

British Social Attitudes 41 | National Identity

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Summary

What does it mean to belong?

Questions of national identity have been to the fore in Britain in recent years. The debate about Brexit was partly about whether decision-making should or should not be shared with countries who do not share the same national identity. It was also about immigration, and the extent to which what was already an increasingly diverse society should welcome and accept people from different cultural backgrounds who come to Britain to live and work. Meanwhile, as a multinational state in which many people feel English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh instead of or as well as British, the legitimacy of Britain's own governance arrangements is sometimes questioned, as for example in the debate about Scottish independence.

This chapter is in two parts. First, it analyses trends in people's conceptions of British identity and their sources of national pride. In particular, it assesses whether people's conception of who is 'truly British' is primarily 'ethnic' or 'civic' in character, and how much this has changed over the last thirty years. At the same time, it examines trends in national pride, and whether people with different conceptions of British identity differ in their sources of national pride.

In the second part, the chapter examines whether people's understanding of national identity in Scotland is different from that in England. That leads on to an examination of whether the relationship north of the border between people's conception of national identity and their attitudes towards Scottish independence is the same as or different from the relationship across Britain between perceptions of national identity and attitudes towards Brexit.

British identity now less regarded as a matter of family background

Over the last ten years, there has been a decline in the proportion who regard birth or ancestry as important for being 'truly British'.

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- The proportion who think that to be ‘truly British’ it is important for someone to have been born in Britain has fallen from 74% in 2013 to 55% now.
 - Similarly, the proportion who believe it is important for someone to have British ancestry has dropped from 51% to 39%.
 - In contrast, 86% say it is important that someone respects British political institutions and laws.

Sharp decline in national pride

Over the last decade, people have become less likely to take pride in the country’s achievements and less likely to feel Britain is better than elsewhere.

- In 2013, 86% said they were proud of Britain’s history. Now the figure has fallen to 64%.
- Only 53% now say they take pride in the way Britain’s democracy works, down from 69% in 2013.
- Just 49% now say they would rather be a citizen of Britain than of anywhere else, compared with 62% in 2013.

Brexit and Scottish independence are different nationalisms

Those who support being outside the EU are more likely than those in favour of membership to think family matters to people’s identity – but those who back independence are less likely than its opponents to take this view.

- Across Britain, 78% of those who support Brexit believe having been born in Britain is important to being ‘truly British’, compared with 45% of those who favour EU membership.
- In Scotland, 59% of those who oppose independence say being born in Scotland matters to being ‘truly Scottish’. Among supporters the figure is

50%.

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Brexiteers believe British ancestry matters to being British, whereas only 42% of Scottish independence supporters feel ancestry is important for being Scottish.

Introduction

What does it mean to be British? This perhaps is a question that every generation in every age asks itself. But now seems a particularly pertinent time to address it.

One reason is the UK's decision to leave the European Union. During the 2016 referendum, at which this decision was taken, part of the argument put forward by those campaigning in favour of exiting the EU was that it would enable the UK to reclaim its national sovereignty from a multinational institution in which states take collective decisions that are binding on its members. Such a nationalist sentiment presumes that collective decision-making is only legitimate if those affected have a shared sense of national identity (Miller, 2000). Meanwhile, antipathy to immigration – and thus the entry into the country of people who might not be thought to share the same background or understanding of what it means to be British – was also an attribute of the pro-Leave argument. That would seem to suggest a belief that the criteria used to identify who is British should be drawn relatively narrowly.

Yet the fact that the UK has experienced relatively high levels of immigration over the last two decades or so means that, in combination with previous waves of immigration, Britain has become a more diverse society in terms of ethnic origin, linguistic background, and religion. In contrast to the impression created by the Brexit debate, perhaps this experience has encouraged people to become less exclusive in their conception of what it means to be British, and to take the view, for example, that current commitment matters more than past ancestry.

Still, both these observations assume that the only national identity that matters in the UK is 'British'. However, the UK is not a nation state. Rather, it is a multinational country consisting of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern

Ireland. Each of the UK's component parts has its own sense of national identity, or in the case of Northern Ireland, contested identities. In the three nations other than England there are political parties with significant support that advocate leaving the UK. Much like the Brexiteers, they espouse a nationalist sentiment that questions the legitimacy of the multinational governing arrangement of which their country is currently part. However, given that in Scotland the principal nationalist party advocates rejoining the European Union and believes that Scotland would benefit from a relatively liberal immigration regime, we might wonder whether the nationalism of those who back leaving the UK, an option for which 45% voted in the 2014 independence referendum, necessarily has the same character as the nationalism of those who backed Brexit. That there is a difference is certainly the claim that is made by many a Scottish nationalist politician.

This chapter addresses these two issues. First, we examine people's understanding of Britishness. In particular, we investigate the extent to which their conception of the qualities needed to be regarded as 'truly British' is 'inclusive' or 'exclusive' and the sources and the strength of their sense of national pride. Then, in the second part, we compare people's understanding of national identity in Scotland with that in England and then go on to assess whether the outlook of those who support Scottish independence is the same or different from that of those who are in favour of being outside the EU.

In order to assess whether people's sense of identity, be it in England, Scotland, or across Britain as a whole, is 'inclusive' or 'exclusive', our analysis uses a distinction that is often made in the analysis of national identity, that is, between a 'civic' and an 'ethnic' conception of who is regarded as a member of a nation (Kohn, 1944; Brubaker, 2004; Weissmark, 2020). Those with a civic conception of national identity believe someone can become a member of a nation through upholding a certain set of shared values or respecting a country's political institutions. For a civic nationalist, what matters is not a person's background, such as where they were born, but rather the choice they make about the country in which they live and whether they have a sense of belonging and commitment to that country. This outlook is typically characterised as 'inclusive', as it admits of the possibility that someone may be able to make a choice later in life about where they feel they belong. In contrast, for ethnic nationalists, membership of a nation is based on ancestry and/or place of birth, things that by definition a person cannot change later in

life. This perspective is usually regarded as ‘exclusive’, limiting membership of the nation to those who can satisfy a narrow set of criteria based on familial background.

One of the key ways in which national identity can express itself is in a sense of pride in the country’s collective achievements and in those of its individual citizens. This may include what might be regarded as a ‘nationalist’ sentiment, that is, a feeling that the country with which people identify is better than any other country. What people do or do not take pride in may well depend on whether people have an inclusive or exclusive sense of identity. Those with an ethnic, more exclusive conception of what it means to be British might be expected to take especial pride in the country’s past achievements rather than its current ones (to which those relatively new to the country may have contributed) and to be more likely to support nationalist sentiments that, *inter alia*, mean they are more likely to question sharing sovereignty with others. We therefore also examine the association with people’s understanding of national identity and their sense of national pride.

Our data comes from an International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) module on ‘National Identity and Citizenship’ that was answered by 1,611 respondents to the 2023 British Social Attitudes (BSA) from across Britain as a whole, including 1,469 in England, and separately by 1,574 respondents to the 2023 Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) survey living north of the border. In the case of the latter, we not only asked questions about British national identity and their sense of pride in Britain, but also questions that addressed their understanding of what it takes to be regarded as Scottish and what makes them feel proud about Scotland. As a result, we can both compare people’s understanding of British and Scottish identity within Scotland, but also compare conceptions of British identity in England and Scotland. At the same time on both surveys the module also contains a question on attitudes towards membership of the EU, while SSA also asked about attitudes towards Scotland’s constitutional status. As a result, we can compare the views of Brexit supporters with those of the backers of independence.

