# Culture Wars

Keeping the Brexit divide alive?

'Culture war' issues have become prominent in the media and in political debate. They reflect disagreement about the portrayal of Britain's colonial past and what should be done to recognise the identity and economic position of minority groups. Attitudes towards these issues are thought to align with people's attitudes towards Brexit and, consequently, the 'culture war' could perpetuate the division between Remainers and Leavers that was a prominent feature of the 2019 election. This chapter analyses trends in public attitudes towards 'culture war' issues, the extent to which these attitudes are correlated with views about Brexit, and how far they reflect the ideological division between social liberals and social conservatives that underpins attitudes towards the EU.

Views on many 'culture war' issues have become more liberal. For example, more people today say that equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not gone far enough

45%

25%

■ 2000   ■ 2021

% who say equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not got far enough

Remainers and Leavers have different views on these issues

60%

IN

23%

OUT

■ Remainers   ■ Leavers

% who say that equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not gone far enough
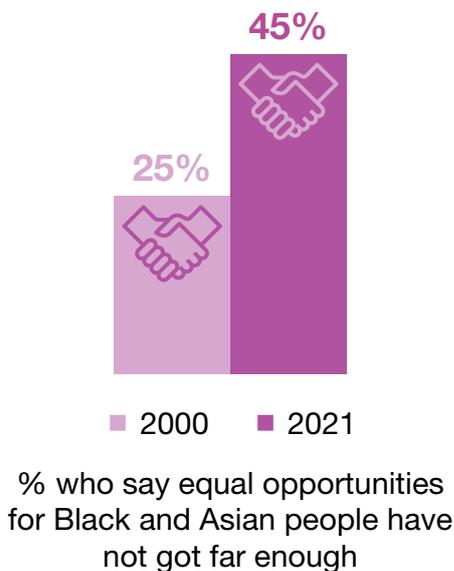
Source: British Social Attitudes 2000, 2021
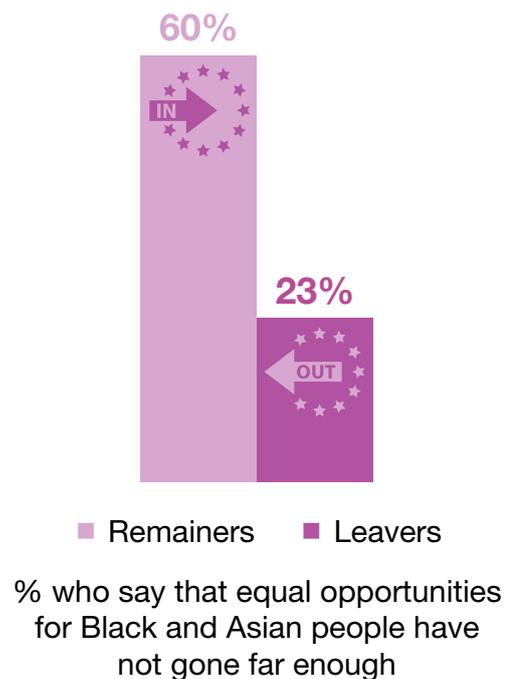
Overview

Public opinion has become more liberal on 'culture war' issues

Attitudes towards Britain and Britishness have become more inclusive, while more now say that equal opportunities for minority groups have not gone far enough.

- Only 17% now say that it is very important for being truly British that someone has been born in Britain, down from 48% in 1995.
- In 1995 52% agreed that Britain is better than most other countries; now only 34% take that view.
- 45% say that equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not got far enough, up from 25% in 2000.

Issues around identity and equal rights divide social liberals and conservatives

Whether someone has a libertarian (socially liberal) or authoritarian outlook (socially conservative) is strongly associated with where they stand on 'culture war' issues.

- Two thirds of social conservatives say they feel very strongly British and believe you have to have been born in Britain to be truly British, compared with approximately one in five liberals.
- 79% of liberals believe migrants have a positive impact on the country's culture. Only 25% of social conservatives do.
- Only just over a quarter (27%) of social conservatives believe that giving opportunities to Black and Asian people has not gone far enough. 71% of liberals agree with this sentiment.

Leavers and Remainers diverge in their opinions on 'culture war' issues

People's attitudes towards Brexit are strongly related to their attitudes towards issues of identity, immigration and equal opportunities.

- Twice as many Leavers (66%) as Remainers (31%) consider themselves to be very strongly British. Similarly, 65% of Leavers believe that being born in Britain is important to be truly British, compared with 34% of Remainers.
- Only 22% of Leavers, but as many as 65% of Remainers, believe that migrants enrich Britain's cultural life.
- Three in five (60%) Remainers think that equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not gone far enough, while only around a quarter (23%) of Leavers express that view.

Authors

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

Victoria Ratti
Senior Researcher
National Centre for Social Research

Introduction

In recent years, the term, 'culture wars', has become common currency in media commentary on British politics (Duffy et al., 2021). In Britain, it is used to refer primarily to two overlapping debates about identity, social justice and equality. The issues at stake are ones about which some people feel passionately, while they have also been a source of notable disagreement between politicians.

The first of these debates is about what should be done to recognise the culture, identity and economic position of some minority groups. It is argued that they face disadvantage because of their personal characteristics, such as being Black or transgender, and that to address these disadvantages it is important to acknowledge and challenge 'white male' or 'heterosexual' privilege. Critics of this position, in contrast, feel that society has already done enough to recognise and enhance the position of 'equalities groups' and that to go further could have a detrimental impact on social cohesion and fairness.

The second debate is about attitudes towards Britain's past. Some argue that it is important to acknowledge the injustices that were inflicted by the British empire on many indigenous populations, and that, consequently, the diverse, multicultural Britain of today should adopt a more critical perspective towards Britain's past and should no longer necessarily laud the contribution of some of those who played a significant role in the empire. Others suggest that Britain should continue to be proud of an empire that spread economic prosperity and British values across much of the world, and without which the world would have been a worse place.

Those who advocate change along these lines are sometimes characterised as 'woke', a term that originated among African Americans and means to be alert to racial prejudice and discrimination (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017). More recently it has come to be used to denote awareness of social inequalities in general. The tenor of debates that often touch upon people's sense of identity is sometimes heated. Indeed, the term is sometimes used pejoratively by those who do not share their views, that is, take an 'anti-woke' stance. Meanwhile, a tension is sometimes manifest between those who suggest that respect for minorities requires a ban on the public expression of what may be regarded as discriminatory or offensive views and language, while others suggest that what has been dubbed a 'cancel culture' represents an unacceptable limitation on freedom of speech.

This chapter assesses where public opinion stands on the two principal themes in the 'culture wars' debate, and how the balance of opinion has changed over the years. In so doing it focuses in particular on the potential for the debate to become a source of division in Britain's electoral politics. For, as we explain further below, these are controversies on which Conservative and Labour politicians have often expressed different views. Moreover, some have argued that the Conservatives in particular have been keen to stoke a 'culture war' (Economist, 2021; Shrimsley, 2021). Certainly, some in the Conservative party have expressed concern about the prevalence in some institutions (such as universities and the BBC) of so-called progressive or 'woke' attitudes that question positive accounts of Britain's history and which suggest that people should not be allowed to express views that are thought harmful to minorities (Donelan, 2022; Dowden, 2022). It has been suggested that not least of the reason why some Conservatives have pursued 'culture wars' issues is because it is anticipated that doing so might help the party retain the support of those voters who backed the party at the 2019 general election because it promised to 'get Brexit done' (Sobolweska and Ford, 2020a). In this chapter, we aim to assess whether a focus on 'culture wars' issues does have the potential to maintain the Brexit divide that was crucial at that election.

