

Blair's Britain: **the social & cultural legacy**

**Social and cultural trends in Britain 1997-2007
and what they mean for the future**

Ben Marshall, Bobby Duffy, Julian Thompson, Sarah Castell and Suzanne Hall

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Foreword

There are many voices and perspectives in Britain at the end of the Blair era. Some of these say the British glass is half full, others that it is half empty. Take the National Health Service as an example. By almost every indicator, ask any expert, there is no doubt things are very much better. Public opinion is, however, on a different page. Patients have persuaded themselves everything is worse, even though they tell researchers like Ipsos MORI that their local NHS is pretty good.

What I've previously called "Feelbad Britain" thinks the NHS will kill it with MRSA, deny it life-saving cancer drugs, refuse treatment by postcode, tip schizophrenics on to the streets, close local hospitals to cut debt and make it impossible to phone GPs for an appointment (though some of these are true). So, Tony Blair has missed the one really important target – an NHS that makes people feel better.

Partly this is down to expectations, raised by this Government to sometimes eye-wateringly high levels. Impatience is growing, people want it all and they want it now, and that is exactly what Tony Blair encouraged with his "choice" ideology; when he said he wanted to make booking a hospital appointment like booking an airline ticket, that's the unbridled consumerism he endorsed. But, also, people are in no mood to trust a fact or figure uttered by a Labour politician. Much has been achieved, but restoring public trust is the elephant in the room; there's no point of a blizzard of good news if most people don't believe it.

This report looks at these issues and a lot, lot more besides. It considers everything from consumerism to celebrity, from the internet to integration, from security to 'spin' and, in doing so, takes us further down the road of understanding what the British public think and do, and why. Marshalling a wide and deep evidence-base, the Ipsos MORI team put forward a handy portrait of British culture and society at the time Gordon Brown begins his premiership. This will be a valuable reference-point for those politicians, policy-makers and others keen to build on the past and construct an even brighter future.

The complexity of Britons' outlooks and opinions is captured neatly in the conclusion. At its core, this complexity is the product of the age old "me" versus "us" debate but with a modern twist reflected recently in heightened concerns and debates (at least in Westminster and, sometimes, in the real world) about, for example, our 'footprint', inequality, poverty, and how best to harness and temper modern consumerism.

Whatever else Tony Blair has done wrong and failed to do – and the list is long – he has made the political weather and shifted culture. But the question now is whether Gordon Brown and his Government can adapt to, and shape, that political and cultural backdrop and move Britain further forward.

Polly Toynbee

Columnist

Summary

- Tony Blair's hat trick of general election wins ensured the longest ever continuous term of Labour government and Gordon Brown now aims to carry this winning streak on to the next election and beyond. To fully understand the 1997-2007 period, its impact on Britain and the challenges it poses Prime Minister Brown, it is important to look beyond manifesto pledges, policy promises, league tables and the like and seek to understand British culture and society.
- This report explores the way Britons think and behave, their values and aspirations, and does so by drawing on the social research that Ipsos MORI, and others, have conducted over the past decade.

Britain 1997-2007

- One of the recurring themes running through this report is the national pessimism that pervades the British psyche at present. While most Britons are content with their own standard of living, pessimism has grown about the country's "direction of travel". Our poll in May 2007 found six in ten, 60%, of the view that Britain is getting worse as a place to live, more than four times the proportion thinking it is getting better (14%). This represents a fifteen percentage point negative swing since we last asked the question in 1998, a little over a year into Labour's term of office.
- So, quite apart from what the metrics, the indicators and the targets say, the majority think Britain is going backwards rather than forwards in social terms. When looking across public services we increasingly find that while people are satisfied with their own experiences, they remain much less convinced that this is replicated nationally. The Government and others face a significant challenge in over-turning such 'perception gaps'. There is also a disconnect between perceptions and 'facts'.
- The **economy** has consistently performed strongly during 1997 to 2007 with many people benefiting as a result. Surveys show that the British are markedly more positive about their own personal circumstances than their European neighbours and those living in other major economies; 61% feel confident about their own and their family's future standard of living, matched only by confidence in America.
- This increased economic optimism has manifested itself in what some have termed 'turbo-consumerism' but, with rising credit and housing prices, this has left levels of household debt at an all-time high. Despite the Blair Government's inroads into reducing child poverty, economic inequality has accelerated further still, as the wealthiest grow richer fastest.
- Economic optimism has not impacted on **well-being** though and we are less happy as a nation than we were in 1950. Surveys identify physical and mental health as two of the key determinants of quality of life – three-quarters (76%) of Britons identify health as among the most important things contributing to their quality of life, higher than money (30%) and employment (24%). Our physical condition has come under the spotlight recently and Britain now has the highest proportion of obese children across the European Union. Full-time workers consistently put in the longest working week in Europe and many seem to be feeling the pressure with rising reported levels of stress.

- Our **national concerns** have also shifted over the past decade. Reflecting Britain's economic buoyancy, the proportion of the public citing economic concerns has declined – only 2% mentioned inflation/prices as among the most important issues facing the country in October 2006, a tiny number compared to the equivalent 23% in 1990 and 81% in 1974. First public services, and then security issues of all types, have become the most salient issues in the public's consciousness. Concerns about immigration and race relations have increased to a remarkable degree; twelve-fold during the Blair years.
- While **public services** are very much a public priority, there has been a decline in confidence in the Government's ability to improve them. Nowhere is this more apparent than with the NHS. Despite 81% being satisfied with their last hospital visit, only 48% believe that the NHS is providing a good service nationally and, during 2004-5, only one in five were willing to accept that crime was falling and less than half (43%) believed there were more police (there were).
- Much of this could be explained by rising, sometimes unrealistic, public expectations (for example, 40% of Britons think that the NHS should provide the most *effective* treatments regardless of costs). Less clear is the impact of the choice agenda but our evidence suggests some public concern about how this is working out in practice and a particular concern about any sign of a "postcode lottery".
- **Communities and demographics** are also changing significantly. By 2011 there will, for the first time ever, be more people aged over 65 than under 16. There are also a greater number of single person households which, in turn, is putting even greater pressure on infrastructure. But, more positively, we are becoming more tolerant towards each other and diverse lifestyles (although 85% think political correctness has "gone too far"). Around seven in ten now believe that gay couples should be allowed to get married (68%, up from 46% as recently as 2000) and roughly the same proportion think that there should be more respect for the beliefs of different religions. This increasing acceptance, however, tends to dissipate when it comes to immigration.
- Given such trends, it is not surprising that the notion of **Britishness** has become a major topic of debate although our research suggests that nationality is only a small part of what Britons actually identify with. Instead, they tend to reference their family, marital status and local community as the most important aspects describing who they are. Our data suggests a decline in national pride – twenty years ago, a majority (55%) felt very proud of being British but the proportion had dropped to two in five by 2004 – and it is only when comparing Britain to the rest of the world or looking at particular institutions such as the NHS or the Army that this resurfaces.
- **Political engagement** surfaced as an issue during the Blair years. Our surveys find only a third of the view that "getting involved in politics works" while many more, 68%, say they want to have a say in how the country is run. But, four million fewer voters turned out in 2005 than in 1997 despite declared levels of interest in politics being little changed since the 1970s. Some disengagement could be attributed to a lack of trust in Government and the political classes more generally but there is little evidence to support a new 'crisis' of trust. There have, however, been significant declines in important aspects of this, partly related to increased public awareness of 'spin'.

- One of the most striking aspects of the Blair years has been the pace of **technological change** with mobile phones and access to the internet now an accepted part of everyday life. While the Government tried to harness these developments as a way of improving how people interact with public services, new technologies have had a much greater impact on how we do business and socialise. Despite increasing access for many, though, a digital divide persists along the lines of class and age: 44% of those aged 65+ do not use a mobile phone and only 8% of those aged 65+ in the lowest social classes have internet access.

Working with the complexity of public opinion

- This report demonstrates the complexity and often contradictory nature of public opinion. It is not just the case that there is a broad spectrum of views across different people, but the same person can hold apparently very inconsistent views. Consequently, those keen to shape public policy and discourse will need to utilise an increasingly sophisticated mix of tools to make sense of opinions and behaviour and to respond accordingly.
- Our final chapter uses an analysis technique from the field of commercial semiotics to identify **six oppositions** which underpin all of the behaviours and opinions voiced in the main body of this report. These encapsulate the key countervailing trends in public behaviour, culture and opinion. They relate to the way Britons, individually and collectively, conceive of themselves, their activities, their Government, their role in society and their relationship with the issues of the day:
 - **Parent and children v Adult-to-Adult:** Government is often seen to take a controlling, parental stance which can prompt citizens to react in a recalcitrant way. However, the rise of choice in public services requires citizens to make active and informed decisions and, thus, demands an adult dialogue.
 - **Individual v Community:** People increasingly want services that are flexible, responsive and personalised, signs that we are acting as individuals. At the same time, people have strong affinity to local issues and the opportunities to get involved in communities of association are widening (often through the use of the internet and new technologies).
 - **Having it all v Tough choices:** Rising standards and expectations coupled with increasing choice has meant that the ideas of 'having it all' and consumption per se are positively valued. But, at the same time, people are becoming more aware of the social and environmental implications their behaviour has and discussions about our 'footprint' on the planet have become commonplace.
 - **Consumers v Citizens:** This has been a key debate over the past ten years. While people like the idea of choice in public services *in principle*, the market implications, such as perceived risk of postcode lotteries, are often unpalatable. People want to be treated like consumers by public services, but also recognise the resource constraints, conscious that, as citizens and tax-payers, they foot the bill.
 - **Small club v Big tent:** This represents two competing schools of thought around the welfare state. The first holds that it should remain all-encompassing and offer support to those that need it; the 'big tent'. On the other hand, concerns about competition for finite state resources has led others to take a different stance - that welfare should only be granted to those that have earned the right for help.

- **Turned-off v Clued-up:** This final opposition reflects the fact that while the British are now more savvy and demanding than ever, and certainly more active in voicing their preferences, they are also reluctant to actively participate, frequently cynical about whether they can influence change.

- Identifying these oppositions deepens our insight and mapping them against each other allows us to make sense of the complex picture we have described so far. In addition to this **sense-making** function, the use of these oppositions can also act as a **creative** spur to think about big social and political challenges in new ways.
- We go on to combine and **map the themes** to illustrate how they can be used to better understand the complexities of British society at the beginning of the Brown era and as a way of considering policy questions and social marketing strategies. To illustrate this, we have concentrated on three key policy areas; social cohesion, aviation and the ageing population (although the mapping of oppositions is an approach that can be applied in many other contexts).
- To pick out just one of these here, the mainstream debates on aviation are well known. There are those of us who believe we can, and should, be able to do what we like – the low-cost airline boom and last-minute deals are symptomatic of this. On the other hand, there is much discourse around environmental responsibility with many calling for, at least, a cap on the expansion of the aviation industry. However, the new emergent discourse appears when looking at the segment of society which believes that one can ‘have it all’ while being a ‘good’ citizen. Communicating ‘eco-chic’ behaviours, such as more formalised carbon off-setting schemes, may be one means by which the desired policy outcome can be achieved.
- In this report we look at the contradictions that exist in attitudes and values today and demonstrate that, to understand society more fully we need to look beyond attitudinal data alone, to identify underlying themes and structures. Such an approach, alongside the deliberative techniques we have helped pioneer over the past ten years, will help researchers and government to develop policy and communications that really address the key challenges of the future.
- Plotting a political course for Britain is no longer about navigating between right or left, or even following a middle “Third Way”, but manoeuvring around a complex system and deciding which drivers ought to be encouraged and what communications and policy levers to use. This is a tough challenge but one that the Government will have to take on.

1

Introduction

Introduction

A short time after 5 a.m. on Friday 2 May 1997, Britain's then newly elected Prime Minister, Tony Blair, made a speech to Labour Party workers at the Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. He set out his vision for Britain, referring to New Labour governing as "the party of all the people" whose "voice has been silent for all too long..."¹

A little more than ten years on, Mr. Blair left office on 27 June and handed over to Gordon Brown after the longest period of continuous government by a Labour Prime Minister. Rarely can a Prime Minister's departure have been so well signposted and there has already been a glut of analyses, commentaries and debates about the Blair era.² Such coverage has, however, tended to focus mainly on the political dimension (we have produced our own report, *Blair's Britain: the political legacy*, reviewing the main political trends during the past ten years³) and we think it is important to look beyond this at the way Britons think, the way they behave, the values they have and the aspirations, hopes and fears they share.

The purpose of this report is to do just that. We have revisited the research we, and others, have done for a range of different clients over the past decade to measure and explore the British mindset. In doing so we have been mindful that analysis of this nature tends to look backwards at what has been done, why, and with what consequences. By contrast, we also wanted to look ahead to the future, providing the Brown Government, policy makers and shapers with a useful evidence-base and some conceptual tools to help them think about public opinion and behaviour going forward.

We have considered public reaction to what Tony Blair and the Labour Government have done (of course, overall, it is likely that Blair's Government was as much shaped by societal and cultural currents as shaped them) while also reviewing the wider social and cultural landscape and the shared characteristics, behaviour, knowledge, values and outlook of the British population.

In our final chapter we have used an analysis technique borrowed from the field of commercial semiotics to identify a series of **oppositions** encapsulating the key countervailing trends in public behaviour, culture and opinion. It is our hope that understanding the cultural context and looking at the implications this might have for the future will provide useful material for those seeking to build on the period and to move things forward, as well as helping those who simply wish to further their understanding of contemporary Britain.

Ipsos MORI's evidence base

We are well placed to reach some conclusions about British culture. Over the past three decades we have been conducting surveys and discussion groups for hundreds of different clients on many different topics. This report draws on the political polling we are best known for but looks much wider, referencing the work we have done across the public and private sectors.

The use of surveys and discussion groups to understand public prejudices and priorities is itself a feature of the Blair era, albeit one whose effect has been exaggerated. Organisations, companies and Government itself now place greater emphasis on consultation, dialogue, engagement and empowerment, reflecting the public's own emphasis. Internet polls, phone and text votes have become a staple of media coverage, while interactivity has become a by-word for modernity.

Similarly, the new deliberative research techniques we have pioneered in the past decade in partnership with our clients have helped them to ground research and policy in line with the agenda of those it seeks to involve and affect. They have also provided us with many valuable insights, drawn upon in this report along with findings from several other new techniques including semiotics and horizon scanning. These will grow in importance for policy-makers in the years ahead.

The reality of public opinion is often complicated and we have been sensitive to the need to contextualise survey findings. Our report also builds on previous Ipsos MORI work and reports and picks up some of the themes from our annual reviews and other key reports⁴ and we have been able to draw on our Public Affairs Data Archive and qualitative research as well as trend data from British Social Attitudes, Social Trends and a wide variety of other sources. While our focus is on the period 1997-2007, we have referenced data from the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s where it is available to provide the fullest picture possible.

From data to insight

While there is plentiful available data on social trends from a vast array of sources, insight is much more elusive and takes time. Moreover, we know that it is notoriously difficult to pinpoint cultural change as it is happening, let alone to scope future challenges, but we have tried to do both.

After briefly introducing the background and build up to the Blair era (**chapter 2**), we draw on our survey data and other sources to review the state of Britain between 1997 and 2007 in the form of thematic-based portraits (**chapter 3**) before pulling this together in a summary of the social and cultural nature of Britain (**chapter 4**). Here, we identify a new approach to addressing the complexities of public opinion designed to enhance modern policy-making and social marketing.

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2

The making of Blair's Britain

Before Blair

Tony Blair became Prime Minister on 2 May 1997. His premiership got off to a memorable start with Andrew Rawnsley recently recalling the “*surge of optimism and goodwill*” in May 1997 towards the youthful leader.⁵ The spring sunshine, flag-waving citizens lining Downing Street, Blair’s young family and his own fresh-face helped to create the impression of newness.

These themes were ones that Tony Blair himself was keen to tap into and encourage and he did so with his oft-used description of Britain as a “young country”. This was supplemented by his party’s careful use of “new” and “modern”.

Prime Minister Tony Blair, London, Friday 2 May 1997

*“A new dawn has broken, has it not? And it is wonderful...This vote tonight has been a vote for the future...so we can put behind us the battles of this past century and address the battles of the new century. It will be a Britain renewed...where we build a nation united. With common purpose, shared values, with no one shut out, no one excluded, no one told that they do not matter. In that society, tolerance and respect will be the order of the day...That is the country we have wanted for so long. A Britain whose politics start once again to live up to the finest ideals of public service. And a Britain that stands tall in the world...”*⁶

All this contrasted, deliberately so, with the long period of Conservative incumbency and the ‘greyness’ of the Major years: fairly or unfairly, the ‘Spitting Image’ portrayal did stick. Our polling in the lead up to the 1997 election found a strong sentiment among the public of a time for change and a desire to see substantial improvements to Britain’s public services. Concern about the NHS, in particular, was increasing in the period immediately prior to the 1997 election: 33% of the public rated NHS/hospitals as one of the most important issues facing the country in August 1996 but this figure had increased to 48% by February 1997.⁷

These sentiments were well exploited by the Labour Party. Ratings of Tony Blair’s performance in Opposition were virtually unprecedented in polling history and at 43 he became the youngest British Prime Minister since Lord Liverpool in 1812. Earlier, in the 1990s, his reputation had been built on his time as Shadow Home Secretary when he famously attacked the policies and record of the Conservative Government, promoting the Labour alternative of being “*tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime*”. At the time, Labour also benefited from public dissatisfaction with the Major Government whose image never really recovered from the cumulative effect of a number of “sleaze” scandals. “Black Wednesday” caused irreparable damage to the Conservatives’ reputation for sound economic management and was an important turning-point.

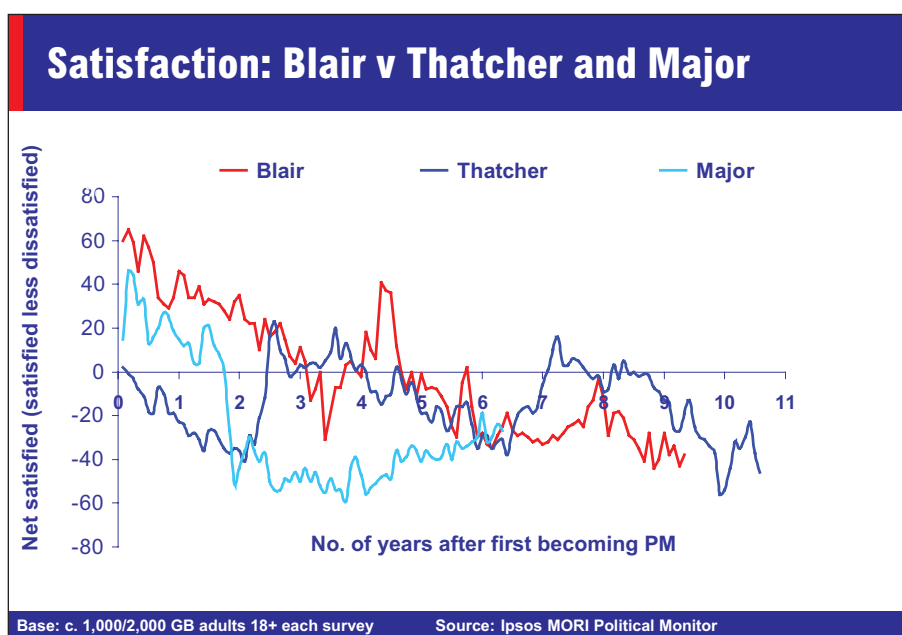
Tony Blair had become Leader of the Labour Party following the sudden death of John Smith in 1994. He led efforts to re-brand the party as New Labour, eventually ridding the constitution of the totemic ‘Clause IV’. According to Philip Gould, Labour’s communications director since 1985, part of Blair’s appeal was his “...*innate understanding of what makes people tick. He’s kind of plugged in to them*”⁸ and even his harshest critics would probably concede that he was proficient at tapping into, and reflecting, the public mood at key moments such as the death of Diana and 9/11.

Blair, Labour and Britain

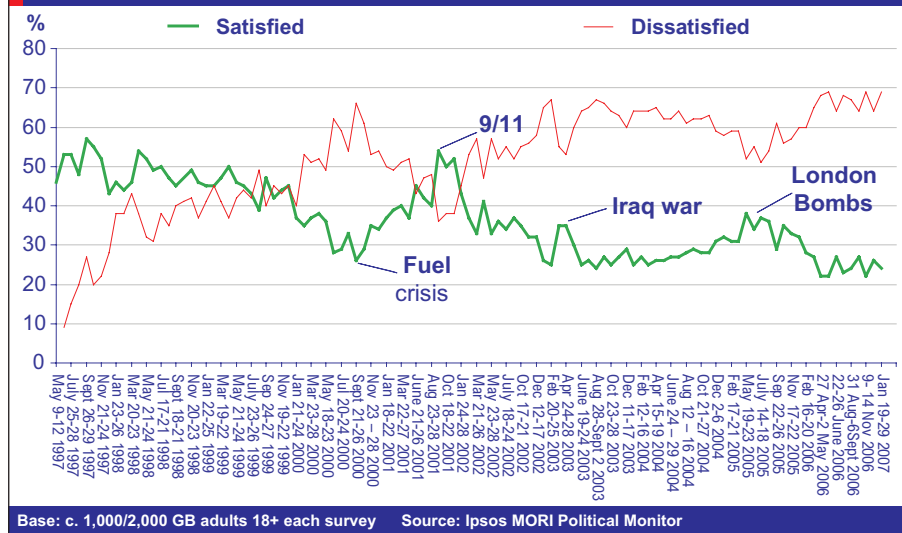
The scale of Labour's landslide victory at the 1997 general election was impressive and took many by surprise (not least because of concerns about the accuracy of the polls following the 1992 election⁹). Incredibly, the party won 26 more seats than it did in 1945. In the immediate aftermath of the election, the British electorate seemed satisfied with the outcome¹⁰ and during the late 1990s MORI's polling showed a becalmed political scene. The new Government and its Prime Minister remained popular with the public – at his height, Blair was the most popular Prime Minister in the post-war period – and the Conservative's share “flat-lined” at around 30%.

During a prolonged honeymoon period, the Government and Tony Blair himself seemed to defy the usual laws of political gravity and scored well in MORI polls. Labour benefited from the time it took the Conservatives to adapt to Opposition and Blair went on to set more records, becoming the first Labour leader to win three successive elections, ensuring the longest ever continuous term of Labour government; he is the longest serving Prime Minister, other than Lady Thatcher, since the nineteenth century. Thatcher had also won a hat-trick of elections, but Blair's landslides were even bigger than hers: Labour won 418 seats in 1997 and 412 in 2001, compared to 397 and 375 won by the Conservatives in 1983 and 1987.

In a historical context, Blair's ratings in the first few years of his period in office were impressive; only Winston Churchill during the War had a satisfaction rating higher than Blair's 75% in September 1997. He was above 60% for twenty consecutive months but, later on, his satisfaction scores were much lower, never better than 50% during his last five years in office, nor even 40% after July 2005. Similarly, the Blair Government's average monthly satisfaction rating over its ten years of office has been only 36% despite persistently high satisfaction ratings during its first term. Although it was not obvious at the time, the underlying trend was downwards from a very early stage and an 18-month period between April 1999 and September 2000 (in the aftermath of the fuel crisis) saw the Government lose an average of more than 19,000 satisfied adults every day for a year and a half (our complementary report *Blair's Britain: the political legacy* considers these trends in much more detail).



Satisfaction with Government '97-'07



In Opposition and then in government, Blair and Labour put issues such as crime, health and education at the top of their to-do list and described their activities in terms of these policy areas rather than an over-arching philosophy. During his time in office few people talked of Blairism, although there has been much use of the Blairite label to describe camps of allegiance, for example in contrast to Brownite. The 'Third Way' was briefly part of the political vernacular but was neither uniquely British nor enduring. That is not to say that Government policy and thinking was ephemeral: recently, Andrew Rawnsley has identified economic efficiency combined with social justice and reformed public services as integral parts of 'Blairology'.¹¹

Some pre-1997 clues about how Tony Blair and Labour would approach government were available in two books published in 1996: *New Britain: my vision of a young country* and *What needs to change: New visions for Britain*, a collection of essays setting out an agenda for Britain:

*"I was brought up to form my views on the basis of what I saw around me...in other words, to study reality rather than theory."*¹²

*"We are only a few years from a new millennium. People in Britain will then look around and see a world transformed since their youth...The renewal we need cannot be carried out by government alone but only by government in partnership with the people."*¹³

A few years earlier in 1994 Blair made a speech to the Labour Party conference in which he asserted its position as the party of aspiration for the working and middle classes. He summarised the journey Labour had made (in that same conference Clause IV had been replaced) claiming *"We are back as the party of the majority in British politics, back to speak up for Britain, back as the people's party."*¹⁴

These extracts demonstrate a strong emphasis on people, on society and on community, and underline the centrality of these concepts to New Labour thinking. The words used also reflect the discourse and thinking of the time, such as the emphasis on the 'stakeholder' economy advanced by Will Hutton in *The State We're In*.¹⁵ They also indicate a firmly held view that government and people had become distant from each other. In a chapter in *New Britain: my vision of a young country* entitled 'The Stakeholder Society', Blair talked about "a nagging siren of disaffection, malaise and cynicism". He identified the need to re-invent community to remove division and ensure that everybody has a 'stake' in a society, respectful of their own and others' rights and responsibilities.

