

Voting

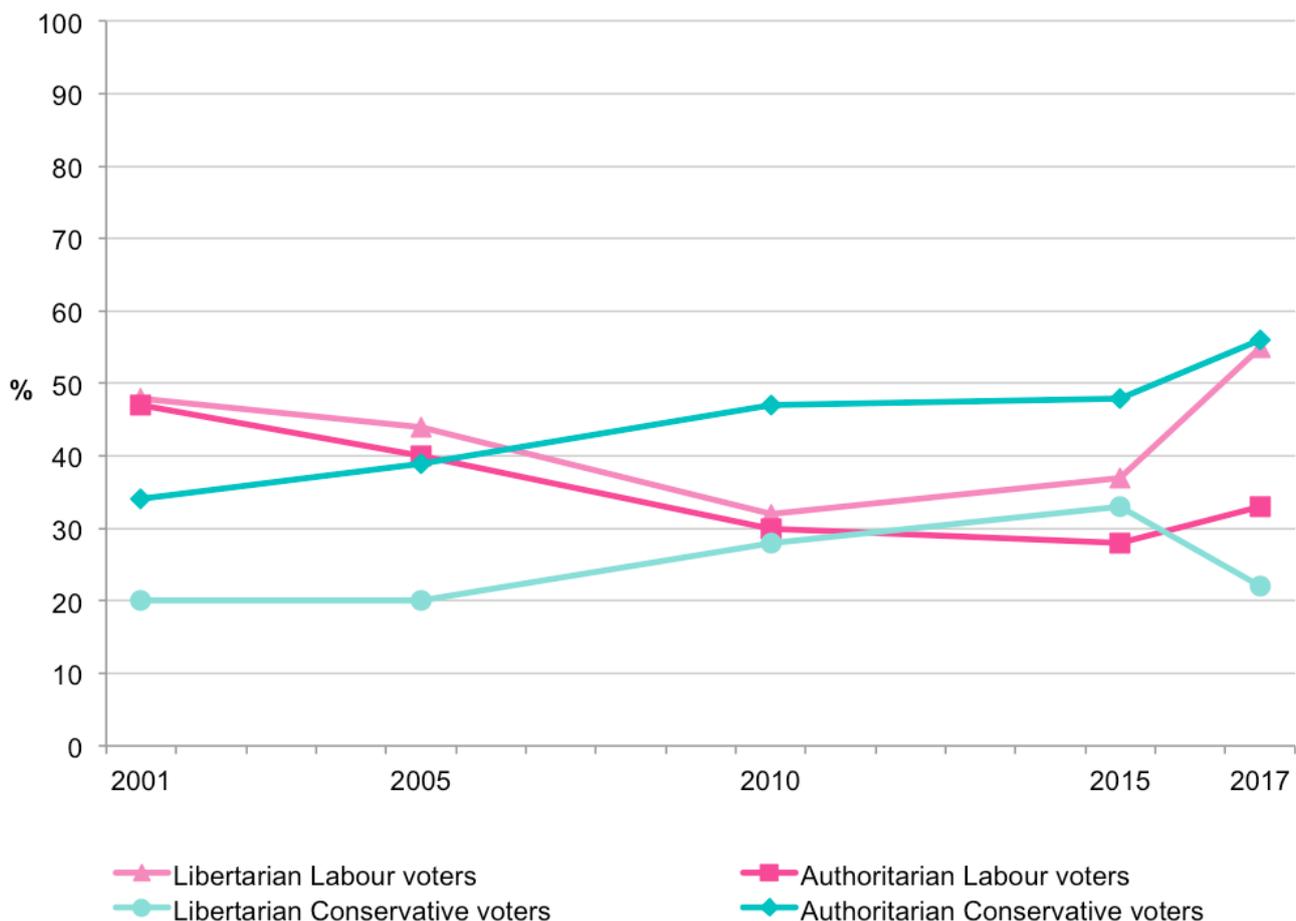
The 2017 Election: New divides in British politics?

Theresa May precipitated the 2017 general election in order to secure a mandate for her vision of Brexit. But did the way that people voted reflect their views about Brexit? This chapter shows that to some extent they did, and that, as a result, whether someone is a 'libertarian' or an 'authoritarian' now has a considerable bearing on whether they are likely to vote Labour or Conservative, alongside the more traditional 'left-right' division in Labour and Conservative support.

Spotlight

Between the 2015 and the 2017 elections, a much deeper divide opened up to separate libertarian and authoritarian voters' support for the Conservatives and Labour.

Labour and Conservative vote choice, by libertarian-authoritarian position, 2001-2017



Overview

Leave voters swung to the Conservatives while Labour advanced more among Remain supporters

Support for the Conservatives increased among Leave voters and fell among Remain supporters, while Labour's support increased much less among Leave supporters than it did among Remain voters.

- Support for the Conservatives increased by 14 points between 2015 and 2017 among those who say Britain should leave the EU, while it fell by 7 points among those who say Britain should stay in an EU that is at least as powerful as it is at present.
 - Support for Labour increased by 7 points among those who support leaving the EU, but by 16 points among those who want Britain to remain in an EU that is as powerful as at present.
 - As a result, 58% of Leave supporters voted Conservative at the election, while 52% of Remain voters backed Labour.
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A stronger libertarian-authoritarian division

Whether someone voted Conservative or Labour in 2017 was more strongly linked with whether they have a 'libertarian' or an 'authoritarian' outlook than at any other recent election.

- Fifty six per cent of authoritarians but only 22% of libertarians voted Conservative. Conversely, 55% of libertarians voted Labour but only 33% of authoritarians did so.
 - However, the libertarian-authoritarian division in Conservative and Labour support exists alongside the traditional 'left-right' division rather than displacing it.
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Age has become the biggest demographic division in Conservative and Labour support

Never before has there been so large an age divide in British electoral politics. Labour support is far higher among younger voters than it is among older ones, while the opposite is true of Conservative support.

- Support for Labour increased by 23 points among those aged under 35, whereas it did little more than hold steady (up 2 points) among those aged 65 and over.
 - The Conservative vote increased by 6 points among those aged 65 and over, while it fell by 10 points among those aged under 35.
 - As many as 62% of under 35s voted Labour, while 55% of those aged 65 or over supported the Conservatives.
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Introduction

In announcing on 18th April 2017 that she wished to precipitate an early general election, Theresa May's rationale was clear. The Prime Minister feared that her existing overall majority in the House of Commons of 12 seats was too small for her to be confident of being able to deliver her vision of Brexit. She feared her strategy would always be at risk of being ambushed by the opposition. She therefore wanted a larger parliamentary majority, an outcome that, she believed, would not only reinforce her position at home, but also strengthen her hand in the forthcoming negotiations with the European Union. Thus, the Prime Minister suggested, the election was to be a battle between the parties' alternative visions of Brexit and a judgement on the ability of the respective party leaders to deliver their vision successfully (BBC, 2017).

