



Embargoed: 00h01 hrs 24 May 2022

Pre-release (not formatted) version

# Red Wall, Red Herring? Economic Insecurity and Voting Intention in Britain

A Nuffield Politics Research Centre - Elections Unit report using data from the British Election Study

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May 2022

Nuffield Elections Unit Reports are works-in-progress with the potential to be of use in current debates. Comments are welcome. Please email us at <u>elections@nuffield.ox.ac.uk</u>.

We are grateful to Jack Bailey, Rosalind Shorrocks, Raluca Pahontu, Zack Grant, Edward Fieldhouse, Geoffrey Evans, Tom O'Grady, participants of the Elections, Public Opinion and Parties conference and the University of Liverpool Political Behaviour seminar for comments to date, and Dan Snow at Nuffield College for his help with the constituency maps found on pp. [26-27] and the interactive maps [online].





# Red Wall, Red Herring? Economic Insecurity and Voting Intention in Britain

The economic gap between Britain's younger graduates and non-graduates is a growing problem that politicians and policy-makers need to understand. Younger non-graduates – who live in all parts of the UK – are the most economically insecure and may not have the job security, housing security or pensions in the future that their predecessors had.

Political parties risk being out of step with these dynamics, in part because of a preoccupation with the "Red Wall". This is a useful term for classifying a group of constituencies. But many people now seem to equate Red Wall places with voters who support the Conservatives within them, painting a picture of economically left-behind voters who also tend to have more socially conservative and pro-Brexit values. This is misleading, at least in part.

Using data from 2018, we examined who feels economically insecure in Britain, and why, to directly explore the relationship between economic insecurity, social conservatism and vote choice, and to better understand sources of economic insecurity. We found that the Conservatives owed much of their success in recent elections to the relative economic security of their older voters. While there may have been some increase in Conservative support in 2019 among more economically insecure voters, the majority of Conservative voters are economically secure. As the cost of living crisis bites and the fortunes of younger graduates and non-graduates increasingly diverge, this picture could very easily change.

The political significance of economic insecurity couldn't be greater. Since we gathered these data, the UK has endured COVID and is now dealing with the cost of living crisis. Such crises affect people according to whether they have wealth buffers; savings, a home, a secure income, the ability to borrow. Politicians need to consider who stands least ready to be able to weather this particular storm and how this might affect a future election.

Our report makes three key thematic points.

#### 1. The risk of a divide between 'Will Haves' and 'Won't Haves'

We reveal who feels economically insecure in Britain. We show a problem of economic insecurity among Britain's **younger non-graduates**. These are found in non-graduate women under 50 and non-graduate men under 40. They live in a variety of areas of the country, not only in 'the Red Wall'. The economic gap between Britain's younger graduates and non-graduates is a key distinction. There is a risk these groups **could** become 'will haves' and 'wont haves', because while they both face a very harsh economic climate now, some have greater support and likely income returns, on average (graduates), so their outcomes could





diverge in future. Not all graduates are potential 'will haves' and not all nongraduates are potential 'won't haves', but the predicament of the group of potential 'won't haves' in Britain today is different from previously. This is due, we argue, to the expansion of the knowledge economy and the long-term effects of globalisation, automation and deindustrialisation, against which older generations of nongraduates were relatively better protected. Britain's older non-graduates were more likely to have secure work, benefit from social mobility, buy a house and have a decent pension – giving them (though not all) economic security over time.

The focus on the Red Wall as synonymous with Conservative voters creates a blind spot about who is most economically left-behind and where these people live. This is not to say that there isn't particular hardship in many northern and surrounding constituencies, but there is a wider and overlooked problem for younger nongraduates throughout Britain today.

#### 2. Cultural concerns and economics

It is misleading to simply equate economic vulnerability to concerns about immigration, support for Brexit or socially conservative values. This is one of the apparent myths of a typical 'Red Wall voter'. Britons who are most concerned about immigration, who have the most socially conservative values and who are most pro-Leave, are also among the most **economically secure voters**. They are Britain's older voters, and mostly non-graduates.

Younger non-graduates are the most economically insecure, on average, and hold more socially conservative views than younger graduates. But they are *not* as socially conservative, or pro-Brexit, as older non-graduates.

It is misleading to describe a 'Red Wall voter' as always both economically leftbehind and culturally conservative. This may be the case for *some* voters within and also outside the Red Wall. But it is unlikely to be the majority. Moreover, those voters who *are* the most economically insecure and culturally conservative are most likely to be non-voters in recent elections, although their votes could be mobilised.

This does not mean that levelling up areas of the country could not bring electoral benefits (as well as social policy benefits). But this would need to appeal to economically secure and insecure voters within these locations.

An economic emphasis is likely to be at least as effective as appeals to culture war issues, and possibly much more so, particularly given current economic pressures.





#### 3. People vote, places don't

The Conservatives are supported by economically secure voters, on average, and by voters who are more culturally conservative and pro-Brexit. Labour are supported by more economically insecure voters, on average, and voters who are more culturally liberal and pro-Remain. Economic insecurity was as strongly associated with Labour-Conservative vote intention (in 2018) as immigration attitudes and social conservativism values.

This suggests that the Conservative coalition is owed to economic security, as well as to Brexit. And a loss of that security could be very electorally damaging.

It is a mistake to simply equate the characteristics of 'Red Wall places' (economically left-behind areas with older populations and lower education levels) with the characteristics of the voters supporting the Conservatives (economically secure voters who tend to be older with lower education levels). We find some support for the Conservatives in 2019 among more economically insecure voters, but these proportions are relatively small.

We don't find much systematic variation in the trends we report above by the type of place in which people live; whether by unemployment levels or by average local house prices. That is to say, younger non-graduates remain less socially conservative than older non-graduates regardless of where they live. Younger non-graduates are more economically insecure than younger non-graduates regardless of where they live, though both have marginally higher average economic insecurity in areas of higher unemployment. This is largely a story about people *wherever they live*.

The winning electoral coalitions of the parties lie within places. And the electoral coalitions of the two largest parties are not immutable, as the recent local elections demonstrated. The Conservatives may have a problem winning over younger non-graduates and holding onto economically insecure voters across the board. Labour may have a problem holding economically secure graduates. There are opportunities for smaller parties at these intersections.

#### **Implications: electoral**

- 1. The economically left-behind are Britain's younger generations of non-graduates who are likely to feel economically unrepresented and politically aggrieved. These are not left-behind young white males in particular. Economic insecurity is higher among younger women, it tends to be higher among younger graduate women than younger graduate men, and it is also higher among ethnic minorities.
- 2. The Conservatives' successes in recent elections are not just due to Brexit but also due to the economic security of their Brexit-supporting voters. This helps us





understand the combination of support in Tory Shires and in the 'Red Wall'. It also points to the vulnerability of the Party should these voters' economic security be threatened by the cost of living crisis.

- 3. Economic insecurity and security are as strongly associated with Conservative-Labour vote choice in 2018 as either Brexit vote, immigration preferences or cultural values. This is also true taking social class into account.
- 4. The future electoral coalitions of the parties lie both in economics and in cultural issues and they transcend types of place and levels of education. Economically insecure and secure voters live in various parts of the country and across types of constituency.
- 5. Conservative voters are more insulated, on average, from the current economic crisis because they were more economically secure in the first place. They have buffers to weather economic storms. The voters who will be least able to sustain further economic hardship at the current time are younger (though not all *young*) non-graduates; a group of voters both major parties need to try to attract.
- 6. There is no guarantee of winning over Britain's most economically insecure voters through a 'culture wars' frame. They currently lean towards Labour and they are also more likely to be non-voters than other electoral groups.
- 7. There is no guarantee of holding onto Britain's most economically secure voters through a culture wars frame either. Their economic security is electorally powerful and it might be more so with the declining political relevance of Brexit.
- 8. Labour's support among graduates is lower among graduates with higher economic security. Labour's ability to hold onto graduate voters if they gain greater economic security into the future is therefore uncertain. The Conservatives' ability to win younger non-graduates is also uncertain, given lower levels of economic security.
- Economic insecurity is also strongly associated with redistribution (left-right) attitudes. Economically insecure graduates have more pro-redistribution attitudes, economically secure graduates are less pro-redistribution. Having a degree does not, therefore, simply equate to being more pro-redistribution and more economically left-leaning overall.
- 10. These sub-groups of voters provide opportunities for the smaller parties; for the Liberal Democrats or Greens, for example, to win over economically secure more liberal graduates who may not be willing to vote for the Conservatives. And for parties like Reform to win economically insecure non-graduate voters who may become alienated from the mainstream parties.





#### **Implications: policy relevant**

- The focus on generational economic differences is important, but so too is a focus on which younger individuals (and they are not all 'young') are more likely to weather the new economic storms (on average graduates; the 'will haves') and which are less likely to do so (non-graduates; the 'won't haves'). We need to focus on intragenerational inequality, as well as inter-generational inequality.
- 2. It is also very important that we examine differences within those groups; graduates who may not benefit from sufficient income returns or family wealth. Non-graduates who will thrive, and where these groups will prosper more and struggle more; areas in the country where house prices remain affordable or increasingly unaffordable.
- 3. Policy-makers need to focus on those Britons who feel the greatest economic insecurity; younger (though not all *young*) non-graduates. The prospects of this group are different compared to non-graduates in the past who were better protected, at least on average.
- 4. Focusing on household income to study these differences hides the economic security felt by older people and the future economic returns of higher education and family wealth for many younger people. We need to examine people's wider economic circumstances. Feelings about economic insecurity are a good proxy.
- 5. Geography still matters, because it is more difficult for younger generations to get onto the housing ladder in some parts of the country than it is elsewhere, and economic insecurity is marginally higher for non-graduates and also graduates who live in areas of higher unemployment.
- 6. Economic security is not just about home ownership but about the wider buffers that protect people from harsh economic conditions; savings, job status, work status.
- 7. Retirees (especially men) are considerably more economically secure; possibly due to pensions and savings, but also due to the absence of stressors such as job insecurity, dependents, mortgage repayments, as well as accumulated housing wealth. But can this be sustained into the future for younger generations?
- 8. Women tend to feel more economic insecurity than men throughout their lives and at older ages. It is not possible to know for sure whether this is due to higher reporting or higher objective insecurity, but this is a very important difference to explore. Having a degree does not appear to provide the same economic security dividend for women as it does for men. Similarly, ethnic minorities are more economically insecure than white Britons.
- 9. These economic gaps will likely persist and worsen, exacerbated by perceived differences in status, the growing size of the graduate population (the non-graduate





population gradually becoming a minority over time), within-family wealth transfers which will especially benefit graduates and the economic returns of higher education for many (but not all) graduates.

10. Inter-generational *and* intra-generational wealth inequality should be of pressing concern to policy makers.





# Red Wall, Red Herring? Economic Insecurity and Voting Intention in Britain

#### Jane Green and Roosmarijn de Geus

#### Introduction

Education level has become a crucial electoral fault-line in Great Britain. Whether someone is a university graduate or non-graduate is now a strong predictor of voting behaviour, alongside their age (Fieldhouse et al. 2020; Green 2021). Graduates – especially younger graduates - are more likely to support Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party and non-graduates – especially older non-graduates – are now more likely to support the Conservatives. The relationship between age and education is of central importance to understanding British politics, currently and for the future.

The expansion of university education in the population underpins the growing values differences in the electorate (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020): graduates are more accepting of social-liberalism and increasing multiculturalism, and non-graduates less so (Jenssen and Engesbak, 1994; Stubager, 2008; Surridge 2016; Scott, 2022). These attitudes are strongly correlated with support for Brexit, and hence whether someone attended University is a predictor of whether someone supported Leave or Remain, at both the individual and local authority levels (Hobolt, 2016; Calvert Jump and Mitchell 2020). This could mean, if very simply extrapolated, the British electorate will grow increasingly liberal and progressive as more young graduate voters enter the electorate and older non-graduates leave it. That would favour socially democratic and liberal parties in future elections, and perhaps even one day a challenge to the Brexit vote.