Also in 1996, Blair's introduction to *What needs to change: New visions for Britain* referred to his "moral credo" which he summed up as "...a society in which ambition is matched by compassion, success by social justice, and rewards by responsibility." These themes were echoed in his speech at the Royal Festival Hall on Friday 2 May 1997 and reflect an appreciation by Labour that to govern effectively it would need to meet often competing challenges and objectives. To be relevant, Labour would need to strike the right balance between what were seen as the old ideologies of 'left' and 'right'.

In *The Unfinished Revolution* Philip Gould describes the key document entitled 'Labour and Britain in the 1990s' as being the most comprehensive review of public opinion ever undertaken by Labour. He cites it as "the polling foundation upon which the party's modernisation was built"¹⁶ and it is clear from *The Unfinished Revolution* that Gould and his team spent a great deal of time and resource to find out what people thought about life in Britain as much as what they thought about the political scene and the rival parties. Since then, and like Prime Ministers before and, no doubt after him, Tony Blair has sought to develop a vision for Britain in tune with the hopes and aspirations of the British people.

Blair also tried to behave in ways which reflected Britain's cultural preoccupations, values and behaviour. At its most basic level, this manifested itself in 'photo op' moments such as playing 'head tennis' with Kevin Keegan and guesting on 'Richard and Judy'. Beyond this, he was keen to communicate that he was culturally in tune with the public, describing himself as a "regular guy", sharing his tastes in music and, more recently, telling Catherine Tate that he wasn't "bovvered". But this was more than just skin-deep (and, of course, by no means unique to Blair's premiership) and extended to his informal style of 'sofa government'.

Brown takes over

Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair as Britain's Prime Minister on 27 June 2007. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, he oversaw Britain's longest uninterrupted period of growth in 200 years.¹⁷ At the height of his popularity in April 2002, our polls recorded 57% public satisfaction with his performance, twice the proportion saying they were dissatisfied (28%). His last budget, however, saw 32% satisfaction, his lowest post-budget approval rating. More recently, as speculation about his 'coronation' as Blair's successor increased, Brown out-scored David Cameron on our "most capable Prime Minister" question, polling 31% against Cameron's 24% in August 2006. In the days leading up to him taking over as Prime Minister he stretched this lead further; up to 40% against 22%.¹⁸

At the same time, however, our polling in June 2007 suggested that he would have some work to do to persuade the public that he was trustworthy (like all leading politicians, more people consider him untrustworthy than trustworthy) and 'likeable'; only 36% say they like him compared to 41% saying the same about Cameron and 57% of Blair.¹⁹ The public are also unconvinced about his prospects of being a better Prime Minister than Blair; 20% think he will be, 18% think he won't and 50% think there will be little difference. But a more immediate challenge for the new Prime Minister is winning public trust and support, and before entering 10 Downing Street Brown said:

"This will be a new government with new priorities. And I have been privileged to have been granted the great opportunity to serve my country...at all times I will be strong in purpose, steadfast in will, resolute in action in the service of what matters to the British people, meeting the concerns and aspirations of our whole country."

Just as Gordon Brown and Tony Blair before him have reflected on the state of British society, its economy and politics in framing Labour's vision for Britain, so too do we ten years on from Labour's election in May 1997. In the following pages, we consider the behaviours and values the British people share, and don't share, at the time of the Blair/Brown hand-over plus their hopes, fears, prejudices and preferences. In doing so, we draw on our own polls, surveys, discussion ('focus') groups and secondary desk research. We have sought to enhance our own, and others, understanding of what currently characterises British public opinion as well as the direction it might be heading in.

3

Blair's Britain,
1997-2007

Blair's Britain, 1997-2007

What is Britain like and how has it changed over the past ten years during Tony Blair's premiership? This chapter draws on our data and the work of other social commentators to describe the values and behaviours of Britons and how these have changed since 1997. This is clearly a huge task in a short section of a review such as this but while, inevitably, we can only scratch the surface, we think that the evidence gathered here moves us towards an understanding of the prevalent themes and trends in modern Britain. We return to these in our later discussion of the implications for public policy.

Below, we look at:

- **Wealth, inequality and consumerism;**
- **Ethical consumerism, well-being and work;**
- **Public priorities, public services;**
- **People, communities and places;**
- **Crime, security and identity;**
- **'Spin' and the trust deficit;**
- **Technology and media;**
- **Sport, celebrity and other pastimes.**

Wealth, inequality and consumerism

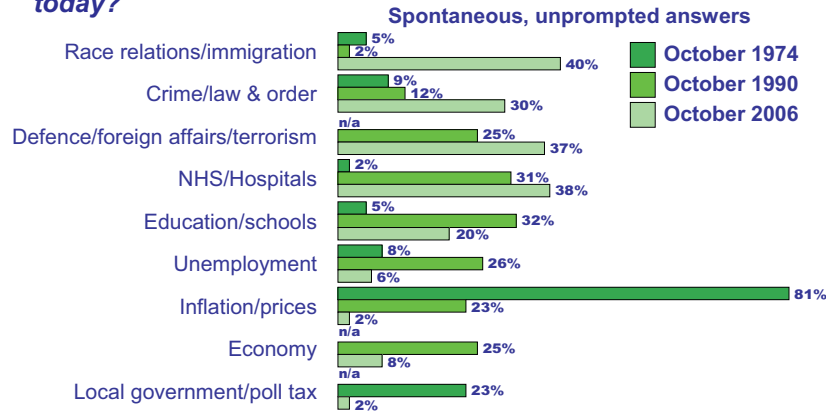
New Labour's anthem at the 1997 general election was D:Ream's 'Things can only get better' and the song was used to position the party as representing change and optimism. This was, no doubt, designed to contrast with "*the politics of pessimism*" inherent in Britain in the 1990s²⁰ and Labour was good to its word in one key area: throughout the Blair years the economy, under the Chancellorship of Gordon Brown, performed strongly, achieving forty consecutive quarters of sustained growth by the time Tony Blair announced his resignation. The Blair Government avoided the 'boom and bust' cycles which had previously plagued many previous governments of different hues.

MORI polls found Gordon Brown, initially at least, to be the most popular Chancellor of the Exchequer for over twenty years and we found a higher proportion of British adults satisfied with their standard of living in 2003 compared to survey results from the late 1980s: 78% were satisfied and 12% dissatisfied when asked about "The things people can buy and do – their housing, furniture, food, cars, recreation and travel..." compared to 75% and 17% respectively in 1989.²¹ In 2006, the British were markedly more positive than their European neighbours and other major economies when asked about their own personal circumstances (64% said they were confident about their own prospects, compared to only 36% in France and 54% in Germany). This recognition of Britain's relative economic success and support for Brown's investments in core public services has been labelled as an emerging "Anglo-Social" model that combines the best of free-market and social welfare approaches. However, as we shall see later in this report, there are no signs of British support for Scandinavian levels of redistribution.²²

Reflecting the relative economic confidence of Britons, there were low levels of public concern about the economy as a national issue throughout the Blair years: for example, in October 2006, only 2% mentioned inflation/prices as among the most important issues facing the country, a tiny number compared to the equivalent 23% in 1990 and 81% in 1974. But, while top-of-mind concerns about the economy and economic issues are not what they once were, there is still a strongly pessimistic tinge to public opinion about the country's future prospects. Labour's re-election in 2005 came despite the public being more apprehensive about the country's economic future than at any previous election at which MORI has polled.

Important issues facing Britain

Q What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today? What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?

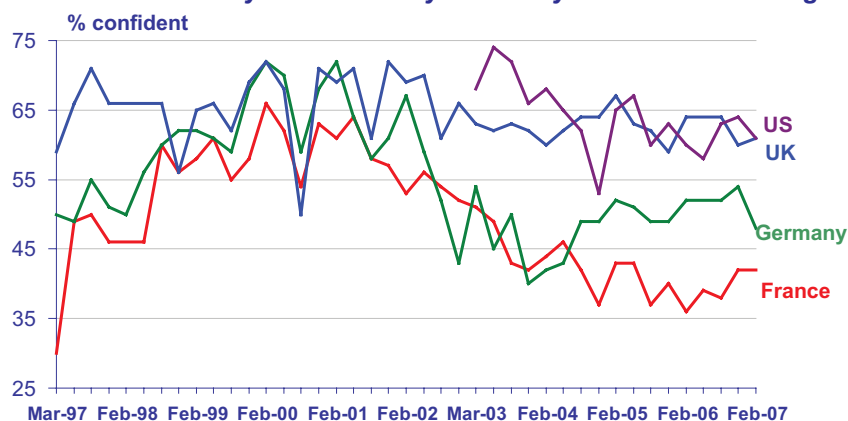


Base: c. 1,000/2,000 GB adults 18+ each survey Source: Ipsos MORI Political Monitor

Pessimists also outnumber optimists among Captains of Industry whose mood about the national economy turned downwards in 2004 after two years of improvement. They are, though, much more positive about the prospects for their own companies and, similarly, the general public are more positive about their own personal financial prospects than the nation's economic future. Our most recent data shows that Britons, along with the Americans, are the most confident among citizens of the G6 countries about their own and their family's standard of living, with six in ten (61%) feeling confident about the future.

G6 comparisons: standard of living

Q When you think generally about the future, do you feel confident or worried about your own and your family's standard of living?



Source: International Social Trends Monitor 1997-2007

That future will depend on many things, including the buoyancy of the high street and the property market. Both have changed to reflect public preferences and lifestyles and will need to do so again in the years ahead. The last decade has seen a growth in the demand for, and supply of, conspicuous and lifestyle consumption in the form of 'bling'²³ in the 2000s, luxury

items such as cars, 4x4s and SUVs²⁴, record sales of wine and champagne and the boom in celebrity magazines.²⁵ According to the 2007 British Lifestyles report, overseas holidays were Britons' number one spending priority for the coming year with £23.8 billion spent on them in 2006.²⁶

Since 1997 first, second and now third generation phones and technology have become must-have items for British shoppers but as well as technology, convenience and value have remained by-words for success in British retailing. Tesco now receives £1 of every £7 spent on groceries in the UK and sells everything from food to clothes, to furniture, to white goods, to insurance and houses.²⁷ But polling by ICM shows that while most shoppers say they find supermarkets useful, they worry that big stores harm small food producers and limit choice.²⁸

The housing market, and property prices in particular, have remained a constant preoccupation throughout the Blair years; a 2001 MORI poll found four in five (79%) of the view that owning your own home is either 'critical' or 'important' to having a reasonable standard of living.²⁹ Housing does not feature when we ask for top-of-mind concerns, but the issue is seen as vitally important when people's attention is directed towards it, for example when we are asking about what needs improving in local areas.

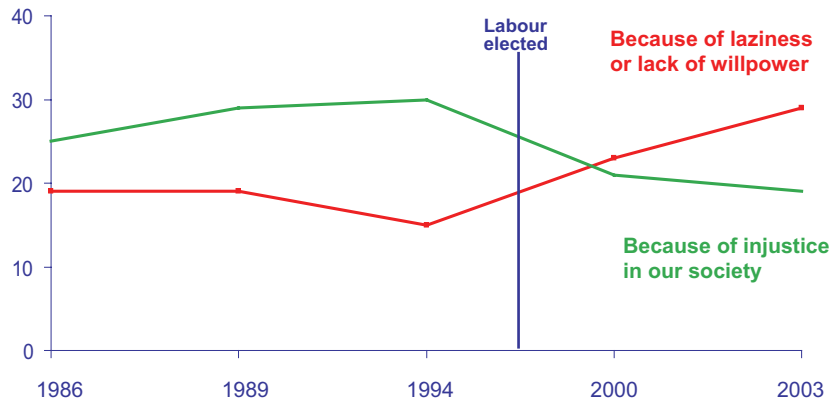
Related to ongoing interest in property, the last decade has seen a rise in DIY and 'lifestyle' activities. TV programmes such as 'Changing Rooms' and 'Ground Force' were popular especially in the late 1990s before some TV channels, most notably the BBC, decided that such programmes needed to be scaled-back. Do-it-yourself self-improvement also manifested itself in new and varied ways with the rise of makeovers of all sorts including the increased use of cosmetic surgery by women and men – last year, The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons recorded 22,041 procedures carried out by its members, up 34.6% since 2004.³⁰

Self-improvement and identity-shaping were similarly evident in work we did recently among younger age groups.³¹ In today's society, being young means that your body and mind are 'your project' – clothes, taste in music and body image are just some of the facets of personality that are important to change and refine until the 'right' look or identity is achieved. This pattern of do-it-yourself identities is a strong indicator of the increased trend towards individualism in society³² and our research suggests a strong meritocratic streak in the public's outlook with such sentiments reflected in attitudes towards inequality and poverty. Evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey, for example, shows an increasing public tendency during the Blair years to attribute economic need to individual laziness rather than structural injustice (shown in the following chart) although this will also, of course, be partly due to perceptions that injustice has decreased.

During the last decade child poverty has gone down, the number of children in workless households has fallen by a quarter and there has been a big drop in poverty among single pensioners.³³ At the same time, however, several independent studies have shown that the gap between rich and poor, growing under Conservative Governments, accelerated still further under the Blair Government.³⁴ The number of millionaires rose dramatically under Blair, driven by rising house prices³⁵ but also related, in part, to the large weekly winnings paid out by the National Lottery introduced in 1995. The last decade has seen much comment on the salaries earned by top sports stars, celebrities and businessmen and women and there are now 108,000 people earning over £100,000 a year in London.³⁶ The spending power of some Britons has increased considerably, thereby widening the gap between the have-nots, *'the haves and the have-yachts'*.³⁷

Less sympathy?

% reasons why people live in need

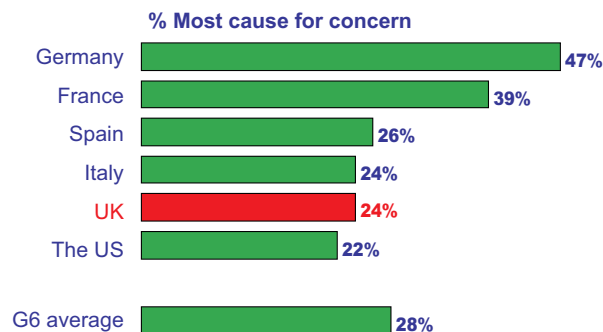


Source: British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA)

Whatever the actual trends, income inequality and poverty do not feature strongly in our “most important issues” question and Britons are relatively less concerned about domestic poverty compared to citizens of other major European countries. Our most recent data shows a quarter of Britons citing poverty and social inequality among the three most worrying issues, compared to nearly half of Germans.

G6 concern about poverty and social inequality

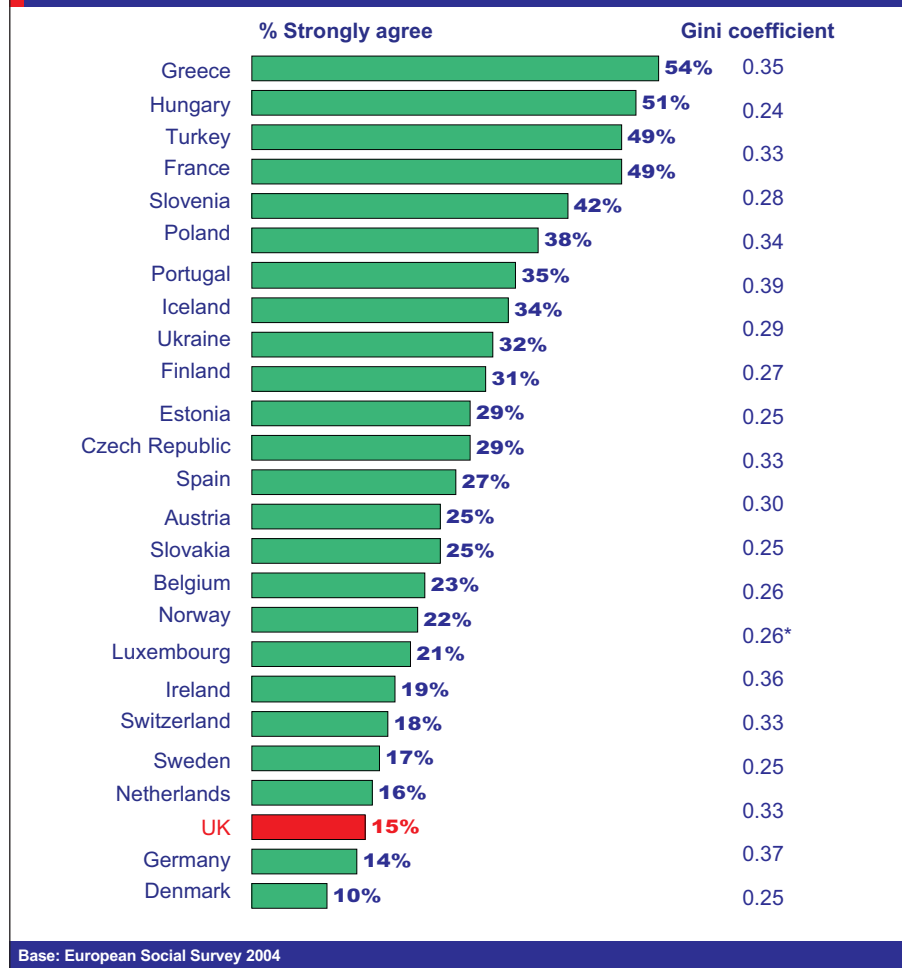
Q Which three of the following eleven topics do you find the most worrying in your country? – Poverty and social inequality



Source: Ipsos Global Consumers and Citizens Monitor, February 2007 Base: c.1,000 interviews in each country

In fact, despite the growing separation of the very rich from the very poor, Britons seem quite tolerant of high levels of income inequality. They are far less likely than citizens of most other European countries to feel strongly that the Government should reduce income inequality, despite the UK having the highest levels of inequality among major European countries (except Portugal), as shown in the following chart (the Gini coefficient is an index based on income distribution – the higher the number the greater the level of inequality).

Government should reduce differences in income levels?



Our in-depth qualitative research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found a deep-seated wariness among people about offering help in case it is co-opted by the “undeserving”³⁸ (perhaps a reason why the Government itself has often been at pains to talk about tax credits designed to help what Ministers have called “hard working families”). We have seen a kind of “free-rider phobia” across a range of our research. At the same time, however, a survey we did for The Sun in early 2006 showed an important, albeit rather slight, shift in attitudes towards favouring greater redistribution. When Mrs. Thatcher was in office during the 1980s, the majority of the British public preferred a society “which allows people to make and keep as much money as they can” (52%) rather than the more egalitarian society “which emphasises similar incomes and rewards for everyone” (40%). By 2006, the public were more evenly divided (46% and 48%).³⁹

While the Blair Government didn’t talk about egalitarianism either often or loudly (although Gordon Brown’s budgets were often described as ‘redistributive’), it certainly did reference equality and with some apparent effect. Our qualitative research for the Equalities Review in 2006 found wide public acceptance of the aim of achieving equality of opportunity and a clear and shared understanding that it meant more than equality of treatment. We also found public recognition that there have been considerable advances towards equality for several minority and needful groups. Although some participants felt that legislation has been a key driver of change, there was widespread recognition that attitudinal change, through

education and social marketing, is also key to progressing the equalities agenda as these verbatim comments from group participants illustrate:⁴⁰

"People are conscious of their rights, and certain laws are there to protect them as well."

"I think people have more access to information and are learning more about race and ethnicity, whereas in the past people were worried and nervous because they just weren't aware of other cultures."

The last decade has also seen a further rise in the central role of consumption to identity and lifestyles. One in three Britons (37%) now identify "looking around the shops" as something they tend to do as a weekend leisure activity (ranked fourth).⁴¹ This interest in shopping and consumption was encapsulated in the "I shop, therefore I am" slogan used by London's Selfridges store a few years ago. In 2002 doctors began prescribing drugs to treat a new condition called 'shopaholism'⁴² and Oliver James has pointed to a new desire to keep up with the Beckhams rather than the next-door Joneses.⁴³ In his study entitled *Affluenza*, James identifies a causal link between economic inequality and incidences of emotional distress.⁴⁴

Some commentators have even begun talking about the advent of turbo-consumerism⁴⁵ drawing on the work of the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard who developed the concept of the "consumer society" during the 1970s to describe a situation in which consumption was the "axis" of culture. Whether or not that is the case, consumption is certainly exacting a strong hold on the British public. Rising property prices and the availability of credit are among many factors driving personal indebtedness (and the country's national debt is at record levels, hitting the £500 billion mark for the first time at the end of 2006⁴⁶). In 2003, Citizens Advice Bureaux debt advisers across the UK reported a 47% increase in the number of new consumer credit debt problems over the past five years, and last year the charity warned that it could take 77 years on average for those asking them for help to get back into the black. The number of people who were declared insolvent in England and Wales rose to a new record of 107,000 in 2006 and repossession orders went up by 29% from 2005.⁴⁷

Even if these figures look frightening, findings from research by MORI Market Dynamics in 2003 based on evidence collected from 48,000 consumers suggests that they are not necessarily unsustainable. In fact, the vast majority of credit card holders use their cards wisely and have sufficient assets to service their debt, even in the event of the economy deteriorating.⁴⁸ The analysis showed that 68% of credit card users, which we called the 'convenient controllers', pay off their balance in full on a monthly basis. In contrast, only 5% are 'spiralling debtors', with significant debt relative to their income. The research predicts that there will be a polarisation in credit card use, with an even larger majority of people using their credit cards sensibly while a small but still growing minority of people will fall into the spiralling debtor segment.

Still, average household debt excluding mortgages stands at £8,793⁴⁹ and consumption continues apace with spending reaching a record £1.09 trillion last year.⁵⁰ Such trends have led one commentator to describe Britain as having:

*"...a get-rich-quick, live-now-pay-later, zeitgeist."*⁵¹

At the same time, however, there have been a number of discernable trends away from modern day consumerism and its associated lifestyles during the Blair years. These have included 'anti-globalisation' movements manifest in the mainly peaceful protests in Britain and

worldwide but occasionally erupting into violence, for example in central London on 1 May 2000. They also extend to the way Britons shop, particularly apparent in the rise of a new form of conscious, ethical consumption, as well as the way we work and live – the ideas of ‘work/life balance’ and ‘downshifting’ really hit the national consciousness in the mid to late 1990s.

