TONY BLAIR
INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL
CHANGE

From Red Walls to Red Bridges: Rebuilding Labour's Voter Coalition

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Foreword

This comprehensive polling survey from one of Britain's leading political analysts shows that Labour's problem is not complex but simple.

Essentially, the working-class vote has substantially declined over the past half-century. The lines between middle class and working class have become blurred. The trends visible in 1997 have become more pronounced with much less voting by tradition and much more voting independent of tradition. Two-thirds of the British electorate who have switched from Labour define themselves as near the political centre, and that is where a plurality of both main parties also resides.

Therefore, after the 2019 defeat and a decade or more moving in the direction of the traditional left, Labour has a cultural problem with many working-class voters, a credibility problem with the middle ground, and is seen as being for everyone other than the hard-working families who feel their taxes aren't spent on their priorities.

The tragedy for Labour is that this is not new. It mirrors almost exactly what happened in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was the last time the far left came into a position of power in the Labour Party – though not in control of it – and when Labour suffered its second worst defeat ever (discounting the anomaly of 1935).

In 1983, we lost a swath of traditional Labour seats. My majority in Sedgefield was 8,000, not the 19,000 of 2005, and in County Durham all the majorities were down and Darlington was Tory.

I remember saying to my agent on the Sunday before the election, "Thank God we're voting on Thursday because another two weeks and we will lose this seat."

The difference? In those days there was a "loyalty Labour" vote that was immovable. These were old former miners who literally could not vote anything else.

But large numbers of Labour voters in 1983 felt our economic policy was not credible and our attitudes across a range of cultural questions were profoundly alienating.

In 2019 – this time with the far left in control – we suffered our worst defeat, and for pretty much the same reasons, but this time without that engraved Labour vote.

A rational person might conclude that our electoral history shows that a lurch to the far left was not, is not and will never be electorally successful.

The Labour Party under its new leadership understands this, and the Labour conference and the performance of much of the Labour front bench since then marks a "turning of the corner".

But the challenge, as we found in the 1980s and early 1990s, is that moving from positions much of the British public regards as extreme is necessary but insufficient.

We don't need to repeat the long journey back from 1983, step by agonising step, to 1997. And frankly, the country can't afford it.

For the best part of the past half-century, Labour has needed to reconcile the Labour and non-Labour progressive traditions of British politics in order to win power and govern sustainably.

This was the philosophy behind New Labour, and the social changes this polling survey reflects makes that more not less important today.

New Labour succeeded until the pressures of power, longevity in office and the divisions in progressive forces left Labour as a government vulnerable and the Liberal Democrats with an opportunity, too juicy to resist.

But the consequence for both has been baleful.

Labour retreated to its perennial trope of a Labour government defeated by the Tories because it was betrayed by its leadership. The Liberal Democrats entered a coalition with a Conservative government only to find that they had to take decisions inconsistent with the basis on which they had challenged Labour.

Labour now has an opportunity to become again the party of government. And its enemy is caution. It can move to a winning position, but it means complete clarity of purpose and direction.

1. The leadership should continue to push the far left back to the margins. The country must know there is no question of negotiating the terms of power with them.

2. The party needs a new future-oriented policy agenda based on an understanding of how the world is changing which rejects both the old-fashioned statist view of the left and the status quo politics of the right. I have suggested before that the technology revolution should be at the heart of it.

3. We should openly embrace liberal, tolerant but common-sense positions on the "culture" issues, and emphatically reject the "wokeism" of a small though vocal minority.

4. And we should go out and seek the best and brightest from the younger generation to come and stand as Labour candidates. And make a virtue of doing so.

All of this is difficult. But none of it is impossible. The findings of this report show it is necessary, if winning is the aim – as it should be. Not for power but for principle. The last Labour government had many faults, as all governments do. Even the best end eventually. And the anger at some of the decisions, particularly Iraq, was understandable.

But there were radical improvements in public services; large reductions in poverty; some things like the Northern Ireland peace process which took years of patient effort, and some like trebling the development budget or the minimum wage which took political will. And much that we did – on a daily basis – spoke not just to different policies but to different values.

Labour could do it again. Its leadership today is capable of governing and confidence is returning. The corner is turned. But the road ahead is long, and the vehicle requires an engine that can accelerate at speed. We just require the determination to do it.

Tony Blair
Executive Chairman

Executive Summary

To win the next election, Labour must address both the short- and long-term causes of its massive defeat in 2019.

The size and urgency of the task are hard to overstate. To secure a majority at the next general election, Labour needs to gain more than 120 seats. This will require a 12 per cent lead in the popular vote – and a swing to Labour greater than in 1997. The party has barely started to climb the mountain it must conquer. Most recent polls show Labour and the Conservatives with broadly similar support, but this is not nearly sufficient. Past oppositions have often enjoyed sustained and substantial mid-term leads, whether or not they go on to win the following election. No successful opposition has been anything like as far from the winning post in the mid-term period as the Labour Party is today.

At the heart of Labour's problems is the transformation of Britain's economic and social structures in recent decades. The party has struggled to respond to the decline in class-based voting, and to the new divisions of age, education and culture. Our report has investigated the character of these new divisions – and the potential for an election-winning coalition of voters that spans them. This is why the report's title begins: "From Red Walls to Red Bridges." Walls divide; bridges connect. The common ground in Britain today is broader than is often depicted. Labour's challenge is to reconnect this ground and these voters.

Our independent report commissioned by the Tony Blair Institute sets out the findings of new research by polling company Deltapoll into the voters that Labour has lost. It also brings together data from past elections, polls and the census to explore how the party's problems have evolved over recent decades.

These are the main findings:

5. Labour has failed to adapt to the loss of its historic, core voter base: manual workers in heavy industry, belonging to a trade union and living in council homes. Labour's collectivist politics used to chime with the lives of millions of its voters. The death of heavy industry, sale of council homes and the rise of consumer society all undermined Labour's traditional appeal.

6. Labour's failure to adapt has been masked by Britain's growing middle class, which has in turn increased support for the party over the long term. Demographically, the new dividing line in British elections is age, together with education. Labour does best today among students and graduates aged under 30, and worst among non-graduates aged over 50. These long-term demographic forces lie at the heart of Labour's failure to retain its so-called red-wall seats.

7. A detailed survey by Deltapoll, which questioned more than 2,500 former Labour voters and more than 3,000 individuals who remained loyal to Labour, contains six clear messages:

    a. More than 11 million former Labour voters failed to vote for the party in 2019. Of these, 5.5 million voted Conservative while 2.5 million supported an anti-Brexit Party (Liberal Democrats, Green Party, Scottish National Party or Plaid Cymru). Four out of ten Tory voters in 2019 had previously voted Labour at some point in their lives.

    b. In terms of social class, former Labour voters now divide in a similar way to the general electorate, with white-collar workers outnumbering manual workers by four-to-three. Labour needs to win back not just pro-Brexit manual workers who have switched to the Conservatives, but voters from all social classes and with a wide range of views.

    c. The survey finds little evidence to support the widely held view that voters have deserted Labour because they feel particularly hard up, or think Britain or their own area have declined, or are worried about their children's future.

d. Two-thirds of voters who have switched from Labour place themselves in or near the political centre. In fact, majorities in every major political and demographic group regard themselves as political moderates.

e. Many of the voters that Labour has lost, however, say the party is "very" or "fairly" left wing. Labour's reputation is weak in other respects. Those who have turned away regard the party as incompetent, out of touch and excessively concerned with helping different minority groups over people in general. Older voters who have deserted Labour feel especially strongly about the need for competent government – and equally strongly that Labour is incompetent.

f. One of Labour's fundamental problems, among loyalists and former supporters alike, is that few people feel they receive more in the way of public services than they pay in taxes. This applies even to groups that benefit most from public spending: the poor, the elderly and families with children. Labour needs to revive faith not just in the party, but in politics.

8. So-called cultural issues, such as Brexit and immigration, have contributed to Labour's recent problems. This is despite the fact that British attitudes have become steadily more liberal in recent decades on a range of issues: the death penalty, abortion and homosexuality, but also on race and immigration. Labour maintained its clear majority support among manual workers in the early post-war decades despite the views of its core voters on these issues, not because of them. Liberal reforms were tolerated as long as voters were confident the party would deliver on jobs, homes, health, tackling poverty and boosting pensions. Today that confidence has gone. Economics no longer trumps culture.

9. On the face of it, Labour's problem seems almost impossible to solve. The old coalition, between manual workers and metropolitan liberals, appears to have disintegrated. There does not seem to be a way to appeal to one without further alienating the other. Yet our research suggests a more optimistic conclusion. There is much common ground across all social and political groups that suggests the priorities for the government – any government – should be pensioners, the poor and "ordinary working people". However, too few of the voters that Labour needs to

attract currently think that these are the party's priorities. Despite its change of leader in April 2020, Labour has made only limited progress to detoxify the party brand.

10. Additional focus-group research carried out by Deltapoll this month, to be presented in full in a future report, finds that Labour's failure to cut through on bread-and-butter issues, such as taxes and living standards, flows from widespread uncertainty about what a Labour government would do – not just in terms of specific measures, but on its overall objectives. The party suffers not just from a perceived lack of policies, but a perceived lack of purpose.

