

FPTP & Inequality

Part II

The hidden evils of 'First Past The Post'

How FPTP leads to greater
inequality

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2022



Why are social outcomes of **Free-market Fanatics** so poor?

Are they just evil?



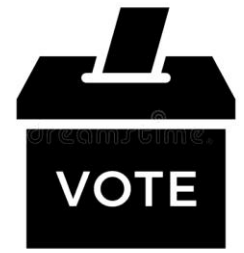
Verdict



Are they simply more right wing / capitalist?



Or is it something to do the nature of their electoral systems?



Two schools of 'electoral system' thought...

Electoral system

How it works

Outcome

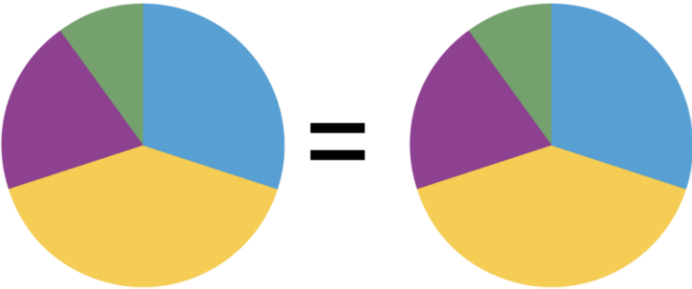
Users

Proportional Representation (PR)

- Parties get seats in proportion to the number of votes they get
- If a party gets 15% of the vote, it gets (roughly) 15% of seats

VOTER SUPPORT

SEATS IN PARLIAMENT



- Norway
- Denmark
- Sweden
- Finland
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Netherlands
- Austria
- Germany
- Belgium
- Switzerland

versus

Majoritarian or 'First Past the Post' (FPTP) systems

- Parties win seats when they get the most votes in a constituency
- Votes for losing parties in a constituency do not count
- Normally means the winning party represents a MINORITY of votes

WINNER TAKES ALL

LOSERS GET NOTHING



- France*
- UK
- USA
- Australia**
- Canada

* France has a unique majoritarian system in Europe with two 'rounds' of elections; technically first past the post but outcomes much more like PR
 **Strictly speaking, Australia has an older 'AV' system for parliamentary elections but outcomes are much more in line with FPTP than PR



The hidden evils of FPTP

I. FPTP and narrow democracy

II. FPTP: a 2-horse race

III. PR: a culture of compromise

IV. FPTP and its bias to the right

V. The Data's verdict: time-out for FPTP

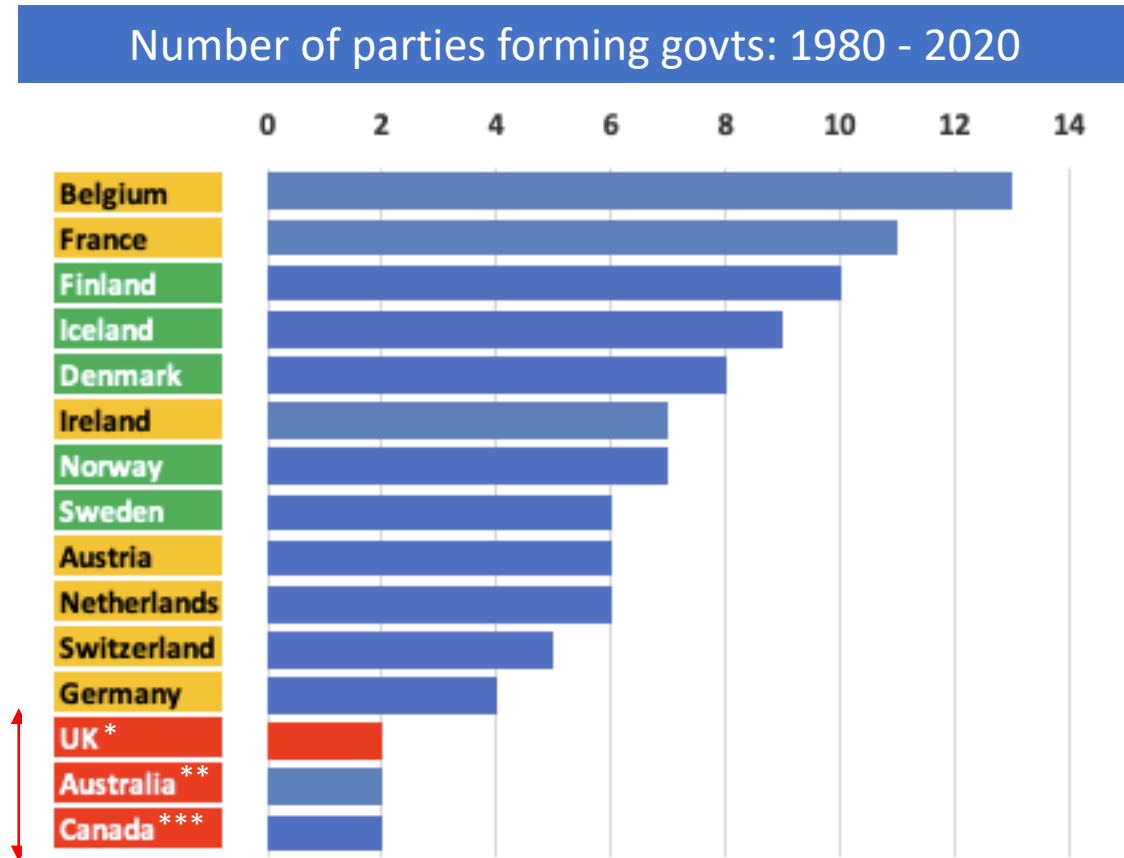
V. Conclusion



Observations

- **Free-market Fanatics** all use the FPTP system
- All three rank amongst the bottom 5 countries for the fewest parties forming part of a government, average 3
- **Nordic Nobles** and **Mainland Moderates** on average have voted in 7 different parties to power

Key takeaway - PR allows more parties to have a say in power; FPTP allows for fewer



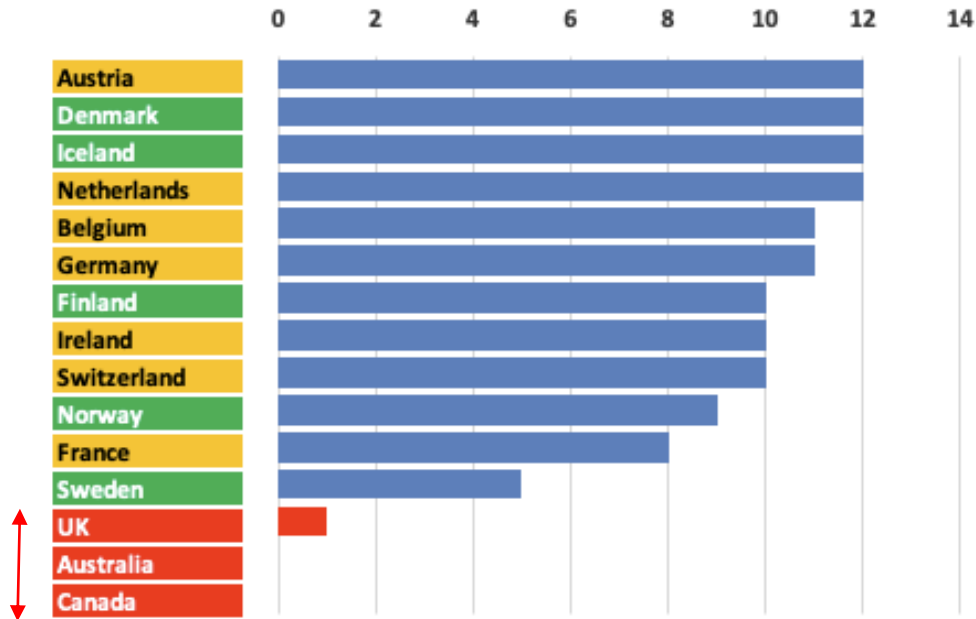
Source: ParlGov Project

* Technically a third party was in govt in 2010 and 2015 – the libdems but a very small majority and little impact

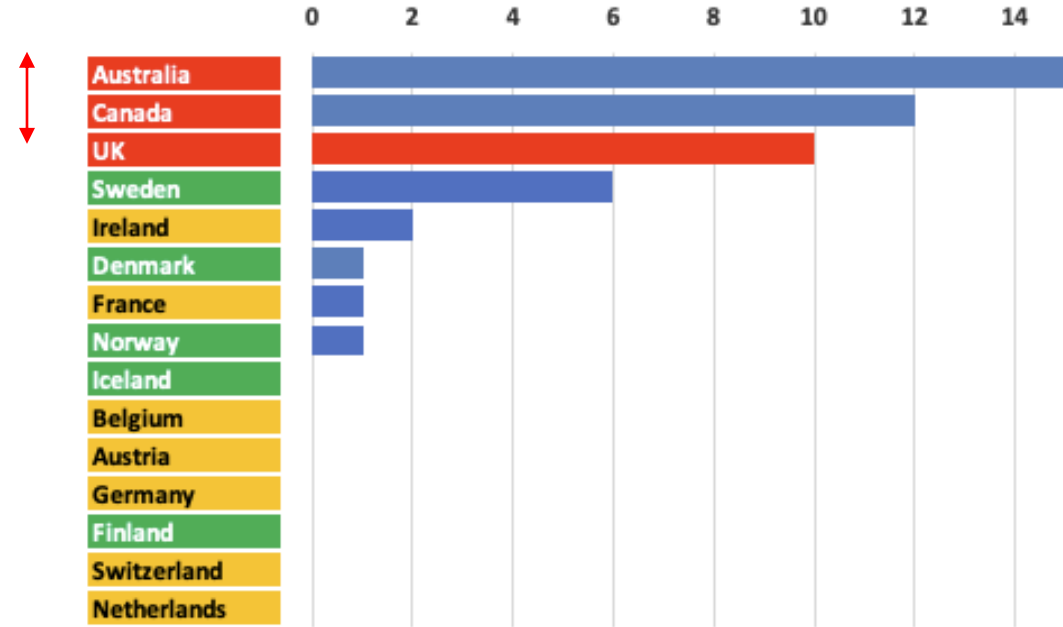
** There have been 5 discreet parties in govt but 4 are part of a stable coalition that markets itself as one party; the other is the Labour Party

*** Canada has had 3 parties in govt but the one conservative party has replaced the other to re-establish a two party system

Coalitions with 2+ parties: 1979 - 2020



Single party govts: 1979 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

- **Nordic Nobles** and **Mainland Moderates**, that mostly use PR systems, are dominated by coalition governments

- **Free-market Fanatics** on the other hand are dominated by single party governments

Key takeaway - Multi-party government the norm under PR; very rare with FPTP



European coalitions normally have 3 to 4 parties

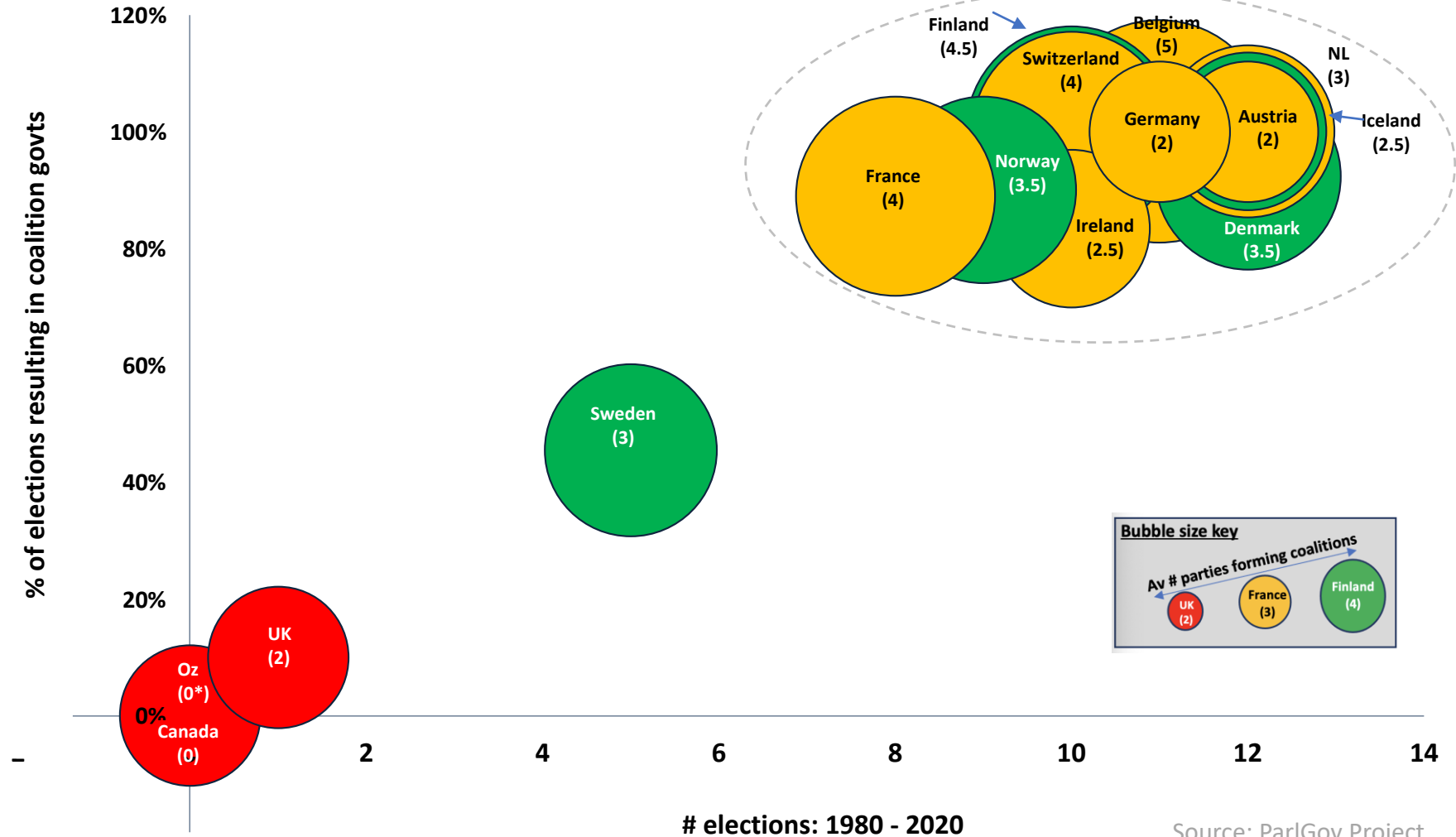
FPTP and narrow democracy

Observations

- Coalitions with 3 to 4 parties sharing power is the established norm for **Nordic Nobles** and **Mainland Moderates**
- Free-market Fanatics** are clearly distinct from the European 'pack'; Canada, not on chart since it has not had a single coalition arrangement
- UK is very obvious outlier even compared to Oz

Key take-away – 40 years of outcomes in Europe shaped by multi-party decision making

