

Immigration and the rise of the radical right in Western Europe

Robert Ford

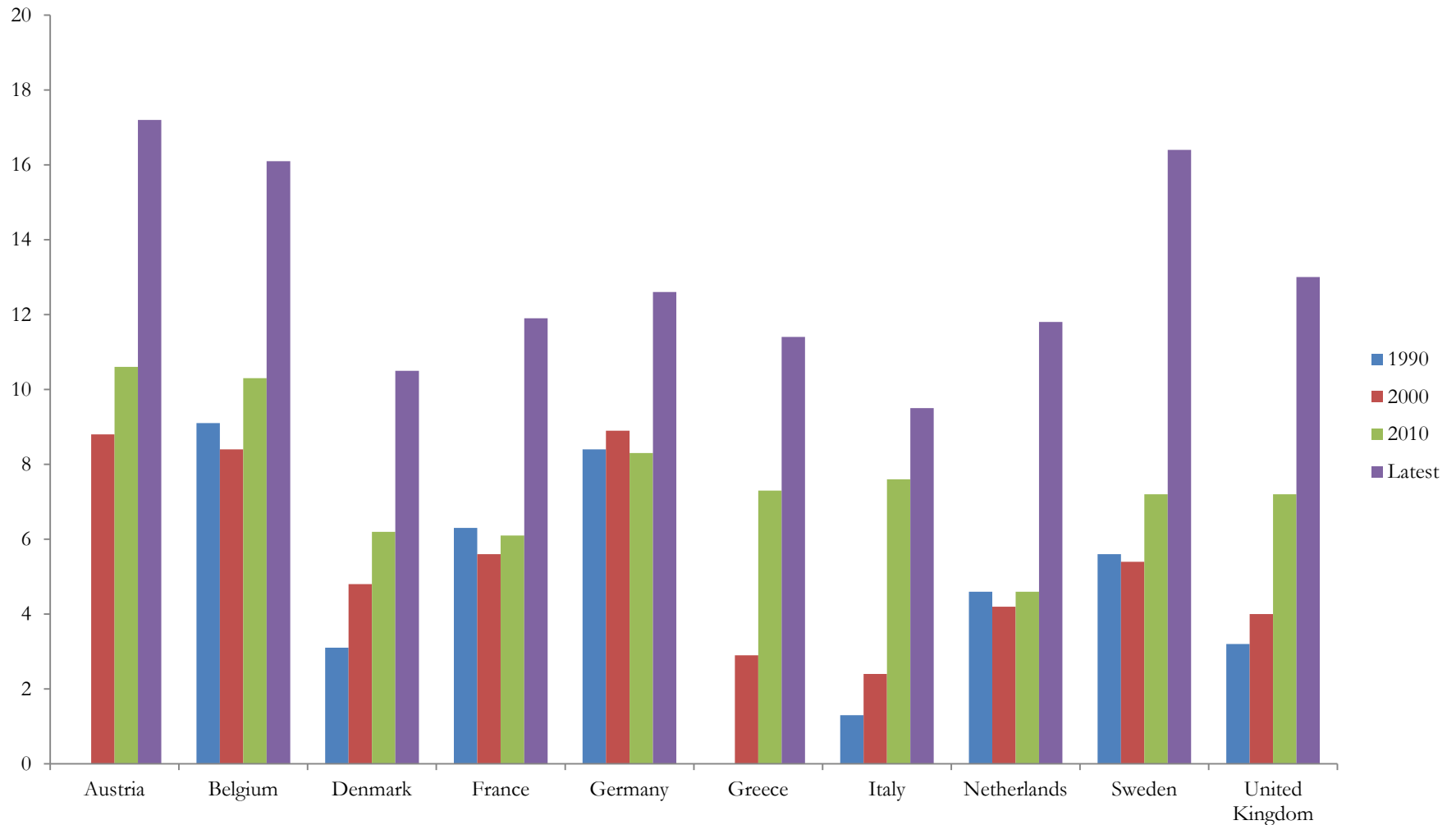
Professor of Political Science, Manchester University

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Rob.ford@manchester.ac.uk

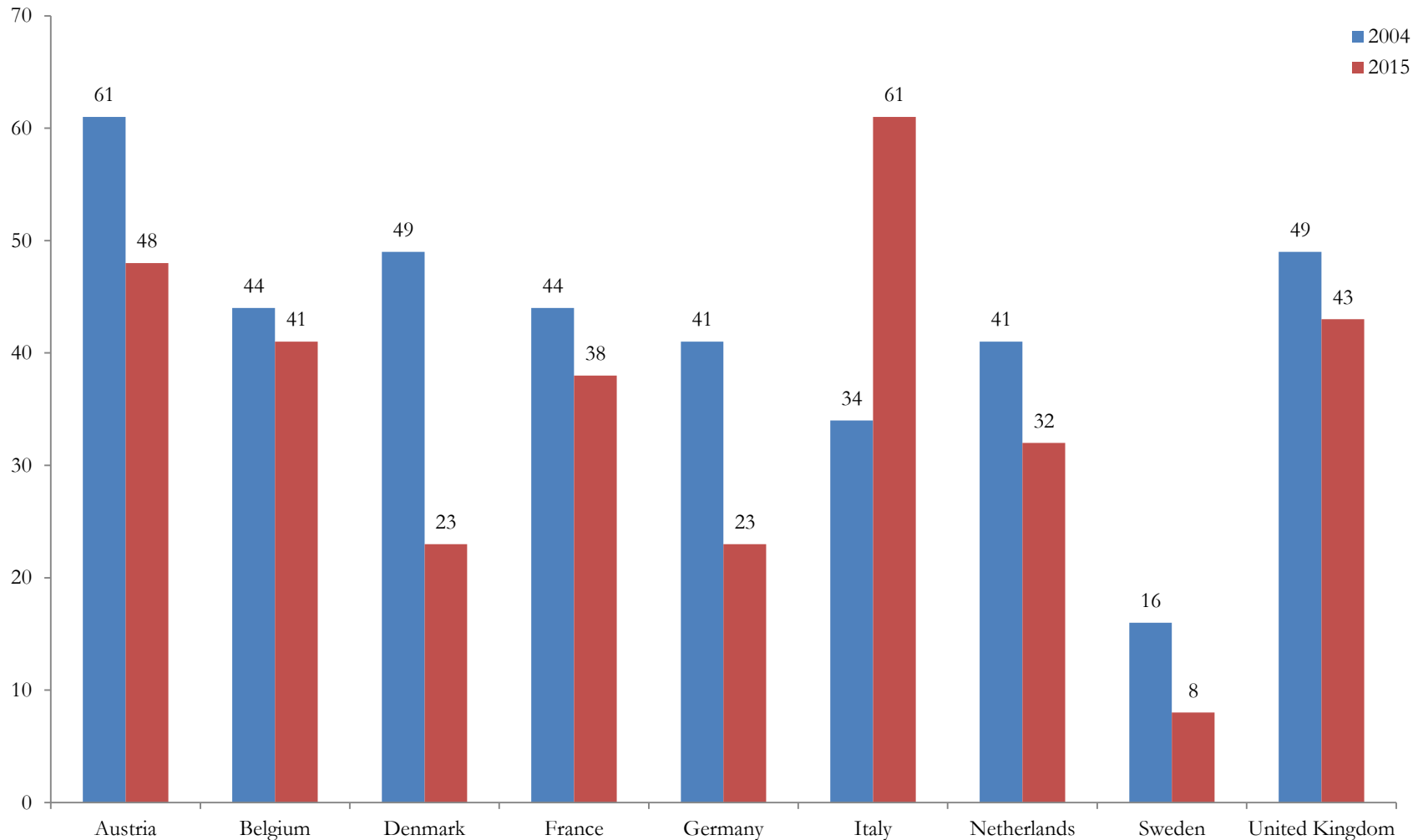
twitter: @robfordmancs

Foreign born share of the population in 10 European countries 1990-present



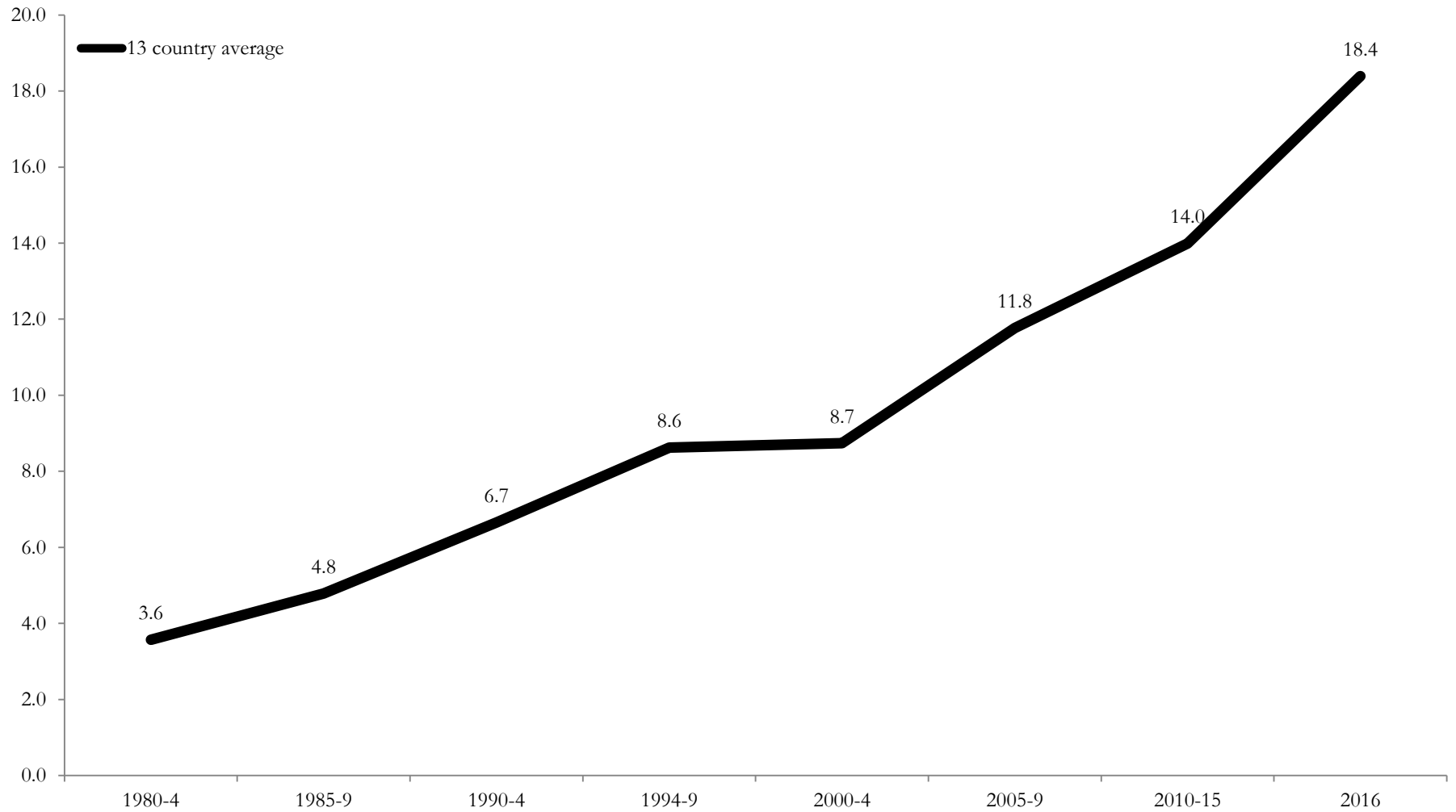
Source: OECD, Eurostat

Share of respondents saying “allow few or none” re: immigrants from different ethnic group to majority