11. Labour's task is easy to describe, albeit hard to implement: the party needs to persuade voters that it is competent, in touch and has a relevant agenda for improving everyday life. While cultural issues have dominated political debate in recent years, the people's agenda today is primarily economic and social, not cultural.

12. This has relevance to fraught issues, including immigration and relations with the EU. As long as they are framed as cultural battles, the Conservatives will have more powerful weapons. But if Labour can reframe these issues as economic and social challenges, in which current government policies damage people's everyday lives, then Labour has the opportunity to develop policies that are *both* progressive and popular.

13. This is especially true for the "red-wall" seats, which independent economists say will suffer most from Brexit. Our research suggests that Labour needs a two-part strategy both to win back these seats and to retain them. The first is a national drive to regain the support of older voters without university degrees. This would yield the greatest dividends in places with the highest concentration of such voters – such as red-wall towns. Second, a future Labour government needs to ensure these same towns attract the graduates and young families that have increasingly congregated in metropolitan cities. Meanwhile, Labour fights these seats with a double handicap because they contain too few of the types of people who are keen supporters nowadays – and too many who, across the country, used to vote Labour, but have stopped doing so.

Class Is No Longer the Determining Factor

In Their Own Words: Voters on Labour and Class

"I don't think that social class is the same now as it was 20 years ago, certainly not 40 years ago, and so if social classes are not as clear cut as they used to be, then how can those different parties be as clear cut, like you say? It used to be that Labour was there for the working-class people. There's much more of a crossover now, and I think as was proven in the last election, that a lot of red-wall voters who would have traditionally voted Labour, actually voted Conservative."

Woman, the North West, under 45

"When we talk about Labour as a party of the working-class, and the Conservatives are the upper class and the toffs, it's very simplistic and it's kind of easy. And to some extent, it creates a caricature of how things are … The notion of class as it used to be defined in traditional politics, maybe up until about the 1950s and 1960s, has moved on. Why has it moved on? Because as a society we've become broadly more affluent overall. That isn't to say there are a lot of people who aren't living in poverty, and there's child poverty, and I acknowledge all of that. But broadly, society has moved on … And I think it's a bit archaic to almost say Labour is the party of the working-class."

Man, London, over 60

"I think what Labour needs to do is to look at who they're representing, and what we want as modern-day 21st-century people … what do we want and what can they do for us. Because at the moment, they're floundering with past values that are no longer relevant."

Woman, red-wall area, over 60

Source: These quotes are extracts from additional focus groups that took place in different parts of England in November 2021, with current and former Labour supporters; full findings will be presented in a future report.

Peter Pulzer, one of the most eminent political scientists of his generation, wrote in 1967: "Class is the basis of British party politics; all else is embellishment and detail." He was right at the time. But in subsequent years, the links between class and voting began to fray. Today they have largely gone, their disappearance marked by the Conservative gains of 2019 of an array of traditionally safe, "red-wall" Labour seats across the Midlands and northern England – from Bishop Auckland (County Durham) to Bolsover (Derbyshire), Wakefield (Yorkshire) to Wolverhampton (West Midlands).

Figure 1 tells the story of how Labour has captured a declining share of the shrinking working class over the past 50 years, and a rising share of an expanding middle class. This report uses the conventional definitions of social class, derived from the occupation of the head of each household: A (professional), B (managerial), C1 (other non-manual), C2 (skilled manual), D (semi-skilled manual) and E (unskilled). There is a case for designing a different class scheme but this would make historic comparisons difficult, so we must use the data we have. They explain much of what has happened and lie at the root of the challenges facing Labour today.

Figure 1

LABOUR'S VOTE SHARE OF THE SHRINKING WORKING CLASS AND THE GROWING MIDDLE CLASS

Election	Working class (C2DE)			Middle class (ABC1)			Working-class voters as % of overall Labour voters
		Labour vote			Labour vote		
	% of electorate	% of C2DE	millions	% of electorate	% of ABC1	millions	
1970	66	56	10.0	34	22	2.2	82
1974 Feb	65	50	9.7	35	17	1.9	84
1974 Oct	65	52	9.6	35	20	1.9	83
1979	64	45	8.7	36	22	2.8	76
1983	63	36	6.8	37	16	1.7	80
1987	62	41	7.8	38	18	2.2	78
1992	57	44	8.3	43	22	3.2	72
1997	51	53	8.0	49	36	5.5	59
2001	48	51	6.1	52	34	4.6	57
2005	45	41	4.8	55	33	4.8	50
2010	43	33	3.9	57	27	4.7	45
2015	43	34	4.1	57	29	5.2	44
2017	43	42	5.6	57	40	7.3	43
2019	43	33	4.1	57	33	6.2	40

Sources: Calculations derived from successive editions of "The British General Election of..." series (1970–2017) and YouGov (2019)

As Figure 1 shows, back in 1970, when Harold Wilson lost to Edward Heath, two-thirds of voters were working class. More than half of them voted Labour, while just over one-in-five middle-class voters voted Labour. Overall, 82 per cent of Labour's voters comprised manual workers and their families, numbering 10 million out of the total of 12.2 million.

Tony Blair's landslide election win 27 years later was very different. Instead of a two-to-one preponderance of working-class voters, the numbers of ABC1 (middle class) and C2DE (working class) were broadly equal. Blair actually attracted a smaller share of working-class voters than Wilson in 1970 (53 per cent compared to 56 per cent), but this was swamped by Labour winning as much as 36 per cent of the growing number of middle-class voters. The combined impact of demographics and voting choices meant that Labour won 2 million fewer working-class votes in 1997 than in 1970, but 3.3 million *more* middle-class votes.

We should note that Labour's share of the C2DE vote in 1997 formed part of an increase in support for the party across every demographic group. In fact, Labour's ABC1 vote in 1997 was 14 points higher than in 1992, compared with a nine-point rise among C2DE voters. In relative terms, the long-term trend of Labour's support shifting from working- to middle-class support was continuing. New Labour's landslide victories in 1997 and 2001 interrupted the decline in Labour's working-class support, but this resumed in 2005.

Wind the clock on to the present day: middle-class voters now outnumber working-class voters by four-to-three. Labour won one-third of both ABC1 and C2DE votes in 2019, which means that more than 6 million middle-class Labour voters comfortably outnumbered the party's 4 million working-class voters. The 2017 election looks out of step, with Labour's C2DE vote climbing from 34 per cent to 42 per cent in two years. But this is deceptive: the rise in Labour's ABC1 vote was even greater. In 2019, the gains of 2017, both among middle- and working-class voters, were reversed.

These long-term forces can be seen at work in the red-wall seats that Labour lost in 2019. Here, the process started later. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, much of industrial England remained loyal to Labour. Even when industries closed or contracted – be they coalmines, steelworks, shipyards and large factories in many sectors – the resentment at Conservative policies, especially in the Thatcher years, slowed Labour's decline in these areas. Labour struggled, but no more than in the rest of England.

Figure 2 shows how Labour's support in red-wall parts of England compares with the party's vote in England as a whole. In 1987, Labour's average support across the country stood at 30 per cent; in the red wall, it stood at 50 per cent, producing a "red-wall bonus" of 20 points – much as it had been through the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 2

COMPARING LABOUR'S SUPPORT IN RED-WALL TOWNS WITH THE PARTY'S SUPPORT ACROSS ENGLAND, INCLUDING THE BONUS (THE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE TWO)

Labour's % share in	(a)	(b)	(a) minus (b)
	Red wall*	England	Red-wall bonus
1987	50	30	20
1992	56	34	22
1997	64	43	21
2001	59	41	18
2005	53	35	18
2010	41	28	13
2015	43	32	11
2017	51	42	9
2019	37	34	3

*Source: Author's calculation from election results (Note: * = average of Bishop Auckland, Bolsover, Don Valley, Great Grimsby, Rother Valley, Sedgefield, Stoke-on-Trent Central, Wakefield, Wolverhampton NE and Workington)*

However, the bonus fell slightly between 1997 and 2005, and more sharply after 2005. It stood at just three points in 2019. No wonder the Conservatives were able to win these once-secure Labour seats.

As the figure above shows, this was not a sudden Labour collapse. Brexit and Jeremy Corbyn's leadership accelerated the process towards the end of the 32-year period, but the red-wall bonus had been shrinking for 20 years; indeed, most of it happened before either the Brexit referendum or Corbyn's election as party leader. In fact, the long-term political trajectory of the red-wall towns has been towards parity with England overall, not away from it. The following table contrasts these towns with the five big northern cities (Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Sheffield), as well as England, in the two nationally similar elections of 1987 and 2019.

