

The politics of belonging

*What is driving the sea change in our politics and why
we must embrace Conservatism for the Common Good*



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In partnership with Hanbury Strategy

ONWARD 

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Summary of the argument



You know there are times, perhaps once every thirty years, when there is a sea-change in politics. It then does not matter what you say or what you do. There is a shift in what the public wants and what it approves of. I suspect there is now such a sea change and it is for Mrs Thatcher.

Jim Callaghan, 1979

For the last fifty years, the organising principle of British politics has been the expansion of freedom. Politicians and governments of all stripes have, to a greater or lesser extent, pursued policies that sought to remove the shackles from individuals and set them free from traditional economic, social and political structures. This is true of Roy Jenkins' cultural revolution in the 1960s, of Margaret Thatcher's economic revolution in the late 1970s and 1980s, and the social revolution started by Tony Blair in the first decade of this century and continued by his successors. In each case, authority was replaced with autonomy, community gave way to individuality, and security was subjugated beneath liberty.

Emancipatory politics was driven by, and then amplified, a shift in the public's attitude towards liberalism, especially on social issues,¹ and support for the principles of liberal democracy such as the rule of law, civil liberties and an open society.² British people wanted freedom and they got it, whoever was in power. Today they are freer to be who they want, do what they want, and say what they want than at any point in history.

Yet the tide of politics seems to be changing, both on the surface and within its deepest currents. At electoral level there is a feeling of fragmentation and churn. Labour and the Conservatives may have achieved 82% of the popular vote at the last election, and hold 9 out of every 10 parliamentary seats, but both now find themselves threatened by challenger parties and their vote share considerably diminished in the last two years. In the UK today, the propensity of individual voters to switch political parties is more than three times what it was in the late 1960s. The share of voters who strongly identify with a political party, which fell from 44% to 35% between 1987 and 2018, has been overtaken by the share who neither support nor feel close to a particular party, which rocketed from 26% to 39%.

This cannot simply be put down to dissatisfaction with the superficial aspects of party politics. Something more profound is occurring. According to Onward's polling, 70% of voters agree with the statement "the status quo isn't working and we need radical change" and most polls show only around half to three fifths of voters saying they will vote for either main party if an election were called today.³ Brexit muddies the waters, and it is unclear whether it is a symptom of this dissatisfaction or its cause, but there is clearly a wider shift in attitudes that is now de-stabilising the duopoly that has dominated British democracy since the 18th Century.

At its most extreme we see this collapse of liberalism in rising levels of support for authoritarianism and "strong man" leadership, especially among younger voters. In the USA, one in six people now believe army rule to be a good system of government, up from one in sixteen in 1995.⁴ Populist movements have emerged across Europe, leading in some cases even to national populist governments⁵ Marine Le Pen's Front National, for example, attracted nearly half the votes cast by 18–24 year olds at the 2017 Presidential elections.⁶

We discover the same militant tendency in the UK. More than a third (35%) of under-35 year old voters believe the army would be a good way to run the country and nearly a quarter (24%) think democracy is a bad way to run the country, compared to 15% and 7% respectively for those over-65 years old. Nearly two-thirds support a strong leader who “does not have to bother with Parliament”, compared to half (52%) of over 65s.

More significant, we believe, for British politics is the headline finding from our research: that by a ratio of 2-to-1, voters want to live in a society that provides greater security not greater freedom. While Westminster and Whitehall are still locked into a paradigm that places the extension of liberty above all other ends of public policy, the public mood has changed. It is as if, as Harold Macmillan commented of *laissez-faire* in 1950, policymakers have “inflated the rights of the individual to the point at which social responsibility for the welfare of all citizens threatened to be ignored”.

We find that it is more security they crave, protection from the accelerating headwinds of globalisation and social reform, not yet greater exposure to the howling gales of of change. Seen through this lens, the disenchantment with politics as usual is not because of some great loss of faith in the institutions of democracy, but rather a large and growing dissonance between what voters *want* from their politics and what is on *offer* from their parties. Politicians ignore this gap at their peril, because this is where true populism festers.

The question for established parties is how should they respond without succumbing to populism themselves or fading into irrelevance. One approach is to ape the populists, engage full-throatedly in the culture wars and row back on the freedoms introduced in recent decades. There are others who say that the problem is not an excess of freedom, but a lack of it: that politicians should take liberalisation further, either through deregulation and tax cuts in the economy or through greater social liberalism and extensions of human rights in the cultural sphere, while reviving the intellectual arguments for both.⁷

Neither a retreat into reactionary populism nor emboldened liberalism will save Britain’s established parties. One result of our research that may surprise commentators, especially on the Right, is that voters are not nostalgic. Yes, they are looking for a new political direction, but they do not want to go back to some imagined golden age. They would much rather “live in a society that embraces change” than one that “preserves tradition”. When asked what kind of change they want, they want it to be gradual to protect what is important (80%), rather than radical change that happens quickly but might lead to lower living standards in the short term (20%). As is often the case, the British people favour evolution over revolution, but we cannot assume their patience is unlimited.

So how does this preference for security over freedom express itself attitudinally? We found that voters disapprove of more people living in cities and expanding universities, think that globalisation and technology have worsened jobs and wages, and think communities are becoming more segregated, not more integrated. Just over one in ten (12%) voters are pro-freedom across both social and economic dimensions, while over half (51%) favour both economic and social-cultural security.

Our research suggests that the right way forward is to embrace a new and different political agenda than the one currently on offer. We call this “the politics of belonging”. It is ambitious but mainstream and moderate, and is based as much on ideas of security, community and togetherness as ideas of more freedom, autonomy and choice. In the last decade, people overwhelmingly think Britain’s hyper-liberalised economy and culture have moved away from their views, not towards them – especially outside London. They believe that society needs to be strengthened and that the animal spirits of the economy should be tamed, not unleashed. If the price of greater freedom is rootlessness and disconnection, voters no longer seem to think it is worth the cost.

This has major implications for the policies and political strategy needed to break the parliamentary stasis and win a general election, for both main parties. If the sea change that brought Margaret Thatcher to power was rooted in the post-war clamour for freedom, today’s sea change invites a new agenda which offers voters greater protection and security. This should take three forms.

1. Economic security: higher skilled and higher paid jobs, a focus on homeownership, a more contributory welfare system, and better technical education.
2. Cultural security: prioritising citizenship, community integration, immigration control, and a revival of neighbourhoods and civic life.
3. National security: investing in defence, tougher and more visible policing, and a more robust regime to punish and rehabilitate offenders.

While both main parties must shift to this new reality, the one that has most to gain or lose is the Conservative Party. Labour’s fragmented tribe has mostly split to the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party, and its voters are relatively more liberal, especially on social issues. The Conservative tribe, by contrast, is no longer the tribune of freedom fighters that some still think it is. Today, Conservative considerers are considerably more communitarian than libertarian, and the 5 million voters the Conservatives have lost since 2017 – especially those who have switched to the Brexit Party – are among the most security-focused of all voters.

For the new Prime Minister, this new reality represents an opportunity to embrace what we call *Conservatism for the common good*. Its concerns are the quotidian ones of lived experience in Britain’s towns – the fraying social fabric, poor local transport, underfunded FE colleges and the dying high street – rather than national *grands projet* that only seem to benefit Londoners and the most well off. It is involved in building up the institutions that give meaning and strength to people in their lives – families, communities and small businesses – rather than the endless expansion of universities or cutting taxes for big business.

It would invest in police forces and prisons, and make sure sentences match the crime. It would give cities and regions control over infrastructure like the railways, and rebalance public investment away from London to the rest. This agenda would care less whether government is big or small, and more about whether it is good or bad. It would foster a shared sense of belonging rather than pursuing ever-greater individualism and diversity. Most challenging for Conservatives, it involves rejecting tax cuts and using any fiscal surpluses to invest in the public services that people value and rely on.

In short, the route to a majority today is not rugged individualism but resilient communities. And for as long as established parties offer more of the same, the political volatility will continue, hastening our slide towards authoritarianism.

The post-war liberalising consensus has given way to a post-Brexit consensus based on security and belonging. The first party to offer a coherent policy platform that responds to these concerns will succeed in wrestling not just fragile power but a genuine mandate from a divided country.

Fragmentation

*The breakdown of two-party politics
and the rise of populism*



The stable two party system that has been the hallmark of British democracy for four centuries is under extreme strain. Labour and the Conservatives may have together won eight of every ten votes at the last election and control nine in ten seats in Parliament, but their grip on power is arguably looser than at any time in recent political history.

Evidence for this fracture has been most visible since the local elections in May this year, when the two-party vote share fell to 62% from 73% a year earlier and from an average of 70% since 1979. As Michael Thrasher and Collin Rawlings note, it “will be remembered as one where many voters turned their backs on the two main parties and quite possibly national politics also”.⁸ Following the launch of the Brexit Party, the European Elections saw fewer than a quarter (23%) of votes cast for the Conservatives or Labour, down from 49% in 2015 and not far off a third of the 63% post-1979 average.

It is tempting to see this collapse as a symptom of Brexit – and there is some evidence to support the theory. Polls suggest that most of those defecting to the Brexit Party are Leave voters while those switching the Liberal Democrats mainly voted Remain (see Figure 1 below). As John McTernan writes, “a referendum smashes and then remakes political allegiances, uprooting old loyalties and making millions of voters available”. But it is a mistake to think this is an overnight phenomenon: the fragmentation of two party politics has been going on for fifty years, and it is accelerating.

Voters today are less attached and more fickle than at any time since the Second World War. Since 1987, the share of people who very or fairly strongly identify with a political party has steadily fallen from 44% of voters to 35% today. In contrast, the proportion expressing no partisanship (i.e. they are neither a supporter of, nor close to, any political party) has risen from 26% to 39% today. This is also strongly related to age: in 2018, only voters over the age of 55 years old were more likely to identify with a political party than to have no partisan ties at all.

With weaker party attachment, it is unsurprising that the share of people who switched their vote to a different party at a general election nearly tripled between 1966 and 2015, from just over one in ten voters (13%) to well over one in three (38%).⁹ And as a result, party vote share at general elections has been, on average, twice as volatile in this decade as it was in any single decade since the war, and more than two and a half times more volatile than the post-war average, according to the Pedersen Index, a respected measure of political volatility that tracks the change in vote share within the electoral party system.¹⁰

Figure 1.1: Prevalence and strength of party identification, 1987–2018

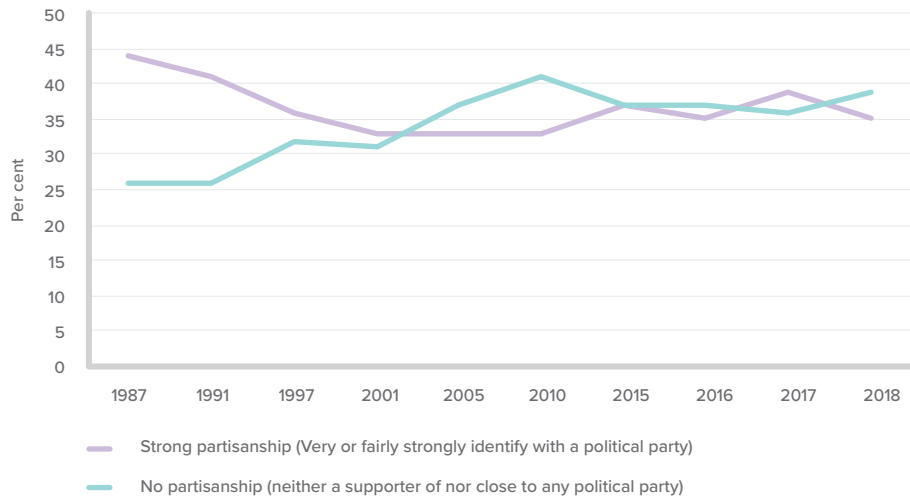
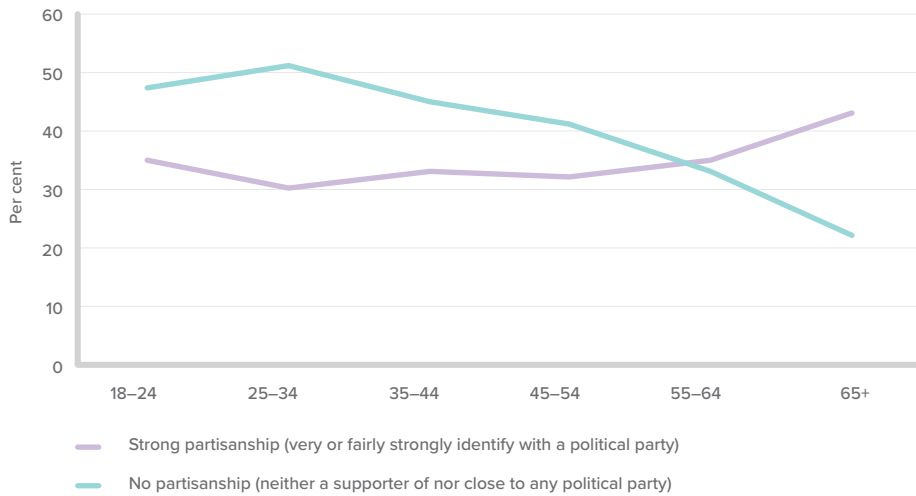


Figure 1.2: Prevalence and strength of party identification by age, 2018



Sources: Onward analysis; NatCen (2019), *British Social Attitudes 36*.

Figure 2.1: Change in volatility of individual voting patterns

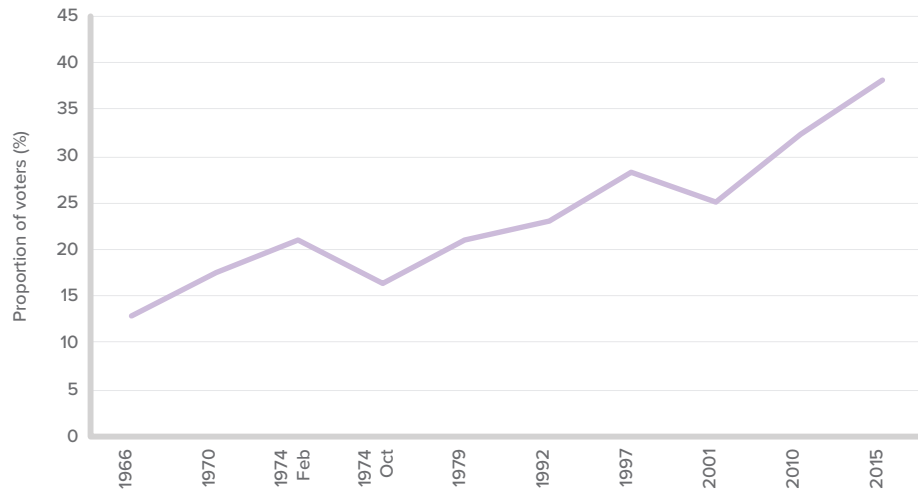
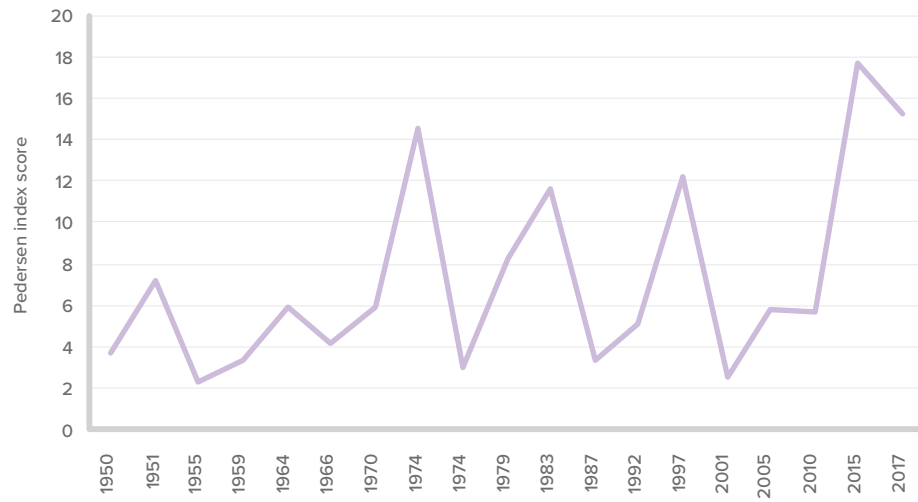
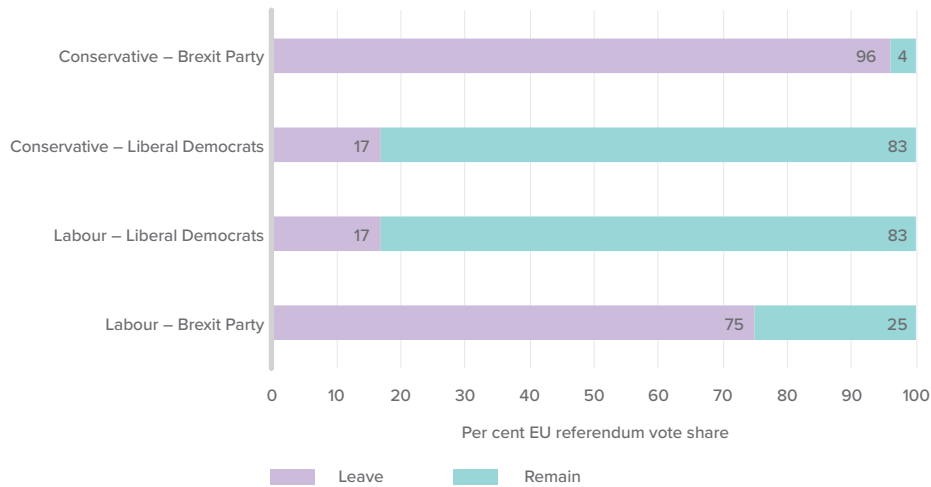


Figure 2.2: Change in volatility, overall party share



Sources: Onward analysis; J. Mellon (2016), *Party Attachment in Great Britain: Five Decades of Dealignment*; A. Clarke (2018), *Political Parties in the UK*.

Figure 3: How defecting groups voted in the 2016 EU referendum



Source: *Onward/Hanbury Strategy*, 21–29 June 2019.

What is driving the fragmentation of the two main parties and is there a way for established parties to reunite their tribes?

There are many theories for the fracturing of the established order and the rise of smaller or populist parties.

Some commentators blame the changing conditions in which voters exist and erosion of established social and economic structures. Academics such as David Goodhart, Matthew Goodwin and Eric Kaufmann have used compelling data to show how growing economic insecurity and the decline of class identity have forged new political groupings and stoked an escalating culture war.¹¹ In *Generation Why?*, we showed how changing generational conditions are driving a wedge between younger and older voters at the ballot box, with half of Conservative voters now over the age of 65 years old and three-fifths of under-35s voting for Labour.¹²

Others attribute the collapse of party attachment to the dissipation of traditional fault lines between left and right, which has undermined the traditional base of the main parties. As YouGov’s Matt Smith says: “any politician who still looks at the electorate in terms of left and right is not only missing opportunities to appeal to voters who support other parties, but is also potentially unaware of how up for grabs their own voters are.”¹³

Both may well be true, and this paper explores another, complementary, hypothesis: that political volatility is rising because voters increasingly desire a new philosophical direction. Our hypothesis is that, after five decades of liberalising policies, the pendulum is swinging back towards security. To explore this, we commissioned

a large sample poll with Hanbury Strategy to understand the ways in which people respond to ideas of freedom and autonomy, on the one hand, and security and belonging, on the other.

The 5,073 size of the sample allowed us to examine not just how people of different ages, ethnicities, places and levels of education respond to freedom and security, but also to overlay their voting behaviour and leanings. We can therefore build up a detailed picture of what voters switching from established parties believe in, across a wide variety of issues, what unites them and where new dividing lines exist.

Questions we wanted to understand include:

1. Is there evidence of a sea change away from freedom and towards security, and what is driving the shift in public attitudes?
2. To what extent does it explain the fragmentation of British politics – and what does it mean for the configuration of the main political parties in future?
3. What are the policy priorities for the politics of belonging, and how can we ensure that such an agenda does not succumb to populism?

The full results of the poll are published alongside this study. Hanbury Strategy surveyed 5,073 people in a representative GB sample between 21 and 29 June 2019. Vote intention adjusted for turnout was 23% Conservative, 25% Labour, 20% Liberal Democrat, 18% Brexit Party, 8% Greens, 5% SNP and 1% Plaid Cymru. This is in line with other polls conducted at the same time.

The shift towards a “politics of belonging” – like all inflection points – has profound risks as well as opportunities. For some, it is tempting to ape the populists and embrace an agenda based around cultural division. This is a destructive politics that pitches natives against migrants, somewheres against anywheres, the metropole against the provinces, and Remainers against Brexiteers, in an attempt to drive “us” and “them” division.

For others, it demands a more full-throated defence of freedom and individual liberty. The reason for declining support for liberalism, some argue, is not that people have too much choice and autonomy, but too little: because taxes are too high, regulation too onerous, the nanny state too interfering and trade too restricted. To advocates of this school, 1980s revivalism and laissez-faire reforms are needed to roll back everyday infringements and set individuals free.

As we will see, both responses would hasten the decline. The challenge for established parties is to offer something different that is neither authoritarian nor libertarian, and in doing so to reunite their political tribe around a new set of ideas and policies: the politics of belonging.

The limits of freedom

*The search for security
in a liberal age*



Is there evidence of a sea change away from freedom and towards security, and what is driving the shift in public attitudes?

While only a snapshot survey, our poll reveals far weaker support for freedom, choice and openness than we might expect after five consecutive decades of liberalising policies. We find that:

- When asked to choose, 65% of our respondents say they want to “live in a society that focuses on giving people more security”, compared to 35% who favoured a society which focuses on giving people more freedom. People favour security over freedom by a ratio of two-to-one.
- This is true of people of all ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds. Net support for security ranged from 3% among people in full-time education to 53% among respondents over 75 years-old. No group supported freedom over security.
- Net support for security over freedom is 9% among 18–24 year olds but 53% for over-75s. Among women (39%) it is nearly double what it is among men (21%). In Wales (20%) and the North West (25%) people are around half as net supportive of security as their counterparts in the North East (39%) and East Midlands (40%).

Given freedom and security are abstract constructs, we tested the extent a leaning towards security over freedom holds true across specific social, economic and political dimensions by asking a large series of wedge questions.

- On a socio-cultural dimension, we uncover evidence that the pendulum of liberalism is swinging back in the other direction. Two thirds (68%) of people believe communities have become more divided and segregated in recent years, versus 32% who believe that they have become more integrated and diverse. 63% of people say they believe that fewer people are getting married because of a decline in family commitment and values, compared to 37% who say it is because people have more freedom and choice in a partner. An extraordinary 66% of respondents say that more people going to university and fewer gaining technical qualifications has been bad for the country overall, versus 34% who think it has been beneficial.
- This is a surprising finding, given the British Social Attitudes survey has shown rising social liberalism since its inception, especially regarding issues of personal liberty and justice. We see this in declining support for the death penalty, for example, which fell below 50% for the first time in 2016.¹⁴ However the last two years of the BSA have detected a potential slowing or reversal of social liberalisation that supports our thesis of a sea change: the share of people who say pre-marital sex is “not wrong at all” fell for the first time in 15 years in 2017, and again in 2018. And in 2018, the share of people who said same-sex relationships are “not wrong at all” fell for the first time since 1987. While not conclusive, it should certainly give us pause.
- On the economic axis, we find strong hostility to the key drivers of prosperity in the modern liberal market economy: global trade, innovation and urban agglomeration. Two thirds of respondents believe that “globalisation has

not benefited most people” (66%), versus 34% who think it has. Three-fifths of people (61%) say that “on the whole, jobs and wages have been made worse by technological change”, compared to 39% who think they have been improved. 71% of people think that more people living in cities has made society worse, compared to 29% who think better. Less surprisingly, we find that 59% of people think that increases in immigration has had a “negative impact on the economy overall.”

