Editors:
Daniel Phillips, John Curtice, Miranda Phillips and Jane Perry

2018 Edition

# BRITISH SOCIAL ATTITUDES 35

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

# Publication details

Phillips, D., Curtice, J., Phillips, M. and Perry, J. (eds.) (2018), British Social Attitudes: The 35th Report, London: The National Centre for Social Research

© The National Centre for Social Research 2018

First published 2018

You may print out, download and save this publication for your non-commercial use. Otherwise, and apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, or by any means, only with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to The National Centre for Social Research.

The National Centre for Social Research
35 Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0AX

info@natcen.ac.uk

ISBN: 978-1-5272-2591-6

# Contents

**Author**

**Roger Harding,**
Head of Public Attitudes,
The National Centre for Social Research

# Key findings

## How will Britain navigate the global, social, economic and Brexit challenges of the near future?

### The challenges of the near future

Commentators who agree on little else are in agreement that this is a turbulent time for Britain. The Brexit process has started but its conclusion is far from clear. The country seems divided in new ways and ill at ease with itself. Meanwhile, global disruptions pick up pace - climate change is rapidly ceasing to be a purely theoretical concern, while new technologies are changing established industries.

In many ways it feels as if the early 21st century has posed a series of questions about the future of the country that will have to be answered sooner rather than later. There is no shortage of policy reports on *how* Britain should go about doing so. However, this year's National Centre for Social Research British Social Attitudes report takes a different approach. We examine how the British public views these challenges and whether we are as divided as it can seem on the questions that arise. In doing so we hope to expose where there might be important divergences between expert and public expectations and highlight where current attitudes might pose particular problems for policymakers.

In the course of this year's report we examine four major types of challenge facing Britain:

- **Global challenges**: these are issues that no country can hope to avoid. In particular, we examine climate change and the impact of new technology on current jobs with a view to assessing how people view challenges with far-reaching impact that is often hard even for experts to comprehend fully.
- **Social cohesion challenges:** many feel that the country is more divided than it has been in a long time. We analyse whether this is correct and examine the challenges for bridging attitudinal divides.
- **Economic settlement challenges:** this decade has been shaped by government austerity and a high employment, low wage growth economy. As politicians on the left and right debate the best way forward, we explore what the British people want from work, welfare and public spending.
- **Brexit challenges:** as much as many may be tiring of discussing Brexit, there is little doubting how profound a challenge it is. We examine its political ramifications for political parties and the Union, and examine how hard it will be for politicians to reach a post-EU membership settlement that has widespread support.

**In summary we find:**

- **The British public are not as worried about major global challenges as the experts who work on them**. Public concern about the threat of climate change and technology replacing their jobs is relatively low.
- **Age and education are major dividing lines in how we voted in the 2016 referendum and the 2017 General Election.** These divides also show up in other areas such as climate change and welfare.
- **But on social issues these divides are narrowing, and our trust in one another is as high as it has ever been.** Learning from these areas could help attempts to bridge the country's political differences.
- **People increasingly want a new spending settlement on public services and expect employers to pay wages that cover the basic cost of living.** Most people feel the NHS has a major funding problem and a large proportion want to see the minimum wage increased.
- **The public is divided into two evenly sized groups who have coalesced around opposing views of the UK's future relationship with the EU.** Politicians face an uphill struggle to deliver a post-referendum settlement that will unite the country.

# Global challenges: are we as worried as we should be?

## Most experts believe the impact of climate change and that of technology on jobs will be dramatic

Britain faces two global challenges where expert opinion commonly believes that the effects could be profound: climate change and the impact that new digital, artificial intelligence (AI) or robotic technologies will have on jobs. In the case of climate change there is an overwhelming consensus among the international scientific community that it is happening, that it is predominantly caused by humans and that its consequences, if left unchecked, are going to be dramatic. The most recent assessment of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014) was unambiguous:

> ***"Without additional mitigation efforts beyond those in place today… warming by the end of the 21st century will lead to high to very high risk of severe, widespread and irreversible impacts globally"***

Analysis of the impact of new technologies on jobs is less advanced but the picture that is emerging is one where economists expect the changes to be notable. Relatively conservative assessments

suggest that just over 10% of UK workers are in roles that are highly automatable (Arntz et al., 2016). Other reports put the proportion of British jobs vulnerable to technological replacement closer to 20% (Manyika, et al., 2017) or even 30% (Hawksworth et al., 2018). In industries where these studies expect fewer jobs to be lost, nonetheless they expect workers in those roles to need to undergo a lot of re-skilling if they are to adapt to technological advancements.

## The public agrees that these challenges are real …

Using data from the 2017 BSA survey and the European Social Survey[1], we find the British public overwhelmingly shares the expert view that these global challenges exist:

- 93% of people believe that the world's climate is definitely or probably changing.
- 75% of people think it is likely that machines and computer programmes will definitely or probably do many of the jobs currently done by humans.

It is, however, noteworthy that only 36% of people believe that humans are entirely or mainly the cause of climate change. A majority (53%) believe that it is caused equally by human activity and natural processes, while 9% think it is mainly or entirely happening naturally. In contrast, the UN Intergovernmental Panel is again unambiguous, and notes that human action is "extremely likely to have been the dominant cause" of global warming (IPCC, 2014).

## … but it is far more relaxed about their impact

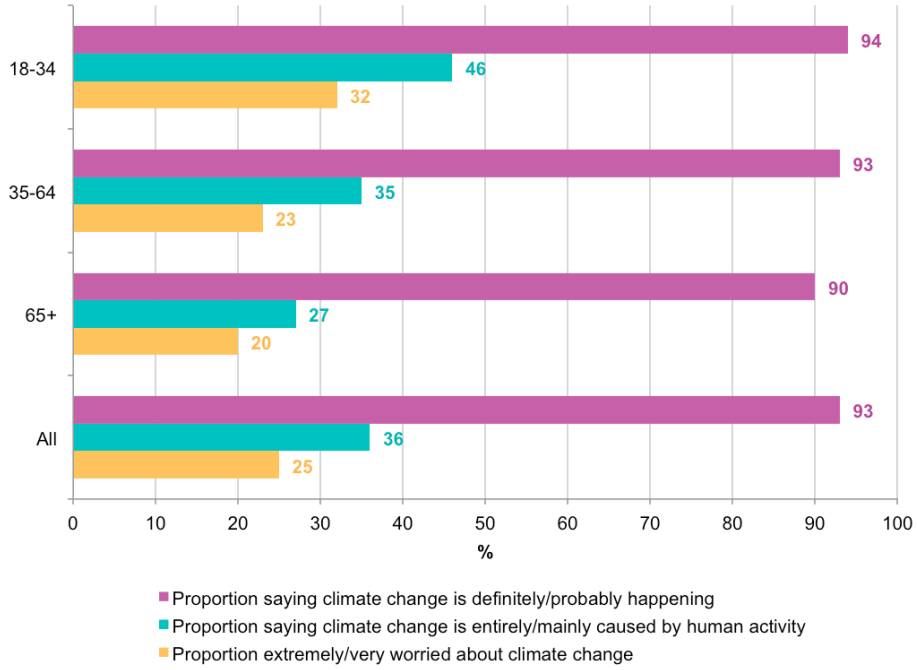
While scientists and economists worry about the scale of disruption both issues could bring about, the British public appears slightly more relaxed:

- Only 25% of people are very or extremely worried about climate change. 45% are just somewhat worried, and 28% are either "not very" or "not at all worried" about it.
- Just 10% of workers are "very" or "quite" worried that machines or computer programmes will replace their job, while 81% are "not very" or "not at all" concerned that they might lose their jobs.

Despite the comparably low levels of public concern about climate change, we find that on average people are not particularly optimistic that governments or individuals will take sufficient action to reduce their energy use.

1 Data on attitudes to climate change comes from the UK data from the European Social Survey. The UK fieldwork was conducted by NatCen using a high quality random probability sample methodology similar to the BSA.

**Views on existence, causes and consequences of climate change, by age**




## Work is about more than just the money it brings in

Some of the debate about future challenges to the labour market focuses solely on the financial implications of losing a job. For most of the British public, however, work has wider benefits:

- The vast majority of people believe that work is good for mental (90%) and physical (83%) health.
- It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that 59% of the public agree, and just 16% disagree, that "I would enjoy having a paid job even if I did not need the money".
- Likewise, 50% of people disagree (and only 28% agree) with the statement that "a job is just a way of earning money – no more".

Rapid technological advancement often heralds people who speculate and hope that in the near future we will see the 'end of jobs' and a dramatic increase in leisure time. Today is no exception (Beckett, 2018). The failure of previous similar predications to materialise urges caution about reaching for them now, and the BSA provides another reason. The strength of people's support for work suggests that if technology is to take a large number of jobs, many people will want those jobs replaced with others in some form or other.

**The Challenge:** The public have undoubtedly received the message that climate change is happening and the 'robots are coming', but they do not share the concern of experts about the impact of these forces. This should worry policymakers. Preventing or mitigating climate change will require significant changes to how people live their lives. Technology-driven labour market change is likely to require people to re-train for, and seek pride in, very different kinds of jobs. So far, politicians and others have failed to prepare the public for these levels of disruption.

In the case of climate change this will mean rising to the complex communications challenge created by a need to match growing public concern about the problem with greater optimism that it can be fixed. Securing that optimism will be crucial in overcoming people's fear that it might be fruitless or naïve to restrict their own energy use when there are no guarantees of other people doing the same. In the case of technology replacing jobs, politicians will also need both to stimulate concern about how our labour market will change while giving people the confidence and financial security needed for them to embrace new ways of working.

## Social cohesion challenges: age and education divide us politically, but we trust each other more

All societies are based on shared bonds and accommodations between their constituent parts. By stereotype, Britain is said to be one of the better countries at quiet compromise. However, recent events have left many wondering whether the country now faces un-bridgeable internal divides. News headlines proclaim that we have: *'Generations at war'* and a '*yawning money gap between have and have nots'* (Clark, 2017; Hiscott, 2014). Others say that our *'Towns and Cities Are Divided'*; that *'Britain is more divided than ever'* when it comes to social mobility; and, that *'Culture wars [have] cross[ed] the Atlantic to coarsen British politics'* (Brett, 2017; Sculthorpe, 2017; Lewis, 2018). Meanwhile, populists from left and right declare that the most important divide is between 'the people' and an out of touch establishment.

The challenge among all the noise is to understand the degree to which these tensions truly are real and how they should be managed. BSA cannot speak to all of the above issues, but its breadth and extensive time series data does provide a particularly useful insight into many of them.

### The political divide by age and education is stark

This year's BSA confirms that there is a stark age and education divide in political views. This is perhaps not surprising given that much of the media discussion about whether Britain is divided stems

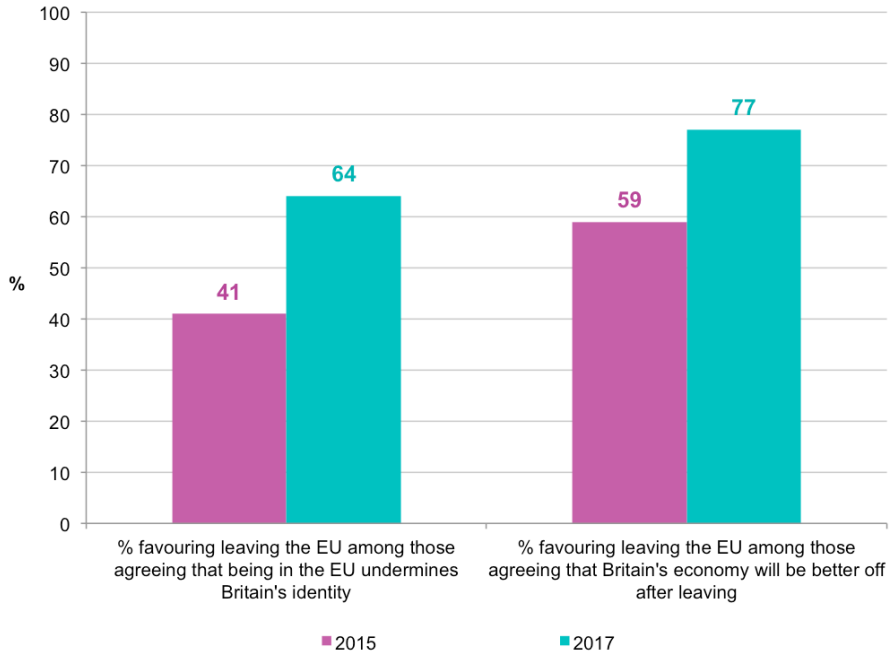
from the evidence of demographic divisions in how people voted in the EU referendum and the 2017 General Election (such as the British Election Study, 2018). Our report provides authoritative confirmation of that picture:

- There was an age and education divide in views on Britain's membership of the EU before the referendum, but the vote and subsequent debate has deepened both. Older people (aged 55+, 49%) and those with no formal qualifications (54%) are much more likely than young people (aged 18-34 years, 23%) and graduates (19%) to want to leave the EU.
- Age was the primary demographic dividing line at the 2017 General Election. While Labour secured 62% of the votes of 18-34 year-olds (versus 22% for the Conservatives), the Conservatives won 55% of over-65 voters (compared with 30% for Labour). The educational divide was not as pronounced, but for the first time Labour was more popular among graduates than those with no formal qualifications.

The chapter in this year's BSA report on voting shows that the age and education divides on party politics, in no small part, stem from the same divides on Brexit. These in turn relate to the politicisation of immigration; an issue where Britain has previously been shown to have the largest age and education attitudes divide in Europe (Ford & Lymperopoulou, 2017).

Despite these divides in attitudes and vote choice, there was no great narrowing in the general election of the differences in the level of turnout by age. BSA data released earlier in the year (Curtice & Simpson, 2018) showed that while turnout among 18-24 year-olds increased by 5 points, this was broadly in line with the increase in the rest of the population (a four point increase among 45-54 year-olds, and a 3 point increase among those aged 65 and over). Therefore, suggestions that the 2017 election led to dramatic rise in voting among young people are wide of the mark.

**Support for leaving the EU, by attitudes towards the EU**




## These two divides also show up elsewhere

As they are associated with different vote choices, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that age and education are associated with different views on a range of other issues covered in this report:

- The proportion of those “very” or “extremely” worried about climate change is higher among those aged 18-34 years (31%) and those with degrees (35%), than it is among those aged 65 years and over (19%) and those with no or few formal qualifications (20%). However, those workers with fewer qualifications and a low income are more worried than those with degrees about the prospect that technology will threaten their job.
- People aged 18-34 years (75%) and graduates (82%) are more likely than those aged 65-74 (67%), over-75 (47%), and those with no formal qualifications (55%), to disagree that “a man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family”.
- An age divide is also present in views on the acceptability of a man commenting that a woman he doesn’t know “looks gorgeous today”. Sixty-one per cent of people under 35, compared with 49% of people over 65, think this behaviour is wrong.
- Support is higher among those aged 18 to 25 (67%) than those over 65 (46%) for the government topping up the incomes of low wage working parents.

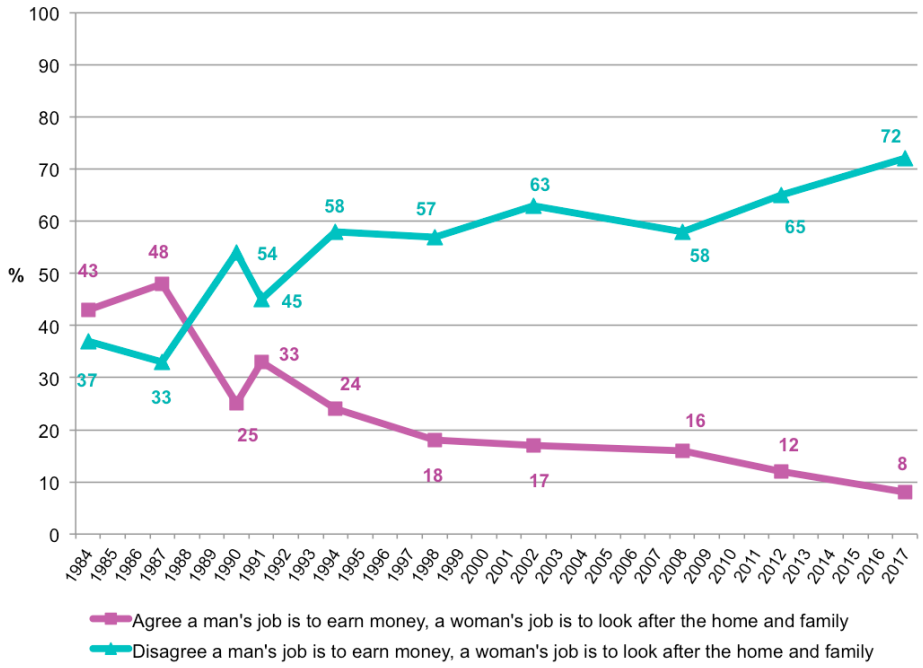
## But in important ways differences in attitudes by age and education are narrowing…

Despite the importance of these differences in opinion by age and education, they are not growing on all issues. In many instances the opposite is the case. For example, last year's BSA report (Swales and Attar Taylor, 2017) showed that on issues of sex before marriage, same-sex relationships and abortion, the gap between different age groups (and thus generations) was narrowing at an accelerating rate. In this report we find something similar in respect of views on whether in a different-sex couple it is the woman's job to look after the home and family, and the man's to work. While there is still a difference of view by age, the gap is much smaller than in recent decades:

- The difference between the proportions of 18-34 year olds who disagree that "a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family" and the proportion of those aged 75 and over who think the same has dropped from 46 points in 2012 to 27 points in 2017.
- The gap between the same younger group and those aged 65-74 will soon disappear if trends continue, as it has narrowed from 27 points in 2012 to just 8 in 2017.

So while there are important divides by age and education, we should be careful not to assume they are present everywhere or even necessarily always getting bigger. In fact, social issues like attitudes to the role of women provide interesting case studies for how attitudes across the generations can be bridged. This then leads to an interesting question: why is it that age and education have become starker political dividing lines, when on many social questions, young and old, and graduates and school leavers, are closer in their views than ever before?

**Views on traditional gender roles, 1984-2017**




## …And our trust in one another is as high as it has ever been

In a result that might surprise people given the divides we have analysed, we find that our trust in one another is at the highest level BSA has measured in nearly 20 years:

- 54% of people in Britain say that, generally speaking, people can be trusted[2]. This is up from 47% in 2014 and is at the highest level since we first asked the question in 1998.

## But we're divided on the trust question too

While the overall increased level of trust cautions us against believing the country irrevocably divided, we nonetheless find divides on the question:

- 42% of people prefer the statement that you "cannot be too careful dealing with people", over the idea that most people can be trusted.
- People with degrees (64%) and in a managerial or professional occupation (63%) are more likely than those with few or no formal qualifications (42%), or in a routine job (41%), to say that generally speaking they think other people can be trusted.

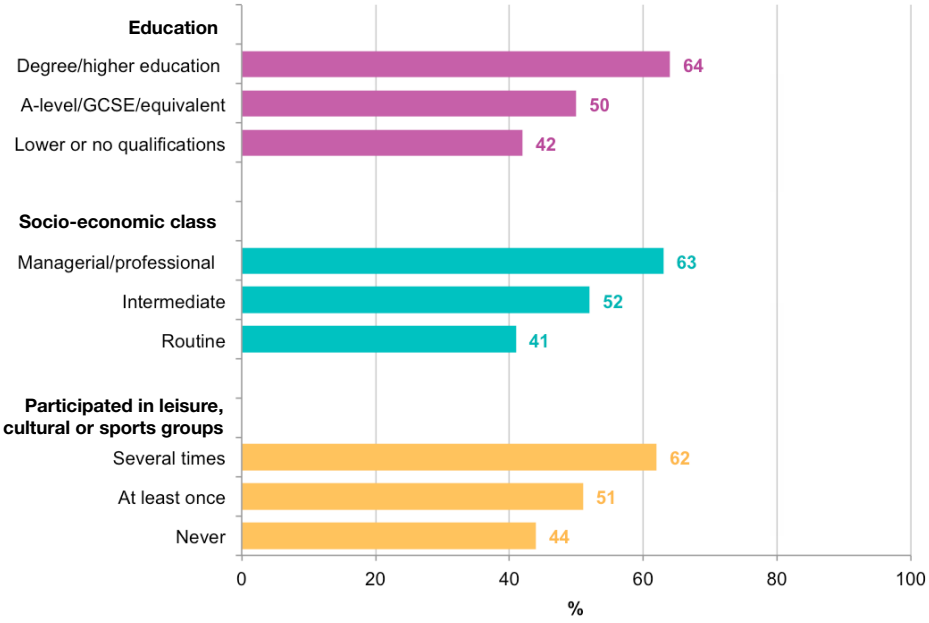
This difference might be explained by the greater security that typically comes with having a better job or education. This security

2 People were asked "Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted?" and able to choose the following responses: "People can almost always be trusted / People can usually be trusted / You usually can't be too careful in dealing with people / You almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people / Can't choose."

perhaps allows someone to have a more optimistic worldview. The chapter in this report on social trust also analyses the degree to which it varies according to people's level of participation in community activities and the nature of their social networks:

- Using both a 'Position Generator' approach[3] and regression analysis, the authors find that higher social trust is associated with age, higher social class, further education and having a larger and higher-status social network.
- Greater involvement in sports, leisure and cultural activities are also associated with greater social trust. By contrast, involvement in charity work, volunteering, or political and religious activities seems to make little difference to people's levels of trust.

### Social trust, by education, socio-economic class, and participation in leisure, cultural and sports groups




**The Challenge:** attitudes to immigration are divided and have been highly politicised by the EU referendum, which itself is creating new divides in politics. However, on many social questions a new consensus has emerged and our political divides do not seem to have harmed our trust in one another. This contrast of divides and growing unity should caution against overly-simplistic or sweeping proclamations of 'culture wars'.

This year's BSA report does highlight that it will be a major social cohesion challenge to bridge the views of young and more formally-educated people with those of older people and those with few qualifications. However, BSA data also points to some of the

3 Developed by Lin (Lin, 2001), this involves asking people whether they personally know someone in a series of professions. This allows us to calculate a measure for the extent of someone's social network and the social status of those in it.

potential solutions. Those keen to bridge attitudes gaps would do well to examine how this has happened with many social issues and to explore ways to further grow social trust through greater involvement in sports, leisure and cultural activities.

# Economic challenges: time for a new settlement with employers and on public spending?

The global financial crisis, among many other things, triggered a prolonged debate about the balance of power between market, state and worker that is unabated a decade on from the crash. In the UK in recent months this debate has particularly focused on the feasibility of easing government spending restraint (Whittaker, 2017), and the best options for increasing sluggish productivity and median earnings growth (Cribb et al., 2018). Data in this year's BSA report helps us chart how the public view many of the country's important economic questions.

## People feel work is plentiful but for a minority it is not very secure

The rise in the insecure 'gig economy'[4] and zero hour contracts is well documented (For example: Lepanjuuri et al., 2018), and the former is arguably an early symptom of the economic transformation discussed in the first section of this key findings. We are also living in a time of relatively high employment levels (Cribb et al., 2018) and this is reflected in this year's BSA results:

- Although 95% are confident they will be working in 12 months' time, as many as 26% of those in employment worry about losing their job. The figure is as much as 37% among those earning below £1,200 per month.
- A small but important 8% of workers, which rises to 15% for those earning below £1,200 a month, face the insecurity of having their working hours changed at short notice.

## People expect the government and employers to ensure that work pays a decent wage

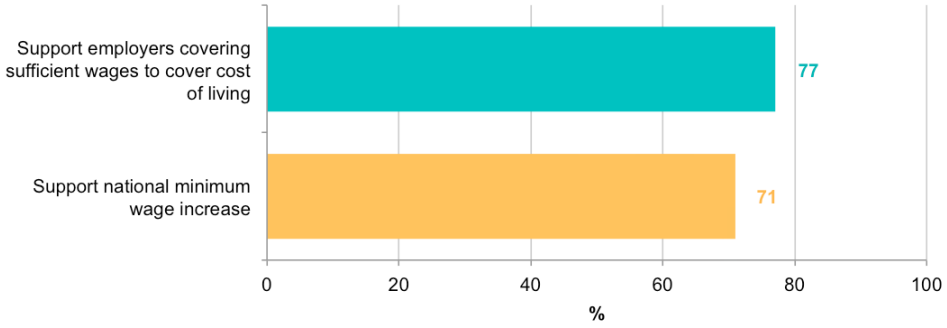
But what impact does this state of affairs have on attitudes towards what the government and employers should do? Interestingly, we find a high proportion of people want the minimum wage to be increased. This is despite the fact that the government has recently been raising the minimum wage level to meet its ambition that all workers aged 25 and above are paid a minimum of 60% of median hourly wages by

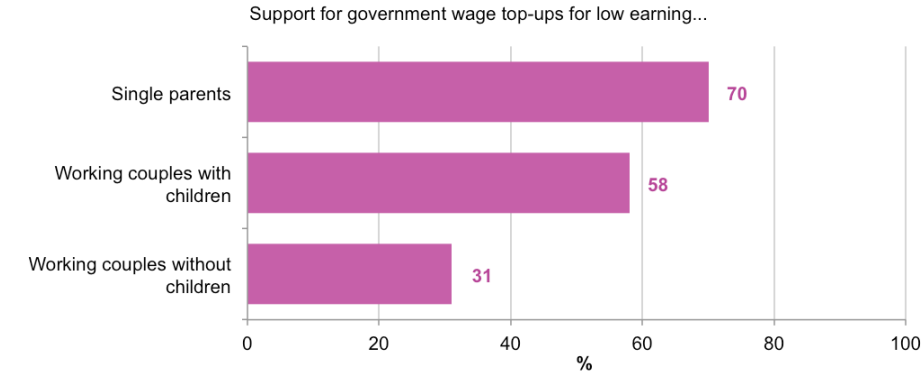
4 Wider NatCen research defines the gig economy as the "exchange of labour for money between individuals or companies via digital platforms that actively facilitate matching between providers and customers, on a short-term and payment by task basis" (Lepanjuuri et al., 2018).

2020 (OBR, 2018). Majorities also want the welfare system to top up low wages:

- 71% of people feel the minimum wage should be increased.
- Three-quarters (77%) of people feel that employers should pay a wage that covers the basic cost of living. Only a fifth (18%) say that workers themselves should be responsible for finding work that pays enough to cover the cost of living.
- 70% think the government should top up the wages of lone parents who find it hard to make ends meet on low wages, and 58% want the same for low-paid working-age couples with children. Support however drops to just 31% for low-paid childless couples.

### Views of employers' and the government's responsibilities regarding wages




## Attitudes to welfare are softening but a majority still think the unemployed could find work

A majority of the public feels confident about the prospects of anyone unemployed finding a job, perhaps because they themselves feel self-assured that they personally will still be working in 12 months' time. However, there is some indication that attitudes to spending on unemployment benefits are softening (from a low base), and fewer people think welfare is causing dependency:

- 56% of respondents feel that "most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one", compared with just 17% who disagree.
- 20% of people now support higher benefits for the unemployed. While this is low it is the highest proportion since 2002.
- In 2001, 39% of people agreed that the generosity of welfare benefits creates dependence. This rose to 55% in 2010. After several years of stability, it has now dropped back to 43%.
- Over half of people (56%) now prefer to note that "cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives".

So, clear majorities of people very much expect government and employers, in one form or another, to ensure that work pays. Furthermore, more people are taking a warmer attitude to welfare. This is perhaps a warning to employers and government that if either new technology or a downturn in the economy disrupts the labour market at some point in the future, most people are not expecting people to have to cope with any drop in real wages by themselves.

## There is a growing public view that we need a new settlement on public spending

Advocating or repudiating austerity has been a defining left/right divide in politics this decade. However, in recent months, figures within the government have begun to ask whether the increased spending should be back on the table (Hope & Bodkin, 2018; Haynes & Elliott, 2018). Last year's BSA report (Clery, et al., 2017) showed that the proportion of people wanting higher taxation to fund higher spending was at its highest since the financial crash and now greater than those who want things kept as they are. The updated figure for this year's report won't be available until the late summer / early autumn, and it will be fascinating to see whether that growth in demand for more spending has increased further.

Until that release we take a look at the overall spending question through the prism of the NHS, which after all is in-line with just under 10% of our national income (Stoye, 2017) and is this year celebrating its 70th anniversary.

## The public has little doubt that the NHS has a funding crisis; the question is how to pay for it

BSA data released earlier in this year (Evans, 2018) shows that there is now a dominant view that the NHS is facing a funding crisis:

- 86% of people believe the NHS faces a "major" or "severe" funding problem, up 14 points since 2014.

Given the preponderance of this view, it is perhaps not surprising that since the release of these data the government has announced an increase in NHS funding (Triggle, 2018) from next year. The significant

level of additional NHS spending proposed marks a notable policy change from years of minimal real-term growth (Stoye, 2017). The Chancellor has suggested that this will partly have to be met through higher taxes (Hammond, 2018). He might therefore be reassured to know that a majority of the public would support them opting for higher taxation:

- 61% "would be prepared to accept" tax rises to increase NHS spending, up 21 points from 2014.

Regardless of whether austerity is deemed necessary or needless, it increasingly seems that the public is tiring of it. The challenge now for policymakers is finding the publicly acceptable means for paying for a new public spending settlement.

## Many of us support shared parental leave, at least in theory

Another crucial feature of an economy and society in which most women with children go out to work is the settlement between government, employers and partners that ensures that parents can take time off work to look after new-born children. In the last two decades there has been increasing recognition that parents need greater rights and protections to make this possible. This culminated in legislation that, since 2015, has given parents the legal right to share up to 50 weeks of parental leave between them, with up to 37 of those weeks being paid by their employer. We find that there is widespread public support for the idea that different-sex couples should use this right to share parental leave:

- When asked how a different-sex full-time working couple should divide paid parental leave between them, only 15% of the public think the mother should take the entire allowance. 39% think that the mother should take most and the father some, and 30% think the parents should split the parental leave evenly.

An official estimate of take-up of shared parental leave is not yet available; however forecasted take-up is relatively low at 2%-8% (BEIS, 2018). If this is the case, the BSA supports wider research (For example: Newton et al., 2018) in finding that there is a notable gap between what the public thinks is desirable and what parents do in practice. As this wider research finds that traditional social norms are one of the important blockages to the higher take up of shared parent leave, it is an interesting question as to whether and how more liberal attitudes are translated into new norms.

**The challenge:** The picture that emerges is one of a country that is increasingly tired of austerity, softening on welfare and expecting action from employers on low wages. The challenge for politicians will be meeting increased public service spending or welfare demands within the constraints of an economy that is growing slowly and faces the prospect of Brexit-related turbulence and growing technological challenges. The challenge for employers will be

meeting the demand for higher wages for the lowest paid in a period of sluggish productivity growth. Ultimately, however, these challenges seem unavoidable when there are clear majorities of people expecting action on low pay, whether through wages or welfare. Meanwhile, the settlement for new parents has certainly improved in rights terms, but we confirm that other interventions will be required to make this more real in practice.

# Brexit: can we unite behind a deal and can old political institutions survive in the Brexit vote's wake?

## As attitudes coalesce on both sides, uniting the country behind a future settlement with the EU could prove difficult

The EU referendum and the subsequent debate about Brexit have resulted in a crystallisation of attitudes towards the EU. People's attitudes to staying or leaving are now more likely to reflect their sense of identity, their social values and what they think will be the consequences of leaving the EU than they were before the EU referendum campaign began:

- Between 2015 and 2017 there was a 22-point increase in support for leaving the EU among those who think membership has undermined Britain's sense of identity, compared with a 7 point rise among those who do not think the EU membership has affected Britain's identity
- Between 2015 and 2017, support for leaving the EU among those who think Brexit will make Britain's economy better-off rose by 18 points. Among those who reckoned Brexit would damage Britain's economy it only increased by 7 points.

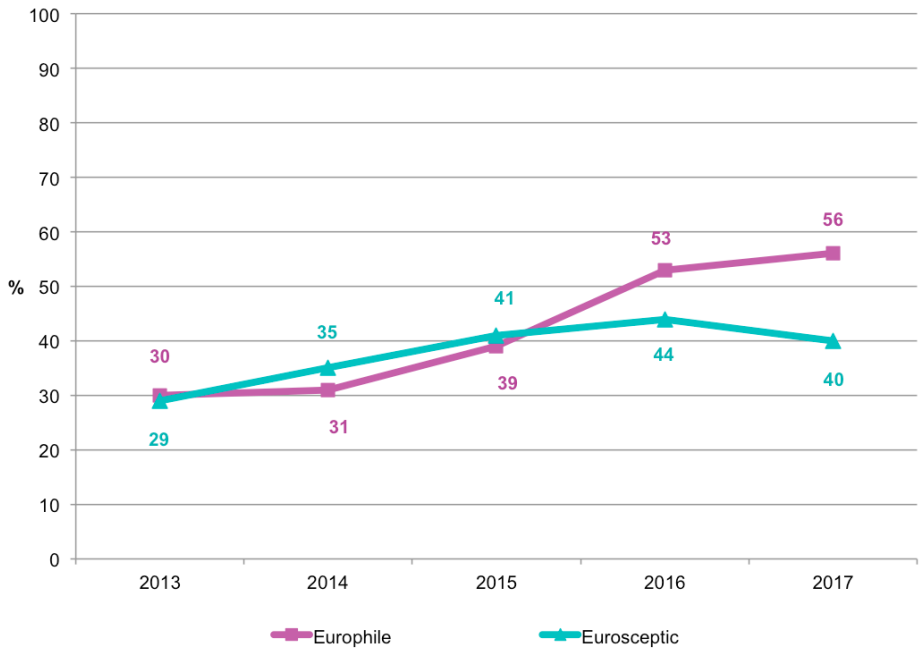
This development suggests that it has now probably become more difficult for politicians on either side of the Brexit debate to win people over from the opposing point of view. This could mean that it will be relatively difficult to secure clear public support for whatever relationship with the EU emerges from the Brexit negotiations.

## Can the Union survive as views on Scottish independence become intertwined with Brexit?

Ever since it became clear that Scotland voted to remain in the EU, and England and Wales did not, there has been considerable speculation as to what this means for the Scottish independence debate. Evidently anticipating that the prospect of Scotland being 'forced' to leave the EU against its 'democratic wishes' would be unpopular, the First Minister and Scottish National Party (SNP) leader,

Nicola Sturgeon, suggested immediately after the EU referendum that leaving the EU would represent a sufficient change of circumstance to warrant a re-run of the 2014 Scottish independence ballot. Opponents of a new referendum, however, argue that the issue was settled by the 2014 vote and cite polling to suggest there is not sufficient Scottish public demand for another vote (Reported in BBC, 2017).

**Support for Scottish independence, by attitude towards Britain's membership of the EU, 2013-2017**




Champions of a second vote clearly hope to build on the 45% who voted for independence in 2014. But, at first glance, the 2017 General Election result in Scotland suggested this might not be easy. The main political champions of independence and another vote, the SNP, found their vote and seats cut from historic highs of 50% and 56 seats to 37% and 35.

However, analysis of the Scottish Social Attitudes survey (SSA)[5] in this year's report finds that support for independence has not diminished in the wake of the EU vote – but equally it has not increased either. Instead, what has happened is that support for independence has come to be linked with a favourable attitude towards the EU in a way that it was not previously. At the same time, the SNP lost ground particularly heavily in the 2017 election among those who are sceptical about Europe.

5 Data specifically on attitudes in Scotland is drawn from NatCen Social Research's Scottish Social Attitudes survey, which uses the same high quality sampling approach as BSA.

- 56% of Europhiles in Scotland[6], but only 40% of Eurosceptics[7], support Scottish Independence.

It is clear that the Brexit vote has not led to the jump in support for Scottish independence that some of its advocates hoped. Instead, the coalition of voters that made up the 45% who voted for independence in 2014 has been unsettled, but that is not to say that it could not grow in future as the Brexit process evolves.

Many have speculated whether the Brexit vote was driven by a resurgence of English nationalism south of the border (for example: Cockburn, 2017). Here BSA data finds that although English identity is more closely associated with a leave vote, overall levels of English nationalism are down:

- Just 13% of people in England describe themselves as "English, not British", the lowest level since 1997. The most popular category remains "Equally English and British", which remains stable at 41%.

## Can our old political parties survive Brexit?

Britain's two largest political parties have traditionally reflected a division between the Conservatives' right-leaning and middle-class appeal, and Labour's left and working-class one. However, people's views about Brexit reflect a different dimension, that is, whether they are 'libertarian' or 'authoritarian'. Authoritarians prize order and tradition, and tend to be more negative towards immigration. By contrast, libertarians place greater weight on individual freedom and are more comfortable living in a diverse society. Consequently, if voters' opinions about Brexit were reflected in how they voted in the 2017 election, this would likely disrupt some of the traditional patterns of support for the two largest parties.

How people voted in the election was influenced by their views about Brexit:

- Support for the Conservatives increased by 14 points between 2015 and 2017 among those who think the UK should leave the EU, but fell by seven points among those who think the EU should remain at least as powerful as at present.
- Labour's vote rose by 16 points among those who think the EU's powers should be undiminished but by only seven points among those who back leaving the EU.

This in turn ensured that how people voted was more clearly linked to whether they are a libertarian or an authoritarian than it has been at any other recent election:

6 People in Scotland saying they want to stay in the EU and see its powers remain the same or be increased.

7 People in Scotland wanting to leave the EU or stay but with the EU having with reduced powers.

- Support for the Conservatives increased between 2015 and 2017 by eight points among authoritarian voters, whereas it fell by 10 points among libertarians.
- Support for Labour rose by 19 points among libertarians but by only five points among authoritarians.

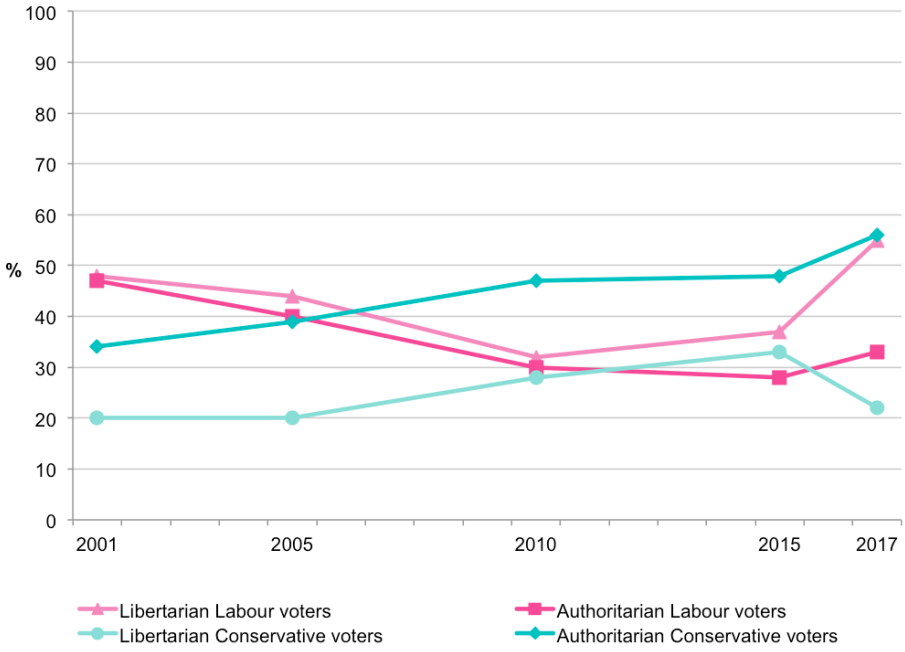
We also find that traditional voting differences by social class narrowed:

- The Conservatives gained 8 points from working-class people, but lost 3 points among the managerial and professional classes.
- Labour's vote share rose 5 points among the working classes but a much greater 12 points among the managerial and professional classes.

As a result, there are marked tensions within the coalitions that support the two largest parties. The Conservatives are traditionally regarded as the party of big business, but the pro-Leave views of many of its current voters are at odds with the preferences of those running large companies. Labour, meanwhile, regards itself as the party that represents the working-class but finds itself growing in popularity among socially-liberal middle-class graduates.

**The Challenge:** Politicians not only face the enormous challenge of managing Brexit but they also have to contend with a public that is divided into two evenly sized groups who have coalesced around opposing views of what the UK's relationship with the EU should be. As a result, they face an uphill struggle to deliver a post-referendum settlement that unites the country. At the same time, the EU referendum has disrupted some of the past patterns of electoral support, thereby leaving politicians with the difficult task of balancing their new coalitions of support with their traditional ones.

**Labour and Conservative vote choice, by libertarian-authoritarian position, 2001-2017**




# Conclusion

We started by noting that it feels as if the early 21st century has posed a series of questions about the future of the country that will soon have to be answered. We have found in the four challenges examined that providing some of those answers will be difficult for four different reasons. However, there is at least one theme that connects them all: politicians and policymakers will need to be very adept at public communication if they are to successfully navigate the challenges of the near future.

With the global challenges we face, public concern arguably needs to increase. However, this will have to be done without also increasing pessimism that change is possible, and perhaps instead growing the idea that change can be embraced. The closing of the age and education divisions on some social issues points to it being possible to bridge our political divides. But that example also points to it taking a long time, unless some political leaders find a way to speak to young and old, and more and less formally-educated groups. We are, in contrast, more united on wanting a response to low pay and greater investment in public services. However, economic choices are rarely without opportunity costs and it will again take skilled communication to maintain this greater unity of thought when those trade-offs bite. Finally, the extent of our Brexit divide means that it will take truly excellent communication to develop widespread public support for a specific vision of our future relationship with the EU. It may even be impossible in the near future.

Successfully attempting to meet any or all of these public policy and communication challenges will require a sound understanding of the underlying currents of public attitudes. As is hopefully demonstrated in this report, BSA remains an indispensible tool for doing this.

# Why the British Social Attitudes Survey is different

The BSA is different in some important respects to opinion polls on British attitudes:

- **It is long running –** BSA has been run since 1983 and many of its questions have been asked frequently since then. This provides unique time series data not available elsewhere. Dramatic shifts in public attitudes are often proclaimed; BSA helps us examine whether this is actually the case.
- **It uses a gold standard methodology –** most polls use a methodology where respondents opt in to completing surveys (for example, in response to an advert). respondents' views are then weighted according to population statistics to ensure the self-selected sample broadly matches. This approach has the benefit of creating large samples, and polls that can be completed very quickly and cheaply. However, they can also create biases towards those types of people more likely to volunteer to answer surveys (such as the more politically engaged).
- **The BSA is very different.** It uses a random probability sample, where people are picked at random and specifically asked to participate (you can't proactively volunteer). This is the approach the 2015 election polling inquiry encouraged more use of. In simplified terms, the BSA sample is selected by picking addresses at random from post code data. When a NatCen fieldworker then visits and gets an answer at the door, they ask how many adults live at the address. The fieldworker then uses a random number generator to select which individual they need to speak to. The fieldworker will visit an address up to 10 times to maximise the chance of getting a response and getting to speak to the chosen person. This process takes 4 months and is inevitably more costly than a poll.
- **New questions are piloted to ensure they accurately measure views –** new BSA question are typically piloted 1-2 times with a small sample of the public to ensure that they are well understood and are able to be answered easily.
- **It measures people by detailed demographics and values scales –** The BSA survey (which typically takes 1 hour to complete) asks people a series of detailed demographic questions, often in excess of that available in a typical poll. Since 1986 the BSA has also measured people on left/right, libertarian/authoritarian and, since 1987, welfare values scales. Where someone sits on those scales is determined by their answers to a series of questions.

While of each these elements are not unique to the BSA[1] in combination they create a powerful data set and explain why the BSA often receives more attention that regular polls. NatCen does not receive core funding for the BSA so organisations and academics are encouraged to fund BSA questions to benefit from its highly robust insights and ensure its long-term sustainability.

For more detailed information on the BSA methodology, please consult the technical appendix to the report available here. NatCen has also created an online and telephone Panel using the BSA sample to bring greater sample quality to faster, more affordable surveys. For more details on this Panel and how to commission questions on it see here: http://natcen.ac.uk/our-expertise/methods-expertise/surveys/probability-panel/

1 For example, the European Social Survey uses a similar face-to-face random probability methodology, and the British Election Study uses the left-right and libertarian-authoritarian value scales.

## References

Arntz, M., Gregory, T. and Zierahn, U. (2016), 'The Risk of Automation for Jobs in OECD Countries: A Comparative Analysis', *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 189, OECD Publishing, Paris

BBC (2017), 'Theresa May believes independence issue 'settled'', posted at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-38839103

Beckett, A. (2018), 'Post-work: the radical idea of a world without jobs', *The Guardian*, London: Guardian News and Media Limited, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jan/19/post-work-the-radical-idea-of-a-world-without-jobs

Brett, W. (2017), 'Towns And Cities Are Divided. Here's What To Do About It', *Huffington Post*, available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/william-brett/towns-cities-divided_b_18292494.html

British Election Study Team (2018), *2017 Election BES Internet Panel Data*, posted at: http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-resources/2017-election-bes-internet-panel-data-released/#.Wz0ttNhKib8

Clark, R. (2017), 'Generations at war: the election has laid bare a huge old vs young divide', The Spectator, London: *The Spectator*, available at: https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/06/generations-at-war-the-election-has-laid-bare-a-huge-old-vs-young-divide/

Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Harding, R. (2017), British Social Attitudes: The 34th Report, London: The National Centre for Social Research, available at: www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk

Cockburn, P. (2017), 'Brexit unleashed an English nationalism that has damaged the union with Scotland for good', *The Independent*, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-scottish-referendum-english-nationalism-damaged-union-for-good-a7635796.html

Cribb, J., Norris Keiller, A., Waters, T. (2018), *Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2018*, London: The Institute for Fiscal Studies, available at: https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R145%20for%20web.pdf

Curtice, J. and Simpson, I. (2018), *Why Turnout Increased in the 2017 General Election; and the Increase Did Not Help Labour*, London: The National Centre for Social Research, available at: http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and Department for Education (2018), *New 'Share the joy' campaign promotes shared parental leave rights for parents*, (press release), available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-share-the-joy-campaignpromotes-shared-parental-leave-rights-for-parents

Evans, H. (2018), *Does the public see tax rises as the answer to NHS funding pressures?*, London: The King's Fund, available at: https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/does-public-see-tax-rises-answer-nhs-funding-pressures

Ford, R. and Lymperopoulou, K. (2017), 'Immigration: How attitude sin the EU compare with Europe', in Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Harding, R. (eds.) (2017), *British Social Attitudes: The 34th Report*, London: The National Centre for Social Research, available at: http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-34/immigration.aspx

Hammond, P. (2018), *Speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer*, Mansion House 2018, full text available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/mansion-house-2018-speech-by-the-chancellor-of-the-exchequer

Hawksworth, J., Berriman, R., and Goel, S. (2018), 'Will robots really steal our jobs?', PwC, available at: https://www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/assets/international-impact-of-automation-feb-2018.pdf

Haynes, D., and Elliott, F. (2018), 'Billions more needed for defence, says Gavin Williamson', *The Times*, London: Times Newspapers Limited, available at: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/billions-more-needed-for-defence-says-gavin-williamson-0z70s9tfd

Hiscott, G. (2014), 'The rich are getting richer: Britain's yawning money gap between have and have nots widens yet again', *Daily Mirror*, London: Reach Plc., available at: https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/rich-getting-richer-britains-yawning-4435734

Hope, C., and Bodkin, H. (2018), 'People want to pay more tax to fund the NHS, Jeremy Hunt says in direct challenge to Chancellor', *The Telegraph*, London: Telegraph Media Group, available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/05/24/people-want-pay-tax-fund-nhs-jeremy-hunt-says-direct-challenge/

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014), 'Synthesis Report of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report', Geneva: IPCC, available at: http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/syr/

Lepanjuuri, K., Wishart, R., Cornick, P. (2018), 'The Characteristics of Those in the Gig Economy', London: The National Centre for Social Research, available at: http://natcen.ac.uk/our-research/research/characteristics-of-the-gig-economy/

Lewis, H. (2018), 'Culture wars cross the Atlantic to coarsen British politics', *Financial Times*, London: The Financial Times Ltd, available at: https://www.ft.com/content/5ac4d090-f6f9-11e7-a4c9-bbdefa4f210b

Lin, N. (2001), *Social Capital*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Manyika, J,, Lund, S., Chui, M., Bughin, J., Woetzel, J., Batra, P., Ko, R., and Sanghvi, S. (2017), *Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transitions in a Time of Automation*, McKinsey Global Institute, available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-organizations-and-work/jobs-lost-jobs-gained-what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages

Newton, B., Tamkin, P., Gloster, R., Cox, A., Everett, C. and Cotton, J. (2018), *Rapid evidence assessment: parents' decisions about returning to work and child caring responsibilities*, Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/705820/Parents__decisions_about_returning_to_work_and_child_caring_responsibilities.pdf

Office for Budget Responsibility (2018), 'Economic and fiscal outlook', London: HM Stationary Office, available at: http://cdn.obr.uk/EFO-MaRch_2018.pdf

Sculthorpe, T. (2017), 'Britain is more divided than ever and politicians must focus on ensuring people have a fair chance to succeed, warns report', *Mail Online*, available at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4646406/Britain-divided-ever.html

Stoye, G. (2017), '*UK health spending*' London: The Institute for Fiscal Studies, available at: https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/bns/BN201.pdf

Swales, K. and Attar Taylor, E. (2017), 'Moral issues; Sex, gender identity and euthanasia', in Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Harding, R. (eds.) (2017), British Social Attitudes: The 34th Report, London: The National Centre for Social Research, available at: http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39147/bsa34_moral_issues_final.pdf

Triggle, N. (2018), 'NHS funding: Theresa May unveils £20bn boost', BBC, posted at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-44495598

Whittaker, M. (2017), *Ending austerity?*, Resolution Foundation, available at: https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/ending-austeritythe-priorities-price-tags-and-practicalities-for-a-government-changing-course-on-spending-cuts/

# Acknowledgements

British Social Attitudes (BSA) could not take place without its many generous funders. A number of government departments have regularly funded modules of interest to them, while respecting the independence of the study. In 2017 we gratefully acknowledge the support of The Department for Work and Pensions, The Department for Transport, The Department for Communities and Local Government, The Department for Education and The Government Equalities Office.

Thanks are also due to The King's Fund, The Nuffield Trust, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Health Foundation, The National Housing Federation, Scope and The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

The ESRC continued to support the participation of Britain in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), a collaboration whereby surveys in 45 countries administer an identical module of questions in order to facilitate comparative research. Some of the results are described in our Social trust chapter.

We are also grateful to Professor Richard Topf of the Centre for Comparative European Surveys, for all his work in creating and maintaining access to an easy to use website that provides a fully searchable database of all the questions that have ever been asked on a British Social Attitudes survey, together with details of the pattern of responses to every question. This site provides an invaluable resource for those who want to know more than can be found in this report. It is located at www.britsocat.com.

The BSA survey is a team effort. The report editors could not do their job without the invaluable editorial support provided by BSA Senior Researchers, Eleanor Attar Taylor and Pete Dangerfield. We also thank Ian Simpson and Elizabeth Clery for their work on the management of the 2017 survey, and Chloe Robinson for her project management support. The survey is heavily dependent on staff who organise and monitor fieldwork and compile and distribute the survey's extensive documentation, for which we would pay particular thanks to our colleagues in the National Centre for Social Research's operations office in Brentwood. Thanks are also due to the regional managers, field performance managers and field interviewers who are responsible for all the interviewing, and without whose efforts the survey would not happen at all. We are also grateful to Sue Corbett in our computing department who expertly translates our questions into a computer-assisted questionnaire, and to Jackie Palmer who has the unenviable task of editing, checking and documenting the data.

Finally, we must praise all the people who anonymously gave up their time to take part in one of our surveys over the last thirty-five years, not least those who participated in 2017. They are the

cornerstone of this enterprise. We hope that some of them might come across this report and read about themselves and the story they tell of modern Britain with interest.

# Work and welfare

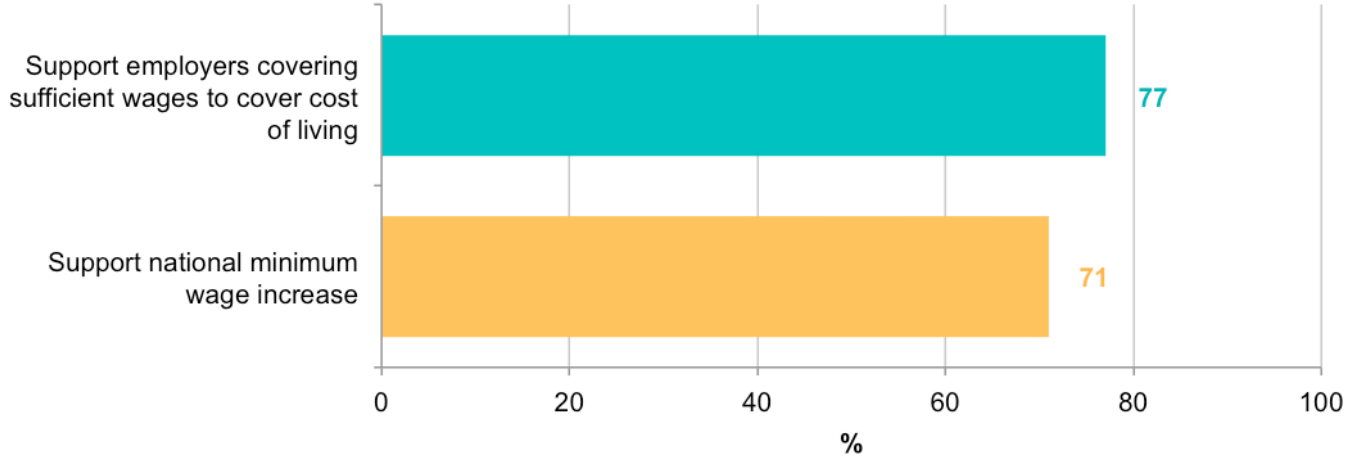
## The changing face of the UK labour market

This chapter explores Britain's attitudes to work and welfare in 2017 and whether they reflect the changing nature of the UK labour market which can be attributed to economic and industrial change. Despite ongoing labour market change, the British public continues to perceive there to be a dignity in work, with intrinsic value placed upon employment that goes beyond simple monetary compensation. We also consider expectations upon employers and the state in supporting people on low incomes, a subject which may be of increasing relevance if the threat of automation and labour market polarisation is realised. Despite the decline of 'jobs for life', people still expect employers to help them grow and develop and that employers should pay wages that cover the cost of living. However they also know that this is often not the case, and, where this is true they expect the government to intervene to support people on low wages.

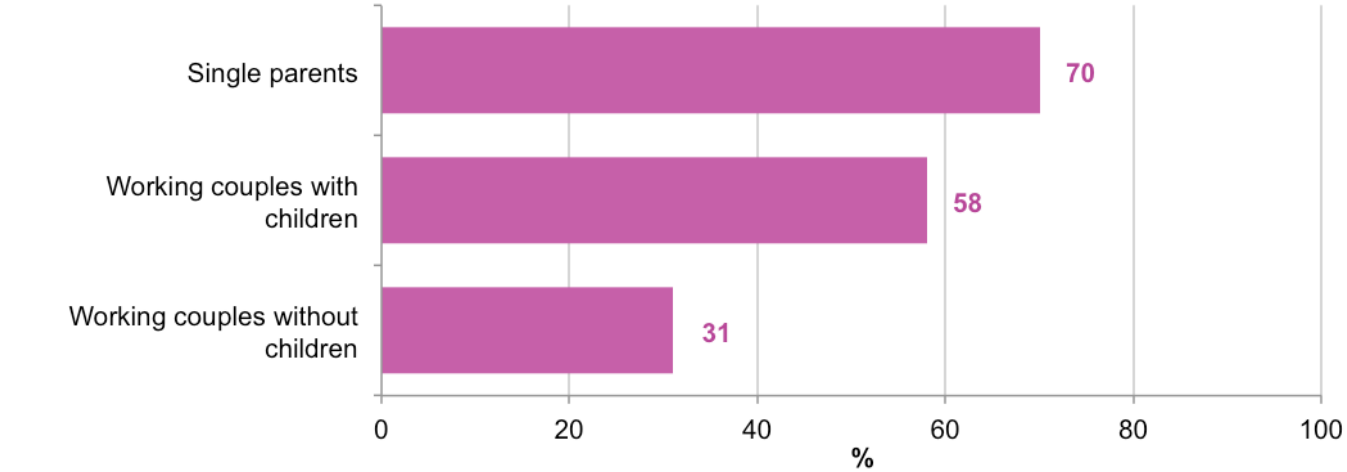
## Spotlight

A majority of the public believe employers should be responsible for paying wages that cover the cost of living. A majority also support a national minimum wage increase and wage top-ups for low-earning single parents and working couples without children.

**Views of employers' and the government's responsibilities regarding wages**




**Support for government wage top-ups for low earning...**



# Overview

## Precarious work may be the new norm

**A significant minority of young people have unpredictable work patterns, but almost all are confident they will be working in a year.**

- In the context of a recent rise in precarious or insecure work, nearly a fifth (17%) of workers aged 18-25 have changing working hours given at short notice compared with only 5% of those aged 36-65.
- Despite being more likely to have precarious work, young workers aged 18-25 remain confident that they will be working in 12 months' time (94%).

## The robots are coming

**While there is recognition from the public that automation will have an impact on the world of work, most don't think it will affect them.**

- Automation is expected to have a significant impact on the labour market in the coming years. Three-quarters (75%) feel that in the next 10 years machines or computer programs will do many of the jobs currently done by humans.
- However, just 1 in 10 (10%) of people in work are "very" or "quite" worried about the threat automation poses to their own job.

## State support still needed to support low-paid workers

**A majority of the public are in favour of government support for low-paid workers, and there are signs that attitudes towards unemployment benefits are softening.**

- Despite three-quarters (77%) of the public perceiving employers to be responsible for paying sufficient wages to cover the cost of living, there is still a role for the state to support workers.
- 7 in 10 (71%) support increasing the minimum wage, while 58% support wage top-ups for working couples with children and 70% support top-ups for single parents.
- There is some evidence that traditionally sterner attitudes towards unemployment benefits are softening; one fifth (20%) feel that the government should spend more on welfare benefits for the unemployed, the highest they have been since 15 years ago.

**Authors**

**Nancy Kelley,**
Deputy Chief-Executive,
The National Centre for Social Research

**Professor Christopher Warhurst**,
Institute for Employment Research

**Robert Wishart**,
Senior Researcher (Analyst),
The National Centre for Social Research

# Introduction

Over the last four decades, globalisation and technological advances have driven significant structural change to the UK labour market. The impacts of these changes have been profound: income inequality rose substantially throughout the 1980s before stabilising (McGuinness, 2018); manufacturing work has declined and service work increased; the labour market has feminised and the male-centric breadwinner model of employment been undermined (Rubery et al., 2015). The outcome is a long-term polarisation of the UK labour market (Eurofound, 2015), with a rise in the proportion of high-skill, high-wage and low-skill, low-wage jobs, and a shrinking proportion of mid-level jobs. More recently, since the global financial crisis, there has been a rise in temporary, part-time, zero-hours contracts and involuntary self-employment, with implications for the distribution of income and job security.