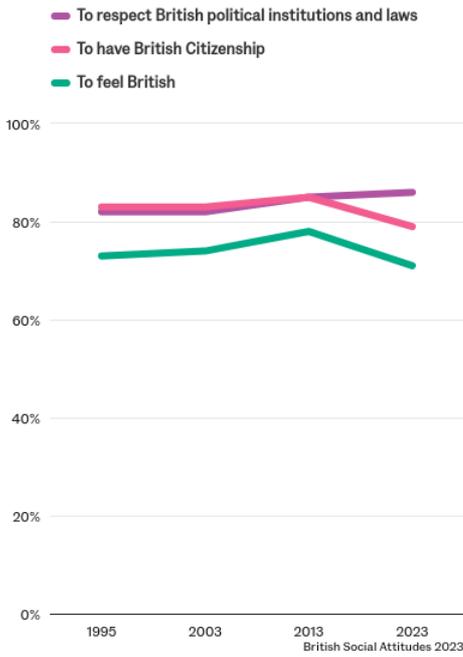
National Identity and Pride in Britain

National Identity and Pride in Britain over time

British national identity has been fashioned as an identity to which people throughout the UK can belong. It thus can potentially encourage them to think of the UK as a single country to which those living in all of its component nations belong (Colley, 1992). Indeed, the legal status that all citizens of the UK share is 'British citizen'. True, not everyone who is a British citizen necessarily thinks of themselves as British, though in practice most do. Since 1996, BSA has regularly presented respondents with a list of all the identities associated with the islands of Great Britain and Ireland and invited them to choose as many of these identities as they feel describe themselves. 'British' has always been the most popular choice, with the proportion who choose it as at least one of their identities consistently at or close to two-thirds (67%). The figure in our most recent survey of 64% is in line with that pattern. So, in asking people what it takes for someone to be regarded as British, we are inviting them to consider an identity that is widely shared across Great Britain.

But is people's conception of what is required to be 'truly British' primarily 'civic' and thus, perhaps, relatively 'inclusive', or is it primarily 'ethnic' and thus rather 'exclusive'? To address this question, BSA asked respondents how important six attributes were for being 'truly British'. Three of these, having British citizenship, respecting the country's political institutions and laws, and feeling British, may be regarded as consistent with a civic conception of national identity. In contrast, the other three, having been born in Britain, to have British ancestry, and (given the country's religious heritage) to be a Christian, might be thought indicative of an ethnic conception of 'Britishness'. Figure 1^[1] shows the answers to these questions we obtained in our most recent survey and how they compare with the three previous readings we have obtained since 1995.

Civic Attributes



Ethnic Attributes

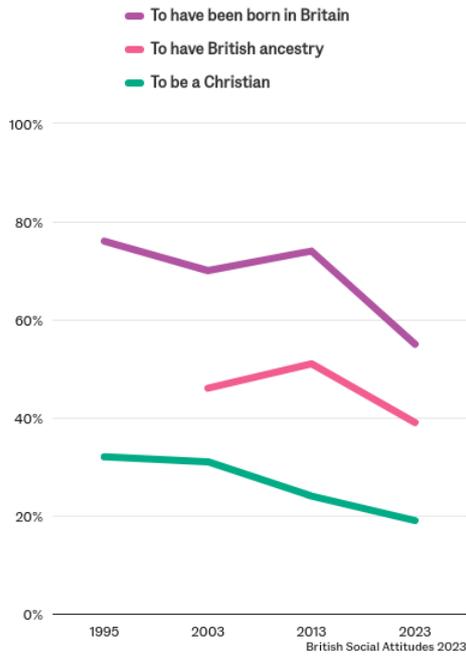


Figure 1 - Importance of civic and ethnic attributes for being 'truly British'?

Table 1 – Importance of civic and ethnic attributes for being 'truly British'?

	1995	2003	2013	2023	Change 1995- 2023	Change 2013- 2023
% Saying 'very'/'fairly' important	%	%	%	%		
Civic Attributes						
To respect British political institutions and laws	82	82	85	86	+4	+1
To have British Citizenship	83	83	85	79	-4	-6
To feel British	73	74	78	71	-2	-7
Ethnic Attributes						
To have been born in Britain	76	70	74	55	-21	-19

To have British ancestry	N/A	46	51	39	-7*	-12	-
To be a Christian	32	31	24	19	-13	-5	-
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>1058</i>	<i>873</i>	<i>904</i>	<i>1611</i>			

N/A: Not available

*Figure is for between 2003 and 2023 given 1995 data is unavailable

Two patterns emerge. First, more people think that to be regarded as ‘truly British’, it is ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ important for someone to have each of the three civic attributes than it is for them to have any of the ethnic ones. Between 71% and 86% feel the civic attributes are important for someone to have, whereas in the case of the ethnic qualities only one, being born in Britain, is regarded in that way by over half (55%). Second, there has been a marked decline since 2013 in the proportion who say that two of the ethnic attributes, to have been born in Britain (from 74% in 2013 to 55% now) and to have British ancestry (from 51% to 39%), are important. Indeed, there has also been a five-point drop, from the much lower base of 24% in 2013 (a figure that reflects the increasingly secular nature of British society), in the proportion who say it is important to have the third ethnic attribute, that is, to be a Christian. True, there has also been some decline in the proportion who believe two of the three civic attributes are important, that is, to have British citizenship (down by six points since 2013) and to feel British (seven points). Nevertheless, relatively speaking at least, people in Britain have become more inclusive in their understanding of what it means to be British over the last decade. This finding updates and confirms the evidence reported by Curtice and Ratti (2022) which found that a decline in support for exclusionary forms of national sentiment was part of a wider trend towards the increasing popularity of socially liberal positions.

Nevertheless, Table 1 implies that the attributes we have labelled as ‘civic’ or ‘ethnic’ are not necessarily regarded as two opposing conceptions of national identity. It would seem most people think the various civic attributes are important to being ‘truly British’ (Kiss and Park, 2014). This is the case because those who think the ethnic attributes are important are also inclined

to believe the civic qualities matter too. For example, 95% of those who think it is important for people to have been born in Britain also believe that it is important for them to have British citizenship, compared with 79% for the population as a whole. However, those who attach importance to the civic attributes do not necessarily feel the same way about the ethnic ones. For example, only 66% of those who believe it is important for someone to have British citizenship also feel that they should have been born in Britain. In short, in response to these questions, most people appear to have a civic conception of British identity; what divides people is whether or not that is accompanied by an ethnic conception too.

As a result, the questions detailed in Table 1 do not clearly distinguish between those who have a civic conception of British identity and those whose outlook is primarily ethnic. To overcome this problem, in 2023, the ISSP module included a new question that was intended to distinguish better those with a primarily ethnic conception from those with a primarily civic one. The question reads as follows:

Some people say that it is possible to become truly British if a person makes an effort. Others say a person has to be born British to be truly British. What is your position?

A: It is possible to become truly British if a person makes an effort.

B: A person has to be born British to be truly British.

1. ***I definitely agree with statement A***
2. ***I agree more with statement A than with statement B***
3. ***I agree more with statement B than with statement A***
4. ***I definitely agree with statement B***
5. ***Can't choose***

Statement A is intended to reflect a civic conception of British identity and statement B an ethnic one.

