material interests, related to housing wealth and pensions' income, that are visible in their political preferences".

Families (singles or couples) owning their own home, UK

Source: ONS

Median wealth by age group

£ ('000)

Sources: ONS; Netwealth
© FT

[Luke and Christabel Cooper](#) combine demographics to provide a richer picture of voting patterns. They invite us to look beyond headline stats, eg at deflated red wall house prices rather than just ownership levels.

	Labour consistently held seats	Labour gained from Con in GE2017 or GE2019	Con gained from Labour in GE2017 or GE2019	Conservative consistently held seats
Deprivation	Much higher than average levels of deprivation	Slightly lower than average levels of deprivation	Higher than average levels of deprivation	Much lower than average levels of deprivation
Housing	Low numbers own outright. High numbers of private renters. High levels of social housing. Fairly low numbers of ownership with a mortgage	Average numbers own outright. High numbers of private renters. Low levels of social housing. Average numbers of ownership with mortgage	Average numbers own outright. Low numbers of private renters. High levels of social housing. Average numbers of ownership with mortgage	High numbers own outright. Low numbers of renters. Very low levels of social housing. High numbers of ownership with mortgage
House prices	Below average	Average (though wide variation)	Substantially below average	Above average
Wages	Slightly below average	Average	Substantially below average	Above average
Age	High working age population. Low numbers of pensioners	High working age population. Quite low numbers of pensioners	Quite low working age population. Quite high numbers of pensioners	Low working age population. High numbers of pensioners
Ethnicity	Substantially above average BAME population	Above average BAME population	Below average BAME population	Below average BAME population
Education	Average numbers of graduates	Very high numbers of graduates	Very low numbers of graduates	Quite high numbers of graduates

|	Labour consistently held seats	Labour gained from Con in GE2017 or GE2019	Con gained from Labour in GE2017 or GE2019	Conservative consistently held seats
Deprivation (median rank out of 533)	108	233	133	375
% Outright ownership (mean)	25%	30%	32%	35%
% Private renters (mean)	19%	20%	13%	14%
% Social housing	24%	17%	20%	13%
% Ownership with mortgage	30%	32%	34%	35%
Median house price	£160,000	£200,000	£143,000	£265,000
Median weekly wage	£550	£580	£520	£600
% working age population (mean)	63%	62%	59%	58%
% Pensioners (mean)	15%	17%	20%	21%
% White (mean)	76%	86%	92%	93%
% Graduates (mean)	26%	31%	20%	28%

The authors identify four types of seats, which correspond with the voting trends identified above:

- **Multi-Ethnic Working Class Heartlands.** These are seats that Labour has consistently held despite the losses seen in 2017 and 2019. High levels of inequality, deprivation but also ethnic diversity define these seats.

- **Young Cosmopolitan Centres of the New Capitalism.** These are seats that Labour won for the first time in 2017 and 2019. They tend to have above average levels of ethnic diversity, high numbers of private renters and graduates, and fairly average levels of deprivation. They have higher than average concentration of the aspirational and socially liberal. These groups are well educated, but struggling with the impact of high rents and house prices.

- **The Brexit Voting Towns of Left Behind Britain.** These are seats the Tories won for the first time in 2017 and 2019. They are socio-economically declining towns and small cities with low levels of ethnic diversity that have struggled to find a new place for themselves in Britain's post-industrial economy. They are older, have fewer than average qualifications, have higher rates of home ownership and higher than average numbers of pensioners.

- **The Affluent and Middle Class Conservative Shires.** These are seats that the Tories have consistently held and are not at risk from Labour. They are particularly notable for the contrast with the 2017 and 2019 Conservative gains. They tend to be much more affluent with high numbers of outright home ownership, higher house prices, and much lower levels of deprivation. They have low levels of ethnic diversity and high numbers of pensioners.
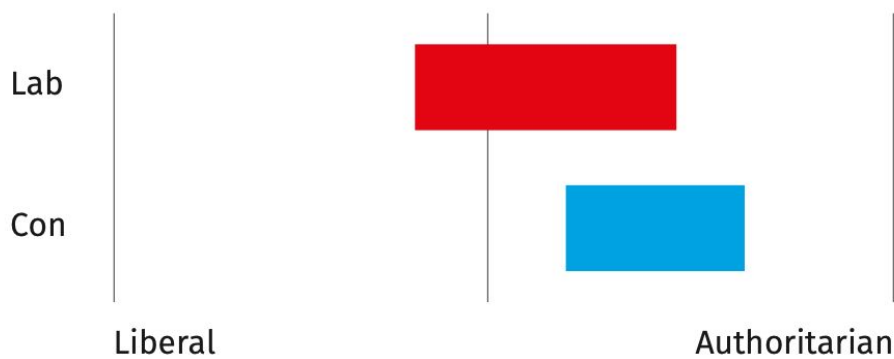
2. Economic and social attitudes

The British Election Study measures economic left vs right and liberal vs authoritarian attitudes and finds the population considerably to the left on the former, and to the right on the latter.

Economic left-right axis (British Election Study 2017)
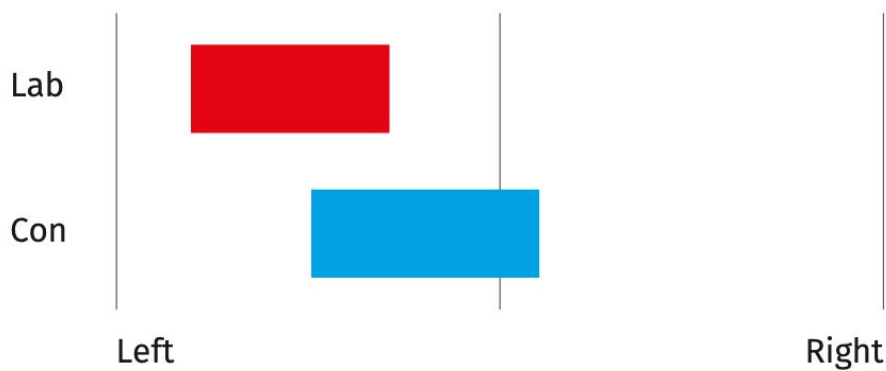