For young workers in particular the transition into paid work has become more difficult (Purcell et al. 2017), with periods of precarious employment now the norm. The challenges faced by young people have led some to refer to the risk of there being a 'lost generation' confronted with fewer employment opportunities and lower pay (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2015). While younger workers must deal with increased precarity, older workers are being encouraged to remain in the labour market for longer and there are now more older people in work than ever before (Department for Work and Pensions, 2017).

**The challenges faced by young people have led some to refer to the risk of there being a 'lost generation'**

These themes have been brought into sharp focus by the prospect of a 'fourth industrial revolution'. Triggered by the work of Frey and Osborne (2013), some economists forecast that millions of jobs will be lost in the coming decade, as workers are replaced by robots using artificial intelligence (AI). Techno-anxiety has gripped the popular media, along with many politicians and academics. Of course, such fears can be overplayed; technological innovations tend to be followed by job creation as well as job loss and the reconfiguring of the tasks of some existing jobs (Economist, 2016).

The changing nature of work also raises profound questions about the role of the welfare state. As the structure of the UK labour market has changed since the 1980s, so has the nature of the welfare safety net. This change is characterised by an increasing emphasis on conditionality (Dwyer, 2004), active labour market policy and the 'work first' approach which uses a system of financial incentives and sanctions to encourage people to take any job they are capable of getting, whatever the quality (Daguerre and Etherington, 2009). At the same time, policies such as the National Minimum Wage, Tax Credits and Universal Credit have been implemented to address some of the impacts of low pay and precarity.

**6 in 10 say they would enjoy work even if they didn't need the money**

The British public remains very positive about work, with six in ten (59%) saying they would enjoy work even if they didn't need the

money, eight in ten (83%) saying work is good for physical health and nine in ten (90%) saying work is good for mental health (see Tables A.2, A.3, A.4 and A.5 in the appendix to this chapter). However, in this chapter, we explore whether the changes occurring in the UK labour market are giving rise to new attitudes to work and welfare. We start by examining how the increase in precarious employment has affected attitudes towards job security. Next we explore whether the concerns voiced by academics and the media regarding technological developments in the labour market are reflected by public attitudes. We then assess whether changes in the labour market have affected perceptions of welfare and where responsibility lies for ensuring that people have enough to live on.

## Job security

**In general, the British public feels fairly confident about job security**

In the context of the shift to more precarious contract types, job quality has become a significant concern in the UK (Taylor, 2017). While there are competing definitions and measures of job quality (Findlay et al., 2013), it is clear that job security is an important component of 'good work'. The rise in non-standard employment might be expected to affect some more than others, with particular concern for young people entering the job market.

To assess views about job security, and whether they differ by income group or age, we ask all respondents in paid employment the following questions:

> ***To what extent, if at all, do you worry about losing your job?***
>
> ***How difficult or easy do you think it would be for you to find a job at least as good as your current one?***

In general, the British public feels fairly confident about job security. As Table 1 shows, a quarter (26%) of those in paid employment worry "a great deal" or "to some extent" about losing their job, while most (71%) worry "a little" or not at all. However some subgroups of the population appear more worried than others. Two-fifths (37%) of those in the lowest income group worry "a great deal" or "to some extent" about losing their job, compared with one fifth (22%) of those in the highest income group (although it should be noted that the sample size is small for the low income group, and therefore the results should be viewed with caution). These responses may reflect the more precarious employment of low-wage workers, (e.g. Stuart et al., 2016), but also the fact that lower income households are more dependent on earnings, and have less financial resilience in the form or savings or borrowing power.

**Table 1 Employee concerns about job security, by household income group**

| | Less than £1,200 per month | £1,201 to £2,200 per month | £2,201 to £3,700 per month | £3,701 or more per month | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Worry about losing their job** | % | % | % | % | % |
| Worry a great deal or to some extent | 37 | 31 | 27 | 22 | 26 |
| Worry a little or not at all | 62 | 64 | 70 | 76 | 71 |
| **Finding a job at least as good as your current one** | % | % | % | % | % |
| Easy | 42 | 32 | 33 | 41 | 37 |
| Neither easy nor difficult | 19 | 22 | 20 | 21 | 21 |
| Difficult | 35 | 41 | 44 | 36 | 39 |
| *Unweighted base* | *91* | *220* | *314* | *463* | *1269* |

*Base: all employees*
*Base for Less than £1,200 per month is <100 and therefore findings should be treated with some caution*

**Confidence in finding a good replacement job declines steadily with age**

There is a significant divergence between younger and older people's level of confidence that it would be easy to find a job at least as good as their current one if they became unemployed. As shown in Table 2, half (51%) of 18 to 25 year olds feel that this would be very or fairly easy, although again note that the sample size for the 18-25 group is small, and therefore the results should be viewed with caution. This is higher than for any other age group and more than double the proportion (24%) of those approaching retirement age (55-65). This finding is interesting given the difficulties young people are experiencing in entering the labour market (Purcell et al., 2017).

Confidence in finding a good replacement job declines steadily with age, which may reflect older workers having better quality (and therefore more competitive) roles, but also perceptions of declining employability. In particular, the very low level of confidence in the oldest group (56-65) is consistent with well documented problems for older workers: at 27%, the economic inactivity rate of 50-60 year olds is more than twice that of workers aged 35-49 (Office for National Statistics, 2017), and estimates indicate that as many as one million economically inactive older workers did not choose to stop working (Franklin et al., 2014).

**Table 2 Employee concerns about job security, by age[1]**

| | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65 | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Worries about losing their job** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Worry a great deal or to some extent | 22 | 23 | 35 | 26 | 25 | 26 |
| Worry a little or not at all | 77 | 76 | 62 | 71 | 70 | 71 |
| **Finding a job at least as good as your current one** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Easy | 51 | 44 | 37 | 30 | 24 | 37 |
| Neither easy nor difficult | 17 | 21 | 25 | 19 | 18 | 21 |
| Difficult | 29 | 33 | 37 | 46 | 52 | 39 |
| *Unweighted base* | *96* | *281* | *299* | *340* | *203* | *1269* |

*Base: all employees*
*Bases for employees who are 66 or over are very small and therefore they have not been presented in this table*
*Base for 18-25 is <100 and therefore findings should be treated with some caution*

To further explore attitudes to job security, we also ask employees:

> ***How confident are you that you will be working in 12 months' time? This may be in your current job or in a future job***

The overwhelming majority (95%) of employees are confident that they will be in work in 12 months' time. Medium-term job security appears to follow similar trends to the short-term, with lower-income workers feeling less secure than those in higher-income households. Almost all (98%) employees in the top two income groups feel confident that they would be working in 12 months' time, significantly higher than the four-fifths (81%) of those in the lowest income group.

Again, those under 35 are very confident about their medium-term prospects, with very similar levels of confidence to those of prime working age. While a clear majority (88%) of employees approaching retirement age (56-65 years) are confident that they will still be working in 12 months, this proportion is lower than that observed in other age groups (shown in Table 3).

1 The age cross breaks used in this chapter differ from those used elsewhere in BSA reporting. The age breaks selected for this chapter (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65 and greater than 65 years old) were selected because of the expected importance of being retired on attitudes towards work and welfare.

**Table 3 Employee confidence that they will be working in 12 months' time, by age**

| | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65 | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **How confident** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Confident | 94 | 97 | 97 | 96 | 88 | 95 |
| Not confident | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *99* | *332* | *324* | *333* | *192* | *1319* |

*Base: all employees*
*Bases for employees who are 66 or over are very small and therefore they have not been presented in this table*
*Base for 18-25 is <100 and therefore findings should be treated with some caution*

In the context of a debate about zero-hours contracts and the gig economy, where working hours may be uncertain, we ask all respondents in paid employment about their short-term working hours:

> *Do you know how many paid hours you will be working next month?*
>
> > *Yes, I know what hours I'm working for the next month*
> >
> > *Yes, I'm fairly sure I know what hours I'm working for the next month*
> >
> > *No, I don't know what hours I will be working for the next month*

> *Which of the following statements describes your usual working hours in your main job?*
>
> > *I have regular working hours or a regular shift*
> >
> > *I have changing working hours, which my employer gives me well in advance*
> >
> > *I have changing working hours, which my employer gives me at short notice*
> >
> > *I decide the hours I work in order to do my job*

It is important to note that job security and working hours security are not synonymous, and that non-standard employment such as part-time and zero hours contract working can constitute good quality work, depending on workers' personal circumstances (CIPD, 2017; Knox and Warhurst, 2016; Lepanjuuri et al., 2018; Taylor, 2017). However, as with job insecurity, poor working-hours security can have a negative impact on both the level and predictability of employment and pay.

A clear majority (76%) are certain about their hours in the next month. Only a small minority (12%) don't know what their hours will be in the next month. However, there are significant differences

between income groups. In particular, workers with low incomes are significantly less likely to know their short-term working hours relative to those in higher income households. Three in ten (29%) of those in the bottom income group do not know their working hours in the next month, more than four times the proportion of those in the highest income group (7%). Similarly, those in the highest income group have greater certainty about their usual hours. More (71%) of this group have regular working hours compared with those (58%) in the lowest income group.

**Three in ten (29%) of those in the bottom income group do not know their working hours in the next month**

**Table 4 Employee certainty about working hours in the next month, by household income group**

| | Less than £1200 per month | £1201 to £2200 per month | £2201 to £3700 per month | £3701 or more per month | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Do you know how many paid hours you will be working next month** | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, I know the hours I'm working next month | 50 | 73 | 81 | 82 | 76 |
| Yes, I'm fairly sure I know what hours I'm working next month | 20 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| No, I don't know what hours I will be working next month | 29 | 13 | 9 | 7 | 12 |
| **Usual working hours in your main job** | % | % | % | % | % |
| Has regular working hours or a regular shift | 58 | 70 | 74 | 71 | 71 |
| Has changing working hours given well in advance | 15 | 15 | 10 | 8 | 10 |
| Has changing working hours given at short notice | 15 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| Decides the hours worked in order to do job | 12 | 6 | 9 | 16 | 11 |
| *Unweighted base* | *244* | *319* | *447* | *157* | *1319* |

*Base: all employees*

Age also drives interesting differences in working hours security. People aged 36-55 years are most assured of their work pattern in the next month, with a large majority (81%) of these employees certain of their working hours. Conversely, young workers (18-25) and older workers (56-65) are most uncertain about their working hours (not statistically significant, see Table 5).

**Table 5 Certainty about working hours in the next month, by age**

| | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65 | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Do you know how many paid hours you will be working next month?** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, I know the hours I'm working next month | 66 | 75 | 81 | 80 | 76 | 76 |
| Yes, I'm fairly sure I know what hours I'm working next month | 16 | 13 | 9 | 12 | 8 | 12 |
| No, I don't know what hours I will be working next month | 18 | 11 | 10 | 7 | 16 | 12 |
| **Usual working hours in your main job** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Has regular working hours or a regular shift | 64 | 72 | 71 | 76 | 65 | 71 |
| Has changing working hours given well in advance | 16 | 10 | 12 | 5 | 11 | 10 |
| Had changing working hours given at short notice | 17 | 11 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 |
| Decides the hours worked in order to do job | 3 | 7 | 11 | 14 | 19 | 11 |
| *Unweighted base* | *99* | *332* | *324* | *333* | *192* | *1319* |

*Base: all employees*
*Bases for employees who are 66 or over are very small and therefore they have not been presented in this table*
*Base for 18-25 is <100 and therefore findings should be treated with some caution*

While uncertainty over working hours affects younger and older workers alike, younger workers have the greatest uncertainty about their short-term working hours. Nearly a fifth (17%) of those aged 18-25 have changing working hours given at short notice compared with only 5% of those aged 36-65. Older workers also have greater self-determination over their working hours, with a fifth (19%) of those aged 56-65 deciding their own hours compared with a very small minority (3%) of those aged 18-25.

Despite being more likely to have precarious work than other age groups, younger workers are more confident than older workers about their medium-term employment prospects, and their ability to get a job that is 'as good' if they lose the job they have now. If precarity is indeed the new norm of the UK labour market, these findings suggest that younger workers have adapted to it.

## The robots are coming

Structural change is inevitable as economic and technological developments continue to change the nature of work. Although the form and extent of this change is not yet known, it is clear that the labour market could be disrupted by robots and AI, and there will be

some job losses as a consequence. In fact, in some instances the robots have already arrived. Retailers Amazon and Ocado have, for example, already created distribution centres where product picking is done by robot rather than by human workers. To investigate the perceptions people had of their long-term job security we ask all respondents the following questions:

> ***Overall, how likely do you think it is that in the next 10 years, machines and computer programmes will do many of the jobs currently done by humans?***
>
> ***And what about your own job. How worried if at all, are you that in the next 10 years, your job might be done instead by machines and computer programmes?***[2]

**75% say that it is likely that many of the jobs currently done by humans will be done by machines or computer programmes in 10 years' time**

There is a clear perception among most of the public (75%) it is likely that many of the jobs currently done by humans will be done by machines or computer programmes in 10 years' time. Four-fifths (82%) of those of retirement age feel that automation would replace many existing jobs, more than any other age group (Table 6).

However while the public is clear that jobs will be lost to the clever robots, few think that their own jobs could be at risk. One in ten (10%) of those in work are "very" or "quite" worried that automation will be a threat to their job in the next 10 years. Responses vary by age, with those aged 36-45 most concerned (16%) about automation.

**Table 6 Attitudes to automation over the next 10 years, by age**

| | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65 | 66+ | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Likelihood many of the jobs currently done by humans will be done by machines and computer programmes** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Definitely/probably will happen | 72 | 73 | 74 | 69 | 77 | 82 | 75 |
| Definitely/probably will not happen | 21 | 21 | 21 | 26 | 19 | 9 | 19 |
| *Unweighted base* | *148* | *365* | *390* | *423* | *419* | *662* | *2410* |
| **How worried job will be replaced by machines and computer programs?** + | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Very/quite worried | 11 | 10 | 16 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 10 |
| Not very/not at all worried | 83 | 86 | 80 | 88 | 80 | 51 | 81 |
| *Unweighted base* | *111* | *323* | *332* | *374* | *247* | *166* | *1556* |

+ *Base: all in work*

2 Those without a job were able to give this as an answer. These respondents are excluded from the analysis of this question.

Those on higher incomes appear less concerned by the threat of automation. Very few workers (6%) in the highest income group say that they are "very" or "quite" worried about robots or computer programs replacing their job in the next 10 years, compared with a fifth (15%) of workers in the lowest income group. Higher paid workers may be justified in their confidence: although estimates of the impact of automation vary considerably, there is consensus that the focus of job losses will be in sectors such as transport, manufacturing and retail. This evidence perhaps also reflects that higher income jobs are also generally higher skilled (Goos and Manning, 2007) and therefore more complex and so less easy to replace with automation (Muñoz-de-Bustillo Llorente, 2016).

To investigate further, we carried out logistic regression to assess whether people with differing educational qualifications have varying perceptions of the threat posed by automation to their job (the results of this analysis are found in Table A.1 in the appendix to this chapter). The analysis included age as a covariate, as those approaching retirement age may have less fear about losing their job if they are likely to no longer be working. The results of this analysis indicate that, when controlling for age, those with GCSE or equivalent qualifications and below as their highest educational qualification attained are significantly more likely to be "very" or "quite" worried about a machine or computer program replacing them at work within the next decade (see Table A.1 in the appendix to this chapter).

**On the one hand the public thinks that there will be significant job automation by robots, on the other hand, they believe that their own jobs will be safe**

Nevertheless, across all groups there is less anxiety about the march of the machines than media and policy debates would suggest. There is a very significant dissonance in the responses: on the one hand the public thinks that there will be significant job automation by robots, on the other hand, they believe that their own jobs will be safe.

This confidence of younger groups that the robots are coming (but not for my job) is particularly striking. Those in our younger age groups (18-25 and 26-35) will spend their working lives in a labour market that is evolving at pace in response to disruptive and transformative technology. Relatively conservative assessments suggest that just over 10% of UK workers are in roles that are highly automatable (Arntz et al., 2016), and this process of automation will take place over the next few decades. In addition to displacing jobs, automation will likely require young people to adapt their skills on an ongoing basis (PWC, 2017), something that is recognised in government proposals for a National Retraining Scheme (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2017). If more pessimistic models of our labour market future crystalise, young people may also face significant periods of underemployment and unemployment.

If technological change drives further polarisation of the labour market or even a permanent reduction in human work, then more fundamental welfare reform may be needed to address low pay,

precarity and long-term unemployment, particularly among citizens with disabilities and long term health conditions. In the next section, we explore attitudes to welfare.

## Covering the cost of living

As the shape of the labour market has changed over recent decades with rising precarity of work and entrenched income inequality, we might expect to see concomitant changes in attitudes to welfare, including rising support for both income supplements and unemployment benefits.

This section investigates who the British public feels should be responsible for ensuring people have an adequate income: employers, the state or the individuals themselves? We also explore whether changes to the labour market are engendering different attitudes to welfare for different age groups.

We ask respondents a series of questions about pay and different approaches to ensuring pay meets workers' living costs. First we explore whether the public believes the burden is on employers or individuals to ensure jobs pay enough to cover the basic cost of living.

We ask all respondents:

> ***Which of these statements comes closer to your view?***
>
> > ***Employers should be made to pay a wage that would cover a basic cost of living***
> >
> > ***People are responsible for finding work that pays enough to cover the cost of their living***

Three-quarters (77%) feel that employers should pay a wage that covers the basic cost of living. Only a fifth (18%) say that people should be responsible themselves for finding work that pays enough to cover the cost of living. Women are more likely to think that the employer is responsible for paying wages that cover the cost of living than men (81% and 73% respectively). Those approaching retirement age (56-65, 80%) and younger (18-25, 82%) respondents are more likely to say that this burden is the employer's than those in the middle of working age (36-55, 74%).

There are a number of policy options for governments trying to mitigate the risk of low pay. One such policy is the National Minimum Wage, first introduced in 1999. At its introduction, the imposition of a wage floor was hotly disputed, as some feared that it could lead to an increase in unemployment. However, consistent econometric analyses have found little or no evidence of negative employment effects arising from the minimum wage (Rand, 2016). In 2015, George Osborne announced the introduction of a new National Living Wage to tackle low pay for over-25s. The aim of the National Living Wage is to ensure that minimum wages reach 60% of median earnings by 2020 (a traditional measure of relative poverty).

To gauge what the public thinks about the current rate of minimum wage, we ask all respondents:

> ***Do you think the minimum wage should be increased, reduced or kept at the same level it is now?***

**71% think that the minimum wage should be increased**

A clear majority (71%) feel that the minimum wage should be increased, with no evidence of divergence between different groups. Only a quarter (24%) believe that it should be kept at its current rate and very few (1%) believe it should be lowered.

An alternative to imposing a wage floor is for governments to supplement the incomes of low-paid individuals using welfare payments. Since 2003, the government has provided supplementary income in the form of Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits, which have now been integrated into Universal Credit as part of the welfare reform programme. While entitlement to tax credits has risen substantially over this period, the percentage of spend given to working families has fluctuated between 51% and 57% (HM Revenue and Customs, 2017). To investigate the level of support for such a policy, we ask all respondents the following:

> ***Some working couples with children find it hard to make ends meet on low wages. In these circumstances, do you think…***
>
> ***… the government should top-up their wages,***
>
> ***… or, is it up to the couple to look after themselves and their children as best they can?***

> ***And what about working couples <u>without</u> children? If they find it hard to make ends meet on low wages, do you think …***
>
> ***… the government should top-up their wages,***
>
> ***… or, is it up to the couple to look after themselves as best they can?***

> ***And what about working <u>lone</u> parents? If they find it hard to make ends meet on low wages, do you think …***
>
> ***… the government should top-up their wages,***
>
> ***… or, is it up to the parents to look after themselves and their children as best they can?***

**Support for topping up low wages is closely associated with whether people have children, a position that is consistent with attitudes to welfare overall**

As Table 7 shows, a majority (58%) feel that the government should top up the wages of working couples with children. A substantial majority (70%) feel the government should top up the wages of working lone parents. However, there is less public support for working couples without children having their low wages topped up by the state (31%). Here, the dominant view is that working couples without children are responsible for ”look[ing] after themselves as best they can” (56%). These responses suggest that support for topping up low wages is closely associated with children, a position

that is consistent with attitudes to welfare overall, where benefits to families with children are viewed far more positively than benefits to unemployed adults (see Figure 1) later in the chapter.

While support for the minimum wage is high across all groups, there are divergences between younger and older groups when it comes to topping up wages for families with children, with younger respondents consistently more supportive of state intervention than older respondents.

Two-thirds (67%) of people aged 18-25 feel that the government should top up the wages of working couples with children, compared with less than half (46%) of those of retirement age (those over 66 years old). There is even stronger support among young people for the government topping up low wages of lone parents. Four-fifths (79%) of those aged 18-25 support state intervention compared with three-fifths (57%) of those aged 66 or older. A notable minority are unable to choose between the various statements (14%, 13% and 11% respectively).

**Table 7 Attitudes to topping up low wages, by age**

| | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56-65 | 66+ | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Working couples with children** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| The government should top up their wages | 67 | 62 | 66 | 61 | 54 | 46 | 58 |
| It is up to the couple to look after themselves and their children as best they can | 20 | 23 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 37 | 27 |
| **Working couples without children** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| The government should top up their wages | 34 | 33 | 33 | 31 | 34 | 22 | 31 |
| It is up to the couple to look after themselves as best they can | 55 | 51 | 54 | 56 | 53 | 63 | 56 |
| **Working lone parents** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| The government should top up their wages | 79 | 74 | 79 | 73 | 65 | 57 | 70 |
| It is up to the parents to look after themselves as best they can | 12 | 11 | 12 | 16 | 22 | 26 | 17 |
| *Unweighted base* | *148* | *365* | *390* | *423* | *419* | *662* | *2410* |

It is possible that this greater sympathy for the principle that the government should top up the wages of families with children is itself associated with the changing structure of the labour market. For younger age groups, the concept of the 'family job' where a single working class wage could support a whole family is an idea from the distant past: juggling work and childcare is now the norm.

So far we have considered how to support people in work and on low pay, but how should the unemployed be supported? In order to gauge respondent views on unemployment and its drivers, we ask all respondents whether they agree or disagree with the statement about how easy it would be for an unemployed person to get a job in their local area:

> ***Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they wanted one***

The British public appears fairly bullish about job prospects for the unemployed, with over half (56%) feeling that most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted to, compared with less than a fifth (18%) who disagree. This high level of support for the idea that getting a job is relatively easy does not vary by age, education level or income.

However if the predictions about automation are right and the future is one in which technology drives up unemployment substantially (Frey and Osborne, 2013), public attitudes to and support for welfare benefits may become increasingly important.

We ask all respondents about support for increasing government spending on a range of welfare benefits:

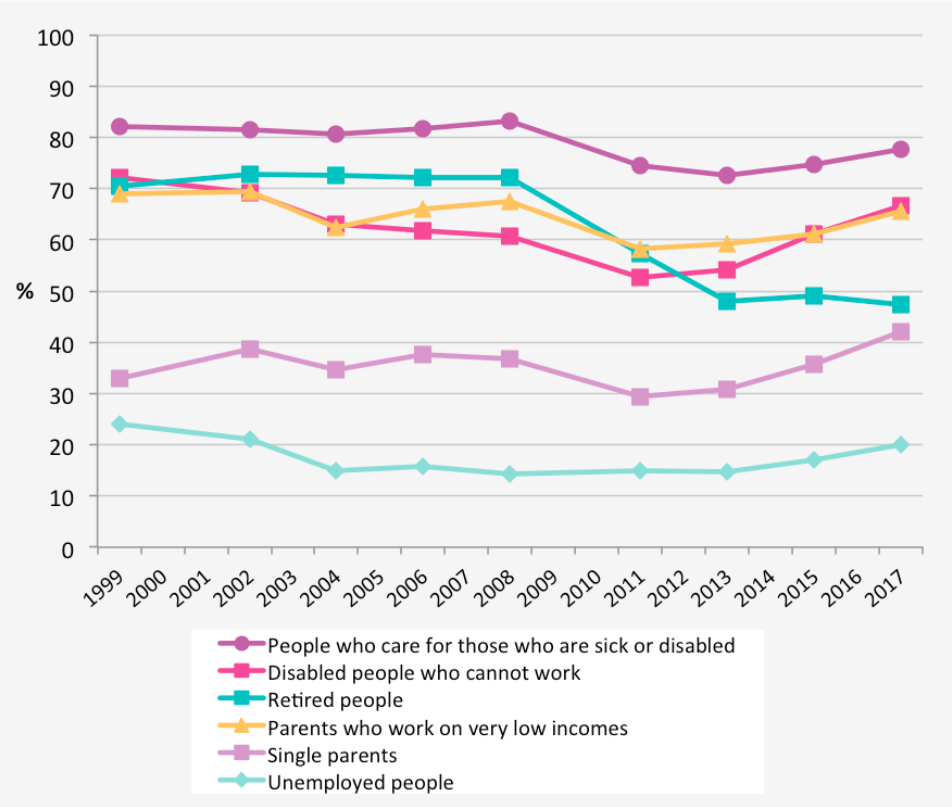
> ***Some people think that there should be more government spending on social security, while other people disagree. For each of the groups I read out please say whether you would like to see more or less government spending on them than now. Bear in mind that if you want more spending, this would probably mean that you would have to pay more taxes. If you want less spending, this would probably mean paying less taxes.***

**Attitudes towards benefits for the unemployed have always been sterner relative to other groups**

The benefits we asked respondents about are for: the unemployed; disabled people who cannot work; parents who work on very low incomes; single parents; retired people; people who care for those who are sick, and disabled retired people.

As Figure 1 shows, attitudes towards benefits for the unemployed have always been sterner relative to other groups. However, in 2017 one fifth (20%) support higher benefits for the unemployed. While this may seem a fairly low level of public support, it is the highest proportion since 2002, suggesting British attitudes towards the unemployed are softening. This can be contrasted with the trend regarding increasing support for retired people, which continues to fall.

**Figure 1 Proportion saying the government should spend more on different benefit claimants, 1999-2017**




*The data on which Figure 1 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

We also ask whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

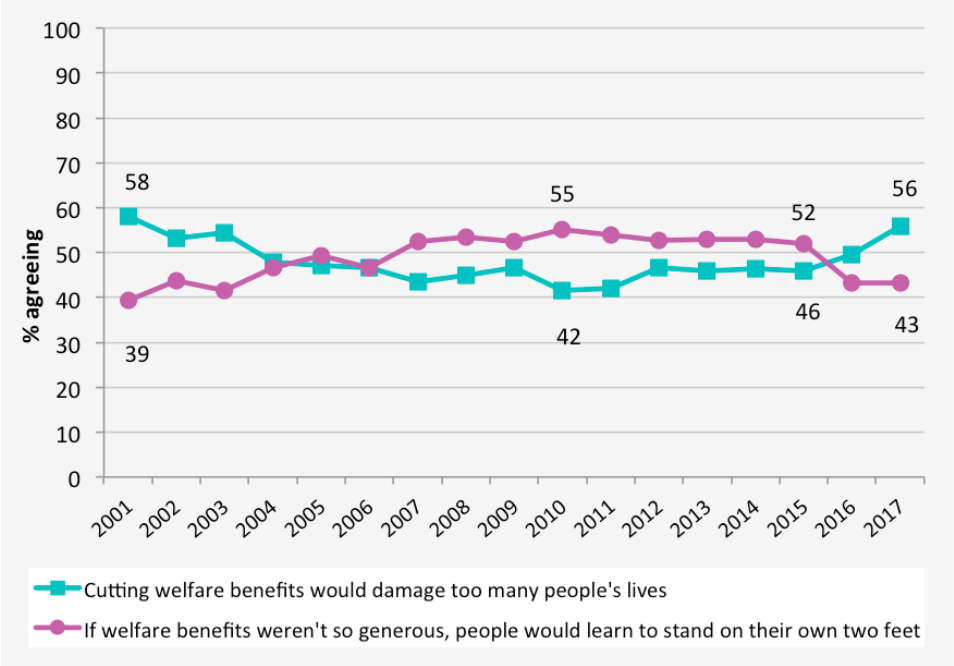
> ***If welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet***
>
> ***Cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives***

In 2001, approximately two-fifths (39%) of people agreed that the generosity of welfare benefits creates dependence (see Figure 2). This rose steadily over the decade to just under three-fifths (55%) in 2010. For the duration of the coalition government (2010-2015) the proportion of the public agreeing with this statement appeared relatively stable. However, in the last two years there has been a marked drop in support for this statement. In 2017 only two-fifths (43%) agree (see Figure 2).

**In the last couple of years there has been a sharp rise in the proportion of people who agree that cutting benefits would damage too many lives**

Over the same time period, we can see a corresponding change in the proportion who are concerned about the impact of cuts to welfare on people's lives. In 2001, three-fifths (58%) of people felt that cutting benefits would damage too many people's lives. This proportion fell steadily to two-fifths (42%) in 2011. However in the last couple of years there has been a sharp rise in the proportion of people who agree with this statement, highlighting a possible tipping point in public attitudes towards welfare spending cuts.

**Figure 2 Views on the impact of welfare benefits, 2001-2017**

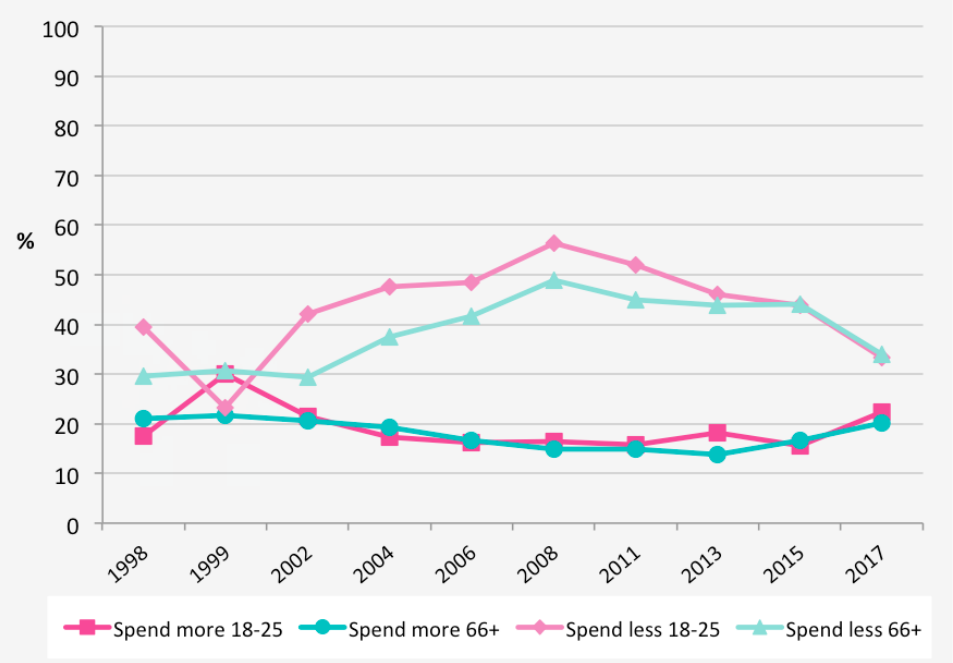



*The data on which Figure 2 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

**Two-thirds (65%) of young people are concerned that cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives, compared with half (53%) of older people**

In addition to an overall softening of attitudes towards unemployed people, there are significant differences in the views of older and young people when it comes to welfare. Just over a third (35%) of younger people (18-25) agree that welfare benefits create dependency, compared with half (50%) of those aged 66 or older. Similarly, two-thirds (65%) of young people are concerned that cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives, compared with half (53%) of older people. However, when we ask about whether the government should spend more or spend less on unemployment benefits specifically, this difference between younger and older people disappears, and for both groups we see a marked increase in support for spending more on unemployment benefits, and a marked decrease for spending less on unemployment benefits over the last two years (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3 Proportion of 18-25 year olds and those who are 66+ who think we should spend more or spend less on unemployment benefits, 1998-2017**




*The data on which Figure 3 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

The British public as a whole feels strongly that work should pay, and pay enough to meet a basic standard of living. A substantial majority support the idea that employers should pay adequate wages, and the the government should increase the minimum wage. This indicates that the National Living Wage ambition to bring the minimum wage for over 25s up to the relative poverty line by 2020 is likely to be strongly endorsed. The picture in relation to topping up wages is more mixed, perhaps as a consequence of the strongly-held belief that providing an adequate wage is the responsibility of the employer, and attitudes to support for the unemployed are slowly but steadily softening.

There are some substantive differences of opinion between younger and older people in Britain about supporting people who are struggling to meet the cost of living. On average, younger people appear to have more sympathetic attitudes than their older peers when it comes to topping up wages, are less concerned about the concept of welfare dependency, and more concerned that cuts to welfare would damage people's lives.

## Conclusions

Debates about the future of work and, with it, the future of welfare are coming sharply into focus as economists and commentators predict labour market futures characterised by precarious employment, or even mass unemployment if the robots take over work. While some experts are concerned about this possible future, others eulogise it, claiming it will provide a welcome escape from wage labour.

Interestingly, while the majority of the public believes that the robots are indeed coming, and that many jobs currently done by humans will be done by robots in the future, they are equally clear in their view that the robots are coming for other people's jobs, not their own. Anxiety in the policy community and the commentariat about the negative consequences of automation has not yet spread to the general public. Only time will tell if this proves to be myopia from the public or hysteria from the 'experts'.

Perceptions of the availability of work now and in the future remain relatively buoyant. Most people are confident they could get another job if they became unemployed, and believe that unemployed people generally can find a job if they want one. At the same time, there appears to be growing concern that the government should do more to push up or top up wages, and that welfare benefits may be too low, including for unemployed people.

**Young people are confident about their employability and job security despite evidence suggesting that they will be most challenged by the impact of technological change**

There are important differences between the attitudes of young people as they enter the labour market and start their careers, and older people who are nearing retirement. Young people favour wage top ups more than older people and are more concerned about the potential impact of cuts to welfare spending. Most of all, they are confident about their employability and job security, including over the long term, despite evidence suggesting that it is precisely this generation who will be most challenged by the impact of technological change.

Whatever the future holds, given the public's positive attitudes towards work and changing attitudes to welfare, it seems likely that as the labour market changes the public will look to the government and employers to create new jobs to replace the old, rather than demanding fundamental reform of the welfare system.

## Acknowledgements

The National Centre for Social Research is grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Department for Work and Pensions for their financial support which enabled us to ask the questions reported in this chapter. The views expressed are those of the authors alone.

## References

Arntz, M., T. Gregory and U. Zierahn (2016), 'The Risk of Automation for Jobs in OECD Countries: A Comparative Analysis', *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 189, OECD Publishing, Paris

Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (2017), *Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain Fit for the Future,* available from*:* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2017), *To gig or not to gig? Stories from the modern economy*, London: CIPD. Avaiable from: www.cipd.co.uk/Images/to-gig-or-not-to-gig_2017-stories-from-the-modern-economy_tcm18-18955.pdf

Daguerre, A. and Etherington, D. (2009), *Active labour market policies in international context: what works best? Lessons from the UK*, Department for Work and Pensions

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2017), *Digital Skills for the UK Economy,* London, available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/492889/DCMSDigitalSkillsReportJan2016.pdf

Department for Work and Pensions (2017), *Fuller Working Lives A Partnership Approach*, Department for Work and Pensions, available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/587654/fuller-working-lives-a-partnership-approach.pdf

Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Health (2017), *Improving Lives: The Work, Health and Disability Green Paper*, available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564038/work-and-health-green-paper-improving-lives.pdf

Dwer, P (2004), 'Creeping Conditionality in the UK: From Welfare Rights to Conditional Entitlements?' *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 29, No2

Economist (2016), *March of the machines*, 25 June, 2012

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2015), *Is Britain Fairer? The state of equality and human rights 2015*

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (2015), *'Upgrading or polarisation? Long-term and global shifts in the employment structure',* European Jobs Monitor 2015, Dublin, Eurofound

Findlay, P., Kalleberg, A. and Warhurst, C. (2013), 'The challenge of job quality', *Human Relations*, **66(4):** 441-451

Franklin et al (2014), *The missing million: illuminating the employment challenges of the over 50s. Joint report for ILC-UK*, PRIME and BITC

Frey, C. B. and Osborne, M. A. (2013), *The Future of Employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation,* Oxford Martin Programme on Technology and Employment, University of Oxford

Goos, M. and Manning, A. (2007), 'Lousy Jobs and Lovely Jobs: The rising polorization of work in Britain', *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, **89(1):** 118-133

HM Revenues and Customs (2017), *Child and Working Tax Credit Statistics: Finalised annual awards in 2015-16,* available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/617128/Child_and_Working_Tax_Credits_statistics_finalised_annual_awards_-_2015_to_2016.pdf

Knox, A., Warhurst, C., Nickson, D. and Dutton, E. (2015), 'More than a feeling: using hotel room attendants to improve understanding of job quality', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **26(12)**: 1546-1567

Lepanjuuri, K., Wishart, R. and Cornick, P. (2018), *'The characteristics of those in the gig economy'* Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, London

Loretto, W., Phillipson, C. and Vikcerstaff, S. (2017), *'Skills and training for the older generation: Training the new work generation'* in Warhurst, C., Mayhew, K., Finegold, D. and Buchanan, J. (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Skills and Training,* Oxford: Oxford University Press

McGuiness, F. (2018), *Income Inequality in the UK: House of Commons Briefing Paper 7484*, House of Commons Library

Muñoz de Bustillo, R. Fernández-Macías, E., Esteve, F. and Antón, J. (2011), *'Measuring More than Money: The Social Economics of Job Quality'*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Muñoz de Bustillo, R. (2016), 'The coming of the robots: what implications for job quality?', available from: www.bryder.nu/quinne1/node/33

Office for National Statistics (2017), *Labour Market Statistics Timeseries*

Purcell, K., Elias, P., Green, A., Mizen, P, Simms, M., Whiteside, N., Wilson, D., Robertson, A. and Tzanakou, C. (2017), *Present tense, future imperfect? Young people's pathways into work,* Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick

PWC (2017), *Will Robots Really Steal Our Jobs: an international analysis of the potential long term impact of automation,* available from: www.pwc.co.uk/economic-services/assets/international-impact-of-automation-feb-2018.pdf

Rand (2016), 'The Impact of the National Living Wage on Employment: A meta-analysis', Cambridge, UK

Rubery, J. (2015), 'Change at Work: Feminisation, flexibilisation, fragmentation, and financialisation', *Employee Relations*, **37(6)**: 633-644

Stuart, F., Pautz, H., Crimin, S. and Wright, S. (2016), *What Makes for Decent Work? A Study with Low Paid Workers*, Oxfam UK

Taylor, M. (2017), *Good Work: The Taylor review of modern working practices*, London: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Warhurst C., Mathieu, C. and Wright, S. (2017), 'Workplace Innovation and the Quality of Working Life in an Age of Uberisation', in Oeij, P., Rus, D., and Pot, F. D. (eds.) *Workplace Innovation: Theory, Research and Practice*. Heidelberg: Springer

Warhurst, C., Mathieu, C. and Wright, S. (2018f), 'Vorsprung durch Technik: the future of work, digital technology and the politics of the platform economy' in Bennett, L. (ed.) *Future of Work*, Chicago: University of Chicago

# Appendix

In Table A.1 we present a logistic regression where the dependent variable is whether the respondent is not worried (worries "a little" or not at all) that their job will be replaced by machines or computer programs. A positive coefficient indicates a higher score while a negative coefficient indicates a lower score. For categorical variables, the reference category is shown in brackets after the category heading.

**Table A.1 Machines or computer replacing the respondent's job within the next decade – logistic regression**

| | Coefficient | Standard error | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age (continuous)** | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.11 |
| **Education (no qualifications)** | | | |
| O level or equivalent | **0.75 | 0.29 | 0.010 |
| A level or equivalent | **1.26 | 0.30 | 0.000 |
| Degree and higher education | **1.43 | 0.30 | 0.000 |
| Constant | 0.65 | 0.42 | 0.119 |
| R2 (adjusted) | 0.03 | | |
| *Unweighted base: 1336* | | | |

**=significant at 95% level **=significant at 99% level*

The data in Tables A.2, A.3, A.4 and A.5 are explored in the introduction.

**Table A.2 Attitudes to work**

| | All |
|---|---|
| **A job is just a way of earning money – no more** | % |
| Agree | 28 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 18 |
| Disagree | 50 |
| **I would enjoy having a paid job even if I did not need the money** | % |
| Agree | 59 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 19 |
| Disagree | 16 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2410* |

**Table A.3 Attitudes to work and its relationship with health**

| | All |
|---|---|
| **Relationship between work and mental health** | % |
| Good | 90 |
| Bad | 5 |
| **Relationship between work and physical health** | % |
| Good | 83 |
| Bad | 6 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2963* |

**Table A.4 Attitudes to returning to work after recovering from a back problem**

| | All |
|---|---|
| **When should this person be expected to return to work** | % |
| As soon as they can do some of their job | 40 |
| As soon as they can do most of their job | 40 |
| Not until they can do all of their job | 20 |
| **In principle, going back to work quickly will help speed their recovery** | % |
| Agree | 41 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 29 |
| Disagree | 29 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2963* |

**Table A.5 Attitudes to returning to work after recovering from depression by age**

| | All |
|---|---|
| **When should this person be expected to return to work** | % |
| As soon as they can do some of their job | 39 |
| As soon as they can do most of their job | 37 |
| Not until they can do all of their job | 22 |
| **In principle, going back to work quickly will help speed their recovery** | % |
| Agree | 52 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 26 |
| Disagree | 20 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2963* |

## The data on which Figure 1 is based on are as follows:

**Table A.6 Proportion saying the government should spend more on different benefit claimants, 1999-2017**

| | 1999 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **% who say should spend more on…** | | | | | | | | | |
| Unemployed people | 24 | 21 | 15 | 16 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 20 |
| Disabled people who cannot work | 72 | 69 | 63 | 62 | 61 | 53 | 54 | 61 | 67 |
| Parents who work on very low incomes | 69 | 69 | 62 | 66 | 67 | 58 | 59 | 61 | 66 |
| Single parents | 33 | 39 | 35 | 38 | 37 | 29 | 31 | 36 | 42 |
| Retired people | 70 | 73 | 73 | 72 | 72 | 57 | 48 | 49 | 47 |
| People who care for those who are sick or disabled | 82 | 82 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 74 | 73 | 75 | 78 |
| *Unweighted base* | *3143* | *3435* | *3199* | *3240* | *3358* | *3311* | *3244* | *3266* | *2963* |

## The data on which Figure 2 is based on are as follows:

**Table A.7 Views on the impact of welfare benefits, 2001-2017**

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % agree if welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet | 39 | 44 | 42 | 47 | 49 | 47 | 53 | 54 | 53 |
| % agree cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives | 58 | 53 | 54 | 48 | 47 | 47 | 44 | 45 | 47 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2795* | *2900* | *873* | *2609* | *2699* | *2822* | *2672* | *3000* | *967* |

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % agree if welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet | 55 | 54 | 53 | 53 | 53 | 52 | 43 | 43 |
| % agree cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives | 42 | 42 | 47 | 46 | 46 | 46 | 50 | 56 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2791* | *2845* | *2855* | *2832* | *2376* | *2781* | *2400* | *3258* |

The data on which Figure 3 is based on are as follows:

**Table A.8 Proportion of 18-25 year olds and those who are 66+ who think we should spend more or spend less on unemployment benefits, 1998-2017**

| | 1998 | 1999 | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **% say should spend more** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-25 | 18 | 30 | 21 | 17 | 16 | 17 | 16 | 18 | 16 | 22 |
| 66+ | 21 | 22 | 21 | 19 | 17 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 17 | 20 |
| *Unweighted base* | *3146* | *3143* | *3435* | *3199* | *3240* | *3358* | *3311* | *3244* | *3266* | *2963* |
| **% say should spend less** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-25 | 39 | 23 | 42 | 48 | 48 | 56 | 52 | 46 | 44 | 33 |
| 66+ | 30 | 31 | 29 | 38 | 42 | 49 | 45 | 44 | 44 | 34 |
| *Unweighted base* | *3146* | *3143* | *3435* | *3199* | *3240* | *3358* | *3311* | *3244* | *3266* | *2963* |

# Gender

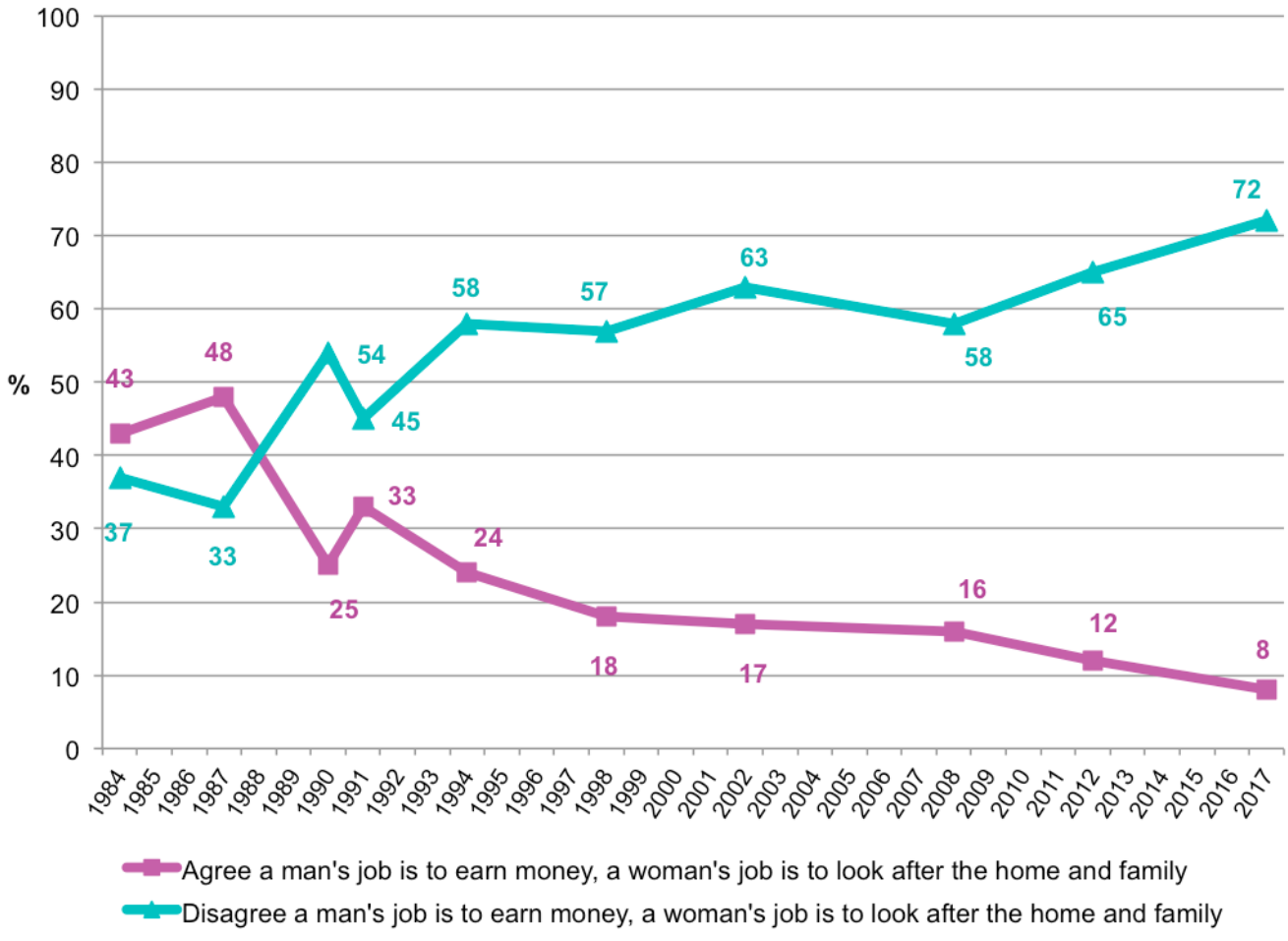
## New consensus or continuing battleground?

In this chapter we explore changing attitudes towards gender roles in work and at home, as well as views on online sexist bullying and unsolicited comments. We find the British public continues to move away from conservative views of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers, with narrowing divides in views between different demographic and socio-economic groups. Despite this the past five years have seen little change in views of whether mothers should work. Meanwhile there is near consensus in condemning online sexist bullying, and making comments on a woman's appearance in the street is widely seen as wrong.

## Spotlight

Views on gender roles have become less traditional over the past three decades, including a notable change in attitudes since 2008.

**Views on traditional gender roles, 1984-2017**



# Overview

## Traditional views of gender roles continue to decline

**Views on gender roles continue to become more progressive, and this is particularly true of traditionally conservative groups.**

- 72% disagree with the view that a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family, up from 58% in 2008.
- Older people, people with no formal qualifications and people with lower incomes are more likely than other groups to hold traditional gender role views.
- But these divisions are narrowing; for example while in 2012 only 30% of people aged 75+ disagreed with this statement, now nearly half do (47%). This corresponds with a a 46 percentage point gap in 2012 between the oldest (75+) and youngest (18-34) age groups, that has now reduced to 27 points.

## Divisions on working mothers

**There is now little public consensus on whether mothers of young children should work or stay at home, representing a shift away from a preference for mothers to stay at home.**

- While a third (33%) say mothers of pre-school children should stay at home, 38% say mothers should work part-time, and 7% full-time.
- There has been substantial change in this area since 1989, when 64% said mothers of pre-school children should stay at home. But much of this change happened leading up to 2012, and views have remained relatively static over the past five years.
- Notably a fifth (20%) do not choose an option, up from just 6% in 1989.

## Comments on a stranger's appearance on the street widely seen as wrong

**A majority see unsolicited comments towards women as wrong, and there is near consensus against online sexist bullying of women.**

- 57% say it is "always" or "usually" wrong for a man to comment on a woman's appearance in the street. This view is more common among men (61%) than women (52%).
- Fewer (45%) think it is wrong for a woman to comment on a man's appearance in the street, but conversely this view is more common among women (54%) than men (35%).
- An overwhelming majority (93%) say sexist online bullying towards women is wrong, while 85% say the same about sexist online bullying directed at men.

**Authors**

**Eleanor Attar Taylor**,
Senior Researcher and Co-Director of the British Social Attitudes series, The National Centre for Social Research

**Jacqueline Scott,**
Professor Emerita of Empirical Sociology and Fellow of Queens' College, University of Cambridge

# Introduction

Debates surrounding gender roles and equality have been a feature of British society since at least the eighteenth century but have gained renewed prominence in British public debate during recent months and years. In February 2018 we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918, which gave some women over the age of 30 the right to vote for the first time. December 2018 marks 100 years since the first general election in which women voted in the UK. Such anniversaries, together with other high-profile news events, have focused attention afresh on the roles and experiences of men and women in contemporary society.

British society has, in many ways, made substantial progress towards greater gender equality. More women are in paid employment than ever before: 71% of women aged 16-64 are in paid work, the highest employment rate since records began (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Increasing rates of employment for women are attributed to anti-discrimination legislation (Equal Pay Act, 1970, Sex Discrimination Act and Employment Protection Act, 1975), changes to support for lone parents and the increase in state pension age for women. At the same time, wider changes in the British labour market have seen the growth in services, where women are more likely to work than men, and the decline of the traditionally male-dominated manufacturing sector (Office for National Statistics, 2013). As a result of these changes, including an increase in mothers in work and a decline in male employment, women now represent just under half of the total UK labour force.

**Women now represent just under half of the total UK labour force**

Despite men and women now having the same rights under UK law, women still experience significant inequalities in many different areas of life (Baker, 2014). Women with low or no qualifications have much lower employment levels than men with equivalent backgrounds. Women are also more likely than men to be in low paid jobs: 25% of employed women have low pay compared with 15% of employed men (Tinson et. al., 2016). Recently, increasing attention has been paid to the 'gender pay gap', with publication for the first time of figures showing the extent of pay differences between men and women in the UK. Analysis of these figures gives a measure of the difference in men's and women's working patterns which underlie disparities in pay: different occupations, part-time roles being predominantly female and the lack of women in senior roles (Jones, 2018). Campaigners maintain that these inequalities are damaging the quality of people's lives, harming relationships, limiting the effectiveness of businesses and institutions and restricting the potential of our children to reach their full potential.

Over the last decade, there has also been a marked increase in the public spotlight on issues of behaviour, how men treat women including so called 'mansplaining' (Solnit, 2014) and what is or is not appropriate sexual behaviour. Exposés of sexual harassment have resulted in high profile scandals in media, business, and charity

sectors, including resignations of government ministers. The #MeToo social media campaign, which spread virally in October 2017, helped demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace.

However, what is perceived by some as progress is often met by a backlash from others. Some have claimed that the 'cultural wars', that have long been part-and-parcel of American civic and political life, have become an increasingly important part of the British social landscape (Bagehot, 2017). Mary Beard (2017), an academic who was a victim of online abuse, talks of this as the 'silencing' of women, which she claims can be tracked back to ancient civilizations and is still manifest in modern Britain. Opinion seems divided on what the real issues are, and whether responses are proportionate or appropriate.

This chapter examines three potential fault lines of gender politics. First, attitudes towards gender roles in the home and in the labour market, including attitudes towards parental leave. Second, whether there are 'essential' differences between men and women in terms of skills and job suitability. And third, attitudes to the treatment of women and men, in terms of unsolicited comments in the street and online bullying.

Across all these topic areas, the aim is to find out whether there is increasing consensus or an ongoing divergence of opinion. In other words, we want to examine how far the language of 'culture wars' and 'lines of battle' is an appropriate description of how the British public views a range of gender issues. We also seek to go beyond this to unpack who thinks what across different demographic divides. Existing research suggests that persisting cultural differences are found along key social stratification divides: gender, age and class (Esping-Andersen, 2009, Scott et al., 2010). Moreover, these divides remain important even when other relevant factors, including religion, marital status and women's employment are taken into account (Braun and Scott, 2009). Therefore, in order to explore key divides among the British public, we address the following questions: do attitudes towards gender politics differ between men and women? If so how and by how much? Is this affected by age? And are there differences according to education and/or income?

## Gender roles – at home and in the labour market

In this section, we consider three aspects of attitudes towards men and women's roles in the home and in employment: first, attitudes to the division of labour, within and outside the home; second, views on mothers' employment in different circumstances; and third, how the public thinks a dual earner couple should divide parental leave.

Scott and Clery's (2013) analysis of almost 30 years of British attitudes to gender roles, found considerable changes in the way the public viewed the gender role divide. They predicted that while we might expect to see further reductions in support for a gender division of labour in subsequent years, the speed of change in attitudes would slow down. This is because the attitudinal gap between different generations was narrowing, as it became increasingly acceptable and economically necessary for women and mothers to be employed.

Here, we extend their analysis by looking particularly at how attitudes have changed since 2012: have we seen a continuing revolution in gender role attitudes or has the pace of change slowed or stalled? And to what extent are British attitudes in consensus or divided on such important and timely issues? And what are the differences between different groups?

During this time, there have been several policy changes aiming to support working families to balance work and childcare. In 2015, Shared Parental Leave was introduced to give greater childcare flexibility for parents in the first year after their baby is born (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and Department for Education, 2013). Then, in 2017, the government increased the free hours of childcare for three- and four-year-olds available for working parents from 15 to 30 hours (Department for Education, 2015). How do such initiatives relate to public opinion?

## How have views on gender roles in the home and workplace changed over time?

Since the mid-1980s, British Social Attitudes (BSA) has included attitudinal questions asking about the role of men and women within the family, in particular around providing an income from work versus a caring role at home. In 2017, we continue this time-series by asking respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following two statements:

> ***A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family***
>
> ***Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income***

Given that these questions were first asked more than three decades ago, the fact that the questions focus only on heterosexual couples is no surprise. An additional challenge for interpretation is that the questions are designed to tap into 'agreement' with 'traditional' gender roles, but the reasons for rejecting these strict divisions is far less clear. An individual's personal reasons for selecting a particular response might include endorsement of the right of both men and women to participate in the labour market and/or supporting greater gender equality in the home, but also might reflect the view that such decisions should be a matter of individual choice. We must keep this in mind when reviewing these findings.

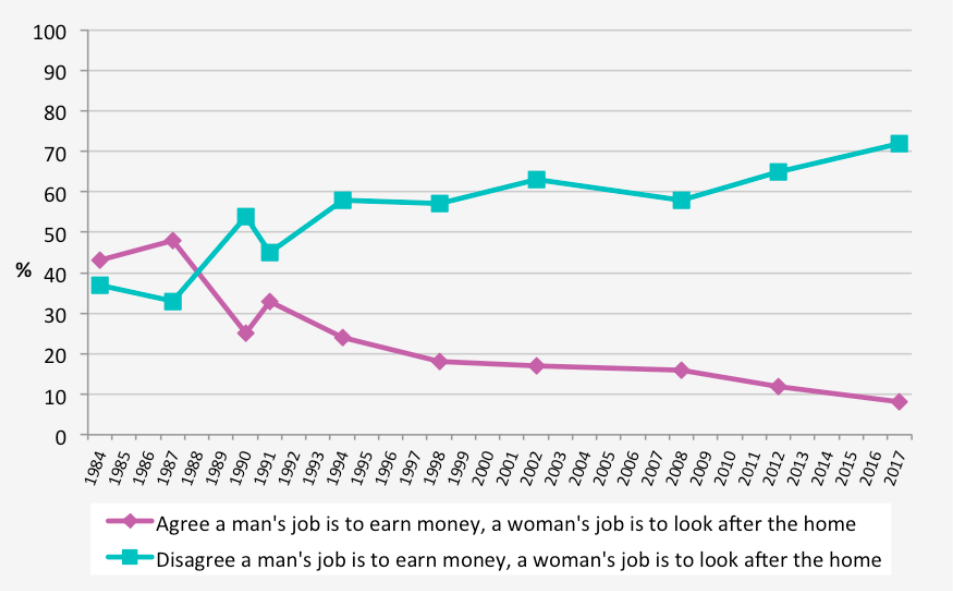
**A traditional view of gender roles in a household for men and women is now relatively rare**

What is clear is that a traditional view of gender roles in a household for men and women is now relatively rare; less than one in ten (8%) agree that "a man's job is to earn money", and "a woman's job is to look after the home and family", while over seven in ten (72%) disagree with this statement (Figure 1). Similarly, 72% agree that "both the man and the woman should contribute to the household income", while only 4% disagree.[1]

By contrast, when the gender roles question was first asked in 1984, 43% of the British public agreed that a man should be the breadwinner and a woman the homemaker, while just 37% disagreed with this view. By the early 1990s traditional views of gender roles were in swift decline, and while this stabilised somewhat during the 2000s, the decrease has continued steadily since. This trend has been mirrored by increasing agreement that both men and women should contribute to the household income; from 53% in 1989 to 72% in 2017.

Given the scale of societal change in the number of women participating in the labour market over the past three decades, it is unsurprising that the long-term trend has been towards more progressive (less traditional) views. But even looking to the short-term, the past five years have seen a further shift away from traditional views. Agreement that men and women should contribute to the household income rose from 62% in 2012 to 72% in 2017, and in the same time period disagreement with the male breadwinner-female housewife model increased from 65% to 72%.