The Prime Minister took her decision against the backdrop of a large lead in the opinion polls. Even so the decision appeared rather risky. After all, one of the key features of the pattern of voting in the EU referendum the previous year had been the relative failure of the parties to persuade voters to follow their advice about which way to vote. In calling the referendum, the then Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, had recommended that voters should vote to remain in the EU. Yet in the event, a majority (54%) of those who identified as Conservatives voted Leave. One in three Labour supporters also defied their party's recommendation to vote to Remain in the EU. Even the Liberal Democrats, historically the most pro-EU of the parties, found that around a quarter of their supporters backed Leave. The only party that was able to persuade more or less all of its supporters to follow its recommendation was UKIP, and most likely they needed little persuasion to vote Leave in the first place (Curtice, 2017a).

This failure of the parties to persuade many of their voters to back staying in the EU should not, perhaps, have come as a surprise. Europe had long been a divisive issue in the ranks of both Conservative and Labour MPs. It caused Labour to split in the 1980s and the Conservatives to engage in internecine combat from the early 1990s onwards. During the EU referendum itself, the Conservative parliamentary party divided almost evenly between supporters of Remain and backers of Leave (BBC, 2016), and although most Labour MPs backed Remain, those that did not were particularly prominent in campaigning for a Leave vote. In short, voters might be thought to have received rather mixed messages from the parties in the run up to the referendum vote.

But division within each party's supporters was also not surprising given the subject matter of the referendum. The ideological division between Conservative and Labour is primarily a division between 'left' and 'right', that is, between those who think the government should intervene a bit more with a view to making society more equal and those who think it should step back a bit and ensure there are

The election was a battle between the parties' alternative visions of Brexit

adequate incentives for people to invest and help grow the economy. Those who hold the former view are more likely to vote Labour while those with the latter disposition are more inclined to support the Conservatives (Curtice, 2010; 2017b). However, for the most part, the debate during the referendum campaign was not about the role of the government in managing the economy and dealing with inequality. Rather, it was about Britain's relationship with the rest of the world, including whether it should accept the limitations on its sovereignty that came with EU membership and the extent to which it should be willing to embrace immigration from the EU (and elsewhere). These are issues that belong to a different ideological division, one between, on the one hand, libertarians or social liberals and, on the other, authoritarians or social conservatives (Heath et al., 1985.). The former group comprises those who feel that people should be free to choose the moral code that they follow and the social mores that they respect, and are comfortable living in a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic society. These are views that were associated with voting for Remain. Those in the latter group, in contrast, are inclined to the view that society needs to encourage and enforce common moral codes, social mores and linguistic practices as a way of promoting social cohesion, while they are personally more comfortable living in a relatively homogenous society. This group consists disproportionately of Leave supporters (Curtice, 2017a; see also the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping).

In short, if voters followed the Prime Minister's cue and voted according to their feelings about Brexit, there was a prospect that some of the traditional patterns of voting behaviour at election time might well be disturbed. True, both Labour and the Conservatives (though not the Liberal Democrats or the SNP) said that the outcome of the referendum should be respected, and to that extent the two largest parties shared the same position on the issue. However, the vision of Brexit that the Prime Minister had laid out three months earlier in a speech at Lancaster House¹ (May, 2017), a vision which ruled out continued membership of the EU Single Market and, most likely, the Customs Union too, had widely been portrayed as a 'hard' Brexit. Moreover, it was a stance from which Labour to some extent had demurred; the party argued that there should be a "strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the Single Market and the Customs Union" (Labour Party, 2017). Certainly, the Prime Minister wanted voters to believe that there was an important difference between her stance on Brexit and that of her opponents. However, if they took her at her word, perhaps any gains she might make among more socially conservative Leave supporters who liked her vision of Brexit would be counterbalanced by losses among those more liberal Conservative voters who voted Remain and who wanted a 'softer' Brexit? If so, the result might be a Conservative – and a Labour – vote that had a rather different character than usual.

1 May, T. (2017), 'The government's negotiating objectives for exiting the EU', Speech given at Lancaster House, 17 January, available at www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech

In this chapter, we assess the extent to which voters' attitudes towards Brexit affected the way in which they voted in the 2017 election and whether, as a result, some of the traditional patterns of voting in British elections were disturbed. We start by looking at the extent to which those who voted Remain and Leave in the 2016 referendum – and those who support a hard rather than a soft Brexit – behaved differently at the election. We then examine whether the pattern of voting in 2017 represented a change in the ideological underpinnings of party support and, in particular, whether the distinction between libertarians and authoritarians was reflected more strongly than before in how people voted. Finally, we investigate the implications of our findings for the demographics of party support.

Perceptions of the parties' stance on Brexit

We begin by looking at where the parties themselves were thought to stand on Brexit. After all, voters might be thought unlikely to decide how to vote on the basis of this issue unless they reckoned that the parties held different views about how it should be pursued – and the distinction between the positions adopted by the Conservatives and Labour might be considered relatively subtle.

The key choice that it was widely felt the UK faced in the Brexit negotiations was whether it wanted to maintain free trade with the EU or be able to control EU immigration. The EU took the view that freedom of movement for EU citizens was one of four freedoms that were integral to the maintenance of the EU Single Market (European Parliament, 2017). Consequently, any wish to control immigration was incompatible with continued membership of the Single Market. Indeed, it was in recognition of this stance, together with a belief that the public wanted greater control over immigration, that the Conservative government had accepted that the UK should not attempt to remain in the Single Market – albeit it still wanted a wide-ranging free trade agreement. In any event, a wish to prioritise immigration control was widely portrayed as supporting a hard Brexit, whereas those who felt it was more important to maintain free trade with the EU were regarded as supporters of a soft Brexit.

To identify where voters stood on this issue we invite them to consider the following question:

It has been argued that when Britain leaves the EU, British firms will only be allowed to continue to sell goods and services freely to people in the EU if people from the EU are still free to come here to live and work

Do you think Britain should or should not allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work in return for allowing British firms to sell goods and services freely in the EU?