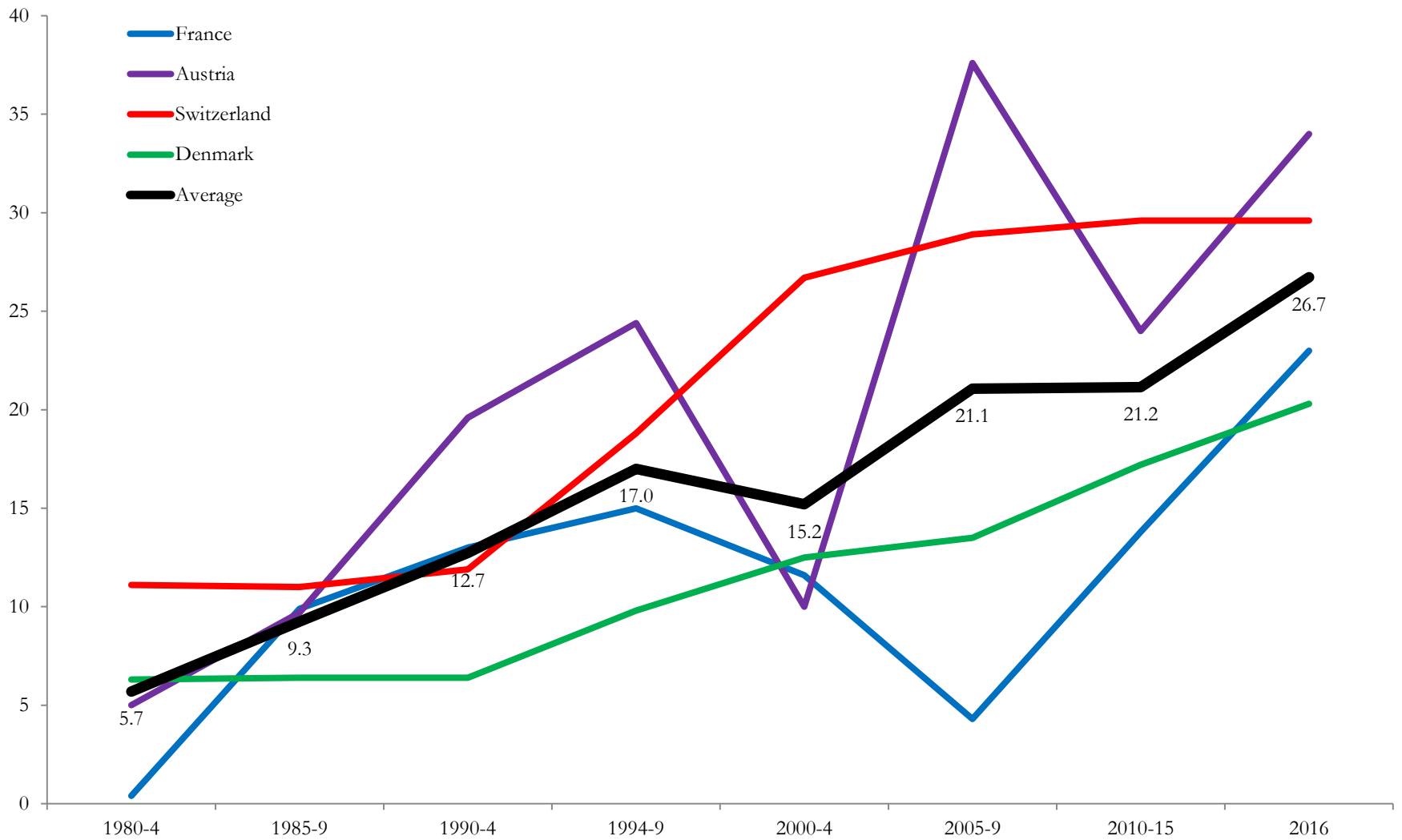
Source: European Social Survey

Radical right support, 13 established European democracies 1980-2016

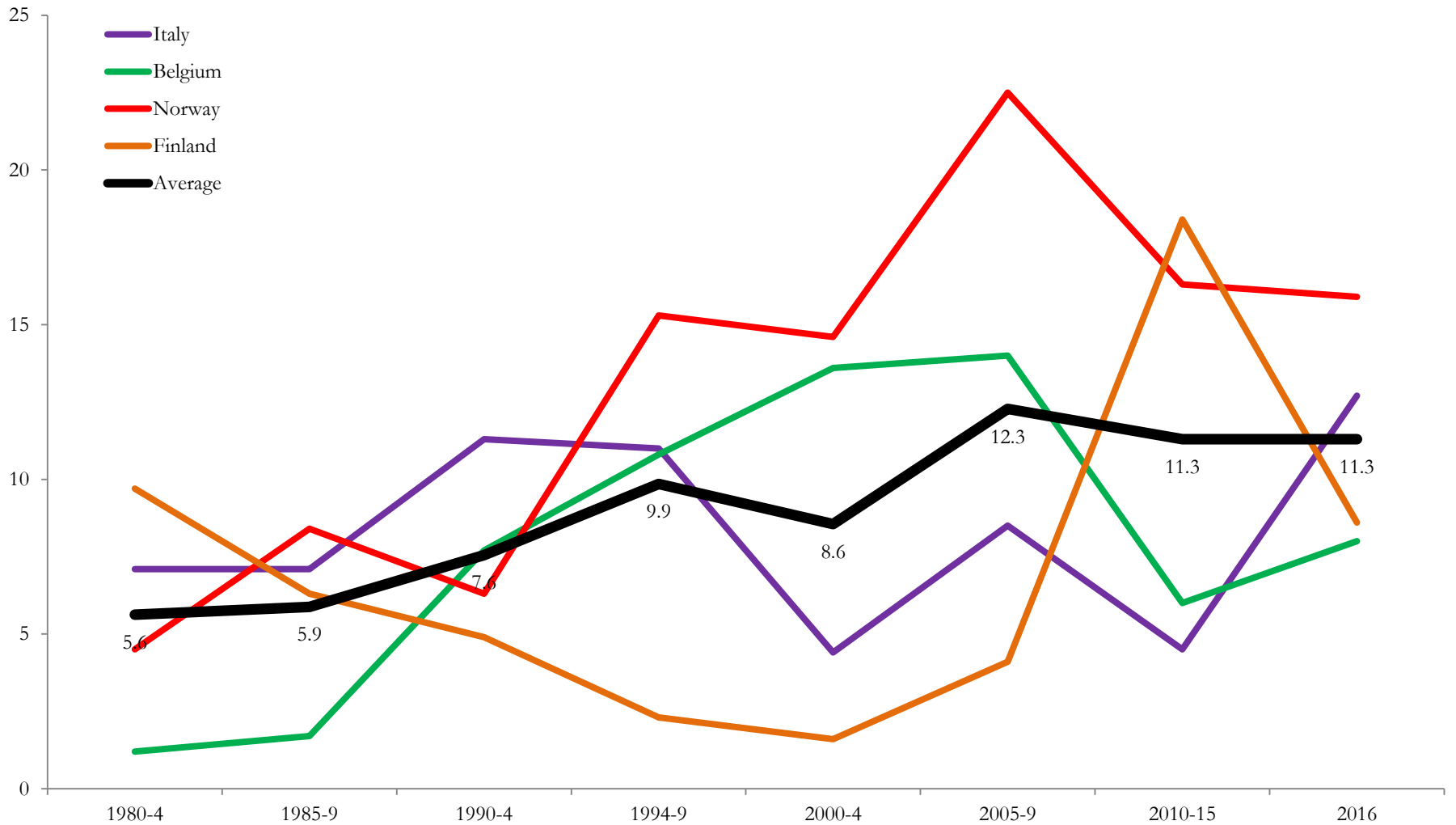


Election results (1980-2015); most recent polling in 2016

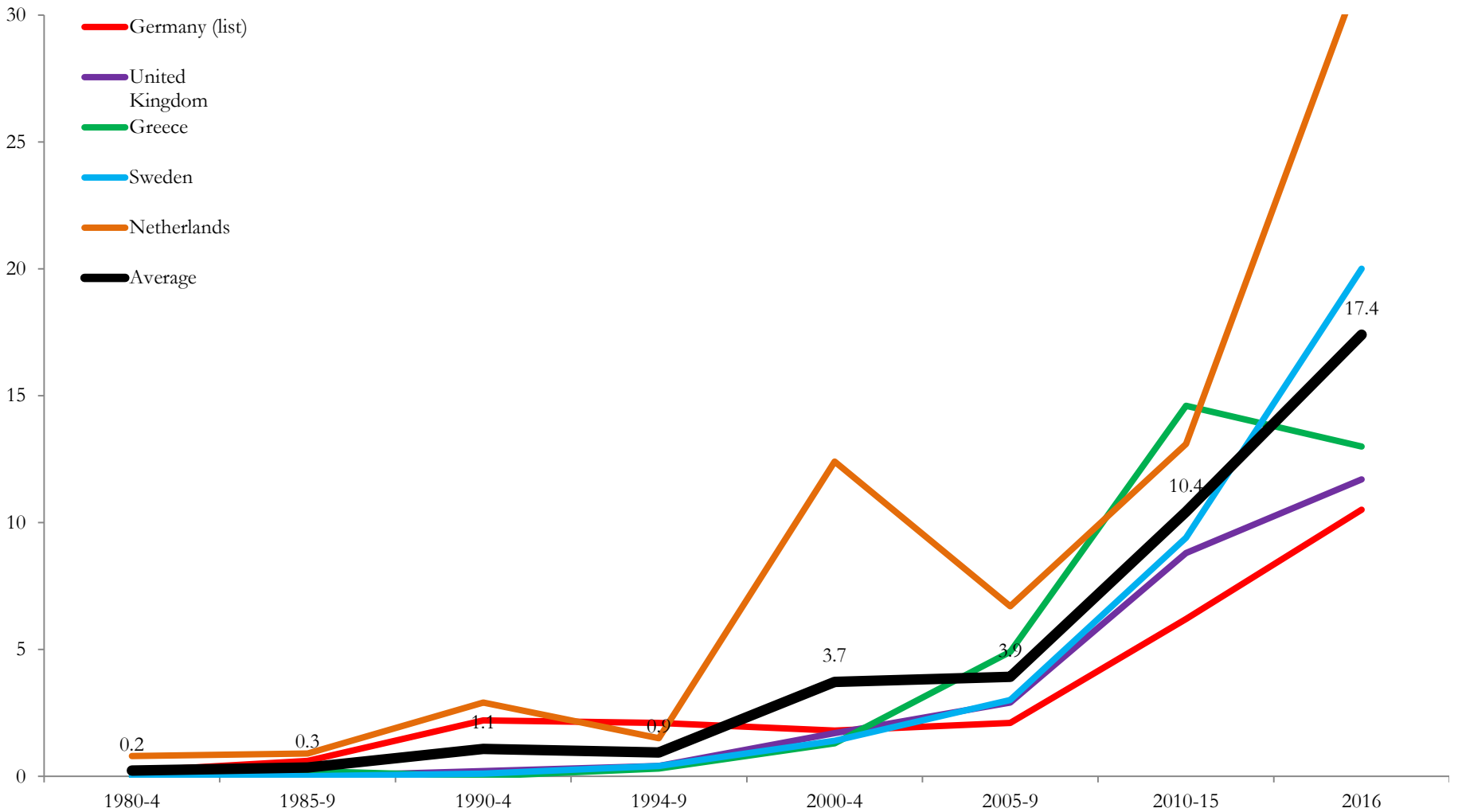
Group 1: Established and rising



Group 2: Established and stable/falling



Group 3: New and booming



Group 4: No radical right presence

- Some countries in Europe still have no electorally significant radical right
- Post-fascist Iberia: Spain & Portugal
 - Memories of far right dictatorships still too fresh?
- Ireland
 - Radical nationalism already mobilised by the left (Sinn Fein)?
- Could situation change?
 - Radical right surges are relatively recent in UK, Germany, Sweden (all thought of as “exceptional” before)