Source: British Election Study

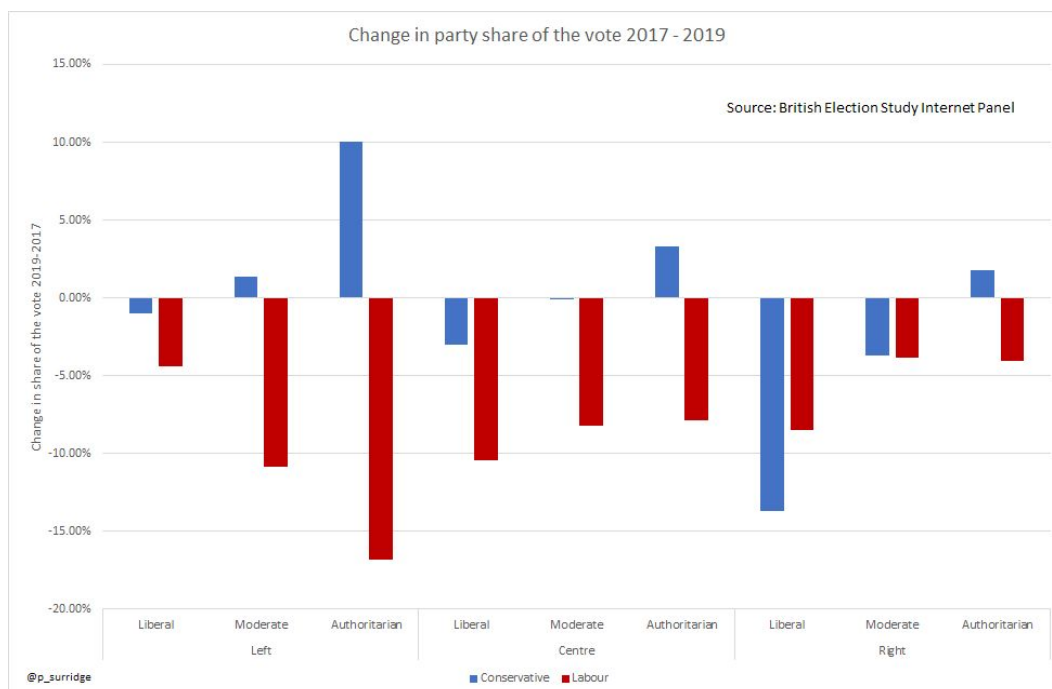**Liberal-authoritarian axis** (British Election Study 2017)

Source: British Election Study

[Paula Surridge](#) segments the population into nine by dividing economic attitudes into left, centre and right, and subdividing those into liberal, moderate and authoritarian social attitudes.