Coalition govts: 1979 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

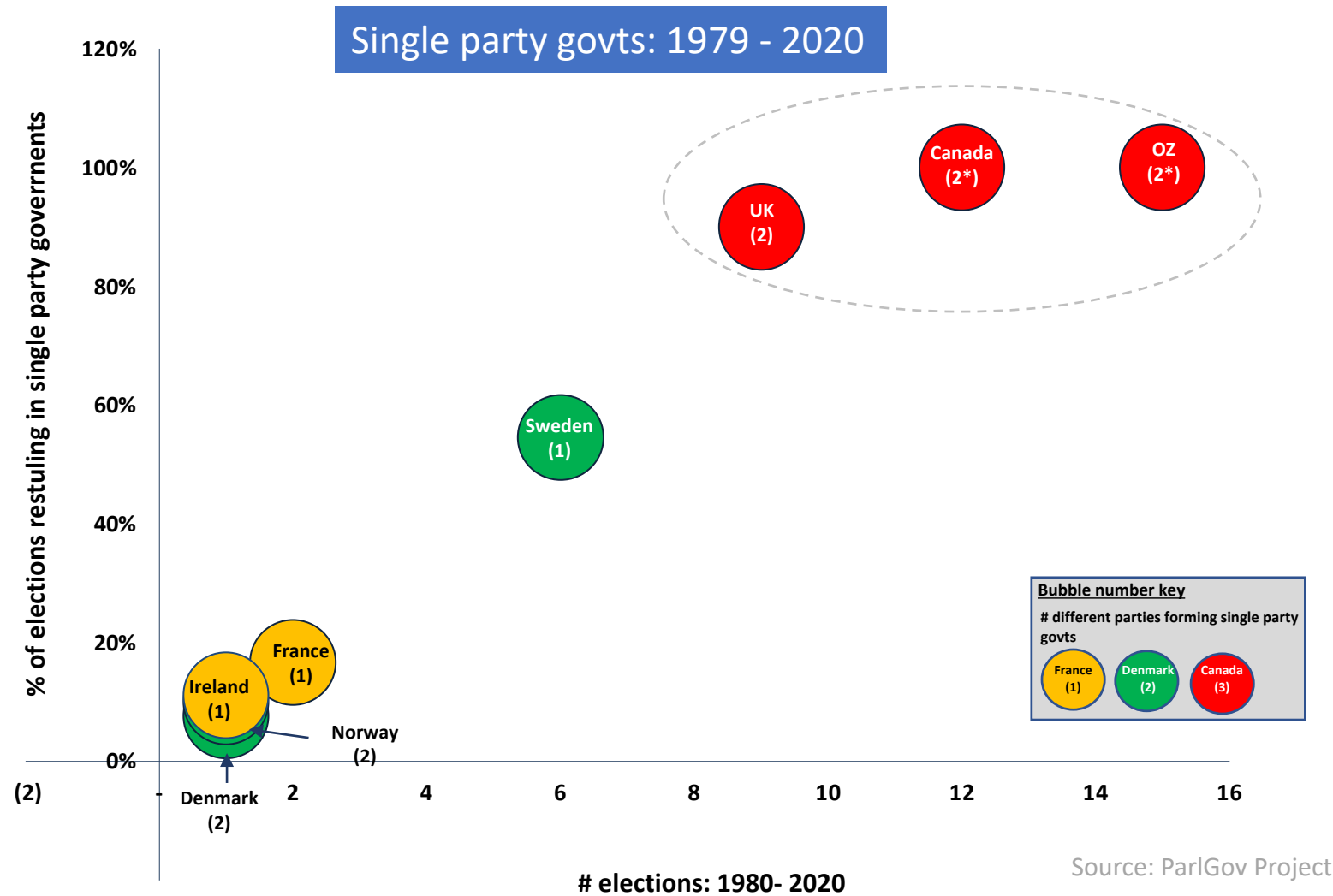
* Australia's 'Coalition' although comprising 5 parties operates consistently as if 1 party

Whereas FPTP leads to single party governments...

FPTP and narrow democracy

- True FPTP **Free-market Fanatics** states UK and Canada have returned single party governments in all but 1 election since 1979
- Since 1980, few parties have held power in **Free-market Fanatics**; 2 in UK and 3 in Canada, all with single party majority governments
- Instances of single party rule amongst PR countries very rare (Sweden the outlier with just over ½ of govts run by a single party; NB minority govts)

Key takeaway - 40 years of outcomes shaped by single party decision making for **Free-market Fanatics**



* Canada has had 3 different parties in single party govts but one replaced the other (the Conservative Party of Canada merged with the Progressive Conservatives) and Australia's 'Coalition' although comprising 5 parties operates consistently as if 1 party (classically 'adversarial')

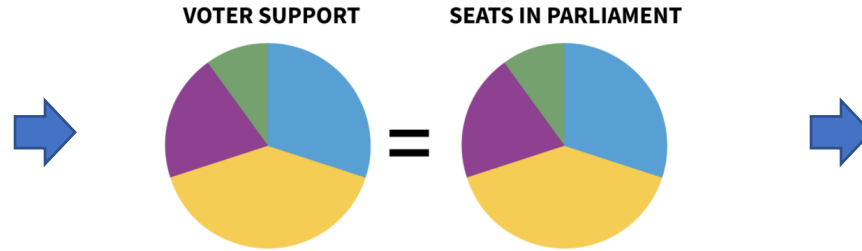


Electoral system

Outcome

Conclusion

Proportional Representation (PR)



- Lots of parties sharing power;
- Coalitions the norm



Majoritarian or 'First Past the Post' (FPTP) systems



- Few parties in power
- Single party majority government the norm

So what?

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II. FPTP: a 2-horse race

III. PR: a culture of compromise

IV. FPTP and its bias to the right

V. The Data's verdict: time-out for FPTP

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Parties dominating power in the Netherlands, Germany and the UK between 1979 and 2020

4 parties govern in the NL...

and 4 parties in Germany too...

but only 2 in the UK?



NL Freedom Party (VVD) – right of centre / conservatives



Christian Democrat Appeal (CDA) – centre-right conservative



Democrats 66 (D66) – centre-left social democrats



NL Labour (PvdA) – left of centre labour party of Netherland



Christian Democratic Union & Christian Social Union – centre-right party (party of Helmut Kohl and Angela Merkle)



Free Democrats (FDP) – centre-right conservative



Social Democratic Party – centre-left social democratic party (party of Gerard Schroder)



German Green Party – a centre-left party focused on environmental issues



Conservative & Unionist party – right of centre / conservatives (Thatcher, Major, Cameron, May, Johnston and Truss)

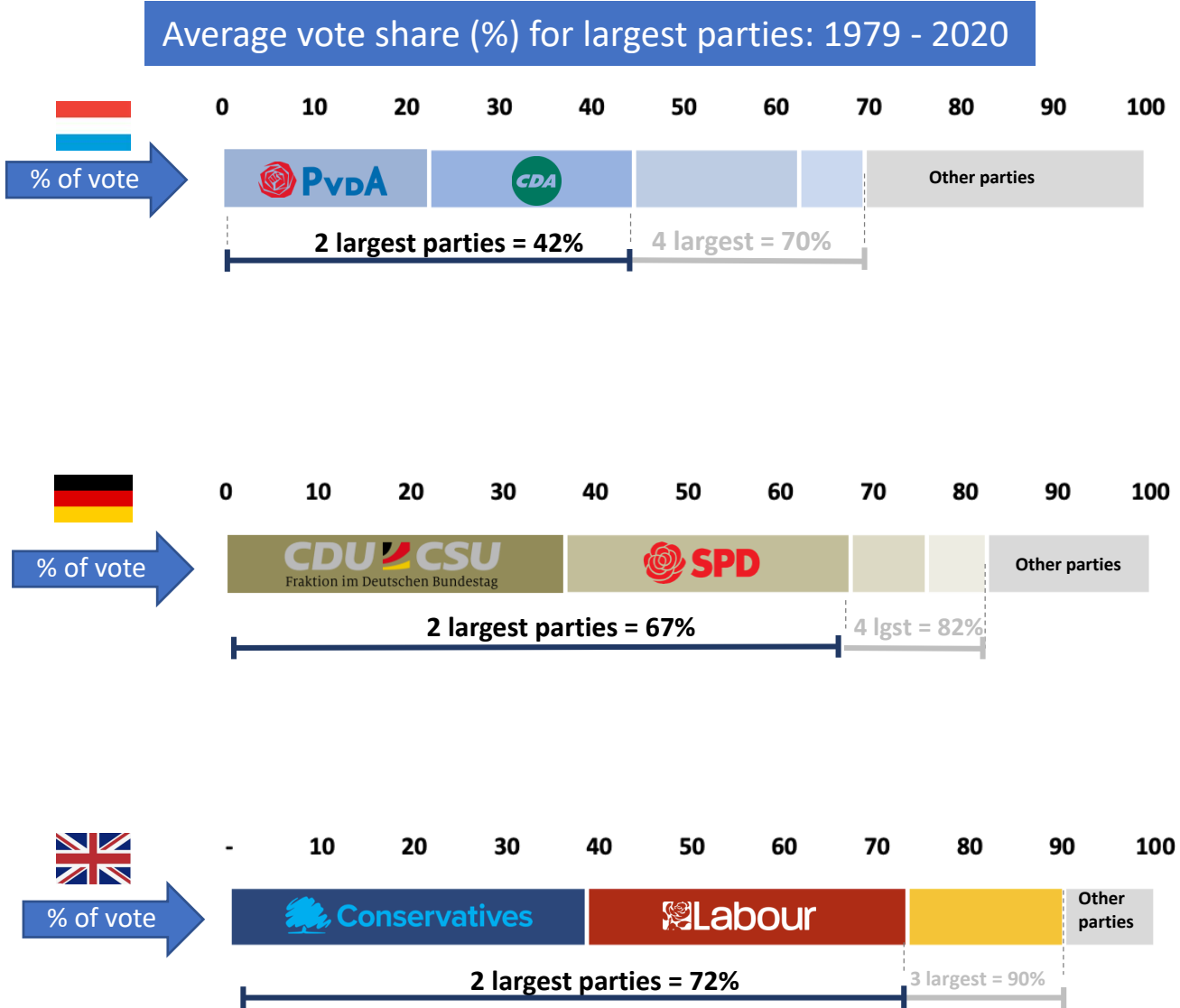


Labour Party – centre-left labour party (Blair and Brown)

Key takeaway – 5 parties to the right and 5 to the left – pretty balanced so far



- Since 1979, on average the 2 largest UK parties account for 7 in every 10 votes cast in UK elections
- Top 2 in UK attract more votes than the top 4 in the NL combined
- Vote share for top two in Germany similar to UK



Key takeaway - 2 party domination in terms of votes not unique to the UK

Source: ParlGov Project



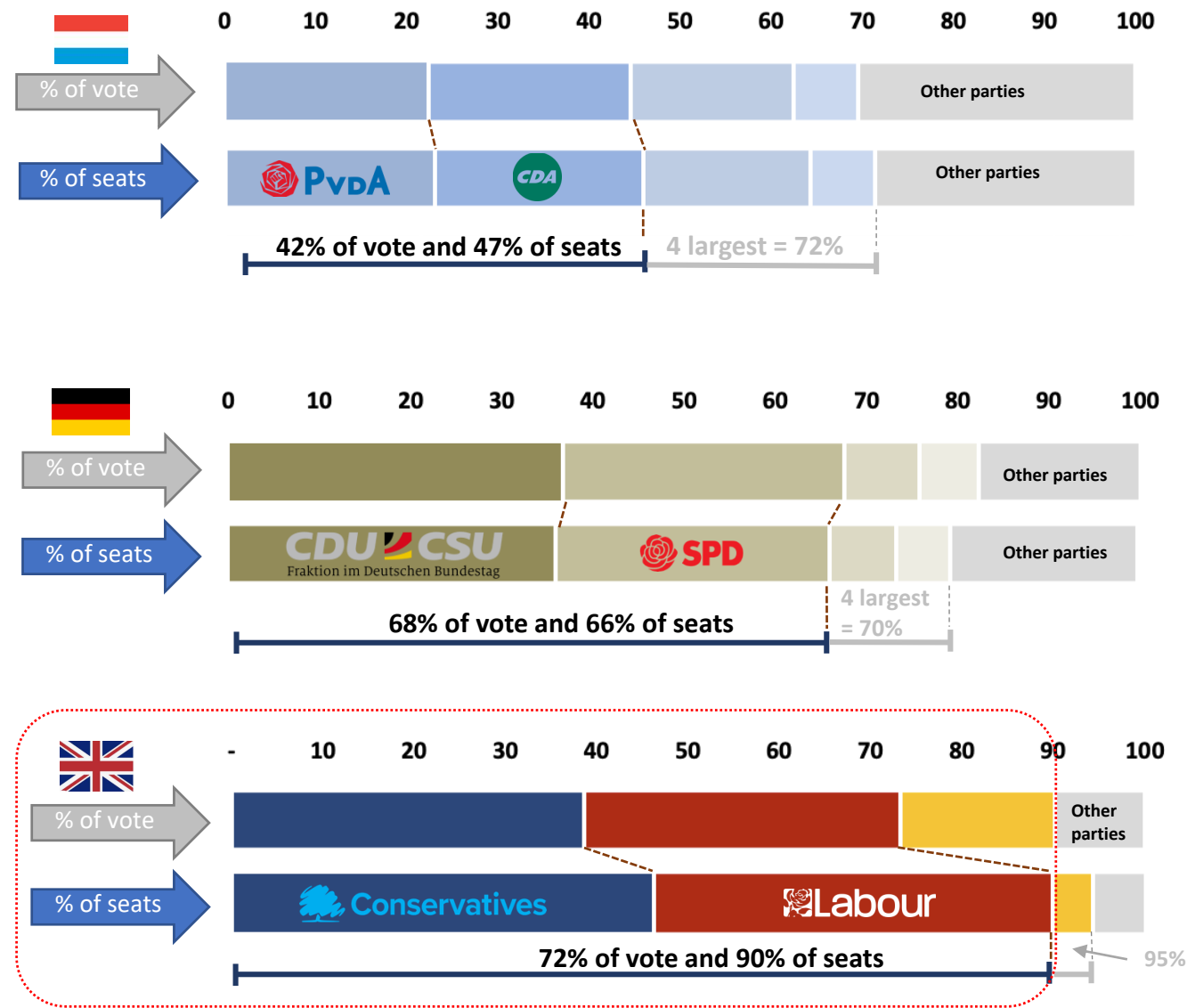
But dominance in UK even bigger in terms of seats...