The key choice the UK faced in the Brexit negotiations was whether it wanted to maintain free trade with the EU or be able to control EU immigration

Respondents can answer by choosing one of the following options:

Definitely should allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work

Probably should allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work

Probably should not allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work

Definitely should not allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work

Supporters of a soft Brexit prove to be more numerous. As many as 30% say that the UK should definitely allow people from the EU to come here freely to live and work in order to secure free trade, while another 28% state that it should probably do so. This represents a combined tally of 58% support. In contrast, just 12% say that the UK should definitely not allow people from the EU to come freely to the UK to live and work, while another 18% state that it probably should not, a total of 30%. Another 11% indicate they cannot choose which option is best. As we might anticipate, those who voted Remain are most likely to say that such a deal should be struck (78% say it definitely or probably should be) whereas Leave voters are more likely to take the opposite view (51% are definitely or probably opposed and only 36% in favour).

Of more immediate interest to us here, however, is what respondents say when we ask them where they think the parties stand on this issue. Respondents are asked:

And as far as you know, where does the Conservative Party stand on this issue?

Is the Conservative Party in favour or against allowing people from the EU to come here freely to live and work in return for allowing British firms to sell goods and services freely in the EU?

The same question is then also asked about the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP. As Table 1 shows, it is a question that many voters find difficult to answer. In the case of the Conservatives, Labour and UKIP around a quarter say they cannot choose where they stand, while in the case of the Liberal Democrats the figure is nearly two-fifths. That said, among those who do feel able to answer, the parties are regarded rather differently. Most reckon that both Labour and the Liberal Democrats would be in favour of allowing continued freedom of movement, while UKIP would not. However, there is little sign that the Liberal Democrats' opposition to Brexit happening at all means that the party's stance is distinguishable in voters' minds from that of the Labour Party. But the one party about which opinion is more evenly divided is, perhaps ironically, the Conservatives. Although, on balance, slightly more people (40%) think that they would not allow freedom of movement than reckoned they would (32%), evidently there is some disagreement about where the party is thought to stand on the issue.

Around a quarter cannot choose where the Conservatives, Labour and UKIP stand on free movement and free trade

Table 1 Perceptions of the parties' stances on Brexit

Is party in favour or against allowing free movement of people in return for free trade in the EU?	Perceived stance of ...			
	... the Conservatives	... Labour	... the Liberal Democrats	... UKIP
	%	%	%	%
In favour	32	57	50	5
Against	40	16	10	67
Can't choose	26	25	38	25
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>812</i>	<i>812</i>	<i>812</i>	<i>812</i>

The reason for this disagreement becomes clearer when we look separately at the perceptions of those who voted Remain and Leave in the EU referendum. For the most part the two sets of voters are largely in agreement about where Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP stood on Brexit, albeit that Leave voters are more likely to be unable to state where they thought the parties stood. But Table 2 shows that in the case of the Conservatives, Remain voters are inclined to the view that the party backs a hard Brexit, while Leave voters feel that the party's position is rather softer. It seems that the apparent ambiguity in the Conservatives' position put the party's support at risk among Leave and Remain voters, both of which seem to think that the Tories might act against what they themselves might well prefer. However, Leave voters are still more likely to feel that the Conservative Party would oppose continued freedom of movement than they are to believe that either Labour or the Liberal Democrats would do so. So, although the parties' positions on Brexit may not be regarded as being as distinct as the Prime Minister claimed they were, there is perhaps enough of a distinction in voters' minds that those with different views on the subject might have behaved rather differently in the election contest.

Table 2 Perceptions of the parties' stances on Brexit, by EU referendum vote

Is party in favour or against allowing free movement of people in return for free trade in the EU?	Perceived stance of ...							
	... the Conservatives		... Labour		... the Liberal Democrats		...UKIP	
	Remain	Leave	Remain	Leave	Remain	Leave	Remain	Leave
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
In favour	29	44	62	57	61	44	2	9
Against	49	27	17	17	7	12	78	62
Can't choose	19	26	19	23	30	40	17	26
<i>Unweighted base</i>	345	300	345	300	345	300	345	300

Brexit and party choice

In the event, those with different views about Brexit did indeed vote rather differently in the election. Unsurprisingly, as Table 3 shows, nearly all of UKIP's (much diminished) support came from Leave voters, while the Liberal Democrats were much more popular among Remain voters (13% voted for them) than Leave supporters (3%). More striking, however, is the contrast between the pattern of support for the Conservatives and that for Labour. Just over half of those who voted Remain in the EU referendum voted Labour in the 2017 election, whereas only 30% of Leave voters did so. Conversely, twice as many Leave voters (58%) as Remain supporters (29%) voted for the Conservatives. Almost exactly the same pattern is in evidence if we compare those who can be said to favour a soft Brexit with those who back a harder version.

In the 2017 election, over half of Remain voters voted Labour, while over half of Leavers voted Conservative

Table 3 Vote choice, 2017 election, by (a) EU referendum vote, (b) Preference for a 'hard' or 'soft' Brexit

	EU Referendum Vote		Allow free movement of people in return for free trade?	
	Remain	Leave	Definitely/ probably should	Definitely/ probably should not
2017 general election vote	%	%	%	%
Conservative	29	58	33	59
Labour	52	30	49	30
Liberal Democrat	13	3	11	3
UKIP	*	5	1	4
Other	7	4	7	3
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1052	871	1053	527

But to what extent does this pattern represent a departure from how voters behaved at previous elections? We certainly might think it does given that, as noted above, in 2016 Conservative supporters were not far from being evenly divided in how they voted in the referendum, whereas in the 2017 election the party appears to have been much more popular among Leave voters than their Remain counterparts. But to pursue this further we need to use a different measure of attitudes towards the EU, one that has been asked regularly on British Social Attitudes (BSA) since well before the referendum was called. Further details about this question are to be found in the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping, here we can simply note that the question from 2017 reads:

Leaving aside the result of the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union, what do you think Britain's policy should be.

Should it...

... leave the European Union,

stay in the EU and try to reduce the EU's powers,

stay in the EU and try to keep the EU's powers as they are,

stay in the EU and try to increase the EU's powers,

or, work for the formation of a single European government?

In Table 4 we show how people voted in each of the 2005, 2015 and 2017 elections broken down by how they responded in those years to this question. Given that relatively few people selected either of the last two options, respondents choosing these have been combined with those who said that things should be left as they are.