Distribution of the electorate across value groups (December 2019)
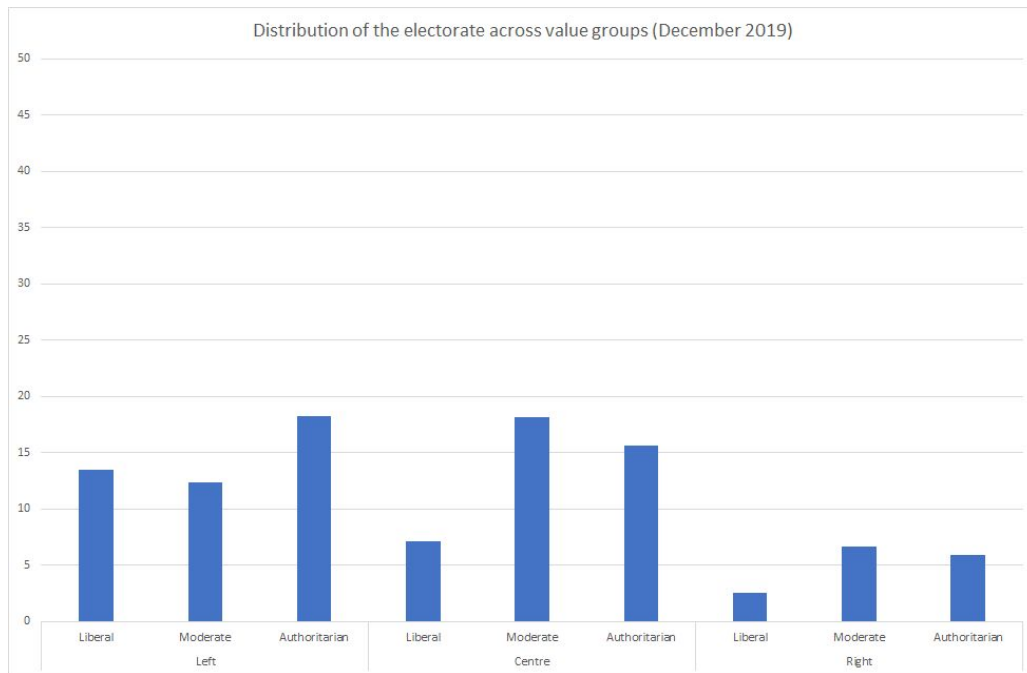
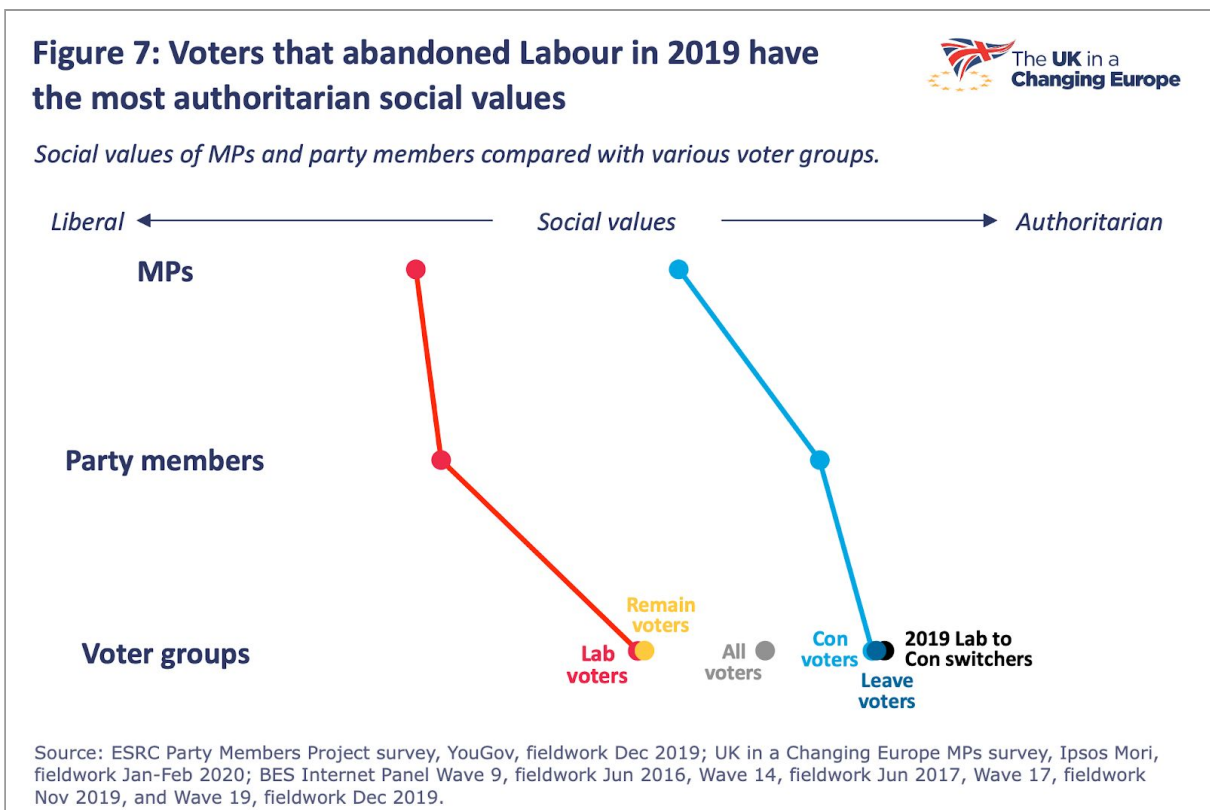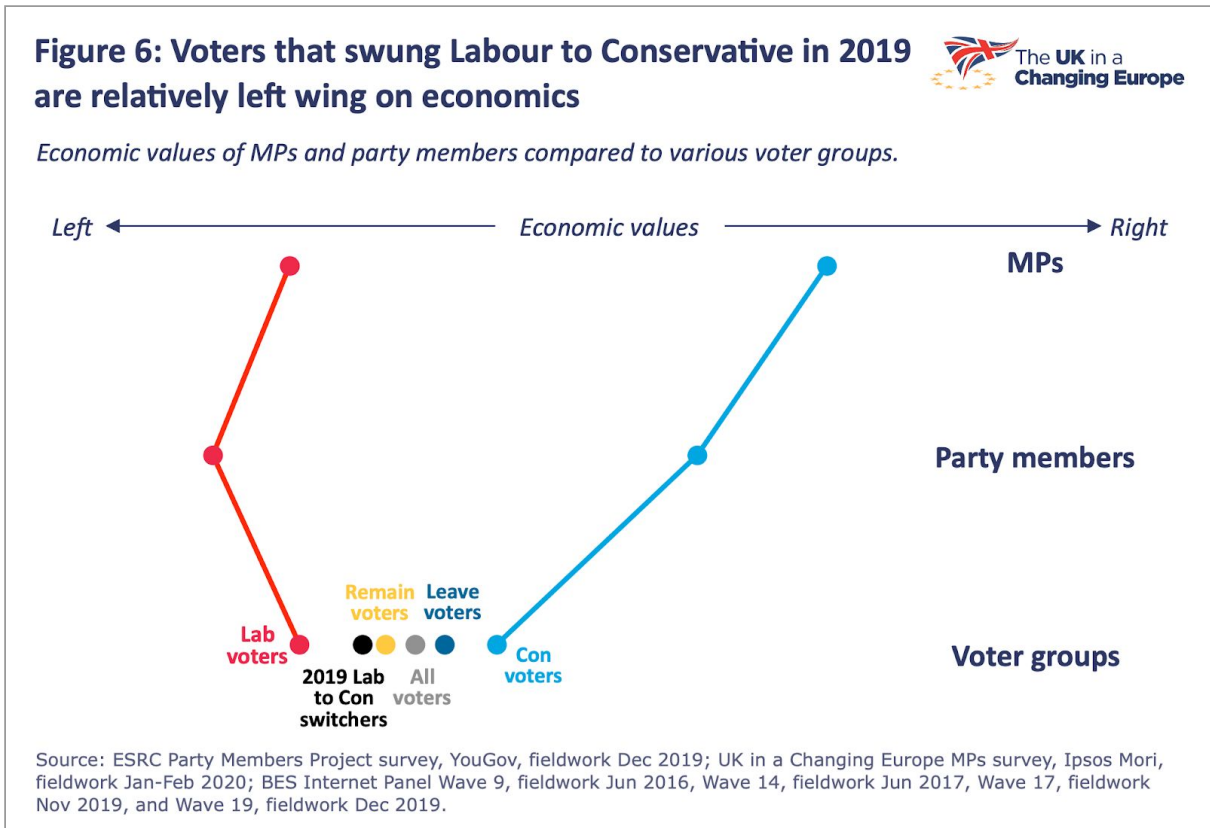She notes the 'left-authoritarian', 'centre-moderate' and 'centre-authoritarian' groups are the largest (although these are followed closely by 'left-liberal' and 'left-moderate').
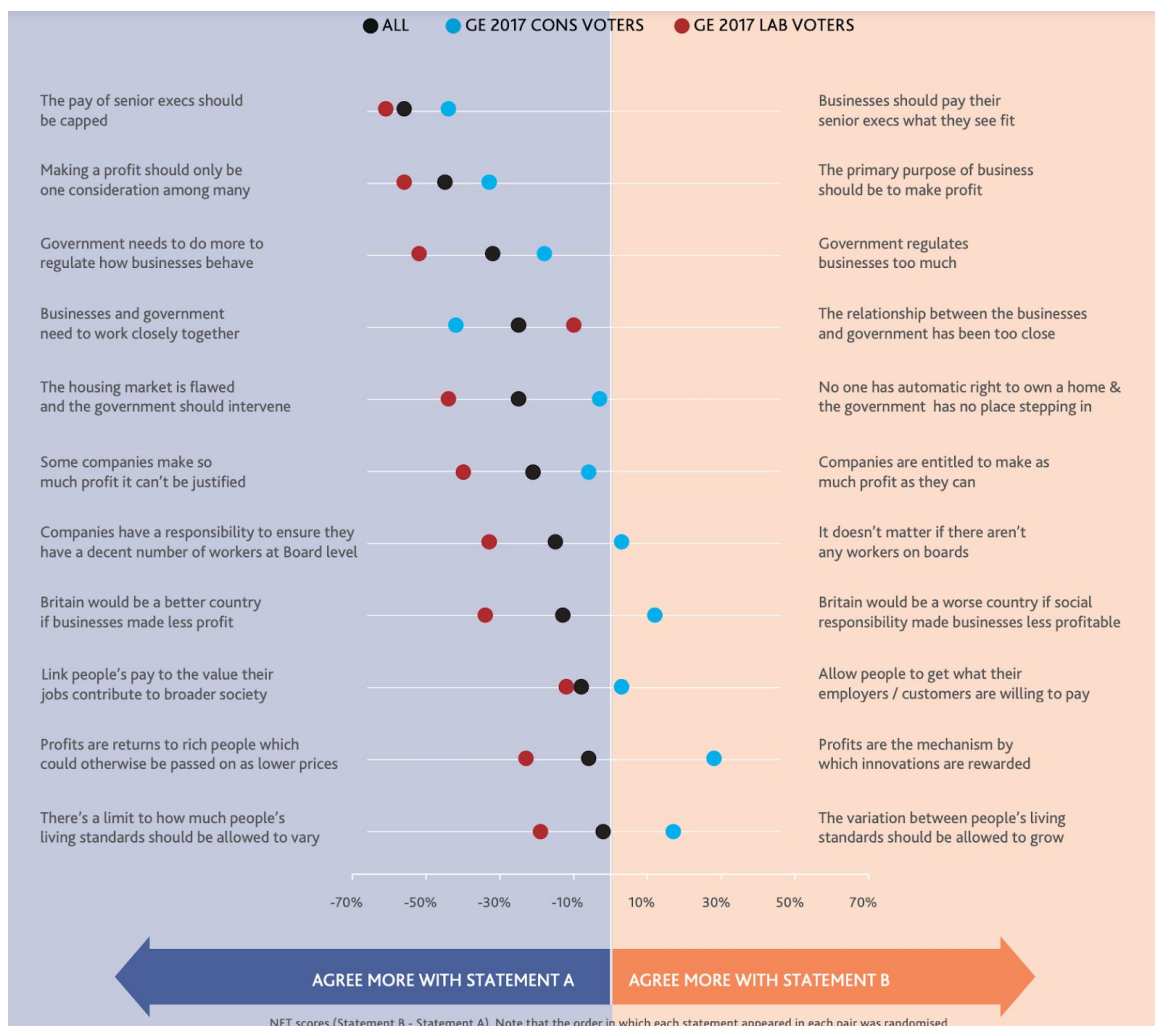
Surridge charts the change in party support among each group, with the 'left-authoritarian' group showing the strongest Labour-Tory swing:

Change in party share of the vote 2017 - 2019

Source: British Election Study Internet Panel

This is borne out by [research from UK in a Changing Europe](#), which finds Labour-Tory switchers are close to Labour voters on economics but are more socially authoritarian than regular Conservative voters.