- This scepticism may be related to declining individual opportunity. Most people (74%) think that “making a decent living has got harder for people like me,” compared to 26% who say it has got easier. A similar share (74%) believe that “the wealthiest in our society have generally earned their money by exploiting others”, rather than hard work. Onward has previously shown that most people are pessimistic about their personal finances and the prospects of the next generation. This may explain why the British Social Attitudes survey shows strongly rising support for redistribution through higher taxes and spending.¹⁵

Using a composite measure of all responses to map individuals across both socio-cultural and economic dimensions, we can observe that the vast majority of people favour either economic or cultural security, or both.

Figure 4: Freedom versus security across economic and socio-cultural dimensions, all voters



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

How do these voters break down?

We applied latent class analysis (LCA) to respondents' answers to the twelve value questions which make up our freedom/security index. The LCA model identified 5 distinct groups of voters who exhibited similarities in their preferences for security or freedom across these values. We then looked into these identified groups to assess their composition in terms of demography and political attitudes.

Figure 5: Freedom versus security, coloured by voter archetype group



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

Our five voter archetypes are as follows:

- 1. Freedom Fighters.** This group favours economic and social freedom and represents around 7% of the electorate. They are the opposite of securitarians: they hold strongly favourable views of globalisation, immigration, privatisation and urbanisation. They do not feel like making a decent living has got harder or that communities have become divided. They are much younger as a group – 7 in 10 are under 45 years old – and are the most ethnically diverse and metropolitan of any group, with only 15% living in rural areas. Freedom Fighters are more supportive of Labour than the Conservatives and a majority voted for Remain.
- 2. Old New Labour.** These voters want economic security but social freedom, and represent around a quarter of the population. They prefer reducing inequality to growing the economy and think that privatisation of utilities has been bad for consumers. They are one of the two groups (along with Freedom Fighters, above) to think that communities have become more integrated and that more people going to university and living in cities has been a good thing overall. Around half of this group are under-35 years old and they are most likely to hold a university degree. As the name suggests, two-thirds of this group voted Labour in 2017 and 70% voted to Remain in the EU; 22% intend to vote Liberal Democrat.
- 3. Middle England.** Middle England. This group represents around a third (35%) of voters and is in “the common ground” of British politics (as distinct from what some call the “centre ground”). They are solidly in favour of economic and socio-cultural security, and they take a particularly negative view of immigration, community division and urbanisation. Middle Englanders are disproportionately White, mostly over 45 years old, mostly live in suburbs and have fairly low levels of university education (28%). They voted 63% to Leave and a large number would switch from the Conservatives to the Brexit Party.
- 4. Provincial Right.** This group favours economic freedom and social security. They are the second-most likely (after Freedom Fighters) to say that making a decent living has got easier for them. This group is positive about globalisation and the rise of flexible working. They think that communities have become more divided and segregated and are concerned about the cultural impact of immigration but think it has brought economic benefits. The Provincial Right represent 22% of the electorate. They are very settled – nearly half have lived in their house for more than 10 years – and are also disproportionately rural. They backed Leaving the EU by a small margin. Many in this group would defect from the Conservatives to the Brexit Party and some to the Liberal Democrats.
- 5. Securitarians.** This group represents 10% of the population and strongly favours security across both axes. Securian voters are overwhelmingly likely to think that globalisation, privatisation, immigration, urbanisation and university growth have been negative. They also believe that communities have become more divided, that marriage rates have declined because of a values breakdown, and that making a decent living has got harder. Politically, nearly half voted Conservative in 2017 and two thirds voted to Leave the EU. They are mostly aged in their 30s and 40s, have a high degree of homeownership and typically live in cities or towns.

	Freedom Fighters	Old New Labour	Middle England	Provincial Right	Securitarians
Net economic security index score	-79	57	103	-17	193
Net cultural security index score	-40	-43	71	51	65
Estimated share of population	7%	26%	35%	22%	10%
Age splits					
18 to 24	23%	24%	10%	15%	9%
25 to 34	23%	21%	15%	15%	21%
35 to 44	24%	16%	15%	13%	27%
45 to 54	19%	17%	21%	18%	17%
55 to 64	6%	12%	16%	13%	8%
65 or older	6%	10%	23%	26%	18%
% White	82%	89%	91%	90%	86%
% degree	21%	37%	28%	32%	36%
% renters	34%	37%	30%	25%	21%
% lived in house more than 10 years	31%	37%	43%	46%	20%
Urbanity (rural/suburban/urban)	14/44/42%	20/44/37%	20/48/32%	23/45/32%	14/21/66%
Leave/Remain	44/56%	30/70%	63/37%	54/46%	64/36%
2017 Election vote split	CON: 38% LAB: 41% LD: 11% UKIP: 10%	CON: 21% LAB: 62% LD: 13% UKIP: 4%	CON: 42% LAB: 39% LD: 8% UKIP: 11%	CON: 56% LAB: 31% LD: 8% UKIP: 5%	CON: 48% LAB: 31% LD: 11% UKIP: 10%
VI Next Election split	CON: 29% LAB: 39% LD: 14% BXP: 18%	CON: 13% LAB: 54% LD: 22% BXP: 11%	CON: 22% LAB: 35% LD: 11% BXP: 32%	CON: 39% LAB: 26% LD: 14% BXP: 21%	CON: 44% LAB: 29% LD: 13% BXP: 13%

Overall, this analysis gives the lie to the idea that the centre ground of British politics is essentially liberal. In fact, the public are marginally *illiberal* on economic and socio-cultural grounds – or, as we put it in *Generation Why?*, slightly to the right on socio-cultural issues and slightly to the left on economic issues using a traditional Left-Right spectrum. This means that the only way to a majority now is by winning over a sizeable number of security focused voters: Middle England comprises 35% of the electorate. On current voting intention, these voters favour the Labour Party and the Brexit Party, but in 2017 many voted Conservative. In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher’s target voter was the aspirational C1C2 voter, “Essex Man”. In 1997, Tony Blair reframed the target voter archetype to “Mondeo Man” – “whose instincts were to get on in life... and he thought our instincts were to stop

him – and “Worcester Woman”, a middle-class, aspirational, female swing voter. Both of these latter groups remained relevant through the 2005, 2010 and arguably 2015 elections.

However, the sea change in people’s attitudes and the restructuring of the electorate described above significantly changes the dynamics in a post-Brexit landscape. The next election will be fought around a new voter archetype, representing the median voter of the group essential for either party to win a majority (Middle England). We call this voter “Workington Man”.

Portrait of Workington Man

“Workington Man” is the new voter archetype and the key swing voter in Britain today. This voter is likely to be over 45 years old, white, does not have a degree and has lived in his home for over 10 years. He voted to Leave the EU in 2016 and thinks the country is moving away from his views both economically and culturally.

The typical “Workington Man” favours security over freedom across both social and economic axes, but leans much more towards security on social issues. He wants government to prioritise apprenticeships rather than cut the cost of student loans and thinks government should promote a shared sense of national identity over a diversity of identities. Workington Man is more likely to think that crime is a major issue facing the country and twice as likely as the rest of the population to think that immigration is a major issue. He is particularly sceptical about the benefits of globalisation and thinks that we have a special responsibility to protect local institutions such as pubs and post offices from closure.

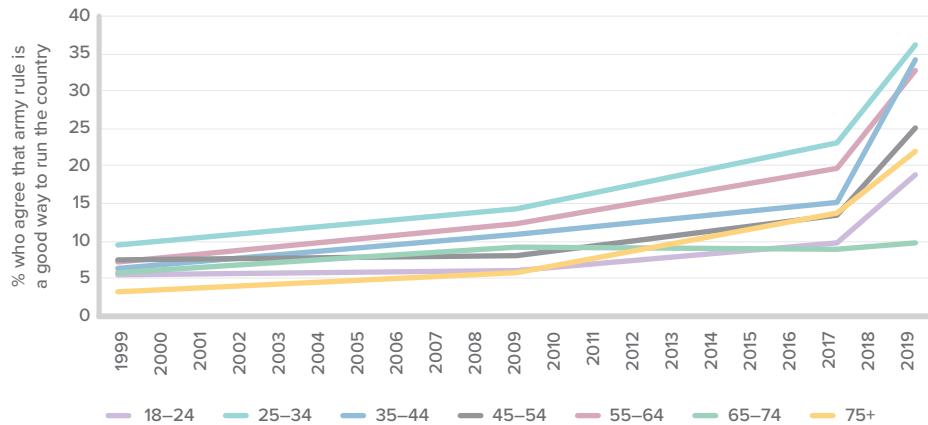
The constituency of Workington in Cumbria exhibits many of these demographic characteristics and is one of the places where the eponymous archetype is most common among the local electorate. Although the people of Workington only once elected a Conservative MP (the 1976 by-election), they voted to Leave the EU in 2016 and Labour currently has a majority of just 4,000. This makes it the ultimate bellwether seat, despite being a long standing Labour stronghold.

The rejection of liberal democratic government and the rise of authoritarianism

- The third dimension of freedom that we tested was political. How attached voters are to notions of liberal democracy, such as democratic government, expert-led decision-making? And how resistant are they to army rule or strongman leadership? To do so, we asked identical questions to the European Values Study (EVS), a longitudinal study of public attitudes which has a similar sample size to allow for meaningful comparisons.
- Comparing our polling data with the EVS, we find that support for democratic forms of government remains strong in the UK, but a large and growing minority share of voters favour authoritarian forms of government. In our survey, more than 8 in 10 people (84%) believe a democratic political system is a good way to run the country, which is consistent with the EVS. Also consistent with international data is the fact that 80% of people believe that “having experts, not politicians, make decisions” is a good way to run the government.

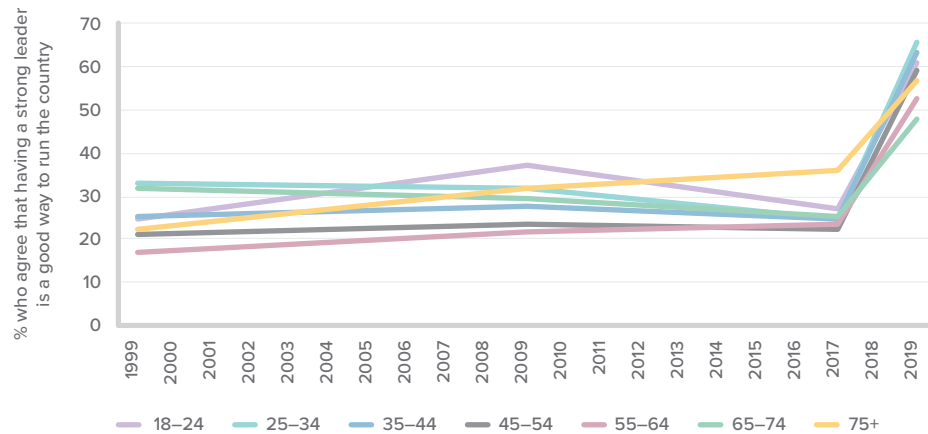
- However, our survey identifies a significant number of voters who believe that “putting the army in charge” would be a good way to run the country (26%) and 58% believe that we would be well served by a “strong leader who does not have to bother with Parliament”. As shown below, we see rising support for these across both the EVS and our survey, inkeeping with rising authoritarianism in the US and Western Europe.¹⁶

Figure 6: Rising support for “having the army rule”, 1999–2019



Sources: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21-29 June 2019; EVS (2019): European Values Study 2017: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2017). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7500 Data file Version 2.0.0; EVS (2015): European Values Study Longitudinal Data File 1981–2008 (EVS 1981–2008). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA4804 Data file Version 3.0.0.

Figure 7: Change to “Support for having a strong leader”, 1999–2019



Sources: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21-29 June 2019; EVS (2019): European Values Study 2017: Integrated Dataset (EVS 2017). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA7500 Data file Version 2.0.0; EVS (2015): European Values Study Longitudinal Data File 1981–2008 (EVS 1981–2008). GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA4804 Data file Version 3.0.0.

Figure 8.1: Net support for freedom and security across economic issues

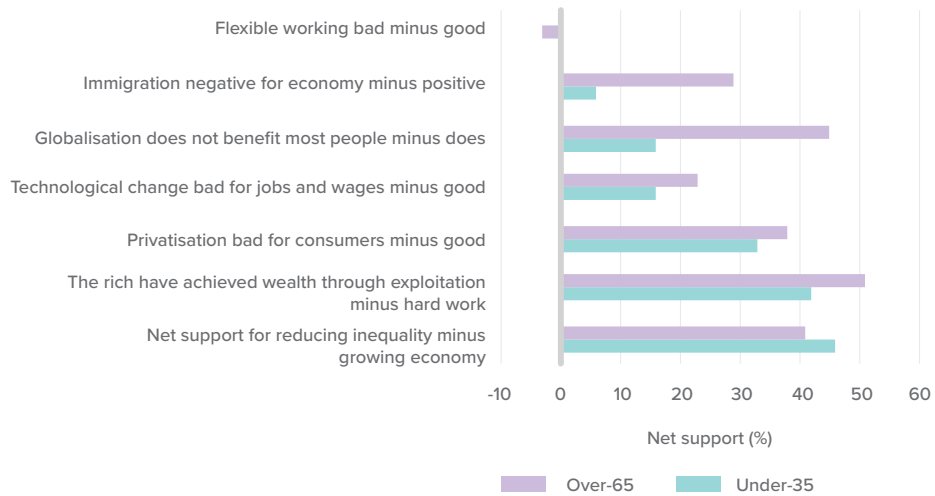
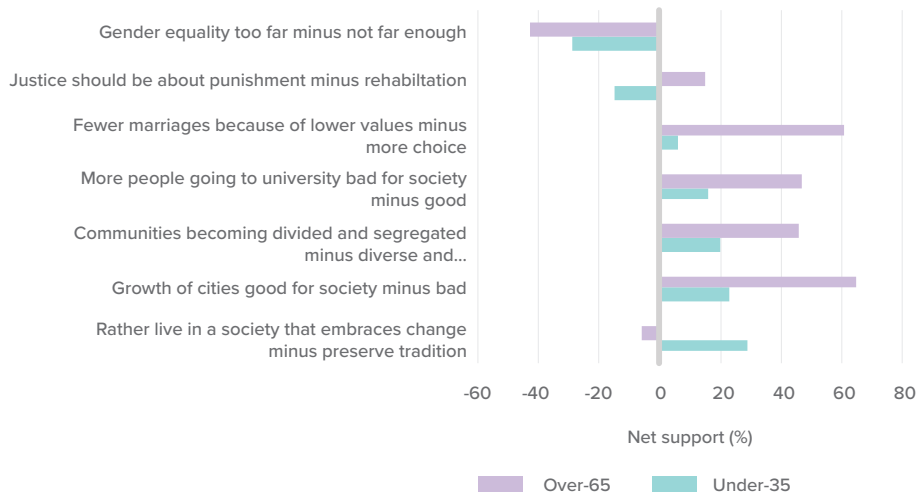


Figure 8.2: Net support for freedom and security across socio-cultural issues



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

Figure 9.1: Support for liberal democracy by age

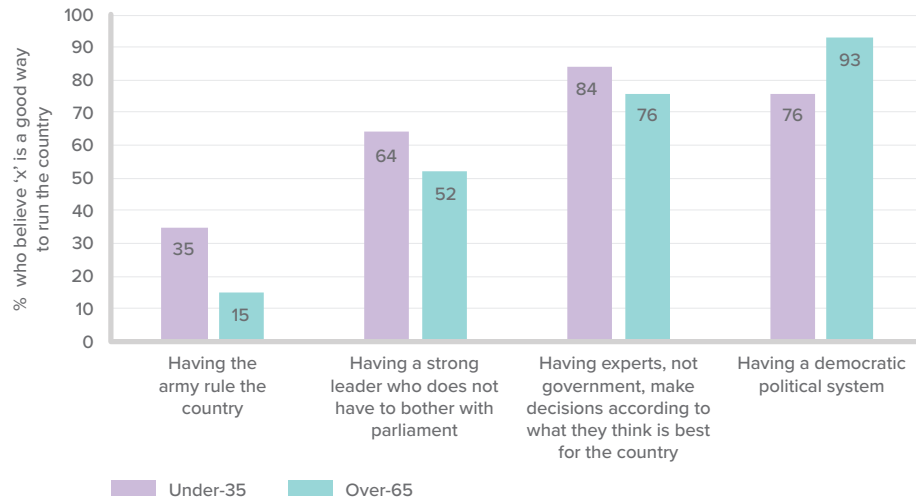
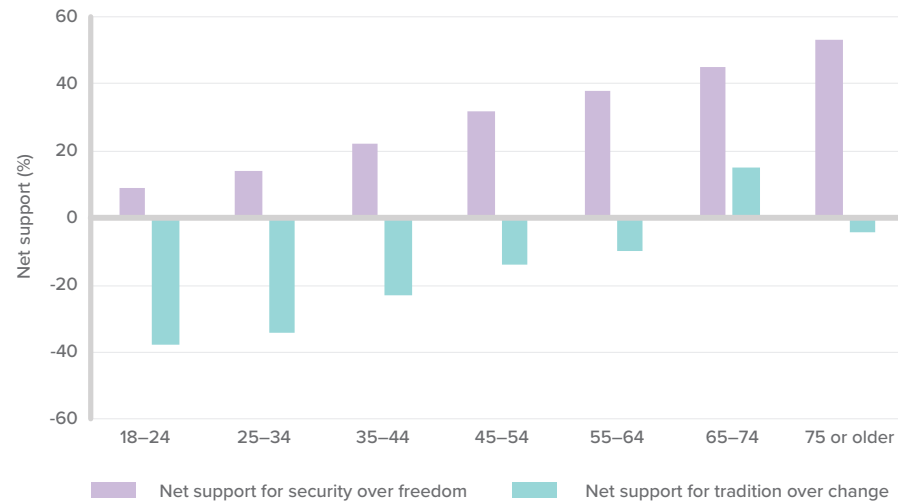


Figure 9.2: Support for freedom and changes by age



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21-29 June 2019.

What is driving this sea change in public attitudes away from freedom and towards security?

If the liberal consensus is collapsing, what factors best explain it? And how does the rise of belonging relate to the other great dividing lines in British politics – age, geography and education – which have replaced class and income as the key predictors of vote intention since the referendum?

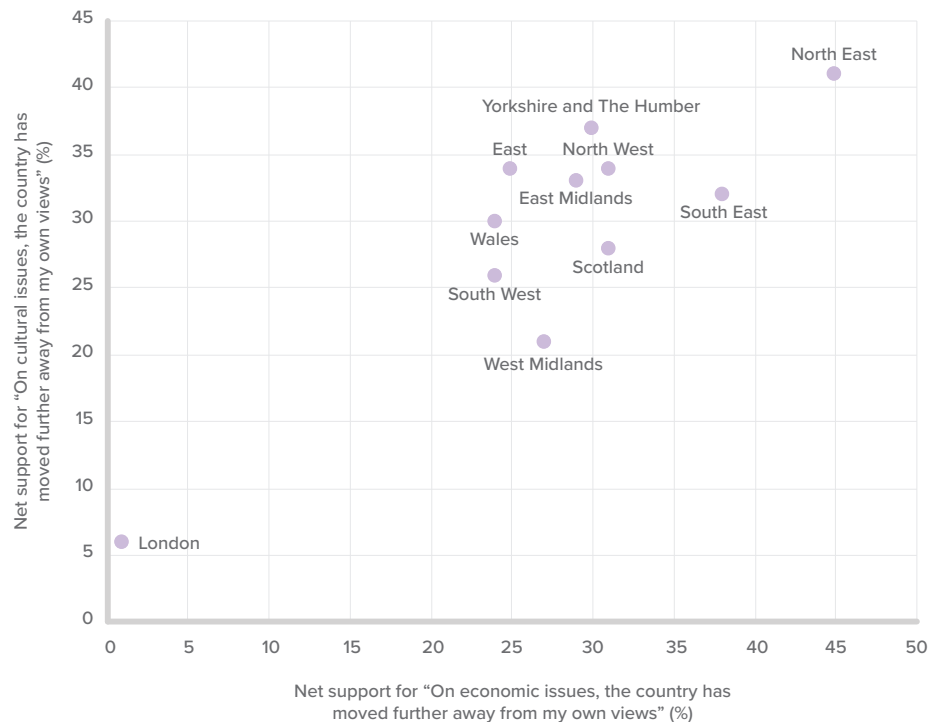
Age

- At the last general election, age was the single most important dividing line and academics such as Inglehart and Norris have argued that the traditional left/right dichotomy has been replaced by a generational culture war, in which nationalism and social conservatism of older generations is a minority backlash against the increasingly hegemonic social liberalism of younger people.
- On face value, our polling reinforces this thesis: there is no doubt that young people are more interested in freedom in their social and economic views than their parents and grandparents. However closer inspection reveals that this support is relative, rather than absolute: all age groups favour security over freedom. The backlash against individualism, such as it exists, is present among younger as well as older generations: 58% of under-35s say they would rather live in a society that focused on security, versus 74% of over-65s.
- When asked about economic issues, young people are sceptical overall of the benefits of immigration, globalisation, privatisation and technological change, but marginally less so than older respondents. The exception is flexible working, where both older and younger workers are marginally positive. The only area where young people are more security-orientated is on questions of economic growth and inequality, where they favour closing the gap marginally more than over-65s.
- On socio-cultural issues, young people strongly believe that urban growth and the rise of university attendance have been bad for the country and – to a lesser degree – that the falling marriage rates are down to declining family values. The social issues of divergence are change versus tradition and rehabilitation versus punishment, where the young favour the former and the old the latter.
- The clearest generational divide is related to liberal forms of government, where we find strong support for military rule and strongman leadership among younger generations. Support for army rule among people under the age of 35 is more than double what it is among over-65s, and antipathy for democratic government is nearly four times as great. Interestingly, younger generations are more willing to back technocratic government by experts than a democratic political system, suggesting this is driven by scepticism of Parliament or politicians rather than a desire necessarily for authoritarian rule.

Geography

- There is growing interest in the hypothesis that the rise of more security-based politics is driven by geography. Politicians such as Lisa Nandy, who co-founded the Centre for Towns, have argued persuasively that the post-Brexit political settlement is predicated on the emergence of “two Englands” – cosmopolitan areas of growth and others in backwater areas of decline – which have “increasingly different outlooks and priorities”.¹⁷
- Our polling shows strong evidence of geographic division. When asked whether the country has moved towards their views or away from them, Londoners are the only people in the UK to express affinity with the country’s direction of travel. In net terms, only 1% more Londoners say the country has moved away from them than towards them on economic issues and 6% more think the country has moved away than towards them on cultural issues.
- This contrasts heavily with the rest, who believe strongly the country has moved away from them. People in the North East are considerably more likely to say the country has moved away from them economically and culturally. Just 6% of people say the country has moved towards their views economically and 4% say that the country has moved towards their views on cultural issues.