FPTP: a two-horse race

- In the NL and Germany, seat share much more in line with vote share; this is what PR is all about!
- Instead under FPTP, 'winner takes all' arithmetic kicks in when vote shares > 30%; the tipping point when the vote to seat ratio massively advantages larger parties
- 70% of the vote for the UK's top two parties leads to a staggering 90% of parliamentary seats

▪ **Key takeaway** - UK enjoys a highly geared vote to seat % leverage (1:1.25) unlike NL and Germany where it is largely 1:1

Average vote share (%) for largest parties: 1980 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

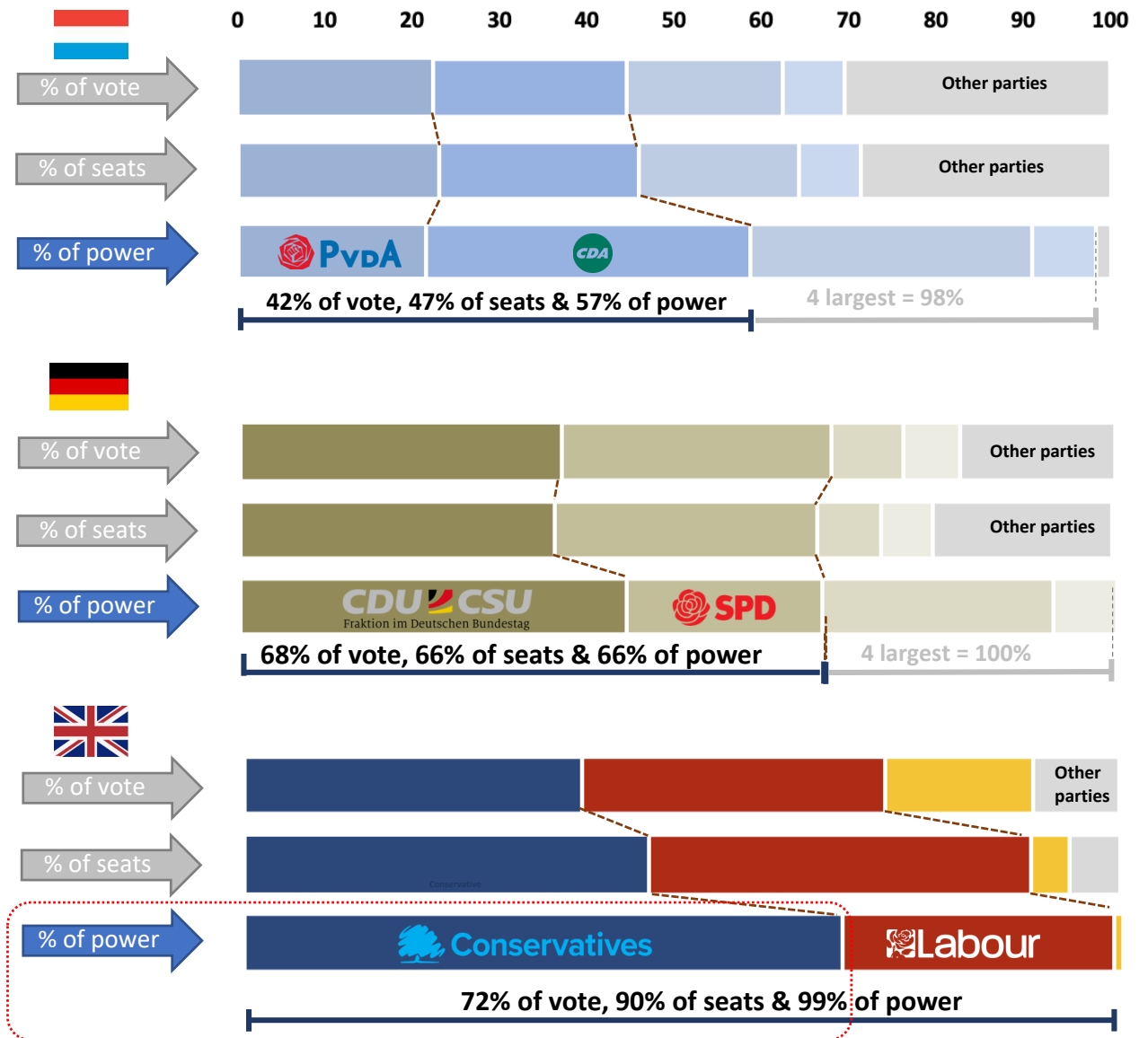
And the Tories share of power is even more exaggerated...

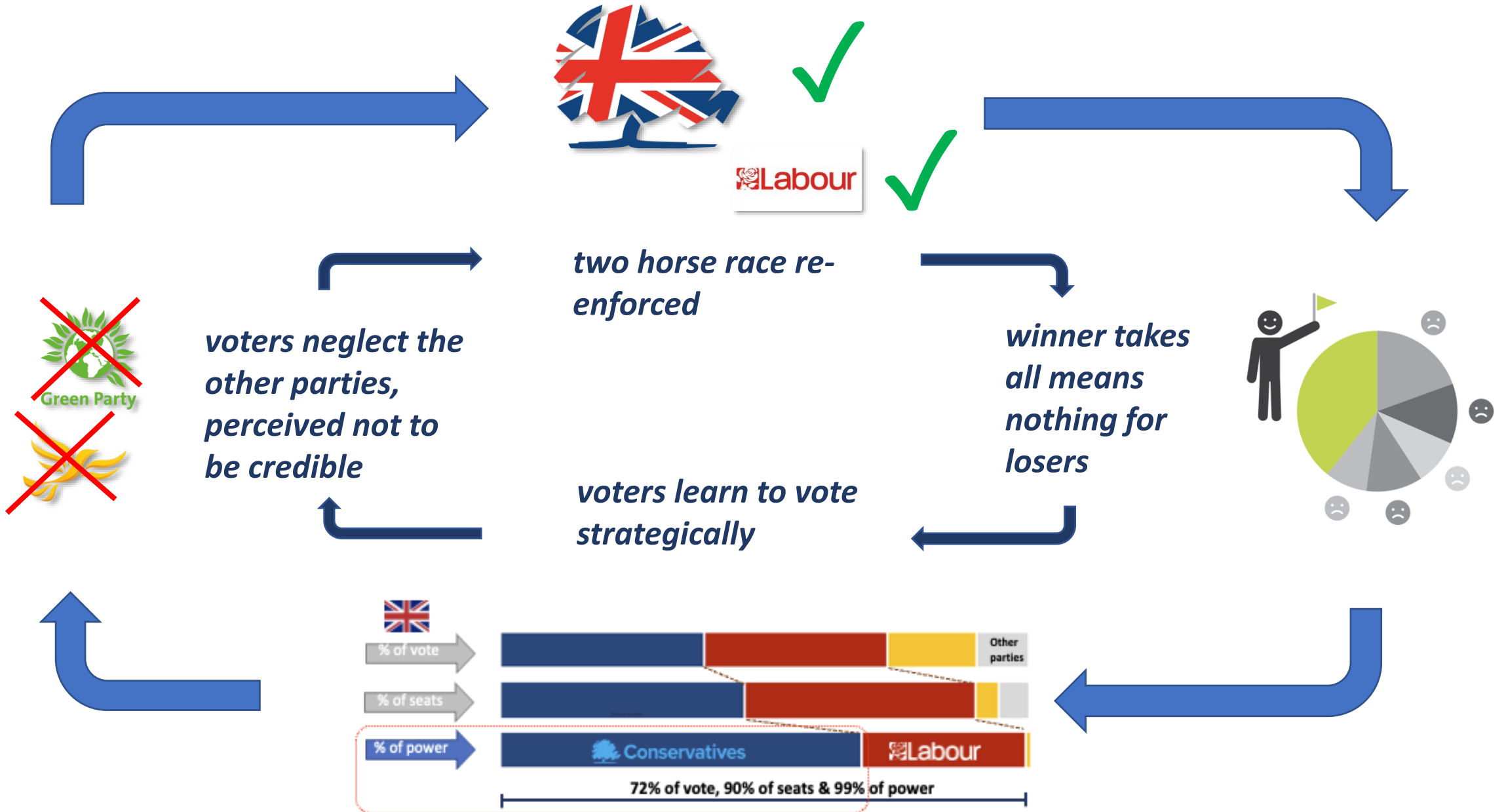
FPTP: a two-horse race

- In both NL and Germany, weighted power shares* for top 2 remains largely in line with vote / seat share
- But UK's seat to power exaggeration is even greater with 99% of weighted power* since 1979 held by top 2
- The standout political force of 'democratic' Europe of the last 40 years are the UK's Tories with 68% of total government power

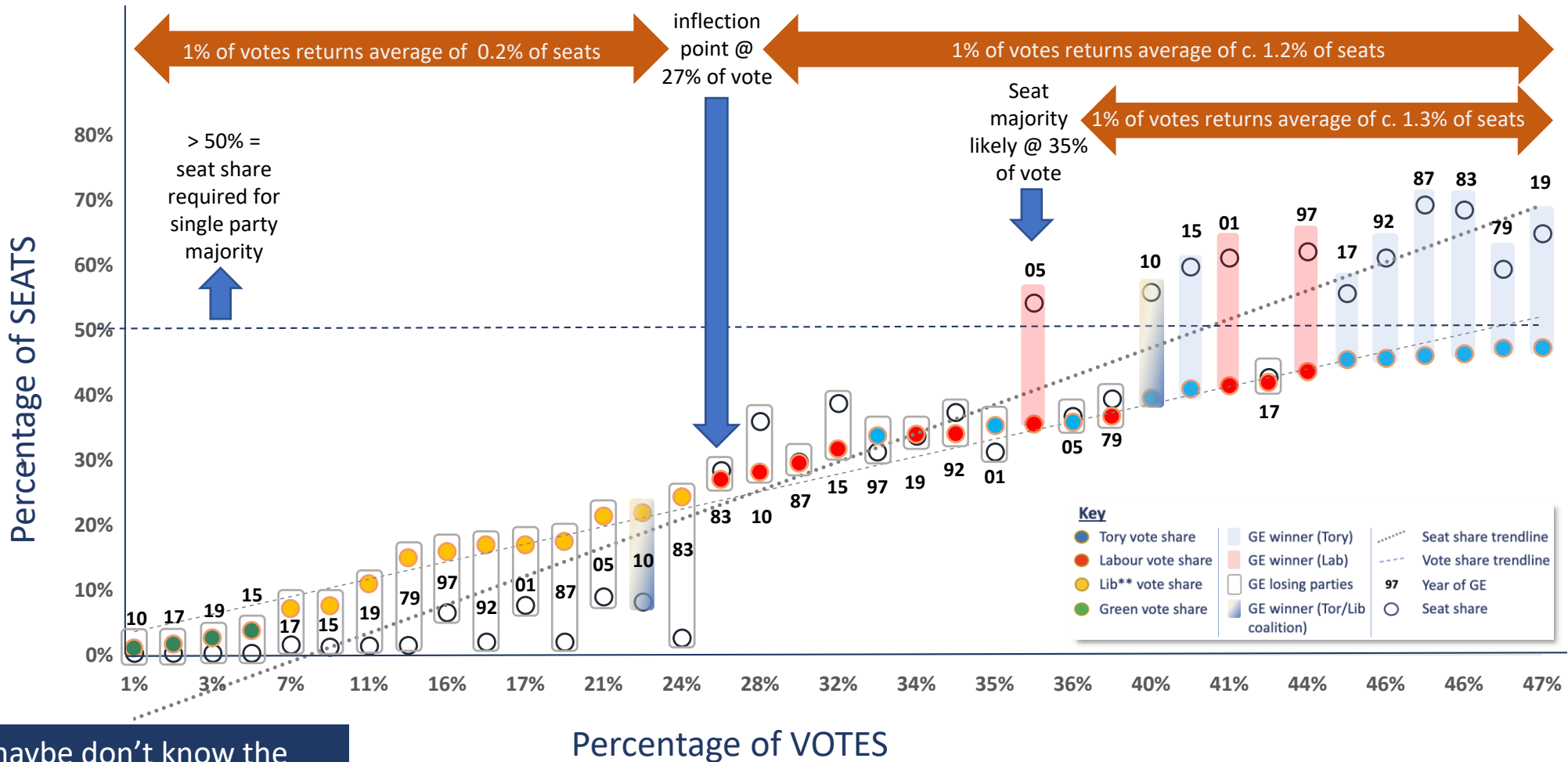
■ **Key takeaway** - largest parties in the UK enjoy both exaggerated shares from vote to seat and seat to power; PR for PR countries means PR...

Average vote share (%) for largest parties: 1979 - 2020





Vote to seat ratios of 4 main UK parties: GE results 1979 to 2019 across English seats*



Key takeaway – they maybe don't know the maths, but the data shows they know how it works, resulting always in a 2 horse race

*Results in England alone align with each GE outcome although sizes of vote / seat shares were slightly different; focussing on England this way draws out the performance of the 4 main UK parties (achieving at least 1 seat) in each GE over the 40 years to 2019

** 'Lib' regroups the 'Liberals' that stood in 1979, the 'Alliance' (Liberals & SDP) in 1983 and 1987, and the 'Liberal Democrats' from 1992

- voter anticipation of FPTP's 'winner take all' mechanism is what narrows FPTP to a 2 horse race
- PR countries produce PR outcomes allowing at least 4 'viable' or 'electable' parties to thrive and share power



So what?