Figure 6: Voters that swung Labour to Conservative in 2019 are relatively left wing on economics

Economic values of MPs and party members compared to various voter groups.

Source: ESRC Party Members Project survey, YouGov, fieldwork Dec 2019; UK in a Changing Europe MPs survey, Ipsos Mori, fieldwork Jan-Feb 2020; BES Internet Panel Wave 9, fieldwork Jun 2016, Wave 14, fieldwork Jun 2017, Wave 17, fieldwork Nov 2019, and Wave 19, fieldwork Dec 2019.

Figure 7: Voters that abandoned Labour in 2019 have the most authoritarian social values

Social values of MPs and party members compared with various voter groups.

Source: ESRC Party Members Project survey, YouGov, fieldwork Dec 2019; UK in a Changing Europe MPs survey, Ipsos Mori, fieldwork Jan-Feb 2020; BES Internet Panel Wave 9, fieldwork Jun 2016, Wave 14, fieldwork Jun 2017, Wave 17, fieldwork Nov 2019, and Wave 19, fieldwork Dec 2019.

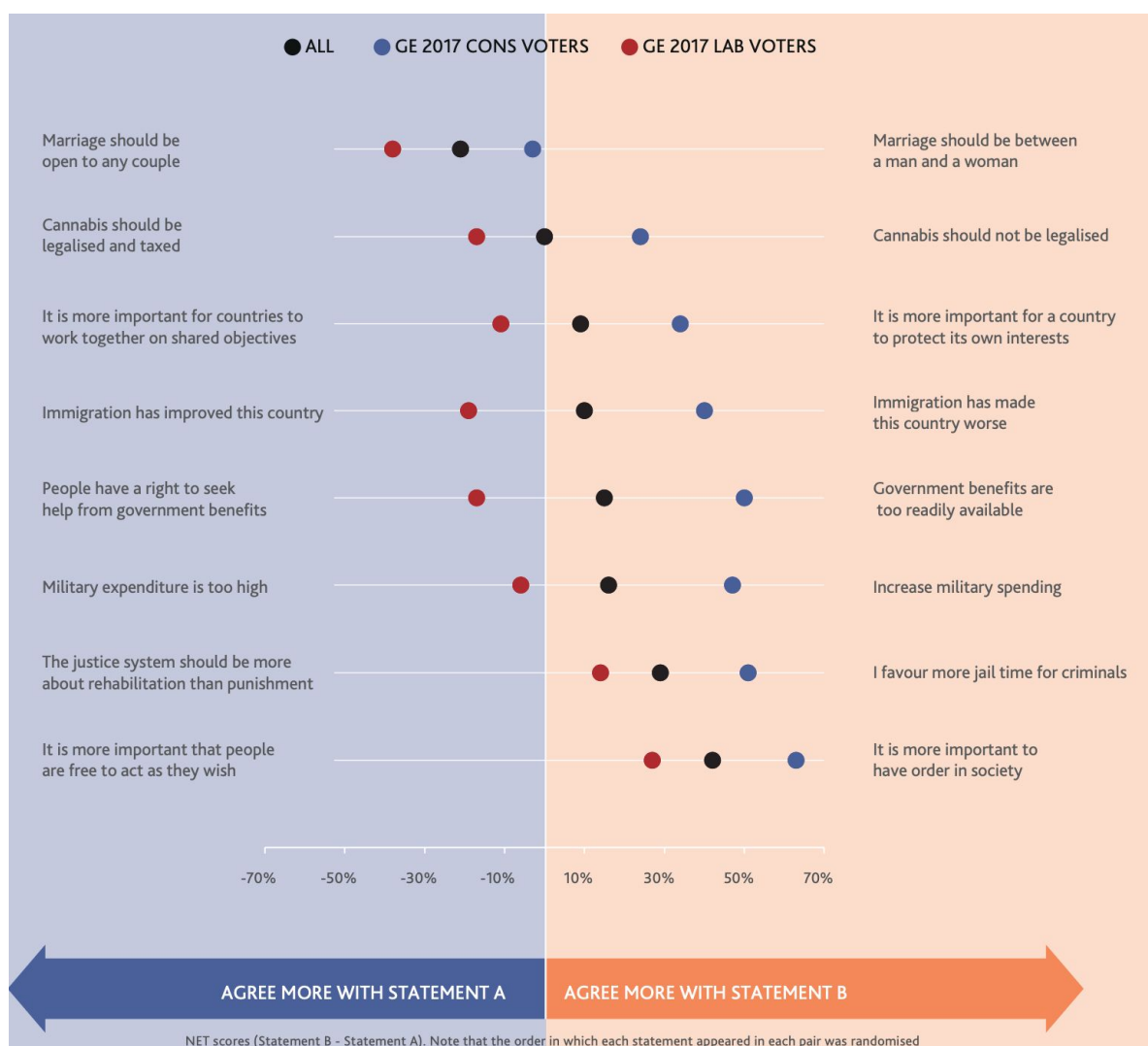The Legatum Institute polled public opinion in 2017 for a report by [Matthew Elliott (of Vote Leave fame) and James Kanagasooriam](). On economics and business they found a strong leftwards tilt:

● ALL   ● GE 2017 CONS VOTERS   ● GE 2017 LAB VOTERS

Statement A		Statement B
Regulation is often necessary		Regulation is often an unnecessary burden
The NHS needs more funding and higher taxes should pay for this		Costs of the NHS are going up too much too fast
Zero hours contracts should be abolished		Zero hour contracts offer useful work
People's obligation to pay their taxes is more important than their personal wealth		People are rewarded for working hard by keeping more of what they earn
I favour increased taxation, bigger government and more spending		I favour lower taxes, smaller government and less spending
The time of austerity is over		Austerity should continue

-70% -50% -30% -10% 10% 30% 50% 70%

AGREE MORE WITH STATEMENT A   AGREE MORE WITH STATEMENT B

NET scores (Statement B - Statement A). Note that the order in which each statement appeared in each pair was randomised

● ALL   ● GE 2017 CONS VOTERS   ● GE 2017 LAB VOTERS

Statement A		Statement B
The pay of senior execs should be capped		Businesses should pay their senior execs what they see fit
Making a profit should only be one consideration among many		The primary purpose of business should be to make profit
Government needs to do more to regulate how businesses behave		Government regulates businesses too much
Businesses and government need to work closely together		The relationship between the businesses and government has been too close
The housing market is flawed and the government should intervene		No one has automatic right to own a home & the government has no place stepping in
Some companies make so much profit it can't be justified		Companies are entitled to make as much profit as they can
Companies have a responsibility to ensure they have a decent number of workers at Board level		It doesn't matter if there aren't any workers on boards
Britain would be a better country if businesses made less profit		Britain would be a worse country if social responsibility made businesses less profitable
Link people's pay to the value their jobs contribute to broader society		Allow people to get what their employers / customers are willing to pay
Profits are returns to rich people which could otherwise be passed on as lower prices		Profits are the mechanism by which innovations are rewarded
There's a limit to how much people's living standards should be allowed to vary		The variation between people's living standards should be allowed to grow