Drivers of radical right support

- Nationalism
- Authoritarianism
- Disaffection with democracy
- Value change on the left
- Anxiety about social change
- Euroscepticism

All of these are associated to some extent with immigration

- Nationalism
 - Immigration threatens national identity
- Authoritarianism
 - Immigration threatens social order
- Disaffection with democracy
 - Mainstream parties fail to deal with immigration
- Value change on the left
 - immigrant minorities becoming a significant & growing electoral constituency for left – seen by blue collar voters as favouring “them” over “us”
- Anxiety about social change
 - Immigration and diversity as symbols of threatening change & decline
- Euroscepticism
 - EU increasingly associated with immigration – A8, refugees

Emergence of radical right is leading to mobilisation and polarisation

- **Mobilisation:** Anxieties about immigration are often longstanding...
 - ...but radical right parties mobilise them into the heart of electoral competition ...
 - ...so radical right attitudes become more politically prominent even if they are declining overall
- **Polarisation:** Radical right reorient political competition around social issue divisions...
 - ...this can lead to break down in mainstream consensus on these issues...
 - ...and lead voters to connect social problems together in new ways (e.g. Blaming them on immigration or “elites”)

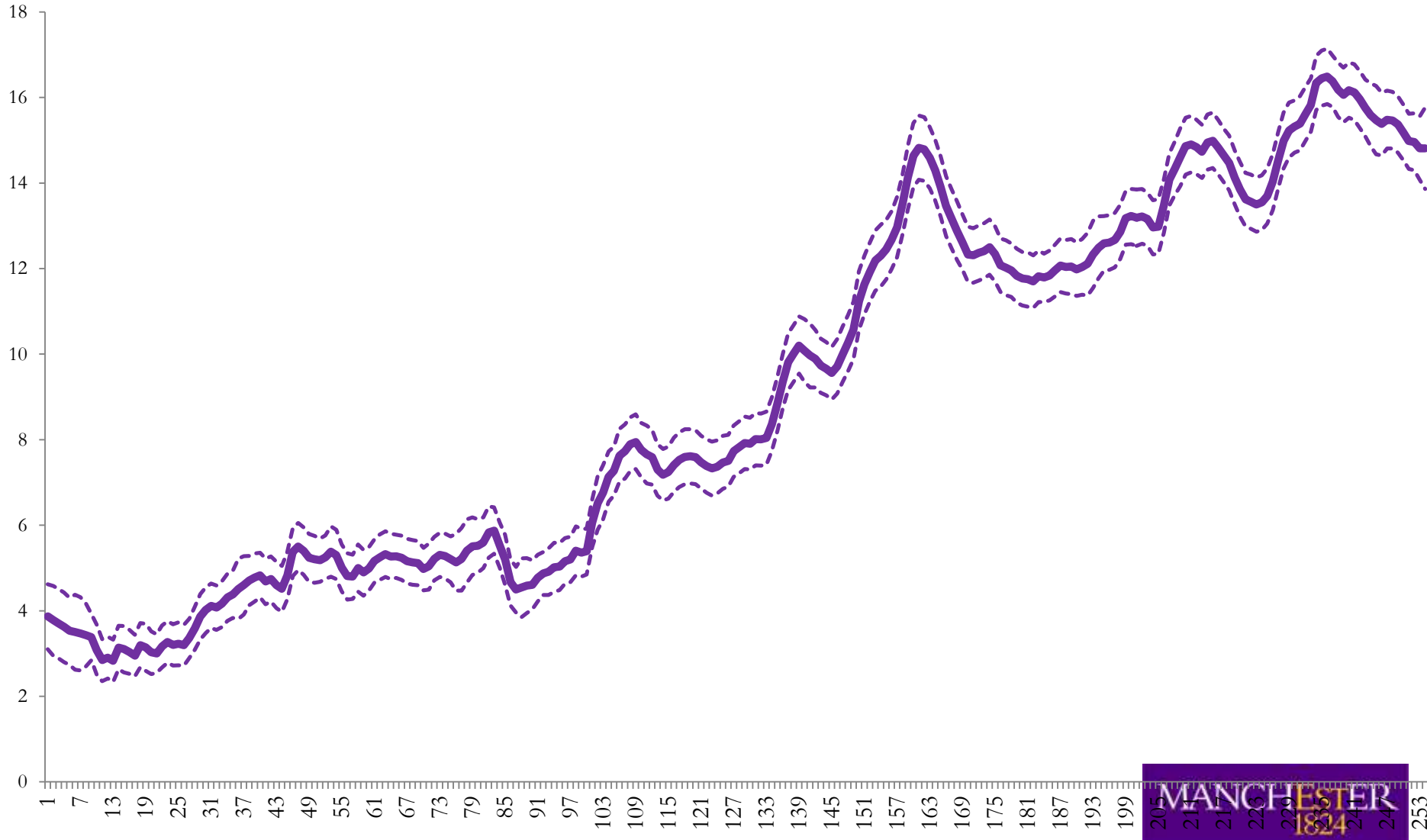
Rise of the radical right: a (simplified) template narrative

- 1. The tinder:
 - Value change (generations, education)
 - Declining political attachment (trad parties; mainstream pols; trust)
 - Discontent with social change (relative econ decline; cultural anxiety)
- 2. The spark:
 - Rising immigration and/or conflicts with new minorities...
 - ...exploited by new or (more usually) established political actor
- 3. The flame:
 - Actor mobilising on this issue experiences sharp rise in support...
 - ...which triggers major attention to issue & actor...
 - ...which in turn can fuel further polarisation on rad rt issues...
 - ...and further increases in radical right voting

A case study: Immigration, changing public opinion and the rise of UKIP

- UK was, until recently, a case study in radical right electoral failure
- Dramatic rise of UKIP casts light on many of the key dynamics driving radical right growth across Europe
 - An anti-EU party, but supporters primarily motivated by immigration and identity
 - Similar to other European radical right parties, who often began focussed on other issues then surged after focussing on immigration
 - Strong similarities between social and attitudinal profile of UKIP supporters and supporters of other European radical right parties

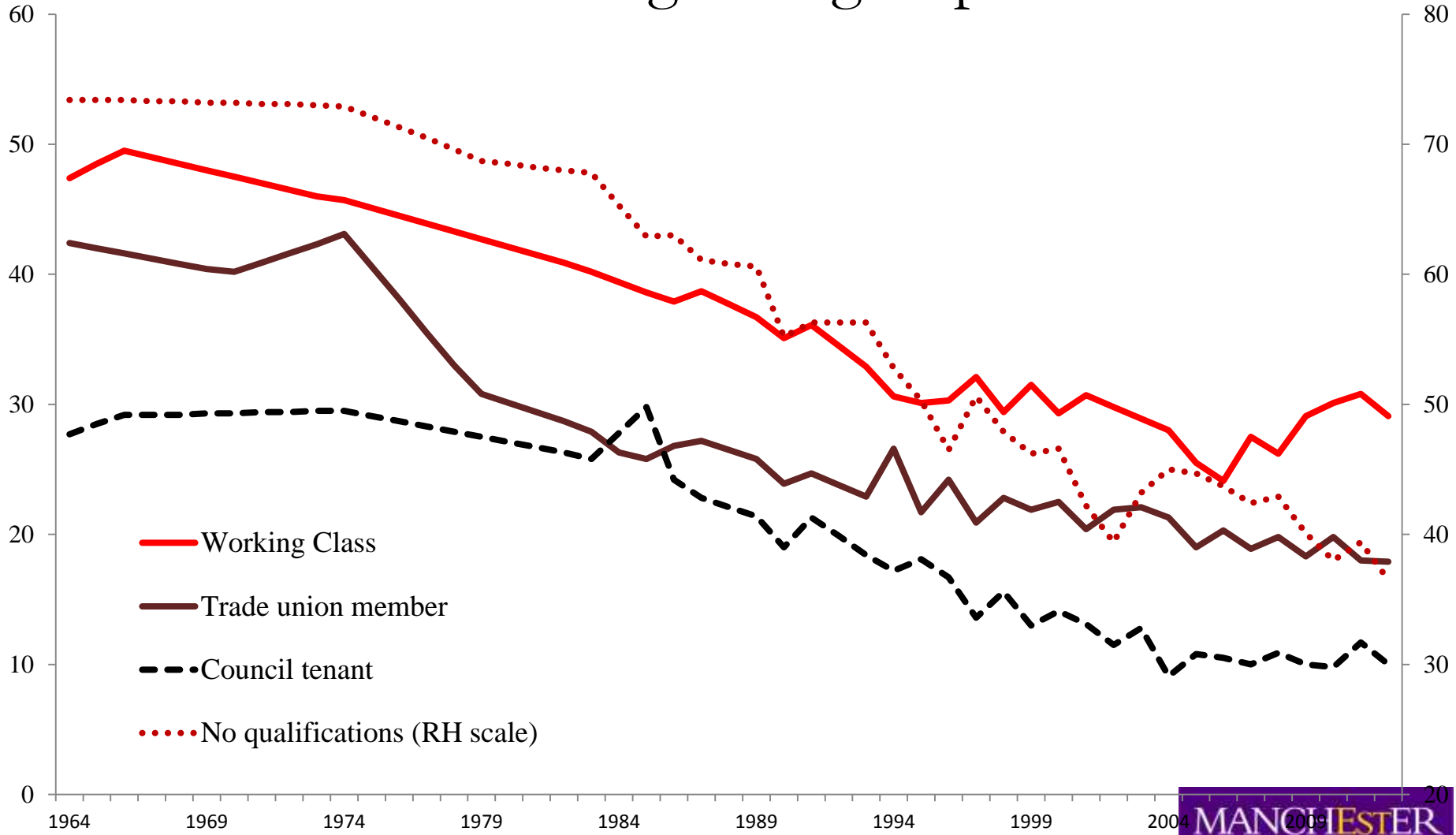
A distinct new electorate: Growth in UKIP support 2010-15



Source: Pickup, Jennings, Wlezien and Ford "Polling Observatory" poll aggregation estimates