**Figure 1 Views of traditional gender roles, 1984-2017**




*The data on which Figure 1 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

1 The full data for this question from 1989 to 2017 can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

A key question then is does the continued liberalisation of views of gender roles over the past five years reflect a cross-societal change, or have we seen differential rates of change among particular groups? In Table 1 we present the proportion of people disagreeing with a gendered separation of roles, indicating a non-traditional view of gender roles within the household, by a number of demographic variables.

Overall, there is a broad consensus between the sexes in rejecting the traditional gender role divide, although women are a little more likely than men to disagree with traditional gender roles (74% compared with 69% for men). Unsurprisingly, there is a significant age gap in views of gender roles: older people are more likely to hold more traditional views than younger people - around half (47%) of those in the oldest age group (75 or older) disagree with the statement "a man's job is to earn money and a woman's job is to look after the home", compared with three-quarters (75%) of the youngest age group (18-34). However, the past five years have seen a convergence of the views of older and younger people (illustrated by the fall from a 46 percentage point difference between oldest and youngest groups in 2012 to 27 points in 2017). This has been driven largely by an increase in progressive views among those in the older age groups.

**The past five years have seen a convergence of the views of older and younger people**

**Table 1 View of gender roles, by demographics, 1991-2017**

| % disagree a man's job is to earn money; a woman`s job is to look after the home and family | 1991 | 2002 | 2012 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | | | | |
| Men | 41 | 58 | 66 | 69 |
| Women | 47 | 67 | 64 | 74 |
| Difference Men-Women | -6 | -9 | +2 | -6 |
| **Age** | | | | |
| 18-34 | 67 | 78 | 76 | 75 |
| 35-44 | 54 | 73 | 72 | 77 |
| 45-54 | 44 | 69 | 64 | 79 |
| 55-64 | 25 | 52 | 67 | 72 |
| 65-74 | 16 | 41 | 50 | 67 |
| 75+ | 11 | 24 | 30 | 47 |
| Difference youngest group-oldest group | +55 | +54 | +46 | +27 |
| **Highest educational qualification** | | | | |
| Degree | 67 | 78 | 81 | 82 |
| Higher education or A-level | 54 | 70 | 72 | 79 |
| GCSE, O level, CSE or equivalent | 46 | 64 | 60 | 62 |
| No qualifications | 31 | 44 | 42 | 55 |
| Difference degree-no qualifications | +36 | +34 | +39 | +28 |
| **Household income group** | | | | |
| £3,701 or more per month | 53 | 74 | 72 | 84 |
| £2,201 to £3,700 per month | 50 | 71 | 68 | 73 |
| £1,201 to £2,200 per month | 30 | 57 | 57 | 64 |
| Less than £1,200 per month | 23 | 44 | 57 | 60 |
| Difference highest-lowest income group | +30 | +30 | +15 | +24 |
| **All** | 44 | 63 | 65 | 72 |

*The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing differences between groups in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

As well as a difference between age groups, there is also a clear divide between those with different levels of education; with 82% of graduates disagreeing that men should be breadwinners and women housewives, compared with 55% of those with no formal qualifications. Here we also see a narrowing of the gap between groups; since 2012 the difference between those with no formal qualifications and graduates has reduced from 39 points to 28 points, with those with no qualifications, in particular, becoming more progressive over time.

Analysis by income shows a similar pattern, with those in the higher income quartiles being more likely to disagree with the traditional view than those with lower income, but with the gap fluctuating over time. This finding is difficult to interpret. On one hand, those on higher incomes, who might be thought to have greater ability to choose to have one parent stay at home, are less likely to support traditional gender roles, indicating that the view goes beyond economic necessity. On the other, higher income families will, typically, be more likely to be dual-earner households and have the resources to employ alternative help for housework and/or childcare.

Gender, age, education and income are all correlated with views on gender roles. They are, of course, themselves linked; for example, younger people are more likely than older people to be graduates and those with higher education (of any age), are typically more likely to have higher income. Regression analysis confirms that the oldest age group and those with lower educational levels are more traditional in their gender role attitudes compared with younger people and those with higher educational levels, even when controlling for gender and income. In addition, women and higher income groups are more progressive (less traditional) than are men and low income groups, controlling for both age and education (full results for the multivariate analysis can be found in the appendix to this chapter).

While there are clear differences in attitudes between different demographic groups, these differences do seem to have narrowed over time, particularly in terms of reduced differences by age and education. However, as we indicated above, it is impossible to know whether disagreeing with the traditional gender-role divide indicates overall support for a principle of gender equality or greater endorsement of couples' right to decide their division of labour for themselves. In addition, we have seen that society as a whole has become less traditional in gender role attitudes over time, with seven in ten disagreeing that a man's job is to earn money and a woman's job is to look after the home and family in 2017. Will this progressive trend continue in the future? It seems likely that it will; because, as Scott and Clery (2013) suggested, the increasing rejection of traditional gender-roles is in line with changing social norms, including the greater acceptance of maternal employment.

## Should mothers of young children work outside the home?

One specific change that has led to an increase in the proportion of women in the labour market has been an increase in the number of mothers working. In 2017 almost three-quarters (74%) of mothers[2] in England were employed, an increase of 12 percentage points over the last 20 years (Office for National Statistics, 2017). However, mothers aged 16-49 are still less likely to be in employment than

2 This refers to mothers of working age with dependent children (living with their parent(s) and aged under 16, or 16-18 and in full-time education).

women of the same age without dependent children. At the beginning of September 2017, the government's 30 hours free childcare offer for working parents in England was launched (Department for Education, 2015). This is one of a raft of family-friendly initiatives, including flexible working and improved childcare provision, designed to support parents who wish to work or to work more hours.

Previous analyses of BSA data found that while very few believed there should be a clear gender divide in roles between male breadwinners and female home-keepers, there remained a substantial minority who believed mothers of young children should stay at home rather than take on paid work (Scott and Clery, 2013). But are these views changing over time? And do attitudes differ between different social groups?

On BSA we ask two questions on views about working mothers:

> ***Do you think that women should work outside the home full-time, part-time or not at all under the following circumstances?***
>
> ***When there is a child under school age***
>
> ***After the youngest child starts school***

When we ask about a mother of a child under school age, the most common view is that she should work part-time (38%), closely followed by the view she should stay at home (33%) (Table 2). Only a small minority (7%) think she should work full-time. However, once the youngest child has started school, a majority believe a mother should work either part-time (49%) or full-time (27%), with only 2% saying she should stay at home. For both scenarios a fifth of respondents cannot choose a response.

**Table 2 Attitudes to mothers' employment in different circumstances, 1989-2017**

| | When there is a child under school age | | | | When the youngest child has started school | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1989** | **2002** | **2012** | **2017** | **1989** | **2002** | **2012** | **2017** |
| **A woman should:** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Stay at home | 64 | 48 | 33 | 33 | 11 | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Work part-time | 26 | 34 | 43 | 38 | 68 | 66 | 52 | 49 |
| Work full-time | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 13 | 15 | 28 | 27 |
| Can't choose | 6 | 12 | 17 | 20 | 7 | 12 | 16 | 19 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1307* | *1960* | *950* | *2474* | *1307* | *1960* | *950* | *2474* |

*Answer options are presented in the table in reverse order to how they were presented to respondents*

**There has been a decline in the view that women should stay at home if they have a child under school age – from 64% in 1989, to 33% now**

Over time there has been a decline in the view that women should stay at home if they have a child under school age – down from almost two-thirds (64%) in 1989, to a third (33%) now, coinciding with an increased view that women with a child under school age

should work part-time (from 26% in 1989, to 38% now). However much of this change happened leading up to 2012, and the past five years have seen little change.

Views on whether a mother should work when her youngest child has started school have seen a different pattern of changes, although again little has changed since 2012. The view that a mother of a school-age child should work part-time has reduced over time, from 68% in 1989 to 49% in 2017. This has coincided with an increase in the proportion favouring full-time work (rising from 13% in 1989 to 27% now). Very few people now say that mothers of school-age children should say at home – 2% down from 11% in 1989.

For both questions, the proportion of people who cannot choose from the available options has increased over time; in 1989, 6%-7% said they could not choose an option, compared with 19%-20% now. One interpretation of this increased "can't choose" selection is that people's view of the question is now more nuanced; either that their response would depend on the situation, or that a mother's work status should not be prescribed by others. While men and women are similarly likely to say they "can't choose", being unable to choose appears to be related to age (younger and middle-age groups aged under 55), being more highly educated, and having a higher income.

In general, men and women have comparable views on mothers returning to work; although women are slightly more likely than men to favour a mother working part-time, both for mothers of pre-school children (41% of women, compared with 36% of men) and mothers of school-age children (52% of women, compared with 46% of men). On the other hand, men (36%) are more likely than women (30%) to favour a mother of pre-school children staying at home.

Not surprisingly, the oldest age group's views on mothers working reflect the more traditional view of gender roles among older groups that we saw in the previous section. Around half (49%) of the oldest age group (75+) say a mother of a pre-school child should stay at home, compared with 30% of those aged 18-34. When asked about a mother working with school-age children, the oldest group (75+) show a strong preference for part-time work (64%) over full-time (14%), while similar proportions of young people aged 18-34 favour full-time (37%) and part-time (42%) work.

Similarly, those with lower educational qualifications hold more traditional views on mothers' employment than graduates, which is the same pattern we saw with views regarding gender roles. For example, those with no formal qualifications are twice as likely as graduates (40% versus 21%) to say a mother of a pre-school child should stay at home. In the same way, those on lowest household incomes (less than £1,200 per month) are most likely to say that mothers of pre-school children should stay at home, with the proportion saying this reducing as income increases. However, it is impossible to tease out cause and effect in this analysis: those who have made the decision to be a single-earner family (now or in the

past) may be more likely to have lower household incomes.

## How should mothers and fathers share parental leave?

In April 2015, the government introduced new Shared Parental Leave (SPL) legislation to allow both parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave, 37 weeks of which is paid, to look after their new child. In practice this means that while the mother must take the first two weeks after birth, the rest of the leave can be shared as the parents want, within certain limits (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and Department for Education, 2013).

The government estimates that around 285,000 couples every year are eligible for SPL. An official estimate of take-up levels is not yet available; however forecasted take-up is relatively low at 2%-8%. Similarly there is little available evidence around awareness, although according to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy research only around half of the general public have heard of SPL (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2018). There is some evidence that even when new fathers want to spend more time with their baby, many families can't afford for the father to take time off work (Working Families, 2017).

To assess what the public thinks about shared parental leave for new parents, we asked the following question:

> ***Consider a couple who both work full-time and earn roughly the same amount, and now have a new born child. Both are eligible for paid leave if they stop working for some time to care for their child. How should the mother and father divide the paid leave period between them?***

**Four in ten (39%) say the mother should take most of the paid leave and the father some, a further three in ten (30%) think the mother and father should each take half of the paid leave**

Table 3 shows that the majority of the public thinks new parents should share their parental leave to some degree – that is that both the mother and father should take at least some time off to look after the baby. While around four in ten (39%) say the mother should take most of the paid leave and the father some, a further three in ten (30%) think the mother and father should each take half of the paid leave. Only 15% think the mother should take the entire paid parental leave period and the father none.

A relatively high proportion of people – 14% – say they "can't choose" an option. As with the maternal work questions, this may reflect a view that it would depend on the situation, although this can't be unpicked from other possible reasons for answering "can't choose" (for example, believing families should make their own

decisions).

**Table 3 How should a full-time working couple with a new baby divide the paid leave period between them?**

| | % |
|---|---|
| Mother should take entire paid leave period, father none | 15 |
| Mother should take most of paid leave, father some | 39 |
| The mother and the father should each take half | 30 |
| Father should take most of paid leave, mother some | * |
| Father should take entire paid leave, mother none | * |
| Can`t choose | 14 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2474* |

Men and women alike most commonly choose an option with some element of shared parental leave. We might expect men to show more support for a shared approach to parental leave than women, given this policy offers greater paternal choice. However, we find that men (19%) are more likely to say the mother should take the entire leave period than women (11%), although it is worth noting that this difference is not large.

The age difference in views on shared parental leave, however, is stark; 34% of those aged 75 or more say mothers should take all of the leave, compared with only 10% of 18-34 year-olds. Similarly, just 17% of the older age group (75+) thinks the leave should be shared equally between the parents, compared with 38% of the youngest group (18-34 year-olds). Again, this reflects the higher levels of traditional gender role beliefs among the oldest age group.

Those with no educational qualifications, or on lower incomes, are more likely to say that the mother should take the entire leave period, compared with graduates, and those with the highest incomes. Interestingly, as with the questions on mothers returning to work, those with higher educational qualifications and in the highest income bracket are much more likely to say they "can't choose", compared with those with no qualifications or in the lowest income group (both 18% compared with 10% respectively). Again, this may indicate a more prevalent view among higher income, more educated people that parental leave allocation should be for the couple to choose, depending on circumstances.

In conclusion, this analysis has shown that the pattern of increasing consensus towards more progressive, equitable roles for men and women has largely continued. There remain distinct minorities who support more traditional division of labour and working patterns for mothers, and views around shared parental leave are more divided. More traditional views are most common among older people and those with lower education and/or lower income, although

these groups have become more progressive over time. The other significant shift is in the proportion of people, particularly in higher educated, higher income groups, who 'cannot say' in response to the maternal employment questions. It is not clear whether this indicates growing uncertainty in views, or a growing reluctance to dictate what might be the 'right' decision for other people.

Having explored attitudes to gender roles, our focus now shifts to beliefs about differences between men and women.

**One of the big debates in gender equality is the extent to which men and women are essentially the same, or fundamentally different from each other**

## Differences between men and women

One of the big debates in gender equality is the extent to which men and women are essentially the same, or fundamentally different from each other. While there are clear biological differences between the sexes, the term 'gender' refers to social roles based on the sex of the person. The extent of, and link between, inherent differences by sex and gender are disputed. There are gender differences in employment: for example, men markedly outnumber women in programming and software development, while women dominate employment within caring and leisure occupations (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Moreover, these occupational differences are linked to the gender pay gap. However, there is an ongoing debate as to whether these differences reflect 'essential' differences in terms of male and female abilities or preferences, or whether they reflect socially-constructed gender inequalities.

In this section we examine two issues surrounding the public's beliefs as to whether there are differences between men and women: in terms of job suitability; and between girls' and boys' natural abilities in maths and computing.

### Are there gender differences in job suitability?

For the first time this year, BSA asked:

> ***Would you say that in general, men and women are equally suited to doing all jobs, almost all jobs, most jobs, some jobs, a few jobs or are there no jobs to which men and women are equally suited?***

**Around half (47%) of people think men and women are equally suited to "all" or "almost all jobs"**

Table 4 shows that overall, the consensus is in favour of there being few gender differences in job suitability: around half (47%) of people think men and women are equally suited to "all" or "almost all jobs", with a further 31% saying men and women are equally suited to "most jobs". However, around a fifth (20%) say men and women are only equally suited to "some" or "a few jobs", indicating a substantial minority of the population who do hold reservations about gender neutrality.

Women (50%) are more likely than men (44%) to say men and women are equally suited to "all" or "almost all jobs". However, as we have found with other questions on women and work above,

there is a more pronounced divide by age and education. Those in the youngest age group are particularly likely to say men and women are equally suited to "all" or "almost all" jobs. Sixty per cent of 18-34 year olds are of this opinion, compared with only 28% of those aged 75 or older.

**Table 4 Job suitability for men and women, by age**

| | Age group | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **18-34** | **35-44** | **45-54** | **55-64** | **65-74** | **75+** | **All** |
| **Men and women are equally suited to …** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| … all jobs | 20 | 17 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 14 |
| … almost all jobs | 40 | 36 | 35 | 27 | 29 | 21 | 33 |
| … most jobs | 26 | 28 | 33 | 38 | 31 | 29 | 31 |
| … some jobs | 11 | 13 | 16 | 21 | 27 | 37 | 18 |
| … a few jobs | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| … no jobs | - | - | - | - | * | 1 | * |
| *Unweighted base* | *484* | *398* | *445* | *424* | *413* | *309* | *2474* |

Graduates are more likely to think men and women are equally suited to "all" or "almost all jobs" (59%), than those with A-levels or higher education qualifications (48%), those with GCSE or equivalent qualifications (40%) as their highest educational qualification, and those with no formal qualifications (36%). This may be due to more egalitarian gender views among those with higher qualifications, but also to the types of jobs available to different educational groups.

## Are there gender differences in school subject ability?

Women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and maths (known as STEM) occupations (WISE, 2015). Traditionally, it might have been held that boys and girls differed in their ability to do technical subjects such as maths and computing. This stereotype is often held to explain the differences in rates of boys and girls studying at university and so going on to work in those careers. However, in recent years there have been considerable attempts to discourage this view and encourage more girls to engage in STEM subjects.

To gauge attitudes to differing abilities according to gender, we asked respondents to say whether girls or boys were naturally better in ability at maths and computing. The question about maths ability is as follows:

***Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?***

*Girls are naturally much better at maths than boys*

*Girls are naturally a little better at maths than boys*

*Neither girls nor boys are naturally better at maths*

*Boys are naturally a little better at maths than girls*

*Boys are naturally much better at maths than girls*

**Three-quarters of the public think neither girls nor boys are naturally better at maths or at computing**

Table 5 shows that overall, around three-quarters of the public think neither girls nor boys are naturally better at maths or at computing (72% and 73% respectively). There is some evidence, however, of computing being seen as a more 'male' subject than maths; while equal proportions think girls (8%) and boys (8%) are naturally better at maths, a markedly higher proportion think boys are naturally better at computing (12%) than think girls are (3%). Nevertheless, for both subjects only minorities believe one sex to be naturally better at the subject than the other.

When asked about gender differences in mathematical abilities, there are differences between sub-groups in terms of the overall proportion saying neither girls nor boys are better, but no clear picture in terms of whether different groups thought girls or boys were better. For example, women (76%) are more likely than men (67%) to say neither girls nor boys are naturally better at maths. However, the remaining men are equally likely to choose either girls or boys instead of this option.

Comparing between age groups, the youngest age group (18-34) is more likely than the oldest group to say neither girls nor boys are naturally better at maths (78% versus 57%, respectively). But older groups are more likely to be unable to select a response (17% of those aged 75 or older say they cannot choose, compared with only 6% of 18-34-year olds). Similarly, higher education levels are associated with saying neither sex is better at maths; people with a degree (76%) are more likely than those with no formal qualifications (58%) to say neither sex is better at maths, while those with no formal qualifications (20%) are more likely to be unable to choose an option (compared with 8% of those with a degree).

When asked about computing, all groups regardless of gender, age or education are more likely to view boys as naturally better than girls. However, this view is more common among some groups than others, for example, men (16%) are more likely than women (9%) to say boys are naturally better and, somewhat surprisingly, younger

people aged 18-34 (19%) are more likely than all older age groups to take this view.

**Table 5 Perceived ability of girls and boys at maths and computing, by sex and age**

| | | Girls are naturally better | Neither girls nor boys are naturally better | Boys are naturally better | Can't choose | *Unweighted base* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **View on whether girls or boys are naturally better at maths** | | | | | | |
| **All** | % | 8 | 72 | 8 | 11 | *2474* |
| **Sex** | | | | | | |
| Men | % | 11 | 67 | 10 | 12 | *1198* |
| Women | % | 6 | 76 | 7 | 10 | *1252* |
| **Age** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | % | 7 | 78 | 9 | 6 | *484* |
| 35-44 | % | 5 | 76 | 7 | 11 | *398* |
| 45-54 | % | 9 | 72 | 7 | 11 | *445* |
| 55-64 | % | 9 | 68 | 8 | 13 | *424* |
| 65-74 | % | 8 | 67 | 10 | 14 | *413* |
| 75+ | % | 13 | 57 | 11 | 17 | *309* |
| **View on whether girls or boys are naturally better at computing** | | | | | | |
| **All** | % | 3 | 73 | 12 | 11 | *2474* |
| **Sex** | | | | | | |
| Men | % | 5 | 67 | 16 | 12 | *1198* |
| Women | % | 2 | 79 | 9 | 10 | *1252* |
| **Age** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | % | 1 | 75 | 19 | 5 | *484* |
| 35-44 | % | 3 | 77 | 8 | 10 | *398* |
| 45-54 | % | 3 | 74 | 11 | 11 | *445* |
| 55-64 | % | 5 | 71 | 9 | 13 | *424* |
| 65-74 | % | 4 | 73 | 9 | 13 | *413* |
| 75+ | % | 6 | 61 | 13 | 18 | *309* |

Perceptions of gender differences in aptitudes are interesting, particularly as they might explain the perpetuation of 'traditional views' (for example, if women were seen as being better suited to childcare while men are better suited as earners). This analysis shows

that the majority of the British public does not perceive substantial differences between men and women in terms of the jobs they can do or abilities in maths and computing, but that there are a distinct minority who disagree. Further, more detailed, questions and analysis would be needed to understand the nature of these perceived differences and relationship to beliefs about gender divisions of labour.

In our final section, attention turns to how men and women behave towards members of the opposite sex.

## Unsolicited comments and online sexist bullying

Sexual harassment and online bullying have come to prominence in public debate over the last decade, reaching a tipping point with the #MeToo campaign in October 2017. Much of the present focus has been explicitly concerned with the behaviour of men towards women. Connection is often made between perceived misogyny and the wider power imbalance in society that affects women disproportionately (Beard, 2017). Laura Bates (2014), the founder of the social media campaign "everyday sexism", views such issues as reflecting gender inequalities and the social disadvantages faced by women, not just in the labour force but in everyday life.

However, the issue is not without controversy. Although the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2017) provides clear guidelines concerning an employer's duty to take sexual harassment seriously, it is far less clear as to what constitutes sexual harassment outside of the workplace and at what point flirtatious behaviour becomes harassment. In addition, there are also those who feel uncomfortable about what they perceive as the 'demonization' of men. Over a hundred French women (including the French film star Catherine Deneuve) made world headlines with an open letter, offering an alternative view of the #MeToo campaign and drawing attention to what they regard as rampant censorship and as a hatred of men and of sexuality (Collins, 2018). When the British parliament addressed the issue of misogyny as a hate crime (Hansard online, 2018), one female MP felt the need to state that this is #NotAllMen and a male MP asked whether misandry as well as misogyny should also be a hate crime.

In this section we explore these differences in opinion by examining responses to questions regarding perceptions of unsolicited comments and online bullying. What do people think about comments about another person's appearance made by a stranger in the street, or sexual comments made online? Does it matter whether the comments are made by a man towards a woman, or vice-versa? And are there differences in opinion regarding these matters between

different social groups, by sex, age or education?

## Is it wrong to comment on a stranger's appearance on the street?

For the first time in 2017, we assessed opinions about comments about a person's appearance, made by a stranger in the street. To minimise the risk that respondents would give what they felt were socially acceptable answers, rather than their genuine opinion, the following question was included in the self-completion questionnaire:

> ***Imagine a woman is walking down the street. She passes a man who she does not know, and he comments loudly that she looks gorgeous today. Which of the following best describes what you think about the man's behaviour?***
>
> > ***Never wrong, Rarely wrong, Sometimes wrong, Usually wrong, Always wrong***

This scenario was purposefully chosen to gauge the public's reaction to an unsolicited comment, but not one which is inherently offensive or rude. Although comments on the person's appearance has the potential to make them uncomfortable, individuals may or may not construe this as 'street harassment'. Respondents are therefore likely to view the rights or wrongs of the behaviour in different ways. The scenario might be interpreted as involving a compliment that is less likely to be seen as wrong. Others might not want to judge the behaviour without knowing whether the remark caused discomfort to the person to whom it was addressed. Still others might feel that, regardless of the person's reaction, such comments are wrong.

We also wanted to examine whether gender influenced these opinions. Would the British public take different views depending on whether the behaviour was directed at a woman by a man, or vice versa? To do this we used a 'split ballot' experiment, involving asking a randomly-selected two-thirds of our respondents to envisage a man making comments about a woman, and the remaining third to envisage a woman making comments about a man. The exact same wording was used except in terms of switching the gender of the people involved in the scenario.

**57% say that a man commenting on a woman's appearance in the street is "always" or "usually wrong"**

Overall, uninvited male comments about a woman's appearance are widely thought to be wrong (Table 6): 57% say that a man commenting on a woman's appearance in the street is "always" or "usually wrong" and around a quarter of respondents (27%) think such comments are "sometimes" wrong, leaving only a minority believing unsolicited comments towards a woman are "rarely" or "never" wrong (7% and 2% respectively).

Many also believe that unsolicited comments directed at men (by women) are wrong, but to a lesser extent: 45% say this is "always" or "usually" wrong. Moreover while only 9% say an unsolicited comment made about the appearance of a woman (by a man) is

"rarely" or "never wrong", 16% say this about a comment directed at a man (by a woman). This difference is unsurprising given the higher prevalence of comments directed to women by men on the street, and a perception that comments could make women feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

**Table 6 Views about an unsolicited comment about appearance directed at women and men**

| | If a man comments that a woman on the street looks gorgeous | If a woman comments that a man on the street looks gorgeous |
|---|---|---|
| | % | % |
| Never wrong | 2 | 7 |
| Rarely wrong | 7 | 9 |
| Sometimes wrong | 27 | 24 |
| Usually wrong | 27 | 23 |
| Always wrong | 30 | 22 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1642* | *808* |

**Women are equally likely to see comments directed at women and men as wrong, while men are considerably more likely to think that comments directed at a woman (by a man) are wrong**

When we ask about a man commenting on a woman on the street, around six in ten men say it is "always" or "usually" wrong (61%), compared with five in ten (52%) women (see the top row of Table 7). The opposite pattern occurrs when we ask about a comment directed towards a man; 54% of women say this is "always"/"usually" wrong, compared with 35% of men. So, looking across the two scenarios, women are equally likely to see comments directed at women and men as wrong, while men are considerably more likely to think that comments directed at a woman (by a man) are wrong.

However, the pattern varies by sex and age: younger women (aged under 55, and particularly those under 35) are more likely to think comments directed at a woman are wrong, compared with older women. We don't see the same pattern among women by age when we ask about comments directed at a man (and it should be noted that age groups 18-34 and 55-64 have small base sizes for this

question, so these figures should be interpreted with caution). For both these questions the pattern is less clear when we compare men in different age groups.

**Table 7 Views about an unsolicited comment directed at women and men, by age and sex**

| | Man comments that a woman looks gorgeous | | | Woman comments that a man looks gorgeous | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Respondent sex | | | Respondent sex | | |
| % saying behaviour is wrong | Men | Women | All | Men | Women | All |
| **All** | 61 | 52 | 57 | 35 | 54 | 45 |
| **Age group** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | 59 | 63 | 61 | 32 | 58 | 44 |
| 35-54 | 63 | 54 | 58 | 39 | 47 | 43 |
| 55-64 | 66 | 48 | 56 | 38 | 53 | 45 |
| 65+ | 58 | 43 | 49 | 33 | 59 | 47 |

*Bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

In analysis (not shown) those with higher educational levels are more likely to see unsolicited comments about appearance as wrong, whether directed towards a man or woman. Sixty-seven per cent of graduates say a man commenting on a woman is "always" or "usually" wrong, compared with 47% of people with no formal qualifications. Similarly, around half (50%) of graduates say a woman commenting on a man is wrong, compared with 37% of people with no qualifications.

Majority opinion, therefore, is that unsolicited comments are at least sometimes wrong, whether directed towards a man or woman. In general people are more strongly opposed to comments about women's appearance than comments about men's, and this is particularly true of men and younger women. This may reflect women's more frequent exposure to remarks about their appearance, especially for young women. It might also be indicative of heightened awareness of the issues among men and/or a view that women are more likely to feel threatened and so to deserve protection.

## What about crude, sexual comments online?

Another issue gaining considerable media attention is the level of online or cyber-bullying, particularly the apparently increasing level of internet trolling – commenting negatively to provoke a reaction – and cyberstalking which is targeted at women. While online abuse can affect anyone, women often experience abuse because of their sex. This is often taken as another ongoing example of misogyny and gender inequality (for example Hansard online, 2018).

In a similar way to unsolicited comments in the street, in the BSA 2017 survey's self-completion questionnaire, we asked people's perceptions of online sexist bullying using the following question:

> ***Imagine a man writes a crude, sexual comment on the internet about a woman he does not know. The comment can be seen by anyone. Which of the following best describes what you think about the man's behaviour?***
>
> ***Never wrong, Rarely wrong, Sometimes wrong, Usually wrong, Always wrong***

**Overwhelmingly, the public believes this type of online bullying to be wrong, although this is more strongly expressed when we ask about bullying directed at a woman**

Again, two-thirds of the sample were asked about a man directing a sexist comment towards a woman, and one third of the sample were presented with the same scenario but with the sexes reversed (a woman writing a sexist comment towards a man). In this example, however, the behaviour in question was specifically referred to as "crude" and "sexual" (compared with the ambiguous nature of the street comments).

Overwhelmingly, the public believes this type of online bullying to be wrong, although this is more strongly expressed when we ask about bullying directed at a woman. Nearly nine in ten (87%) say this is "always wrong" when directed towards a woman, with a further 6% saying it is "usually wrong", while seven in ten (70%) say it is "always wrong" when directed at men, with a further 15% saying this is "usually wrong".

There is little difference between men and women in their view of online sexist bullying of women. Women are, however, more likely than men to say online sexist bullying of *men* is "always wrong"; 76% of women say this compared with 64% of men.

Unlike with unsolicited street comments, older people are more likely to disapprove of online bullying of women than their younger counterparts; 93% of people over the age of 65 say this is "always wrong", compared with 82% of 18-34 year-olds. (There was no significant difference found by age in attitudes to online bullying directed at men, but this may be due to reduced sample size.) Perhaps younger people are more exposed to this sort of behaviour, and thus it holds less 'shock' value than for older people. In addition, older people, although less familiar with online bullying, may be far more likely than the young to condemn crude sexual comments, regardless of where they appear.

Again, we see greater disapproval for online sexist bullying among the more highly educated, both for comments directed at women, and men. While 89% of graduates say sexist online bullying of a woman is "always wrong", 78% of those with no formal qualifications say the same. Similarly, 77% of graduates say online sexist bullying of a man is "always wrong", compared with 63% of those without

qualifications.

## Conclusions

Gender equality is a complex and disputed subject. Based on the assertion that all people have the same value, regardless of gender, it encompasses the aim of eliminating discrimination and disadvantage, including removal of barriers to opportunity. As a result, 'success' can be seen as the extent to which men and women are free to choose the direction their life takes, rather than being constrained by stereotypes or cultural convention. As well as tackling the tricky subject of whether men and women are fundamentally different, whether through biology and/or social differences, debates in modern gender politics extend to misogynistic attitudes as expressed in the treatment of women as sex objects or fair game for harassment.

Analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates clearly that public attitudes towards gender issues depend on the topic under question. Looking at issues around roles in the home and labour market, we find that there is a marked reduction of support for traditional gender roles of the man working and the woman looking after the home, mirrored by increasing agreement that both men and women should contribute to household income. However, when it comes to maternal employment, the majority of people still think either mothers should stay at home or work part-time, particularly when there is a child under school age. In addition, regarding parental leave there is little difference between the sexes with a majority feeling the mother should take all or most of the leave.

Age, education and income are strongly (and independently) correlated with views of gender roles. But both the age and education divides have narrowed over time. It seems that regardless of sex, age, education or income, people are more likely to endorse views that suggest that fixed gender roles of the past are no longer suited to family life in the 21st century. This suggests there is a growing consensus in views across the different social groups.

However, although most people reject the traditional division of roles according to gender, it is not clear why they do so. Is this because they are in favour of greater gender equality, because they recognise more fluidity in gender roles, or because they regard it as a matter of each couple's choice as to how they allocate work and family roles? For many questions, the proportion saying they "can't choose" has risen over time, particularly among younger and more educated groups. This may point to increasingly liberal views regarding individuals' and couples' rights to choose, but we cannot say for certain that it reflects increasing belief in gender parity. It is also not clear how far changing opinion is motivated by ideology and/or driven by pragmatism.

In 2017, new questions on BSA reveal considerable consensus of opinion that men and women are equally suited to all jobs, and that

neither girls nor boys are "naturally" better at maths. Interestingly, it is the young who are more 'unisex' when it comes to both job suitability and maths aptitude. This could be that the young are less likely than their elders to endorse any divides along gender lines, or it could be a result of societal changes in both education and technology, that has helped produce a less gendered 'knowledge economy' (Scott et al., 2018).

Online sexist bullying of either men or women is widely thought to be wrong, and a majority also condemn commenting on a woman's appearance in the street, even when this comment could be construed by some as 'complimentary'. Our split-sample experiment reveals some interesting insights into gender differences concerning attitudes to unsolicited comments and online bullying, with evidence of men holding men to higher standards in their behaviour towards women in the street than they would apply to women's behaviour towards men. This somewhat surprising finding may well have something to do with men wanting to be particularly harsh on anything that could be conceived as 'inappropriate sexual behaviour' by other men – a topic that has attracted considerable media interest since our survey was conducted in summer 2017, including the extensive coverage of the #Metoo movement.

**We have found little evidence to support the notion of a clearly delineated 'culture war' between traditionalist/ conservative values and progressive/ socially liberal values being played out in gender politics**

So, in conclusion, in our examination of a range of views concerning different gender issues, we have found little evidence to support the notion of a clearly delineated 'culture war' between traditionalist/ conservative values and progressive/socially liberal values being played out in gender politics. Our analysis suggests views differ according to the topic in question and are in flux. This is an area where there appears to be ongoing social change. Although the language of 'gender wars' might be over-stated, gender equality remains a challenging and disputed area, with implications for the

government, employers and wider society.

## Acknowledgements

The National Centre for Social Research is grateful to the Government Equalities Office for their financial support which enabled us to ask the questions reported in this chapter. The views expressed are those of the authors alone.

## References

Baker, J. (2014), *Equals: Enjoying Gender Equality in All Areas of Life*, London: SPCK Publishing

Bagehot (2017), 'The culture wars arrive in Britain', *The Economist*, London: The Economist Newspaper Limited, available at: http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21723197-election-revealsastonishing-changes-political-landscape-culture-wars-arrive

Bagnoli, A., Demey, D. and Scott, J. (2014), 'Young people, gender and science: does an early interest lead to a job in SET?', in Schoon, I. and Eccles, J. (eds.), *Gender Differences in Aspirations and Attainment: A Life Course Perspective*, pp 79-100, Cambridge: CUP

Bates, L. (2014), *Everyday Sexism*, London: Simon & Schuster

Beard, M. (2017), *Women and Power: A Manifesto*, London: Profile Books Ltd

Braun, M. and Scott. J. (2009), 'Changing public views of gender roles in seven nations', in Kaller, M., Jowell, R. and Smith, T. (eds.), *The International Social Survey Programme*, 1984-2009, Charting the Globe, London: Routledge

Collins, L. (2018), 'Why Did Catherine Deneuve and Other Prominent French Women Denounce #MeToo', *New Yorker*, New York

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and Department for Education (2013), *Children and Families Bill 2013*, The Stationery Office Limited, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219658/Children_20and_20Families_20Bill_202013.pdf

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and Department for Education (2018), *New 'Share the joy' campaign promotes shared parental leave rights for parents*, (press release), available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-share-the-joy-campaign-promotes-shared-parental-leave-rights-for-parents

Department for Education (2015), *Childcare Bill: Policy Statement*, London: The Stationery Office Limited, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childcare-bill-policy-statement

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2017), *Sexual Harassment and the Law: Guidance for Employers*, Equality and Human Rights

Commission, available at: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/sexual-harassment-and-law-guidance-employers

Esping-Andersen, G. (2009), *The Incomplete Revolution Adapting to Women's New Roles*, Cambridge: Polity

HC Deb 7 March 2018 vol 637, available at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-03-07/debates/92236C51-2340-4D97-92A7-4955B24C2D74/MisogynyAsAHateCrime

Jones, L. (2018), 'What is the gender pay gap?, BBC, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-42918951

Office for National Statistics (2013), *Women in the labour market: 2013*, available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/womeninthelabourmarket/2013-09-25

Office for National Statistics (2017), *Families and the Labour Market, England: 2017*, available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/familiesandthelabourmarketengland/2017

Office for National Statistics (2018), *Statistical bulletin: UK labour market: April 2018*, available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/april2018

Scott J. and Clery, E. (2013), 'Gender Roles: An incomplete revolution?', in Park, A., Bryson, C., Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Phillips, M. (eds.) (2013), *British Social Attitudes: The 30th Report*, London: National Centre for Social Research, available at: www.bsa-30.natcen.ac.uk

Scott, J., Crompton, R. and Lyonette, C. (2010), *Gender Inequalities in the 21st Century*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Scott, J., Dex, S. and Joshi, H. (eds.) (2008), *Women and Employment*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Solnit, R. (2014), *Men Explain Things to Me*, London: Granta Books

Tinson, A., Aldridge, H & Whitham, G. (2016), *Women, work and wages in the UK*, New Policy Institute, https://www.npi.org.uk/files/2214/7766/7305/Women_Work_and_Wages_in_the_UK_NPI_report.pdf

WISE (2015), 'Women in the UK STEM workforce', available at https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/resources/2015/09/women-in-the-stem-workforce

Working Families (2017), 'Half of fathers would use shared parental leave', available at: https://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/news/half-of-fathers-would-use-shared-parental-leave-survey-finds/

# Appendix

The data on which Figure 1 is based are shown below.

**Table A.1 Views of traditional gender roles, 1984–2017**

| | 1984 | 1987 | 1990 | 1991 | 1994 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family** | % | % | % | % | % |
| Agree | 43 | 48 | 25 | 33 | 24 |
| Disagree | 37 | 33 | 54 | 44 | 58 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1562* | *1281* | *2430* | *1257* | *984* |

| | 1998 | 2002 | 2008 | 2012 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family** | % | % | % | % | % |
| Agree | 18 | 17 | 16 | 12 | 8 |
| Disagree | 57 | 63 | 58 | 65 | 72 |
| *Unweighted base* | *807* | *1960* | *1986* | *950* | *2474* |

The data for the statement “Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income” are shown below.

**Table A.2 Views of men and women contributing to the household income, 1989-2017**

| | 1989 | 1994 | 2002 | 2012 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Both the man and woman should contribute to the household income** | % | % | % | % | % |
| Agree | 53 | 60 | 59 | 62 | 72 |
| Disagree | 20 | 13 | 14 | 11 | 4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1307* | *984* | *1960* | *950* | *2474* |

The bases for Table 1 can be found below.

**Table A.3 View of gender roles, by demographics, 1991-2017**

| | 1991 | 2002 | 2012 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* |
| **Sex** | | | | |
| Men | *573* | *852* | *438* | *1126* |
| Women | *684* | *1108* | *512* | *1348* |
| **Age** | | | | |
| 18-34 | *370* | *498* | *184* | *484* |
| 35-44 | *223* | *417* | *166* | *398* |
| 45-54 | *203* | *311* | *153* | *445* |
| 55-64 | *172* | *310* | *159* | *424* |
| 65-74 | *182* | *221* | *172* | *413* |
| 75+ | *105* | *200* | *115* | *309* |
| **Highest educational qualification** | | | | |
| Degree | *120* | *304* | *178* | *673* |
| Higher education or A-level | *335* | *558* | *272* | *693* |
| GCSE, O level, CSE or equivalent | *327* | *573* | *207* | *659* |
| No qualifications | *462* | *475* | *197* | *404* |
| **Household income** | | | | |
| Highest quartile | *113* | *453* | *236* | *460* |
| 3rd quartile | *319* | *430* | *179* | *528* |
| 2nd quartile | *390* | *513* | *197* | *497* |
| Lowest quartile | *435* | *386* | *185* | *608* |
| **All** | *1257* | *1960* | *950* | *2474* |

The bases for Table 7 can be found below.

**Table A.4 Views about an unsolicited comment directed at women and men, by age and sex**

| | Man comments that a woman looks gorgeous | | | Woman comments that a man looks gorgeous | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Respondent sex | | All | Respondent sex | | All |
| | Men | Women | | Men | Women | |
| | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* |
| **All** | *748* | *914* | *1662* | *378* | *434* | *812* |
| **Age group** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | *139* | *185* | *324* | *71* | *89* | *160* |
| 35-54 | *248* | *322* | *570* | *119* | *154* | *273* |
| 55-64 | *141* | *155* | *296* | *63* | *65* | *128* |
| 65+ | *220* | *251* | *471* | *125* | *126* | *251* |

The multivariate analysis technique used is logistic regression (for more information see Technical Details chapter of the report). The dependent variable is whether the respondent disagrees that "A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family". A significant positive coefficient indicates that the group are more likely than the reference group (shown in brackets) to have disagreed with this statement whilst a significant negative coefficient indicates the group are less likely than the reference group to have disagreed with this statement.

**Table A.5 Disagree with traditional gender roles, logistic regression**

| | Coefficient | Standard error | p value |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sex (male)** | **0.497 | 0.107 | 0.000 |
| **Age (18–34)** | | | 0.008 |
| 35–44 | 0.013 | 0.171 | 0.939 |
| 45-54 | 0.227 | 0.168 | 0.177 |
| 55-64 | 0.177 | 0.169 | 0.297 |
| 65–74 | -0.028 | 0.171 | 0.872 |
| 75+ | **-0.562 | 0.200 | 0.005 |
| **Education (degree)** | | | 0.000 |
| Higher education or A level | -0.071 | 0.153 | 0.643 |
| GCSE or equivalent | **-0.804 | 0.150 | 0.000 |
| No qualifications | **-0.731 | 0.190 | 0.000 |
| **Household Income (less than £1,200 p.m.)** | | | 0.000 |
| £1,200-£2,200 p.m. | 0.041 | 0.161 | 0.797 |
| £2,201-£3,700 p.m. | 0.240 | 0.168 | 0.153 |
| £3,701 or more p.m. | **0.854 | 0.181 | 0.000 |
| Refusal | 0.031 | 0.201 | 0.879 |
| Constant | **0.936 | 0.199 | 0.000 |
| R2 (adjusted) | .078 | | |
| *Unweighted base: 2162* | | | |

**=significant at 95% level ***=significant at 99% level*

# Voting

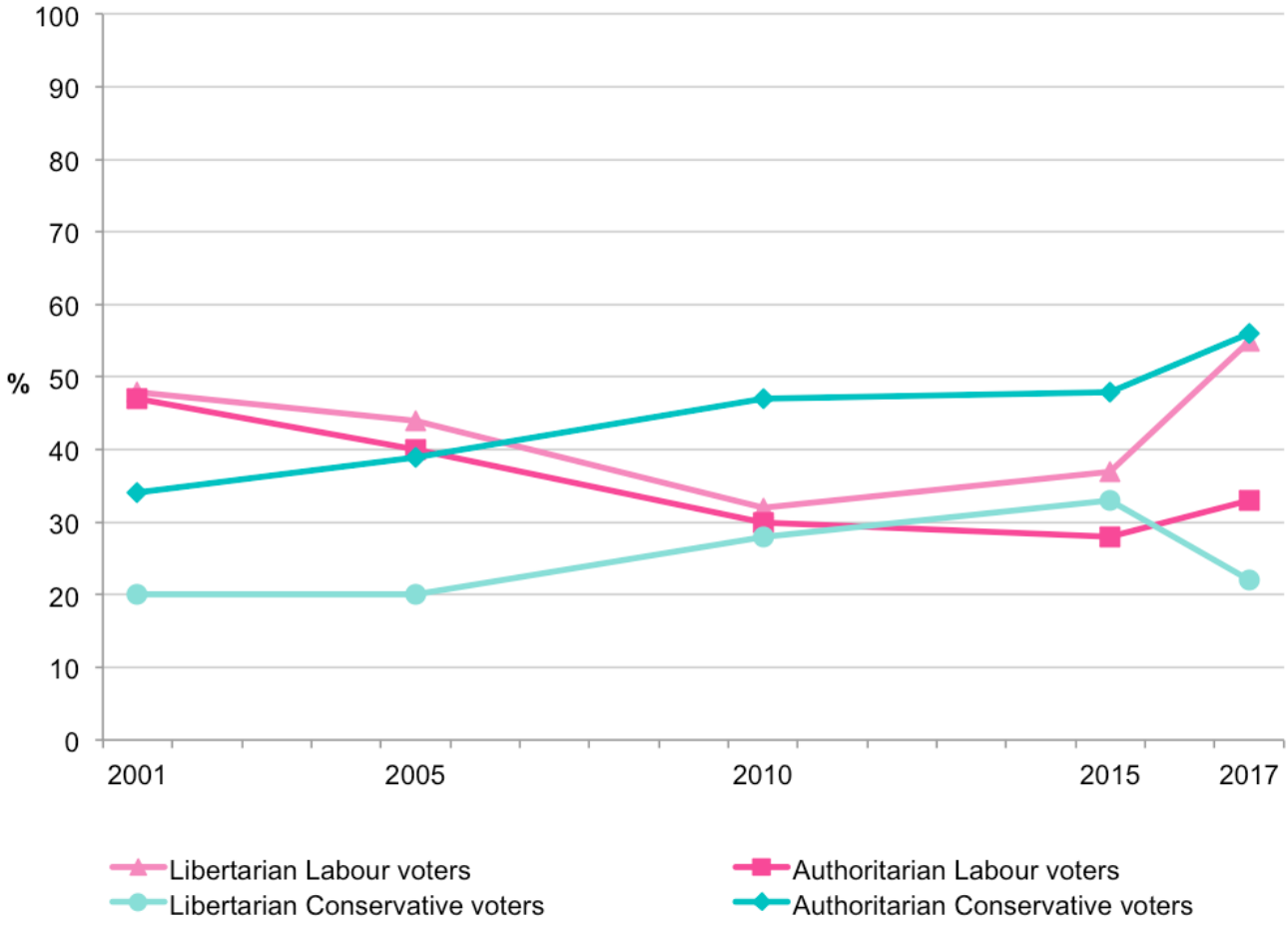
## The 2017 Election: New divides in British politics?

Theresa May precipitated the 2017 general election in order to secure a mandate for her vision of Brexit. But did the way that people voted reflect their views about Brexit? This chapter shows that to some extent they did, and that, as a result, whether someone is a 'libertarian' or an 'authoritarian' now has a considerable bearing on whether they are likely to vote Labour or Conservative, alongside the more traditional 'left-right' division in Labour and Conservative support.

## Spotlight

Between the 2015 and the 2017 elections, a much deeper divide opened up to separate libertarian and authoritarian voters' support for the Conservatives and Labour.

**Labour and Conservative vote choice, by libertarian-authoritarian position, 2001-2017**



# Overview

## Leave voters swung to the Conservatives while Labour advanced more among Remain supporters

**Support for the Conservatives increased among Leave voters and fell among Remain supporters, while Labour's support increased much less among Leave supporters than it did among Remain voters.**

- Support for the Conservatives increased by 14 points between 2015 and 2017 among those who say Britain should leave the EU, while it fell by 7 points among those who say Britain should stay in an EU that is at least as powerful as it is at present.
- Support for Labour increased by 7 points among those who support leaving the EU, but by 16 points among those who want Britain to remain in an EU that is as powerful as at present.
- As a result, 58% of Leave supporters voted Conservative at the election, while 52% of Remain voters backed Labour.

## A stronger libertarian-authoritarian division

**Whether someone voted Conservative or Labour in 2017 was more strongly linked with whether they have a 'libertarian' or an 'authoritarian' outlook than at any other recent election.**

- Fifty six per cent of authoritarians but only 22% of libertarians voted Conservative. Conversely, 55% of libertarians voted Labour but only 33% of authoritarians did so.
- However, the libertarian-authoritarian division in Conservative and Labour support exists alongside the traditional 'left-right' division rather than displacing it.

## Age has become the biggest demographic division in Conservative and Labour support

**Never before has there been so large an age divide in British electoral politics. Labour support is far higher among younger voters than it is among older ones, while the opposite is true of Conservative support.**

- Support for Labour increased by 23 points among those aged under 35, whereas it did little more than hold steady (up 2 points) among those aged 65 and over.
- The Conservative vote increased by 6 points among those aged 65 and over, while it fell by 10 points among those aged under 35.
- As many as 62% of under 35s voted Labour, while 55% of those aged 65 or over supported the Conservatives.

**Authors**

**John Curtice,**
Senior Research Fellow,
The National Centre for Social Research,
and Professor of Politics,
University of Strathclyde

**Ian Simpson,**
Senior Researcher and Co-Director of the British Social Attitudes series,
The National Centre for Social Research

# Introduction

In announcing on 18th April 2017 that she wished to precipitate an early general election, Theresa May's rationale was clear. The Prime Minister feared that her existing overall majority in the House of Commons of 12 seats was too small for her to be confident of being able to deliver her vision of Brexit. She feared her strategy would always be at risk of being ambushed by the opposition. She therefore wanted a larger parliamentary majority, an outcome that, she believed, would not only reinforce her position at home, but also strengthen her hand in the forthcoming negotiations with the European Union. Thus, the Prime Minister suggested, the election was to be a battle between the parties' alternative visions of Brexit and a judgement on the ability of the respective party leaders to deliver their vision successfully (BBC, 2017).

**The election was a battle between the parties' alternative visions of Brexit**

The Prime Minister took her decision against the backdrop of a large lead in the opinion polls. Even so the decision appeared rather risky. After all, one of the key features of the pattern of voting in the EU referendum the previous year had been the relative failure of the parties to persuade voters to follow their advice about which way to vote. In calling the referendum, the then Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, had recommended that voters should vote to remain in the EU. Yet in the event, a majority (54%) of those who identified as Conservatives voted Leave. One in three Labour supporters also defied their party's recommendation to vote to Remain in the EU. Even the Liberal Democrats, historically the most pro-EU of the parties, found that around a quarter of their supporters backed Leave. The only party that was able to persuade more or less all of its supporters to follow its recommendation was UKIP, and most likely they needed little persuasion to vote Leave in the first place (Curtice, 2017a).

This failure of the parties to persuade many of their voters to back staying in the EU should not, perhaps, have come as a surprise. Europe had long been a divisive issue in the ranks of both Conservative and Labour MPs. It caused Labour to split in the 1980s and the Conservatives to engage in internecine combat from the early 1990s onwards. During the EU referendum itself, the Conservative parliamentary party divided almost evenly between supporters of Remain and backers of Leave (BBC, 2016), and although most Labour MPs backed Remain, those that did not were particularly prominent in campaigning for a Leave vote. In short, voters might be thought to have received rather mixed messages from the parties in the run up to the referendum vote.

But division within each party's supporters was also not surprising given the subject matter of the referendum. The ideological division between Conservative and Labour is primarily a division between 'left' and 'right', that is, between those who think the government should intervene a bit more with a view to making society more equal and those who think it should step back a bit and ensure there are

adequate incentives for people to invest and help grow the economy. Those who hold the former view are more likely to vote Labour while those with the latter disposition are more inclined to support the Conservatives (Curtice, 2010; 2017b). However, for the most part, the debate during the referendum campaign was not about the role of the government in managing the economy and dealing with inequality. Rather, it was about Britain's relationship with the rest of the world, including whether it should accept the limitations on its sovereignty that came with EU membership and the extent to which it should be willing to embrace immigration from the EU (and elsewhere). These are issues that belong to a different ideological division, one between, on the one hand, libertarians or social liberals and, on the other, authoritarians or social conservatives (Heath et al., 1985.). The former group comprises those who feel that people should be free to choose the moral code that they follow and the social mores that they respect, and are comfortable living in a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic society. These are views that were associated with voting for Remain. Those in the latter group, in contrast, are inclined to the view that society needs to encourage and enforce common moral codes, social mores and linguistic practices as a way of promoting social cohesion, while they are personally more comfortable living in a relatively homogenous society. This group consists disproportionately of Leave supporters (Curtice, 2017a; see also the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping).

In short, if voters followed the Prime Minister's cue and voted according to their feelings about Brexit, there was a prospect that some of the traditional patterns of voting behaviour at election time might well be disturbed. True, both Labour and the Conservatives (though not the Liberal Democrats or the SNP) said that the outcome of the referendum should be respected, and to that extent the two largest parties shared the same position on the issue. However, the vision of Brexit that the Prime Minister had laid out three months earlier in a speech at Lancaster House[1] (May, 2017), a vision which ruled out continued membership of the EU Single Market and, most likely, the Customs Union too, had widely been portrayed as a 'hard' Brexit. Moreover, it was a stance from which Labour to some extent had demurred; the party argued that there should be a "strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the Single Market and the Customs Union" (Labour Party, 2017). Certainly, the Prime Minister wanted voters to believe that there was an important difference between her stance on Brexit and that of her opponents. However, if they took her at her word, perhaps any gains she might make among more socially conservative Leave supporters who liked her vision of Brexit would be counterbalanced by losses among those more liberal Conservative voters who voted Remain and who wanted a 'softer' Brexit? If so, the result might be a Conservative – and a Labour – vote that had a rather different character than usual.

1 May, T. (2017), 'The government's negotiating objectives for exiting the EU', Speech given at Lancaster House, 17 January, available at www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech

In this chapter, we assess the extent to which voters' attitudes towards Brexit affected the way in which they voted in the 2017 election and whether, as a result, some of the traditional patterns of voting in British elections were disturbed. We start by looking at the extent to which those who voted Remain and Leave in the 2016 referendum – and those who support a hard rather than a soft Brexit – behaved differently at the election. We then examine whether the pattern of voting in 2017 represented a change in the ideological underpinnings of party support and, in particular, whether the distinction between libertarians and authoritarians was reflected more strongly than before in how people voted. Finally, we investigate the implications of our findings for the demographics of party support.

## Perceptions of the parties' stance on Brexit

We begin by looking at where the parties themselves were thought to stand on Brexit. After all, voters might be thought unlikely to decide how to vote on the basis of this issue unless they reckoned that the parties held different views about how it should be pursued – and the distinction between the positions adopted by the Conservatives and Labour might be considered relatively subtle.

**The key choice the UK faced in the Brexit negotiations was whether it wanted to maintain free trade with the EU or be able to control EU immigration**

The key choice that it was widely felt the UK faced in the Brexit negotiations was whether it wanted to maintain free trade with the EU or be able to control EU immigration. The EU took the view that freedom of movement for EU citizens was one of four freedoms that were integral to the maintenance of the EU Single Market (European Parliament, 2017). Consequently, any wish to control immigration was incompatible with continued membership of the Single Market. Indeed, it was in recognition of this stance, together with a belief that the public wanted greater control over immigration, that the Conservative government had accepted that the UK should not attempt to remain in the Single Market – albeit it still wanted a wide-ranging free trade agreement. In any event, a wish to prioritise immigration control was widely portrayed as supporting a hard Brexit, whereas those who felt it was more important to maintain free trade with the EU were regarded as supporters of a soft Brexit.

To identify where voters stood on this issue we invite them to consider the following question:

> *It has been argued that when Britain leaves the EU, British firms will only be allowed to continue to sell goods and services freely to people in the EU if people from the EU are still free to come here to live and work*
>
> *Do you think Britain should or should not allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work in return for allowing British firms to sell goods and services freely in the EU?*

Respondents can answer by choosing one of the following options:

> ***Definitely should allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work***
>
> ***Probably should allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work***
>
> ***Probably should not allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work***
>
> ***Definitely should not allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work***

Supporters of a soft Brexit prove to be more numerous. As many as 30% say that the UK should definitely allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work in order to secure free trade, while another 28% state that it should probably do so. This represents a combined tally of 58% support. In contrast, just 12% say that the UK should definitely not allow people from the EU to come freely to the UK to live and work, while another 18% state that it probably should not, a total of 30%. Another 11% indicate they cannot choose which option is best. As we might anticipate, those who voted Remain are most likely to say that such a deal should be struck (78% say it definitely or probably should be) whereas Leave voters are more likely to take the opposite view (51% are definitely or probably opposed and only 36% in favour).

Of more immediate interest to us here, however, is what respondents say when we ask them where they think the parties stand on this issue. Respondents are asked:

> ***And as far as you know, where does the Conservative Party stand on this issue?***
>
> ***Is the Conservative Party in favour or against allowing people from the EU to come here freely to live and work in return for allowing British firms to sell goods and services freely in the EU?***

**Around a quarter cannot choose where the Conservatives, Labour and UKIP stand on free movement and free trade**

The same question is then also asked about the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP. As Table 1 shows, it is a question that many voters find difficult to answer. In the case of the Conservatives, Labour and UKIP around a quarter say they cannot choose where they stand, while in the case of the Liberal Democrats the figure is nearly two-fifths. That said, among those who do feel able to answer, the parties are regarded rather differently. Most reckon that both Labour and the Liberal Democrats would be in favour of allowing continued freedom of movement, while UKIP would not. However, there is little sign that the Liberal Democrats' opposition to Brexit happening at all means that the party's stance is distinguishable in voters' minds from that of the Labour Party. But the one party about which opinion is more evenly divided is, perhaps ironically, the Conservatives. Although, on balance, slightly more people (40%) think that they would not allow freedom of movement than reckoned they would (32%), evidently there is some disagreement about where the party is thought to stand on the issue.

**Table 1 Perceptions of the parties' stances on Brexit**

| | Perceived stance of … | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Is party in favour or against allowing free movement of people in return for free trade in the EU?** | **… the Conservatives** | **… Labour** | **… the Liberal Democrats** | **… UKIP** |
| | % | % | % | % |
| In favour | 32 | 57 | 50 | 5 |
| Against | 40 | 16 | 10 | 67 |
| Can't choose | 26 | 25 | 38 | 25 |
| *Unweighted base* | *812* | *812* | *812* | *812* |

The reason for this disagreement becomes clearer when we look separately at the perceptions of those who voted Remain and Leave in the EU referendum. For the most part the two sets of voters are largely in agreement about where Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP stood on Brexit, albeit that Leave voters are more likely to be unable to state where they thought the parties stood. But Table 2 shows that in the case of the Conservatives, Remain voters are inclined to the view that the party backs a hard Brexit, while Leave voters feel that the party's position is rather softer. It seems that the apparent ambiguity in the Conservatives' position put the party's support at risk among Leave and Remain voters, both of which seem to think that the Tories might act against what they themselves might well prefer. However, Leave voters are still more likely to feel that the Conservative Party would oppose continued freedom of movement than they are to believe that either Labour or the Liberal Democrats would do so. So, although the parties' positions on Brexit may not be regarded as being as distinct as the Prime Minister claimed they were, there is perhaps enough of a distinction in voters' minds that those with different views on the subject might have behaved rather differently in the election contest.

**Table 2 Perceptions of the parties' stances on Brexit, by EU referendum vote**

| Is party in favour or against allowing free movement of people in return for free trade in the EU? | Perceived stance of … … the Conservatives | | … Labour | | … the Liberal Democrats | | …UKIP | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Remain | Leave | Remain | Leave | Remain | Leave | Remain | Leave |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| In favour | 29 | 44 | 62 | 57 | 61 | 44 | 2 | 9 |
| Against | 49 | 27 | 17 | 17 | 7 | 12 | 78 | 62 |
| Can't choose | 19 | 26 | 19 | 23 | 30 | 40 | 17 | 26 |
| *Unweighted base* | *345* | *300* | *345* | *300* | *345* | *300* | *345* | *300* |

## Brexit and party choice

**In the 2017 election, over half of Remainers voted Labour, while over half of Leavers voted Conservative**

In the event, those with different views about Brexit did indeed vote rather differently in the election. Unsurprisingly, as Table 3 shows, nearly all of UKIP's (much diminished) support came from Leave voters, while the Liberal Democrats were much more popular among Remain voters (13% voted for them) than Leave supporters (3%). More striking, however, is the contrast between the pattern of support for the Conservatives and that for Labour. Just over half of those who voted Remain in the EU referendum voted Labour in the 2017 election, whereas only 30% of Leave voters did so. Conversely, twice as many Leave voters (58%) as Remain supporters (29%) voted for the Conservatives. Almost exactly the same pattern is in evidence if we compare those who can be said to favour a soft Brexit with those who back a harder version.