-70% -50% -30% -10% 10% 30% 50% 70%

AGREE MORE WITH STATEMENT A   AGREE MORE WITH STATEMENT B

NET scores (Statement B - Statement A). Note that the order in which each statement appeared in each pair was randomised

Only on support for austerity was opinion towards the right, but that has since shifted left too. The authors concluded:
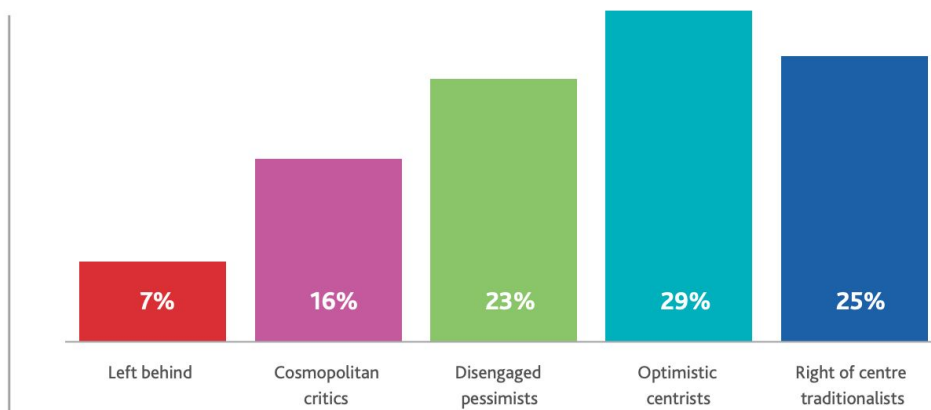
> "We find that on almost every issue, the public tends to favour non-free market ideals rather than those of the free market. Instead of an unregulated economy, the public favours regulation. Instead of companies striving for profit above all else, they want businesses to make less profit and be more socially responsible. Instead of privatised water, electricity, gas and railway sectors, they want public ownership. They favour CEO wage caps, workers at senior executive and board level and for government to reign in big business. They want zero hours contracts to be abolished."

But on social issues there was a much more rightwards tilt:

NET scores (Statement B - Statement A). Note that the order in which each statement appeared in each pair was randomised

Legatum then segmented the population into five groups:

Left behind	Cosmopolitan critics	Disengaged pessimists	Optimistic centrists	Right of centre traditionalists
7%	16%	23%	29%	25%

- **Left behind**
  Economically left-wing and pro-nationalisation, this segment voted heavily to Leave the EU (60%).

- **Cosmopolitan critics**
  Cosmopolitan critics are anti-capitalist, anti-free enterprise and anti-conservative, but unlike 'Left behind', they are extremely socially liberal and pro-Remain (64%). They have the lowest Conservative Party representation, are economically 'left wing' and want an end to austerity.

- **Disengaged pessimists**
  Disengaged pessimists are Eurosceptic (with a Leave vote of 56%) and dismissive of political ideologies. Capitalism has a very bad brand image with this segment: 61% say it is greedy, 53% selfish and 52% corrupt.

- **Optimistic centrists**
  Optimistic centrists tend towards the centre-right on economic issues. They are broadly free market although capitalism still has a brand problem with this segment (35% describe it as selfish). However, more Optimistic centrists describe capitalism as 'innovative' and 'appealing to the head' than any other segment, and they are strongly anti-socialist.

- **Right of centre traditionalists**
  Ideologically free market and patriotic, this segment is the most opposed to big government. Indeed, it is the only segment that favours lower taxes and a smaller state.

[Labour Together's 2019 election review](#) cites research from Datapraxis that combines demographics and attitudes into a mighty 14 segments:

Group name	% of popn	Key positions	Demographics	Social grade	Geography	Lab vote 2017	Lab vote 2019
The Green Left	7	Support redistribution, Anti Big Business	61% 25-54	65% ABC1	More in London and Scotland, less in SE & SW	79	79
Progressive Cosmopolitans	9	Pro migration, identify strongly as European	77% 35+	79% ABC1	More in London & SE, Less in North and midlands	60	57
Centre-Left Pragmatists	7	Think politicians are out of touch, Anti- big business	63% 25-54, 63% women	60% ABC1	More in Scotland, NW and Wales, less in E/SW	78	70
Anti-Tory Heartlands	6	Think politicians are out of touch, say people take advantage of welfare	74% 35+, 56% men	59% C2DE	More in Scotland and the North, Less in midlands and the South	60	50
Young InstaProgressives	5	Think politicians are out of touch, most oppose privatisation	72% 18-34	69% ABC1	More in London & Scotland, less in West Midlands, NW, Wales	15	46
The Younger Disengaged	8	Few strong views, moderate on Brexit	57% 18-34, 60% women	56% C2DE, 44% ABC1	More in North West & West Midlands, less in South	13	21
Young Apathetic Waverers	5	Few strong opinions	74% 18-44	61% C2DE	More in London & NE, reasonable number everywhere	20	21

Group		Description	Demographics	Class	Region		
Older Brexit Swing Voters	8	Think politicians are out of touch, mix of views on immigration, more pro deal	77% 45+, 65% women	56% C2DE, 44% ABC1	More in NE, Yorkshire & Humber and Midlands, less in London	35	13
The Older Disillusioned	5	Think politicians are out of touch, think big business take advantage, want to reduce immigration	72% 35+	62% C2DE	More in Yorkshire & Humber and West Midlands, less in London	13	4
Anti-Establishment Hard Brexiteers	10	Think politicians are out of touch, want to end free movement, anti big business	73% 45+, 64% men	53% C2DE, 47% ABC1	More in Y&H, NW & Wales, less in London & Scotland	15	3
Older Establishment Liberals	6	Oppose ending freedom of movement, identify as european	66% 45+	77% ABC1	More in SE & SW, less in North & Midlands	14	16
Pragmatic Tories	8	Support government investment and borrowing, pro Boris deal, trust the government	66% 45+	70% ABC1	More in London & East, less in North, Wales & Scotland	7	2
Older Moderate Traditionalists	4	Think politicians are out of touch, mix of views on immigration	75% 55+, 56% women	62% ABC1	More in SE & SW, less in Yorkshire & Midlands	23	18
Establishment Tory Brexiteers	12	Most want to end free movement and tend to think people take advantage of welfare	70% 55+	58% ABC1	More in SE, SW and E, Less in Scotland, North and Yorkshire		

Source: Datapraxis • * note that many of those in the younger groups were aged under 18 in 2017, so the share who voted Labour in 2017 and 2019 are not comparable

Datapraxis found that across all the 13 groups from whom Labour has drawn support, there was little opposition to most of Labour's key economic policies, from redistribution and corporate regulation to nationalisations, a higher minimum wage, and plans for housing. But a critical issue was the overall credibility and deliverability of the package.

Further, on social attitudes, a key fault line runs between the three most socially liberal groups – Progressive Cosmopolitans, Younger Instagram Progressives and The Green Left – and the rest of the electorate.

3. Mapping values

This section summarises different approaches to evaluating the cultural and moral values that shape our attitudes. While some approaches are largely descriptive, others prescribe ways to better communicate across divides.