Table 4 Vote choice, by attitudes towards participation in the EU, 2005, 2015 and 2017

	2005			2015		
	Leave	Stay (reduce powers)	Stay (keep powers at least same)	Leave	Stay (reduce powers)	Stay (keep powers at least same)
2017 general election vote	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	46	40	16	44	47	22
Labour	28	36	53	21	30	49
Liberal Democrat	16	19	24	2	8	8
UKIP	4	1	*	28	6	1
Other	6	4	6	5	9	20
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>494</i>	<i>1154</i>	<i>994</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>184</i>

	2017			Change in % vote 2015 - 2017		
	Leave	Stay (reduce powers)	Stay (keep powers at least same)	Leave	Stay (reduce powers)	Stay (keep powers at least same)
2017 general election vote	%	%	%			
Conservative	58	35	14	+14	-12	-7
Labour	28	48	65	+7	+18	+16
Liberal Democrat	3	10	13	+1	+2	+5
UKIP	6	*	1	-22	-5	-1
Other	5	7	7	0	-3	-13
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>569</i>	<i>507</i>	<i>338</i>			

Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

As we might by now anticipate, those who say that Britain should leave the EU voted very differently in 2017 from those who said that Britain should remain in the EU but try to reduce its powers, while that group, in turn, also behaved differently from those who would like the EU to remain at least as powerful as it is at present. In particular, the Conservatives (Table 4, top row) won a majority of the vote (58%) among the first group, only around a third among the second (35%), and even less (14%) in the third category. In contrast, the equivalent figures for Labour (in the second row) were around a third (28%), a half (48%), and two-thirds (65%).

What also becomes clear from Table 4 is that this division is much sharper in 2017 than it had been in 2015. Then the Conservative Party was no more popular among those who wanted to leave the EU than it was among those who felt that Britain should stay but simply try to reduce its powers. Only those who wanted the EU to remain at least as powerful as it was were less likely to vote for the party. Indeed, much the same was true ten years earlier in the 2005 election. But between 2015 and 2017 support for the Conservatives increased by 14 percentage points among those who want the UK to leave the EU – doubtless in part thanks to a collapse in support for UKIP among this group – while support fell by 12 and 7 points respectively among (a) those who would like to stay in the EU but reduce its powers and (b) those who would like to stay in the EU and at least keep the EU’s powers the same as they are now. Conversely, although support for Labour did increase between 2015 and 2017 among those who say Britain should leave (by 7 points), the party enjoyed more marked increases in support – of 18 and 16 points respectively – among the remaining two groups. As a result, in Labour’s case too, people’s attitudes towards the EU are more strongly related to how they voted in 2017 than they had been in 2015, or indeed long before that.

Nevertheless, perhaps voting Leave and supporting the Conservatives had already become more closely aligned with each other by the time voters made their choice in the EU referendum, and the pattern of party support in 2017 is simply a reflection of a change that has already happened. To investigate this possibility, we need to use a different measure of party support that is collected by BSA every year, irrespective of whether an election has taken place or not. This is a measure known as party identification, which is intended to capture whether someone has an affective attachment to a party such that they might call themselves a ‘Conservative supporter’, a ‘Labour supporter’ or the supporter of another party. This measure is sometimes regarded as an indicator of more long-term support for a party than voting for it at a particular election (Bartle and Bellucci, 2008). (Details of the questions we ask to measure this concept are to be found in the Technical details of this report.)

First of all, in Table 5 we compare the relationship between party identification and referendum vote in 2017 with that in 2016. This shows that while there clearly was a relationship between the two in the months immediately after the referendum – a large proportion of Remain voters (40%) identified with Labour while a large proportion of Leave supporters identified with the Conservatives (43%) – the link is even stronger in 2017. The proportion of Remain voters that identify with the Conservatives fell by as much as 8 points between 2016 and 2017, while the proportion of Leave voters that did so increased by 4 points. In Labour’s case the contrast is not so stark, but identification with the party seems to have increased more among Remain supporters between 2016 and 2017 than it did among Leave voters.

Remain Conservative voters fell by 8 points between 2016 and 2017, while Leave Conservative voters increased by 4 points

Table 5 Party identification, by EU referendum vote, 2016 and 2017

	2016		2017		Change from 2016-2017	
	Remain	Leave	Remain	Leave	Remain	Leave
Party identification	%	%	%	%		
Conservative	34	43	26	47	-8	+4
Labour	40	22	49	28	+9	+7
Liberal Democrat	9	4	10	3	+2	-1
UKIP	*	1	*	4	0	-6
Other	9	5	7	3	-2	-2
None/Don't Know	8	16	8	15	0	-1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>1115</i>	<i>1139</i>	<i>1163</i>	<i>1046</i>		

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Meanwhile, in Table 6 we use the more detailed measure of attitudes towards the EU we introduced earlier at Table 4 to chart how the link between attitudes towards the EU and party identification evolved each year between 2015 and 2017. Note, first of all, that for the most part the change in the pattern of party identification between 2015 and 2017 as a whole in Table 6 mirrors the change in vote choice that can be observed between those two years in Table 4. For example, looking at the top row, the level of Conservative identification among those who want the EU to remain as powerful as at present fell by 7 points between 2015 and 2017, the same as the 7-point drop in the party's share of the vote among this group. There is therefore no reason to believe that using party identification rather than vote choice has any impact on the validity of our analysis, and thus can be used to examine the year-by-year dynamics of party support between 2015 and 2017.

Meanwhile, what we can now also see is that much of the strengthening of the relationship between party identification and attitudes towards the EU occurred between 2016 and 2017, rather than between 2015 and 2016. In Labour's case in particular, the party's support rose between 2015 and 2016 by more or less the same amount (that is, by 6, 4 and 4 points respectively) irrespective of people's attitudes towards Brexit. In other words, the relationship between identifying with the Labour party and attitudes towards the EU was little different in 2016 from what it had been a year earlier. However, between 2016 and 2017 Labour's support increased by much less (by just 3 points) among those who said Britain should leave than it did among either those who said the UK should stay in the EU but seek to reduce its powers (12 points) or those who would like the EU to remain at least as powerful as at present (14 points). Equally, although the proportion of Conservative identifiers did fall somewhat between 2015 and 2016 among those who said that the UK should remain in the EU but reduce its powers (though

Between 2016 and 2017, Labour support increased by much less among Leavers than among Remainers

The relationship between attitudes towards the EU and Conservative and Labour support strengthened between 2016 and 2017

not among those who felt the EU's powers should at least stay the same), between 2016 and 2017 the level of identification with the party fell yet further amongst those who said that Britain should stay in the EU (irrespective of whether or not they thought the EU's powers should change), whereas it held up (indeed, it appeared to increase slightly) among those who said that Britain should leave the EU. As a result, the relationship between attitudes towards the EU and both Conservative and Labour support was stronger after the 2017 election than it had been immediately after the EU referendum in 2016.