**Table 3 Vote choice, 2017 election, by (a) EU referendum vote, (b) Preference for a 'hard' or 'soft' Brexit**

| | EU Referendum Vote | | Allow free movement of people in return for free trade? | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Remain | Leave | Definitely/ probably should | Definitely/ probably should not |
| **2017 general election vote** | % | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 29 | 58 | 33 | 59 |
| Labour | 52 | 30 | 49 | 30 |
| Liberal Democrat | 13 | 3 | 11 | 3 |
| UKIP | * | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| Other | 7 | 4 | 7 | 3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1052* | *871* | *1053* | *527* |

But to what extent does this pattern represent a departure from how voters behaved at previous elections? We certainly might think it does given that, as noted above, in 2016 Conservative supporters were not far from being evenly divided in how they voted in the referendum, whereas in the 2017 election the party appears to have been much more popular among Leave voters than their Remain counterparts. But to pursue this further we need to use a different measure of attitudes towards the EU, one that has been asked regularly on British Social Attitudes (BSA) since well before the referendum was called. Further details about this question are to be found in the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping, here we can simply note that the question from 2017 reads:

> ***Leaving aside the result of the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, what do you think Britain's policy should be.***
>
> ***Should it...***
>
> ***… leave the European Union,***
>
> ***stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers,***
>
> ***stay in the EU and try to keep the EU's powers as they are,***
>
> ***stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers,***
>
> ***or, work for the formation of a single European government?***

In Table 4 we show how people voted in each of the 2005, 2015 and 2017 elections broken down by how they responded in those years to this question. Given that relatively few people selected either of the last two options, respondents choosing these have been combined with those who said that things should be left as they are.

**Table 4 Vote choice, by attitudes towards participation in the EU, 2005, 2015 and 2017**

| | 2005 | | | 2015 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Leave** | **Stay (reduce powers)** | **Stay (keep powers at least same)** | **Leave** | **Stay (reduce powers)** | **Stay (keep powers at least same)** |
| **2017 general election vote** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 46 | 40 | 16 | 44 | 47 | 22 |
| Labour | 28 | 36 | 53 | 21 | 30 | 49 |
| Liberal Democrat | 16 | 19 | 24 | 2 | 8 | 8 |
| UKIP | 4 | 1 | * | 28 | 6 | 1 |
| Other | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 20 |
| *Unweighted base* | *494* | *1154* | *994* | *184* | *364* | *184* |

| | 2017 | | | Change in % vote 2015 - 2017 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Leave** | **Stay (reduce powers)** | **Stay (keep powers at least same)** | **Leave** | **Stay (reduce powers)** | **Stay (keep powers at least same)** |
| **2017 general election vote** | % | % | % | | | |
| Conservative | 58 | 35 | 14 | +14 | -12 | -7 |
| Labour | 28 | 48 | 65 | +7 | +18 | +16 |
| Liberal Democrat | 3 | 10 | 13 | +1 | +2 | +5 |
| UKIP | 6 | * | 1 | -22 | -5 | -1 |
| Other | 5 | 7 | 7 | 0 | -3 | -13 |
| *Unweighted base* | *569* | *507* | *338* | | | |

*Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

As we might by now anticipate, those who say that Britain should leave the EU voted very differently in 2017 from those who said that Britain should remain in the EU but try to reduce its powers, while that group, in turn, also behaved differently from those who would like the EU to remain at least as powerful as it is at present. In particular, the Conservatives (Table 4, top row) won a majority of the vote (58%) among the first group, only around a third among the second (35%), and even less (14%) in the third category. In contrast, the equivalent figures for Labour (in the second row) were around a third (28%), a half (48%), and two-thirds (65%).

What also becomes clear from Table 4 is that this division is much sharper in 2017 than it had been in 2015. Then the Conservative Party was no more popular among those who wanted to leave the EU than it was among those who felt that Britain should stay but simply try to reduce its powers. Only those who wanted the EU to remain at least as powerful as it was were less likely to vote for the party. Indeed, much the same was true ten years earlier in the 2005 election. But between 2015 and 2017 support for the Conservatives increased by 14 percentage points among those who want the UK to leave the EU – doubtless in part thanks to a collapse in support for UKIP among this group – while support fell by 12 and 7 points respectively among (a) those who would like to stay in the EU but reduce its powers and (b) those who would like to stay in the EU and at least keep the EU's powers the same as they are now. Conversely, although support for Labour did increase between 2015 and 2017 among those who say Britain should leave (by 7 points), the party enjoyed more marked increases in support – of 18 and 16 points respectively – among the remaining two groups. As a result, in Labour's case too, people's attitudes towards the EU are more strongly related to how they voted in 2017 than they had been in 2015, or indeed long before that.

Nevertheless, perhaps voting Leave and supporting the Conservatives had already become more closely aligned with each other by the time voters made their choice in the EU referendum, and the pattern of party support in 2017 is simply a reflection of a change that has already happened. To investigate this possibility, we need to use a different measure of party support that is collected by BSA every year, irrespective of whether an election has taken place or not. This is a measure known as party identification, which is intended to capture whether someone has an affective attachment to a party such that they might call themselves a 'Conservative supporter', a 'Labour supporter' or the supporter of another party. This measure is sometimes regarded as an indicator of more long-term support for a party than voting for it at a particular election (Bartle and Bellucci, 2008). (Details of the questions we ask to measure this concept are to be found in the Technical details of this report.)

**Remain Conservative voters fell by 8 points between 2016 and 2017, while Leave Conservative voters increased by 4 points**

First of all, in Table 5 we compare the relationship between party identification and referendum vote in 2017 with that in 2016. This shows that while there clearly was a relationship between the two in the months immediately after the referendum – a large proportion of Remain voters (40%) identified with Labour while a large proportion of Leave supporters identified with the Conservatives (43%) – the link is even stronger in 2017. The proportion of Remain voters that identify with the Conservatives fell by as much as 8 points between 2016 and 2017, while the proportion of Leave voters that did so increased by 4 points. In Labour's case the contrast is not so stark, but identification with the party seems to have increased more among Remain supporters between 2016 and 2017 than it did among Leave voters.

**Table 5 Party identification, by EU referendum vote, 2016 and 2017**

| | 2016 | | 2017 | | Change from 2016-2017 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Remain | Leave | Remain | Leave | Remain | Leave |
| **Party identification** | % | % | % | % | | |
| Conservative | 34 | 43 | 26 | 47 | -8 | +4 |
| Labour | 40 | 22 | 49 | 28 | +9 | +7 |
| Liberal Democrat | 9 | 4 | 10 | 3 | +2 | -1 |
| UKIP | * | 1 | * | 4 | 0 | -6 |
| Other | 9 | 5 | 7 | 3 | -2 | -2 |
| None/Don't Know | 8 | 16 | 8 | 15 | 0 | -1 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1115* | *1139* | *1163* | *1046* | | |

*Figures showing the change between 2016 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

Meanwhile, in Table 6 we use the more detailed measure of attitudes towards the EU we introduced earlier at Table 4 to chart how the link between attitudes towards the EU and party identification evolved each year between 2015 and 2017. Note, first of all, that for the most part the change in the pattern of party identification between 2015 and 2017 as a whole in Table 6 mirrors the change in vote choice that can be observed between those two years in Table 4. For example, looking at the top row, the level of Conservative identification among those who want the EU to remain as powerful as at present fell by 7 points between 2015 and 2017, the same as the 7-point drop in the party's share of the vote among this group. There is therefore no reason to believe that using party identification rather than vote choice has any impact on the validity of our analysis, and thus can be used to examine the year-by-year dynamics of party support between 2015 and 2017.

**Between 2016 and 2017, Labour support increased by much less among Leavers than among Remainers**

Meanwhile, what we can now also see is that much of the strengthening of the relationship between party identification and attitudes towards the EU occurred between 2016 and 2017, rather than between 2015 and 2016. In Labour's case in particular, the party's support rose between 2015 and 2016 by more or less the same amount (that is, by 6, 4 and 4 points respectively) irrespective of people's attitudes towards Brexit. In other words, the relationship between identifying with the Labour party and attitudes towards the EU was little different in 2016 from what it had been a year earlier. However, between 2016 and 2017 Labour's support increased by much less (by just 3 points) among those who said Britain should leave than it did among either those who said the UK should stay in the EU but seek to reduce its powers (12 points) or those who would like the EU to remain at least as powerful as at present (14 points). Equally, although the proportion of Conservative identifiers did fall somewhat between 2015 and 2016 among those who said that the UK should remain in the EU but reduce its powers (though

not among those who felt the EU's powers should at least stay the same), between 2016 and 2017 the level of identification with the party fell yet further amongst those who said that Britain should stay in the EU (irrespective of whether or not they thought the EU's powers should change), whereas it held up (indeed, it appeared to increase slightly) among those who said that Britain should leave the EU. As a result, the relationship between attitudes towards the EU and both Conservative and Labour support was stronger after the 2017 election than it had been immediately after the EU referendum in 2016.

**The relationship between attitudes towards the EU and Conservative and Labour support strengthened between 2016 and 2017**

**Table 6 Party Identification, by attitudes towards the EU, 2015-2017**

| | 2015 | | | 2016 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Leave | Stay (reduce powers) | Stay (keep powers at least same) | Leave | Stay (reduce powers) | Stay (keep powers at least same) |
| **Party identification** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 38 | 41 | 20 | 40 | 34 | 19 |
| Labour | 18 | 28 | 37 | 24 | 32 | 41 |
| Liberal Democrat | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 8 |
| UKIP | 18 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 1 | * |
| Other | 3 | 7 | 13 | 5 | 8 | 12 |
| None/Don't Know | 21 | 14 | 25 | 20 | 18 | 19 |
| *Unweighted base* | *252* | *470* | *315* | *852* | *666* | *367* |

| | 2017 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Leave | Stay (reduce powers) | Stay (keep powers at least same |
| **Party identification** | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 43 | 27 | 13 |
| Labour | 27 | 44 | 55 |
| Liberal Democrat | 2 | 7 | 11 |
| UKIP | 4 | * | * |
| Other | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| None/Don't Know | 20 | 17 | 15 |
| *Unweighted base* | *773* | *677* | *467* |

So, it seems clear that Brexit did make a difference to how some people voted in the 2017 election, just as the Prime Minister hoped it would. However, while this meant her party gained ground among those who voted Leave (and thus for the most part backed a hard Brexit), it also meant that her party lost ground among those who

backed Remain (and were more inclined towards a soft Brexit). Labour, in contrast, found it rather easier to gain ground among Remain voters than it did among their Leave counterparts. As a result, how people voted in the election reflected their attitudes towards the EU to a much greater extent than previously. Not only that, but it seems that in some cases the party with which a voter identifies may have been influenced by Brexit too, and that thus the 2017 election may have a longer-term impact on the pattern of support for the parties. In any event, it evidently now behoves us to investigate to what extent the traditional patterns of vote choice in British elections may have been disrupted by Theresa May's Brexit election.

## Attitudes towards immigration and vote choice

One of the key themes of the EU referendum debate was the desirability, or otherwise, of recent levels of immigration into Britain. A core message of the Leave campaign was that Brexit would allow Britain to 'take back control of its borders', with the implication being that this would allow the UK government to reduce the level of immigration into the country. Given that, as we have just demonstrated, vote choice and party identification have become more closely associated with attitudes towards the EU, we might expect that vote choice and party identification are now also more closely associated with attitudes towards immigration (see also the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping). Might a supposedly hard Brexit' supporting Conservative Party have enjoyed increased support among those sceptical of the value of immigrants who come to Britain? Did the Labour Party, perceived to be taking a somewhat softer approach to Brexit, and perhaps particularly so on the issue of immigration, increase its support among those with a more positive view of immigration?

The following question, included in BSA in both 2015 and 2017, helps us address these questions. We ask respondents to use a scale from 0 to 10 to say whether they think that:

> ***Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries***

A score of 0 to 3 is assumed to indicate a belief that, on balance, immigration undermines Britain's cultural life, a score of 7 to 10 that immigration enriches Britain's cultural life and a score of between 4 and 6 that immigration does neither of these things.

Table 7 shows that our expectation proves to be correct. While support for the Conservatives among voters who believe that immigration enriches cultural life fell by 8 points between the 2015 and 2017 general elections, it rose by 10 points among voters who think immigration undermines cultural life, an increase that mirrors a

10-point fall in UKIP support among this group. Meanwhile, although there was a small 3-point increase in Labour support among voters who feel that immigration undermines cultural life, this was dwarfed by a 17-point rise in support among people who believe it enriches Britain's culture.

**Table 7 Vote choice, by attitudes towards immigration, 2015 and 2017**

| | 2015 | | | 2017 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Cultural life undermined** | **Neither** | **Cultural life enriched** | **Cultural life undermined** | **Neither** | **Cultural life enriched** |
| **2017 general election vote** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 40 | 47 | 31 | 50 | 44 | 23 |
| Labour | 31 | 43 | 42 | 34 | 42 | 59 |
| Liberal Democrat | 4 | 8 | 10 | 1 | 9 | 12 |
| UKIP | 18 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 7 | 7 | 15 | 7 | 4 | 6 |
| *Unweighted base* | *495* | *494* | *466* | *176* | *256* | *319* |

*Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

So, the EU referendum and subsequent arguments about Brexit also appear to have contributed to an increased divergence in support for the Conservatives and Labour on an issue that has been central to those debates. At the 2015 general election, before David Cameron's re-negotiation of Britain's EU membership and the subsequent referendum, Conservative support among voters who thought immigration undermines cultural life was already 9 points higher than it was among voters who thought immigration enriches cultural life. However, in the 2017 general election, this gap increased to 27 points. Similarly, Labour's support went from being 11 points higher in 2015 among those who think immigration enriches cultural life than among those who think it undermines cultural life, to being as much as 25 points higher in 2017. How voters behaved in the 2017 election reflected their views about immigration to a greater extent than it had done two years earlier.

**Voting behaviour in the 2017 election reflected views on immigration to a greater extent than in 2015**

# Ideological voting patterns

## The left-right dimension and vote choice

As we noted earlier, the key ideological difference between the Labour and Conservative parties and their respective supporters has traditionally been between 'left' and 'right'. Those on the 'left' are inclined to the view that society is too unequal and that the government should endeavour to make it less so through, for example, higher taxation, more generous welfare benefits, the provision of public services and tighter regulation of the economy. They are more likely to vote for the Labour Party. Those on the 'right', in contrast, feel that a certain amount of inequality has to be accepted so that there are sufficient incentives for people to work and invest and thereby ensure economic growth from which all can profit. It is to this group that the Conservatives are more likely to appeal.

Each year, the BSA survey asks its respondents a series of questions designed to ascertain whether respondents are inclined to the left or the right (Evans and Heath, 1995). Details of these questions are given in the Technical details of this report. Here we may simply note that we can use the responses to identify the one third or so of respondents who give the most left-wing responses, the one third who give the most right-wing, and the one third who fall in between these two groups. The long-running nature of BSA enables us to analyse the trends in voting behaviour along this left/right ideological spectrum since the turn of the century and, in particular, to examine whether there have been any changes in the distribution of Conservative and Labour support along this spectrum since the EU referendum.

Table 8 reveals that the traditional divide between voters who incline to the left and those who incline to the right was still very much in place at the 2017 general election. Three-fifths (60%) of the most left-wing voters voted Labour, while nearly two-thirds of the most right-wing voters (64%) voted Conservative. Looked at another way, support for Labour among the most left-wing third of the electorate was 40 points higher than backing for the Conservatives, and conversely, support for the Conservatives among the most right-wing third of the electorate was 41 points higher than backing for Labour. In contrast, but as in previous years, there was little variation in the levels of support for the Liberal Democrats or UKIP across the left-right ideological spectrum.

While the usual left-right division in voting was in evidence in 2017, we should note that it did not deepen. The changes in support for each of the two main parties between 2015 and 2017 were very similar across the left-right spectrum. For example, although Labour support rose by 9 points among the most left-wing part of the electorate, it also rose by 8 points among the most right-wing part

and by 12 points among the one third of the electorate in the centre. Although Jeremy Corbyn is widely perceived as the most left-wing Labour leader for many years, it appears that under his leadership support for Labour did not increase any more among left-wing voters than it did in the rest of the electorate. In fact, it was at the 2015 election, under the leadership of Ed Miliband (who first dropped the 'New Labour' label bequeathed to the party by Tony Blair), when the composition of Labour's support became relatively more left-wing. Labour's vote rose by 8 points among the most left-wing group between 2010 and 2015, whereas there was no change among the 'middle' group and backing for the party actually fell by 6 points among the most right-wing group.

Meanwhile, between 2015 and 2017 there was a small rise of 3 points in Conservative support among both the most left-wing group and the 'middle' group, while there was actually a small 3-point fall among the most right-wing group. There is certainly no sign of the left-right division deepening on this side of the party battle either. Again, the relative stability of the left-right divide across the 2015 and 2017 elections stands in contrast to what happened between 2010 and 2015. Between those two earlier elections support for the Conservatives actually fell by 3 points[2] among those on the left and 3 points among those in the centre, whereas it increased by 16 points[3] among those on the right. So far as the left-right dimension is concerned, the 2017 election simply left in place the increased polarisation that had been in evidence two years earlier.

**The 2017 election did not exacerbate the existing left-right divide**

2 This is the figure for the change between 2010 and 2015 that is obtained if it is calculated by taking the difference between the proportions in the table calculated to one decimal place and rounding the resulting figure to the nearest integer.

3 See footnote 1.

**Table 8 Vote choice, by left-right position, 2001-2017**

| General election vote | 2001 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Left-wing voters** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 14 | 17 | 21 | 17 | 20 | +3 |
| Labour | 62 | 54 | 43 | 51 | 60 | +9 |
| Liberal Democrat | 17 | 22 | 22 | 7 | 10 | +3 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 3 | 10 | 3 | -7 |
| Other | 8 | 6 | 11 | 15 | 8 | -8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *519* | *766* | *224* | *751* | *517* | |
| **Centre voters** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 24 | 27 | 39 | 36 | 39 | +3 |
| Labour | 50 | 45 | 33 | 33 | 45 | +12 |
| Liberal Democrat | 21 | 23 | 22 | 9 | 7 | -2 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 2 | 11 | 2 | -9 |
| Other | 5 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 6 | -4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *724* | *765* | *202* | *939* | *647* | |
| **Right-wing voters** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Conservative | 44 | 47 | 51 | 66 | 64 | -3 |
| Labour | 33 | 29 | 21 | 15 | 23 | +8 |
| Liberal Democrat | 19 | 19 | 24 | 7 | 8 | +1 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 2 | 6 | 1 | -5 |
| Other | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | -1 |
| *Unweighted base* | *595* | *877* | *217* | *845* | *565* | |

*n/a: votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey*

*Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

## The libertarian-authoritarian dimension and vote choice

But what of the distribution of support across the libertarian-authoritarian divide? As was discussed in the introduction, the issues in the Brexit debate touched more upon this dimension than the 'left-right' one, so it is, perhaps, here that we might expect to observe increased polarisation of Conservative and Labour support in 2017. As with the left-right dimension, we are able to use BSA to analyse the pattern of vote choice across the 'libertarian-authoritarian' divide at each of the last five elections. Each year respondents to BSA are asked a series of questions designed to ascertain whether they are more inclined to the libertarian or the authoritarian end of this ideological spectrum. Details of these questions are given in the

Technical details of this report. In much the same way as we did in the case of the left-right dimension, we can use the responses to identify the one third or so of respondents who give the most libertarian responses, the one third who give the most authoritarian responses and the one third who give responses that fall in between these two groups.

We saw earlier that the level of support for both the Liberal Democrats and UKIP varies little across the 'left-right' axis. However, in Table 9 we can see that their support does tend to diverge strongly along the 'libertarian-authoritarian' one. For example, at the height of 'Cleggmania' in 2010, the Liberal Democrats won as much as a third of the vote (33%) among the most libertarian section of the electorate, whereas their support among the most authoritarian voters was less than half this (13%). Although support for the Liberal Democrats has since fallen across the board, this divide in their support is still very much in evidence in 2017; 14% of the most libertarian voters backed them, compared with only 3% of the most authoritarian. Meanwhile, at the high point of UKIP's electoral success in 2015, the party secured the support of no less than 15% of the most authoritarian group of voters, but only 3% of the most libertarian.

In contrast, support for Labour and the Conservatives has historically not diverged anything like as much across the 'libertarian-authoritarian' divide, as it has across the 'left-right' one. For example, in 2001, support for Labour was almost exactly the same among the most libertarian group of voters, the 'middle' group and the most authoritarian group. Meanwhile, although in the same year support for the Conservatives among the most authoritarian voters was 14 points higher than among the most libertarian ones, this was still only around half the 30-point difference between Conservative support among right-wing voters and that among their left-wing counterparts.

However, this picture changed between the 2015 and the 2017 elections. As Table 9 shows, Labour gained more ground among libertarian voters than among authoritarian respondents, while support for the Conservatives actually fell among the former group but increased among the latter. Thus, although Labour support rose by 5 points among the most authoritarian group and 6 points among the 'middle' group, it rose considerably more, by 19 points, among the most libertarian group of voters. Meanwhile, backing for the Conservatives fell by 10 points among the most libertarian section of the electorate, while it rose by 5 points among the 'middle' group and by 8 points among the most authoritarian set of voters.

**The 'libertarian-authoritarian' divide in the Labour and Conservative vote is the largest for 20 years**

As a result, voting for Labour and the Conservatives is divided along 'libertarian-authoritarian' lines to a greater extent than at any point in the last 20 years. There had been tentative evidence in 2015 that this divide was growing, but the scale of the change between the 2015 and 2017 general elections far exceeds any changes that took place beforehand. We have already noted that in 2001 Labour

support was almost exactly the same across our three groups of voters. In contrast, by 2015, Labour support was 9 points higher among libertarian voters than authoritarian ones. However, between 2015 and 2017 this gap more than doubled again, such that Labour's vote was 22 points higher amongst the most libertarian third of voters than among the most authoritarian third. Meanwhile, support for the Conservatives increased in much the same fashion at each of the four elections between 2001 and 2015, irrespective of where people stood on the libertarian-authoritarian divide, and, as a result, the difference in 2015 between the Conservative level of support among authoritarian voters and that among libertarian ones was, at 15 points, no higher than it had been in 2001 (14 points). In 2017, however, the difference between Conservative support among authoritarian voters and that among libertarian ones more than doubled, to 34 points.

**Table 9 Vote choice, by libertarian-authoritarian position, 2001-2017**

| General election vote | 2001 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Libertarian voters** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 20 | 20 | 28 | 33 | 22 | -10 |
| Labour | 48 | 44 | 32 | 37 | 55 | +19 |
| Liberal Democrat | 26 | 30 | 33 | 12 | 14 | +2 |
| UKIP | n/a | * | 1 | 3 | 1 | -2 |
| Other | 7 | 6 | 6 | 16 | 7 | -8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *721* | *832* | *262* | *994* | *610* | |
| **Centre voters** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 31 | 36 | 40 | 45 | 49 | +5 |
| Labour | 49 | 42 | 35 | 31 | 37 | +6 |
| Liberal Democrat | 16 | 17 | 19 | 6 | 5 | 0 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 2 | 12 | 1 | -10 |
| Other | 4 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| *Unweighted base* | *721* | *817* | *142* | *722* | *496* | |
| **Authoritarian voters** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 34 | 39 | 47 | 48 | 56 | +8 |
| Labour | 47 | 40 | 30 | 28 | 33 | +5 |
| Liberal Democrat | 14 | 15 | 13 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| UKIP | n/a | 2 | 3 | 15 | 4 | -11 |
| Other | 5 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 4 | -2 |
| *Unweighted base* | *707* | *773* | *243* | *828* | *627* | |

*Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey*

*Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

Thus, the 2017 election witnessed a marked change in the ideological basis of Conservative and Labour voting. Although the left-right divide between their supporters remained, more or less, as strong as ever, it was accompanied by unprecedentedly sharp differences of support along the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, a dimension whose content reflects the subject matter of much of the debate about Brexit. True, Conservative and Labour support is still more strongly demarcated by the left-right division than by the libertarian-authoritarian one (for example, there is a 44-point difference between the level of Conservative support among right-wing and left-wing voters, compared with a 34-point one between authoritarians and libertarians), but Britain's two largest parties now find themselves straddling two different ideological dimensions rather than articulating just one, a situation that is almost bound to be a more difficult balancing act.

## Demographic voting patterns

We have established that, at the 2017 general election, the Conservatives lost ground among Remain voters and those who take a favourable view of the consequences of immigration, while the party's support increased among Leave voters and those less supportive of immigration. Labour, in contrast, advanced more strongly among Remain and pro-immigration voters than it did among those of the opposite view. These developments, in turn, appear to have helped open up a much wider gap between libertarian and authoritarian voters in the level of support they afforded to the Conservatives and Labour. These findings raise the question as to whether they have been accompanied by changes in the demographic patterns of party support. In particular, it has previously been shown that people's attitudes towards Brexit vary primarily by age and education rather than by the characteristic which traditionally has been the most important demographic division in British electoral politics: social class (Evans and Tilley, 2017; Curtice 2017a; 2017c; see also the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping). Younger voters and graduates were much more likely to vote Remain than older voters and those with few, if any, qualifications. We might therefore wonder whether these divisions by age and educational background are now also apparent in the pattern of Conservative and Labour support.

### Age and vote choice

Table 10 summarises the differences in party support by age by comparing the level of support for the parties among those aged 18 to 34 with that among those aged 65 and over. The Conservative Party has long tended to be more popular among older voters than those who are younger, though in 2001 and 2005, at least, the opposite was not true of Labour. But in 2017 this tendency was

much more marked. Support for the Conservatives fell between 2015 and 2017 by 10 points among the youngest age group, whereas it increased by 6 points among those aged 65 and over. Meanwhile, Labour's share of the vote increased by just 2 points among older voters whereas it rose by no less than 23 points among the youngest age group. Indeed, more generally across all age groups, the younger the voter, the more likely they were to have switched to Labour and less likely they were to have supported the Conservatives. As a result, there is now an enormous difference between the voting preferences of younger voters and those of their older counterparts, a difference that has been dubbed a 'youthquake' (Stewart et al., 2018). Those aged 18-34 are no less than 32 points more likely to vote Labour than those aged 65 and over, while they are 33 points less likely to vote Conservative. Never before has there been so big an age divide in British electoral politics.

**Never before has there been so big an age divide in British electoral politics**

**Table 10 Vote choice, among those aged 18-34, and 65 and over, 2001-2017**

| General election vote | 2001 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aged 18-34** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 25 | 23 | 32 | 32 | 22 | -10 |
| Labour | 50 | 43 | 32 | 39 | 62 | +23 |
| Liberal Democrat | 17 | 25 | 25 | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 3 | 6 | 1 | -5 |
| Other | 8 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 8 | -8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *367* | *448* | *109* | *464* | *346* | |
| **Aged 65+** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 34 | 41 | 48 | 49 | 55 | +6 |
| Labour | 49 | 42 | 28 | 28 | 30 | +2 |
| Liberal Democrat | 13 | 15 | 18 | 6 | 8 | +2 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 3 | 11 | 3 | -9 |
| Other | 4 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 | -2 |
| *Unweighted base* | *578* | *800* | *234* | *941* | *707* | |

*Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey*

*Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

## Education and vote choice

But can the same be said of educational background? In Table 11 we compare, at each of the last five elections, the voting behaviour of graduates (who mostly voted Remain) and the party choice made by those without any formal educational qualifications (who largely voted Leave). As we might anticipate, Labour has usually been

more popular among those without any educational qualifications than among graduates; the former group are, after all, more likely to be employed in working-class occupations, employment in which has traditionally been associated with voting Labour. However, the Conservative Party has never been especially popular among university graduates, among whom the Liberal Democrats have instead tended to be unusually popular.

**The Labour Party is now more popular among graduates than those without any educational qualifications**

The Conservatives are certainly not especially popular with university graduates in the wake of the Brexit debate. Support for the party among this group actually fell back by 5 points between 2015 and 2017, whereas it increased by 12 points among those without any qualifications. In contrast Labour's tally increased by 14 points among graduates, while it simply remained static among those without any qualifications. As a result, nearly half of all university graduates voted for the Labour Party, and the party was – for the first time – seemingly somewhat more popular among graduates than among those without any educational qualifications. While the differences in voting behaviour between those of different educational backgrounds are nothing like as large as those between older and younger voters, it is still the case that here, too, the 2017 election witnessed a disruption of the usual pattern of voting behaviour in Britain.

**Table 11 Vote choice, among graduates, and those with no formal educational qualifications, 2001-2017**

| General election vote | 2001 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Graduates** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 22 | 29 | 31 | 37 | 32 | -5 |
| Labour | 41 | 33 | 27 | 35 | 48 | +14 |
| Liberal Democrat | 31 | 31 | 36 | 13 | 12 | -1 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | -2 |
| Other | 5 | 6 | 4 | 12 | 7 | -5 |
| *Unweighted base* | *348* | *487* | *159* | *766* | *629* | |
| **No qualifications** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 25 | 28 | 38 | 35 | 47 | +12 |
| Labour | 58 | 57 | 38 | 43 | 43 | 0 |
| Liberal Democrat | 12 | 12 | 17 | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 3 | 12 | 4 | -8 |
| Other | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 3 | -3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *571* | *779* | *175* | *550* | *358* | |

*Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey*

*Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

## Social class and vote choice

If the relationship between vote choice and both age and education changed in 2015, what implications, if any, did this have for differences in voting behaviour by social class? For much of the post-war period the association of the Labour Party with the working class and of the Conservatives with the middle class was one of the staples of British politics. But the advent of New Labour under Tony Blair served to weaken that association both in voters' minds and in how they behaved, not least because of an increased tendency among working class voters to abstain (Heath et al., 2001; Heath, 2016; Evans and Tilley, 2017). Even so, in 2005, the third election that Labour fought under Tony Blair's leadership, support for Labour was still 19 points higher among people from routine and semi-routine occupational backgrounds than among those engaged in managerial and professional jobs, and this gap was only slightly smaller at 15 points in 2015. Equally, the gap between the level of Conservative support among those in professional and managerial occupations and those in semi-routine and routine ones was, at 16 points, also much the same in 2015 as it had been in 2005 (15 points). However, between 2015 and 2017 Labour's vote increased by 12 points among those in professional and managerial jobs, but only by 5 points among those in semi-routine and routine employment. Meanwhile, Conservative support rose by 8 points among those in semi-routine and routine employment but fell back slightly, by 3 points, among those in managerial and professional occupations. As a result, the differences between the two classes in the level of support that they gave the parties fell to 5 points in the case of the Conservatives and 8 points in respect of Labour. In other words, the difference between Labour's support among working class and that among middle class voters was smaller under veteran left-winger, Jeremy Corbyn, than it had been under Tony Blair, the architect of the New Labour project that was intended to enhance the party's appeal to the middle classes.

**Conservative support rose by 8 points among semi-routine and routine workers but fell by 3 points among managers and professionals**

**Table 12 Vote choice among managerial and professional workers, and semi-routine/ routine workers, 2001-2017.**

| General election vote | 2001 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Managerial & professional occupations** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 30 | 36 | 41 | 44 | 41 | -3 |
| Labour | 42 | 37 | 26 | 30 | 42 | +12 |
| Liberal Democrat | 24 | 23 | 28 | 11 | 10 | -1 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 | -5 |
| Other | 5 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 7 | -3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *761* | *1096* | *262* | *1264* | *975* | |
| **Semi-routine & routine occupations** | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Conservative | 20 | 21 | 32 | 28 | 36 | +8 |
| Labour | 59 | 56 | 43 | 45 | 50 | +5 |
| Liberal Democrat | 15 | 16 | 15 | 4 | 5 | +1 |
| UKIP | n/a | 1 | 3 | 12 | 3 | -9 |
| Other | 6 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 6 | -5 |
| *Unweighted base* | *641* | *737* | *209* | *718* | *475* | |

*Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey*

*Occupational class is as measured by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification. For further details see the Technical details chapter*

*Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

# Conclusions

**Attitudes towards the EU and immigration were sharply reflected in voter behaviour at the 2017 election**

In the event, Theresa May's decision to call the 2017 election backfired so far as she was concerned. Rather than securing a bigger overall majority, she lost the small one that she already had, and had to form a minority government with support from the backbenches of the pro-Leave Democratic Unionist Party, of Northern Ireland. Yet, despite the seeming ambiguity and similarity of the Conservative and Labour positions on Brexit, voters' attitudes towards Britain's future relationship with the EU, and on some of the issues that were central to the debate about that relationship such as immigration, were reflected more sharply in how the electorate voted than they had been just two years previously. The Prime Minister may not have secured an increased majority, but she did have her wish that voters should use the election to express their views about Brexit.

Yet in so doing voters eschewed what might have been regarded as the 'obvious' vehicles for expressing their views about Brexit, that is by voting for the pro-Remain Liberal Democrats or the ardently pro-Leave UKIP. Too few voters, perhaps, felt they understood the Liberal Democrats' position on Brexit, while others, perhaps, still

felt unable to forgive the party for the role it played in the Coalition it formed between 2010 and 2015 with the Conservatives. Meanwhile, Leave voters may have regarded the Conservatives as better-placed to deliver the hard Brexit that they would prefer even if some seemingly doubted the strength of the party's commitment to that cause. In any event, both the Conservatives and Labour increased their share of the vote, and, at 82%, the two parties' combined share of the UK-wide vote was higher than at any election since 1970. Indeed, far from disrupting the usual rhythms of British politics, at first glance the outcome seemed to represent a return to the 'normality' of post-war British politics whereby its elections were dominated by just two parties; Conservative and Labour.

**Thanks to Brexit, electoral politics now reflects an emerging libertarian-authoritarian divide and a more pronounced generational division**

However, thanks to Brexit, the pattern of support for those two parties was far from 'normal'. The Brexit debate had brought to the fore issues such as immigration that cut across the traditional divide between left and right and sat uneasily with the class division that still to a degree underlies it. Consequently, as Leave voters gravitated towards the Conservatives and their Remain counterparts towards Labour, the 2017 election saw a different ideological distinction, between libertarian and authoritarians (or social conservatives), come to matter much more in shaping the pattern of Conservative and Labour support than it had done previously. This, in turn, helped accentuate generational differences in electoral choice to such an extent that, for the time being at least, these differences have displaced social class as the principal demographic division in British electoral politics.

This disruption of the regular rhythms of Conservative and Labour support creates potential tensions within both parties. The Conservative Party has long been regarded as the party of 'big business', yet the predominantly pro-Leave and immigration-sceptic electorate that the party gathered in 2017 shares little of that constituency's preference for a continued close relationship with the EU. Labour, meanwhile, still regards itself as the party of the 'working class', yet that portrayal seems hard to sustain when the party is almost as popular among university graduates as it is among semi-routine and routine workers. It remains to be seen which party, if either, proves to be more successful at adapting to the new political environment and challenges that Brexit appears to have created.

## Acknowledgments

The research reported here was supported financially by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of its 'The UK in a Changing Europe' initiative (grant no. ES/R001219/1). Responsibility for the views expressed here lies solely with the authors.

## References

Bartle, J. and Bellucci, P. (eds.) (2008), Political Parties and Partisanship: Social identity and Individual Attitudes, London: Routledge

BBC (2016), 'EU vote: where the cabinet and other MPs stand', BBC, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-35616946

BBC (2017), 'Theresa May's election statement in full', BBC, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-39630009

Curtice, J. (2010), 'Thermostat or weather-vane? Public reactions to spending and redistribution under New Labour', in Park, A., Curtice, J., Thomson, K., Phillips, M., Clery, E. and Butt, S. (eds.), British Social Attitudes: The 26th Report, London: Sage

Curtice, J. (2017a), 'The vote to leave the EU: Litmus Test or Lightening Rod?' in Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Harding, R. (eds.), British Social Attitudes: The 34th Report, London: The National Centre for Social Research, available at: http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-34/brexit.aspx

Curtice, J. (2017b), 'Has Brexit Reshaped British Politics?', London: The National Centre for Social Research, available at www.whatukthinks.org/eu/analysis/has-brexit-reshaped-british-politics/

Curtice, J. (2017c), 'Why Leave won the UK's EU referendum', Journal of Common Market Studies, 55(S1), 19-37

European Parliament (2017), 'Factsheets on the European Union: The Internal Market', Brussels: European Parliament, available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=theme3.html

Evans, G. and Heath, A. (1995), 'The measurement of left-right and libertarian-authoritarian values', Quality and Quantity, 29(2), 191-206

Evans, G. and Tilley, J. (2017), The New Politics of Class: The Political Exclusion of the Working Class, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Heath, A., Jowell, R. and Curtice, J. (1985), How Britain Votes, Oxford: Pergamon

Heath, A., Jowell, R. and Curtice, J. (2001), The Rise of New Labour: Party Policies and Vote Choices, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Heath, O. (2016), 'Policy Alienation, Social Alienation and Working-Class Abstention in Britain', British Journal of Political Science, 1-21

Labour Party (2017), For the Many, Not the Few: The Labour Party Manifesto 2017, London: Labour Party, available at https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/labour-manifesto-2017.pdf

Stewart, M., Clarke, H., Goodwin, M. and Whiteley, P. (2018), 'Yes there was a 'youthquake' in the 2017 election – and it mattered', London: New Statesman, 5 February, available at www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2018/02/yes-there-was-youthquake-2017-snap-election-and-it-mattered

# Europe

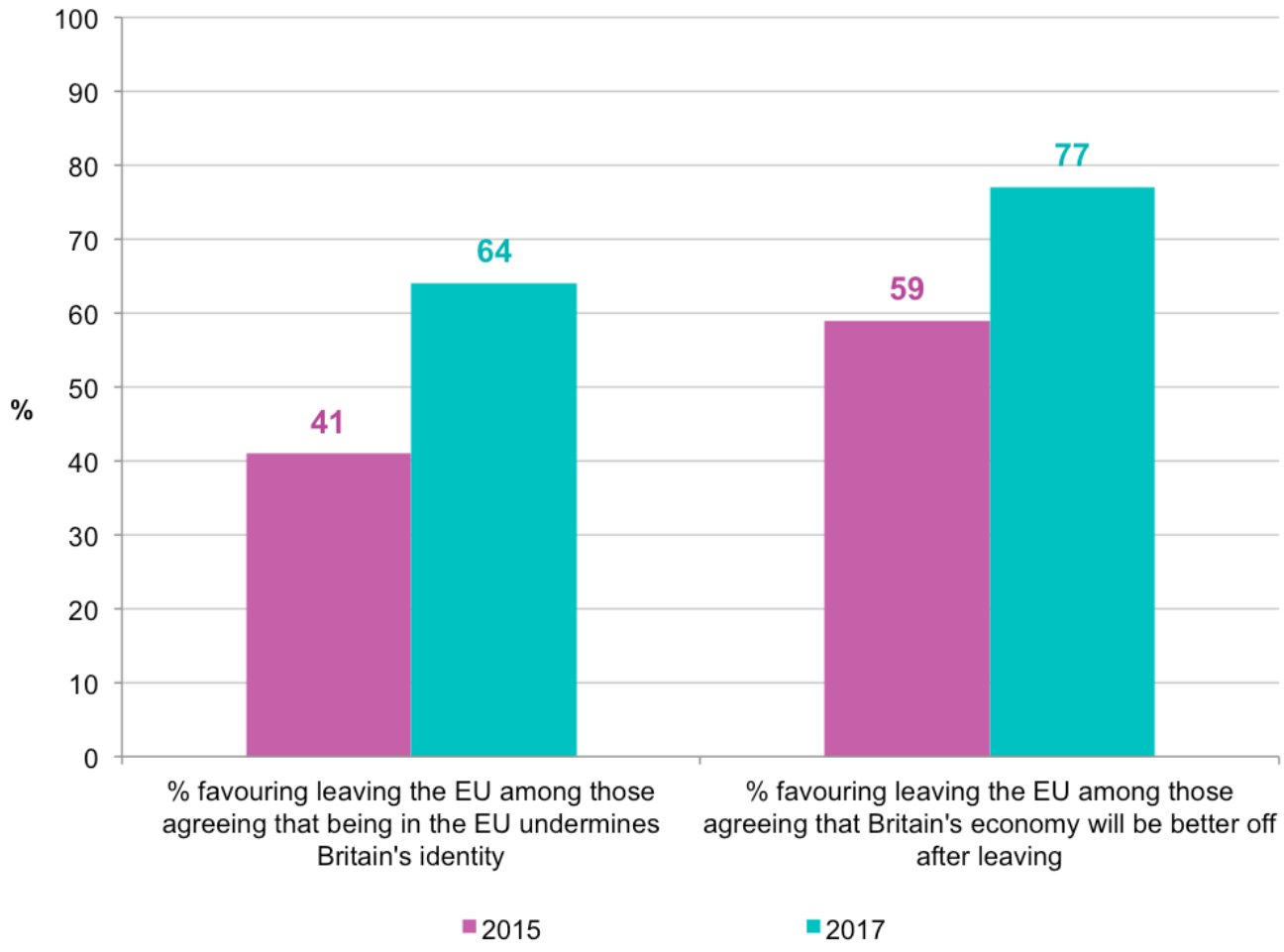
## A more 'informed' public? The impact of the Brexit debate

What impact has the debate about Brexit before and since the referendum had on public attitudes to the EU? Has support for leaving increased because people have become more concerned about the implications of membership for their sense of identity, and are now more optimistic about the consequences of leaving? Or has it risen because of a strengthened relationship between voters' attitudes towards the EU on the one hand and their sense of identity, their values and their views of the consequences of leaving on the other?

## Spotlight

Support for leaving the EU has increased considerably since 2015 among those who feel EU membership undermines Britain's identity, and those who think that leaving the EU would make the economy better.

**Support for leaving the EU, by attitudes towards the EU**



# Overview

## From scepticism to withdrawal

**Public opinion in Britain has long been sceptical about the country's membership of the EU, but support for leaving has increased in the wake of the Brexit debate.**

- For the last 20 years, at least half of the public have been 'Eurosceptic', that is, they either wanted to leave the EU or wanted its powers reduced.
- However, as recently as 2015 only 22% said that they wanted Britain to leave the EU. Now, though, 36% hold that view.

## A paradox

**The rise in support for leaving the EU has not been accompanied by increased concern about the implications of EU membership or greater optimism about the consequences of leaving.**

- The proportion who agree that membership of the EU undermines Britain's distinctive identity has fallen from 47% in 2015 to 41% now.
- Although only 31% feel strongly European, the proportion is up 6 points on 2015.
- 45% feel that the economy will be worse off as a result of leaving the EU, slightly above the 40% who held that view in 2015.

## A more 'informed' electorate?

**Support for leaving the EU has been more marked among those who are concerned about the implications of EU membership for identity or who are optimistic about the consequences of leaving.**

- Support for leaving the EU has increased by 22 points since 2015 among those who agree that EU membership undermines Britain's distinctive identity, but by only 7 points among those who disagree.
- There has been an 18-point increase in support for leaving among those who think the economy will be better off as a result, but only a 7-point rise among those who think it will be worse off.

**Authors**

**John Curtice,**
Senior Research Fellow,
The National Centre for Social Research, and Professor of Politics,
University of Strathclyde

**Sarah Tipping,**
Research Director (Analyst),
The National Centre for Social Research

# Introduction

Campaigns, be they before an election or a referendum, can potentially change public opinion in two ways. The first, and more obvious, is that voters change their minds about which way to vote and, as a result perhaps, the balance of opinion is altered. The second, less obvious but perhaps equally important, is that the campaign influences the reasons behind voters' choices. In particular, we might anticipate that the choice that voters make becomes a clearer reflection of their sense of identity and the values that they uphold, together with their perceptions of the likely consequences of one side winning rather than another. If that happens, the debate in advance of polling day may have helped ensure that voters cast a more 'informed' vote that better reflects their values, identities and perceptions of the consequences of their choice, even if, perhaps, they have done so only as a result of using 'information shortcuts' (Bartels, 1996; Gerber and Lupia, 1999; Lupia, 1994; Popkin, 1994).

In this chapter, we consider what impact the debate about Britain's membership of the EU – both before and since the referendum in June 2016 – has had on both the balance and the structure of public opinion in Britain towards the EU. There is, after all, every reason to anticipate that it should have made a difference. Before the referendum, the EU was for most voters a relatively distant institution about which many had probably not thought particularly deeply. Their answers to survey questions on the subject may well have been no more than 'top of the head' responses that were reckoned by respondents to be of little consequence – after all, they had not been asked to express their views on the subject on a ballot paper for over 40 years. However, now the future of Britain's membership of the EU has been put directly in their hands. Meanwhile, before the referendum, voters were subjected to five months of intense debate and competing claims about the merits of leaving or staying, while the issue has continued to attract attention and disputation as the UK has endeavoured to negotiate its withdrawal following the majority vote to leave. It would seem that there has been plenty of reason and opportunity for voters to think afresh about the issue.

**Before the referendum, voters were subjected to five months of intense debate and competing claims about the merits of leaving or staying**

Not only were voters being invited in the referendum to cast a vote on an issue with which many might well have been unfamiliar, but they were also required to reflect on a referendum debate whose content was multi-faceted (Clarke et al., 2017). In part, the question at stake was one of identity. For many advocates of a Leave vote, Britain's membership of the EU offended their sense of being part of an independent 'British' nation that they felt should be able to govern itself. In contrast, for some supporters of a Remain vote, membership of the EU reflected a European identity they held in common with those living across the continent and with whom, therefore, they were happy to share some resources and collaborate on making some policy decisions. In part too, the debate was about perceived and alleged consequences. What impact would leaving (or

remaining) have on the country's economic well-being, its influence in the world, or the level of immigration? That last issue had come to be particularly contentious given the UK's recent relatively high levels of net inward migration and the fact that the 'freedom of movement' provisions of the European Union gave EU citizens the right to come to the UK to live and work (Curtice, 2017a).

At the same time, the debate about EU membership also touched upon the values that people uphold – though not, perhaps, the ones that voters are usually thought to have at the back of their minds at election time (Heath et al., 1985). The principal division between supporters of Britain's two largest parties can be characterised as a debate between those on the 'left' and those on the 'right'. Those on the left would like to see Britain become a more equal society and feel that the government should intervene to help bring that about, a stance that tends to be associated with the Labour party. In contrast, those on the right tend to the view that it is more important that there are sufficient economic incentives for people to better themselves and thereby help grow the overall size of the economic cake. Those of this view would prefer the government to step back somewhat, a stance commonly regarded as closer to that of the Conservative party.

However, the EU referendum was not primarily about the merits or otherwise of equality. Rather, 'diversity' was its catchword. On one side of this debate were those who are comfortable with diversity, who feel that it is fine for individuals to follow their own moral code, to adhere to different social mores, and to embrace different identities and symbols, and who welcome the cultural variety created by a multi-linguistic, multi-racial and multi-religious society. Those who uphold this view may be regarded as 'libertarians' or 'social liberals'. On the other side were those who feel that a degree of commonality across these dimensions is needed, as without them the social cohesion that a society needs to function effectively is lost. These are society's 'authoritarians' or 'social conservatives'. In the EU referendum, the arguments of the Remain side in favour of multi-national co-operation and freedom of movement appeared closer to the values of social liberals, whereas the emphasis on an exclusive British identity and a need to reduce immigration more closely echoed the values of social conservatives.

But which of these various possible influences on how people voted – identity, values and perceived consequences – came to matter more in voters' minds and thus more closely reflected how they voted? Did the referendum campaign simply encourage voters to reflect further on the transactional consequences of being in or out of the EU? Or, as they learnt about the debate and considered the rather different set of values that were discussed, did it also stimulate them to think more about those values and their sense of identity – and thus perhaps ensured that their views about the EU became more firmly rooted and structured than they had been before the referendum was called? Just how the so-called Brexit debate has or

has not reshaped the character of attitudes towards the EU is what we seek to understand in this chapter.

Our inquiry falls into two halves. First, we assess whether the Brexit debate has changed the balance of public opinion by looking at recent trends in the distribution of voters' attitudes towards the EU, on their sense of identity and on their perceptions of the consequences of leaving the institution. Then we examine the impact of the debate on the reasons why people hold the views that they do. We assess how the relationship between, on the one hand, attitudes towards the EU and, on the other, people's sense of identity, their values, and their expectations of what would happen as a result of leaving the EU has evolved during the course of the EU referendum and the subsequent debate about Brexit. We conclude by assessing the implications of our findings for how well informed voters' attitudes towards the EU now appear to be.

## Has the balance of opinion changed?

We begin by looking at the distribution of attitudes towards the EU. After all, the Leave side's victory in the EU referendum came as a surprise to many. Indeed, in our 2015 survey – conducted after that year's general election but before the referendum debate had really got under way – only 30% said that the UK should withdraw from the EU and 60% said that it should continue to be a member. It was certainly far from clear when that reading was obtained, a year before the referendum ballot, that Britain would necessarily vote to leave the EU. So, is it the case that the referendum campaign left the public more sceptical about the merits of EU membership than before, leaving perhaps a long-term imprint on public attitudes towards the institution?

To address this question we can, first of all, examine how people have responded when, at various points during the last quarter of a century, they have been asked:

> ***Do you think Britain's long-term policy should be…***
>
> ***... to leave the European Union,***
>
> ***to stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers,***
>
> ***to leave things as they are,***
>
> ***to stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers,***
>
> ***or, to work for the formation of a single European government?***

The only minor change that has had to be made to the wording of this question since the referendum has been to introduce it by saying, "Leaving aside the result of the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, what do you think Britain's policy should be…" The wording of the answer options themselves remains almost completely unchanged (see the Voting chapter for full 2017 wording).

**Table 1 Attitudes towards Britain's relationship with the EU, 1992-2017**

| | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Leave the EU | 10 | 11 | 11 | 14 | 19 | 17 | 14 | 13 | 17 | 14 | 15 |
| Stay but reduce EU's powers | 30 | 27 | 25 | 23 | 39 | 29 | 36 | 43 | 38 | 38 | 35 |
| Leave things as are | 16 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 18 | 23 | 20 | 19 | 21 | 23 |
| Stay and increase EU's powers | 28 | 22 | 28 | 28 | 8 | 16 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 12 |
| Work for single European government | 10 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2855* | *1461* | *1165* | *1227* | *1180* | *1355* | *1035* | *1060* | *2293* | *1099* | *3435* |

| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2008 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Leave the EU | 15 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 20 | 30 | 26 | 24 | 22 | 41 | 36 |
| Stay but reduce EU's powers | 32 | 38 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 37 | 39 | 38 | 43 | 35 | 33 |
| Leave things as are | 27 | 23 | 24 | 27 | 24 | 16 | 19 | 18 | 19 | 16 | 19 |
| Stay and increase EU's powers | 11 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| Work for single European government | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2293* | *3199* | *4268* | *1077* | *1128* | *1103* | *2147* | *971* | *1105* | *1965* | *2009* |

*Source 1992: British Election Study*

**The rise in support for UKIP during the course of the 2010-2015 parliament was accompanied by a marked increase in support for withdrawal**

Until 2008, typically only around 15% or so responded by saying that the UK should leave the EU (Table 1). However, the rise in support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) during the course of the 2010-2015 parliament was accompanied by a marked increase in support for withdrawal; by 2012, 30% said that the UK should leave. Although this trend was somewhat reversed thereafter, at 22% support for leaving was higher in 2015 than it had been at any time in the 1990s or 2000s.

Nevertheless, the proportion saying the UK should leave the EU has increased even more in the wake of the EU referendum. In our 2016 survey, undertaken shortly after the referendum, 41% said that Britain should leave the EU, and although the figure has subsequently fallen, at 36% it is still relatively high.[1] It seems that the EU referendum

1 We should note that, after leaving aside those who said they did not vote, only 45% of our 2017 sample reported having voted Leave in the 2016 referendum, below the 52% who did so in practice. It is thus possible that our 2017 reading somewhat underestimates the current level of support for leaving as reported in Table 1.

campaign has indeed had a marked long-term impact on the balance of attitudes towards the EU.

However, although support for leaving the EU in response to our long-running question had long been relatively low, the pattern of answers hardly ever suggested that the British public was in love with the institution. Ever since the late 1990s, the most popular response had been that the UK should stay in the EU but should try to reduce its powers. As a result, from 1998 onwards (with the single exception of 2003) at least half of the public could be classified as 'Eurosceptic', that is, they either said Britain should leave the EU or that it should try to reduce its powers. Indeed, by 2012 as many as two-thirds were of that view, and at 69% the latest figure is, in fact, little different. Thus, scepticism about the EU is perhaps no more widespread now than it was before the EU referendum. What has changed is that it has become more likely to be expressed in the form of support for leaving the institution rather than for just trying to loosen Britain's ties with it.

But what of people's perceptions of the consequences or otherwise of remaining in or leaving the EU? If the referendum campaign and the subsequent debate about Brexit altered people's views about the EU, then one might anticipate that their views about these consequences might have changed too. We would expect that more voters are optimistic about what Brexit will bring than had been the case before the referendum. At the same time, we might wonder whether their sense of identity changed as well, with fewer feeling in any way European. In order to establish whether or not this has happened, on our most recent survey we repeated a suite of questions that, with one exception, we initially asked in 2015, before the EU referendum campaign had largely got under way. This suite provides us with a unique indication of the extent to which people's perceptions of the consequences of Brexit and their sense of identity have changed over the course of the EU referendum and beyond.

**For some critics of Britain's membership of the EU, the central issue in the EU referendum was one of legitimacy**

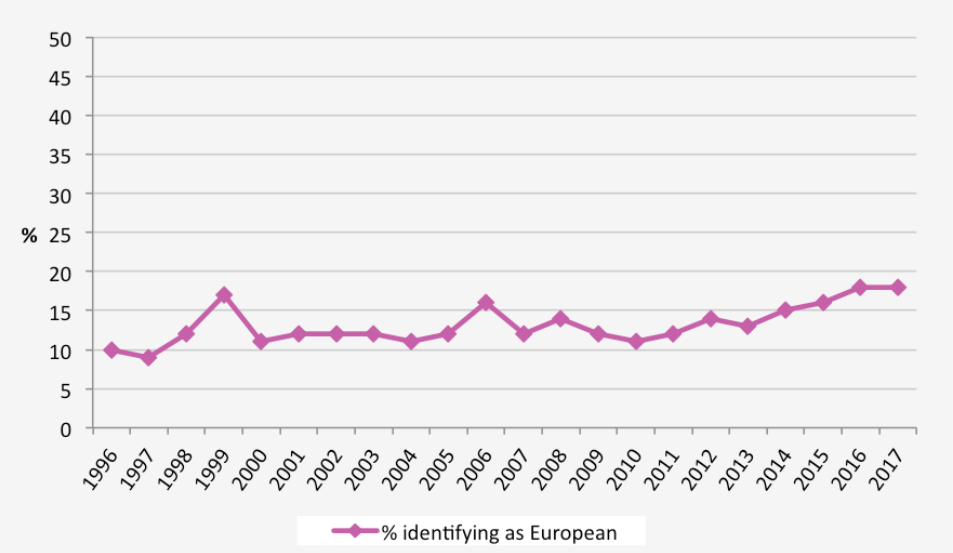
For some critics of Britain's membership of the EU, the central issue in the EU referendum was one of legitimacy. As we noted earlier, they felt that, as an independent state, Britain should not have to abide by rules and regulations passed by the EU that the UK government might well have opposed in the Council of Ministers. Not least of the possible motivations for holding this view is the absence of any sense of European identity that could potentially underpin a willingness to share decisions and resources with other European countries. Indeed, there might even be a concern among some people that membership of the EU has served to undermine what they think is a distinctive British identity that they believe should be highly valued.

To capture how much support there is now for this outlook we first of all ask:

> ***How much do you agree or disagree that being a member of the European Union undermines Britain's right to be an independent country that makes its own laws?***

There is widespread support for this view: 57% agree while just 27% disagree (and 17% say that they neither agree nor disagree). At the same time, as Figure 1 shows, when invited to choose from a list of national identities associated with Britain and Ireland, less than one in five pick "European" as one of the identities that they acknowledge. Evidently, most voters in Britain do not feel they share an identity in common with their European neighbours. That said, it appears that the referendum campaign may have helped ignite a sense of being European among a small minority. At 18%, the proportion who now say they are European is higher than it has been at any point during the course of the last 20 years.

**Figure 1 Proportion selecting "European" identity, 1996-2017**




*The data on which Figure 1 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

The relative weakness of most people's sense of European identity is confirmed by the pattern of responses to a second, more nuanced measure that we asked in 2015 and again in 2017. In this instance respondents were presented with a scale that ran from "1" on the left-hand side to "7" on the right-hand side. The "1" was labelled "not at all European", while the "7" was described as meaning "very strongly European". We asked:

> ***Here is a scale I would like you to use to describe to what extent you think of yourself as European. The more European you feel, the further to the right you would put yourself. The less European you feel, the further to the left you would put yourself.***

As Table 2 reveals, in our most recent survey around a half (51%) give themselves a score of between 1 and 3 on this scale, implying

a relatively weak sense of European identity. Only around three in ten (31%) put themselves at between 5 and 7, suggesting that they have a reasonably strong sense of being European. In contrast, when we ask people to use the same 0-7 scale to describe how "British" they feel, nearly three-quarters (74%) record a score of between 5 and 7.[2] That said, here too there is some sign that a few more people now feel more European than did before the referendum campaign started; the proportion giving themselves a score of between 5 and 7 was just 25% in 2015, 6 percentage points below the latest figure.

**Table 2 Strength of European identity, 2015 and 2017**

| | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **European identity** | % | % | |
| 1 – not at all European | 27 | 27 | 0 |
| 2 | 16 | 12 | -4 |
| 3 | 13 | 12 | -1 |
| 4 | 18 | 16 | -2 |
| 5 | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| 6 | 7 | 10 | +3 |
| 7 – very strongly European | 6 | 9 | +3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1105* | *1025* | |

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

Indeed, there is also little sign that the referendum served to broaden the level of concern about the impact of EU membership on Britain's distinctive sense of identity. Here we ask:

> ***How much do you agree or disagree that being a member of the European Union is undermining Britain's distinctive identity?***

As Table 3 shows, nearly half agreed with this proposition in 2015. However, the figure has now fallen by 6 points to 41%, while, conversely, there has been an 7-point increase in the proportion disagreeing. The question of British identity may have been a source of concern for many voters in the EU referendum (see further below), but evidently those concerns are no more common now than they had been before the EU referendum campaign.

2 Our contention that people's attitudes towards the impact of the EU on Britain's sovereignty are closely linked to their sense of identity is also clear from further analysis of this question. Among those with a score of between 1 and 3 on our European identity scale, no less than 68% agree that being a member of the EU undermines Britain's independence and its ability to make its own laws. In contrast, just 31% of those with a score of between 5 and 7 do so.