3.1 Haidt's moral foundations theory

In her book *The New Working Class: How to Win Hearts, Minds and Votes,* Claire Ainsley, Labour's Director of Policy, proposes a '[values-led policy agenda](#)'. She says "parties could do much better at understanding and appealing to voters' emotions, based on the moral foundations theory put forward by Jonathan Haidt" and uses this to guide her own proposals.

In *[The Righteous Mind](#),* Haidt sets our six moral foundations that underlie our attitudes:

- care/harm
- fairness/cheating
- liberty/oppression
- loyalty/betrayal
- authority/subversion
- sanctity/degradation

He argues that 'liberals' rely on the first three of these, while 'conservatives' draw on all six and thus have a 'broader palette' of morality. If liberals want to get better at persuading conservatives, they need to appeal to all foundations.

Any invitation to progressives to communicate beyond their base is welcome, but Haidt's prescription invites strong criticism. [Marissa McNeace and Jeffrey Sinn](#) say that Haidt omits other important moral values (particularly those that support universalism) and fails to acknowledge the opposition between conservative and progressive values. Political psychologist John T. Jost says Haidt puts "[a smiley face on authoritarianism](#)". And [philosopher John Holbo](#) says Haidt's claims break down in practice: "Why is everyone wearing pussyhats at protest marches? Because the Prez is a professed pussy-grabber, which is a harm but also (this is important) a purity violation."

Haidt is more useful in showing that two foundations invoked by both liberals and conservatives – fairness/cheating and liberty/oppression – have distinct meanings for each group. For liberals, fairness means equality, while for conservatives it means proportionality (reward in proportion to input, which can be used, for instance, to attack benefit claimants). Conservatives focus on

negative liberty (the absence of limits on individual action), while liberals value positive liberty (having power and resources to fulfil your potential).

Haidt explores this in his essay Of Freedom and Fairness, where he adds a third form of fairness, procedural fairness, which is up for grabs by both sides: "the integrity of the process by which we decide who gets what" – or whether we "all play by the same rules".

Reading, say, Tax Justice UK's recent report on winning support for taxing wealth through this lens is useful. Certainly concern with tax avoidance fits procedural fairness arguments, while the left could probably do more to frame its case against billionaires in terms of proportionality as well as equality.

3.2 Schwartz's basic values theory

Marissa McNeace and Jeffrey Sinn argue that Shalom Schwartz's basic values theory is superior to Haidt's moral foundations theory in predicting ideological differences and in capturing the trade-off between opposing values.

Schwartz's model features a spectrum of 10 types of universal values organised into four groups. Opposite values conflict while neighbours complement.
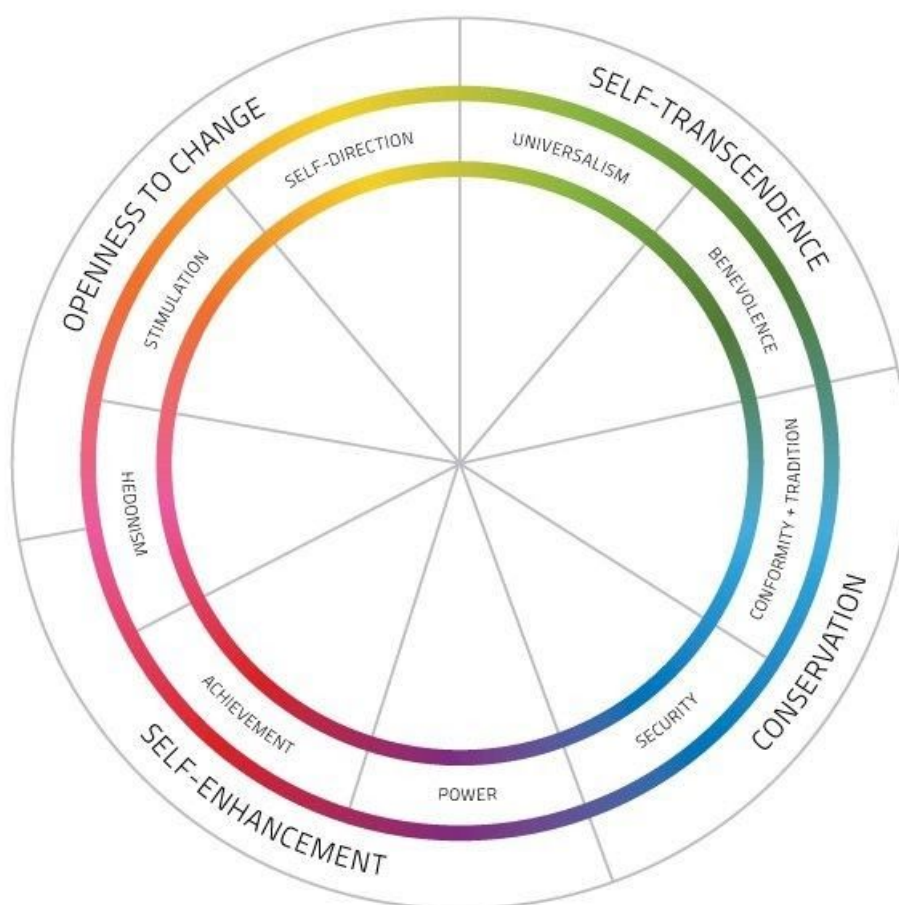
The values within the 10 value types are shown below:
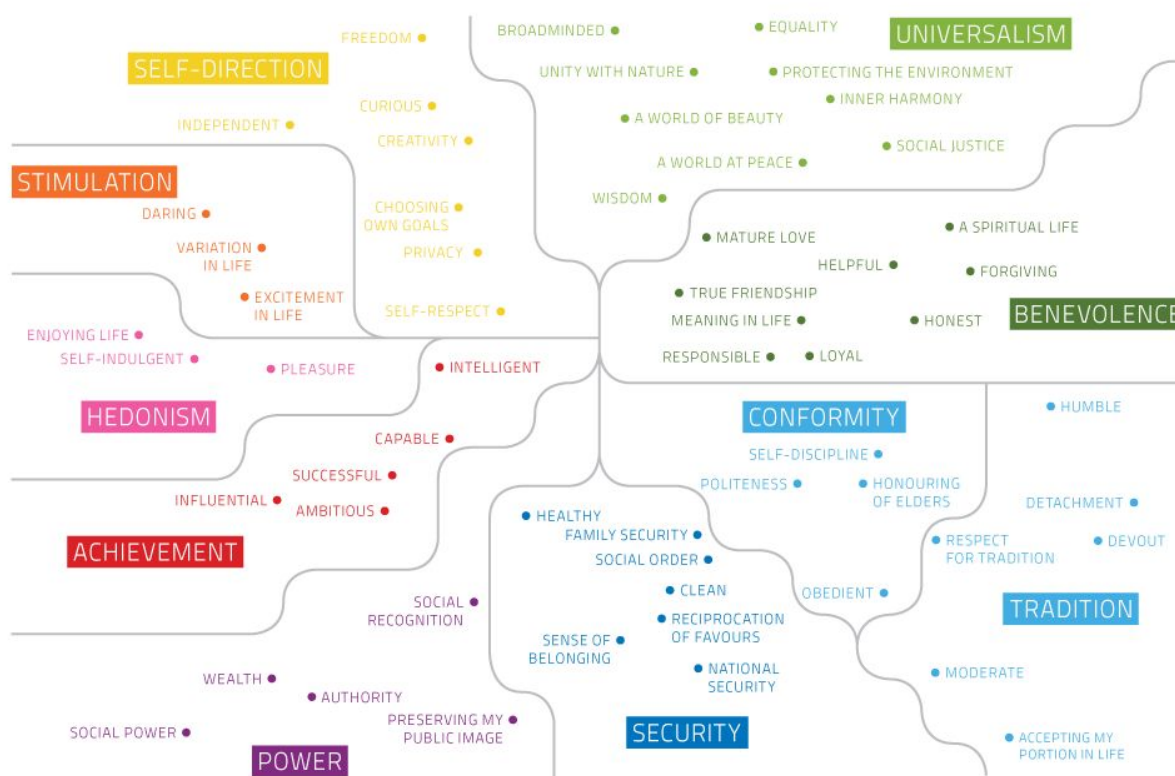
Drawing on Schwartz's basic value theory, Jeffrey Sinn and Matthew Hayes have developed an "evolutionary-coalitional theory" as a direct challenge to and replacement for Haidt's moral foundations theory.