The fuel (1): Social change

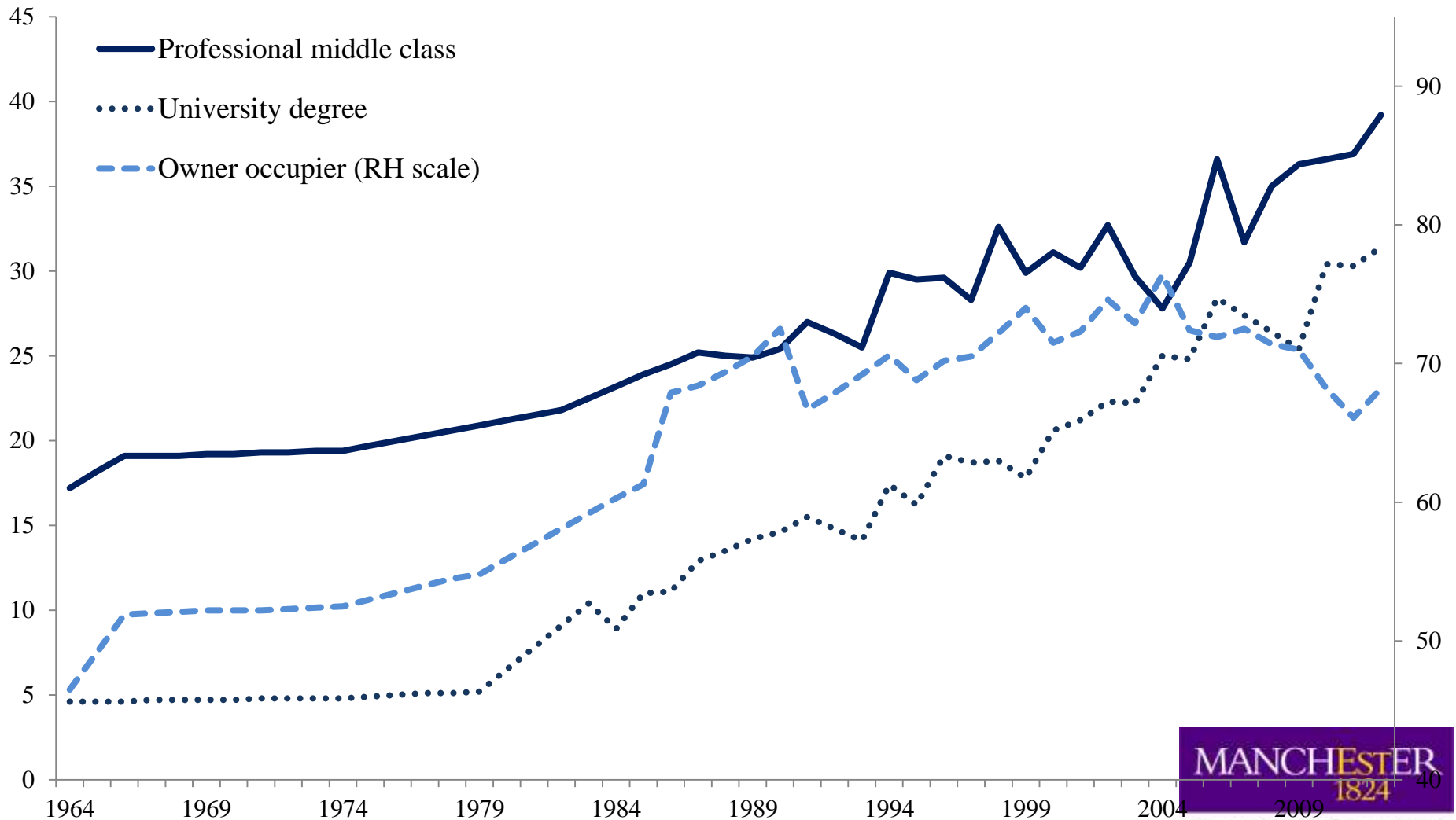
Decline of working class groups 1964-2012



Source: British Election Studies, British Social Attitudes

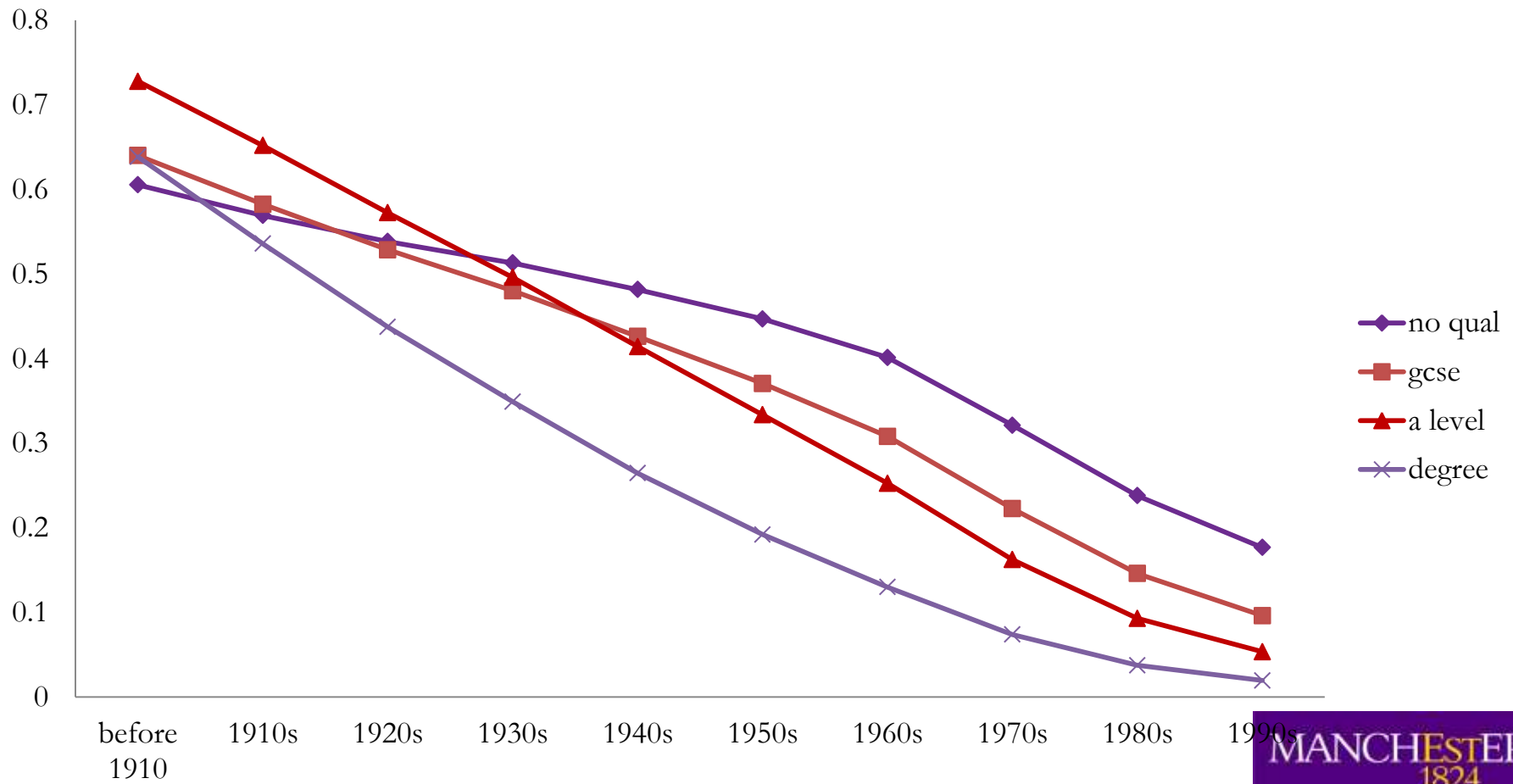
The fuel (1): Social change

Rise of middle class groups 1964-2012



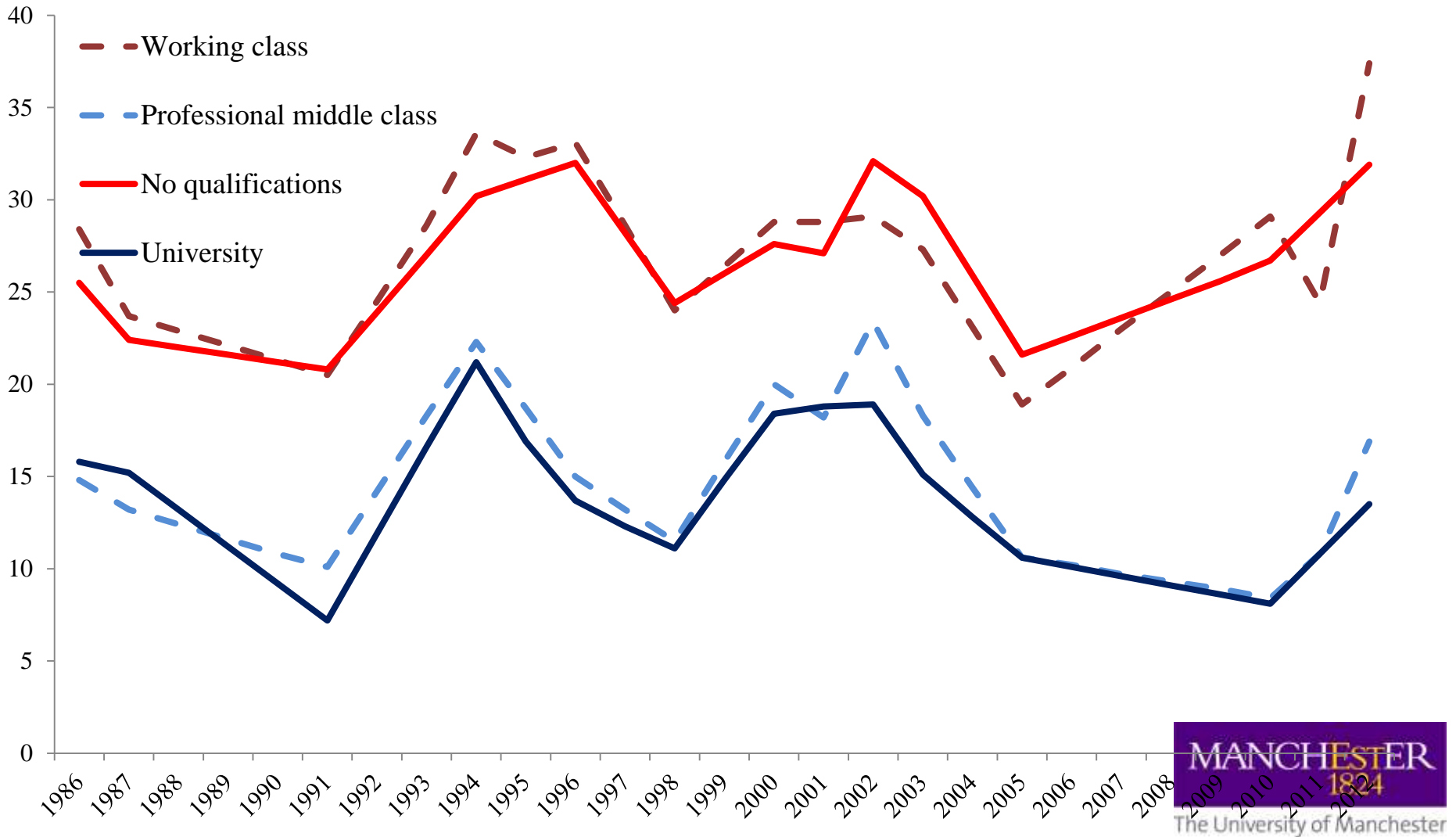
The fuel (2): Value divides: Share expressing opposition to marriage with Asian minorities by birth cohort and education

