Expert Survey

Cumulative Codebook 2014-19

Contents

Purpose

When drafting a questionnaire for an electoral survey, one of the sections that needs addressing is where respondents are asked about their attitudes about issues and policies. Because of the overriding importance of these issue questions for a variety of research perspectives – like the estimation of issue effects on the vote, the effectiveness of political representation (understood as issue congruence between representatives and represented), or the properties of the space of party competition -- this section is of particular importance.

One quite predominant style of approaching all these questions compares the issue orientations and preferences of citizens and voters (=survey respondents) with those of political parties (or presidential candidates). The smaller the distance between citizens and parties or candidates, the more likely are they to vote for that party, the closer is the representational bond between them, and so on. This politico-economic tradition of studies of issue voting originates in Downs' Economic Theory of Democracy (1957) and builds almost entirely on the spatial paradigm of voting and party competition. This assumes that voters can identify their issue preferences on an issue or policy dimension, can identify where the parties and/or candidates stand on this same dimension, and deduce their voting decision from the comparison of distances between them-selves and the competing parties/candidates by voting for the closest alternative.

One of the problems with that stream of studies is that the necessary survey instrumentation is quite extensive and time consuming. The reason for that is that positions on each issue or policy dimension are measured for the respon-dent as well as for each of the relevant competing parties. This way each question on an issue or policy dimension is repeated multiple times which is very costly.

But this strategy of data collection is also potentially misleading because of the psychological mechanism referred to as 'assimilation and contrast' (Granberg and Holmberg 1988). Under this psychological mechanism observations are summarised according to which citizens pull the issue positions of parties which they like towards their own positions, and push the position of others that they do not like further away from their own positions than where they actually are located.

Both problems – the limits of space and perceptual distortions – suggest the measurement of 'objective' party positions through an independent data collection effort. This is often realised by way of an expert survey. We have chosen to follow that strategy also in the framework of the British Election Study.

With the exception of the question on devolution, the questions and answer scales match those fielded to respondents in the British Election Study internet panel and face-to-face surveys.

2014 Survey

The 2014 BES Expert Survey was led by Hermann Schmitt with the support of Thomas Loughran under the auspices of the 2014-19 British Election Study.

The expert survey was administered online. It was fielded between April 16 and May 16, 2014.

The targeted universe was the membership of the Elections Parties and Public Opinion (EPOP) specialist group of the Political Studies Association – a professional organisation that serves as a forum for academics with an interest in elections, public opinion and parties in the UK. The e-mail list that is kept by this group comprised 248 members at the time. In April 2014, all members of that list were invited by email to fill in the survey questionnaire. The e-mail consisted of an explanation of the purpose of the survey, a brief outline of the British Election Study and an online link to the survey. Respondents could click the link to answer the survey. It was not possible to generate duplicate responses.

Of the 248 addresses it was originally sent to eight replies were received saying that the survey subject was outside the recipient's expertise. There were also five 'mail delivery fails' where the e-mail addresses on the mailing list were no longer valid. 93 fully or partially completed questionnaires were received out of a possible 235. This points to a response rate of 40 percent.

2015 Survey

The 2015 BES Expert Survey was led by Hermann Schmitt with the support of Thomas Loughran under the auspices of the 2014-19 British Election Study.

The expert survey was administered online. It was fielded between 23 April 2015 and 22 May 2015.

As in the 2014 expert survey the targeted universe was the membership of EPOP. We combined the EPOP 2015 mailing list with the mailing list we created for last year's survey (removing duplicates). The resulting e-mail list that we used consisted of 350 separate individual addresses. In April 2015, all members of that list were invited by email to fill in the survey questionnaire. The e-mail consisted of an explanation of the purpose and value of the survey, a brief outline of the British Election Study, a description and link to the results of the 2014 version of the survey and an online link to the survey. Respondents could click the link to answer the survey. It was possible to generate duplicate responses to the survey in this version of the survey (due to a glitch in the survey tool). However, any duplicates could be easily spotted and removed through e-mail tracking of responses.

Of the 350 addresses it was originally sent to three replies were received saying that the survey subject was outside the recipient's expertise. There were also 13 'mail delivery fails' where the e-mail addresses on the mailing list were no longer valid. 95 fully or partially completed questionnaires were received out of a possible 337. This points to a response rate of 30 percent.

2017 Survey

The 2017 BES Expert Survey was led by Hermann Schmitt and Thomas Loughran under the auspices of the 2014-19 British Election Study.

The expert survey was administered online. It was fielded between 1 May 2017 and 31 May 2017 to ensure that all responses were received prior to the 2017 UK General Election.