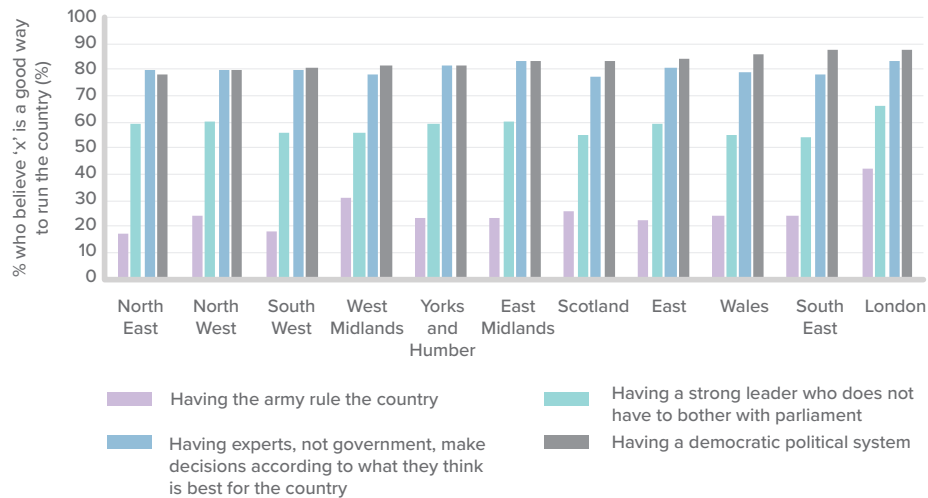
Figure 10: Regional affinity with the country’s direction of travel, cultural and economic axes



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

- However, it is not clear that Londoners are as liberal as this thesis would suggest. In fact, Londoners are less supportive of recent liberalising trends than many other regions: 73% say that more people living in cities has been bad for the country and 69% think that globalisation does not benefit most people, compared to national averages of 71% and 66%, respectively. This suggests that Londoners themselves are somewhat dissatisfied with the effects of liberal policies in recent years, despite being most likely to support a society that embraces change.
- Londoners are also less likely to support liberal democracy than people from other regions, likely reflecting the younger demographic of the city compared to other regions. Despite being most in favour of democratic political system (88%), 42% of Londoners say that “having the army rule the country” would be a good way to run the country, 17 percentage points higher than the national average of 25%. Londoners are also most likely to favour strongman leaders.

Figure 11: Regional support for different forms of government



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

- Considering the difference between rural, urban and suburban voters, we find that suburban voters are most supportive of a society that focuses on giving people more security but that rural voters tend to be considerably more hostile to immigration, globalisation, urban growth and technological change than voters in cities or suburbs. Urban voters are more likely to want a society that embraces change, believe falling marriage rates are due to greater freedom and choice, and are more sceptical of the gig economy.

Figure 12.1: Support for belonging and tradition, by education level

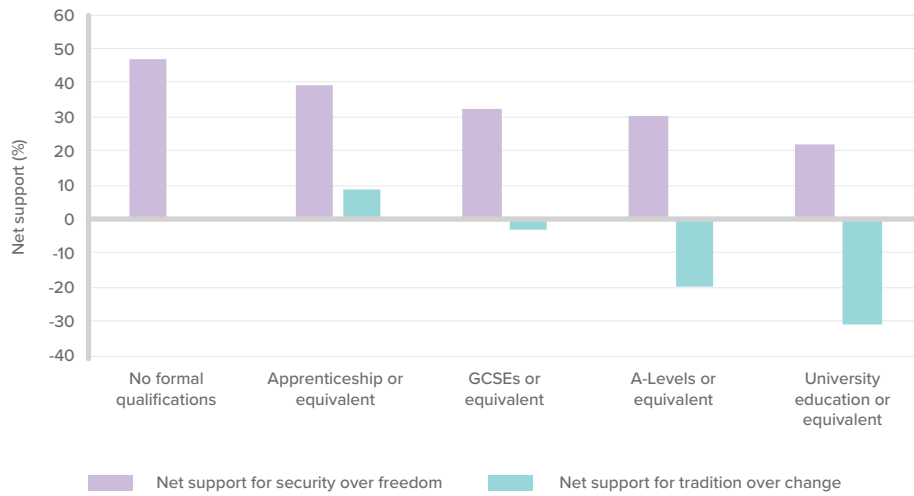


Figure 12.2: Support for belonging and tradition, by job category



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

Education and economic status

- In the 2016 referendum campaign, education was strongly correlated to the Leave vote and many commentators associate that result and the subsequent rise of populism with the voters of lower-educated, less professional voters (who tend to be older, live outside cities, often outside the South East) – in opposition to a largely metropolitan degree-educated elite.
- We find a strong relationship between education level and economic status and people’s views towards security and belonging. The less educated or professional someone is, the more supportive they are of security and of preserving tradition, while greater education and professionalism is associated with a higher willingness to embrace freedom and change.
- On specific issues, those in full-time education are the only group that think that immigration has had a positive effect on the economy and that falling marriage rates are due to freedom and choice – all other groups see rising immigration as a negative and declining matrimony as a sign of declining family values. Signalling who is feeling the effects of economic change most keenly, skilled manual workers and higher managerial administrative and professional workers are twice as likely to be sceptical of technological change and globalisation than semi – or – unskilled workers or intermediate managers. Pensioners are most likely to say that making a decent living has become harder for people like them.
- Politically, low levels of schooling are associated with greater authoritarianism. Those with no formal qualifications (36%) are nearly twice as likely as those with degrees (19%) to think that “having the army rule the country” is a good way to run Britain and 14 percentage points (65% to 51%) more likely to support a “strong leader who does not have to bother with Parliament”. 90% of people who attended university think a democratic political system is a good way to run the country, compared to 77% of those with GCSEs.

The absence of nostalgia

Contrary to received wisdom, the search for security does not seem to be the nostalgic longing for a bygone age. We find consistent support for the idea that people are essentially progressive – i.e. they believe that society has to change to thrive.

- People are not resistant to change in general, they just do not like the status quo. When asked to choose, 58% of people would rather live in a society that “embraces change”, compared to 42% who favour one that “preserves tradition”. Onward has previously found 70% approval for “radical change to the status quo”¹⁸
- When asked about the nature of such change, people are naturally risk averse rather than radical. 80% of people said that politicians should “pursue gradual change to protect what is important, even if it takes longer to achieve” rather than “embrace radical change, even if it leads to lower living standards in

the short-term”. While Londoners, younger generations and men are all more radical than the rest of the country, every demographic group shows a strong preference for prudence over disruption.

- There is strong continuing support for some liberalising reforms. By a ratio of around two-to-one, people believe that “efforts to reduce inequality between men and women have not gone far enough” over “efforts to reduce inequality between men and women have gone too far”. Support for greater gender equality is uniform across all ages, genders, political parties and regions.
- When asked if the country has moved closer to their views or further away from them in the last decade, a much larger group of people feel alienated than feel vindicated by the country’s direction of travel. On economic issues, 37% of people think the country has moved away from their views, compared to just 10% who believe it has moved towards them. On cultural issues, 39% of people feel like the country is moving away from them compared to 11% towards them. On both questions, around half (53% and 50% respectively) said neither closer nor further away.

It seems clear that people do not want to turn the clock backwards and reverse the freedoms of recent years. Instead, they want to go forward in a different direction that focuses more on security and belonging.

The politics of belonging

What might happen to the two party system?



To what extent does this explain the fragmentation of British politics – and what does it mean for the configuration of the main political parties in future?

In the months since Britain's failure to leave Europe before the Article 50 deadline on the 29th of March, most polls have indicated that the surge in Brexit Party and Liberal Democrat vote share in the European elections will hold up if transposed to a general election.

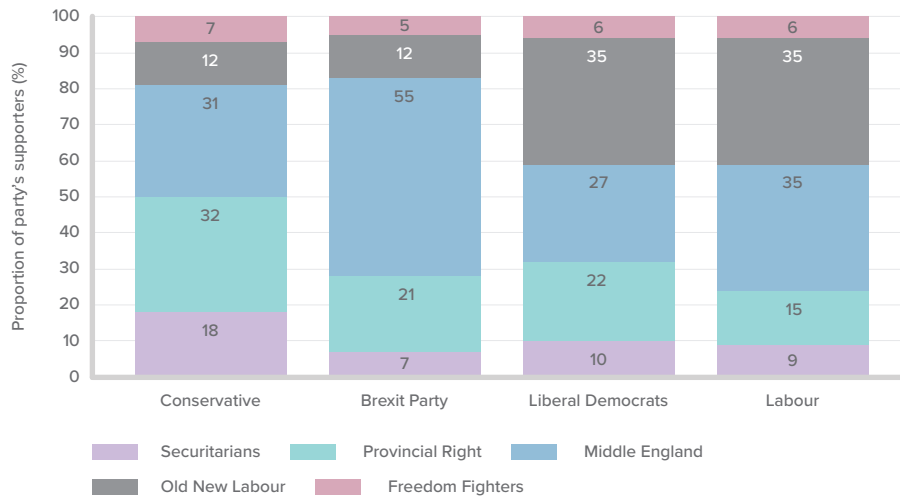
- We conducted our poll in June, so the headline VI results are now relatively dated, but the general undercurrent of voter behaviours is revealing.
- Voters defecting from the Labour Party are splitting in three directions. 21% of 2017 Labour voters would switch to the Liberal Democrats; 10% would vote Green; and only 8% intend to vote for the Brexit Party. This reinforces evidence put forward by Ian Warren and others that Labour's greatest electoral weakness is among liberal voters rather than socially conservative Leavers.
- The Conservatives' defectors are, by contrast, mostly moving to the Brexit Party. 28% of 2017 Conservative voters told us they would vote for the Brexit Party, compared to only 11% who say they will vote Liberal Democrat. However, the party cannot rely on only one wing to reclaim its 2017 vote share, they need both Lib Dem and Brexit Party switchers to reassemble most (84%) of the 2017 coalition.

Our poll shows that this fragmentation can be at least partly attributed to the growing split between people who favour security and those motivated by freedom. When looking at the preferences of different parties' voters and switchers, we see sharp differences emerge between the priorities of different groups:

- Core Conservative voters are relatively more freedom-orientated (and less communitarian) than any other voting group. 10% of Conservatives are what we call Libertarians, a further 26% are on the Liberal Right and favour economic freedom and a further 9% are on the Liberal Left, supporting social freedom. On the whole, core Conservatives are more likely to believe that privatisation has been good for consumers, the rich have achieved their wealth due to hard work, and think technological change has improved wages and jobs.
- The Conservatives defectors are from either end of its values coalition. Voters defecting from the Conservatives to the Brexit Party are twice as likely, in net terms, to oppose university growth and rising immigration as those moving to the Lib Dems. They are twice as likely, in net terms, to believe that privatisation has been good for consumers and five times less likely to believe that gender equality has not gone far enough. They are split on law and order, with Lib Dem defectors believing strongly in rehabilitation, and Brexit Party defectors believing in punishment.
- Core Labour voters are relatively more security-orientated in their views. Nearly a third (32%) are on the Liberal Left, with a further tenth Libertarian and Liberal Right, with just under half (48%) Communitarian. This means that 8 in 10 favour economic security, compared to just over 6 in 10 Conservatives. On social issues, the party is relatively split between those who favour social security (57%) while the two-fifths (43%) who want social freedom.

- But those defecting from the Labour Party have much more pronounced philosophical differences than the Conservatives. Among Labour voters switching to the Brexit Party, there is twice the net support for the idea that communities are becoming more divided than those defecting to the Liberal Democrats; three times the net support for the belief that innovation has made jobs worse; four times the net support for the notion that globalisation does not benefit most people; and five times the net support for lower marriage rates being down to declining values. Brexit is not the only issue fracturing old tribal loyalties.
- Voters from the two main parties who are considering voting for the Brexit Party, by contrast, are relatively similar. The only issues where the two defecting groups diverge significantly are privatisation, wealth accumulation and gender equality, where Labour defectors are unsurprisingly more left wing. On almost every other issue, we find that Brexit Party considerers are similarly opposed regardless of their previous party affiliation. This suggests the new Brexit Party coalition is more homogenous than the existing party coalitions – and therefore potentially harder to unravel.

Figure 13: Freedom versus security preferences of different voters



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

This data exposes the dilemma facing established parties in a post-Brexit landscape: their core voting base is increasingly at odds from their target voters.

- The Conservatives have historically made freedom their calling card, especially since the 1980s and particularly on the economy. But the voters they now need to attract from other parties, or prevent from defecting elsewhere, are motivated by security and belonging, on both the economy and social issues.

- Labour has always prioritised security, especially on the economy. But to win a majority today it must appeal to a segment of its voting base that is much more liberal across both social and economic dimensions. This means the voters that today's Labour Party needs to win are very different to those it culturally feels it has historically represented.

In short, the parties of Margaret Thatcher and Keir Hardie are not just exchanging more voters as a result of rising political volatility, but this process is happening precisely because both main parties must now actively target each others' base in a realignment of old voting coalitions.

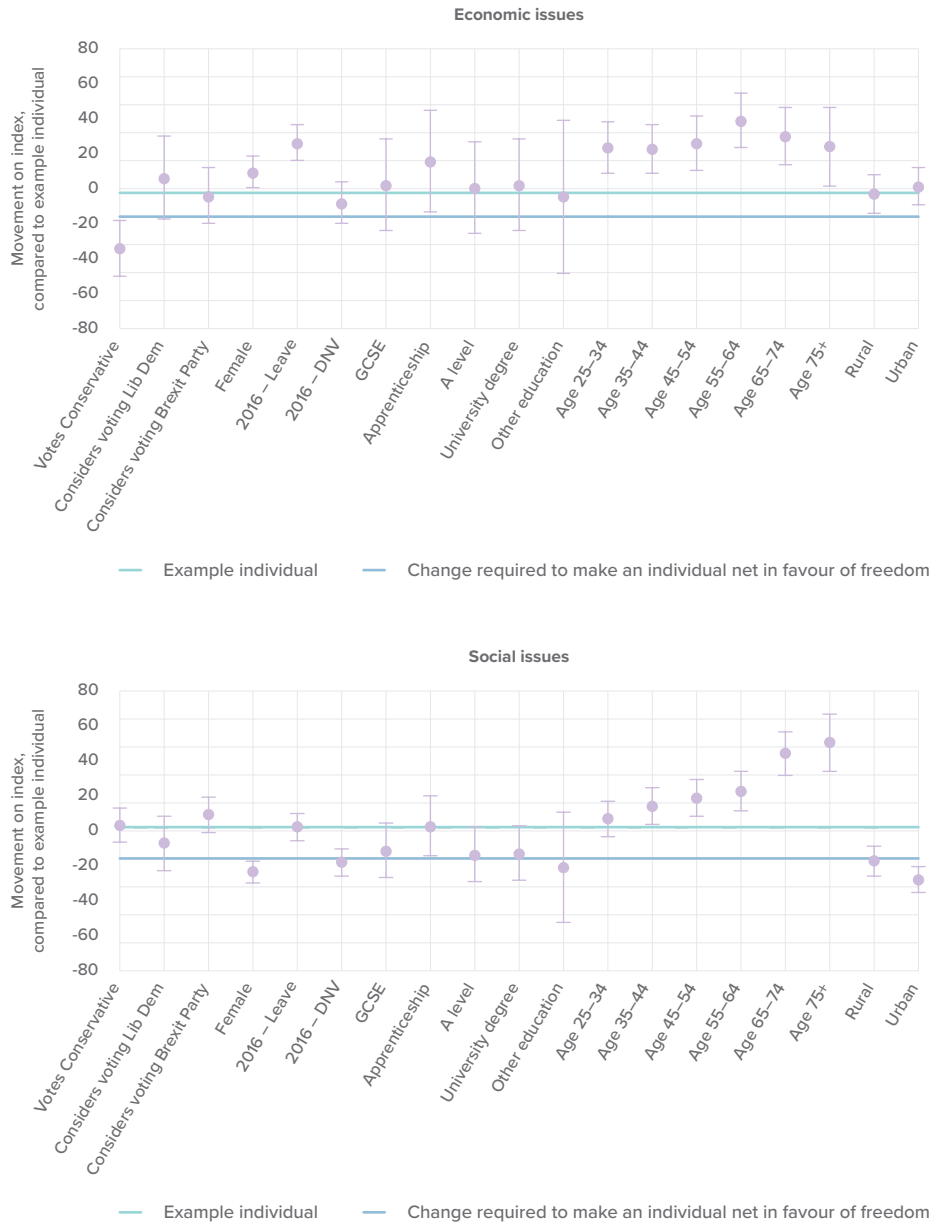
Which factors influence people's support for freedom or belonging?

Figure 14 below demonstrates the extent to which this correlates with people's views towards freedom and security. By modelling the marginal impact of different factors on views towards freedom or security across both dimensions, we observe that the only factor driving people towards economic freedom is being a confirmed Conservative voter. In fact, the effect is large enough that it is enough to offset almost any other single demographic factor though the combination of factors generally means individuals lean towards economic security.

On social issues, a range of factors make voters more freedom-orientated, including higher levels of education, being female, and living in cities. Voters considering the Brexit party are more security-orientated on social issues, whereas those contemplating voting Liberal Democrat are more freedom-orientated. Age appears to be the driving factor supporting security on the socio-cultural axis.

This suggests that, while the Conservatives can appeal to their supporters by invoking freedom in their economic policies and messages, they will struggle to win many new voters or retrieve some of their lost base from the Liberal Democrats or Brexit Party. Even urban, younger, and graduate voters are less inclined towards freedom than Conservative voters. This is less the case on social issues, where the Conservatives could appeal to young and educated voters with messages designed to promote social liberty, but in doing so the Conservatives risk alienating an older cohort which is strongly focused on security.

Figure 14: Marginal impact of different factors on individual freedom and security favourability, by economic (LHS) and socio-cultural (RHS) issues



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

Note: The scenario individual is a composite of the excluded categories, so accounts for a non-Conservative voting male who voted remain, is aged under 25, has below GCSE-level education, and lives in a suburban area. If each of these were to change, the impact would be the inverse of the non-excluded categories, so for example, being Male would make an individual slightly more likely to favour freedom.

The changing electoral map

The electoral map has started to shift to reflect the new post-Brexit reality. Since the referendum, Labour has strengthened its vote in young, liberal metropolitan seats and the Conservatives have seen support rise in older, less educated seats, especially in rural and suburban areas. At both the general election and in local and European elections, we have seen the soul of the Conservative Party shift from Kensington and Chelsea to North Yorkshire and Labour's heartlands from Northern working class seats to metropolitan boroughs.

The politics of belonging is likely to hasten this geographic realignment and with it turn Labour into the party of freedom and the Conservatives into the party of security. When we map security scores onto constituencies, the seats exhibiting the greatest preference for freedom are reliably concentrated in urban Labour held or targeted seats, while provincial or suburban seats and targets for the Conservatives are more likely to favour security.

- Conservative seats have a greater preference for economic and social security than the average, whereas Labour seats have a greater preference for economic and social freedom. This divide is also true at the margins. Of the 100 most freedom-loving seats, 86 are held by Labour and 9 are held by the Conservatives. Contrastingly, 83 of the 100 most security-centric seats are held by Conservatives, but only 6 are held by Labour.
- The South East exemplifies this polarisation. The region simultaneously contains some of the most security-focused seats, such as Bexhill & Battle and Worthing West (both in the top ten) as well as seats that show relatively strong support for freedom, such as Guildford and Wycombe. These four seats were once part of a broad Conservative coalition; it is increasingly unlikely that they will be held by a single party.
- The North West is in the exact opposite situation. Much of the region has historically been Labour-voting, but the coalition that the party has built could now disintegrate. The electorates in central Manchester and Liverpool are overwhelmingly pro-freedom metropolitan liberals and currently support Labour by margins of 60%–70%. But the party risks losing its grip on security-oriented seats such as Barrow & Furness and Workington; both have slim majorities (0.5% and 9%, respectively), as the Conservatives have steadily whittled down Labour's lead in both of these constituencies over the last five General Elections.

The effect is particularly pronounced when it comes to marginal seats. Of the Conservative-held seats that are conducive to a more liberal, Remain and younger party, we find that the following become vulnerable:

Constituency	Majority (%)	Majority (votes)	Second place	Combined freedom/ security score
<5% Marginals				
Southampton, Itchen	0.1%	31	Labour	0.39
Richmond Park	0.1%	45	Liberal Democrats	0.37
Chipping Barnet	0.6%	353	Labour	0.44
Hendon	2.1%	1,072	Labour	0.26
Finchley & Golders Green	3.2%	1,600	Labour	0.33
Putney	3%	1,554	Labour	0.24
Milton Keynes South	2.6%	1,665	Labour	0.31
Harrow East	3.5%	1,757	Labour	0.41
Milton Keynes North	3.1%	1,975	Labour	0.34
Watford	3.6%	2,092	Labour	0.38
Crawley	4.9%	2,457	Labour	0.38
South Swindon	4.8%	2,464	Labour	0.43
Cheltenham	4.5%	2,569	Liberal Democrats	0.46
Other vulnerable seats				
Cities of London & Westminster	8.1%	3,148	Labour	0.39
Colchester	10.6%	5,677	Labour	0.36
St Albans	10.7%	6,109	Liberal Democrats	0.42
Wimbledon	10.9%	5,622	Labour	0.34
Welwyn Hatfield	14.3%	7,369	Labour	0.41
Chelsea & Fulham	19%	8,188	Labour	0.32

Figure 15: Constituencies ranked by preference for freedom (green) and security (purple)

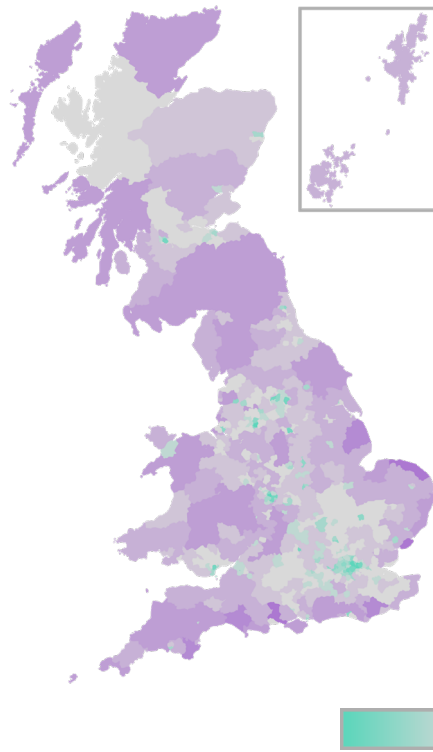
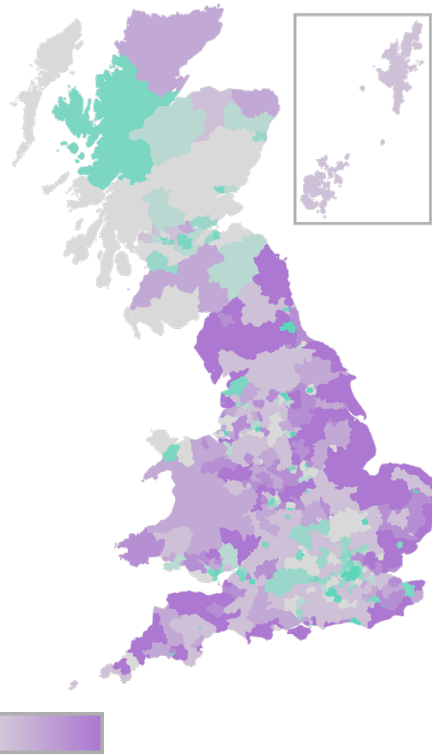


Figure 16: Constituency map showing predicted support for a freedom coalition* (green) vs security coalition** (purple)



**Remain-voting, young, highly educated, pro-freedom voters*

***Leave-voting, older, less educated, pro-security voters*

Note: Calculations for Figure 16 based on the proportion of individuals with a degree or equivalent, the relative proportion of people under 30 years-old compared to people over 65 years-old, whether a majority voted to Leave or Remain in the 2016 EU Referendum, and the average score on our freedom/security index.