Predicted probabilities: Mind relative marry Asian

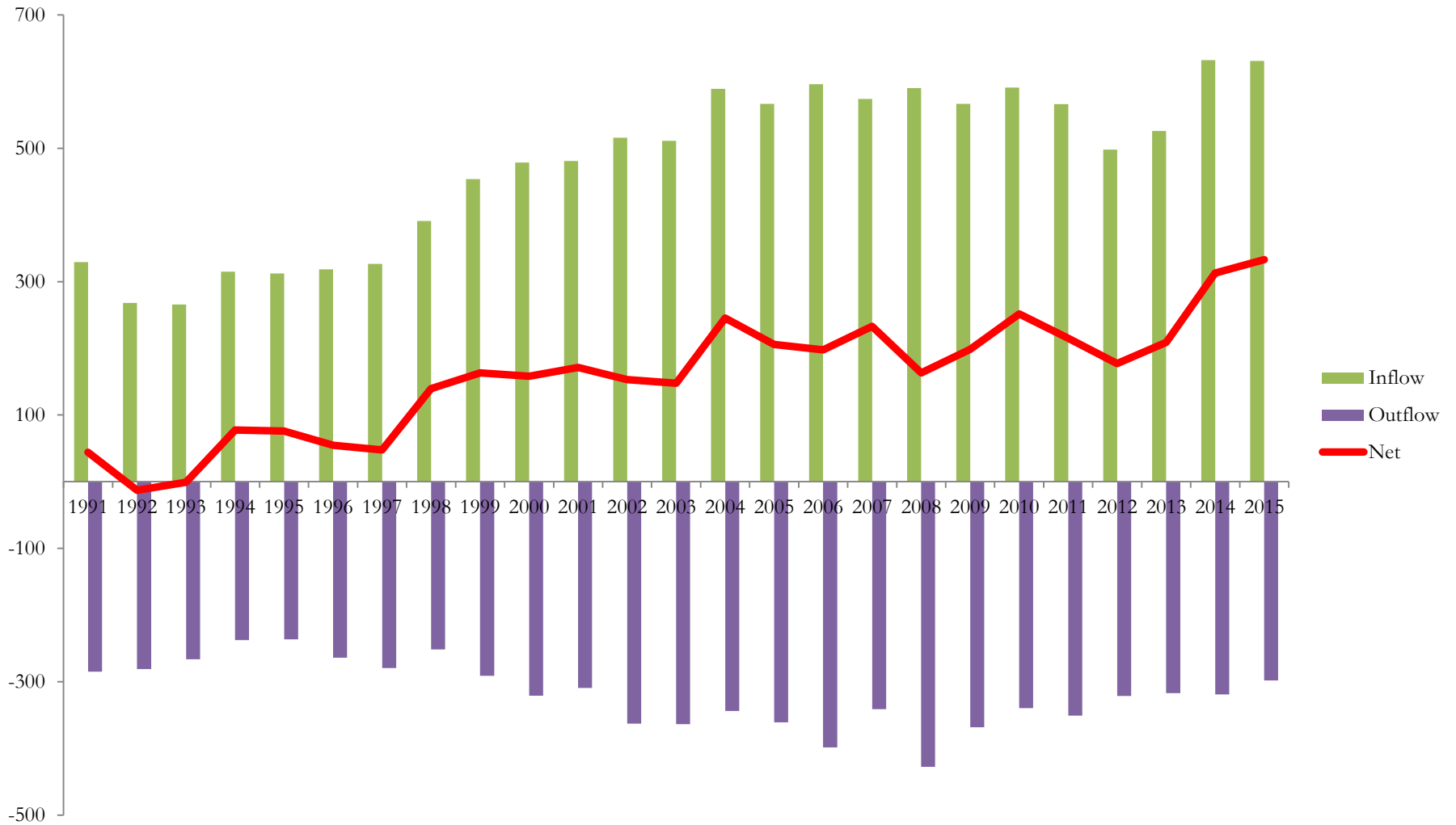


The fuel (2) Value divides:

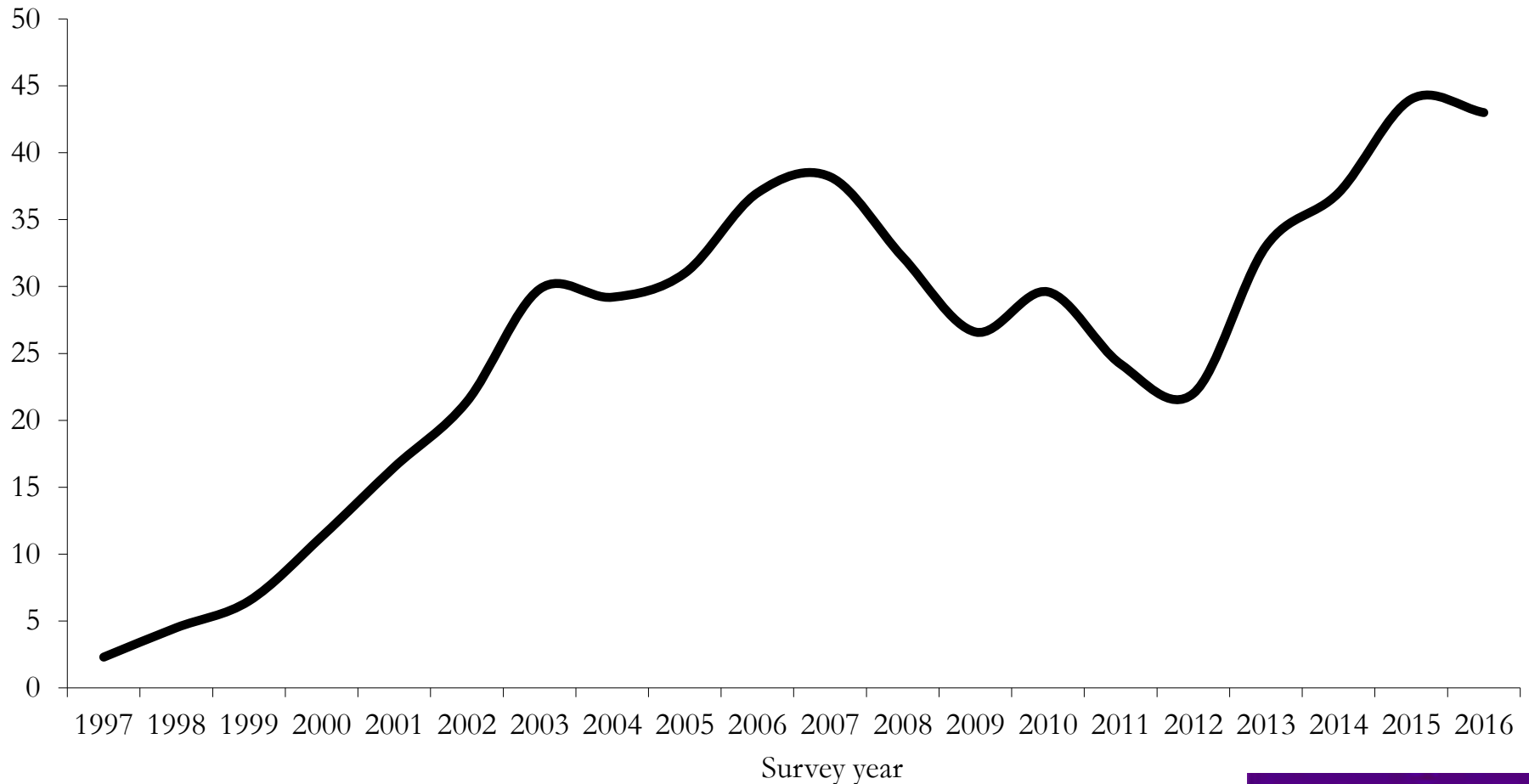
Share of voters who strongly agree that “I have no say in politics”



The spark: sharp rise in immigration levels from early 2000s...

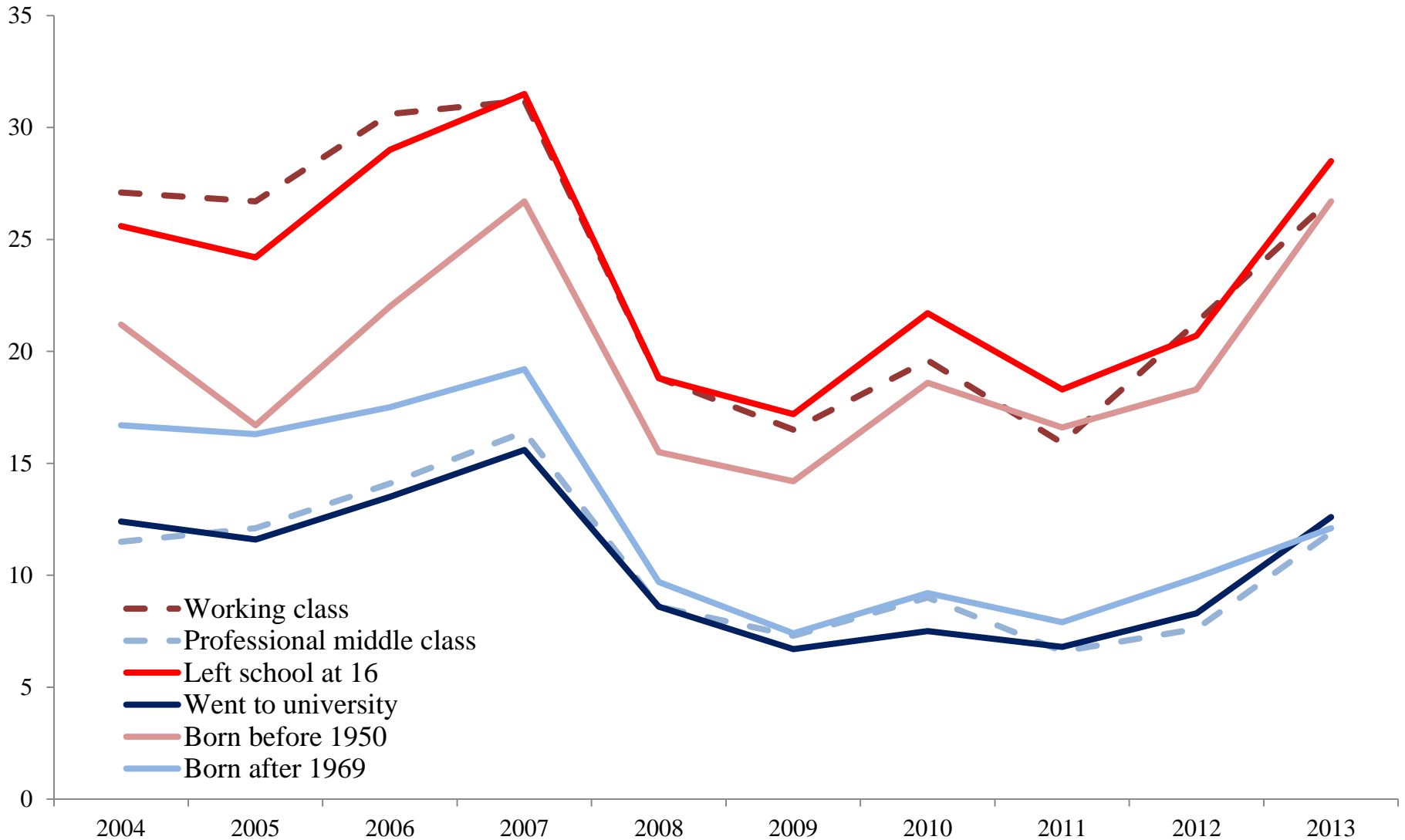


...leading to sharp sustained increase in public concern about the issue...