As in the 2014 and 2015 Expert Surveys the targeted universe was the membership of EPOP. Unfortunately, due to changes in the data protection protocols (the introduction of GDPR) we were unable to have as much control over the sampling and administration process as we did in the previous two waves, and instead had to invite members of the EPOP mailing list en masse .

Because of this change in invitation method, we were also unable to send direct follow up e-mails in order to try and boost response rates as we had done in the previous years.

We believe that this necessary, but unfortunate, change in process had a depressing effect on the response rate to the 2017 survey compared with the 2014 and 2015 waves. We received 41 partial or fully completed responses.

Due to the data protection protocols we are unable to estimate a comparable response rate with the 2014 and 2015 waves as we do not have information regarding the total size of the mailing list. However, this represents a decline from 93 and 95 respondents in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

Nevertheless, we believe this to be a valuable data source as it still compares favourably to the sample size of other expert surveys that have been carried out in the UK and elsewhere.

2019 Survey

The 2019 BES Expert Survey was led by Chris Prosser under the auspices of the 2019-23 British Election Study.

The expert survey was administered online. It was fielded between 5 December and 16 December 2019.

Given the problems encountered in the running of the 2017 Survey due to the introduction of GDPR, the 2019 survey adopted a new sampling methodology. A list of experts to invite to the survey was gathered by examining the websites of all departments that made a politics submission to the 2014 REF. Any member of staff in these departments that listed research or teaching expertise in British elections, party politics, or political behaviour was invited to take the survey, a total of 144 people. Of these, 74 partially or fully completed the survey, a response rate of 51%.

Variables

responseid

Respondent ID – unique within years, but not constant between years for respondents who took the survey in multiple years (identifying information is not available).

year

Year of expert survey

DateCompleted

Date survey taken

Party Codes

Variable suffix denoting party:

Lab	Labour
Con	Conservatives
LibDem	Liberal Democrats
UKIP	UK Independence Party
Brexit	Brexit Party
Green	Green Party
SNP	Scottish National Party
Plaid	Plaid Cymru

Parties included in survey year

	2014	2015	2017	2019
Labour	■	■	■	■
Conservatives	■	■	■	■
Liberal Democrats	■	■	■	■
UK Independence Party	■	■	■	
Brexit Party				■
Green Party		■	■	■
Scottish National Party	■	■	■	■
Plaid Cymru	■	■	■	■

leftright

Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
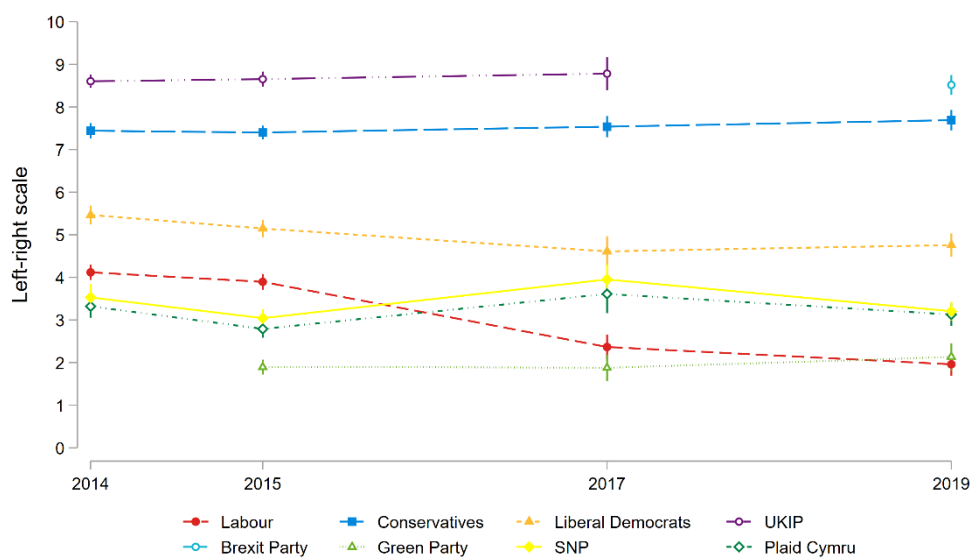0 = left, and
10 = right