Table 6 Party Identification, by attitudes towards the EU, 2015-2017

	2015			2016		
	Leave	Stay (reduce powers)	Stay (keep powers at least same)	Leave	Stay (reduce powers)	Stay (keep powers at least same)
Party identification	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	38	41	20	40	34	19
Labour	18	28	37	24	32	41
Liberal Democrat	2	5	3	3	7	8
UKIP	18	4	2	9	1	*
Other	3	7	13	5	8	12
None/Don't Know	21	14	25	20	18	19
<i>Unweighted base</i>	252	470	315	852	666	367

	2017		
	Leave	Stay (reduce powers)	Stay (keep powers at least same)
Party identification	%	%	%
Conservative	43	27	13
Labour	27	44	55
Liberal Democrat	2	7	11
UKIP	4	*	*
Other	3	6	7
None/Don't Know	20	17	15
<i>Unweighted base</i>	773	677	467

So, it seems clear that Brexit did make a difference to how some people voted in the 2017 election, just as the Prime Minister hoped it would. However, while this meant her party gained ground among those who voted Leave (and thus for the most part backed a hard Brexit), it also meant that her party lost ground among those who

backed Remain (and were more inclined towards a soft Brexit). Labour, in contrast, found it rather easier to gain ground among Remain voters than it did among their Leave counterparts. As a result, how people voted in the election reflected their attitudes towards the EU to a much greater extent than previously. Not only that, but it seems that in some cases the party with which a voter identifies may have been influenced by Brexit too, and that thus the 2017 election may have a longer-term impact on the pattern of support for the parties. In any event, it evidently now behoves us to investigate to what extent the traditional patterns of vote choice in British elections may have been disrupted by Theresa May's Brexit election.

Attitudes towards immigration and vote choice

One of the key themes of the EU referendum debate was the desirability, or otherwise, of recent levels of immigration into Britain. A core message of the Leave campaign was that Brexit would allow Britain to 'take back control of its borders', with the implication being that this would allow the UK government to reduce the level of immigration into the country. Given that, as we have just demonstrated, vote choice and party identification have become more closely associated with attitudes towards the EU, we might expect that vote choice and party identification are now also more closely associated with attitudes towards immigration (see also the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping). Might a supposedly hard Brexit' supporting Conservative Party have enjoyed increased support among those sceptical of the value of immigrants who come to Britain? Did the Labour Party, perceived to be taking a somewhat softer approach to Brexit, and perhaps particularly so on the issue of immigration, increase its support among those with a more positive view of immigration?

The following question, included in BSA in both 2015 and 2017, helps us address these questions. We ask respondents to use a scale from 0 to 10 to say whether they think that:

Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries

A score of 0 to 3 is assumed to indicate a belief that, on balance, immigration undermines Britain's cultural life, a score of 7 to 10 that immigration enriches Britain's cultural life and a score of between 4 and 6 that immigration does neither of these things.

Table 7 shows that our expectation proves to be correct. While support for the Conservatives among voters who believe that immigration enriches cultural life fell by 8 points between the 2015 and 2017 general elections, it rose by 10 points among voters who think immigration undermines cultural life, an increase that mirrors a

10-point fall in UKIP support among this group. Meanwhile, although there was a small 3-point increase in Labour support among voters who feel that immigration undermines cultural life, this was dwarfed by a 17-point rise in support among people who believe it enriches Britain's culture.

Table 7 Vote choice, by attitudes towards immigration, 2015 and 2017

	2015			2017		
	Cultural life undermined	Neither	Cultural life enriched	Cultural life undermined	Neither	Cultural life enriched
2017 general election vote	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	40	47	31	50	44	23
Labour	31	43	42	34	42	59
Liberal Democrat	4	8	10	1	9	12
UKIP	18	6	2	8	1	1
Other	7	7	15	7	4	6
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>495</i>	<i>494</i>	<i>466</i>	<i>176</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>319</i>

Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

So, the EU referendum and subsequent arguments about Brexit also appear to have contributed to an increased divergence in support for the Conservatives and Labour on an issue that has been central to those debates. At the 2015 general election, before David Cameron's re-negotiation of Britain's EU membership and the subsequent referendum, Conservative support among voters who thought immigration undermines cultural life was already 9 points higher than it was among voters who thought immigration enriches cultural life. However, in the 2017 general election, this gap increased to 27 points. Similarly, Labour's support went from being 11 points higher in 2015 among those who think immigration enriches cultural life than among those who think it undermines cultural life, to being as much as 25 points higher in 2017. How voters behaved in the 2017 election reflected their views about immigration to a greater extent than it had done two years earlier.

Voting behaviour in the 2017 election reflected views on immigration to a greater extent than in 2015

Ideological voting patterns

The left-right dimension and vote choice

As we noted earlier, the key ideological difference between the Labour and Conservative parties and their respective supporters has traditionally been between 'left' and 'right'. Those on the 'left' are inclined to the view that society is too unequal and that the government should endeavour to make it less so through, for example, higher taxation, more generous welfare benefits, the provision of public services and tighter regulation of the economy. They are more likely to vote for the Labour Party. Those on the 'right', in contrast, feel that a certain amount of inequality has to be accepted so that there are sufficient incentives for people to work and invest and thereby ensure economic growth from which all can profit. It is to this group that the Conservatives are more likely to appeal.

Each year, the BSA survey asks its respondents a series of questions designed to ascertain whether respondents are inclined to the left or the right (Evans and Heath, 1995). Details of these questions are given in the Technical details of this report. Here we may simply note that we can use the responses to identify the one third or so of respondents who give the most left-wing responses, the one third who give the most right-wing, and the one third who fall in between these two groups. The long-running nature of BSA enables us to analyse the trends in voting behaviour along this left/right ideological spectrum since the turn of the century and, in particular, to examine whether there have been any changes in the distribution of Conservative and Labour support along this spectrum since the EU referendum.