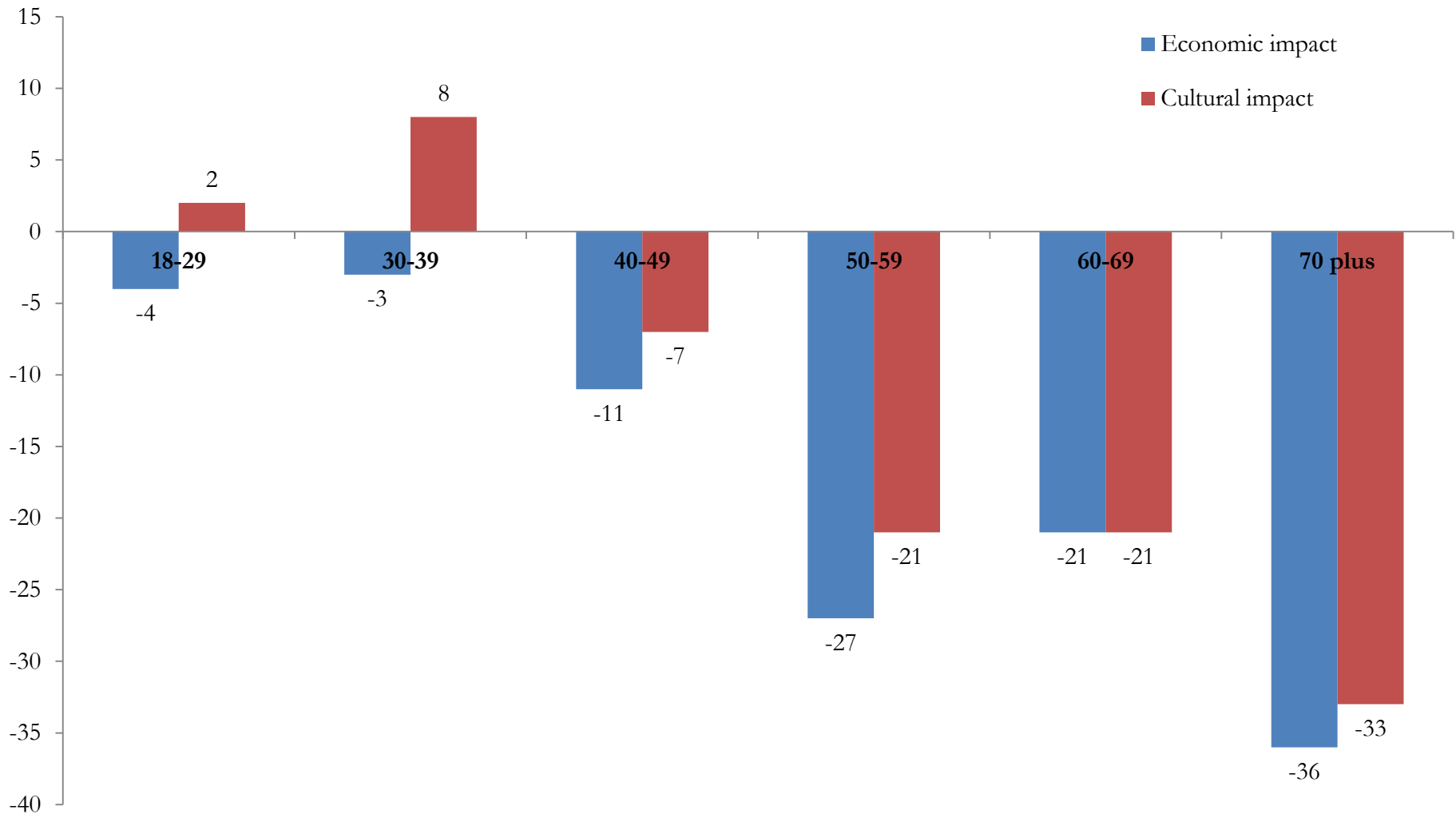


Source: MORI "Most important problems" series

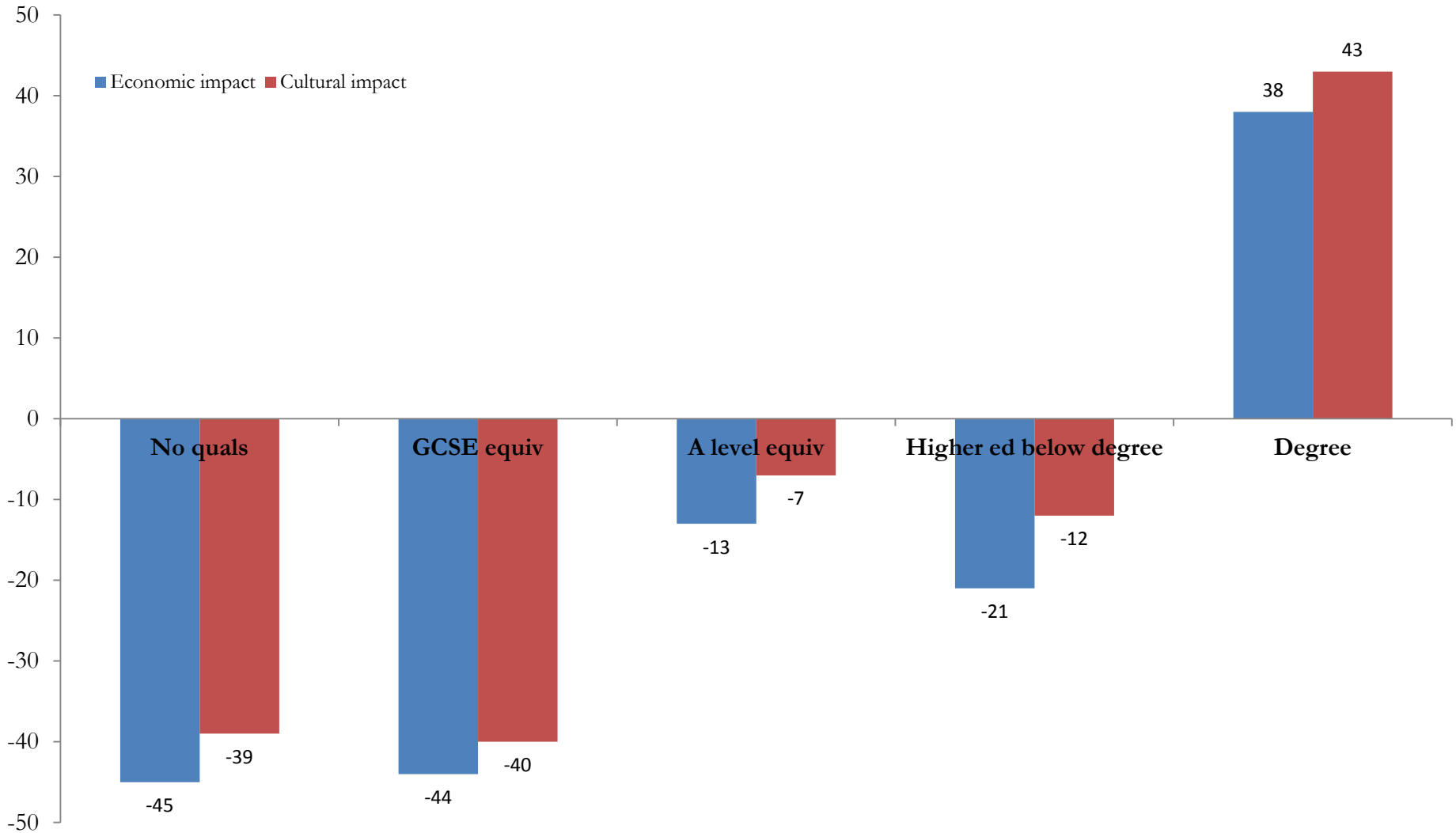
...but with strong social polarisation in attention paid to immigration...



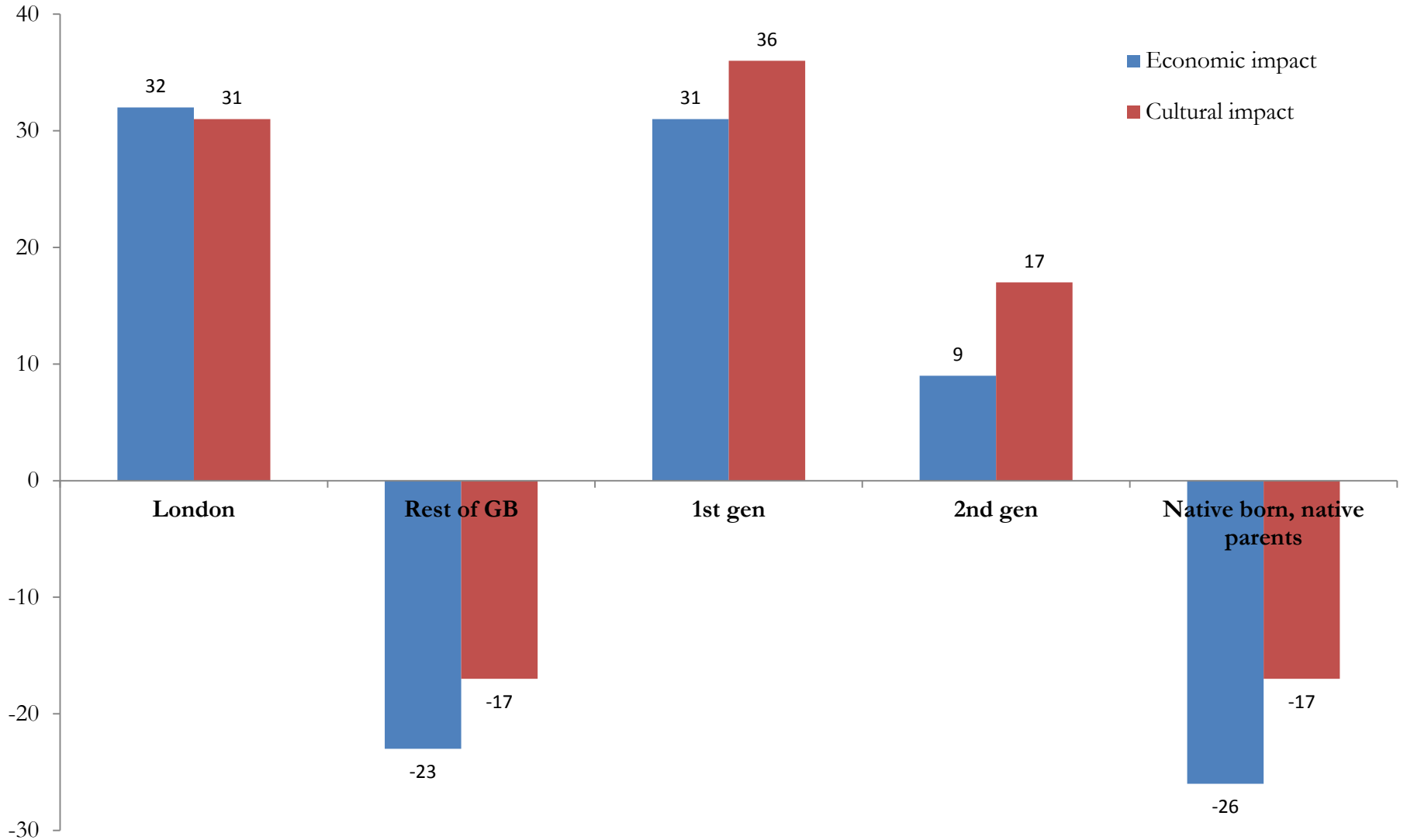
...and in views about the impact of immigration— by (1) age



