Five years of unprecedented challenges

The impact of the 2019-2024 Parliament on public opinion

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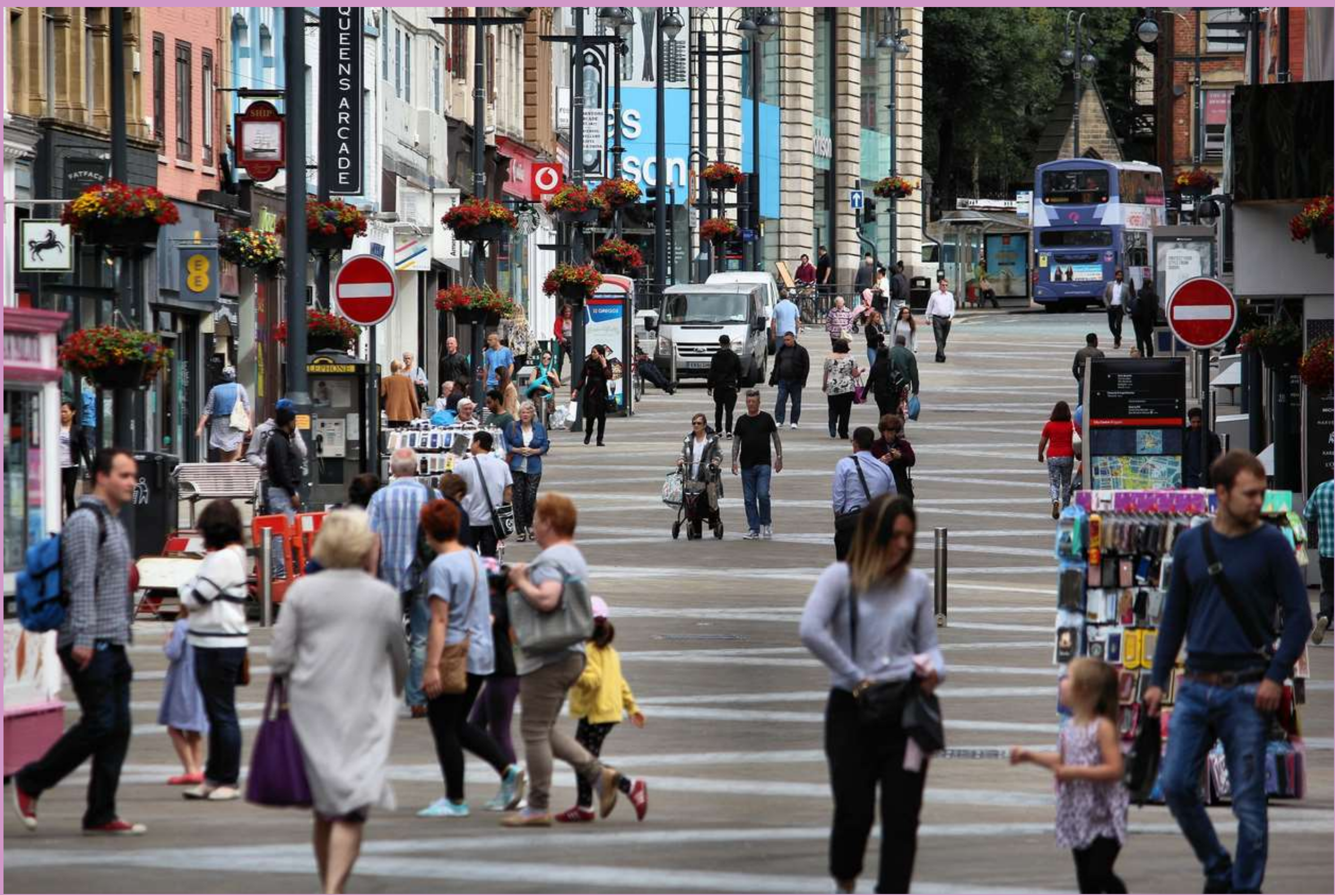

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The 2019-2024 Parliament has witnessed unprecedented economic and political turmoil. The COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the associated ‘cost of living crisis’ have adversely impacted living standards and the economy. Public services have struggled to recover too. Meanwhile, two Prime Ministers were ousted from office. This chapter assesses how far these developments have affected public opinion and the implications our findings might have for the next government.

Dissatisfaction with public services

Despite record levels of taxation and spending, dissatisfaction with the health service is at an all-time low. Yet, so far, there has only been a limited reaction against the heightened level of taxation and spending.

- Dissatisfaction with the health service has more than doubled from 25% in 2019 to a record high of 52% now.
- Dissatisfaction with social care has increased over the same period from 37% to 57%.
- 46% say the government should increase taxation and spending, only slightly down on 53% in 2019.

Reactions to policy challenges

Public attitudes towards some policy issues have changed in the wake of the challenges of the last five years.

- Now, only 39% think migrants are good for Britain’s economy, down from 47% in 2019.
- 73% believe there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, up from 68% in 2019.
- 57% of people now express ‘Eurosceptic’ views, compared with 69% in 2019.

Low trust and confidence in governing arrangements

After rising in the wake of the delivery of Brexit, trust and confidence in government has fallen back to where it was five years ago, while a long-term decline in support for the monarchy has continued.

- A record high of 45% "almost never" trust governments to put the nation's interests first, up from 34% in 2019.
- After falling to 61% in 2020, 79% now say the system of governing Britain needs "a lot of improvement", the same as in 2019.
- Only 54% now say it is "very important or quite important" for Britain to have a monarchy, down from 68% in 2018.

Introduction

Britain today looks markedly different to how it did when the Conservative Party secured a majority in the House of Commons in the December 2019 general election. Since that ballot, the UK has faced a series of profound social and economic challenges that are likely to leave a substantial legacy.

The 2019 election was fought on the issue of Brexit. Winning an overall majority enabled Boris Johnson to “get Brexit done” (Walker, 2001). The UK left the European Union (EU) at the end of January 2020 and, after further negotiations, left the EU single market and Customs Union at the end of that year. Brexit has required the UK to adapt to a different relationship with its nearest economic and political partner, while attempting to strike new trade deals with the rest of the world. Yet rather than reducing immigration, as many who had voted Leave anticipated, net migration has increased to record levels (Migration Observatory, 2024).

No sooner had Brexit been delivered, than the country was faced with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. People’s daily lives were severely restricted in order to reduce the spread of the virus. Much of the economy was shut down, creating a major increase in demand for public spending to support jobs and businesses via a furlough scheme. Public services – particularly the NHS and social care – were placed under severe pressure. To pay for the support that was needed, public spending – and subsequently taxes – were increased by more than at any time since 1945.

Then, in February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, worsening a rise in inflation – especially in respect of energy costs – that had already been instigated by the disruption to supply chains occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the government subsidising energy bills during the winter of 2022-2023, inflation rose to its highest level since the 1970s and outstripped the growth in wages. Some people’s difficulties were compounded by a sharp rise in mortgage interest rates to levels not seen since the financial crash of 2008, while many in private rental accommodation suffered a sharp increase in their rent. The resulting decline in living standards led to the highest level of labour unrest since the 1980s, primarily in the public sector, as workers sought to protect the real level of their pay. Although the economy bounced back from the worst of the pandemic, it subsequently slipped again into recession after an attempt by the government to make a ‘dash for growth’ by lowering taxes, resulting in a crisis on the financial markets. All in all, the 2019-2024 Parliament proved to be the most difficult period for the economy since 1945.

In the eyes of some, the COVID-19 pandemic not only damaged the economy but also cast a spotlight on the extent of inequality in Britain. Those who were less well-off certainly experienced higher levels of morbidity and mortality. Lockdown exposed differences in economic security and in the housing conditions under which people were living. Meanwhile, the subsequent ‘cost of living crisis’, in which food and energy prices rose especially sharply, also particularly affected those who were less well off.

The 2019-2024 Parliament also witnessed unprecedented political change. After more than 70 years on the throne, HM Queen Elizabeth II passed away in September 2022, resulting in the accession of her eldest son, King Charles III. Meanwhile not one, but two Prime Ministers were brought down by their parliamentary colleagues. Boris Johnson's government collapsed in July 2022 after it came to light that lockdown regulations had not always been closely followed in 10 Downing Street and revelations that he had not always been honest about what happened on this and other matters. Then, just a few months later, his successor, Liz Truss, lost the confidence of her colleagues in October 2022 following the crisis caused by her 'mini-budget'. No previous post-war parliament had seen the tenancy of 10 Downing Street change not just once but twice.