Table 8 reveals that the traditional divide between voters who incline to the left and those who incline to the right was still very much in place at the 2017 general election. Three-fifths (60%) of the most left-wing voters voted Labour, while nearly two-thirds of the most right-wing voters (64%) voted Conservative. Looked at another way, support for Labour among the most left-wing third of the electorate was 40 points higher than backing for the Conservatives, and conversely, support for the Conservatives among the most right-wing third of the electorate was 41 points higher than backing for Labour. In contrast, but as in previous years, there was little variation in the levels of support for the Liberal Democrats or UKIP across the left-right ideological spectrum.

While the usual left-right division in voting was in evidence in 2017, we should note that it did not deepen. The changes in support for each of the two main parties between 2015 and 2017 were very similar across the left-right spectrum. For example, although Labour support rose by 9 points among the most left-wing part of the electorate, it also rose by 8 points among the most right-wing part

and by 12 points among the one third of the electorate in the centre. Although Jeremy Corbyn is widely perceived as the most left-wing Labour leader for many years, it appears that under his leadership support for Labour did not increase any more among left-wing voters than it did in the rest of the electorate. In fact, it was at the 2015 election, under the leadership of Ed Miliband (who first dropped the 'New Labour' label bequeathed to the party by Tony Blair), when the composition of Labour's support became relatively more left-wing. Labour's vote rose by 8 points among the most left-wing group between 2010 and 2015, whereas there was no change among the 'middle' group and backing for the party actually fell by 6 points among the most right-wing group.

Meanwhile, between 2015 and 2017 there was a small rise of 3 points in Conservative support among both the most left-wing group and the 'middle' group, while there was actually a small 3-point fall among the most right-wing group. There is certainly no sign of the left-right division deepening on this side of the party battle either. Again, the relative stability of the left-right divide across the 2015 and 2017 elections stands in contrast to what happened between 2010 and 2015. Between those two earlier elections support for the Conservatives actually fell by 3 points² among those on the left and 3 points among those in the centre, whereas it increased by 16 points³ among those on the right. So far as the left-right dimension is concerned, the 2017 election simply left in place the increased polarisation that had been in evidence two years earlier.

 **The 2017 election did not exacerbate the existing left-right divide** 

2 This is the figure for the change between 2010 and 2015 that is obtained if it is calculated by taking the difference between the proportions in the table calculated to one decimal place and rounding the resulting figure to the nearest integer.

3 See footnote 1.

Table 8 Vote choice, by left-right position, 2001-2017

General election vote	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	Change 2015-2017
Left-wing voters	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	14	17	21	17	20	+3
Labour	62	54	43	51	60	+9
Liberal Democrat	17	22	22	7	10	+3
UKIP	n/a	1	3	10	3	-7
Other	8	6	11	15	8	-8
<i>Unweighted base</i>	519	766	224	751	517	
Centre voters	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	24	27	39	36	39	+3
Labour	50	45	33	33	45	+12
Liberal Democrat	21	23	22	9	7	-2
UKIP	n/a	1	2	11	2	-9
Other	5	5	4	11	6	-4
<i>Unweighted base</i>	724	765	202	939	647	
Right-wing voters	%	%	%	%	%	%
Conservative	44	47	51	66	64	-3
Labour	33	29	21	15	23	+8
Liberal Democrat	19	19	24	7	8	+1
UKIP	n/a	1	2	6	1	-5
Other	4	4	3	5	4	-1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	595	877	217	845	565	

n/a: votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey

Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

The libertarian-authoritarian dimension and vote choice

But what of the distribution of support across the libertarian-authoritarian divide? As was discussed in the introduction, the issues in the Brexit debate touched more upon this dimension than the 'left-right' one, so it is, perhaps, here that we might expect to observe increased polarisation of Conservative and Labour support in 2017. As with the left-right dimension, we are able to use BSA to analyse the pattern of vote choice across the 'libertarian-authoritarian' divide at each of the last five elections. Each year respondents to BSA are asked a series of questions designed to ascertain whether they are more inclined to the libertarian or the authoritarian end of this ideological spectrum. Details of these questions are given in the

Technical details of this report. In much the same way as we did in the case of the left-right dimension, we can use the responses to identify the one third or so of respondents who give the most libertarian responses, the one third who give the most authoritarian responses and the one third who give responses that fall in between these two groups.

We saw earlier that the level of support for both the Liberal Democrats and UKIP varies little across the 'left-right' axis. However, in Table 9 we can see that their support does tend to diverge strongly along the 'libertarian-authoritarian' one. For example, at the height of 'Cleggmania' in 2010, the Liberal Democrats won as much as a third of the vote (33%) among the most libertarian section of the electorate, whereas their support among the most authoritarian voters was less than half this (13%). Although support for the Liberal Democrats has since fallen across the board, this divide in their support is still very much in evidence in 2017; 14% of the most libertarian voters backed them, compared with only 3% of the most authoritarian. Meanwhile, at the high point of UKIP's electoral success in 2015, the party secured the support of no less than 15% of the most authoritarian group of voters, but only 3% of the most libertarian.

In contrast, support for Labour and the Conservatives has historically not diverged anything like as much across the 'libertarian-authoritarian' divide, as it has across the 'left-right' one. For example, in 2001, support for Labour was almost exactly the same among the most libertarian group of voters, the 'middle' group and the most authoritarian group. Meanwhile, although in the same year support for the Conservatives among the most authoritarian voters was 14 points higher than among the most libertarian ones, this was still only around half the 30-point difference between Conservative support among right-wing voters and that among their left-wing counterparts.

However, this picture changed between the 2015 and the 2017 elections. As Table 9 shows, Labour gained more ground among libertarian voters than among authoritarian respondents, while support for the Conservatives actually fell among the former group but increased among the latter. Thus, although Labour support rose by 5 points among the most authoritarian group and 6 points among the 'middle' group, it rose considerably more, by 19 points, among the most libertarian group of voters. Meanwhile, backing for the Conservatives fell by 10 points among the most libertarian section of the electorate, while it rose by 5 points among the 'middle' group and by 8 points among the most authoritarian set of voters.