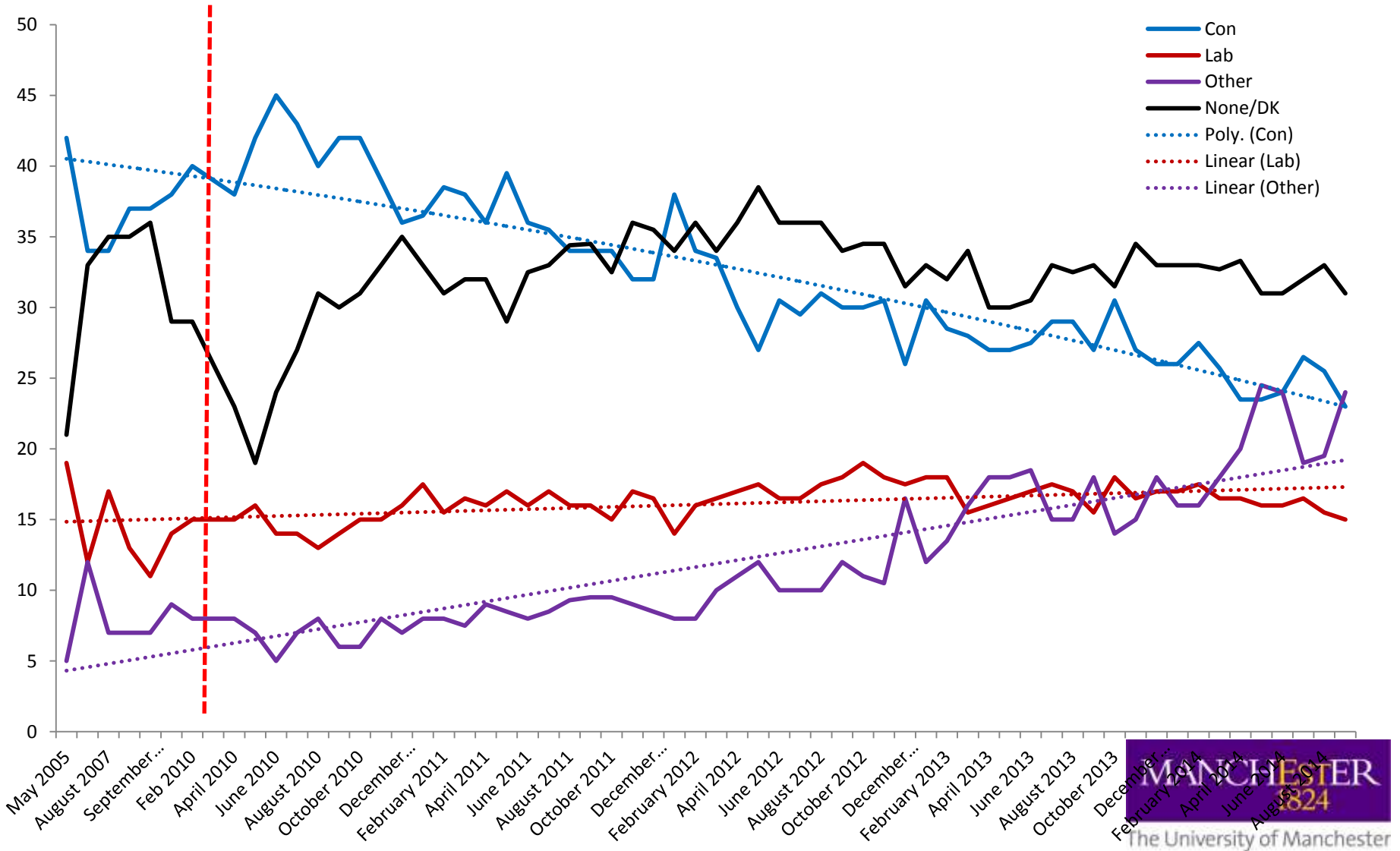
(2) Education level...



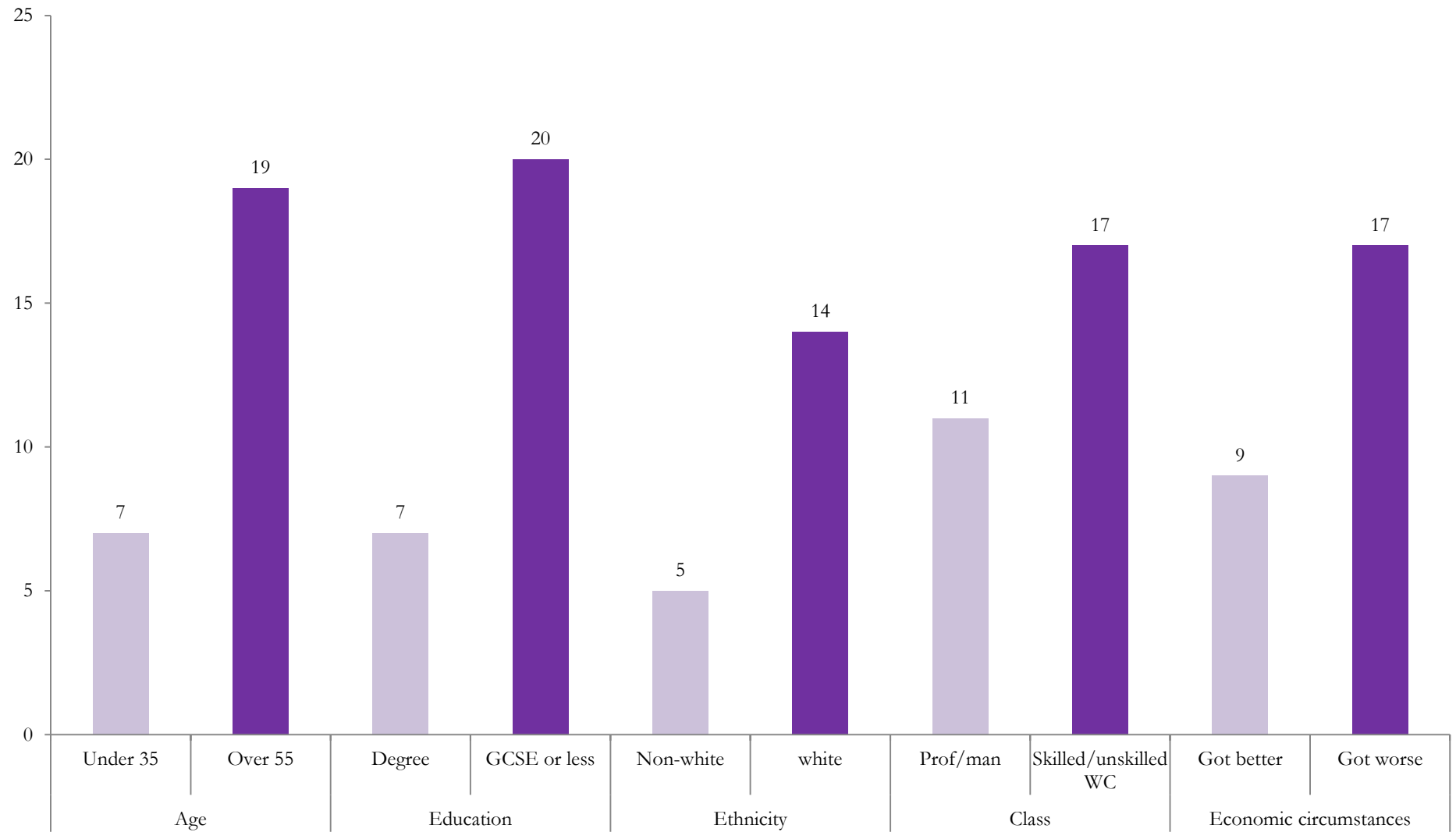
...(3) location and heritage



(3) The fire – party best on immigration

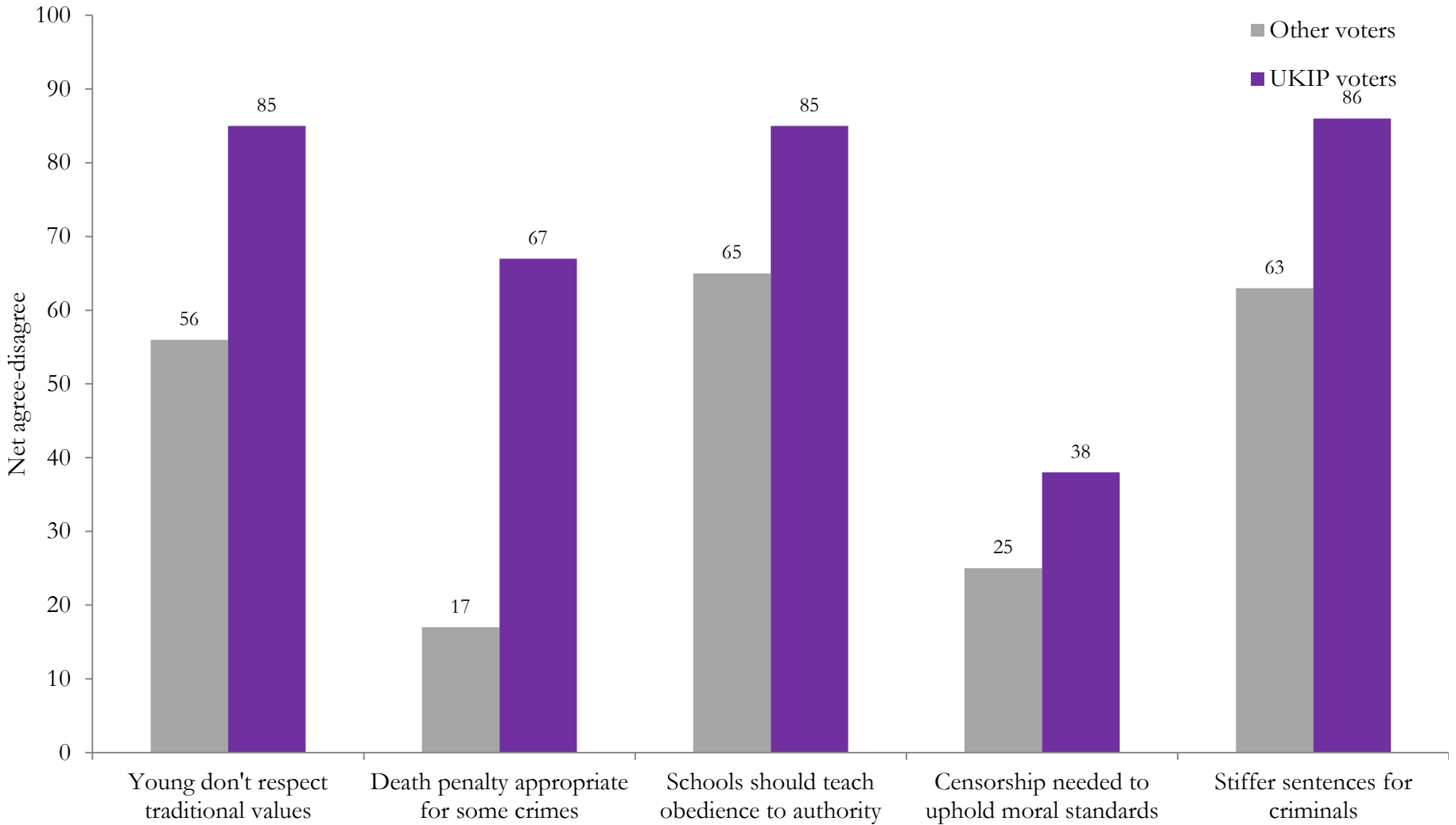


(3) The fire: UKIP mobilise “left behind” social groups...