Ethical consumerism, well-being and work

These counter-trends away from consumerism have come at a time when there has been much growing commentary on, and debate about, the issues of happiness. Four in five Britons believe that the Government’s prime objective should be the greatest happiness rather than the greatest wealth⁵² and David Halpern, a senior advisor to Tony Blair, has suggested that within the next ten years government will increasingly be measured against how happy it makes its citizens.⁵³ Others have talked about “the politics of well-being” and Conservative Party leader David Cameron has similarly commented that:

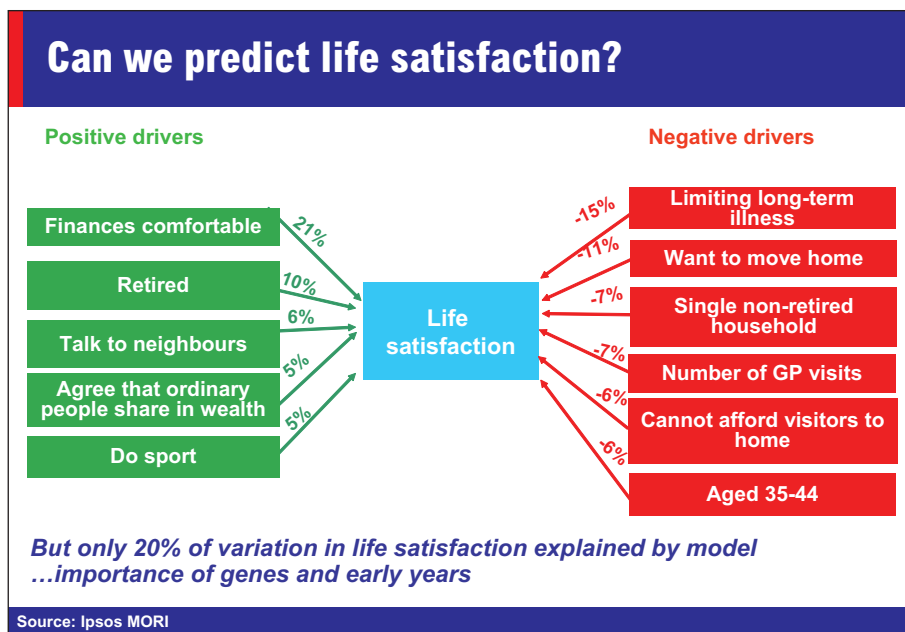
*“Well-being can’t be measured by money or traded in markets. It’s about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture, and above all, the strength of our relationships...It’s time we admitted that there’s more to life than money, and it’s time we focussed not just on GDP but on GWB – general well-being”.*⁵⁴

The data suggests he may have a point – we are less happy as a nation than we were in 1950, despite being three times richer⁵⁵ and do not compare favourably with some other European countries. Richard Layard, a long-standing advisor to the Labour Government on happiness, has studied the available evidence to conclude that:

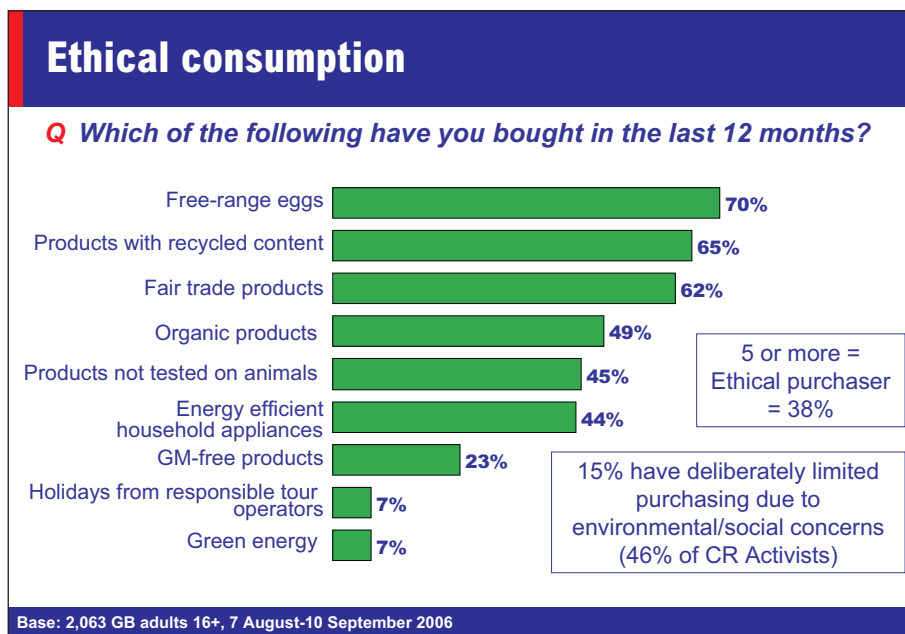
*“...when material discomfort has been banished, extra income becomes much less important than our relationships with each other: with family, with friends and in the community. The danger is that we sacrifice relationships too much in pursuit of higher income.”*⁵⁶

The evidence suggests that once average incomes reach about £10,000 per annum, extra money does not make a population any happier.⁵⁷ This is due to the fact that a major part of what happiness means to people is contentment and inner peace.⁵⁸ Certainly, people themselves appreciate more than money and ownership – our research in 2003 pointed to a growing recognition and valuing of the lived environment, happiness, social cohesion and inclusion⁵⁹ and our 2004 study showed that views of income (not actual income) and self-assessed levels of health are the most important predictors of life satisfaction. Analysis shows that absolute levels of income are not that important compared to an individual’s perceptions of how comfortable they are (this is backed up by studies that show the central importance of personal philosophy in influencing life satisfaction).⁶⁰

Further results from our “key drivers” analysis (employing a multiple regression model) are represented in the very simple chart below. This shows the relative strength of the factors on the right hand side in explaining levels of life satisfaction – that is, those factors most associated with happiness. The first point to note is that, overall, the model using these factors can “explain” 20% of the variation seen in life satisfaction although this is a fairly high proportion for this type of attitudinal variable. The strength of relationship with the factors is indicated by the percentage – the higher the absolute value of the percentage the stronger the predictor of life satisfaction that factor is. Feeling your finances are comfortable (but not absolute levels of income) and suffering from a limiting long-term illness are the strongest positive and negative drivers of happiness respectively.⁶¹



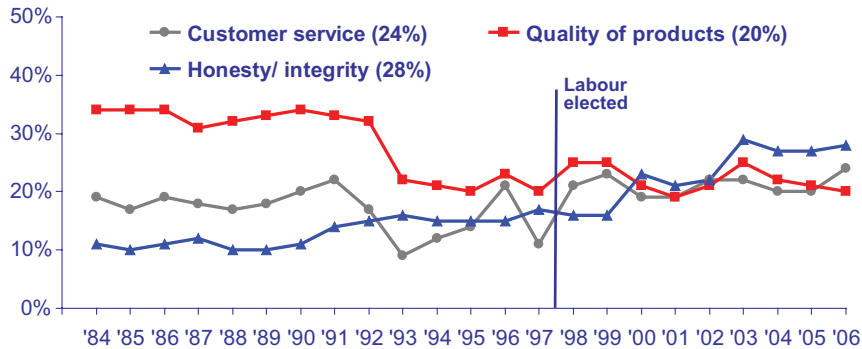
Surveys have shown large rises in the numbers boycotting goods for ethical reasons: up from 4% in 1985 to 31% in 2002.⁶² That ethical columns and supplements now feature in several national broadsheet newspapers is further evidence of something at work here, as is the interest in “ethical chic” on the catwalk and on the high street.⁶³ In October 2005, The Observer reported the emergence of the ‘New Puritans’, a generation of young, educated and opinionated people determined to “*sidestep the consumerist perils of modern life.*”⁶⁴



The suggestion that Britons are increasingly concerned with ethical dimensions of consumption is very clearly underlined by our research tracking the most important factors for judging a company’s reputation. As the chart below shows, there has been a long term increase in the number of people citing honesty and integrity as key factors when making assessments of companies, with honesty overtaking quality of products for the first time during the Blair years.

Honesty increasingly important as factor for judging companies

Q What do you think are the two or three most important things to know about a company in order to judge its reputation? (Spontaneous)

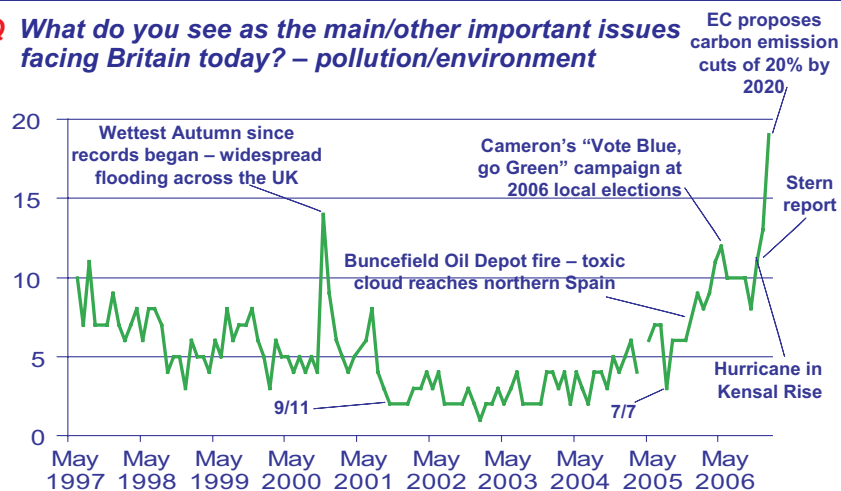


Base: British adults (c1,000 each survey)

Growing concerns about the environment have also contributed to contemporary debates about the future of consumerism. In April 2007 Jonathan Porritt argued that consumerism – in his view, the only big idea to have ever “achieved total supremacy” – has a dark side and is in danger of destroying the planet.⁶⁵ In the same month our Political Monitor poll showed the environment well behind other issues seen by the public as being among the “most important facing Britain today”. However, such questions tend to produce a ranking of “top-of-mind” issues from the national political agenda, and we have found that, when prompted, the public is also prepared to recognise wider threats, with global warming mentioned more than terrorism and wars. Furthermore, although the environment still ranks far lower than concerns about immigration and public services in our top of mind poll, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of the public rating it as an important issue, to almost twice the level of May 1997.

The environment as an issue

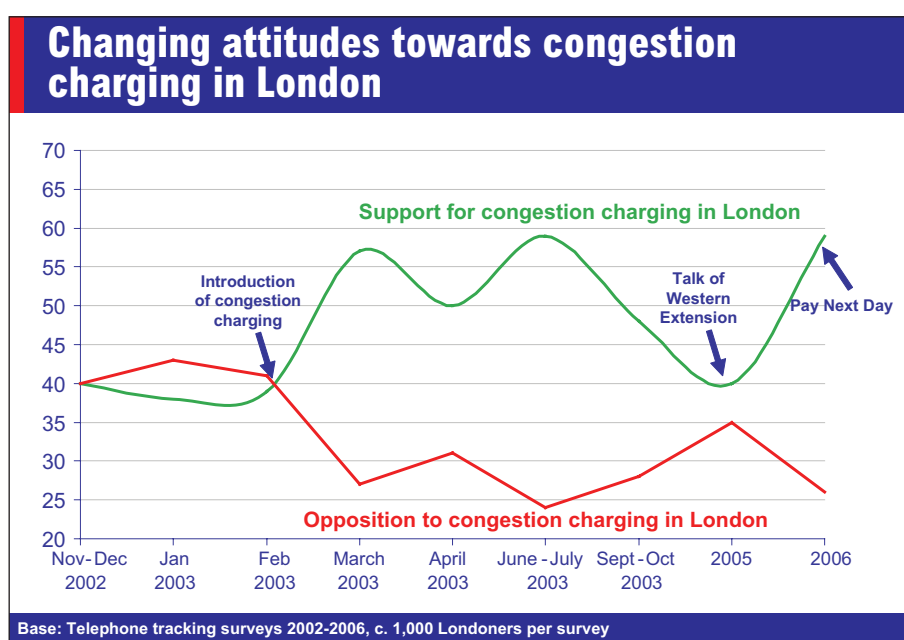
Q What do you see as the main/other important issues facing Britain today? – pollution/environment



Base: c. 1,000/2,000 GB adults 18+ each survey Source: Ipsos MORI Political Monitor

The environment is something of a litmus issue when it comes to the apparent clash between individualist consumerism and wider-world citizenship. We find people keen to protect their own individual lifestyles and choices but, at the same time, appreciative of the need for change and, mainly, supportive of this.

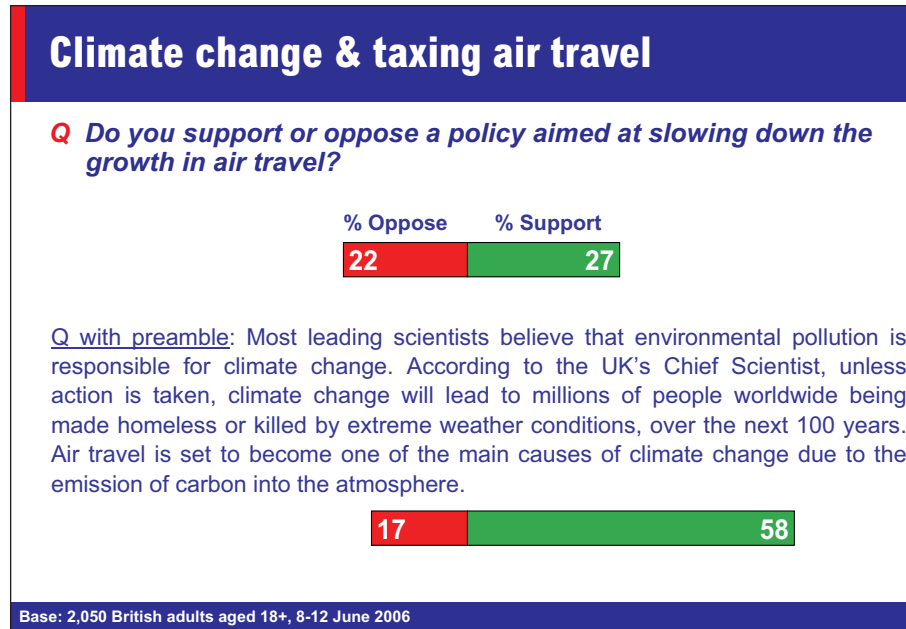
Transport is a case in point. The car is something of an icon for personal freedom but traffic congestion and pollution consistently feature near the top of most respondent's 'to do' lists in our surveys for local authorities. Our research in London and Edinburgh highlights that, for the most part, public opinion can shift on issues like road pricing with political leadership and courage vital to the success, or otherwise, of such schemes. For example, support for congestion charging in London increased significantly following its introduction: as the chart shows, after falling in response to plans for the Western Extension, support among Londoners received a boost with the introduction of a Pay Next Day option.



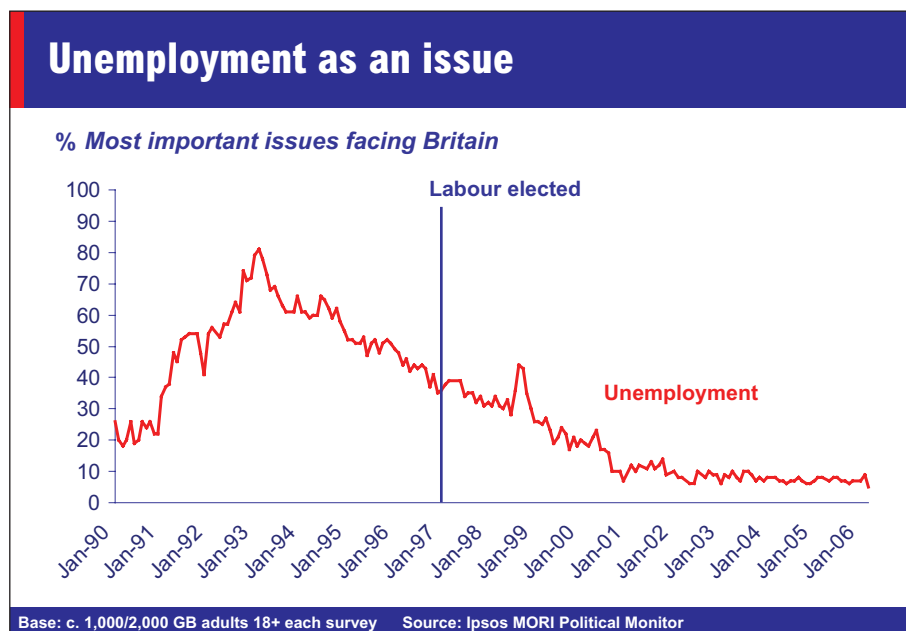
Air travel has also been an important issue during recent years and represents a pinch-point between consumer choice and a concern about the environment. Britons are travelling abroad more than ever before and 80% of overseas trips were made by plane in 2006, up from 60% in 1981, while travel by sea fell from 41% to 12% over the same period.⁶⁶ Budget airlines and budget flights took off at the start of the Blair years, enabling Britons to reach European destinations for ski and sun weekends, and are as popular as ever. More recently though, our surveys have found growing public support for a policy aimed at slowing down the growth in air travel but that support is much greater when respondents are provided with projections about climate change (shown in the following chart).⁶⁷

Our deliberative work, however, suggests a more complex picture with people's willingness to consider personal behavioural change lagging behind their support for the principle of environmentally friendly policies. Although people are concerned about climate change and, in principle, are supportive of policies designed to reduce the environmental impact of air travel, they are unwilling to sacrifice their own foreign holidays and are hostile to the idea of being priced out of flying. Similarly, recent ICM research pointed to widespread opposition to government action via taxation aimed at cutting the number of people who fly in order to

limit climate change. This comes despite a growing level of concern about the environmental implications of aviation (76% think taxes should be reduced or kept the same, only 20% that they should be increased).⁶⁸



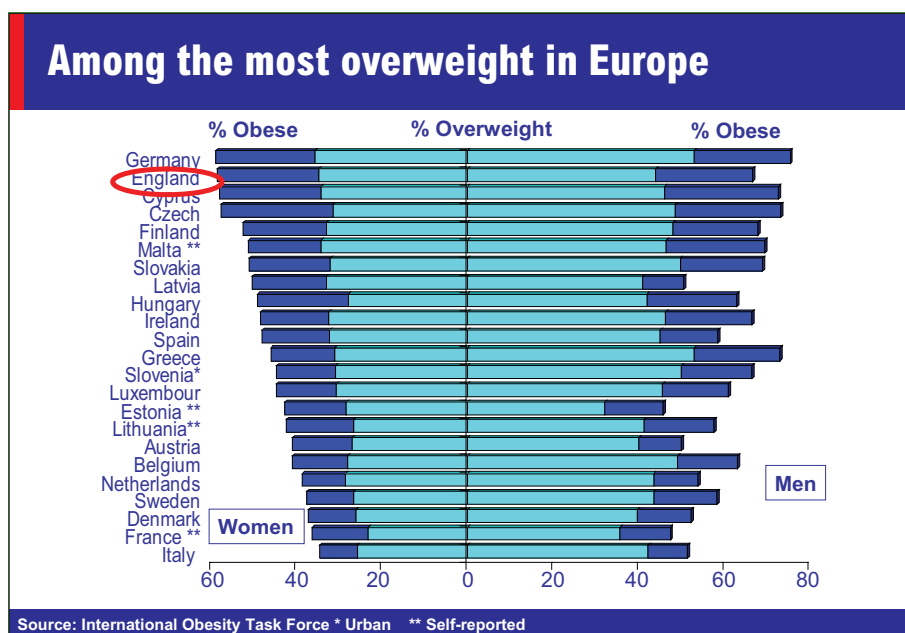
While unemployment was not a salient issue for most Britons during the Blair years (as seen in the chart below), the way Britons work has come under scrutiny in recent years with the late 1990s seeing a growing emphasis on 'work/life balance'. The latest Eurostat survey shows that, on average, British full-time workers put in the longest working week in Europe: an average of 42.4 hours compared to an EU average of 40.5 hours⁶⁹, amounting to an extra working day over the course of a month (and, put another way, UK workers were 'owed' £23 billion in unpaid overtime in the UK last year⁷⁰).



Britons also seem anxious about the implications of flexible working. A MORI study about work/life balance for the DTI in 2003 found over four in ten (43%) of the view that working shorter hours would negatively affect their job security, and even larger proportions thought a range of flexible arrangements would affect career prospects.⁷¹ Although there are signs of change – for example, the TUC has recently reported that the percentage of people working at least one hour of unpaid overtime is falling, albeit slowly⁷²– the British approach to work is having negative knock-on effects. It is estimated that anxiety and stress are responsible for the loss of approximately 45 million working days a year which, in turn, costs the economy a staggering £100 billion each year in lost revenues.⁷³ Technology has facilitated more flexible working but also made it harder to ‘leave’ the office behind.

Many employees do seem to be feeling the pressure, with now more than half a million people claiming Incapacity Benefit for ‘depressive episodes’, up from 275,000 in 1997. The numbers claiming for anxiety have similarly increased from 85,800 to 115,850 and, over the same period, the numbers claiming for stress have increased from 16,700 to 49,160.⁷⁴ In 2002, around 13.3 million prescriptions were written for selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors⁷⁵ more than double the 6.5 million in 1997⁷⁶ and recent figures suggest that one in six adults have a neurotic disorder such as anxiety or depression.⁷⁷

Britons’ physical condition has also been a topic of much discussion and debate during the last few of the Blair years, especially our expanding waistlines (although there has also been a focus on ‘size zero’ dieting) and the latest figures show that Britain has the highest proportion of obese children across the EU and that England is second only to Germany among adults.⁷⁸ The National Audit Office has estimated that this costs the British economy £6 billion per annum.⁷⁹ At the same time, however, research by the Food Standards Agency in 2006 found 71% of consumers aware of the message that they should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day (compared to only 43% in 2000) and only 12% of Britons think that healthy eating is not important to them.⁸⁰



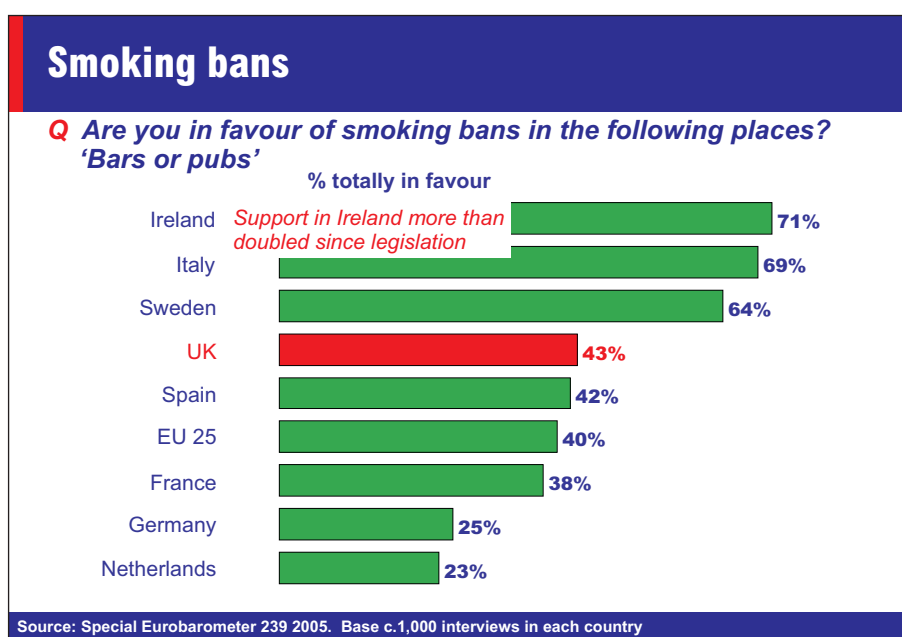
Our surveys have found three-quarters of people (76%) identifying health as among the most important things contributing to their quality of life, higher than money (30%) and employment (24%).⁸¹ In recent years sales of healthy food lines in British supermarkets have increased rapidly⁸² but building public awareness and knowledge remains an important priority area. This has been brought into sharper focus by Jamie Oliver's 'Feed Me Better School Meals' campaign as well as findings from MORI polls. Our survey for the Developing Patient Partnerships organisation found three in five children (60%) confused about what a healthy diet is and our work for Nestlé found over a quarter of those aged 55+ (31%) do not get nutritional advice from any source (one in five skip breakfast).

The need to build awareness also extends to alcohol consumption. Our work for Alcohol Concern in 2003 found that while many British people are concerned about the country's binge drinking, few are aware of the safe drinking limits recommended by Government and medical experts.⁸³ But this is about more than education. In 2003, our qualitative research for the Home Office found young binge drinkers enjoy drinking and being drunk, and few feel that their drinking habits should change. While most had either done something they later regretted or been involved in or witnessed criminal or disorderly incidents when out drinking, most considered risk-taking, drunken fights and disorder to be a key part of a night out as these verbatim comments from participants illustrate: ⁸⁴

"If I am drunk and sick then I know I have enjoyed myself."

"It is part of our heritage. Like football matches, you always get a fight at the end."

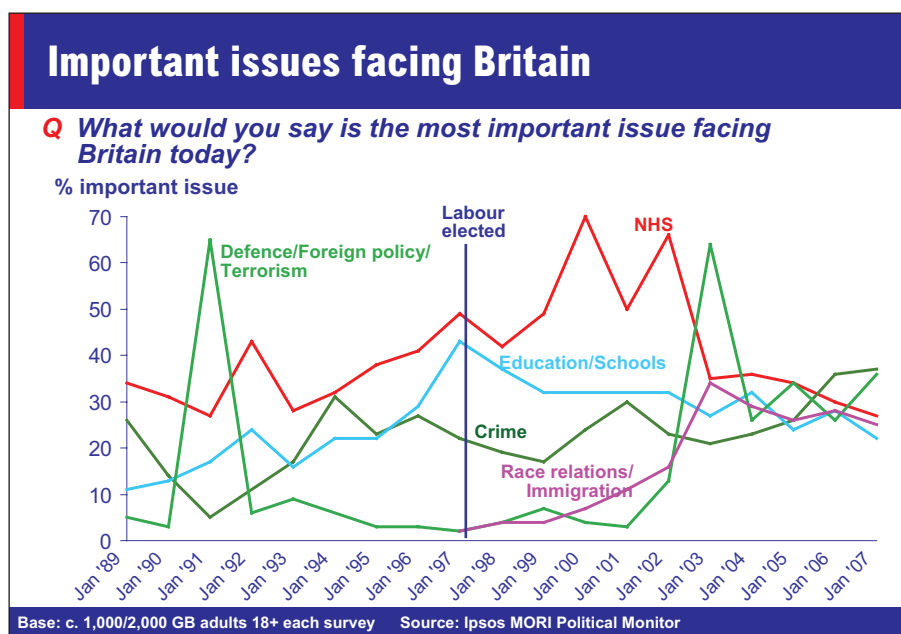
Pubs remain a cornerstone of British leisure activities. Over the past decade they have become more female- and family-friendly. While women are less likely than men to go to the pub to drink, our surveys shows that their propensity to do so has increased over the last few years. It is estimated that, women's share of drinks consumption in Europe will grow 1.5% a year between 2005 and 2010 and by 2010 women will account for 38% of all drinking in Britain, up from 32% in 2005.⁸⁵ Three in four women aged 18-34 say they drink in a pub at least once a fortnight, one in three do so at least once a week. This is only slightly fewer than men as a whole, although younger men remain the heaviest and most frequent drinkers.



More encouragingly, evidence from the Health Survey for England suggests that the Government's anti-smoking drive has had some success. For example, between 1993 and 2004 the proportion of British men smoking fell from 28% to 22% while the proportion who were obese rose from 13% to 24%⁸⁶ and, from July, smoking will be banned in public places such as pubs. In 2005, less than half of UK residents were in favour of such a ban, however, evidence from Ireland, where support has more than doubled since legislation came into place, suggests that public attitudes can shift and may become increasingly supportive following the introduction of the ban. As with congestion charging, this seems to be an area where decisiveness and effective communications could really make a difference.