**Table 3 Perceptions of the consequences of EU membership for British identity, 2015 and 2017**

| | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Being a member of the EU undermines Britain's identity** | % | % | |
| Agree | 47 | 41 | -6 |
| Neither | 20 | 20 | 0 |
| Disagree | 30 | 38 | +7 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1105* | *1025* | |

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

A second key issue in the referendum campaign concerned what the economic consequences of leaving the EU would be. It was a subject on which the Remain side in particular was inclined to focus, with various warnings that Brexit would be bad for the British economy (Oliver, 2016). It is little wonder that Remain emphasised this issue. As can be seen from the top half of Table 4, even in 2015 voters were more inclined to think that the economy would be worse off as a result of leaving the EU than thought it would be better off (the full question wording can be found in the appendix to this chapter). However, there is no sign that voters have now become less inclined to think the economy would be worse off. Rather, there appears to have been a slight increase in the proportion expressing that view, while somewhat fewer now feel that it would not make much difference either way. Meanwhile, the bottom half of the table reveals that the proportion who think that unemployment will be higher as a result of leaving the EU is now 8 points higher than it was before the referendum. All in all, there is little sign here of greater optimism about the economic consequences of Brexit.

**There is little sign here of greater optimism about the economic consequences of Brexit**

**Table 4 Perceptions of the economic consequences of leaving the EU, 2015 and 2017**

| | 2015 | 2017+ | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perceived impact of leaving EU** | | | |
| **Impact on the economy** | % | % | |
| Better off | 24 | 26 | +2 |
| Won't make much difference | 31 | 25 | -6 |
| Worse off | 40 | 45 | +5 |
| **Impact on unemployment** | % | % | |
| Higher | 25 | 32 | +8 |
| Won't make much difference | 46 | 44 | -2 |
| Lower | 24 | 20 | -4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1105* | *1025* | |

*+Question wording was amended in 2017 to take account of the vote to leave the EU in 2016. Full etails are given in the appendix to this chapter.*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

The EU referendum debate was also about the UK's relationship with the rest of the world. Different views were expressed as to whether Britain would be more or less influential outside the EU. At the same time, the Leave side focused on the recent relatively high levels of net migration into the UK and the fact that thanks to the EU's 'freedom of movement' provisions the UK was limited in what it could do to control immigration from EU countries. Table 5 shows how attitudes towards these issues now compare with what they were before the EU referendum.

**Table 5 Perceptions of the consequences of leaving the EU for Britain's influence in the world and for the level of immigration, 2015 and 2017**

| | 2015 | 2017+ | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perceived impact of leaving EU** | | | |
| **Impact on influence in the world** | % | % | |
| More influence in the world | 17 | 26 | +10 |
| Won't make much difference | 44 | 38 | -7 |
| Less influence in the world | 36 | 35 | -1 |
| **Impact on immigration** | % | % | |
| Higher | 9 | 5 | -3 |
| Won't make much difference | 31 | 39 | +7 |
| Lower | 57 | 54 | -3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1105* | *1025* | |

*+Question wording was amended in 2017 to take account of the vote to leave the EU in 2016. Full details are given in the appendix to this chapter.*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

Here at least we do see some signs of a change of outlook that might be thought to have helped underpin increased support for leaving the EU. Before the EU referendum only 17% thought that the UK would have more influence in the world if it left the EU, while slightly more than twice as many (36%) took the opposite view. The latter figure has not changed significantly, but the proportion who think that Britain will have more influence as a result of leaving the EU has increased by 10 points to just over a quarter (26%). Perhaps the UK government's portrayal of post-Brexit Britain as 'Global Britain' has had some impact on attitudes here (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018).

**It remains the case that well over half (54%) expect leaving the EU would reduce immigration**

On the other hand, there is little sign that the expectation that leaving the EU would serve to reduce immigration has become any more common. This belief was already widespread before the EU referendum was held, and it remains the case that well over half (54%) are of that view. Meanwhile, the already rare view that immigration would be higher as a result of leaving the EU is now even less in evidence and this in turn has helped to increase the proportion who think leaving the EU will not make much difference to the level of immigration.

The success of the Leave side in the referendum campaign, accompanied as it was by the widespread perception that leaving the EU would reduce immigration, has led some to take the view that the referendum campaign served to increase hostility towards immigration (see, for example, Oyekanmi, 2016). We can assess this proposition by taking advantage of the fact that at various points during the last six years, we have included the following question:

> ***On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely bad and 10 is extremely good, would you say it is generally bad or good for Britain's economy that migrants come to Britain from other countries?***

At the same time, we have also asked:

> ***And on a scale of 0 to 10, would you say that Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries?***

Table 6 summarises the pattern of results to these two questions. In both cases those proffering a score of between 0 and 3, thereby indicating a relatively negative attitude towards immigration, are grouped together, as are those with a more or less neutral score of between 4 and 6 and those with a positive one of between 7 and 10.

**Table 6 Perceptions of the impact of migrants, 2011-2017**

| | 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Perceived impact of migrants who come to Britain from other countries** | | | | | |
| **Impact on Britain's economy** | % | % | % | % | |
| Bad (0-3) | 42 | 39 | 28 | 17 | -11 |
| Neither (4-6) | 36 | 38 | 38 | 35 | -3 |
| Good (7-10) | 21 | 21 | 34 | 47 | +14 |
| **Impact on Britain's cultural life** | % | % | % | % | |
| Undermined (0-3) | 40 | 38 | 33 | 23 | -10 |
| Neither (4-6) | 33 | 34 | 35 | 32 | -3 |
| Enriched (7-10) | 26 | 27 | 31 | 44 | +12 |
| *Unweighted base* | *3311* | *3244* | *2167* | *1025* | |

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

When we first asked these questions in 2011, the public was clearly doubtful about the merits of migration. Around two in five thought that migrants were bad for Britain's economy and that it undermined the country's cultural life, whereas only around a fifth to a quarter took the opposite view. The picture was little different in 2013 (Ford and Heath, 2014). But by the time of our 2015 survey, opinion was somewhat less negative. By then more (34%) thought that migrants were good for the economy than thought they were bad (28%), while almost as many thought that immigration enriched the country's cultural life (31%) as reckoned that it undermined it (33%). Now opinion seems to have moved quite markedly further in this direction (see also Ipsos MORI, 2018). In our latest survey, approaching a half

(47%) believe that migrants are good for Britain's economy, while only around one in six (17%) feel that they are bad. At the same time, almost twice as many (44%) now say that migrants enrich Britain's culture as feel that they undermine it (23%). There is little sign here that the EU referendum campaign served to make Britain less tolerant towards migrants; rather they have apparently come to be valued to a degree that was not in evidence before the referendum campaign.

**Approaching a half (47%) believe that migrants are good for Britain's economy**

## A question of identity?

We have then uncovered something of a paradox. On the one hand Britain is more supportive of leaving the EU than it was before the referendum campaign began. Yet for the most part there is little sign that the campaign resulted in a balance of opinion that was more optimistic about the consequences of leaving or which was increasingly of the view that membership was at odds with the country's sense of identity. True, the public is now rather more likely to think that leaving the EU will increase Britain's influence in the world, but equally, voters seem to have become somewhat less likely to be concerned about the implications of membership for Britain's distinctive sense of identity. Perhaps, therefore, rather than making people more likely to be doubtful about the merits of EU membership, the referendum campaign had a different impact – to heighten people's sense of identity and thus the extent to which their attitudes towards the EU reflect that identity? Maybe, in turn, their choice came to reflect their values and perceptions of the consequences of leaving the EU more closely too. In other words, perhaps those who were concerned about the implications of EU membership for their sense of identity are now markedly more likely to want to leave the EU, as are those who have a socially conservative outlook and those who are optimistic about the consequences of leaving the EU. Perhaps it was developments such as these that helped ensure that what was already a widespread Euroscepticism became rather more of a determination to leave the EU?

If this is what has happened, the first pattern that we might anticipate is that people's concern about the cultural impact of Britain's membership of the EU should have come to be more clearly related to support for leaving. Support for leaving the EU should have increased above all among those who feel that EU membership undermines Britain's distinctive sense of identity. This is indeed what has happened. As Table 7 shows, support for leaving the EU (as measured by the question detailed in Table 1) is as much as 22 points higher now than in 2015 among those who agree that EU membership threatens Britain's distinctive identity, compared with just 7 points higher among those who disagree.[3] Although, as we have observed previously (Table 5), fewer people now feel that EU membership undermines Britain's distinctive sense of identity, we can now see those that do hold that view have become especially more likely to back leaving the EU. In short, the question of identity has seemingly come to play a more central role in people's attitudes towards the principle of EU membership.

**The question of identity has seemingly come to play a more central role in people's attitudes towards the principle of EU membership**

**Table 7 Support for leaving the EU, by perceptions of the consequences of EU membership for British identity, 2015 and 2017**

| % favouring leaving the EU | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Being a member of the EU undermines Britain's identity** | | | |
| Agree | 41 | 64 | +22 |
| Neither | 7 | 28 | +21 |
| Disagree | 3 | 10 | +7 |

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

This conclusion is further supported by the evidence in Table 8, which shows for 2015 and 2017 the proportion who said that Britain should leave the EU (as in Table 1), broken down by the reported strength of their European identity. The increase in support for leaving the EU has been much greater among those with a relatively weak sense of European identity than it has among those with a relatively

3 This difference in the increased probability of supporting the EU is statistically significant at the 1% level. Although not reported in detail, similar tests inform the commentary on subsequent tables.

Note that we can also measure change in the level of support for leaving the EU in 2015 and 2017 using an alternative measure. In 2015 we asked respondents, "Do you think that Britain should continue to be a member of the European Union or should it withdraw?", to which, once we leave aside those who said, "Don't Know", 33% said "withdraw". In 2017, we asked, "If you were given the chance to vote again, how would you vote – to remain a member of the European Union, to leave the European Union, or would you not vote?", and on this occasion (again leaving aside those who said "Don't Know" or that they would not vote) 41% stated that they would vote to leave. If we are willing to regard the two questions as functionally equivalent to each other, they may be said to record an 8-point increase in support for leaving between 2015 and 2017. This alternative measure paints a less dramatic (and statistically insignificant) picture of a change in the relationship between perceptions of the impact of EU membership on identity. Support for leaving increased by 13 points among those who agree that EU membership undermines Britain's distinctive identity, by 20 points among those who neither agree nor disagree, but only by 6 points among those who disagree.

strong sense. Across all those who gave themselves a score of between 1 and 3, there has been a 21-point increase in support for leaving, compared with just a 4-point increase among those with a score of between 5 and 7.[4]

**Table 8 Support for leaving the EU, by strength of European identity, 2015 and 2017**

| % favouring leaving the EU | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Strength of European identity** | | | |
| 1 – not at all European | 36 | 54 | +18 |
| 2 | 29 | 53 | +24 |
| 3 | 19 | 44 | +25 |
| 4 | 14 | 30 | +17 |
| 5 | 9 | 18 | +8 |
| 6 or 7 – very strongly European | 10 | 11 | +1 |

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

**The increase in support for leaving the EU since 2015 has been much greater among those with a strong sense of English identity**

There is one further indication of the changed relationship between identity and people's views about EU membership. One of the features of the pattern of voting in the EU referendum in England is that those who regard themselves as wholly or primarily English were much more likely than those who say they are wholly or primarily British to vote to Leave the EU (Henderson et al., 2016; Curtice, 2017b). In Table 9 we show (for those living in England) the level of support for leaving the EU in each of the last four years, broken down by whether people say they mostly feel English or mostly feel British (for further details of this measure of national identity see the chapter on Scotland by Curtice and Montagu). It shows that the increase in support for leaving the EU since 2015 (and indeed before that) has been much greater among those with a strong sense of English identity , a change that was already clearly in evidence in our 2016 survey and is still apparent 12 months later. There has been a 26-point increase in support for leaving the EU among those who describe themselves as "English, not British" compared with just a 5-point increase among those who say they are "British, not English".[5] As a result, the two groups now have very different views about EU membership. (Note that the sample sizes used for "more English" and "more British" categories for 2014 and 2015 are relatively low and should therefore be interpreted with caution.)

4 Alternatively, if we look at the change in the pattern of response to the two questions detailed in the previous footnote, the increase in support for leaving proves to be 17 points among those who give themselves a score of between 1 and 3, whereas there is actually a small drop of 3 points among with a score of between 5 and 7. (In contrast to the position in the previous footnote, this difference is statistically significant at the 1% level. Although not reported in detail, similar tests of statistical significance also inform the commentary in subsequent footnotes.)

5 Using our alternative measure of the change in support for leaving the EU described in footnote 3, we find that there has been a 16-point increase among those who say they are "English, not British", but a 5-point fall in support among those who say they are "British, not English".

**Table 9 Support for leaving the EU, by national identity, England, 2014-17**

| % saying Britain should leave the EU | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **National identity** | | | | | |
| English, not British | 40 | 36 | 69 | 62 | +26 |
| More English than British | 29 | 23 | 47 | 45 | +22 |
| Equally English and British | 23 | 19 | 42 | 36 | +17 |
| More British than English | 22 | 21 | 38 | 34 | +13 |
| British, not English | 25 | 22 | 33 | 27 | +5 |

*Source: British Social Attitudes respondents in England only. In 2014 those born in Scotland or Wales are excluded*

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*The sample sizes used for "More English than British" and "More British than English" categories for 2014 and 2015 are relativel low and should therefore be interpreted with caution*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

## A question of immigration?

Attitudes towards the EU are, then, more closely linked to people's sense of identity now than they were before the referendum. But is this pattern also reflected in the relationship between attitudes towards immigration and support for leaving the EU? After all, attitudes to immigration often vary according to people's sense of identity; for example, those who describe themselves as English have been repeatedly shown to be less liberal than those who consider themselves British in their attitudes towards immigration, and, indeed, to ethnic minorities (Curtice and Seyd, 2001; Jeffery et al., 2014). Meanwhile, immigration is perhaps above all the issue in the debate about Britain's membership of the EU where attitudes might be thought to reflect whether someone is a social liberal or a social conservative. So, although, as we have already noted (Table 6), those who embrace immigration are more common now than they were, perhaps those who do not uphold that view have become firmer in their opposition to EU membership?

**Support for leaving the EU has increased much more among those who either think migrants have undermined Britain's cultural life or that they have not had much impact either way**

Table 10 provides some support for this proposition. It shows for 2015 and 2017 the proportion of people who said that Britain should leave the EU, broken down by people's perceptions of the impact of migrants on (a) Britain's cultural life, and (b) the country's economy. The first half of the table shows that support for leaving the EU has increased much more among those who either think migrants have undermined Britain's cultural life or that they have not had much impact either way, than it has among those who feel that the nation's culture has been enriched. Among the first two groups the increase in support for leaving the EU has been 25 and 21 points respectively, whereas among those who feel that migrants have enriched Britain's culture, the increase has been just 9 points. On the other hand, there

is no systematic evidence that voters' perceptions of the economic consequences of immigration have come to be more closely linked to their likelihood of being a supporter of leaving the EU. Rather, we simply find that there has been a marked increase in support for leaving among those who think that immigration has not made much difference either way to Britain's economy.[6]

**Table 10 Support for leaving the EU, by attitudes towards the cultural and economic consequences of immigration, 2015 and 2017**

| % saying Britain should leave the EU | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perceived impact of migrants on Britain's cultural life** | | | |
| Undermined (0-3) | 37 | 62 | +25 |
| Neither (4-6) | 19 | 40 | +21 |
| Enriched (7-10) | 9 | 18 | +9 |
| **Perceived impact of migrants on Britain's economy** | | | |
| Bad (0-3) | 43 | 57 | +14 |
| Neither (4-6) | 17 | 46 | +28 |
| Good (7-10) | 10 | 20 | +10 |

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

## A sense of values?

But have people's views about leaving or staying in the EU also come to reflect more whether they are a social liberal or a social conservative, a libertarian or an authoritarian? To measure that concept more directly we combine our respondents' answers to six questions designed to measure where people stand on this dimension (see the Technical details to this report for further details). We have then used this measure to divide our sample into the one third or so most libertarian or socially liberal, the one third or so most authoritarian or socially conservative, and the one third or so who lie in between these two positions. As Table 11 reveals, when we do so we find that, even though it was already somewhat higher in the first place, support for leaving the EU has increased during the course of the last two years by more among authoritarians/social conservatives (by 19 points) than it has among libertarians/social liberals (among

6 Our findings are supported if we compare the change in the pattern of responses to the two questions detailed in footnote 3. Support for leaving on these measures increased by 22 points among those who think migrants undermine Britain's cultural life, by 14 points among those who think that they do not make much difference either way, and by just 5 points among those who think migration undermines the country's culture. The equivalent analysis by perceptions of the impact of immigration on Britain's economy identifies increases of 19 points among those who think it has been bad, and 22 points among those who think it has not made much difference, though only one of 4 points among those who think the economic impact has been beneficial.

whom the increase has been 9 points). We can also see that the strengthened link between people's values and support for leaving the EU was already in evidence in our 2016 survey, conducted shortly after the EU referendum.[7]

**The strengthened link between people's values and support for leaving the EU was already in evidence in our 2016 survey**

**Table 11 Support for leaving the EU, by libertarian/authoritarian values, 2014-2017**

| % saying Britain should leave the EU | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Placement on libertarian-authoritarian scale** | | | | | |
| Libertarian | 13 | 8 | 21 | 17 | +9 |
| Neither | 22 | 20 | 45 | 35 | +15 |
| Authoritarian | 39 | 36 | 63 | 55 | +19 |

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

So, as well as being more clearly linked to their sense of and concerns about identity, people's attitudes towards the EU have also become more closely linked to the values that they uphold, and in particular to whether they can be characterised as a liberal or an authoritarian. There seems to be little doubt that the referendum and the subsequent debate about Brexit have left in their wake an electorate whose views about the EU are more clearly structured by their identity and values, and thus one that is also more polarised. As a result, it is perhaps also an electorate that might now be less willing to change its mind.

## A matter of consequences?

But what of voters' perceptions of the consequences of Brexit? Have these also become more strongly linked to people's preference to remain in or leave the EU? Or, given that people's attitudes towards the EU have come to be more closely linked to their values and sense of identity, perhaps their perceptions of the transactional costs and benefits of leaving have come to play less of a role in shaping their attitudes towards membership of the institution?

First of all, in Table 12 we examine how the relationship between people's perceptions of the economic consequences of leaving the EU, and support for leaving the EU changed between 2015 and 2017. In the top half of the table we can see that there was already a very strong relationship in 2015 between perceptions of whether Britain's economy would be better or worse as a result of Brexit and people's propensity to back leaving the EU (Curtice, 2016). Hardly anyone

7 This analysis is confirmed if we use the alternative measures introduced at footnote 3. The proportion backing withdraw/leave on these measures increased by two points among liberals, by 12 points among those in the centre and by 18 points among authoritarians.

**Support for leaving the EU increased by 18 points among those who thought the economy would be better**

(just 3%) who thought that leaving the EU would make the economy worse favoured leaving the EU, while nearly three in five (59%) of those who thought the economy would be better supported leaving. Nevertheless, this gap widened yet further. Support for leaving the EU increased by 18 points among those who thought the economy would be better, but by only 7 points among those who thought it would get worse. That said, the biggest increase (22 points) has been among those who thought that Brexit would not make much difference either way to the economy.[8]

**Table 12 Support for leaving the EU, by perceptions of the economic consequences of leaving the EU, 2015 and 2017**

| % saying Britain should leave the EU | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Britain's economy** | | | |
| Better off | 59 | 77 | +18 |
| Won't make much difference | 20 | 42 | +22 |
| Worse off | 3 | 9 | +7 |
| **Unemployment** | | | |
| Higher | 11 | 23 | +12 |
| Neither | 23 | 44 | +21 |
| Lower | 34 | 41 | +6 |

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

In contrast, the link between support for leaving the EU and perceptions of the consequences of leaving for unemployment was relatively weak in 2015. Even among those who thought that unemployment would fall, only around one in three (34%) favoured leaving. Meanwhile, if anything, this relationship has weakened even further during the Brexit debate. Support for leaving actually increased slightly more among those who thought that unemployment would increase as a result of Brexit than it did among those who thought it would be lower.[9] Certainly, it is only among those who thought that leaving the EU would not make much difference that there is a marked increase in support for leaving the EU. [10]

8 However, under the alternative measures introduced in footnote 3, the differences are not so stark. There is a 9-point increase in support for leaving among those who thought the economy would be better off, a 14-point increase among those who thought it would not make much difference, and a 5-point increase among those who thought the economy would be worse. However, the difference between the increase among those saying the economy would be worse and that among those giving any other response is still significant at the 5% level.

9 But the difference in the increase in support in the two categories is not statistically significant.

10 The pattern of the increases in support for leaving using the alternative measures in footnote 3 is similar (but not statistically significant). There has been a 10-point increase in support for leaving among those who thought that unemployment would be higher, a 12-point increase among those who thought it would be the same, and a 4-point increase among those who thought it would be lower.

Meanwhile, the first half of Table 13 reveals that in 2015 people's perceptions of the consequences of Brexit for Britain's influence in the world were also quite strongly related to their propensity to support leaving the EU. Just over half (54%) of those who felt that Britain would have more influence supported leaving, compared with just 5% of those who thought that Britain would have less influence. Even so, this gap has also widened somewhat following a 14-point increase in support for leaving the EU among those who thought that Britain would have more influence, compared with just a 2-point increase among those who thought it would have less. In contrast, there was little indication in our 2015 survey that people's perceptions of the consequences of Brexit for immigration had much of a relationship with support for leaving the EU and this remained the case in 2017.[11]

**Table 13 Support for leaving the EU by perceptions of the consequences of leaving the EU for Britain's influence in the world and for the level of immigration, 2015 and 2017**

| % saying Britain should leave the EU | 2015 | 2017* | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perceived impact of leaving the EU on Britain's influence in the world** | | | |
| More | 54 | 68 | +14 |
| Won't make much difference | 24 | 40 | +15 |
| Less | 5 | 7 | +2 |
| **Immigration** | | | |
| Higher/won't make much difference | 13 | 31 | +18 |
| Lower | 29 | 40 | +12 |

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

So, there is some sign that in the case of the consequences of Brexit for the economy and for Britain's influence in the world, both of which were strongly related to people's attitudes towards the EU even before the EU referendum campaign got under way, perceptions have become even more strongly related to attitudes towards leaving in the wake of the Brexit debate. On the other hand, when we look at people's expectations of what might happen to immigration and unemployment, there is no sign of what was already a relatively weak relationship having been strengthened in any way. It seems that the issues that already seemed to matter to voters have come to matter more, whereas those that were relatively peripheral to the Brexit debate in voters' minds have remained that way.

**The issues that already seemed to matter to voters have come to matter more**

11 According to the measures introduced in footnote 3 there was an 11-point increase in support for leaving among those who thought that Brexit would increase Britain's influence in the world, whereas there was a less than 2-point increase in the remaining two groups combined. Meanwhile, support for leaving increased by 13 points among those who thought that immigration would not fall, but by only 5 points among those who thought that it would, thereby confirming that, if anything, the relationship has weakened somewhat, though both here and in Table 13 the differences are not statistically significant.

# The demographic divide

Given that in some respects at least attitudes towards the EU have become more polarised in the wake of the Brexit debate, we might anticipate that some of the demographic differences in attitudes towards the EU might have widened too. Previous research has clearly established that two demographic divisions in particular underlay the way in which people voted in the EU referendum – age and educational background (Curtice, 2017a; 2017b). Younger people and graduates were more likely to vote Remain while older voters and those with few, if any, educational qualifications were mostly inclined to back Leave. But have the EU referendum and the subsequent debate about Brexit served to strengthen this divide?

**Support for leaving the EU increased between 2015 and 2017 by 25 points among those without any qualifications**

Table 14 suggests that they did, and especially so in the case of educational background. Support for leaving the EU increased between 2015 and 2017 by just 7 points among graduates while it grew by as much as 25 points among those without any qualifications. At the same time, support for leaving the EU increased by 21 points among those aged 55 and over but by only 12 points among those aged under 35. The Brexit process did not just unveil a country that was deeply divided on the question of Brexit but also served to accentuate that division.[12]

**Table 14 Support for leaving the EU, by age and highest educational qualification, 2014-2017**

| % saying Britain should leave the EU | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age Group** | | | | | |
| 18-34 | 17 | 11 | 33 | 23 | +12 |
| 35-54 | 24 | 24 | 34 | 34 | +11 |
| 55+ | 32 | 28 | 53 | 49 | +21 |
| **Highest Educational Qualification** | | | | | |
| Degree | 11 | 13 | 20 | 19 | +7 |
| Higher education below degree /A Level | 26 | 19 | 38 | 33 | +13 |
| CSE/O Level | 27 | 27 | 54 | 50 | +23 |
| None | 37 | 29 | 57 | 54 | +25 |

*The sample sizes on which the figures in this table are based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point*

12 There is, however only limited evidence of these patterns if we use the alternative measures introduced at footnote 3. Support for leaving increased by 4 points among the under 35s, by 10 points among those aged 35-54 and by 9 points among those aged 55 or over. However, support increased by just 3 points among graduates, compared with increases of 10, 16 and 13 points respectively in the other three educational categories at Table 14.

## A more structured preference?

**People's attitudes towards the EU now better reflect their sense of identity, their values and their perceptions of the consequences of leaving**

It appears then that, despite the majority vote to Leave, the EU referendum campaign and the debate about Brexit have not, for the most part, resulted in people becoming more optimistic about the consequences of leaving the EU, more doubtful about the merits of immigration, or more concerned about the implications of EU membership for their sense of identity. However, the campaign and debate have ensured that the relationship between people's attitudes towards the EU and their sense of identity, their values, and to some extent their perceptions of the consequences of leaving the EU has strengthened. To that extent, it can be argued that the EU referendum and the debate about Brexit have helped ensure that people's attitudes towards the EU are now 'better informed' than they were beforehand, that is, they now better reflect people's sense of identity, their values and their perceptions of the consequences of leaving. At the same time, this means that people's views on the subject have become more polarised too, and that a sharper demographic division on the subject is now more in evidence.

Of course, all of these potential influences on people's attitudes towards the EU are interrelated. For example, those who are most concerned about the impact of EU membership on Britain's distinctive identity are also much more likely to think that the economy would be better if we left the EU. It is thus perhaps not surprising that, having found that the relationship between support for leaving the EU and, say, identity has strengthened, we should find that, for the most part, it has also strengthened in respect of, for example, perceived consequences too. As a result, it is difficult to argue that, for example, identity has become relatively more important than, say, perceptions of the consequences of leaving, in shaping people's attitudes towards the EU. What, however, we can confirm is that collectively all the considerations we have examined have become more important. If we undertake a logistic regression of support for leaving the EU against all of our measures of identity, values and consequences,[13] we find that whereas in 2015 our measures between them accounted for 37% of the predicted support for leaving the EU, in 2017 they account for 43%.[14] Attitudes towards the EU do now appear to be more clearly structured and thus 'informed' than they were before the EU referendum campaign began in earnest.

13 Except whether someone feels wholly or mostly British/English, which is only available for respondents living in England.

14 The three key predictors in the model are: perceptions of the impact of leaving the EU on Britain's economy and on its influence in the world, together with the perceived implications of EU membership for Britain's distinctive sense of identity, all three of which were shown earlier to have become more strongly related to people's attitude towards leaving the EU. It is thus probably the strengthening of these relationships in particular that has been especially important. The full models are included in the appendix to this chapter.

# Conclusions

**For the most part voters have proved relatively resistant to attempts to change their minds about what the consequences of leaving the EU would be**

The decision to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU was a controversial one, and especially so among those advocates of UK membership that felt the ballot posed an unnecessary risk. The majority vote to Leave only reinforced that controversy. Meanwhile, there has been plenty of criticism of the quality of the campaigning on both sides of the argument. Claims that leaving the EU would mean that there would be £350m a week extra to spend on the NHS or that it would leave every family £4,300 worse-off have been variously criticised as baseless, tendentious or misleading, and that they were iconic of a campaign that did not serve voters well.

Yet voters seem to have survived the experience. For the most part they proved relatively resistant to attempts to change their minds about what the consequences of leaving the EU would be. What they do seem to have done during the referendum campaign – and since – is to align their views more closely, not just to their perceptions of some of the consequences of leaving the EU, but also to their sense of identity and whether they uphold a socially liberal outlook or a more conservative one. And it is this development that helps explain – albeit not entirely – why voters in Britain have so far emerged from the Brexit process more critical of Britain's membership of the EU. Those whose perceptions, sense of identity and values already predisposed them in 2015 to take a sceptical view of the EU have particularly come to the view that the UK should leave. Their decision may not be a popular one in all quarters, but it does bear the hallmarks of being an 'informed' one.

## References

Bartels, A. (1996), 'Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, **40(1)**: 194-230

Clarke, H., Goodwin, M., and Whiteley, P., (2017), *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Curtice, J. (2016), 'How deeply does Britain's Euroscepticism run?', in Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Phillips, M. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 33rd report*, London: the National Centre for Social Research, available at http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-33/euroscepticism.aspx

Curtice, J. (2017a), 'Why Leave Won the UK's EU Referendum', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, **55(S1),** 19-31

Curtice, J. (2017b), 'Brexit: Litmus Test or Lightening Rod?', in Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Harding, R. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 34th report*, London: the National Centre for Social Research, available at http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media-centre/archived-press-releases/bsa-33-britain-divided-public-attitudes-after-seven-years-of-austerity.aspx

Curtice, J. and Seyd, B. (2001), 'Is devolution strengthening or weakening the UK?' in Park, A., Curtice, J., Thomson, K., Jarvis, L. and Bromley, C. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 18th report. Public policy, Social ties,* London: Sage

Ford, R. and Heath, A. (2014), 'Immigration: A Nation Divided?' in Park, A., Curtice, J. and Bryson, C., *British Social Attitudes: The 32nd Report*, London: the National Centre for Social Research, available at http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-31/immigration/introduction.aspx

Gerber, E. and Lupia, A. (1999), 'Voter competence in direct legislation elections', in Elkin, S. and Soltan, K. (eds.), *Citizen Competence and Democratic Institutions*, University Park, PA: Penn State Press

Heath, A., Jowell, R. and Curtice, J. (1985), *How Britain Votes*, Oxford: Pergamon Press

Henderson, A., Jeffery, C., Liñeira, R., Scully, R., Wincott, D. and Wyn Jones, R. (2016), 'England, Englishness and Brexit', *Political Quarterly*, **87(2**), 187-99

House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2018), *Global Britain*, HC 780, London: House of Commons

Ipsos MORI (2018), 'Attitudes towards immigration have softened since referendum but most still want to see it reduced', posted at https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/attitudes-immigration-have-softened-referendum-most-still-want-see-it-reduced

Jeffery, C., Wyn Jones, R., Henderson, A., Scully, R. and Lodge, G. (2014), *Taking England Seriously: The New English Politics*, Edinburgh: Centre for Constitutional Change. Available at https://www.centreonconstitutionalchange.ac.uk/sites/default/files/news/Taking%20England%20Seriously_The%20New%20English%20Politics.pdf

Lupia, A. (1994) 'Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections', *American Political Science Review,* **88(1)**: 63-76

Oliver, C. (2016), *Unleashing Demons: The Inside Story of Brexit*, London: Hodder and Stoughton

Oyekanmi, R. (2016), 'This country is no longer safe for immigrants', *The Independent*, 25 June. Available at https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/brexit-eu-referendum-result-this-country-is-no-longer-safe-for-immigrants-a7102591.html

Popkin, S. (1994), *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*, Chicago: Chicago University Press

# Appendix

The data on which Figure 1 is based are shown below.

**Table A.1 Proportion selecting "European" identity, 1996-2017**

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % identifying as European | 10 | 9 | 12 | 17 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 16 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1180* | *1355* | *3146* | *3143* | *3246* | *3287* | *3435* | *4432* | *3199* | *4268* | *4290* |

| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| % identifying as European | 12 | 14 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 18 |
| *Unweighted base* | *4124* | *4486* | *3421* | *3297* | *3311* | *3248* | *3244* | *971* | *4316* | *2942* | *3988* |

The full wording for the questions presented in Tables 4 and 5 is shown below.

2015 wording:

***If Britain were to leave the EU, do you think Britain's economy would be better off, worse off, or wouldn't it make much difference? (Please choose a phrase from the card.)***

***(A lot better off, A little better off, Wouldn't make much difference, A little worse off, A lot worse off)***

***And if Britain were to leave the EU, do you think unemployment in Britain would be higher, lower, or wouldn't it make much difference? (Please choose a phrase from the card.)***

***(A lot higher, A little higher, Won't make much difference, A little lower, A lot lower)***

***If Britain were to leave the EU, do you think Britain would have more influence in the world, less influence, or wouldn't it make much difference? Please choose a phrase from the card.***

***(A lot more influence, A little more influence, Won't make much difference, A little less influence, A lot less influence)***

***And if Britain were to leave the EU, do you think unemployment in Britain would be higher, lower, or wouldn't it make much difference? (Please choose a phrase from the card.)***

***(A lot higher, A little higher, Won't make much difference, A little lower, A lot lower)***

2017 wording:

*From what you have seen and heard so far, do you think that as a result of leaving the EU Britain's economy will be better off, worse off, or won't it make much difference? (Please choose a phrase from the card.)*

*(A lot better off, A little better off, Won't make much difference, A little worse off, A lot worse off)*

*And from what you have seen and heard so far, do you think that as a result of leaving the EU unemployment in Britain will be higher, lower, or won't it make much difference? (Please choose a phrase from the card.)*

*(A lot higher, A little higher, Won't make much difference, A little lower, A lot lower)*

*From what you have seen and heard so far, do you think that as a result of leaving the EU Britain will have more influence in the world, less influence, or won't it make much difference? Please choose a phrase from the card.*

*(A lot more influence, A little more influence, Won't make much difference, A little less influence, A lot less influence)*

*(From what you have seen and heard so far,) do you think that as a result of leaving the EU immigration to Britain will be higher, lower, or won't it make much difference? (Please choose a phrase from the card.)*

*(A lot higher, A little higher, Won't make much difference, A little lower, A lot lower)*

Unweighted bases for Table 7 are shown below.

**Table A.2 Support for leaving the EU, by perceptions of the consequences of EU membership for British identity, 2015 and 2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2015** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|
| **Being a member of the EU undermines Britain's identity** | | |
| Agree | *548* | *445* |
| Neither | *216* | *204* |
| Disagree | *307* | *360* |

Unweighted bases for Table 8 are shown below.

**Table A.3 Support for leaving the EU, by strength of European identity, 2015 and 2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2015** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|
| **Strength of European identity** | | |
| 1 – not at all European | *304* | *300* |
| 2 | *178* | *118* |
| 3 | *154* | *127* |
| 4 | *200* | *161* |
| 5 | *124* | *123* |
| 6 or 7 – very strongly European | *137* | *186* |

Unweighted bases for Table 9 are shown below.

**Table A.4 Support for leaving the EU, by national identity, England, 2014-2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **National identity** | | | | |
| English, not British | *159* | *183* | *261* | *258* |
| More English than British | *82* | *97* | *172* | *177* |
| Equally English and British | *332* | *399* | *723* | *725* |
| More British than English | *78* | *85* | *139* | *165* |
| British, not English | *102* | *111* | *216* | *222* |

Unweighted bases for Table 10 are shown below.

**Table A.5 Support for leaving the EU, by attitudes towards the cultural and economic consequences of immigration, 2015 and 2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2015** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|
| **Perceived impact of migrants on Britain's cultural life** | | |
| Undermined (0-3) | *377* | *260* |
| Neither (4-6) | *389* | *347* |
| Enriched (7-10) | *323* | *411* |
| **Perceived impact of migrants on Britain's economy** | | |
| Bad (0-3) | *313* | *187* |
| Neither (4-6) | *453* | *377* |
| Good (7-10) | *325* | *452* |

Unweighted bases for Table 11 are shown below.

**Table A.6 Support for leaving the EU, by libertarian/authoritarian values, 2014-2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Placement on libertarian-authoritarian scale** | | | | |
| Libertarian | *290* | *253* | *483* | *527* |
| Neither | *220* | *384* | *581* | *461* |
| Authoritarian | *271* | *305* | *469* | *618* |

Unweighted bases for Table 12 are shown below.

**Table A.7 Support for leaving the EU, by perceptions of the economic consequences of leaving the EU, 2015 and 2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2015** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|
| **Britain's Economy** | | |
| Better off | *271* | *280* |
| Won't make much difference | *355* | *261* |
| Worse off | *416* | *443* |
| **Unemployment** | | |
| Higher | *264* | *317* |
| Neither | *524* | *473* |
| Lower | *256* | *196* |

Unweighted bases for Table 13 are shown below.

**Table A.8 Support for leaving the EU, by perceptions of the consequences of leaving the EU for Britain's influence in the world and for the level of immigration, 2015 and 2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2015** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|
| **Perceived impact of leaving the EU on Britain's influence in the world** | | |
| More | *177* | *280* |
| Won't make much difference | *386* | |
| Less | *382* | *342* |
| **Immigration** | | |
| Higher/Won't make much difference | *442* | *464* |
| Lower | *620* | *541* |

Unweighted bases for Table 14 are shown below.

**Table A.9 Support for leaving the EU, by age and highest educational qualification, 2014-2017**

| *Unweighted bases* | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age Group** | | | | |
| 18-34 | *186* | *222* | *398* | *422* |
| 35-54 | *349* | *366* | *662* | *692* |
| 55+ | *429* | *515* | *899* | *893* |
| **Highest Educational Qualification** | | | | |
| Degree | *211* | *260* | *470* | *530* |
| Higher Education below Degree/A Level | *273* | *293* | *537* | *560* |
| CSE/O Level | *258* | *280* | *514* | *512* |
| None | *205* | *248* | *390* | *361* |

## Multivariate analysis

The multivariate analysis technique used is logistic regression, about which more details can be found in the Technical Details chapter of the report. The dependent variable is whether the respondent supports leaving the EU. A positive coefficient indicates that the group are more likely than the reference group (shown in brackets) to support leaving the EU while a negative coefficient indicates the group are less likely than the reference group to support leaving the EU.

**Table A.10 Logistic regression models of support for leaving the EU, 2015 and 2017**

| | 2015 | | 2017 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Coefficient** | **Standard Error** | **Coefficient** | **Standard Error** |
| **Identity** | | | | |
| **Think of self as European (Weakly (1-3))** | | | | |
| Not strongly (4) | ***-1.08 | 0.34 | -0.41 | 0.29 |
| Strongly (5-7) | -0.49 | 0.37 | -0.51 | 0.33 |
| **Is EU membership undermining identity? (Neither/Disagree)** | | | | |
| Agree | ***-1.20 | 0.48 | ***-1.32 | 0.30 |
| **Immigration** | | | | |
| **Impact on economy** | -0.36 | 0.31 | -0.29 | 0.29 |
| **Impact on cultural life** | -0.51 | 0.33 | -0.31 | 0.31 |
| **Values (Libertarian)** | | | | |
| Neither | 0.28 | 0.37 | 0.33 | 0.35 |
| Authoritarian | 0.48 | 0.38 | 0.57 | 0.36 |
| **Consequences** | | | | |
| **Economy (Better off)** | | | | |
| No difference | ***-1.36 | 0.24 | ***-1.38 | 0.27 |
| Worse off | ***-2.76 | 0.41 | ***-2.16 | 0.33 |
| **Unemployment (Higher)** | | | | |
| Neither | 0.64 | 0.34 | 0.44 | 0.29 |
| Lower | 0.73 | 0.38 | 0.25 | 0.36 |
| **Influence in the world (More)** | | | | |
| No difference | *-0.66 | 0.27 | -0.39 | 0.26 |
| Less | ***-1.38 | 0.38 | ***-1.59 | 0.38 |
| **Immigration (No Difference/Higher)** | | | | |
| Lower | **-0.68 | 0.24 | 0.41 | 0.24 |
| Constant | 0.00 | | 1.16 | |
| McFadden Pseudo R-squared | 37% | | 42% | |
| No. of cases | *838* | | *719* | |

**=significant at 95% level **=significant at 99% level ***=significant at 99.9% level*

# Climate change

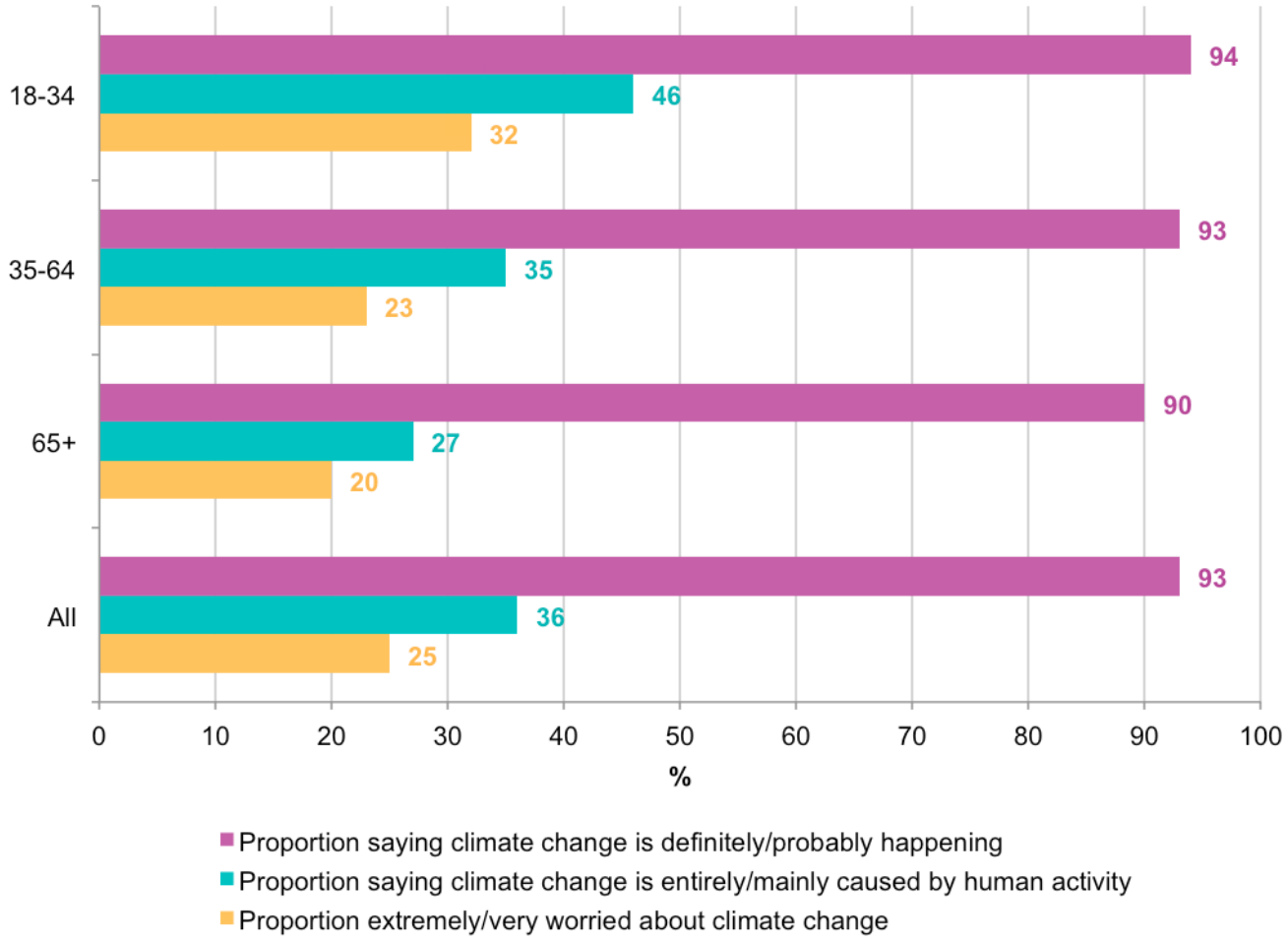
## Social divisions in beliefs and behaviour

As a global problem, climate change affects everyone. But within Britain opinion is divided. This chapter asks to what extent people in Britain believe humans cause climate change, think it is a problem, and feel that citizens and governments are likely to be able to reduce it. Also, what are the main social divisions in attitudes to climate change, and how much does opinion differ between supporters of different political parties?

## Spotlight

Most people believe climate change is happening but far fewer believe it is mainly caused by humans or are worried about it. Older people are comparatively less worried and think that the consequences will not be so bad.

**Views on existence, causes and consequences of climate change, by age**



# Overview

## Most think climate change is at least partly caused by humans

**The vast majority acknowledge a human component in climate change, but relatively few agree with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) conclusion that it is *mainly* caused by humans.**

- 95% think climate change is at least partly due to human activity when asked about relative contributions of human and natural causes.
- 36% say climate change is "mainly" or "entirely" due to human activity.
- 53% think human and natural causes are equally to blame.
- Just 2% claim that climate change definitely is not happening.

## Young and educated are more worried about climate change

**Older and less educated people are less worried about climate change and think that the consequences will not be so bad.**

- 31% of 18-34 year olds are "very" or "extremely" worried about climate change compared with just 19% of over-65s.
- 35% of graduates are "very" or "extremely" worried about climate change compared with just 20% among those without any educational qualifications above GCSE level.
- These findings reflect similar age and education patterns as found when analysing views on the extent to which climate change is happening and is caused by human activity.

## Lack of optimism about reducing climate change

**Respondents assessed the chances of reducing climate change on a number of dimensions, using a scale from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely).**

- On average people give a 4.4 score for the chances that limiting their own energy use would reduce climate change.
- On average people give a 5.8 score for the chances that climate change would be reduced if large numbers of people reduced their energy use.
- On average people give a 3.8 score for the chances that large numbers of people will *actually* limit their energy use.
- On average people give a score of 4.3 for the chances that governments in enough countries will take action that reduces climate change.

**Authors**

**Stephen Fisher,**
Associate Professor
of Political Sociology,
University of Oxford

**Rory Fitzgerald,**
Director of the
European Social Survey, City,
University of London

**Wouter Poortinga,**
Professor of Environmental
Psychology,
Cardiff University

# Introduction

Climate change is arguably one of the most pressing challenges the world is currently facing. The burning of fossil fuels, in combination with other human activities, has significantly altered the heat balance of the earth's atmosphere. This poses serious risks for both human and natural systems across the world (IPCC, 2014). As climate change is a global problem, it also requires global collaboration to address it. The Paris agreement, adopted by global consensus at the end of 2015, sets out to reduce the threats of climate change by keeping the global temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015).

**Climate change is arguably one of the most pressing challenges the world is facing**

Policy action that different governments may take is however likely to be dependent on public perceptions in their countries – they may be less willing to take action if the electorate are not concerned or do not believe that climate change is happening. Since there is widespread scientific consensus that manmade climate change is happening (Cook et al., 2016), there should be little room for differences of opinion. So a central question this chapter will address is the extent to which the British public has a united view on climate change.

Previous evidence suggests there are a number of social divisions in attitudes to climate change (Poortinga et al , 2011; Whitmarsh, 2011; Taylor, 2012). While overall levels of climate scepticism appear to be low, there are clear differences in attitudes in terms of sex, age, and education. Climate change is largely about long-run trends in global temperatures, and is not simply reflected in day-to-day experiences of the weather. It is likely that those who have had more formal education are more likely to know about it – either from having learnt about it directly at school and university, or from active engagement with current affairs fostered by their education. Given that climate change only started to attract widespread attention from the public from the late 1980s onwards, and evidence of its existence and consequences has mounted since then, there may well be age differences in attitudes to and concern about the issue. While older generations grew up without any mention of climate change, younger generations have been taught about it in school and have heard about it in mainstream media (news and entertainment) for a longer period of their lives.

As evidence of climate change has mounted over time, so demands for mitigation policies have grown stronger. However, moves to tax and restrict carbon emissions have been resisted by some organisations. Political divisions over climate change and the environment may have been fuelled by sceptical coverage in the English-speaking media (Painter & Ashe, 2012) and campaigns to sow doubt in the public's mind about the existence and importance of climate change (Oreskes & Conway, 2010); but also by a dislike of

the solutions rather than of the issue itself (Campbell & Kay, 2014). The gap in concern about climate change between Republicans and Democrats in the US has been widely reported in the literature (Dunlap et al., 2016). Although political divisions have also been found in Europe and the UK, they tend to be much smaller than in the US (McCright et al., 2016).

Indeed, differences between Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat voters on this topic have been found to be modest in previous British Social Attitudes (BSA) surveys (Taylor, 2012). Although Poortinga and colleagues (2011) reported that people who are politically disengaged were less likely to think that climate change is real, more recently Britain has seen the rise of the climate-sceptic UK Independence Party (UKIP), as well as the 2016 EU membership referendum which mobilised previously disengaged citizens (Curtice, 2017). As Curtice and Tipping discuss in the Europe chapter, the politics of Brexit has profoundly shaped how citizens divide themselves politically; and that process of political sorting may well have had consequences for the extent to which supporters of different political parties hold different opinions on the environment, and climate change in particular. It is therefore an appropriate moment to re-assess public attitudes to climate change, and how they may vary across social groups.

In this chapter, we investigate the nature and extent of social and political divisions in attitudes to climate change. We use data from the European Social Survey (ESS), the European sister survey to the BSA series. The ESS is a biennial survey that has been conducted since 2002. Each round contains two modules on key social themes. Round 8 of the ESS included a module on Climate Change and Energy, with interviews conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) in late 2016 and early 2017[1].

We discuss beliefs about the existence, causes and consequences of climate change, before moving on to individual feelings regarding the issue, including feelings of worry, responsibility and willingness to limit personal energy use. This is followed by an analysis of political divisions on climate change opinion in the context of Brexit.

# Beliefs about climate change

## Thoughts about climate change

Given that climate change is a long-standing and major environmental problem, people may well be expected to have given it some thought. When respondents are asked "how much have you

1 Unlike the BSA series which draws a representative sample of those aged 18 years and over, the ESS draws a representative sample of the UK population aged 16 years and over. In order to help comparison with the BSA survey, respondents aged 16-17 and those resident in Northern Ireland are excluded from the analysis. The data were weighted to account for the way the respondents were randomly selected, and so that the distributions of age, sex, and region correspond to those in the Labour Force Survey. This means that the resulting sample can be considered broadly representative.

thought about climate change before today?", the most popular answer is "some" (39%). Table 1 shows that a further 39% say either "a lot" or "a great deal".

We explore divisions by age and education here and elsewhere in the chapter, firstly because these have been highlighted as being important social divisions (Poortinga et al., 2011; Whitmarsh, 2011; Taylor, 2012) and secondly because regression analyses, that are not shown but inform this chapter[2], indicate that they are more important and consistent determinants than factors such as sex, income, religion and ethnicity[3].

**A majority (56%) of graduates say they have given climate change a lot or a great deal of thought**

When we look at the different age and education groups, we see that a majority (56%) of graduates say they have given climate change a lot or a great deal of thought[4]. People with lower levels of education are increasingly less likely to say that they have done so (36% for participants with an intermediate qualification[5], and 27% for those with GCSE or lower). Despite being more likely than older groups to have grown up hearing about climate change, younger age groups generally do not report having thought about it more. Overall, while people may not have thought much about climate change they do seem to have thought about it enough to have an opinion on whether it is happening and be aware of whether or not it is a problem caused by human activity.

**Table 1 How much people have thought about climate change before today, by age and education level**

| | Age group | | | Highest education level | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18-34 | 35-64 | 65+ | GCSE or lower | Intermediate | Degree | All |
| **Thought about climate change** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| A great deal | 11 | 12 | 12 | 7 | 9 | 21 | 12 |
| A lot | 27 | 30 | 23 | 20 | 27 | 36 | 27 |
| Some | 37 | 40 | 40 | 39 | 43 | 33 | 39 |
| Very little | 18 | 16 | 19 | 25 | 18 | 9 | 17 |
| Not at all | 6 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *392* | *893* | *540* | *607* | *736* | *515* | *1858* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

*Answer options are presented in the table in reverse order to how they were presented to respondents*

2 Regression analysis output is available from the authors on request.

3 To save space, our tables divide people into three groups for each of age and education. There are still further divisions within these groups, but they follow essentially the same pattern (Barasi and Harding, 2017).

4 Figures reported in the main text body that combine two or more categories from a table are calculated from the exact data, rather than the rounded figures that appear in the table. As a result, these figures will sometimes vary from the sum of the rounded figures by +/-1%.

5 This category includes those without a degree but with, for example, a nursing certificate, BTEC, HNC, A and AS-levels, Vocational A-levels, apprenticeship or other equivalent qualifications above GSCE level.

## Existence of climate change

**The vast majority of people think that the world's climate is changing (93%)**

Table 2 shows that the vast majority of people think that the world's climate is, at least probably, changing (93%). Less than 2% report that they think the world's climate is definitely not changing; and an additional 5% that climate change is probably not happening. Scepticism regarding the existence of climate change is very rare, both overall and in the different age and education groups.

Given the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change, it might be considered surprising that still 39% are not fully sure that the world's climate is changing. The extent to which people are convinced is greater among younger and more educated people. But even among graduates and under-35s, only two-thirds are definite that climate change is happening. Among the over-65s and those with GCSE, equivalent or lower educational attainment, only half think that the world's climate is changing.

**Table 2 Views on whether the world's climate is changing, by age and education level**

| | Age group | | | Highest education level | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18-34 | 35-64 | 65+ | GCSE or Lower | Intermediate | Degree | All |
| **Climate is ...** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| ... definitely changing | 66 | 63 | 50 | 50 | 63 | 68 | 61 |
| ... probably changing | 28 | 30 | 40 | 40 | 31 | 25 | 32 |
| ... probably not changing | 5 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| ... definitely not changing | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| *Unweighted base* | *392* | *893* | *540* | *607* | *736* | *515* | *1858* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

## Causes of climate change

**Only about a third (36%) say that climate change is mainly or entirely caused by human activity**

Successive reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have become increasingly confident that there is a clear human influence on the global climate. Their most recent report emphasises that the warming of the climate is unequivocal, and that it is extremely likely that more than half of the observed increase in global average surface temperature from 1951 to 2010 was caused by humans (IPCC, 2014). Table 3 shows that when asking respondents whether they "think that climate change is caused by natural processes, human activity or both", only about a third (36%) say that climate change is mainly or entirely caused by human activity. Most people think humans and natural causes are equally responsible. While the vast majority (95%) think that climate change is at least in part caused by human activity, it is equally true that a large majority (93%) think that climate change is at least partly

due to natural processes. By contrast, the IPCC's best estimate is that the human contribution to global warming is about the same as the actual observed global warming. On this basis, humans are not just mainly but entirely responsible. Perhaps because this estimate has not been effectively communicated, only 4% think that climate change is entirely due to humans; although, total scepticism about human involvement in creating climate change is, at 2%, also extremely rare.

**Table 3 Views about whether climate change is caused by natural processes, human activity or both, by age and education level**

| | Age group | | | Highest education level | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18-34 | 35-64 | 65+ | GCSE or Lower | Interme-diate | Degree | All |
| **Cause of climate change** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Entirely by human activity | 7 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| Mainly by human activity | 39 | 32 | 24 | 23 | 29 | 43 | 32 |
| Equally human activity and natural processes | 44 | 54 | 58 | 58 | 55 | 43 | 53 |
| Mainly by natural processes | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| Entirely by natural processes | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Definitely not happening | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| *Unweighted base* | *392* | *893* | *540* | *607* | *736* | *515* | *1858* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

*Answer options are presented in the table in reverse order to how they were presented to respondents*

Younger people and graduates are more likely to say that climate change is mainly or entirely due to human activity, but even among graduates and the under-35s, this is not a majority viewpoint. Meanwhile, for the over-65s and the least educated, only 27% think climate change is mainly or entirely caused by human activity.

## Consequences of climate change

If people do not appreciate that climate change is caused by humans, this might also be expected to affect the extent to which people think that climate change is a problem or not. The ESS asked people how good or bad they thought climate change would be for people around the world. The 2% who think the world's climate

is "definitely not changing" were not asked this and subsequent questions about climate change, apart from those on policy preferences in Table 14[6].

Respondents were asked to give a score from 0, meaning extremely bad, to 10, meaning extremely good, to indicate what they thought the impact of climate change "will be on people across the world". Two-thirds (66%) of those who gave any score gave one on the bad side 0-4, 18% said 5 (suggesting perhaps they thought it will be neutral or that they don't know), and 16% gave a score of 6-10 – suggesting that they think that climate change has net positive consequences for humans.

**Younger and more educated groups think the consequences of climate change will be worse than older and less educated groups**

Table 4 reports the mean scores for the perceived consequences of climate change "on people across the world" (full question text is available in the appendix to this chapter), according to different age and education groups. It is clear that, in line with their stronger beliefs in the existence of human-caused climate change, younger and more educated groups think that the consequences of climate change will be worse than older and less educated groups do. The age divide is particularly apparent among graduates (although caution needs to be applied, given the small sample size for the oldest age group) but less apparent within the group with the lowest levels of education.

**Table 4 Average scores for how good or bad people think the impact of climate change will be on people across the world, by age and education level**

| | Highest education level | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean of extremely bad (0) to extremely good (10)** | **GCSE or Lower** | **Intermediate** | **Degree** | **All** |
| **All** | 4.0 | 3.6 | 2.9 | 3.5 |
| *Unweighted base* | *590* | *724* | *507* | *1821* |
| **Age Group** | | | | |
| 18-34 | 3.8 | 3.4 | 2.4 | 3.2 |
| *Unweighted base* | *90* | *185* | *113* | *388* |
| 35-64 | 3.9 | 3.7 | 3.0 | 3.5 |
| *Unweighted base* | *215* | *361* | *295* | *871* |
| 65+ | 4.3 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 4.0 |
| *Unweighted base* | *267* | *174* | *91* | *532* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

As we've seen in this section, the average person in Britain has given "some" thought to climate change. Most think that the world's climate is "definitely" changing, and there is also a majority who hold the view that climate change is "about equally" caused by human activity and natural processes. On average, adults in Britain think that the impact of climate change for people around the world will only

6 Since there were only a few that chose this option, their exclusion makes little difference to the conclusions of our analyses.

be slightly on the bad side. This is a combination of opinions that suggests the average person in Britain accepts that climate change is a problem created by humans, but not a terribly damaging one.

## Personal responses to climate change

In this section we consider how people respond to climate change, both in how they feel about it and in their personal behaviour.

### Worry about climate change

**More people say they are very or extremely worried about the cost of energy (36%) than about climate change (25%)**

The ESS asked respondents, "how worried are you about climate change?" Responses are shown in Table 5. The most popular response was "somewhat worried" (45%). Just over a quarter are not at all or not very worried (28%), and a quarter are very or extremely worried (25%). There is a very similar pattern of responses to a related question asking, "How worried are you that energy may be too expensive for many people in Britain?". In fact, more people say they are very or extremely worried about the cost of energy (36%) than about climate change (25%).