This would, however, overlook the importance of the relationship between graduate education and economic security, and crucially how this is different across generations. This is the point we seek to illustrate in this report. It is well-known that education levels divide graduates and non-graduates economically (Boliver 2017; 2011; Cavaille and Marshall 2019), both due to self-selection into





university and also due to graduate income returns,<sup>1</sup> and also that there is a growing problem in Britain of inter-generational wealth inequalities.<sup>2</sup> This increasingly divides younger generations and older ones in terms of economic assets and recent economic pressures have made this intergenerational divide of particular concern, while at the same time pensioner poverty has been falling over the longer-term.<sup>3</sup>

We focus on the combination of these education and age divides and argue that they should lead us to expect that the education-based divide should be in evidence among younger generations, but not as strongly among those who are older. With a focus on economic insecurity, which is a useful way to examine the economic outcomes of older individuals in particular, we show that this is indeed the case. Economic insecurity is higher among younger graduates and younger non-graduates but it is highest among younger *non-graduates* (roughly, non-graduate women under 50 and non-graduate men under 40), because older individuals in Britain are more economically secure, which is true for older graduates and non-graduates alike. We draw out the implications of these insights in a number of different ways, reflecting on some of the seemingly prevalent assumptions about current British politics which may need to be more nuanced.

Our study uses a unique combination of data about both subjective and objective economic insecurity, combined with questions about political attitudes, vote intention and also turnout, fielded in the 2018 wave of the British Election Study internet panel (wave 14), which we can also analyse in a more limited way alongside 2017 and 2019 vote choice.<sup>4</sup> These data were collected before the pandemic and before the current cost of living crisis. They show us who was most vulnerable to these subsequent economic shocks and suggest that the overall levels of economic insecurity will now very likely be higher. We are therefore also in the process of gathering some further data at the current time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> <u>The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings - Institute For Fiscal Studies - IFS</u>. We note, of course, that the graduate/non-graduate split is not the only key educational attainment economic difference. Though it is a key difference, including electorally, and therefore the one we focus on in this report. <sup>2</sup> An intergenerational audit for the UK • Resolution Foundation

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> <u>https://ifs.org.uk/publications/6738</u>, <u>https://www.jrf.org.uk/data/pensioner-poverty-rates</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A full set of economic security items were unique to the 2018 BES wave (14). Note that when we analyse 2017 vote choice the economic insecurity items are asked to the same respondents a year later. When we analyse 2019 vote choice the economic insecurity items are asked to the same respondents a year earlier. For this reason we primarily analyse 2018 vote intention.





Economic insecurity is a very useful summary measure of a range of economic experiences. We also use a liberal-conservativism scale and immigration attitudes to examine cultural conservatism and their relationship to Labour or Conservative vote intention, and Brexit preference. We further corroborate the core relationships we report here with Bank of England NRM panel study data from 2013 to 2018, only ending in 2018 again due to the absence of subsequent equivalent data. Together these data represent the only combination of economic security measures and political attitudes of which we are aware.

We show which groups are more economically insecure and socially conservative and pro-Brexit, and why this matters. We reveal that the most economically insecure are younger non-graduates, whereas the most culturally conservative are older non-graduates. It is therefore essential to understand how these experiences differ across generations. This economic gap between graduates and non-graduates chimes with other work in the US showing that education is becoming a dangerous and pernicious economic divide (Case and Deaton 2021). The crucial point we make here is that this differs over the age distribution in Britain (and may well do so in the US too), and it has broad consequences for how we understand economics and politics. It is happening to younger non-graduates, possibly – and plausibly, we argue – due to the inter-generational economic impacts of the broad economic transformations that have been sweeping and continue to sweep the country, but which older individuals have been, on average, better insulated against.

These economic patterns are different to the way age and education shapes people's cultural conservatism or social liberalism. Older generations are thought to feel most challenged by the cultural changes that have come with globalisation (increasing diversity, multiculturalism and more liberal values), since those are most different to their formative cultural experiences, and graduates are substantially more likely to hold more socially liberal and pro-immigration views than non-graduates (Inglehart, 2008; Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Sobolewska and Ford, 2020). Together, these age and education divides mean that older non-graduates are the most culturally conservative, whereas younger graduates are the least so. Therefore, while we expect that older non-graduates are *not* the most economically insecure, they *are* the most culturally conservative and pro-Brexit. When we put all of this together we see that some of the accepted wisdoms about the combination of economic and cultural (or immigration) grievances fall short, and at least require more nuanced interpretations. The focus on economic grievances and areas of the country that have been economically left-behind may be confusing an interpretation that it is the most economically





insecure who are the also the most pro-Brexit, anti-immigration and recently pro-Conservative. While it is true that some people in the population do hold anti-immigration, pro-Brexit views and report high degrees of economic insecurity, the proportion who do so is somewhere between **a quarter and a third** of our full sample. The majority of people who hold the strongest antiimmigration and pro-Brexit views are *not* the same people who have high degrees of economic insecurity. We only see this distinction when we focus on economic insecurity – not on income. Older individuals tend to have lower incomes (and might also come from working class backgrounds) but experience relatively high levels of economic security – either through pensions, savings, home ownership, asset values or also from lower burdens of job insecurity and living costs.

We are not saying that *all* older individuals in Britain are economically secure, or that *all* younger non-graduates in Britain are the most economically insecure. We report averages and highlight where differences need to be explored further. Our contribution, in addition to studying who feels most economically insecure and why, is to contrast average levels of economic insecurity with average levels of cultural conservatism, and to show that these do not go hand-in-hand.

This is a potentially important observation for conclusions we might make about the combined economic and cultural effects of globalisation and multiculturalism on political phenomena; such as Brexit in the UK. When we consider who is the most culturally aggrieved as a result of those changes, it is not the same groups of people in the electorate who feel more economically insecure, at least within the British context. This may help us understand how 'second dimension politics' will evolve in the future, how new economic divides will open up, between which groups, and how much this depends on the economic insulation provided through national-level policy efforts that disproportionately benefit some groups in the population. In the British case, it helps us understand why the Conservatives have placed a focus on young people's non-University training opportunities, but also the patterns that emerge as a result of them winning the 'grey vote' (Chrisp and Pearce 2019; Pearce and Chrisp 2021). It places a focus on the diversity of the Leave vote and the current Conservative coalition, and might explain why the Leave vote was also high among the affluent, Eurosceptic portion of the middle class (Swales 2016; Green and Pahontu 2020), shifting a focus away from one only about those who may feel somehow economically left-behind (Carerras 2019; Carreras et al. 2019; Fetzer 2019).





Turning to the electoral consequences for British parties, while higher educational attainment predicts support for the Labour Party, higher economic security favours the Conservatives, suggesting that new generations of graduates, who are also economically secure, may be crosspressured in their electoral support in the future, as might non-graduates who continue to have low economic security. Our main data and analysis are in 2018, and the 2019 election saw more Leavesupporting voters shifting support to the Conservatives, the continuation of the strong relationship of age to Conservative-Labour vote choice between 2017 and 2019 and a sharpening of the education divide in vote choice, with more non-graduates supporting the Conservatives in 2019 in comparison to 2017 (Green, 2021). We find some evidence of Conservative voting among the most economically insecure voters in 2019, but the majority of the Conservatives' support remained among the most economically secure. While the working class relationship to Labour and Conservative vote choice has changed substantially, and the Conservatives now have a substantial lead among working class voters (see Evans and Mellon, 2020), the Conservatives are supported by more economically secure voters overall. We suggest that many older non-graduate voters are now backing the Conservatives due to Brexit but also due to their greater economic security, providing further evidence to support Chrisp and Pearce (2019; Pearce and Chrisp 2021) who highlight the inter-relationships between age, education and economic security (via housing tenure) and voting in both the 2017 and 2019 general elections. Our findings underline the importance to the Labour Party of more economically insecure voters and of more redistributive policy appeals (Hix and Abou-Chadi, 2020) – particularly in light of the increasing levels of economic insecurity in the country as a result of the current economic crisis. They suggest that local election results may well - at least in part – be a sign of a response to the cost of living crisis.

These differences should bear on how we think about the geography of electoral support in Britain, which is of central importance to how votes translate into seats. Younger graduates tend to live in cities, and this has helped to concentrate Labour's vote in urban areas (Jennings and Stoker, 2016; 2017; Ford and Jennings, 2020), including in the capital (as further evidenced recently in May 2022), and this metropolitan concentration makes it harder for Labour to win an overall majority (as is also true for the Democrats in the US, see Rodden, 2019). Increasing geographic polarisation is especially crucial in majoritarian electoral systems. Non-graduate older voters tend to live in towns, suburban areas, coastal and rural parts of Great Britain, and this more efficient distribution of the Conservative's current vote serves to benefit the Conservatives. Similar patterns are also found in many other countries, despite the importance of Brexit in galvanising these electoral differences in





Britain and the specific aspects of these patterns in the British context.<sup>5</sup> Responding to these geographic divides and trade-offs places considerable strategic difficulty on liberal, socially democratic parties that need to expand their electoral coalition in order to win office, and they place a significant tension on the current British Conservative party who needs to keep a disparate geographic coalition together, as evidenced in Conservative fears over the so-called 'blue wall' (constituencies in parts of the South East of England with higher Remain votes), and the recent local election results in which the Liberal Democrats – and Greens – made advances.

Analysis to date has shown where younger graduates live (metropolitan areas), and where older non-graduates live (rural and coastal areas and towns). Our analysis shows where *younger nongraduates* live; those who are the most likely to feel economically insecure. While we might first think of the 'Red Wall' areas, the populations in those areas have also been aging over time. To understand where Britain's younger non-graduates (the most economically insecure group) live we have to look within and beyond the 'Red Wall' lens. Younger non-graduates in particular are not only coalescing in Britain's capital. They live in the area of the Thames estuary, East Anglia, the Midlands, South Wales and in London; but primarily in the west, east, north and southern parts of greater London. They are less likely on average to vote in general elections but it is plausible that they voted in relatively higher numbers (compared to in general elections) in the 2016 Brexit referendum.

Economic security and insecurity lie *within* the areas it is perhaps too easy to stereotype into rich cities and poorer towns, wealthy blue wall Conservative Shires and economically declining red wall constituencies. It is our contention that the current and future electoral coalitions of Britain's parties lie within larger types of place or constituencies.

#### **Red Wall red herrings**

Our report brings three key insights to bear on our understanding of British politics. There has been considerable focus on the electoral importance of 'the Red Wall', and with very good reason (Kanagasooriam and Simon, 2021). These seats had been shifting away from Labour over time, they were traditional Labour heartlands with high Leave votes and a majority of them fell – in large and in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> In particular, the British experience has seen higher educated voters coalesce around the Labour party, whereas in other countries smaller liberal and green parties that have secured these voters' support (Abou-Chadi and Hix, 2021).





dramatic fashion – to the Conservatives in 2019. We have no disagreement whatsoever with the identification and importance of these seats for previous or future elections. We wish to contribute to how the Red Wall is being used now as a shortcut for a series of other policy and electoral challenges facing British society and politics: how this overlooks some important features of economic inequality and understanding of attitudes and vote intention.

This leads us to our first insight in relation to the popular focus on the Red Wall: the **risk of a divide between the 'will haves and won't haves'**. We show that the most economically insecure in Britain are younger non-graduates (women under 50 and men under 40), and younger graduates feel more secure in relative terms to non-graduates. There is a risk they could become 'won't haves' and 'will haves' due to their differences in family wealth and likely income returns, even though both groups face a very harsh economic climate now. These economic divides are overlooked if we view economic hardship as correlated primarily with geography. That is not to say that regional and/or local economic outcomes and inequalities are unimportant – but this is not the whole story. If we think about the effects of globalisation, automation and deindustrialisation, we should think about the sub-populations that are most impacted by them – not just the places we can more easily see.