Overall, a majority (68%) could be classified by their response to the question as primarily ‘civic’ nationalists, that is, they said they either ‘definitely’ agreed with statement A (35%) or agreed more with it than statement B (33%). Just under one in five (19%) either ‘definitely’ agreed with statement B (6%) or agreed more with statement B than statement A (13%), and so can be classified as primarily ‘ethnic’ nationalists. Around one in ten (12%) people could not choose between the options. These figures indicate that nowadays most people have a civic rather than an ethnic conception of British national identity.

In practice, the pattern of the answers to the new question closely resembles that to the specific attributes in Table 1. Table 2 divides respondents according to the pattern of their response to the new question, with ‘primarily civic’ defined as those who chose one of the first two options, and ‘primarily ethnic’ as those who chose either the third or the fourth option. For each of these two groups it shows the proportion who regard each of the specific attributes as important for being ‘truly British’. It emerges that, for the most part, the two groups differ little in the importance they attach to the civic attributes, albeit there is some tendency for those whose conception is ‘primarily ethnic’ to be even more likely to attach importance to these qualities as well. However, those whose response to our new question suggests their conception is ‘primarily civic’ are less likely to regard any of the specific ethnic attributes as important. In particular, only half (50%) think it is important for someone to have been born in Britain, while just one in three (33%) believe it is important to have British ancestry. The equivalent figures for those whose outlook is primarily ethnic are 83% and 66% respectively. While it would be a mistake to suggest that those with a primarily civic conception of British identity necessarily regard someone’s familial background as wholly irrelevant to their being regarded as ‘truly British’ (see also Kiss and Park, 2014), they clearly attach less importance to this consideration than do the minority with a more ethnic outlook.

Table 2 – Importance of civic and ethnic attributes by overall conception of British identity, 2023

	Primarily Civic	Primarily Ethnic	Total
% Proportion saying ‘Very’/‘Fairly’ Important for Being ‘Truly British’	%	%	%
<i>Civic Attributes</i>			
To respect British political institutions/laws	87	87	86
To have British citizenship	80	90	80
To feel British	73	79	71
<i>Ethnic Attributes</i>			
To have been born in Britain	50	83	55
To have British ancestry	33	66	39
To be a Christian	18	25	19
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	1084	316	1611

So far, however, we have examined people’s conception of being ‘truly British’ irrespective of whether they describe themselves as British. We might wonder whether the picture we have painted so far of people’s conception of British identity is also true of those who actually regard themselves as British. Table 3 suggests that for the most part it is. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, those who regard themselves as British are more inclined to regard all the attributes as important, and indeed, this is particularly true of feeling British, which is regarded as important by over three-quarters (77%) who themselves feel British but by only three in five (60%) of those who do not. However, this particular example underlines the fact that, as among the population as a whole, those who do regard themselves as British attach greater importance to civic rather than ethnic features of British identity. Indeed, as many as 70% of those who identify as British give a primarily civic response to our new

question on how someone can become ‘truly British’, while only 17% give a primarily ethnic one.

Table 3 – Conception of British identity by whether identify as British, 2023

	British	Not British	Total
% Proportion saying ‘Very’/‘Fairly’ Important for Being ‘Truly British’	%	%	%
<i>Civic Attributes</i>			
To respect British political institutions/laws	87	83	86
To have British citizenship	83	74	80
To feel British	77	60	71
<i>Ethnic Attributes</i>			
To have been born in Britain	59	48	55
To have British ancestry	40	37	39
To be a Christian	18	21	19
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	539	1054	1611

Demographic Differences in Conceptions of British Identity

Previous research on attitudes towards immigration and Brexit – two of the subjects that motivate our analysis here – has found that older people and those with fewer educational qualifications are more likely to back tighter immigration control and Britain leaving the EU (Curtice, 2017; Richards et al., 2023). So, we might anticipate that these groups are more likely to hold an ethnic conception of British identity that excludes others. In contrast, we might anticipate that those from an ethnic minority background, many of

whom will not have deep ancestral roots in the UK, will be more likely to uphold a more inclusive, civic conception of what it means to be ‘truly British’.

These expectations are upheld. As Table 4 shows, those aged 65 and over (26%) are nearly twice as likely as those aged less than 35 (14%) to have a primarily ethnic conception of British identity. Similarly, those with no educational qualifications (27%) are more than twice as likely as graduates (11%) to regard British identity in that way. Meanwhile over three-quarters (78%) of those from a minority ethnic background are primarily civic in their outlook, compared with two-thirds (67%) of those who say they are ‘white’. Consequently, it is not surprising to discover that those who voted Leave in the 2016 EU referendum (27%) were twice as likely as those who vote Remain (13%) to have a primarily ethnic view of British identity, a subject to which we return later in this chapter.

Table 4 – Conception of British identity by age, ethnicity and level of education

	Age Group			Ethnicity		Educational Qualification			
	Total	18-34	45-54	65+	White	Other Ethnicity	Degree	GCSEs or equivalent	No quals
Primarily Civic	68	71	69	65	67	78	78	62	52
Primarily Ethnic	19	14	16	26	20	9	11	24	27
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>1611</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>436</i>	<i>1415</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>707</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>104</i>

These demographic differences are also apparent when we examine who says that each of the specific ethnic attributes are important. For example, as Table 5 reveals, as many as 70% of those aged 65 or over feel it is important for someone to have been born in Britain, compared with just 41% of those aged under 35. Equally, those with no educational qualifications are more likely than those with a degree to feel that any of the ethnic attributes are important, while those from a minority ethnic background take the opposite view.

Table 5 - Importance of ethnic attributes for being ‘truly British’ by age, ethnicity and level of education

	18-34	45-54	65+	White	Other Ethnicity	Degree	GCSEs or equivalent	No quals
% Saying ‘Very important’ / ‘Fairly important’ for being truly British	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
To have been born in Britain	41	57	70	59	31	44	67	69
To have British ancestry	24	40	61	41	21	25	52	66
To be a Christian	10	17	35	19	17	14	28	31
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>352</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>436</i>	<i>1415</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>707</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>104</i>

Given the very substantial differences by age, we might wonder whether part of the explanation at least for the decline in the proportion who attach importance to the ethnic attributes of identity is a process of generational replacement. Perhaps older generations who are more likely to have an ethnic conception of British identity are being replaced by younger generations who are less likely to do so. Table 6 examines this possibility by analysing each of the four survey readings taken since 1995 as to what proportion of each decennial birth cohort has said it was important for someone to have been born in Britain.

Table 6 - Importance of being born in Britain for being truly British, by birth cohort, 1995-2023

	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1995	86	87	78	83	74	69			
2003		75	81	73	67	66	64		
2013			89	86	74	74	66	63	
2023				73	65	65	54	50	47

A version of this table with unweighted bases can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

There is some evidence of generation replacement. Each new decennial cohort entering the adult population has been less likely than the cohort that has just left to say that it is important for someone to have been born in Britain. They have also typically been somewhat less likely than the cohort immediately before them to take that view too. That said, it appears that much of the fall since 2013 in the perceived importance of being born in Britain has occurred within each birth cohort, indicating that people of all ages and generations have become less likely to think that this particular ethnic attribute matters. A similar picture emerges if we undertake a similar analysis of the two decades of data we have on the perceived importance of ancestry.