Figure 3

COMPARING LABOUR AND CONSERVATIVE VOTE SHARES IN RED-WALL TOWNS, NORTHERN CITIES AND ENGLAND OVERALL

(%)	1987	2019	Change
Red-wall towns			
Conservatives	33	50	17
Labour	50	37	-13
Northern cities			
Conservatives	27	21	-6
Labour	50	61	11
England			
Conservatives	46	47	1
Labour	30	34	4

Source: Author's calculations

In 1987, Labour's vote in the red-wall towns and northern cities was the same – 50 per cent – but very different from the rest of England. In 2019, the towns preferred the Conservatives by the same margin – 13 per cent more – as England as a whole while the cities diverged, giving Labour a 40-per-cent lead over the Tories. Compared with 1987, the red-wall towns have moved from abnormal (in polling terms) to normal, while the northern cities have moved from abnormal to more abnormal.

Paradoxically, this could have been good news for Labour. Rising support among the growing number of middle-class voters, to offset falling support among the shrinking number of working-class voters, should have been a recipe for success. In national terms, the loss of red-wall seats might have been a price worth paying if it had been outnumbered by gains in more middle-class areas. But four election defeats in 11 years, culminating in the catastrophic 2019 defeat, have shown that this has not happened.

Instead, the losses of the red-wall seats need to be considered in a wider context. They reflect Labour's national failure to respond effectively to the economic and social changes of the past 50 years. This failure looks greatest in the red-wall towns simply because the changes there have been the greatest. These towns used to be strongly Labour because they contained big majorities of the types of people who voted Labour everywhere, in other words, manual workers and their families. Today, following the decline of class voting, these towns contain more of the types of people who vote

Conservative everywhere, in other words, older voters and non-graduates. Labour's problems are not exclusively red-wall problems, rather they are "everywhere" problems.

To make sense of today's class landscape, Deltapoll asked both former and existing Labour voters a range of questions about their lives, views and values. Our findings suggest that Labour will fail, and probably fail badly, if it tries to regain power simply by seeking to revive its working-class appeal. The reason is not just that the number of working-class voters is now too small, but that their lives today are far less like those of their (usually) working-class parents, and far more like their middle-class contemporaries.

Another quotation from the 1960s is relevant here. In 1967, the *British Journal of Sociology* published *A Theory of Political Deviance* by Frank Parkin, a sociologist at the University of Kent. Parkin noted that there had always been a significant minority of working-class Conservatives: Disraeli's "Angels in Marble". Parkin argued that they formed the "non-deviant" group, for they accepted the broad social and cultural norms of Britain's leading institutions, which the Conservatives upheld, as part of their central mission (in those days, at any rate).

For Parkin, the "deviant" group (deviant is used here as a description, not a criticism) were working-class *Labour* voters:

Socialist voting in general can be regarded for analytical purposes, as a symbolic act of deviance from the dominant values of British capitalist society, whilst Conservative voting may be thought of as a symbolic reaffirmation of such values.

To be rather more specific the following hypothesis is proposed: namely, that electoral support for Socialism will occur pre-dominantly where individuals are involved in normative sub-systems which serve as 'barriers' to the dominant values of the society. That is to say, Labour voting, like other institutionalized forms of deviance, requires certain structural supports to maintain it against the pressures of the wider society making for conformity to the central value system. Where individuals do not have access to such normative sub-systems – where, that is, deviant structural supports are not available – then Conservative voting is expected to be the common response.

Arthur Scargill, who led the miners during the Thatcher era, used simpler, more brutal language to make much the same point, when he called on Labour to "defend our class as vigorously as the Tories defend theirs." Trade unions, along with other local organisations, represented Parkin's

"institutionalised forms of deviance" that played such a large part in the local communities of Labour's industrialised heartlands, dominated by specific industries with large workforces.

In these heartlands, the disappearance of so many big industries has undermined the culture of working-class solidarity, and so diminished the appetite for challenging the status quo and the establishment. Figure 4 shows that today's working-class voters are:

- less likely than middle-class voters to join a trade union
- less likely to have jobs in workplaces with more than 100 employees
- less likely to be left-of-centre

Figure 4

WORKING-CLASS VOTERS ARE LESS LIKELY TO BELONG TO A TRADE UNION, WORK IN A LARGE ORGANISATION OR VIEW THEMSELVES AS LEFT-OF-CENTRE

(To those currently working full-time) Are you a trade-union member? (%)	**Middle class (ABC1)**	**Working class (C2DE)**
Yes	31	27
No	69	73

About how many people, including yourself, are employed at your own place of work?	**ABC1 %**	**C2DE %**
1-20	29	33
21-50	12	11
51-100	11	12
More than 100	47	38
Don't know	2	6

Where voters place themselves on left-to right-wing scale	**ABC1 %**	**C2DE %**
Very left wing	5	5
Fairly left wing	12	10
Slightly left-of-centre	16	10
Total left	33	25
Centre	29	38
Slightly right-of-centre	13	9
Fairly right wing	11	7
Very right wing	4	3
Total right	28	19
Don't know	10	18

Source: Deltapoll

It's also worth noting that only 15 per cent of C2DE voters describe themselves as "very" or "fairly" left wing while 57 per cent place themselves among the scale from "slightly left-of-centre" to "slightly right-of-centre". In so far as there are class differences, there are slightly more middle- than working-class voters who fit the traditional stereotype of unionised, left-wing voters with jobs in large workplaces.

That said, the differences are small. Now that Parkin's "institutionalised forms of deviance" have disappeared, so too have gaps in these traditional measures of class difference closed.

The same applies to the way ABC1 and C2DE voters view British society today. Here are the results from questions that asked people to choose between two pairs of statements on which political conflict at Westminster is often fierce, and which have historically fed into class divisions. As Figure 5 shows, the class differences are again minimal, although immigration produces a slightly larger division. Again, though, the differences should not be exaggerated.

Figure 5

RESPONSES TO THREE OPPOSING PAIRS OF STATEMENTS REVEAL MINIMAL DIFFERENCE IN VIEWS BETWEEN MIDDLE- AND WORKING-CLASS VOTERS

Which view is closer to yours? (%)	**Middle class (ABC1)**	**Working class (C2DE)**
In Britain today, it's possible for anyone with talent to get ahead if they work hard and take responsibility for their own lives	52	48
Today's Britain is full of injustice and inequality which hold too many people back, however hard they work	42	45
Don't know	6	7

Which view is closer to yours? (%)	**ABC1**	**C2DE**
Britain's current welfare system has created a culture of dependency, whereby many people, and often whole families, get used to living off state benefits. The system needs to be radically changed to get such people to take more responsibility for their lives and their families	53	49
Most people who rely on welfare benefits are victims of circumstance beyond their control. The benefits they have received are far from generous, and are the least a civilised society should provide in order to help them and their families avoid abject poverty	39	43
Don't know	8	8

Which view is closer to yours? (%)	**ABC1**	**C2DE**
Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care	41	47
Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents	52	44
Don't know	8	9

Source: Deltapoll

One further factor, arguably the greatest, has contributed to the convergence of class attitudes and to Labour's current problems. As Figure 6 shows, far more people in almost every group think they pay more in taxes than they receive from public services and benefits.[1] This applies to full-time workers, both blue- and white-collar, to the over-65s (despite NHS care and pension payments), and to families with children (despite the NHS and education benefits). Only among those whose household income is less than £14,000 are the two figures similar. Social class makes virtually no difference.

Figure 6

RESPONDENTS ACROSS SOCIOECONOMIC GROUPS CHOOSE WHETHER THEY THINK THE TAXES THEY PAY OR THE VALUE OF THE SERVICES THEY RECEIVE IS LARGER

Thinking about you and your family, which would you say is larger.....? (%)	**All**	**Full-time workers**		**Over-65s**	**Children in household?**		**Annual household income**	
		ABC1	**C2DE**		**Yes**	**No**	**< £14,000**	**£14,000 to £28,000**
The total amount you and your family pays in national and local taxes	42	52	51	40	44	42	25	39
The total value of all the services and benefits you and your family receive from national and local government	23	25	17	21	30	20	24	26
The overall value of the two are about equal	13	10	13	19	11	15	16	14
Don't know	22	13	19	21	16	24	34	21

Source: Deltapoll

What these figures show is that, more than 70 years after the Attlee reforms, the state is seen as a drain on people's finances much more than as an enhancement of their lives. This question wasn't asked in the 20th century, but the results may well have been different 50 to 70 years ago (not least because only a few manual workers paid much income tax, and many paid none at all).

This finding has serious implications for progressive politics. If the government is not seen to spend efficiently and fairly, voters will be wary of voting for a higher-tax party (or, more precisely, a party that is perceived to be a higher tax-and-spend party). More fundamentally, these figures feed into the right-wing narrative that for the provision of everyday needs, government is more of a problem than a solution. This means that Labour's task is to revive trust in not just the party, but in politics.

The Blair government managed to solve this problem for a while. Almost 20 years ago, at a time of economic growth and rising prosperity, voters backed the decision to raise national insurance to pay for greater spending on the National Health Service. However, years later, most voters think the NHS had improved only a little, and that much of the extra spending had been wasted.

Despite these figures, it is wrong to say there are no significant class differences. Two do persist: in housing and education.