Many of the security-focused, pro-Brexit and older seats are currently held by the Conservatives. But many are not. These might reliably make up the Party's target seats in an election:

Constituency	Majority (%)	Majority (votes)	Currently held by	Combined freedom/ security score
<5% Marginals				
Dudley North	0.1%	22	Labour	0.55
Newcastle-under-Lyme	0.1%	30	Labour	0.56
Crewe & Nantwich	0.1%	48	Labour	0.52
Barrow & Furness	0.4%	209	Labour	0.66
Keighley	0.5%	239	Labour	0.52
Ashfield	0.9%	441	Labour	0.59
Bishop Auckland	1.2%	502	Labour	0.65
Stroud	1.1%	687	Labour	0.62
Westmorland & Lonsdale	1.5%	777	Liberal Democrats	0.79
Penistone & Stocksbridge	2.7%	1,322	Labour	0.69
Eastbourne	2.8%	1,609	Liberal Democrats	0.70
Wakefield	4.7%	2,176	Labour	0.53
High Peak	4.3%	2,322	Labour	0.59
Warrington South	4.1%	2,549	Labour	0.51
Other vulnerable seats				
Vale of Clwyd	6.1%	2,379	Labour	0.75
North Norfolk	6.7%	3,512	Liberal Democrats	0.94
Blackpool South	7.2%	2,523	Labour	0.60
Rother Valley	7.8%	3,882	Labour	0.62
Bassetlaw	9.3%	4,852	Labour	0.63
Workington	9.4%	3,925	Labour	0.69
Gedling	9.1%	4,694	Labour	0.58
Don Valley	11.2%	5,169	Labour	0.61
Bolsover	11.4%	5,288	Labour	0.62
Clwyd South	11.6%	4,356	Labour	0.55
Sedgefield	14.6%	6,059	Labour	0.61

The significance of the rugby league

While these constituencies are located in different parts of the country and exhibit some key differences, there is a high preponderance of towns – rather than rural or metropolitan constituencies – in the North of England with a proud rugby league tradition. In the table above, this includes Keighley (Cougars), Barrow (Raiders), Wakefield (Trinity), Warrington (Wolves) and Workington (Town).

This is historically significant. The seven towns that were founding members of the Super League (excluding city-based teams) – Castleford, Halifax, Oldham, St Helens, Warrington, Wigan, Workington – have returned only one Conservative MP in every ten general elections since 1918 and currently have a median Labour majority of 13,273. They are very different from the Rugby Union cities – Gloucester, Bath, Exeter and London – that the Conservative Party has targeted in the past. Rugby League towns are fast becoming the key electoral battleground between the two main parties.

We have seen how the restructuring of the electorate increasingly threatens the hegemony of Britain's established parties and creates space for authoritarian tendencies to emerge. This echoes the rise of national populism across the West, ranging from minority party insurgency in social democracies like France and Germany to strongman rule in emerging powers like Brazil and Turkey.

But if Britain is to continue to be immune to the kind of populism that has divided many other countries – and put an end to the volatility undermining the two party system – how should the main parties respond? What are the policy priorities for the politics of belonging?

The issues that matter to different groups

- Three years after Britain voted to Leave the European Union, Brexit remains the most important issue for every group of voters. 83% of Conservative voters placed Britain Leaving the EU in their top three issues, marginally ahead of 81% of Brexit Party voters. 60% of Labour and 68% of Liberal Democrat voters said the same.
- Among all voters, the NHS is the second most important issue (45%). However this varies between different voting groups. Health is substantially more important to Labour (53%) and Liberal Democrat (50%) voters than Conservatives (39%) or Brexit Party (37%) voters, both of whom place crime (42% and 45% respectively) higher on their list of priorities.
- Immigration and asylum is the third most important issue for Brexit Party voters (43%) and the fourth most important for Conservative voters (31%), compared to the eighth for Labour (14%) and Liberal Democrat (15%) voters.
- In contrast, climate change is the joint third top issue for Liberal Democrat voters (33%), equal with crime and behind only Brexit and the NHS, and sixth most important for Labour voters (23%). This compares to seventh (17%) among Conservative voters and eighth (13%) among Brexit Party voters. Among all voters, climate change (22%) is now a more important issue than education (19%), housing (21%) and the economy (20%).

Policy priorities

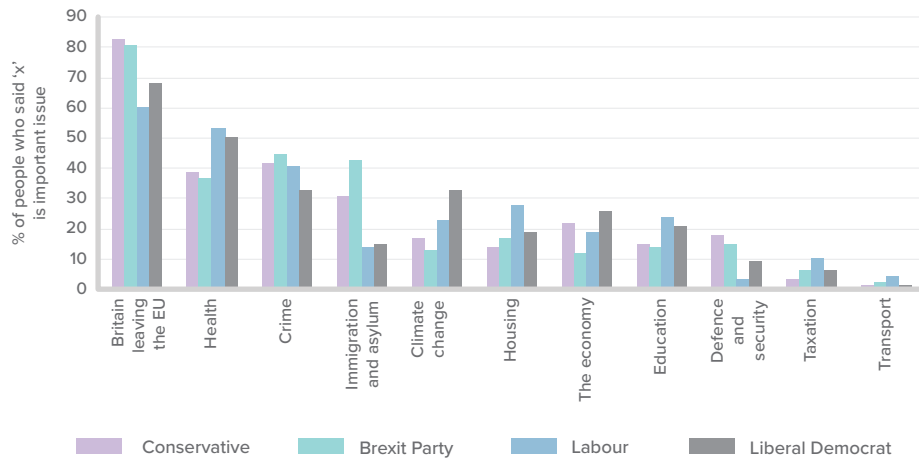
What does the politics of belonging look like in practice?



- In a sign of people’s attitudes towards fiscal policy, only 7% of people chose taxation as one of their most important issues. This was lowest among Conservative (3%) voters and highest among Labour voters (10%).

We find more notable differences when we analyse different switching groups: those who voted for one political party at the 2017 election but now say they would vote for another party if a general election were called today.

Figure 17: Most important issues by vote intention

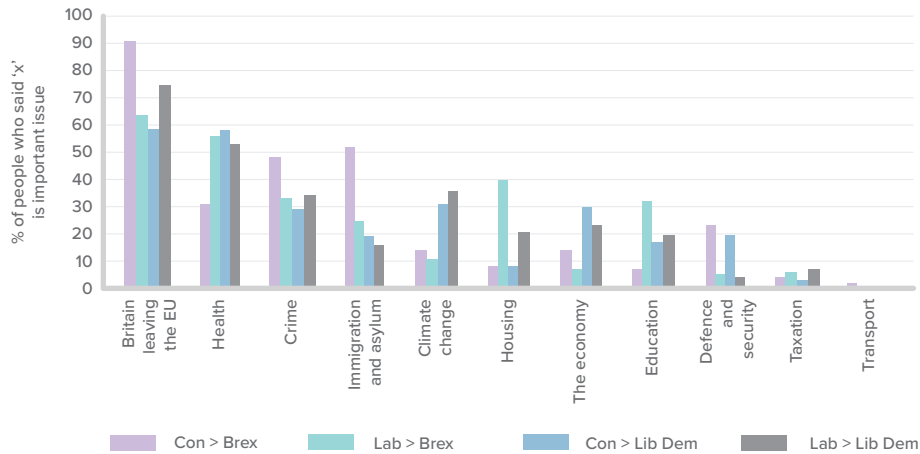


Source: *Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.*

- Among these groups, Brexit continues to be the most important issue, but there is a clear split along Leave and Remain lines. 91% of Conservative voters defecting to the Brexit Party and 75% of Labour voters planning to vote for the Liberal Democrats say Brexit is their most important issue. This compares to just 64% of Labour voters planning to vote for the Brexit Party and 59% of Conservatives planning to vote Lib Dem.
- Those defecting from the Conservatives to the Brexit Party are distinctive in their priorities. They attribute around half the importance to the NHS (31%) to other defecting groups, and around twice the priority to immigration and asylum (52%), which is their second priority. Crime (48%) is their third most important issue. Like other groups, taxation (4%) and transport (2%) are their least important issues.
- Those switching from Labour to the Brexit Party have very different priorities to their fellow Conservative defectors. They care considerably more about health (56%) and are more than four times more likely to make education (42%) and housing (40%) a top priority than Conservative to Brexit Party defectors. They are however similarly unconcerned about climate change, the economy, taxation and transport.

- There is much greater synergy between those defecting to the Liberal Democrats from the established parties. For both Labour and Conservative defectors to the Lib Dems, health is the second top issue, followed by climate change, crime and the economy, in different orders. Unsurprisingly, Labour to Lib Dem switchers place greater importance on housing, while former Conservatives care more about defence and security.

Figure 18: Most important issues by vote switching groups



Source: *Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.*

Conclusion

The main established parties seem to be losing voters to other parties for different reasons. Brexit may continue to dominate but defecting groups exhibit markedly different domestic priorities from one another. This should inform the main parties' political strategies and determine which issues they try to own in a general election.

If the Conservatives are seeking to build a new tribe which wins back Brexit Party voters and appropriates large numbers of former Labour defectors going the same way, they should focus on crime, the NHS and immigration. However, too great an emphasis on traditionally safe Conservative issues such as housing and education may work with its own former voters but turn off Labour defectors.

If the Labour Party wants to gain a majority vote share it should give more time to crime, housing and education, which motivate both defectors to the Liberal Democrats and the Brexit Party, and downplay issues that divide the two such as immigration and the economy. The Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, clearly have an opportunity to solidify their growing base around three issues: climate change, the economy and the NHS.

While Brexit continues to be the greatest priority for all voters, this serves as a reminder that it will not on its own build a winning coalition of voters able to deliver a majority. Domestic policy matters.

In-depth policy focus

1. The size and shape of the State

The debate in Westminster tends to focus on whether the State is big or small but ordinary people in our focus groups have a completely different conception of the question: is the State good or bad at the things it needs to do? In polling, we found strong support for greater investment over tax cuts. While this varied to some extent between groups, there was relative unanimity among voter groups – with one exception: London.

Focus group excerpt

When people say that they're going to cut taxes for working people, do you think "that's going to make me better off"?

It's just an easier way to win voters.

They'll take it from you somewhere else. Giving with one hand and taking from somewhere else.

Would you prefer big or small government?

Not bothered.

It depends on the people in the government. It depends if they're doing their job.

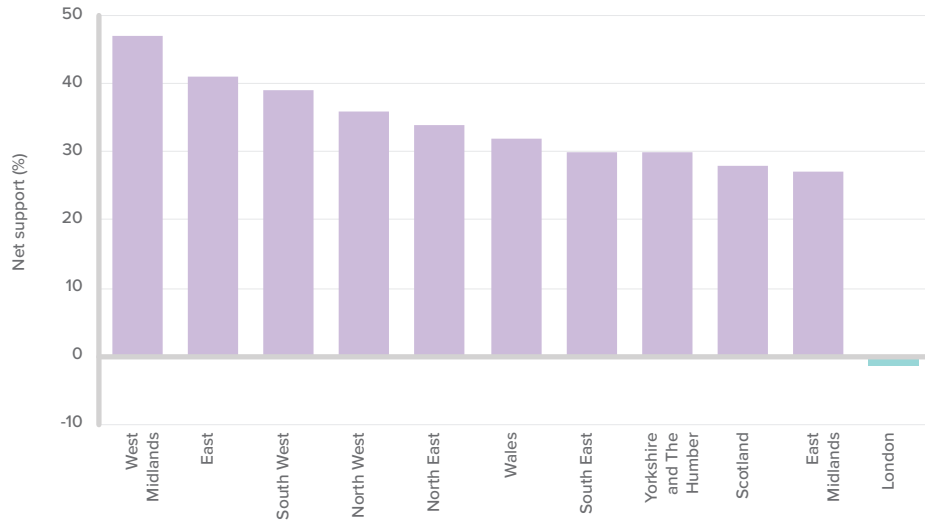
What about higher taxes?

I'm sure the average person wouldn't mind paying all this tax if it was used right.

- When asked to choose, slightly less than two thirds (65%) of people believe that “the government should prioritise spending for schools, hospitals and social care”, and just over a third (35%) want government to “prioritise cutting income tax to let people keep more of their own money”. Combined with Onward’s previous findings that people would prefer higher taxation to reduce inequality than for people to be able to keep more of their own money,¹⁹ this suggests that there is little appetite for significant income tax cuts.
- While all age groups favour more investment, young people tend to be less favourable to more public spending than older generations: 59% of under-35s support public spending over tax cuts, compared to 74% of over-65s. The cohort most in favour of higher public investment is those aged 65–74 (77%), while those most against are those aged 25–34 (56%), reflecting the cohort effects we described previously in *Generation Why?*, where those born between 1985 and 1994 are some of the most traditionally right-leaning on economic issues and those born between 1945 and 1954 are some of the most left-wing.

- All ethnic groups support higher public spending but Asian voters are markedly more averse to it than other groups. Net support for public spending is just 3% among Asian and British Asian voters, but ten times higher among Black (41%), Mixed (40%) and White (30%) voters. Women are marginally more in favour of public spending than men.

Figure 19: Net support for public spending on schools, hospital and social care versus income tax cuts



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

- The only people that favour income tax cuts to higher public spending are Londoners, by 51% to 49%. This is completely at odds from every other region, all of whom support higher public spending by more than three fifths. More generally, net support for higher public spending in rural areas (39%) is around double that in urban areas (19%). Income tax cuts may be a metropolitan priority, but are not a priority for the rest of the country.
- While all political parties support higher levels of spending over income tax cuts, core Conservative voters and Brexit Party voters do so with the least enthusiasm. Of all defecting groups, voters switching to the Liberal Democrats from both main parties are considerably more in favour of higher public spending than Brexit Party defectors, reflecting the fact that Leave voters are relatively less in favour than Remain voters.
- The public is split on so-called “nanny state” policies to regulate personal consumer choices. When asked if the government should “give consumers more information about products to decide for themselves” or “prevent advertising of harmful products like cigarettes and sugary food”, people lean 53% towards choice over 47% towards intervention. Over-65 year olds, Welsh and Remain voters favour regulation, while younger groups and people in Scotland in particular support free choice.

Conclusion

There is clear support for higher levels of public spending to support the NHS, schools and social care and a willingness to forgo personal income tax cuts to pay for it. This correlates with the British Social Attitudes survey and suggests that voters strongly favour public services investment.

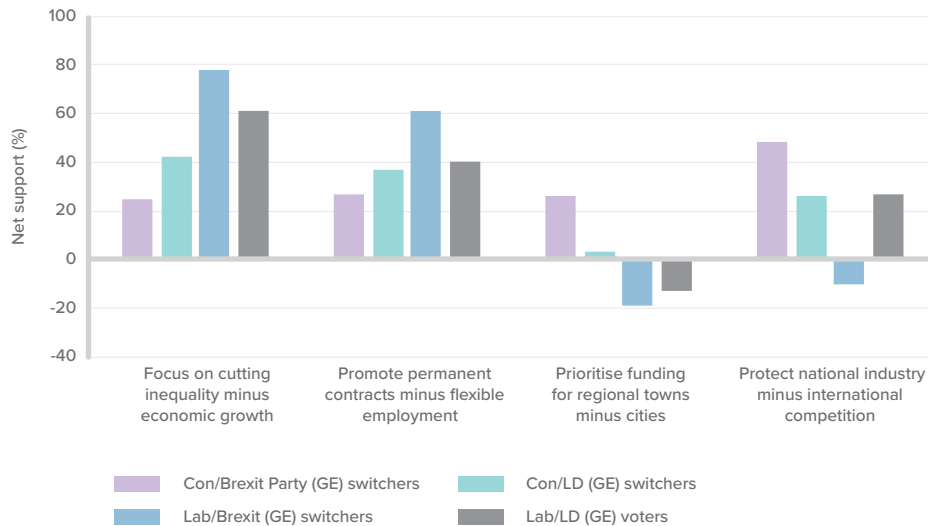
Our focus groups imply that this stems from both a requirement for arms of the State to perform its duties much more effectively than it currently does, and a scepticism of whether tax cuts will actually materialise for working people.

This is instructive for several reasons. If faced with a trade-off between tax cuts and higher levels of spending, the public would strongly prefer investment. But investment alone is not enough: it must be targeted to materially improve services for people: the policing of their streets, nursing on their wards, teaching in their schools. Finally, if policymakers do cut taxes, they should prioritise those on lower incomes first who no longer believe they will benefit from such changes.

The economy

- By more than 2-to-1, people overwhelmingly believe that the Government “should focus on reducing the gap between rich and poor, even if the economy grows more slowly” (71%) rather than “focus on growing the economy as fast as possible, even if it leads to more inequality” (29%). This wide margin is replicated for all age groups, regions, men and women, every ethnicity, both rural and urban voters, property owners and renters, and for all levels of education and occupation.
- Voters are content to put up with higher prices to support national industries, but are not content to pay to rescue them once they have failed. Three in five (58%) voters say the government should protect national industries from international competition, even if it leads to higher prices, but a further 57% do not want taxpayers money spent rescuing industries. Support for protectionism varies considerably by age and geography. 18–24 year olds are the only age group not in favour of protecting national industries from international competition (46%), while those over 65 are most supportive (68%). Perhaps reflecting its younger age demographic, London is the only region that does not support protecting national industries (40%), whereas the North East (65%), East of England (64%) and West Midlands all show strong support (61%).
- Among all voter groups,²⁰ Conservative voters are most in favour of government prioritising economic growth, among the most in favour of flexible contracts and among the least supportive of government protecting national industries (behind Labour voters). However, on all issues Conservatives are net supportive of the interventionist rather than liberal position. There is a clear split between the Labour Party and the Brexit Party on the protection of industry and whether we should invest in regions rather than cities, with Labour considerably more liberal on both issues.

Figure 20: Net support for economic security over freedom, by party and defector groups



Source: *Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.*

- There are also splits within both parties’ defectors. While all defecting groups support reducing inequality, net support for reducing inequality is nearly three times higher among Labour defectors to the Brexit Party than among those gained from the Conservatives. Meanwhile, defectors to the Liberal Democrats are relatively uniform in strongly favouring action to tackle inequality over action to spur growth.

The labour market

- There is a clear desire for greater job security rather than greater job freedom. Two-thirds (62%) of people think the government should promote permanent contracts, even if it means fewer people in employment, compared to only 38% who would prefer a trade-off between more flexible contracts but weaker job security. Although younger people are marginally more supportive of flexible working, all age groups show net support for more permanent contracts. Support for flexible working is lowest (34%) among semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers – arguably those most affected by it – but marginally higher among managerial professionals (40%) and those in full-time education (46%). Labour defectors to the Brexit Party want secure contracts twice as much (61% net) as Conservative defectors to the Brexit Party (27% net).

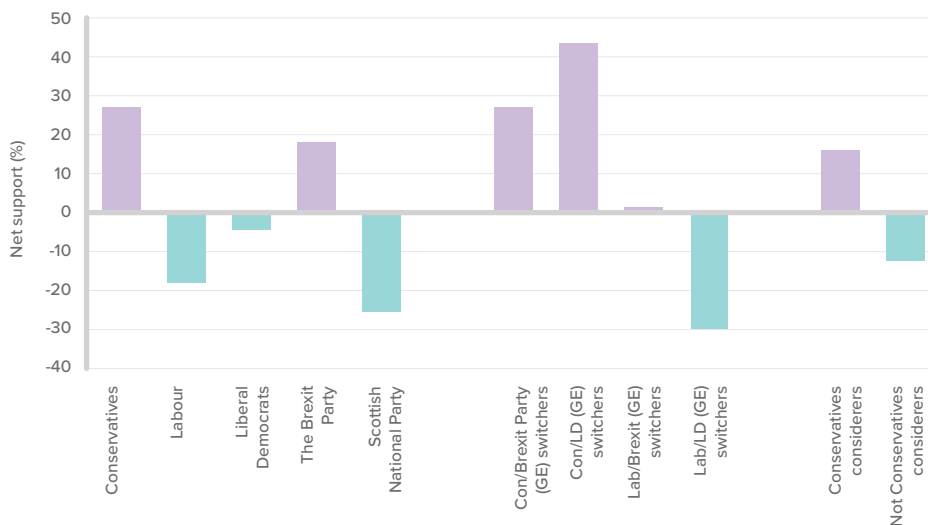
Focus group excerpt

I don't feel as stable as what I did. I said I'd take a couple months out of work, because I've never done that and then it took me five months to find another! I thought I could walk out of one job and bang right into another.

Not a chance. Now, I've got a job, but it's not the hours I want, it's not the place I want, it's not the distance I want to be at, and I'm still in the same situation because I still need a job. Things like that worry you.

- This extends to job mobility, where people would rather people moved to well-paid jobs than took worse paying jobs near home. 64% of people think we should encourage people to take better paid jobs, even if it means moving away from the place they were born, compared to 36% who would prefer people to work locally. Among Londoners, net support for moving to find better paid jobs (50%) is twice the average of all other regions combined (26%).
- Just over half of people think that the government should guarantee that all working families have a good standard of living (51%) versus 49% who believe that a family's standard of living should be determined by how hard they work. Young people and those with few qualifications are much more egalitarian and homeowners, Asian and Asian British voters and older generations are more meritocratic. This translates into a clear political division: Labour, SNP and Labour-to-Lib Dem voters are egalitarian, whereas Conservative groups and the Brexit Party are considerably more meritocratic.

Figure 21: Net support for meritocracy versus egalitarianism by voting group



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

- There is incredibly strong support for investing in technical education over reducing the cost of student loans. 78% of people say the government should “use taxpayers money to invest in apprenticeships and technical courses for young people” versus just 22% who say they should “use taxpayers money to cut the cost of student loans”. Over-65s are considerably more supportive (87%) than under-35s (67%) and Londoners are least supportive of all regions by a considerable margin, reflecting concentration of university students and graduates.
- White individuals are most in favour of investment in technical education out of all ethnic groups, and the unemployed, pensioners and skilled manual workers were the occupations that indicated the highest support. These groups are most likely to vote Conservative.
- Politically, all voting coalitions support greater investment in technical education over student loan reductions, but Conservative and Brexit Party voters are more favourable. It is clearly a priority for defectors from the Conservative Party: more than 9 in 10 Tory switchers to both the Brexit Party and the Liberal Democrats would prefer their taxes to pay for more technical courses rather than lower student loans, compared to only 7 in 10 Labour defectors.