We begin by describing in more detail some of the incidents and policy developments that have helped move 'culture wars' issues up the media agenda, and some of the political disagreements that have been exposed in their wake. At the same time, we also explain why those who voted Remain and Leave in 2016 might hold different views on some of the issues in the 'culture wars' debate. Thereafter, our analysis of data collected as part of the 2021 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey comes in four parts. First, we examine the current distribution of attitudes towards a number of questions about national identity and sentiment, that is, pride in Britain and who can claim to be 'truly British', immigration, and equal opportunities for minority groups, including transgender people. We then assess the extent to which there is a relationship between attitudes towards these issues and the value division between social liberals and social conservatives that underlies attitudes towards Brexit. Thereafter we look directly at the extent to which attitudes towards our 'culture wars' issues differ between those who support being inside the European Union (EU) and those who prefer to be outside and at whether attitudes vary by demographic group in much the same way as they have done in relation to Brexit. Finally, we assess the extent to which the supporters of the political parties hold different views on 'culture war' issues, thereby suggesting that they have the potential to become an electoral dividing line. We conclude by assessing whether our evidence does or does not suggest that a focus on 'culture war' issues could keep the Brexit divide alive in Britain's electoral politics.

'Culture war' debates

Two key incidents and policy debates have served to give greater prominence recently to some of the issues in the 'culture wars' debate – and illustrated their potential to expose political differences on the issue. The first was the death of an African American while being arrested by a white policeman. The second has been a call for improved legal recognition of those who wish to change their gender.

The debate about racism and attitudes towards Britain's colonial past gained particular prominence in the wake of the death in Minneapolis in May 2020 of an African American, George Floyd, while he was being arrested by a white police officer who was subsequently convicted of his murder. Mobile phone footage of the incident, during which Floyd could be heard crying, 'I can't breathe', went viral on social media. It gave new, worldwide impetus to the Black Lives Matter social movement that had been campaigning for some years on issues of racial injustice. Numerous demonstrations in support of the movement were held in the United Kingdom (UK) and across the world. In one instance, in Bristol, some protestors felled (and threw into a harbour) the statue of a seventeenth century philanthropist who had made his fortune in the slave trade. This action was condemned by some Conservatives, including the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, whereas some opposition politicians, including the Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, argued that the hurt and offence caused by the presence of the statue should have already been recognised and acted upon (Sullivan, 2020; BBC News, 2020; Walker, 2020). The incident provided a focal point for what was already an ongoing argument about whether Britain should adopt a more critical attitude towards its colonial past (Elkins, 2022; Ferguson, 2004).

At the same time, the death of George Floyd also instigated a popularisation of the practice of 'taking the knee', a symbolic gesture initiated by American footballer, Colin Kapernick, in protest at the lack of attention given to issues of racial injustice, inequality and police brutality in the United States. In the UK in particular, many football matches began with players kneeling on one knee before kick-off, including not least in matches featuring the England national side. The Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, together with his deputy, Angela Rayner, marked George Floyd's funeral by being photographed taking the knee. They were not joined by the Conservative leadership, some of whom voiced criticism of the practice (Gregory, 2020; Wood, 2021). How best to respond to concerns about racial injustice thus appeared to become something of a dividing line between the parties.

Increased media coverage of and public discussion of the rights and recognition of transgender people led the UK Conservative government in 2018 to issue a consultation paper that, inter alia, raised the possibility that someone who identified with a different gender from their sex at birth should be able to obtain legal recognition of their 'acquired gender' without having to secure a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria (Fairbairn et al., 2022).

However, the position of transgender people has become the subject of a fierce debate, and especially in respect of whether trans women should be able to compete in female-only sports competitions and what access they should have to female only spaces. In the event, the UK Equalities Minister at the time, Liz Truss, decided not to drop the requirement for a medical diagnosis. In contrast, Labour have indicated support for the change (Powys Maurice, 2021), while the SNP-led Scottish Government has made a commitment to implement the change north of the border.

'Culture wars' and Brexit

It is, then, evident that some of the issues in the 'culture wars' debate have become the focus of sometimes heated debate and that politicians have taken different stances on them. But why might there be a potentially electorally important connection between attitudes towards these issues and attitudes towards Brexit?

Attitudes towards Brexit played a central role in how people voted in the 2019 UK general election. The vast majority of those who had voted to leave the EU in 2016 voted Conservative, seemingly attracted by the party's promise to 'get Brexit done'. In contrast, most of those who had voted to remain in the EU scattered their support across a number of different opposition parties. As a result, the Conservatives were able to turn a clear plurality of the vote (45%) into an overall parliamentary majority of 80 seats (Curtice, 2020; Curtice, 2021; Evans et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2021).

Brexit not only had an impact on the level of party support but also its character. Traditionally, whether people vote Labour or Conservative has been associated with where people stand on the left/right divide, that is, between those on the left who think the state should intervene in the economy in order to make society more equal, and those on the right who prioritise creating incentives to pursue the economic growth from which all might benefit (Curtice and Simpson, 2018). However, how people voted in the EU referendum was not strongly related to whether they stood on the left or the right. According to the 2016 British Social Attitudes survey, 55% of the one third most left-wing voted to leave the EU, little different from the 48% figure among the one third most right-wing.[1]

Rather than being about government intervention and inequality, central to the Brexit debate were questions of sovereignty, identity and immigration (Curtice, 2017). Those with a strong sense of British identity, who questioned why the UK had to follow rules made in Brussels, and who were concerned about the level of immigration, were inclined to vote Leave, while those of the opposite view on these issues backed Remain. As a result, how people voted in the EU referendum was more strongly linked with where people stood on a

---

1 People were classified as left-wing or right-wing according to where they stood on the BSA left-right scale (see Technical Details).

second ideological spectrum, that is, between social liberalism (or a libertarian stance) and social conservativism (or an authoritarian outlook). Social liberals are those who value living in a socially, ethnically and linguistically diverse society, while social conservatives place greater emphasis on the need for social cohesion and adherence to common rules and practices. Among the one third most socially conservative, no less than 72% voted Leave. In contrast, just 21% of the one third most socially liberal did so.[2]

This second ideological dimension has always had some relationship with the party for which people vote – social conservatives are somewhat more likely to vote Conservative, social liberals to support Labour or the Liberal Democrats. Until Brexit, however, it has always been less important than the left-right divide (Curtice and Simpson, 2018). Nonetheless, in persuading Leave voters to back them, the Conservatives increased their support markedly among social conservatives, while losing ground among social liberals (Curtice, 2020). The opposite pattern was evident in Labour support. As a result, by 2019 where people stood on this second dimension became much more closely related to how people voted.

However, Brexit is now a reality, though the UK and the EU are in dispute about its application in Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, neither Labour nor the Liberal Democrats wish to revisit the issue (Savage, 2020; Starmer, 2022). Both parties want to regain the backing of those of their former supporters who voted Leave and anticipate that if Brexit is no longer a source of division between them and the Conservatives, the ideological division between social conservatives and social liberals will become less important at the ballot box too. However, the 'culture wars' debates appear to touch upon issues of identity and diversity that are central to that ideological division. As a result, perhaps they have the potential to keep the Brexit debate – and the electoral coalition that gave the Conservatives victory – alive at the next election. It is to an empirical assessment of that potential that we now turn.