Figure 7

EDUCATION AND HOUSING ARE THE TWO MAIN AREAS WHERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORKING AND MIDDLE CLASSES REMAIN

Housing tenure	**Middle class (ABC1) (%)**	**Working class (C2DE) (%)**
Own outright	41	29
Own with mortgage	28	17
Total who own their home	69	46
Rent from council or housing association	13	32
Rent from someone else	15	19
Total who rent	28	51
Other	3	3

Educational attainment	**ABC1 (%)**	**C2DE (%)**
University graduate	45	22
Non-graduate	50	72
Still in education	5	4

Source: Deltapoll

Tenure is still linked to party choice and social attitudes. Working-class homeowners are far more likely than those who rent their homes to vote Conservative and to say that our welfare system has created a culture of dependence.

In short, some vestiges of traditional social differences remain. But the arc over the past 50 years has seen those differences dissolving through a combination of industrial change, which would have happened anyway, and, in some cases, political choices such as Margaret Thatcher's "right-to-buy" policy in the 1980s. All in all, Labour's shrinking working-class base, amplified by the loss of red-wall seats in 2019, needs to be set in a wider context.

Where Labour's Lost Voters Have Gone

In Their Own Words: Voters Explain Why They Left Labour in 2019

"When I voted for the Conservatives in the last election, I was hoping, particularly when the pandemic hit, that Labour would refocus, and step back up and argue about what was happening … Where I live, these are real staunch Labour areas. But the amount of people who I've spoken to who've said they won't vote for them again, reiterating what I said: they don't know what they stand for anymore. And I think that's sad for people who have voted Labour all their lives, because they used to be very, very clear, very focused, on who they supported."

Woman, red-wall area, over 60

"I voted Labour for 40 years because my father, brothers and sisters all voted Labour. But like people here, I think from about 2010 onwards, I started to see a change in Labour. I think it was called Momentum, when they started to appear, and Jeremy Corbyn's idea of seeing the future didn't agree with me. Especially nationalisation of the railways and the water and election [sic], et cetera. So, I voted Conservative for the first time."

Man, red-wall area, over 60

"I voted Brexit. Labour, they basically turned to 5 million of their own voters, and said: 'We're not going to deliver Brexit. We're going to have another referendum.' They basically didn't want Brexit, they wanted to stop it. And yes, that's really my main reason. Plus, how some of their MPs are actually MPs is kind of mystifying to me. A lot of them are incompetent. And I thought to myself after I voted, why did I ever vote Labour in my life? I'd never do it again… You see [Labour MPs] in the House of Commons, they're always angry, they're always shouting and screaming, and I just don't like the calibre of their MPs."

Man, London, over 60

[*Did any of you not vote for Labour at the last election because of Brexit?]*

"Yes, because they were dilly-dallying, and I was a clear remainer, and the only party that, all along, was clearly in favour of remaining in the EU was the Lib Dems."

Man, red-wall area, over 60

Source: These quotes are extracts from additional focus groups that took place in different parts of England in November 2021, with current and former Labour supporters; full findings will be presented in a future report.

One of the consequences of the class-divide collapse is that any analysis of Labour's lost votes must include both middle- and working-class voters. Much of the discussion around Labour's loss of red-wall seats has implied that only working-class voters switched to the Conservatives. This is not the case. In a typical red-wall seat these days, 30 to 40 per cent of voters are ABC1,[2] compared to 57 per cent for Great Britain as a whole. Decades ago, when red-wall seats had huge Labour majorities and overwhelmingly working-class electorates, the middle-class vote in these constituencies was electorally insignificant. No longer. The story of Labour's losses here is largely of working-class loyalties, but not exclusively so.

Indeed, the more working- and middle-class loyalties have converged, the more similar the movements from one party to another at election time have become.

As discussed, Deltapoll's survey sample included 2,500 respondents who have stopped voting Labour at some point in their lives. To help clarify the story of where they have gone, polling percentages have been converted into millions of voters. It should be stressed the figures are a best estimate: many people have imperfect memories of how they voted in the past. To provide a general understanding of who has left Labour and where they have gone, Figure 8 extrapolates from the overall data all those who recall having voted Labour once at *any* past general election, but who withheld their support in 2019.

Figure 8

HOW VOTERS WHO PREVIOUSLY VOTED FOR LABOUR IN ANY GENERAL ELECTION SWITCHED IN 2019

	All (millions)	**Middle class (millions)**	**Working class (millions)**
Conservatives	5.5	3.2	2.3
UKIP	0.3	0.2	0.1
The Brexit Party	0.4	0.2	0.2
Total right	**6.2**	**3.6**	**2.6**
Liberal Democrats	1.4	1.0	0.4
SNP/Plaid Cymru	0.6	0.3	0.3
Green Party	0.5	0.3	0.2
Total left/centre	**2.5**	**1.6**	**0.9**
Some other party	0.1	0.1	*
Did not vote	2.7	1.6	1.1
Total no longer Labour	**11.5**	**6.9**	**4.6**

Source: Deltapoll

Four findings stand out:

The numbers are big. In the 2019 election, 10.3 million people voted Labour, but they are exceeded by the 11.5 million the party has lost, at some point, along the way.

Of the 11.5 million lost voters, just half switched to the Conservatives in 2019. Put another way, four in ten people who voted for Boris Johnson had, at some point, wanted a Labour government.

Labour also lost 2.5 million votes to pro-European parties: the Liberal Democrats, Green Party, SNP and Plaid Cymru. These voters should not be ignored in the attempt to win votes back from the Conservatives.

In absolute numbers, Labour has lost more middle- than working-class voters. To some extent, this reflects the fact that the electorate now divides 57 per cent ABC1 to 43 per cent C2DE. The safest assumption is that middle- and working-class voters are now equally likely to switch parties – another sign of class convergence.

While these findings relate to the long-term picture, what about the specific haemorrhaging of Labour votes between the party's relatively narrow defeat in 2017 and its catastrophic performance two years later? Deltapoll's 2,500 former Labour voters included almost 1,300 who had voted for Corbyn's leadership in 2017, but not in 2019. They divided in much the same way as voters who had previously deserted the party: middle class by 57 per cent and working class by 43 per cent. Of these voters, 51 per cent switched to the Conservatives and 18 per cent to the Liberal Democrats, Green Party or the SNP/Plaid Cymru.

Looking in more detail, Figure 9 divides those former Labour supporters into those who voted for the Conservatives in 2019 and those who voted for the Liberal Democrats or Green Party, with the most obvious difference between them also highlighted – how they voted on Brexit in 2016.

Figure 9

HOW LABOUR SUPPORTERS WHO SWITCHED TO THE CONSERVATIVES OR LIBERAL DEMOCRATS/ GREEN PARTY IN 2019 VOTED ON BREXIT

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/Greens (%)
Voted to leave the EU	74	22
Voted to remain in the EU	23	71
Did not vote	3	6

Source: Deltapoll

Since almost three times as many former Labour voters switched to the Conservatives, rather than the Liberal Democrats or Green Party, the leaning among this overall group is towards supporters of Brexit: Leave by 58 per cent and Remain by 42 per cent during the 2016 referendum. Among those who voted Labour in 2017, but not 2019, the figures are similar: Leave by 60 per cent and Remain by 40 per cent. So while it is true that most of Labour's lost voters wanted the UK to leave the EU, the balance is not overwhelming.

This poses a dilemma: Brexit policies designed to please Leave voters could alienate Remainers who would prefer a party that advocates for a closer relationship with the EU. Nevertheless, Labour's biggest challenge is to encourage the return of former supporters who voted Conservative in 2019. Brexit aside, two points are frequently made about these lost voters: first, that they were rebelling against the damage done to Britain and specifically their area by the economic and social changes of recent decades; and second, that these new Conservatives came from families with no history of voting Tory.

Deltapoll's data suggest that both are wrong.

First, on the transformation of Britain's economy, Figure 10 shows there is no consensus about the impact of long-term changes either on the country as a whole or on specific areas. These changes were defined as a decline in old industries, factories and jobs, and growth of new jobs, businesses, goods and services. Voters who switched to the Conservatives are actually more positive about the changes than voters who stuck with Labour.

Figure 10

RESPONDENTS CHOOSE WHETHER BIG CHANGES TO BRITAIN'S ECONOMY OVER THE PAST 30 TO 40 YEARS HAVE BEEN FOR THE BETTER OR WORSE

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 (%)	Labour voters who remained with the party in 2019 (%)
For Britain		
For the better	38	27
Neither	24	28
For the worse	35	37
For my area		
For the better	32	22
Neither	34	32
For the worse	33	36

Source: Deltapoll (Note: the percentage for "don't knows" has been omitted)

As for how families voted, former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives were more likely to have had Tory-voting parents than those who remained with Labour. This group was still a minority, however – just 35 per cent – but whereas Labour loyalists divided four-to-one for having Labour, rather than Tory, parents, that division was fairly even among those who voted Conservative in 2019.