In this chapter, we assess what impact the experience of the last five years has had on the landscape of public attitudes. Has public opinion been significantly reshaped, or will politicians campaigning on the election trail find themselves in familiar territory? Will the next government be attempting to implement its policy agenda against a largely unchanged backcloth, or will it be facing an electorate with very different social and economic hopes and expectations? In short, is there reason to believe that the 2019-2024 Parliament could prove an epoch-defining moment in British public opinion – or despite everything, does the picture now look much the same as it did before 2019?

We attempt to answer these questions in four main sections. First, we assess trends in attitudes towards public services and the taxes that are needed to pay for them. Second, we consider public opinion towards some of the consequences of the economic challenges faced by the country over the last few years, that is, inequality, the role of trade unions and housing. Thereafter, we assess attitudes towards what are sometimes termed 'cultural' issues such as Brexit and immigration. Finally, we consider what effect this period of economic and political turmoil has had on attitudes towards the country's political institutions. We conclude by pulling together our findings to assess whether the public mood in Britain is markedly different now from what it was five years ago.

Public services

The NHS

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic represented one of the largest public health challenges any UK government has had to face. Although the pandemic resulted in significant pressures being felt across a range of public services, it was the NHS upon which perhaps the most visible burden fell. It was, after all, the health service – despite having endured a decade of lower increases in spending and workforce shortages (Morris et al, 2023) – that was responsible for treating rising numbers of COVID-19 patients in highly challenging circumstances as the pandemic progressed, and for subsequently negotiating the significant backlog of patients with a range of other health issues who had incurred delays in their treatment during the peak of the crisis (BMA, 2024).

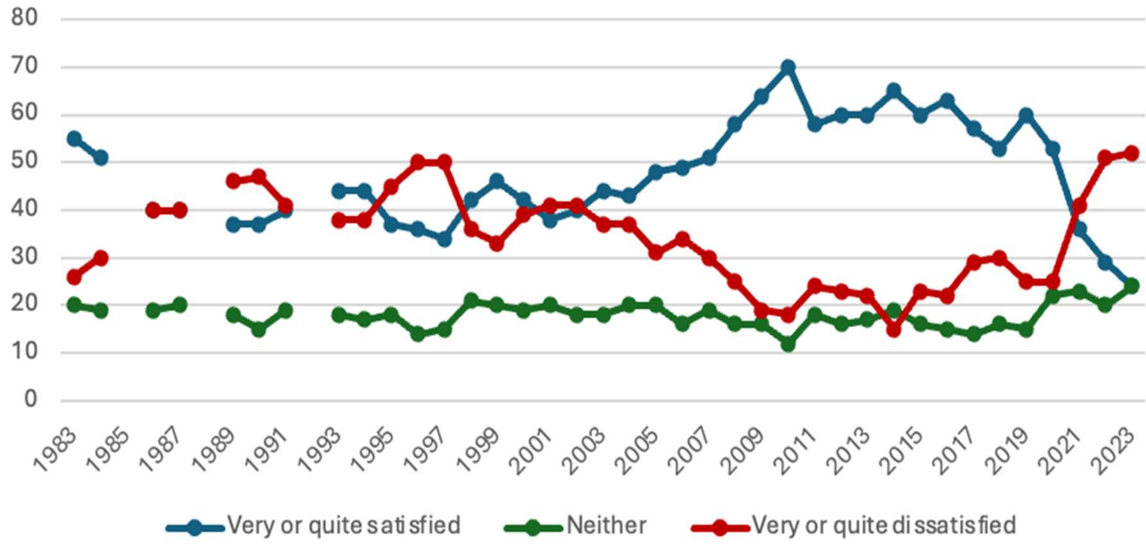
The role of the NHS and its staff in navigating the pandemic was the subject of considerable public attention, with hospital staff recognised as 'front line heroes' and a regular show of support taking place in the form of a weekly Clap for Carers (Manthorpe et al, 2022). However, despite major government investment in the health service throughout the pandemic (King's Fund, 2023), sustained poor performance indicators have suggested that the service is continuing to feel the after-effects of the public health crisis (Morris et al, 2023).

One manifestation of these pressures is the high waiting times endured by NHS patients since the height of the public health crisis. In the past – particularly during the early-to-mid 1990s – long waits for NHS treatments have contributed to increases in dissatisfaction with the health service (Morris and Maguire, 2022). Perhaps, then, we might expect public satisfaction with the NHS to be lower now than was the case prior to the commencement of the current government. This indeed appears to be the case. Since 1983, the British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) has measured attitudes towards the NHS by asking the following question:

> ***All in all, how satisfied or dissatisfied would you say you are with the way in which the National Health Service runs nowadays?***
>
> ***Very satisfied***
> ***Quite satisfied***
> ***Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied***
> ***Quite dissatisfied***
> ***Very dissatisfied***

Data for this entire period is presented in Figure 1. It shows that, at the time of the Conservatives' 2019 election victory, overall satisfaction with the NHS stood at six in 10 (60%) with just a quarter (25%) indicating that they were dissatisfied. Since then, however, levels of satisfaction with the health service have collapsed, with just under a quarter (24%) currently stating they feel satisfied and 52% stating they feel dissatisfied. Much of this drop in satisfaction occurred between 2020 and 2022.

Figure 1 Satisfaction with the NHS, 1983-2023



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

The dramatic shift in attitudes towards the NHS throughout the life of the current Parliament has, of course, occurred against the backdrop of an unprecedented set of circumstances. However, attitudes continued to shift in a negative direction in the years after the pandemic's peak in tandem with a rise in waiting times for NHS treatments. Previous evidence suggests that this trend is not irreversible; as Figure 1 indicates, the success of New Labour in reducing waiting times following their 1997 election victory presaged a rise in levels of satisfaction with the NHS that was sustained throughout the following decade. The incoming government may therefore look to prioritise a reduction in waiting times in order to reverse the current trajectory of public attitudes – although, given the constraints under which the NHS has been operating for a significant period, this may prove to be a particularly challenging prospect.

Social care

Another public service which felt the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic particularly keenly was social care. As with the NHS, the social care system approached the pandemic in the wake of long-standing structural pressures. For over a decade, prior to the onset of COVID-19, spending on social care in Britain had faced a series of constraints (Ham, 2023), while staff vacancy levels had risen markedly throughout the 2010s (King's Fund, 2024).

Despite traditionally not being afforded the same degree of public scrutiny as the NHS (Morris and Maguire, 2022), the level of excess mortality in social care settings during the height of the pandemic placed the service front and centre of the news agenda (Scobie, 2021) and highlighted the pressures under which social care services were operating. These pressures intensified further in the wake of the end of freedom of movement provisions following Britain's departure from the EU, a development which further increased the level of staff shortages within the sector (Allen and Shembavnekar, 2023).

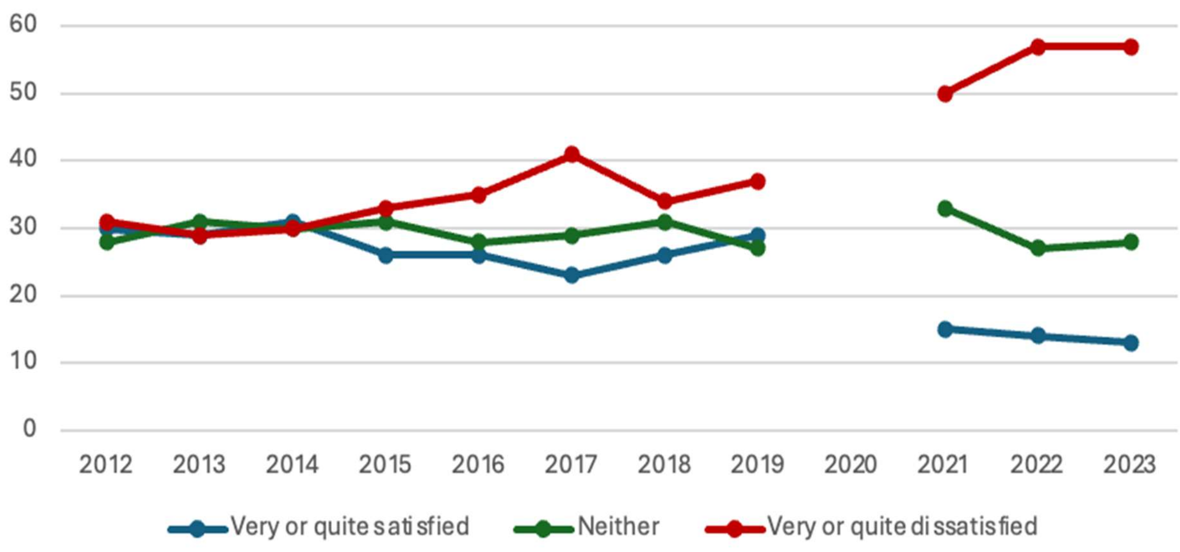
Given the intensity of the spotlight on social care in recent years, perhaps we might expect the public to have become more acutely aware of the issues faced by the service – and for attitudes towards social care services to have followed a similar trajectory to those seen in the case of the NHS. Since 2012, we have measured perceptions of the performance of the social care system in Britain by asking the following question:

> ***From your own experience, or from what you have heard, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with social care for people who cannot look after themselves because of illness, disability or old age?***[1]
>
> ***Very satisfied***
> ***Quite satisfied***
> ***Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied***
> ***Quite dissatisfied***
> ***Very dissatisfied***

Data for this period are presented in Figure 2. They indicate that, over the course of the past five years, views on social care have shifted in a markedly negative direction. While, in 2019, around three in 10 (29%) felt satisfied with social care services in Britain, this figure has now dropped to just slightly more than one in ten (13%). At the same time, dissatisfaction with social care has risen from 37% to 57%. As was the case with dissatisfaction with the NHS, this change appeared to occur prior to 2022, although, because data were not collected in 2020, we cannot be certain of the exact timing of this change. In both cases then, the public appears to have been alerted by the pandemic to the myriad challenges faced by this sector, with levels of satisfaction continuing to deteriorate in the years after the height of the public health crisis.

[1] In 2012, this question referred to "social care provided by local authorities for people who cannot look after themselves because of illness, disability or old age".

Figure 2 Satisfaction with social care, 2012-2023



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

Taxation and spending

Our analysis thus far suggests that the period since the 2019 general election has seen a marked drop in satisfaction with the way key public services are operating. One way for the incoming government to address this state of affairs might be to commit to a higher level of spending to help bolster ailing services such as health and social care, generating the additional funds required to do so through an increase in taxation. But would the public be receptive to such a commitment?

The events of the past five years might lead us to anticipate one of two things. Where public services are perceived to have deteriorated, we might expect people to indicate that taxation and spending should be raised so that the situation can be addressed fiscally. As demonstrated above, views on the performance of health and social care services have worsened considerably in recent years; perhaps, then, we might expect support for increased taxation and public spending to have risen in line with these trends.

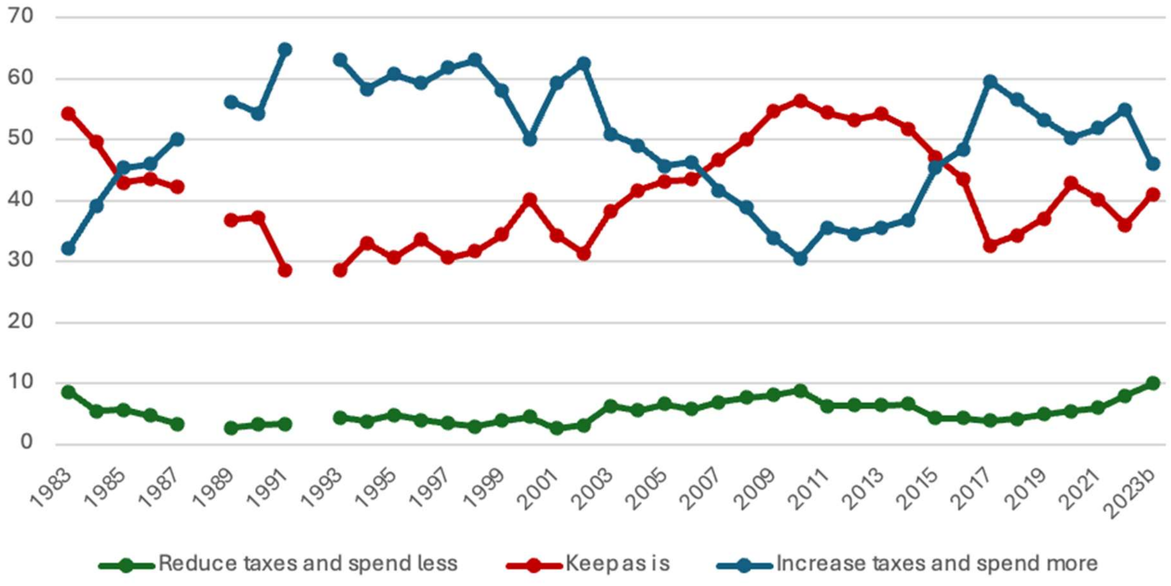
However, given the marked increase in public spending that occurred during the pandemic – in particular to support the NHS in its clinical response to the crisis and to cover the wages of those who could not work during lockdown (Brien and Keep, 2023) – it might also be the case that the public feels such increases in public spending has gone far enough. In short, we might expect something akin to a thermostatic response (Wlezien, 1995; Soroka and Wlezien, 2005), whereby the public readjust their preferences according to the temperature; when taxation and spending is perceived as having been too high for too long, the 'thermostat' is turned down and support for further increases falls away.

Since its inception in 1983, BSA has asked the following question:

> ***Suppose the government had to choose between the following three options. Which do you think it should choose?***
>
> ***Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits***
> ***Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now***
> ***Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits***

Data for the entire duration of the survey are presented in Figure 3. Recent figures perhaps suggest that a combination of the two potential developments described above has occurred. In 2019, support for increased taxation and public spending stood at over a half (53%) while just under four in 10 (37%) believed that levels of tax and spend should be kept as they were. Subsequently – and despite the marked rise in public expenditure in the wake of the pandemic – a majority continued to favour support for increased taxation and spending during the first years of the 2020s.

Figure 3 Attitudes towards taxation and spending, 1983-2023



Data for 2023a is taken from the January 2023 wave of the NatCen Panel

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

However, we may be witnessing a more recent shift in public mood. While the proportion who feel that the level of taxation and spending should be kept as it currently is remains at around four in 10 (41%), at 46%, the proportion in favour of raising taxes and spending more on key public services now sits at its lowest level since 2015. Meanwhile, the proportion who say that taxation and spending should be reduced – albeit remaining at just one in 10 (10%) – is now at a record high. Perhaps the public's thermostat has responded to the sustained increase in taxation and spending witnessed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with support for the kind of increased expenditure that might be required to address the issues faced by organisations such as the NHS and social care services starting to fall away.

That said, such a thermostatic response is rather less marked than we might anticipate, given the record increase in taxation and spending witnessed since the onset of the pandemic (Emmerson et al, 2023). When compared with previous shifts in attitudes following a change in the level of public expenditure – for instance, in the years immediately after the inauguration of the New Labour government in 1997 – the recent fall in support for increased spending appears relatively slight. As shown in Figure 3, three years after New Labour’s election victory, support for increased tax and spend had declined by 12 percentage points; although followed by a short-term reversal, this proportion continued to fall throughout the 2000s. In contrast, our latest reading – three years after the commencement of the public health crisis and the initiation of the largest rise in public spending spend since World War II – indicates that support for further increases in tax and spend has dropped by just four percentage points. Perhaps the incoming administration may find a public more supportive of the kind of heightened taxes and increased spending that may be required to address declining perceptions of key public services than may be expected, given the level of taxation and spending during the past five years.

