



FROM: Rosie Carter
SUBJECT: Red Wall voters: are they really so different?
DATE: 3 July 2020

This note is based on a poll of 5,317 adults aged 18+ of two groups:

- *2,019 respondents who were nationally representative of the GB population (the 'nationally representative' portion of the sample); and*
- *3,298 respondents in 100 constituencies of interest:*
 - *1,768 were in the 44 constituencies which were won by the Conservatives in 2019 but were previously held by Labour in 2017 in the North and Midlands ('Red Wall' seats), an average of 40 respondents per constituency*
 - *1,580 were in an additional 56 constituencies of interest, predominantly other seats that were marginal in 2019 plus other Conservative gains from Labour, an average of 28 respondents per constituency*

The fieldwork was carried out between 29th May-5th June.

Cultural conservatism

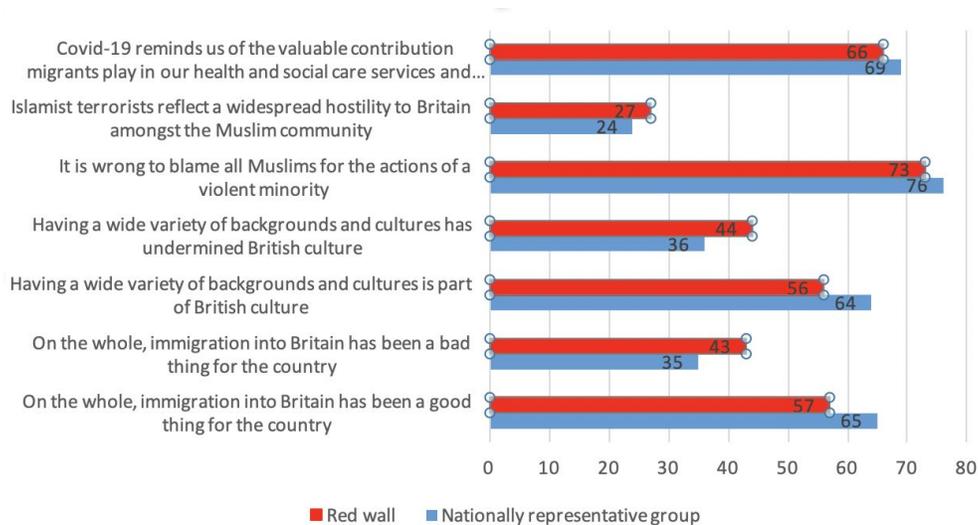
The collapse of the red wall at the 2019 election, a set of traditionally Labour-voting constituencies in the Midlands, Yorkshire and Northern England, was largely put down to social conservatism among red wall voters.

The shift in support towards the Conservatives reflected voters' position on Brexit, with Leave voting constituencies at odds with the Remain-leaning Labour party, a vote that was in a large part determined by attitudes towards free movement and immigration more generally. The declining Labour vote was also put down to a feeling of distance from the party under Jeremy Corbyn, a rejection of a London-based leadership with strong socially liberal values.

Our polling suggests that red wall voters are, on the whole, more socially conservative than other areas of the country. 44% say that having a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures has undermined British culture, compared to 36% of the nationally representative sample, and 43% say that on the whole, immigration into Britain has been a bad thing for the country, compared to just 35% of the nationally representative group.

Nonetheless, the margins of difference are not as substantial as one might expect, and it is very clear that red wall voters do not share a homogenous view on social and cultural issues. More people in red wall seats see immigration as a good thing for the country (57%) and more see a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures as an integral part of British culture (56%) than think they have undermined it.