3.3 Values Modes

A third, related approach to mapping values is Cultural Dynamics' Values Modes, championed by campaign strategists Chris Rose and The Campaign Company (whose founder David Evans is Labour's new general secretary).

This divides the population into three values groups: 'settlers', 'prospectors' and 'pioneers'. Each of those groups is further subdivided into four 'values modes', each representing around 7-12% of the population.
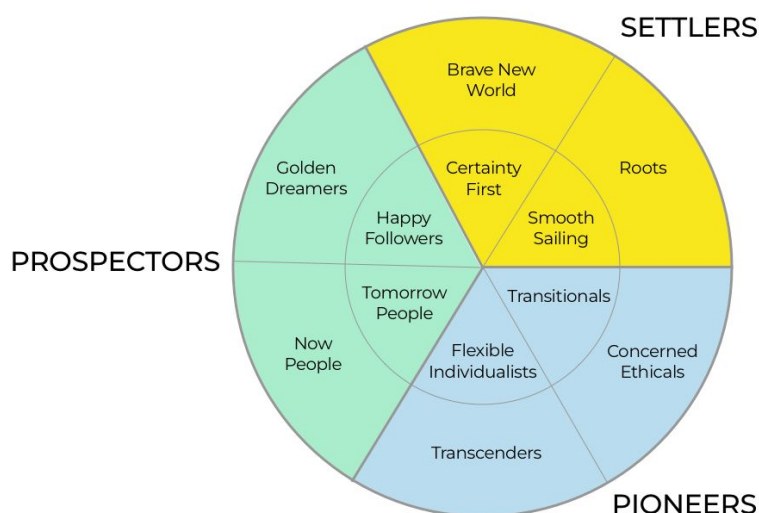
The groups correspond to [Maslow's hierarchy of needs](#) and have these characteristics:

- **Settlers** are sustenance driven and seek safety, security and belonging. They value tradition, family and home.
- **Prospectors** are outer directed and success-orientated, seeking the esteem of others and self-esteem. They enjoy recognition and reward.
- **Pioneers** are inner directed, seeking self-actualisation. They are often driven by a strong desire for fairness, justice and equality.

IPPR's 2012 report *The new electorate: Why understanding values is the key to electoral success* produced a demographic analysis, showing changes over time. Will shocks like coronavirus will strengthen 'settler' values in future?

Table 2.1
Age profile of the main values groups, 2012 British Values Survey (%)

	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
Pioneers	41.0	37.2	34.6	40.7	41.0	34.6
Prospectors	45.3	39.7	35.5	28.5	23.7	22.5
Settlers	13.5	23.7	29.7	30.9	35.4	42.9

Table 2.2
Class profile of the main values groups, 2012 British Values Survey (%)

	AB	C1	C2	DE
Pioneers	42.9	43.3	32.3	30.8
Prospectors	37.8	30.4	35.8	24.3
Settlers	19.2	26.1	31.8	44.7

Table 3.1
Main values groups as a proportion of the population, 1973–2012 (%)

	1973	2000	2005	2008	2011	2012
Pioneers	19	36	38	41	37	38
Prospectors	25	30	38	28	24	32
Settlers	56	35	24	31	39	30

The model is close to Schwartz's basic values theory and the two can be superimposed:
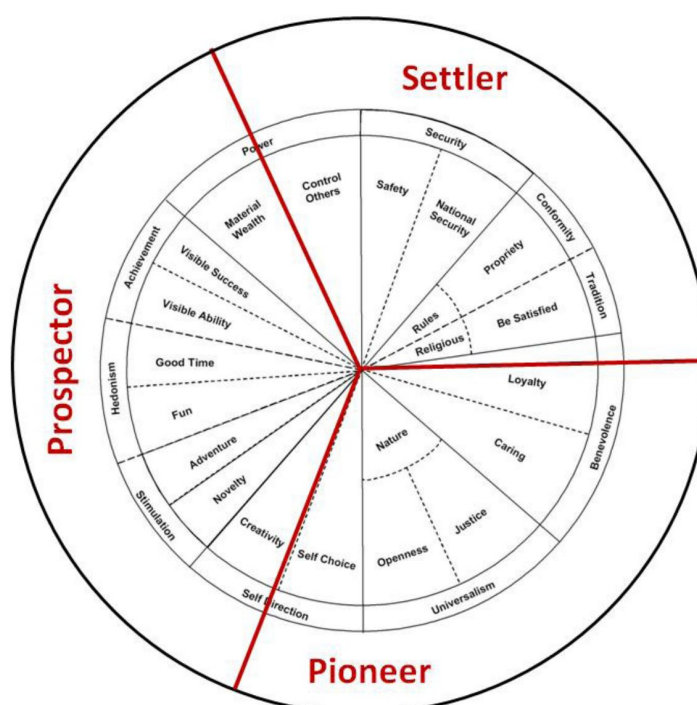
Values Modes advocates argue that campaigns need to be calibrated to match the different motivations of those in each group. Opinions adjust to align with behaviour, so it's more important to secure behaviour change even if it means appealing to different values (eg green consumerism for prospectors).

Critics of this approach include Common Cause and PIRC, who also invoke Schwartz's basic values theory but draw very different conclusions. They distinguish between 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' values, which approximate to Schwartz's self-transcendence/self-enhancement axis. You cannot promote good (intrinsic) behaviours through frames that undermine what you are trying to achieve.

Values Modes defenders counter that Common Cause's approach leaves campaigners reliant on an over-idealistic mission to shift societal values at the expense of more practical, nearer-term actions. Both sets of criticisms contain some truth: Common Cause is overly optimistic about the ability of campaigners to influence people's values through framing (and its focus on intrinsic values can feel over-pious). And Values Modes' focus on aligning with values risks reinforcing those values that hold back real change.

Yet both Schwartz's basic values theory and Values Modes remain useful tools in understanding motivations (and more so than Haidt's moral foundations theory) – and, importantly, they can help us craft common as well as segmented narratives.