Figure 11

VOTERS WHO SWITCHED FROM LABOUR AND WHO REMAINED WITH THE PARTY INDICATE WHO THEIR PARENTS TYPICALLY VOTED FOR

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 (%)	Labour voters who remained with the party in 2019 (%)
Conservatives	35	14
Labour	39	58
Some other party	5	5
No particular party/don't know	20	22

Source: Deltapoll

It's worth repeating: memories are fallible. The true figures might be different but what these results signify is that many former Labour voters who backed the Conservatives in 2019 did so thinking they were reverting to a family habit, rather than striking out on a path their parents had always rejected. Many of them are the daughters and sons of Tory-voting "angels in marble."

Our survey also explored the impact of ideology. There is more common ground than might be expected between those who switched to the Conservatives and those who voted Liberal Democrats or Greens in 2019. Figures 12 and 13 highlight the differences – and similarities.

Figure 12

VOTERS PLACE THEMSELVES ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM FROM LEFT TO RIGHT WING

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/Greens (%)
Very left wing	4	5
Fairly left wing	4	14
Slightly left-of-centre	7	30
Total left	**15**	**49**
Centre	43	34
Slightly right-of-centre	16	6
Fairly right wing	14	3
Very right wing	4	2
Total right	**34**	**11**
Don't know	8	6
Total near centre	**66**	**70**

Source: Deltapoll

While the voters gained by the Conservatives tilted more to the right, and those gained by the Liberal Democrats and Greens to the left, by far the biggest cluster across both groups comprised those who felt they were in the centre, or just "slightly" to the left or right.

Yet this is not how many voters who switched in 2019 view their former party. While only 8 per cent of those switching to the Conservatives describe themselves as "very" or "fairly" left wing, as many as 48 per cent apply that label to the Keir Starmer-led Labour Party.

Figure 13

VOTERS PLACE LABOUR ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM FROM LEFT TO RIGHT WING

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/Greens (%)
Very left wing	24	8
Fairly left wing	24	29
Slightly left-of-centre	13	34
Total left	**61**	**71**
Centre	14	10
Slightly right-of-centre	4	6
Fairly right wing	2	5
Very right wing	3	1
Total right	**9**	**12**
Don't know	14	7
Total near centre	**31**	**50**

Source: Deltapoll

Among those who switched to the Liberal Democrats and Green Party, the issue is more complex. Some have moved away from Labour because it is not left-wing enough, although this should not be overstated. Far more respondents who voted for the Greens or Liberal Democrats place themselves in or near the political centre than in either of the two left-wing categories. Yet, as Figure 14 reveals, matters of ideology go well beyond positions on a left-to-right scale.

Figure 14

RESPONDENTS INDICATE THEIR PREFERENCE ON A MAINLY CAPITALIST OR SOCIALIST SOCIETY

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/Greens (%)
A mainly capitalist society in which private interests and free enterprise are most important	41	26
A mainly socialist society in which public interests and a more controlled economy are most important	41	62
Don't know	17	12

Source: Deltapoll

Deltapoll's question is one that research company MORI first asked more than 30 years ago. In 1989, after a decade of Thatcher's economic reforms, the public divided 47 per cent to 39 per cent in favour of a socialist rather than capitalist society. Today, voters as a whole prefer socialism by 48 per cent to 29 per cent, with the number of don't knows climbing from 14 per cent to 23 per cent.

Yet the responses do not divide as neatly along party lines as could be expected. Among all those who voted Conservative in 2019, capitalism triumphed over socialism – but only by 46 per cent to 34 per cent. As shown in the figure 14, the new intake of Conservative voters divided evenly. MORI's figures from 1989, like other polling data from the same era, indicate that Thatcher never won the ideological argument as comprehensively as is sometimes argued. Today, Boris Johnson is right in believing that few voters share the same passion for a laissez-faire society as some Tory activists do.

What then should we make of the apparent public appetite for socialism? Jeremy Corbyn argued that the polls showed majority support for a number of his policies that collectively amounted to a socialist agenda. But Labour lost badly in 2019 – and, indeed, the election saw many voters switch to the Conservatives, despite preferring a socialist to a capitalist agenda. In taking this one question in isolation, much of the public seems to be attracted by an ideological left-wing agenda, yet the rest of our research does not support this conclusion.

To make sense of this issue, we need to relate the widespread pro-socialist inclination among voters to the clear preference for staying close to the political centre. Taken together, Deltapoll's data suggest that at the heart of Britain's electorate – especially among those voters that Labour lost to the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats or Greens – is the desire for a government that acts in the public interest, not least to curb the excesses of a free-enterprise economy, but which does *not* do so to pursue an ideological goal. "Social" is a useful word for Labour to own: there is clearly a public appetite for the ethic of coming together for the common good. Adding "ism" on the end, however, is risky unless socialism can be stripped of its doctrinal associations. In recent years, when banks and railway companies have failed, and the government has had to step in, this action has had widespread support as a pragmatic measure to keep money flowing and trains running, but not as a step towards full-blooded socialism.

It is not just perceptions of extremism that have driven voters away from Labour. More important is the party's reputation for incompetence. Figure 15 shows how Labour's lost voters regard the main parties today. Many people punished Labour with an even more damning verdict at the time of the last election, but other surveys since December 2019 show that there has been an increase in Labour's competence rating – and a decline in the Conservative's equivalent rating.

Figure 15

THE COMPETENCY OF THE MAIN PARTIES ARE ASSESSED BY FORMER LABOUR SUPPORTERS

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/Greens (%)
Conservatives		
Competent	59	20
Incompetent	33	74
Don't know	8	6
Labour		
Competent	16	33
Incompetent	74	46
Don't know	10	21

Source: Deltapoll

It is clear that Labour's perceived incompetence was a major cause of its loss in 2019, especially among those who voted for the Conservatives. Among those who voted Labour in 2017 but not in 2019, only 25 per cent say that Labour is competent these days, while 60 per cent say it continues to be incompetent. This is arguably the most important single indicator of Labour's continuing failure to overtake the Conservatives when it comes to voting intentions.

Culture, Competence and the Generation Gap

In Their Own Words: Voters on Labour's Ability to do the Job

"Because [Labour] are so unsure of themselves, it makes us as voters be totally unsure. We don't know, in a sense, who to trust and who you can't trust. It's like a circle that's just going round and round; you're hearing what the Conservatives are doing wrong, but then you think to yourselves, Well, are Labour actually going to put it right?"

Woman, red-wall area, over 60

"Every time Labour have been in government, they've left the country bankrupt every single time. You look it up. Every time Labour are in government, the country is bankrupt."

Man, London, over 60

"The problem with [Labour], and it's been the case for the last 10 years as an opposition party, every time they say something or they publish a manifesto, they know they're not going to get held to account. They don't cost it, they throw things in there they have no intention of delivering or don't know how to deliver, like free, unlimited broadband for all. If you think Tory, you think work hard for money, police and whatever else your mind comes to. Labour are trying to appeal to all people at all times, and failing. They want to be the party of the country but there are lots of divisive local issues, so tackle the big ones. Tackle re-privatising rail, the NHS, bring down the waiting times, get rid of elective surgeries. They're trying to appeal to the liberal, young, woke, in the cities, and the hardcore northern wall of [Len] McCluskey types. You can't have it both ways. Pick something and tell us how you are different."

Man, London, under 45

Source: These quotes are extracts from additional focus groups that took place in different parts of England in November 2021, with current and former Labour supporters; full findings will be presented in a future report.

One of the notable features of the two general elections since the Brexit referendum of 2016 has been the growing generation gap.

Figure 16
HOW GREAT BRITAIN VOTED IN 2019 BY AGE

(%)	All	18–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	70+
Conservatives	45	22	30	41	49	57	67
Labour	33	55	46	35	28	22	14
Liberal Democrats	12	12	14	13	12	11	11
Others	10	11	10	11	11	10	8
Conservative lead	12	-33	-16	6	21	35	53

Source: YouGov

As with the results in the red-wall seats, we can disentangle long-term trends from more recent developments. Figure 17 compares the votes of three major age groups in 1987 (when the Conservative and Labour shares of the national vote were similar to 2019), 2015 (one year before the Brexit referendum) and finally 2019.

Figure 17
THE CONSERVATIVE LEAD BY AGE BRACKET IN THE 1987, 2015 AND 2019 ELECTIONS

(%)	All	18–34	35–54	55+
1987	11	2	6	15
2015	7	-12	-2	21
2019	12	-27	5	39

Sources: MORI/YouGov (based on estimates)

When we define the generation gap as the difference in the Conservative lead between those aged 18 to 34 and those aged 55-plus, then the gap grew from 13 points in 1987 to 33 points in 2015 and 66 points in 2019. The gap has widened more since 2015 than it did over the 28 years prior. It's clear from these figures that Labour has a particular problem attracting support from voters aged over 55, one that has grown significantly in recent years.

Why has this happened?

To answer this question, Deltapoll questioned almost 6,000 current and former Labour voters. Figures 18 and 19 divide the voters into four groups, breaking them down by both age and voting choice in the 2019 election. The data help us to identify what distinguishes the over-45s who have stopped voting Labour from the three other groups. Some of the findings are predictable. Former Labour voters in the older age bracket are keener on Brexit than the other groups, and more hostile to immigration. It's worth noting that the under-45s who had voted Labour in the past were, on balance, opposed to Brexit and favourable towards immigrants. And even among the over-45s who were former Labour supporters, significant minorities were both pro-EU and pro-immigration.