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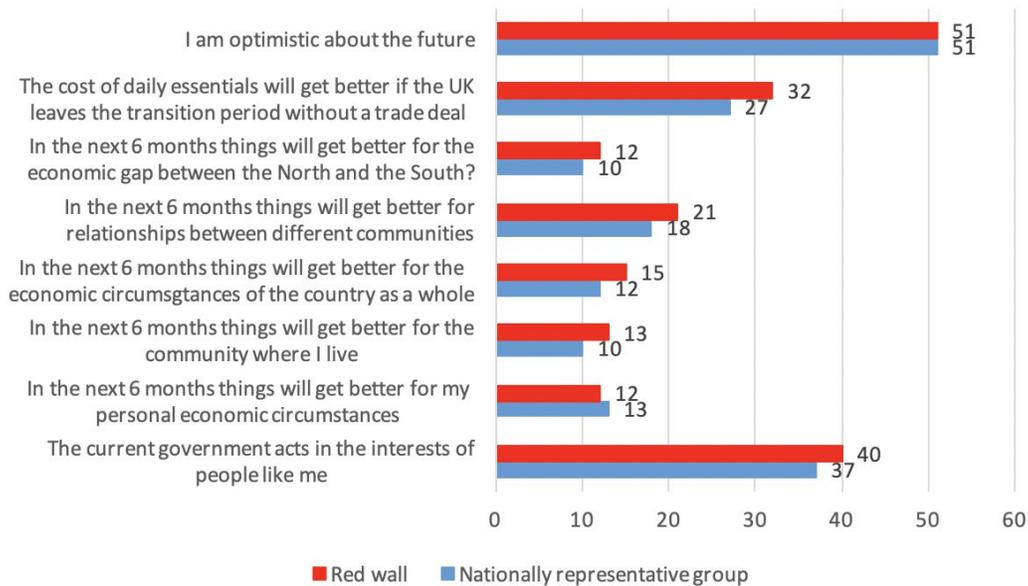
There is nothing to suggest that these are the issues that drive red wall voters, and most have a pragmatic view on issues like immigration that reflects their own experiences and concerns. As we found in the [National Conversation on immigration](#), most people are not simply pro- or anti- immigration, but tend to have balanced views which reflect their broader worldview. Some people have concerns about resource competition based on their local experiences with housing, booking GP appointments or school placements. Others have concerns about control and criminality, reflecting their more authoritarian values. The majority of people value the contribution of migrants, for the economy and for our communities.

Therefore, it is not surprising that there is no significant difference between red wall voters and the nationally representative group in seeing the contribution of migrant workers during the coronavirus outbreak. 66% of people in red wall seats agreed that Covid-19 reminds us of the valuable contribution migrants play in our health and social care services and food production and distribution, just 3% fewer than in the nationally representative group (69%). As with the nationally representative group, the majority reject associations between Islamist terrorism and Muslim communities more generally.

There is a greater degree of variation on these questions when the data is broken down by demographic and socioeconomic markers. Only 26% of 18-24 year olds say that having a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures has undermined British culture compared to 47% of those aged 55-64 and 48% of those aged over 65. 42% of those from households with an income of £10,000 - £29,999 per annum and 40% with an income under £10,000 a year agree that multiculturalism undermines British culture compared to 29% of households earning over £50,000 a year. And there are even more dramatic cuts across education; almost twice as many (81%) people with postgraduate degrees say that immigration has been a good thing for the country as those with no formal qualifications (44%). Our polling would reinforce findings of Rob Ford among others, that the social conservatism seen in red wall seats is a reflection of demographic and socioeconomic makeup of its voters.

Brexit

Brexit was a huge dividing line for the 2019 election, across most red wall seats, a majority had voted to Leave the EU, at odds with Labour’s remain-leaning leadership. Although our polling finds no significant difference in the Leave vote recalled by the nationally representative group (43% recall voting Leave in 2016) and red wall respondents (49% recall voting Leave in 2016), Brexit identities have a higher role in shaping red wall responses.



Although there is no difference between the optimism people feel for the future in the nationally representative group or the red wall seats, optimism that we saw increase among Leave voters following the referendum, that things will get better one the UK leaves the EU, appears to have held for some in red wall seats. A third (32%) think that the cost of daily essentials will get better if the UK leaves the EU without a trade deal and slightly more people in red wall seats feel that the current Government acts in their interests (40%) than those in the nationally representative group (37%).

But on the whole there are only a few percentage points between red wall respondents and the nationally representative group in their optimism for the country’s economic circumstances, the economic gap between the North and the South and their own economic situation. Across both red wall seats and in the nationally representative group, more people think that these things will get worse or stay the same. In fact, more respondents in red wall seats are expecting things to get worse for the North – South divide than the nationally representative group.