Economic challenges

Poverty and inequality

As highlighted previously, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed long-standing challenges across a range of public policy areas. In addition, for many people the crisis underscored more broadly the extent to which Britain is an unequal society, with inequality illuminated across several dimensions (Blundell et al, 2022). Both morbidity and mortality, as a result of COVID-19, proved to be higher in less affluent areas (Kontopantelis et al, 2022) while rates of long COVID have been significantly elevated among those in the most deprived parts of the UK (Shabnam et al, 2023). Meanwhile, job losses as a result of the pandemic were felt most keenly among low-paid and ethnic minority workers (Powell et al, 2022) and learning time among pupils from lower socioeconomic groups fell more dramatically when compared with their peers from more affluent backgrounds (Cattan et al, 2021). Moreover, the cumulative economic impacts of the pandemic compounded inequalities in material living standards, with those in low-paid jobs more likely to have their income affected during the public health crisis (Papoutsaki and Wilson, 2020), and more likely to be unable to afford basic items (Handscomb and Judge, 2020) and to keep up with rent or mortgage repayments (Borquin et al, 2020).

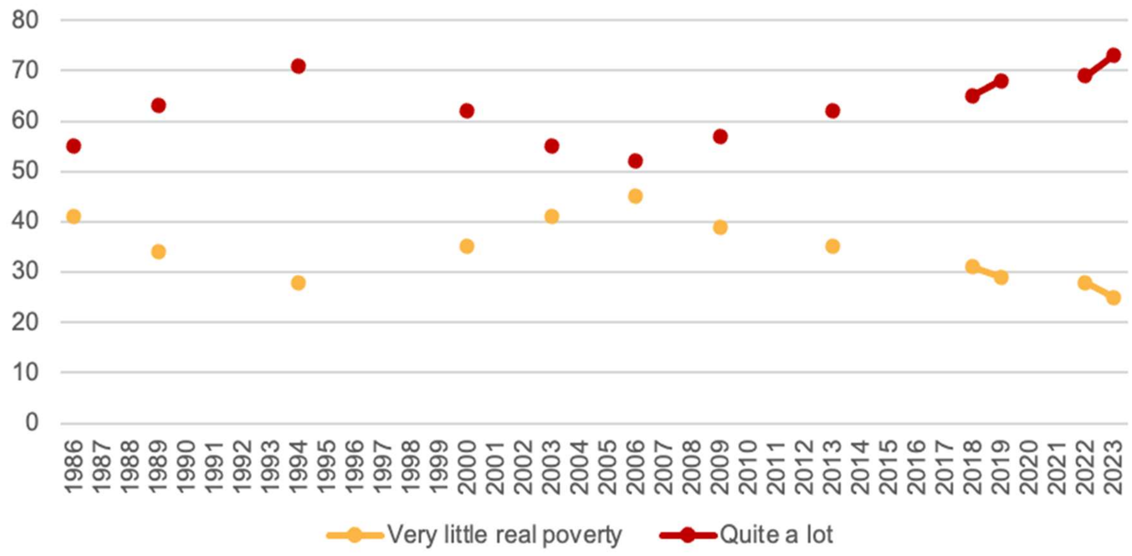
The inequalities exposed by the pandemic have since been further highlighted by the emergence of a ‘cost of living crisis’. (Harari et al, 2024). Just as those with fewer material resources struggled disproportionately with the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in inflation and increased prices of food, energy, and everyday essentials seen since late 2021 has particularly impacted the poorest in society (Resolution Foundation, 2022), with three-quarters of the lowest-income households going without essentials (Earwaker, 2022). At the same time, a reduction in mean disposable income among the poorest fifth of households in 2021 and 2022, combined with an increase among the richest fifth, has led to a further rise in income inequality, with the UK’s Gini coefficient – a measure of income inequality between the richest and poorest members of society – rising from 32.5% in 2019 (ONS, 2019) to 35.7% according to the most recently-available data (ONS, 2023a).

Perhaps then, we might expect people’s perceptions of the level of poverty in Britain to have shifted in recent years, with a greater acceptance of the hardships faced by those who are less well-off. For almost four decades, BSA has measured perceptions of the nature and extent of poverty in Britain by asking the following question:

> ***Some people say there is very little real poverty in Britain today. Others say there is quite a lot. Which comes closest to your view ...***
>
> ***…that there is very little real poverty in Britain,***
> ***or, that there is quite a lot?***

As shown in Figure 4, our expectation is, to a degree, borne out by BSA data. In 2019, around two-thirds (68%) felt that there was “quite a lot” of real poverty in Britain, while just one in three (29%) believed that “very little real poverty” existed. Although the survey’s 2022 iteration suggested that perceptions of the prevalence of poverty in Britain had remained relatively consistent over the previous three years, this year’s data indicate that almost three-quarters (73%) now believe that there is “quite a lot” of real poverty in Britain – the highest proportion recorded in almost four decades. Conversely, the proportion who assert that there is “very little” poverty has slipped to just a quarter (25%) – representing a record low.

Figure 4 Perceptions of poverty in Britain, 1986-2023



The data on which Figure 4 is based can be found in Table A.4 in the appendix to this chapter.

When put into a broader context, however, this trend appears of a piece with the direction of travel prior to 2019. As shown in Figure 4, despite a sustained decline in the number who believed that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, this proportion began to rise once more immediately following the 2008 recession – a pattern that continued throughout the 2010s and has remained unchecked throughout the lifetime of this Parliament. Our latest data therefore indicate that although the current government has been unable to stem the rise in perceptions of poverty, in attempting to address this issue the incoming administration will be required to reverse a trend spanning almost two decades, rather than one simply resulting from the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and ‘cost of living crisis’.

Trade unions

Rising perceptions of substantial levels of poverty in recent years have been accompanied by the highest level of labour unrest since the 1980s, with workers across a range of sectors voting via their trade unions to take industrial action in response to real-terms pay decreases and a decline in working conditions. With high-profile strikes taking place among public sector workers including consultants and junior doctors, nurses and ambulance workers, teachers and civil servants, the UK lost more working days to labour disputes in 2022 than it had done in any single year for over three decades (ONS, 2023b) – leading to the postponement of NHS operations, the closure of schools, and the understaffing of key government departments.

Negotiations between the government and trade unions representing striking public sector workers became particularly salient during this period, with discussions between ministers and union officials proving especially fractious in the context of healthcare, education, and public transport (Gill, 2022; Davies, 2023; Hoddinott, 2023). In response to the strikes, the government has attempted to apply a range of limitations on the ability of trade unions to organise public sector walk-outs and to secure minimum service levels for rail, border security, and ambulance services (UK Government, 2023). Set against this context, it appears that labour relations may prove to be a key area of concern for the incoming administration.

But where does the public stand on this issue, and does this picture differ when compared with previous periods of labour unrest? Moreover, might the distribution of opinion present a challenge for the incoming administration in approaching labour relations? In its early years, BSA regularly measured perceptions of the power held by trade unions. This year's survey presented respondents with the following item for the first time since 2007:

Do you think that trade unions in this country have too much power or too little power?

Far too much power
Too much power
About the right amount of power
Too little power
Far too little power

As shown in Table 1, the latest data indicate that modern-day Britain is highly divided on the appropriate role and function of trade unions. The proportion who feel that trade unions hold "about the right amount" of influence currently stands at around three in 10. Although we cannot be certain whether this proportion has changed over the period of the current Parliament, it is worth noting that the level was last this low during the 1980s in the midst of a series of high-profile industrial disputes by labour groups including miners and postal workers, suggesting that attitudes have become more polarised once more. However, in contrast with the 1980s, when people were much more likely to feel that trade unions had too much power than too little, now the balance of opinion is almost evenly divided.

Table 1 Perceptions of trade union power, 1985-2023

	1985	1986	1987	1989	1990	1994
Too much	54	53	48	40	35	17
About right	28	30	32	33	45	45
Too little	11	11	13	19	13	28
Unweighted base	*1530*	*1321*	*1281*	*1516*	*1197*	*970*
	1996	**1998**	**2006**	**2007**	**2023**	
Too much	18	15	14	15	29	
About right	48	48	44	42	30	
Too little	22	20	20	19	27	
Unweighted base	*989*	*2531*	*2818*	*2731*	*1217*	

This level of division and dissatisfaction with the balance of power held by trade unions presents a challenge for the incoming administration. Although the last time similar levels of labour unrest were seen in the UK a majority felt that trade unions held too much sway, this sentiment is far less prominent today. The new government may therefore face the dual challenge of conducting negotiations with unions from a less advantageous position than was the case during the 1980s, while also attempting to pitch these discussions at a tone which is likely to find more public support than opposition.