Attitudes towards 'culture war' issues

First, we examine the current distribution of attitudes towards a number of questions about national identity and sentiment, that is, pride in Britain and who can claim to be 'truly British', immigration, and equal opportunities for minority groups, including transgender people, and how these have changed over time. These are all issues and outlooks that touch upon one or more aspects of the 'culture wars' debate.

---

2 Respondents are classified according to where they stood on the BSA libertarian-authoritarian scale (see Technical Details).

National identity and sentiment

As we have seen, one of the key themes in the 'culture wars' debate touches upon people's sense of national pride and identity. Should Britain be proud of its achievements or more critical of its colonial past? Should it embrace or not the racial and cultural diversity that often comes with immigration? Who, indeed, do people believe counts as British?

Most people in Britain certainly identify strongly as British. When asked to use a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very strongly) to indicate the extent to which they feel British, no less than 44% gave themselves a score of seven, while just 14% gave themselves a score of three or less, thereby indicating they at most only felt a little British. Moreover, this pattern of response has proven very stable. On three previous occasions that the question was asked between 2015 and 2018, between 40% and 42% gave themselves a score of seven, while only between 11% and 14% recorded a figure of three or less. Most people living in Britain regard themselves as at least fairly strongly British, and any issue or development that touches upon that sense of identity would appear potentially capable of resonating with the public.

But to what extent is this strong sense of identity accompanied by a sense of pride in Britain and its achievements? How kindly are people likely to take to criticism of its record? To address these questions, our latest survey included the following couple of items that had appeared occasionally on previous BSA surveys. These ask people whether they agree or disagree that:

> *The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the British*

> *Generally speaking, Britain is a better country than most other countries*

Despite the apparently large number of people with a strong sense of British identity, this does not necessarily mean that they regard Britain and its people as superior to others (see Table 1). Nearly half (46%) disagree that the world would be better if people from other countries were more like the British, while just 15% agree with the proposition. Even though the proportions of people who agree and disagree that Britain is better than elsewhere are quite similar (34% and 29% respectively), this still means that only around one in three positively agree with this sentiment. What, however, is even more striking is that in both cases there has been a marked change in the balance of opinion on these statements over time. The proportion who agree that the world would be a better place if other people were more like the British has more than halved (from 32% to 15%) since 2013. Meanwhile, over the same period, there has been as much as a 20-point fall in the proportion who agree that Britain is better than most other countries. Far from necessarily sharing the 'anti-woke'

concern that people are too ready to criticise Britain, it appears that people have become more willing to cast a critical eye over their country.

Table 1 Perceptions of Britain compared with other countries, 1995-2021

	1995	2003	2013	2021
The world would be a better place if people from other countries more like the British	%	%	%	%
Agree	28	30	32	15
Neither agree nor disagree	39	37	41	28
Disagree	28	29	23	46
Britain a better country than most other countries	%	%	%	%
Agree	52	46	54	34
Neither agree nor disagree	28	33	31	36
Disagree	16	17	12	29
Unweighted base	*1058*	*873*	*904*	*3112*

This decline in the country's sense of superiority has also been accompanied by a more inclusive attitude towards who can be regarded as 'truly British'. We asked respondents how important they thought the following characteristics were for "being truly British".

> ***To have been born in Britain***
> ***To have British ancestry***
> ***To feel British***

Regarding the first two of these as important may be thought indicative of a more exclusive, even 'ethnocentric', conception of who can be considered British. By implication they suggest that it is difficult for a migrant to become 'truly British', while the reference to "British ancestry" suggests a preference for those who have a long familial connection with the country. In contrast, anyone may be thought capable of feeling British, regardless of birth.

Less than half of people in Britain now take an ethnocentric view of who is 'truly British' (see Table 2). Forty-five per cent say that it is "very" or "quite important" that someone should be born in Britain, while just 37% feel it is important that someone should have British ancestry. In contrast, as many as two-thirds (67%) say that it is important to feel British. Identity is evidently thought to matter more than heritage.

Meanwhile, people have also become less prescriptive in general about what is required to be 'truly British'. In 2003 and 2013, around half said it was very or quite important for someone to have British ancestry, well above the 37% who express that view now. In 1995, nearly half (48%) said that it was very important that someone had

been born in Britain, while even in 2013 as many as two in five (40%) held that view. Now it is just 17%. At the same time, whereas in 1995 almost half (49%) said it was very important that someone felt British, and 42% still took that view in 2013, now only just over a quarter (28%) feel that way.

Table 2 Importance of different characteristics for being truly British, 1995-2021

	1995	2003	2013	2021
Born in Britain	%	%	%	%
Very important	48	44	40	17
Quite important	28	26	34	28
Not very important	15	19	20	33
Not at all important	6	8	6	21
British ancestry	%	%	%	%
Very important	n/a	26	27	13
Quite important	n/a	20	24	24
Not very important	n/a	28	28	36
Not at all important	n/a	26	18	20
Feel British	%	%	%	%
Very important	49	41	42	28
Quite important	25	34	36	38
Not very important	13	13	15	21
Not at all important	8	7	4	11
Unweighted base	*1058*	*873*	*904*	*3112*

Immigration

Discussions about national identity often constitute the backdrop to, and go hand in hand with, discussion of immigration. Individuals with a stronger and exclusive sense of national identity, and a perceived sense of superiority compared to other countries, tend to have stronger negative attitudes towards immigration (Mangum and Block, 2018). Given that the British public's attitudes have moved away from such an outlook, we might anticipate that attitudes towards immigration have changed too. Despite the prominence of the issue in the EU referendum, people might have come to have a more benign view of immigration. We examine whether this is the case by examining responses to two questions on the perceived consequences of immigration that have appeared regularly on BSA during the course of the last decade. These read as follows:

> *Would you say it is generally bad or good for Britain's economy that people come to live here from other countries? [11-point scale where 0 is 'Bad for the economy', 10 is 'Good for the economy']*

Would you say that Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? [11-point scale where 0 is 'Cultural life undermined', 10 is 'Cultural life enriched']

Table 3 shows that the public has become markedly more positive about the economic and cultural impact of immigration over the course of the last decade. On both questions, the proportion who view immigration as having a positive impact has steadily increased from around a quarter in 2011 to approximately half in our latest survey. Conversely, there has been a general trend for the proportion of people who view immigration as having a negative impact on the economy and culture to decrease over time. Support for this view has fallen from around two in five in 2011 to less than one in five in 2019, though on our most recent survey the proportion has increased once again to around one in five, suggesting that attitudes may have polarised somewhat. That said, whereas a decade ago the balance of opinion was tilted strongly in favour of the perception that migrants had a negative impact on Britain's economy and culture, now that balance is tilted even more strongly in the opposite direction.