Public priorities, public services

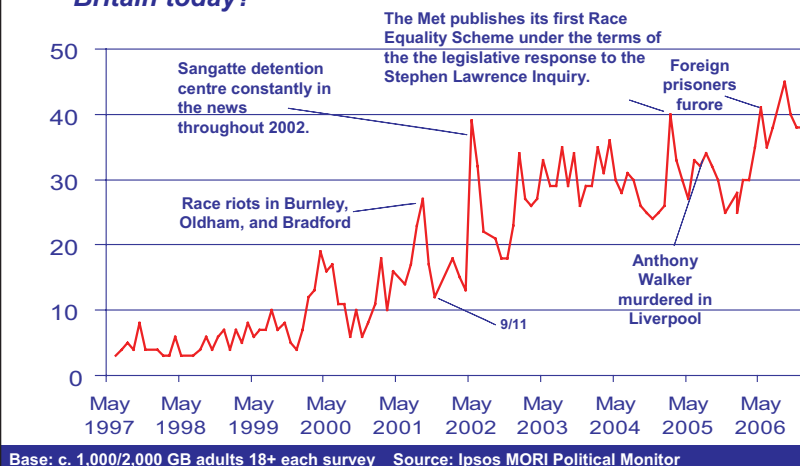
For most of the past decade Britons have consistently identified education, health/the NHS and crime/law and order as being among the most important issues facing the country. Of course, the data such a question produces is likely to be influenced by the issues politicians and the media focus on (and vice-versa), but it does give us a sense of changing priorities over time. While public services have been prominent throughout the period, the issues of defence/foreign affairs/terrorism and race/immigration rose greatly in importance during the 2000s, with the former in particular being related to events.⁸⁷ The chart below shows trends in public perceptions of the salience of five of the key issues facing the country since 1989.



Looking in more detail at immigration/race relations, concern increased twelve-fold from 3% (June 1997) to 36% (April 2007) as asylum-seeker and migrant numbers rose dramatically at the end of the twentieth century: in 2005, an estimated 565,000 migrants arrived to live in the UK for at least a year, compared with fewer than 350,000 in 1997 and, at the last Census, 4.9 million (8.3%) of the total population of the UK were born overseas.⁸⁸ The chart below illustrates both the long-term rise in concern about race relations and immigration over the Blair years and the short term impact of specific events on public perceptions.

Issues facing Britain: Race relations / immigration

Q What do you see as the main/other important issues facing Britain today?

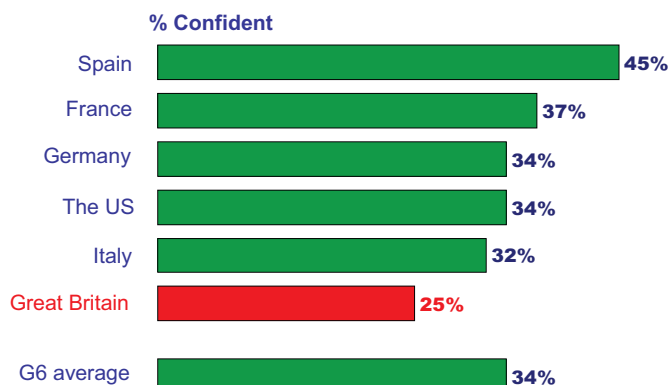


The increase in concern about immigration is clearly driven by media coverage more than direct experience⁸⁸: while only 18% of Britons see it as a big problem in their own area, 76% think it is a national problem. The average Briton estimates that 22% of the UK population was born abroad (the actual figure is 8%) while 78% disagree that the Government is open and honest about migration. Nevertheless, the pace of change has been unsettling in some communities, such as Barking and Dagenham – the local authority became more diverse more quickly than anywhere else in the UK and residents voted BNP in large numbers.

International comparisons are also instructive. Britons are more worried about immigration control than the Spanish, Americans, Italians, French, and Germans.⁹⁰ They also rank bottom in terms of confidence in the government's ability to promote the integration of foreign populations into society and are more likely than populations in eleven other countries in Europe to think that 'far many more people' come to live here compared to countries of about the same size.⁹¹ Reflecting this, there has been a shift in support since the mid-1990s for reducing, by a lot, the number of immigrants into Britain: from 41% to 51% between 1995 and 2003.⁹²

Confidence in government to promote the integration of foreigners into society

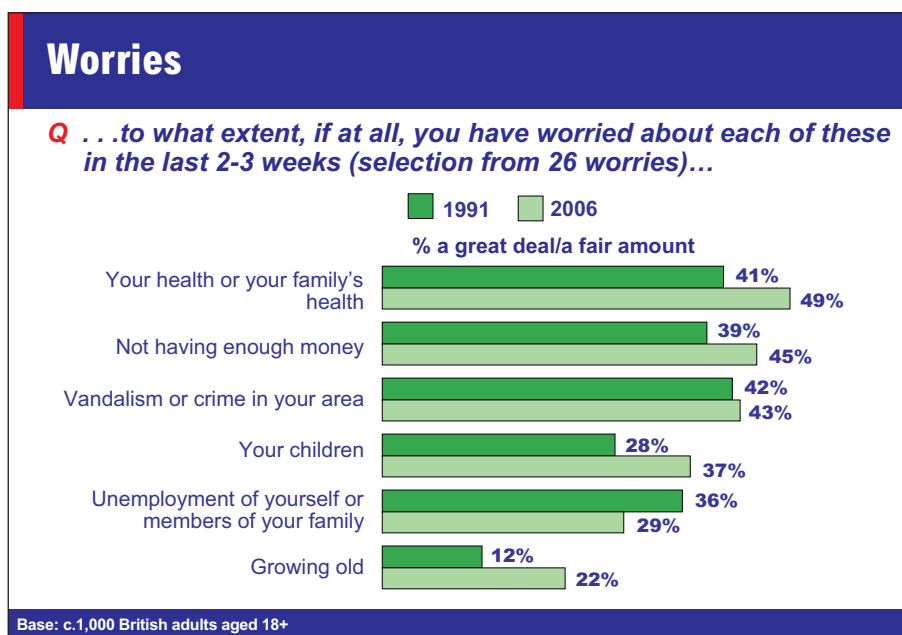
Q Please tell me whether you are confident in the current government, or not, when it comes to ... promoting the integration of foreign populations into your country's society



Source: Ipsos Global Consumers and Citizens Monitor, Nov. 2005 Base: c.1,000 interviews in each country

There are, of course, other ways of measuring public concern. An Ipsos MORI poll for The Sun newspaper in January 2006 gave us the opportunity to measure the extent to which people were worried about different things and then compare this with data from a similar poll conducted in 1991. In 2006 proportionately more people reported having worried about not having enough money, the health of their family/themselves, their children, how things are going at work and growing old. There was little change in terms of, for example, relationships and local vandalism/crime, while fewer reported being worried about family unemployment than did so in 1991 (and most respondents in the 2006 survey reported being happy: 87% compared to 79% in 1991).⁹³

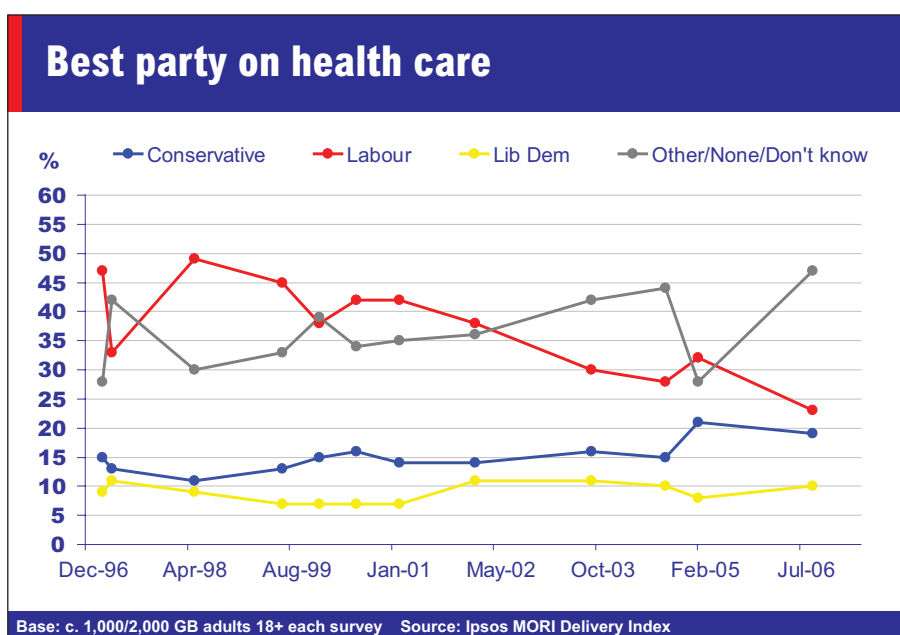
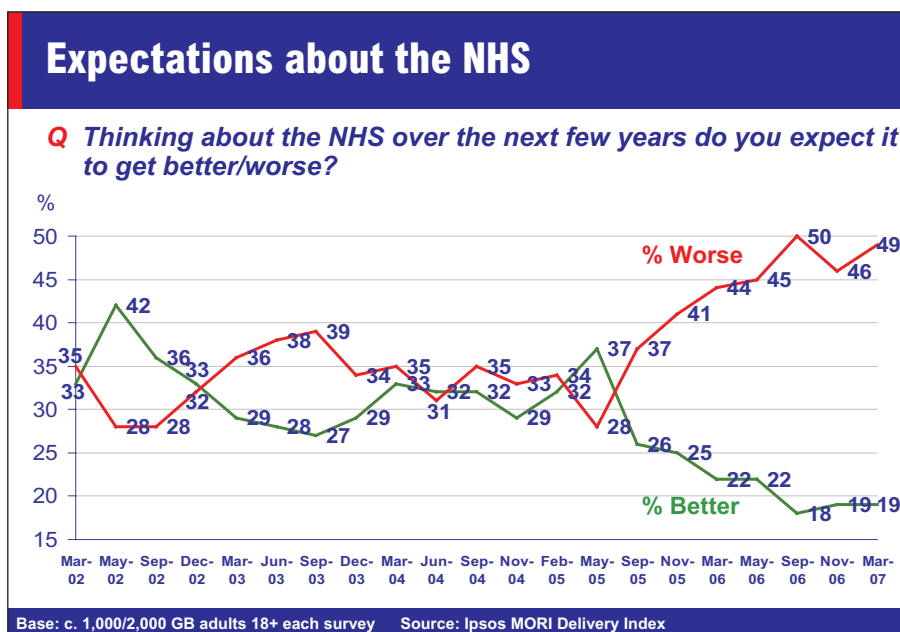
So, while our concerns about the country have increasingly focussed on race relations and immigration, in our personal lives we are now more likely to worry about health, money and family than in 1991. Interestingly, more of us worry about not having enough money, although fewer of us worry about unemployment, suggesting that achieving financial security while in employment is an increasing concern – or that our aspirations are still increasing ahead of our greater affluence. However, it is not only material concerns which have increased since 1991, with more of us also worrying about health and ageing in particular, perhaps reflecting increasing media attention on these issues.



Our monthly polls consistently show that public services are seen by Britons as among the most important issues facing Britain and improving public services has been a central plank of Labour's three election-winning manifestos. At the time of the 2001 election, considerably more of the public believed that the Government's policies would improve the state of Britain's public services than thought they would not. This confidence fell away until summer 2003 when things began to improve up until the 2005 election before falling away again.

A similar, pessimistic, picture exists for individual services, especially the National Health Service as shown in the chart below.⁹⁴ Our survey in May 2007, shortly after Tony Blair's resignation, found 49% of the view that the Government had done a bad job at improving the NHS, more than the 33% who rated the Government's record positively. However, our most recent data from May 2007 shows a 'bounce' for the Government on satisfaction and

other measures following Tony Blair's announcement of his resignation. Nonetheless, as he is leaving office, Labour and the Conservatives are closer than they have ever been in ratings of who has the best policies on health, as seen in the second chart below.



But while Britons are concerned about the overall state of the NHS and pessimistic for its future, they are positive about particular NHS services and their own experiences. For example, while 81% were satisfied with their last hospital visit in 2004⁹⁵ and two-thirds (67%) agreed that “My local NHS is providing me with a good service” only 48% admitted that “the NHS is providing a good service nationally”. This difference between ratings at local and national levels is not unique to the health sector and represents one element of the ‘perception gap’, much discussed in Westminster and Whitehall and outlined by the Prime Minister himself at Labour’s Spring Conference in March 2004:

“There is much scratching of the head in political circles over this apparent paradox: people who feel personally optimistic in Britain; but collectively pessimistic. They say their own health care in the NHS is good; but the NHS in general is bad. Their schools are good; but education is bad. They are safer; but the country is less safe. Their future is bright; but the nation’s is dark.”

The gap is easier to measure than to explain but our research has pointed to the media and the Opposition taking very negative approaches and the fact that general views are influenced by political allegiance much more than ratings of direct experience will be. The general lack of trust in government information, particularly following high profile examples of perceived deception such as the case for military intervention in Iraq, are also likely to be a factor.

But we are also perhaps seeing the impact of rising expectations partly caused by people reading across from private sector services. For example, barely a quarter of Britons think that the NHS should provide the most effective and value for money drug treatment (28%), preferring instead that it either provide all treatments (31%) or the most *effective* treatments regardless of costs (40%).⁹⁶ Whether or not expectations are wide of the mark, they are also changing in other ways too. Our qualitative research for the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit in March 2007 found people acknowledging improvements in public services but wanting further improvements, especially user empowerment and service responsiveness, more personalisation and a more ‘caring’, ‘warmer’, constructive relationship:⁹⁷

“I know a surgery where seven doctors don’t work any weekends and don’t even work a full day, it’s all convenient to them. We’re not treated as customers, we’re an inconvenience.”

“You should get more of the community involved, it’s the same people over and over again that are involved.”

“We need to give more resources to local communities ... and to encourage and provide incentives for adults to play a more active role in the community.”

People tell us they want to be treated like customers and are fairly pragmatic about the involvement of the private sector in delivering public services. Eight in ten (79%) agree that “Britain’s public services need to start treating users and the public in the same way as the private sector does.” Perhaps reflecting a strong consumerist streak, as well as the ‘customer-focused’ language used by politicians and public sector staff, there is strong, in principle, backing for the idea of choice in public services. On further reflection, however, people are much more ambivalent.⁹⁹ They are wary about the potential implications, especially fragmentation, the creation of a two-tier system and greater variation in services.¹⁰⁰

Our research suggests that some people doubt how real choices will actually be and question whether they are equipped to make these decisions in any case. Others want services to be flexible and responsive and like the idea of personally being able to choose a school, hospital consultant or GP but see ‘postcode lotteries’ as unacceptable (these have become a very powerful negative image in any discussions about choice). In fact, a majority say they want higher taxes to fund uniform improvement in local healthcare services in preference to keeping taxes as they are but extending choice.

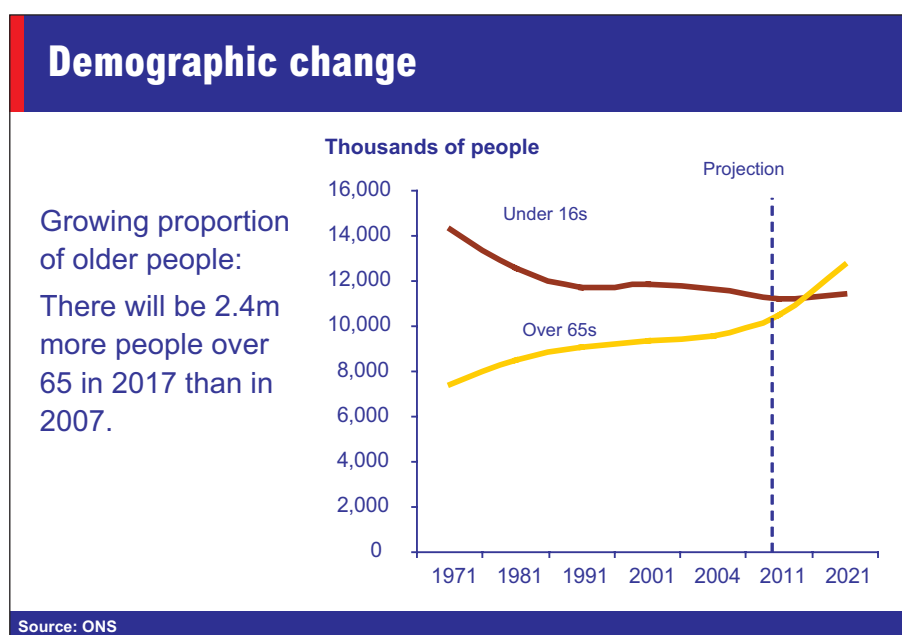
This is, of course, fairly new territory for the public, as well as policy-makers and politicians. The latter face a number of significant ongoing challenges including how best to meet the public’s apparent twin desires to lead and to be led; thus while 51% agree that “The Government is

too involved in telling us how to eat healthily”, 44% disagree.¹⁰¹ It is a far from straightforward picture, but our recent work suggests that people feel that the Government needs to take people through stages, firstly *enabling* them to make the right decisions by putting support mechanisms in place, then to encourage them through the use of social marketing and communications and, only then, to use *enforcement* via penalties and rewards.¹⁰²

People, communities and places

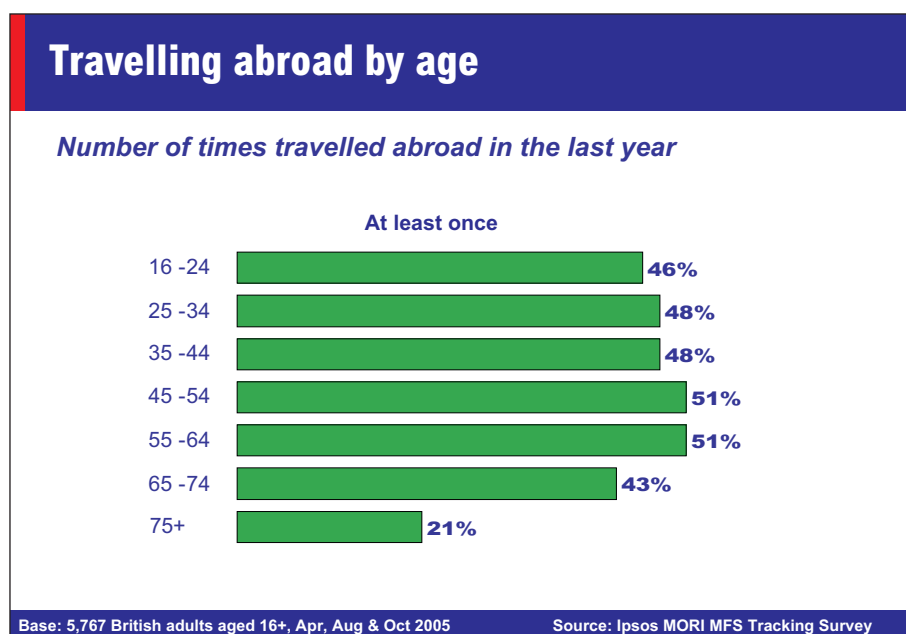
One of the key challenges facing public service providers and others in the years ahead will be how best to respond to the changing nature of British families and communities. Many of the themes discussed so far and developed further in the remainder of this report, reflect, at least in part, the changing nature of Britain's population. This has increased by nearly 8% over the past 35 years to reach 60.2 million¹⁰³ and looks set to rise further¹⁰⁴, one of the reasons why the Government has predicted a need for over four million new homes by 2016.

Britain will also be challenged by shifting demographics and, particularly, her ageing population. According to estimates, the number of people of state pensionable age in Britain will exceed the number of under-16s for the first time ever around 2011. This 'greying' of the British population was just one of a number of medium- to long-term demographic and lifestyle changes which became apparent during the Blair years. For example, the recent Social Trends report showed that people are staying at home longer and, last year, 58% of men and 39% of women aged 20-24 were still living at home.¹⁰⁵



The number of people living alone is also rising; the number of single person households more than doubled between 1971 and 2005, from three million to seven million¹⁰⁶. This is putting even greater pressure on infrastructure and increasing population density, although some argue that this has been over-played; for example, Simon Parker and David Goodhart have recently pointed out that “raising London's population density may not be as hard as it looks, because, despite its crowded tubes and roads, London is sparsely populated” in comparison to, for example, Barcelona and Paris.¹⁰⁷

In years to come, inter-generational understanding and respect is going to be increasingly important, especially given Britain's ageing population. In March 2007, 68% of Britons were of the view that the rights of pensioners are overlooked and our work for Help the Aged in 2005 suggested younger people's views of the needs of senior citizens are influenced by stereotypes. For example, 18-40 year olds feel that items like cars and credit cards are more essential to themselves than to the older generations.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, our data shows that older age groups are far from homogeneous. As the number of older people grows and health and wealth improves for many, it will become increasingly clear that there is no one group of 'older people' as, perhaps, tends to be assumed. There are already significant differences in attitudes and behaviour, depending on age and other factors – the chart below provides just one example.

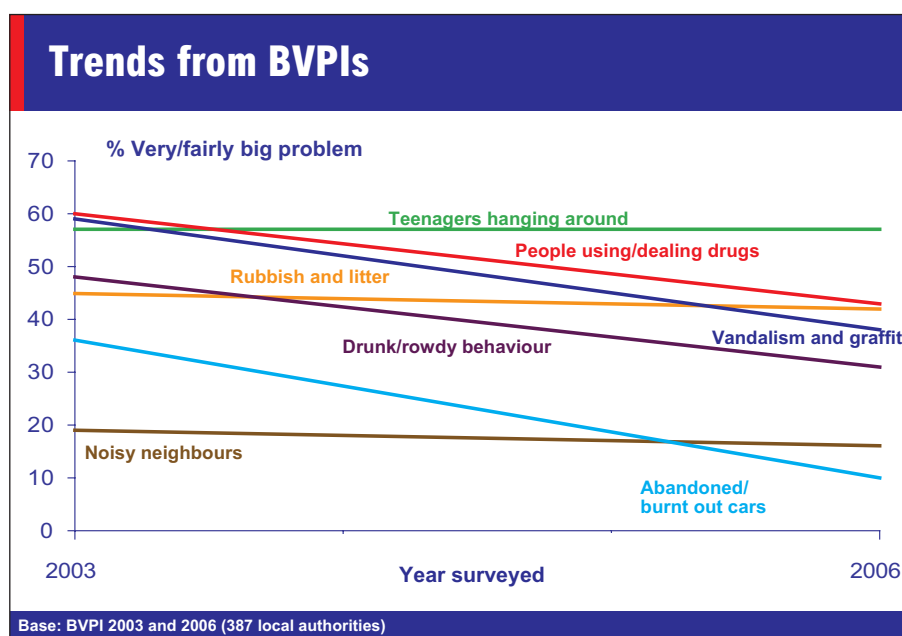


The way we live, who we live with, and when, is changing. The average age of marriage for women and for men is now 33.6 years and 36.2 years respectively¹⁰⁹ and mothers first give birth, on average, aged 27.¹¹⁰ By more than two-to-one, Britons believe that marriage is very important to bringing up children than not important (69% to 27%).¹¹¹ At the same time, data shows that more than a fifth of children live in lone parent families in the UK, double the figure in 1981 and, before its abolition, the Child Support Agency was handling 1.4 million cases.¹¹² It now costs more than £165,000, on average, to raise a child from birth to the age of 21¹¹³ and while MORI polls have show parents identifying necessary improvements in childcare provision, many believe that working mothers do not have sufficient access to affordable childcare.¹¹⁴

British parents are not short of advice and 59% say they either do, or would, find parenting information from friends and family to be useful, followed by schools and playgroups (40% identify these as sources, with information from Government departments towards the bottom of the list at 10%). Television programmes about parenting are now extremely popular with almost three-quarters (72%) of parents with children aged under 16 having watched at least one parenting programme. More than eight in ten parents who have watched such a programme found a technique helpful to them but, at the same time, a large minority think that the programmes sensationalise family problems for public entertainment.¹¹⁵

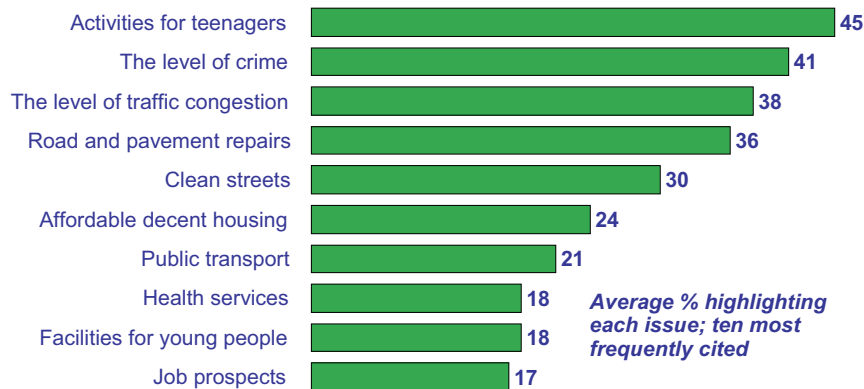
Children and young people have been a subject of particular debate and enquiry during the Blair years. Our semiotic research for The Camelot Foundation earlier this year¹¹⁶ identified a rhetoric of fear and failure surrounding British youth, examples being coverage of British teenagers being the 'worst' in Europe and February's Unicef report which put the UK bottom of a league table for child well-being among 21 industrialised countries (the Unicef analysis used forty indicators from 2000-2003 including poverty, family relationships, and health).¹¹⁷

Our surveys have also recorded growing concerns about the behaviour of young people and our analysis of local and national media coverage of young people in August 2004 showed 71% had a negative slant, while the British Crime Survey finds people significantly over-estimating the amount of crime young people are responsible for.¹¹⁸ Our survey and discussion group research also regularly finds "*teenagers hanging around on street corners*" to be a key concern across Britain. It is consistently the top worry in surveys on anti-social behaviour, and overall trends from the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) surveys conducted in every local authority in the country (over 500,000 interviews in total), shows that concern is not declining, unlike with many other aspects of Anti-Social Behaviour. Our work for the Nestlé Family Monitor shows that around seven in ten parents **and** young people think that the latter commit crimes because there is not enough for them to do – consequently, it is not surprising that activities for teenagers regularly comes out as the top action to improve local areas (shown in the second chart below).