The relationship between conceptions of identity and both education and ethnicity are also likely part of the explanation too. Graduates have become more numerous (though all educational groups have become less likely since 2013 to say that place of birth is important), while we suggested at the beginning of this chapter that the increasing ethnic diversity of Britain's population may also have had an impact – not simply because it means more of the population belong to demographic groups that are less likely to hold an ethnic conception of identity, but also because the attitudes of the wider population may well have been influenced by the increased diversity of those among them whom now live and share their British citizenship.

National Pride and National Identity in Britain

Feeling British potentially provides the basis for holding a positive view – that is, feeling proud – about Britain and what it has achieved. An affective orientation towards the country helps affirm the self-esteem that individuals derive from their sense of British identity. One way in which this positive view may be expressed is having pride in what Britain is thought to have achieved – such as, for example, is sometimes evident in communal celebrations of sporting success. However, it may also be reflected in a sense of superiority, in a belief that Britain is better than other countries, and thus an outlook that has a nationalist or jingoistic tone.

Given there has been little change over time in the proportion who identify as British, we might anticipate that levels of national pride, in both senses, have remained largely unchanged over the last thirty years. However, perhaps those whose conception of national identity is primarily civic and inclusive take pride in different things from those whose conception is primarily ethnic and exclusive to express high levels of national pride. They might, for example, be expected to be less likely to feel a sense of potentially jingoistic superiority, while being more likely to take pride in the country's current achievements than in its past as a 'people'. In that event, given the decline in the proportion who hold an ethnic conception of British identity, perhaps there has been a change in the character of British national pride.

Figure 2 (Table 7) shows the proportion who say they feel 'proud' or 'very proud' of what Britain has achieved across six domains of national life and how this has changed over the last 30 years. People have consistently been more likely to be proud of what are perceived to be the country's cultural and sporting achievements than they have been of its political or economic record. In our latest survey, for example, nearly four in five (79%) say they are proud of Britain's achievements in arts and literature while just 44% feel proud of the country's economic achievements. Meanwhile, in many instances the level of pride reported in our latest survey is not dissimilar to that observed back in 1995. That said, however, there has been a marked decline of 17 points in the proportion who are proud of Britain's history, while the proportion who are proud of its artistic and literary achievements is ten points higher than 30 years ago. At the same time, we should note that whereas in every case the level of pride was higher in 2013 than it was in 1995,

in many instances that trend has been reversed over the last decade. For example, between 1995 and 2013 there was a 19 point increase (from 38% to 57%) in the proportion who were proud of the country’s economic achievements, whereas over the last ten years the figure has fallen back by 13 points (from 57% to 44%).

Figure 2 - Pride in Britain's achievements, 1995-2023

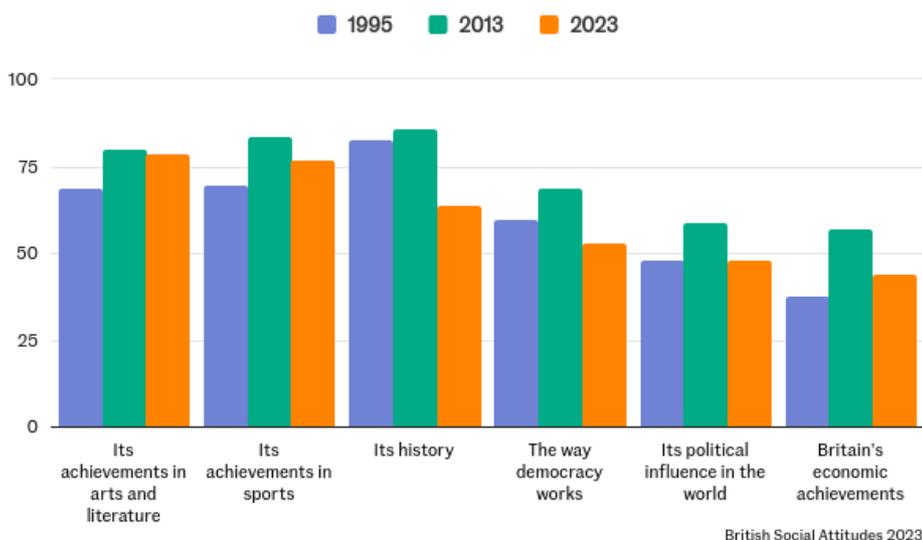


Table 7 – Pride in Britain’s achievements, 1995-2023

	1995	2003	2013	2023	Change 1995-2023	Change 2013-2023
% Saying 'Very proud'/'Proud' of Britain	%	%	%	%		
Its achievements in arts and literature	69	67	80	79	+10	-1
Its achievements in sports	70	63	84	77	+7	-7
Its history	83	82	86	64	-19	-22
The way democracy works	60	62	69	53	-7	-16
Its political influence in the world	48	54	59	48	+0	-11

Britain's economic achievements	38	62	57	44	+6	-13
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	1058	873	904	1611		

As we would anticipate, levels of pride in Britain's achievements are higher among those who identify as British than it is among those who do not. On average the difference is a little under ten points. For example, 69% of those who identify as British are proud of Britain's history, compared with 57% among those who do not. The narrowest difference is in respect of Britain's achievements in arts and literature, of which 80% of those who identify as British are proud, but where so also are 77% of those who do not choose British as one of their identities. However, overall, the relative levels of pride across the six domains are much the same among those who identify as British as they are among the population as a whole.

The reversal during the past decade of the previous increase in national pride may, of course, have been occasioned by circumstance. As Curtice et al note in their chapter on political trust, the political turmoil and economic difficulties of recent years have taken their toll on public perceptions of how the country is being governed. But that still leaves the contrast between the very sharp drop of 22 points in the proportion who are proud of the country's history and the near stability of the figure for arts and literature. We might anticipate that, given its emphasis on familial background, those who hold an ethnic conception of British identity are particularly proud about the country's history at a time when aspects of that history, most notably empire and slavery, have come to be questioned as part of the 'culture wars' debate (Curtice and Ratti, 2022). Conversely, the country's arts and literature often present a picture of a multicultural community.

This reasoning is supported by the results in Table 8, which shows the level of pride across all six domains broken down by whether people are primarily civic or primarily ethnic in their conception of British identity. Uniquely, those with an ethnic conception (74%) are more likely than those with a civic one (65%) to say they are proud of Britain's history. Conversely those with a civic conception (84%) are more likely than those with an ethnic one (74%) to express pride in Britain's arts and literature. In fact, they are also rather more likely to express pride in the country's sporting achievements and the way its democracy works, both of which are aspects of the country's current life

rather than its past. In any event, one of the reasons for the sharp decline in pride in Britain’s history over the past decade (and the lack of much of a drop in the proportion who are proud in its arts and literature) probably lies in the decline (see Table 1 above) in the proportion who have an ethnic conception of British identity.

Table 8 – Pride in Britain’s achievements by conception of British identity, 2023.