Table 3 Perception of the economic and cultural impacts of migration, 2011-2021

Perceived impact of migrants who come to Britain from other countries on…	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
Britain's economy	%	%	%	%	%	%
Bad (0-3)	42	39	28	17	14	20
Neither (4-6)	36	38	38	35	38	30
Good (7-10)	21	21	34	47	47	50
Britain's cultural life	%	%	%	%	%	%
Undermined (0-3)	40	38	33	23	18	21
Neither (4-6)	33	34	35	32	35	30
Enriched (7-10)	26	27	31	44	45	48
Unweighted base	*3311*	*3244*	*2167*	*1025*	*3224*	*3112*

Equal opportunities

So far in this chapter we have seen that the more liberal or 'woke' outlook on national identity, national sentiment, and immigration now tends to be the more popular view – in contrast to the position a decade or so ago. Where though does the public stand on the second theme in the 'culture wars' debate, that is, the treatment of minorities, such as Black and transgender people?

Our latest BSA survey addressed this issue by asking whether "attempts to give equal opportunities have gone too far or not gone far enough" for the following groups: women; Black and Asian people; lesbians, gay and bisexual people; and transgender people. Table 4 reveals that people are more likely to take the view that equal opportunities have not gone far enough in the case of the first two groups than they are in respect of the latter two. Almost half (49%) express that view in the case of women, while 45% do so in the case of Black and Asian people. In contrast, only around three in ten feel the same way about lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (30%) or transgender people (32%). Indeed, in the case of transgender people, just as many (33%) feel that attempts to give equal opportunities have gone too far, while, at 25%, the equivalent figure for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals is only a little lower than the proportion who feel that equal opportunities have not gone far enough.

Our evidence on how attitudes have changed over time is sporadic, but the trend is consistent. People appear more likely to think that equal opportunities have not gone far enough than they did previously. This is most clearly so in the case of Black and Asian people where two decades ago more people (35%) felt that equal opportunities had gone too far than felt that they had not gone far enough (25%). A similar, if less dramatic reversal, has occurred in the case of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals since 2013, and it is probably the case that attitudes towards this group are now very different indeed from what they were in the 1990s (Park and Rhead, 2013). Meanwhile, although there was already a widespread perception in the 1990s that equal opportunities for women had not gone far enough, the current figure is now nine points higher than it was then.

Table 4 Attitudes towards equal opportunities for minority groups, 1994-2021

Attempts to give equal opportunities to [group] have...	1994	2000	2013	2021
Women	%	%	%	%
Gone too far	14	n/a	n/a	10
About right	44	n/a	n/a	40
Not gone far enough	40	n/a	n/a	49
Black and Asian people	%	%	%	%
Gone too far	n/a	35	n/a	19
About right	n/a	36	n/a	34
Not gone far enough	n/a	25	n/a	45
Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals+	%	%	%	%
Gone too far	46	n/a	32	25
About right	32	n/a	42	43
Not gone far enough	18	n/a	20	30
Transgender people	%	%	%	%
Gone too far	n/a	n/a	n/a	33
About right	n/a	n/a	n/a	32
Not gone far enough	n/a	n/a	n/a	32
Unweighted base	*1137*	*2293*	*1097*	*3112*

+ In 1994, the question referred to 'homosexuals – that is gays and lesbians'

In contrast to the other items in Table 4, the latest survey was the first to ask about equal opportunities for transgender people. However, here we do have the evidence of a second question that attempts to measure attitudes towards the principle demand that those campaigning for transgender rights have been making in recent years – that transgender people should be able to secure legal recognition of their 'acquired gender' without having to acquire a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria. It asks whether people agree or disagree that:

> ***A person who is transgender should be able to have the sex recorded on their birth certificate changed if they want?***

Table 5 reveals that opinion is divided on this proposition, much as we have seen that it is divided on attitudes towards equal opportunities for transgender people. While almost a third (32%) agree with the proposition, slightly more (39%) are opposed. However, the table also suggests that support for the proposal has fallen markedly during the course of the last two years – hitherto it had appeared that more than half were in favour. At this point we should note that the wording of the question on our latest survey was slightly different from that asked previously – before 2021 the

question referred to "the sex on their birth certificate" rather than the "sex recorded on their birth certificate" (emphasis added). It may be that some people accept that people should be able to secure some form of legal recognition of their 'acquired gender' but also believe that this should not involve changing the sex that is recorded on their birth certificate. In any event, we should be aware that there is apparently still some potential for disagreement about what should be done about the rights and recognition of transgender people. This, perhaps, is not surprising given it is a topic that has only become the subject of widespread discussion in recent years (Mediatique, 2020).

Table 5 Views about whether transgender people should be able to change the sex on their birth certificate, 2016-2021[3]

	2016	**2019**	**2021**
	%	%	%
Agree	58	53	32
Neither agree nor disagree	18	21	28
Disagree	22	24	39
Unweighted base	*974*	*3224*	*3112*

Summary

For the most part our indicators suggest that, whereas it might once have represented a widespread view, now the 'anti-woke' position on 'culture war' issues often appear to be more of a minority one. Meanwhile, in the introduction we noted that the ideological divide between social liberalism and social conservatism was strongly related to how people voted in the EU referendum. If a focus on 'culture war' issues might serve to maintain the Brexit divide, then it should be the case that where people stand on those issues is related to whether they are socially liberal or conservative.

Attitudes along the socially liberal/ conservative divide

As explained in the Technical Details, our liberal-authoritarian scale is based on how much people agree or disagree with a suite of six items such as "for some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence" and "young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values". The stronger people's agreement with these items, the more authoritarian their score on the scale, while the more that they disagree, the more liberal their tally.

3 In 2016 and 2019 the question read: 'How much do you agree or disagree that a person who is transgender should be able to have the sex on their birth certificate changed if they want to?'.
In 2021 it read: 'How much do you agree or disagree that a person who is transgender should be able to have the sex recorded on their birth certificate changed if they want?'

In Table 6 we divide where people stand on this scale into three roughly equally sized groups. In the 'liberal' column are those respondents whose scale score puts them among the one third most liberal in our sample, while the 'authoritarian' column comprises those whose scale score puts them among the one third most authoritarian. Those with scores in between these two groups are in the 'centre' column. The table then summarises how each group answered our various indicators of national sentiment.

Table 6 National sentiment, by position on liberal-authoritarian scale

% who...	Liberal	Centre	Authoritarian
Think of self as very strongly British	22	41	65
Agree or neither agree nor disagree better if other people more like British	31	56	70
Agree Britain better than other countries	21	33	46
Believe being born in Britain important for being truly British	19	44	67
Believe British ancestry important for being truly British	11	37	59
Believe feeling British important for being truly British	49	67	81
Unweighted base	*1052*	*939*	*1121*

All our indicators are associated with where people stand on our liberal-authoritarian scale – and in many instances quite strongly so. For example, nearly two-thirds (65%) of authoritarians say they feel "very strongly British" compared with only just over one in five (22%) liberals. Similarly, two-thirds (67%) of authoritarians believe you have to have been born in Britain to be 'truly British', whereas around one in five (19%) liberals express that view. And no less than 70% of authoritarians do not disagree with the proposition that it would be better if people from other countries were more like the British, a stance only backed by 31% of liberals. Only in the case of whether someone needs to feel British to be 'truly British', and whether people agree that Britain is better than other countries, is the gap between liberals and authoritarians somewhat less marked.

Appeals to notions of 'Britishness' by politicians are, therefore, more likely to resonate with socially conservative voters who place particular importance on tradition and national identity. Equally, perceptions of immigration, which played such a central role in the EU referendum, are also strongly patterned in this way. Nearly four in five liberals (79%) think that migrants who come to Britain are good for the country's economy, while the same proportion take the view that they enrich the country's culture. In contrast, only 25% of authoritarians feel that migrants enrich Britain's country, while just 30% believe they are good for the economy.