**Table 5 Levels of worry about climate change, by age, education level, and climate change beliefs**

| | Age group | | | Highest education level | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18-34 | 35-64 | 65+ | GCSE or Lower | Inter-mediate | Degree |
| **Level of worry** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Extremely worried | 7 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Very worried | 25 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 17 | 27 |
| Somewhat worried | 42 | 47 | 45 | 45 | 49 | 41 |
| Not very worried | 19 | 22 | 26 | 23 | 25 | 17 |
| Not at all worried | 6 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 6 |
| Climate change not happening | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| *Unweighted base* | *392* | *893* | *540* | *607* | *736* | *515* |

| | Beliefs about climate change | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Climate change entirely /mainly human | Climate change not entirely /mainly human | All |
| **Level of worry** | % | % | % |
| Extremely worried | 11 | 3 | 6 |
| Very worried | 32 | 12 | 19 |
| Somewhat worried | 43 | 46 | 45 |
| Not very worried | 11 | 29 | 22 |
| Not at all worried | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| Climate change not happening | - | 3 | 2 |
| *Unweighted base* | *648* | *1210* | *1858* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

*Answer options are presented in the table in reverse order to how they were presented to respondents*

**Those who think that climate change is mainly or entirely caused by humans are most worried by it**

The greatest differences between groups are evident when you compare those saying “very” or “extremely” worried. Younger age groups and graduates are more likely to be worried about climate change, partly because they are more likely to believe in the existence of human-driven climate change. As Table 5 shows, those who think that climate change is mainly or entirely caused by humans are more worried. However, even among people with this view, only 42% indicate being very or extremely worried about climate change. 18-34 year olds and graduates are the age and educational groups that are most worried; in both cases around a third say they are very or extremely worried by climate change.

## Feeling personal responsibility to reduce climate change

**People only feel a moderate personal responsibility to help reduce climate change**

As well as differing in how worried they are about climate change, people may also feel different levels of personal responsibility to try to reduce climate change. Table 6 shows the average scores on a scale of personal responsibility for helping with climate change mitigation, where 0 means no responsibility and 10 means feeling a great deal of responsibility (full question wording can be found in the appendix to this chapter). The overall average score is 6.0, only slightly above the mid-point of 5. Responses are quite spread out across the scale, with scores from 5 to 8 being the most popular. Less than 10% give a score of 2 or less and 15% a score of 9 or 10. While most scores are above 5, they are also clustered around intermediate levels, suggesting that people only feel a moderate personal responsibility to help reduce climate change.

**Table 6 Average score for extent to which people feel personal responsibility to reduce climate change, by age, education level and climate change beliefs**

| | Highest education level | | | Beliefs about climate change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean of not at all responsible (0) to a great deal responsible (10)** | **GCSE or lower** | **Inter-mediate** | **Degree** | **Climate change entirely / mainly human** | **Climate change not entirely / mainly human** | **All** |
| **All** | 5.4 | 6.0 | 6.7 | 6.8 | 5.6 | 6.0 |
| *Unweighted base* | *576* | *723* | *505* | *646* | *1158* | *1804* |
| **Age Group** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | 5.2 | 5.6 | 6.6 | 6.7 | 5.1 | 5.8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *88* | *185* | *112* | *169* | *216* | *385* |
| 35-64 | 5.7 | 6.2 | 6.8 | 7.0 | 5.9 | 6.3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *208* | *361* | *295* | *326* | *538* | *864* |
| 65+ | 5.3 | 6.0 | 6.4 | 6.6 | 5.4 | 5.7 |
| *Unweighted base* | *264* | *173* | *90* | *147* | *385* | *527* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

Responses to the question of personal responsibility are strongly linked to beliefs about the causes of climate change. Those who think climate change is mainly or entirely caused by humans feel more personally responsible for trying to mitigate it. Furthermore, as shown in Table 6, the more educated people are, the more likely they are to believe that climate change is mainly caused by humans, and thus the more likely to feel some sense of responsibility for resolving the problem. However, even after using regression analysis (not shown) to account for the correlation between education and beliefs about the causes of climate change, education still has an additional impact on feelings of responsibility. Also, while younger

people are more likely to believe in human responsibility for climate change, there is no correlation between age and feelings of personal responsibility for climate change mitigation. As Table 6 shows, reported feelings of personal responsibility among those who believe that climate change is entirely or mainly due to humans, and among those who do not, show a similar pattern across the different age groups (for example, the 35-64 year-old age group felt the highest level of personal responsibility across both of these groups). Beliefs about the causes of climate change only explain a small part of the differences in feelings of personal responsibility we observe.

## Limiting personal energy use

Before introducing any questions about climate change, the ESS asked respondents how often they do things to reduce their energy use in their daily life, "such as switching off appliances that are not being used, walking for short journeys, or only using the heating or air conditioning when really needed." The median response was that they "often" do things to reduce energy use, and just under half (47%) said they do so "very often" or "always".

If beliefs and concerns about climate change motivate efforts to save energy, then we would expect to see younger and more educated people reporting doing things to save energy more often. Table 7 shows that the under 35s, rather than doing the most, are particularly less likely to say that they do things to save energy. Since they are more likely to live with their parents, or otherwise in shared accommodation, they might have less opportunity than over 35s to save energy. However, in response to a hypothetical question in the ESS, young people are also less likely to say they would buy an energy efficient appliance[7].

7 The ESS question read, "If you were to buy a large electrical appliance for your home, how likely is it that you would buy one of the most energy efficient (in the sense of 'using less energy) ones?" Responses were on a scale of 0 meaning "Not at all likely" to 10 meaning "Extremely likely".

**Table 7 Frequency of limiting personal energy use, by age, education level and climate change beliefs**

| | Age group | | | Highest education level | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18-34 | 35-64 | 65+ | GCSE or Lower | Interme-diate | Degree |
| **Frequency of limiting personal energy use** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Always | 15 | 19 | 15 | 17 | 17 | 18 |
| Very often | 27 | 31 | 32 | 27 | 28 | 35 |
| Often | 29 | 27 | 28 | 27 | 31 | 26 |
| Sometimes | 24 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 20 | 18 |
| Hardly ever | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Never | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | * |
| Cannot reduce energy | * | * | * | * | * | 0 |
| *Unweighted base* | *392* | *893* | *540* | *607* | *736* | *515* |

| | Beliefs about climate change | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Climate change entirely /mainly human | Climate change not entirely /mainly human | All |
| **Frequency of limiting personal energy use** | % | % | % |
| Always | 18 | 17 | 17 |
| Very often | 32 | 29 | 30 |
| Often | 26 | 29 | 28 |
| Sometimes | 18 | 20 | 20 |
| Hardly ever | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Never | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Cannot reduce energy | * | * | * |
| *Unweighted base* | *648* | *1210* | *1858* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

**Those who believe climate change is mainly or entirely caused by humans show only a modest tendency towards saving energy more often than other groups**

It is not just with respect to age that the social divisions in beliefs and concerns about climate change do not translate into differences in personal action. Efforts to save energy only modestly increase with level of education. Part of the issue here is that energy-saving behaviours are only moderately linked to beliefs about climate change. Table 7 shows only a slight tendency towards saving energy more often for those who believe climate change is mainly or entirely caused by humans. Indeed, this tendency is only statistically significant for those who believe climate change is entirely, not just

mainly, the result of human activity (regression analysis not shown). Personal decisions about energy use are affected by a variety of other factors; and ambitions to mitigate climate change may only be one of them.

## Personal efficacy

**People are not convinced that reducing the amount of energy they use would be effective in reducing climate change**

One of the reasons why beliefs and worry about climate change may not necessarily translate into action could be that some people think that whatever action they themselves could take may not make a difference. Table 8 confirms that people are not convinced that reducing the amount of energy they use would be effective. When asked "how likely (on a scale from 0 meaning "not at all likely" to 10 meaning "extremely likely") do you think it is that limiting your own energy use would help reduce climate change?" the average score is 4.4. This is below the mid-point, suggesting a low level of confidence in personal efficacy.

**Table 8 Views on likelihood that limiting own energy use would help reduce climate change, by age, education and climate change beliefs**

| | Highest education level | | | Beliefs about climate change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean from not at all likely (0) to extremely likely (10)** | **GCSE or lower** | **Inter-mediate** | **Degree** | **Climate change entirely / mainly human** | **Climate change not entirely /mainly human** | **All** |
| All | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 4.4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *576* | *716* | *506* | *642* | *1156* | *1798* |
| **Age Group** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | 4.3 | 4.1 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 4.3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *89* | *183* | *112* | *167* | *217* | *384* |
| 35-64 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.7 | 4.9 | 4.4 | 4.6 |
| *Unweighted base* | *210* | *359* | *295* | *326* | *538* | *864* |
| 65+ | 4.2 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 4.7 | 3.9 | 4.1 |
| *Unweighted base* | *262* | *170* | *91* | *145* | *378* | *523* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

Table 8 shows that feelings of personal efficacy do not follow the same age and education patterns as for climate change beliefs and concerns. Feelings of efficacy are slightly greater among graduates than those with less educational attainment, but only among those of working age. Graduates over 65 have the lowest average scores of all the groups in the table – although we should be cautious about this finding, given the small sample size involved. Overall, with regard to age, those aged 35-64 have the highest level of personal efficacy, followed by those aged 18-34.

Feelings of personal efficacy are greater for those who believe that climate change is mainly or entirely due to humans than for those who think that natural processes play an equal or greater part. But that relationship is fairly weak. Table 8 shows only a 0.5 average difference. So it is not surprising that social divisions in feelings regarding personal efficacy do not necessarily follow the same pattern as those for climate change beliefs and concerns. We can't be sure why we observe this pattern; it may be that the weak linkage between beliefs about the causes of climate change and feelings of personal efficacy depends on a deeper attitude or set of values regarding personal efficacy.

**On average, people in Britain are only "somewhat worried" about climate change, and do not feel a strong sense of personal responsibility to try to reduce it**

Overall, these findings reveal that, on average people in Britain are only "somewhat worried" about climate change, and they do not feel a strong sense of personal responsibility to try to reduce it. Although people on average do not strongly feel that by reducing their own energy use they can help reduce climate change, they do report "often" doing things to save energy, but not necessarily in an attempt to reduce climate change. The consistent age and education gaps that were observed for beliefs and worry about climate change, do not extend to feelings of responsibility, efficacy, and, perhaps most importantly, energy-saving behaviour. On these variables, the education gap is smaller and a different pattern emerges with respect to age. Even if the young are more likely to believe and to be worried about climate change, it is the 35-64 year olds who feel the most responsible and efficacious, and report reducing their energy use the most often.

## Climate change as a collective issue

Climate change is a global challenge. As a result, climate change mitigation is not only a matter of individuals acting alone; it is hard to imagine a solution without both people acting collectively and government intervention. This section considers the extent to which people feel climate change might be addressed by either.

### Collective efficacy on climate change

Before asking about the prospects for collective action, the ESS asked a question designed to capture the extent to which people believe that large-scale collective action by individuals would actually reduce climate change. Specifically, it asked, "Now imagine that large numbers of people limited their energy use. How likely do you think it is that this would reduce climate change?" Responses are on a scale from 0 meaning "not at all likely" to 10 meaning "extremely likely". The distribution of scores is fairly similar to the one for the question on personal efficacy, but with a slightly higher average overall. Naturally enough, people think that lots of people limiting their energy use will have more effect than just one person doing so. However, while the average score for collective efficacy (5.8) is clearly higher

than that for personal efficacy (4.4), it is surprising that the gap is not much wider.

**Younger people are much more likely to think that large numbers of people limiting energy use would be effective in reducing climate change**

Table 9 shows that younger people are much more likely to think that large numbers of people limiting energy use would be effective. By contrast, responses are not consistently associated with education since there are different patterns by education within the different age groups. However, there is a modest difference in responses between men and women, with women reporting a greater sense of collective efficacy (6.0) than men (5.6). Also, the more someone thinks that climate change is due to humans, the more they think humans can collectively do something about it.

**Table 9 Views about likelihood that large numbers of people limiting their energy use would reduce climate change, by age, education level and climate change beliefs**

| | Highest education level | | | Beliefs about climate change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean from not at all likely (0) to extremely likely (10)** | **GCSE or lower** | **Inter-mediate** | **Degree** | **Climate change entirely /mainly human** | **Climate change not entirely / mainly human** | **All** |
| **All** | 5.7 | 5.7 | 6.0 | 6.4 | 5.4 | 5.8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *570* | *712* | *504* | *638* | *1148* | *1786* |
| **Age Group** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 6.3 | 6.6 | 5.5 | 6.0 |
| *Unweighted base* | *87* | *178* | *112* | *165* | *212* | *377* |
| 35-64 | 5.8 | 5.7 | 6.0 | 6.4 | 5.5 | 5.8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *209* | *360* | *293* | *326* | *536* | *862* |
| 65+ | 5.4 | 5.5 | 5.4 | 6.1 | 5.2 | 5.4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *261* | *170* | *91* | *144* | *378* | *522* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

## Will large numbers of people limit their energy use?

Having asked a hypothetical question about the potential effectiveness of collective action, the ESS asked respondents how they rate the chances of large numbers of people actually limiting their energy use. Specifically, the question was, “How likely do you think it is that large numbers of people will actually limit their energy use to try to reduce climate change?” Table 10 shows that the average answer on a scale from 0 meaning “not at all likely” to 10 meaning “extremely likely” is 3.8, well below the scale mid-point of 5. Overall, people are not terribly optimistic that lots of people will take it upon themselves to reduce their energy consumption in a collective effort against climate change.

**Table 10 Views about likelihood that large numbers of people will limit their energy use to reduce climate change, by age, education level and climate change beliefs**

| | Highest education level | | | Beliefs about climate change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean from not at all likely (0) to extremely likely (10)** | **GCSE or lower** | **Interme-diate** | **Degree** | **Climate change entirely /mainly human** | **Climate change not entirely / mainly human** | **All** |
| **All** | 4.0 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 3.8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *574* | *717* | *505* | *641* | *1155* | *1796* |
| **Age Group** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | 3.7 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| *Unweighted base* | *89* | *180* | *112* | *166* | *215* | *381* |
| 35-64 | 4.2 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.8 | 3.8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *209* | *360* | *294* | *326* | *537* | *854* |
| 65+ | 4.1 | 4.1 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| *Unweighted base* | *263* | *173* | *91* | *146* | *381* | *598* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

Despite having the most positive view of collective action, young people and graduates are relatively more pessimistic about whether humans will fulfil this potential. Overall, differences between age groups and those with different levels of education explain little of the variation in expectations on this issue. Similarly, there is only a very weak relationship between views about the causes of climate change and expectations for collective action. If anything, the more someone thinks that climate change is the result of human activity the more pessimistic they are about the prospects of large numbers of people limiting their energy use in an attempt to mitigate climate change, but that correlation is not statistically significant.

## Will governments in enough countries take action?

**People have relatively little faith that sufficient governments will take action to reduce climate change**

If individuals are thought unlikely to take much action, then maybe people in Britain expect governments to intervene instead. The ESS asked "How likely do you think it is that governments in enough countries will take action that reduces climate change?". This question elicited slightly more positive responses than the previous question on the same scale of 0 "not at all likely" to 10 "extremely likely". The average (4.3) is only just above the average for the response regarding the chances of large numbers of people limiting their energy use (3.8), but still below the scale mid-point of 5. A score of 4.3 indicates relatively little faith that sufficient governments will take action to reduce climate change. Table 11 shows that average expectation does not systematically differ by age, education or even beliefs in human-driven climate change.

**Table 11 Views about likelihood that governments in enough countries will take action that reduces climate change, by age, education level and climate change beliefs**

| | Highest education level | | | Beliefs about climate change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean from not at all likely (0) to extremely likely (10)** | **GCSE or lower** | **Inter-mediate** | **Degree** | **Climate change entirely /mainly human** | **Climate change not entirely / mainly human** | **All** |
| **All** | 4.4 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *562* | *711* | *504* | *637* | *1140* | *1777* |
| **Age Group** | | | | | | |
| 18-34 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| *Unweighted base* | *85* | *179* | *112* | *166* | *210* | *376* |
| 35-64 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 4.3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *207* | *360* | *293* | *325* | *535* | *860* |
| 65+ | 4.4 | 4.6 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *257* | *168* | *91* | *143* | *373* | *516* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

To summarise, using a scale from 0 “not at all likely” to 10 “extremely likely”, people give an average score of 4.4 for the chances that limiting their own energy use would reduce climate change; 5.8 for the chances that climate change would be reduced if large numbers of people reduced their energy use; 3.8 for the chances that large numbers of people will *actually* limit their energy use; and 4.3 for the chances that governments in enough countries will take action that reduces climate change. Overall people in Britain have some hope that climate change could be reduced, but they are not very confident that it will actually happen.

## Political divisions

In the following section we explore whether age and education divisions in climate change beliefs and concerns echo patterns of support for Brexit and for the political parties shown in the Voting chapter (Curtice and Simpson) and Europe chapter (Curtice and Tipping). Given that Leave voters had gradually moved towards the Conservatives and Remain voters to Labour by the time of the ESS in late 2016, a consequence of post-referendum politics in Britain may be that the parties have become divided on climate change. In this section we first consider the similarity between divisions over climate change and those over Brexit before turning to partisan divides.

## Brexit

**71% of Remain voters think that climate change is definitely happening, compared with just 53% of Leave voters**

The ESS asked respondents how they voted in the June 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. Table 12 below shows the climate change worry responses (explored earlier in Table 5) by whether people voted for the UK to leave or remain a member of the European Union. Those who voted leave are much less likely to be very or extremely worried about climate change (17%) than those who voted for the UK to remain (32%). This partly reflects a more fundamental divide with respect to belief in the existence of climate change. Some 71% of Remain voters think that climate change is definitely happening, compared with just 53% of Leave voters.

**Table 12 Level of worry about climate change, by Brexit vote**

| | All | Remain | Leave |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Level of worry** | % | % | % |
| Extremely worried | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Very worried | 19 | 26 | 12 |
| Somewhat worried | 45 | 48 | 46 |
| Not very worried | 22 | 15 | 29 |
| Not at all worried | 6 | 3 | 7 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1858* | *679* | *692* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

*Answer options are presented in the table in reverse order to how they were presented to respondents*

## Partisan divides

The ESS asked respondents if there was any political party they felt "closer to than all the others", and if so which. Respondents were additionally asked which party they voted for at the last (2015) election. As a measure of which party they support we use the party they said they were closest to, if there was one, and, if not, the party voted for. This still leaves some 22% of those who neither voted in 2015 nor felt closer to one party than any of the others. These people come under the category "None" in Table 13, and, based on previous research, can be considered disproportionately disinterested or disengaged with politics. This group, just like Conservative supporters (34%), are relatively more likely to say that they are not at all or not very worried about climate change (33%). However, in accordance with previous research (Carter and Clements, 2015), supporters of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) are the least worried, with 48% indicating that they are either not very or not at all worried.

**Table 13 Level of worry about climate change, by party identification**

| | | Extremely worried | Very worried | Somewhat worried | Not very worried | Not at all worried | *Unweighted base* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **All** | % | 6 | 19 | 45 | 22 | 6 | *1858* |
| **Party identification** | | | | | | | |
| Conservative | % | 3 | 15 | 47 | 28 | 5 | *548* |
| Labour | % | 6 | 23 | 48 | 17 | 4 | *512* |
| Liberal Democrats | % | 6 | 29 | 51 | 9 | 2 | *130* |
| Scottish National Party | % | 5 | 22 | 44 | 25 | 3 | *57* |
| Green Party | % | 28 | 23 | 40 | 11 | - | *53* |
| UKIP | % | 4 | 9 | 35 | 40 | 8 | *114* |
| None | % | 6 | 17 | 42 | 23 | 10 | *414* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

Green party supporters are the most concerned, with 52% reporting to be very or extremely worried about climate change. Liberal Democrats are also clearly on the concerned side, with 35% saying that they are either very or extremely worried. Labour and Scottish National Party (SNP) supporters are more divided, and overall less worried than Greens and Liberal Democrats (though results for the SNP and Greens should be viewed with caution due to the small sample sizes involved).

Similar party differences are present in terms of the climate change beliefs discussed earlier (see Table 5). These are not merely a reflection of social differences in age, education and sex, as the effects remain after controlling for socio-demographic characteristics in a regression analysis (not shown). There are also party differences with regard to the questions on collective action. However, they follow a different pattern. For instance, Green party supporters have more confidence in the power of collective action than supporters of other parties, but are also more pessimistic than others about the prospects of large numbers of people actually limiting their energy use. Party differences are almost absent regarding the questions on personal energy saving efficacy and behaviour, with the exception that non-voters are less likely to save energy. Green party supporters are equally as likely as other party supporters to say that they often save energy, although they might be setting themselves higher standards as to what counts as “often”.

We cannot tell whether the differences we describe above are due to people with different attitudes to climate change choosing different parties, the influence of people’s preferred parties on the opinions of their supporters, or some combination. There are instances in British history when parties and their leaders provoked large-scale change

in the opinions of their supporters. By analysing BSA survey data, Curtice and Fisher (2003) showed that Blair moved the economic policy preferences of Labour party supporters to the right. But they also showed that Thatcher failed to achieve the same effect, within her party or more broadly, despite her efforts to do so. Since it is hard for leaders to change the public's mind, and there has been remarkably little effort from mainstream politicians to exercise environmental leadership, we assume that individuals with different attitudes chose different parties. That does however not mean that they are necessarily choosing the party because of their opinion on climate change. With the exception of the Green party, it is more likely that people chose parties based on other considerations which happen to be correlated with climate change opinions. For instance, people increasingly choose between Labour and the Conservatives based on their attitudes to Brexit (Curtice, 2017), which, as we have seen above, are linked to attitudes to climate change.

But while age, education and partisan divisions on climate change beliefs, concerns and policy preferences mirror the divisions on Brexit, the gaps are much smaller. Britain and the political parties are much more polarised on the issues most pertinent to the Brexit vote than they are on climate change policy.

**Support for climate change mitigation policies is only slightly higher for Labour voters than for Conservative voters**

Not only are the main partisan divisions on climate change beliefs and concerns relatively modest, but partisan divisions on climate change mitigation policy tend to be even smaller. There is little in the ESS to suggest that, for example, a Labour government would be pressured by their own voters for much stronger climate change mitigation policy than the Conservatives. Table 14 shows that support for climate change mitigation policies is only slightly higher for Labour voters than it is for Conservative voters, but not by much. There are no decisive differences indicating support for a policy among one party's supporters but not another's. For both parties, only a minority support more taxation of fossil fuels, and for both parties there is majority support for both renewable subsidies and a ban on inefficient appliances.

**Table 14 Favourability of measures to reduce climate change, by party identification**

| | Fossil fuel tax | | | Renewable energy subsidies | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Conservative | Labour | All | Conservative | Labour | All |
| **Level of favour** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Strongly in favour | 5 | 11 | 8 | 17 | 29 | 24 |
| Somewhat in favour | 30 | 31 | 28 | 51 | 43 | 44 |
| Neither in favour nor against | 22 | 23 | 25 | 15 | 13 | 17 |
| Somewhat against | 32 | 22 | 24 | 13 | 9 | 10 |
| Strongly against | 11 | 12 | 13 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| *Unweighted base* | *548* | *512* | *1858* | *548* | *512* | *1858* |

| | Ban energy-inefficient household appliances | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Conservative | Labour | All |
| **Level of favour** | % | % | % |
| Strongly in favour | 17 | 19 | 18 |
| Somewhat in favour | 45 | 39 | 38 |
| Neither in favour nor against | 16 | 22 | 21 |
| Somewhat against | 15 | 14 | 15 |
| Strongly against | 7 | 4 | 6 |
| *Unweighted base* | *548* | *512* | *1858* |

*Source: European Social Survey wave 8 (2016), British respondents aged 18+*

Nothing here suggests radically different internal policy pressures for Labour compared with the Conservatives. If a Labour-led government were to depend for parliamentary support on the Greens, Scottish National Party and the Liberal Democrats, the pressure for pro-environmental policy from the government's own supporters would be somewhat greater than with a majority Labour government. But still, environmental policies are relatively unimportant to all but the Greens and Liberal Democrats, and those are very small parties in terms of parliamentary seats.

## Conclusions

This chapter has shown that most people in Britain have given at least some thought to the issue of climate change, and also that most think it is definitely happening. Total scepticism about the existence of climate change is rare, as is the belief that climate change is entirely due to natural causes. But most do not think that

**Most people do not think that climate change is mainly caused by humans or that the consequences will be very bad**

climate change is mainly caused by humans, and do not think the consequences will be very bad. The majority of people are only somewhat worried about it. In fact, people are rather less worried about climate change than they are about energy becoming too expensive.

Accordingly, people are ambivalent about taxing energy from fossil fuels, which could clearly impose a cost on them. They are notionally supportive of subsidies for renewables and bans on energy inefficient appliances, although our survey questions did not point out that those policies would come at a cost.

Overall, it appears that Britain is relatively relaxed about climate change, and not strongly divided over it. There are more worried than there are sceptical individuals, but the majority in Britain appears to have fairly middling attitudes towards climate change. They know about it, and acknowledge a human component, but are overall relatively indifferent and apathetic about climate change (Barasi, 2017).

Differences by age and education are reasonably strong and consistent when it comes to beliefs and concerns about climate change and what the government should do about it, but they do not extend to feelings of personal ability to make a difference or their own efforts to save energy. What divisions there are on other socio-demographic variables, such as sex, ethnicity, and income, are typically fairly weak and sporadic.

There are, however, noticeable and consistent differences between supporters of different parties in how they think about climate change, as well as according to attitudes to Brexit. With this kind of survey we cannot properly assess if people are choosing their parties based on their attitudes to climate change, or whether parties are leading their voters towards certain views on climate change. It may also be that people are choosing parties more based on their attitudes to Brexit and related cultural issues, especially immigration. Opinion on those issues is correlated with attitudes to climate change. And so the Labour partisans are more climate-conscious than Conservatives, not necessarily because they chose their party based on environmental considerations, but more likely because their climate change attitudes go hand in hand with their Brexit and other attitudes. Although it was still on a modest scale, since late 2016 and early 2017 when the ESS took place, at both the 2017 general election and in the 2018 local elections, we have seen swings from Labour to Conservative among Leave supporters and in the opposite direction among Remain voters (Curtice, 2018). Climate change may well become more of a partisan political football because of Brexit.

## Acknowledgements

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC). Participating countries contribute to the central coordination costs of the ESS ERIC as well as covering the costs of their own fieldwork and national coordination. In the UK these funds are provided by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The views expressed are those of the authors alone. The authors are grateful to Gisela Böhm, Linda Steg, Lorraine Whitmarsh and all those in the ESS team who helped design and field the survey questions; to the respondents; to the editors; and to John Kenny for help compiling tables and for comments on earlier drafts.

## References

Barasi, L. (2017), *The Climate Majority*, London: The New Internationalist

Barasi, L., and Harding, R. (2017), "Climate Concern and Pessimism: Examining Public Attitudes Across Europe", National Centre for Social Research, available at: http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1513272/ESS-Climate-Change-report-FINAL.pdf

Campbell, T. H., and Kay, A. C. (2014), 'Solution aversion: On the relation between ideology and motivated disbelief', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **107(5)**, 809–824

Cook, J., Oreskes, N., Doran, P. T., Anderegg, W. R. L., Verheggen, B., Maibach, E. W., and Rice, K. (2016), 'Consensus on consensus: a synthesis of consensus estimates on human-caused global warming', *Environmental Research Letters*, **11(4)**, 48002

Carter, N., and Clements, B. (2015), 'From "Greenest Government Ever" to "Get Rid of All the Green Crap": David Cameron, the Conservatives and the Environment', British Politics, **10(2)**: 204–25

Curtice, J. (2017), 'The vote to leave the EU: Litmus test or lightning rod?', in Clery, E., Curtice, J. & Harding, R. (eds.), British Social Attitudes: The 34th Report, London: National Centre for Social Research

Curtice, J. (2018), 'How Brexit Shaped the Local Election Vote', What UK Thinks, the National Centre for Social Research, available at: http://whatukthinks.org/eu/how-brexit-shaped-the-local-election-vote

Curtice, J. and Fisher, S.D. (2003), 'The Power to Persuade? A Tale of Two Prime Ministers', in Park, A., Curtice, J., Thomson, K., Jarvis, L. and Bromley, C. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: The 20th report – Continuity and change over two decades*, London: Sage

Dunlap, R. E., McCright, A. M., & Yarosh, J. H. (2016), 'The Political Divide on Climate Change: Partisan Polarization Widens in the U.S', *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, **58(5)**, 4–23, available at: http://doi.org/10.1080/00139157.2016.1208995

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014), *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,IPCC*, Geneva, Switzerland: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

McCright, A. M., Dunlap, R. E., and Marquart-Pyatt, S. T. (2016), 'Political ideology and views about climate change in the European Union', *Environmental Politics*, **25(2)**, 338–358, available at: http://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2015.1090371

Oreskes, N., and Conway, E. M. (2010), *Merchants of Doubt*, London: Bloomsbury Press

Painter, J., and Ashe, T. (2012), 'Cross-national comparison of the presence of climate scepticism in the print media in six countries, 2007–10', *Environmental Research Letters*, **7(4)**, 44005, available at: http://stacks.iop.org/1748-9326/7/i=4/a=044005

Poortinga, W., Spence, A., Whitmarsh, L., Capstick, S., and Pidgeon, N. F. (2011), 'Uncertain climate: An investigation into public scepticism about anthropogenic climate change', *Global Environmental Change*, **21(3, SI)**, 1015–1024, available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.03.001

Taylor, E. (2012), 'Environment: concern about climate change: a paler shade of green?', Park, A., Clery, E., Curtice, J., Phillips, M. and Utting, D. (eds.) (2012), *British Social Attitudes: The 28th Report*, London: Sage, available at: http://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-28/environment.aspx

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015), *Adoption of the Paris Agreement. Report No. FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1*, Paris: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Whitmarsh, L. (2011), 'Scepticism and uncertainty about climate change: Dimensions, determinants and change over time', *Global Environmental Change*, **21(2)**, 690–700. available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.01.016

## Appendix

The full question wording for the data presented in Table 4 is as follows:

> ***How good or bad do you think the impact of climate change will be on people across the world? Please choose a number from 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely bad and 10 is extremely good.***
>
> ***(Answer scale from 0 = Extremely bad, to 10 = Extremely good)***

The full question wording for the data presented in Table 6 is as follows:

> ***To what extent do you feel a personal responsibility to try to reduce climate change?***
>
> ***(Answer scale from 0 = Not at all, to 10 = A great deal)***

# Social trust

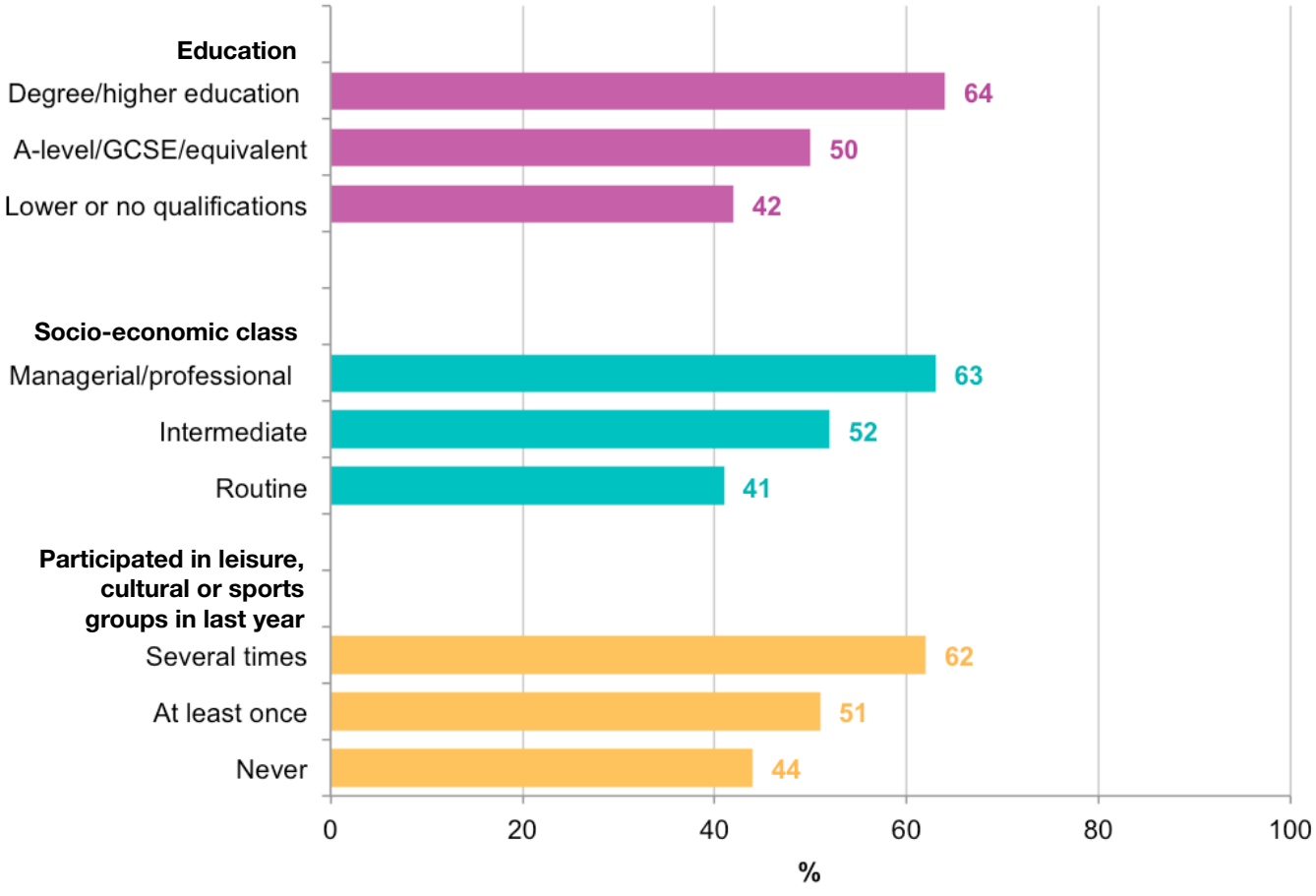
## The impact of social networks and inequality

Social trust – confidence in the moral orientation or trustworthiness of our fellow citizens – plays an important role in how secure individuals feel and how well society functions. This chapter explores levels of social trust in Britain over the last few decades and examines how social trust is related to a range of socio-economic characteristics. Trust has a social foundation: while the extent of people's social connections – through participation in social activities and social networks – mediates trust, in Britain today, these too are patterned according to social status.

## Spotlight

People with higher levels of education and those in higher occupational classes are more likely to trust, as are people who regularly participate in leisure, cultural or sports groups or associations.

**Social trust, by education, socio-economic class, and participation in leisure, cultural and sports groups**



# Overview

## No sign that social trust in Britain is in decline

**While levels of social trust have generally remained stable over the past two decades, they have increased since 2014.**

- The proportion of people saying that people can almost always or usually be trusted has remained relatively stable (at around 45%) between 1998 and 2014.
- 54% now say people can almost always or usually be trusted, representing an increase in reported rates of trust. It remains to be seen whether this is part of an upward trend.

## Doing things 'with' people engenders trust

**Participation in social activities is linked to trust, but this is less the case for political activities and voluntary work.**

- The more frequently one undertakes leisure, sports and cultural activities with other people, the more likely one is to hold a trusting view.
- Participation in civic or voluntary work, and with political parties, is also related to trust – but with a clearer division between activists (who participated at some point) and those who haven't participated at all.

## There is a strong social foundation to trust

**Education and class have a strong link to trust even when age and people's social connectedness are taken into account.**

- Those with the highest level of education (degree or another higher education qualification) have levels of trust around 20 percentage points higher than those with qualifications that are lower than GCSE or who have no qualifications.
- Participation in social activities, and the extent and status of people's social networks, are also strongly linked to class and education.
- Education and social class remain significantly related to trust, even when other factors have been accounted for.

**Authors**

**Yaojun Li,**
Professor of Sociology,
University of Manchester

**Neil Smith,**
Research Director,
The National Centre for Social Research

**Peter Dangerfield,**
Senior Researcher and Co-director of the British Social Attitudes series,
The National Centre for Social Research

# Introduction

Social trust refers to the level of confidence people have in the moral orientation or trustworthiness of their fellow citizens. It is an important part of the social fabric: a high level of social trust can promote democratic governance, reduce corruption, decrease transaction costs and increase quality of life (Putnam, 1993). Given this important contribution to a well-functioning society, social trust has been a focus for academic and policy research. Academic research has been focused on the trends, sources and consequences of trust. Meanwhile policy researchers have been concerned about possible effects of declining trust on electoral turnout, confidence in public decision-making and a whole range of national policies such as those on immigration and Brexit.

This chapter explores trends in trust in Britain over the last few decades. In addition, we focus on the social underpinning of trust in Britain using data from the 2017 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, which was collected as part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Our main argument is that trust has a social foundation: it is rooted in the stratified social order of society and is shaped by education and class. While the extent of people's social connections – through participation in social activities and social networks – does mediate trust, these too are patterned according to education and class.

**Trust is rooted in the stratified social order of society and is shaped by education and class**

Over the past two decades, there has been much research on the sources, manifestations and consequences of social trust and social capital. Much of the research is in debate with Robert Putnam's work on social capital, especially his ideas in the two books: *Making Democracy Work* (1993) and *Bowling Alone* (2000). Putnam's basic argument, drawing from Tocqueville (1969), is that when people get together, they learn how to work together, to be more trustworthy and to trust others, and to solve collective problems together. According to Putnam, for social networks to have value, they should involve activities "doing with" other people rather than merely "doing for". He goes on to say, "doing good for other people, however laudable, is not part of the definition of social capital" (Putnam, 2000: 117). It is the extent of these networks and shared social norms which leads to trust and co-operation which has variously been termed 'social capital'. The key feature of Putnam's work traces the declining stock of social capital including social trust in the USA since the 1960s and links it to people's increasing disengagement from socio-political and civic life.

Meanwhile, parallel work on Britain (Hall, 1999) has looked at civic participation and social trust in the period between 1959 and 1990. On the one hand, this shows a generally vibrant civic life in Britain with no across-the-board decline. On the other, it does find a growing class division in social capital with the middle class becoming increasingly more likely to participate in civic activities than the working class. However, this work is now rather old and unlikely to

be representative of the levels of social trust in Britain today. And while other studies have looked at the uneven distribution of social trust among different groups (Clery and Stockdale, 2008), a fresh analysis of the current stocks of social trust, civic participation and its interplay with socio-economic factors is much in need.

In the policy arena, over the last two decades social cohesion and trust have been the subject of several government-commissioned reports and reviews in response to events such as the Bradford riots in 2001 and the London riots a decade later. Successive government initiatives, including David Cameron's 'Big Society' and the National Citizen Service, have attempted to enhance 'community cohesion' by increasing mutual understanding, collaboration and therefore trust through promoting greater civic participation.

**Political rhetoric surrounding a "broken society" was seen as reflecting a divided and unequal society with diminishing trust in the state as well as between individuals**

In the other direction, the build up to the general election of 2010 was characterised by political expense scandals, increasing mistrust and fear over state surveillance and perceived erosion of individual social freedoms. Political rhetoric surrounding a "broken society" (Driver, 2009) was seen as reflecting a divided and unequal society with diminishing trust in the state as well as between individuals. This perception has only been exacerbated by the 2016 Brexit referendum and subsequent highlighting of apparently increased social fragmentation.

The apparently deepening social division in Britain, alongside a seemingly rapid deterioration in civic health in the USA, has sent shock waves through the academic and policy-making communities, attracting heated debates. Most of the resulting empirical studies seem more intent on comparing the effects of formal (civic) versus informal (interpersonal) social connections on social trust, ignoring substantive issues such as what are the social foundations of both social networks and trust (Newton, 2001; Halpern, 2005; Pichler and Wallace, 2007). Instead of placing social factors such as age, sex and socio-economic factors at the heart of the research, they are sometimes sidelined, used as simply 'control variables' (Sturgis et al., 2015).

These issues form the structure of our exploration of social trust in BSA data which considers the following research questions:

1. What is the trend of social trust in Britain?
2. How does the level of social trust vary between social, economic or demographic groups?
3. How is trust related to acts of social participation and to strengths of social networks? And how are both trust and social networks shaped by socio-economic factors?

Understanding and analysing the nature of social trust is challenging. The most important distinction between different types of trust has been made by Uslaner (2002), who separates out 'strategic' trust from 'moralistic' trust. Strategic trust, or bonding social capital as Putnam (2000) calls it, is experience-based, 'situational' and thickly

embedded in the intimate relationships, such as with family, kin, neighbours or friends (see also Li et al., 2005). It is a type of trust emanating from links to others based on a common sense of identity, or 'people like us'. By contrast, moralistic trust is trust in strangers, or in one's fellow citizens at the overall level. As such, it is more stable, socialisation-based and grounded in an optimistic disposition and a firm sense of control. It is a value-learned in the past but reinforced by the prevailing socio-economic conditions and the composition of one's social contacts and their social status.

The long-running question used by BSA pins down the expression of moralistic trust to 'generalised' trust, referring to trust in other members of society, as defined by Rosenberg (1956)[1]. We explore the trends in responses to this question from 1998 to 2017, as well as variations between demographic and socio-economic groups.

In 2017, BSA also includes questions around social participation and social networks which can hopefully help us gain a better understanding of the social foundations of trust. Our key measure of social participation refers to activities in the past year which are of the 'doing with' character, highlighted by Putnam (2000) as key to developing social trust. This year's survey also specifically focuses on capturing the social diversity of people's social networks. Taken together, these two variables enable us to understand more about the social nature of trust and how it is shaped by the social and economic situations of people's lives.

It is this detail on the differing forms and levels of social connections, coupled with our ability to simultaneously assess the contribution of socio-economic conditions and other attributes towards how trusting people are, which can hopefully help us understand the moral and social foundations of trust in Britain today.

## Trends in social trust over time

Looking at how levels of social trust have changed over time requires a specific definition of trust, measured by the same question over a significant time period.

At regular intervals between 1998 and 2017, we have asked:

***Generally speaking, would you say that people can be trusted?***

Respondents are able to give the following answer options:

***People can almost always be trusted***

***People can usually be trusted***

***You usually can't be too careful in dealing with people***

***You almost always can't be too careful in dealing with people***

***Can't choose***

1 Throughout this chapter when the term 'trust' is used we mean this generalised trust measure.

In the analysis the response options were grouped into 'trusting' and 'cannot be too careful', with those who answered "can't choose" not grouped with either.

Our outcome of interest is, therefore, 'generalised' trust as defined by Rosenberg (1965), as referring to trust in other members of society. Generalised trust is closely related to moralistic trust (as defined in the previous section), with both types being based on a person's optimistic worldview. However, while moralistic trust is values-led and highly stable, generalised trust – as expressed in this question – has scope for variation according to a person's wider circumstances (Uslaner, 2002).

**54% think people can be trusted, an increase from 47% in 2014**

Between 1998 and 2014, the proportion of the public reporting that they believe that most people can be trusted was relatively stable at around 45% (see Table 1). The same question on generalised trust is included in several other major British social surveys: the British Household Panel Survey; Home Office Citizenship Survey; and UK Household Longitudinal Study (also known as Understanding Society). Rates of trust found in BSA are around five percentage points higher than those found in these other surveys. Similarly, Hall's (1999) data for 1981 and 1990 gave rates of trust at 43% and 44%, respectively. We can therefore be fairly confident that social trust has remained stable at around 40%-45% in the last four decades.

The BSA figure for 2017, at 54%, represents a statistically significant increase from 47% in 2014. Whether this reflects a genuine increase in the level of trust or a sampling variation can only be assessed against the responses to future BSA surveys.

**Table 1 Social trust, 1998-2017**

| | 1998 | 2004 | 2007 | 2008 | 2014 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level of trust** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| People can be trusted | 47 | 46 | 45 | 45 | 47 | 54 |
| Cannot be too careful dealing with people | 49 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 48 | 42 |
| *Unweighted base* | *807* | *853* | *906* | *1986* | *1580* | *1595* |

## Are there social divisions in how much we trust one another?

More central to our concern in this chapter are the social differences in trust – how far might the level of social trust vary between social, economic or demographic groups. Table 2 shows the data on the propensity to trust by age, sex, class, education and ethnicity in

nine years between 1998 to 2017[2]. We need to bear in mind that our 2017 data on trust are a few points higher than in the other years, but our focus is on the relative difference between categories in each variable.

**Table 2 Proportion who generally trust other people, by socio-demographic characteristics, 1998-2017**

| % saying people can be trusted | 1998 | 2004 | 2007 | 2008 | 2014 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **All** | 47 | 46 | 45 | 45 | 47 | 54 |
| **Age** | | | | | | |
| 18-35 | 40 | 34 | 37 | 41 | 43 | 51 |
| 36-60 | 49 | 52 | 49 | 45 | 51 | 56 |
| 61+ | 51 | 45 | 46 | 50 | 46 | 53 |
| **Sex** | | | | | | |
| Men | 52 | 45 | 48 | 46 | 48 | 53 |
| Women | 44 | 46 | 42 | 44 | 46 | 54 |
| **Education** | | | | | | |
| Degree or higher education | 58 | 56 | 54 | 57 | 60 | 64 |
| A-level or GCSE or equivalents | 47 | 44 | 42 | 41 | 41 | 50 |
| Lower or no qualifications | 39 | 39 | 40 | 40 | 37 | 42 |
| **Socio-economic class** | | | | | | |
| Managerial or professional | 56 | 53 | 53 | 54 | 59 | 63 |
| Intermediate | 48 | 48 | 42 | 46 | 42 | 52 |
| Routine | 37 | 34 | 39 | 34 | 39 | 41 |
| **Ethnicity** | | | | | | |
| Ethnic minority | ‡ | ‡ | 36 | 46 | 40 | 49 |
| White | 48 | 46 | 45 | 45 | 48 | 54 |

‡ percentage not shown as base is under 50

The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter

Older people tend to have greater faith in strangers, which is shown in most years (though the differences between age groups are smaller in 2017 and not significant)[3]. From these descriptive data, it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which this effect is generational (older generations are more trusting than those born more recently), a life-course effect (people become more trusting as they get older) or a socio-economic effect, as older people tend to be economically more secure. For instance, people tend to reach occupational

2 Social class was defined using the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) system: "managerial and professional" are relatively self-explanatory; "intermediate" is comprised of self-employed, lower supervisory or employer in a small organisation; and "routine" is comprised of those with routine or semi-routine occupations.

3 We shall see later that age is significant in our multi-variate analysis.

maturity at around age 35, beyond which drastic changes in class positions in either direction are rather uncommon (Goldthorpe, 1987). Therefore, older age may simply indicate greater economic security which then underlies greater trust.

**Those with the highest level of education had levels of trust around 20 percentage points higher than those with low or no qualifications**

There are also marked differences according to education and class. In each of the years, those with the highest level of education (degree or another higher education qualification) had levels of trust around 20 percentage points higher than those with qualifications lower than GCSE or no qualifications. Similar differentials are found with regard to managerial and professional occupations versus routine manual workers. Differences between White people and ethnic minorities have been mixed over time (and results for 2007 need to be treated with caution due to the small sample size involved), though the difference between White people and ethnic minorities in 2017 is not statistically significant.

Differences in trust levels between certain social groups are clear, but what, if any, explanation can we give for those patterns? It is this question we turn to next.

## Are there social foundations to trust?

As demonstrated above, those in higher socio-economic positions tend to report higher levels of social trust (see also Brandt et al., 2015). It is plausible to argue that this is simply because greater levels of education, work status and financial security enable and empower people to be more optimistic in their worldview, to have a greater sense of control, and therefore to trust others more. However, it may also be possible that high levels or high quality of social participation or connectedness might provide social outlets which empower individuals to develop high levels of trust regardless of their social or economic circumstances. In this section, we explore further the potential mechanisms through which trust might be related to social status, via differing levels of social connection: is social trust related to participation in social activities and/or are levels of social trust related to the extent of people's social networks?

### Is social trust linked to participation in social activities?

As Putnam's argument goes, active participation in social/civic activities generates trust – it is the 'doing with' other people that is essential here. When people participate they learn to work together and trust each other.

To explore participation in a range of social activities, we ask respondents:

*In the past 12 months, how often, if at all, have you taken part in activities …*

*… of groups or associations for leisure, sports or culture?*

*… of political parties, political groups or political associations?*

*… of charitable or religious organisations that do voluntary work?*

The response categories range between "once a week or more", "one to three times a month", "several times in the past year", "once in the past year", and "never".

By referring to activities in the past year, the timeframe for this measure does not fit exactly with the measure on social trust (which is taken as a 'general' state of mind). However, this question forms a key measure of formal social connection because it focuses on activities which are of the 'doing with' character, highlighted by Putnam as key to developing social trust.

Table 3 explores the relationship between frequency of participation in each type of activity and trust for 2017.

**Table 3 Proportion who generally trust other people, by participation in different types of group or association**

| % saying people can be trusted | Social (leisure, sports or culture) | Political (political parties, groups or association) | Civic (voluntary work for charitable or religious organisations) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Frequency of participation** | | | |
| Never | 44 | 53 | 49 |
| Once in the past year | 51 | 61 | 62 |
| Several times in the past year | 61 | 62* | 62 |
| One to three times a month | 64 | | 62 |
| Once a week or more | 63 | | 64 |

** Frequency of political participation has grouped together the last three categories due to low base sizes. The base size for this combined figure is still <100 so these results need to be treated with some caution*

*The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

**The more frequently one undertakes leisure, sports and cultural activities with other people, the more likely one is to hold a trusting view**

The data show a clear gradient of 'social' activities upon trust: the more frequently one undertakes leisure, sports and cultural activities with other people, the more likely one is to hold a trusting view. Regarding participation in 'civic' activities in "charitable or religious organisations that do voluntary work", there is a clear division between activists participating at some point and non-activists who haven't participated in the past year.

The relationship between trust and political activity is less straightforward. Most of the public (81%) are not frequent political

activists, and very few participated more than once in the last year. However, members of the public who do participate in political associations, even once in the last year, show a greater likelihood of trusting their fellow citizens (data for this group need to be treated with caution, due to the small sample size involved).

So, who participates in these activities? Table 4 shows the social and demographic characteristics of those who have participated in social, political and civic groups at least once a year. Participation is heavily stratified by class and education. The higher a person's level of education the more likely they are to have taken part in social, political and civic groups in the last year. A similar pattern holds for social class: those in the managerial and professional occupational category have a participation level that is about 10 percentage points higher than those in the intermediate occupational category and 20 percentage points higher than those in the routine manual occupational groups. However, unlike education, this pattern does not hold for political participation.

**Table 4 Proportion participating in social, political and civic groups at least once in the past year, by socio-economic characteristics**

| % who participate at least once in the past year | Social (leisure, sports or culture) | Political (political parties, groups or association) | Civic (voluntary work for charitable or religious organisations) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **All** | 61 | 12 | 42 |
| **Age** | | | |
| 18-35 | 65 | 17 | 44 |
| 36-60 | 66 | 12 | 46 |
| 61+ | 50 | 9 | 34 |
| **Sex** | | | |
| Men | 62 | 13 | 39 |
| Women | 60 | 12 | 44 |
| **Education** | | | |
| Degree or higher education | 71 | 16 | 54 |
| A-level or GCSE or equivalents | 62 | 11 | 40 |
| Lower or no qualifications | 42 | 8 | 24 |
| **Socio-economic class** | | | |
| Managerial or professional | 70 | 13 | 50 |
| Intermediate | 59 | 13 | 39 |
| Routine | 49 | 10 | 31 |
| **Ethnicity** | | | |
| Ethnic minority | 66 | 22 | 56 |
| White | 60 | 11 | 40 |

*The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

Older people (aged 61+) are less likely to have participated in social, political and civic groups in the last year. This age group has a higher level of limiting health problems, which is likely to affect their levels of participation. Those from ethnic minorities are more likely to have participated in political and/or civic groups in the past year but there are no significant differences in participation for social groups.

We have identified socio-economic differences in participation in activities according to education and class which follow the differences found earlier for social trust. However, the mechanism by which trust is fostered is unclear. Understanding the social foundations of trust in British society needs a deeper understanding of how social groups interact with other factors beyond simply describing which types of activities are associated with trust. One potential pathway for generating trust is through our social networks, and it is to this which we turn next.

## Do our social networks explain our levels of trust?

Our social networks are an established pathway by which we build up stocks of social capital and trust in others (Stouffer, 1949; Allport, 1954), but the meaningful measurement of such networks which captures the quantity and quality of ties is a complex task. Tapping into the social status of social networks at the population level was not possible until Lin (2001) developed the ingenious 'Position Generator' approach, which was used in the 2017 BSA survey. The Position Generator not only estimates the size of a person's social network, but also measures the social status of those within it.

A series of questions which form the Position Generator is presented to respondents in 2017 as follows:

> ***Here is a list of jobs that people you know may have. These people could be family or relatives, close friends or someone else you know. By "knowing" a person, we mean that you know him/her by name and well enough to contact him/her. If you know several people who have a job from the list below, please only tick the box for the person who you feel closest to. Each of these jobs could be held by a woman or a man.***
>
> ***Do you know a woman or a man who is…?***

The ten professions presented to the respondent are shown in Table 5. The number of ties for each respondent is calculated and the social status of these contacts is scored using the Cambridge Social Interaction System (CAMSIS) scale (Prandy, 1990).[4] This means that for each respondent we have two scores: an indicator of the volume of informal social connections (from which we have calculated a mean number of ties) as well as an overall indicator of the social status of the respondent's network (from which we have calculated

4 These scores are shown in Table 5; occupations of a higher social standing have higher CAMSIS scores.

a mean score of social ties). Higher overall scores are generally indicative of networks composed of ties to higher status occupations. For reference, we have also given the overall proportion who report knowing each of the professions in the second column of Table 5.

**Table 5 Proportion of people who know someone from each profession, and CAMSIS score for each profession**

| | % who know someone in position | CAMSIS score |
|---|---|---|
| **Profession** | | |
| A bus/lorry driver | 36 | 14.2 |
| A senior executive of a large company | 36 | 64.6 |
| A home or office cleaner | 47 | 11.6 |
| A hairdresser/barber | 59 | 31.9 |
| A human resource manager/personnel manager | 37 | 51.2 |
| A lawyer | 38 | 73.2 |
| A car mechanic | 49 | 21.3 |
| A nurse | 60 | 35.1 |
| A police officer | 41 | 41.4 |
| A school teacher | 66 | 65.1 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1595* | |

**Both the number of ties and social status of those ties are particularly stratified by education and socio-economic class**

The mean number of ties and the mean social status of those ties are broken down by demographic characteristic in Table 6. It is clear from this table that both the number of ties and social status of those ties are particularly stratified by education and socio-economic class, and to a lesser extent ethnicity. Those who have a higher level of education and those in higher social classes have more social ties and these ties are also, on average, of a higher social status. Ethnicity is interesting here. As we saw above, those from an ethnic minority are more likely to have participated in political and civic organised activities (see Table 4), but the implication is that this does not translate into more social connections or overall ties with higher social status.

Cutting across all these socio-economic and demographic factors is age. Table 6 shows that the mean number of social ties decreases steadily with age, yet the overall social status of these ties is relatively constant. The implication may be that younger people have more ties, but they tend to be with occupations of lower social status than older people who hold fewer ties but which tend to be in higher social status.

**Table 6 The average number and status of social ties, by by socio-demographic characteristics**

| | Mean number of ties | Mean score of social ties |
|---|---|---|
| **All** | 4.7 | 40.1 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-35 | 4.9 | 39.9 |
| 36-60 | 5.3 | 40.2 |
| 61+ | 3.7 | 40.3 |
| **Sex** | | |
| Men | 4.8 | 39.9 |
| Women | 4.6 | 40.4 |
| **Education** | | |
| Degree or higher education | 5.3 | 44.0 |
| A-level or GCSE or equivalents | 4.8 | 38.8 |
| Lower or no qualifications | 3.5 | 35.1 |
| **Socio-economic class** | | |
| Managerial or professional | 5.3 | 44.2 |
| Intermediate | 4.6 | 38.0 |
| Routine | 3.5 | 36.0 |
| **Ethnicity** | | |
| Ethnic minority | 4.6 | 42.4 |
| White | 4.7 | 39.9 |

The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter

## Which factors are independently related to trust?

The relative influence of social ties and the status of the social networks on levels of generalised trust can be estimated using logit regression modelling. This approach has the additional benefit of allowing us to test the relative effects of social networks alongside a range of other potentially explanatory factors which might underpin trust, such as participation in social activities and socio-demographic characteristics. Five logistic regression models were used to test the effects of various explanatory factors on our trust measure. Table 7 shows a simplified version of the model (more detailed results are found in the appendix of this chapter). Our first model (Model 1) measures the effect of the number of ties a person has on their trust. At this early stage the model allows for the possibility that trust might not increase at a steady rate with increasing numbers of ties. To account for this non-linear effect the number of ties squared is also entered into the model. Model 2 estimates the effect of the overall number of ties and who they are with, and Model 3 measures the

effect of participation in social activities on trust. Finally, Models 4 and 5 explores whether socio-economic and demographic factors respectively have a significant influence on trust, while controlling for all other explanatory factors.

Where factors are in bold in Table 7, the analysis shows them to have a significant independent effect on our trust measure. That is, they emerge as important factors, when accounting for all the other factors in each model.

**Table 7 Results of five regression models looking at the interaction between people's social ties, their participation in organised activities, and key demographic variables on trust**

| Types of factor | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Informal social ties (based on Position Generator)** | **Number of social ties** | Number of social ties | | Number of social ties | Number of social ties |
| | **Number ties squared** | **Number ties squared** | | Number ties squared | Number ties squared |
| | | **Tie scores** | | **Tie scores** | **Tie scores** |
| **Participation** | | | **Social participation** | **Social participation** | **Social participation** |
| | | | Political participation | Political participation | Political participation |
| | | | **Civic participation** | Civic participation | Civic participation |
| **Demographic variables** | | | | **Education** | **Education** |
| | | | | **Occupational Class** | **Occupational Class** |
| | | | | | Sex |
| | | | | | **Age** |
| | | | | | Ethnicity |
| *Unweighted base* | *1572* | *1572* | *1572* | *1572* | *1529* |

*Factors in bold if some categories are significant to at least the 95% level.*
*Full results for the models are shown in the appendix to this chapter.*

The analysis shows that, in early models, both number of ties and number squared are significant. This indicates a non-linear effect of social ties on levels of trust: having more social ties enhances one's likelihood of being trusting, but beyond a certain point (number) the propensity turns the other way around. Further analysis of our data suggests that the turning point is at 6.5 social ties based on the Position Generator scale. Overall, this suggests that a moderate (but not excessive) volume of social ties is linked to higher levels of trust.

Importantly, over and above the effects of number of ties, we also find independent and significant effects of the status position of our respondent's social ties, implying that levels of trust gained from social ties is wrapped up with who the ties are with as well as how many of them you have (see Model 2).

**The status of social network, participation in social activities, education, class and, age, all have significant and independent effects on trust**

Model 3 explores the contribution of participation in social, political and civic activities, while Model 4 reintroduces the social network variables, along with education and social class – both of which were shown earlier to be strongly related to trust (Table 2) and social participation (Table 3). The data in Model 3 show that when no other factors are considered, two of the three participation variables – social and civic engagement – are significantly and positively associated with trust: those who frequently partake in these activities do exhibit a higher propensity to trust their fellow citizens. Yet when other factors are taken into account in Model 4, involvement in civic activities such as donating time, or 'doing for' in Putnam's terms, is no longer significant. However, the status of social network (Tie score), participation in social activities, education, class and, in Model 5, age, all have significant and independent effects on trust.