As a result, voting for Labour and the Conservatives is divided along 'libertarian-authoritarian' lines to a greater extent than at any point in the last 20 years. There had been tentative evidence in 2015 that this divide was growing, but the scale of the change between the 2015 and 2017 general elections far exceeds any changes that took place beforehand. We have already noted that in 2001 Labour

The 'libertarian-authoritarian' divide in the Labour and Conservative vote is the largest for 20 years

support was almost exactly the same across our three groups of voters. In contrast, by 2015, Labour support was 9 points higher among libertarian voters than authoritarian ones. However, between 2015 and 2017 this gap more than doubled again, such that Labour's vote was 22 points higher amongst the most libertarian third of voters than among the most authoritarian third. Meanwhile, support for the Conservatives increased in much the same fashion at each of the four elections between 2001 and 2015, irrespective of where people stood on the libertarian-authoritarian divide, and, as a result, the difference in 2015 between the Conservative level of support among authoritarian voters and that among libertarian ones was, at 15 points, no higher than it had been in 2001 (14 points). In 2017, however, the difference between Conservative support among authoritarian voters and that among libertarian ones more than doubled, to 34 points.

Table 9 Vote choice, by libertarian-authoritarian position, 2001-2017

General election vote	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	Change 2015-2017
Libertarian voters	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	20	20	28	33	22	-10
Labour	48	44	32	37	55	+19
Liberal Democrat	26	30	33	12	14	+2
UKIP	n/a	*	1	3	1	-2
Other	7	6	6	16	7	-8
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>721</i>	<i>832</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>994</i>	<i>610</i>	
Centre voters	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	31	36	40	45	49	+5
Labour	49	42	35	31	37	+6
Liberal Democrat	16	17	19	6	5	0
UKIP	n/a	1	2	12	1	-10
Other	4	5	3	7	7	0
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>721</i>	<i>817</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>722</i>	<i>496</i>	
Authoritarian voters	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	34	39	47	48	56	+8
Labour	47	40	30	28	33	+5
Liberal Democrat	14	15	13	3	3	0
UKIP	n/a	2	3	15	4	-11
Other	5	4	7	6	4	-2
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>707</i>	<i>773</i>	<i>243</i>	<i>828</i>	<i>627</i>	

Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey

Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

Thus, the 2017 election witnessed a marked change in the ideological basis of Conservative and Labour voting. Although the left-right divide between their supporters remained, more or less, as strong as ever, it was accompanied by unprecedentedly sharp differences of support along the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, a dimension whose content reflects the subject matter of much of the debate about Brexit. True, Conservative and Labour support is still more strongly demarcated by the left-right division than by the libertarian-authoritarian one (for example, there is a 44-point difference between the level of Conservative support among right-wing and left-wing voters, compared with a 34-point one between authoritarians and libertarians), but Britain's two largest parties now find themselves straddling two different ideological dimensions rather than articulating just one, a situation that is almost bound to be a more difficult balancing act.

Demographic voting patterns

We have established that, at the 2017 general election, the Conservatives lost ground among Remain voters and those who take a favourable view of the consequences of immigration, while the party's support increased among Leave voters and those less supportive of immigration. Labour, in contrast, advanced more strongly among Remain and pro-immigration voters than it did among those of the opposite view. These developments, in turn, appear to have helped open up a much wider gap between libertarian and authoritarian voters in the level of support they afforded to the Conservatives and Labour. These findings raise the question as to whether they have been accompanied by changes in the demographic patterns of party support. In particular, it has previously been shown that people's attitudes towards Brexit vary primarily by age and education rather than by the characteristic which traditionally has been the most important demographic division in British electoral politics: social class (Evans and Tilley, 2017; Curtice 2017a; 2017c; see also the Europe chapter by Curtice and Tipping). Younger voters and graduates were much more likely to vote Remain than older voters and those with few, if any, qualifications. We might therefore wonder whether these divisions by age and educational background are now also apparent in the pattern of Conservative and Labour support.

Age and vote choice

Table 10 summarises the differences in party support by age by comparing the level of support for the parties among those aged 18 to 34 with that among those aged 65 and over. The Conservative Party has long tended to be more popular among older voters than those who are younger, though in 2001 and 2005, at least, the opposite was not true of Labour. But in 2017 this tendency was

much more marked. Support for the Conservatives fell between 2015 and 2017 by 10 points among the youngest age group, whereas it increased by 6 points among those aged 65 and over. Meanwhile, Labour's share of the vote increased by just 2 points among older voters whereas it rose by no less than 23 points among the youngest age group. Indeed, more generally across all age groups, the younger the voter, the more likely they were to have switched to Labour and less likely they were to have supported the Conservatives. As a result, there is now an enormous difference between the voting preferences of younger voters and those of their older counterparts, a difference that has been dubbed a 'youthquake' (Stewart et al., 2018). Those aged 18-34 are no less than 32 points more likely to vote Labour than those aged 65 and over, while they are 33 points less likely to vote Conservative. Never before has there been so big an age divide in British electoral politics.

Never before has there been so big an age divide in British electoral politics

Table 10 Vote choice, among those aged 18-34, and 65 and over, 2001-2017

General election vote	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	Change 2015-2017
Aged 18-34	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	25	23	32	32	22	-10
Labour	50	43	32	39	62	+23
Liberal Democrat	17	25	25	8	8	0
UKIP	n/a	1	3	6	1	-5
Other	8	8	8	16	8	-8
<i>Unweighted base</i>	367	448	109	464	346	
Aged 65+	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	34	41	48	49	55	+6
Labour	49	42	28	28	30	+2
Liberal Democrat	13	15	18	6	8	+2
UKIP	n/a	1	3	11	3	-9
Other	4	2	3	5	4	-2
<i>Unweighted base</i>	578	800	234	941	707	

Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey

Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

Education and vote choice

But can the same be said of educational background? In Table 11 we compare, at each of the last five elections, the voting behaviour of graduates (who mostly voted Remain) and the party choice made by those without any formal educational qualifications (who largely voted Leave). As we might anticipate, Labour has usually been more popular among those without any educational qualifications

than among graduates; the former group are, after all, more likely to be employed in working-class occupations, employment in which has traditionally been associated with voting Labour. However, the Conservative Party has never been especially popular among university graduates, among whom the Liberal Democrats have instead tended to be unusually popular.

The Conservatives are certainly not especially popular with university graduates in the wake of the Brexit debate. Support for the party among this group actually fell back by 5 points between 2015 and 2017, whereas it increased by 12 points among those without any qualifications. In contrast Labour's tally increased by 14 points among graduates, while it simply remained static among those without any qualifications. As a result, nearly half of all university graduates voted for the Labour Party, and the party was – for the first time – seemingly somewhat more popular among graduates than among those without any educational qualifications. While the differences in voting behaviour between those of different educational backgrounds are nothing like as large as those between older and younger voters, it is still the case that here, too, the 2017 election witnessed a disruption of the usual pattern of voting behaviour in Britain.