	Primarily Civic	Primarily Ethnic	Total
% Saying ‘Very proud’/’Proud’ of Britain	%	%	%
Its achievements in arts and literature	84	74	79
Its achievements in sports	80	72	77
Its history	65	74	64
The way democracy works	57	49	53
Its political influence in the world	50	51	48
Britain’s economic achievements	46	48	44
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1084</i>	<i>316</i>	<i>1611</i>

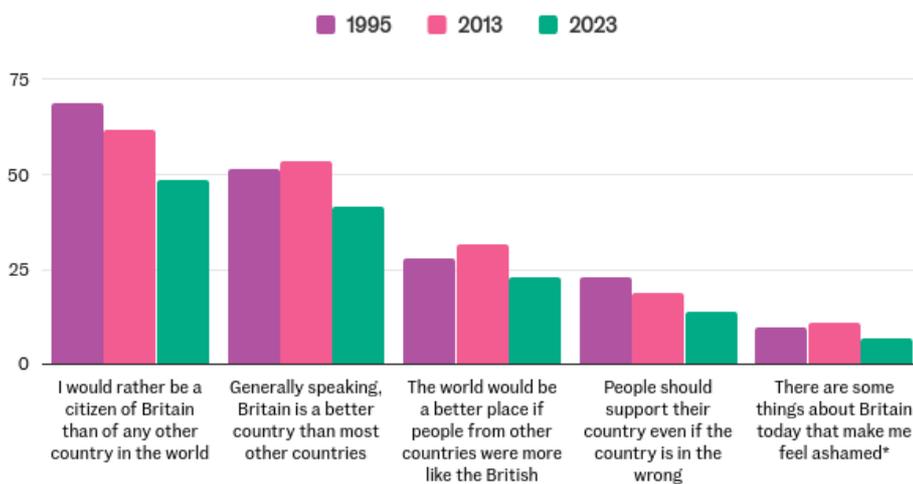
But what about more nationalist and jingoistic expressions of national pride? Figure 3 (Table 9) shows the level of agreement since 1995 with four statements that express the sentiment that Britain is one of the best if not, indeed, the best country in the world and thus is worthy of support. At the same time, it also includes the level of disagreement with one statement that expresses shame rather than pride in the country.

The picture that emerges from Figure 3 is of a country that feels quite proud of itself, but maybe no more than that. Around half (49%), say they would rather be British than a citizen of any other country, while just over two in five (42%) reckon Britain is better than most other countries. Meanwhile, hardly anyone (just 7%) feels there is nothing about the country of which they are

ashamed. On the other hand, less than a quarter (23%) believe the world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the British, while only one in seven (14%) reckon that people should support their own country even if it is wrong.

Yet what is most striking about the chart is that whereas hitherto levels of nationalist sentiment have largely changed little over time, over the last decade they have fallen sharply. In particular, there has been a 13 point drop in the proportion who would prefer to be a citizen of Britain rather than any other country, and a similar 12 point fall in the proportion who reckon Britain is better than most other countries. So, the last decade has not only witnessed, as we saw earlier, a sharp fall in pride in the country's achievements but also a notable decline in expressions of nationalist sentiment.

Figure 3 - British nationalist sentiment, 1995-2023



* The figures for this item are the % who 'Disagree / Disagree Strongly'

British Social Attitudes 2023

Table 9 – British Nationalist Sentiment, 1995-2023

	1995	2003	2013	2023	Change 1995-2023	Change 2013-2023
% Saying 'Agree'/'Agree strongly'	%	%	%	%		
I would rather be a citizen of Britain than of any other						

country in the world	69	70	62	49	-20	-13
Generally speaking, Britain is a better country than most other countries	52	46	54	42	-10	-12
The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the British	28	29	32	23	-5	-9
People should support their country even if the country is in the wrong	23	19	19	14	-9	-5
There are some things about Britain today that make me feel ashamed*	10	8	11	7	-3	-4
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>1058</i>	<i>873</i>	<i>904</i>	<i>1611</i>		

* *The figures for this item are the % who 'Disagree / Disagree Strongly'*

In line with the expectations we set out earlier, Table 10 shows that those with an ethnic conception of identity are more likely to express agreement with statements that encapsulate nationalist – and thus exclusive – sentiment. Typically, the difference is around ten points. For example, 59% of those with an ethnic conception of British identity agree that they would prefer to be a citizen of Britain rather than another country, compared with 48% of those with a civic conception. Similarly, 36% of those with an ethnic conception believe the world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the British, compared with 22% of those with a civic outlook. This suggests the decline in those who emphasise ethnic attributes of British identity helps at least in part to account for the decline in nationalist sentiment.

Table 10 – British nationalist sentiment by conception of British identity, 2023

	Primarily Civic	Primarily Ethnic	Total
	%	%	%
I would rather be a citizen of Britain than of any other country in the world	48	59	49
Generally speaking, Britain is a better country than most other countries	42	49	42
The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the British	22	36	23
People should support their country even if the country is in the wrong	12	24	14
There are some things about Britain today that make me feel ashamed*	7	9	7
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1084</i>	<i>316</i>	<i>1611</i>

** Figures for these measures are the % who 'Agree' / 'Agree Strongly', with the exception of the fifth item which shows the % who 'Disagree / Disagree Strongly'*

Three key findings emerge from our analysis. First, most people in Britain have a civic conception rather than an ethnic conception of what it means to be British. Second, this pattern has strengthened over the past ten years. Third, after increasing between the 1990s and the 2010s, pride in Britain's achievements has fallen during the last decade, and especially so in respect of the country's history. At the same time, nationalist sentiment appears to have waned. Despite Brexit and the debate about immigration, Britain has become less exclusive in its attitude towards Britishness, less likely to feel a sense of superiority as compared with the rest of the world, and somewhat more critical about its politics and its past. It is perhaps a picture of a country that to some degree at least becomes more reflective about itself and about its relationship with the rest of the world.

National Identity in Scotland and England

As we have noted, national identity – and especially ethnic conceptions thereof – can express itself in nationalist sentiment. But does this mean that all nationalisms, such as the assertion of a British nationalism implied in Brexit and the Scottish nationalism that calls for independence for Scotland, are necessarily the same? Many of those who argue for Scottish independence certainly claim there is a difference between these two examples. They argue Scottish nationalism is civic in character and is both welcoming of those who decide to come to Scotland to live (thereby helping to reverse the country’s relative population decline and the ageing of its population) and willing to share sovereignty with other countries, including not least in the European Union (Gunn and Schmitdke, 2015; Paterson, 2024). Both of these characteristics, it is argued, are the very opposite of those associated with Brexit. Indeed, whereas England voted by 53% to 47% in favour of leaving the European Union, Scotland voted by 62% to 38% to remain a member. Perhaps this means that people’s understanding of national identity is different in the two parts of the UK, with people in Scotland having a more civic and inclusive outlook than those living south of the border?

We address this question in three stages. First, we compare the understanding of those living in England as to what it means to be British with the conception of Britishness held by people in Scotland. Are people in Scotland less likely to have an ethnic conception of what it means to be British? However, perhaps any more civic conception of national identity in Scotland only emerges if we ask people about what it means to be Scottish rather than what it means to be British – after all that is the identity that underlies support for Scottish independence. That leads us in turn to investigate whether within England people’s understanding of national identity depends on whether they feel primarily English or primarily British.

The distribution of national identity is, of course, different in the two countries. When BSA presented people in England with a list of all of the identities associated with Britain and Ireland, 66% said they were British, a figure that has changed relatively little since the question was first asked in 1996. True, just over half (52%) acknowledged being English, exactly the same proportion as in 1996 though rather lower than was recorded in many years in between. In contrast, only 42% of respondents to SSA selected British as one of their identities, a figure that, if anything, is somewhat lower than on previous SSA surveys (though this may be attributable to the survey

methodology; see Scholes et al., 2024). As many as seven in ten (70%) said they were Scottish.