The fact that participation in social activities with others rather than political involvement and voluntary work is independently related to trust as shown in Models 4 and 5 may be explained by wider evidence on the class gradient in volunteering; those with higher levels of managerial and professional occupations being 30 percentage points more likely to volunteer than those in routine occupations (Li, 2015: 46, Figure 3.2 on class volunteering). As people in higher classes are more likely to volunteer in charitable work and to trust, the mere act of volunteering has no independent effect on trust.

Education was also significantly related to trust, independently of social networks, social participation and social class. It is worth noting that the effect of degree-level education on trust increases considerably after accounting for differences in age, ethnicity and sex in Model 5. As people from ethnic minorities tend to have higher education than White people (43% of Black people and 51% of Asian people have a higher education qualification, compared with 38% of white people), controlling for ethnicity has brought the effect of education into sharper relief.

As well as socio-economic factors and social networking having effects on levels of trust, Model 5 shows age also predicts trust (despite this not appearing as significant in 2017 using bivariate analysis). Older people tend to be more trusting than younger people, independent of all other factors controlled for in the model (and despite the earlier finding that they are less likely to participate socially). As discussed earlier, this perhaps reflects their greater life experience and hence their greater confidence in dealing with the generalised 'others' or strangers; a stronger sense of control. Further analysis shows that, other things being equal, an increase of ten years in age would increase trust by two percentage points.

Model 5 also added ethnicity as a factor for trust. A particular issue with ethnicity analysis is the small base available for analysis, and though this is not a significant effect (at the 95% significance level shown in Table 7), it offers some evidence to suggest that Black

people have a lower level of trust, when accounting for social networks, participation rates and socio-economic factors[5]. Apart from the markedly higher rates of unemployment as mentioned in footnote 5, further analysis using data from Waves 1 and 3 of the Understanding Society survey also shows that people of Black Caribbean and Black African origins in Britain suffer much higher levels of discrimination: 10.5% of the former and 11% of the latter report that they had been rejected promotion or training opportunities in the last twelve months for ethnic or religious reasons as compared with 1% for the whole sample and less than 0.5% for White people. In spite of the various Race Relations Acts that have been enacted, ethnic minorities in Britain still encounter various setbacks in their socio-economic lives (see Li, 2018a, for further evidence) which may be having a dampening impact on generalised trust as a consequence.

Overall, Table 7 shows that while some factors, such as volume of a person's social network and civic participation, may seem to have an important effect on trust, this is likely to be more a facet of both socio-economic inequalities in education and occupation, alongside age. On the other hand, the *social position* of ties a person has and whether they participate in organised social activities are strong predictors of trust regardless of social class or education, or demographic attributes such as age, sex and ethnicity.

## Conclusions

This chapter has shown that generalised trust – whether people generally think others can be trusted – has remained fairly constant in Britain in the last four decades, at around 40%-45% on the basis of some of the most authoritative datasets. This lack of an obvious decline in trust is somewhat at odds with popular discourse: there may have been declines in trust in institutions and experts, but there is little evidence this has extended to the more fundamental civic fabric of our society, namely, in how much ordinary people trust each other. Indeed, there might have even been some increase in social trust in recent years, though we will have to await the findings of future BSAs to see if this finding is confirmed.

There is some evidence that trust is related to age, with older people typically being more trusting than younger people. However, of far greater importance are wider social factors. People's class position and educational levels are closely related to trust, with people in higher social classes and with higher qualifications reporting much higher levels of trust.

5 Taking a look at the detailed version of our analysis in the appendix of the chapter (see Table A.5), the findings in Model 5 show Black people to be less trusting (based on a 90% significance level). If this finding is accurate, this may be attributable to the marked socio-economic disadvantages, especially the higher levels of unemployment, they face in the labour market. Li (2018b: 15) shows that Black Caribbean men are around 2.5 times, and Black African men around twice as likely to be unemployed throughout their life courses from age 16 to 65 in contemporary society.

Social connection – participation in social activities (particularly joining with others in leisure, sports or cultural activities) and the extent of an individual's social networks (particularly the social status of such ties) – are also closely and significantly associated with trust. Participation in voluntary, mainly charitable, activities (which might be considered to be an expression of working *for* others), together with political engagement, have more limited roles to play in fostering trust.

**A focus on merely encouraging social participation, without reducing socio-economic differences is unlikely to reduce the social divisions in trust**

In conclusion, attempts by government to encourage social engagement and organised community life, as typified by initiatives such as the Big Society and National Citizenship Service, may have a role to play in enhancing social trust. However, their effect is likely to be enhanced if people work *with* others, rather than on charitable grounds *for* others. More importantly, a focus on merely encouraging social participation, without reducing socio-economic differences is unlikely to reduce the social divisions in trust.

Lack of success in addressing socio-economic inequalities, shown here as vital to the foundations of developing trust, is the main barrier to an inclusive and prosperous society imbued with trust.

## Acknowledgements

The National Centre for Social Research is grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council (grant reference ES/P002234/1) for their financial support which enabled us to ask the questions on social trust reported in this chapter. The views expressed are those of the authors alone.

## References

Allport, G. (1954), *The Nature of Prejudice,* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

Brandt, M., Wetherall, G., Henry. P. (2015), 'Changes in Income Predict Change in Social Trust: A Longitudinal Analysis' *Political Psychology,* **36(6)**: 761-768

Clery, E., & Stockdale, J. (2009), 'Is Britain a respectful society?', in Park, A., Curtice, J. and Thomson, K., Phillips, M. and Clery, E., (eds.) *British Social Attitudes: the 25th Report*, London: Sage

Driver S. (2009), 'Fixing Our Broken Society: David Cameron's Post-Thatcherite Social Policy', in: Lee S., Beech M. (eds.) *The Conservatives under David Cameron*, Palgrave Macmillan: London

Goldthorpe, J. H. (with Llewellyn, C. and Payne, C.) (1987), *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Hall, P. (1999), 'Social Capital in Britain', *British Journal of Political Science,* **29**: 417-61

Halpern, D. (2005) *Social Capital*, Cambridge: Polity

Li, Y. (2018a), *Persisting Ethnic Disadvantages in the UK*, report submitted to the Women and Equalities Committee inquiry into the government's Race Disparity Audit, accessed from: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/women-and-equalities-committee/race-disparity-audit/written/75982.pdf

Li, Y. (2018b), 'Against the odds? Educational attainment and labour market position of the second generation minority ethnic members in the UK', *Ethnicities,* **18**: 1-25

Li, Y. (2015), 'The flow of soul: a sociological study of generosity in England and Wales (2001 – 2011)', in Li, Y. (ed.) *The Handbook of Research Methods and Applications on Social Capital*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing

Li, Y., Pickles, A. and Savage, M. (2005), 'Social Capital and Social Trust in Britain', *European Sociological Review*, **21(2)**: 109-123

Lin, N. (2001), *Social Capital*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Newton, K. (2001), 'Trust, Social Capital, Civic Society and Democracy', *International Political Science Review,* **22(2):** 201-14

Pichler, F. and Wallace, C. (2007), 'Formal and Informal Social Capital in Europe', *European Sociological Review*, **23(4)**: 423-35

Prandy, K. (1990), 'The revised Cambridge scale of occupations', *Sociology*, **24(4)**: 629-655

Putnam, R. (1993), *Making democracy work: civic traditions in modern Italy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press

Putnam, R. (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon & Schuster

Rosenberg, M. (1956), 'Misanthropy and political ideology', *American Sociological Review*, **21**: 690-695.

Stouffer, S. (1949), *American Soldier*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Sturgis, P., Patulny, R., Allum, N. and Buscha, F. (2015) 'Social Connectedness and generalized trust: a longitudinal perspective', in Li, Y. (ed.) *The Handbook of Research Methods and Applications on Social Capital*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing

Tocqueville, A. (1969), *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence, New York: Doubleday

Uslaner, E. (2002), *The Moral Foundations of Trust*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

# Appendix

The bases for Table 2 can be found below.

**Table A.1 Proportion who generally trust other people, by socio-demographic characteristics, 1998-2017**

| | 1998 | 2004 | 2007 | 2008 | 2014 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* |
| **All** | *807* | *853* | *906* | *1986* | *1580* | *1595* |
| **Age** | | | | | | |
| 18-35 | *222* | *197* | *233* | *454* | *317* | *329* |
| 36-60 | *360* | *412* | *403* | *874* | *680* | *672* |
| 61+ | *223* | *242* | *270* | *653* | *580* | *592* |
| **Sex** | | | | | | |
| Men | *320* | *373* | *378* | *854* | *696* | *708* |
| Women | *487* | *480* | *528* | *1132* | *884* | *887* |
| **Education** | | | | | | |
| Degree or higher education | *230* | *239* | *256* | *552* | *544* | *620* |
| A-level or GCSE or equivalents | *259* | *309* | *273* | *627* | *572* | *539* |
| Lower or no qualifications | *318* | *305* | *377* | *807* | *464* | *436* |
| **Socio-economic class** | | | | | | |
| Managerial or professional | *248* | *294* | *313* | *717* | *594* | *656* |
| Intermediate | *308* | *295* | *312* | *675* | *490* | *468* |
| Routine | *227* | *245* | *262* | *556* | *454* | *428* |
| **Ethnicity** | | | | | | |
| Ethnic minority | *32* | *32* | *61* | *139* | *137* | *133* |
| White | *774* | *821* | *843* | *1845* | *1441* | *1460* |

The bases for Table 3 can be found below.

**Table A.2 Proportion who generally trust other people, by participation in different types of group or association**

| | Social (leisure, sports or culture) | Political (political parties, groups or association) | Civic (voluntary work for charitable or religious organisations) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* |
| **Frequency of participation** | | | |
| Never | *588* | *1298* | *862* |
| Once in the past year | *160* | *106* | *224* |
| Several times in the past year | *223* | | *189* |
| One to three times a month | *161* | *78* | *95* |
| Once a week or more | *387* | | *125* |

The bases for Table 4 can be found below.

**Table A.3 Proportion participating in social, political and civic groups at least once in the past year, by socio-demographic characteristics**

| | Social (leisure, sports or culture) | Political (political parties, groups or association) | Civic (voluntary work for charitable or religious organisations) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* |
| **All** | *1595* | *1595* | *1595* |
| **Age** | | | |
| 18-35 | *329* | *329* | *329* |
| 36-60 | *672* | *672* | *672* |
| 61+ | *592* | *592* | *592* |
| **Sex** | | | |
| Men | *708* | *708* | *708* |
| Women | *887* | *887* | *887* |
| **Education** | | | |
| Degree or higher education | *620* | *620* | *620* |
| A-level or GCSE or equivalents | *539* | *539* | *539* |
| Lower or no qualifications | *436* | *436* | *436* |
| **Socio-economic class** | | | |
| Managerial or professional | *656* | *656* | *656* |
| Intermediate | *468* | *468* | *468* |
| Routine | *428* | *428* | *428* |
| **Ethnicity** | | | |
| Ethnic minority | *133* | *133* | *133* |
| White | *1460* | *1460* | *1460* |

The bases for Table 6 can be found below.

**Table A.4 The average number and status of social ties, by socio-demographic characteristics**

| | Mean number of ties | Mean score of social ties |
|---|---|---|
| | *Unweighted base* | *Unweighted base* |
| **All** | *1595* | *1479* |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-35 | *329* | *311* |
| 36-60 | *672* | *636* |
| 61+ | *592* | *530* |
| **Sex** | | |
| Men | *708* | *660* |
| Women | *887* | *819* |
| **Education** | | |
| Degree or higher education | *620* | *597* |
| A-level or GCSE or equivalents | *539* | *495* |
| Lower or no qualifications | *436* | *387* |
| **Socio-economic class** | | |
| Managerial or professional | *656* | *628* |
| Intermediate | *468* | *434* |
| Routine | *428* | *379* |
| **Ethnicity** | | |
| Ethnic minority | *133* | *120* |
| White | *1460* | *1357* |

## Logistic regression

The multivariate analysis technique used for the five models is a logistic regression shown in Table A.5. The dependent variable is whether the respondent says that people can generally be trusted. A positive coefficient indicates that the group is more likely than the reference group (shown in brackets) to trust, while a negative coefficient indicates the group is less likely than the reference group to trust.

**Table A.5 Logit regression coefficients on trust**

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of social ties** | 0.195** | -0.180† | | -0.081 | -0.062 |
| **Number ties squared** | -0.015* | -0.017* | | -0.014† | -0.014† |
| **Tie scores** | | 0.009** | | 0.048** | 0.045* |
| **Social involvement (Never)** | | | | | |
| Once in the past year | | | 0.203 | 0.198 | 0.221 |
| Several times past year | | | 0.548** | 0.460* | 0.501* |
| 1-3 times a month | | | 0.659** | 0.552* | 0.565* |
| Once a week | | | 0.649** | 0.554** | 0.563** |
| **Political involvement (Never)** | | | | | |
| Once in the past year | | | -0.031 | 0.121 | 0.143 |
| Several times past year | | | 0.363 | 0.348 | 0.363 |
| 1-3 times a month | | | -0.306 | -0.036 | 0.037 |
| Once a week | | | -0.601 | -0.728 | -0.726 |
| **Civic involvement (Never)** | | | | | |
| Once in the past year | | | 0.331† | 0.129 | 0.179 |
| Several times past year | | | 0.332† | 0.256 | 0.248 |
| 1-3 times a month | | | 0.284 | 0.041 | 0.063 |
| Once a week | | | 0.502* | 0.317 | 0.282 |
| **Education (Lower or no qualification)** | | | | | |
| Degree or higher education | | | | 0.460* | 0.629** |
| A-level or GCSE or equivalents | | | | 0.069 | 0.193 |
| **Socio-economic class (Lower)** | | | | | |
| Managerial or professional | | | | 0.410* | 0.361* |
| Intermediate | | | | 0.304† | 0.285† |
| **Sex (Male)** | | | | | |
| Men/Women | | | | | 0.081 |
| **Age (Continuous)** | | | | | 0.083* |
| **Ethnicity (White)** | | | | | |
| Black | | | | | -0.589† |
| Asian | | | | | -0.349 |
| Other | | | | | 0.166 |
| **Constant** | -0.289† | -0.265† | -0.304** | -0.788** | -1.335** |
| **Pseudo $R^2$** | 0.006 | 0.025 | 0.028 | 0.058 | 0.065 |
| *Unweighted base:* | *1572* | *1572* | *1572* | *1529* | *1529* |

*† shows significance at the 90% level, * at the 95% level of significance and ** at the 99% level of significance*

# Scotland

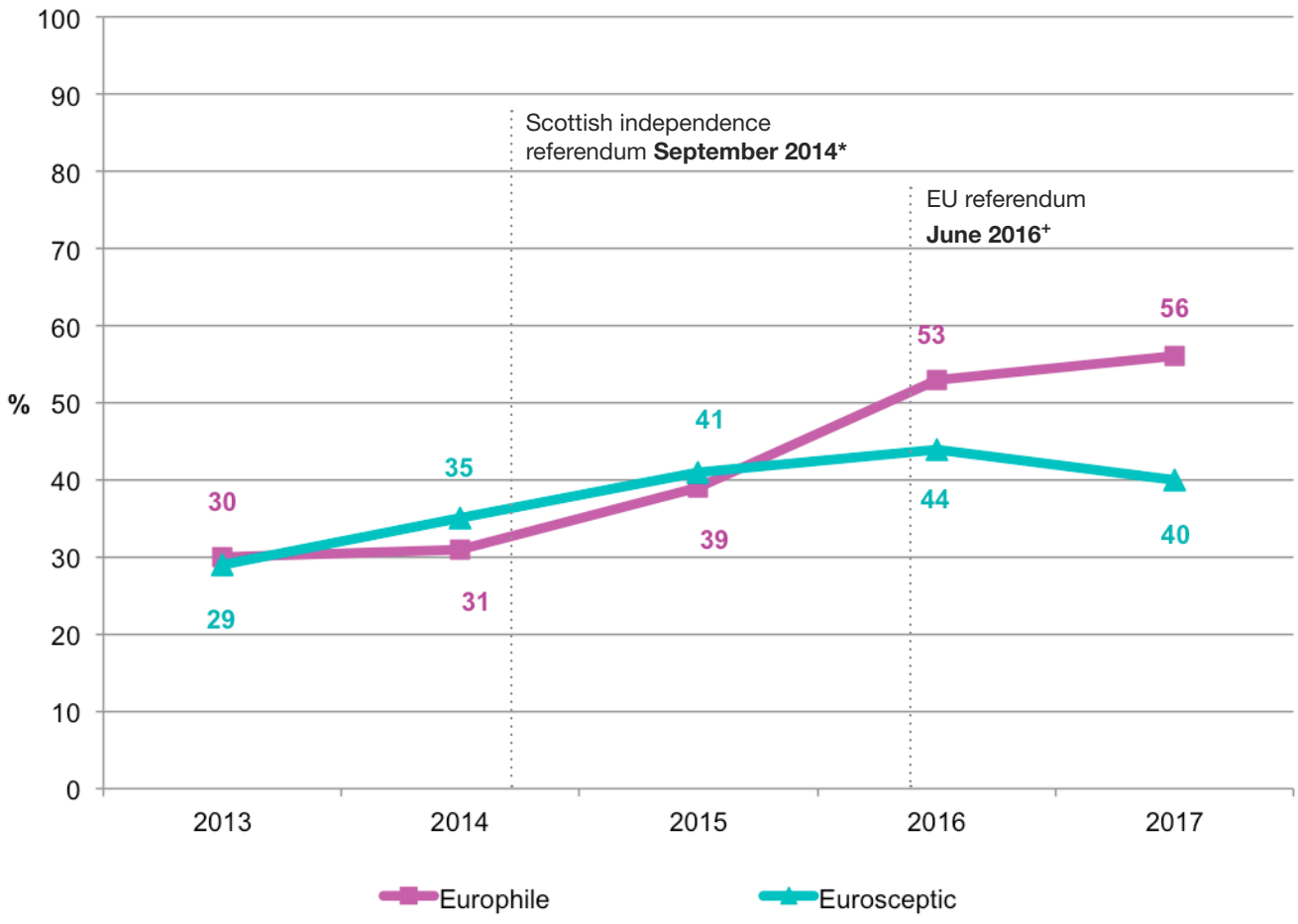
## How Brexit has created a new divide in the nationalist movement

The overall level of support for Scottish independence has not changed in the wake of the EU referendum result. However, support for independence is now more strongly linked with a favourable attitude towards the EU, while the SNP lost ground in the 2017 election among those who are sceptical about Europe. Meanwhile, although those with a strong English identity were more likely to vote Leave, the EU referendum has not led to an increase in English nationalism that is hostile to Scottish devolution.

## Spotlight

Brexit has created a new line of division in the debate about Scotland's constitutional status, with Eurosceptics now less likely than Europhiles to support Scottish Independence.

**Support for Scottish independence, by attitude towards Britain's membership of the EU, 2013-2017**




*2014 survey data collected between May and August

+2016 survey data collected between July and December

# Overview

## Attitudes to Brexit and independence become intertwined

**Although the level of support in Scotland for independence has not increased in the wake of Brexit, support for the idea has become more closely linked to having a favourable view of the EU.**

- 46% now say that the Scottish Parliament should make all decisions for Scotland, compared with 51% in 2015.
- In 2015 the level of support for independence among 'Europhiles' (39%) was similar to that among 'Eurosceptics' (41%).
- Now, however, support for independence is higher among 'Europhiles' (56%) than among 'Eurosceptics' (40%)

## Brexit cost SNP support in 2017 election

**Support for the SNP fell more heavily among those who are sceptical about the EU than it did among those who take a more favourable view of the EU.**

- Support for the SNP fell substantially between 2015 and 2017 among 'Eurosceptics' (15 points), while remaining relatively steady among 'Europhiles' (2-point fall).
- Conversely, the Conservatives registered a considerable increase in support among 'Eurosceptics' (14 points), while there was much less of a change among 'Europhiles' (4-point increase).
- The impact of Brexit on how people voted helps explain why only 72% of those who support independence voted for the SNP in 2017, down from 84% in 2015.

## No increase in hostility towards Scottish devolution in England

**The tendency of those with a strong sense of English identity to vote Leave in the EU referendum does not signal a wider English nationalism that is unsympathetic to Scottish devolution.**

- At 23%, the proportion of people in England who now say they are more English than they are British is no higher than the 26% who expressed that view four years ago.
- 55% of people in England support Scottish devolution, unchanged from 20 years ago.

**Authors**

**John Curtice**,
Senior Research Fellow, National Centre for Social Research, and Professor of Politics, University of Strathclyde

**Ian Montagu,**
Senior Researcher, ScotCen Social Research

# Introduction

Scotland voted very differently from the rest of Britain in the EU referendum in June 2016. While both England and Wales voted in favour of Leave by 53% to 47%, Scotland itself voted for Remain by 62% to 38%. As a result, the country appeared destined to leave the EU even though a majority of its voters had clearly indicated that they wanted to stay.

This outcome transpired just two years after another referendum had been held north of the border, this time on Scottish independence. In that ballot in September 2014, Scotland voted to remain part of the UK by 55% to 45%. But one of the central arguments during that referendum campaign concerned the implications of Scottish independence for the country's relationship with the EU. Opponents of independence argued that an independent Scotland would have to apply to join the EU, a process that might potentially be somewhat problematic, and that therefore the best way of ensuring Scotland's current status as part of the EU was to vote to remain part of the UK. Now that the UK itself was set on leaving the EU, that argument at least for voting against independence was seemingly at risk of looking a little threadbare.

**One of the central arguments during the independence referendum campaign concerned the implications of independence for the country's relationship with the EU**

But perhaps even more importantly, the outcome of the EU referendum in Scotland could be regarded as the clearest possible illustration of the long-standing nationalist argument that, for as long as it remained part of the UK, Scotland was always at risk of seeing its 'democratic wishes' overturned by the votes of people in England. Moreover, the claim that the political preferences of England were different from those of Scotland seemed to be verified by a Leave vote that was a reflection of an apparently resurgent English nationalism (Henderson et al., 2017). If that conclusion was now also drawn by voters then perhaps the balance of opinion north of the border might now tilt in favour of Scottish independence.

That certainly seemed to be what Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, anticipated would happen. Just a few weeks before the EU referendum, her party had been re-elected as the devolved Scottish Government on a pledge that it would not necessarily seek to hold a further referendum on independence unless there was a "material change of circumstance" – of which a UK-wide vote to Leave the EU that was not replicated in Scotland was cited as a possible example (Scottish National Party, 2016). Within hours of the announcement of the result of the EU referendum, Ms Sturgeon indicated that she felt that the circumstances had indeed changed and the possibility of holding a second independence referendum was now back "on the table" – though this was, perhaps, more a threat that another ballot might be called rather than a promise that it would be.

Indeed, in the months following the EU referendum the Scottish Government seemed intent on using the possibility of another independence ballot as a bargaining chip in the debate about what

shape Brexit should take. In December, it published a White Paper in which it laid out a vision of the "softest" of Brexits – Scotland, at least, should remain in the EU single market and the Customs Union even if the rest of the UK did not – and suggested that in the event of such an outcome another independence referendum might not be held after all (Scottish Government, 2016). But by March of the following year the First Minister had evidently come to the conclusion that the UK government had no intention of accommodating her stance on Brexit. As a result, Ms Sturgeon announced that she now wanted the UK Parliament to grant the Scottish Parliament the authority it needed to hold a second independence ballot, most likely in the autumn of 2018 or the spring of 2019 as the Brexit negotiations came to an end. Just a few days later, the Scottish Parliament itself voted in favour of a request for that authority.

However, things then began to go somewhat awry for the First Minister. In April 2017 the Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced that she intended to precipitate an early UK general election. That meant the SNP had to defend its remarkable success in the 2015 general election, when it won 50% of the vote in Scotland and 56 of the country's 59 Westminster seats, three years earlier than it had anticipated. Meanwhile, in the Scottish Parliament election the previous year there had already been signs of a revival in the fortunes of the Scottish Conservative Party, while since then that party had made opposition to the SNP's proposal for another independence referendum its central campaigning message. In the event the SNP's share of the Scotland-wide vote fell to 37% and the party was reduced to 35 seats. That might still have been the party's second-best result ever in a UK general election, but, nevertheless, it seemed like something of a rebuff. Shortly afterwards, Ms Sturgeon indicated that she was putting her plans for another independence referendum on hold, to be revisited in a year's time when perhaps the political weather might, from her point of view at least, look a little less cloudy.

In this chapter, we look at the currents of public opinion that underlie these political developments. First, we assess what impact, if any, the EU referendum has had on public attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed. Is there any evidence that the referendum has changed the level of support for independence? Or, more subtly perhaps, has the referendum resulted in attitudes towards independence and membership of the European Union becoming intertwined, with support for one becoming more synonymous with backing for the other? Second, what role, if any, did debates about independence and about Brexit play in how people in Scotland voted in the general election? How might we account for the SNP's reverse in that ballot? Third, what impact, if any, has the EU referendum and the further calls for a Scottish independence referendum that followed had on public opinion in England? Is there any reason to believe that the supposed awakening of English nationalism that was evident in the EU referendum is also reflected in increased hostility south of the border to the (enhanced) devolution settlement that Scotland now enjoys?

# Attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed

We begin by examining how attitudes towards the governance of Scotland have evolved since the referendums on independence and Britain's membership of the EU. Is there any evidence that Brexit has had a material impact on the balance of opinion on the subject?

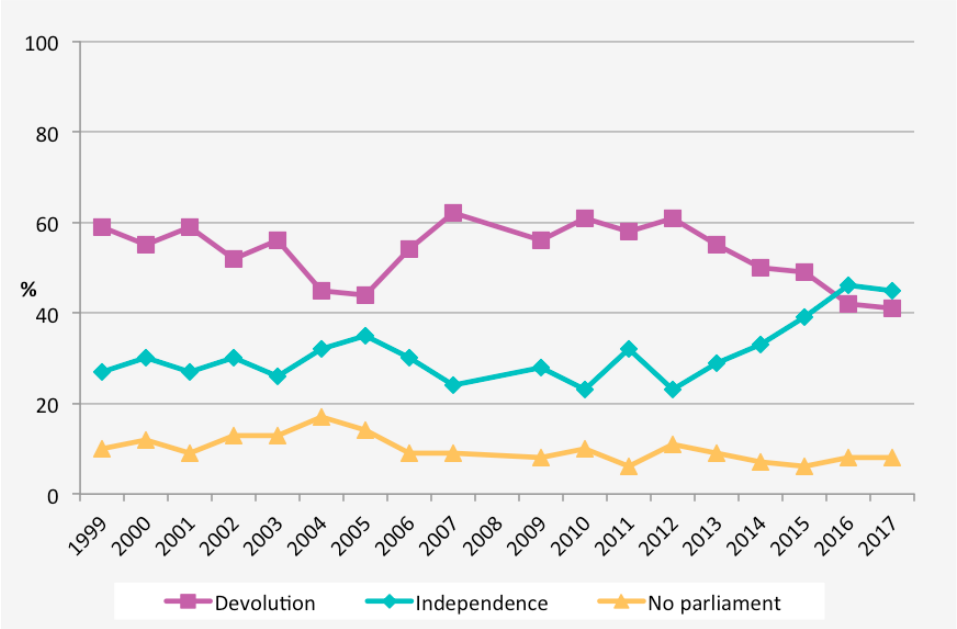
Since the advent of devolution in 1999, the Scottish Social Attitudes survey (SSA) has asked its respondents a variety of questions about how Scotland should be governed, enabling us to track how public opinion towards Scotland's constitutional status has changed over the last two decades. The longest-running of these questions reads as follows:

> ***Which of these statements comes closest to your view?***
>
> > ***Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK and the European Union***
> >
> > ***Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK but part of the European Union***
> >
> > ***Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has some taxation powers***
> >
> > ***Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has no taxation powers***
> >
> > ***Scotland should remain part of the UK without an elected parliament***

The question may now be regarded as a little dated. The distinction between having a devolved parliament with and without taxation powers refers to a debate that was originally settled when a majority of voters in Scotland not only voted in a referendum in 1997 in favour of creating the new institution, but also that it should have 'tax-varying powers' – powers that have subsequently been expanded considerably. Nevertheless, because the same question has been asked throughout the course of devolution it provides a unique indicator of how attitudes towards Scotland's constitutional status have evolved throughout the lifetime of the Scottish Parliament.

For our immediate purposes here, those respondents who select either of the first two options can be classed as supporters of independence, while those who choose either the third or fourth option can be categorised as supporters of some form of devolution. Those who opt for the last answer can be regarded as opposed to either independence or devolution. Using that simplification, Figure 1 summarises the pattern of responses to this question in each year since it was first asked:

**Figure 1 Attitudes in Scotland towards how Scotland should be governed, 1999-2017**[1]




*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*
*The data on which Figure 1 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

**There is evidence that the independence referendum in 2014 resulted in a marked increase in support for independence that has outlasted the ballot itself**

As discussed elsewhere (Curtice, 2014), there was little sign of any long-term increase in support for independence prior to the independence referendum in September 2014. Between 1999 and 2013 support for independence on our measure simply fluctuated between a low of 23% and a high of 35%, with the lowest reading having been replicated as recently as 2012. Even our 2014 survey – conducted during the spring and summer before the independence referendum – still only put support at 33%. But since then support for independence has consistently been higher. In 2015 it increased to 39%, while in our 2016 survey, interviewing for which took place shortly after the EU referendum, it increased yet further to 46%. Now, at 45% it remains at more or less that level.

Our latest reading therefore supports the previous evidence from our 2015 and 2016 surveys that the independence referendum in 2014 resulted in a marked increase in support for independence that has outlasted the ballot itself (Curtice, 2017a). That said, we might still be left wondering if the EU referendum has also played a part in bringing about this rise. After all, some of the increase in support for independence in Figure 1 was first registered after the EU ballot in 2016 rather than immediately after the independence referendum itself.

However, other measures of attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed suggest that the EU referendum has not had a material impact on the balance of opinion towards how Scotland should

1 Note that between 1999 and 2015, the SSA survey interviewed adults aged 18 plus. In 2016 and 2017, following a reduction in the age at which people can vote in ballots organised by the Scottish Parliament, the survey also interviewed those aged 16 and 17. Their inclusion has little material impact on the figures reported here.

be governed. The first such measure is a question that focuses on what people believe the appropriate division of powers between the Scottish Parliament and the UK government should be:

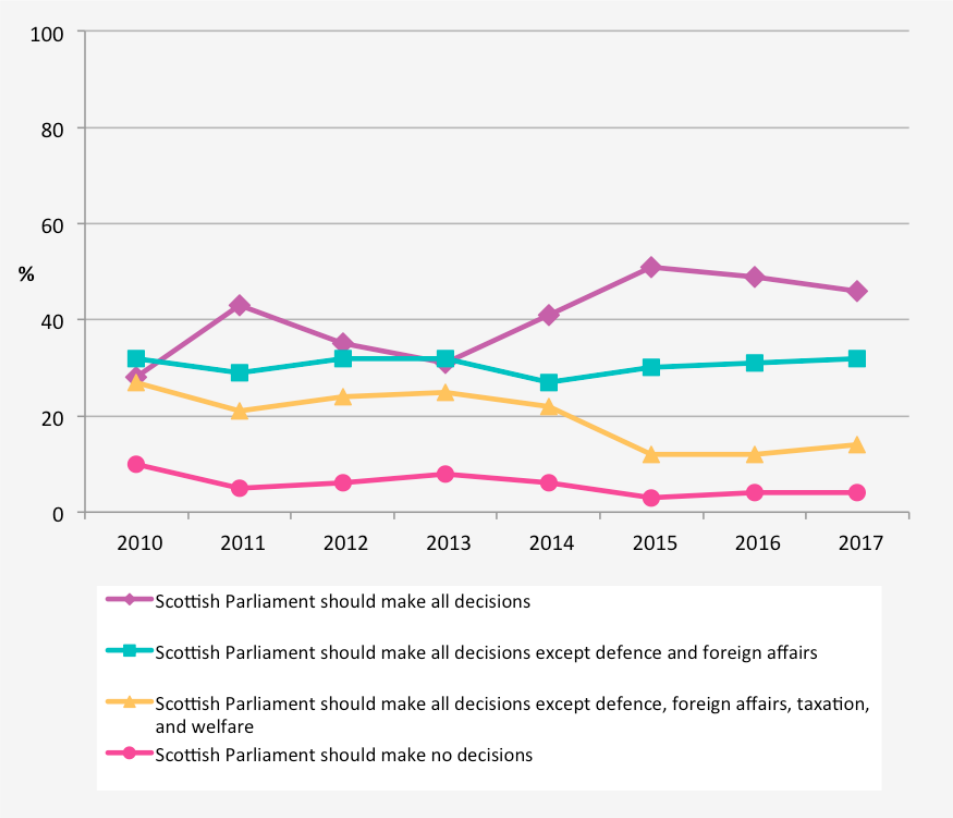
> ***Which of the statements on this card comes closest to your view about who should make government decisions for Scotland?***
>
> > ***The Scottish Parliament should make all the decisions for Scotland***
> >
> > ***The UK government should make decisions about defence and foreign affairs; the Scottish Parliament should decide everything else***
> >
> > ***The UK government should make decisions about taxes, benefits and defence and foreign affairs; the Scottish Parliament should decide the rest***
> >
> > ***The UK government should make all decisions for Scotland***

The first option is intended to describe 'independence', while the second is intended to refer to what has come to be known as 'devo max', that is, that the Scottish Parliament should be responsible for more or less all of Scotland's domestic affairs, leaving just defence and foreign affairs in Westminster's hands. The third option is designed to encapsulate the original devolution settlement prior to the expansion of the Scottish Parliament's powers in legislation passed in 2012 and (especially) 2016, while the fourth option suggests there should not be a devolution settlement of any kind.

**There appears to be no sign, on this measure at least, that support for independence has increased in the wake of the EU referendum**

As Figure 2 shows, for the most part the level of support for 'independence' as ascertained by this question showed little sign of increasing until shortly before the independence referendum was held. At 31% the level in 2013 was little different from the 28% figure recorded in 2010. However, by the time that the referendum was over the proportion had increased (in our 2015 survey) to 51%, while since then it has shown signs of easing a little (to 46%). There appears to be no sign, on this measure at least, that support for independence has increased in the wake of the EU referendum.

**Figure 2 Attitudes in Scotland towards the distribution of responsibilities between the Scottish Parliament and the UK government, 2010-2017**




*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*
*The data on which Figure 2 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

Much the same conclusion can be reached if we look at how people say they would vote if another independence referendum were to be held now. Leaving aside those who felt unable to say how they would vote, in 2016 45% said that they would vote Yes to independence, 55% No – the same result as in the September 2014 referendum. In our most recent survey the proportion saying Yes was, at 48%, a little higher (with No at 52%), but this slight departure from the result of the first independence referendum could clearly be a consequence of no more than the random sampling variation to which all surveys are subject.[2]

The relatively favourable light in which the prospect of independence is now regarded is underlined by the evidence in Table 1, in which we show the results that we obtained in our 2017 survey when, for the first time since the independence referendum, we repeated a number of questions about what people think would happen "if Scotland were to become an independent country, separate from

2 Indeed, our 2015 survey also obtained a reported referendum vote of Yes 48%, No 52%. The fact that support for independence as registered by our long-standing question in Figure 1 more closely matches that of our other two measures in 2016 and 2017 than it did in 2015 reflects a greater consistency of response to our various measures in our more recent surveys. In 2017 only around one in ten of those who said that they would vote Yes in another independence referendum failed to choose one of the two independence options in Figure 1, whereas in 2015 around one in four of those who said that they voted Yes in the previous year's referendum did not do so. This adds further weight to our argument that the increase in support for independence in Figure 1 between 2015 and 2016 should not be regarded as attributable to the impact of the EU referendum.

the rest of the United Kingdom but part of the European Union" (full question wording for these questions is available in the appendix to this chapter). As the table makes clear, our data suggest that, during the two years leading up to the referendum, on balance voters were inclined to become more pessimistic about the consequences of such a scenario. For example, in 2012 as many people thought that the economy would be better as a result of independence as thought it would be worse, whereas two years later, in the weeks leading up to the referendum, as many as 43% thought that Scotland's economy would become worse while only 26% reckoned it would be better. Now, however, rather more people think that Scotland's economy would be better as a result of independence (41%) than believe it would be worse (35%). Similar improvements have also occurred in people's perceptions of the consequences of independence for how much pride people would have in their country and (especially) for the strength of Scotland's voice in the world.

**Our data suggest that, during the two years leading up to the referendum, on balance voters were inclined to become more pessimistic about the consequences of Scottish independence**

**Table 1 Attitudes towards the consequences of Scottish Independence, Scotland, 2012-2017**

| Perceived consequence of independence | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Scotland's Economy** | % | % | % | % |
| Better | 34 | 30 | 26 | 41 |
| No difference | 23 | 26 | 15 | 13 |
| Worse | 34 | 34 | 43 | 35 |
| **Pride in country** | % | % | % | % |
| More | 55 | 51 | 49 | 58 |
| No difference | 39 | 41 | 39 | 34 |
| Less | 3 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| **Scotland's voice in the world** | % | % | % | % |
| Stronger | 42 | 38 | 33 | 49 |
| No difference | 32 | 32 | 23 | 22 |
| Weaker | 22 | 25 | 37 | 25 |
| **Gap between rich and poor** | % | % | % | % |
| Bigger | 19 | 16 | 29 | 29 |
| No difference | 47 | 49 | 37 | 40 |
| Smaller | 25 | 25 | 18 | 22 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1180* | *1348* | *1433* | *1234* |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*

Because we did not ask these questions in 2015 and 2016, we cannot be sure whether or not people's perceptions have been affected by the outcome of the EU referendum, separately from the legacy of the independence referendum. Indeed, it will be noted

that these questions refer explicitly to an independent Scotland that was part of the EU, and perhaps the implied contrast with what is now set to be membership of a UK that is outside rather than inside the EU influenced some respondents' answers in our most recent survey, encouraging them to view independence within the EU more favourably than if Brexit were not due to take place. But either way, we certainly have here further evidence that the climate of opinion is now more favourable to the idea of leaving the UK as compared with the position before the independence referendum.

**Our evidence suggests that the outcome of the EU referendum has not resulted in a significant increase in support for independence**

For the most part, then, our evidence suggests that the outcome of the EU referendum has not resulted in a significant increase in support for independence. That said, there is little evidence that it has resulted in a diminution either. Rather, the marked increase in support for independence that appears to have arisen during the later stages of the independence referendum campaign has proven to be much more than a short-term phenomenon and, despite the fall in SNP support in the 2017 general election, has withstood the fallout from the Brexit vote. The increase also seems to be founded on a more optimistic view of the likely consequences of independence than was in evidence during the independence referendum campaign itself. That alone is enough to ensure that the debate about Scotland's constitutional future is far from settled, even if it has not as yet been sparked into new life by the prospect of Brexit.

## The intertwining of the independence and European debates

On balance, therefore, it seems that the UK-wide vote to leave the EU has not had a significant impact on the level of support for independence. To that extent, the First Minister's apparent expectation that the Brexit referendum result would increase the level of support for Scotland leaving the UK has not been fulfilled. However, even if the EU referendum has not significantly changed the aggregate level of support for independence, perhaps it has ensured that attitudes towards the two issues are intertwined more closely than before. Perhaps some people who voted No to independence now feel minded to vote Yes, because of their opposition to Brexit. At the same time, perhaps some who voted Yes to independence but are opposed to membership of the EU have switched in the opposite direction. Such a development would result in a greater tendency for supporters of independence to hold favourable attitudes towards the EU and vice-versa.

First of all, however, we should investigate that pattern of attitudes in Scotland towards the European Union a little more closely. To what extent was the 62% vote in favour of Remain registered at the EU referendum a reliable indication that people in Scotland largely take a favourable view of the EU? To assess how far this is the case, we examine answers to a question that endeavours to secure a more

nuanced picture of public opinion than simply whether people are in favour or against Britain's membership of the EU. It reads:

> ***Leaving aside the result of the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, what do you think Britain's policy should be...***
>
> ***...should it leave the European Union,***
>
> ***to stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers,***
>
> ***to leave things as they are,***
>
> ***to stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers,***
>
> ***or, to work for the formation of a single European government?***

This question has appeared periodically on SSA since 1999. The one change that we have had to make since the EU referendum is to introduce it by saying, "Leaving aside the result of the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, what do you think Britain's policy should be...". The possible answer options, however, have not been changed. Table 2 shows the proportion choosing each option in each year and also the combined tally of those who give either of the first two responses, answers that (to some extent at least) are indicative of a 'Eurosceptic' outlook (Curtice and Evans, 2015). In contrast, those selecting any of the remaining response options might be considered to be 'Europhile', as they wish to maintain or enhance the current relationship between Britain and the EU.

**Table 2 Attitudes in Scotland towards Britain's membership of the EU, 1999-2017**

| | 1999 | 2000 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Britain should …** | % | % | % | % | % |
| … leave the EU | 10 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 14 |
| … stay in the EU but reduce its powers | 36 | 37 | 29 | 31 | 36 |
| **Total Eurosceptic** | **46** | **48** | **40** | **45** | **51** |
| … stay in the EU and keep powers as they are | 21 | 21 | 24 | 27 | 21 |
| … stay in the EU and increase powers | 14 | 13 | 19 | 12 | 13 |
| … work for formation of a single European government | 9 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 5 |
| **Total Europhile** | **44** | **44** | **52** | **46** | **38** |
| *Unweighted base* | *1482* | *1663* | *1508* | *1637* | *1549* |

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Britain should …** | % | % | % | % | % |
| … leave the EU | 19 | 17 | 17 | 25 | 19 |
| … stay in the EU but reduce its powers | 40 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 39 |
| **Total Eurosceptic** | **59** | **57** | **58** | **66** | **58** |
| … stay in the EU and keep powers as they are | 25 | 24 | 21 | 21 | 30 |
| … stay in the EU and increase powers | 8 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 5 |
| … work for formation of a single European government | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| **Total Europhile** | **36** | **35** | **33** | **29** | **37** |
| *Unweighted base* | *1497* | *1501* | *1288* | *1237* | *1234* |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*
*'Total Eurosceptic' and 'Total Europhile' figures are calculated from the exact data, rather than the rounded figures that appear in the table. As a result, these figures will sometimes vary from the sum of the rounded figures by +/-1%.*

**Relatively few people in Scotland say that they think that Britain should leave the EU**

As we might anticipate, relatively few people in Scotland say in response to this question that they think that Britain should leave the EU, though in the immediate wake of the referendum the proportion choosing that option did reach as high as one in four. But that does not mean that people in Scotland necessarily want the EU to be a relatively powerful institution. The modal response to our question has consistently been that Britain should remain a member but should try to reduce the EU's powers. Moreover, this has been a somewhat more popular response in recent years than it was during some of the early years of devolution. As a result, a majority of people in Scotland can nowadays be classified as 'Eurosceptic', that is, they would either like Britain to leave the EU or they would like the EU's powers reduced. Indeed, as many as two-thirds (66%) fell into that camp in the immediate wake of the referendum, and, at 58%, the figure remains relatively high in our most recent survey.

Scotland is therefore not as enamoured of the existing EU as we might have anticipated from the result of the EU referendum north of the border – or indeed from the fact that, according to a separate question on our survey, nearly three in four (74%) think that an independent Scotland either 'definitely' or 'probably' should be a member of the EU. Furthermore, half of those who said they voted Remain in the EU referendum can be classified as Eurosceptics by this definition (because although they back staying in the EU they think it should have fewer powers). Against this backdrop, it is perhaps not so surprising that the UK-wide outcome of the EU referendum apparently did not persuade many people to change their minds about independence. The commitment of many Remain voters to the EU was too weak for the issue to be a deal breaker for them on the question of Scotland's constitutional status (Montagu, 2018).

Nevertheless, it appears that the EU referendum has left its mark on the pattern of support for independence. Table 3 shows people's attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed as measured by their responses to our long-running question on independence (introduced at Figure 1), broken down by whether the respondent is a 'Eurosceptic' or a 'Europhile' (as defined at Table 2). Up to and including 2015, the level of support for independence (and, indeed, devolution) was more or less the same among Europhiles as it was among Eurosceptics. Perhaps, despite the prominence that the issue of EU membership was given in the independence referendum campaign, it had little influence on how people voted in that ballot. However, since the EU referendum, both our 2016 and our 2017 surveys show that Europhiles are now more likely than their Eurosceptic counterparts to support independence. It seems that the two issues have, indeed, become more closely intertwined in voters' minds.

**Since the EU referendum, our surveys show that Europhiles are now more likely than their Eurosceptic counterparts to support independence**

**Table 3 Attitudes in Scotland towards how Scotland should be governed, by attitude towards Britain's membership of the EU, 2013-2017**

| | Attitudes towards the EU | |
|---|---|---|
| **Constitutional Preference** | **Eurosceptic** | **Europhile** |
| **2013** | % | % |
| Independence | 29 | 30 |
| Devolution | 57 | 55 |
| No Parliament | 10 | 8 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *913* | *484* |
| **2014** | % | % |
| Independence | 35 | 31 |
| Devolution | 53 | 49 |
| No Parliament | 7 | 9 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *893* | *476* |
| **2015** | % | % |
| Independence | 41 | 39 |
| Devolution | 50 | 51 |
| No Parliament | 7 | 5 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *787* | *394* |
| **2016** | % | % |
| Independence | 44 | 53 |
| Devolution | 45 | 37 |
| No Parliament | 8 | 7 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *836* | *337* |
| **2017** | % | % |
| Independence | 40 | 56 |
| Devolution | 48 | 33 |
| No Parliament | 9 | 7 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *763* | *407* |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*

This development is confirmed if we take the link between attitudes towards the EU and how people said they voted in the 2014 independence referendum (as measured by our 2015 survey), and compare it with the link between attitudes towards the EU and how respondents say they would vote in an independence referendum that was held now (using our 2017 survey). Support for independence in the 2014 referendum was, if anything, higher among those who were Eurosceptics than it was among Europhiles - while 49% of Eurosceptics voted Yes in the independence referendum, only 44% of Europhiles did so (although this difference was not found to be

statistically significant). But now, in our 2017 survey, the pattern is very different – only 40% of Eurosceptics say they would vote Yes compared with 60% of Europhiles.

**40% of Eurosceptics say they would vote Yes compared with 60% of Europhiles**

A further, more direct indication of the more Europhile nature of support for independence is obtained if we return to our long-running question about how Scotland should be governed, but now examine the division that we ignored earlier between those who think that Scotland should be independent outside the EU and those who think it should be independent inside the EU. While in 2013 those who backed an independent Scotland inside the EU (18%) were rather more numerous than those who wanted an independent Scotland outside the EU (11%), the latter group still constituted a significant part of the nationalist movement, much as they had done ever since the first SSA survey in 1999. But by 2016, those who backed independence outside the EU still only represented 11% of all voters in Scotland, whereas those who supported independence in the EU now constituted 35%. At 10% and 35% respectively, the most recent figures for 2017 are much the same. In short, where once those whose first preference was independence outside the EU comprised at least one in three of all those who wished for Scotland to leave the UK, now they represent less than one in four.

Meanwhile, as we might by now anticipate, in some respects at least Eurosceptics and Europhiles now also have rather different views about what would happen if Scotland were to become independent. As Table 4 shows, in 2014 the two groups largely had similar views about what the consequences of independence would be. For example, while 28% of Europhiles thought that Scotland's economy would be better as a result of independence, so also did 25% of Eurosceptics. But while both groups now take a more optimistic view of the economic consequences of independence, at 48% the level of optimism is clearly higher among Europhiles than among Eurosceptics (37%). Similar gaps between the two groups have also opened up in respect of the implications of independence for Scotland's voice in the world and for the gap between rich and poor. Europhiles are now noticeably less likely to regard independence as a risky project than their Eurosceptic counterparts.

**Table 4 Attitudes in Scotland towards the perceived consequences of independence, by attitude towards the EU, 2014 and 2017**

| | 2014 | | 2017 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Attitudes towards the EU | | Attitudes towards the EU | |
| **Perceived consequence of independence** | **Eurosceptic** | **Europhile** | **Eurosceptic** | **Europhile** |
| **Scotland's Economy** | % | % | % | % |
| Better | 25 | 28 | 37 | 48 |
| No difference | 13 | 17 | 13 | 13 |
| Worse | 48 | 41 | 40 | 29 |
| *Unweighted base* | *850* | *450* | *737* | *388* |
| **Pride in country** | % | % | % | % |
| More | 48 | 49 | 56 | 61 |
| No difference | 39 | 40 | 36 | 32 |
| Less | 6 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| *Unweighted base* | *853* | *450* | *737* | *388* |
| **Scotland's voice in the world** | % | % | % | % |
| Stronger | 33 | 34 | 46 | 56 |
| No difference | 23 | 23 | 23 | 20 |
| Weaker | 39 | 38 | 30 | 18 |
| *Unweighted base* | *852* | *452* | *737* | *388* |
| **Gap between rich and poor** | % | % | % | % |
| Bigger | 32 | 27 | 32 | 24 |
| No difference | 37 | 37 | 41 | 37 |
| Smaller | 17 | 21 | 19 | 30 |
| *Unweighted base* | *851* | *450* | *737* | *389* |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*

We have seen that up until the EU referendum – though not thereafter – attitudes in Scotland towards Britain's membership of the EU were not related to people's views on the relative merits of Scotland staying in the UK or becoming an independent country. Those with a favourable view of the EU were no more likely to support Scottish independence than those with a more sceptical outlook – and vice-versa. Indeed, this was still the position on EU referendum day itself. According to the 2016 SSA survey, for example, while 67% of EU referendum participants who were in favour of independence indicated that they had voted Remain, so also did 63% of those who voted No**.** However, since then support for independence has come to be aligned to some extent with a more Europhile outlook – and vice-versa. It looks as though the prospect of the UK leaving the EU has made the idea of an independent Scotland that, according

**Brexit has, it seems, created a new line of division in the debate about Scotland's constitutional status**

to the SNP at least, would be part of the EU look a somewhat more attractive prospect to those with a 'Europhile' outlook, while making a UK that is outside the EU look more acceptable to Eurosceptics. Brexit has, it seems, created a new line of division in the debate about Scotland's constitutional status.

## Brexit and the 2017 general election in Scotland

We have seen that, how people voted in the EU referendum cut across the existing patterns of support for both independence and unionism. Both groups found themselves split roughly two to one in favour of remaining in the EU. Yet those two groups had voted very differently in the 2015 election. No less than 84% of those who supported independence voted for the SNP, whereas only around one in four unionists (27%) did so. Never before had the two groups voted so differently in a UK general election, suggesting that the constitutional question had now come to dominate electoral politics in Scotland (Curtice, 2017b).

This suggests that if voters north of the border responded to the Prime Minister's decision in April 2017 to precipitate an early general election by reflecting their views about Brexit in how they voted, one consequence would be to reduce the prominence of the constitutional question in how people voted in 2017. For example, given that the SNP was expressing continued opposition to Brexit and was arguing for Scotland to continue to have a close relationship with the EU, some previous opponents of independence who voted Remain might have been persuaded to vote for the SNP, whereas some supporters of independence who backed Leave might have defected from the SNP because of their stance on Brexit. Such a pattern would see the SNP gain ground among No voters while losing it among their Yes counterparts – and would suggest that it might be wrong to interpret the decline in SNP support in the 2017 election as simply a rejection of the party's stance on independence.

But did the way in which people in Scotland voted in the 2017 election in any way reflect their stance on Brexit rather than the constitutional question? Table 5 shows how those who we defined earlier as 'Eurosceptics' and 'Europhiles' voted in the 2015 and 2017 UK general elections. Two points stand out. First, in 2015, before it was clear that a EU referendum was going to be held, the level of support for the SNP was almost exactly the same in both groups, with around a half of both sets of voters backing the party. But whereas in 2017 support for the SNP remained at roughly this level among Europhiles, it dropped to little more than a third among Eurosceptics. The SNP does indeed appear to have found it more difficult in the 2017 election to retain the support of those who were less strongly committed to Britain's membership of the EU.

Second, the increase in Conservative support registered between the two elections was more marked among Eurosceptics than Europhiles. As a result, the party attracted the support of more than one in four Eurosceptics, but only around one in ten Europhiles. In this respect at least, the pattern of voting in the election north of the border had clear echoes of the pattern in evidence in the rest of Britain whereby the Conservative Party gained ground among Eurosceptics but lost support among Europhiles (see the Voting chapter by Curtice and Simpson). On the other hand, what we do not see north of the border is any clear evidence of the Labour Party advancing more strongly in one group rather than another. Instead, the party's support seems to have edged up a little among both groups, albeit with the result that the level of support for the party remained a little higher among those we have classified as Europhiles.

**Table 5 General election vote, by attitude towards the EU, 2015 and 2017**

| | Attitude towards EU | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Eurosceptic | | | Europhile | | |
| | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
| **General election vote** | % | % | | % | % | |
| Conservative | 14 | 28 | +14 | 7 | 12 | +4 |
| Labour | 22 | 26 | +4 | 30 | 34 | +4 |
| Liberal Democrat | 7 | 8 | +1 | 9 | 4 | -5 |
| SNP | 51 | 36 | -15 | 49 | 47 | -2 |
| Other | 6 | 1 | -4 | 4 | 3 | -1 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *628* | *585* | | *280* | *287* | |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*
*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the exact data, rather than the rounded figures that appear in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1%.*

But what implications, if any, did this pattern have for the relationship between attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed and how people voted in the general election? What impact did the decline in SNP support among Eurosceptics have on the party's ability to secure the support of those who back independence? In Table 6 we classify people as either supporters of independence or of the Union using our long-standing question on how Scotland should be governed and show how the two groups divided their support between the parties in the 2015 and 2017 elections. This shows that the SNP were markedly less successful than they had been two years earlier in securing the backing of those who said they currently supported independence. Fewer than three-quarters (72%) of those

who currently support independence voted for the party in 2017, well down on the 84% who did so in 2015. Not since the 2010 UK general election, when only 55% of those who favoured independence voted for the SNP, had the level of support for the SNP among those who backed the party's stance on the constitutional question been so low in an election to either the Westminster or the Scottish Parliament (Curtice, 2017b).

**Table 6 General election vote, by attitude towards how Scotland should be governed, 2015 and 2017**

| | Attitude towards how Scotland should be governed | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Independence | | | Stay in the UK | | |
| | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 | 2015 | 2017 | Change 2015-2017 |
| **General election vote** | % | % | | % | % | |
| Conservative | 1 | 4 | +3 | 19 | 37 | +18 |
| Labour | 7 | 19 | +12 | 38 | 36 | -1 |
| Liberal Democrat | 1 | 2 | +2 | 13 | 10 | -3 |
| SNP | 84 | 72 | -12 | 27 | 15 | -12 |
| Other | 7 | 2 | -5 | 3 | 2 | -1 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *374* | *355* | | *556* | *513* | |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*
*Figures showing change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the exact data, rather than the rounded figures that appear in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1%.*

However, the party's losses were not confined to those who supported independence. Support for the SNP also fell away among those who would prefer Scotland to remain in the UK. In fact, it fell by just as much among this group as it did among those who supported independence, even though many fewer unionists had voted SNP four years previously – indeed, the level of support among this group was also lower than at any election since 2010. It would seem that support for the SNP fell irrespective of voters' stance on the constitutional question. But then given that No supporters had been just as likely as backers of Yes to vote Leave, perhaps the explanation is simply that the SNP's No voters who supported Leave also defected in greater numbers from the party than did those who voted Remain?

Indeed, the SNP did lose ground especially heavily among Eurosceptic backers of the Union; its support fell by as much as 15 percentage points among this group. But that said, it also fell by 9 points among Europhile unionist voters. Meanwhile, we have so far ignored the implications for our analysis here of the fact that the relationship between attitudes to the constitutional question and

people's attitudes towards the European Union changed after the EU referendum. As we showed above, by 2017 those who supported independence were significantly more likely to be Europhiles, in contrast to the position in 2015. That makes it rather surprising that the SNP should have lost as much ground among supporters of independence as it did among those who would prefer to stay part of the UK. Indeed, further analysis reveals that support for the SNP among those who both support independence and can be classified as Europhiles was as much as 13 points lower in 2017 than it had been two years previously. Evidently the pattern of the SNP's losses in the 2017 election cannot simply be accounted for by its stance on Brexit.

**Evidently the pattern of the SNP's losses in the 2017 election cannot simply be accounted for by its stance on Brexit**

Before we pursue how we might account for those losses, we should note two other features of Table 6. First, as we might anticipate given the robust stance that the party took in opposing the possibility of any second referendum on independence, the increase in support for the Conservatives between 2015 and 2017 occurred primarily among those who would prefer Scotland to remain part of the UK. The party's share of the vote increased by 18 points among unionists, but by just 3 points among supporters of independence. Indeed, although the party's core constituency proved to be those who both supported the Union and were Eurosceptic – no less than 42% of this group support the party, up 19 points on the equivalent figure in 2015 – it also registered substantial support (26%, up 14 points) among those who supported the Union but could be classified as 'Europhile'. It would seem that people's willingness to support the Conservatives north of the border was shaped by their attitudes towards the constitutional question as well as Brexit.

The second pattern of note in Table 6 is, however, one that we might not have anticipated. Even though Labour also supports Scotland's continued membership of the Union, the party's support rose markedly between 2015 and 2017 among supporters of independence, while the party did not make any advance at all among those who would prefer Scotland to remain part of the UK. Here, perhaps, is a vital clue as to why the SNP lost ground among supporters of independence even though that group had become more Europhile in outlook.

At this point it is useful to bear in mind two features of those who support independence. First, they are more numerous among those on the left of the political spectrum. Secondly, they are more common among the young. The first of these patterns becomes apparent when we use the items that form our socialist-laissez-faire scale, details of which are given in the appendix to this chapter, to divide voters in Scotland into three groups, the one third most socialist – or left-wing – the one third most laissez-faire – or right-wing – and the remaining one third in the centre. In our latest survey, no less than 58% of those on the left support independence as measured by our long-standing question, compared with 41% of those in the centre and just 38% of those on the right. Meanwhile, 56% of 18-34 year

olds back independence, compared with 48% of 35-54 year olds and just 33% of those aged 55 and over.

Despite the relatively high level of support for independence among younger and more left-wing voters, Labour advanced particularly strongly in both groups. Support for the party increased between 2015 and 2017 by as much as 13 points among those on the left compared with 6 points among those in the centre, while the party's support actually dropped by 3 points among those on the right. Meanwhile, an 18-point increase in Labour support was registered among 18-34 year olds, while those aged 35 or more barely moved towards the party at all. Conversely, SNP support fell most heavily (by 18 points) among young voters, with the result that, if anything, they were less likely to vote for the party (42%) than those aged 35-54 (46%) (though the difference between these groups was not found to be statistically significant).