The hidden evils of FPTP

I. FPTP and narrow democracy

II. FPTP: a 2-horse race

III. PR: a culture of compromise & temperance

IV. FPTP and its bias to the right

V. The Data's verdict: time-out for FPTP

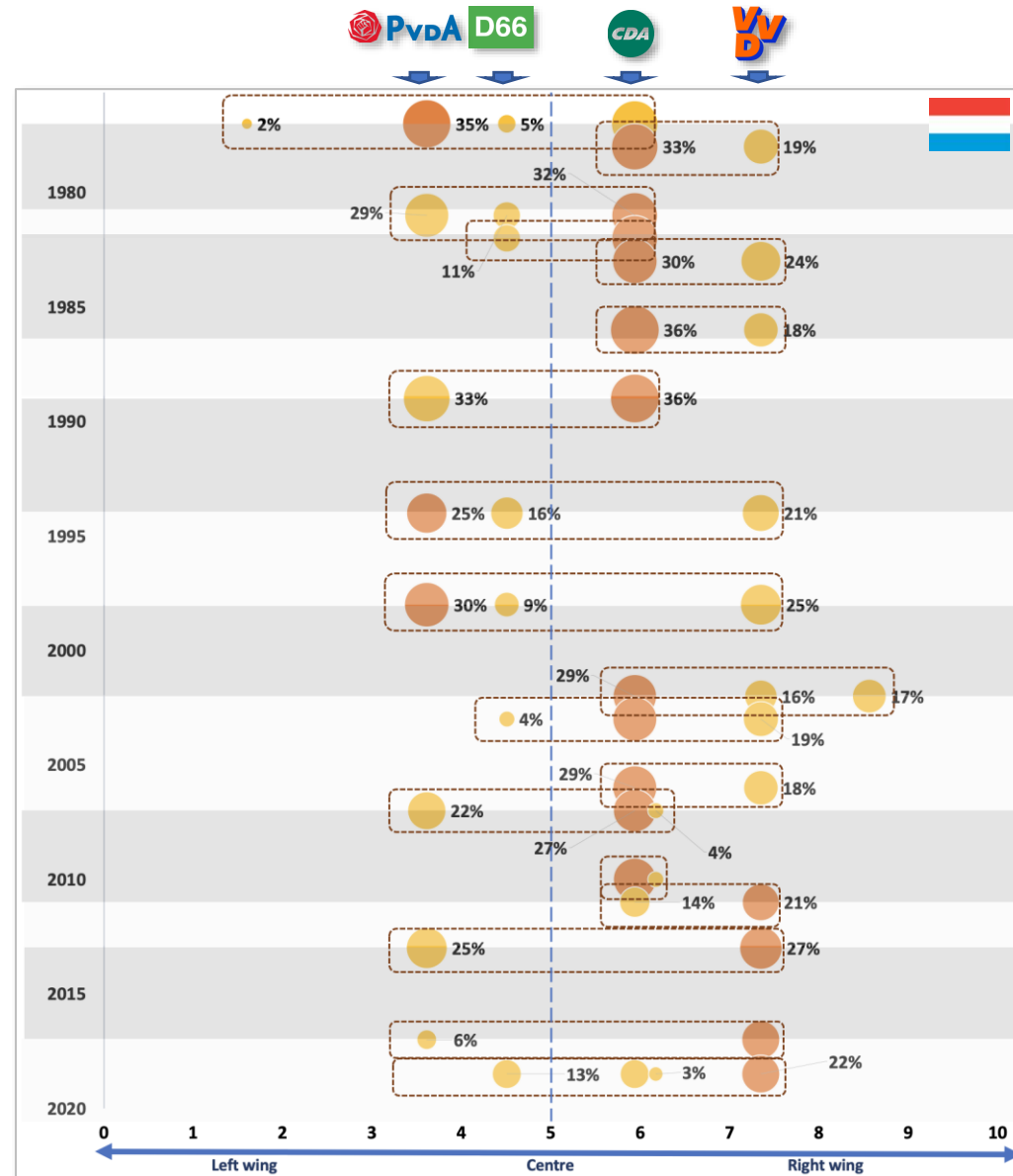
V. Conclusion



- Because vote share = seat share, far less likely that any party achieves a majority; the biggest seat share any largest party has achieved in the NL in the last 40 years was 36% (CDA in 1987)
- This is what drives coalition governments; between 1979 and 2020, the NL has been governed by coalition governments at EACH and EVERY election
- Only 3 of the 17 coalition governments formed have been led by a left of centre party
- But 11 of the 17 coalition configurations have involved parties from either side of the political divide

Key takeaway - in the NL, power share reflects voter expression both in terms of popular parties as well as broad political persuasion

Leading political parties across NL elections 1980 - 2020



Key

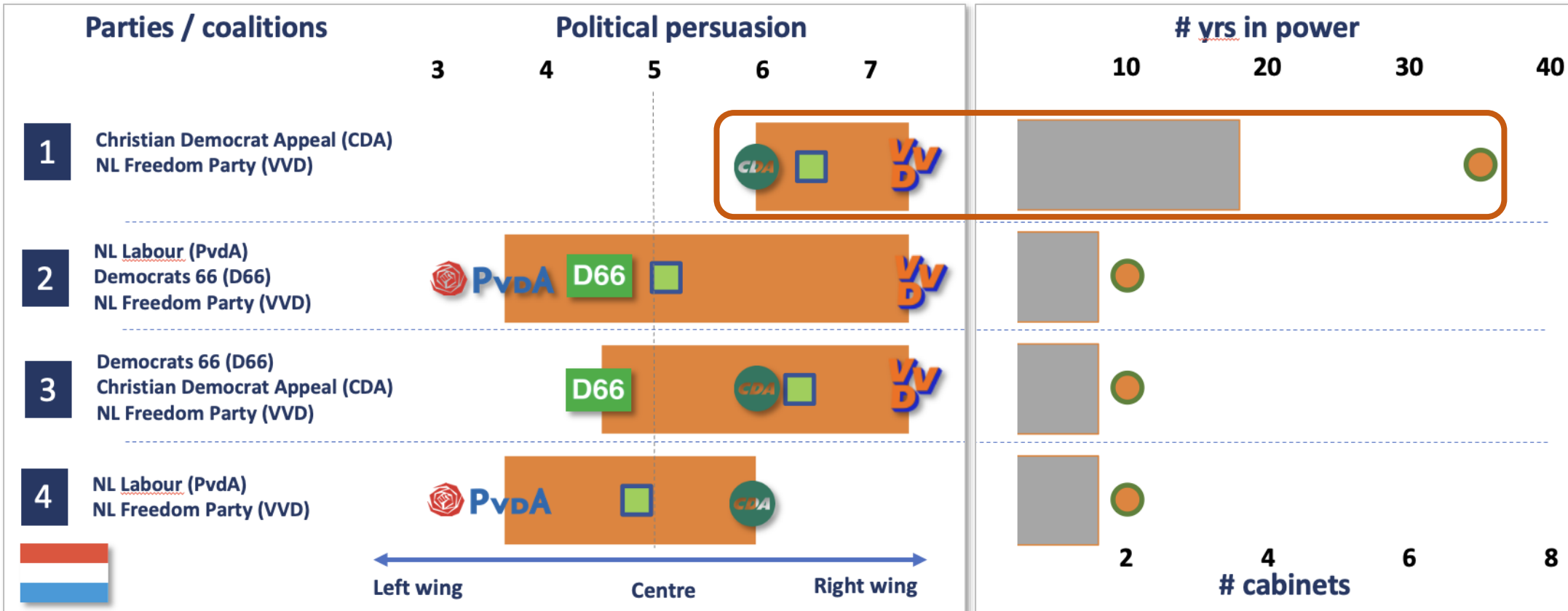
- Time between elections
- Party of Prime Minister
- Coalition party
- Coalitions (30% of total parl seats)

Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010;

0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

Source: ParlGov Project

Most successful NL coalitions & parties



Key

- Spread of coalition's political persuasion
- Weighted average of party / coalition political persuasion
- Time in power
- Number of cabinets formed by the coalition

* The average score of the parties weighted by the proportion of seats within the coalition arrangement

Source: ParlGov Project

- NL politics dominated by the right leaning VVD & CDA with weighted average scores for 3 most popular coalitions right of centre.
- But more than 50% of governments since 1980 have been 'moderated' by left wing and centre-left parties

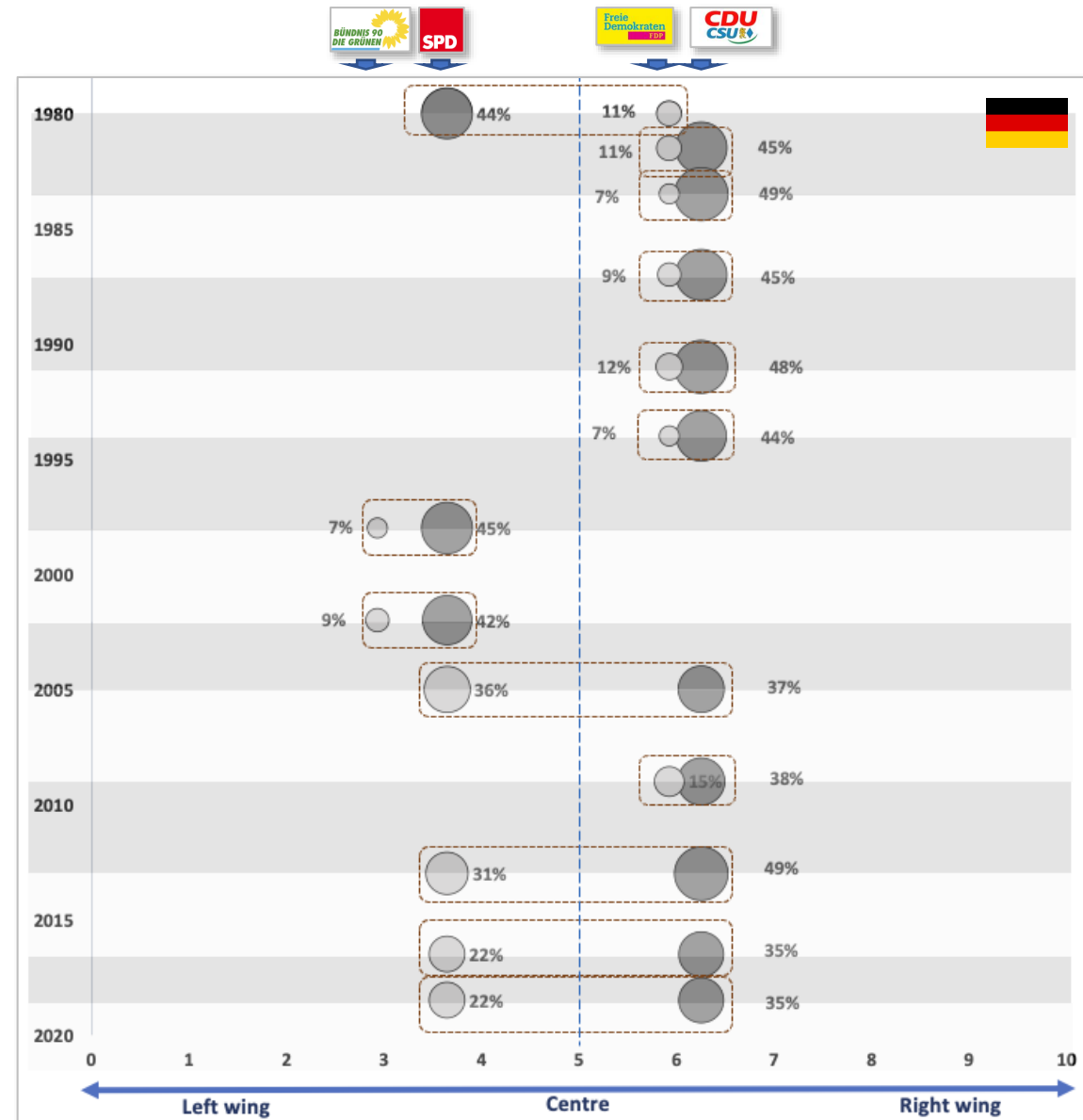
Key takeaway: persuasion biases also tempered by multi-party, broad based coalition



- Germany's largest party since 1980, CDU & CSU (an amalgam of two parties historically) has come close to achieving a majority under PR on two occasions but not quite
- In any case, Germany has been governed by coalition governments at EACH and EVERY election
- Although Between 1980 and 1995, Germany dominated by the centre right CDU&CSU / Free Democrat coalition
- Only 3 of the 13 coalition governments formed have been led by a left wing party but 5 of the 13 coalition configurations have involved parties from either side of the political divide

Key takeaway - PR evolves in Germany to foster multiple left and right coalitions (common in NL, never in the UK)

Leading political parties across German elections 1979 - 2020



Key

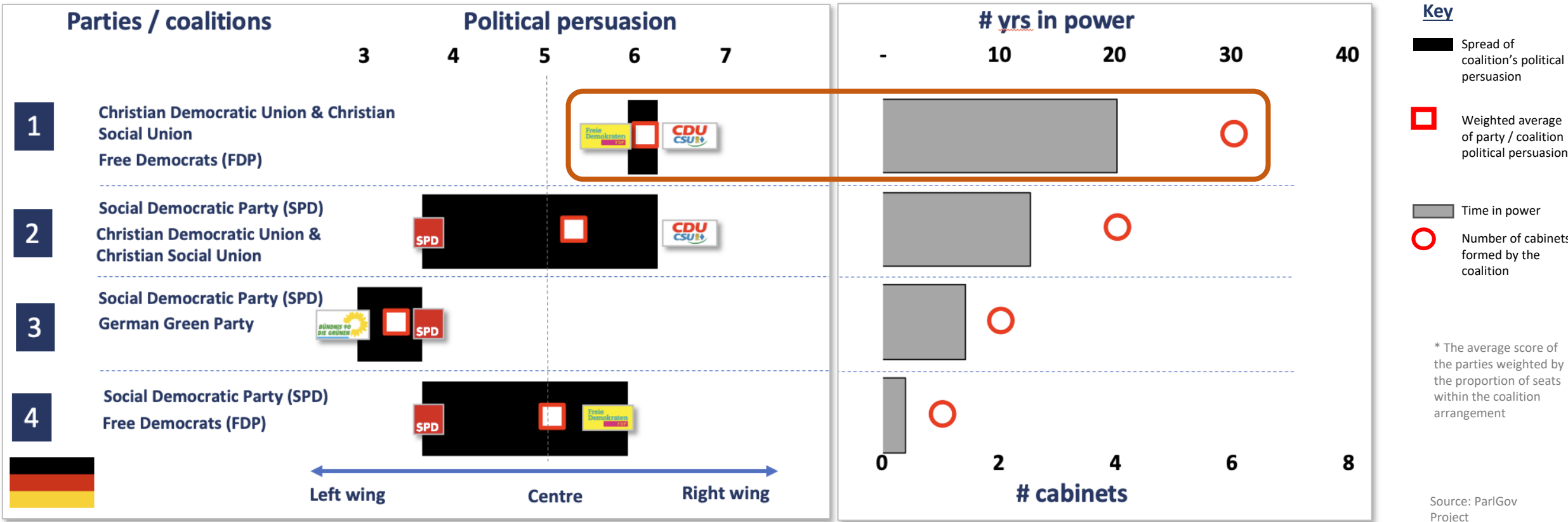
- Time between elections
- Party of Prime Minister
- Coalition party
- Coalitions
- 30% Seat %

* Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

Source: ParlGov Project



Most successful German coalitions and parties



- The most popular political voice has been the centre-right Free Democracy & CDU/CSU coalition, in power for 20 years & 6 cabinets
- The other three main coalition groups each have left leaning parties and account for 20 years in power