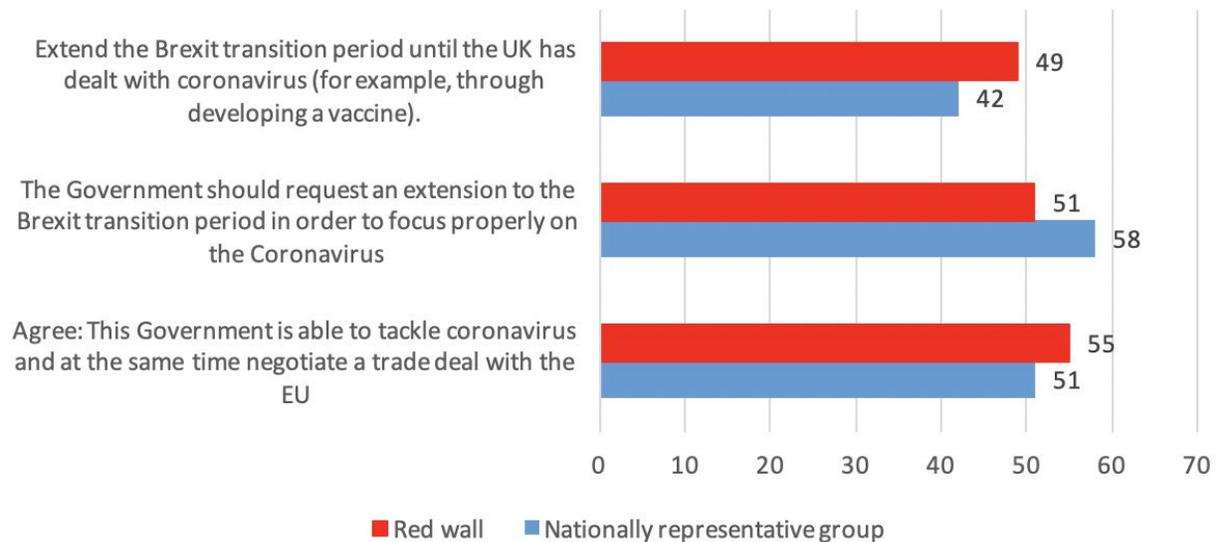
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	In the next six months, what do you think is likely to happen to....?	Your personal economic circumstances?	The community where you live?	The economic circumstances of the country as a whole?	Relationships between different communities?	The economic gap between the North and the South?
Red Wall	They will get better	12%	13%	15%	21%	12%
	They will get worse	36%	38%	68%	34%	49%
	They will broadly stay the same	51%	50%	17%	45%	40%
Nationally representative	They will get better	13%	10%	12%	18%	10%
	They will get worse	39%	38%	71%	37%	47%
	They will broadly stay the same	48%	52%	16%	45%	43%



It could be that the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, with the economic impact anticipated to be unevenly spread across the UK, with many red wall areas predicted to be disproportionately affected by job losses, has dampened the optimism of Brexit supporters in these seats. A majority (66%) in the red wall group reject the idea that the economy will return to its pre-Covid 19 state within 6 months, instead pessimistic about the prospects.

Although there is slightly more optimism among red wall respondents about the government's ability to tackle coronavirus while reaching a trade agreement with the EU, and there is slightly more resistance to extending the transition period, there is little difference between respondents in red wall seats and the nationally representative group when they are asked about Brexit in conjunction with responses to coronavirus.



Red wall voters would rather collaborate with Europe (66%) than America (24%) on issues like Coronavirus and trade. And if both the UK and the EU agreed that an extension to the transition period would help them deal with Coronavirus, 71% of red wall respondents would support an extension to the UK's transition period (74% of the nationally representative group said the same).

Red wall respondents are also understanding towards flexibility over the period of transition in light of coronavirus. 64% believe that the Brexit transition period should be extended until the UK has dealt with coronavirus (for example, through developing a vaccine), with a minority (36%) certain that the Brexit transition period should be extended to a maximum of a year.

Brexit may have played a big role in the fall of the red wall in the 2019 election, but it has become far less of a public priority given the immediate crisis covid-19 has posed, and the uncertain future it is shaping out.