The Labour Party is now more popular among graduates than those without any educational qualifications

Table 11 Vote choice, among graduates, and those with no formal educational qualifications, 2001-2017

General election vote	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	Change 2015-2017
Graduates	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	22	29	31	37	32	-5
Labour	41	33	27	35	48	+14
Liberal Democrat	31	31	36	13	12	-1
UKIP	n/a	1	1	3	1	-2
Other	5	6	4	12	7	-5
<i>Unweighted base</i>	348	487	159	766	629	
No qualifications	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	25	28	38	35	47	+12
Labour	58	57	38	43	43	0
Liberal Democrat	12	12	17	3	4	0
UKIP	n/a	1	3	12	4	-8
Other	5	3	5	6	3	-3
<i>Unweighted base</i>	571	779	175	550	358	

Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey

Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

Social class and vote choice

If the relationship between vote choice and both age and education changed in 2015, what implications, if any, did this have for differences in voting behaviour by social class? For much of the post-war period the association of the Labour Party with the working class and of the Conservatives with the middle class was one of the staples of British politics. But the advent of New Labour under Tony Blair served to weaken that association both in voters' minds and in how they behaved, not least because of an increased tendency among working class voters to abstain (Heath et al., 2001; Heath, 2016; Evans and Tilley, 2017). Even so, in 2005, the third election that Labour fought under Tony Blair's leadership, support for Labour was still 19 points higher among people from routine and semi-routine occupational backgrounds than among those engaged in managerial and professional jobs, and this gap was only slightly smaller at 15 points in 2015. Equally, the gap between the level of Conservative support among those in professional and managerial occupations and those in semi-routine and routine ones was, at 16 points, also much the same in 2015 as it had been in 2005 (15 points). However, between 2015 and 2017 Labour's vote increased by 12 points among those in professional and managerial jobs, but only by 5 points among those in semi-routine and routine employment. Meanwhile, Conservative support rose by 8 points among those in semi-routine and routine employment but fell back slightly, by 3 points, among those in managerial and professional occupations. As a result, the differences between the two classes in the level of support that they gave the parties fell to 5 points in the case of the Conservatives and 8 points in respect of Labour. In other words, the difference between Labour's support among working class and that among middle class voters was smaller under veteran left-winger, Jeremy Corbyn, than it had been under Tony Blair, the architect of the New Labour project that was intended to enhance the party's appeal to the middle classes.

Conservative support rose by 8 points among semi-routine and routine workers but fell by 3 points among managers and professionals

Table 12 Vote choice among managerial and professional workers, and semi-routine/routine workers, 2001-2017.

General election vote	2001	2005	2010	2015	2017	Change 2015-2017
Managerial & professional occupations	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	30	36	41	44	41	-3
Labour	42	37	26	30	42	+12
Liberal Democrat	24	23	28	11	10	-1
UKIP	n/a	1	1	6	1	-5
Other	5	3	4	10	7	-3
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>761</i>	<i>1096</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>1264</i>	<i>975</i>	
Semi-routine & routine occupations	%	%	%	%	%	
Conservative	20	21	32	28	36	+8
Labour	59	56	43	45	50	+5
Liberal Democrat	15	16	15	4	5	+1
UKIP	n/a	1	3	12	3	-9
Other	6	6	7	11	6	-5
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>641</i>	<i>737</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>718</i>	<i>475</i>	

Votes for UKIP were not recorded separately on the 2001 survey

Occupational class is as measured by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification. For further details see the Technical details chapter

Figures showing the change between 2015 and 2017 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

Conclusions

In the event, Theresa May's decision to call the 2017 election backfired so far as she was concerned. Rather than securing a bigger overall majority, she lost the small one that she already had, and had to form a minority government with support from the backbenches of the pro-Leave Democratic Unionist Party, of Northern Ireland. Yet, despite the seeming ambiguity and similarity of the Conservative and Labour positions on Brexit, voters' attitudes towards Britain's future relationship with the EU, and on some of the issues that were central to the debate about that relationship such as immigration, were reflected more sharply in how the electorate voted than they had been just two years previously. The Prime Minister may not have secured an increased majority, but she did have her wish that voters should use the election to express their views about Brexit.

Yet in so doing voters eschewed what might have been regarded as the 'obvious' vehicles for expressing their views about Brexit, that is by voting for the pro-Remain Liberal Democrats or the ardently pro-Leave UKIP. Too few voters, perhaps, felt they understood the Liberal Democrats' position on Brexit, while others, perhaps, still

Attitudes towards the EU and immigration were sharply reflected in voter behaviour at the 2017 election

Thanks to Brexit, electoral politics now reflects an emerging libertarian-authoritarian divide and a more pronounced generational division

felt unable to forgive the party for the role it played in the Coalition it formed between 2010 and 2015 with the Conservatives. Meanwhile, Leave voters may have regarded the Conservatives as better-placed to deliver the hard Brexit that they would prefer even if some seemingly doubted the strength of the party's commitment to that cause. In any event, both the Conservatives and Labour increased their share of the vote, and, at 82%, the two parties' combined share of the UK-wide vote was higher than at any election since 1970. Indeed, far from disrupting the usual rhythms of British politics, at first glance the outcome seemed to represent a return to the 'normality' of post-war British politics whereby its elections were dominated by just two parties; Conservative and Labour.

However, thanks to Brexit, the pattern of support for those two parties was far from 'normal'. The Brexit debate had brought to the fore issues such as immigration that cut across the traditional divide between left and right and sat uneasily with the class division that still to a degree underlies it. Consequently, as Leave voters gravitated towards the Conservatives and their Remain counterparts towards Labour, the 2017 election saw a different ideological distinction, between libertarians and authoritarians (or social conservatives), come to matter much more in shaping the pattern of Conservative and Labour support than it had done previously. This, in turn, helped accentuate generational differences in electoral choice to such an extent that, for the time being at least, these differences have displaced social class as the principal demographic division in British electoral politics.

This disruption of the regular rhythms of Conservative and Labour support creates potential tensions within both parties. The Conservative Party has long been regarded as the party of 'big business', yet the predominantly pro-Leave and immigration-sceptic electorate that the party gathered in 2017 shares little of that constituency's preference for a continued close relationship with the EU. Labour, meanwhile, still regards itself as the party of the 'working class', yet that portrayal seems hard to sustain when the party is almost as popular among university graduates as it is among semi-routine and routine workers. It remains to be seen which party, if either, proves to be more successful at adapting to the new political environment and challenges that Brexit appears to have created.

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