Public priorities for improvement

Q Thinking about this local area, which of the things below, if any, do you think most need improving?

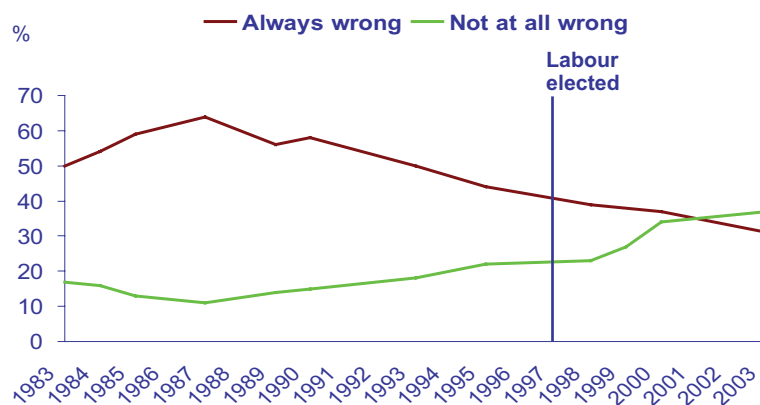


Base: Upper/Single tier authorities BVPI 2006 (149 local authorities)

We have also seen some significant shifts in views of particular communities and lifestyles during the past decade. For example, in an unpublished Ipsos MORI survey undertaken in March this year we found 68% of British adults believing that gay couples should be allowed to get married, with 25% taking the opposite view. This represents a quite remarkable shift in British public opinion since 2000: then, 46% supported gay marriage, 42% opposed it.¹¹⁹ This is also seen in more general acceptance of homosexuality; as shown in the chart below a majority thought that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex was always wrong up until the early 1990s, and it is only in the last few years that this view has been overtaken by the proportion who think it is not at all wrong. This softening in attitudes extends to gay adoption and reflects, in part, the Labour Government's abandonment of Section 28, the equalisation of the age of consent and, of course, the introduction of civil partnerships. The last decade has also seen more mainstream representation of homosexuality and openly gay people in the media and in politics (if not yet in sport).

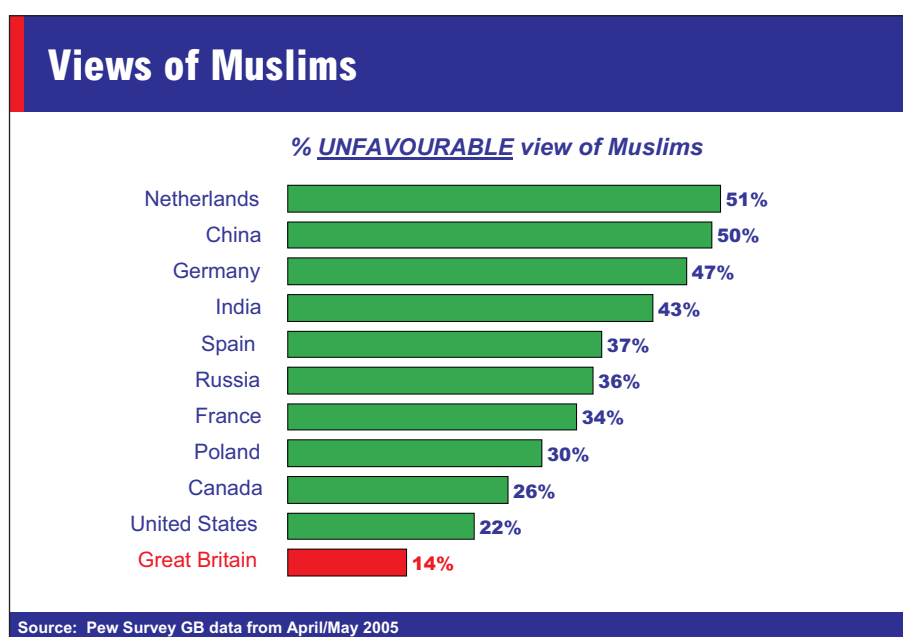
Marked increase in acceptance of homosexuality

Q What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex?



Source: British Social Attitudes (BSA) c.2,000 per wave

The British are also supportive of the concept of religious and ethnic tolerance and see further scope for enhancing respect of other groups. Seven in ten think that there should be more respect in Britain for the beliefs of Christian people and the same proportion believe the same about non-Christian faiths (72% and 70% respectively). Comparison with opinion in other European and some non-European countries, shows that Britons are less likely to have an unfavourable view of Muslims than those living elsewhere (the proportions with unfavourable views of a whole cultural group seen in some other countries is quite shocking as shown in the chart below, although note that the fieldwork in Britain was conducted just prior to the 7/7 bombings in London). Britons are also relatively supportive of living in racially mixed areas and opposed to the banning of wearing head scarves by Muslim women¹²⁰, while the qualitative research we do on the subject finds a strong sentiment of live and let live.

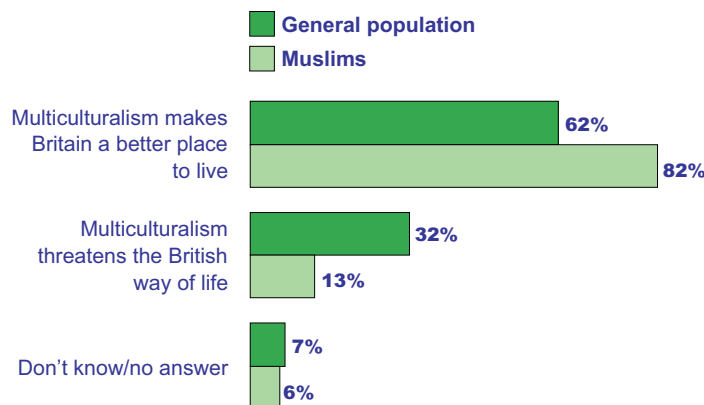


However, the position is less clear when we ask people directly about one of the key debates in recent times – the relative merit of multiculturalism versus integrationist policies. When asked “Given the threat from terrorism, should we ...Encourage ethnic communities to integrate more with the White British communities or encourage greater tolerance between different ethnic communities”, 45% chose the former and 50% the latter.¹²¹ By two-to-one people think that multiculturalism makes Britain a better place to live and two-thirds disagree that the policy is a mistake and ought to be abandoned.¹²²

Eight in ten (82%) Muslims in our multiculturalism poll for the BBC felt closer to the view that ‘multiculturalism makes Britain a better place to live’ than the view that ‘multiculturalism threatens the British way of life’, compared to six in ten (62%) of the general population. On the other hand, Muslims are more likely than other Britons to demand that Muslim clerics should preach in English and that immigrants should be made to learn English. However, they are less likely to agree that ‘people who come to live in Britain should adopt the values and traditions of British culture’ (29% of Muslims agree, compared to 58% nationally).¹²²

Most accept multiculturalism

Q Tell me which one of the statements is closest to your view.

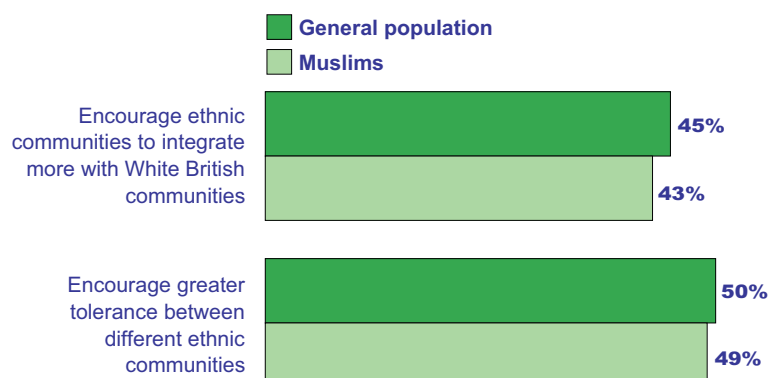


Base: 1,004 British adults aged 16+ and 204 Muslims aged 16+, 8-9 August 2005

Source: Ipsos MORI/BBC

Integration or tolerance?

Q Given the threat to Britain from terrorism, we should..



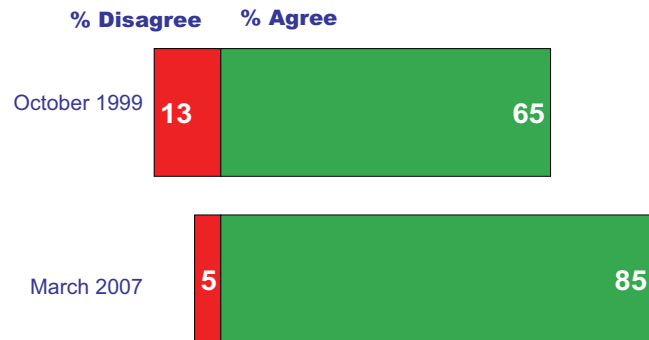
Base: 1,004 GB general public aged 16+ and 204 Muslims aged 16+, 8-9 August 2005

Source: Ipsos MORI/BBC

The backdrop to these findings is a growing distaste among Britons for political correctness. More than eight in ten, 85%, think that it has “gone too far”, an increase of twenty percentage points since a MORI survey in 1999 recorded 65% taking this view.¹²⁴ Our research finds people critical of the way in which political correctness stifles debate and discussion and many of our discussion group participants report feeling quite liberated and able to talk with freedom in front of strangers. Our surveys have found a third agreeing that “I am unwilling to say what I really think about immigration in case I am seen as a racist”¹²⁵ (underlining the need to interpret survey findings on these subjects carefully given the possibility of ‘social desirability bias’, where people say what they think puts them in the best light). During the controversy in 2006 over Jack Straw’s remarks about Muslim women wearing veils, the public thought that what the Minister said would damage community relations but that he was right to raise the issue.¹²⁶

Political correctness

Q Do you agree or disagree that... *“Political correctness has gone too far”*



Base: c.1,000 British adults each survey Source: Ipsos MORI

Political correctness has been attacked from many quarters and earlier in the Blair period some commentators suggested that 'lad culture', and subsequently its 'ladette' sister, represented a counter-trend. The word 'chav' has now entered the British vernacular and while this appears to be about more than class alone (and something to do with aspiration and fashion), it does perhaps serve notice of a fissure in British society relating to being poor.¹²⁷ Tellingly perhaps, our March 2007 poll found more Britons of the view that the rights of the poor are overlooked (62%) than think the same of immigrants (28%), ethnic minorities (30%) and religious people (31%)¹²⁸ and more than three times agree than disagree that Britain is now a better place for ethnic minorities than it was in 1997 (51% against 16%).¹²⁹

Labour's initiatives to improve community cohesion have gone hand-in-hand with programmes designed to improve local neighbourhoods. The Blair Government sought to initiate economic and social regeneration of inner cities, tough estates and other deprived areas. It did so via a number of initiatives and schemes too numerous to list here but including the establishment of urban regeneration companies, the New Deal for Communities, Housing Plus, neighbourhood management programmes and the creation of regional development agencies.¹³⁰ These were about providing a focus to change areas physically and economically but also about improving local capacity, social capital and support networks.

And there has certainly been considerable physical change in Britain's inner cities and other deprived areas, with results from the New Deal for Communities Household Study (a major study of 500 interviews in each of 39 of the most deprived areas conducted as part of the national evaluation of this flagship £2bn ten year programme) showing a significant upturn in residents' perceptions of local life. Between 2002 and 2006 there was a 24 percentage point increase in the proportion taking the view that the NDC has improved their area.¹³¹ During the same period, we found residents starting to notice the impact of local activity with significant declines in the proportions seeing abandoned/burnt out cars, run down/boarded up properties, vandalism/graffiti and litter/rubbish as problems (although the overall picture in these areas remained less positive than it did across England).

NDC programme 2002 – 2006: Indicators showing significant change			
	2002	2006	change
	(19,574) %	(15,792) %	% points +/-
Feel NDC has improved the area (great deal/fair amount)	33	57	+24
Abandoned/burnt out cars a problem in area	45	19	-26
Run down/boarded up properties a problem in area	40	25	-15
Vandalism/graffiti/deliberate damage to property a problem in area	63	48	-15
Litter and rubbish in the streets a problem in area	70	61	-9
Source: Ipsos MORI			

These are important findings because our qualitative research in NDC areas has pointed to how an area's physical appearance and feelings of community and crime can reinforce each other in vicious or virtuous circles. It is also clear that an area's physical appearance is seen as having the greatest influence on visitors' perceptions of the area, which in turn affects residents' own views (discussion of the importance of dealing with "*broken windows*" and other signal disorders became commonplace in the Blair years).¹³² Statistical analysis of our quantitative data also shows a close relationship between satisfaction with an area and its "visual quality". This highlights a key challenge in the years ahead – that is, building in areas which require high density housing where the preference is for traditional housing types and a more 'spacious' visual environment.¹³³

With this in mind, regional plans for developing huge numbers of houses right across areas such as the South East mean that there are significant challenges to be met but also opportunities to be seized. This is also the case in east London where the 2012 Olympics will see a huge swathe of the Lower Lea Valley regenerated. Our poll for BBC London in December 2006 found 81% of Londoners of the view that the Olympics *will* lead to regeneration and the same proportion think that it will create jobs, with these two things seen as the most convincing justifications for the amount the Games is costing.¹³³

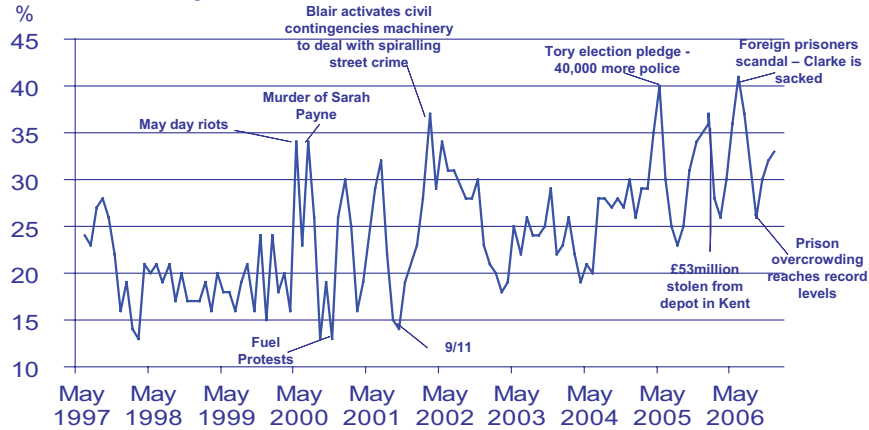
Back in 2006 more than two-thirds of Londoners supported London hosting the Games (69%) although nearly half disagreed that the team responsible for winning the bid for London had been open and honest about how much the games would cost (48%). Many more (79%) said they expected the actual cost of the games will be more than the 38p per week estimated by the Mayor but, despite this, the majority (62%) thought that the cost increase would make no difference to their support for London being the 2012 host.¹³⁵

Crime, security and identity

By 2006 the Blair Government spent more per head on law and order than any other country in the OECD.¹³⁶ Yet, crime steadfastly remained near the top of the public's priority list. At the end of 2006, right across England, ASB and activities for teenagers remained the number one local concern in the Government's BVPI surveys in every English local authority. Our surveys of residents across England show that crime is often the most frequently named problem in need of local improvement and is seen as important in making somewhere a good place to live (often even more so than good health services). It wasn't always like this, and current concerns about crime/law and order are high in historical terms. In October 1990, 12% thought the issue to be among the "most important issues" facing Britain, but by October 2006 it was at 30%.

Issues facing Britain: Crime/law and order

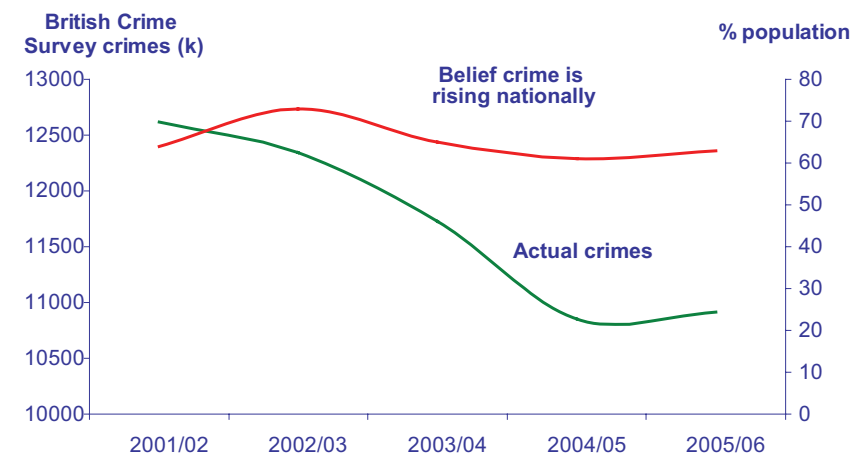
Q What do you see as the main/other important issues facing Britain today?



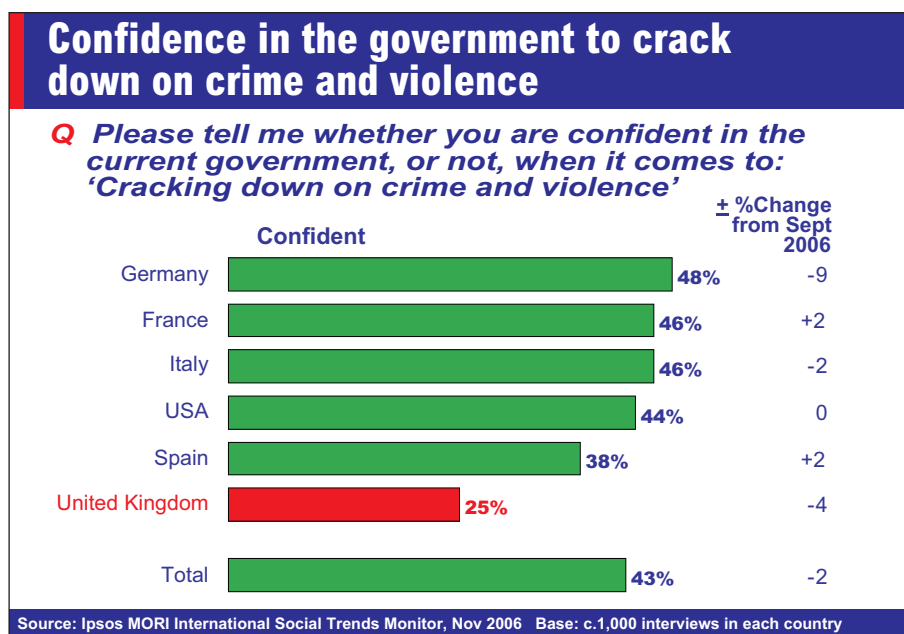
Base: c. 1,000/2,000 GB adults 18+ each survey Source: Ipsos MORI Political Monitor

Actual crime rates have fallen since 1997 but the majority do not believe the Government. Only one in five were willing to accept that crime was falling and less than half (43%) believed there are more police¹³⁷, and Brown takes over from Blair with confidence in the Government on crime lower in this country than in any of the five major countries included in Ipsos MORI's regular international tracking study (the other four are USA, France, Germany and Spain).

Gap between actual crime and the belief that crime is increasing



Source: Walker, A., Kershaw, C. and Nicholas, S. (2006) Crime in England and Wales 2005/06



As well as the gap between perceptions of overall trends and the actual reality, there is a further gap on crime issues (as there is with health services), where people are more positive about their local area than they feel about the country as a whole. The explanations are numerous including, for example, the fact that media coverage on crime is biased towards the negative and this is more likely to influence national rather than local opinion. Further, there has been shown to be a natural “hometown favouritism” where people tend to believe that those who live in their local area share values and behaviours.

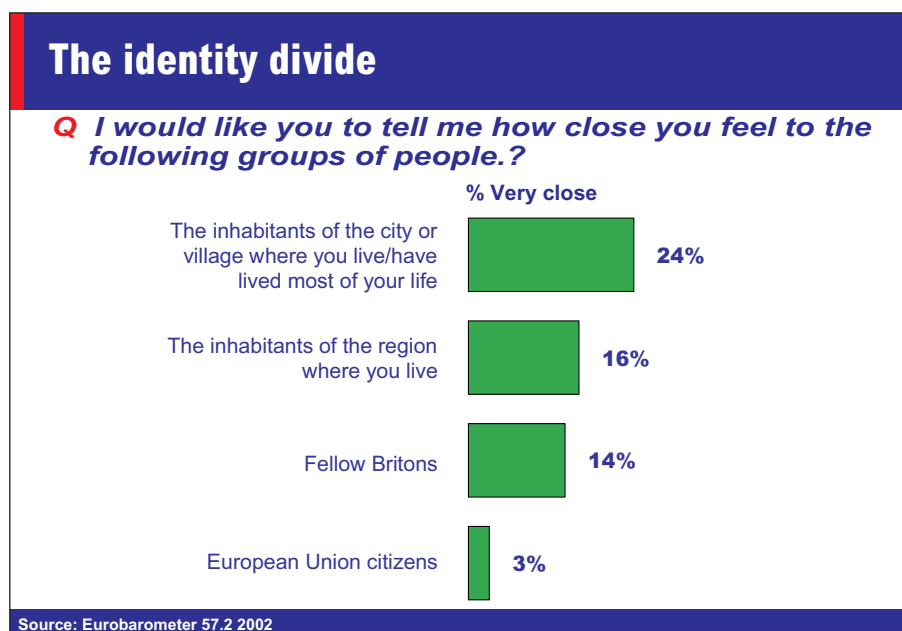
Reflecting public concerns about these issues, the Blair Government focused on behaviour and civility during its second term. This was badged as the “Respect agenda” and encompasses, for example, tackling low-level crimes and misdemeanours including littering, rowdiness and poor neighbourliness and these remain in sharp focus – for example, Social Trends recently reported a five-fold increase in rows over noisy neighbours.¹³⁸ A key element of rebuilding respect has been the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), which have won public backing. Four in five British adults support the issuing of ASBOs and this impressive level of support comes despite opinion being more divided on their effectiveness.¹³⁹ Our analysis suggests that some of this support is simply borne out of a desire to see something done and a signal that the authorities are making a stand for victims rather than perpetrators. Such findings further underline the importance of addressing perceptions as much as reality.

In addition to ongoing public concerns about crime, the attacks in New York in 2001 and London in 2005 put terrorism firmly on the public and political agenda in Britain. Our surveys showed that Londoners’ fears of further terrorist attacks did fade slowly over time but apprehension remained widespread. And the reaction to the authorities’ response was also mixed. In September 2005, 65% felt that they had seen more police patrols across the capital, but 46% felt that these made them feel less safe, not far below the 49% who felt more safe as a result. More generally though, Britons appear determined to get on with life despite the heightened terrorist threat: in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 we found only a tiny proportion of the public, a mere 3%, saying that war and terrorism will put them off going overseas on holiday.¹⁴⁰

Britishness has also become a major subject of inquiry and debate, partly due to devolution in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland during the Blair period but also in relation to protecting some sense of national identity. Leading politicians such as Gordon Brown have focussed on this topic, redefining a discussion which has typically been avoided by the political left. In 2005 David Blunkett defined Britishness:

*“...not on ethnic and exclusive grounds, but through shared values, our history of tolerance, openness and internationalism and our commitment to democracy and liberty, to civic duty and the public space.”*¹⁴¹

But such certainty over what it is to be British is not felt by most of the general public; in fact nationality is only a small part of what Britons identify with. In 2003, over half cited their family or marital status as the most important thing in describing who they were (55%), while just one in ten mentioned their nationality (9%) (occupation and gender were just as important – 12% and 10% respectively).¹⁴² A range of surveys actually suggest that people associate less with “Britain” or “Europe” and more with their local area and its people, as shown by the graphic below.



This identity divide between the local and national/regional may explain the lack of connection many people have with their country. In 2003, just a third of Britons said they feel very close to Britain (33%)¹⁴³ and only Germans felt less attached to their nation. The relative lack of association British people feel seems not only to be at the national level: they are the least likely of the major European populations to feel close to people at all geographic levels.¹⁴³ The issue, therefore, is perhaps less about patriotism and more about community and belonging.