**Some of the SNP's younger and more left-wing supporters switched to Labour in 2017**

It appears then that, despite their increasingly more Europhile outlook and their continued support for independence, some of the SNP's younger and more left-wing supporters switched to Labour in 2017. The defection of younger voters to Labour in particular complements what was a strong Labour advance among younger voters across Britain as a whole. The apparent enthusiasm among younger people for the relatively radical message put forward by the Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, perhaps served to displace these voters' former enthusiasm for the equally radical independence message of the SNP, and thereby served to undermine the SNP's hold on a constituency that the party had hitherto seemed to make its own. Certainly, it seems that the scale of the SNP's loss of support among supporters of independence cannot simply be blamed on voters responding to their views about Brexit. Rather, the outcome of the 2017 election in Scotland reflected the interplay of voters' attitudes towards the constitutional question and Labour's more left-wing appeal as well as the new intertwining between attitudes towards independence and Britain's future relationship with the EU. What it was not, was simply a reflection of voters' judgement on the merits or otherwise of independence.

## An English backlash?

One of the most notable features of how people in England voted in the EU referendum is that those who describe themselves as wholly or primarily English were much more likely to vote to Leave the EU than those who regard themselves as wholly or primarily British (Curtice, 2017c; Henderson et al., 2017). Indeed, as we noted earlier, their behaviour could be regarded as one of the vital ingredients that brought about the overall vote to Leave. It has been suggested that the pattern is indicative of a wider, longer-term change in the prevalence and role of national identity in England whereby people have both become more likely to regard themselves as English rather than British and more likely to reflect their sense of identity in their

views about how the UK should be governed (Jeffrey et al., 2016). One implication of this argument is that voters in England might have become less supportive of the relative autonomy that Scotland enjoys in its domestic affairs as a result of the devolution settlement, and that this may be particularly true of those with a strong sense of English identity. In other words, the EU referendum may have helped stir up an 'English backlash' against Scotland's constitutional status.

Is there, however, any evidence that English identity has become more prevalent? One very useful way of ascertaining national identity in a country where most people acknowledge one or the other of two identities – and maybe both – is to ask what has come to be known as the Moreno question (Moreno, 2006). Respondents are invited to say which of five possible combinations of the two identities best describes themselves. Thus, in England we ask:

> ***Which, if any, of the following best describes how you see yourself?***
>
> ***English not British***
>
> ***More English than British***
>
> ***Equally English and British***
>
> ***More British than English***
>
> ***British not English***

Table 7 shows the pattern of responses to this question in England over the last 20 years. As we have noted before (Curtice et al., 2013), there was an increase in the proportion of people who felt a strong sense of English identity at the time that devolution was first introduced in Scotland and Wales. In 1997, just 7% said that they were English and not British, whereas two years later 17% did so. But there is no evidence of any continuing trend thereafter, or of any particular increase in English identity in the wake of the 2016 Brexit referendum. Indeed, at 23%, the proportion who say they are either 'English, not British' or 'More English than British' is lower now than it has been at any time since before the introduction of devolution in the late 1990s. Indeed, for the first time, it is no larger than the proportion who say they are either 'British, not English' or 'More British than English'. In short, there is little sign of any continuous or recent trend towards a more widespread sense of English identity.

**There is little sign of any continuous or recent trend towards a more widespread sense of English identity**

**Table 7 Moreno national identity in England, 1997-2017**

| | 1997 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2003 | 2007 | 2008 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **National identity** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| English, not British | 7 | 17 | 18 | 17 | 17 | 19 | 16 |
| More English than British | 17 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 19 | 14 | 14 |
| Equally English and British | 45 | 37 | 34 | 42 | 31 | 31 | 41 |
| More British than English | 14 | 11 | 14 | 9 | 13 | 14 | 9 |
| British, not English | 9 | 4 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 9 |
| *Unweighted base* | *3150* | *2718* | *1928* | *2761* | *1917* | *859* | *982* |

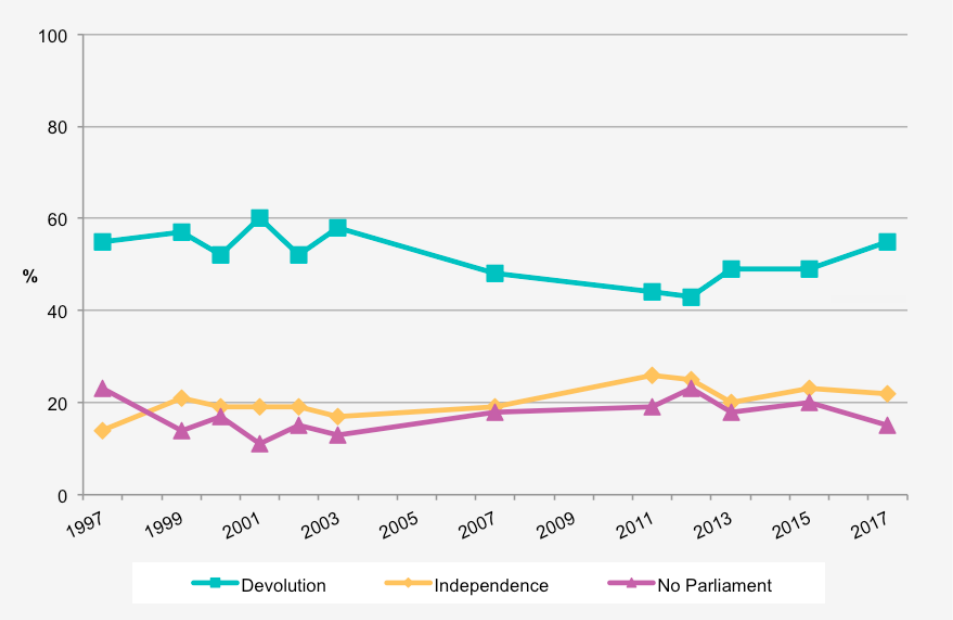
| | 2009 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **National identity** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| English, not British | 17 | 17 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 14 | 13 |
| More English than British | 16 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 10 |
| Equally English and British | 33 | 44 | 42 | 41 | 42 | 42 | 41 |
| More British than English | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 10 |
| British, not English | 13 | 10 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1940* | *2729* | *2799* | *2383* | *3778* | *2525* | *3478* |

*Source: British Social Attitudes, respondents in England only*
*In 2012 and 2014 the question was not asked of those living in England who were born in Scotland or Wales*

**85% of people in England would like Scotland to remain part of the UK**

Equally, there is little sign that the Brexit vote signals the onset of an English nationalism that is also reflected in the attitudes of people in England towards how Scotland should be governed. In Figure 3 we show how people in England have responded when they have been presented with our long-standing question on how Scotland should be governed. This shows that the willingness of people in England to back devolution for Scotland was seemingly beginning to wane in 2011 and 2012 – that is, shortly after the SNP won an overall majority in the 2011 Scottish Parliament election and instigated the independence referendum. Support for the idea that Scotland should have its own parliament within the framework of the UK fell from 60% in 2001 and 58% in 2003 to just 43% in 2012, while, conversely, support for independence increased from 17% in 2003 to 26% in 2011. However, these trends have since largely been reversed. At 55%, the level of support in England for Scottish devolution is now as high as it was 20 years ago. Meanwhile, the proportion backing Scottish independence is still no more than 22%. In short, it remains the case that a large majority (85%) of people in England would like Scotland to remain part of the UK, and, moreover, that many are also willing to accept that Scotland should enjoy a degree of self-government.

**Figure 3 Attitudes in England towards how Scotland should be governed, 1997-2017**




*Source: 1997: British Election Study, respondents in England only; 1999-2017: British Social Attitudes, respondents living in England only*
*The data on which Figure 3 is based can be found in the appendix to this chapter*

True, this outlook is somewhat less popular among those who say they are "English, not British". Only 40% of this group say that they support Scottish devolution, while as many as 30% feel that Scotland should leave the UK and become an independent country. But this is a difference of degree, not a major division on the scale that was evident in how people voted in the EU referendum. Support for Scottish independence is only 11 points higher among those who say they are "English, not British" than it is among those who either say they are equally English and British or that they are wholly or primarily British. Moreover, the level of support for independence among those who say they are "English, not British" is no different now from what it was in 2015, before the Brexit referendum campaign, while the proportion backing devolution has only slipped back a statistically insignificant 3 points. The link in England between national identity and attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed is both relatively weak and no stronger now than it was before the EU referendum.

**The link in England between national identity and attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed is both relatively weak and no stronger now than it was before the EU referendum**

Thus, whatever role national identity may have played in shaping how people in England voted in the EU referendum, it would appear to be a mistake to assume that the sharp differences between those who regard themselves as English and those who call themselves British in their levels of support for Remain and Leave are indicative of a wider resurgence in English nationalism. There is little sign that English identity has become more prevalent in the wake of the Brexit referendum or that those who feel predominantly English have become particularly more antagonistic towards Scotland's current status within the UK. To that extent at least it seems that Brexit has

done little to undermine the level of tolerance in England for the current constitutional settlement north of the border.

## Conclusions

The outcome of the EU referendum has had an impact on attitudes towards Scottish independence – but not in the way that Scotland's First Minister and many others anticipated. It has not resulted in a marked increase in Scotland in support for independence, not least because despite the heavy support for Remain in the EU referendum, the commitment of many Remain voters to the EU is relatively weak. Further, it has not stirred up an English nationalism that has become more antipathetic to Scotland's position in the Union. Equally, however, it has not resulted in a diminution of support in Scotland for an idea which, despite the outcome of the 2017 election in Scotland, remains markedly more popular than it had been before the independence referendum in 2014.

**The EU referendum has brought about a degree of alignment in Scotland between attitudes towards independence and those towards the European Union**

What the aftermath of the EU referendum has done is to bring about the emergence of a degree of alignment in Scotland between attitudes towards independence and those towards the European Union, whereas no such alignment existed before. As a result, the nationalist movement in Scotland is now more of a pro-European movement at grassroots level than was previously the case. It is a change that has proven disruptive for the SNP. In the 2017 election it helped cost the party the support of some of those who voted Yes in 2014 and SNP in 2015 but who were sceptical about the EU and may well have voted Leave in 2016, and whose enthusiasm for independence may consequently have dimmed. At the same time, the party's difficulties in that election were compounded by the ability of a somewhat revived Scottish Labour Party to win the support of some of those who still support independence. The coalition that resulted in a 45% vote for independence in 2014 has been unsettled – but if it were put back together again, perhaps when the future of Brexit is clearer, it could yet still raise questions about the future integrity of the UK.

## Acknowledgement

The research reported here was supported financially by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of its 'The UK in a Changing Europe' initiative (grant no. ES/R001219/1). Responsibility for the views expressed here lies solely with the authors.

## References

Curtice, J. (2014), *The Score at Half-Time: Trends in Support for Independence*, Edinburgh: ScotCen Social Research, available at www.scotcen.org.uk/media/270726/SSA-13-The-Score-At-Half-Time.pdf

Curtice, J. (2017a), *From Indyref1 to Indyref2: The State of Nationalism in Scotland;* Edinburgh: ScotCen Social Research, available at www.ssa.natcen.ac.uk/media/38910/ssa16-2fr8m-1ndyref-2-1ndyr8f-tw0-two.pdf

Curtice, J. (2017b), 'The Party and The Electorate', in Hassan, G., and Barrow, S. (eds.), *A Nation Changed? The SNP and Scotland Ten Years On*, Edinburgh: Luath Press

Curtice, J. (2017c), 'The vote to leave the EU: Litmus Test or Lightening Rod' in Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Harding, R. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 34th report*, London: National Centre for Social Research, available at www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-34/brexit.aspx

Curtice, J., Devine, P. and Ormston, R. (2013), 'Devolution: Identities and Constitutional Preferences across the UK', in Park, A., Bryson, C., Clery, E., Curtice, J. and Phillips, M. (eds.) *British Social Attitudes: the 30th report*, London: National Centre for Social Research, available at www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-30/devolution/introduction.aspx

Curtice, J. and Evans, G. (2015). 'Britain and Europe: Are we all Eurosceptics now?', in Curtice, J. and Ormston, R. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 32nd report*, London: National Centre for Social Research, available at www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-32/europe.aspx

Henderson, A., Jeffrey, C., Wincott, D. and Wyn Jones, R. (2017), 'How Brexit was Made in England', *British Journal of Politics and International* Relations, 19 (4), 631-46

Jeffrey, C., Henderson, A., Scully, R and Wyn Jones, R. (2016), 'England's Dissatisfactions and the Conservative Dilemma', *Political Studies Review*, 14(3), 335-48

Montagu, I. (2018), 'Scotland' in Menon, A. (ed.), *Brexit and Public Opinion*, London: The UK in a Changing Europe, available at ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Public-Opinion.pdf

Moreno, L. (2006), 'Scotland, Europeanization and the 'Moreno Question', *Scottish Affairs*, 54: 1-21

Scottish Government (2016), *Scotland's Place in Europe*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government, available at www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00512073.pdf

Scottish National Party (2016), *Re-elect; SNP Manifesto 2016*, Edinburgh: Scottish National Party available at https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/thesnp/pages/5540/attachments/original/1485880018/SNP_Manifesto2016-web_(1).pdf?1485880018

# Appendix

The data on which Figure 1 is based are shown below.

**Table A1 Attitudes in Scotland towards how Scotland should be governed, 1999-2017**

| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **How Scotland should be governed** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Independence | 27 | 30 | 27 | 30 | 26 | 32 | 35 | 30 | 24 |
| Devolution | 59 | 55 | 59 | 52 | 56 | 45 | 44 | 54 | 62 |
| No Parliament | 10 | 12 | 9 | 13 | 13 | 17 | 14 | 9 | 9 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1482* | *1663* | *1605* | *1665* | *1508* | *1637* | *1549* | *1594* | *1508* |

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **How Scotland should be governed** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Independence | 28 | 23 | 32 | 23 | 29 | 33 | 39 | 46 | 45 |
| Devolution | 56 | 61 | 58 | 61 | 55 | 50 | 49 | 42 | 41 |
| No Parliament | 8 | 10 | 6 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 8 |
| *Unweighted base* | *1482* | *1495* | *1197* | *1229* | *1497* | *1501* | *1288* | *1237* | *1234* |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*

The data on which Figure 2 is based are shown below.

**Table A2 Attitudes in Scotland towards the distribution of responsibilities between the Scottish Parliament and the UK government, 2010-2017**

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Scottish Parliament should make…** | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| … all decisions | 28 | 43 | 35 | 31 | 41 | 51 | 49 | 46 |
| … all except defence and foreign affairs | 32 | 29 | 32 | 32 | 27 | 30 | 31 | 32 |
| … all except defence, foreign affairs, taxation, and welfare | 27 | 21 | 24 | 25 | 22 | 12 | 12 | 14 |
| … no decisions | 10 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| *Unweighted Base* | *1495* | *1197* | *1229* | *1497* | *1501* | *1288* | *1237* | *1234* |

*Source: Scottish Social Attitudes*

The full question wording for the data presented in Table 2 is as follows:

*Thinking now about what might happen if Scotland were to become an independent country, separate from the rest of the United Kingdom but part of the European Union.*

*As a result of independence would Scotland's economy become better, worse, or would it make no difference?*

*(A lot better, A little better, No difference, A little worse, A lot worse)*

*As a result of independence would people in Scotland have more pride in their country, less pride or would it make no difference?*

*(A lot more, A little more, No difference, A little less, A lot less)*

*As a result of independence would Scotland have a stronger voice in the world, a weaker voice, or would it make no difference?*

*(A lot stronger, A little stronger, No difference, A little weaker, A lot weaker)*

*As a result of independence, would the gap between rich and poor in Scotland be bigger, smaller or would it make no difference?*

*(A lot bigger, A little bigger, No difference, A little smaller, A lot smaller)*

The data on which Figure 3 is based are shown below.

**Table A3 Attitudes in England towards how Scotland should be governed, 1997-2017**

| | 1997 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **How Scotland should be governed** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Independence | 14 | 21 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 17 |
| Devolution | 55 | 57 | 52 | 60 | 52 | 58 |
| No Parliament | 23 | 14 | 17 | 11 | 15 | 13 |
| *Unweighted base* | *2536* | *902* | *1928* | *2761* | *1924* | *1917* |

| | 2007 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **How Scotland should be governed** | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Independence | 19 | 26 | 25 | 20 | 23 | 22 |
| Devolution | 48 | 44 | 43 | 49 | 49 | 55 |
| No Parliament | 18 | 19 | 23 | 18 | 20 | 15 |
| *Unweighted base* | *859* | *967* | *939* | *925* | *1865* | *891* |

*Source: 1997: British Election Study, respondents in England only; 1999-2017: British Social Attitudes, respondents living in England only*

## Libertarian–authoritarian scale

Since 1986, the BSA surveys have included an attitude scale which aims to measure where respondents stand on a certain underlying value dimension – libertarian–authoritarian.

This scale consists of a number of statements to which the respondent is invited to “agree strongly”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “disagree strongly”.

The items are:

***Young people today don’t have enough respect for traditional British values. [TradVals]***

***People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. [StifSent]***

***For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence. [DeathApp]***

***Schools should teach children to obey authority. [Obey]***

***The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong. [WrongLaw]***

***Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards. [Censor]***

# Technical details

## Technical details

In 2017, the sample for the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey was split into four equally-sized portions. Each portion was asked a different version of the questionnaire (versions A, B,C and D). Depending on the number of versions in which it was included, questions were thus asked either of the full sample (3,988 respondents) or of a random quarter, half or three-quarters of the sample.

## Sample design

The BSA survey is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over. Since 1993, the sampling frame for the survey has been the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of addresses (or postal delivery points) compiled by the Post Office.[1]

For practical reasons, the sample is confined to those living in private households. People living in institutions (though not in private households at such institutions) are excluded, as are households whose addresses were not on the PAF.

The sampling method involved a multi-stage design, with three separate stages of selection.

### Selection of sectors

At the first stage, postcode sectors were selected systematically from a list of all postal sectors in Britain. Before selection, any sectors with fewer than 500 addresses were identified and grouped together with an adjacent sector; in Scotland all sectors north of the Caledonian Canal were excluded (because of the prohibitive costs of interviewing there). Sectors were then stratified on the basis of: 37 sub-regions; population density, (population in private households/ area of the postal sector in hectares), with variable banding used in order to create three equal-sized strata per sub-region; and ranking by percentage of homes that were owner-occupied.

This resulted in the selection of 361 postcode sectors, with probability proportional to the number of addresses in each sector.

### Selection of addresses

Twenty-six addresses were selected in each of the 361 sectors or groups of sectors. The issued sample was therefore 361 x 26 = 9,386 addresses, selected by starting from a random point on the list of addresses for each sector, and choosing each address at a fixed

interval. The fixed interval was calculated for each sector in order to generate the correct number of addresses.

The Multiple-Occupancy Indicator (MOI) available through PAF was used when selecting addresses in Scotland. The MOI shows the number of accommodation spaces sharing one address. Thus, if the MOI indicated more than one accommodation space at a given address, the chances of the given address being selected from the list of addresses would increase so that it matched the total number of accommodation spaces. The MOI is largely irrelevant in England and Wales, as separate dwelling units (DUs) generally appear as separate entries on the PAF. In Scotland, tenements with many flats tend to appear as one entry on the PAF. However, even in Scotland, the vast majority (99.9%) of MOIs in the sample had a value of one. The remainder had MOIs greater than one. The MOI affects the selection probability of the address, so it was necessary to incorporate an adjustment for this into the weighting procedures (described below).

### Selection of individuals

Interviewers called at each address selected from the PAF and listed all those eligible for inclusion in the BSA sample – that is, all persons currently aged 18 or over and resident at the selected address. The interviewer then selected one respondent using a computer-generated random selection procedure. Where there were two or more DUs at the selected address, interviewers first had to select one DU using the same random procedure. They then followed the same procedure to select a person for interview within the selected DU.

## Weighting

The weights for the BSA survey correct for the unequal selection of addresses, DUs and individuals, and for biases caused by differential non-response. The different stages of the weighting scheme are outlined in detail below.

### Selection weights

Selection weights are required because not all the units covered in the survey had the same probability of selection. The weighting reflects the relative selection probabilities of the individual at the three main stages of selection: address, DU and individual. First, because addresses in Scotland were selected using the MOI, weights were needed to compensate for the greater probability of an address with an MOI of more than one being selected, compared with an address with an MOI of one. (This stage was omitted for the English and Welsh data.) Secondly, data were weighted to compensate for the fact that a DU at an address that contained a large number of DUs was less likely to be selected for inclusion in the survey than a

DU at an address that contained fewer DUs. (We used this procedure because in most cases where the MOI is greater than one, the two stages will cancel each other out, resulting in more efficient weights.) Thirdly, data were weighted to compensate for the lower selection probabilities of adults living in large households, compared with those in small households.

At each stage the selection weights were trimmed to avoid a small number of very high or very low weights in the sample; such weights would inflate standard errors, reducing the precision of the survey estimates and causing the weighted sample to be less efficient. A small proportion (typically less than 1%) of the selection weights were trimmed at each stage.

## Non-response model

It is known that certain subgroups in the population are more likely to respond to surveys than others. These groups can end up over-represented in the sample, which can bias the survey estimates. Where information is available about non-responding households, the response behaviour of the sample members can be modelled and the results used to generate a non-response weight. This non-response weight is intended to reduce bias in the sample resulting from differential response to the survey.

The data were modelled using logistic regression, with the dependent variable indicating whether or not the selected individual responded to the survey. Ineligible households[2] were not included in the non-response modelling. A number of area-level and interviewer observation variables were used to model response. Not all the variables examined were retained for the final model: variables not strongly related to a household's propensity to respond were dropped from the analysis.

The variables found to be related to response, once controlled for the rest of the predictors in the model, were: region, type of dwelling, whether there were entry barriers to the selected address, the relative condition of the immediate local area, the relative condition of the address and population density. The model shows that response increases if there are no barriers to entry (for instance, if there are no locked gates around the address and no entry phone) and if the general condition of the address is better than other addresses in the area, rather than being about the same or worse. Response is also higher for flats than detached houses. Response increases if the relative condition of the immediate surrounding area is mainly good, and decreases as population density increases. Response is also generally higher for addresses in Yorkshire and the Humber. The full model is given in Table A.1

**Table A.1 The final non-response model**

| Variable | B | S.E. | Wald | Df | Sig. | Odds |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Region** | | | 54.430 | 11 | .000 | |
| Inner London | (baseline) | | | | | |
| North East | .298 | .155 | 3.703 | 1 | .054 | 1.347 |
| North West | .350 | .129 | 7.411 | 1 | .006 | 1.419 |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | .366 | .135 | 7.373 | 1 | .007 | 1.443 |
| East Midlands | .197 | .139 | 2.020 | 1 | .155 | 1.218 |
| West Midlands | .111 | .134 | .683 | 1 | .408 | 1.117 |
| East of England | .207 | .136 | 2.326 | 1 | .127 | 1.230 |
| Outer London | .031 | .134 | .052 | 1 | .819 | 1.031 |
| South East | -.092 | .128 | .522 | 1 | .470 | .912 |
| South West | .014 | .135 | .011 | 1 | .916 | 1.014 |
| Wales | .114 | .157 | .532 | 1 | .466 | 1.121 |
| Scotland | -.101 | .134 | .570 | 1 | .450 | .904 |
| **Type of dwelling** | | | 20.023 | 3 | .000 | |
| Detached House | (baseline) | | | | | |
| Semi-detached house | -.162 | .065 | 6.300 | 1 | .012 | .850 |
| Terraced house (including end of terrace) | .027 | .070 | .146 | 1 | .702 | 1.027 |
| Flat or maisonette and other | .172 | .093 | 3.426 | 1 | .064 | 1.187 |
| **Barriers to address** | | | | | | |
| No barriers | (baseline) | | | | | |
| One or more | -.490 | .087 | 31.617 | 1 | .000 | .613 |
| **Relative condition of the local area** | | | 32.588 | 2 | .000 | |
| Mainly good | (baseline) | | | | | |
| Mainly fair | -.266 | .049 | 29.950 | 1 | .000 | .767 |
| Mainly bad or very bad | -.374 | .120 | 9.647 | 1 | .002 | .688 |

**Table A.1 The final non-response model (continued)**

| Variable | B | S.E. | Wald | Df | Sig. | Odds |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Relative condition of the address** | | | 34.379 | 2 | .000 | |
| Better | (baseline) | | | | | |
| About the same | -.444 | .082 | 29.293 | 1 | .000 | .641 |
| Worse | -.617 | .119 | 26.753 | 1 | .000 | .539 |
| **Percentage owner-occupied in quintiles** | | | 4.720 | 4 | .317 | |
| 1 lowest | (constant) | | | | | |
| 2 | -.057 | .073 | .628 | 1 | .428 | .944 |
| 3 | .089 | .075 | 1.394 | 1 | .238 | 1.093 |
| 4 | .008 | .078 | .011 | 1 | .918 | 1.008 |
| 5 highest | -.013 | .079 | .029 | 1 | .866 | .987 |
| **Population density**[1] | -.047 | .022 | 4.323 | 1 | .038 | .955 |
| **Constant** | .475 | .164 | 8.333 | 1 | .004 | 1.608 |

*The response is 1 = individual responding to the survey, 0 = non-response*

*Variables that are significant at the 0.05 level are included in the model. Owner-occupied was not significant in 2017 but was kept in the model for consistency.*

*The model $R^2$ is 0.023(Cox and Snell)*

*B is the estimate coefficient with standard error S.E.*

*The Wald-test measures the impact of the categorical variable on the model with the appropriate number of degrees of freedom (df). If the test is significant (sig. < 0.05), then the categorical variable is considered to be 'significantly associated' with the response variable and therefore included in the model*

The non-response weight was calculated as the inverse of the predicted response probabilities saved from the logistic regression model. The non-response weight was then combined with the selection weights to create the final non-response weight. The top 0.5% of the weight were trimmed before the weight was scaled to the achieved sample size (resulting in the weight being standardised around an average of one).

## Calibration weighting

The final stage of weighting was to adjust the final non-response weight so that the weighted sample matched the population in terms of age, sex and region.

Only adults aged 18 or over are eligible to take part in the survey, therefore the data have been weighted to the British population aged 18+ based on 2016 Mid-Year Estimates data from the Office for National Statistics/General Register Office for Scotland.

1 Population density refers to the number of people per unit of area. This was achieved by calculating the ratio between the number of people in private households in each PSU divided by the area of each PSU in hectares.

The survey data were weighted to the marginal age/sex and region distributions using calibration weighting. As a result, the weighted data should exactly match the population across these three dimensions. This is shown in Table A.2.

**Table A.2 Weighted and unweighted sample distribution, by region, age and sex**

| | Population | Unweighted respondents | Respondent weighted by selection weight only | Respondent weighted by un-calibrated non-response weight | Respondent weighted by final weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Region** | % | % | % | % | % |
| North East | 4.2 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| North West | 11.3 | 12.9 | 12.4 | 11.2 | 11.3 |
| Yorks. and Humber | 8.5 | 10.2 | 9.9 | 8.7 | 8.5 |
| East Midlands | 7.4 | 8.5 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 7.4 |
| West Midlands | 9.0 | 8.9 | 9.2 | 9.1 | 9.0 |
| East of England | 9.6 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 9.4 | 9.6 |
| London | 13.5 | 10.3 | 10.3 | 11.9 | 13.5 |
| South East | 14.1 | 12.6 | 13.0 | 14.5 | 14.1 |
| South West | 8.8 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 9.7 | 8.8 |
| Wales | 4.9 | 4.8 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 4.9 |
| Scotland | 8.7 | 8.0 | 7.8 | 8.7 | 8.7 |
| **Age & sex** | % | % | % | % | % |
| M 18–24 | 5.8 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 5.8 |
| M 25–34 | 8.6 | 6.1 | 6.6 | 6.9 | 8.6 |
| M 35–44 | 8.0 | 7.0 | 7.2 | 7.4 | 8.0 |
| M 45–54 | 8.8 | 8.1 | 8.6 | 8.6 | 8.8 |
| M 55–59 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 |
| M 60–64 | 3.3 | 4.1 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 3.3 |
| M 65+ | 10.4 | 13.6 | 12.9 | 12.5 | 10.4 |
| F 18–24 | 5.5 | 3.2 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 5.5 |
| F 25–34 | 8.6 | 8.7 | 8.3 | 8.6 | 8.6 |
| F 35–44 | 8.1 | 9.3 | 9.3 | 9.5 | 8.1 |
| F 45–54 | 9.1 | 10.1 | 10.6 | 10.7 | 9.1 |
| F 55–59 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| F 60–64 | 3.5 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 3.5 |
| F 65+ | 12.5 | 15.0 | 12.2 | 11.7 | 12.5 |
| *Base* | *50,340,973* | *3,988* | *3,988* | *3,988* | *3,988* |

The calibration weight is the final non-response weight to be used in the analysis of the 2017 survey; this weight has been scaled to the responding sample size. The range of the weights is given in Table A.3.

**Table A.3 Range of weights**

| | N | Minimum | Mean | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DU and person selection weight | 3,988 | .56 | 1.00 | 2.25 |
| Un-calibrated non-response and selection weight | 3,988 | .37 | 1.00 | 3.29 |
| Final calibrated non-response weight | 3,988 | .30 | 1.00 | 4.34 |

## Effective sample size

The effect of the sample design on the precision of survey estimates is indicated by the effective sample size (neff). The effective sample size measures the size of an (unweighted) simple random sample that would achieve the same precision (standard error) as the design being implemented. If the effective sample size is close to the actual sample size, then we have an efficient design with a good level of precision. The lower the effective sample size is, the lower the level of precision. The efficiency of a sample is given by the ratio of the effective sample size to the actual sample size. Samples that select one person per household tend to have lower efficiency than samples that select all household members. The final calibrated non-response weights have an effective sample size (neff) of 3,168 and efficiency of 79%.

## Weighted bases

All the percentages presented in this report are based on weighted data. Only unweighted bases are presented in the tables. Details of weighted bases for standard demographics are shown in Table A.4.

**Table A.4 Weighted bases for standard demographics, 2017**

| | Weighted base | Unweighted base |
|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | | |
| Male | *1944* | *1806* |
| Female | *2044* | *2182* |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-24 | *448* | *223* |
| 25-34 | *687* | *591* |
| 35-44 | *643* | *650* |
| 45-54 | *712* | *729* |
| 55-59 | *313* | *320* |
| 60-64 | *272* | *333* |
| 65+ | *910* | *1138* |
| **Ethnicity** | | |
| White | *3467* | *3562* |
| Black and Minority Ethnic | *516* | *421* |
| **Class group (NSSEC)** | | |
| Managerial & professional occupations | *1574* | *1593* |
| Intermediate occupations | *474* | *504* |
| Employers in small org; own account workers | *372* | *374* |
| Lower supervisory & technical occupations | *316* | *308* |
| Semi-routine & routine occupations | *1072* | *1081* |
| **Highest educational qualification** | | |
| Degree | *1111* | *1050* |
| Higher education below degree | *443* | *460* |
| A level or equivalent | *703* | *626* |
| O level or equivalent | *695* | *702* |
| CSE or equivalent | *312* | *324* |
| Foreign or other | *81* | *73* |
| No qualification | *634* | *747* |
| **Marital status** | | |
| Married | *2006* | *1809* |
| Living as married | *493* | *400* |
| Separated or divorced after marrying | *342* | *530* |
| Widowed | *226* | *380* |
| Not married | *920* | *868* |

# Questionnaire versions

Each address in each sector (sampling point) was allocated to one of the portions of the sample: A, B ,C or D. As mentioned earlier, a different version of the questionnaire was used with each of the four sample portions. If one serial number was version A, the next was version B,the third version C and the fourth version D. There were 2,418 issued addresses for each of the versions of the sample.

## Fieldwork

Interviewing was mainly carried out between July and October 2017, with a small number of interviews taking place in November 2017.

Fieldwork was conducted by interviewers drawn from The National Centre for Social Research's regular panel and conducted using face-to-face computer-assisted interviewing.[3] Interviewers attended a one-day briefing conference to familiarise them with the selection procedures and questionnaires, with the exception of experienced interviewers who completed a self-briefing containing updates to the questionnaire and procedures.

The mean interview length was 54 minutes for version A of the questionnaire, 50 minutes for version B, 55 minutes for version C and 55 minutes for version D.[4] Interviewers achieved an overall response rate of between 45.4% and 46.1%. Details are shown in Table A.5.

**Table A.5 Response rate on British Social Attitudes, 2017**

| | Number | Lower limit of response (%) | Upper limit of response (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Addresses issued | 9,672 | | |
| Out of scope | 891 | | |
| Upper limit of eligible cases | 8,781 | 100 | |
| Uncertain eligibility | 127 | 1.4 | |
| Lower limit of eligible cases | 8,654 | | 100 |
| Interview achieved | 3,988 | 45.4 | 46.1 |
| With self-completion | 3,258 | 37.1 | 37.6 |
| Interview not achieved | 4,666 | 53.1 | 53.9 |
| Refused | 3,519 | 40.1 | 40.7 |
| Non-contacted | 684 | 7.8 | 7.9 |
| Other non-response | 463 | 5.3 | 5.4 |

*Response is calculated as a range from a lower limit where all unknown eligibility cases (for example, address inaccessible, or unknown whether address is residential) are assumed to be eligible and therefore included in the unproductive outcomes, to an upper limit where all these cases are assumed to be ineligible and therefore excluded from the response calculation*

*'Refused' comprises refusals before selection of an individual at the address, refusals to the office, refusal by the selected person, 'proxy' refusals (on behalf of the selected respondent) and broken appointments after which the selected person could not be re-contacted*

*'Non-contacted' comprises households where no one was contacted and those where the selected person could not be contacted*

As in earlier rounds of the series, the respondent was asked to fill in a self-completion questionnaire which, whenever possible, was collected by the interviewer. Otherwise, the respondent was asked to post it to NatCen Social Research.

A total of 730 respondents (18% of those interviewed) did not return their self-completion questionnaire. Version A of the self-completion questionnaire was returned by 85% of respondents to the face-to-face interview, version B of the questionnaire was returned by 79%, version C by 80% and Version D by 83%. As in previous rounds, we judged that it was not necessary to apply additional weights to correct for non-response to the self-completion questionnaire.

## Advance letter

Advance letters describing the purpose of the survey and the coverage of the questionnaire, were sent to sampled addresses before the interviewer made their first call.[5]

## Analysis variables

A number of standard analyses have been used in the tables that appear in this report. The analysis groups requiring further definition are set out below. For further details see Stafford and Thomson (2006). Where relevant the name given to the relevant analysis variable is shown in square brackets – for example [HHincQ].

## Region

The dataset is classified by 12 regions, formerly the Government Office Regions.

## Standard Occupational Classification

Respondents are classified according to their own occupation, not that of the 'head of household'. Each respondent was asked about their current or last job, so that all respondents except those who had never worked were coded. Additionally, all job details were collected for all spouses and partners in work.

Since the 2011 survey, we have coded occupation to the Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (SOC 2010) instead of the Standard Occupational Classification 2000 (SOC 2000). The main socio-economic grouping based on SOC 2010 is the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). However, to maintain time-series, some analysis has continued to use the older schemes based on SOC 90 – Registrar General's Social Class and Socio-Economic Group – though these are now derived from SOC 2000 (which is derived from SOC 2010).

## National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC)

The combination of SOC 2010 and employment status for current or last job generates the following NS-SEC analytic classes:

- Employers in large organisations, higher managerial and professional
- Lower professional and managerial; higher technical and supervisory
- Intermediate occupations
- Small employers and own account workers
- Lower supervisory and technical occupations
- Semi-routine occupations
- Routine occupations

The remaining respondents are grouped as "never had a job" or "not classifiable". For some analyses, it may be more appropriate to classify respondents according to their current socio-economic status, which takes into account only their present economic position. In this case, in addition to the seven classes listed above, the remaining respondents not currently in paid work fall into one of the following categories: "not classifiable", "retired", "looking after the home", "unemployed" or "others not in paid occupations".

## Registrar General's Social Class

As with NS-SEC, each respondent's social class is based on his or her current or last occupation. The combination of SOC 90 with employment status for current or last job generates the following six social classes:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I | | Professional etc. occupations | 'Non-manual' |
| II | | Managerial and technical occupations | |
| III | (Non-manual) | Skilled occupations | |
| III | (Manual) | Skilled occupations | 'Manual' |
| IV | | Partly skilled occupations | |
| V | | Unskilled occupations | |

They are usually collapsed into four groups: I & II, III Non-manual, III Manual, and IV & V.

## Socio-Economic Group

As with NS-SEC, each respondent's Socio-Economic Group (SEG) is based on his or her current or last occupation. SEG aims to bring together people with jobs of similar social and economic status, and is derived from a combination of employment status and occupation. The full SEG classification identifies 18 categories, but these are usually condensed into six groups:

- Professionals, employers and managers
- Intermediate non-manual workers
- Junior non-manual workers
- Skilled manual workers
- Semi-skilled manual workers
- Unskilled manual workers

As with NS-SEC, the remaining respondents are grouped as "never had a job" or "not classifiable".

## Industry

All respondents whose occupation could be coded were allocated a Standard Industrial Classification 2007 (SIC 07). Two-digit class codes are used. As with social class, SIC may be generated on the basis of the respondent's current occupation only, or on his or her most recently classifiable occupation.

## Party identification

Respondents can be classified as identifying with a particular political party on one of three counts: if they consider themselves supporters of that party; closer to it than to others; or more likely to support it in the event of a general election. The three groups are generally described respectively as 'partisans', 'sympathisers' and 'residual identifiers'. In combination, the three groups are referred to as 'identifiers'. Responses are derived from the following questions:

> ***Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a supporter of any one political party? [Yes/No]***
>
> ***[If "No"/"Don't know"]***
>
> ***Do you think of yourself as a little closer to one political party than to the others? [Yes/No]***
>
> ***[If "Yes" at either question or "No"/"Don't know" at 2nd question]***
>
> ***Which one?/If there were a general election tomorrow, which political party do you think you would be most likely to support?***

*[Conservative; Labour; Liberal Democrat; Scottish National Party; Plaid Cymru; Green Party; UK Independence Party (UKIP)/Veritas; British National Party (BNP)/National Front; RESPECT/Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)/Socialist Party; Other party; Other answer; None; Refused to say]*

## Income

Respondent's household income is classified by the standard BSA variable [HHInc]. Two derived variables give income deciles/quartiles: [HHIncD] and [HHIncQ].

In 2017 BSA included some more detailed questions on respondent individual and household income. The dataset includes a derived variable using these data [eq_inc_quintiles] which is the net equivalised household income after housing costs in quintiles. More detailed income data can be made available to researchers on request.

## Attitude scales

Since 1986, the BSA surveys have included two attitude scales which aim to measure where respondents stand on certain underlying value dimensions – left–right and libertarian–authoritarian.[6] Since 1987 (except in 1990), a similar scale on 'welfarism' has also been included. Some of the items in the welfarism scale were changed in 2000–2001. The current version of the scale is shown below.

A useful way of summarising the information from a number of questions of this sort is to construct an additive index (Spector, 1992; DeVellis, 2003). This approach rests on the assumption that there is an underlying – 'latent' – attitudinal dimension which characterises the answers to all the questions within each scale. If so, scores on the index are likely to be a more reliable indication of the underlying attitude than the answers to any one question.

Each of these scales consists of a number of statements to which the respondent is invited to "agree strongly", "agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree" or "disagree strongly".

The items are:

## Left–right scale

*Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off [Redistrb]*

*Big business benefits owners at the expense of workers [BigBusnN]*

*Ordinary working people do not get their fair share of the nation's wealth [Wealth]*[7]

*There is one law for the rich and one for the poor [RichLaw]*

*Management will always try to get the better of employees if it gets the chance [Indust4]*

## Libertarian–authoritarian scale

*Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values. [TradVals]*

*People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. [StifSent]*

*For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence. [DeathApp]*

*Schools should teach children to obey authority. [Obey]*

*The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong. [WrongLaw]*

*Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards. [Censor]*

## Welfarism scale

*The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other. [WelfHelp]*

*The government should spend more money on welfare benefits for the poor, even if it leads to higher taxes. [MoreWelf]*

*Around here, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one. [UnempJob]*

*Many people who get social security don't really deserve any help. [SocHelp]*

*Most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another. [DoleFidl]*

*If welfare benefits weren't so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet. [WelfFeet]*

*Cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people's lives. [DamLives]*

*The creation of the welfare state is one of Britain's proudest achievements. [ProudWlf]*

The indices for the three scales are formed by scoring the leftmost, most libertarian or most pro-welfare position, as 1 and the rightmost, most authoritarian or most anti-welfarist position, as 5. The "neither agree nor disagree" option is scored as 3. The scores to all the questions in each scale are added and then divided by the number of items in the scale, giving indices ranging from 1 (leftmost, most libertarian, most pro-welfare) to 5 (rightmost, most authoritarian, most anti-welfare). The scores on the three indices have been placed on the dataset.[8]

The scales have been tested for reliability (as measured by Cronbach's alpha). The Cronbach's alpha (unstandardised items) for the scales in 2017 are 0.83 for the left–right scale, 0.764 for the libertarian–authoritarian scale and 0.84 for the welfarism scale. This level of reliability can be considered 'good' for the left–right and welfarism scales and 'respectable' for the libertarian-authoritarian scale (DeVellis, 2003: 95–96).

## Other analysis variables

These are taken directly from the questionnaire and to that extent are self-explanatory. The principal ones are:

- Sex
- Age
- Household income
- Economic position
- Religion
- Highest educational qualification obtained
- Marital status
- Benefits received

## Sampling errors

No sample precisely reflects the characteristics of the population it represents, because of both sampling and non-sampling errors. If a sample was designed as a random sample (if every adult had an equal and independent chance of inclusion in the sample), then we could calculate the sampling error of any percentage, *p*, using the formula:

$$\text{s.e. (p)} = \sqrt{\frac{\text{p(100 - p)}}{\text{n}}}$$

where *n* is the number of respondents on which the percentage is based. Once the sampling error had been calculated, it would be a straightforward exercise to calculate a confidence interval for the true population percentage. For example, a 95% confidence interval would be given by the formula:

p ± 1.96 x s.e. (p)

Clearly, for a simple random sample (srs), the sampling error depends only on the values of *p* and *n*. However, simple random sampling is almost never used in practice, because of its inefficiency in terms of time and cost.

As noted above, the BSA sample, like that drawn for most large-scale surveys, was clustered according to a stratified multi-stage design into 361 postcode sectors (or combinations of sectors).

With a complex design like this, the sampling error of a percentage giving a particular response is not simply a function of the number of respondents in the sample and the size of the percentage; it also depends on how that percentage response is spread within and between sample points.

The complex design may be assessed relative to simple random sampling by calculating a range of design factors (DEFTs) associated with it, where:

$$\text{DEFT} = \sqrt{\frac{\text{Variance of estimator with complex design, sample size n}}{\text{Variance of estimator with srs design, sample size n}}}$$

and represents the multiplying factor to be applied to the simple random sampling error to produce its complex equivalent. A design factor of one means that the complex sample has achieved the same precision as a simple random sample of the same size. A design factor greater than one means the complex sample is less precise than its simple random sample equivalent. If the DEFT for a particular characteristic is known, a 95% confidence interval for a percentage may be calculated using the formula:

p ± 1.96 x complex sampling error (p)

$$= p \pm 1.96 \times \text{DEFT} \times \sqrt{\frac{p(100 - p)}{n}}$$

Table A.6 gives examples of the confidence intervals and DEFTs calculated for a range of different questions. Most background questions were asked of the whole sample, whereas many attitudinal questions were asked only of a third or two-thirds of the sample; some were asked on the interview questionnaire and some on the self-completion supplement.

**Table A.6 Complex standard errors and confidence intervals of selected variables**

| | % (p) | Complex standard error of p | 95% confidence interval | | DEFT | *Base* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Lower | Upper | | |
| **Classification variables** | | | | | | |
| **Party identification (full sample)** | | | | | | |
| Conservative | 29.6% | 1.0% | 27.7% | 31.5% | 1.330 | *1263* |
| Labour | 38.7% | 1.0% | 36.7% | 40.8% | 1.359 | *1479* |
| Liberal Democrat | 5.9% | .5% | 5.0% | 6.9% | 1.254 | *241* |
| Scottish National Party | 2.3% | .3% | 1.8% | 2.9% | 1.223 | *86* |
| Plaid Cymru | .5% | .2% | .2% | 1.1% | 1.686 | *19* |
| UK Independence Party (UKIP) | 1.6% | .2% | 1.2% | 2.0% | .988 | *9* |
| Green Party | 2.2% | .3% | 1.7% | 2.9% | 1.355 | *79* |
| None | 13.1% | .7% | 11.7% | 14.6% | 1.361 | *515* |
| **Housing tenure (full sample)** | | | | | | |
| Owns | 63.0% | 1.0% | 61.0% | 65.0% | 1.344 | *2540* |
| Rents from local authority | 9.7% | .6% | 8.6% | 11.1% | 1.339 | *411* |
| Rents privately/HA | 26.0% | 1.1% | 24.0% | 28.2% | 1.543 | *994* |
| **Age of completing continuous full-time education (full sample)** | | | | | | |
| 16 or under | 40.5% | 1.0% | 38.5% | 42.6% | 1.340 | *1809* |
| 17 or 18 | 20.1% | .8% | 18.7% | 21.7% | 1.203 | *792* |
| 19 or over | 34.6% | 1.0% | 32.6% | 36.6% | 1.343 | *1294* |
| **Does anyone have access to the internet from this address? (full sample)** | | | | | | |
| Yes | 92.0% | .4% | 91.1% | 92.8% | 1.040 | *3543* |
| No | 8.0% | .4% | 7.2% | 8.9% | 1.043 | *444* |
| **Can I just check, would you describe the place where you live as... (full sample)** | | | | | | |
| ...a big city | 13.0% | .8% | 11.5% | 14.7% | 1.536 | *419* |
| the suburbs or outskirts of a big city | 22.4% | 1.3% | 19.9% | 25.1% | 2.003 | *872* |
| a small city or town, | 45.7% | 1.7% | 42.5% | 49.0% | 2.093 | *1900* |
| a country village | 15.5% | 1.1% | 13.4% | 17.8% | 1.957 | *654* |
| or, a farm or home in the country? | 2.7% | .4% | 2.0% | 3.7% | 1.619 | *112* |

**Table A.6 Complex standard errors and confidence intervals of selected variables (continued)**

| | % (p) | Complex standard error of p | 95% confidence interval | | DEFT | *Base* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Lower | Upper | | |
| **Attitudinal variables (face-to-face interview)** | | | | | | |
| **Benefits for the unemployed are … (three quarters of sample)** | | | | | | |
| … too low | 27.4% | .9% | 25.7% | 29.2% | 1.090 | *829* |
| … too high | 50.0% | 1.0% | 48.0% | 52.0% | 1.099 | *1459* |
| **How serious a problem is traffic congestion in towns, cities (three quarters of sample)** | | | | | | |
| A very serious problem | 19.8% | .9% | 18.1% | 21.6% | 1.227 | *558* |
| A serious problem | 36.2% | .9% | 34.5% | 38.0% | 1.005 | *1057* |
| Not a very serious problem | 32.2% | .9% | 30.4% | 34.0% | 1.068 | *962* |
| Not a problem at all | 11.6% | .7% | 10.3% | 13.1% | 1.221 | *379* |
| **How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics… (full sample)** | | | | | | |
| ... a great deal | 18.6% | .8% | 17.1% | 20.1% | 1.230 | *739* |
| quite a lot | 24.4% | .8% | 22.9% | 26.1% | 1.180 | *982* |
| some | 30.2% | .9% | 28.6% | 31.9% | 1.172 | *1179* |
| not very much | 17.6% | .7% | 16.2% | 19.1% | 1.223 | *708* |
| or, none at all? | 9.1% | .6% | 8.1% | 10.3% | 1.250 | *379* |
| **In your opinion is the NHS facing ... (one quarter of sample)** | | | | | | |
| ... no funding problem, | 3.0% | .7% | 1.9% | 4.8% | 1.308 | *25* |
| … a minor funding problem, | 10.2% | 1.3% | 8.0% | 13.0% | 1.317 | *102* |
| … a major funding problem, | 48.5% | 1.9% | 44.9% | 52.2% | 1.178 | *478* |
| … a severe funding problem? | 37.0% | 1.8% | 33.5% | 40.7% | 1.205 | *386* |
| **Attitudinal variables (self-completion)** | | | | | | |
| **Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off (full sample)** | | | | | | |
| Agree | 42.2% | 1.0% | 40.2% | 44.2% | 1.169 | *1342* |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 26.5% | .9% | 24.8% | 28.3% | 1.158 | *875* |
| Disagree | 30.0% | 1.0% | 28.1% | 31.9% | 1.193 | *989* |
| **People should be able to travel by plane as much as they like (one quarter of sample)** | | | | | | |
| Agree | 67.2% | 1.8% | 63.5% | 70.8% | 1.139 | *561* |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 18.1% | 1.5% | 15.3% | 21.2% | 1.117 | *155* |
| Disagree | 8.3% | 1.0% | 6.5% | 10.5% | 1.083 | *73* |
| **All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? (half sample)** | | | | | | |
| Satisfied | 83.0% | 1.1% | 80.6% | 85.1% | 1.211 | *1300* |
| Neither | 7.7% | .7% | 6.3% | 9.3% | 1.120 | *128* |
| Dissatisfied | 7.3% | .7% | 6.1% | 8.8% | 1.071 | *134* |

The table shows that most of the questions asked of all sample members have a confidence interval of around plus or minus two to four of the survey percentage. This means that we can be 95% certain that the true population percentage is within two to four per cent (in either direction) of the percentage we report.

Variables with much larger variation are, as might be expected, those closely related to the geographic location of the respondent (for example, whether they live in a big city, a small town or a village). Here, the variation may be as large as six or seven per cent either way around the percentage found on the survey. Consequently, the design effects calculated for these variables in a clustered sample will be greater than the design effects calculated for variables less strongly associated with area. Also, sampling errors for percentages based only on respondents to just one of the versions of the questionnaire, or on subgroups within the sample, are larger than they would have been had the questions been asked of everyone.

# Analysis techniques

## Regression

Regression analysis aims to summarise the relationship between a 'dependent' variable and one or more 'independent' variables. It shows how well we can estimate a respondent's score on the dependent variable from knowledge of their scores on the independent variables. It is often undertaken to support a claim that the phenomena measured by the independent variables *cause* the phenomenon measured by the dependent variable. However, the causal ordering, if any, between the variables cannot be verified or falsified by the technique. Causality can only be inferred through special experimental designs or through assumptions made by the analyst.

All regression analysis assumes that the relationship between the dependent and each of the independent variables takes a particular form. In *linear regression*, it is assumed that the relationship can be adequately summarised by a straight line. This means that a 1 percentage point increase in the value of an independent variable is assumed to have the same impact on the value of the dependent variable on average, irrespective of the previous values of those variables.

Strictly speaking the technique assumes that both the dependent and the independent variables are measured on an interval-level scale, although it may sometimes still be applied even where this is not the case. For example, one can use an ordinal variable (e.g. a Likert scale) as a *dependent* variable if one is willing to assume that there is an underlying interval-level scale and the difference between the observed ordinal scale and the underlying interval scale is due to random measurement error. Often the answers to a number of

Likert-type questions are averaged to give a dependent variable that is more like a continuous variable. Categorical or nominal data can be used as *independent* variables by converting them into dummy or binary variables; these are variables where the only valid scores are 0 and 1, with 1 signifying membership of a particular category and 0 otherwise.

The assumptions of linear regression cause particular difficulties where the *dependent* variable is binary. The assumption that the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables is a straight line means that it can produce estimated values for the dependent variable of less than 0 or greater than 1. In this case it may be more appropriate to assume that the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables takes the form of an S-curve, where the impact on the dependent variable of a one-point increase in an independent variable becomes progressively less the closer the value of the dependent variable approaches 0 or 1. *Logistic regression* is an alternative form of regression which fits such an S-curve rather than a straight line. The technique can also be adapted to analyse multinomial non-interval-level dependent variables, that is, variables which classify respondents into more than two categories.

The two statistical scores most commonly reported from the results of regression analyses are:

*A measure of variance explained*: This summarises how well all the independent variables combined can account for the variation in respondents' scores in the dependent variable. The higher the measure, the more accurately we are able in general to estimate the correct value of each respondent's score on the dependent variable from knowledge of their scores on the independent variables.

*A parameter estimate*: This shows how much the dependent variable will change on average, given a one-unit change in the independent variable (while holding all other independent variables in the model constant). The parameter estimate has a positive sign if an increase in the value of the independent variable results in an increase in the value of the dependent variable. It has a negative sign if an increase in the value of the independent variable results in a decrease in the value of the dependent variable. If the parameter estimates are standardised, it is possible to compare the relative impact of different independent variables; those variables with the largest standardised estimates can be said to have the biggest impact on the value of the dependent variable.

Regression also tests for the statistical significance of parameter estimates. A parameter estimate is said to be significant at the 5% level if the range of the values encompassed by its 95% confidence interval (see also section on sampling errors) are either all positive or all negative. This means that there is less than a 5% chance that the association we have found between the dependent variable and the independent variable is simply the result of sampling error and does not reflect a relationship that actually exists in the general population.

## Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical technique which aims to identify whether there are one or more apparent sources of commonality to the answers given by respondents to a set of questions. It ascertains the smallest number of *factors* (or dimensions) which can most economically summarise all of the variation found in the set of questions being analysed. Factors are established where respondents who gave a particular answer to one question in the set tended to give the same answer as each other to one or more of the other questions in the set. The technique is most useful when a relatively small number of factors are able to account for a relatively large proportion of the variance in all of the questions in the set.

The technique produces a *factor loading* for each question (or variable) on each factor. Where questions have a high loading on the same factor, then it will be the case that respondents who gave a particular answer to one of these questions tended to give a similar answer to each other at the other questions. The technique is most commonly used in attitudinal research to try to identify the underlying ideological dimensions which apparently structure attitudes towards the subject in question.

# Table and figure conventions

The following conventions are used for tables and figures throughout the report.

1. Data in the tables are from the 2017 British Social Attitudes survey unless otherwise indicated.
2. Tables are percentaged as indicated by the percentage signs.
3. In tables, '*' indicates less than 0.5 % but greater than zero, and '–' indicates zero.
4. When findings based on the responses of fewer than 100 respondents are reported in the text, reference is made to the small base size. These findings are excluded from line charts, but included in tables.
5. Percentages equal to or greater than 0.5 have been rounded up (e.g. 0.5 % = 1 %; 36.5 % = 37 %).
6. In many tables the proportions of respondents answering "Don't know" or not giving an answer are not shown. This, together with the effects of rounding and weighting, means that percentages will not always add up to 100 %.
7. The self-completion questionnaire was not completed by all respondents to the main questionnaire (see Technical details). Percentage responses to the self-completion questionnaire are based on all those who completed it.

8. The unweighted bases shown in the tables (the number of respondents who answered the question) are printed in small italics.
9. In time series line charts, survey readings are indicated by data markers. While the line between data markers indicates an overall pattern, where there is no data marker the position of the line cannot be taken as an accurate reading for that year.

## International Social Survey Programme

The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is run by a group of research organisations in different countries, each of which undertakes to field annually an agreed module of questions on a chosen topic area. Since 1985, an International Social Survey Programme module has been included in one of the BSA self-completion questionnaires. Each module is chosen for repetition at intervals to allow comparisons both between countries (membership is currently standing at 48) and over time. In 2017, the chosen subject was Social Networks, and the module was carried on the B and C versions of the self-completion questionnaire (knwbdri - spseedu). Further information on ISSP is available on their website: www.issp.org

## Notes

1. Until 1991 all British Social Attitudes samples were drawn from the Electoral Register (ER). However, following concern that this sampling frame might be deficient in its coverage of certain population subgroups, a 'splicing' experiment was conducted in 1991. We are grateful to the Market Research Development Fund for contributing towards the costs of this experiment. Its purpose was to investigate whether a switch to PAF would disrupt the time-series – for instance, by lowering response rates or affecting the distribution of responses to particular questions. In the event, it was concluded that the change from ER to PAF was unlikely to affect time trends in any noticeable ways, and that no adjustment factors were necessary. Since significant differences in efficiency exist between PAF and ER, and because we considered it untenable to continue to use a frame that is known to be biased, we decided to adopt PAF as the sampling frame for future British Social Attitudes surveys. For details of the PAF/ER 'splicing' experiment, see Lynn and Taylor (1995).
2. This includes households not containing any adults aged 18 or over, vacant dwelling units, derelict dwelling units, non-resident addresses and other deadwood.
3. In 1993 it was decided to mount a split-sample experiment designed to test the applicability of Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) to the British Social Attitudes survey series. CAPI has been used increasingly over the past decade as an alternative to traditional interviewing techniques. As the name implies, CAPI involves the use of a laptop computer during the interview, with the interviewer entering responses directly into the computer. One of the advantages of CAPI is that it significantly reduces both the amount of time spent on data processing and the number of coding and editing errors. There was, however, concern that a different interviewing technique might alter the distribution of responses and so affect the year-on-year consistency of British Social Attitudes data.

   Following the experiment, it was decided to change over to CAPI completely in 1994 (the self-completion questionnaire still being administered in the conventional way). The results of the experiment are discussed in the British Social Attitudes 11th Report (Lynn and Purdon, 1994).
4. Interview times recorded as less than 20 minutes were excluded, as these timings were likely to be errors.
5. An experiment was conducted on the 1991 British Social Attitudes survey (Jowell et al., 1992) which showed that sending advance letters to sampled addresses before fieldwork begins has very little impact on response rates. However, interviewers do find that an advance letter helps them to introduce the survey on the doorstep, and a majority of respondents have said that

they preferred some advance notice. For these reasons, advance letters have been used on the British Social Attitudes surveys since 1991.

6. Because of methodological experiments on scale development, the exact items detailed in this section have not been asked on all versions of the questionnaire each year.
7. In 1994 only, this item was replaced by: Ordinary people get their fair share of the nation's wealth *[Wealth1].*
8. In constructing the scale, a decision had to be taken on how to treat missing values ("Don't know" and "Not answered"). Respondents who had more than two missing values on the left–right scale and more than three missing values on the libertarian–authoritarian and welfarism scales were excluded from that scale. For respondents with fewer missing values, "Don't know" was recoded to the midpoint of the scale and "Not answered" was recoded to the scale mean for that respondent on their valid items.

## References

DeVellis, R.F. (2003), *Scale Development: Theory and Applications*, 2nd edition, Applied Social Research Methods Series, 26, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Evans, G., Health, A. and Lalljee, M. (1996), 'Measuring Left-Right and Libertarian-Authoritarian Values in the British Electorate' The British Journal of Sociology, **47(1)**: 93-112

Jowell, R., Brook, L., Prior, G. and Taylor, B. (1992), *British Social Attitudes: the 9th Report*, Aldershot: Dartmouth

Lynn, P. and Purdon, S. (1994), 'Time-series and lap-tops: the change to computer- assisted interviewing', in Jowell, R., Curtice, J., Brook, L. and Ahrendt, D. (eds.), *British Social Attitudes: the 11th Report*, Aldershot: Dartmouth

Lynn, P. and Taylor, B. (1995), 'On the bias and variance of samples of individuals: a comparison of the Electoral Registers and Postcode Address File as sampling frames', *The Statistician*, **44**: 173–194

Spector, P. (1992), *Summated Rating Scale Construction: An Introduction*, *Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences*, 82, Newbury Park, California: Sage

Stafford, R. and Thomson, K. (2006), *British Social Attitudes and Young People's Social Attitudes surveys 2003*: *Technical Report*, London: The National Centre for Social Research