Conclusion

People strongly believe that the economy does not work for everyone, and the feeling shared by people of all political persuasions and demographic profiles. People want policies to protect national industries, promote secure working conditions, and tackle inequality. And they are willing to sacrifice jobs and growth to achieve those goals.

This reflects the wider sea change we described above where the gains from globalisation, automation and free trade are not seen to have been distributed to everyone – encouraging people to shun economic freedom and embrace economic security. As we found earlier, large numbers of people think it has become harder for them to make a decent living; they want to regain that security.

Politically, it is clear that – however much liberal economic policies have benefited the country at large – a majority (and plurality) of voters did not feel the gains. Those that believe in a market economy must develop new economic policies that provide greater security to people and places which have not shared the gains from previous growth while also levelling up their economic prospects in the future.

There is also a pressing desire from voters to rebalance education policy away from the 50% of people who undertake higher education towards the other 50% who do technical education and apprenticeships. This is particularly an opportunity for the Conservatives.

Law and order

No issue has risen up the public's priorities in recent months as quickly as crime. In Onward's previous work, we have found strong intergenerational support for greater action to tackle crime and both polling and focus groups for this report demonstrated universal acknowledgement that security in the most basic sense – safety from crime – should be a much greater focus for policymakers.

- People on balance want a justice system that is more about rehabilitation (52%) than punishment (48%). However there is wide variation between groups. Under-35s (58%), those who voted Remain (63%) and Londoners (66%) all strongly favour rehabilitation. Meanwhile over-65s (58%), Leavers (61%) and areas such as the East of England (54%) strongly favour punishment.
- Within voting groups, Conservative and Brexit Party supporters align on their support for punishment while Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Party supporters show similar support for rehabilitation. This reflects the wider education split within voting patterns given the higher the level of education someone has, the more likely they are to prefer rehabilitation over punishment
- While overall supportive of rehabilitation, we find strong support for the statement “we should increase the use of “stop and search” policing even if it creates racial divisions” (62%) versus 38% who say “we should reduce the use of “stop and search” policing because the racial divisions created outweigh the benefits”. However this headline finding masks considerable demographic divisions: just over half (54%) of under-35s support reducing stops and searches, while 79% of over 65 year olds support increasing use of the power. Among ethnic groups, 73% of Black voters want stop and search reduced, but 64% of White voters want it increased.

Focus group excerpt

Do you think crime has got worse?

God yeah. My nephew was in a car accident. And a young lad, on a moped, 14, wrote his car off. He was caught but the police said that he's too young and they couldn't do anything.

I do think they need to change punishment, though. They need to be a lot more harsh.

More strict laws. We need more strict guidelines. Who cares if he's 14? Send him to a young offender's institution.

Even when you do get a sentence though and you do go to prison, you never do your full term anyway.

So, do you think unsuitable punishments have contributed to crime?

Yeah, definitely.

They're not frightened.

Focus group excerpt

The police used to be the authority. These days, they'd shake your hand and give you a biscuit.

Looking at it, there are more people in this country now than there were 50 years so that's why there's hardly any coppers because they haven't got the manpower to be everywhere.

Police presence is a massive issue.

EU rules as well. They came into place where you got human rights. If someone's committed a crime and gone to jail, they should get a mattress and a toilet, that's it. Not a snooker table. Not a TV. "No, it's my human right to have a TV!" It's so wrong.

- There is a clear political division on stop and search. 82% of Conservative voters, as well as 89% of Conservative to Brexit Party defectors and 73% of Conservative to Liberal Democrat defectors, want the power increased, compared to only 49% of Labour voters and 57% of Labour to Liberal Democrat defectors.
- There is notable support for legalisation of recreational drugs like cannabis (55% of respondents in favour). However, this is principally driven by under-35 year old (63%), degree educated (56%), Remain-voting (60%) and London-dwelling (68%) voters, while over-65s (44%), people with no qualifications (47%) Leavers (48%) and voters in the North and Midlands (51%) are much less supportive of the move). Politically, Conservatives (55% against) and Tory considerers (51% against) are most averse to legalisation.

Conclusion

Crime – the essential security issue – has rocketed up the agenda and will continue to for as long as people feel unsafe in their communities. It is an issue that unites all party groups, especially the Conservative coalition, and will undoubtedly be one of the key issues in a future general election.

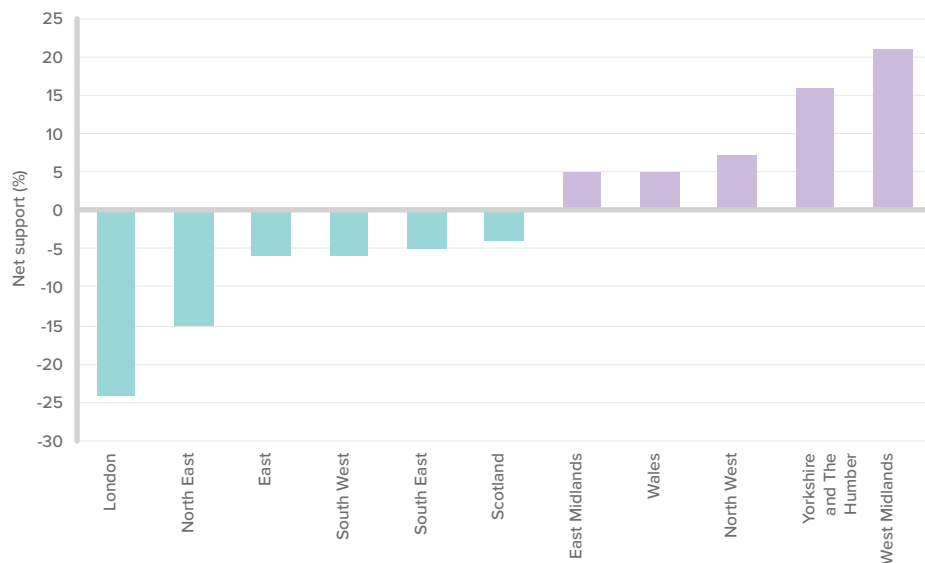
However it is also a wedge issue between different voting coalitions. Conservative and Brexit Party groups favour punishment over rehabilitation, more stop and search rather than less, and are averse to recreational drug legalisation rather than in favour. Labour and Liberal Democrat voters are the opposite.

This creates a natural dividing line between the main parties, but also makes it harder for them to appeal disparate political tribes on law and order without alienating some of their desired coalition.

Local communities

- There is strong support for local ownership and the preservation of local institutions. Three in five (58%) of people think we have a special duty to protect local institutions such as pubs and post offices from closure, which is relatively consistent across different ages, regions and economic factors. The exception, again, is London, where a majority of people (54%) believe that “we should treat local institutions like everything else, and allow them to close if they are not being used”. Supporters of the two main parties as well as Liberal Democrats and the Brexit Party are similarly in favour of protecting local institutions (56% to 60%). However, Labour-to-Brexit Party defectors and Conservative-to-Lib Dem switchers actively support allowing local institutions to close.
- 84% of people think that the transport network would be better run if we gave cities and regions more control, compared to just 16% who think it could be improved by giving politicians in Whitehall more control. When asked specifically about the choice for the HS2 review – whether to support connect the North or invest in a link between Birmingham and London, 74% favoured Northern links versus just 26% who want a London-Birmingham link. The only regions who supported the Southern link London and the West Midlands and voters defecting from the Conservatives to the Brexit Party and the Lib Dems are both strongly in favour of connecting the Northern cities before the Southern route.

Figure 22: Net support for migration policy based on societal impact over economic need



Source: Onward/Hanbury Strategy, 21–29 June 2019.

- Voters marginally believe that the government’s immigration policy should focus on “the level of migration society is able to manage” (51%) over “the types of migrants the economy needs” (49%). However there is considerable variation by age, geography and education. 57% of under-35s say that societal impact is more important, compared to 62% of over-65s who believe that economic need is more important. London and the North East favour economic need, while the West Midlands and Yorkshire are considerably more conscious of societal impact. Those with low levels of qualifications favour societal impact while those with degrees support an economic immigration system.
- Politically, Conservative and Liberal Democrat voters are most in favour of an immigration system based on economic need while Labour voters favour one based on social impact. All defecting groups favour economic need over social impact, with Conservative-to-Lib Dem switchers most favourable.

Conclusion

It is unsurprising to see such strong support for local ownership of services and the preservation of local institutions given the large number of people expressing concern about the state of communities in attitudinal questions earlier in this study. People strongly feel that community is in decline – as Onward has repeatedly demonstrated.

This presents an opportunity for Conservative policymakers to rediscover their essential attachment to community, and Labour politicians to rediscover their historic attachment to fraternity and solidarity. All three became dirty words in an era of economic liberalism and social individualism.

While our questions necessarily only tested a few policy propositions, there is clear support for government to better preserve local institutions such as pubs and post offices – and we might add village shops, libraries, nurseries and town halls as well – and to devolve power over key infrastructure and services to local level to allow people to take back control.

Conclusion

Conservatism for the Common Good



In many ways, it should not surprise us that people increasingly seek security over freedom.

For all the economic and social gains of the last few decades, it is clear that life is more insecure and less purposeful for many people than it once was. Globalisation and technological change have rewrought industries that once underpinned entire communities and made work precarious for many. Urban and university agglomeration has concentrated the benefits of growth in some places and for some people but deprived those elsewhere or those more suited to technical work.

The liberation revolution that started in the 1960s has left us considerably freer but also more isolated. Emancipatory politics have given individuals more autonomy, much of which – such as sexual equality and a more meritocratic labour force – is extremely welcome and must not be lost. But its revolutionary effects, which have torn up traditional forms of hierarchy and authority, have left the institutions which give us security – from the family and the neighbourhood to the nation and the Union – weaker and fragmented. Communities have become more diverse as a result of immigration and mobility, but for many that has spelled cultural division rather than integration – especially given liberals’ reluctance to actively promote assimilation of new migrants to the UK.

The political context is also different. In the 1970s, the straitjacket on aspiration was eye-wateringly high levels of taxation and worklessness. Today we have lower taxes but much higher housing costs and weak pay growth. Homeownership has been on a fifteen-year downward trajectory, rental costs are three times higher as a share of post-tax income than in the 1980s and record employment has not stopped in-work poverty rocketing in the last 25 years. Income inequality is steady but historically high; meanwhile the wealth gap grows. Voters might be forgiven for thinking the government should do more to help them get on.

Conservatism for the common good

For established parties who have made freedom their calling card for several decades, this sea change represents a profound challenge. Through Brexit and the fragmentation of the political order we are seeing the results. But we believe it also represents a historic opportunity: to articulate a new centre right politics that is rooted less in an abstract attachment to freedom and more in the real security people seek in their everyday lives.

This approach would recognise that independence and opportunity come from both freedom *and* security, that people need firm foundations – a decent house, a stable job, financial capital, public services, social security – as well as personal ambition and a range of choices. It would deliberately seek to rebuild institutions, those indispensable community and reciprocal networks that balance individual freedoms against the responsibilities we all have to one another, while restoring a sense of belonging and higher purpose to people’s lives.

Because it is impossible to reduce the supply of government without first reducing the demand for it, this conservatism it would pursue a policy of state intervention that is effective and enabling, rather than simplistically “big” or “small”. Its goal would be neither to leave people to their own devices nor to make people’s choices for them,

but rather to build their independence – as individuals, as families, as communities and as other institutions, so they can be both free *and* secure. And, in the finest traditions of conservatism, it would recognise that prosperity and opportunity must be distributed across all people and places – to One Nation – if the market economy is to maintain the trust it requires to function.

This explicitly does not mean rowing back on hard won freedoms or harking back to a bygone age; as we have shown, voters are not nostalgic. Nor can it be a populist agenda that offers simple answers to complex problems. As we have seen elsewhere, through that door lies authoritarianism. Instead it accepts the Burkean truth that we must reform to preserve and offers a new politics rooted in security and community. We call it *Conservatism for the Common Good*.

Economic security

The economy is not working for everyone and people feel it. As our polling demonstrates, the majority of people believe that making a decent living has become harder for people like them and that the wealthy have achieved success through exploitation rather than hard work. The engine rooms of much of modern economic growth – globalisation, technology, cities and universities – are seen as negative. People are so convinced that the benefits of growth will not accrue to them that they would welcome lower growth if it led to greater equality.

On these key barometers, liberal economic policy has lost the trust of most people. This is not sectoral, although no doubt the behaviour of bankers or tech giants are felt to be among the most egregious, or limited to certain lagging regions. It is structural and it affects every corner of the economy. Only by embracing bold economic reforms will those who believe in markets save the baby from being thrown out with the bathwater.

This means an agenda that offers people much greater economic security, providing the foundations that will enable anyone to go as far as their talents allow, irrespective of their background, place or circumstance. It is about a truly popular capitalism, in the broadest sense, which aims to build up individual and collective capital on every key dimension – financial, human, emotional, social, knowledge, community and so on. Key priorities should be:

- **Higher paid and more secure work.** To deliver this we should invest heavily in retraining, especially for those at most risk of automation and industrial decline. The National Retraining Scheme requires significant long-term funding to scale to retrain millions of low-skilled workers, tax credits should be introduced to encourage employers to invest in human capital as they currently do in R&D, and a system of digital training credits could be adopted to allow everyone to reach a Level 4 qualification. The National Living Wage should rise to two thirds of median wages, and be pegged to that level.
- **Levelling up vocational and technical education.** The funding gap between sixth form, FE and technical education funding and academic routes should be eliminated. There is no justification for the lower funding received by the three-quarters of young people who attend sixth form and Further

Education colleges and the 50% of young people who do not attend university. Universities with high numbers of courses that offer poor average long-term earnings should have student loan subsidies removed and be turned into National Technology Institutes, modelled on those in the US, and elsewhere, and designed to service the new economy.

- **Supporting regional economies and national industries.** Regionally balanced economies have higher rates of growth and the Government should pursue policies which disproportionately benefit Britain's regions and protect strategically important industries. That means increasing investment allowances to support capital-intensive industries typically based outside London and using the Industrial Strategy to focus on the intersection between sectors and place rather than Sector Deals in isolation. Ministers should seek to build ecosystems in specific parts of the country based on existing competitive strengths, supported by better distribution of R&D, infrastructure and economic spending to different places.

Cultural security

It is clear that, despite their benefits, greater social and cultural freedoms have also undermined the ties that bind people together. Our polling has shown that people believe that local communities are divided and Britain's sense of community is in decline. They believe politicians have a particular responsibility to preserve local institutions and would prefer local ownership and delivery of core infrastructure than greater control from Whitehall. Localism has dropped off the agenda of late, but there is a clear sense that locally-driven action is better than anything that emanates from London.

There are many who say that the answer to falling individualism is to make the State responsible for everything. We know from history the pitfalls of that approach and recognise that it is not what people want today. Instead, it seems, they want the thing that sits between the individual and the state: community, and specifically the institutions of society in which people independently come together to face and solve the problems that they experience in life. A cultural security agenda would embrace these institutions, return them to the heart of local social action, and in doing so and promote the virtues of obligation, duty and reciprocity alongside the freedoms we have built up.

- **Restoring a sense of belonging.** Ministers should pursue reforms to boost the rate of homeownership, especially among younger generations. This could be generated by government financing a new generation of homes explicitly for young people, the identification of sites for new towns, reformed tax incentives to encourage landlords to sell to long-term renters, and much sharper tax disincentives to owning empty, second, or commercially owned houses. A form of civic national service, perhaps extended from the National Citizens Service or a requirement to do a certain amount of volunteering, could be introduced for every school leaver. Support for town and high street regeneration should be extended and prioritised for the Shared Prosperity Fund. There could be more effective support for families through a national

NCT-style programme for new parents, a single lump sum voucher scheme, or by allowing families to wrap up existing social security and childcare entitlements into a single pot rather than incremental entitlements.

- **Strengthening civic society.** Too many initiatives to boost civic society are superficial or lack the wherewithal to deliver lasting change. Rebuilding local institutions will require serious crunchy policies to strengthen local civic society, locally and nationally. Local people should have first right of refusal to take over and run local institutions, such as post offices, nurseries and libraries, when they are faced with closure, with similar funding and support as exists for parents and teachers establishing Free Schools. Football fans should be given the opportunity to take over football clubs that fall into administration or bankruptcy with match funding from dormant assets. The government should legislate to hand over viable brownfield public sector land to community land trusts, just as it did with the Allotments Act a hundred years ago, with the freehold held in trust for the community.
- **Empowering local and regional leadership.** Devolution should be extended to every major city and county, alongside considerable powers, budgets and flexibilities. The management of regional infrastructure, in particular, should be decentralised to regional mayors and local authorities, as exists in London and as Transport for the North have argued for. If Ministers wanted to be radical, they could consider promoting smaller units of local governance for some responsibilities: parish councils exist in some parts of the country but not others, while business improvement districts are proving a successful mechanism to drive private sector investment in local places. Local Authorities should have greater ability to borrow to fund community, transport and housing infrastructure, and the land compensation rules should be reformed to allow councils to capture more of the uplift from development.

National security

One of the most striking elements we encountered in our polling was the salience of the most basic kind of security: personal safety. Crime is now a core priority for the public and law and order is a core dividing line between liberal and more security-oriented voters. An agenda based around the Politics of Belonging cannot ignore the issue. There is also growing support for stronger and more authoritarian political leadership.

If national security is not to succumb to national populism, policy must be developed and implemented in a considered fashion. Ministers should consider more funding for defence, policing and the criminal justice system but should use these increases to genuinely transform services. Simultaneously, the government should develop a more sophisticated arsenal of tools to protect economic assets with national security implications, including key datasets, AI and machine learning capabilities and other technologies.

- **Investment in public services.** There is clear support for more investment in public services like the NHS, schools and social care, even set against cuts to personal income tax that would give people more disposable income. This is a notable finding with major implications for conservatives: the government's priority for the foreseeable future should be to increase money for core public services. Tax giveaways should not be a priority and, if pursued, the low-paid should be at the front of the queue.
- **Well-funded policing and prisons.** As Onward has written previously, there is a clear case for greater investment of the criminal justice system. However, this funding should be used for specific purposes: local, neighbourhood policing should be rebuilt to restore the historic link between the public and the police, and prisons funding should be used to deliver genuine purpose to prisons, including a 40-hour training or working week for every prisoner, a significant uplift in substance abuse and mental health support, and a sentencing regime that gives the public confidence that those whose sentences warrant custody serve their full sentence behind bars.
- **Protecting strategic economic assets.** The government could satisfy the public's desire to defend national industries by both providing greater protection from hostile takeover and by actively supporting their expansion. A review of Britain's takeover rules might consider how to prevent foreign buyers from stripping UK acquisitions' intellectual capital for short term interest at a long term strategic cost to the UK. Similarly, the Government could consider applying the pooled risk and compensation model of the Pension Protection Fund to other industries, such as steel manufacturing or shipbuilding, where large numbers of low paid jobs are dependent on a small number of employers in volatile international markets.

This list is necessarily incomplete and imperfect. But it offers some substance as to what *Conservatism for the Common Good* might look like. It is instinctively conservative in the sense that it seeks to rebuild the institutions upon which we rely, to restore the reciprocal obligations within communities, and to give people back a greater sense of ownership and security over their own lives in the midst of vast economic and technological change.

It does not make the State the answer. It recognises that the only way to reduce the size and impact of the State is to make people more independent – the authors of their own life stories. But no story is written alone. That is the liberal mistake. Rather, it depends for its content, structure and progress on a web of thickly woven relationships with others, often encountered in the institutions of society that give us the foundations from which to forge our path. That is the politics of belonging.

Endnotes



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- 20 This excludes those who said they "would not vote".

Annex



Long Eaton – Group 1

When you engage with the news, what sort of things are coming up?

Knife crime.

A lot of it.

Too much.

There's a sense that it's happening in London. Is it happening everywhere?

Yeah.

It doesn't matter where you are in the country at the moment.

Yeah but it's not the same as in London, though, is it? It's in London more than anywhere else.

Yeah but it's a bigger population, you're gonna get more people.

It's still more concentrated in London.

Yeah, there's a sense of that.

Yeah but a lot doesn't get reported. In local areas, they don't get it reported as much. If it's in London, it's like "Oh, another knife crime!" but if it's in Nottingham or in Long Eaton, it will be in the Trader, and that's it.

Is there a sense that crime as a topic is being talked about more now, a news topic that's come back on the agenda?

Yeah.

It's definitely gone up.

Is there anything else you've noticing nationally?

Well, it's all Brexit, isn't it?

Or lack of.

Have you been tuning in a lot to who's going to be the next Prime Minister?

Yeah.

What do people think? Who's going to win?

It's not who's going to win, it's if you can be bothered with either of them.

It's whoever's going to deliver Brexit really.

Because the rest is lies. They just throw things to try and attract people.

Do you get the sense that it's going to be a tough gig for whoever gets it?

Oh yes.

But that's because they've got no backup. Parliamentarians are throwing their toys out the pram. They won't back up to say "Yes, we'll follow you and we'll leave you a no deal on the table, leave proroguing on the table." They don't want to go out. And I think it was Gove who made the very good comment that we've got a country of leavers and a parliament of remainers.

Yeah, that's what it amounts to.

It's to do with leadership. Cameron started it and then he went and Theresa May carried it on and then she went and...

But Theresa May's speech when she came into power was brilliant. I thought when she came out that this woman is going to do it, and then it's just fallen by the wayside.

Well she was a remainer, wasn't she?

She couldn't negotiate.

What are the big issues locally?

HS2.

Note: General agreement.

What is the local sense about it?

Against it.

Very much so.

It's not really talked about that much nationally, is it?

You occasionally see protestors.

I occasionally, like every month, get letters through from HS2.

Yeah, we get them too.

I don't even open them, I'm not interested.

What are some of the recent things that have been going on around here?

The bus stop lane roadworks which is kicking off at the moment because you can only get out of Long Eaton one way which causes a bit of a nightmare.

Yeah, traffic's dreadful.

It's time to put traffic lights where the two islands are because that causes no end of trouble.

Knife crime's getting closer and closer to Long Eaton. There were a couple of muggings in University Park in Beeston and then there was a guy who robbed a shop with like a samurai sword in Toton. And it's just getting closer and closer to where I live.

There's some issue with gun crime in Nottingham, isn't there?

It's not the same as before.

There was a shooting last month.

There's a lot of armed robberies, aren't there? Like in garages and...

Co-ops.

Two women got mugged in West Park, didn't they?

And a young girl, 16, she got...

Sexually assaulted, yeah.

Where do people hear about all this, is it through local news?

I get stuff from the Nottingham Evening Post on Facebook.

Yeah, Facebook pages and stuff.

Is there anything else other than Brexit that you think is staring the country in the face that we need to sort?

We need more police.

Climate change is a big one for me.

It's kind of been put on the backfoot because of Brexit.

And the NHS as well.

Do people think that's happening with a lot of stuff?

Yeah, definitely.

They're doing a lot of stuff in through the backdoor that we don't know about because everybody's concentrating on Brexit and there's other laws being passed or whatever and we don't hear about them.