The second insight is how we might typically think about a 'Red Wall voter' in terms of **cultural concerns and economics**; that assuming that Brexit – and Conservative – voters are motivated by *both* economic insecurity and cultural (immigration) concerns implies that these two things – economic and cultural grievances – typically go hand in hand, when for the majority of Conservative voters they do not. Older voters are more likely to be economically secure on average, yet more likely to have voted Leave. These more economically secure pro-Leave voters may have other economic concerns relating to their local communities and regional inequalities, but this is not the same as a personal sense of economic insecurity for the majority of these more Brexit-supporting individuals.

The third insight relates to electoral behaviour: **people vote**, **places don't**. We suggest that economic security has been a very important foundation of the Conservatives' recent electoral success, along with voters' values and orientations on the issue of Brexit and related issues to it, and will be important test for all of the political parties going forward, especially given the impact of the current cost of living crisis on people's economic insecurity. It would be a mistake to simply equate the characteristics of 'Red Wall places' (economically left-behind areas with older populations and





lower education levels) with the characteristics of the voters supporting the Conservatives (economically secure voters who tend to be older with lower education levels). There is some evidence of Conservative support in 2019 among the most economically insecure voters, but the Conservatives' voters are more economically secure in the majority. Furthermore, the trends we report in reported economic insecurity and social conservatism are largely unrelated to the characteristics of where people live; whether they live in areas with high or low house prices or high or low levels of unemployment. An older non-graduate in an affluent area is as likely to be as socially conservative as an older non-graduate in a poorer area. A younger graduate in an affluent area is as likely to be as non-graduates feel somewhat more economically insecure if they live in areas of the country with higher unemployment, but younger non-graduates feel more economically insecure overall.

# The risk of a divide between the 'Will Haves', 'Won't Haves' and the older 'Haves'

Kitschelt (1995) first highlighted a new structural conflict in advanced societies between those with lower educational qualifications who have been materially and symbolically harmed by deindustrialisation, automation and globalisation, and those with higher educational qualifications, who have benefitted in relative terms. His argument is that the economic changes that have taken place over time have further disadvantaged the very people and segments of the workforce who do not attend university, and who would be more likely to have worse economic outcomes to begin with. Cavaille and Marshall (2019: 254) note the relationship between educational attainment, economic position and cultural values: "the successful completion of additional degrees translates into different life expectations and experiences—e.g., lower unemployment risks, higher wages, and different occupational choices – that make one less likely to hold anti-immigration attitudes." Here the economic and cultural challenges of globalisation may intersect most negatively for those with lower levels of educational qualifications.

These economic changes, which have unfolded over time, may now be impacting younger generations of non-graduates more severely. Older generations experienced other countervailing economic benefits and support, whereas younger generations of non-graduates now experience an especially harsh economic climate.





We focus here on the inter-generational impacts of globalisation on different types of people (graduates and non-graduates) which spans geography, rather than on the location of economic shocks (Colantone and Stanig, 2018), local economic decline (Carreras 2019; Carreras et al. 2019), or relative economic assessments (Clarke et al. 2017; Green et al. 2022). This re-poses the possibility that those with lower educational qualifications are the group in society who have been most economically left-behind by the transformations brought with globalisation, automation, deindustrialisation, irrespective of the communities in which those people live. Their outcomes may be especially poor in areas of the country with few economic opportunities, but on the other hand their ability to succeed in areas of the country where they compete in greater numbers with graduates, and where house prices are especially high, will also impact on their economic fortunes.

Crucially, we propose that this may be markedly different across the age distribution in Britain. The material impact of transformational economic changes is greater on those who are active in the economy now, or entering it, at a key life-stage when economic security can be built-up. The loss of high-status and secure blue-collar work affects those people who are trying to enter an equivalent job-market now, arguably much more so than those people who previously – and successfully – built their economic security upon it. The out-sourcing of services and importing of goods impacts upon lower-skilled jobs, on average, and those who find employment will be more likely to do so on lower wages, making the likelihood of home ownership much lower.

Older generations had greater opportunities to accumulate financial security when they entered the workforce and were more likely to benefit from social mobility and subsequent wage inflation, both of which have subsequently stagnated for younger generations. Previous generations of non-graduates had greater expectations of life-long employment in work. Social mobility saw a substantial increase in the 1950s and 1960s, due to an increase in managerial-professional jobs, whereas for people born since 1980, social mobility is now as likely to be downwards as upwards (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2018). These economic pressures have been compounded for younger generations by the acceleration of house prices, which has disadvantaged younger generations but greatly advantaged older ones who purchased assets and have subsequently seen those assets appreciate. Home ownership increased substantially for a widening proportion of the population,<sup>6</sup> those homes have on average seen sustained appreciation over time,<sup>7</sup> and as these older

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Census unearthed: explore 50 years of change from 1961 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> UK House Price Index - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)





generations face retirement, which they could also do at younger relative retirement ages, they are – on average – likely to have pension protection, which has appreciated with or above inflation since 2011. This has been evidenced in decreasing pensioner poverty over time, although there is some evidence that it is now increasing slightly, particularly among women.<sup>8</sup>

That does not mean of course that many people haven't suffered painful economic losses or faced extreme economic insecurity, poverty and deprivation throughout their lifetimes. However, according to these arguments, overall economic security should be higher on average among older generations irrespective of their educational qualifications, which should particularly be true in Britain, where house price ownership, house price inflation and pension protection have benefitted older generations (see also Chrisp and Pearce, 2019). The boomer generation has boomed (Duffy 2021), and this has implications for generational differences in education-based economic divides.

According to Kitschelt's (1995) analysis that graduates are the winners of the economic changes brought with globalisation, graduates should be relatively better able to manage the recent changes to the economy, at least in relation to non-graduates. Note that this may be because of their higher educational attainment, which the Institute for Fiscal Studies notes provides an income return to the vast majority (80%) of graduates – controlling for parental background and students' prior attainment,<sup>9</sup> but also because of the ongoing opportunities that happen to be associated with entering higher education in the first place, including social and economic networks and levels of family wealth and inheritance. The causal effect of a university education is not straight-forward. Higher education leads to greater economic security because of the ability to compete for better paid jobs, but it will also reflect the ongoing inequalities in who goes to university in the first place. Budoki and Goldthorpe (2018) also warn that relative social mobility – the chance of moving upwards in the social class schema over the life-course - has not increased over the period of university expansion. It is harder to move up relatively if the pool of similarly educated graduates is also expanding at pace. Furthermore, the expansion of university education has not eliminated the greater take-up among those individuals whose families already have economic security, such that the most prestigious academic institutions are still attended by students from the most privileged family backgrounds (Marginson 2016). These selection-effects into university education persist, and will mean that a majority of graduates already benefit from considerable economic security and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> <u>https://www.jrf.org.uk/data/pensioner-poverty-rates</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings - Institute For Fiscal Studies - IFS





backing in comparison to non-graduates, even if their incomes are low and their level of (student) indebtedness is relatively high – alongside the investment and insurance that university indebtedness provides.<sup>10</sup> Boliver (2017) demonstrates how the expansion of university education *reproduces* rather than reduces class inequalities (see also Boliver, 2011). Work by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reminds us that wealthier parents tend also to have wealthier children.<sup>11</sup> The inheritance of wealth across graduates and non-graduates may only increase the wealth divide.

Older generations in Britain have been fortunate to secure economic security, we suggest, largely *irrespective of their level of educational attainment*. This is very simply likely to be the case because the economic benefits to early generations benefited non-graduates the most – because non-graduates were the largest segment of the population. Younger generations are now likely to experience highly divergent economic conditions based on their level of educational attainment. We expect, then, the most economically insecure to be younger non-graduates but economic security to be similar for older graduates and non-graduates alike.

Consider, also, the changing composition of the graduate and non-graduate populations. There are now substantially more young degree holders than young people without degrees, but there are greater proportions of older people without degrees than with degrees. In our British Election Study sample (using wave 14, collected in 2018) this equates to estimates of around 60% of the population being non-graduates and around 40% of the population now being graduates (see appendix table A2), although these figures would need to be replicated across different population surveys to give full confidence in precise figures. The following graph shows a density plot of graduates and nongraduates over the age distribution.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> I.e. Student loan repayments are due only at higher levels of earnings.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> R196-Why-do-wealthy-parents-have-wealthy-children.pdf (ifs.org.uk)









This shows that younger non-graduates – who may be especially negatively impacted by globalisation as well as the current economic pressures which are disproportionately affecting younger generations – are in a minority among their age cohort. They may likely therefore have worse economic outcomes and also worse **status outcomes** in a society that values educational attainment through the increasing normalisation of holding a graduate degree.

The increase in managerial, problem-solving and other service sectors (e.g. media and journalism), and tech industries, has opened up greater job opportunities for graduates, and this has happened alongside the huge expansion of graduates who are available to fill those higher-skilled professions. Conversely, not having a degree may be especially challenging for the younger generations above who are entering the workforce if the proportion of lower-skilled employment opportunities has reduced at a faster rate than the proportions of non-graduates entering the workforce.

Taken together, we expect that economic security should be higher for older non-graduates and graduates alike, whereas economic insecurity should be highest for younger non-graduates.





### **Evidence: economic insecurity by education and age**

We use British Election Study (BES) internet panel data and survey questions we designed and collected in May 2018 (Fieldhouse et al. 2018).<sup>12</sup> We asked over 30,000 respondents a series of questions about their economic position; whether they own a home or rent and – if they don't currently own a home – whether they expect to be able to purchase a home in the next 5-10 years. We also asked the value of their home if they are a home owner, the value of their savings (by household), their household level of non-mortgage debt,<sup>13</sup> whether they had needed to borrow money in the last year to pay for household bills, groceries, or other essential day-to-day items, and how (and whether) they would be able to pay for an unexpected £300 emergency expense. In order to compare these answers with how respondents feel about their economic security, we also asked:

'How worried are you about your and your family's economic security?', with answers provided on a scale from 0 = not worried at all, to 10 = very worried.

These questions on economic security accompany standard questions on household income (which we adjust to household size), occupational class, and standard demographics. We use these questions to explore the amount of reported economic insecurity for different subgroups by education level and age and what kinds of economic experiences are associated with reported economic insecurity overall. We also use BES questions to examine the same respondents' attitudes towards immigration and their average score on a standard liberal-social conservatism scale (the liberal-authoritarianism scale), as well as their Brexit preference. The combination of these economic security and cultural questions has not been available before within the BES, nor indeed afterwards (for economic security), so the data are uniquely useful for our purposes.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 2 reports the relationship of education level to reported economic insecurity across the age distribution, showing the plot of the average economic insecurity variable for graduates and non-graduates, with higher mean values denoting that respondents are more worried about their economic security. We exclude full-time students from our analysis so that we can compare non-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> For other work using these survey questions, and validating their distribution to population data and comparable Bank of England panel data, see (Green and Pahontu 2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> This also excludes student loan repayments.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Full variable information is provided in Table A1 of the appendix.





graduates who do not hold a degree with graduates, and we remove respondents over 80, due to sample size.<sup>15</sup> Using the confidence intervals in the appendix (Figure A1) we can also see where the two groups (with and without university degrees) are statistically different (the confidence intervals do not overlap) and where they are similar (confidence intervals overlap) across the age distribution.<sup>16</sup> Confidence intervals overlap for our sample at approximately 50 years of age.