Figure 18

HOW BREXIT DISTINGUISHES THE OVER-45s WHO STOPPED VOTING LABOUR IN 2019 FROM OTHER GROUPS

Brexit	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)
Voted to leave the EU	23	34	34	60
Voted to remain in the EU	60	61	41	32
Did not vote	14	4	22	7

Source: Deltapoll (Note: percentage for "not sure" has been omitted)

Figure 19

HOW IMMIGRATION DISTINGUISHES THE OVER-45s WHO STOPPED VOTING LABOUR IN 2019 FROM OTHER GROUPS

Immigration: which view is closer to yours?	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)
Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care	32	27	42	51
Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents	60	62	50	43
Don't know	8	10	8	6

Source: Deltapoll

Similar patterns emerge on the broader issue of nationalism. Respondents were asked how nationalistic – loyal and devoted to one nation above others, with emphasis placed on promoting its culture and interests over those of others – they regarded themselves.

Figure 20

MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, DEFINED BY AGE, CHOOSE HOW NATIONALISTIC THEY REGARD THEMSELVES

(%)	All	18–24	24–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
Very/fairly nationalistic	54	37	47	47	51	61	68
Not very/not at all nationalistic	35	46	39	39	37	31	27
Don't know	11	16	14	15	12	8	5

Source: Deltapoll

Figure 21

EXISTING AND FORMER LABOUR VOTERS, DEFINED BY AGE, CHOOSE HOW NATIONALISTIC THEY REGARD THEMSELVES

	All who have remained Labour (%)	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/ Greens (%)
Very/fairly nationalistic	40	37	44	49	68	75	46
Not very/ not at all nationalistic	48	51	45	42	26	20	50
Don't know	11	12	10	9	6	6	4

Source: Deltapoll

As with immigration and Brexit, Labour has a particular problem with voters aged over 45 who switched to the Conservatives. A lesson from history teaches us what can happen when culture trumps economics: in 1964, during the general election, one constituency behaved completely different from the rest of the country. While Labour returned to government on a swing of 3 per cent nationally, one of the party's most senior MPs was defeated on a swing of 7 per cent to the Conservatives in Smethwick.

This was largely because immigration from other Commonwealth countries dominated the local campaign in the West Midlands town. Labour had sought to neutralise the issue by accepting the principle of limiting immigration nationally, yet its campaign in Smethwick was upended by an unofficial local slogan – crude and openly racist – accusing the party of being soft on the issue and designed to frighten constituents into voting Conservative. It's worth noting that hostility to immigration was by no means unique to Smethwick at the time. A Britain-wide Gallup survey a few months later asked:

Do you think that on the whole this country has benefitted or been harmed through immigrants coming to settle here from the Commonwealth?

The results were:

Benefitted	16%
Harmed	52%
No difference	20%
Don't know	12%

Despite the similarly stated positions of the two main parties, the outgoing Conservative government was more associated with a policy of firm controls than Labour. In short, Labour won the 1964 election, not because it won the argument on immigration – indeed, it tried hard to avoid it – but because it was an issue that, outside Smethwick, had little impact on the way people voted. The issues that mattered for Labour's core, overwhelmingly working-class voters were jobs, homes, health care, schools and "13 wasted years" of Conservative government. With the exception of Smethwick and, to a lesser extent, a few other constituencies in the West Midlands, economics trumped culture.

One of the paradoxes of Britain today is that on a great range of issues, we are far more liberal (or, perhaps more accurately, less illiberal) than 40 or more years ago – but that a liberal outlook is more likely to lose votes. The Brexit referendum and the two general elections since show what can happen when the central question concerns national identity rather than economic and social progress – especially for older, once-solid Labour voters who have now deserted the party in such large numbers.

In 1966, the voters of Smethwick reversed their 1964 decision. Labour regained the seat on a swing of 8 per cent. This time, culture mattered less, and the constituency behaved like the rest of Britain. Can Labour achieve today what it did in Smethwick 18 months after losing the seat? The party might wish to say nothing about immigration, post-Brexit relations with the EU and national identity, but silence on such matters is unlikely to work during a fierce election campaign. Our research suggests two goals for the party. The first is to distinguish nationalism from patriotism – two distinct values that the Leave campaign so successfully fused together during the Brexit referendum. The second is to link patriotism to a compelling plan for improving people's daily lives. Labour is unlikely to win any argument for closer ties with the EU, or more liberal immigration

controls, by fighting them as battles in a culture war. Today's Labour Party needs to separate patriotism from nationalism, and make it an economic and social cause.

To achieve this, Labour needs to remove, perhaps, the biggest boulder blocking its path back into government: the loss of voters' faith in its competence. For the survey, Deltapoll asked:

If you had to choose, would you prefer a government that is competent, or a government that shares your view of society?

Figure 22

EXISTING AND FORMER LABOUR VOTERS ON WHETHER THEY WANT A COMPETENT GOVERNMENT OR ONE THAT ALIGNS WITH THEIR VIEWS

	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)
A government that is competent	47	58	48	72
A government that shares your view of society	44	35	43	23
Don't know	9	7	8	5

Source: Deltapoll

Figures for the under-45s are virtually the same regardless of whether or not they remained with Labour in the 2019 election. Of course, such figures conceal variations among individual voters. Competence was clearly a factor for many of the younger voters who switched from Labour in 2019 but, in the larger scheme of things, it mattered far more to voters aged over 45. Whereas those under-45s who had stopped supporting the party by 2019 divided evenly on this issue, those aged over 45 who did not vote for the party preferred competence by three-to-one.

This tells us what kind of government voters want, but how do they view the two main parties?

Figure 23

EXISTING AND FORMER LABOUR VOTERS RATE THE TWO MAIN PARTIES ON THEIR COMPETENCE

	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)
Labour Party is				
Competent	55	58	36	18
Incompetent	31	24	49	67
Don't know	13	18	15	15
Net rating (% competent minus % incompetent)	+24	+34	-13	-49
Conservative Party is				
Competent	16	8	33	42
Incompetent	73	85	56	50
Don't know	11	8	12	8
Net rating	-57	-77	-23	-8

Source: Deltapoll

It should come as no surprise that Labour voters who have maintained their support for the party have a reasonably good view of its competence, but a negative view of the Conservatives on this issue. (It should worry Labour, however, just how many of its loyalists still say the party is incompetent 18 months into Starmer's leadership.) But the more telling figures are those relating to who switched their support in 2019. It might be thought that people who have stopped voting Labour would have a dim view of the party's competence whatever age they are. Instead, there is a clear difference. The party's net-competence rating among under-45s is a disappointing minus-13, but among over-45s, it is a terrible minus-49. And while Labour scores less badly than the Tories among these same under-45s, it scores far worse among the older age category.

A belief in Tory competence was plainly a factor driving the choice of former Labour voters in 2019, but especially among the over-45s, with these figures suggesting that Labour's reputation on this point was a larger factor. Again, we can surmise that had this question been asked at the time of the 2019 election, Labour's competence figures would have been even worse.

Could it be that perceptions of competence on the one hand, and views about Brexit and immigration on the other, are two sides of the same coin? And that the key to reviving Labour's reputation for competence could be found in pleasing its target voters on these two fraught issues? That may be true to some degree, but the following results suggest that possibly a large part of Labour's competence problem has deeper roots. We can assess this by returning to two questions: what are voters' priorities, and what do they think are Labour's?

Figure 24

FORMER VOTERS ARE ASKED WHAT GROUPS THEY WANT TO HELP THE MOST COMPARED TO THOSE THEY THINK LABOUR WANTS TO HELP

	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019			Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019		
	Own priorities (%)	Labour's priorities (%)	Difference (%)	Own priorities (%)	Labour's priorities (%)	Difference (%)
Ordinary working people	49	36	-13	76	40	-36
Pensioners	27	15	-12	58	17	-41
The poor	48	31	-17	52	37	-15
So-called traditional families – married couples with children	17	16	-1	29	20	-9
Single-parent families	31	21	-10	16	20	4
White Britons	12	13	1	14	6	-8
Immigrants and non-white Britons	16	24	8	5	32	27
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer & others (LGBTQ+)	13	15	2	3	25	22
The rich	8	19	11	2	10	8

Source: Deltapoll

Voters who are under-45 give somewhat, but not massively, different answers to the two different questions. Their own priorities and their view of Labour's priorities overlap to a large degree. On none of the nine issues does the difference reach 20 points. That cannot be said of over-45s. On four issues, the difference exceeds 20 points, and on their own two biggest priorities of ordinary working people and pensioners, it is as much as 36 and 41 respectively. In the previous chapter, we noted similar differences among all former Labour supporters who had switched to the Conservatives in 2019. It's not surprising: they are largely the same people. The point here is that Labour has lost ground among older voters for a range of reasons that go deeper than Brexit and immigration.

If there are crumbs of comfort in this analysis, it is that economic and social ideology have played little part in Labour's specific problem with voters aged over 45, as responses to the two questions on an ideal society in Figure 25 show.