Response scale

0	Left
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	Right
9998	No position
9999	Don't know

libauth

Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
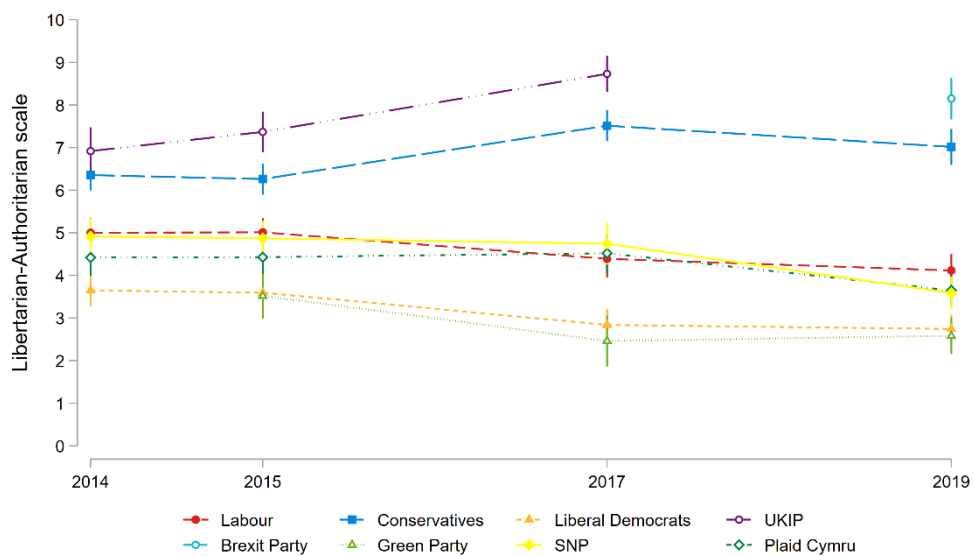0 = Libertarian, and
10 = Authoritarian.

Response scale

0	Libertarian
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	Authoritarian
9998	No position
9999	Don't know

EUIntegration

Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
0 = European Unification has already gone too far, and
10 = European Unification should be pushed further

Response scale
    0   European Unification has already gone too far
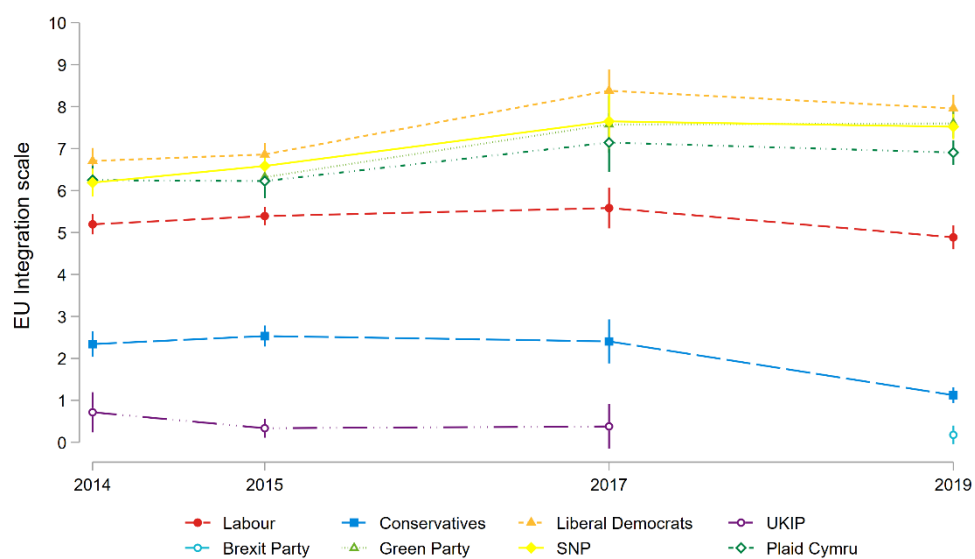   1
    2
    3
    4
    5
    6
    7
    8
    9
   10   European Unification should be pushed further
 9998   No position
 9999   Don't know

EUindependence

Years asked

2019

Parties

Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, Brexit, Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording

Please place the following parties on a scale where:

0 = Unite fully with the European Union

10 = Protect our independence from the European Union

Response scale

    0   Unite fully with the European Union
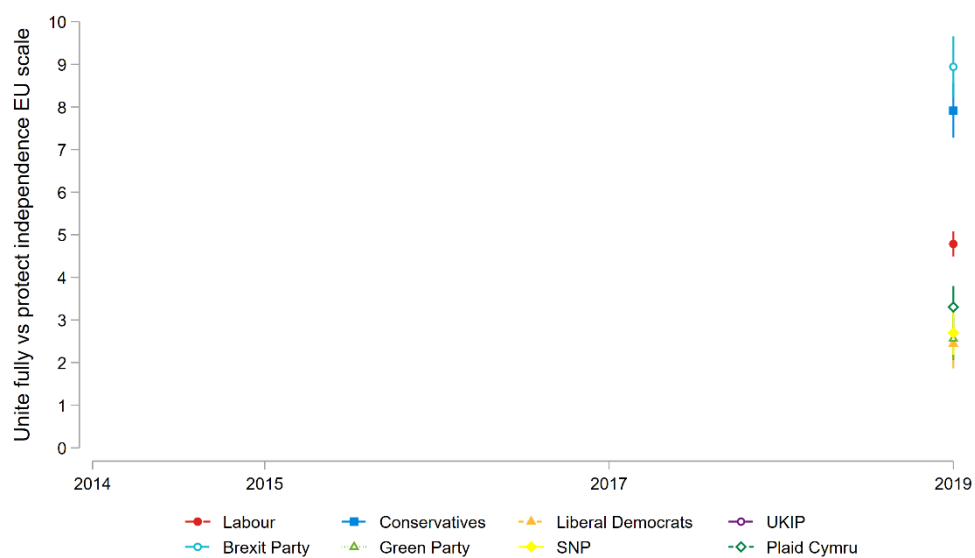
    1

    2

    3

    4

    5

    6

    7

    8

    9

  10   Protect our independence from the European Union

9998   No position

9999   Don't know

11

redist

Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
0 = Government should try to make people's incomes more equal, and
10 = Government should be less concerned about equal incomes.

Response scale

   0   Government should try to make people's incomes more equal
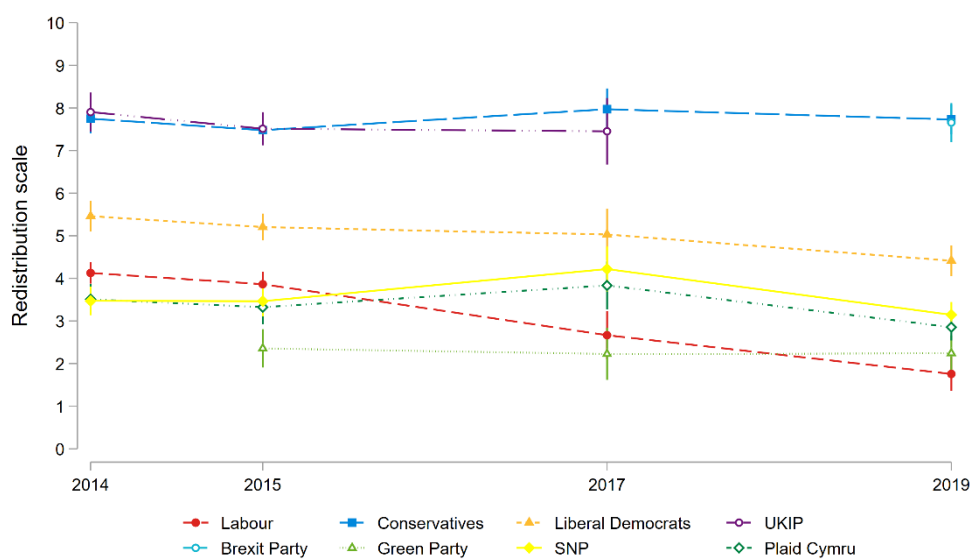   1
   2
   3
   4
   5
   6
   7
   8
   9
  10   Government should be less concerned about equal incomes
9998   No position
9999   Don't know

econvenvir

Years asked
2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2015-17), Brexit (2019), Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Some believe that protecting the environment should have priority even if that reduces economic growth.

Please place the following parties on a scale where:
0 = Economic growth should always have priority over the environment, and
10 = The environment should always have priority over economic growth.