Graph excludes full-time students and respondents over the age of 80. For those with a degree we exclude under 21s. Confidence intervals overlap from approx. 50 years of age

The people who report the highest amount of economic insecurity for themselves and their family are the youngest groups who do not have degrees. This peaks for non-graduates at around ages 27-28 and only starts to decline at around age 40. The average level of economic insecurity is almost statistically indistinguishable across education level (degree/non-degree) from around the age of 50,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> This means we start the series for non-graduates at age 18, and graduates at age 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> The widening confidence intervals for older graduates reflects the smaller proportions of these respondents in the sample.





although the oldest non-graduates are slightly more economically insecure than the oldest graduates – which makes a great deal of sense when we consider that Britain's oldest graduates would have represented a highly selective segment of British society when they entered university. Recall that the scale runs from 0 (not worried at all) to 10 (very worried), and so graduates are barely worried on average, whereas non-graduates are more worried than not until they near retirement age, at around 60 years old<sup>17</sup>.

The pattern we display in Figure 2 is not a quirk of the BES survey question about being worried, or to the BES sample. We replicated almost the exact same picture using a separate survey run by the Bank of England (using 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017 and 2018 waves of the data)<sup>18</sup> asking respondents, 'Do you feel you have enough money set aside for emergencies?', which can be found for all the panel waves (pooled) in Figure A2 of the appendix.

Note that the above pattern in Figure 2 does not mean that ageing is a predictor of economic security, nor does it prove a generational effect. We cannot distinguish whether these current 27-28 year olds will continue to have high economic insecurity as they age – because we cannot distinguish in these data between age effects and generational effects. Likewise, we cannot know whether the 60 year old non-graduates in our sample had similar levels of economic insecurity to their newer generational counterparts when they were also in their late 20s to 40s. However, within the generations we are able to study, economic security increases over the age distribution for non-graduates and graduates alike.

Appendix (Figure A3) shows that the key educational distinction is the one shown above between graduates and non-graduates. Respondents' average economic insecurity is the same for respondents with no formal qualifications and those with GCSE level qualifications; such that economic insecurity is higher for younger respondents with no formal qualifications and with GCSE qualifications, and similarly lower for older respondents across educational qualification level. Table A3 of the appendix also shows a statistical model using demographics to predict feelings of economic insecurity so that we can see what is statistically meaningful and also control for other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> We also re-examine Figure 2 above with an interaction term between age and education level, which tells us whether the higher reported economic insecurity of non-graduates by age is statistically significant and we find that it is (the plot of the linear effects is in Figure A4).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> The relevant survey item was not asked in the 2015 wave.





variables. In that model we examine the effects of age, education level, gender, ethnicity and NS-SEC occupational class, and we control for the number of children in the household.<sup>19</sup> The model (Table A3) also shows that women report higher economic insecurity than men, that all occupational groups (except higher professionals) report higher economic insecurity than 'employers in large organisations and higher managerial positions', as we would expect, and that economic insecurity is higher the larger the number of children in the household. The number of dependents is, on average, higher for non-graduates than for graduates, and this difference is statistically significant, pointing to one reason that non-graduates with dependents may report higher economic insecurity, and another reason this group is especially important to support.<sup>20</sup> Their lack of economic security has the potential to impact on their dependents in greater numbers.

It is useful to highlight some further detail on the fact that women report higher economic insecurity. They do so when controlling for education level, age, the number of children in the household and social class. Women's average reported economic insecurity tends to be higher until around the age of 50 whereas the same is true for men until around the age of 40.

We explored whether this was different for graduate women or non-graduate women. University education expansion (overall and by gender) should, after all, minimise any gender gap in economic insecurity between women and men. This does not appear to be the case.<sup>21</sup> Despite the considerable advances in gender parity that have taken place over time, a degree appears to provide less experience or perception of economic insurance to women than it does to men. These findings may account for the higher levels of support for redistribution among younger women and women overall (Sanders and Shorrocks, 2019). Furthermore, our model of economic insecurity shows that ethnic minority Britons experience greater economic insecurity than white Britons, and ethnic minority men report greater economic insecurity than white British men. These differences underline historic experiences of inequality in Britain, and suggest that they are palpable to survey respondents in their answers about economic insecurity.

The fact that men feel more economically secure over the life-course may be due to women's higher propensity to show caution in surveys, reflect different propensities to worry about family members

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Note again we exclude respondents who are full-time students at the time of the survey, 4% of respondents.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> The average for graduates is 1.2 and for non-graduates 1.5, and a t-test confirms the difference in means.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Analysis available on request.





(the economic security question is: "How worried are you about your and your family's economic security?"), or more simply reflect the ongoing economic disparities and gender inequalities in British society, which are particularly affecting younger women. Women are substantially more likely, for example, to take on part-time employment, especially when they are also caring for children. Sanders and Shorrocks (2019) argued that while younger women reacted against the British government's austerity measures, older women were protected by the government's policies on pensions, and therefore held attitudes and made electoral choices more similar to men. Our data are broadly consistent with these patterns, although retired women do remain more economically insecure than retired men (though retirees overall report lower economic insecurity).

# Where do younger non-graduates live?

Much recent analysis of British elections, particularly since Brexit, has focused on the types of places in the country where more young graduates live (metropolitan areas of the country that supported Remain and are also more likely to vote Labour) and where older non-graduates live (rural, coastal, peripheral areas of towns and suburbs that supported Leave and are also more likely to vote Conservative) (Jennings and Stoker 2016; 2017). This geographical polarisation of younger graduates and older non-graduates compounds Labour's problem of disproportionate concentration of support in cities which, under a majoritarian electoral system, makes it very difficult for Labour to win a majority. The same is true for the Democrats and Republicans in the US (Rodden, 2019). It has also placed considerable focus – through the government's language of 'levelling up' on parts of the country where economic outcomes have been poorest, which have tended to be areas where greater proportions of older non-graduates reside.<sup>22</sup>

Our analysis suggests that we also need to be concerned about the locations and economic experiences of **younger non-graduates**. It is not immediately obvious where this sub-group of the population should be more heavily distributed. Labour's former heartlands – parts of the Red Wall – have seen increasing population aging over time as these left-behind areas experience a 'brain drain' and a search for greater economic opportunity. And yet, if this sub-group of the population experiences greater economic insecurity, it could be because they face fewer job opportunities in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> For a review of economic outcomes and levelling up: <u>Publications | CPP (progressive-policy.net)</u>





left behind parts of the country, or alternatively because they have left these parts of the country but are struggling to make ends meet, particularly when competing with younger graduates.

We analysed 2011 Census for England and Wales data linked to British constituencies (using the Ordinance Survey boundary line) to examine the proportions of younger (under 50) non-graduates across constituencies, as measured in the last available Census for England and Wales.<sup>23</sup> Note that this necessarily includes people who are aged between 16 and 18 who may go on to university but who were not yet at university at the time of the 2011 Census (due to their age), and it also includes people of university-age who will go on to get a degree but who don't yet have a degree (due to their age). We are interested here in the variation between constituencies as best as we can measure them, noting the need to investigate this again with the 2021 Census data when it is available. Figure 3(a) presents the constituency map of England and Wales and Figure 3(b) presents a close-up view of the London distribution which cannot be adequately seen on Figure 3(a).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> We also examined these patterns with an under 40 age cut-off and found the same pattern of distribution.





# **Figure 3(a):** Constituency map of the distribution of younger non-graduates (2011 Census cross-breaks on age (under 49s) and education level), England and Wales<sup>24</sup>

Percentage of Young Non-Graduates in Each Constituency



Source: 2011 UK Census and Ordinance Survey Boundary-Line

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Interactive maps showing figures by constituency can be found online here:





#### **Figure 3(b):** London constituency map of the distribution of younger non-graduates (2011 Census cross-breaks on age (under 49s) and education level)



#### Percentage of Young Non-Graduates in Each London Constituency

Source: 2011 UK Census and Ordinance Survey Boundary-Line

The maps demonstrate considerable spread in the distribution of younger non-graduates using the 2011 Census (for England and Wales).

The map of younger non-graduate distribution in England and Wales demonstrates concentrations both in city constituencies – including London – and in more peripheral parts of the UK: East Anglia, The Wash, the Midlands, the North East, North West, South Wales and some parts of the South and South West. Within London, younger non-graduates tend to live on the east-side of London and the extreme west; that is, in parts of greater London and away from the leafier and affluent parts of London's central constituencies and south west. Figure 3(a) also shows a concentration in the Thames Estuary area; those Essex and Kent constituencies that voted strongly for Brexit. Indeed, the relationship to Leave voting areas is striking in these maps (particularly Figure 3(a)). The over-riding picture is one of spread however; both in metropolitan areas and in more peripheral areas; in constituencies with large cities and those with large and small towns, in more rural areas and more urban areas. Younger non-graduates do not disproportionately live in the Red Wall, although they can be found in relatively high proportions in a many of these constituencies (see Kanagasooriam and Simon (2021) for a list).





## What makes someone feel economically insecure?

Economic security relates to the buffers and insurance a person has at their disposal which will also likely influence their expectations of economic insecurity into the future – whether they will be able to buy a home and whether they could weather an economic storm, such as the economic storms that have taken place since we asked our respondents these detailed questions about their economic circumstances. It is related to working status, home ownership and savings; all indicators of the kinds of security afforded to individuals who acquire security through incomes, but not only through incomes. Home ownership is also a function of affordability and when someone bought.

We need to distinguish between economic insecurity and income. After all, why not just use a person's household income to infer their current economic circumstances and therefore their likely economic security (and also their related political attitudes and vote intention)? It is true that graduates have higher incomes, on average, than non-graduates. However, we have also shown that older people tend to have higher economic security and the same cannot be said of their average household incomes. An average household income for a retired pensioner will naturally be a great deal lower than for a working-age individual, especially a working-age graduate. And yet pensioners will likely have higher asset values, savings, lower living costs, and of course will not be impacted by levels of job security or insecurity, making them (as we show) feel more economically secure.

The correlation between our economic insecurity measure and household income is only - 0.20. The values are -0.22 when correlated with household income adjusted for household size and -0.25 for the logged adjusted household income measure. We propose that economic security is a useful indicator of someone's economic circumstances in addition to income, giving us insight into the economic basis of new education and age relationships with political attitudes and vote choice in a way that household income (or social class) cannot, due to its variation over the age distribution. It may be especially important now that the age and education relationships are so important for understanding vote choice in Britain (also in other countries), as well as most recently for electoral turnout, since older people may have lower incomes but higher economic security, and younger graduates and non-graduates may have different degrees of economic confidence.





Let's take two young individuals, one a graduate and one a non-graduate, but neither of them have yet had a chance to buy a home and both are renting. A graduate may have a higher income and – crucially - will anticipate a higher income return in the future and may (given the relationship of university entrance with existing family wealth) also have greater ability to borrow or be gifted a deposit from family. We asked BES survey respondents whether they expected to be able to buy a house in the next 5 to 10 years (if they did not own a home at the point of taking the survey). Examining just those respondents who were currently renting,<sup>25</sup> the proportion of **graduates** who said 'yes – they expect they will be able to buy a house' was **44%** in 2018 and the proportion of **nongraduates** who said 'yes' was only **18%**. These figures may have considerably decreased since 2018 given rising house prices but the gap between them is very striking.