I think it's been like that from the start. It's going to take up so much money and power for years. We're not going to get anything else done.

Is Britain on the right track or the wrong track?

I think we've stopped.

Yeah.

There's no community anymore. People are not helpful anymore.

Just, Brexit has been a joke from the beginning and they're not doing anything about it still. We're still in it, as far as I'm concerned. I mean I voted out and...

And everyone's unhappy, aren't they? Because for the ones that want out, we're still in, and the ones that want in are throwing their dummies out.

Now, I'm just like "Hold on, do what you want to do."

I think most people just want it over and done with.

Yeah, just crack on.

What do people think of this area?

I moved here a year ago and I actually think it's really good. I really like it. I'd been living in Beeston for five years, which is similar. I think we're actually really lucky. When you look at some of the [muffled 12:03]... Manchester, Birmingham, London, the North, the East... I think we're really lucky to live round here. House prices are really good. All the people are generally quite moderate. We're not like one of those places – we don't have crime and stuff like that.

I think there's a lot of opportunity here because we're kind of right in the middle of Nottingham, Derby, Leicester. We're not restricted, you can pretty much get anywhere you need to. Good transport.

And the amount of new infrastructure around the airport, it's quite a booming area actually.

House prices are accessible?

They're reasonable for the size of the house you get.

If you look at Beeston, people pay a lot more than you would here.

I think Long Eaton's catching up. I bought my house for 135k in 2015. I just sold it very quickly for 175k. But, I mean, we've been looking at other places and the prices are just ridiculous.

The rental market has gone sky high as well.

Is that because of what we've been talking about – how good it is here?

Yeah, more jobs.

It's definitely becoming more attractive as well, like there's more restaurants now, more bars. There's not as many charity shops.

I feel like the council takes good care of the town as well. They keep the park really nice.

Oh it's fabulous.

What could be improved about the area?

I don't understand why shops are allowed to sell things like drug paraphernalia, like normal shops, newsagents, are allowed to sell like bongos.

Is the traffic issue part of a wider problem with the roads?

There's always traffic lights and if there's an accident on the M1 then the whole community comes to a standstill.

Yeah, there's been roadwork on the M1.

The A50 too.

Is there anything else negative about Long Eaton?

High streets, so many charity shops.

I would disagree, I actually love charity shops.

I guess the high streets have changed from what they used to be like. Is it getting better?

To be fair, I don't even go to Long Eaton shopping. I just nip to Aldi to do my food shop or I do it online.

If I'm going clothes shopping, you can't really do it in Long Eaton unless you're going Peacocks or New Look – that's your lot, really. So it's either Derby or Nottingham.

I lived in Beeston for five years and I quite enjoy Beeston high street but actually Long Eaton's better in my opinion.

Has anything been changing in Long Eaton over the last couple of years?

No, not really.

What about a longer time frame – 10 years? 20 years?

I think the only thing I can remember is the medical centre. They built a new medical centre.

Which is good because when you want X-rays and stuff like that, you don't have to go to the hospital and get them there.

You don't even need to make an appointment. You walk in: "X-ray? Yes please."

Does it feel like there's a difference between the people who live in Long Eaton and those in the centres of the cities around it like Nottingham?

I feel like people in Nottingham are slightly more impoverished in terms of time and money. They've got less time. They've got less money. And I think they've probably got a lower quality of life. I feel like out here, it's less busy, people have got a bit more time, a bit more money, and it's just more relaxed.

If you're in the city centre, you've probably got a better job.

Yeah because the flats are so expensive.

It's about priorities. They want the city life. They want to be able to go into the town. Living on the outskirts, you might have a family, you might be a bit older, you want to settle down.

You're probably from the younger generation as well.

There's a large student population.

There's a lot of house shares which makes it a bit more reasonable.

When I was younger, I used to live in Victoria centre. I was in my early 20s then and I worked in nightclubs and it was brilliant for me. I couldn't even bear to think of living there now.

Do you think Nottingham is closer to what Long Eaton is like or closer to what a bigger city like London is like?

I don't know if it's closer to London.

I'd say it's a community.

But I do enjoy going to Nottingham, so vibrant.

There's something for everybody's taste in Nottingham whether it be restaurants, clubs, bars, whatever. And there's not many cities you can say that about and it's all quite concentrated.

Nottingham's a lot more ethnically diverse than Long Eaton. That makes it more like London.

Long Eaton's definitely very white. Very white.

From when you were young to now, what are the big things that have changed?

Jobs are a lot harder to get now. When I left school, you just walked into a job and if you didn't like it, you walked out and walked into the next one. It was so easy then whereas I feel sorry for the younger generation. I think that employers are asking too much of people.

See, I haven't experienced that. A lot of my mates have found a job pretty easily.

I know a lot of graduates aren't realistic, though. They'll go into a job expecting 30/40k just because they're graduates which is not always how it works.

But jobs are very very different. When I was younger, there was a lot of manual labour, you went down the coal mine, stuff like that.

There's nothing like that, now.

Has that been for the better?

I don't think it's been good for the country that like Sheffield Steel's gone. Mining's gone. The fisheries are gone. It's just one of the reasons why I wanted to leave Europe because we're forced to buy all the stuff that we're quite capable of producing ourselves. Why can't we be self-sufficient? I know the prices probably aren't as good as what they are abroad but I think it's wrong that we're being forced to buy stuff from abroad.

We're gonna end up with no skilled labour.

We see that where I work – we work with engineers. There's none coming through younger than 30/35.

I know a bloke who owns his own building company and he just hires college graduates because they're cheap labour. He says "I'm not interested in their English. They do a damn good job and they do it cheap."

What do you think is better about life in 2019 compared to previous decades?

People are more conscious of things like vegetarianism, health, fitness, stuff like that.

People smoke less than before.

I think it's because, certainly going back to my younger days, you didn't have to think about being a vegetarian or a vegan or anything because it wasn't around. You had your meat and two veg and that was it, if you were lucky. Seriously, if you were lucky.

Is choice something that's more broadly made things better? Sort of the ability to get what you want when you want, like being able to shop online?

I think it's made things better for certain people but obviously not for the shop trade. My youngest daughter works part-time at River Island and it looks, at the minute, like they are absolutely fine but there's a lot of the major retailers that are going under. Look at House of Fraser and all the problems with them. But in some ways, like you say, you buy everything online and I buy quite a bit of stuff online, but when it comes to clothes, I prefer to be able to go and try them on and see them.

What about, as you say, things like increased awareness of the negatives of smoking? Is there anything else that you look at and think “Yes, that is better than before”?

Well the way I see it, yeah okay, we're sort of on the verge of environmental collapse but at least now we're aware of it. 20 years ago, we were blissfully unaware about it all but actually they were causing the problem then. Now, we've got the problem from 20 years ago and yeah, we're on the brink of collapse but actually we are trying to fix it.

What makes life now harder than when you were a teenager?

I think everything's a lot more expensive. I remember, maybe 10 years ago, being able to travel around the whole of Nottingham by bus all day for £2, now it's six/seven quid. Little things like that I notice.

It's the relationship with income though. I used to earn £20 a week, now you can't imagine that today, but we took some friends out to a restaurant in Derby and the meal cost us £10 – that was 50% of my income on one meal.

Some of you have said it's harder to get a job now. Is it harder to keep a job now and progress in it?

I think that's got harder to be honest with you because everybody's disposable now.

You're just a number.

I actually have quite a good work experience. Where I work, it's a small maintenance company but everyone's... the CEO is on the shop floor, he's approachable.

People switch more, people get bored – especially people my age. They go to uni and do certain degrees and then go and do something completely different

We've talked quite a bit about financial changes. What about changes to more broadly how we live, like community spirit?

I don't think there is any anymore. To give you an example, years ago, when I was 11/12, when the carnival came around, everyone participated – along the road, just watching the carnival. I didn't go this year because I haven't been for years but I heard it was really good, back to what it used to be. I miss... I mean for the Jubilee, we had a street party – the whole street joined in. I don't get that anymore.

My Mum and Dad used to leave their front door unlocked and their neighbours would just come in, say hello, have a cuppa. I've never even met my neighbours and I would never leave my front door unlocked.

I think it depends where you live as well because I just live over the other side of the M1 and, on our street, well on our estate, we have a community funday, where we all go to the park and we all pitch in and do things. It's a really good day. We're in a community group as well on Facebook. On our street, we know every single neighbour, I could name them all.

That's rare though nowadays, isn't it?

Now, you don't trust to let your kids go to the park on their own.

Why do you think that community spirit has gone? Immigration? Are people just now doing their own thing?

Well, women are going to work more often so there's less of that cooking at home and being with the kids all the time and popping round to the neighbours.

I think the younger generation, we much prefer to be connected online, rather than actually going round and having a cup of tea.

When you go out for a meal, you just see people on their phones and they're not talking anymore.

My daughter texts me from the living room when I'm in the bedroom.

Yeah, I mean I do that to be honest.

Is there a sense that part of the problem is the way places have changed? What else do you think has caused this decline in community spirit?

It's the generation, isn't it? Going back years and years ago, there was no internet, there were no mobile phones or anything like that. You had to talk to people and all the kids played on the street.

In the summer holidays, you were out from the morning until you were hungry.

But nowadays, because it's so drummed into you, because these days, the parents are like "Oh, there's knife crime and there's all this on the telly and stuff like that." You think "Oh, I'm not letting my kid out."

One thing I think that has changed is that there's this new violent form of rap music – drill music. I'm pretty sure this never existed in your day. Literally 11 year-old kids listen and it just encourages them to be violent.

Do the younger generation now have it easier or harder than they did before?

I think a bit of both.

I think they're going to lack social skills because I mean it's really hard to get my son off his PlayStation and out of the house. I was thinking of moving to Exeter and he said he'd miss his mates which I didn't understand because they're all online.

I think financially, we young people have got it worse because we do tend to get ourselves in more debt than the older generation. We don't save up to buy something.

We didn't use credit cards when I was a kid, we just saved up for things.

When I was a kid, we had hand-me-downs. I mean I used to wear my sister's clothes.

It's easier to get what you want but that's not always a good thing if it's all on credit or you don't have to save for it?

You don't value it. You have to work hard for something, value it more.

Some kids have got it really good, better than ever, if your parents are taking care of you, if you go to a nice school. But some kids have got it worse than ever – if you go to a horrible school and...

And if you're a minority.

So really nothing's changed on this – some kids have good lives, some bad.

But wasn't it the case before that most kids went to a pretty decent school?

No, there were secondary modern schools which could be pretty rubbish, and there were grammar schools.

I went to an all girls school, one of my brothers went to an all boys school, one went to a comprehensive and one went to a grammar. From one family, we all had a different secondary school education.

So do you think education is better now?

Yeah, there are many more avenues. There are apprenticeships to gain work experience and get a qualification at the same time, some people get degrees, some people just start working in a job.

There are more equal opportunities now as well because I remember years ago going to a college because I wanted to do computer-aided design and the tutor told me they didn't take women on the course. Now, he wouldn't get away with it.

How do you think this community, the country, and the world are going to look in the next few decades?

I think it's make or break. It's either going to completely collapse or it's going to be quite watertight. Here, politics is either going to completely collapse and the environment's going to collapse or politicians are going to get their act together, we'll save the environment and we'll be alright and live quite nicely with technology and stuff.

I think the poor are going to get poorer and the rich are going to get richer.

Yeah, that's been the case for a long time now.

Do people get that sense?

Yeah.

Note: General agreement.

Do you consider the threat of robots taking over jobs a real one?

I think it's definitely happening. Like in the motor trade, they've got robots putting the parts onto cars. They've just got people standing there making sure nothing goes wrong and not actually physically doing anything.

I work for a manufacturer and we've just made 400 people redundant because we've just introduced machinery.

I think it will eventually create more jobs, higher-skilled labour.

Yeah, it's going to change the workforce even more than it has done already.

I think it will mean us working less but there will still be a base level of income for people who don't have a job that will be okay.

Artificial intelligence is going to take over and that's a real worry.

Do you expect people to drink less and smoke less and things like that in the future?

I read the other day that this country is going to ban tobacco altogether. If they can do it, they should. I was a smoker from the age of 15 right up until six years ago and I vape now but I still can't kick the nicotine habit. I think it's probably a good thing if they stop producing cigarettes.

Do you think those kind of changes will make society better?

Definitely.

If everyone's healthier then yeah.

As long as there's still an element of choice. It really frustrates me when certain people like vegans try and force something on you. That really annoys me.

Why do you think people want to come to the UK?

NHS.

Benefits.

We've got a strong currency so you can work here and save a certain amount which isn't what's it's like in a country like Poland.

I don't know if they'll still want to come now and get involved, with Brexit happening.

They're still coming though, aren't they? In fact, net migration is still rising.

What's the biggest thing that worries you about the next few decades?

For me, it's the leadership and the role models of the country because I believe that we're going to address the environmental crisis but what I'm worried about is what I said earlier about the drill music – it's kind of moving in on society and nobody seems to be addressing it. Before we had good role models – we were good people and had traditional morals. But now, for example, Dizzee Rascal, who's a rapper with very violent lyrics, was standing next to the Queen at the Olympics opening ceremony. For me, that's a symbol of "What the hell is going on here?"

Do you worry more about what's going to happen round here or in the world as a whole?

I worry more about how I am going to financially support myself and my family when I retire. Those are the things I worry about.

In terms of globally, I'd probably say Trump and Brexit and how divided society is.

I care more about the local area personally. I'm kind of selfish in a way but then again I do also read the news and I'm aware of what's going on.

What specific things do you worry about?

Pensions are a big concern, even whether there is going to be a state pension.

My daughter's just turned 18 and she's working part-time and I've already made her get her own pension.

Does the future of healthcare or social care concern you?

Yeah, I worry about the NHS. If we were to lose that and we all had to be insured, there'd be lower-paid people who wouldn't be able to afford insurance. And if we ended up like America or even parts of Europe where you have to pay private companies for your health insurance... that's scary.

I don't think it would happen like that because I just think there are too many good, honest MPs out there. I know the headlines are that they're a bunch of clowns but I do believe the majority of MPs are good, honest people who would never let that happen. Like look at the outcry over the TV license thing. It's a little thing but it shows they care.

I think Gove would privatise it a lot. He's written books about privatisation.

We mentioned crime before but no one's mentioned it as a worry for the future. Is that because you're confident they'll get a grip of it?

Well hopefully.

I think it'll get worse. A lot worse.

They'll never get rid of it.

The punishment doesn't fit the crime most of the time.

But it starts at school, though. The teachers have a lot of stuff taken away from them. When we were at school, the teacher walked around with a two-foot piece of wood. You can't do that anymore.

Is there something the government could do to make sure the NHS always remains free?

I think the government should start billing people from outside the UK.

They say that they do but there's a lot that don't pay it.

They should, like America, say that you've had treatment so you pay.

Well, in fact, in some places you have to pay first.

Is the idea that you haven't paid taxes for the NHS if you're from outside the UK?

Yeah, if you pay taxes then that's fine. But if you're coming from outside the UK because you've got an illness that you can't get treated wherever you live and you come to the UK – straight into the hospital, you're booked in, you've got a bed, you're done.

The NHS won't turn them away. Like you've got all these African women coming over here and having multiple babies and then going back to Africa and they've left the bill. They shouldn't let them leave the hospital without paying.

I worked for the NHS for a while and their whole procurement system is totally messed up.

Oh yes, paying way over the top.

When I used to order stationery, I had to go to this specified supplier even though I could find it cheaper elsewhere.

There was this scandal about a month ago where the NHS was actually buying from the manufacturing company I work for and we were charging the NHS probably 50/60 times what it actually cost us to manufacture that product.

And there's an awful lot of middle management while at the same time, matrons aren't on wards anymore.

Why do you think you see these problems in staffing with the NHS and also things like policing?

The government are cutting it.

Yeah, they have been pay freezes in the NHS and stuff.

Because they ran out of money – the Labour government. Basically, you had to have austerity to get you back where you needed to be. Alright, perhaps they made a lot of mistakes.

I mean there are like new schools and new police stations and things like that. I'm a qualified teacher and I've been around loads of schools and I think the best schools are the really old ones. They're like spending £100 million but they're laying off teachers and stuff like that. It feels like there's a lot of guys out there getting rich of construction. Bit cynical but it's all I can think of.

What sort of things can the government do to help areas like this with the problems we discussed earlier for now and the future?

That's the problem. If you put too much government in, then you just make it a nanny state. You've got to allow outside people to do things. Government can give a direction, that's all.

Taxing big corporate companies would be a start. Tonnes of money there.

Yeah, they sell stuff here by they're not paying taxes.

Amazon particularly because they don't have anything on the high street so they're not paying business rates and then they're not paying their taxes on what they sell within this country.

They employ drivers to deliver those goods and apparently they're on really bad wages. They're working like a dog.

So do you see the role of the government more as funding and taxing but not getting too involved?

You shouldn't get involved in the details.

Do you think when the government does get involved, it is generally competent?

There are things that we don't even notice they do which are obviously going right. It's hard to judge.

A lot of them are Londoners though, they're not going to [muffled 55:16] as people round here.

Do you get the broad sense that the government's on your side?

It's obviously split but I think poorer people feel let down. They won't vote because they don't feel like it counts. You look at the turnout for the local elections – here it was like 30%.

Do you think people see a difference between the local council and the national government that they don't really see as much?

We don't see the MP at all.

No door-knocking.

But why would you see them? Aren't they busy doing stuff?

Well what? Haha.

Pushing pens.

So is there a sense that the government isn't enough on side with people as they should be?

They're out of touch.

They are out of touch. Think about those problems with their expenses.

One of them was saying pensioners should pay for the TV license and he was claiming it on his expenses. What hypocrites!

Do you get the feeling that any politicians get what it's like to live somewhere like this?

No. I don't think they get a thing.

Some of them must do. The ones that we don't see, they're probably more likely.

Who's the MP here?

Maggie Throup.

Is she from around here?

I think she's fairly local.

I've seen her around. I've argued with her. She's for HS2.

It's going to happen no matter what.

You mentioned the idea of the "nanny state". In what ways do you think government gets in the way?

Well the nanny state I'm thinking of is things like [muffled 59:05, something to do with tackling smoking and drinking]. Should we need the government to say that to people? That's what I mean by nanny state.

What about tax? Do you think it's too much?

It's got to be there.

Tax has got to be there because that's where they get the money from.

People moan and ask for lower tax but then they want the NHS to survive.

Do you think businesses should be taxed before money is taken from people's pockets?

Yeah.

Maybe poorer people would probably agree that yeah, maybe corporations, maybe richer people should be first. MPs get paid quite a lot – like 80k a year.

But tax changes probably don't hit the poorest as much as the higher earners because they're not paying much tax anyway. So tax changes make very little difference to them.

I always got told the more you earn, the more tax you pay.

Yeah, absolutely, you're still earning more anyway.

Is the benefits system doing what it's supposed to be doing? Do you get the sense that the system is working?

No, I don't think so.

I think you'd be better off providing people with a job. Like the government has a massive factory and they employ people for below minimum wage, like £6 an hour, saying "Look, we're not going to pay you as much, but you can work here while you've not got a job." And after a month, the people would want to get out of there and they'd go and get a job. But instead they're making a really small amount of money, they have to wait like three weeks, they get docked a week's pay because they're like two minutes late or something. The thing is, the government, they designed it so that there's 5% unemployment at all times. They can't have everyone employed at the same time because otherwise you wouldn't be able to grow the economy. So they designed it like that within reason but then they treat them like idiots because they don't have a job but actually it's not their fault – that's the way the country's designed and it just so happens that it's them, so you should just treat them with a bit more respect and help them get by when they're out of work, not dock their pay all the time.

Something that really gets my goat is the amount of money that we send overseas when we've got people that are homeless here.

They don't even want it though. They ask us not to send it.

When money goes to Africa, there's so many bent governments and they're keeping the money and the people that need it aren't getting it. WaterAid – that's been going on for 40 years. They should all have better tap water by now. That really winds me up because if we stopped sending as much money as we do, they'd do it themselves. Who'd help us if we were in that situation? Nobody.

It is said that some people stay on benefits forever because it's easy. Do you think that's true?

No.

I think it is quite easy to defraud our benefits system and there are some benefits like child benefits that aren't means-tested that I certainly don't need so why are they giving me £80 a month.

Some Mums are getting £1,500 a month for not doing anything while some are getting problems while they're working full-time.

It's the cost of childcare though. There's no point in going to work just to pay for your child to go to nursery.

There was a plan the other year to make sure that you could never earn more by not working than working. Is that a good thing to aim for?

That is a very good aim, yes.

It is but I don't think they have.

No, they haven't. As I say, it's a good aim.

What do you think about the idea that your benefits should be affected by how much you've already paid in throughout your life, like if you had worked for decades?

No, I don't know about that.

Bit petty, isn't it?

It would be unworkable. You'd never be able to work it out.

I don't think you should rely on benefits and I think – I don't want to be disrespectful because I've been on benefits before – but I think their children see and think “Oh, I don't need to work.”

I've seen it over previous years where girls will go and have a baby and then when that one starts school, they'll have another one and that one starts school and they have another one. And I think the best thing that they did was stopping people from claiming child benefit for more than two children because there's so many young girls doing that because they never want to work. My sister-in-law did it – she's got five kids. Get a job!

I was at [muffled 1:06:07] and I had to pay and it cost me something like nine quid nearly and some other woman who was there with a burka on got it all free because she had benefits. And I thought “Because we work, I'm the one who's paying for you to have this.”

It might be nothing to do with the burka. She might have a problem where she's getting...

She was obviously coming over to this country to get the NHS free because she could speak hardly any English.

A lot of them don't bother, do they? Their husbands do and their sons but the females don't.

Do you get the sense that we are now freer as a society?

I think you get judged more for your lifestyle – now more than you ever were before.

But are we more free to do what we want?

Yeah, definitely.

The internet's a big thing for that. You can do anything on the internet. As you said, you can get all your shopping. Every now and again I get stuff online when I can't be bothered to go out.

Would you object to the government controlling things and controlling people a bit more if it meant that your own freedom was limited?

I want the government to be more intervening, like with violent music and drugs. They just let kids get away with anything. It's not right. They should get more involved. Computer games as well. They put an 18 rating on computing games but who's actually monitoring who's playing these games.

That's up to the parents though, isn't it?

It is but it's just not right. Why do these games even exist in my opinion.

On issues of smoking and drinking and kids doing stuff, do you think it's ultimately up to personal responsibility or does the government have a role?

My daughter was watching The Simpsons at 10 years-old. I didn't know that it was a 12.

Yeah but The Simpsons is quite moderate. Like Grand Theft Auto and games like that, they're ultra-violent.

Well they've been debating today what age should you allow your children to watch Love Island. Should you let your 11 year-old watch it?

Should that ultimately be a personal choice?

Yes, that's personal.

Yeah, you should know what your kids are like and what's going to upset them and what they should be able to do. I don't think the government should get involved with that.

No, that's a very personal thing.

But things like violent music... Love Island and a bit of naked skin – that's one thing. Letting kids listen to music about stabbing other people and shooting them in the face – that's where the government should step in and say, "Actually, we're not even going to allow this music to be produced."

Well one time, BBC Radio 1 wouldn't allow certain songs because they had swear words in them and they were banned from being played and so people went out and bought them.