These figures imply that many people in England feel both British and English, while many in Scotland regard themselves as both British and Scottish. We can gain a sense of which, if either, of the two identities matters more to people by examining their responses to the following question (Moreno, 2006):

Which, if any, of the following best describes how you see yourself?

1. ***(English/Scottish/Welsh) not British***
2. ***More (English/Scottish/Welsh) than British***
3. ***Equally (English/Scottish/Welsh) and British***
4. ***More British than (English/Scottish/Welsh)***
5. ***British not (English/Scottish/Welsh)***
6. ***Other description (please say what)***

Those living in England were asked to choose between English and British, while those living in Scotland were presented with the options, Scottish and British.

Now (see Table 11) we observe an even sharper contrast between England and Scotland. In England many people (45%) feel both English and British, while the remainder are evenly balanced between 23% who feel exclusively or primarily English and 22% who regard themselves as exclusively or primarily British. However, in Scotland well over half (57%) say they are exclusively or primarily Scottish, while just one in eight (12%) feel exclusively or primarily British, a picture that has changed relatively little in recent years. Meanwhile, only one in four (25%) people in Scotland feel equally Scottish and British. Thus, in the analysis that follows we need to bear in mind that many fewer people in Scotland than in England have a strong British identity, while in England it appears that for many their British identity sits fairly easily alongside an English identity that they acknowledge too.

Table 11 - Moreno national identity in England and Scotland, 2023

	England	Scotland
	%	%
English/Scottish, not British	13	32
More English/Scottish than British	10	25
Equally English/Scottish and British	45	25
More British than English/Scottish	11	6
British, not English/Scottish	11	6
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>4793</i>	<i>1574</i>

One consequence of this difference in the pattern of national identity can be seen in Table 12, which shows the proportion of people in the two countries who regard each of our specific civic and ethnic attributes as important to being ‘truly British’. In every case, fewer people in Scotland than in England say the attribute is important for being ‘truly British’, while this is especially true of whether someone feels British. Just 59% of people in Scotland believes feeling British matters, compared with 70% in England. This difference is consistent with our earlier findings (Table 3) that those who do not feel British, more numerous as they are in Scotland, are less likely to regard any of the attributes of British identity as important.

Table 12 - Importance of civic and ethnic attributes for being ‘truly British’, England and Scotland 2023

	England	Scotland
	%	%
Civic Attributes		
To respect British political institutions and laws	86	79
To have British citizenship	79	71
To feel British	70	59
Ethnic Attributes		
To have been born in Britain	55	49
To have British ancestry	39	32
To be a Christian	19	16
<i>Unweighted base</i>	4793	1574

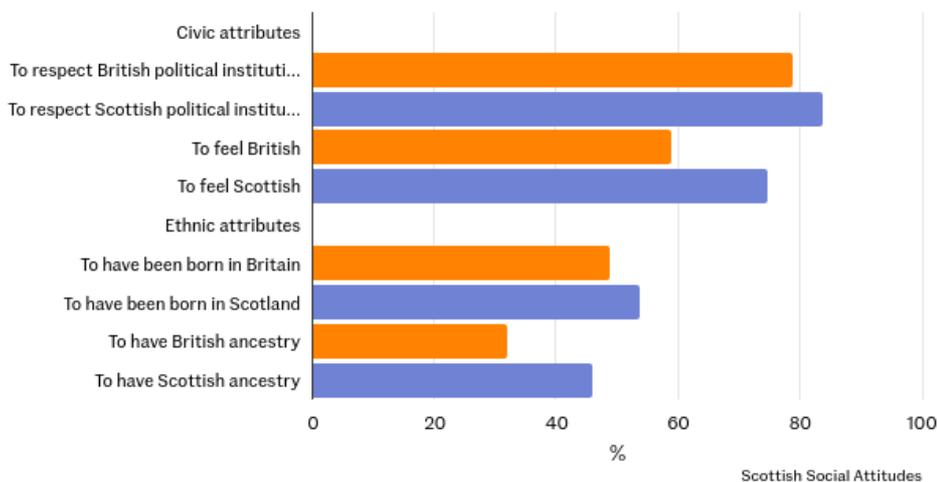
Nevertheless, Table 12 seems to imply that there is little difference between people in England and those in Scotland in whether their conception of British identity is primarily civic or ethnic. This is confirmed by the pattern of answers in the two countries to the new question in the ISSP module we introduced earlier, which asks whether people have to be born in Britain to be truly British or whether they can become British if they make an effort to do so. Just under one in five (19%) of people in England gave the ethnic response that someone needs to have been born in Britain. So also did the same proportion of people in Scotland. Meanwhile, 68% of people in England said that someone could become British through their own effort, actually slightly higher than the equivalent figure in Scotland (63%), where rather more people (18%) than in England (13%) felt unable to choose.

So there is little sign here that people in Scotland are more likely to have a civic conception of what it means to be British. But what happens if we ask

people in Scotland about Scottish identity rather than British identity? Does a more civic conception emerge then? As we would anticipate given that more people in Scotland identify as Scottish than do so as British, Figure 4 (Table 13) shows that people are more likely to feel that both civic and ethnic attributes are more important to being 'truly Scottish' than they are to being 'truly British'. For example, as many as 75% say it is important to feel Scottish in order to be truly Scottish, well above the 59% who say that feeling British is important to being truly British. This in fact means that people in Scotland are somewhat more likely to say that feeling Scottish matters to being Scottish than people in England are to say that feeling British is important for being truly British (70% – see Table 12 above). Indeed, having Scottish ancestry, which is thought to matter to being Scottish by 46% of people in Scotland, is also more likely to be mentioned than is British ancestry to being British by people in England (39%). In short, there is no sign here either that people in Scotland are less likely to have an ethnic conception of national identity than their counterparts south of the border.

Conceptions of British and Scottish identity, Scotland, 2023

% saying 'very'/'fairly' important



Scotland, 2023

	British identity	Scottish identity
	%	%
Civic Attributes		
To respect [British/Scottish] political institutions and laws	79	84
To feel [British/Scottish]	59	75
Ethnic Attributes		
To have been born in [Britain/Scotland]	49	54
To have [British/Scottish] ancestry	32	46
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1574	1574

This observation is affirmed by the pattern of response when people were asked whether someone needs to have been born in Scotland to be truly Scottish or whether they can become Scottish through their own effort. This reveals that people in Scotland are more likely to say someone needs to be born in Scotland to be Scottish (30%) than they are to feel that someone needs to have been born in Britain to feel British (19%). Indeed, this means that they are also more likely to attach importance to birth as a condition for being Scottish than people in England are to regard it as necessary to be considered British (also 19%). Although most people in Scotland (59%) say someone can become Scottish through their own effort, it appears they are no more civic in their understanding of what it means to be Scottish than people in England are of what it means to be British. In truth, both identities are primarily understood as primarily civic in character.

This remains the case if we take into account people's own national identity. True, those in Scotland who, in response to the Moreno question, say they are exclusively or primarily Scottish are somewhat more likely (61%) than those who are exclusively or primarily British (54%) to say that someone can be truly Scottish through their own effort. However, they are just as likely (30%

vs. 29%) to state that someone needs to have been born in Scotland to be truly Scottish – it is just the case that more of those who prioritise their British identity say they cannot choose between the two options.