Housing

Although front-line services such as the NHS and social care bore the brunt of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it also highlighted the existence of a series of long-term structural issues with housing policy in Britain. Ahead of the onset of the crisis, over four million people in the UK lived in homes that failed to meet the government's minimum definition of a 'decent home' (MHCLG 2019), while average house prices had risen by over 40% in the decade to November 2019 (ONS, 2020) and over one million households remained on local authority waiting lists for social housing across Britain (MHCLG, 2021). Construction output fell by 40% at the start of the pandemic (OECD, 2020), placing further pressure on existing housing stocks and contributing to a shortage of around 1.5 million homes (Shelter, 2024). Meanwhile, poor-quality housing was identified as having contributed to the spread of the virus (Centre for Ageing Better, 2019) and causing additional stress and anxiety during periods of lockdown (Gurney, 2021), with inequalities in the standard of housing – particularly in the private rental sector – reinforcing the marginalisation of particular groups in society and their susceptibility to social isolation and mental ill health (McCall et al, 2022). Further, despite a temporary moratorium on evictions during the height of the pandemic, no-fault evictions had, by early 2022, increased significantly when compared with pre-pandemic levels, a phenomenon that had particularly stark impacts for those with fewer financial resources (Shelter, 2022).

One way to attempt to address the problems that exist within the housing sector is to increase the supply of good-quality housing by building more homes. Indeed, despite a long history of opposition to residential developments (Inch et al, 2020), given the issues with housing that were illuminated so starkly during the pandemic, perhaps we might anticipate the public now to be broadly supportive of such a move. Since 2010, BSA has gauged receptiveness to such an endeavour by asking the following question:

Would you support or oppose more homes being built in your local area?

Strongly support
Support
Neither support nor oppose
Oppose
Strongly oppose

Contrary to our expectations, Table 2 offers little sign of enhanced support for building more homes locally in recent years. In 2018 – the year immediately prior to the last election – a considerably higher proportion supported the building of more homes in their local area than opposed the proposition, with 57% suggesting they would be in favour of such an idea, compared with just 23% who were resistant. However, over the period of the current Parliament, the balance of opinion has shifted against this idea, with four in ten supporting the building of new homes and three in ten opposing it (even lower levels of support were measured in 2021)[2].

Table 2 Attitudes towards the building of new homes, 2010-2023

	2010	**2013**	**2014**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**
Support	30	47	56	57	55	57
Neither	22	20	20	17	20	17
Oppose	45	31	21	24	21	23
Unweighted base	*3297*	*929*	*2449*	*2525*	*2617*	*2510*

[2] Some of the change between 2018 and 2021 may have been caused by the change in study design in 2020, although this is unlikely to explain all of the change. Trend data from YouGov (2024) also show a decline in support for an increase in house building from 2019 to 2021, and suggest that support is no higher now than it was at the start of the 2019-2014 Parliament.

Table 2 Attitudes towards the building of new homes, 2010-2023 (continued)

	2021	**2023**
Support	34	41
Neither	34	30
Oppose	31	29
Unweighted base	*3138*	*5578*

In spite, then, of the issues with housing highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems that the electorate became less supportive of the construction of additional local housing rather than more so – perhaps occasioned by lockdown restrictions which led to people spending more time in their homes and in their immediate local area. Consequently, and despite the indication that backing for the construction of new homes locally increased somewhat in the years following the peak of the public health crisis, opinion now appears far more divided on the issue of housebuilding than was the case immediately prior to the inauguration of the current Parliament.

While the construction of additional homes might appear to be an effective way to address the pressures on the current housing stock, finding the political means to achieve this has traditionally proved challenging (Cheshire, 2023). This has been most recently demonstrated by the difficulties encountered by the current government in achieving changes to the planning system during the lifetime of this Parliament (Foster et al, 2024). Although the Labour Party has outlined their proposals to reform the planning system should they assume office (Labour, 2023), the trajectory of attitudes throughout the course of the past five years may suggest a far less amenable environment in which to do so than existed prior to 2019.

Cultural Issues

EU membership

The political turbulence driven by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the squeeze on living standards generated by the cost-of-living crisis immediately followed another major event – the departure of the UK from the EU following a referendum in 2016, ending Britain's membership of the supranational institution after a period spanning almost five decades. Although the decision came as a consequence of the result of a ballot held three and a half years previously, the UK did not formally leave the EU until 31 January 2020 – a development which occurred only after a long and drawn-out Article 50 process negotiating Britain's departure from the institution, the rejection of a Brexit deal formulated by the then Prime Minister Theresa May in October 2019, and the subsequent election victory of Boris Johnson on a promise to "get Brexit done" (Conservatives, 2019). Britain's formal withdrawal from the EU was followed by a transition period, with the UK leaving both the single market and customs union 11 months later on 31 December 2020.

The implementation of Brexit gave rise to a series of political tensions which unfolded at an institutional level within government, Parliament, and the civil service (Blick and Salter, 2021) and between those in the electorate who hold a more liberal set of values and those who adopt a more socially conservative outlook (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020). It also posed particular difficulties for the relationship between the constituent nations of the UK, with challenges to the upholding of the Good Friday Agreement (European Parliament, 2017) and continued debate about the validity of the continued union between Scotland and the rest of Britain in the wake of a majority result north of the border to Remain (Curtice and Montagu, 2020). The UK's period outside of the EU has also instigated debate about the impact of withdrawal for the economy and immigration – two major pillars of the pre-referendum Brexit debate (Curtice, 2016). While some feel that the UK is better off outside of the EU, others argue that the economic impacts have been deleterious (Curtice, 2023), while the anticipated reduction in levels of migration – an issue which formed a foundation of the Leave campaign – has failed to materialise (ONS, 2023c).

Since 1993, BSA has included a question designed to measure people's long-term preferences regarding the nature of Britain's relationship with Europe. Amended in the wake of the EU referendum to reflect the result of the ballot, this question currently asks respondents:

> ***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 be to…***
>
> ***Be outside the European Union***
> ***Be part of the EU but try to reduce the EU's powers***
> ***Be part of the EU and try to keep the EU's powers as they are***
> ***Be part of the EU and try to increase the EU's powers***
> ***Work for the formation of a single European government***

Notwithstanding these amendments, throughout its history the question's third, fourth and fifth options have indicated a desire to either maintain the balance of power between the EU and its member states or to enhance the influence that lies with the EU. Meanwhile, the first and second options have encapsulated a desire to adopt a looser relationship with the institution than was the case before the UK's departure. In other words, while those who select any of the latter three options may be classed as being broadly supportive of the UK's ties with the EU, those selecting one of the first two options may be categorised as holding more 'Eurosceptic' attitudes.

By displaying the combined proportion who select either of our first two answer options, Table 3 allows us to follow the trajectory of Eurosceptic attitudes in Britain over a period of three decades. Focusing on the period of the current Parliament, we see that, eight years on from the UK's initial decision to leave the EU, Britain remains heavily split on the form that the country's relationship with the institution should take – with 57% expressing Eurosceptic and 39% stating Europhile views. Moreover, with the proportion suggesting a wish to draw closer to the EU increasing by almost 10 percentage points since 2019, it seems that the desire to revisit the nature of the UK's ties with Europe has grown considerably stronger throughout the lifetime of the current Parliament – though Euroscepticism is still more prevalent than in the mid-1990s. This is contrary to the idea that, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, the salience of Brexit as a divisive political issue may be expected to have faded.

Table 3 Attitudes to Britain's relationship with the EU, 1993-2023

	1993	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**
Eurosceptic	38	36	37	58	46	50	56	56	52
Europhile	53	57	57	32	41	39	37	36	38
Unweighted base	*1461*	*1165*	*1227*	*1180*	*1355*	*1035*	*1060*	*2293*	*1099*

	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2008**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
Eurosceptic	50	47	56	52	51	55	67	65	63
Europhile	42	44	35	38	40	37	27	27	32
Unweighted base	*3435*	*2293*	*3199*	*4268*	*1077*	*1128*	*1103*	*2147*	*971*

Table 3 Attitudes to Britain's relationship with the EU, 1993-2023 (continued)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2023
Eurosceptic	65	75	70	67	69	67	65	57
Europhile	29	21	26	28	26	30	31	39
Unweighted base	*1105*	*1965*	*2009*	*2926*	*1088*	*1332*	*1008*	*1217*

Meanwhile, Britain's two major political parties continue to adopt seemingly opposing strategies, with Labour's desire to pursue closer links with the EU on issues such as trade and security, should it win the next general election (Parker et al, 2024), contrasting sharply with the Conservatives' continued pursuit of 'symbolic' legislative divergence (Reland, 2024). With suggestions that it may be tactically beneficial for the Conservatives to re-ignite the debate on Brexit in order to rejuvenate its electoral support ahead of the next general election (Stowers, 2023), Brexit may prove to be as much of a divisive issue for the incoming government as it has been for the previous two administrations.