I don't think there's a direct link between violent video games and violence though. There has been loads of studies into it.

If you're going to let them listen to it and then it happens...

So there are a few things where the government should do more but more broadly personal responsibility is still important?

Yeah, up to the parents.

Well what's the government going to do? "Ok then, we're going to ban it." That's all they can do. "We'll ban it."

And it will just go underground then.

Yeah that's the other problem – going underground.

But if, for example, you made heroin legal... let's say now, 2% of the country use heroin, but if you made it legal, bringing it all above board, it would probably go to 5%.

Would you instinctively prefer big government or small government?

Big.

Not bothered.

It depends on the people in the government.

Depends if they're doing their job.

But if there's more of them, they're more likely to do it properly, surely.

But they can argue more, can't they?

So the metric should be if it's doing what it's supposed to be, rather than how big or small?

Yeah.

Would you rather live in a society where there's a lot up to personal responsibility – you can do what you like but there are consequences – or actually you can't do what you want and... for example, the government spends lots of money on certain industries or they just let people have the money and spend it on what they want and the market ultimately decides?

Business is business and the market turns out like it does but in terms of personal freedoms like laws and restrictions on consumption of various products then the government should be stepping in on that side. In terms of the market, that's different.

I think there should be guidelines, rough guidelines, but you can't control the market.

I think you've got to stop the big companies becoming like conglomerates in terms of like controlling the whole market. Like how they push back mergers and acquisitions sometimes if they're going to soak up the whole market. Because you need that competitiveness. You can't let Amazon control everyone, for example. Or let Tesco own all the supermarkets.

They stopped Sainsbury's and Asda merging for that reason.

Was that the right decision?

Oh yes.

Note: General agreement.

Stopping them from having too much power. But still let them innovate in their own way, create their own products and push their own designs and stuff.

So ultimately it's better for the country to have lots of companies competing?

Definitely.

It gives the consumer more choice.

It's like when they built the Tesco right opposite Asda in Long Eaton and they were both open 24/7 but Tesco now isn't because they weren't getting the customers.

Yeah because everyone goes to Aldi.

I mean we're having a Lidl built, we've got Aldi, we've got Tesco, Asda.

So you're like watching market competition in action?

Exactly.

Would you pay a bit more for a car made in Nottingham instead of one from Germany?

If it's better quality, yeah.

We used to have Marathon Knitwear that supplied Marks & Spencers and everything in Marks & Spencers was British-made. They get most of their stuff from Taiwan now and it's just not the quality that they used to have.

Well the British car industry was rubbish. They were producing terrible stuff and they went down in a pan.

As long as unemployment is still very low here, I'm not really bothered.

I wouldn't look at where it's from.

If people aren't being done out of jobs.

I wouldn't go out of my way to buy British.

Does anyone actively do that now?

I do on some things, yeah.

Just eggs.

Would you take being a little bit worse off in the pocket in order to live in a community which is a bit more united and safe, like would you pay into a theoretical pot to invest in community spirit?

Why pay for community spirit when years ago, it used to be free? I want the money in my pocket, not to help other people.

It's not just helping other people, it's who is looking after the pot. If it's the government, you'd never bloody see it.

Look, community's still out there if you want to go and find it. You can't just expect to just knock on your neighbour's door and come in for a cup of tea.

I think there is still community. Like there's loads of free classes, especially in this area.

I just know my neighbours and the one across the road and that's it.

I only talk to next door and the one across the road and that's just to say hello. They're Polish and they're very friendly but it's just hello.

But if you organised a party and you knocked on all the doors and invited people, they'd probably still turn up.

We have parties. I always invite the neighbours.

How do you view the government – as something to keep people safe, to provide public services...?

They should be working for us and not themselves.

I think they've got their own agenda.

Yeah.

Or they're lining their own pockets. As long as it benefits them... I feel that they don't give a toss about Joe public.

I think it's right to complain about it when you compare us to other countries, we're doing very well.

Yeah, like on the environment, we're the only people bloody doing anything. China... I can't see us saving the world. Got to try but...

Public services... is that what you view as the obvious role?

Yeah, that's what the government's for, isn't it?

I do think they need to change punishment, though. They need to be a lot more harsh.

Yeah.

Do you think it's got worse?

God yeah. My nephew was in a car accident. And a young lad, on a moped, 14, rode his car off. He was caught but the police said that he's too young and they couldn't do anything.

They don't have the resources, do they? All these burglaries and...

It's not always the police's fault though. It's the CPS – they stop it in its tracks.

So more funding for the police?

More strict laws. We need more strict guidelines. Who cares if he's 14? Send him to a young offender's institution.

Yeah, we used to send them to borstals years ago.

That was in the paper this morning. They said borstals were brilliant.

Yeah, it used to change them, didn't it? But now...

Even when you do get a sentence though and you do go to prison, you never do your full term anyway.

So you think unsuitable punishments have contributed to crime?

Yeah, definitely.

They're not frightened.

The police used to be the authority. When I was a kid, if you were up to anything bad and the local cop walked round...

These days, they'd shake your hand and give you a biscuit.

Looking at it, there are more people in this country now than there were 50 years so that's why there's hardly any coppers because they haven't got the manpower to be everywhere.

Police presence is a massive issue.

They're not on the beat. They've got to do all the procedures and fill in paperwork.

Although they did bring in a new rule where police can ram mopeds...

About time.

Brilliant.

Take the rights away from the criminals and give them to the people and the police.

EU rules as well. They came into place where you got human rights. If someone's committed a crime and gone to jail, they should get a mattress and a toilet, that's it. Not a snooker table. Not a TV.

"No, it's my human right to have a TV!"

It's so wrong.

Would you have the death penalty for the Yorkshire ripper?

Definitely.

If it looks like a whole industry like car manufacturing is going to collapse, should the government step in and give them a loan or...?

Only if it's not like with the banks where they were earning bonuses even when the banks were going to the wall, then step in and help them. If the directors and owners are willing to take a pay cut to try and help it as well, then yes, I think they should be helped.

It's got to be smart. I think the high street unfortunately is probably going to dwindle anyway over the next 50 years so helping them would just be chucking money down the drain.

Is that an example where things are changing and the government shouldn't bother trying to stop it?

Well local councils need to start dropping the rates on shops.

Yeah, and parking charges.

Then more people would go to the high street.

If there's one thing the government could do to make your life better, what would it be?

Make me feel safer, that's what I would ask.

For me it would be making it easier to buy a house.

I'd just say more policing.

What about the railways? Should the government take more control?

No because one borough, if something breaks down half way between it and another borough, there'd be arguing over who pays.

But, I don't know if you've been to like Italy or Germany, but their rail is all nationalised and the transport is brilliant.

But do you remember the nationalised railways in this country? You wouldn't want them back, I'm telling you.

I don't think they could be much worse than what they are at the minute.

They could subsidise rail travel without nationalising it.

What could the government do about the cost of living?

Reduce the cost of transport because more and more people will get on the trains and buses.

Make them more reliable – which they're not.

If you drop it down a quid, you'll get a load more people using it.

So cut the cost of that rather than reducing taxes?

Well it's good for the environment.

When people say that they're going to cut taxes for working people, do you think "That's going to make me better off"?

It's just an easier way to win voters.

They'll take it from you somewhere else. Giving with one hand and taking from somewhere else.

You can't trust anything Boris Johnson says, can you?

He's just like Trump, isn't he?

In a bad way or a good way?

I think they're both the same. God made them two and that's it. These two run the world and that's it.

I don't like Trump but I think what he's doing in America has been good.

Peace with North Korea, that's amazing, isn't it?

He's actually done what he's said he was going to do.

Exactly and that's what we need.

Is that missing here?

Oh definitely.

Do you know why he does that though? With Korea, Russia, and all that lot. Because they're superpowers. He doesn't give a damn about England and all these little countries. He forgets that we won the war.

He's actually a leader. He's a businessman. He knows what he's doing. He's not just squabbling for votes like our people.

Because he's a proper businessman.

He just goes right in there. Boom. Not everyone likes him – he doesn't care. He's done what he's said.

Well we had one of those already. People hated her – Maggie Thatcher. I reckon everyone under 30 should watch the first episode of that new BBC Thatcher documentary.

MPs and politicians – they just resign from their post like that. But didn't you work so hard to get there? Do you value it so little that just because you made one comment that people didn't like, you resign?

Long Eaton – Group 2

What sort of things do people notice as big challenges facing the country at the moment?

Brexit.

Yeah, the B-word.

It's a sore subject at the minute, for a lot of people.

I think it's dominating, when it shouldn't.

It's the headline every day, and you're just fed up.

They pushed it through too quick and I just don't think anyone was properly informed, from both parties of what they wanted. So I don't think anybody was informed properly enough to make a judgement properly, to exit or to stay. And now, I think they thought everyone would vote stay, and now it's like hang on, what are we going to do.

There's lots of other stuff that people aren't talking about... NHS, schools, crime. It's all been put on the back burner. I'm worried about my kids, one is just leaving university and is struggling to get a job, and this is one with a degree. The only jobs out there are the short term zero contract ones and I've got another one who's just starting uni and another doing A-Levels. I should be focusing on sorting that out, not on Brexit and nothing else.

They'll probably be overqualified, when they do come out.

I think it needs to be dealt with (Brexit). You can look at all these other issues, but until the European Union situation is fixed, it's where the money is going.

Companies have put everything on hold.

We've literally ordered X amount of stock and bought another warehouse just to store stuff in so that if we do leave without deal and the market does crash the company won't just fall down.

It's still in limbo.

That's why I don't think the economy will drop. A lot of people are panic buying, keeping the businesses afloat.

What are some of the challenges facing your family?

I'm worried about the right to travel and visa issues.

I don't feel as stable as what I did. I said I'd take a couple months out of work, because I've never done that and then it took me five months to find another! I thought I could walk out of one job and bang right into another. Not a chance. Now, I've got a job, but it's not the hours I want, it's not the place I want, it's not the distance I want to be at, and I'm still in the same situation because I still need a job. Things like that worry you.

I'm lucky, because I have a job that I like, but it's not anywhere near Nottingham. My base is in Birmingham. That's where the HQ is, so I'm there twice or three times a week. That sort of job isn't common in Nottingham, and it's becoming less and less I think, because of Brexit.

You wonder what the inward investment coming into Nottingham is. You've got big companies here like Boots etc. You wonder how they'll be affected by parts and supplies, and whether that will affect jobs.

A lot of the big ones that you think, "they should be trading, they should be thriving", so you know overall, in your area, things are dropping. You drive down, Mansfield road. There are ten places that are just gone.

And it's not just there, it's everywhere.

They say it's the internet, buying things online and stuff.

It's just really sad. It's just empty.

Do you have the sense that, as a country, we are on the right track?

Currently, nobody has a clue what's happening.

We're not on any tracks.

They just rushed it through Brexit and nobody thought of the implications that would happen.

There was no plan B. And that's stopped everything else progressing.

It just shows you that Parliament was very comfortable with how it was running, for such a big thing to kickoff to show you that for years and years you've been voting for different parties by choosing someone in your area but you see now that the parties aren't all following the same plan.

It wasn't easier before, but this has proved that the way politics was working, they were complacent and it was just ticking over, and now something difficult has come, it's all blown up.

I think politicians were complacent because they're not in the real world. They don't talk to ordinary people enough. If they knew, they probably would have guessed what the decision would have been.

They're in their cushy place, in their ivory tower, and they don't really know what the people in the streets are thinking.

There's nobody to force them to make a decision though. It's just ongoing.

Politicians are there to carry out our wishes, and they don't.

They make all these promises, then everything changes. And you wonder why you can't trust them.

Thinking about where you live, what's it like? Is it good?

Quite bad to be honest – drugs, crime, poverty.

It has maybe got worse, but there has always been underlying issues.

You've got great shopping, because you've got the cheap shops, I mean the really cheap shops. But if you want to buy something decent, you can't find a dry cleaner's.

Actually, where I live, there is no community spirit whatsoever. Because the old people, they don't want to mix with us young ones.

Knife crime and guns... there's more knives than guns now.

They're getting younger and younger, who are carrying knives on them.

You know, luckily my son doesn't like going out much anyway, but I prefer it that way...unfortunately.

Note: General consensus that crime is a big underlying issue.

I think that Nottingham is doing better than other towns though, in terms of crime.

My area in the day is very bustling, lots of shops there, no empty properties.

Lots of diversity, there's eastern europeans. Lots of shops, very busy, very full.

But it's got that underlying... it gets a bit seedy.

You've got a police station which helps.

When my kids were growing up... There was a lot of gang culture in Nottingham.

It feels like that's died down a bit, but maybe it's now in a different way. I follow the local area police on social media and they make it sound quite funny, with jokey hashtags and stuff.

It seems like petty crime, but it's not petty crime really, there's something underneath.

What's changed in the last two years or so?

Transport. You're more or less forced to use the tram or bus. The turning point means there is basically one way in and one way out, so you can't cut through things. So if you want to go to the car park they've put the price up extortionate.

Blatant drug use. There's an epidemic of a drug called Mamba (Spice). They appear to be like zombies. It's quite scary because they look like they could seriously hurt themselves. Three or four years ago, you'd never see that. Not in the sense that people are walking in a busy street.

Homelessness. A lot more rough sleepers.

There does seem to be more help for that. There's different groups that go and put up a plea out on social media "we need sleeping bag" etc. and they set up a table and you can just go to it and get a jumper or... whatever.

You see food getting collected for food banks more often. You didn't use to see that...

It's not just universal credit and benefits its also zero hour contracts. You know, if you're not sure how many hours you're going to be working that week, can you afford your food that week? If you only get 5 hours then...

It's like a third world country, when people have to go to food banks.

Do you think there's a difference between people who live in the centre of town versus people who live in the suburbs?

Some of the stuff I've seen, I shouldn't have seen. And I've seen it because I live in the city centre.

A lot of the rougher areas are pointed towards the centre.

If you've only got so much money coming in, and you need to rent and you can't afford to live in the park, you can only afford the area that you can.

On the flip side, we can say, there's more poverty etc. but if you walk into a pub for a meal, you can't get served. Now there's a gym on every.

A lot of the rougher areas are in the central areas.

I believe my generation (30+) don't have the greatest money management skills. We've not actually been told, we should save, go to the cheapest supermarket etc.

What's changed since you were teenagers growing up?

The neighbours. When I was growing up, you knew everyone.

You'd be sat outside, talking to your neighbors.

Human interaction has decreased.

It sounds like there is less community spirit, is that for the better?

It depends where you are. Villages you still do.

The cost of living has gone up, so people are a bit selfish.

We're still in a recession. We didn't actually come out of that. I'm still feeling the recession. It still affects me.

What about things like getting a job or buying a house?

Easier.

That's easier! Getting a job, securing a mortgage. 20 years ago, you wouldn't hear about young people getting a mortgage, whereas now, it's much more common.

Is it easier or harder to be a parent now?

You always think, when you were younger it was better.

I think social media has made people braggish and egotistical.

It's made people self conscious.

Technology for me is everything though. When we were younger, we were watching people play football, now they're watching people play computer games. Is it not just the next thing?

How do you think the local area will change?

People talk about robots doing jobs or whatever, but is it real?

Oh it's definitely real.

Yeah it's real.

Jobs will be automated.

You'll have people employed to fix robots.

No, you'll have robots fixing robots.

Technology is taking jobs away.

Is all this change for the better?

The jobs aren't going to be there.

The tax will go up, I think.

I think there's more school leavers staying on.

Why would people from abroad move to the UK?

There's easy money. If you really, really wanted to, you could walk into a job today.

I don't understand why a refugee, when he's escaped war, would travel all the way across the world to get to England. He should be safe in the next country.

It's the benefit system as well. They can get benefits, they can get a house, send money abroad.

Yeah it's the benefits, but it's also easier to get a job here.

I don't think the majority of people have a problem with asylum seekers who are coming in to better themselves, but the amount that's coming in is draining.

They bring crime. If you adopt what Australia does, with a stricter system.

I don't get why England has this open door policy and then as soon as they come over to the country, people say it's too crowded. People from the Windrush generation were invited over.

The ones that are invited, what can I say. The jobs that the immigrants are doing the jobs we're not doing anyway.

If you look at the care sector, it's mainly immigrants from Eastern Europe, because they're cheaper to employ.

What about the future?

Technology also creates jobs. People have got to get with the times.

I'm a bit worried about knife crime becoming the norm.

In terms of the future, I'm ready to embrace the digital age.

What should the government be doing?

If you're not working and you're on benefits. If you're working, you get child benefits. If you're working, you don't get any extras.

Someone's not going to be happy. It has to save its money somehow.

Do you get the sense that government understand what it's like?

It depends.

There's only so much money. We're still in a depression.

The government were able to bail out the banks, but squeeze normal people.

Young people are more clued up with the system.

But the system is getting tougher.

They're paying people extra money for drinking.

It's a bit contradictory. Big companies that don't pay tax. If an individual didn't pay their council tax, they'd be straight on you.

I know for a fact that if a government official was to live a week in my shoes, they'd see things from a different perspective.

They wouldn't last a week.

I don't put my trust in the government that much because I don't expect them to see things from my point of view.

Tax cuts are for the rich. If the price of everything goes up, what's a tax cut doing?

Do people think we're freer than we used to be?

More free.

Depends what you mean by free. We are freer in choice of material things, but I think the government have even more control. They seem to get away with things.

In the 60s/70s you're freer to get any job you want.

How do people view that balance between freedom and security?

Community has gone to technology and social media.

This is why we got Brexit. In this area, the mines went. Steel industries have gone, and not a lot done to replace it. This is what happens if the government doesn't step in.

Other countries like France and Germany, as much as they are for the free-market, they know which side their bread is buttered and they look after their own people in terms of jobs.

I think most people agree that with health and police that the Government should be involved, that's sort of the standard to do. Other things that they should maybe get involved in like making sure there are good standards and values that people hold, or is that more a personal responsibility thing?

That should be the family. Who's to decide those values?

Politicians can't force parents to do that kind of stuff.

What kind of things should the Government be focusing on to make lives better?

Transparency. What I mean by that is, knowing exactly what they're going to do and how they're going to do it. People would be a lot more hopeful.

Parliament term times. Should have a 6 month term time with a 3 year plan. If he hasn't done anything he said he would after his first 6 months, he's not getting back in.

Benefit system. I think it's a massive problem, it draws too much money. It's horrible to say but if you said to every working person, I'll drop your tax by 20%, then will cut some money off the benefit system.

Then they're into work.

I would agree. There is too much disincentive.

The government's created that. So I don't blame them [benefit claimants].

It's all about budgeting. If you teach them how to budget in school.

Altrincham – Group 1

What is your area like, what's good about it?

Where I live, it's a lot of you families, low income. Without wanting to sound judgemental, it attracts people you might not want to live in an area with.

I live in a very residential area.

What's changed in the places you live over the last two years?

It's changed in the sense that it with the growing of Manchester University, deprived areas have become very student based. I think crime has decreased.

What's changed in the last 10 years?

We've had the trams. The tram system, house prices have shot up. It has improved the area, which tends to get a bad name.

I think it's made the area better.

A lot better.

United are a lot better.

What would you say people in Manchester are like?

I'm a Southerner myself, and I quite like it here. I love it.

People are so different. A lot of people in London, there's so much going on no one has really got any time.

Some people in London, if you stopped them on the street, they would look at you with disgust, or like you'd done something wrong. It's easy to get in a fight.

Just a bit rude.

What represents Manchester?

Rain.

Manchester in the 50s and 60s was very friendly. Now, it's been taken over by a student area. They're building thousands of apartments.

30-odd years ago I worked in central Manchester and nobody lived in central Manchester, it was just shops, pubs and clubs. Now, it's like, as soon as anything becomes free they're building apartments on it. It took me a long time to get my head round that.

The population is changing. Much more youthful.

What makes a community?

Where I live, it's so multicultural and so accepting. What you see, it's strange.

I think it's more than other places. I think people opened the door and realised how welcoming it is.

Are you not frightened that when you go home and shut your door at night and you don't know your neighbours? You go out in the morning and you don't see anyone.

Years and years ago your neighbors would come out with cups of tea and pieces of cake. But now you come in and shut your door and you don't see anyone; you come out in the morning, and you don't see anyone.

Although, when you go into Tesco, everyone's dead friendly.

What's better about life today?

Access to information.

Technology.

When I was younger and doing research, it was like alright, here's the encyclopedia. Off you go!

Now it's like "What's the third planet from the sun? Google."

You can just ask your phone now.

"Siri, what £1 converted into dollars?" and it will tell you immediately.

Better transport maybe.

Medicine.

Shopping, online shopping. You don't need to spend half your Saturday going to the supermarket.

You don't have to travel to work as well. There's no heavy industry now is there, it's all laptop based.

What's worse?

The roads.

Litter.

Everything's grubby and dirty.

That was because of the industry though, not because of the litter. When I see a piece of litter on the street think that it should be up to McDonalds or whoever to clean it up.

They should be fined.

Yeah.

What's gotten better or worse in the last 5 or 10 years?

Parenting seems to have got softer.

Has getting a job got easier or harder?

You need experience in the industry now.

Harder.

Getting a job is harder.

There's just different jobs out there. Everyone wants to be the director of a company.

But they're not prepared to start at the bottom.

You might be qualified, you might be the most qualified, but you need two or three years of experience. So, where do you go next?

What about keeping a job? Has that got easier or harder?

Harder.

Harder because of zero contracts.

I've gone back to hospitality now because I love it, but the downside is it's zero hour contracts. I'm not sure if you've heard, Jamie's Italian has shut down and that's been bad. Because you get the lunch rush, and then it goes busy from around 3 or 4, and then busy again in the evening. So, employers didn't want to give you a contract because that means they'll have to commit to it.

If like me you've got a mortgage to pay, children to support, bills to pay, you take what you can get and then you go from having like 30 or 40 hours a week where you're thinking "excellent, I'm paying my bills, I'm putting savings away, I'm able to afford my daughters birthday next week" and then all of a sudden you've got four weeks of eight hours, four hours, six hours... and you're begging people to give you the shift, just so you can afford to put food on the table.

Has that changed from when you were growing up?

Yeah.

These zero hour contracts aren't a job.

People are saying "oh there's tonnes of jobs out there". You can't get a job without experience, and you can't get experience without a job.

Buying a house, has that got easier or harder?

Harder.

Much harder.

It's not affected me, but I know now... when I bought a house there was a lot of opportunity to get a 100% or 95% mortgage. Now, there's still the chance to get a 95% mortgage, my daughter just got one, but generally, you've got to save a 10% deposit, and house prices have shot up so that's a lot more money than 10 years ago. And to be honest, if I was buying again now, I would struggle... more than I did 30 years ago.

What about being a parent? Has that got easier or harder?

Harder.

That's harder.

It is harder.

Harder.

What's making it harder?

Around the corner from where I live now there was a Sure Start Centre and there's a lot of single parent families, low income families around that area and people really did need the support of the community. That Sure Start Centre was an absolute Godsend. When I was a kid, when I had clothes, it went to my cousin, and it was passed down until it's useless. And you had clothes in a really good condition that people just gave!

And food hampers, if you felt like your kids were driving you crazy and you need a break, and you're running out of food. You'd have a support worker come round, and they'd bring a food hamper and could sit with your kids for even half an hour while you go upstairs and have a shower.