Figure 25

EXISTING AND FORMER LABOUR VOTERS, BROKEN DOWN BY AGE, CHOOSE THEIR PREFERRED VISION OF AN IDEAL SOCIETY

	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)
A mainly capitalist society in which private interests and free enterprise are most important	19	12	29	32
A mainly socialist society in which public interests and more controlled economy are most important	63	68	52	50
Don't know	18	20	20	18
A society that emphasises the social and collective provision of welfare	53	62	41	45
A society in which individuals are encouraged to look after themselves	35	24	46	46
Don't know	12	14	13	9

Source: Deltapoll

Former Labour voters tend to support capitalism and reject collective welfare in larger numbers than those who have stayed loyal to Labour, but a) socialism and collective welfare remain fairly popular, and b) age makes little difference. The explanation for Labour's problems with voters aged over 45 does not lie here. The party itself is the problem: it has haemorrhaged these votes, especially in the past few years, because it is seen by many of the voters it needs to win back as incompetent, out of touch and obsessed with what right-of-centre commentators describe as "woke" causes.

If any doubts remain that Labour has lost the support of these older voters because of the party itself, Figure 26 should dispel this. Deltapoll asked:

Had Labour won the last general election, with Jeremy Corbyn becoming Prime Minister, how well or badly do you think Britain would have been governed?

Figure 26

RATING THE COMPETENCE OF A LABOUR GOVERNMENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF JEREMY CORBYN

	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)
Very/fairly well	60	47	40	11
Neither	25	21	23	12
Very/fairly badly	12	26	32	76
Don't know	4	6	5	2

Source: Deltapoll

Younger, former Labour voters veer slightly towards a positive view of what a Corbyn government would have been like. But by a margin of seven-to-one, the former Labour voters in the older age category say it would have done badly. Polling surveys do not always bear out the anecdotal evidence of what campaigners say they "hear on the doorstep". This survey does. Former Labour voters, aged over-45, who moved away from the party in 2019 – or, having moved away earlier, declined to return the fold – say overwhelmingly that a Corbyn government would have been bad for Britain. Indeed, most of them choose the "very bad" (56 per cent) rather than just "fairly bad" (20 per cent) category.

Corbyn has gone, but the malady lingers on. And it is clear from Figure 27 that former Labour voters criticise the party more on matters of competence than policy.

Figure 27

VOTERS' MAIN CRITICISMS OF LABOUR (RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED TO CHOOSE THREE OR FOUR)

	Under-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who remained Labour in 2019 (%)	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)	Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)
I don't trust it to run the economy competently	13	13	23	45
Its leader is useless	23	20	22	35
It has changed for the worse in the past two or three years	19	24	22	34
Whenever it's in government, it messes things up	11	11	19	31
It has allowed too many immigrants to come to Britain	13	11	18	25
It has got Brexit all wrong	14	13	17	24
It's too ready to break its promises	16	9	18	19
It does too little to tackle race, sex and other serious forms of discrimination in Britain today	16	10	18	15
It has let down areas like mine	14	14	17	14
It puts the interests of its friends ahead of the interests of the majority	12	8	14	12
At heart, it's an extremist party	6	4	9	16
It's not patriotic	7	3	11	10
None of them/Don't know	28	41	16	11

Source: Deltapoll

Immigration and Brexit came fifth and sixth out of 12 concerns, and the gap between former Labour voters across the two age categories is relatively modest. To have any chance of restoring the faith of the older voters who have switched, Labour needs to rebuild its reputation from the ground up.

What Voters Want and What They Think Labour Wants

In Their Own Words: Voters on What Labour Stands For

"We've been talking now for nearly an hour-and-a-half and none of us can say, 'Labour does this'. Nobody has [said] in the last hour-and-a-half, 'I feel Labour is very clear' on anything. What is that telling you?"

Woman, red-wall area, over 60

"If I'm honest, you've asked, 'What are the main differences between the parties?' and I couldn't actually tell you. I think that's the difficulty now. Obviously, like we've said, we've just had the budget, and the Tories have announced spending for a lot of things that traditionally would have been priorities for Labour. I think this is part of the issue and I think this is why people are confused. I couldn't say, 'Actually, at the moment, I feel like the Tories stand for this and Labour stands for that.'"

Woman, the North West, under 45

"Labour need clear policies, where they actually stand for the issues that they want to tackle, and actually putting the Conservatives under the fire when they make mistakes, and pointing that out more, rather than being a bit more wishy-washy, or not challenging them as much."

Man, red-wall area, over 60

"I don't believe you're ever going to win leadership without being strong on the economy because that's the thing that a lot of people are always going to worry about. They need to have a clear plan and a direction they're going to take us in … Without a strong economy, everything else can't happen because they need things like investments, putting things back into the industry, which are impacted by whether or not we have a strong economy."

Man, London, under 45

Source: These quotes are extracts from additional focus groups that took place in different parts of England in November 2021, with current and former Labour supporters; full findings will be presented in a future report.

A pair of questions in Deltapoll's survey illuminates the issues discussed in the previous chapters: the closing of the gap between working- and middle-class voters, the decision of millions of Labour voters to desert the party, and the gulf that separates younger and older voters. These two questions concern people's own priorities – and their perception of Labour's priorities.

The first thing to stand out is that only small differences separate the preferences of middle-class (ABC1) and working-class (C2DE) voters. Asked which two or three groups from a list of nine that the government should help the most, voters across what used to be the class divide selected "ordinary working people" as the top choice followed by the poor and pensioners – some distance ahead of all others.

Figure 28

VOTERS SELECT TWO TO THREE GROUPS THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HELP THE MOST

	Middle class (ABC1) (%)	Working class (C2DE) (%)
Ordinary working people	64	63
The poor	48	54
Pensioners	44	44
Single-parent families	21	25
So-called traditional families – married couples with children	24	21
White Britons	12	13
Immigrants and non-white Britons	9	7
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer and others (LGBTQ+)	8	7
The rich	3	3
None of these	1	1
Don't know	6	7

Source: Deltapoll

It is not surprising that working-class (C2DE) voters are more likely than middle-class (ABC1) voters to select the poor, but the significant thing is that the gap of six points is so small. The larger truth is that, in social-class terms, there is a shared agenda for government action on who to prioritise for support.

What about the two distinct *political* blocks of former Labour voters – those who moved to pro-Brexit right and voted Conservative in 2019, and those who voted for the progressive, anti-Brexit Liberal Democrats or Greens?

Figure 29

FORMER LABOUR SUPPORTERS, ACROSS TWO DISTINCT POLITICAL BLOCKS, SET OUT THEIR PRIORITIES FOR GROUPS THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPPORT THE MOST

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 (%)	Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/Greens in 2019 (%)
Ordinary working people	72	64
Pensioners	52	40
The poor	41	56
So-called traditional families – married couples with children	31	23
Single-parent families	18	17
White Britons	17	7
Immigrants and non-white Britons	7	12
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer & others (LGBTQ+)	4	11
The rich	4	4
None of these	2	*
Don't know	2	4

Source: Deltapoll

As shown above, the differences between the two blocks are greater than those between working- and middle-class voters. Nevertheless, the similarities still far outweigh the differences. Both sets of former Labour voters say that helping ordinary working people is the top priority, and they agree that pensioners, the poor and so-called traditional families are the next three. There are more stark differences down the pecking order, with voters who switched to the Conservatives more likely than Liberal Democrats or Greens to favour white Britons, and less likely to favour immigrants and LGBTQ+ voters. But among neither block do any of the groups score as much as 20 per cent, nor rise above sixth out of nine place. In short, there is broad agreement across the political spectrum.

So, few voters deserting Labour headed in an opposite direction because they had different social priorities from each other. Indeed, both blocks have a similar range of social priorities to the British electorate as a whole. Labour's main problem is not that different social classes or political blocks of potential voters want different things, it is that many of them remain unconvinced that Labour shares their priorities. Deltapoll's focus groups uncovered a widespread belief that Labour itself has no clear sense of direction, while the news from the main Deltapoll survey of lost Labour voters is just as bad. Among those who do feel they understand Labour's priorities, a large number think the party has a completely different set of priorities to their own. This brings us to Figure 30, which shows the two to three groups that former voters think *Labour* wants to prioritise with help.

Figure 30

FORMER LABOUR VOTERS SELECT THE GROUPS THEY WANT TO HELP THE MOST, AND THE GROUPS THEY THINK LABOUR WANTS TO HELP THE MOST

	Former Labour voters who switched to the Conservatives in 2019 (%)		Former Labour voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats/Greens in 2019 (%)	
	Labour priority	Change from own priority	Labour priority	Change from own priority
Ordinary working people	31	-41	51	-13
Pensioners	12	-40	22	-18
The poor	32	-9	36	-20
So-called traditional families – married couples with children	17	-14	22	-1
Single-parent families	22	4	15	-2
White Britons	7	-10	10	3
Immigrants and non-white Britons	40	33	15	3
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer & others (LGBTQ+)	29	25	14	3
The rich	12	8	10	6

Source: Deltapoll

Many of those voters who switched to the Conservatives believe that Labour fails to share their concern for ordinary working people and pensioners. There is a 40-point gulf between the 52 per cent who are keen to help pensioners and the 12 per cent who believe this group is a priority for the Labour Party. Instead, these voters think the party cares far more than they do for immigrants and non-white Britons as well as the LGBTQ+ community.