Immigration

While the UK's departure from the EU represents a major political and constitutional development, one of the predicted impacts of Brexit – a reduction in net migration levels – has failed to take effect, as detailed in our chapter on immigration. Reducing the number of people coming to live in the UK from abroad formed a core element of the Leave campaign ahead of the 2016 EU referendum, with mass migration from the EU framed as threatening the UK's economic stability and cultural distinctiveness (Grinan-Moutinho, 2022). The debate around the consequences of immigration played a key role in the Conservative election victories of 2017 and 2019, with the party's manifesto promises to reduce net migration "down to the tens of thousands" (Conservatives, 2017) and to introduce an Australian-style points system to control immigration into the UK (Conservatives, 2019), appealing in particular to those who viewed migration in more negative terms. However, despite these promises, immigration has continued to rise sharply, with net migration increasing from 184,000 at the end of the 2010s to 768,000 by the summer of 2023 (Migration Observatory, 2024).

Set against this backdrop, where does the public stand on the economic and cultural implications of immigration – and have attitudes changed in response to the failure to reduce the number of people coming to live and work in Britain – over the period of the current Parliament in particular?

Since 2011 BSA has measured perceptions of the impact of migration on Britain's economy using 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?***
>
> ***1 (Extremely bad) … 10 (Extremely good)***

BSA's initial readings from the 2020s suggest that an increase in positive views of the impact of migration that had been in evidence since shortly before the 2016 referendum (discussed in detail in our chapter on immigration) was largely maintained throughout the early part of this Parliament, with the proportion of people believing that migration is beneficial to the British economy reaching a majority for the first time in 2022 (51% expressed this view, while 17% perceived its impact on the economy to be negative). However, the survey's latest data shows a marked reversal of this long-term trend, with the proportion who view immigration as good for the economy falling back to below two in five (39%). After over a decade of sustained growth in the number viewing migration as a positive for the British economy, attitudes appear to have shifted rather sharply in a more negative direction.

An almost identical development is observable from responses to a similar item carried on BSA since 2011, designed to assess attitudes towards the cultural impact of migration. Respondents are asked:

> ***On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is undermined and 10 is enriched, would you say that Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries?***
>
> ***1 (Undermined) … 10 (Enriched)***

As with attitudes towards migration's economic consequences, views towards the cultural implications of migration grew markedly more positive throughout the 2010s, as detailed in our chapter on immigration. Once again, in both 2021 and 2022, BSA data suggest that attitudes towards the cultural impacts of migration in Britain remained largely positive, with just under a half expressing the view that migration carried with it positive impacts for cultural life in Britain (48% in 2021 and 51% in 2022). Nevertheless, according to the survey's latest reading, attitudes towards the cultural impact of migration appear to have hardened significantly, with the proportion who feel that Britain's cultural life is enriched by migration falling to below two in five (39%). Our chapter on immigration, drawing on data from a range of other sources, corroborates the recent drop in positive views regarding the impacts of migration identified using BSA data.

Therefore, the latest data indicate a revival in scepticism towards the effects of immigration. Notably, this development has occurred in tandem with the UK experiencing a sustained labour and skills shortage in the wake of a series of macro-level events including the global pandemic and the country's formal departure from the EU (Houston and Hunsaker, 2024) – a tension which raises a particular challenge for any incoming administration that may wish to address these shortages through a loosening of migration restrictions.

Equalities

The lifetime of this Parliament has also seen the emergence of a debate regarding the rights of transgender people, with much of this discussion centred on the issue of gender self-identification. Although since the Gender Recognition Act of 2004, transgender people have had the right to change the sex registered on their birth certificate, this right was only exercisable following a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria together with evidence that an individual has lived in their acquired gender for at least two years. At a UK level, the prospect of gender self-identification was rejected by the government in 2020 (Fairbairn et al, 2022). However, in Scotland, the Scottish government set out plans to adopt a system which allowed transgender people to have their birth certificate amended without the need for a medical diagnosis. The resulting clash between Holyrood and Westminster resulted in the use of a Section 35 order by the UK government to block their Scottish counterparts from passing the required legislation, leading to an increase in constitutional tensions between the constituent nations of the UK (Paun and Allen, 2023).

In recognition of this emerging policy issue, since 2016 BSA has carried a question designed to gauge attitudes towards the question of whether it should be possible for a transgender person to amend the sex registered on their birth certificate. Respondents are asked:

How much do you agree or disagree that a person who is transgender should be able to have the sex recorded on their birth certificate changed if they want?

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

Table 4 presents responses over time to this question. It suggests a notable shift in the balance of opinion on this issue over the lifetime of the current Parliament. In 2019, over half of people (53%) thought that transgender people should be able to change the sex registered on their birth certificate if they wished to do so, while around one in five either disagreed with this proposition or indicated they were ambivalent towards it. Today, however, the balance of opinion looks markedly different. Just over one quarter (26%) agree that a transgender person should be able to change the sex on their birth certificate and a half (50%) now disagree.

Table 4 Attitudes towards transgender people changing the sex recorded on their birth certificate, 2016-2023

	2016	2019	2021	2022	2023
Agree	58	53	32	30	24
Neither	18	21	28	29	26
Disagree	22	24	39	39	50
Unweighted base	*974*	*3224*	*3112*	*2202*	*1217*

It could be argued that this apparent shift in attitudes may be restricted to the specific issue of gender self-identification – perhaps the public may feel reluctant to support the ability of a transgender person to amend the sex registered on their birth certificate without the need for a formal diagnosis of gender dysphoria, yet in other areas feel that the rights of transgender people ought to be protected and enhanced. Alternatively, perhaps the intensity of debate around the issue of gender self-identification has influenced attitudes towards people who are transgender more broadly, with the result that views towards society's protection of their rights may have shifted in a more illiberal direction.

To test these hypotheses, we examined responses to a second question on transgender rights, carried on the latest survey and first included in 2021. This question goes beyond the relatively specific issue of gender self-identification and seeks to measure a broader set of attitudes towards the advancement of rights for transgender people in Britain, asking respondents:

> ***Do you think attempts to give equal opportunities have gone too far or not gone far enough for…***
> ***Transgender people***
>
> ***Gone much too far***
> ***Gone too far***
> ***About right***
> ***Not gone far enough***
> ***Not gone nearly far enough***

In 2021, attitudes towards the extent of efforts to safeguard the rights of transgender people were evenly split, with around a third believing that attempts to secure equal opportunities for transgender people had gone too far (33%) and a similar proportion stating that such endeavours had not gone far enough (32%) or had been pitched at about the right level (32%). The most recent data, however, indicate that the proportion who feel that equal rights for transgender people have not gone far enough has slipped to just over one in five (22%), while the number who believe that attempts to ensure equal opportunities for this group have gone too far has reached almost a half (47%).

Taken together, these data suggest that the intense political debate regarding gender self-identification coincided with, and perhaps contributed to, substantial changes in attitudes towards transgender people. Notably, this development appears to contrast sharply with the more widespread movement of society in a more liberal direction (Clery, 2023). Should the discussion around gender self-identification be maintained into the lifetime of the next Parliament, the incoming administration may therefore be faced with an ongoing tension between an increasingly open and accepting society on the one hand and an apparent resistance to the advancement of transgender rights on the other.

Political Institutions

Monarchy

As discussed previously, changing perceptions of the performance of key public services in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of a series of economic challenges upon perceptions of levels of poverty and labour relations, and shifting attitudes towards a range of cultural issues represent major alterations to the sociopolitical landscape in Britain during the lifetime of the current Parliament.