Response scale
   0   Economic growth should always have priority over the environment
   1
   2
   3
   4
   5
   6
   7
   8
   9
  10   The environment should always have priority over economic growth
9998   No position
9999   Don't know
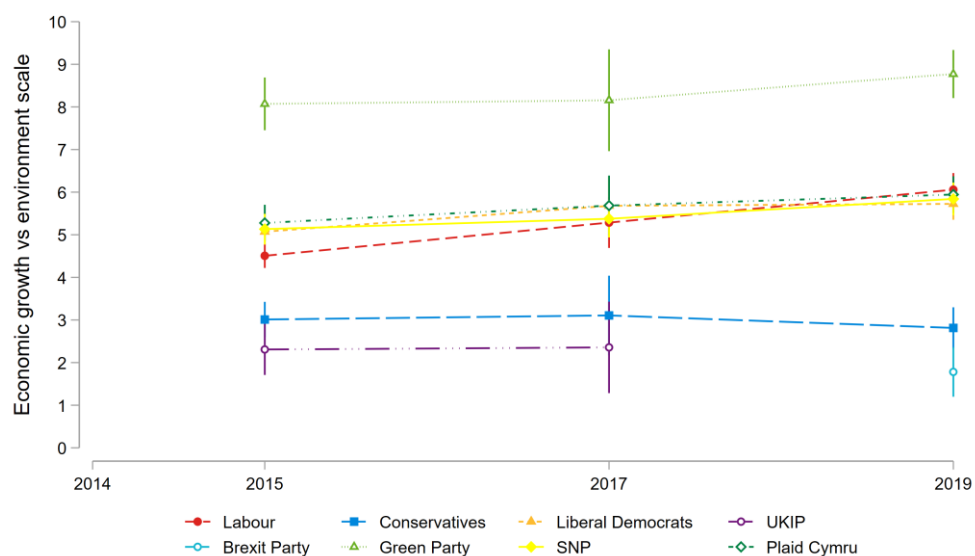
enviroprotection
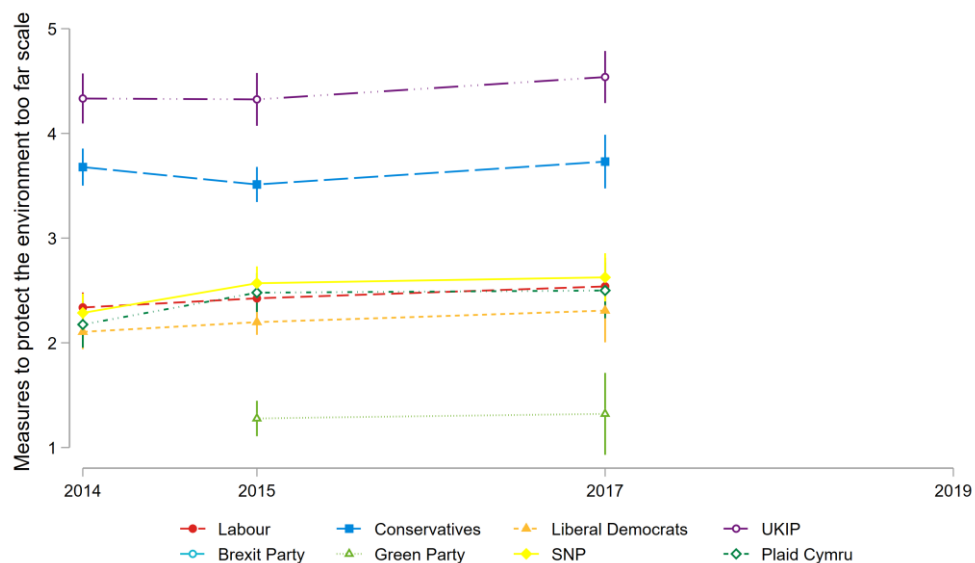
Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP, Green (2015, 2017), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
Measures to protect the environment…

Response scale
1　Have not gone nearly far enough
2　Have not gone far enough
3　Are about right
4　Have gone too far
5　Have gone much to far
9998　No position
9999　Don't know

secvliberties

Years asked
2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2015, 2017), Brexit (2019), Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Some people feel that, in order to fight terrorism, we have to acept infringements on privacy and civil liberties, others feel that privacy and civil liberties are to be protected at all costs.

Please place the following parties on a scale where:
0 = Fighting terrorism should always have priority over civil liberties, and
10 = Civil liberties should always have priority over fighting terrorism.

Response scale
  0   Fighting terrorism should always have priority over civil liberties
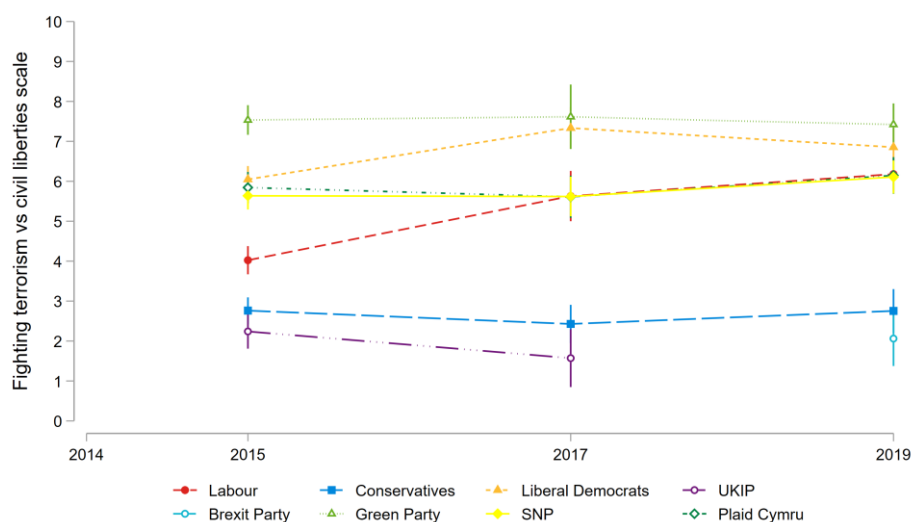 1
  2
  3
  4
  5
  6
  7
  8
  9
 10   Civil liberties should always have priority over fighting terrorism
9998   No position
9999   Don't know