Yet although in Scotland people's own identity makes little difference to their understanding of national identity, in England whether people feel British or English does make some difference to their conception of what it means to be British. Previous research has found that, inter alia, those who feel exclusively or primarily English are more likely to have voted Leave in the 2016 referendum and are less liberal in their attitudes towards immigration (Henderson et al., 2017; Curtice and Montagu, 2018a). They also prove to be twice as likely (30%) as those who feel primarily or exclusively British (15%) to say that someone needs to have been born in Britain to be truly British. Conversely, whereas 72% of those who feel exclusively or primarily British say that someone can become British through their own effort, only 60% of those who regard themselves as exclusively or primarily English feel that way. In fact, this means there is a striking similarity between how those in England who feel exclusively or primarily English regard British identity and how those in Scotland who feel exclusively or primarily Scottish think of their Scottish identity. In both cases, 30% prioritise birth. Conceptions of national identity in England and Scotland do indeed prove to be remarkably similar to each other.

Much the same proves to be true of sources of national pride. As we might anticipate, people in Scotland are consistently more likely – in each case by around ten points – to express pride in Scotland's achievements than they are those of Britain as a whole. However, when, as in Figure 5 (Table 14), we compare the level of pride that people in England have in Britain's various achievements with the level that people in Scotland have in Scotland's achievements, the figures are relatively similar. That said, people in Scotland are more likely to express pride in Scotland's history (78%) than people in England are in Britain's history (65%), while they are less likely to feel proud of Scotland's achievements in sport.

Figure 5 - Sources of national pride in England and Scotland

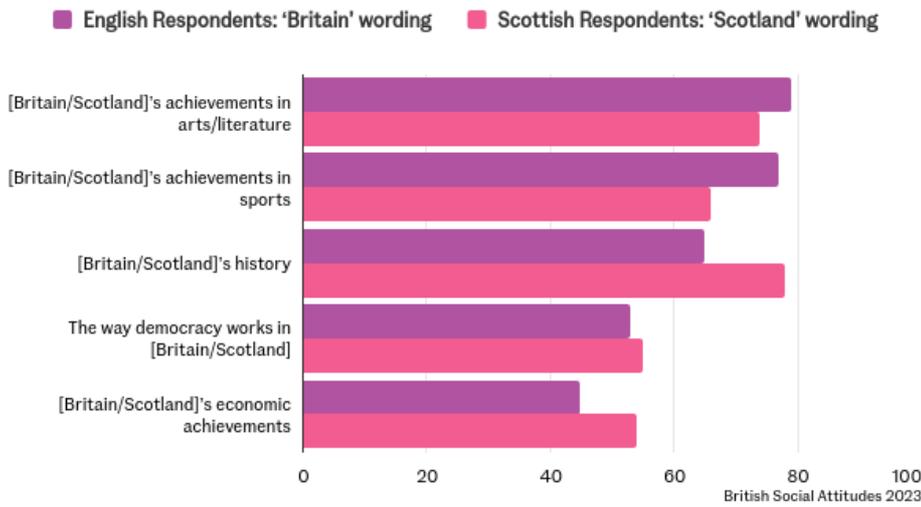


Table 14 - Sources of national pride in England and Scotland

	English Respondents: 'Britain' wording	Scottish Respondents: 'Scotland' wording
% 'Very' / 'Somewhat' Proud	%	%
[Britain/Scotland]'s achievements in arts/literature	79	74
[Britain/Scotland]'s achievements in sports	77	66
[Britain/Scotland]'s history	65	78
The way democracy works in [Britain/Scotland]	53	55
[Britain/Scotland]'s economic achievements	45	54
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>1380</i>	<i>1574</i>

The latter finding perhaps reflects the lower likelihood of a smaller country enjoying sporting success on the international stage. Be that as it may, we

now discover that not only is Scottish ancestry thought to play a role in marking someone out as ‘truly Scottish’ but also now that people in Scotland take especial pride in their country’s history. Such findings might be thought the very opposite of what we would expect for a country that is thought to be especially civic and inclusive in its outlook. However, perhaps here we need to exercise a little caution. Because Scotland is a stateless nation, albeit one with devolved political institutions, there is no legal definition of who is a Scottish citizen. With no contemporary definition to fall back on, in those circumstances perhaps we should not be surprised that familial background and the past plays a rather bigger role in the country’s understanding of itself than we might otherwise have anticipated.

Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, people’s understanding of national identity is much the same in Scotland as it is in England. Rather than being more civic in character in the former than in the latter, people’s conception of what it means to be British is much the same in both countries – that is, primarily civic – even though fewer people in Scotland feel as strongly about what it means to be British. Meanwhile, when people in Scotland are asked what matters to being truly Scottish, what is normally regarded as an ethnic attribute – birth and ancestry – actually emerge as rather more important features in people’s minds. Scotland’s distinctive attitude towards Brexit is not a reflection of a more inclusive understanding of national identity.

National Identity in England and Scotland – Brexit and Independence

Still, the fact that conceptions of national identity are similar in Scotland to those in England does not necessarily mean that the conception held by those who support independence is similar to that who voted to Leave the EU. After all, the demography of support for these two political objectives is very different. Brexit was supported most heavily by older people and those with few, if any, educational qualifications (Curtice, 2017). Independence in contrast is backed more by younger people and is somewhat more popular among graduates than non-graduates (Curtice and Montagu, 2018b). So while voters' general understanding of what it means to be Scottish is not dissimilar to what is thought to matter to being British, it may be that national identity is understood very differently by the two groups of supporters.

Table 15 begins our analysis of this issue by undertaking two analyses. On the left-hand side it shows for those across Britain as a whole the perceived importance of our various civic and ethnic attributes to being 'truly British', broken down whether the respondent would vote now to join the EU or not. Then, on the right-hand side, it shows for those living in Scotland the perceived importance of the same attributes to being 'truly Scottish' broken down by whether people would vote Yes or No in another referendum on Scottish independence.

It shows, as anticipated, that those who would vote against joining the EU are much more likely than those who would vote in favour to attach importance to the two ethnic attributes of having been born in Britain and having British ancestry. For example, more than three-quarters (78%) of those who would vote against joining the EU say that it is important for someone to have been born in Britain compared with under half (45%) of those who would vote in favour. In contrast, those who would vote Yes to Scottish independence are a little less likely than those who would vote No to attach importance to the

same two ethnic attributes. For example, while 59% of those who would vote No believe it is important for someone to have been born in Scotland, 50% of those who back Yes express the same view. Between them these two patterns mean that those who would vote Yes to independence attach markedly less importance than those who would back staying out of the EU to either of our two ethnic attributes. That said, we should note that one feature the two groups do share in common is that they both place rather more emphasis on feeling British/Scottish than do those who do not share their political views.

Table 15 - Importance of civic and ethnic attributes of national identity by attitude towards EU membership and Scottish independence

	EU		Scottish	
	Membership		Independence	
	Join	Not Join	Yes	No
% 'Very' / 'Fairly' important for being truly [British]/[Scottish]	%	%	%	%
Civic Attributes				
To respect [British/Scottish] political institutions and laws	85	94	86	82
To feel [British/Scottish]	64	88	79	72
Ethnic Attributes				
To have been born [in Britain]/[in Scotland]	45	78	50	59
To have [British/Scottish] ancestry	28	65	42	51
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>950</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>768</i>	<i>759</i>

A similar picture emerges if we examine the answers from the same four groups of voters in response to the question that asks respondents to choose between birth and effort as a pathway to being truly British/Scottish. As Table 16 shows, over a quarter (27%) of those who would vote against Britain joining the EU say that place of birth is more important, compared with one in six

(16%) of those who would vote in favour. In contrast, those who would vote Yes to independence (23%) are 15 points less likely than those who would vote No (38%) to say that someone needs to be born in Scotland to be truly Scottish.