Table 7 undertakes the same analysis of attitudes towards equal opportunities by where people stand on the liberal-authoritarian spectrum, showing in each case the proportion who say that attempts to give such opportunities have "gone too far". Here also there are some substantial differences between liberals and authoritarians. Most marked is the difference on giving opportunities to Black and Asian people, where there is a 44-point gap between the 71% of liberals who believe they have not gone far enough and the 27% of authoritarians who take that view. But the equivalent gaps are only a little smaller in respect of lesbians, gays and bisexuals (40 points), transgender people (39 points), and women (32 points). The debate about how much should be done to advance the position of different equalities groups also clearly taps into the divide between social liberals and social conservatives.

Table 7 Attitudes to equal opportunities for minority groups, by position on liberal-authoritarian scale

% say equal opportunities have not gone far enough for…	Liberal	Centre	Authoritarian
Women	69	44	37
Black and Asian people	71	43	27
Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals	55	26	15
Transgender people	56	28	17
Unweighted base	*1052*	*939*	*1121*

Meanwhile, although even among liberals less than half agree that transgender people should be able to have the sex recorded on their birth certificate changed, at 44% the proportion is still well above the 24% recorded among authoritarians. In short, all of our analyses suggest that potential 'culture war' issues have the potential to mobilise the liberal-authoritarian divide that underpinned how people voted in the Brexit referendum.

However, there is also a downside to this linkage for any party that hopes to bolster its electoral support by appealing to social conservative values. We already reported earlier that where we have addressed a 'cultural war' issue on one or more previous BSA surveys, support for the 'anti-woke' position has typically declined over time. However, it also potentially reflects the fact that the proportion of people who can be classified as authoritarians on our liberal-authoritarian scale has been declining over the last decade. This is illustrated in Figure 1, which, using the same definition on each survey, shows how the percentage of people who can be classified as liberal or authoritarian has changed since 2011.[4]

---

4 Respondents are given a score of between 1 and 5 as a result of their responses to the items that form our liberal-authoritarian scale. A score of 1 indicates that the respondent has strongly disagreed with all of the items in the scale, while a score of 5 means that they have strongly agreed with each proposition. In Figure 1, liberals are those with a score of 2.5 or less, while authoritarians are those with a score above 3.5.

Figure 1 Proportion of people classed as liberal and authoritarian, 2011-2021
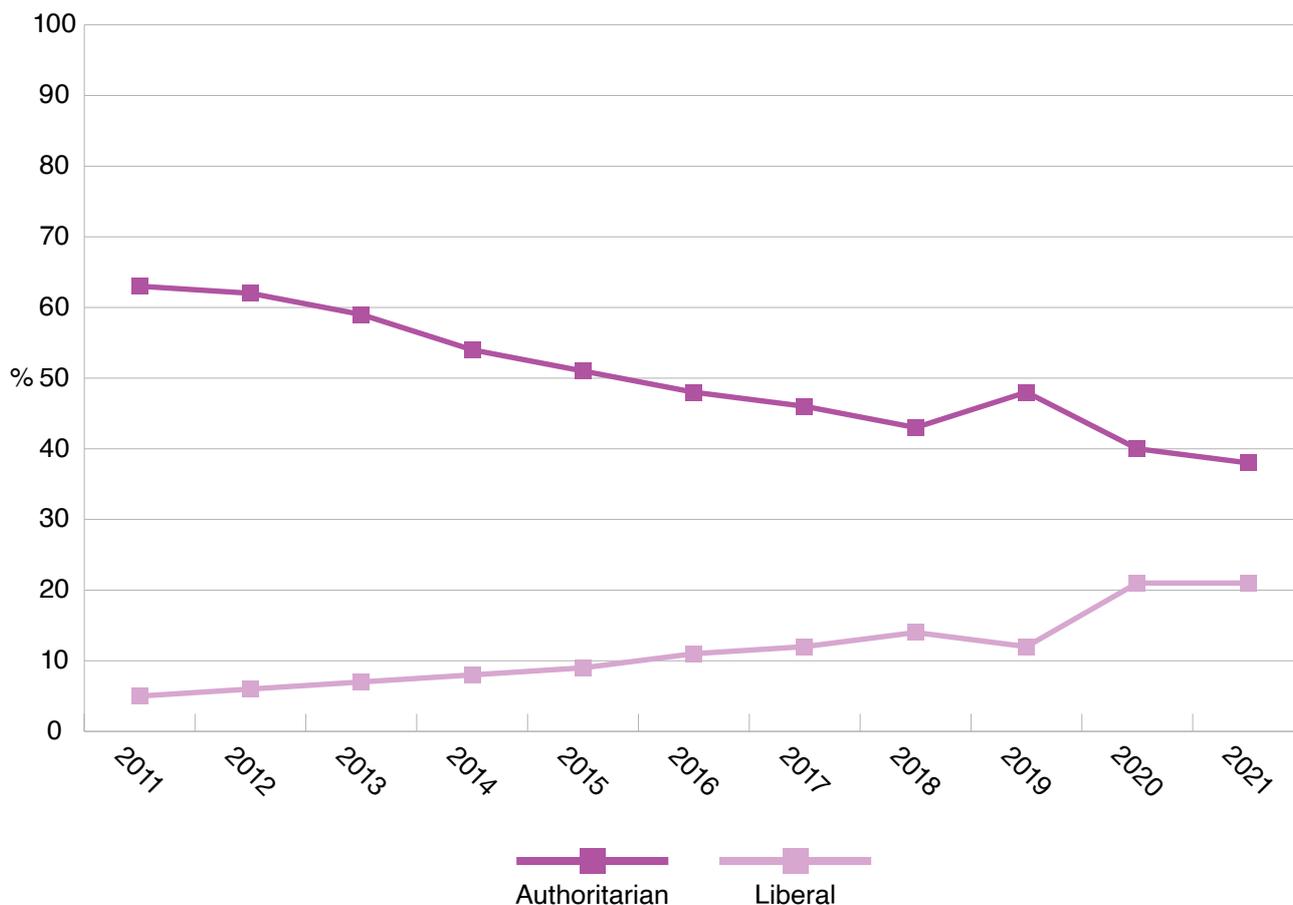
The data on which Figure 1 is based can be found in Appendix Table A.1 of this chapter

On our survey in 2011, approaching two-thirds (63%) of respondents were classified as authoritarians, while only one in twenty (5%) were liberals. However, with just one exception in 2019, the proportion of authoritarians has fallen every year since. By 2018 it was down to 48%, while in our latest survey it has dropped further to a new low of 38%. Meanwhile, by 2018 the proportion who could be classified as liberal had increased to 14%, and now stands at 21%. Britain has become markedly more liberal in its attitudes over the course of the last decade.[5]

---

5 It should be noted that there was a particularly sharp fall in the proportion of authoritarians and a corresponding increase in the proportion of liberals in 2020, when the BSA methodology was changed from face-to-face interviewing to push-to-web. It might thus be wondered whether the results are affected by the change of methodology. However, separate surveys conducted in 2020 and 2021 which comprised re-interviews of people who had been interviewed on previous BSAs also showed a similar change, albeit less marked than in the BSA surveys (Curtice et al., 2022). On these surveys, the 2020 survey contained 16% liberals and 45% authoritarians, while in 2021 the figures were 17% and 44% respectively. Thus, while the change of methodology may have exaggerated the further shift to a more liberal outlook, there seems little doubt that there has been a continuation of a trend that was already well in evidence prior to 2020.