Here we show the bivariate relationships of working status, home ownership and savings with reported economic insecurity in our British Election Study data, showing that each of these indicators shows a relationship with how worried a person feels about their economic security. Figure 4 shows that retirees have the lowest levels of economic insecurity (consistent with Figure 2) and unemployed respondents and those not working for other reasons have substantially higher economic insecurity, followed by students. Part-time workers have higher economic insecurity than full time workers (note that women tend to comprise part-time workers in higher proportions than men). Figure 5 shows that renters report considerably higher economic insecurity than home owners, and owning outright affords someone higher security than owning with a mortgage. Figure 6 shows a very strong relationship with reported savings, with those with higher levels of savings reporting lower levels of economic insecurity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> N = 4,264







Figure 4: Average reported economic insecurity by work status (BES, wave 14)

Figure 5: Average reported economic insecurity by home ownership (BES, wave 14)









#### Figure 6: Average reported economic insecurity by reported savings (BES, wave 14)

Each of these indicators – work status, home ownership and savings – shows an economic gap between graduates and non-graduates in our data (not shown here). Of course we are then simply confirming the results of a huge body of evidence showing the inequalities that become replicated through self-selection into higher education and through the economic returns of higher education itself. Those differences are deeper still when we consider that graduate returns will also differ by degree, degree institution and by parental wealth (both as direct economic impacts and indirect economic effects), as seen here in the difference among graduates in our BES data for those who attended a private or state school, which can proxy for a range of economic benefits; the ability to support children to buy a home, the university someone attends, potentially different aspirations, as well as some ability-based selection into private education in the first place.

Table 1: Economic outcomes for	graduates by priv	vate education (BES	wave 14)
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School	Mean household income (adj)	Mean savings	% owns house mortgage	% outright owns
Not private school	£29,343	£36,738	33%	35%
Private school	£31,147	£50,337	30%	44%

Household Income N = 8,128; Savings N = 7,512; Home Ownership N = 10,469.





Most important for us is understanding the degree to which economic hardship and greater economic insecurity is dividing non-graduates and graduates across the age distribution. This helps us understand the seriousness of the degree of higher economic insecurity among younger generations of non-graduates we reported above, in Figure 2.

We first note the large generation-based divide in people's ability to buy homes, and also how this generational divide may exacerbate the experience of younger non-graduates. Figure 7 reports the level of reported home ownership in wave 14 (2018) among graduates and non-graduates by age, showing that younger non-graduates are substantially less likely to own homes than younger graduates, but that this gap is narrower for older graduates and non-graduates. Recall that non-graduates formed the vast majority of the population who benefited from the expansion in home ownership from the 1970s and 1980s. The same has not been true for younger generations, but younger generations of graduates are more likely to keep pace with their elders.









We identified two further patterns in our data on the degree to which higher reported economic insecurity among younger non-graduates represents a high degree of economic precarity. We asked respondents whether they had 'needed to borrow money for daily essentials in the past 12 months'. Figure 8 reports the distribution of agreement with this statement among graduates and non-graduates across the age distribution. This graph mirrors the reported differences in economic insecurity among younger graduates and non-graduates in Figure 2.



Figure 8: Borrowing necessity by age and education level

Relatedly, we asked respondents whether they could pay for an emergency expense of £300.<sup>26</sup> Options were whether they would rely on savings, a loan, borrowing from friends and family or selling something, or whether they could not come up with £300 right now. Figure 9 shows how those responses (not being able to come up with £300 right now) by age and education level.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Suppose that you have an emergency expense that costs £300. Based on your current financial situation, how would you pay for this expense? Please tick all that apply.







Figure 9: 'I could not come up with £300 right now' by age and education level

Britain has a problem of economic insecurity among its younger generation of non-graduates and these data suggest that this is an extreme problem; a problem of extreme poverty for many in this group of people. Having to borrow for essentials, or not being able to come up with £300 through any means denotes a level of poverty that is crippling, to being "so utterly consumed by financial hardship that it affects every decision you make on a daily basis".<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, these data were collected before the pandemic, before house prices rose further still, before economic conditions impacted most harshly for people whose pre-pandemic employment position was weakest,<sup>28</sup> and before the cost of living crisis that is now hitting the country. Data is being gathered at the current time (BES wave 23) to explore whether these levels are worse still, how graduates and non-graduates differ now compared to 2018 in their likelihood of buying a home, and how the economic gaps we identify here make it likely that younger generations of graduates will be better placed to weather this storm than younger generations of non-graduates. There isn't just an age divide in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> UK Poverty 2022: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | JRF

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Uneven steps • Resolution Foundation





wealth inequality in Britain. It goes deeper than this. It is an economic insecurity inequality that divides people both by age and – for younger people – also by their level of education.

## Social Conservativism, Brexit and Economics

We have established that younger non-graduates feel the most economically insecure, why that is the case (they are substantially more unable to afford the costs of living), and that the majority of older non-graduates and graduates feel equally economically secure. We now contrast the age and education level relationships with Brexit vote, cultural conservatism and immigration attitudes.

Theoretically, economic security and cultural concerns might be assumed to be related in important ways, as economic insecurity is expected to increase labour competition and more hostile attitudes towards immigrants (Pardos-Prado and Xena, 2019; Cavaille and Marshall, 2019; Carreras et al. 2019). If that is true, we might expect that effect to be especially acute among younger non-graduates in the workforce. However, it should now be clear that the people who are most economically insecure are *not*, on average, the same people who are the most socially conservative. Whereas being an older non-graduate means you are more likely to be economically secure, you are much more likely to be culturally conservative. Older people with lower levels of education are most supportive of Brexit, least supportive of immigration and the most socially conservative, and this accounts for the increasing relationship between age and education to vote choice in recent elections (Fieldhouse et al. 2019). This suggests that we need to examine the interaction between age and education level and these political attitudes.

We examine these attitudes by education level using reported vote in the EU referendum, respondent immigration attitudes,<sup>29</sup> and the BES social conservatism scale<sup>30</sup> to compare average

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> The same pattern for immigration attitudes exists when we use a measure where respondents were asked: do you think that immigration undermines or enriches Britain's cultural life?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> The authoritarianism scale is a summary measure of respondents' agreement/disagreement with the following five statements:

<sup>1.</sup> Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values

<sup>2.</sup> For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence

<sup>3.</sup> Schools should teach children to obey authority

<sup>4.</sup> Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards

<sup>5.</sup> People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences

Respondents answered on a 1-5 scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The resulting scale ranges between 1-10 with high (low) values reflecting more authoritarian (liberal) values.





levels of cultural conservatism with the economic insecurity measure used above. We plot z-scores to standardise these variables on the same axes with each other so that the average level of economic security can be compared to the average position of respondents on these additional scales, presenting them for non-graduates and graduates. We don't expect substantially different relationships across these scales, but we report each of them because of the importance of each to electoral behaviour in Britain and because it could be argued that economic insecurity might be, for example, more related to immigration concerns than – for example – social conservatism.

Figures 10(a) and 10 (b) presents the standardised economic security and Leave support scores for non-graduates and graduates, Figure 11(a) and 11(b) the same patterns for the social conservatism scale, and Figure 12(a) and 12(b) for the immigration scale.

There are three main observations to take from these comparisons.

The first is that economic insecurity and Brexit preferences, social conservatism and immigration preferences run in opposite directions. Being more on the right on social issues corresponds with greater economic security, not less economic security. This is true for Leave support, social conservatism and for immigration attitudes. It is not the case that people with the highest average levels of reported economic insecurity have the strongest Leave support, social conservatism or anti-immigration attitudes.

The second observation is that these cross-cutting relationships are especially strong for nongraduates. This is because the age gradient on social conservatism (or second dimension political issues) is very strong for non-graduates, and so is the age gradient for economic security for nongraduates, but in the opposite directions. These relationships underline the importance of thinking about the age and education relationships as interactions, rather than as two separate predictors.

The third observation relates to where Leave support, social conservatism and immigration attitudes do correspond most closely; and this is among the younger non-graduates we have focused on in this report. At the aggregate level, examining averages, Leave support, social conservatism and immigration preferences are quite closely correlated with the higher economic insecurity that younger non-graduates report between the ages of around 18 to 30 years old. Note, however, that this is the only segment of the population for whom these attitudes and experiences do correlate




closely. This does not necessarily denote a causal effect, but if we are to expect a causal relationship, we should examine these individuals.





# **Figure 10(a)**: Leave vote and economic insecurity: non-graduates



# Figure 11(a): Social conservatism and economic insecurity: non-graduates











Economic Insecurity - Leave Vote

Economic Insecurity - Social Conservatism

Economic Insecurity - Anti Immigration Attitudes

# Figure 11(b): Social conservatism and economic insecurity: graduates



# Figure 12(b): Immigration attitudes and economic insecurity: graduates



Economic Insecurity - Leave Vote





These differences are important for understanding the 'winners' and 'losers' arguments about globalisation. The key, here, is to understand that people with degrees tend also to be better off and more economically secure, but older non-graduates are conflicted: they are more economically secure but they are more culturally conservative. They are not economic 'losers' in these terms but they have greater grievances with cultural change. This may mean they are unhappy with the symbolic aspects of immigration, cultural change and even with the economic impacts (as they perceive them) of these changes, but they are the least likely to associate their own level of economic insecurity with pressures from immigration, such as through skill-specific job competition.

It may risk setting up a straw man to claim that the majority of the interpretation of Brexit, and of the Conservative vote subsequently, has focused on a combination of economic concerns and concerns about immigration. There has certainly been a debate in academic circles about the combination of economics and immigration preferences in the votes for Trump, Brexit and the radical right more broadly, with some evidence pointing more strongly to cultural relationships, and others prioritising economics, austerity and trade shocks. Our data suggests that what may be crucial is understanding what *types* of economic and other immigration concerns people hold, either through their own economic insecurity or otherwise, and which segments of the population (by age and education) should be most likely to be concerned about them.

At a basic level, if we turn attention to the segment of the population who are both economically insecure and also on the right on second dimension issues, the proportions represent a minority. If we examine those people who are economically insecure as above the mid-point on the economic insecurity scale, and above the mid-points on the social conservatism or immigration scales, we see that the relevant proportions of our BES full sample who report being both economically insecure and socially conservative is 33% and the proportion who report being both economically insecure and anti-immigration is 25%. That is to say, somewhere between **one quarter** and **one third** of all people in our data consider themselves to be both economically insecure and also hold more socially conservative or anti-immigration attitudes. And therefore three-quarters or two-thirds of our sample do not do so. The vast majority of Britons are either economically secure and socially conservative (or anti-immigration), or economically insecure and socially liberal (pro-immigration). The relevant breakdowns can be seen in Appendix Tables A4 and A5.





### **Electoral participation: younger non-graduates**

If younger non-graduates have the greatest potential to hold economic grievances and to hold immigration and Brexit preferences in line with those grievances, it is useful to know whether these individuals also feel more alienated from the political process. Indeed, given the increasing gradient of age to turnout in recent British elections (Prosser et al. 2020; Pearce and Chrisp 2021) and also the very well-documented relationship of education level to electoral turnout, we should expect that younger non-graduates might also be the **least** likely to vote in British elections. The relationship between economic security (via housing tenure), age and educational attainment would point to this (Pearce and Chrisp, 2021).

We can also examine this using the British Election Study. Here we explore whether the relationship of education level and age to reporting having voted in the general election in 2017 – the election that followed the Brexit referendum, using the 2017 post-election wave of the BES internet panel. We choose this election and dataset because we can also corroborate this reported turnout data with the 'validated turnout' data from the BES in-person random probability survey in 2017.

Figure 13 shows that younger non-graduates are more likely to report not voting in the 2017 election and this pattern is indeed corroborated with the BES validated turnout data, both for the 2017 general election and also for the 2015 general election.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> The 2019 general election vote validation data is not yet available. The 2017 validated BES data shows an additional dip in turnout among non-graduates around age 35-40.