devolution

Years asked
2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, Brexit, Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
0 = Strongly favour less devolution to Scotland and Wales, and
10 = Strongly favour further devolution to Scotland and Wales.

Response scale
- 0   Strongly favour less devolution to Scotland and Wales
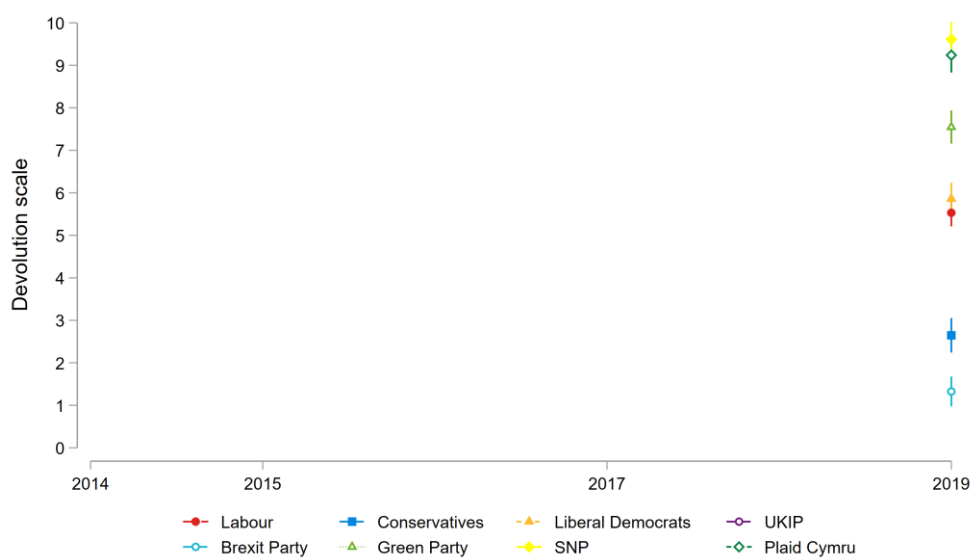- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10   Strongly favour further devolution to Scotland and Wales
- 9998   No position
- 9999   Don't know

immigecon

Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
1 = Immigration is bad for the economy, and
7 = Immigration is good for the economy.

Response scale
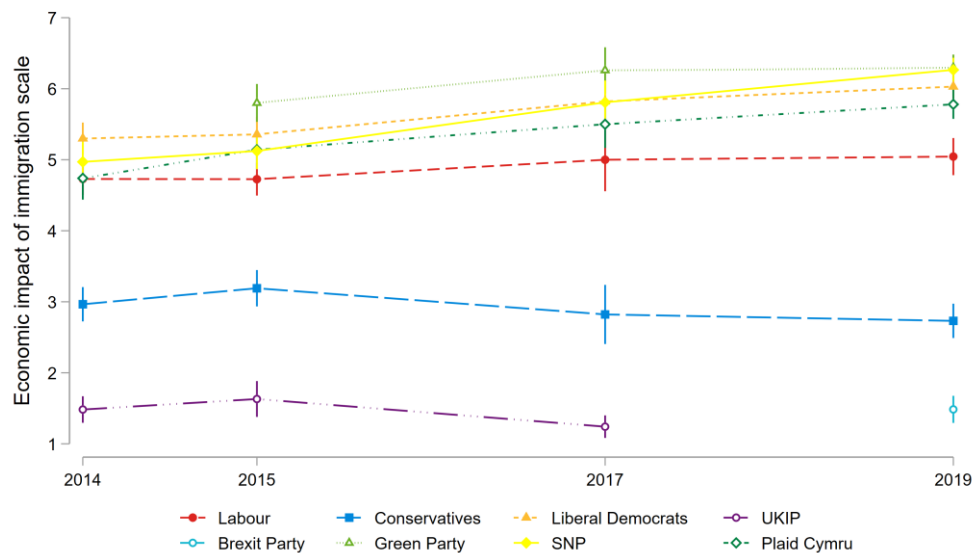   1   Immigration is bad for the economy
    2
    3
    4
    5
    6
    7   Immigration is good for the economy
9998   No position
9999   Don't know

immigcultural

Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale where:
1 = Immigration undermines Britain's cultural life, and
7 = Immigration enriches Britain's cultural life.