Our qualitative research shows that, to many people, Britishness is a poorly-defined concept. This is recognised by a range of politicians, and various suggestions have been put forward to help galvanise it, including, for example, recent proposals to bring in a ‘Britain Day’ – an idea included in a recent pamphlet by [then] Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne:

*“What we hold in common has tended to be implicit in Britain... But today, more than at any time since the Second World War, we need a more vigorous debate about what it is that holds us together.”*¹⁴⁵

Talking about the idea on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Ruth Kelly stressed the local focus of the day:

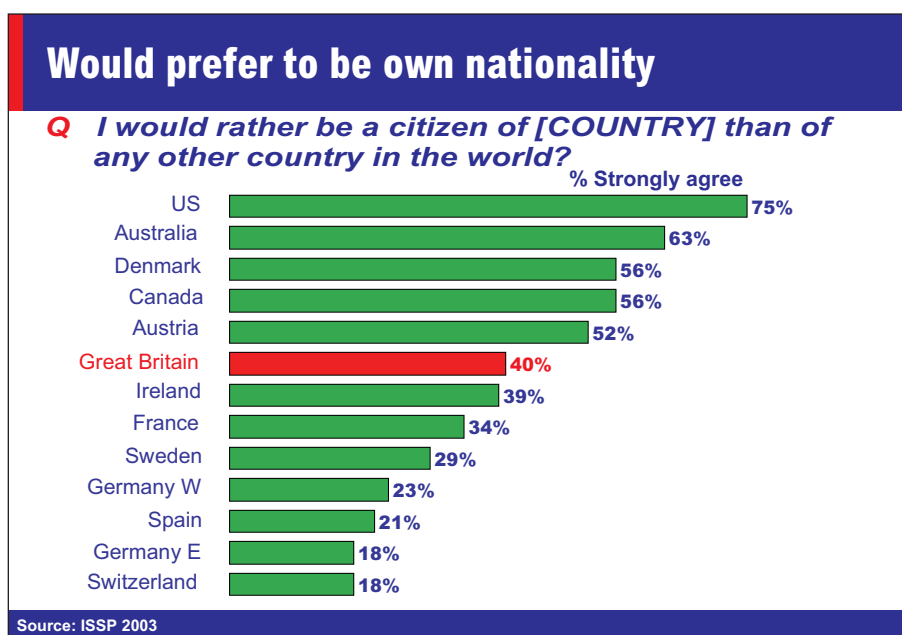
*"It might be, for instance, that local areas come together, they decide for themselves about the contribution that they might make. And then people who live in that area would have the opportunity to get involved in local volunteering, local service to their neighbours, and to celebrate their sense of being a citizen of the country."*¹⁴⁶

Research from the Eurobarometer surveys shows that there is little consensus among British people over what makes them feel British; it is not culture, customs and traditions, language, ancestry, national pride or a national character. It certainly is not about ethnicity, as only 7% of people agreed in 2006 that "to be truly British you have to be White" (it was 9% in 2002).¹⁴⁸

Emerging from this vagueness over Britishness is a decline in national pride. Twenty years ago, a majority of people felt very proud of being British (55%) but by 2004 the proportion had dropped to two in five.¹⁴⁹ An important factor which is affecting people's national identity (or lack of it) is a growing association with the individual British nations rather than Britain as a whole. By looking at longer-term trends, we see that the proportion of Britons considering themselves as British (rather than English, Scottish or Welsh) has been falling in the last two decades but this trend is most pronounced among the English.¹⁵⁰

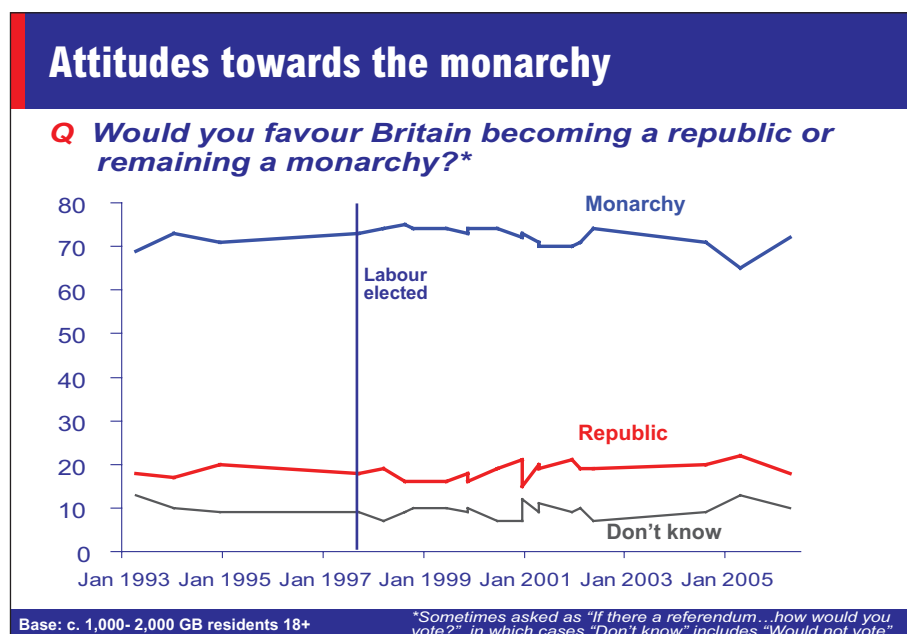
There are, of course, differences in views of Britishness between different social groups. Our research among young people for the Camelot Foundation found that the English are far less likely to think their English identity is more important than their British identity, than young Scots or Welsh people (38% among English people, compared with 60% in Wales and 85% in Scotland), and ethnic identities have far more emotional resonance with black and Asian young people.¹⁵¹ What our findings for Camelot boiled down to was that, as an agent of social cohesion, young people are unable to see how Britishness as a shared social identity can work, taking into consideration multiple identities and ethnic, religious, social and cultural differences between communities.

It is only when British people compare their country to the rest of the world that national pride and patriotism resurfaces. Two in five (40%) strongly agreed in 2003 that they would rather be a citizen of Great Britain than any other country – a proportion higher than most other European nations, as shown in the chart below.



Taking this further, a third of British people think things would be better if other nationalities were like them, which compares to less than one in five in countries like Sweden and France.¹⁵² Other Ipsos MORI research further reveals a competitive streak among British people when comparing themselves to the rest of the world. A study in 2006 showed that a large majority of the public thinks that many of our institutions – the Army, police, the NHS and even our media – are the best in the world. And although it may not be a key identity for modern Britain, three in five agree they are proud of the British monarchy (61%).¹⁵³

While conceptions of Britishness may be in a state of flux, public attitudes towards several British institutions changed little over the Blair years. Despite the Kelly Affair, public confidence in the BBC changed little and even after dramatic events surrounding the death of Diana, public attitudes to the monarchic principle remained virtually the same: apart from a small wobble in the aftermath of her death, only 20% of people wanted a republic in 2006, the same as in 1986.

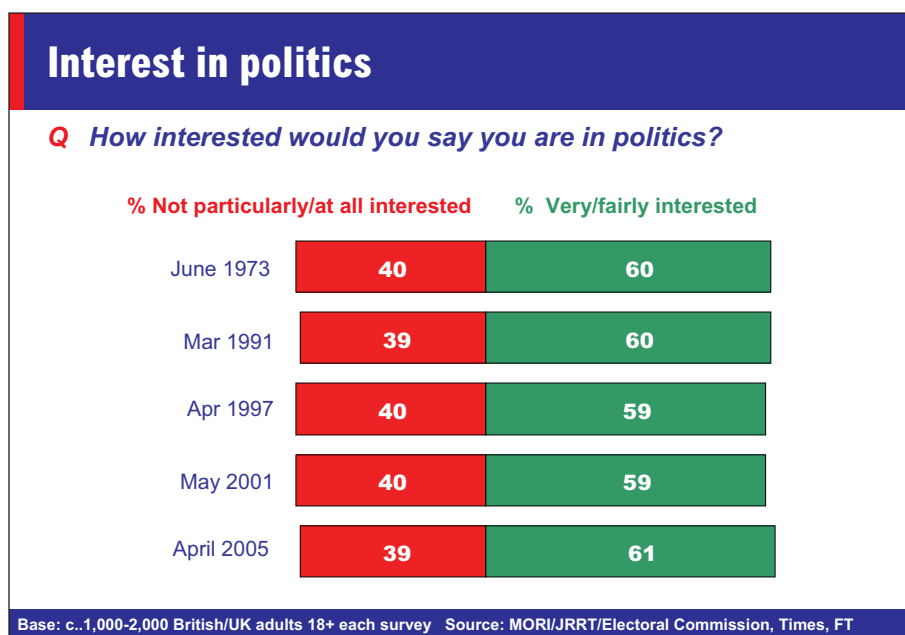


'Spin' and the trust deficit

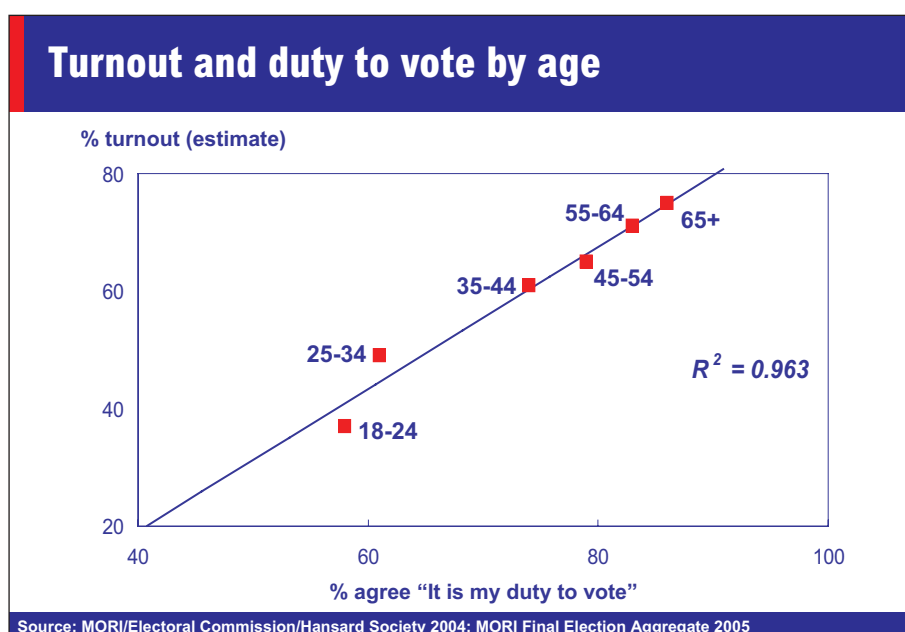
While Labour embarked on a programme of constitutional reform in 1997 and placed greater emphasis on involving people in decision-making, the party presided over a period during which 'trust' and 'apathy' became pre-occupations of the political classes (if not the wider population). Four million fewer electors voted at the 2005 general election than did so in 1997. Turnout was 59.4% in 2001, down from 71.4% in 1997, and this was little-bettered four years later when 61.3% voted, (Labour won with the lowest share of the electorate in the post-war period). At the same time, and in contrast to the situation in the United States as evidenced by Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* analysis, we have found little evidence of declining civic participation in Britain in other respects. Our "Socio-Political Activism" trends show little change except in those areas most closely identified with party politics, which is very much a minority activity in Britain.¹⁵⁴

One thing low turnouts are not a product of is 'apathy', a phrase often used in the media but one our research suggests is an over-simplification. MORI surveys at the start of the 2005 general election campaign found that the declared level of interest in politics in Britain

was as high as it has ever been. A better explanation for falling turnouts seems to be the extent to which political parties are (or are not) acting as effective 'mobilising agencies'.¹⁵⁵ Survey evidence shows that personal contact between party campaigners and voters is still one of the strongest predictors of turnout¹⁵⁶ but this may simply be an option that was no longer available to the campaign planners except on a much smaller and more concentrated scale with campaigns fought hard in marginal seats and voters elsewhere possibly feeling neglected.

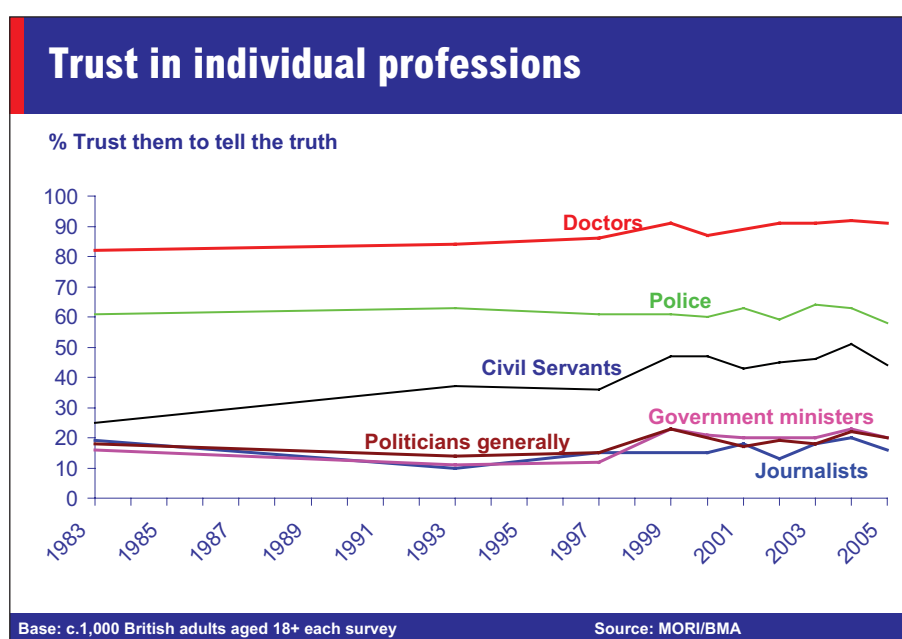


Political parties are currently held in low regard. Britons are more than seven times as likely to have donated money to a charity or campaigning organisation than to a political party,¹⁵⁷ and at the 2005 election we found many more people discouraging than encouraging others to vote for each of the three main political parties.¹⁵⁸ As well as this "negative advocacy", another factor contributing to lower electoral participation is the lower acceptance among young Britons that "It is my duty to vote". Our surveys have found a strong correlation between the proportion of each age group agreeing with the proposition and their eventual turnout.



Another telling finding from the work we have done for the Electoral Commission is that Parliament and the Prime Minister come well behind the media, local councils and business when people are asked who has most impact on their everyday lives.¹⁵⁹ Only a third believe that “getting involved in politics works” and think that the “present system of governing works well” (although, historically, this is not unusual).¹⁶⁰

Some commentators have attributed disengagement to a lack of trust in the Government and the political classes more generally. Our regular surveys for the British Medical Association over the years have found that while nine in ten Britons say they would generally trust doctors to tell the truth, the figure is one in five or lower for government ministers and politicians generally.¹⁶¹ While this is a perennial problem, recent events including the controversial invasion of Iraq have probably worsened matters although, as the chart below shows, there is no new crisis of trust (and ratings of civil servants have actually improved in recent years).



Similarly, while our 2005 study found no evidence of a general crisis of trust of government information, there have been significant declines in some important facets of this. The public's deepest concerns tend to be not over the accuracy or objectivity of Government statistics but over their manipulation by politicians and the media.¹⁶² More generally, one of the many criticisms of Blair's Government was that it was pre-occupied with the 'packaging of politics'¹⁶³ otherwise known as "spin".

Indeed, the word "spin" has become indelibly associated with Blair, and in 2007 even Peter Mandelson confessed that presentation took precedence over policy at times.¹⁶⁴ Quotes such as the one below from MORI's qualitative research over this period suggest how suspicious the public have become about politics and 'political communication', and how difficult it will be for future Prime Ministers to rebuild public trust in government at a time when statistics about the performance of public services and achievement against targets has become so contested:

*"Everything – there's spin on it. Even when you don't think it has got spin, it's got spin on it."*¹⁶⁵

Blair's own trust ratings tumbled during his time in office: in October 2000 46% of Britons rated him as trustworthy but by September 2006 the figure was 29%. The long-term impact on public opinion in general and trust in particular of the Iraq war (covered in detail in our complementary report *Blair's Britain: the political legacy*) and the ongoing 'cash for coronets' affair is hard to pinpoint but whereas nearly half of people (48%) in 1998 thought that the Government was upholding high standards in public life, this fell to 35% at the time of Blair's resignation announcement – not a total collapse, but a significant fall.¹⁶⁶

Despite this, the Government's 'voice' agenda seems, on face value, to be soundly based. Our work for the Electoral Commission/the Hansard Society has found the public eager to be involved in political decision-making and eager to be listened to. Only a quarter (27%) believe that they currently have a say in how the country is run and many more want to have a say (68%).¹⁶⁷ Similarly, our qualitative research has found a desire for greater interactivity, dialogue and responsiveness: people now expect these from public service providers as well as private producers and utilities. Reflecting this, the Government has put in place a number of mechanisms for central and local authorities and agencies to canvass user satisfaction and public priorities. In 2003 the Labour Party used the 'Big Conversation' to inform policy and Ipsos MORI ran a series of workshops followed by a Citizen's Summit at No. 10 Downing Street earlier this year to feed into the Government's policy review.

Although the public say they want to be involved, there is, however, often a gap between what they say they might be willing to do and what they have actually done, hence Gerry Stoker's observation that "people are more demanding and more apathetic".¹⁶⁸ The 2005 Citizenship Survey, conducted for the Department for Communities and Local Government, found that only 7% take part in civic renewal activities at least once a month, defined as decision-making or consultation about local issues or services and engagement in democratic processes (such as signing a petition).¹⁶⁸

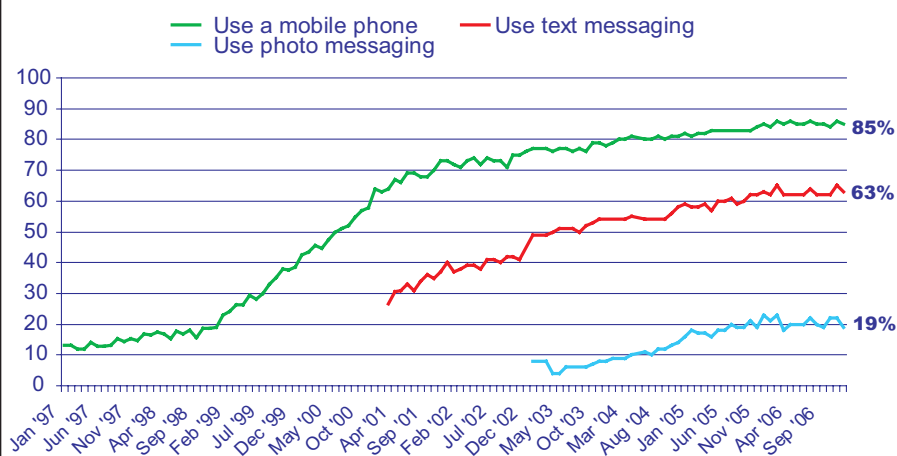
The challenges facing Government and public bodies in this area are also underlined by our work in regeneration areas (many regeneration schemes are based heavily on resident empowerment). This points to the dangers of 'consultation fatigue' particularly in the absence of tangible outcomes and policy-makers/deliverers keeping promises. Paul Skidmore has recently argued for civic and democratic renewal based on a "1% solution" recognising that relatively few of us choose to actively participate and suggesting that participation mechanisms could be usefully focused on a small core of committed people.¹⁷⁰

Technology and media

One of the most striking features of British life over the past decade has been the continuing pace of technological change. Bill Gates' view that "...the 1990s [will be about] reengineering, the 2000s will be about velocity"¹⁷¹ is proving to be prophetic. When Mrs. Thatcher came to power in 1979 Britain was undergoing rapid de-industrialisation with many sociological implications (for example, by 2005 54% of British adults had middle class occupations, up from 33% in 1979) while one of the greatest changes, and challenges, Gordon Brown and his successors will face is technological advancement. It will be vital to cope with the knock-on effects this will have on lifestyles, social networks and the economy.

Looking back, it is perhaps easy to forget that in 1997 the mobile phone was something of a novelty. So too was the internet with access confined to a negligible number of business people. Now, mobile phones are part of nearly everybody's lives and the world wide web has come of age: 85% of British adults use a mobile phone and 63% have internet access at home or at work.¹⁷²

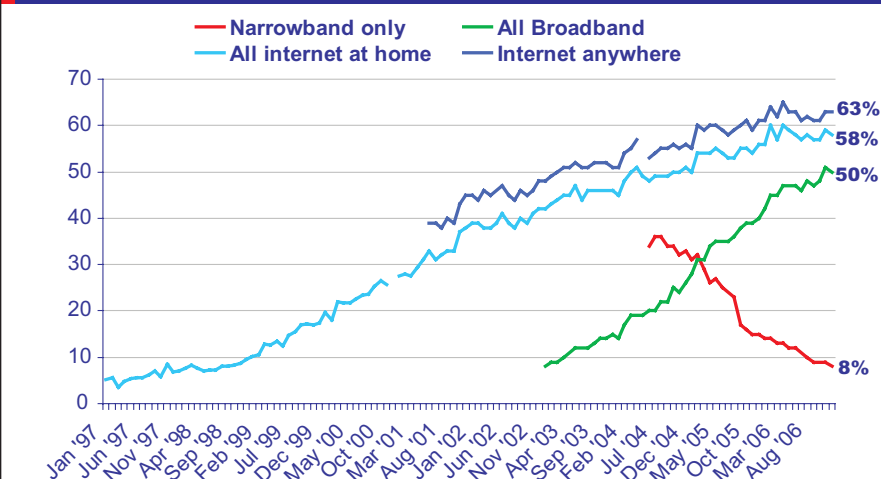
Mobile telephony trends



Ipsos MORI Technology Tracker January 1997-December 2006

Base: c.4,000 interviews per month

Data technology trends



Ipsos MORI Technology Tracker January 1997-December 2006 Base: c.4,000 interviews per month

Tony Blair's Government embraced much of this technology as offering improvements in public services, greater power to ordinary people and faster, easier access to public services (these were to be 'e-enabled' by 2006). As part of its modernisation of Britain, the Government spent millions on projects to give all school children internet access, to improve government websites and to ensure all public services were accessible either online or by phone. In one sense this investment had little impact on user satisfaction, as expectations outstripped delivery; over the six years from 1998 to 2004 our data showed that the proportion of the public saying public services failed to meet their expectations increased from 40% to 51%, but this obscures the scale of the change in terms of accessibility to services.

Looking beyond public services, the internet has also transformed the way we work and the way we live, what (and how) we buy and how we do business. During 2004-5 the iPod became one of the must-have accessories and the rapid rise in downloading music has led to significant changes in the music industry. It has been estimated that a new blog is created every minute and sites like Facebook, MySpace and YouTube are used by millions of ordinary people but, tellingly, also by politicians, celebrities and advertisers with the latter now targeting the virtual reality game 'Second Life' and its 'population' of six million.¹⁷³ There are now new public spaces for people to 'meet' and to showcase their own generated output (the era of "citizen journalism") with the \$1.65billion purchase of YouTube by Google last year, heralding, for some, "the future of television".¹⁷⁴

The impact of rising internet penetration will be magnified by a more recent and even more sudden development, the over-taking of dial-up internet connection by broadband connection. This is already affecting the way in which the internet is used and the purposes for which it is practical to use it, such as downloading video clips. Our latest figures have broadband outstripping narrowband by two-to-one, the reverse of the situation in early 2004¹⁷⁵ and this is important because our research has found broadband users more likely than narrowband users to buy products online¹⁷⁶ Equally as startling has been the take-up of digital television. No longer serving a niche market, and with analogue scheduled to be switched-off in 2012, digital TV is now very much in the mainstream.

Some shifts have been frighteningly quick. Between 2002 and 2004 we found a trebling in the proportion of mobile phone users who thought of their mobile as their main phone. Phone and SMS technology is being integrated with PC technology in smaller and smaller formats. The 'Blackberry', bluetooth and remote accessing of emails has brought some reality to the long-used phrase 'the mobile office' as well as enhancing the scope for the 'always on' society.

On face value, it would appear that the market for mobile phones may have reached saturation point. Britain now has more mobile phones than people¹⁷⁷ and, according to our Technology Tracker, 97% of 15-34 year olds use one. Our research has, however, also identified some groups who have either resisted or been left behind by the rise in internet and mobile technology: 44% of those aged 65+ do not use a mobile compared to 15% among the general population. Internet access also seems to be reaching a ceiling, shown in the previous chart, and levels of internet access differ not only by age, but also by gender, region and social class. More importantly, these factors interact – so that, for example, only 8% of those aged 65+ in the lowest social classes have access, as shown in the following table.

This digital divide has important consequences for policy-makers but is also a matter of concern for the people we speak to. Participants in our qualitative research often express concerns about how the adoption of new technology impacts on vulnerable users and is leaving some behind. This is also important because the development of 'web 2.0' technology opens up new opportunities for dialogue between Government and citizens. Since November 2006, internet users have been able to create and sign petitions on the Downing Street website. The road pricing petition, launched by Peter Roberts an accounts manager from Shropshire and attracting 1.8 million signatories, demonstrates both the huge potential and the pitfalls for the Government seeking to exploit this technology to open new communications channels with citizens.