Table 16 – Conception of national identity by attitude towards EU membership and Scottish independence

	EU Membership		Scottish Independence	
	Join	Not Join	Yes	No
	%	%	%	%
'Primarily Civic' nationalist	71	66	66	52
'Primarily Ethnic' nationalist	16	27	23	38
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>950</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>768</i>	<i>759</i>

The more exclusive conception of national identity held by those who back Brexit and those who oppose independence is then reflected in their attitudes towards immigration. Table 17 reveals that those who would vote against joining the EU are more likely – indeed sometimes much more likely – to endorse negative statements about immigrants. For example, 57% of opponents of EU membership agree that immigrants increase crime rates, compared with just 17% of those who would vote to join. In contrast, those who would vote Yes to independence are less likely than those who would back No to agree with our negative statements, though the gap is not as wide as it is in the case of Brexit. While 32% of those who support Scotland remaining part of the UK agree that immigrants increase crime rates, only 19% of those who would vote Yes share that view. Meanwhile, as we would anticipate, those who would vote to stay out of the EU are less likely than those who would back joining to endorse positive statements about immigrants, whereas Yes supporters are more likely than their No counterparts to do so.

Table 17 - Attitudes towards immigration by attitudes towards EU membership and Scottish independence

	EU		Scottish	
	Membership		Independence	
	Join	Not Join	Yes	No
% 'Agree'/'Strongly Agree' that....	%	%	%	%
Negative Statements				
People in Britain should be given preference over immigrants when it comes to jobs, housing or healthcare	26	67	27	44
Immigrants increase crime rates	17	57	19	32
Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in Britain	8	36	13	19
Positive Statements				
Immigrants improve British society by bringing new ideas and cultures	75	36	65	49
Immigrants are generally good for Britain's economy	70	29	65	45
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>950</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>768</i>	<i>759</i>

A similar picture emerges if we compare attitudes towards protectionism. Although many campaigners for Brexit promoted a vision of a Britain that would be able to reduce trade barriers by striking its own trade deals rather than simply following those negotiated by the EU, this is not a vision that entuses many of those who back Brexit. As Table 18 shows, those who would vote against joining the EU are more likely than supporters of EU membership to adopt a protectionist stance both with respect to other countries. Table 18 reveals, for example, that over three in five (62%) of those who would vote against joining the EU agree that 'Britain should limit the import of foreign products in order to protect its national economy', compared with only a quarter (25%) of those who would vote to join. There is a similarly large gap when respondents are asked whether 'Britain should follow its own interests,

even if this leads to conflicts with other countries'. In contrast, such sentiments are less widely felt by those who would vote Yes to independence than they are by those who would back No. In particular, only around a quarter of Yes supporters feel that Britain should limit foreign imports, compared with 43% of those who are opposed to independence. The only instance where pro-Brexit and pro-independence supporters do have somewhat similar views is when they are asked about the impact of international businesses on small companies in Britain, where both groups are a little more inclined to agree that they have a damaging impact.

Table 18 - Attitudes towards economic protectionism by attitude towards EU membership and Scottish independence

	EU Membership		Scottish Independence	
	Join	Not Join	Yes	No
% 'Strongly agree'/'Agree'	%	%	%	%
Large international companies are doing more and more damage to local businesses in Britain	50	63	55	49
Britain should limit the import of foreign products in order to protect its national economy	25	62	26	43
Britain should follow its own interests, even if this leads to conflicts with other nations	18	60	21	37
British television should give preference to British films and programs	17	32	16	19
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>950</i>	<i>393</i>	<i>768</i>	<i>759</i>

Although people's understanding of national identity is much the same in Scotland as it is in England, our evidence strongly suggests that the nationalism which underpins the demand for Scottish independence is rather different from that which underlay popular support for Brexit. This reflects a sharp difference between the appeals made by the two campaigns. Focusing

as it did on sovereignty and immigration, the argument for Brexit was more exclusive in tone than a campaign for Scottish independence that suggested Scotland should pool its sovereignty with the EU and which promoted a civic understanding of who is Scottish. Thus although both projects are seemingly nationalist in their ambition, in practice they have divided and politicised voters in very different ways.

Conclusion

There are two rather different stories told about British identity. One is a vision of a multicultural society that is welcoming of the cultural diversity that post-war waves of immigration have brought. The other is of a proud country that has withstood all invaders since the Norman Conquest, and which enjoys a rich and unique cultural legacy that needs to be cherished and preserved. The decision to leave the European Union seemed to suggest that the latter vision was the more powerful in the popular mind. However, what appears to have happened in practice during the last decade is that British identity has come to be conceived to an even greater extent than before in primarily civic, inclusive terms that potentially leave the door open to newcomers. In tandem with this development it has also become a society that is less likely to take pride in its past rather than its present, though for the time being at least it has also become more doubtful about its current political standing too.

Moreover, this conception of British identity is in many respects widely shared. Although fewer people in Scotland feel British, they share with those living in England much the same view of what being British entails. Meanwhile, although familial background seems to matter more to Scots' understanding of who is Scottish, this identity too is predominantly conceived of as a civic one. Meanwhile, even among those who support being outside the EU, it is a civic conception of what it means to be British that is more common.

Yet different understandings of what it means to be British or Scottish have still played a role in shaping popular support for Brexit and for Scottish independence – but in divergent ways. Those who back Brexit are somewhat more likely than those who support EU membership to have an ethnic conception of what it means to be British. In contrast, those who support Scottish independence are rather more inclined to take an inclusive view of what it means to be Scottish. Even when understanding of national identity is widely shared, the politics that surround the subject can still be a source of division.

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The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is run by a group of research organisations in different countries, each of which undertakes to field annually an agreed module of questions on a chosen topic area. Between 1985 and 2019, an International Social Survey Programme module was included on BSA as part of the self-completion questionnaire. In 2021, ISSP fieldwork in Great Britain was conducted using sample from the NatCen Opinion Panel and in 2022 and 2023 was run as a module on BSA. Each ISSP module is chosen for repetition at intervals to allow comparisons both between countries (membership is currently standing at 45) and over time. Further information on ISSP is available on their website: www.issp.org.

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Appendix

Table 6 with unweighted bases included as follows:

Importance of being born in Britain for being truly British by birth cohort, 2023

	1995	2003	2013	2023	<i>Unweighted base 1995</i>	<i>Unweighted base 2003</i>	<i>Unweighted base 2013</i>	<i>Unweighted base 2023</i>
1910s	86	-	-	-	57	-	-	-
1920s	87	75	-	-	127	75	-	-
1930s	78	81	89	-	141	126	91	-
1940s	83	73	86	73	163	133	142	166
1950s	74	67	74	65	187	158	161	276
1960s	69	66	74	65	237	173	148	303
1970s	-	64	66	54	-	147	153	239
1980s	-	-	63	50	-	-	118	272
1990s	-	-	-	47	-	-	-	246

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Footnotes

1. All charts in this chapter are followed by the corresponding data tables. This is in addition to the data tables in the appendix. [↑](#)

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