This does not mean that these individuals may be persistent non-voters. Indeed, there is some evidence in the BES internet panel – this time only relying on reported turnout – that younger nongraduates voted in *higher* numbers in the EU referendum than they did in the previous or subsequent general elections. This evidence only uses *reported* turnout in the EU referendum. People tend to over-report their turnout in elections in high numbers in political surveys – which is why the BES post-election survey includes a vote validation exercise and why we place less weight on reported turnout when we cannot verify it. Validated turnout estimates were not available for the EU referendum in 2016, and so self-reported referendum turnout is the best evidence that we can use. This showed that the rate of not-voting (reported not voting) in the 2016 EU referendum was lower among younger non-graduates and therefore more similar to younger graduates. We also note the strong correspondence of the distribution of younger non-graduates to higher Brexit voting constituencies in our earlier map in Figure 4(a). Both would suggest that these individuals could have been a decisive part of the electorate in the EU referendum, and could be a source of potential support for all political parties in future general elections.





### People vote, places don't

What are the political implications of the contrasting inter-generational patterns we have revealed above? The first – most important – observation relates to the increasing role of age to electoral choice in the 2017 and 2019 general elections, the increasing relationship of electoral turnout to vote choice in recent general elections, and the increasing role of educational attainment (Green, 2021). If the Conservatives are supported by older voters, and in increasing relative proportions due to turnout, and if they are supported by older non-graduate voters as opposed to younger non-graduate voters (due to those voters' lower likelihood of voting), then the Conservatives may have seen the average economic security of their electoral base *increase* in recent elections, if we think of the average levels of economic security reported above. If the Conservatives have increased their support among older non-graduates *and* among younger non-graduates, they may have increased their support among the most and the least economically secure.

It is clear that the cultural and economic motivations we report above should be cross-cutting, especially for older generations whose experiences on these two dimensions differ most greatly, and for older non-graduates where their experiences differ most acutely. Whereas we know that the Labour party benefits from support among graduates, those graduates are also more likely to be economically secure than the non-graduates who are more likely to support the Conservatives. This could also mean that the economic security that correlates with education is a source of *potential* Conservative support, not least because of the relationship between a graduate education and more right-wing economic views (Scott, 2022; Gelepithis and Giani, 2022). Others have argued that middle-class graduates tend to be supportive of redistribution (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015), which would imply that support for redistribution may be higher among graduates who accumulate more economic security and that these individuals would continue to vote for Labour – both on economics and on second dimension issues. Our evidence suggests that this may not the case when viewed through the lens of the economic security measures we use here.

To understand these different potential implications we consider a) how party support varies across education level and economic insecurity; b) how relevant each are to Labour versus Conservative vote intention; and c) how these patterns also exist for support for redistribution.





Figure 14 presents the predicted Conservative vote intention (versus Labour) in May 2018 by age, education level and by economic insecurity, in a model where we also control for gender and NS-SEC occupational class. Table A5 of the appendix provides the full model. This is a model only using demographics and economic insecurity.





Figure 14 provides a summary of how the Conservative Party benefitted from economic security among degree holders and non-degree holders over the age distribution in 2018, and how Labour tended to win more support among degree holders and non-degree holders who are more economically insecure. Conservative support is greatest among non-graduates who are economically secure, but the Conservatives also win substantially more support among economically secure degree holders than it does among economically insecure degree holders and non-degree holders. We can therefore see that Labour cannot necessarily count on graduates for its support if those graduates also accumulate economic security, as they are substantially more likely to do (among younger age groups), according to our data. Likewise, the Conservatives cannot necessarily count on non-graduates for its support if those non-graduates do not accumulate economic security, as they





are also substantially less likely to do so, according to our data. Economic security and education level have the potential to cross-pressure voters.

This cross-cutting relationship is exemplified further when we compare the association of economic insecurity and cultural insecurity to party support in 2018, which is of importance because of the divergent relationships we reported above across the age distribution - for non-graduates in particular. Here we include different attitudinal measures alongside economic insecurity - those we reported in the above section; EU referendum vote, social conservatism and immigration attitudes. We also include whether respondents are in work, retired, or students. We are interested in the relative importance of economic insecurity for vote choice in comparison to those second dimension issues. Figure 15 presents a plot of the standardised coefficients, which allows us to compare the statistical association of each measure in comparison to the others. The full model can be found in Table A7 of the appendix.

Figure 15: Coefficient plot: Conservative v Labour vote choice (BES internet panel wave 14, 2018) relationship across variables, standardised coefficients



#### Vote intention Conservative Party





The effects for EU referendum vote choice, liberal-authoritarian values, immigration attitudes show that economic insecurity is equally associated with vote intention as any one of these variables. It is important to remember that those three variables are strongly correlated with each other and adding them together thus presents the relationship of one with vote choice when others are also taken into account. We note, however, that the economic insecurity effect is also in a model including social class and work status, and so each of the variables we are comparing here have other variables that are – in part – controlling for the statistical association upon vote choice. We have tried a range of different specifications and each one found that economic insecurity as a strong and robust effect, and leads to greater Labour voting relative to voting for the Conservatives.

Next, we investigate the relationship between education level and economic insecurity on redistribution values. As discussed above, this is important because it might be thought that graduates will support redistribution at higher levels of economic security, and non-graduates may support redistribution in light of their relatively lower economic security, such that there is little cross-pressure on graduate voters between their education level and their increasing economic security with age, or further that non-graduates may retain their support for redistribution in light of their earlier economic insecurity (if we assume that economic security is an effect of aging, rather than of being in a specific cohort), and therefore not be cross-pressured in light of their increasing economic security by age.

Figure 16 presents the predicted redistribution value by education level and by economic insecurity, from a model presented in Table A8 of the appendix. That model replicates the above vote model (Table A7) with redistribution attitudes as the dependent variable, and shows that economic insecurity is by far the stronger predictor of redistribution attitudes compared to education level, and that graduates are slightly less likely to support redistribution, even at higher levels of economic insecurity, whereas non-graduates are slightly more likely to support redistribution at higher levels of economic security.





**Figure 16:** Redistribution preferences by education and economic insecurity Model controls for age, gender, NS-Sec, work status, immigration attitudes, social conservatism, EU vote (BES internet panel, wave 14, 2018)



Estimates based on model provided in Table A8

Together, these analyses suggest that changes in economic security over the life-course may be extremely important influences on voters who have high or low educational attainment, and have the potential to be a cross-cutting electoral influence of a comparable size to the cultural and immigration issues that have been so typically associated with educational attainment in Britain. The economic security that graduates gain relative to non-graduates may account for their more rightwing political economic values accrued over the life-course (see Scott, 2022). Interestingly, Gelepithis and Giani (2022) argue that graduates' greater economic security is just one reason for their lower support for redistribution; another is an erosion of social solidarity.

### What about 2019?

The questions on economic insecurity were asked in 2018, and our analysis suggests that the Labour party was supported – relative to the Conservatives – by more economically insecure voters in 2018.





However, the 2019 general election was the election in which the Conservatives famously made significant breakthroughs into Labour's Red Wall – those parts of the country that had represented Labour's former industrial heartlands, which had higher than average levels of deprivation, and which had seen particularly high votes for Leave in the EU referendum in 2016. If the Conservatives were supported by more economically insecure voters, it should have taken place in 2019. This may have meant that the Conservatives were supported in greater numbers by those older non-graduate voters who did *not* have high amounts of economic security (they diverged from the averages we report in Figure 2), or by younger non-graduates with greater economic insecurity, possibly won over by Boris Johnson's promises to deliver Brexit and to level-up the country. However, as we have shown above, the relationship of age to electoral choice in 2019, and the relationship of Conservative voters in both 2017 and 2019, should have resulted in the vast majority of Conservative voters in both elections being more economically secure on average.

We explore this by examining the proportions of our sample, across the 2018 economic insecurity scale, who reported having voted Labour and Conservative in the 2019 general election. Note that these are the same respondents who were interviewed in wave 14 of the BES internet panel and also in wave 19 of the BES internet panel (the post-2019 general election wave of the survey), with the data weighted to take account of attrition between 2017 and 2019.



**Figure 17:** Reported Conservative and Labour vote (2019) by economic insecurity (2018), BES internet panel, waves 14-19 (data are weighted).





This graph shows that by far the greatest majority of the Conservatives' support in 2019 was among those who had the greatest levels of reported economic security, that Labour's support was highest in 2019 among those with the greatest economic insecurity (with very low levels of support among those with the highest levels of economic security), but also that the Conservatives had somewhat higher support in 2019 among those with high economic insecurity – at point 9 on the scale. It is very difficult to make a direct comparison with the general election in 2017 because we would not be comparing pre-election levels of economic insecurity with subsequent general election vote choice, and therefore not making a like-for-like comparison over time. However, if we do compare the reported Labour and Conservative vote choice in 2017 with respondents who subsequently reported their economic insecurity in 2018, Labour's vote support was higher overall and exhibited the same steep gradient of support with higher levels of economic insecurity, but the Conservatives' support in 2017 was marginally lower among those who were most economically insecure (at points 9 and 10); suggesting that while the Conservative vote was by far the highest among those with greatest economic security in both elections, there may have been a small but significant increase in Conservative support among some of the most economically insecure in 2019. Insofar as we can measure this across geography, this still resulted in less than 30% of the reported Conservative vote share in the North East and North West regions of England (regions that have been the focus of Red Wall constituencies) in both elections being comprised of those who reported higher than average levels of economic insecurity in 2018.

### Geography, economic insecurity and social conservatism

Our final section of evidence considers the relationship of economic insecurity – and of social conservatism – to some indicators of the types of place in which people live. This is important because we may be overlooking divergent experiences of a young non-graduate who lives in an area with high unemployment or an area with house prices with a young non-graduate who lives in a more affordable and prosperous area, or a younger non-graduate who lives in a city compared to one that lives in a rural area or town. This would place greater focus on the types of place that people live in, rather than their own individual experience within and across those different places. Likewise, it might be possible that someone's social conservatism is higher in areas of high





unemployment or outside of metropolitan areas of the country, such that young non-graduates in left behind parts of Britain actually resemble the older non-graduates who hold the most pro-Brexit attitudes or concerns about immigration.

We can investigate this by adding contextual data to our BES survey data, which we have done using the average rate of unemployment in the area, which we obtain using 2011 ONS Census records. The appendix also compares these relationships by the average local house price for the same areas (in 2016), and we also found very similar patterns by population density and a rural/urban Census classification.

These analyses show that the trends we reported above for the relationship of age and education level to economic insecurity – and the relationship of age and education level to social conservatism – do not tend to vary by the types of place in which people live according to the classifications we use. That is to say, these experiences are largely a product of the type of person who has these experiences and who holds these attitudes, and they do not vary substantially by where those people live. We do not expect that our analysis is significantly different in its application to one part of the country or another. It would hold as well for a young non-graduate living in Islington as it would a young non-graduate living in Sunderland, as it would for younger graduates and older graduates and non-graduates. The level of economic insecurity is somewhat higher in areas of high unemployment – but this is true for graduates and non-graduates alike, and younger non-graduates remain more economically insecure overall.

Figures 18(a) and (b) show the relationship of age to economic insecurity for non-graduates (a) and graduates (b) separated by above and below average unemployment levels using the 2011 Census.





#### Figure 18: Economic Insecurity across age in high and low unemployment areas



There is some evidence that older non-graduates experience less economic insecurity in areas of lower unemployment, in contrast to older non-graduates in areas of high unemployment. Thus, while it is younger non-graduates who report the greatest economic insecurity, this may be more persistent in age where a person also lives in an area with fewer jobs, and somewhat ameliorated for older non-graduates in areas of higher unemployment. We also see that while graduates still have greater economic insecurity overall, they too experience lower levels of economic insecurity if they live in areas of lower unemployment.

Figures 19(a) and (b) show the relationship of age to social conservatism for non-graduates (a) and graduates (b) separated by above and below average unemployment levels using the 2011 Census.









These figures confirm that the relationship between age and education level does not vary by where a person lives; whether they live in an area of high or low unemployment. We replicated these patterns – both for economic insecurity and for social conservatism (in Appendix Figures A4 and A5) with average local house price data and found the same pattern as we report above. We also examined whether there was substantial variation across rural/urban classifications and using a measure of population density and this confirmed that these patterns did not vary by geography.