4. Beyond the segments

4.1 Implications for framing and messaging

One issue with segmentation – whether by demographics, attitudes or values – is that it tends to put people in neat packages whereas it's often the bits on the edges or in the gaps that are most interesting and where change happens. Jeremy Gilbert, for example, points out that rather than focusing on the youngest and oldest voters, we should be studying the more modest drift from Labour in 2019 of middle-aged Generation X voters.

The spectrum of allies diagram is a useful reference point. In any campaign seeking broader appeal, it's the 'neutral' segment and its neighbours we are interested in, but not the active opposition.
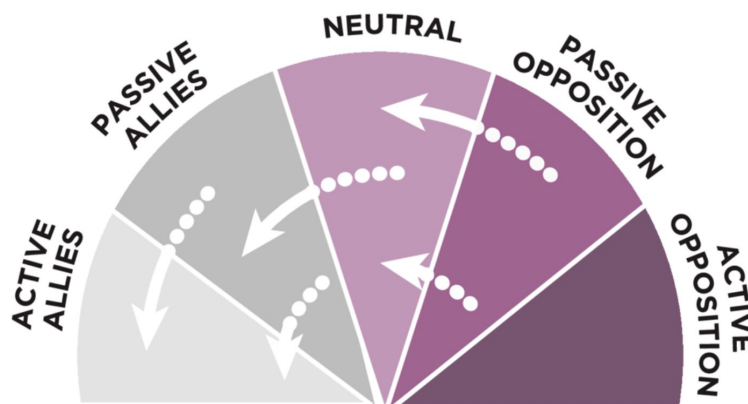
This point is made by comms strategists Anat Shenker Osorio and Drew Westen:

> 'A winning message is one that engages the base, persuades the middle, and provokes the opposition.'
> **Anat Shenker Osorio**

> 'The party's narrative… needs to draw on shared sentiments that have become associated with the other party, allowing moderates to cross over without feeling like strangers in a strange land… Conversely, if the master narrative doesn't alienate about 30 percent of the electorate, it isn't a good narrative, either. About a third of the electorate won't turn left under any circumstances, and if the Democrats' story doesn't make them angry, there's something wrong with it.'
> **Drew Westen**

[Anat Shenker Osorio](#) emphasises that we cannot neglect our base in order to talk to the middle:

> *'The problem with a message that attempts to turn no one off is that it cannot fire up the most enthusiastic believers. Messaging based on mitigating backlash must pull punches. The base may nod along. But they won't be parroting your words to others.*
>
> *Consider the Republican approach to talking to persuadable voters. Ed Goeas, a Republican campaign strategist, characterized this to me by saying, "we don't look at grabbing the middle. We look at grabbing the majority."*
>
> *This distinction between "middle" and "majority" is a key part of why Democrats struggle to engage their voters and generate turnout.'*

Framing theorist George Lakoff says the 'centre' is actually made of 'biconceptuals', people who are conservative in some aspects of life and progressive in others. He counterposes two moral outlooks: the conservative 'strict father' and progressive 'nurturant parent'. Progressives need to invoke their own frames, not repeat those of their opponents, just as the right do:

> *'Reagan knew that blue-collar workers who were nurturant in their union politics were often strict fathers at home. He used political metaphors that were based on the home and family, and got them to extend their strict father way of thinking from the home to politics.'*

Lakoff's [influential thesis](#) seems to reinforce criticism of Haidt or Values Modes. I find it valuable, but also think it can lead to a type of complacency on the left that means we fall back on comfortable messages and don't actually extend our reach for fear of reinforcing 'negative' frames. Or as Anat Shenker Osorio says: 'Don't think of an elephant (unless it's about to trample you).'

4.2 What next?

Ultimately, opinion research is better at telling us where people are but not where they might go. [Alan Finlayson](#) says our current moment calls for 'the vision thing' rather than just 'triangulation and targeted adverts on Facebook':

> *'The pandemic has robbed us of certainty about what next week might hold: whether we will still have a job, send our kids to school or be able to visit friends and relatives... If politics cannot provide us with a vision for the future, then we look to past utopias, cling to conspiracy theories*

that tell us who to blame, and build barricades to protect what little safe space we have left.'

Finlayson lists Thatcherism, Blairism and Brexitism as examples of movements with era-defining visions, but the last two of those were hardly shy in using focus groups and polling. Ellie Mae O'Hagan describes opinion research as a tool for mapping out the political territory to be fought upon: "Hearing what the public has to say is not always easy listening, but it is vital information because it reveals the range of possibilities open to political parties and campaigners."

In other words, there's no point in a big vision that only resonates with you and your mates. In fact Vote Leave's 'Take Back Control' slogan shows how opinion research can be successfully combined with a determination to transform opinion to produce spectacular results.

Progressives who reject both economic and social conservatism face a steep challenge: Noam Gidron identifies an "asymmetry" across Western Europe which means voters who are conservative on only one axis are more likely to swing right than left. This suggests the left needs to work on at least three things simultaneously:

- **Deepening existing support for economic change**, for example by making it more meaningful to people's lived experience, so it overtakes or crowds out socially authoritarian concerns in hierarchies of priorities. This may mean better aligning our proposals with 'settler' values such as safety and security – which are likely to become more dominant under coronavirus – while attempting to push these in less insular directions, eg building a narrative around a need to 'protect each other'.

- **Broadening support for economic change**, for example into Paula Surridge's economically centrist (but not socially authoritarian) segments. This recognises some 'left authoritarian' support may be lost forever as we are not prepared to make the compromises on social issues needed to get it back so must broaden our coalition elsewhere. Credibility and – yes – competence are vital to this group, but it is a story we should be able to tell, particularly when the alternatives are climate-induced chaos not stability. Haidt's call for a 'broader palette' of moral values may come into play too (though not his prescription), as we seek to reclaim 'freedom' frames from the right (as advocated by Keir Milburn and Yanis Varoufakis) or heed James Meadway's call for a distinctive narrative on business (both of which I've written about previously).

- **Eroding support for social/cultural conservatism.** In Nesrine Malik's words: "[The left can't sit out the 'culture wars'. It must learn to fight them better.](#)" In some ways this feels like the most formidable task, yet we should heed [Kenan Malik's observation](#) that:

  'the key feature of Britain over the past half century has been not social conservatism but an extraordinary liberalisation. The annual British Social Attitudes survey, which began recording public attitudes in 1983, has tracked "the onward march of social liberalism". On a host of issues, from gender roles to gay marriage, from premarital sex to interracial relationships, Britain has liberalised to a degree that would have left the average Briton of the 1980s aghast.'

  As Kenan Malik adds, the route to winning here lies not in detaching social from economic issues, but in reforging the link. It's also important to isolate those with the most authoritarian views from the majority. A [YouGov poll](#) following the toppling of Edward Colston's statue showed a clear majority supported removing the statue, but only a minority agreed with how it was done. This is both a vindication of the protestors' action – without it it is unlikely there would be that level of awareness or opposition to the statue – and a reminder that activists should always seek to build bridges. In this case that means aiming to build a broader bloc united by opposition to the statue rather than leaving space for the right to build a bloc united by opposition to the direct action.

These are big challenges, but an approach that better understands and connects all of the themes in this document – demographic trends and material interests, social attitudes and values, and big vision thinking – might help us to win.

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