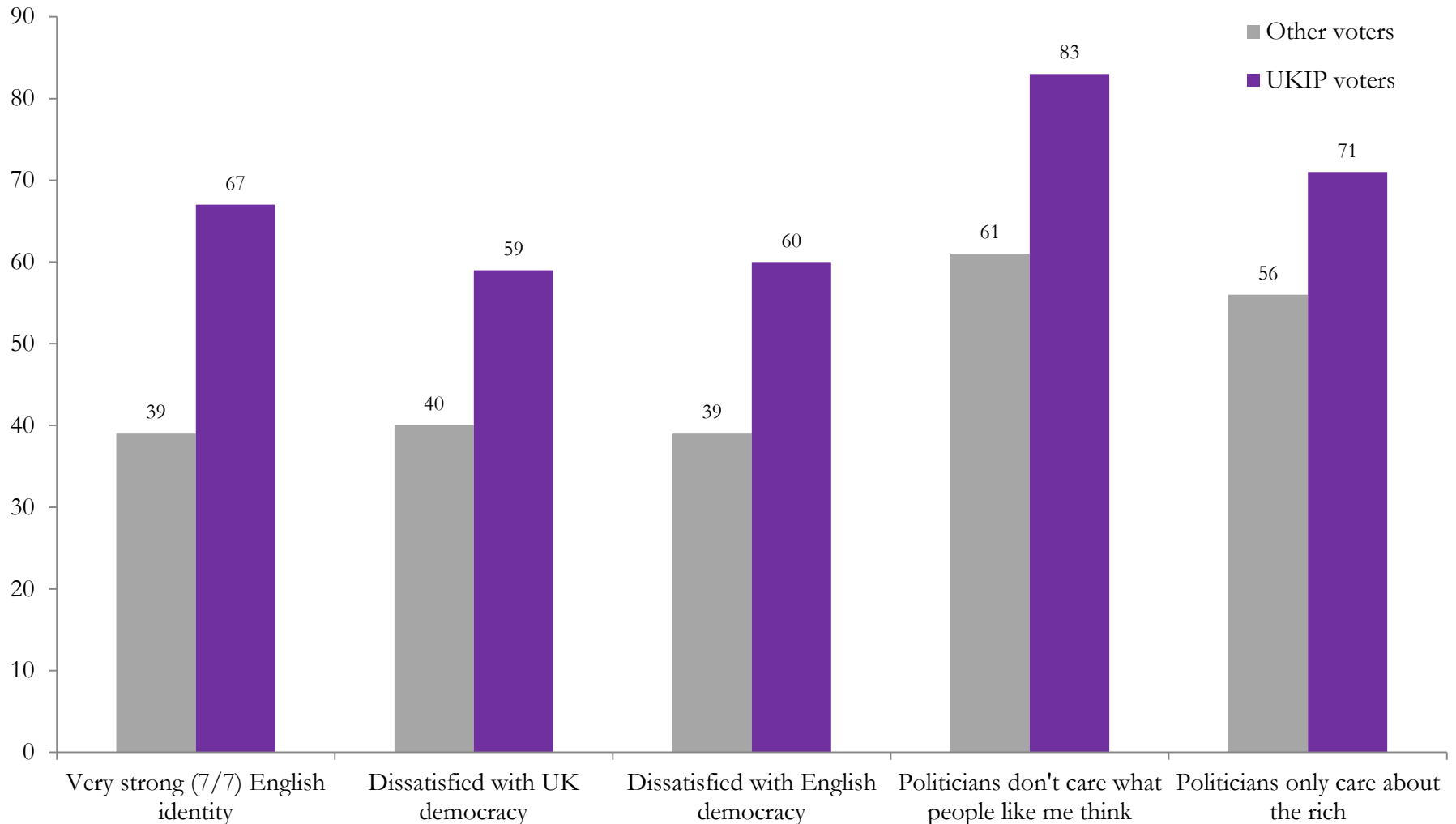


Source: British Election Study/YouGov “Continuous Monitoring Study” 2011-14

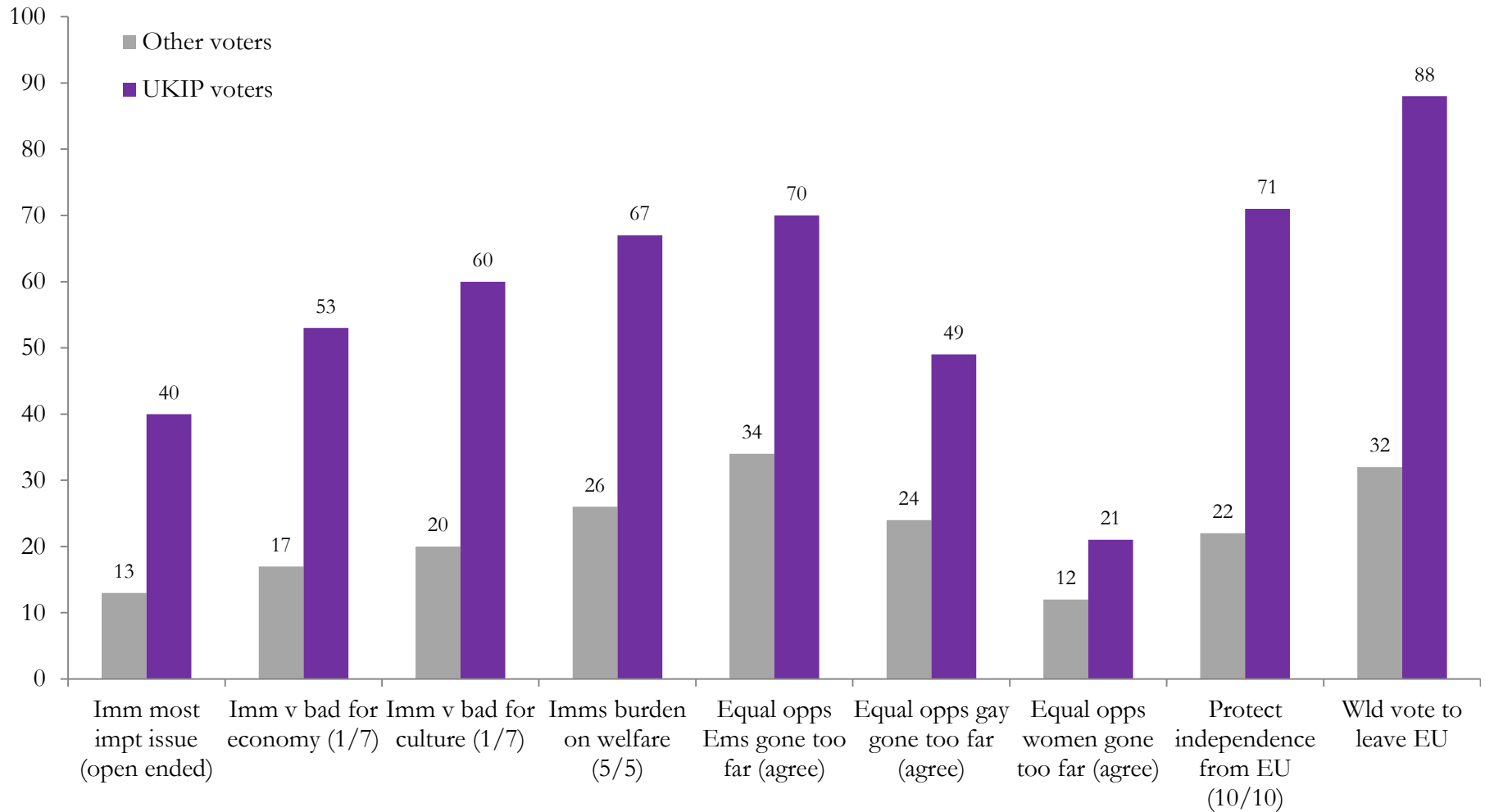
...with distinct authoritarian attitudes....



....who are strongly attached to Englishness but disaffected from politics...



...and very angry about/opposed to immigration, liberal social change & the EU (which they associate with both)



Similar dynamics elsewhere in Europe

- Netherlands:
 - Fortuyn/Wilders pioneered the “defend liberalism from Islam” message; Radical right now leads polls after collapse of centre-left in austerity coalition
- Germany:
 - WWII legacy seemed to make radical right politics beyond the pale. But refugee crisis & emergence of AfD have changed that
- Sweden:
 - Another countries with strong egalitarian social values. Sweden Democrats were marginal and stigmatised, but have surged following refugee crisis
- In many other countries, radical right established and in strong position to gain from political crises over immigration or minority integration

The impact of the radical right on integration

- Electoral disruption
 - Greater uncertainty about voting patterns, higher electoral risk
- Agenda disruption
 - Harder to focus on non-migration policy areas
- Identity polarisation
 - Increased framing of politics as about “us” vs “them”
- Policy racialisation
 - Housing, welfare, investment etc seen in terms of identity groups

Discussion: You are the special adviser...

- You work in the Home Affairs ministry of an established EU democracy, facing two pressing issues on migration politics
- (i) Your government, which has experienced rising migration from inside and outside EU in recent years, is being pressed to respond to a major refugee crisis
 - Public opinion on immigration is negative – polls suggest voters currently oppose major action, feeling migration is already too high
 - But many, particularly on the left, also see helping the refugees as a moral imperative
- A new radical right party has grown rapidly by mobilising opposition to immigration, hostility to new minorities, and anxieties about diversity and integration
 - This party is taking many votes from your minister's party and looks set to hold the balance of power after the election
- Your minister wants to set out a new approach to deal with these twin pressures – “We must act”

Problem 1: The refugees crisis

- Major influx into Europe via hazardous routes
 - Supporters of action point to moral imperative, need to support front-line countries, security and stability risks from neglect
 - Opponents point to economic costs, integration problems, lack of support from other countries
- The minister would ideally like an approach which:
 - Maximises the support provided to refugees...
 - ...but does not inflame public hostility or further encourage the radical right...
 - ...and limits economic risks and political conflict at the European level

Problem 2: the radical right threat

- Election due in a year. Polling suggests radical right will hold balance of power
 - The minister wants options on how to respond to this new political competitor
- Issues to consider:
 - Electoral competition: how to appeal to voters attracted by radical right?
 - Messaging: criticise, engage or ignore?
 - Political strategy: bring into govt or impose “cordon sanitaire”?
 - Policy: Concessions to radical concerns? “Red lines”? How to defend immigration approach?