Was it funds then?

Yeah, funding cut it.

What about community spirit, has that got better or worse?

After what we've been talking about, I think it's gotten better.

What about people speaking the same language and enjoying the same kind of things?

Well, I think there's pockets. Like you say, there are pockets of Muslim or... A lot of communities keep themselves to themselves and don't integrate and don't like to step out of it.

Do you think people have got more into that? Are communities more isolated than they used to be?

I think we're becoming more isolated than we used to be.

Really? You'd say more isolated?

That area now is mainly Somalians, and they keep themselves to themselves.

So are the other communities getting on?

Maybe because the Somalis are just a bit newer, maybe that's what it is.

When I was growing up, there were certain places you couldn't go. You couldn't walk down Alexandra Park. Now, everyone's so friendly, you can do what you like. When I was growing up, the crime was worse. I was out till 7pm and seeing people get shot every day.

What about looking after your house?

That's got worse.

The students houses yeah.

The landlords aren't interested in what it looks like, all they're interested in is cash from the rental.

Some people think that drug use has gone down, but I think it's got worse, because there's different drugs now, newer drugs. It's spice now.

What about pubs?

They're all closing down now.

Yeah because you've got all these trendy cocktail bars and things like that now.

We're losing a lot of pubs. They're closing down left, right and centre.

Do you think the younger generation have got it easier or harder than kids who grew up in the past?

Harder and easier in some respects.

It's harder to buy a house, because before it was easier to get a mortgage. I've always worked, always had a job, always had relatively good credit history, and I'm looking to buy a house, and I still need to go to my parents.

If my parents weren't willing to go to the lengths they're going to, I would never be able to get on the property ladder, my daughter would never be able to get on the property ladder, unless she won the lottery, and her kids wouldn't be getting on the property ladder and she'd be renting for the rest of her life and she'd have no security.

How has the local economy changed?

Fewer jobs.

There's different types of job.

I don't think it's less jobs I think it's more people going for them.

Where I work, they've just merged with another company, so they're condensing some of their departments, and by doing that, because we've been overtaken by a top board, they've been looking at the jobs that are available and saying "right we don't need two people doing the same job in different locations, let's make it one job and move it to a central location".

Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Well it's bad for the employee.

Is it good for patients?

No.

No, not particularly, because the care that you can give to patients is stretched to the limit.

Why do you think they're doing it then?

To save money.

I know the Government are putting more money into research and stuff, but we're working with end of life patients, they're going to die. But everybody in our department is doing more work than they're capable of, our patients are suffering.

Everything's going up every year, and the hospitals are getting no extra money where I work, on top of having to make cuts every year.

Does that put pressure on people?

Oh yeah.

It's different when it's frontline patient care.

What's your biggest worry for kids in the future?

My concern is that I can't send my daughter to university.

Why can't you send your daughter to uni?

Cost.

What do you mean cost? It costs £9,000/year.

But with the loan that doesn't mean you can't send them.

Yeah but then they're saddled with that debt.

You can send them, but then you've got to find the accommodation costs.

Do you think it's worth your daughters going to university?

Um, one of them's got a really good job now, so yes. But what it also does, is this going to uni, it doesn't necessarily mean that what they're qualified in is what they're going to get a job in.

What are your worries for the future? Is it losing your job?

Yes.

Is it not getting the right healthcare?

Yes.

Maybe that.

Looking after a relative?

Yeah.

Yes.

My views on the hospital and what's going on is that it's fantastic.

My worry is losing it.

Mortgage rates going up?

Yes.

Yes, definitely.

What about crime? Are we worried about crime?

Oh yes.

Yeah, no doubt. As the years go on, the crime is just going to get worse.

There's less police on the streets.

What can the Government do about this?

More coppers.

More police stations backup.

I don't think the police can do anything, it's the judicial system.

My friend was burgled. It took the police 24 hours to go to her house.

My other friend's car got jumped. It took them three days to turn up at her house.

What do we reckon has caused this?

Small sentences.

Soft parenting.

It's peer pressure.

When you were round at a friends house when you were younger and you misbehaved, the nearest adult would clip you wouldn't they? And say: "Watch your attitude, watch your behaviour."

Nowadays, parents can't smack their kids.

There's a lot of snowflaking around, isn't there?

Has immigration caused problems? Has that been a big problem?

You know what, a lot of people want to say it does, but statistically, it really hasn't.

I don't think it's affected anything.

If these people are prepared to work. But if these people don't go out and look for a job, then that's not an excuse.

The benefit system gives them an easy job.

Do we all agree with that?

Yes.

Yeah.

Yes.

I agree that there are jobs out there, and some of the British are too lazy to get off their backside and do.

They could go out and get a job that will pay them the same as benefits, but why would they?

What I don't agree with is all these people, who have been documented on the TV, saying they're going to go to England, make £16,000 and send it all back to build myself a home in my own country. While they're in the UK, they're taking up social housing, they're taking up our NHS services. In the UK, we've got British people, living with no homes. You never see homeless foreigners. You never see a foreigner being turned away from free medical care.

But when we go abroad, we have to take the Ehic card.

Who agrees with that?

Note: About half put their hands up.

I'm half-half.

My mum works in a medical centre and she says she sees people so fresh off the boat they've still got suitcases and they're registering at the doctor's surgery, before they've ever got an NHS number, to get a surgery done.

So do we feel like immigration has put more pressure on services like that?

Well, it's harder to get a doctor's appointment now.

Has Brexit caused problems?

It's all rubbish.

It has.

Of course it has.

It's opened us up to all sorts of problems.

It's a scapegoat for something else.

Who's worried that Brexit is making things a little bit more uncertain?

Yes.

Yeah.

Everyone's just using it as an excuse though. Businesses, the Government, everyone.

The government have just backpedaled.

What about social pressure?

Yeah, I think so.

That, along with austerity, because now, you've got the pressure to buy your kids what the neighbours' kids have, the latest iPhone or whatever.

Have the Government taken their eye off the ball because of Brexit?

Yeah.

That's it to be honest.

Whether we agree with Brexit or not, we've got to go with the result.

They asked us to vote, and now they're doing the voting themselves.

Whatever a manifesto does, what we vote for in a general election, it never turns out like that.

People were promised a certain thing, and then it hasn't come through.

Who voted leave? Do any of you regret it?

Not at all.

What could the Government have done to cushion all this change?

Honesty.

Straight talking.

They should just say, "we've cocked it up, lets try and sort it."

Like Theresa May, she's got no support for anyone, at least she was trying.

Do you think the Government is on your side?

No.

No.

Absolutely not.

Is there any difference between local government and national government?

No politicians get what it's like to be just a normal, regular person.

They're all privileged.

That's why. Different schools and that.

Does the government take too much tax?

Note: silence for a while.

I'm sure the average person wouldn't mind paying all this tax if it was used right.

Is it easy enough to start your own business?

I think it's pretty easy.

If you look at statistics, a lot of businesses fail in the first 12 months.

Near me, there's a lot of small businesses closing down.

Are there enough services?

Definitely not.

There's not enough care in general.

What about public transport?

There should be more information services.

What other way does Government get in the way of what you want in life?

Jobseekers allowance. I had savings that my parents have locked away for when I'm 30, but I can't access them, they can't access them and the Job Centre just said, well you've got savings, use them.

So there was a moment when you really needed the Government to help you out, and it didn't?

No!

Has anyone else ever felt that?

Going back to the immigration thing about people literally just stepping off the boat or plane and getting access to assistance. The obstacles that are put in our way, don't apply to them.

Do you think we're freer than we used to be? Or less free?

Less free.

Less.

You can travel anywhere in the world now.

More CCTV, I welcome that.

I think we're freer in the community, because of the multicultural society that we live in, but I think, in the working sphere, we're less free.

Work/life balance is harder.

I'm forever being reprimanded because my work space is too big or I've got too much paper. But it's all work. You're being watched and you're told you're going to hot desk.

You're there to do your job not win tidiest desk of the year.

How do you feel about the Government being able to control people more if it infringed on your own freedom?

That doesn't work.

No.

I don't hear much about antisocial behaviour or anything. It's more about the youth of today, and they know there's no police and where to go to not get caught.

Could we do with a little less freedom?

I think we could do with a little more surveillance in certain areas to protect the public and actual police.

The thing is, they'll go to court for beating up a kid on the street and just get a week community service.

Do you think democracy is working well?

No.

Do you think Parliament should have the final say? Does it appeal to anyone to have a Government who doesn't have to worry about elections?

No.

Maybe a bit.

People should be able to choose who's in the government.

Would you rather live in a society where people have the maximum amount of freedom or where Government is really big?

How would they support the community?

How would the finances work?

No, that's not a good idea.

Would you rather pay a bit more in tax, to support industries like steel and farming?

They would all go out and get a job if their benefits were cut, if they had no choice.

If we could see that it benefitted other people then I'm sure no one would mind.

They're private companies now.

Private companies took it over, and now they can't run it.

Why would you pay more money?

I'd rather support local community and local jobs.

Would you rather be worse off by say £50/month, if it meant you lived in a community that was a bit cleaner, had a bit less crime

No.

No.

I couldn't afford that.

I don't think that would work.

If you could see the results.

I think if the Government took some of our money we'd all be very sore about that.

What should the Government do? What's their role?

Proper infrastructure.

Look after the people.

Act on the will of the people.

We can't work without the infrastructure of the Government.

Ok, so we think the Government should be quite involved with our life? Like they should have a plan to tackle obesity?

Yeah.

Correct.

Take away the fast food places.

You can go buy frozen chips, frozen chicken nuggets.

If you want to get healthy, it will cost you triple.

What about the government getting involved with stuff like internet pornography, making it hard for people to get access of?

Yeah, I agree with that.

Yeah.

Well, I think that should be down to, like, Google. It's their site, so they should be monitoring.

Do we like the idea of the Government securing industry and jobs?

Not with taxpayers money.

The railways are failing, they're overpriced. We shouldn't be giving money to a private company. A private company should have to give up that right.

If there's one thing the Government could do to make your life better or easier, what would it be?

Cheaper packs of salad.

More support for working families.

Instead of importing the food, use local families.

Do a total review of the benefit system.

The benefit system has failed.

It's a support system.

If you want nice things, you've got to go out and work.

My view would be for things to be nationalised.

Any public service needs to be nationalised.

What about education? Would it be better to cut the costs of student loans? Should we spend money on technical education?

Yes.

Yes.

Student loans, some people go to University, and what's the point?

The Government should have something set up to help people with setting up businesses.

Or should the priority be to cut the cost of living, through tax cuts?

I think the price of living is extortionate.

Are tax cuts the way to do it or should we cut the cost of housing, or something like that?

Cut the costs of your working life.

Either bring the minimum wage to the living wage.

If there's one thing the Government could do for you, what would it be?

Sort Brexit out.

Stop fighting between themselves.

It doesn't fill us with any confidence.

Altrincham – Group 2

What's good about the places you live?

I like the schools actually. Schools are fantastic.

Countryside and national park on one side but then Manchester bright lights on the other side. Transport links are fairly good. You've got the best of both worlds.

What are the downsides of where you live?

There's not a lot for teenagers to do.

I don't see Manchester town centre as being a safe place.

If you go out in town, it can be quite expensive.

What's changed over the last two years in the places you live?

It was worse, because of roadworks.

All this new house building as well, has been a nightmare for traffic.

The highstreets have definitely declined. In the time I've been there, it's become a generic British highstreet, you've got your charity shops, the independents. You've got to go to Manchester if you want something.

Places like Altrincham I think have gone up. There are a lot more independent bars and shops and things like that.

There's a new huge retail park.

When you're on holiday and you tell people where you're from, where do you say?

Manchester.

Yeah Manchester, even though I live in very north Cheshire.

I say Manchester because they don't know it.

I would say Cheshire.

People associate Manchester with a small town centre and Coronation Street.

What else has changed over the last 20 years?

The amount of eating places there are. There used to be a fish and chips shop and a café. Now half the shops are for convenience foods. People seem to go out more to eat. It doesn't seem to be a treat anymore, it seems to be a regular occurrence.

Do you think there's a big difference between those who live in cities and those who live in the suburbs?

I think if you go into Manchester in the weekend it will be busy, in Mansfield it's dead.

Do you think Manchester is more like surrounding area towns, or more like London?

London, definitely.

It's more like a city isn't it.

When I go into Manchester now I'm thinking... "Where are the Mancs?"

I feel like the odd one out.

Southerners have replaced them.

How have things changed since you were a teenager?

I didn't go into Manchester for quite a long time. Because everything you needed was right here. Recently I've had to go back, and it was just so cosmopolitan, so many languages and communities. It was a real kind of eye-opener. A lot of students from different countries.

What's better about life today compared to when you were 18?

The internet has improved things. It's been good and bad.

What's worse about life today?

The internet again. Facebook and all that.

Traffic congestion.

There's no sort of, catching up with yourself.

You're always thinking about the next project.

It's a faster pace of life now. There's insecurity. Terrorism, safety. It's a lot more of a dangerous world out there.

Getting a job. Has that got better or worse?

Yeah, better.

Jobs are a lot more accessible, in terms of recruitment agencies.

With the NHS, there's always a pretty steady flow.

What about keeping a job?

See I've been in the same job for 38 years. But that's unheard of these days.

Now it's more common for people to switch jobs, it's almost the done thing.

Now, staying in the same job is kind of frowned upon.

What about buying a house. Has that got better or worse recently?

Harder.

Hard, due to price, affordability of credit.

Note: mostly quiet, unsure at first.

What about being a parent?

Things are very different now. We had our 21 year old, who used to walk to his Grandma's house when he was 9, and he always felt safe whilst we were at work. We wouldn't have our young boy do it now. Too much traffic on the roads first of all. And no other parents are doing it, so you wouldn't want to be the first one doing that.

Is getting on in life harder?

Better.

Better.

It depends on affordability of the area.

Cheshire East in particular is a very expensive place to live, but in other places in Manchester, house prices are about a quarter.

I think there was more opportunity than with my generation. Back in the day, he could have gone to grammar school but they were too poor, so he just went to work.

What about community spirit?

It's different. I've moved around Cheshire a bit, and you might know the person directly next door and say hi in passing... but it's not like when I was growing up, you knew everyone on the street. There was more interaction.

We used to have street parties.

What about everyone speaking the same language and enjoying the same sorts of things?

They do where we live, practically everyone's English.

What about Manchester, that's increasingly cosmopolitan these days?

Well back when I first started teaching, about 98% of the children were Asian... and I'm embarrassed to say this now but taking the register, I couldn't pronounce the names, and it was completely Asian to me. But now it just slips off the tongue and I don't even notice things like this.

Are people looking after their houses?

My neighbors are actually Indian, and their landlord doesn't take care of the house. Their fence is basically blown out.

What about crime and litter?

Litter isn't too bad.

Anti-social behaviour where I live is quite bad.

Are people worried about crime?

Not where I live, but in general, yeah.

There are cameras across the entire village!

Is that a good thing?

Yeah, an improvement, definitely.

Town centres that are worth going to, better or worse?

You have to make reservations for coffee shops now.

What do we think about other towns like Stockport, is it doing well?

No.

Do you think the younger generation today have got it easier or harder than we did in the past?

Harder.

Oh much harder.

Easier.

They'll have to work until they're 70 now. Things like childcare are expensive. Schools etc. once you get out of Cheshire, things get expensive.

My daughter has just bought a house and I've helped her buy that house because otherwise she wouldn't have been able to do so. It's quite a hefty part of her income. I think they've got it hard.

I'm a healthcare professional so I tend to think they'd benefit from new health advancements and treatments, but in regards to pensions and general living, I think we had it far easier.

I was thinking of just of my nieces and nephews and the opportunities they have, and there's so many.

I think there are more privileges and opportunities.

When you think about the local community and the world at large over the next few decades, how has the local economy changed. Are there fewer or more jobs than there used to be?

More.

More.

What's the biggest worry you have for the future?

What really concerns me is the cost of university and how universities now are like a business. Not like when I went and it was all free. You've got everything on loan, and then you've got these Mickey Mouse courses. My friend's daughter who wants to be an estate agent is doing a degree in travel and tourism, there's absolutely no need to be doing a degree in travel and tourism if you want to be an estate agent, when you'll be starting on the same salary.

I know somebody else's daughter who is in university doing a hair and make up degree, and I'm thinking why? The attitude of this particular girl was, well I'm never going to make enough money to pay my loan back so why shouldn't I? I might as well go and have three years of fun.

They're not actually furthering their career prospects.

Is anyone worried about the state of the NHS?

Yeah.

It gets a bad rep.

They all work so hard.

What about caring for a relative, is that something that people are worried about?

Not as much.

What about kids not getting the right skills and opportunities?

Where we all live it's an okay area.

What about crime?

Yes.

When you hear all this about knife crime.

Incidents not getting investigated because they don't have the resources.

What could the government do about these things?

The government are withdrawing money and funding.

Policing and NHS need more funding.

What drives the changes that we've experienced over the last few years?

Technology, I think that affects your mental health.

Immigration, the population has risen quite significantly. We do have a lot of people coming in with skills that we need and a lot of people coming in to do the low skilled jobs that our young people won't do. There's good and bad in it.

What about Brexit? Has that caused a lot of problems?

My son lost his job because of Brexit.
Politicians have got a lot to answer for.

What about austerity?

Resorting to just draining everything now aren't they.
To a certain extent.

What about government taking their eye off the ball because of Brexit?

It should have been dealt with by now.

What about the idea that it's just down to people changing things, not the Government? And that we live like we do now because people prefer it?

Out of town vs. highstreet argument is that local planners are too naive. If you look at Stockport, car parking is expensive, so what do you do? You go somewhere else.

What could the Government have done better?

They've gone too far with restricting money with the police or whoever.
The politicians don't seem to be listening.
You hear about it being really hard for some kids in the summer holiday because their parents can't afford to feed them. And the government seems to be so blasé about that.
Universal credit wasn't handled very well, was it.

Can any government actually protect their society from the big global changes?

Well quite often it's more convenient to shop online because we're all so busy.

Do you think the government is on your side?

A lot of them are just worried about getting re-elected.

Does Government get in the way of what you want in life, or does Government help you?

It's too slow.

It doesn't listen.

Too bureaucratic.

Still very London-focused, the Northern powerhouse isn't going to happen.

Does the Government take too much tax?

Yes.

I think it depends.

The thing I have an issue with is how many wealthy people are finding loopholes to get out of paying tax.

Are there enough services? Elderly care etc.

It seems quite thinly spread.

Everything is means tested.

Do you think we're freer than we used to be or less free?

Yeah, I think so.

There's a lot more choice now, so many more directions to go in.

Do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing?

Good thing.

Everyone's got to earn money and pay for things.

There's a loss of community.

Would you object to the Government controlling others more if it meant your own freedom was limited?

Depends on what people want to do. I don't want to stop people from doing what they want to do.

Do you think Government is working well? Would we be better off if we had a government that didn't have to worry about elections?

It's very difficult to answer that. I think with the Parliament we've got, they were elected on the basis that they would respect the outcome of the decision and both parties haven't so I would call a general election and give the other parties a say.

Anyone who voted leave regret their choice at all?

No.

What do we think about Boris Johnson?

He's charismatic and authoritative, however, he's a bit of a blabber mouth.

I quite liked Rory Stewart.

What about Michael Gove?

No.

No.

No way.

They're all career politicians.

What do we think about Jeremy Corbyn?

Really, really don't like him.

Buffoon.

He's out of touch, especially with the older generation.

Hasn't Jeremy Corbyn got sort of red background? With communist ideas or something? And also Labour, I was always taught: spend, spend, spend.

What's better, a big government or a small government?

Smaller government.

Money should be better managed.

Fair government, balancing your books, getting things done that need doing. 10 years ago, there wasn't the social care that's needed now. They seem to not be able to channel the money in the right places.

Would people rather that we had the maximum amount of freedom or that government was big?

Big governments aren't efficient.

So, for example, spending lots of money on things like steel factories. Should the government have helped them out.

Well how do we know? We don't know whether it was an inefficiency in the management of it or... we don't know anything about it. We're just told there's a problem and that the government are putting money in it to save jobs, and we don't know if it's worth saving those jobs.

Would you rather pay more for a car if it was made locally?

I think, in light of Brexit, we all have a responsibility to say "yes" I would I to buy British, to keep it in this country.

I feel as if I owe it to my country, I'm loyal to my country.

One parallel is David Attenborough's thing on plastics... the only way we're going to solve all these issues is from grass roots up.

Would you rather be worse off by a couple of hundred pounds a month, where the Government spent more money making people safer, and made people worry about the future a bit less?

That puts a reliance on the state, and I think it comes down to personal responsibility more than the state.

The Government could, if you let it, look after every part of your life, but for me personally, that's not how I would want it.

Would you swap a bit of financial security for more cultural security

I would if I was still working, but I can't afford to do that now.

Should the Government spend more on public services?

That's what they do, that's their job.

Safety?

Yes, obviously.

Public health?

Yeah.

Decency, standards, values?

Well that comes down to the home and the parents.

Should the Government encourage that, encourage values in the home?

Yeah.

There are too many different cultures.

It's down to the individuals but the Government needs to lead by example. I mean look at some of the figureheads we've got at the moment.

Securing industry and jobs?

No.

It's a slippery slope.

Inequality?

We've come along way with that.

Income equality is an impossible task.

Should the Government just stay out of our lives?

No, I think there has to be a framework.

And it has to offer a support structure... and coming back to values, if you've got families who need help...

Do you think the Government should police what comedians say?

No, we've gone too far with that.

We've got freedom of speech.

If there's one thing the Government could do, what would it be?

NHS.

What about education? Would it be better to spend money on student loans, and spend more on technical education?

I actually favour apprenticeships, lots of courses are completely useless.

Our eldest one managed to get into a grammar school and the younger one doesn't even want to try a grammar school. I'm up for giving children choices.

You've got lots of people going off to do a professional courses, but if there's nobody there to do the middle jobs, then...yeah.

Do we send too many kids to university?

Yes.

Absolutely yes, yes.

The other thing we don't have is the experience.

What about helping the cost of living? Should the government concentrate on that?

If the families need it then certainly.

What about reducing the cost of housing, is that something the Government should do?

How would they do it though? What would they do? Knock a naught off the end?

We need proper affordable housing.

Is there anything the government could do to make people feel more optimistic about the future?

People have different needs.

You need good leaders for that.

What's the main issue in the local area?

From where I live it's drug dealing.

Antisocial behaviour.

What's the main issue facing the country?

The government.

Politicians.

Collapse of NHS.

Brexit.

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Will Tanner advised the Prime Minister Theresa May between 2013 and 2017, as a Special Adviser in the Home Office and as Deputy Head of Policy in 10 Downing Street. He has also previously worked for the leading communications firm, Portland, and for the independent thinktank, Reform.

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A Member of the House of Lords since 2015, James most recently served as Parliamentary Under Secretary for Health. He also served as No.10 Director of Policy to David Cameron, authoring the Conservative Manifesto, and led the development and implementation of the Programme for Government. James was also involved in education reform, where he is regarded as one of the originators of the Conservative Government's free school programme. He has set up a number of organisations – Floreat, the International Positive Education Network, Edspace.

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