Response scale
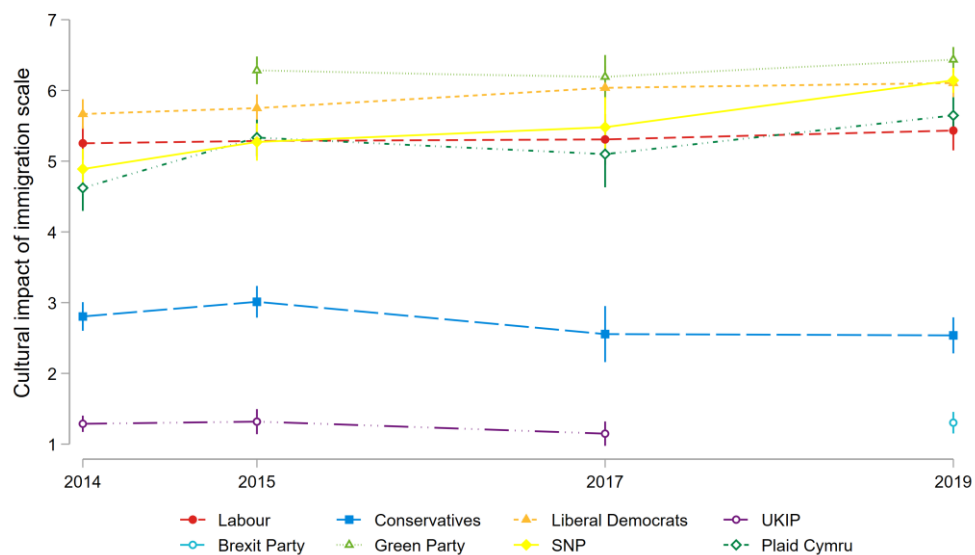   1   Immigration undermines Britain's cultural life
    2
    3
    4
    5
    6
    7   Immigration enriches Britain's cultural life
9998   No position
9999   Don't know

ethnicequality
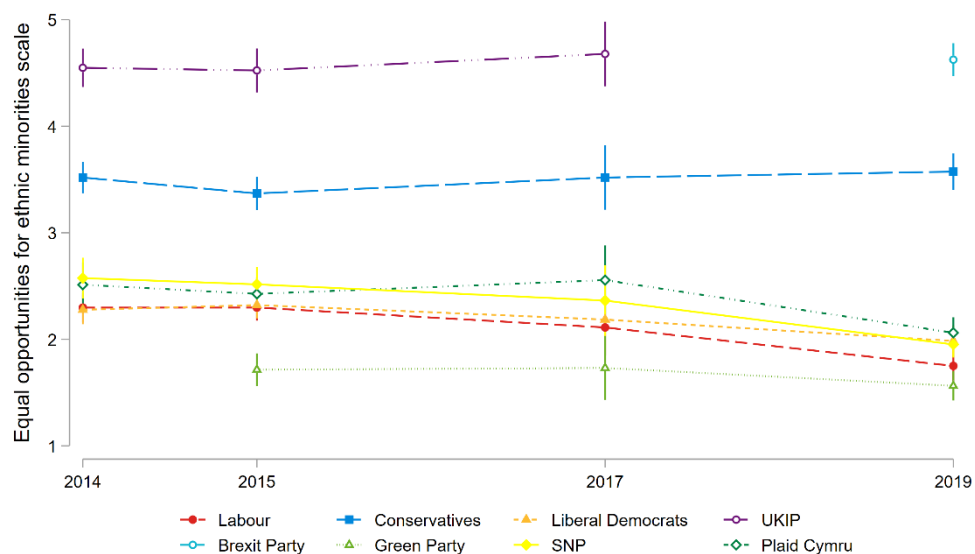
Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale that measures whether attempts to give equal opportunities to ethnic minorities…