## Conclusions

We have demonstrated that economic insecurity is substantially higher for younger non-graduates, but is equally low (economic security is equally high) for older non-graduates and graduates alike. We have suggested that these differences may arise because of the ways in which economic changes – of globalisation, automation, deindustrialisation – have not had such large impacts upon older generations of non-graduates, but are increasing the economic precarity of today's non-graduates. We cannot know whether these differences arise due to those large-scale economic changes over time, or whether they are due to the more equal economic security of older generations due to pensions and house price appreciation over time, or some combination of all of these factors.

The outcome of these differences is that the people who are the most economically insecure are not the same individuals as those who are the most culturally conservative (older non-graduates, on average). This is a potentially important observation for claims that both cultural grievances and





economic insecurity are driving political alienation. It may be the case that economic conservativism drives cultural insecurity for younger non-graduates, or vice versa, but it seems much less likely that economic insecurity is driving the much greater cultural conservatism of older non-graduates. That does not preclude other economic drivers of cultural conservatism among these individuals, or indeed other non-economic explanations, but it provides useful insight into the inter-generational differences in these sources of potential political grievance.

There are many potential implications of the patterns we have identified in this report. We focused on the potential electoral implications, showing that economic insecurity is important for party support and redistribution attitudes. The Labour Party cannot afford to take the votes of graduates for granted; their economic security makes them more likely to support the Conservatives. The Conservative Party cannot afford to take the votes of non-graduates for granted; their economic insecurity makes them more likely to support Labour. And economic insecurity appears to be as important as cultural values and immigration attitudes in its relationship to party support. We noted in our introduction how the future coalitions of the political parties lay within the larger labels and types of 'place'. Economic insecurity exists within Conservative shires. Economic security exists within and without Britain's cities and Labour's 'red wall'. If the Conservatives made gains among a minority of economically insecure voters in 2019, it is by no means certain if they can hold onto them.

We consider now two important additions to how we might think about the implications.

The first addition is what is *unknown* in these analyses. We made an argument about how intergenerational economic, cultural, macro-economic (house purchasing and appreciation) and public policy changes (educational expansion and pensions) have affected individuals across the age distribution. What we cannot know, however, is whether the patterns we have identified are due to generational differences (different events and contexts affecting different generations) or whether these are due to economic differences that accrue over the life-course. That is to say, we don't know for sure whether today's older non-graduates used to be more economically insecure than their graduate contemporaries, though we have reasons to suspect this is the case. The expansion of university education has changed what university education signifies and at the same time the underlying changes in the economy have also altered the economic value of university education in





ways we are unable to assess. Inter-generational differences are also an outcome of the costs of living and availability of pensions, such that today's non-graduates could find themselves more – or less – economic secure as they age. These are useful caveats when thinking about the implications. Simply, without further research with comparable data over long time periods, we cannot assume that the patterns we have identified in this report were the same in the past and we certainly cannot assume that they will be the same in the future.

The second addition is what is *known* about the economic shocks that have happened since our data collection took place. While we do not yet know the economic impacts of Brexit on different intergenerational winners and losers, let alone how this might differ by educational attainment, we have better insight into the wealth differences that have happened due to the covid-19 pandemic. People with existing wealth have seen greater increases in that wealth. House prices have continued to rise, and households have accumulated substantially more savings, highest still for those who already had larger household incomes.<sup>32</sup> This will not apply to those younger non-graduates in our sample who report substantially higher amounts of borrowing for their day-to-day living costs; those people who cannot afford household bills, groceries or other essential day-to-day items, who are also less likely to have savings, have lower household incomes but similarly high levels of debts. Wealth inequality has widened as a result of the pandemic, but it is also true that pensioner poverty – particularly among women – shows some signs of being on the increase (albeit from a much lower base).<sup>33</sup> This may suggest that not only are there education level, age, and generational effects, but there may also be a pandemic cohort effect that impacts on the wealthy and those who are poorer in British society in different ways. Our analysis suggests that we should be especially focused on those younger generations who do not have the future economic opportunities and cushion that so commonly benefits those who graduate from university, but we should also continue to examine feelings of economic insecurity among all ages over time. Moreover, due to social inequalities in university attendance, and also the profound impacts of the pandemic on potential university students in the education system – which has also been felt most greatly by families with lower incomes – any pandemic effect on a widening gap on university access should now be something of urgent policy focus and concern.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> How has Covid affected household savings? | Bank of England

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> <u>UK wealth gap widens in pandemic as richest get £50,000 windfall | Business | The Guardian, and:</u> <u>https://www.jrf.org.uk/data/pensioner-poverty-rates</u>





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## Appendix

## Tables

### Table A1: Variable descriptions

Variable name	Wording	Range	Mean/SD/Distribution
Economic insecurity	How worried	0 = not worried at all	M = 4.96
	are you about	10 = very worried	SD = 2.78
	your and your	DK responses removed	
	family's		
	economic		
	security?		
Immigration attitudes –	And do you	1 = undermines	M = 3.92
cultural	think that	7 = enriches	SD = 2.00
	immigration		
	undermines or	Recoded such that higher	
	enriches	values reflect anti-	
	Britain's	immigrant sentiment.	
	cultural life		
		DK responses removed.	
Libertarian/Authoritarian	Scale variable	Per item:	M = 6.41
scale	consisting of	<1> Strongly disagree	SD = 2.23
	following	<2> Disagree	
	questions:	<3> Neither agree nor	
		disagree	
	How much do	<4> Agree	
	you agree or	<5> Strongly agree	
	disagree with	<99> Don't know	
	the following		
	statements?	Resulting scaled measure	
	[al1] Young	range 0-10:	
	people today	0 = libertarian	
	don't have	10 = authoritarian	
	enough respect	DK responses removed	
	for traditional		
	British values		
	[al2] For some		
	crimes, the		
	death penalty is		
	the most		
	appropriate		
	sentence		





	[al3] Schools		
	chould tooch		
	children to		
	obey authority		
	[al4] Censorship		
	of films and		
	magazines is		
	necessary to		
	unhold moral		
	upriolu moral		
	standards		
	[al5] People		
	who break the		
	law should be		
	given stiffer		
	sentences		
Home ownership	Do you expect	<1>I do not want to	22%
expectations	to be able to	purchase a home	
	purchase a	<2> No. I will not be able	49%
	home in the	to purchase a home	1370
	nome in the	(2) Voc Lwill be able to	1 5 0/
		<3> res, I will be able to	13%
	years?	buy with a mortgage	
		<4> Yes, I will be able to	2%
		buy a home outright	
		<5> Other	1%
		<99>Don't know / Prefer	11%
		not to sav	
		DK responses removed for	
		analyses	
Homo ownorship	Do you own or	<1> Owned outright	200/
Home ownership		<1> Owned Outright	39%
	rent the nome	<2> Own with a mortgage	27%
	in which you	<3> Own (part-own) –	1%
	live?	through shared ownership	
		<4> Rent – from a private	13%
		landlord	
		<5> Rent – from my local	5%
		authority	
		<6> rent – from a housing	6%
		association	•/•
		<7 Noithor Llivo with	20/
		my parants /family	U/U
			40/
		<8> Neither – I live rent-	4%
		free with my parents	
		<99>Other	2%
		For analysis coded as 1 =	
		owns home (categories 1,	





		2, 3) versus does not own	
		home (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 99)	
Occupation / social class	National	<> Employers in large	3%
,	statistics socio-	organisations and higher	
	economic	managerial	
	classification	<>Higher professional	17%
	analytic classes	occupations	1270
	hased on	<	21%
	Standard	managorial and higher	5170
	Occupation		
	Classifications	supervisory	220/
			2370
	2010		
		<> Employers in small	70/
		organisations and own	7%
		account workers	
		<> Lower supervisory and	
		technical occupations	/%
		<> Semi-routine	
		occupations	11%
		<> Routine occupations	
			6%
Work status	Which of these	<1> Working full time (30	38%
	best described	or more hours per week)	
	what you were	<2> Working part time (8-	13%
	doing last	29 hours a week)	
	week?	<3> Working part time	2%
		(less than 8 hours a week)	
		<4> Unemployed and	2%
		looking for work	
		<5> Full time university	4%
		student	
		<6> Other full time	1%
		student	
		<7> Retired	29%
		<8> Not in paid work for	
		any other reason	10%
		, <9> Other	3%
Borrow daily essentials	Have vou	0 = No	87%
,	needed to	1= Yes	11%
	borrow items in	DK	2%
	the last year to	For analyses DK removed	
	pay for	,	
	household hills		
	groceries or		
	other essential		
	dav-to-dav		
	items?		
Work status Borrow daily essentials	Which of these best described what you were doing last week? Have you needed to borrow items in the last year to pay for household bills, groceries, or other essential day-to-day items?	<> Lower supervisory and technical occupations <> Semi-routine occupations <> Routine occupations <1> Working full time (30 or more hours per week) <2> Working part time (8- 29 hours a week) <3> Working part time (less than 8 hours a week) <4> Unemployed and looking for work <5> Full time university student <6> Other full time student <7> Retired <8> Not in paid work for any other reason <9> Other 0 = No 1= Yes DK For analyses DK removed	7%         11%         6%         38%         13%         2%         2%         4%         1%         29%         10%         3%         87%         11%         2%





Small emergency	Suppose that	Answer categories:	
	vou have an	5	
(incl: borrow ability: own	emergency that	<1> Use savings / current	Y: 80%: N:20%
account)	costs £300.	account	,
	Based on your	<2> Take out a loan	Y: 3%: N: 97%
	current	<3> Sell something	V: 4%: N: 96%
	financial	<1>Borrow from friends	V: 9%: N: 9%
	situation how	or family	1. 570, 11. 570
	would you pay	< 5 > 1 could not come up	V· 0%· N· 01%
	for this	with £200 right pow	1.570, N.5170
		with £300 fight flow.	
	expense	All items are coded as 0 -	
		All items are coded as 0 –	
	Please select all	not ticked; I = ticked. For	
	that apply	analyses DK removed.	
	Cross	(1) under CE 000 e veer	20/
Household Income	Gross		2%
	nousenoid	<2>£5,000 - £9,999 per	50/
	income is the	year	5%
	combined	<3> £10,000 – £14,999	8%
	income of all	per year	8%
	those earners in	<4> £15,000 - £19,999 per	8%
	a household	year	
	from all	<5> £20,000 - £24,999 per	8%
	sources,	year	
	including	<6> £25,000 - £29,999 per	6%
	wages, salaries,	year	
	or rents and	<7> £30,000 - £34,999 per	6%
	before tax	year	
	deductions.	<8> £35,000 - £39,999 per	5%
	What is your	year	
	gross	<9> £40,000 - £44,999 per	4%
	household	year	
	income?	<10> £45,000 - £49,999	5%
		per year	
		<11> £50,000 - £59,999	3%
		per year	
		<12> £60,000 - £69,999	5%
		per year	
		<13> 70,000 - £99,999 per	2%
		year	
		<14> 100,000 - £149,999	1%
		per year	
		<15> £150,000 and over	6%
		<9999> Don't know	19%
		<16> Prefer not to answer	
Household savings	Please pick the	<1> £0-£99	1%
Ŭ	approximate	<2> £100-£499	2%
	value of your	<3> £500-£999	2%