Only six in ten still have internet access: penetration is slowing

% with internet access at home or at work, 4th quarter 2006

%	All	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
All	62 ⁺²	74 ⁺¹	72 ⁺¹	78 ⁺⁴	72 ⁺²	59 ⁺⁵	24 ⁺¹
AB	79 ⁺¹	89 ⁻⁴	88 ⁻⁴	93 ⁺³	91 ⁺⁴	80 ⁺²	42 ⁺⁰
C1	73 ⁺³	85 ⁺¹	85 ⁺¹	86 ⁺²	81 ⁺³	70 ⁺⁹	27 ⁺¹
C2	58 ⁺³	74 ⁺⁴	65 ⁺²	74 ⁺⁵	67 ⁺⁵	44 ⁺²	18 ⁺²
DE	37 ⁺¹	55 ⁻¹	45 ⁺⁴	52 ⁺⁷	38 ⁺⁸	29 ⁺¹	8 ⁺¹

Base: c. 10,000 GB adults 15+, Oct-Dec 2006 (c. 12,000 GB adults 15+, Jan-Mar 2005) Source: Ipsos MORI Monthly Technology Tracker?

The British remain avid watchers of television, so much so that there has been some media commentary about the idea of introducing Recommended Daily Amounts (RDAs) of viewing for children.¹⁷⁸ Now, more than half of children under the age of three have a TV in their bedrooms¹⁷⁹ and according to the 2000 UK Time Use Survey, British adults spend nearly 20 hours a week, or just under 3 hours a day, watching television with around half of viewing done in the presence or the company of other household members.¹⁸⁰ More recently, there is some evidence that the availability of video and television online is starting to eat into actual TV viewing time. An ICM survey of 2,070 people for the BBC in November 2006 found that 43% of Britons who watch video from the internet or on a mobile device at least once a week said they watched less 'normal' TV as a result.¹⁸¹

Sport, celebrity and other pastimes

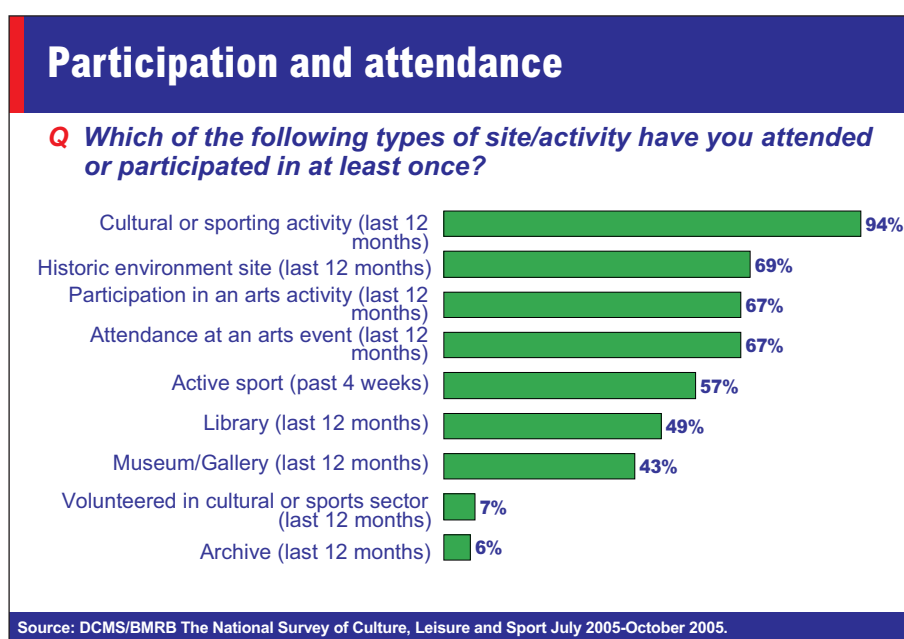
Sport continues to be a large part of British life and culture (the Queen's alleged support for Arsenal was front page news in The Sun in May 2007). Football has always been big in Britain and our Sports Tracker found it to be the most popular sport among British adults in 2004. Surprisingly though given the success of the Premier League and rising attendances throughout most of the 1990s, interest levels in football have not increased according to our polls. Further, as Britain's national sport has become more commercial, some have criticised it for being inaccessible.¹⁸² Average ticket prices have increased (by over 600% since 1989-90) as has the average age of spectators with under-24s now accounting for only 9% of crowds. Long-term trends are hard to come by but, according to Leicester University's Sir Norman Chester Centre, 17% of fans at Arsenal were aged 16-20 in season 1992.¹⁸³

Even if all of those interested in football aren't able to watch their favourite teams and players in the flesh, there is always the pub, and more people now watch football in the pub than at home.¹⁸⁴ England reached two World Cup quarter-finals during the Blair period and it was estimated that, for the England v Argentina game at the Japan/South Korea tournament in 2002 (where kick-offs were often 6.30 a.m. GMT), 20% of England's workforce, some 5 million people, took the day off with a further 2.5 million pulling a "sickie", causing an estimated loss of £1.3 billion in productivity.¹⁸⁵ Playing football still remains a largely male preserve

(although organised women's football grew considerably during the Blair years) and, more generally, our data shows that a higher proportion of men are involved in active sports than women (74% against 65%). Non-participation increases with age – 66% of 45-64 year olds participate in sport compared to 90% of 16-24 year olds – and this is especially pronounced among women; in April 2006 45% of women aged 35 or over were non-participants compared to 31% among men.¹⁸⁶

Apart from sport, the British public continue to enjoy a wide variety of out-of-home leisure activities. Freeview, DVDs and home cinema systems have not halted the rise of cinema-going which is the most popular out-of-home leisure activity excluding meals out and gardening. According to our surveys, almost twice as many people visit the cinema as in 1989 and the numbers have risen since the mid-1990s. The Labour Government introduced free entry to the national museums in 2002 and this led to a significant upsurge in attendance, followed by a dip and subsequent rise. As is often the case though, these headline figures mask differences: those from AB social groups (managers and professionals) remain three times as likely as other groups to have visited a museum or gallery in the preceding twelve months.¹⁸⁷

More generally the consumption of arts, books and film all rose during 1997-2007. While still a minority activity, more Britons say they have been to the theatre than been to a live sports match. Theatre-going was unaffected by the 7/7 bombings in London with a record 12,318,625 people attending the theatre in 2005.¹⁸⁸



As mentioned earlier, celebrity has also become something of a preoccupation in Britain in recent years. There has been a boom in celebrity, gossip-based magazines with annual sales in 2006 hitting the £1bn mark for the first time.¹⁸⁹ For the most part, this represented a continuation of a well established trend – the British media have long since covered the lives, loves and lifestyles of the famous – but, arguably, the last decade has seen a democratisation of celebrity particularly as a result of the emergence of the reality TV show. Channel 4's 'Big Brother' first came onto our screens in the summer of 2000 and quickly caught the public's imagination; around sixteen million votes were cast throughout the second series shown in 2001.

The popularity of the show led to a string of reality TV shows, many of them involving celebrity contestants but also giving ordinary members of the public the chance to take part either as contestants, viewers or decision-makers (the third series of *Celebrity Big Brother* was won by an ordinary member of the public, Chantelle Houghton, posing as a celebrity which, in turn, made her into a celebrity). According to Ellis Cashmore, reality television “strikes a blow for self-improvement and self-development”¹⁹⁰ and the interactive, ‘democratic’ nature of the format drew some contrast with the nature of Parliamentary politics.¹⁹¹

Celebrity has had an important political dimension too. Even before his 1997 election win, Blair sought to identify with the icons of Britain’s resurgent ‘Britpop’ scene and during the ‘Cool Britannia’ period, Oasis declared their full support of Tony Blair, a story which was picked up in the press (with the headline ‘What’s the story? Don’t vote Tory’). At the same time, Paul Conway, Managing Director of Virgin Records said of Blair “*here is a person of our generation who understands us...it’s like when Kennedy dawned on the politics of America*”.¹⁹² More recently, a number of celebrities have been closely involved with political campaigns including Jaime Oliver (school meals) Bono and Bob Geldof (Live8), Miss Dynamite (gun crime and voting), Geri Halliwell (the Labour Party), Damon Albarn (Ken Livingstone’s mayoral campaign), Bianca Jagger (animal welfare) and Annie Lennox (anti-Trident).

Many political and voluntary organisations, as well as private companies, have relied on celebrities to support campaigns directed at young people in particular. However, a MORI poll in 2003 found that declared trust in celebrities among younger age groups was actually relatively low. Only 16% of young people aged between 11 and 18 said they would trust a celebrity to tell them the truth, compared to 86% who would trust doctors, and 76% who would trust the police. Politicians, at 18%, were slightly more likely than celebrities to be regarded as trustworthy.¹⁹³

Summary: Britain then and now

In this chapter we have reviewed a very wide range of cultural and social themes and trends which emerged in Britain during the ten year premiership of Tony Blair. The thematic portraits provided are, inevitably, drawn from a fraction of the evidence-base now at the disposal of those trying to make sense of Britain. Taken together, however, they do provide those involved in shaping public policy with valuable insights into the main thrusts and tropes of British cultural and society during the period 1997 to 2007.

As we have shown, there have been some quite profound changes in British attitudes and behaviour. The accelerative change in technology, for example, has not only changed what Britons own but how they interact as citizens and consumers with each other and within the commercial, social and political spheres. At the same time, however, some things have changed subtly, if at all, despite what has happened over the past decade – for example, Britons steadfastly support the monarchic principle.

More often than not our research reveals shades of grey in public opinion, especially on issues and debates which are new or unfamiliar to people and this can make research a wonderfully frustrating ally to policy makers. Mindful of this, our final chapter seeks to draw together the ideas and opinions held by the British into some kind of cohesive framework via six themes and oppositions.

Firstly though, there is one key dimension to public opinion worthy of particular attention – public concerns about Britain’s social “direction of travel”. Our poll in May 2007 found six in ten, 60%, of the view that Britain is getting worse as a place to live, more than four times

the proportion thinking it is getting better (14%).¹⁹⁴ This represents a fifteen percentage point negative swing since we last asked the question in 1998, a little over a year into Labour's term of office and in June 53% of Britons were of the view that the country is headed in the wrong direction, nearly twice the 28% who think it is on the right track.¹⁹⁵ So, quite apart from what the metrics, the indicators and the targets say, the majority think Britain is going backwards rather than forwards in social terms.

Our polling has also shown that the Blair Government is better judged by the public on the good-for-you-personally scale than on the good-for-the-country scale. Shortly after Tony Blair announced his decision to resign, we asked the British public to assess his Government's record – has it been good or bad for the country, and good or bad for themselves? We found opinion equally split on the first question: 46% think that ten years of Blair's government have been good for the country and 43% that it has been bad (11% have no opinion). When asked about the effect on them personally, 46% think that the Blair effect has been positive, but this time only 35% feel it has been negative (with 19% having no opinion).

These findings chime with those presented earlier which show a relatively optimistic view about personal situations and local public services set against more pessimistic perceptions of the national picture (often referred to as the 'perception gap') as well as perhaps often unrealistically high expectations of what public services can deliver.

This chapter has helped us describe the prevailing social and cultural landscape in contemporary Britain. The next goes further, summarising the key themes in a structural framework before considering ways policy-makers can shape the public agenda on the key challenges of the coming years.

4

Brown's Britain:
now and next

From understanding to action: shaping the public agenda

The previous chapters have described and analysed the shifting patterns of British public opinion over the past ten years of the Blair Government. The picture that emerges is, inevitably, a partial one. Attitudes and values have many facets, they shift in complex ways and are continually changing.

This chapter draws this varying, rich, and sometimes confusing wealth of detail into a cohesive framework which explains the characteristic ways Britons think about themselves, society and the issues of the day. This will be essential for anyone seeking to change the way Britons think or behave, through social marketing or legislation.

We have identified and mapped the underlying themes which run beneath many of the opinions and attitudes described in Chapter 3. These reflect the key tensions of British society, at the end of the Blair era and the beginning of the Brown period. While surface expressions of feeling may move quickly, the basic conflicts, dilemmas and drives that shape British society remain relatively constant.

This chapter, describes the prevailing zeitgeist, but goes further, considering ways policymakers can shape the public agenda on the key challenges of the coming years. We put forward **six themes** which encompass the language and ideas we use to think about enduring human problems, as they are set in our own social and cultural context. These are the 2007 British versions of some eternal conflicts and paradoxes of human societies. Reflecting on the labels and language we use for these problems helps us understand what potential doors are open for policymakers to change the public mood on key issues.

Describing culture through opposites

Our six themes relate to the way Britons conceive of themselves, the way they interpret their activities, the roles they assign to their government, the role they perceive they themselves play in society, Britain's role in the world and the public agenda on the issues of the day.

They will not be news to many. They are the assumptions about culture now recognised by most in Britain, particularly the media, and we expect they will also ring true for readers of this report. Interestingly, the media and cultural climate of the last ten years has made the public particularly aware of their own language, ideas and norms. We are arguably more alive to the assumptions which make up mass British culture today than we were at the start of Blair's premiership.

The six themes do not form a wholly comprehensive schema of British culture, but they do give us a good start when thinking about the norms and assumptions likely to stock the head of the average Briton. They are important for policy-makers to understand since they will act as filters, lenses through which new ideas or policies might be viewed, and standards against which they may be judged.

Each of our themes is presented as a pair of opposites. This approach is based on a premise drawn from **semiotic** analysis and **structuralism** that we naturally conceive of ideas in pairs, and evoking one idea forces us to think of the direct opposite which takes its place in the culture. It is helpful to think about public opinion in terms of oppositions because it helps us understand the often contradictory opinions that individuals and audiences can hold.

It is important to point out, however, that we are not suggesting that the future will mean the country “choosing” one or the other opposition as a way of thinking about all sorts of problems and policies. Rather, currently, each one of these contradictory ideas are available to the public whenever they conceptualise aspects of life in Britain today, and are likely to be available for a long time to come. They represent the parameters within which people manoeuvre, as their attitudes and behaviours consolidate or change.

Our **six themes** are:

- **Parent and children v Adult-to-adult**
- **Individual v Community**
- **Having it all v Tough choices**
- **Consumers v Citizens**
- **Small club v Big tent**
- **Turned-off v Clued-up**

In part, these themes seem familiar because they rehearse two of the central tensions of society. One is the tension between different **roles** individuals may adopt – individual or collective approaches (are we more inward looking, about “Me”, or outward looking, about “Us”?). This tension is covered in the first three oppositions. The other is the tension in **behaviour** – the choice between passive and active behaviours (shaping what happens or waiting for others to take the lead), covered in the second three oppositions.

After exploring the themes in more detail, we go on to combine and map them as a way of considering some actual policy questions.

1. Parents and children v Adult-to-adult

This theme is in evidence whenever Britons think about themselves and those who govern them. The programme of research we did for the Cabinet Office and the Department for Constitutional Affairs in 2004¹⁹⁶ suggests that the Government is seen to take a controlling **parental** mode, with citizens often responding in a recalcitrant and extreme way. We described the citizen-government relationship as akin to that of a step-parent and a teenager, with sulky citizens feeling they should have a say, but still being treated in a **child-like** way. Our work for the Camelot Foundation on young people’s conception of Britishness also identifies strands within popular culture which rehearse the idea of the citizen as a child and the state as a parent, again, often in a negative way.

However, though the public do not enjoy being treated as children, other ideas and opinions emerged during the Blair years which suggest that they became used to it and, in some circumstances, required it. Expectations of the reach and efficacy of Government grew higher and higher, and a demand emerged for Government ownership and action in all areas of life from ‘cradle to grave’, encompassing parenting, health, education, work, pension provision etc. There is now a higher expectation than ever that the Government should manage the risks facing us, taking the burden of responsibility in the way a parent would for their child.

Competing with and opposing this, are also threads and themes in our culture which suggest that our relationship with authority should be an **adult-to-adult** one: the discourse around the choice agenda in health, for instance, with its requirement that people should weigh up the reputations of different offerings and come to an informed decision, implicitly suggests an adult agenda.

The idea of ‘nannying’ has long been a pejorative, standing for over-interference by the state, and in our work for the Prime Minister’s Policy Review we found a perception that individual responsibility is in decline, often crowded out by state action as well as wider societal and cultural changes. Popular culture at the end of the Blair years evidences a backlash to the parent/child discourse with books like Michael Bywater’s *Big Babies* (2006) critiquing it through comedy.

People now say they want a more grown-up relationship where they can be informed about the implications and take responsibility for their own actions and lives. A perceived “health and safety culture”, often referenced in our deliberative work with the public, reflects a public who want to be looked after, but chafe against the restrictions this imposes.

2. Individual v Community

A strong characteristic of the Blair years has been a demand for flexibility, personalisation and responsiveness in all public and consumer services. This betokens a strong desire for individualism; people in the last ten years have become increasingly focused on shaping their identity through lifestyle and life-choices. The advent of “narrowcasting”¹⁹⁷ in recent years has meant that Britons became able to customise and co-create their cultural reference points, sharing ideas and content with people they like, rather than with everyone in the country.

There is a greater desire for more ‘bespoke’ personalised solutions even in politics; declining party membership (but rising interest in single-issue groups) reflects a Britain where individuals are putting together their own credos and philosophies ad hoc rather than joining traditional groups. The media focuses on celebrity, and the public use the language of a “Winners and Losers” meritocracy when talking about personal ambitions and success. This reflects a nation now interested in individual, rather than collective stories and successes.

At the same time, however, our research continues to show some of the strongest attachments people have are with the places they live. They are animated by local concerns – schools, hospitals, local ‘liveability’ – and feel more affinity with local issues and decision-making forums and believe they are better placed to influence them. Often, this confidence is bolstered by the strong sense that the individual is important and his or her voice should be heard. And, of course, the nature of community has itself changed. Communities of association, spanning wide distances and made up of disparate members, are now much more achievable through the advent of the internet.

This opposition, then, exists when the public tries to debate and value the nature of individual success and communal social capital, as both are seen as important yet in some ways contradictory.

3. Consumers v Citizens

The two identities – being a consumer, being a citizen – are often at the heart of contemporary debates on identity and community. The two terms are very familiar now as the Government has gradually introduced some of the concepts of the market to the public sector. Our research finds that while people like the idea of choice in public services in principle and find the language and concepts of consumption attractive, they are much more ambivalent and concerned about the potential practical implications. They want services to be flexible and responsive, treating them as consumers as the private sector would but are unwilling to accept some of the implications of the market, for instance waste or ‘postcode lotteries’.

This opposition is centrally important to those developing public services. A fundamental challenge facing public policy is how to deal with this perceived conflict between the consumerist and citizen viewpoints, inherent in the outlook of Britain's people.

Our polls show strong residual support for the public sector ethos – some services, especially the National Health Service, are almost ‘sacrosanct’ in the public’s eyes – and we have found that people have started to value a wider range of intangible things including happiness, the lived environment, social cohesion and inclusion. Relatively new concepts like corporate social responsibility, social enterprise, carbon footprints, fair trade and the rise of the “watt-com” provide new ways to look at the consumer/citizen opposition, and future policy will need to take careful note of the way this opposition in particular is evolving.

4. Having it all v Tough choices

The eternal opposition of indulgence v abstemiousness is alive and well in British culture at the end of the Blair years. Now, the idea of indulgence is labelled in terms of personal indulgence in consumption, where **excess** in itself and the concept of “**having it all**” are valued. It sits alongside its opposite in the culture, an awareness of the **tough choices** involved and the implications of our behaviour in terms of its social, but especially environmental, impacts – our **footprint**.

An assumption of constantly rising standards, constantly increasing choice and ever-higher expectations across all spheres of life has developed over the last ten years. First seen in the “have it all” phenomenon most associated with working mums, this way of looking at the world is now in evidence much more widely, and affects views of both public policy and private services. Set aside this, Government has recently felt it necessary to raise awareness of, and respond to, issues such as binge drinking, binge eating and, now, ‘binge flying’¹⁹⁸ – the concept of bingeing suggesting both excess and wastefulness. At the same time, economic buoyancy has depended, in large part, on selling and satisfying indulgence.

The public play back to us a sense that they expect access to large numbers of consumer resources. In discussion, people will describe this ability to acquire as liberating, perceiving that some of the traditional barriers between wealthy and poor are blurred in consumption (despite declining social mobility).

In 2006 we investigated the “capabilities” British people believed an individual needed in order to succeed and flourish in life. Among young people, in particular, the “right” to enjoy yourself, by indulging in behaviours which might not be socially acceptable, was a key part of the debate. Eventually, it was prioritised above social concepts such as right to fair trial, suggesting perhaps that, for many, the fabric of democracy sits in the background, with our traditional freedoms less salient than the more interesting world of excess.

There is evidence across a range of studies showing we expect quicker, more tailored, more flexible and higher quality services (in the public and private sectors). It is also seen in increasing expectations of public officials and politicians to be well-educated, local, loyal and independent¹⁹⁹ – echoed in Ann Widdecombe’s comment last year: “*we now expect more from our politicians than God.*”

But on the other hand, much of the frustration people tell us they have with modern politics is, as they see it, the product of an absence of ‘honesty’ from political discourse, a lack of engagement with the tough choices that the country and its people often face. There is a

growing appreciation that some things will have to 'give' when it comes to economic progress, housing, environmental sustainability, and the need to subsidise our ageing population. There is a recognition that we will have to think more about our footprint in all these areas, and about the consequences of our consumption. Politicians over the next few years will need to work with both of these opposed and entrenched ideas.

5. Small club v Big tent

Previous research by Alan Hedges and Tom Sefton (from the London School of Economics) and others has identified a typology of attitudes to the welfare state which suggests another key opposition. As the effects of external pressures such as complex migration and global economic competition are beginning to be felt in the UK, there is a divergence between two competing visions of the welfare state and the distribution of resources within it.

On the one hand, a relatively affluent liberal, progressive and predominantly middle class constituency representing many of those in positions of authority, feels relatively optimistic about the emergence of Britain as a more diverse economy and an open, cosmopolitan society. For them, the downsides of these changes are generally outweighed by the benefits (e.g. low cost labour, services and choices). As a result, they believe the barriers to entry into citizenship should remain relatively low, and the welfare system should remain all-encompassing, with the provision of state support granted simply on the basis of residence and need. We could call this the "Big tent" model of citizenship, one side of our opposition, present in cultural discussion now at the end of the Blair era.

On the other hand, those at the lower end of the income spectrum are feeling the pressure of inward low-skill migration and the resultant increase in competition for finite state resources in the form of housing, benefits and public services. Feeling this pressure, there is growing animosity towards and anxiety about "free-riders" perceived to be cheating the system. There is a desire to award the benefits of the system on the basis of "earned membership"; we could call this the "small club" model of citizenship and welfare. This opposition is particularly reflected in deliberative work for central Government where all policy is viewed through the lens of one or other of these viewpoints and, often, through both. Strikingly, this opposition tends to reflect two different worldviews, which can often be expressed by the same person on the same occasion.

6. Turned-off v Clued-up

Gerry Stoker labels the British today as at once "more demanding and more apathetic"²⁰⁰, reflected in our sixth opposition. On the one hand, the British are more assertive and active in asserting their preferences and desires as consumers and as citizens, but are also often reluctant to articulate their views or to take part. The public themselves are aware of this opposition, and future discussion of participation and engagement will need to take into consideration not just actual participation but perceptions of participation.

In chapter 3 we described the savviness of the British public in terms of consumerism and politics. Product and service development in the private and public realms has become more interactive in the past decade compared with the 1980s and early 1990s and this has equipped people with a greater appreciation of, and ability to decode, organisational objectives, marketing and advertising. There is (often healthy) scepticism about organisational motives be they political or corporate, in part, because enhanced accountability and transparency allied to greater media coverage has made people better aware of what goes on. While it

is true that we have seen historically low turnouts at the last two general elections, our data suggests no signs of an across-the-board decline in collective participation. This is in contrast to the decline Robert Putnam charts in the United States in his seminal *Bowling Alone* study.

The countervailing trend is for people to simply opt-out, feeling unable or unwilling to take part either because of the increasing complexity of the information available or a disillusionment or cynicism about their ability to influence anything. In particular, towards the end of the Blair Government this was allied specifically to concerns and disillusion about whether the citizen's voice could ever be influential. The perceived "failure" of the Stop the War demonstrations is often cited by participants in our deliberative research as a key moment when the public decided to turn off from politics.

Mapping oppositions: a sense-making, creative-thinking tool

The set of themes and oppositions described above, and the core dimensions that underlie them, describe the fundamental oppositions at play in many of the most important challenges and debates facing the UK, both historically over the ten years of the Blair administration, and in the likely near future.

Identifying these oppositions deepens our insight and by mapping them against each other we can make sense of the complex picture we have described so far. In addition to this **sense-making** function, the use of these oppositions can also act as a **creative** spur to think about big social and political challenges in new ways.

We provide examples of how this can be done with respect to three major policy challenges (although the mapping of oppositions is an approach that can also be applied in many other contexts) which have influenced the public agenda during the Blair years, but are likely to grow in importance in the Brown era and beyond.