Response scale
1   Have not gone nearly far enough
2   Have not gone far enough
3   Are about right
4   Have gone too far
5   Have gone much to far
9998   No position
9999   Don't know

femaleequality
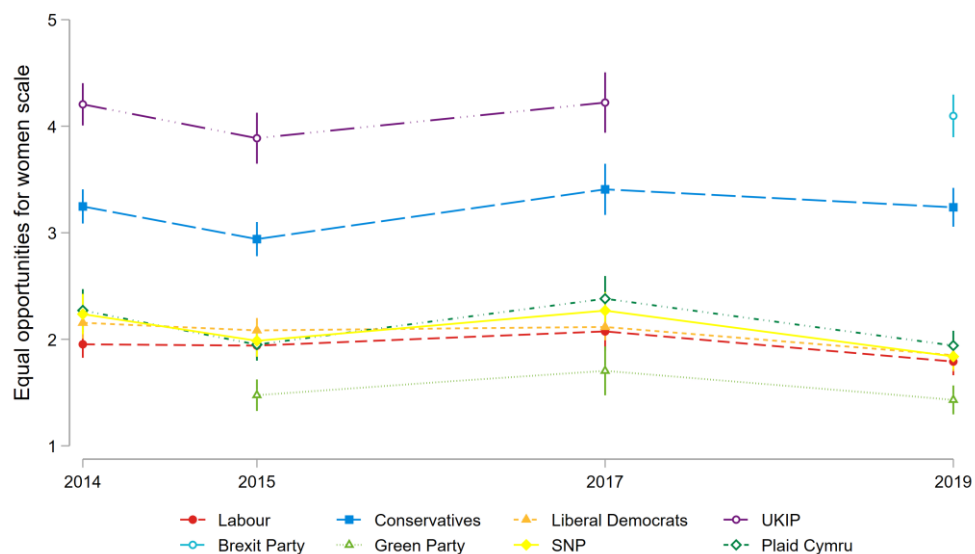
Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale that measures whether attempts to give equal opportunities to women…

Response scale
1   Have not gone nearly far enough
2   Have not gone far enough
3   Are about right
4   Have gone too far
5   Have gone much to far
9998   No position
9999   Don't know

gayequality

Years asked
2014, 2015, 2017, 2019

Parties
Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, UKIP (2014-17), Brexit (2019), Green (2015-), SNP, Plaid Cymru

Question wording
Please place the following parties on a scale that measures whether attempts to give equal opportunities to gay and lesbian people… (2014-17 version)

Please place the following parties on a scale that measures whether attempts to give equal opportunities to gay and lesbian people… (2019 version)

Response scale
   1   Have not gone nearly far enough
   2   Have not gone far enough
   3   Are about right
   4   Have gone too far
   5   Have gone much to far
9998   No position
9999   Don't know
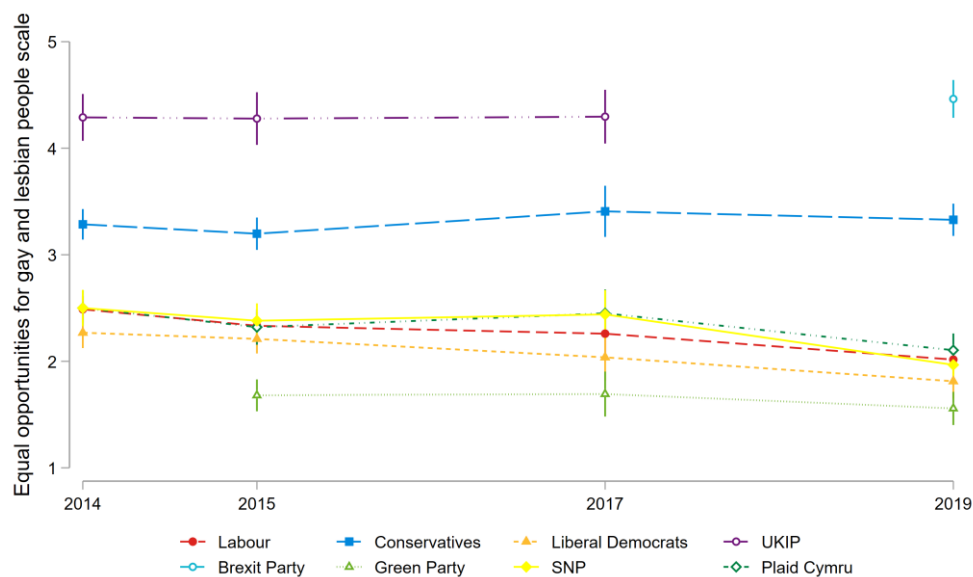
PhD

Whether respondent has a PhD in Political Science or a related discipline (2015 and 2017 only)

Country

Respondent country of residence (2017 only)