Thus, while staking an 'anti-woke' stance on some 'culture war' issues may potentially be a way of appealing to the values of social conservatives, the audience for such appeals, although still substantial, appears to be a diminishing one. Indeed, the fact that 'culture war' issues have been as prominent as they have been in recent years may well be a consequence of the fact that the balance of liberals and authoritarians has gradually been changing over time. Where once there was perhaps more of a consensus, there is now more dissension and debate, requiring social conservatives to defend stances that might previously have largely gone unchallenged.

'Culture wars' issues and attitudes towards Brexit

So far, we have established that the 'anti-woke' position has become less popular and that the British public is gradually becoming more liberal in its attitudes. To that extent it would seem that a focus on 'culture war' issues might not represent an effective way of appealing to those who voted for Brexit in 2016 and for the Conservatives in 2019. However, it could still well be the case that those who would prefer to be outside the EU are largely in favour of an 'anti-woke' position, and in so doing take a different stance from those in favour of EU membership. How far that is the case is the question to which we now turn. Do those who said they would vote Leave or Remain when asked, "if you were given the chance to vote again in the referendum, how would you vote?" differ in their responses to the items we have been analysing so far?

National identity and sentiment

Table 8 summarises how people responded to our various questions on national identity and sentiment broken down by their current attitude towards Brexit.[6] It shows that Leave and Remain sympathisers often have quite divergent views. For example, two-thirds of Leave supporters feel very strongly British compared with less than a third (31%) of their Remain counterparts. They also take a more exclusive view of who is 'truly British'. Sixty-five per cent of Leavers say that in order to be 'truly British' it is important to be born in Britain, whereas only 34% of Remainers do so. There is a similar gap between them on whether it is important for someone to have British ancestry. Meanwhile, compared with Remain supporters, those who would vote Leave are more likely to feel that Britain is superior to other countries. For example, nearly half (48%) of Leave supporters agree that Britain is better than other countries, a belief only held by just over a quarter (26%) of their Remain counterparts.

6 This was obtained by asking, 'Since the EU referendum, some people have changed their minds about how they would vote, while others have not. If you were given the chance to vote again, how would you vote – to remain a member of the European Union, to leave the European Union, or would you not vote? The possible response options were: Remain a member of the European Union; Leave the European Union; I would not vote.

Table 8 National sentiment, by attitude towards Brexit

% who...	Remain	Leave
Think of self as very strongly British	31	66
Agree or neither agree nor disagree better if other people more like British	42	69
Agree Britain better than other countries	26	48
Believe being born in Britain important for being truly British	34	65
Believe British ancestry important for being truly British	23	59
Believe feeling British important for being truly British	57	84
Unweighted base	*1884*	*974*

Immigration

As noted earlier, immigration was a central issue in the EU referendum. We might therefore anticipate that it is still a topic on which Remain and Leave supporters have different views. After all, immigration might be regarded as a threat to the cultural norms and British traditions in which, as we have just seen, Leave supporters still appear to be particularly heavily invested. Table 9 shows that the two groups of voters still perceive immigration very differently. Around two-thirds of Remain supporters regard the economic and cultural consequences of migration in a positive light, compared with only around a quarter of those who back Leave. Despite the shift towards a more positive perception of migrants among voters as a whole (see Table 3 above), nearly 40% of Leave voters still consider immigration to be detrimental to the country's economy and culture.[7]

Table 9 Perception of the economic and cultural impacts of migration, by attitude towards Brexit

Perceived impact of migrants who come to Britain from other countries on...	Remain	Leave
Britain's economy	%	%
Bad (0-3)	7	38
Neither (4-6)	24	26
Good (7-10)	68	25
Britain's cultural life	%	%
Undermined (0-3)	9	39
Neither (4-6)	25	37
Enriched (7-10)	65	22
Unweighted base	*1884*	*974*

---

7 Indeed, this figure has not fallen among Leave supporters in recent years. In 2017, 42% of those who would then vote Leave in another referendum said that migrants undermined Britain's culture, while just 29% said that they were bad for the economy.

There is seemingly a substantial link between people's stance on whether Britain should be in or out of the EU and both the issue of immigration that was prominent in 2016 and the 'culture war' issues that touch upon national identity and sentiment that have been highlighted in recent political debate. That suggests that politicians who take an 'anti-woke' stance may find that their arguments have particular resonance among those who support Brexit.

Equal opportunities

But what of the debate about equal opportunities for minority groups, which might be thought somewhat more remote from the agenda of the EU referendum campaign? Table 10 compares the attitudes towards equal opportunities among those who would currently vote to remain in the EU with the views of those who would prefer to leave. It does so by showing in each case the proportion who feel that attempts to give equal opportunities have not gone far enough.[8]

Table 10 Attitudes to equal opportunities for minority groups, by attitude towards Brexit

% say equal opportunities have not gone far enough for…	Remain	Leave
Women	61	32
Black and Asian people	60	23
Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals	43	11
Transgender people	45	13
Unweighted base	*1884*	*974*

People with a different stance on Brexit hold substantially different views on equal opportunities. The sharpest division between them is on equal opportunities for Black and Asian people; no less than 60% of Remain supporters believe that these have not gone far enough, compared with just 23% of their Leave counterparts, a difference of 37 points. Only around one in eight Leave supporters believe that equal opportunities for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (11%) and transgender people (13%) have not gone far enough, whereas 43-45% of Remain advocates take that stance. Meanwhile, although somewhat less pronounced, there is also a substantial difference of 29 points between Leavers and Remainers on giving equal opportunities for women.

---

8 The questions on attempts to give equal chances to people with a physical impairment and people with a mental health condition were asked on a different version of the questionnaire than the question on how people would vote in another EU referendum. Consequently, it is not possible to analyse the views of Remain and Leave supporters on these two questions.

However, the difference between the two groups on whether transgender people should be able to change the sex registered on their birth certificate is somewhat narrower. While only 20% of Leave supporters feel that they should be able to do so, even among those who back Remain the figure is no higher than 39%. That said, on this issue too, those advocating an 'anti-woke' stance are likely to secure a favourable reaction from many Leave supporters.

Demographic differences

Remain and Leave supporters do, then, have rather different outlooks on 'culture war' issues. Consequently, it seems as though an emphasis on these issues does have the potential at least to mobilise the Brexit divide that was central to the outcome of the 2019 election. Indeed, it is also the case that the demographic differences between younger and older people, and between graduates and those with few, if any, qualifications, that divided voters in 2016 are also apparent in how people responded to our indicators of national sentiment and our questions on equal opportunities.

Table 11 gives some examples of the differences in the pattern of response by age group. Although the extent of the differences vary, in each case younger people are more likely than those who are older to adopt the 'woke' position on our 'culture war' issues. In particular, only just over a quarter (28%) of those under 35 say they are 'very strongly British', whereas two-thirds (66%) of those aged 65 and over do so. And while just a quarter of under 35s say that to be 'truly British' it is important for someone to have British ancestry, nearly half (48%) of those 65 and over take that view. Meanwhile, nearly half (48%) of those in our youngest age group say that equal opportunities for transgender people have not gone far enough, compared with just one in six (16%) of those in our oldest group, while a substantial difference is also apparent in respect of equal opportunities for Black and Asian people.