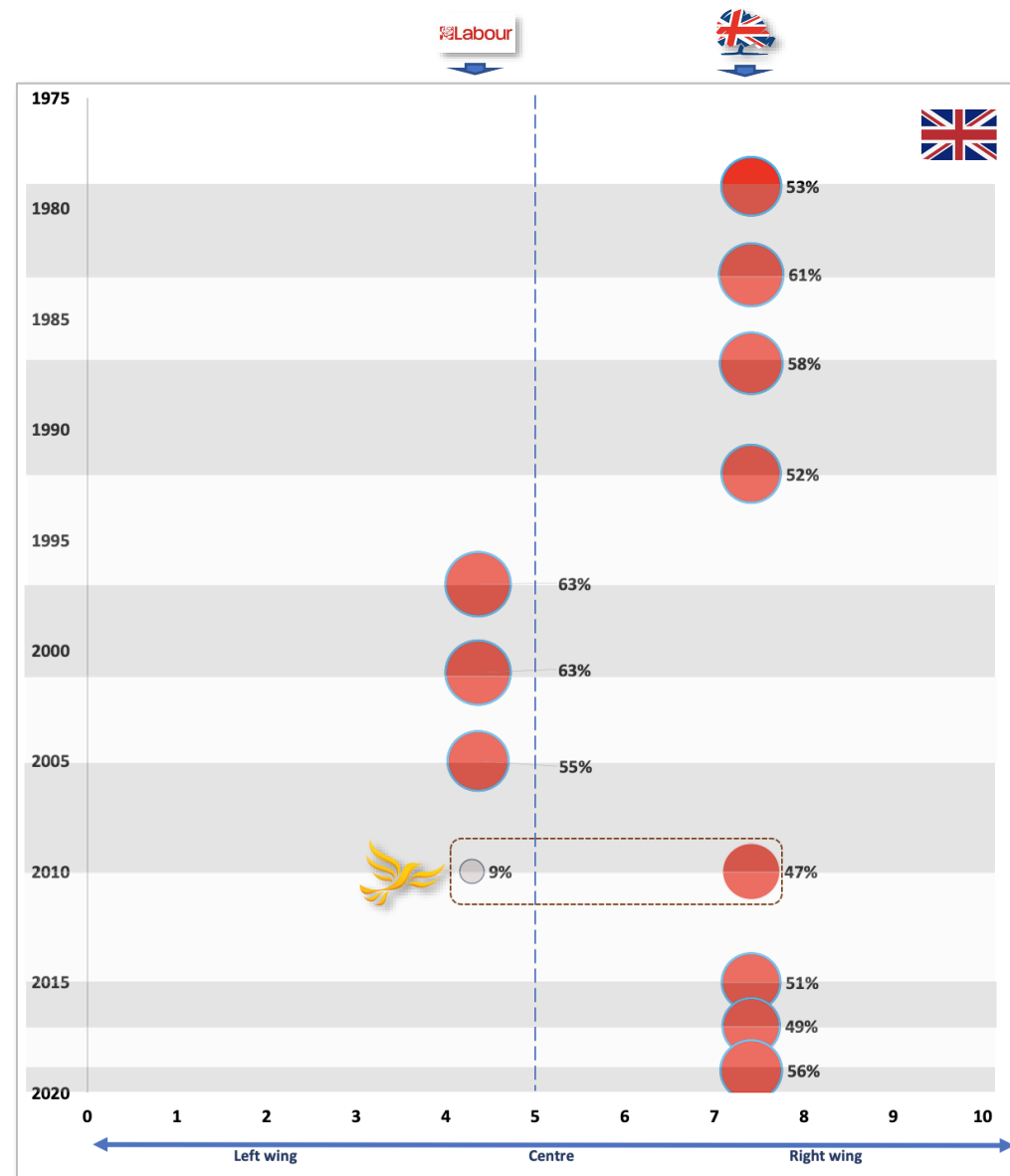
Key takeaway: 2 lead horses bridled by coalition under PR



- Between 1979 and 2020, UK has only had 1 coalition that was massively dominated by the Tories and 1 other minority government
- Only 2 parties have had any meaningful power across 3 long periods (1979–1997, 1998-2010, 2011 to present)
- Each period dominated by single party majority power
- Both the Tory and the Labour political scores indicate much stronger right wing influence than NL or Germany

Key takeaway - total, unfettered power over 3 periods for relatively right wing Tories and weak centre-left Labour

Election history UK 1980 to 2020



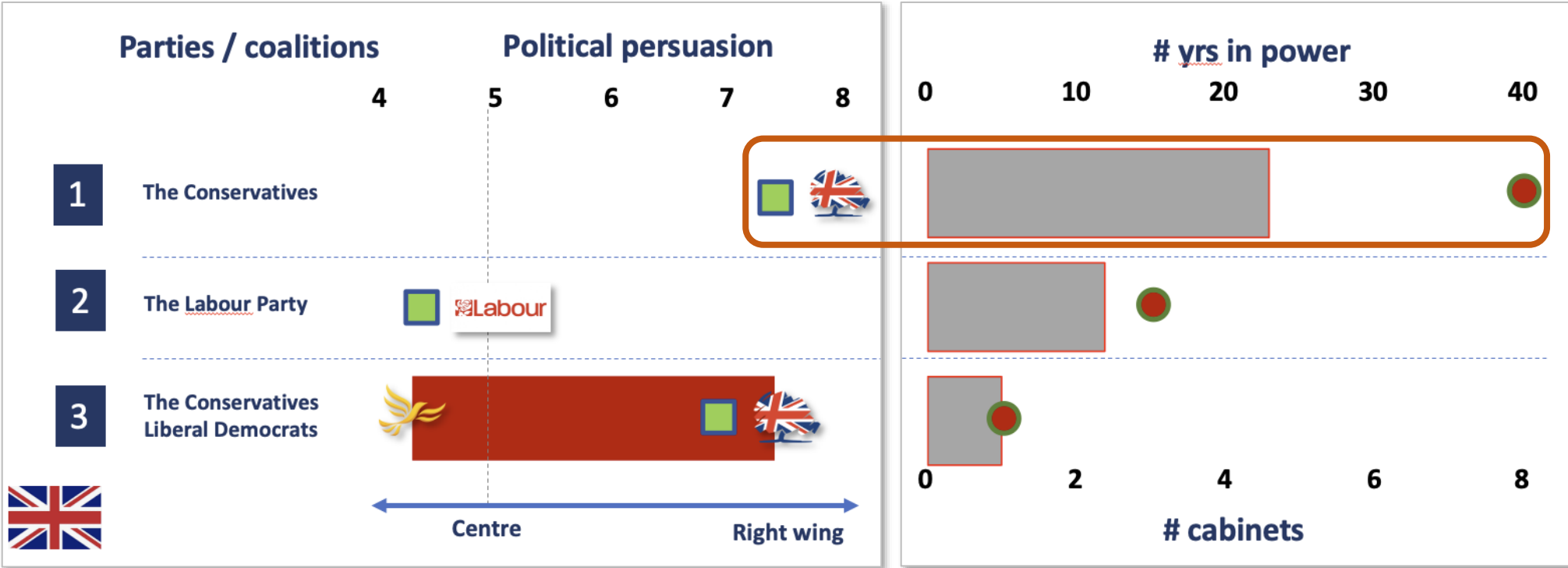
Key

- Time between elections
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- Coalition party
- Coalitions (30% Seat %)

* Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

Source: ParlGov Project

Most successful UK coalitions and parties



Key

- Red bar: Spread of coalition's political persuasion
- Green square: Weighted average of party / coalition political persuasion
- Grey bar: Time in power
- Green circle: Number of cabinets formed by the coalition

* The average score of the parties weighted by the proportion of seats within the coalition arrangement

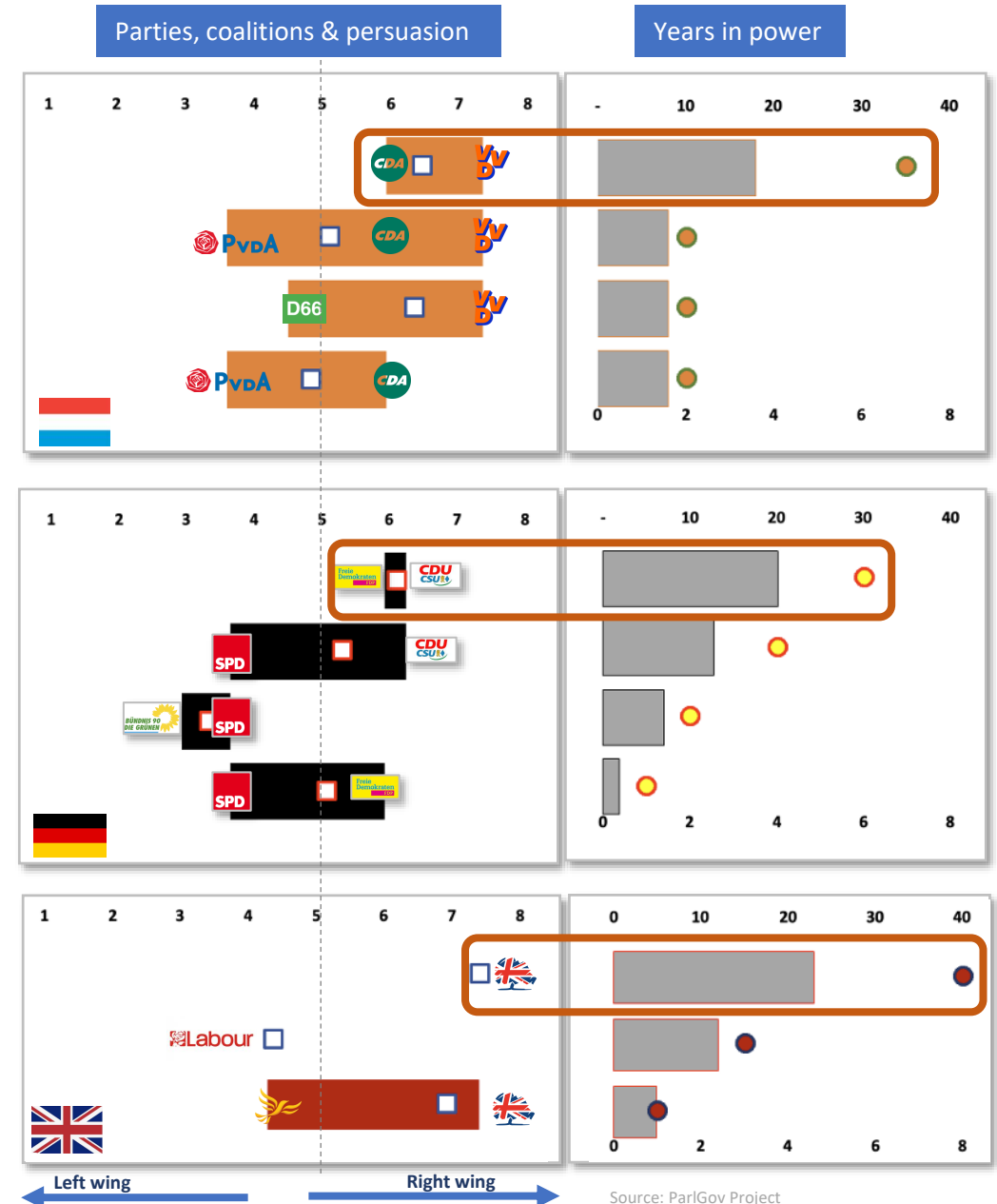
Source: ParlGov Project

- Taking the single instance of coalition together with the single party Tory govts, the Tories have been in power for 28 out of 40 years in the UK, with a total of 8 cabinets (in the case of the UK this means election victories)

Key takeaway: unchecked single party dominance has taken UK much more the right than the PR countries



- In each of the 3 countries, right leaning government has been the most popular but at least half of NL and German govts have had left or centre left parties in cabinets
- NL has had more diversity in leadership, coalition combinations and lowest instance of ongoing political dynasties remaining in power
- UK single coalition was the most right wing coalition across three countries over the period
- UK Tories are both the longest serving and the most right wing party / coalition in sample



Source: ParlGov Project



- All three countries return right of centre governments
- Coalitions seem to temper / moderate under PR regimes
- However, FPTP allows the UK to move and stay much further to the right



**Why does FPTP
seem to
produce /
nurture right
wing
outcomes?**

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III. PR: a culture of compromise

IV. FPTP and its bias to the right

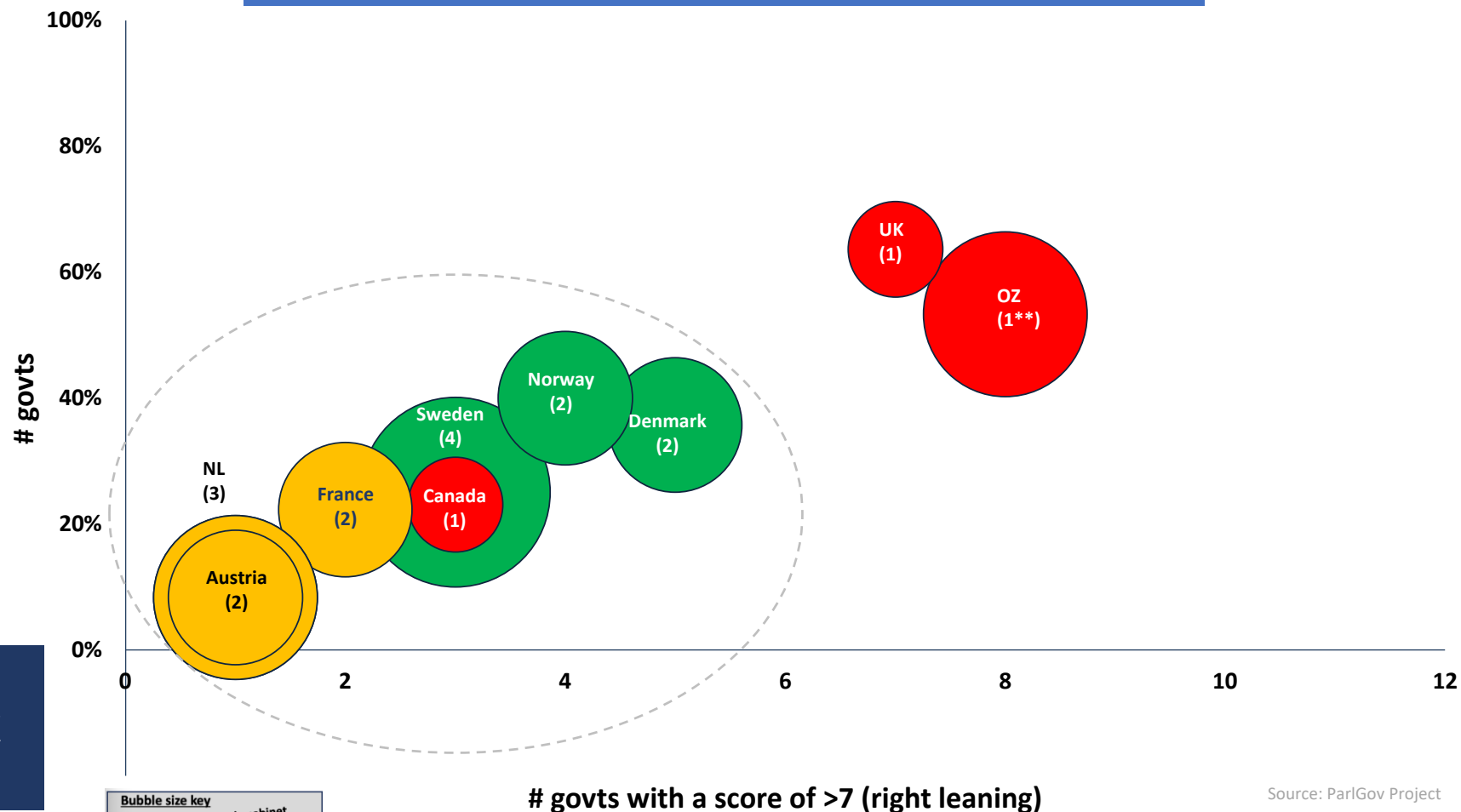
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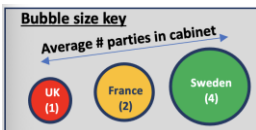