	havaahald	(1) (1 000 (1 000	40/
	nousenoid	<4>£1,000-£1,999	4%
	savings	<5> £2,000-£2,999	3%
		<6> £3,000-£4,999	5%
	Pre-ceded by	<7> £5,000-£9,999	8%
	question "Do	<8> £10,000-£14,999	6%
	you and/or	<9> £15,000-£19,999	4%
	your partner (if	<10> f20.000-f29.999	5%
	annlicable)	<11> f30 000-f39 999	3%
	have any	<12> £40,000 £40,000	20/
	nave any	<12> E40,000-E49,999	570
	savings: which	<13> £50,000-£74,999	5%
	is a filter-	<14> £75,000-£999,999	4%
	question.	<15> £100,000-£149,999	4%
		<16> £150-000-£199,999	2%
		<17> £200,000 or above	6%
		<99> Don't know / Prefer	34%
		not to say	
		Note: household savings	
		are adjusted for	
		household size	
		DK responses removed in	
		analyses	
Household debts	Filter question:	Yes	28%
	Do you and/or	No	65%
	your partner (as	Prefer not to say:	7%
	applicable)		
	have any debts,	<1> £0-£99	2%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499	2% 3%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999	2% 3% 4%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans?	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1.000-£1.999	2% 3% 4% 7%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans?	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2 000-£2 999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7%
	have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans?	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11%
	have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans?	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11%
	have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17%
	have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11%
	have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11%
	have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6%
	Applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans)	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans)	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2%
	<ul> <li>applicable)</li> <li>have any debts,</li> <li>not including a</li> <li>mortgage or</li> <li>student loans?</li> <li>Please tick the</li> <li>appropriate</li> <li>amount of that</li> <li>debt (excluding</li> <li>mortage and</li> <li>student loans)</li> <li>Preceded by</li> </ul>	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question:	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <14> £75,000-£999,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 2%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <14> £75,000-£999,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 1%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or your partner (as	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <14> £75,000-£74,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1% 1% 0.08%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or your partner (as applicable)	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£199,999 <16> £150-000-£199,999 <17> £200.000 or above	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1% 1% 0.08% 0.35%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or your partner (as applicable) have any debts	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£199,999 <17> £200,000 or above <99> Don't know / Prefer	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1% 1% 0.08% 0.35% 20%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or your partner (as applicable) have any debts, not including a	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <14> £75,000-£999,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <16> £150-000-£199,999 <16> £150-000-£199,999 <17> £200,000 or above <99> Don't know / Prefer	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1% 1% 0.08% 0.35% 20%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or your partner (as applicable) have any debts, not including a mortage or	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£14,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <14> £75,000-£999,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <16> £150-000-£199,999 <16> £150-000-£199,999 <17> £200,000 or above <99> Don't know / Prefer not to say	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 1% 1% 0.08% 0.35% 20%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or your partner (as applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £150-000-£199,999 <17> £200,000 or above <99> Don't know / Prefer not to say	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1% 1% 1% 0.08% 0.35% 20%
	applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans? Please tick the appropriate amount of that debt (excluding mortage and student loans) Preceded by filter question: "Do you and/or your partner (as applicable) have any debts, not including a mortgage or student loans?	<1> £0-£99 <2> £100-£499 <3> £500-£999 <4> £1,000-£1,999 <5> £2,000-£2,999 <6> £3,000-£4,999 <7> £5,000-£9,999 <8> £10,000-£14,999 <9> £15,000-£19,999 <10> £20,000-£29,999 <11> £30,000-£39,999 <12> £40,000-£49,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <13> £50,000-£74,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£149,999 <15> £100,000-£199,999 <15> £100,000 cr above <99> Don't know / Prefer not to say	2% 3% 4% 7% 7% 11% 17% 11% 7% 6% 3% 2% 2% 2% 2% 1% 1% 0.08% 0.35% 20%





	Note: if respondent answered "no" to the filter question their debt was set to £1 in order to include them in	Note: household debts are adjusted for household size DK responses removed in analyses	
	analyses		
Home ownership	Do you own or rent the home in which you live?	<1> Own outright <2> Own – with a mortgage <3> Own (part-own)	32% 28% 1%
		through shared owernship cheme (i.e. pay part mortgage, part rent)	150/
		42 Rent – from a private landlord <5> Rent – from my local authority	6%
		<6> Rent – from a housing association	7%
		<7> Neither – I live with my parents, family or friends but I pay some rent to them <8> Neither – I live rent- free with my parents,	5%
		family, or friends <9> Other	2%
House value	Please pick the approximate value of your home	For the purposes of the analyses we combine the home-ownership and house value variable – we set the house value of those who do not own a home (all except categories 1, 2 and 3 from home-owner) is set to £1. This value is chosen rather than £0 such that we can use a logged version of the variable to account for the skew in the data.	1%         6%         13%         14%         11%         9%         12%         6%         3%         2%         1%         1%         1%         1%         1%         1%         1%         1%         1%         18%





Redistribution		0-10 scale with 0 =	M = 4.6
preferences		government should try to	SD = 3.11
		make incomes equal	
		10 = government should	
		be less concerned about	
		egual incomes	
		For purposes of analysis	
		recoded such that high	
		values reflect support for	
		redistribution	
Marital status	What is your	<1> Married	44%
	current marital	<2> In a civil partnership	1%
	or relationship	<3> Separated but still	2%
	status?	legally married or in a civil	
		partnership	
		<4> Living with a partner	13%
		but neither married nor in	
		a civil partnership	
		<5> In a relationship, but	7%
		not living together	
		<6> Single	24%
		<7> Divorced	7%
		<8> Widowed	3%
Number of children in	How many of	0	74%
household	the people in	1	11%
	your household	2	9%
	are under 18?	3	3%
		4	1%
		5 or more	0.3%
		DK	0.3%
		Prefer not to say	2%

Table A2: Proportior	n of BES W14 res	pondents with a degree
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	Entire sample	Under 40	Above 40
Non Degree	61%	54%	65%
Degree	39%	46%	35%
Ν	26,298	6,890	19,056

Data are weighted





### Table A3: Model of economic insecurity using demographics

	Economic Insecurity
Age	-0.03***
	(0.00)
Degree	-1.04***
	(0.19)
Degree # Age	0.02***
	(0.00)
Gender: Female	0.56***
	(0.05)
Ethnicity: Non-White	0.60***
	(0.11)
NS-Sec Occupational class	
Reference: Employers in large organisations	
and higher managerial	
Higher professional occupations	0.18
	(0.15)
Lower professional and managerial and higher	0.40**
supervisory	(0.14)
	(0.14)
Intermediate accupations	0 6E***
	(0.14)
	(0.14)
Employers in small organisations and own	
account workers	0.61***
	(0.16)
	(0.20)
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	0.67***
	(0.16)
Semi-routine occupations	0.92***
	(0.15)
	· · ·
Routine occupations	0.96***
	(0.17)
Number of children	
Reference: no children	





1 child	0.52***
	(0.08)
2 children	0.40***
	(0.09)
3 children	0.69***
	(0.16)
4 children	0.87*
	(0.44)
5 children	0.97
	(0.56)
Constant	5.49***
	(0.21)
Observations	19137

Standard errors in parentheses – data are weighted. Note excludes full-time students and those over 80 years old. \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001





#### Table A4: Proportions by economic insecurity and cultural conservatism

	Economically Secure	Economically Insecure
Culturally liberal	14%	13%
Socially conservative	40%	33%

N = 26,629; Data are weighted.

#### Table A5: Proportions by economic insecurity and immigration attitudes

	Economically Secure	Economically Insecure
Pro-immigration	22%	21%
Anti-immigration	32%	25%

N = 29,725; Data are weighted.





### Table A6: Model of Conservative v Labour vote intention (BES wave 14, 2018)

	<b>Conservative Vote Intention</b>
Economic Insecurity	-0.20***
	(0.01)
Age	0.04***
	(0.00)
Gender: Female	0.02
	(0.05)
Education: Degree	-0.42***
	(0.05)
NS-SEC Occupational Class	
Reference: Employers in large organisations	
and higher managerial	
Higher professional occupations	-0.18
	(0.16)
Lower professional and managerial and higher	-0.45**
supervisory	(2.15)
	(0.15)
	0.20*
	-0.39
	(0.15)
Employers in small organisations and own	
account workers	-0.18
	(0 17)
	(0.17)
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	-0 57***
	(0.17)
	(0.27)
Semi-routine occupations	-0.70***
	(0.16)
	()
Routine occupations	-0.72***
	(0.18)
	· /
Constant	-0.05
	(0.18)
Observations	12107

Standard errors in parentheses \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001





	Conservative Vote Intention
Δσe	0.02***
	(0.00)
Female	0.07
Occupation	(0.06)
Reference: routine occupations	
Employers in large organisations and higher managerial	1.05***
	(0.21)
Higher professional occupations	0.91***
	(0.16)
Lower professional and managerial and higher supervisory	0.50***
· · ·	(0.15)
Intermediate occupations	0.47**
	(0.15)
Employers in small organisations and own account workers	0.78***
	(0.17)
occupations	0.06
	(0.17)
Semi-routine occupations	0.02
	(0.16)
Education	
	η ησ
Degree	(0.07)
Work status Reference: not in paid work	
Paid work	0.39***
	(0.10)
Churchenet	0.54
Student	0.51
	(0.34)
Retired	0.53***

### Table A7: Model of Conservative v Labour vote intention (BES wave 14) - attitudes





	(0.11)
Economic Insecurity and Social Conservatism	
Economic Insecurity	-0.58***
	(0.03)
Social Conservatism	0.55***
	(0.04)
Anti-Immigration Attitudes	0.48***
	(0.04)
Leave Vote	0.46***
	(0.03)
Constant	-1.91***
	(0.23)
Observations	10414

Standard errors in parentheses, the following variables are standardised: economic insecurity, social conservatism, immigration attitudes and EU referendum vote. \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001





### Table A8: Model of Redistribution Attitudes (BES wave 14, 2018)

	(1)
	Redistribution Attitudes
Age	0.00
	(0.00)
Female	0.20***
	(0.06)
NS-SEC Occupation	
Reference: routine occupations	
Employers in large organisations and higher	-1.57***
Indiagendi	(0.18)
	(0.18)
Ligher professional ecoupations	1 7/***
	-1.24
	(0.15)
Lower professional and managerial and higher	-0.89***
supervisory	(0.14)
	(0.14)
Intermediate occupations	-0.70***
	(0.14)
	(0.14)
Employers in small organisations and own	
account workers	-1.03***
	(0.16)
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	-0.24
	(0.16)
Semi-routine occupations	-0.14
	(0.15)
Education	
Degree	-0.38***
	(0.06)
Work status	
Reference: not in paid work	
Paid work	-0.40***
	(0.10)
Student	-0.06
	(0.28)





Retired	-0.52***
	(0.11)
Economic Insecurity and Social Conservatism	
Economic Insecurity	0.72***
	(0.03)
Social Conservatism	-0.31***
	(0.04)
Anti-Immigration Attitudes	-0.23***
	(0.04)
Leave Vote	-0.21***
	(0.03)
Constant	6.32***
	(0.21)
Observations	15360

Standard errors in parentheses. The following variables are standardised: economic insecurity, social conservatism, immigration attitudes and EU referendum vote. \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001





## Figures



Figure A1: Replication of Figure 2 showing confidence intervals




**Figure A2:** Reported economic insecurity (having enough money set aside for emergencies) by age and education (Bank of England NMG dataset, data are weighted).



Note: excluded are full-time students and those over 80 years old and for degree holders we exclude those under 21. N = 15,224.





**Figure A3:** Mean reported economic insecurity by age and education level showing values for no formal education, GCSE education and undergraduate degree (BES wave 14)



Confidence intervals for no qualifications and GCSE/A-level overlap throughout. There is a significant difference with University degree until the age of 40.





**Figure A4 (a and b):** Economic insecurity by age for non-grads by local house prices for (a) Non-Graduates (b) Graduates



Figure A5 (a and b): Social Conservatism by age for non-grads by local house prices for (a) Non-Graduates (b) Graduates