Table 11 Attitudes towards 'culture war' issues, by age group

% who...	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+
Think of self as very strongly British	28	38	56	66
Agree Britain better than other countries	27	31	35	48
Believe British ancestry important for being truly British	25	37	45	48
Say immigration enriches Britain's cultural life	57	47	40	44
Think equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not gone far enough	58	46	40	33
Think equal opportunities for transgender people have not gone far enough	48	33	25	16
Unweighted base	*698*	*989*	*595*	*828*

There are similar differences by people's educational background (Table 12). Graduates (68%) are especially likely to say that immigration enriches Britain's culture, a view adopted by less than three in ten (28%) of those whose highest educational qualification is less than an A level. They are also much more likely than those without an A level or equivalent qualification to say that equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not gone far enough. That said, there is not much difference between the two groups in their level of agreement that Britain is better than other countries.

Table 12 Attitudes towards 'culture war' issues, by education

% who...	Degree	Other higher education/ A level	Below A level
Think of self as very strongly British	29	42	63
Agree Britain better than other countries	32	31	40
Believe British ancestry important for being truly British	23	35	55
Say immigration enriches Britain's cultural life	68	45	28
Think equal opportunities for Black and Asian people have not gone far enough	60	46	29
Think equal opportunities for transgender people have not gone far enough	40	32	24
Unweighted base	*1502*	*832*	*751*

'Culture war' issues divide Remain and Leave supporters. They also divide voters by age and educational background much like Brexit did. At the same time, we can now see why we should not be surprised that, with the possible exception of the rights of transgender people, attitudes towards 'culture war' issues have, for the most part, moved in a 'woke' direction. One of the key changes in the demography of Britain in recent decades has been the expansion of the number of graduates, a group that we have seen are more likely to adopt a 'woke' position (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020b; Surridge, 2016). At the same time, the country has also become culturally, religiously and ethnically more diverse. In tandem, the two developments have turned Britain from a 'white with few qualifications homogenous' society to a more highly educated, multicultural society. It is perhaps not surprising that its social outlook has changed too.

A Partisan Divide?

We have demonstrated that the division between social conservatives and social liberals that underpins people's attitudes towards the EU is also reflected in people's attitudes towards 'culture war' issues. We have also established that those who support the UK being outside the EU tend to have different attitudes towards such issues from those who would prefer the UK to be a member of the EU. It would seem then that stoking those issues might have the potential to influence how people vote at election time. If that potential exists, then we would expect to find that party support is linked to people's stance on the various measures that we have been examining.

We examine whether that is the case for our indicators of national sentiment by showing how attitudes vary according to the political party with which someone identifies. Note that this is not simply a measure of the party for which someone would currently vote, but rather is intended to tap whether someone identifies as being a supporter of a political party or at least feels close to such a party (Dalton, 2021). Not everyone will feel that level of commitment to a party, and indeed, even when given as many as three opportunities to indicate a party preference (see the Technical Details), as many as 15% did not do so. The extent to which an issue divides voters at election time will, of course, depend on the extent to which the parties adopt and publicise different stances on it, but if 'culture wars' do have the potential at least to influence voters then we would expect that it is already evident in the views of those who express a party preference.

Table 13 reveals that Conservative identifiers have distinctive attitudes on our indicators of national sentiment. They are around twice as likely as those who support one of Labour, the Liberal Democrats, or the Greens to say that they feel very strongly British and to agree that Britain is better than most other countries. Meanwhile, although the difference is not quite as sharp, Conservative identifiers

are more likely not to dispute the suggestion that it would better if people in other countries were more like the British. As many as 68% of Conservative identifiers take that view, compared with 44% of those who support one of the opposition parties.

There is a similar pattern in people's responses to what it takes to be 'truly British'. Conservative identifiers are around twice as likely as those who support one of the other parties to express the more exclusive view that it is important to have been born in Britain and to say that they should have British ancestry. As we might by now anticipate even around three-fifths of opposition identifiers feel that someone should feel British, though, at 85%, the proportion is yet higher among Conservative identifiers.

Table 13 National sentiment, by party identification

% who...	Conservative	Labour	Liberal democrat	Green
Think of self as very strongly British	66	34	28	26
Agree or neither agree nor disagree better if other people more like British	68	46	41	40
Agree Britain better than other countries	53	28	26	23
Believe being born in Britain important for being truly British	64	34	29	26
Believe British ancestry important for being truly British	55	25	21	19
Believe feeling British important for being truly British	85	60	62	52
Unweighted base	*991*	*984*	*263*	*244*

Meanwhile, there is also a considerable difference between the perceptions of Conservative party identifiers and those of the supporters of other parties on the issue of immigration. Rather less than half of Conservative identifiers believe that immigration is good for the economy (48%) or that it enriches the country's culture (43%). In contrast, nearly three-quarters of opposition supporters say the same of the economy (73%) and of the country's culture (74%). Despite the fact that, as we saw earlier, perceptions of the impact of immigration have become markedly more favourable in recent years, it is still a subject on which many Conservative identifiers continue to have doubts.

There are also some marked differences by party identification in perceptions of whether or not attempts to give equal opportunities have gone too far or not (see Table 14). This is especially marked in the case of Black and Asian people; just one in four Conservative identifiers think they have not gone far enough, whereas the equivalent figure among supporters of one of the opposition parties is nearly two in three (63%). Meanwhile, just one in eight Conservative

identifiers believe that equal opportunities for lesbians, gays and bisexuals have not gone far enough, and the same is true of transgender people. Among supporters of the opposition parties, nearly half express that view – 45% in the case of lesbians, gays and bisexuals and 47% with reference to transgender people, though those who identify with the Green party have particularly distinctive views on these groups. At 36%, the proportion of Conservative identifiers who feel that equal opportunities for women have not gone far enough is rather higher than it is in respect of other groups but is still well below the equivalent figure of 61% among opposition party supporters.

Table 14 Attitudes towards equal opportunities for minority groups, by party identification

% think equal opportunities have not gone far enough for…	Conservative	Labour	Liberal democrat	Green
Women	36	61	67	69
Black and Asian people	25	63	55	69
Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals	13	44	40	56
Transgender people	13	48	38	67
Unweighted base	*991*	*984*	*263*	*244*

In tandem with these figures, only around one in five (21%) Conservative identifiers believe that a transgender person should be able to change the sex registered on their birth certificate, half the equivalent figure among Labour identifiers (42%), while nearly half (48%) of Green supporters express that view. On this issue, however, Liberal Democrat identifiers appear to share the doubts of Conservative identifiers – just 26% say that transgender people should be able to change their registered sex.

Conclusions

Our analysis suggests that attitudes towards 'culture war' issues vary between different demographic groups and between social liberals and social conservatives in much the same way as attitudes towards the EU. Indeed, we can show that Remain and Leave supporters themselves have different views – as do Conservative and opposition party supporters. In short, there does appear to be the potential for 'culture war' issues to maintain the electoral division between Remainers and Leavers that was central to how people voted in the 2019 general election.