This mismatch is significantly less among voters who switched to the Liberal Democrats or Greens – but still considerable when it comes to support for pensioners and the poor. These are up-to-date figures, just over 18 months after Labour appointed Starmer as leader, so it is likely that the same question asked at the time of the 2019 election would have produced even more dramatic differences.

The importance of lining up people's priorities with those of the party is evident from Figure 31. More than 600 members of Deltapoll's sample are past Labour voters who did not vote for the party in 2019, but say they would now return to Labour in a general election.

Figure 31

VOTERS WHO WOULD RETURN TO THE PARTY SET OUT THEIR PRIORITIES VERSUS THEIR PERCEPTION OF LABOUR'S PRIORITIES

	Own priority (%)	Labour's priority (%)	Difference (%)
Ordinary working people	63	60	-3
The poor	62	48	-14
Immigrants and non-white Britons	13	18	5
Single-parent families	27	20	-7
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer & others (LGBTQ+)	9	12	3
Pensioners	41	26	-15
So-called traditional families – married couples with children	19	22	3
The rich	5	9	4
White Britons	8	9	1

Source: Deltapoll

On only two issues do the preceding figures differ significantly: these returning voters give a higher priority to helping pensioners and the poor than they think Labour does. In general, though, the responses to the two questions are similar, indicating alignment between these voters and the party.

The plot thickens when we consider age. In the previous chapter, we divided former Labour voters by age: the under-45s and the over-45s. Figure 32 shows that former Labour voters aged under-45 give somewhat, but not massively, different answers to the groups they would help the most – and those groups they think Labour wants to prioritise. There is overlap to a large degree and on none of the nine issues does the difference reach 20 points.

Figure 32

FORMER LABOUR VOTERS, BROKEN DOWN BY AGE, SET OUT THEIR PRIORITIES VERSUS THEIR PERCEPTION OF LABOUR'S PRIORITIES

	Under-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)			Over-45s who did not vote Labour in 2019 (%)		
	Own priorities	Labour's priorities	Difference	Own priorities	Labour's priorities	Difference
Ordinary working people	49	36	-13	76	40	-36
Pensioners	27	15	-12	58	17	-41
The poor	48	31	-17	52	37	-15
So-called traditional families – married couples with children	17	16	-1	29	20	-9
Single-parent families	31	21	-10	16	20	4
White Britons	12	13	1	14	6	-8
Immigrants and non-white Britons	16	24	8	5	32	27
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer and others (LGBTQ+)	13	15	2	3	25	22
The rich	8	19	11	2	10	8

Source: Deltapoll

The same cannot be said of former Labour voters aged over-45. On four groups, the difference exceeds 20 points, with the biggest observed for ordinary working people and pensioners at 36 and 41 points respectively. We have already reported similar differences among all former Labour supporters who voted Conservative in 2019. These similarities are not surprising: they are largely the same people. The point here is that Labour's reputation among millions of older voters has been shot to pieces. Among the over-45s who have deserted the party, a clear majority want pensioners to be one of the groups the government helps the most, yet only one-in-six think Labour shares their view. Pensioners rank second in their own list of priorities but only seventh out of nine in their perception of Labour's priorities – behind immigrants and LGBTQ+ voters, and only ahead of white Britons and the rich.

Conclusion

In Their Own Words: Voters on What Labour Needs to Do

"I want to be optimistic but I'm not swayed which way I would vote right now, I'm really not. I don't want to vote [for] the Conservatives, but I'm really not sure. But I'm optimistic because I do want changes, and I think this is a good opportunity for [Labour] to change. I think the whole world has changed over the last year-and-a-half, and they need to grab the bull by the horns, and now is the right time to make those changes happen."

Man, London, under 45

"I think I'm in a bit of a despair, and I think it's purely because of our MP and the way Birmingham City Council is run. Because obviously this is my local area. I don't know anything about Keir Starmer, and at the moment my vote still lies with the Conservatives, unless something radical happens and all of a sudden there's these wonderful things that we're being told are going to happen by the Labour Party, then I'd switch."

Woman, red-wall area, under 45

Source: These quotes are extracts from additional focus groups that took place in different parts of England in November 2021, with current and former Labour supporters; full findings will be presented in a future report.

This report has shown that the verdict of Labour's lost voters is that the party is both incompetent and out of touch. This is especially true of voters aged over 45, who are also the most determined to turn out at election time. The party clearly needs to put both things right. It is unlikely to return to power until it does.

The message is the same, whether we look at the figures from more than 8,000 polling respondents, including almost 6,000 current and former Labour supporters, or listen to the voices of current and former Labour voters drawn from eight focus groups based in different parts of England. What Deltapoll's evidence suggests is that these defects are connected, as are the remedies. A party that is seen to care about the public's social and economic concerns, while being regarded as competent at addressing them, is able to fight the charge that it is out of touch.

Just over 18 months after electing a very different leader from his predecessor, the party's reputation remains toxic among far too many of the voters it needs to attract. Voters of all stripes want a government that helps ordinary workers, pensioners and the poor, but too many think Labour prefers to defend minorities instead of tackling Britain's everyday economic and social problems. It's not so much that these target voters are obsessed by the cultural battles that Labour is doomed to lose. Rather, it is that Labour has gained the reputation of fighting the wrong battles by choice. It risks the most damning of political verdicts: irrelevance to people's daily lives.

Perceptions are not quite everything in politics, but when it comes to fighting elections, they are almost everything. Labour cannot rid itself of this reputation for choosing the wrong priorities simply by saying that it is more concerned with everyday life. It must walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

As in decades gone by, Labour does not need to dilute its liberal values, even when they are opposed by the voters it seeks to attract. Such values become a liability only when they are seen to override Labour's economic and social priorities. That is the burden the party carries today. Labour gained power in 1945, 1964 and 1997 by persuading its target voters that it had practical plans for a better future. Its challenge now is to regain that appeal in an electoral landscape vastly different from the last century.

It won't be easy. The historic, collectivist base of Labour's core vote has gone. New demographic splits have replaced the old class divide. This report has explored those differences and the challenges they pose: they are acute and need to be recognised.

Yet our data also show that a winning coalition of voters across the board remains available. Millions of former Labour voters, however they may have voted in 2019, want a party that can credibly show how it will create more jobs, revive the NHS, deliver better schools, build more homes, combat poverty and care for the elderly. The new agenda is much the same as the old one. To adapt an old phrase, it is a case of traditional priorities in a modern setting. The mountain that Labour must climb is high, but the summit is not out of reach.

The Deltapoll Survey: Sample Details

Deltapoll questioned a representative sample of 2,075 adults online throughout Great Britain between 10 and 12 September 2021. This was boosted by 6,104 further online interviews conducted between 14 September and 6 October, targeted to reach larger numbers of particular groups.

Altogether Deltapoll's two samples, totalling 8,179, included:

- 3,245 people (of all social classes) who voted Labour in 2019
- 2,504 former Labour supporters
- 4,518 C2DE voters, including people who had never voted Labour

The data were weighted to the profile of British adults (for the national sample) and the demographic profiles of the major sub-groups in the booster samples.

Further details and full data are available at www.deltapoll.co.uk/polls-library

About the Author

PETER KELLNER

Peter Kellner is a political analyst, visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe and former president of the pioneering online survey-research company YouGov. He was chairman of YouGov from 2001 to 2007, during which time he was named Chairman of the Year in the 2006 Quoted Companies Alliance awards, and president from 2007 to 2016.

He has written for *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Independent*, *Observer*, *Evening Standard*, *New Statesman* and *Prospect*. He has also been a regular contributor to *Newsnight*, *A Week in Politics*, *Analysis* and the BBC's election-night results programmes. He has written a variety of books and leaflets about politics, elections and public affairs – and was awarded Journalist of the Year in the British Press Awards in 1978.

Peter has also been a visiting fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford, a distinguished visiting fellow at the Policy Studies Institute, London, and served as a member of committees set up by the Economic and Social Research Council to commission research into elections and social exclusion. He has served as a trustee with various charities and also chaired the Royal Commonwealth Society and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Endnotes

1 Technical note. The results in this table relate to the third of three questions. The first asked about taxes and listed "income tax, national insurance, VAT, excise duty (on petrol, alcohol, tobacco etc), council tax, taxes on companies, stamp duty and so on". The second asked about government spending and listed "the NHS, schools, pensions, child benefit, welfare benefits, social care, law and order, roads and local council services (such as rubbish collection, housing, fire services, parks and so on)". In other words, when we asked people about whether their family paid more or received more, it was after respondents had been reminded of the main elements on both sides of the equation.

2 This estimate is derived from 2011 census data. As they are ten years old, and use a different way of assessing social grade, the figure is subject to a considerable margin of error – hence the wide 30 to 40 per cent range.

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