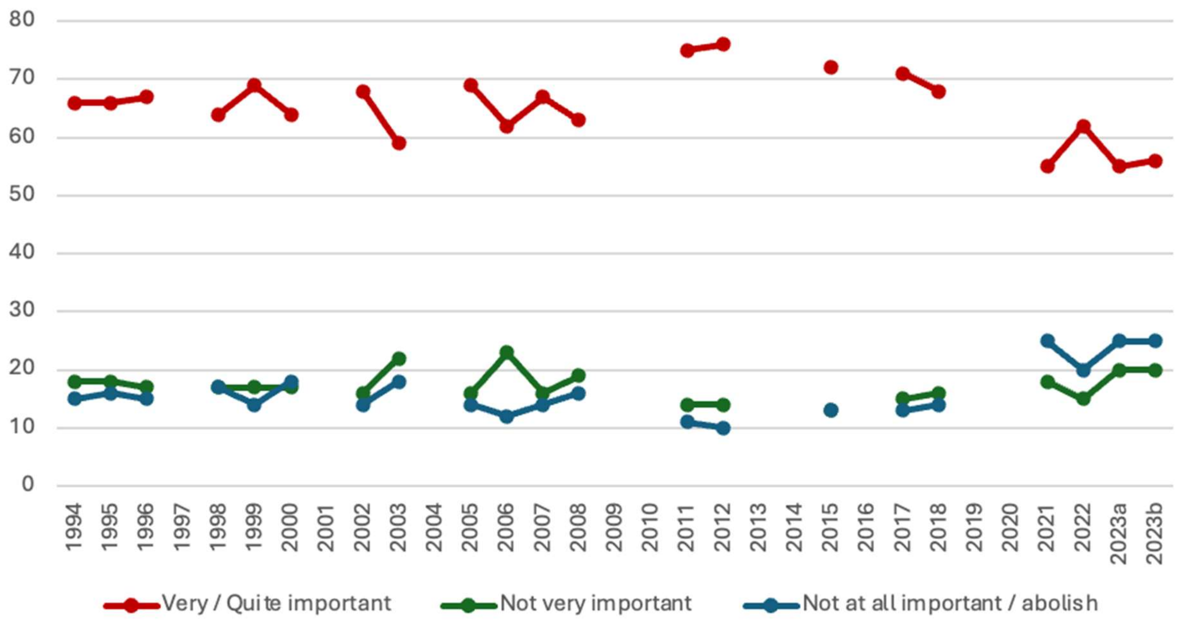
Alongside these developments, the UK witnessed a change in its head of state for the first time since the 1950s, with the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022 and the succession of King Charles III, bringing to an end a reign of 70 years – the longest ever to be presided over by a British monarch. In addition, public attention has centred on controversies surrounding the Duke and Duchess of Sussex withdrawing from royal duties and allegations against Prince Andrew relating to the Epstein scandal.

These developments have raised questions about the future of the British monarchy. But do BSA data suggest that support for the institution has waned? Since its inception, the survey has gauged attitudes towards the monarchy by asking the following question:

> ***How important or unimportant do you think it is for Britain to continue to have a monarchy?***
>
> ***Very important***
> ***Quite important***
> ***Not very important***
> ***Not at all important***
> ***The monarchy should be abolished***

As demonstrated by Figure 5, views on the importance of the monarchy have shifted notably over the period of the current Parliament. In 2018, around seven in 10 (68%) felt that it was “very” or “quite” important for Britain to continue to have a monarchy, while just 14% felt either that the maintenance of the monarchy was “not at all important” or that the institution should be abolished.

Figure 5 Attitudes towards the monarchy, 1983-2023



Data for 2023a is taken from the January 2023 wave of the NatCen Opinion Panel
The data on which Figure 5 is based can be found in Table A.5 in the appendix to this chapter.

By 2021, however, the proportion who favoured the maintenance of the monarchy in Britain had fallen sharply, with just 55% reporting that it was either "very important" or "quite important" for Britain to retain the institution – a record low. Although the following year – which saw high-profile Platinum Jubilee celebrations and the passing of HM The Queen Elizabeth II – witnessed something of a rebound in positive attitudes towards the monarchy, this spike proved to be short-lived. According to the latest data, the proportion viewing the maintenance of the institution as either "very" or "quite important" has returned to its nadir of 54%, while a quarter (25%) now feel either that the monarchy is "not at all important" or believe it should be abolished.

Government and politicians

As detailed in our chapter on the impact of the 2019-2024 Parliament on political trust and confidence, the UK's change in monarch occurred alongside significant political upheaval. During the first period of the current Parliament the government focused on resolving the stalemate that had evolved in the wake of the UK's decision to leave the EU, with then Prime Minister Boris Johnson's promise to "get Brexit done" preceding the ratification of a revised Withdrawal Agreement in January 2020 which sealed the terms of Britain's departure from the institution. Subsequently, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a series of major political decisions that imposed an unprecedented set of public health restrictions in an attempt to slow the spread the disease – with revelations that these restrictions had not been followed by those in positions of power, ultimately contributing to the resignation of Boris Johnson and the succession of Liz Truss. Just six weeks after assuming office, Truss herself resigned in the wake of the reaction of financial markets to her 'mini-budget' which proposed £45 billion of unfunded tax cuts and was replaced by current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, an occurrence which represented the first time that the UK had experienced multiple Prime Ministerial changes during the lifetime of a single Parliament in more than 80 years.

To what extent did these events affect public trust and confidence in the government and politicians? BSA has regularly included a suite of questions designed to assess levels of public trust and confidence in those in government. Since 1986, this suite of questions has included the following item:

> ***How much do you trust British governments of any party to place the needs of the nation above the interests of their own political party?***
>
> ***Just about always***
> ***Most of the time***
> ***Only some of the time***
> ***Almost never***

As shown in our chapter on the impact of the 2019-2024 Parliament on political trust and confidence, in 2019 just 15% stated that they trusted the government “just about always” or “most of the time”. As had been the case in each previous year, the most popular response to this item was one of mild scepticism, with around a half (49%) indicating that they trust British governments of any stripes “only some of the time”. Meanwhile, around a third (34%) reported “almost never” trusting the government.

Despite being the most common response to this item since its first appearance in 1986, the latest data suggests that, at 39%, the proportion who trust British governments “only some of the time” has been superseded by the number who “almost never” did so – which, at 45%, represents the highest figure recorded by in BSA’s history.

This picture of a stark decline in trust across the period of the current Parliament is mirrored by a further item included on BSA since 1994 designed to assess public trust and confidence in politicians. This item reads asks respondents:

> ***And how much do you trust politicians of any party in Britain to tell the truth when they are in a tight corner?***
>
> ***Just about always***
> ***Most of the time***
> ***Only some of the time***
> ***Almost never***

While this question has consistently yielded more negative responses than the item on trust and confidence in government, this year’s data suggest that trust in British politicians is at a particularly low ebb. Although the number who state that they “almost never” trust MPs to tell the truth when in a tight corner sat at just over a half in 2019 (51%), BSA’s latest reading suggests that this proportion has increased to almost six in 10 (58%). Meanwhile, although typically fewer than one in 10 suggest that they trust British politicians either “just about always” or “most of the time”, the most recent data suggest that – at 5% – the number of people trusting British politicians to behave honestly has reached a record low.

This dovetails with the pattern of responses to an additional item included on BSA since 1991, aimed at gauging perceptions of the broader political system in the UK. It reads as follows:

> ***Which of these statements best describes your opinion on the present system of governing Britain?***
>
> ***Works extremely well and could not be improved***
> ***Could be improved in small ways but mainly works well***
> ***Could be improved quite a lot***
> ***Needs a great deal of improvement***

In 2019, just one in five (20%) felt that the system of governing Britain either "could not be improved" or could be improved only "in small ways", while almost four times as many (79%) believed "quite a lot" or "a great deal" of improvement was required. As demonstrated by our chapter on the impact of the 2019-2024 Parliament on political trust and confidence, these figures represented a record low for levels of confidence in the system of government in Britain. Although this picture subsequently improved in the wake of the implementation of Brexit, with levels of confidence in the British system of government remaining at a somewhat elevated level during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest data suggest that the proportion who believe the system of governing Britain needs "quite a lot" or "a great deal" of improvement has returned to around four in five (79%). As a result, our combined evidence suggests that people's trust and confidence in how they are governed is as low now as it has ever been throughout the survey's history.