These examples are:

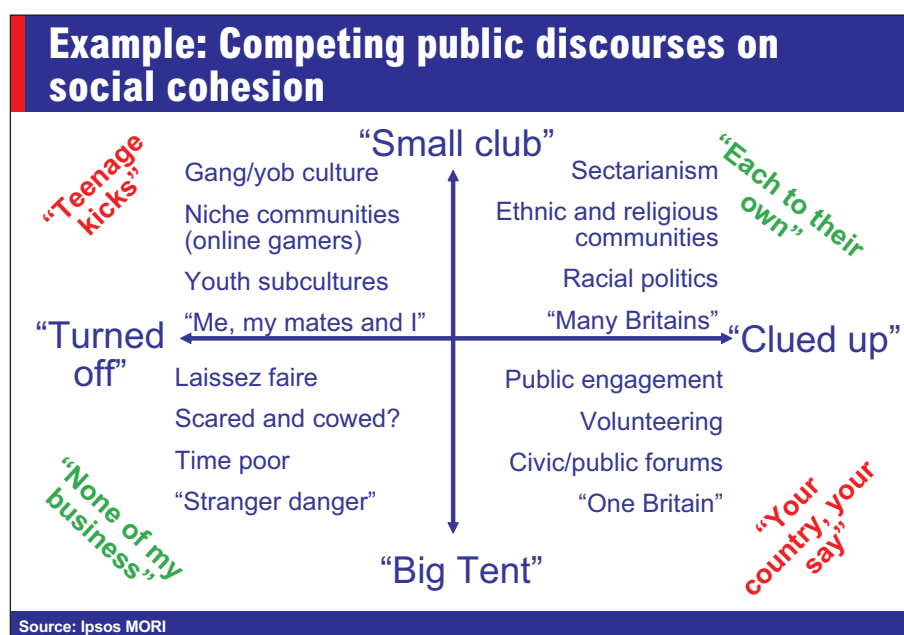
- **Social cohesion:** an issue that has come to the fore in Britain as migration, demographic change and religious tensions act as drivers of change.
- **Aviation:** an issue that has started to gain prominence towards the end of Blair's tenure as aviation expansion and the threat of climate change start to collide.
- **Ageing population:** a major potential threat identified by many in the policy community and elsewhere looking ahead.

In each of our examples we do not pretend to have captured all the complexities and nuances of these subjects. Neither are the configurations we describe the only possible ones that could apply. But the maps we provide, orientate us in the public debate. They highlight the implications for strategy and communications by illustrating some of the worldviews that will be competing for share of mind both now and in the future.

A. Social cohesion

The following map shows four competing responses to the perennial problem of where we say we belong in society. In the top right, the **Small club/Clued up** combination describes a discourse that is at once both immensely attractive and powerful in British society but also

potentially dangerous, hence its ability to frequently capture public imagination and media headlines. This space (“**Each to their own**”) is characterised by a tribal worldview in which social groups are defined in a strong, selective and relatively narrow way (“Small club”), and to which a number of strings are attached to qualify for membership. This helps to maintain a strong in-group identity through differentiation from outsiders. The active stance involved (“Clued up”) is necessary because it requires an active effort to maintain this community identity in the face of outside pressures, and generally involves mainstream or traditional methods of building cohesion to do so.



This is a worldview with strong attractions for migrant, ethnic, religious, national, peer-based or traditional (e.g. rural) communities in modern Britain, but also for those seeking to exclude such groups from a narrowly defined British identity. On the positive side this carries many of the benefits of tightly knit communities i.e. a sense of belonging and identity, strong moral and social frameworks. In this sense, it is described in the language of diversity and multiculturalism.

But on the negative side it is also about separation and distinction, and with its “activist” orientation is prone to generating frictions between rival groups such as sectarian or racially inspired politics and inter-group hostility – we can see it in the inflammatory rhetoric and action of the BNP. This dualism is a real problem for policy and communications, reflected in recent debates about multiculturalism. How can we celebrate diversity while at the same time not foster inter-group tensions and resentment?

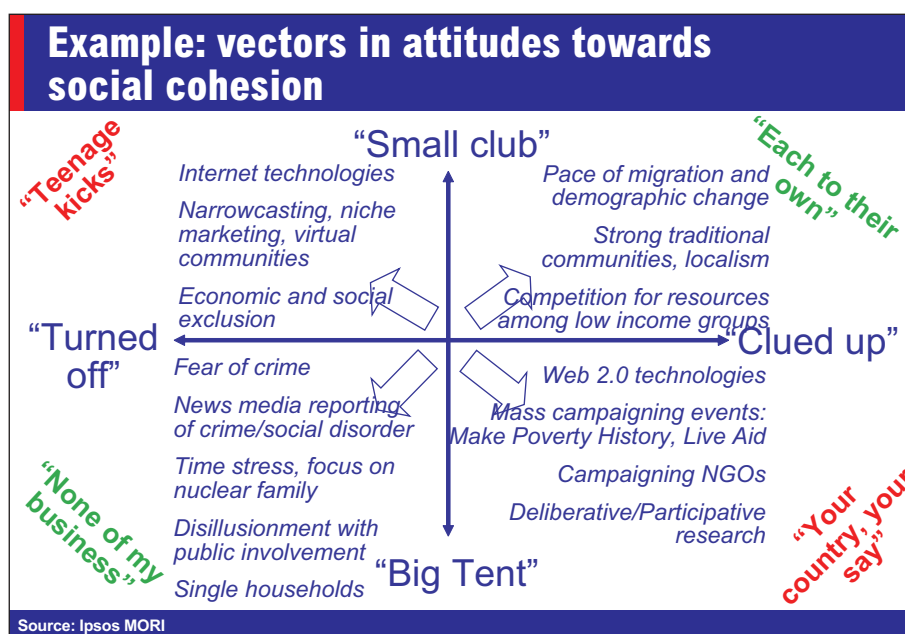
Perhaps the answer is to encourage a more passive version of this worldview? **Turned off/ Small club – “Teenage kicks”** is the space where we find a much looser or more chaotic form of social cohesion which we see in informal street gangs (e.g. “clicks”), friendship groups and communities of interest (e.g. online gamers and traders). This might represent the future for social cohesion but, if so, it is a much more fragmented vision of a society with looser ties, and a much greater challenge for Government to communicate through multiple channels.

The two variations on the “Big tent” view of social cohesion both look to a wider, more inclusive view of social identity (e.g. Britishness) which may seem more attractive and in line with

policy objectives (e.g. encouraging Britishness). The active version of this (**Big tent/Clued up** – “**Your country, your say**”) perhaps describes an old mainstream norm of participation in civic society. This is the worldview politicians and policymakers are always keenest to foster and a great deal of effort is currently being spent to revive the appeal of this old trope through new types of engagement (e.g. deliberative forums) and technology (e.g. e-voting, Web 2.0).

Perhaps the biggest challenge is to shift people out of the stance in the bottom left quadrant (**Turned off/Big tent**) which describes a retreat into passivity and lack of community involvement, driven by a combination of inertia, lack of “tribal” identification with any smaller grouping, fear, time-stress and social isolation. This worldview encompasses not only the poor and socially excluded but also large swathes of the middle class who fail for a number of reasons to be drawn into participation in civic and community life.

How might we influence and shape the agenda to either attract people towards one type of thinking, or discourage them from adopting another one? This is where it helps to map onto the matrix a number of possible factors which may be sustaining or increasing the attraction of these competing worldviews, or to identify the likely implications of a growth in this attitude. This helps to generate thinking about the possible policy levers or interventions that could be applied to drive attitudinal or behavioural change in the desired policy direction.



In the case of social cohesion, we can see a number of possible drivers or explanations for the power of the alternative themes. For example, in the case of the bottom right quadrant, as mentioned earlier, new forms of democratic engagement and campaigning have acted as the catalyst for new forms of collective identity and action. On the other hand, the niche nature of internet technologies fuels a more fragmented and complex sense of community, while economic and social exclusion swells the attraction of “being someone” in a street gang.

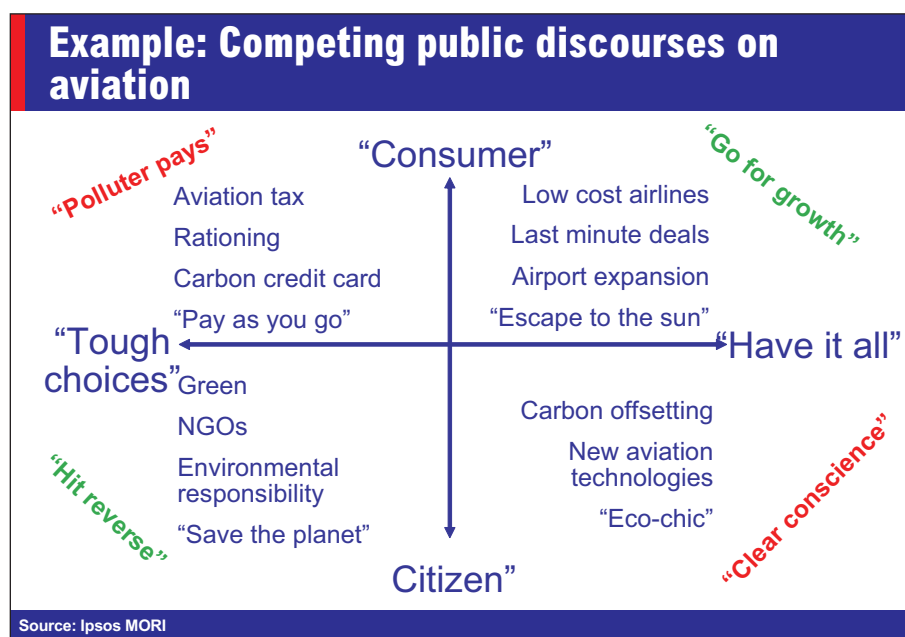
Returning to the example of the BNP, our research²⁰¹ suggests that the party draws its core support from the **Small club/Clued up** quadrant, tending towards conceiving Britishness in a narrow, exclusive (racial) way, requiring the active preservation of identity from outside pressures or ‘threat’. At the same time, there is some latent sympathy for the party among

those inhabiting the top left quadrant who also favour an in-group identity but in a more passive way. One response would be to use those drivers increasing the attraction of the **Big tent** worldview shown in the map, including providing reassurances about the resources and policies in place to both tackle economic and social exclusion and manage the pace of socio-demographic change. This might also involve provide alternative sources of shared identity and the chance to exercise 'voice'.

B. Aviation

The second example looks at the key issue of aviation through the **Tough choices/Having it all** and **Consumer/Citizen** oppositions. As shown in the graphic below, the **Consumer/Having it all** perspective gives us the mainstream discourse; something which is well established in public and consumer life. We have described this as "Go for growth"; individual and consumer needs are paramount and the arguments in favour of low cost airlines, frequent holidays, and airport expansions are well embedded and remain in the ascendancy.

The **Tough choices/Citizen** mapping, on the bottom left, is an equally well-understood way of looking at environmental threats even though, in the context of aviation, it currently appears a minority position. This is the discourse of NGOs and involves stopping, limiting or reversing development. It could be tagged as "Hit reverse".



If these are the **norms** of discourse on aviation then communicators will need to find ways to disrupt, or reinforce, these, depending on the direction of policy.

While efforts are currently in their infancy, the focus so far has been on the actions outlined in the **Having it all/Citizen** quadrant to the bottom right. These attempt to resolve the tension between peoples' desire for greater personal mobility and foreign travel on the one hand, and their recognition that this carries with it negative environmental impacts on the other (How can we have what we want, and yet behave as good citizens?). They represent a combination of supply side measures - including technological advances in the efficiency of aircraft - alongside social marketing and behaviour change initiatives to encourage the development of either "eco-chic" or "eco-conscious" behaviours. Here, the behaviour itself remains intact but

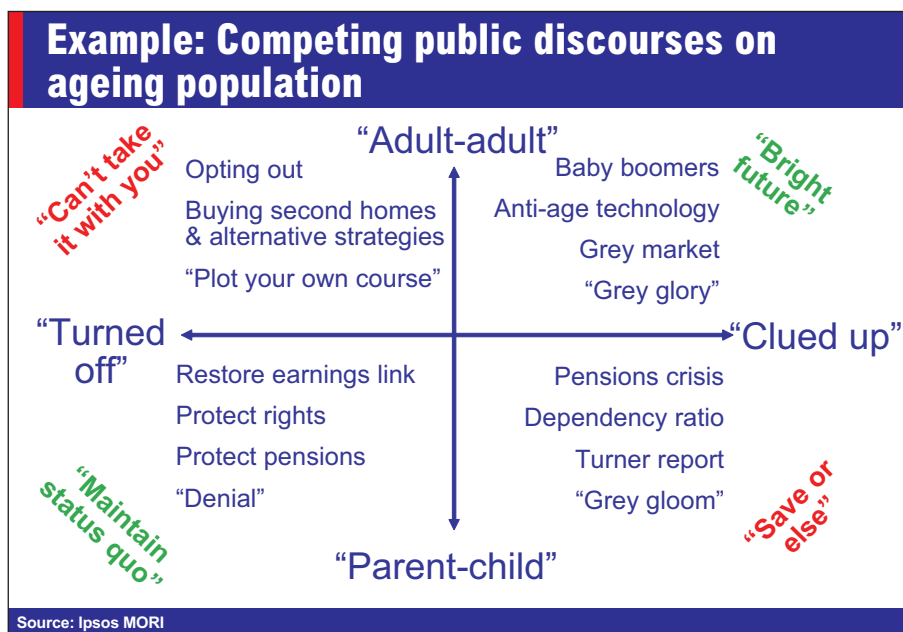
efforts are made to mitigate negative impacts, such as voluntary carbon offsets or choosing an environmentally conscious travel company or airline (helped, for example, by some airline companies' efforts to adopt a version of the colour code label used for white consumer goods).

The current debate on aviation and its environmental footprint has also triggered a consideration of actions in the top left, **Consumer/Tough choices**, part of the map. Examples include the possibility of incorporating aviation within the European Union Trading Emissions Scheme, or directly increasing taxation on aviation (whether on a per passenger or per flight basis). This section of the map contains a contradiction; assumptions of consumer rights and benefits, along with an assumption that tough choices must be made. At the current time the public do not seem as willing to countenance tough choices, and issues of taxation in relation to aviation are generally perceived negatively. Issues of trust play an important role in encouraging consumer buy-in (particularly in terms of hypothecation of monies collected), as do choice and the presence of an alternative – calls to single out domestic flights, for example, may have more resonance with the public given that comparable alternatives exist.

Therefore, to garner support for initiatives which set out the “true” costs of aviation and its impact on the environmental, the language of genuine consumer choice, coupled surprisingly with a **Tough choices** agenda, may cut through scepticism.

C. Ageing population

By way of a final example, our mapping of the issue of Britain's aging population suggests that using the oppositions of **Adult/parent & child** and **Turned off/Clued-up** gives us some insight into the underlying tensions in society on this topic.



The choice lies essentially between an old assumption in the bottom left quadrant, in which the “state provides” and citizens are essentially recipients of their “payout” after years of paying their dues to society. This is an essentially passive (e.g. child-like) set of roles and behaviours, as people adopting this stance do not feel they should have to worry about, or take responsibility for the pension they will receive. A key policy and communication challenge is to shift people from this position, but where to?

In the immediate term, the approach seems to be to encourage people into the bottom right area, in which essentially the state still acts as provider and setter of the parameters (e.g. age of retirement), but the mode has shifted from indulgent parenting to a more conditional form based on tough love, in which the public must start to adopt a greater sense of responsibility in their own long term interests.

Recent Government policy reflects this. The proposed introduction of personal accounts in 2012 whereby all employees who are not currently saving for a pension will be automatically enrolled into a Government administered pension scheme (though with the option to opt-out should they wish) shows the shift towards greater levels of personal responsibility with this ‘soft’ form of compulsion.

A more confident and optimistic outlook on the opportunities arising from an ageing society is perhaps the natural next step in Government communications and policy once it is satisfied that a sufficient number are on board with the need to safeguard their financial future more securely. The top right quadrant could become increasingly important – as we saw earlier there will be a greater fragmentation in the older age group as it grows, and some confident, wealthy cohorts will be coming through (the “baby boomers”). These will require a very different approach to communications, as is being increasingly recognised in the private sector.

Summary: what next?

As this report has demonstrated, there are a number of contradictory impulses and opinions in society. This reflects, in part, the demise of traditional left-right politics and a simple bi-polar world of British politics and society (based on, for example, class and tribal party allegiance). Our analysis highlights the modern reality that people hold a more multi-polar view of society, and that they may simultaneously hold multiple, contradictory and competing ideas about social issues and their role in shaping them.

Consequently, if we are to understand society fully, we need to go beyond attitudinal data to identify underlying themes and structures. The oppositions outlined above can facilitate this and help to make sense of the world around us by providing a framework which we can use to help break through the clutter, confusion and ‘noise’ of today’s shifting, and competing, attitudes. It can be used to help us to anticipate and create new spaces for tomorrow, to more effectively monitor movements in prevailing attitudes and diagnose the vectors that are driving these.

Our ability to do this well is becoming increasingly important. Research practitioners need to be able to offer more and richer insight, drawing on multiple data sources. We also need to ensure the issues under discussion are salient and, therefore, it will be important to contemporise the content and type of questions put to survey respondents and qualitative participants.

The new deliberative research techniques we have pioneered in the past decade in partnership with our clients will continue to be important, helping us to ground research and policy in the agenda of those it seeks to involve and affect. Moving forward, it will be important that we adopt a multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach to research (making use of, for example, attitudinal and behavioural research, semiotics, horizon scanning) to provide multiple lenses and sense-making tools for policy-makers.

Perhaps one of the greatest legacies of the Blair years, with its sophisticated use of modern communications and an eye for a memorable turn of phrase, is that people are so conscious not just of the tensions and trade-offs we have described, but also the labels or buzzwords (e.g. “binge”; “engaged”) we use to describe them. In fact, we will probably need to go further in future research to understand the role of language and cultural context in constructing and shaping perspective. It is only by doing this that we will be able to help our clients to not only devise and ‘pitch’ policy but ensure there is public understanding, take-up, engagement and advocacy.

Furthermore, as government seeks to address the macro challenges facing society it needs to make decisions for the long-term future and, therefore, understanding shifts in opinions – and the direction of travel – will be crucial. In the post-Blair era, new external drivers will emerge around which an emergent set of discourses will be formed, although the underlying tensions will remain broadly the same.

As they make longer-term decisions under greater uncertainty (and scrutiny), governments are likely to need to find ways to make sense of cultural complexity, where necessary avoiding the distractions of a noisy, voracious and vibrant 24 hour media and prioritising what they think most likely simply to work in delivering the intended outcomes.

It will be up to Gordon Brown and his Government to decide which drivers they wish to encourage and what communications and policy levers they might use to shape the agenda and the debate. Plotting a political course is no longer about navigating between right or left, or even following a middle “Third Way”, but manoeuvring around a complex system.

This represents a tough challenge but one that government will have to take on.

Endnotes

- ¹ Brian Cathcart, *Were You Still Up For Portillo?*, 1997.
- ² Just two examples from as early as April this year are *The Observer's* 'The Blair Year's' supplement published on 8.4.07 and Frank Luntz's focus group feature broadcast on the BBC's 'Newsnight' programme on 12.4.07.
- ³ Ipsos MORI, *Blair's Britain: the political legacy*. Both of our complementary reports are available in hard copy on request or to download from www.ipsos-mori.com
- ⁴ MORI (2003) *The more things change...Government, the economy and public services since the 1970s*; MORI, *MORI Review*, December 2004; Ipsos MORI, *End of Year Review 2005*; Ipsos MORI, *Review of 2006*.
- ⁵ Andrew Rawnsley 'Peace and War' in 'The Blair Years', *The Observer's* 8.4.07.
- ⁶ Brian Cathcart, *Were You Still Up For Portillo?*, 1997.
- ⁷ MORI survey of 1,940 adults aged 18+ across Britain, 21-24 February 1997.
- ⁸ Philip Gould *The Unfinished Revolution*, 1998.
- ⁹ Polls (by all agencies) in the run up to the 1992 election gave Labour an average lead of 2%, with the Conservatives ultimately finishing ahead by nearly 8% of the vote. In contrast, polls by members of the British Polling Council in 2005 were collectively the most accurate prediction ever made of a British general election outcome (for commentary on 1992, see R. Worcester and R. Mortimore *Explaining Labour's Landslide* and for detail on the 2005 election, see <http://www.britishpollingcouncil.org/simon-atkinson.pdf>)
- ¹⁰ A MORI poll conducted between 7-8 May 1997 found that even two in ten of those who voted Conservative said they were satisfied with the outcome of the election.
- ¹¹ Andrew Rawnsley 'Peace and War' in 'The Blair Years', *The Observer's* 8.4.07.
- ¹² Giles Radice (ed.) *What needs to change: New visions for Britain*, 1996.
- ¹³ Tony Blair *New Britain: my vision of a young country*, 1996.
- ¹⁴ Philip Gould *The Unfinished Revolution*, 1998.
- ¹⁵ Will Hutton *The State We're In*, 1996.
- ¹⁶ Philip Gould *The Unfinished Revolution*, 1998.
- ¹⁷ <http://news.bbc.co.uk>
- ¹⁸ Ipsos MORI interviewed 977 British adults, 14-20 June 2007.
- ¹⁹ Ipsos MORI interviewed 984 British adults, 14-20 June 2007 and 961 British adults 18+, 11-13 May 2007.
- ²⁰ Peter Hennessy 'The Prospects for a Labour Government' in Giles Radice (ed.) *What needs to change: New visions for Britain*, 1996.
- ²¹ MORI/*Financial Times* 'State of Britain Poll', 2,075 British adults aged 16+, 10-15 April 2003.
- ²² See Bobby Duffy and Rea Robey, *A new British model* (2006). The term "Anglo-Social" model was first used by Mike Dixon and Nick Pearce Social Justice in 'Changing World: The Emerging Anglo-Social Model' in Pearce and Paxton (ed.s) *Social Justice Building a Fairer Britain*, 2005. It describes an attempt to combine the economic performance and flexibility of liberal welfare states with the social protection and equality of Scandinavian countries.
- ²³ 'Bling' is ostentatious jewellery and watches popularised by hip hop culture. Rap family the Cash Money Millionaires have been credited with coining the phrase 'bling bling' in the late 1990s and the word entered the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2003 (see: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/3192258.stm).
- ²⁴ Such growth is not confined to luxury cars alone: MORI data shows that in 2004-5 74% of households owned a car, up from 57% in 1979, and that over the same period the proportion of households with more than one car has more than doubled.
- ²⁵ 'Spend, spend, spend: Britons lap up the high life' *The Guardian*, 16.5.07.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ 'Tesco banks £2.5bn profit', *The Observer*, 15.4.07.
- ²⁸ ICM poll for *The Guardian*, 1,000 adults aged 18+, 17-19 November 2006. Reported in 'Nation of reluctant supermarket shoppers revealed', *The Guardian*, 23.11.06.
- ²⁹ MORI Financial Services poll for Scottish Provident involving interviews with 1,914 British adults aged 16+, 1-6 March 2001.
- ³⁰ 'Big rise in cosmetic surgery ops' BBC, 16.1.07, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4609166.stm>
- ³¹ The Camelot Foundation, *Young People and British Identity*, 2007.
- ³² It is also by no means the preserve of young people, especially given the oft-observed trend in marketing towards 'extended youth' (or Kidult-ism) among older adults.
- ³³ See: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1815-poverty-UK-2006.pdf>.
- ³⁴ Inequality in 2005/06, measured according to the Gini Coefficient, reached its highest level since 2001-02 and is significantly higher than levels inherited by the 1997-2001 Labour Government. However, the Institute for Fiscal Studies contrast this with the fall, since 1996-97, in measures of income inequality that do not take into account incomes at the very top and bottom of the distribution (see: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn73.pdf>).

- ³⁵ The Centre for Economics and Business Research estimated the number of millionaires in 2005 at 425,000, an 80% increase since 2001. House prices rose by 64% over the same period. See: <http://www.coutts.com/newsandinformation/20051013200.asp>.
- ³⁶ Simon Parker and David Goodhart 'A city of capital' in *Prospect* magazine, April 2007.
- ³⁷ Boris Johnson, 'Let's have schools to match London's wealth', *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 February 2007.
- ³⁸ Ipsos MORI research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Communicating on UK poverty: getting the public's attention* published in 2007. The Eurobarometer surveys show Britons more likely than most other nationalities in Europe to associate poverty with laziness and less likely to think it caused by injustice.
- ³⁹ Ipsos MORI for *The Sun*, 1,001 British adults aged 18+, 12-17 January 2006 (1,498 British adults aged 15+, 2-13 March 1989).
- ⁴⁰ *Consulting for a Capability List*: research study conducted by Ipsos MORI for the Equalities Review (February 2007).
- ⁴¹ Mintel, *Leisure Time, Leisure Intelligence* (2006). 37% of Britons usually tend to look around the shops at the weekend, compared to 61% who read newspapers, books and magazines, 54% who listen to music and 42% who eat out at a pub or restaurant.
- ⁴² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1868364.stm>.
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