- The UK has had the highest number of right wing govts with only 1 party in power
- All other European right wing govts across **Nordic Nobles** and **Mainland Moderates** have had at least 2 parties sharing power

Countries with 'right wing'* governments: 1979 - 2020



Key takeaway - even against European peers with right wing governments, UK is by miles the most right wing



Source: ParlGov Project

* Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

** Australia's 'Coalition' although comprising 5 parties operates consistently as if 1 party

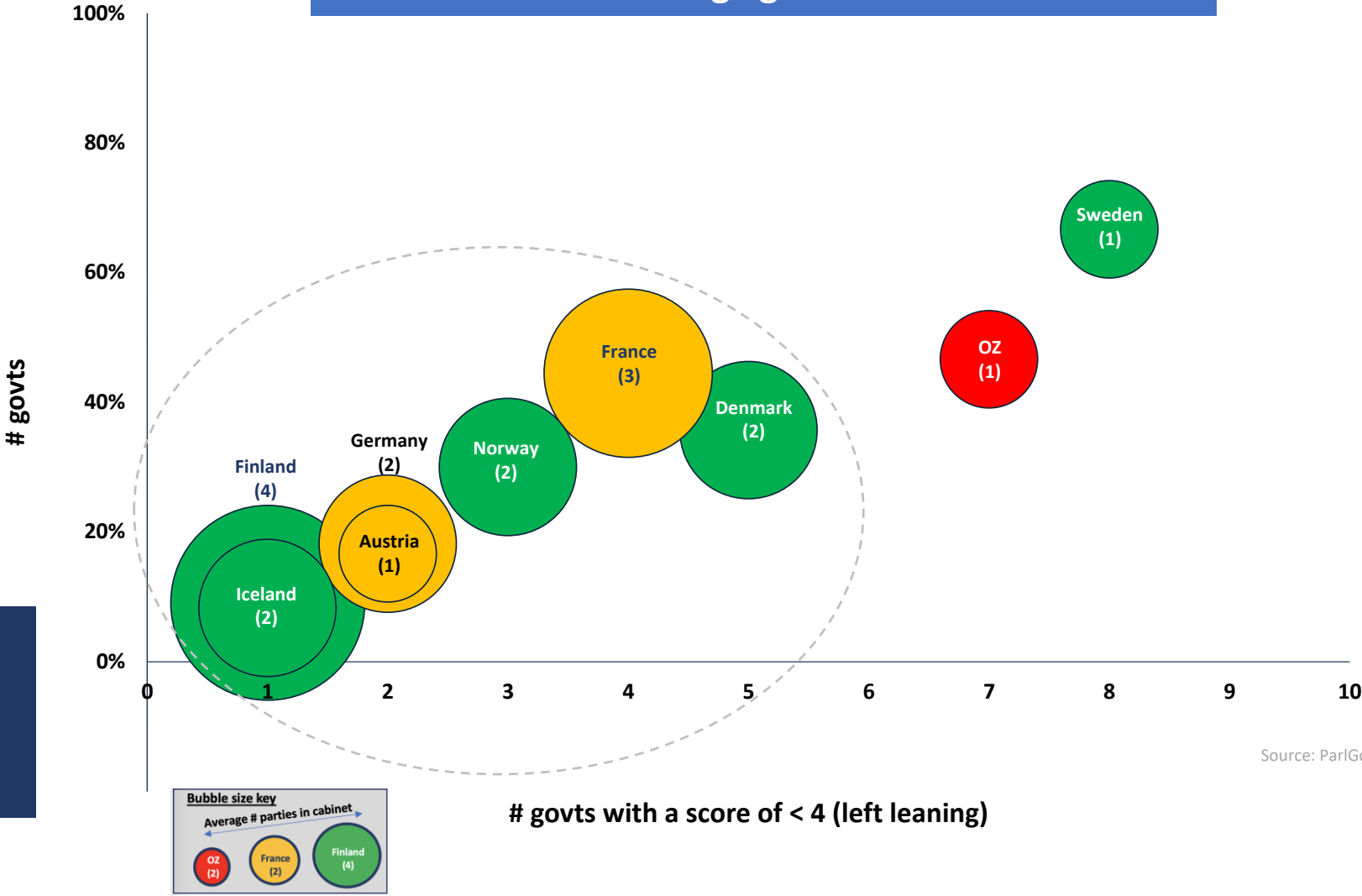


Why has it never had a 'regular' left wing govt?

- There have been no left-wing govts (score =<4) in the UK in the last 40 years, nor in Canada
- All Nordic Nobles and 3 Mainland Moderates have had left wings since 1980
- Even Australia has voted in a left wing govt!

Key takeaway - half of European peers have had regular left govts; the other half have not, including the UK

Countries with left-wing* governments: 1980 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

* Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing



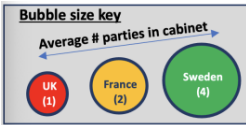
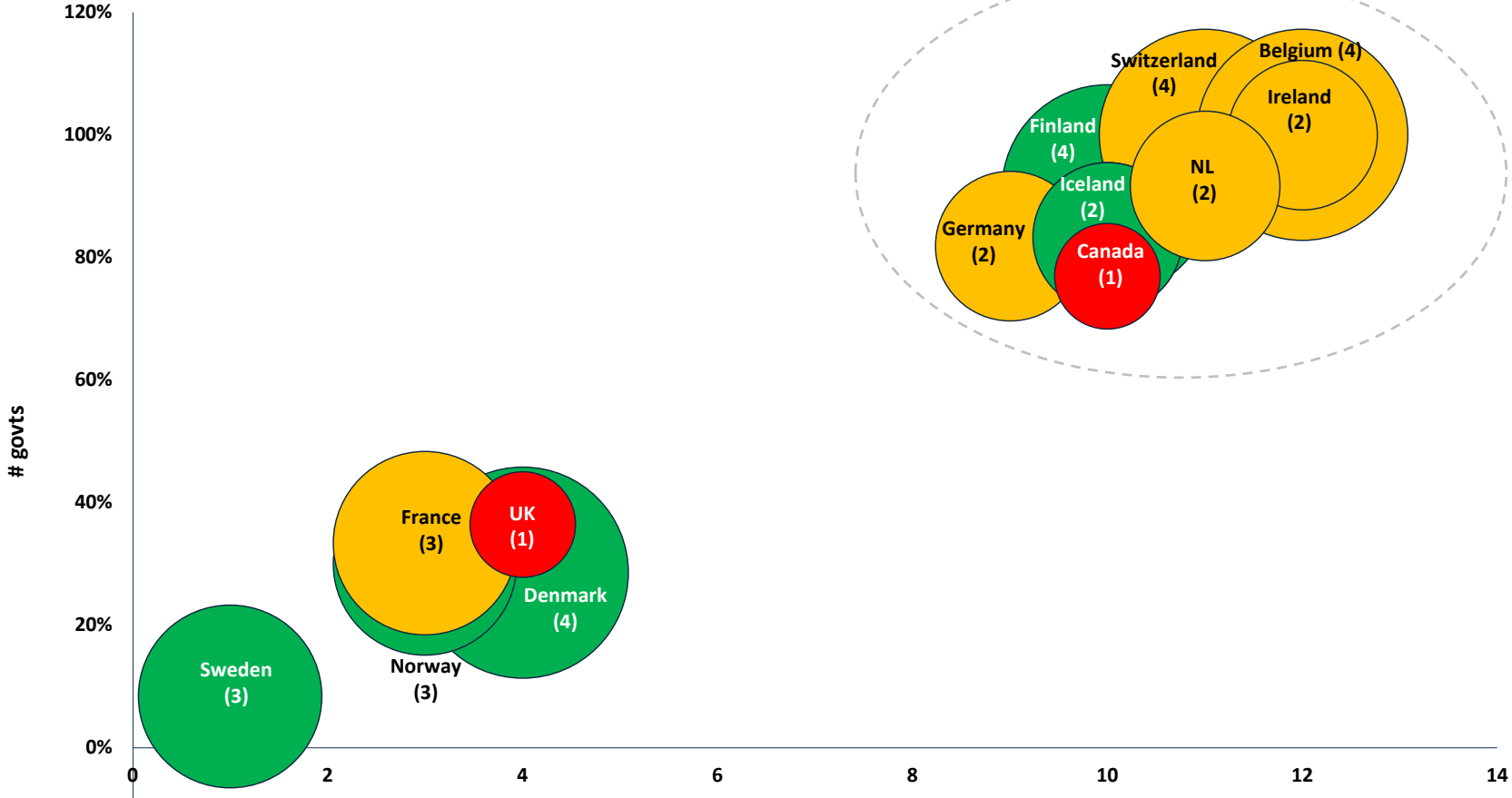
Why far fewer centrist governments than European peers?

FPTP bias to the right

- Mainland Moderates have been mostly governed by centrist coalitions since 1979, typically with 2 – 4 parties in cabinet
- However, only 40% of UK govts have been centrist with single party majorities (only one collation)

Key takeaway - not only has the UK not had a single regular left govt (as per slide 28), it is an outlier v peers for centre left govts too

Countries with 'centrist'* governments: 1979 - 2020



govts with a score of >4 and < 7 (centrist)

Source: ParlGov Project

* Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

Why is the UK the most right wing overall?

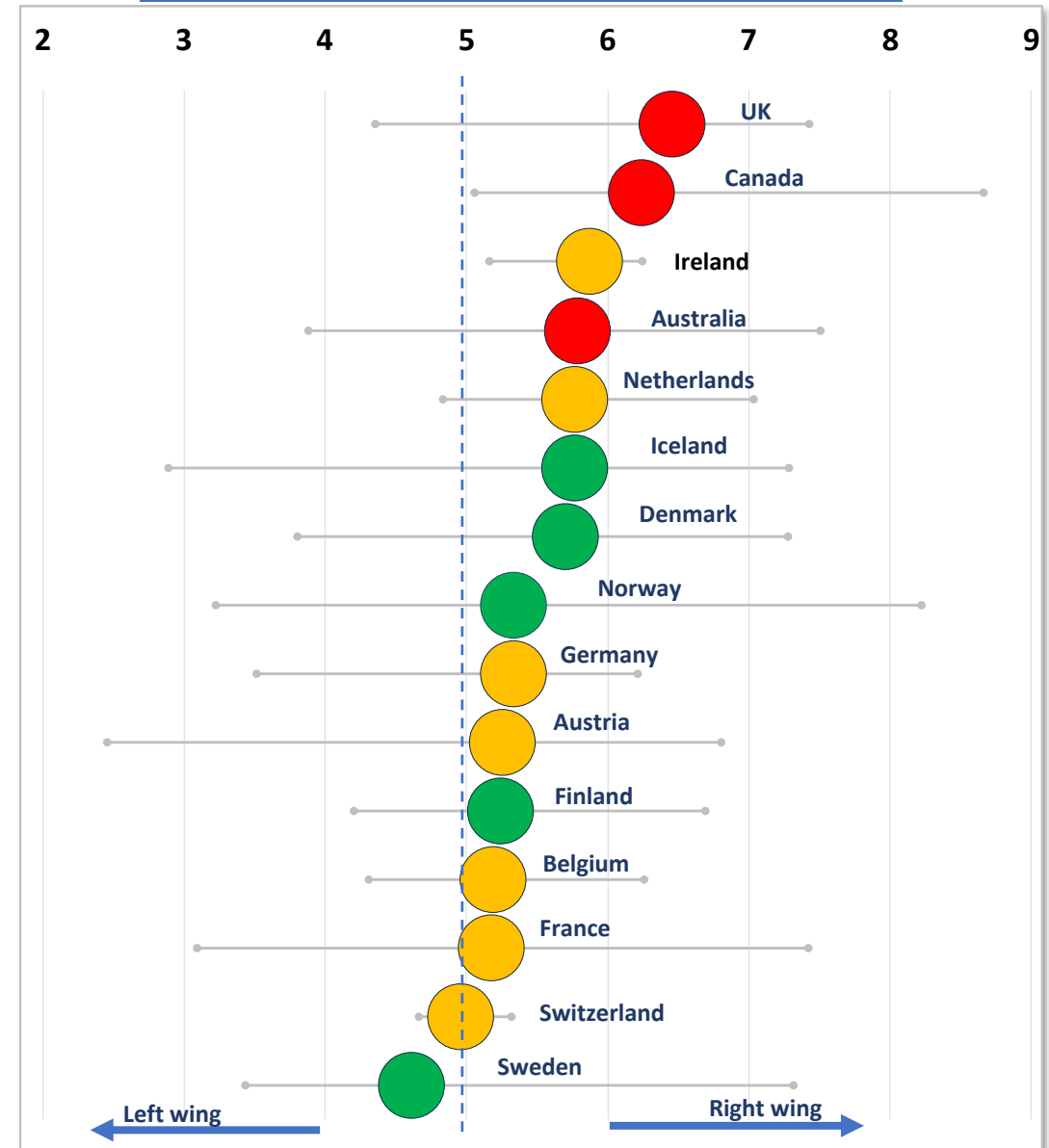
FPTP bias to the right

Taking time-weighted political scores* for all govts in power over the 40 year period:

- 13/15 all have biases to the right although 11 of these have persuasion scores $>5 < 6$ making them centre right with only 2 having average scores to the left (<5)
- UK has experienced more under right wing administrations than any other country
- The other 2 FPTP countries (the **Free-market Fanatics**) are also in the top 4 of 15

Key takeaway - clear evidence that FPTP countries end up with more extreme right wing outcomes; the UK leading the pack by a good nose...

Average persuasion* of govts: 1979 - 2020



* Political leaning / persuasion score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

Is the UK 'culturally' right wing?

Verdict

?

Is it something to do with the two-horse race?

?

Is it do with where people live?

?