That said, what is less clear is whether such a development would necessarily prove as advantageous to the Conservatives as the Brexit divide proved to be. In line with a long-term decline in those at the authoritarian end of the liberal-authoritarian spectrum, the 'anti-woke' position on our indicators has for the most part become less popular over time. As a result, on many of our items the balance of opinion is

now tilted in favour of the 'woke' position, contrary to what was often the case a decade or two ago. The 'anti-woke' rhetoric in which some politicians have recently engaged is perhaps an implicit recognition that Britain's attitudinal landscape has changed in a way that means that once widely-shared assumptions are now being challenged, and that this development is not confined to a supposed cultural and educational elite. Inevitably some are uncomfortable with such change and will quite reasonably look to politicians to express their concern. But we cannot assume that the politicians who express that concern will necessarily find that their stance brings them electoral success.

Acknowledgements

References

BBC News (2020), 'Edward Colston: Bristol slave trader statue "'was an affront"'. 8 June. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-52962356

Curtice, J. (2017), 'Why Leave won the UK's EU referendum', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55 (S1): 19-38.

Curtice, J. (2020), *Was The 2019 General Election A Success?* London: NatCen Social Research. Available at https://whatukthinks.org/eu/analysis/was-the-2019-general-election-a-success/

Curtice, J. (2021), 'A Brexit Election?', in Wring, D., Mortimore, R. and Atkinson, S. (eds), *Political Communication in Britain: Campaigning, Media and Polling in the 2019 General Election'*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Curtice, J., Abrams, D., and Jessop, C. (2022), *A Turning Point in History? Social and Political Attitudes in Britain in the Wake of the Pandemic*, London: NatCen Social Research. Available at https://natcen.ac.uk/media/2166750/Social-and-Political-Attitudes-in-Britain-in-the-Wake-of-the-Pandemic.pdf

Curtice, J. and Simpson, I. (2018), 'The 2017 election: New divides in British politics?', in Phillips, D., Curtice, J., Phillips M. and Perry, J. (eds), *British Social Attitudes: the 35th report*, London: NatCen Social Research. Available at http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-35/voting.aspx

Dalton, R. (2021), 'Party Identification and its implications', *Oxford Research Encyclopaedias*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-72

Duffy, B., Hewlett, K., Murkin, G., Benson, R., Hesketh, R., Pahe, B., Skinner, G. and Gottfried, G. (2021), *'Culture Wars' in the UK*, London: King's College and Ipsos UK. Available at https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/culture-wars-in-the-uk.pdf

Donelan, M. (2022), 'Minister Donelan addresses Policy Exchange'. Speech given at Policy Exchange, London, 26 April. Text available at https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/minister-donelan-addresses-policy-exchange

Dowden, O. (2022), 'Standing up for our values'. Speech given at the Heritage Foundation, Washington DC, 15 February. Text available at https://www.conservatives.com/news/2022/standing-up-for-our-values

Economist (2021), 'Tories bet on culture wars to unite disparate voters', *The Economist*, 18 February. Available at: https://www.economist.com/britain/2021/02/18/tories-bet-on-culture-wars-to-unite-disparate-voters

Elkins, C. (2022), *Legacy of Violence*, London: Bodley Head

Evans, G., de Geus, R., and Green, J. (2021), 'Boris Johnson to the rescue? How the Conservatives won the radical-right vote in the 2019 General Election', *Political Studies*, online first. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00323217211051191

Fairbairn, C., Pyper, D., and Balogun, B. (2022), *Gender Recognition Act Reform: Consultation and outcome*, London: House of Commons Library. Available at https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9079/CBP-9079.pdf

Ferguson, N. (2004), *Empire: How Britain Made The Modern World*, London: Penguin.

Ford, R., Bale, T., Jennings, W. and Surridge, P. (2021), *The British General Election of 2019*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gregory, A. (2020), 'Black Lives Matter: Keir Starmer takes knee in solidarity with "all those opposing anti-black racism"', *The Independent*, 9 June. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/black-lives-matter-keir-starmer-labour-take-knee-george-floyd-funeral-a9557166.html

Mangum, M. and Block, R. (2018), 'Social identity theory and public attitude towards immigration', *Social Sciences*, 7 (3): 41.

Mediatique (2020), *Examining trends in editorial standards in coverage of transgender issues*, London: Independent Press Standards Organisation. Available at https://www.ipso.co.uk/media/1986/mediatique-report-on-coverage-of-transgender-issues.pdf

Oxford English Dictionary (2017), 'New words notes June 2017'. Posted at https://public.oed.com/blog/june-2017-update-new-words-notes/

Park, A. and Rhead, R. (2013), 'Changing attitudes towards sex, marriage and parenthood', In A. Park, C. Bryson, E. Clery, J. Curtice and M. Phillips (eds), British Social Attitudes 30, London: NatCen Social Research. Available at https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-30/personal-relationships/introduction.aspx

Powys Maurice, E. (2021), 'Labour's Keir Starmer doubles down on vow to reform Gender Recognition Act and introduce self-ID for trans people', *Pink News*, 10 June. Available at: https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/06/10/keir-starmer-labour-party-gender-recognition-act-self-id-trans-people-pride/

Savage, M. (2020), 'We lost the Brexit fight – now we must listen to voters, Ed Davey urges Lib Dems', *The Observer*, 26 September. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/sep/26/we-lost-the-brexit-fight-now-we-must-listen-to-voters-ed-davey-urges-lib-dems

Shrimsley, R. (2021), 'Conservative culture war is fight for new establishment', *Financial Times*, 14 July. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/3a82f466-85f1-4bb3-8c32-62a1914ad8dd

Sobolewska, M. and Ford, R. (2020a), 'Brexit and Britain's Culture Wars', *Political Insight*, 11 (1): 4-7.

Sobolewska, M., and Ford, R. (2020b), *Brexitland: Identity, Diversity and the Reshaping of British Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Starmer, K. (2022), 'Keir Starmer lays out Labour's 5-point plan to make Brexit work'. Speech given at the Centre for European Reform, London, 4 July. Text available at https://labour.org.uk/press/keir-starmer-sets-out-labours-5-point-plan-to-make-brexit-work-2/

Sullivan, R. (2020), 'Black Lives Matter protestors in Bristol pull down and throw statute of 17th-century slave trader into river', *The Independent*, 7 June. Available at https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/black-lives-matter-protests-uk-bristol-statue-edward-colston-slavery-a9553266.html

Surridge, P. (2016), 'Education and liberalism: pursuing the link', *Oxford Review of Education*, 42 (2); 146-64.

Walker, P. (2020), 'Keir Starmer: pulling down Edward Colston statue was wrong', *The Guardian*, 8 June. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jun/08/keir-starmer-edward-colston-bristol-statue-wrong

Wood, P. (2021), 'Priti Patel does not support England players taking the knee and says fans have the right to boo', *The I*, 14 June. Available at: https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/priti-patel-not-support-england-players-taking-the-knee-fans-have-right-boo-1050589

Appendix

Table A.1 Proportion of people classed as liberal and authoritarian, 2011-2021

	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	5	6	7	8	9	11
Authoritarian	63	62	59	54	51	48
Unweighted base	*2841*	*2855*	*2832*	*2376*	*3670*	2400

	2017	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Liberal	12	14	12	21	21	
Authoritarian	46	43	48	40	38	
Unweighted base	*3225*	*3065*	*2630*	*3864*	*6250*	

Publication details

Butt, S., Clery, E. and Curtice, J.(eds.) (2022), British Social Attitudes: The 39th Report. London: National Centre for Social Research