Conclusion

The many challenges with which public policy has been faced over the last five years have left their imprint on public opinion. Being outside the EU looks less attractive. New doubts have arisen about the benefits of having migrants come to Britain. An already growing concern about inequality has become accentuated. Meanwhile, the role of trade unions has re-emerged as an issue of some contention, while the legal recognition of transgender people has emerged as a new source of division and disagreement.

Above all, however, trust and confidence in how the country is governed and by whom has fallen to as low as it has ever been, a trend from which not even the monarchy has escaped. At the same time there is widespread dissatisfaction with the public services that government provides, most notably the NHS. It might be thought that Britain has given up on the state as a potential instrument of social and political improvement.

Yet, despite a substantial hike in taxation, so far at least there appears to be only a limited demand that the size of the state in the nation's economy should be cut back to its pre-pandemic level. Disappointment at the turn of events over the last five years has, it seems, not entirely eroded people's hope that, irrespective of its partisan colour, government will eventually be able to turn things around. That, at least, will be the challenge facing whoever wins the 2024 general election.

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Appendix

Table A.1 Satisfaction with the NHS, 1983-2023

	1983	1984	1986	1987	1989	1990
Very satisfied	11	11	6	7	6	7
Quite satisfied	44	40	34	34	30	30
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20	19	19	20	18	15
Quite dissatisfied	18	19	23	24	25	27
Very dissatisfied	7	11	16	15	21	20
Unweighted base	*1761*	*1675*	*3100*	*2847*	*3029*	*2797*
	1991	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**
Very satisfied	7	9	10	8	7	7
Quite satisfied	33	35	34	29	29	28
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	19	18	17	18	14	15
Quite dissatisfied	23	23	22	25	28	28
Very dissatisfied	18	15	16	20	22	22
Unweighted base	*2918*	*2945*	*3469*	*3633*	*3620*	*1355*
	1998	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**
Very satisfied	8	8	8	7	8	6
Quite satisfied	33	39	34	32	32	38
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21	20	19	20	18	18
Quite dissatisfied	26	23	26	27	26	24
Very dissatisfied	11	11	13	14	14	13
Unweighted base	*3146*	*3143*	*3426*	*2188*	*2287*	*2293*

Table A.1 Satisfaction with the NHS, 1983-2023 (continued)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Very satisfied	7	10	10	10	14	16
Quite satisfied	36	38	39	41	44	49
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20	20	16	19	16	16
Quite dissatisfied	23	21	22	20	17	13
Very dissatisfied	14	10	12	10	8	6
Unweighted base	*3199*	*3193*	*2143*	*3078*	*3358*	*3421*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Very satisfied	17	14	13	15	14	17
Quite satisfied	52	44	47	45	51	43
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12	18	16	17	19	16
Quite dissatisfied	14	16	18	16	12	16
Very dissatisfied	4	7	5	6	3	7
Unweighted base	*3297*	*1096*	*1103*	*1063*	*1937*	*2167*

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Very satisfied	18	16	15	17	11	6
Quite satisfied	45	40	39	43	42	30
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15	14	16	15	22	23
Quite dissatisfied	16	22	22	18	18	28
Very dissatisfied	6	7	8	8	6	13
Unweighted base	*2942*	*3004*	*2926*	*3224*	*1275*	*3112*

Table A.1 Satisfaction with the NHS, 1983-2023 (continued)

	2022	2023
Very satisfied	4	4
Quite satisfied	25	20
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20	24
Quite dissatisfied	32	32
Very dissatisfied	18	20
Unweighted base	*3362*	*3374*

Table A.2 Satisfaction with social care services, 2012-2023

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Very satisfied	4	4	7	6	7	4
Quite satisfied	26	25	25	20	19	19
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	28	31	30	31	28	29
Quite dissatisfied	21	20	22	22	22	28
Very dissatisfied	10	9	8	11	12	13
Unweighted base	*1103*	*1063*	*971*	*1062*	*974*	*1002*

	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
Very satisfied	4	6	2	2	2
Quite satisfied	22	22	13	12	11
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	31	27	33	27	28
Quite dissatisfied	23	25	33	34	34
Very dissatisfied	11	11	17	23	23
Unweighted base	*973*	*1075*	*1039*	*3362*	*3374*

Table A.3 Attitudes to taxation and spending, 1983-2023

	1983	**1984**	**1985**	**1986**	**1987**	**1989**
Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits	9	5	6	5	3	3
Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	54	50	43	44	42	37
Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits	32	39	45	46	50	56
Unweighted base	*1761*	*1675*	*1804*	*3100*	*2847*	*3029*
	1990	**1991**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**
Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits	3	3	4	4	5	4
Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	37	29	28	33	31	34
Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits	54	65	63	58	61	59
Unweighted base	*2797*	*2918*	*2945*	*3469*	*3633*	*3620*

Table A.3 Attitudes to taxation and spending, 1983-2023 (continued)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits	3	3	4	5	3	3
Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	31	32	34	40	34	31
Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits	62	63	58	50	59	63
Unweighted base	*1355*	*3146*	*3143*	*2292*	*3287*	*3435*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits	6	6	7	6	7	8
Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	38	42	43	43	47	50
Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits	51	49	46	46	42	39
Unweighted base	*3272*	*2146*	*2166*	*3240*	*3094*	*2229*

Table A.3 Attitudes to taxation and spending, 1983-2023 (continued)

	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits	8	9	6	6	6	7
Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	55	56	54	53	54	52
Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits	34	31	36	34	36	37
Unweighted base	*1139*	*3297*	*3311*	*3248*	*3244*	*2878*
	2015	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**
Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits	4	4	4	4	5	6
Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	47	44	33	34	37	43
Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits	45	48	60	57	53	50
Unweighted base	*3266*	*2942*	*2963*	*2884*	*3224*	*3964*

Table A.3 Attitudes to taxation and spending, 1983-2023 (continued)

	2021	2023 (a)	2023 (b)
Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits	6	8	10
Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	40	36	41
Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits	52	55	46
Unweighted base	*2073*	*2415*	*1103*

Data for 2023a is taken from the January 2023 wave of the NatCen Panel

Table A.4 Perceptions of poverty in Britain, 1986-2023

	1986	1989	1994	2000	2003	2006
There is very little real poverty in Britain	41	34	28	35	41	45
There is quite a lot of real poverty	55	63	71	62	55	52
Unweighted base	*1548*	*1516*	*1167*	*3426*	*3272*	*3240*
	2009	**2013**	**2018**	**2019**	**2022**	**2023**
There is very little real poverty in Britain	39	35	31	29	28	25
There is quite a lot of real poverty	57	62	65	68	69	73
Unweighted base	*3421*	*3244*	*2884*	*3224*	*3310*	*3284*

Table A.5 Attitudes towards the monarchy, 1994-2023

	1994	**1995**	**1996**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**
Very important	32	31	32	28	34	30
Quite important	34	35	35	36	35	34
Not very important	18	18	17	17	17	17
Not at all important	5	7	5	7	5	8
The monarchy should be abolished	10	9	11	10	9	10
Unweighted base	*1137*	*1227*	*1180*	*1035*	*1060*	*2293*
	2002	**2003**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Very important	35	28	33	27	34	33
Quite important	33	31	36	35	33	30
Not very important	16	22	16	23	16	19
Not at all important	6	8	7	5	6	8
The monarchy should be abolished	8	10	8	7	8	8
Unweighted base	*1123*	*2293*	*1075*	*1077*	*992*	*1128*
	2011	**2012**	**2015**	**2017**	**2018**	**2021**
Very important	42	46	40	40	33	31
Quite important	33	30	32	31	35	24
Not very important	14	14	13	15	16	18
Not at all important	6	4	7	6	9	11
The monarchy should be abolished	5	5	6	7	6	14
Unweighted base	*1109*	*1103*	*1062*	*1025*	*1968*	*2073*

Table A.5 Attitudes towards the monarchy, 1994-2023 (continued)

	2022	2023 (a)	2023 (b)
Very important	38	29	27
Quite important	24	26	27
Not very important	15	20	18
Not at all important	7	10	9
The monarchy should be abolished	13	14	16
Unweighted base	*2175*	*2415*	*1276*

Data for 2023a is taken from the January 2023 wave of the NatCen Panel

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