3 main 'welfare' questions in the ESS* 2008 & 2016

- **Nordic Nobles** are typically on the left-leaning side of views (lower rankings)
- UK is moderately more inclined to prefer low tax, lower benefits

1. Do you agree that social benefits and services place too great a strain on the economy?

	2008	2016
1	Ireland (60%)	UK (55%)
2	France (53%)	France (54%)
3	UK (52%)	Ireland (52%)
4	Belgium (39%)	Belgium (38%)
5	Germany (38%)	Switzerland (37%)
6	Switzerland (36%)	Austria (35%)
7	Austria (34%)	Finland (34%)
8	Sweden (26%)	Norway (32%)
9	Netherlands (26%)	Germany (27%)
10	Norway (25%)	Sweden (27%)
11	Finland (20%)	Netherlands (25%)

2. Do you agree that the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels?

	2008	2016
	France (78%)	Austria (77%)
	Finland (75%)	France (75%)
	Ireland (73%)	Germany (73%)
	Belgium (70%)	Belgium (72%)
	Germany (68%)	Ireland (72%)
	Switzerland (67%)	Finland (72%)
	Sweden (64%)	Switzerland (65%)
	Austria (63%)	UK (64%)
	Norway (60%)	Sweden (64%)
	UK (59%)	Netherlands (62%)
	Netherlands (56%)	Norway (61%)

3. Do you agree that social benefits and services cost businesses too much in taxes and charges?

	2008	2016
	France (59%)	France (54%)
	Ireland (58%)	Ireland (45%)
	Belgium (56%)	Belgium (43%)
	UK (51%)	Austria (38%)
	Germany (44%)	Netherlands (36%)
	Netherlands (43%)	UK (31%)
	Sweden (36%)	Finland (31%)
	Austria (35%)	Switzerland (28%)
	Switzerland (35%)	Sweden (26%)
	Norway (34%)	Norway (23%)
	Finland (33%)	Germany (21%)

Key takeaway - UK seems in the pack with **Mainland Moderates**, with similar attitudes to the Dutch, French and Irish

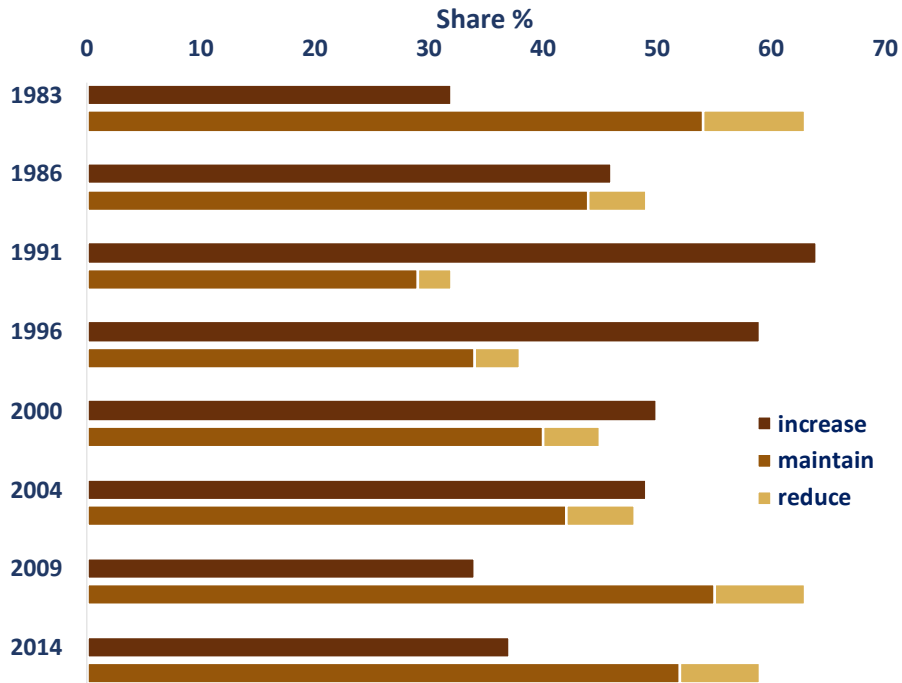
Source: ESS

* ESS is the European Social Survey carried out periodically across a wide range of topics



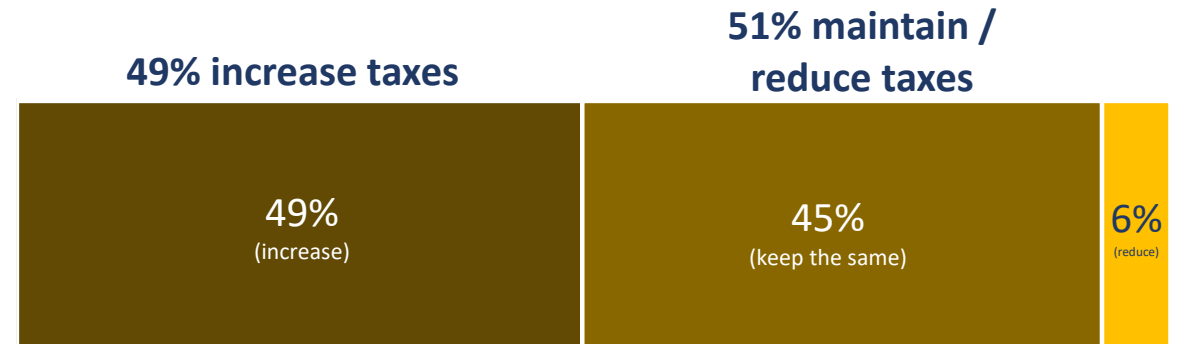
- In line with the ESS surveys, the UK's BSA survey on tax and spend, welfare and benefits, there's a slight majority to maintain / reduce on average over period

UK Attitudes to tax & spend survey results: 1983 - 2014



*BSA survey 32, 1983 – 2014

Average attitude of UK public 1983 - 2014



Key takeaway: over longer period, UK public seems to hold balanced views about tax and spend

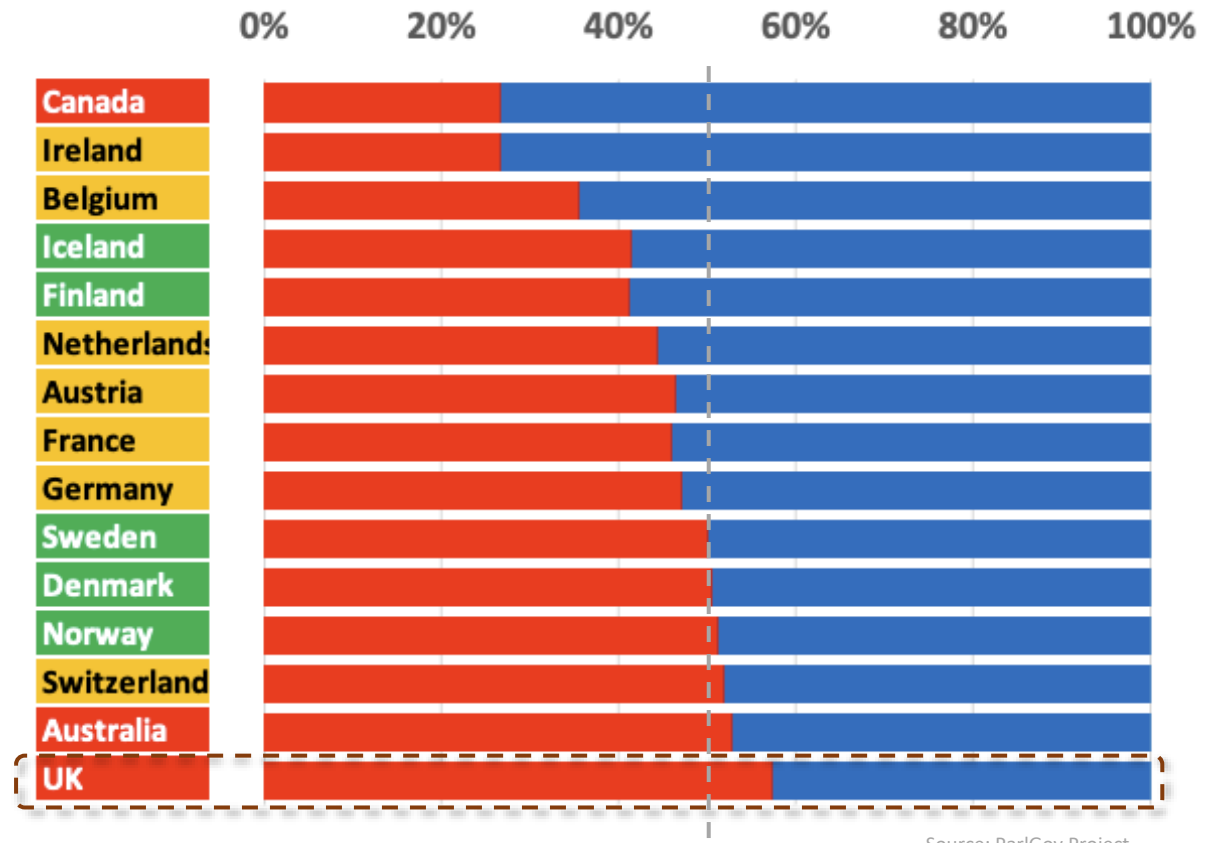


and in terms of voting, UK voters are the most left wing!

- Despite having to both the most right wing government outcomes v European peers, UK voters have cast on average more votes for left of centre parties than any other country in the sample
- Over the 40 years and 11 elections, UK voters have cast on average just under 6 out of every 10 votes for parties with scores of 5 or less (57%)
- In addition to the labour party, these parties include SNP, Plaid Cymru, the Greens, Sinn Fein, the SDLP and the Liberals

Key takeaway: on votes alone, the UK emerges as the most progressively minded country amongst all 15 peers in the sample

average left-right split – total votes 1978 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

■ left-leaning (parties with a political score < 5)
■ right-leaning (parties with a political score > 5)



Is the UK culturally right wing?

Verdict

X

Is it something to do with the two-horse race?

?

Is it do with where people live?

?

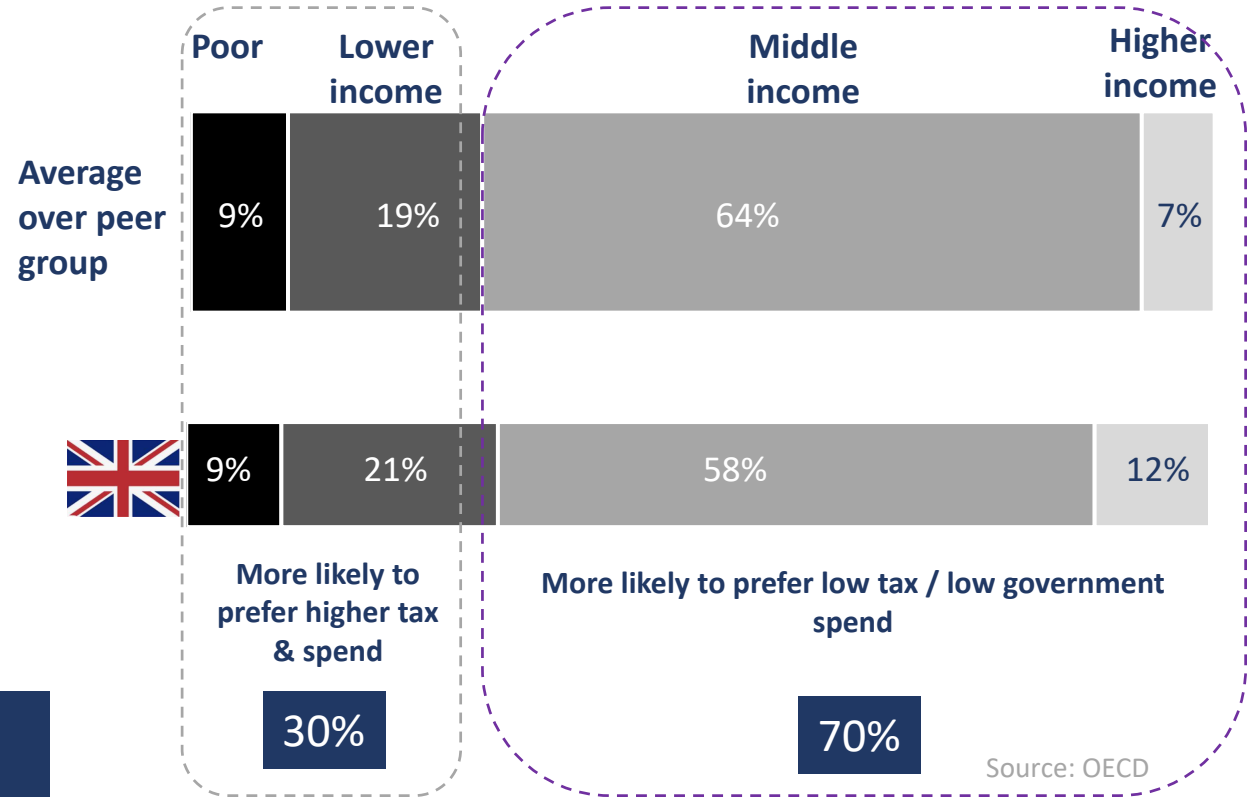


- Since before 1980, the well-off, taken as the middle and higher income earners*, have represented around 70% of wealthy** country populations
- For many amongst the 70%, there is a shared interest in electing an 'income friendly' government
- Given their huge majority, under a two horse race system, the party with the most attractive income proposals (normally low tax) will typically get the larger share of the vote
- in the UK, this has normally meant the Tories

Key takeaway: two horse race under FPTP in wealthy countries is stacked against the interests of the poor / lower income earners

* higher than median income has historically been the most obvious means of categorising the 'better off' to make sense of how they vote although property ownership and levels of education have typically aligned with income to this end. However, as noted in the recent Deaton review of inequality, some of these metrics have been less aligned in recent years e.g. the 2017 and 2019 GEs but even in these years, the Tories remained the dominant party and in 2019 with its 2nd largest majority in 40 years.

Breakdown of electorate by income band***



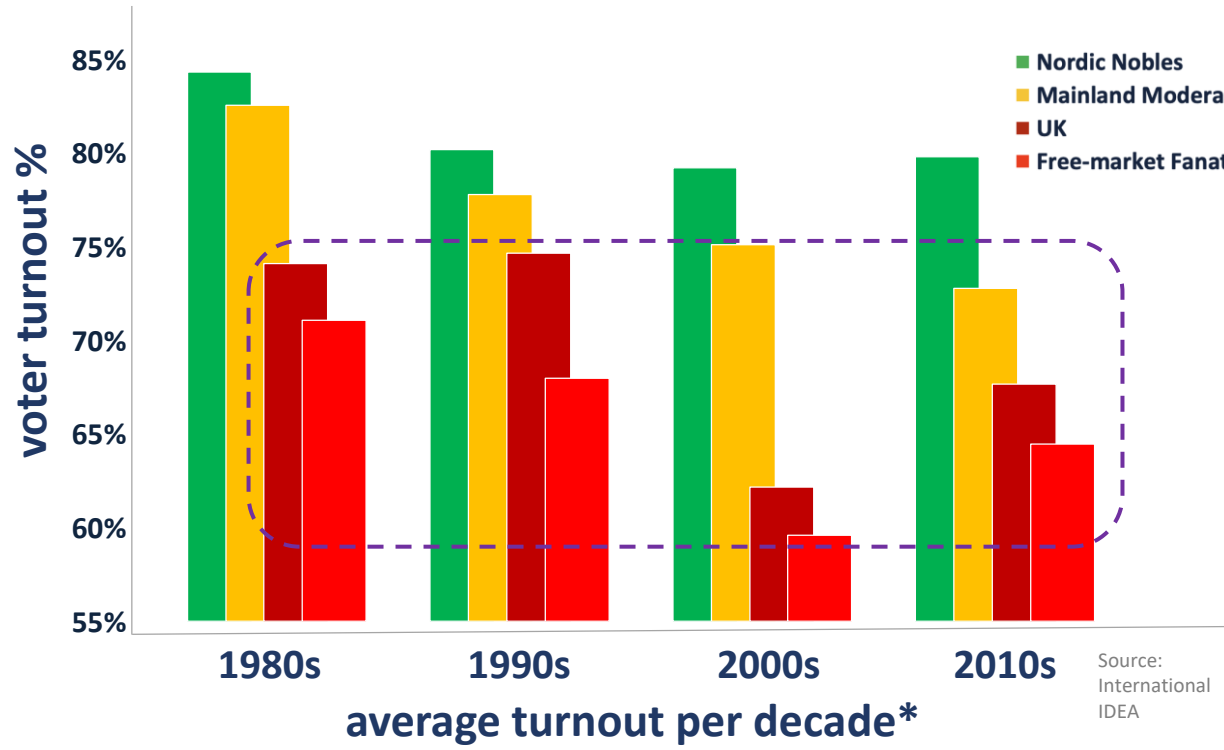
Poor: 0-50% of median, Lower income: 50-75% of median, Middle income: 75-200% of median, Higher income: > 200% of median

** the 16 Nordic Noble, Mainland Moderate and Free-market Fanatic countries

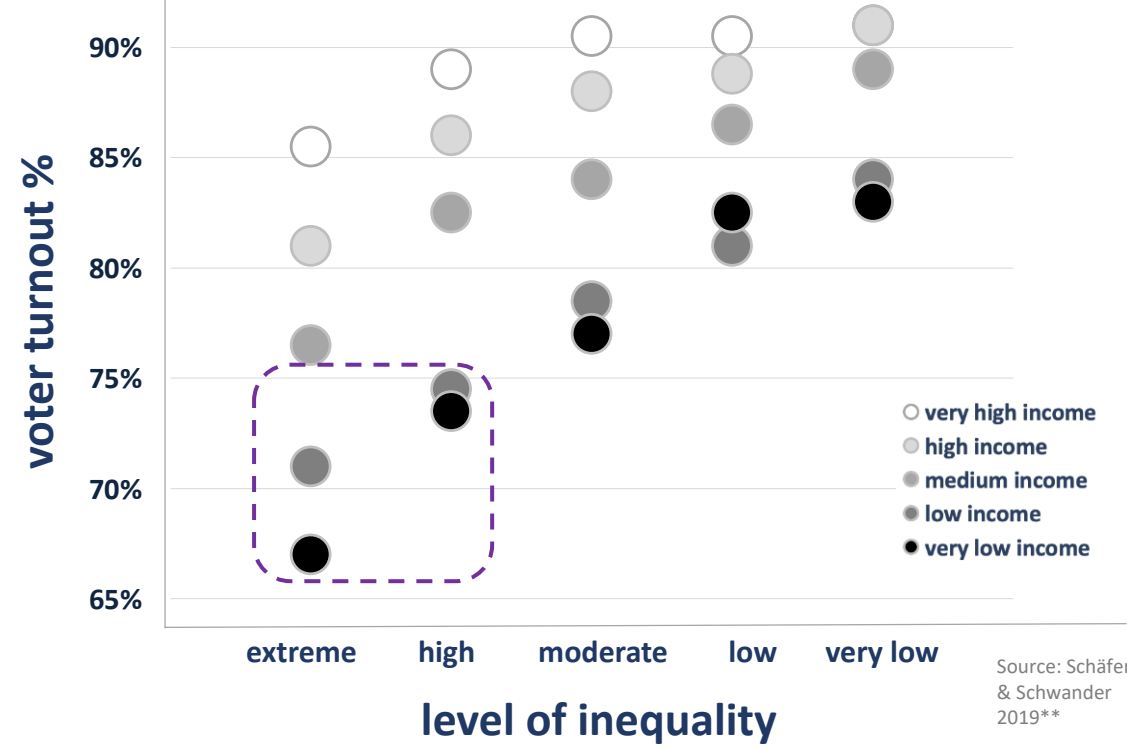
*** Splits between income brackets largely consistent since 1980 (source: OECD, Pew Research)



General election turns outs – 1980 - 2020



Voter turnout by income and inequality



- The more unequal FPTP / **Free-market Fanatic** countries have lower overall turnouts than **Nordic Noble** or **Mainland Moderate** PR countries

- People on low income less likely to vote across all countries
- The higher the level of inequality, the higher the level of abstention amongst low income voters

Key takeaway - the more unequal the country, the lower traditional left (poorer) vote

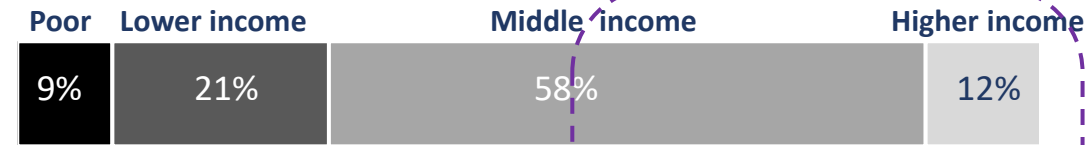
* does not include Australia (has a compulsory voting regime) or Switzerland (turnout compromised by high frequency of single issue referendums) or the US (General election voting compromised by presidential elections)
 ** voting data for 14 /16 peers (Switzerland and Iceland missing) also including Japan, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Lux, NZ and Italy using ESS, EB, CSES and ISSP surveys between 1985 and 2015



Explaining Tory dominance of UK General Elections 1980 - 2020

- 7/10 voters in the UK are middle or higher income earners
- Since 1983, as we know, on average around 51% in the UK claim they want taxes to stay the same or be reduced
- UK voters know that only the Tories or Labour can achieve power
- most UK voters typically believe that the Tories are more likely to keep taxes lower

UK Income brackets
1980* - 2019



Source: OECD

Attitude to tax/spend
1983 - 2014



Source: BSA 32

Who can I vote for that has a chance of getting into power and raise / lower taxes and spending?



Vote share (%) for Tory GE wins 1979 - 2019



Source: House of Commons Library

Key takeaway: the dominant middle / higher earner 'voter coalition' ensures that the low tax (right wing) party typically gets a larger share of the votes

Why would this be any different under a PR system?

FPTP – UK style election

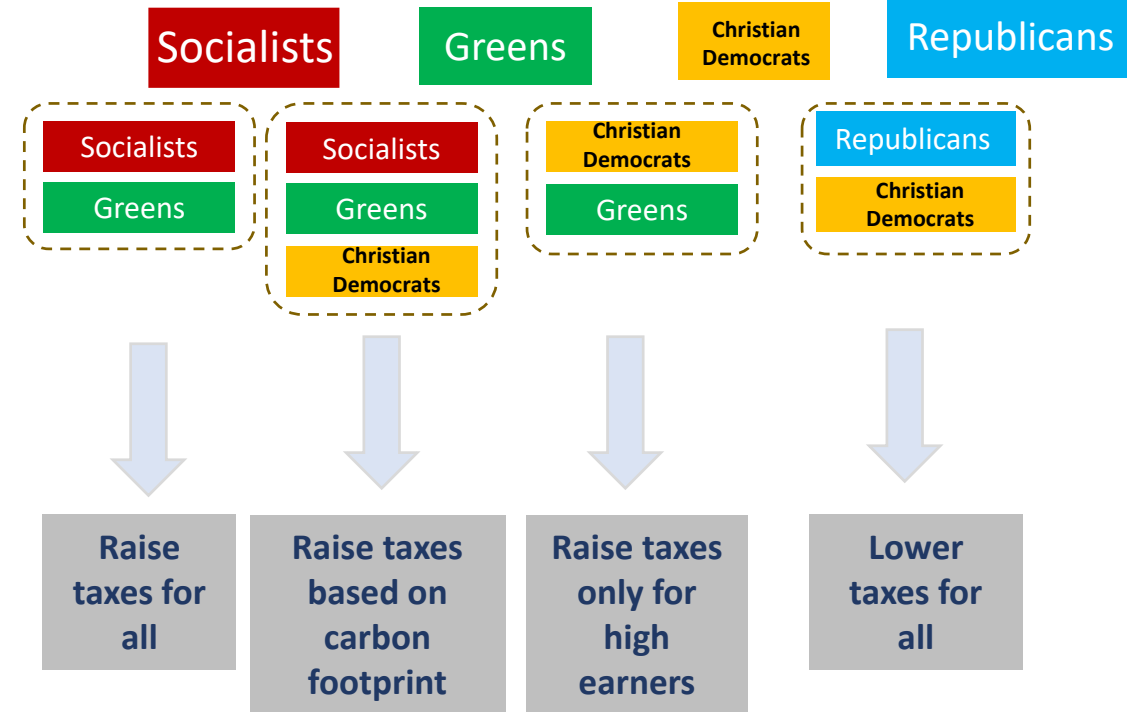
Only two credible parties



Single party option for low / high tax means only two 'voter coalition' possibilities; the larger middle / high earners therefore dominates over time...

PR – NL style election

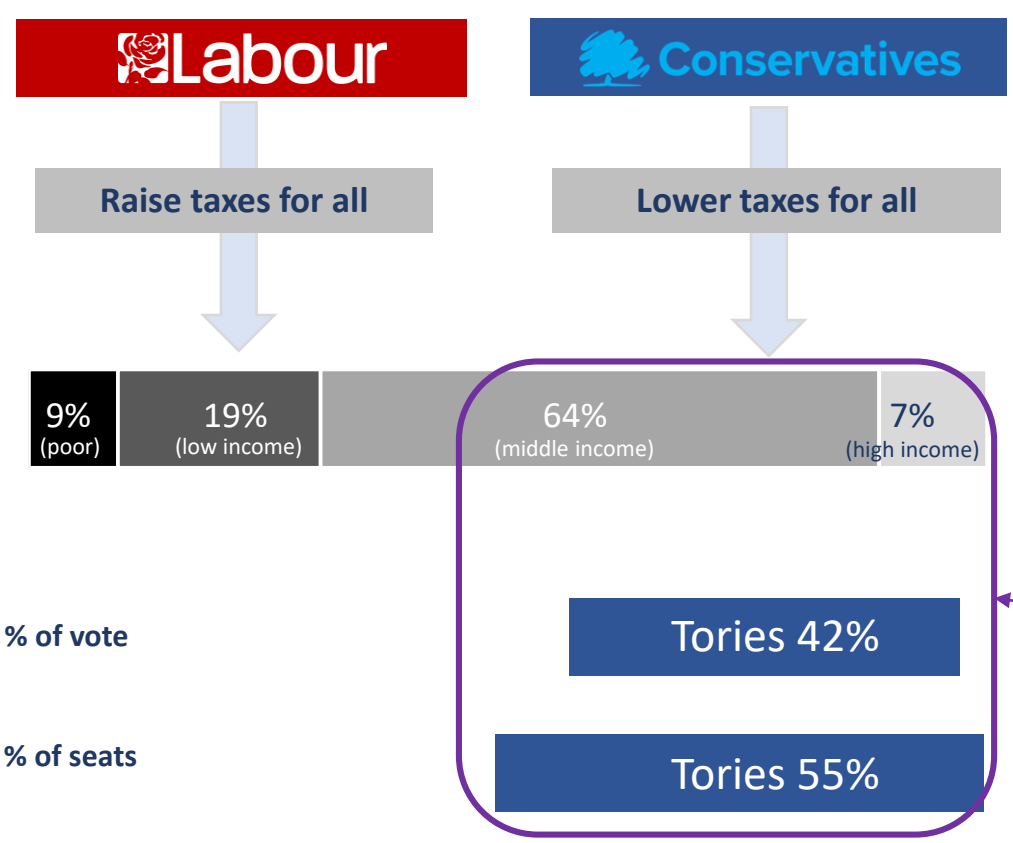
Multiple coalition combinations from at least 4 credible parties



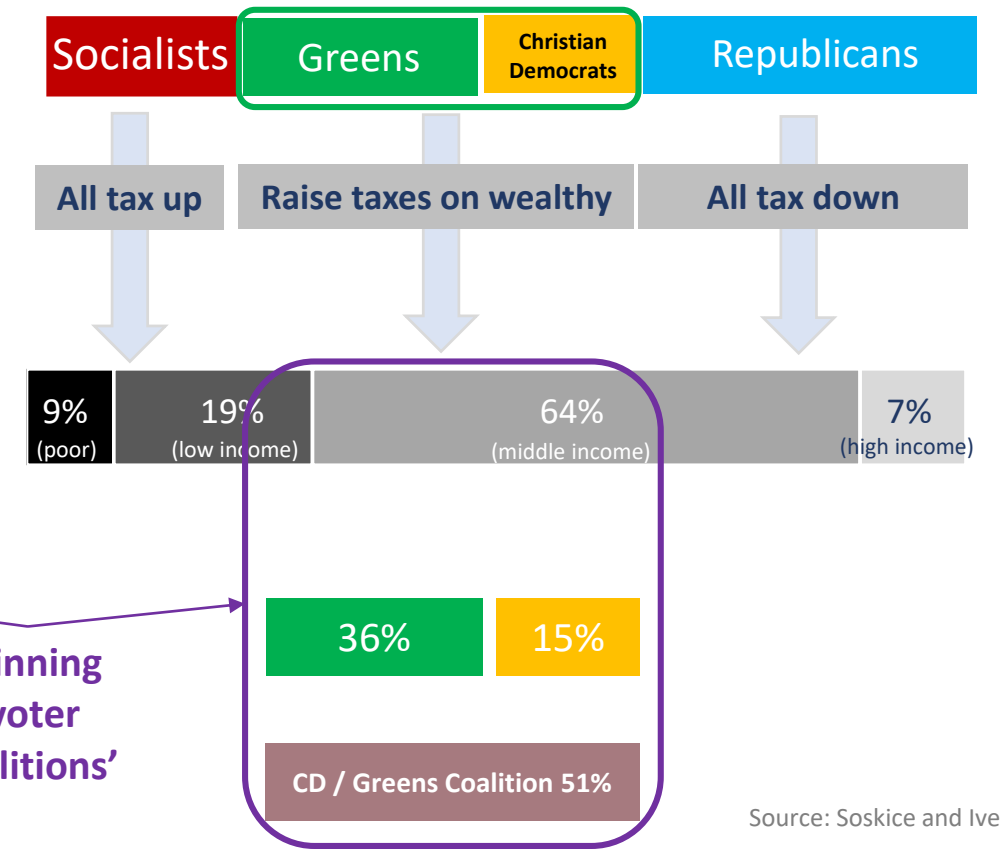
Different party coalitions = potentially different voter coalitions and so different combinations of interests can get to power

- 1 Election options
- 2 Voters
- 3 Election outcome

FPTP – UK style election



PR – NL style election



Source: Soskice and Iversen 2006

The norm in the UK: Tories are identified as the low tax party and the usual dominant middle / high income voter coalition ensures they win power

Election outcome returns a majority coalition for the Greens and Christian Dems with a manifesto to raise tax for high earners only; based on a voter coalition of low to low-middle income

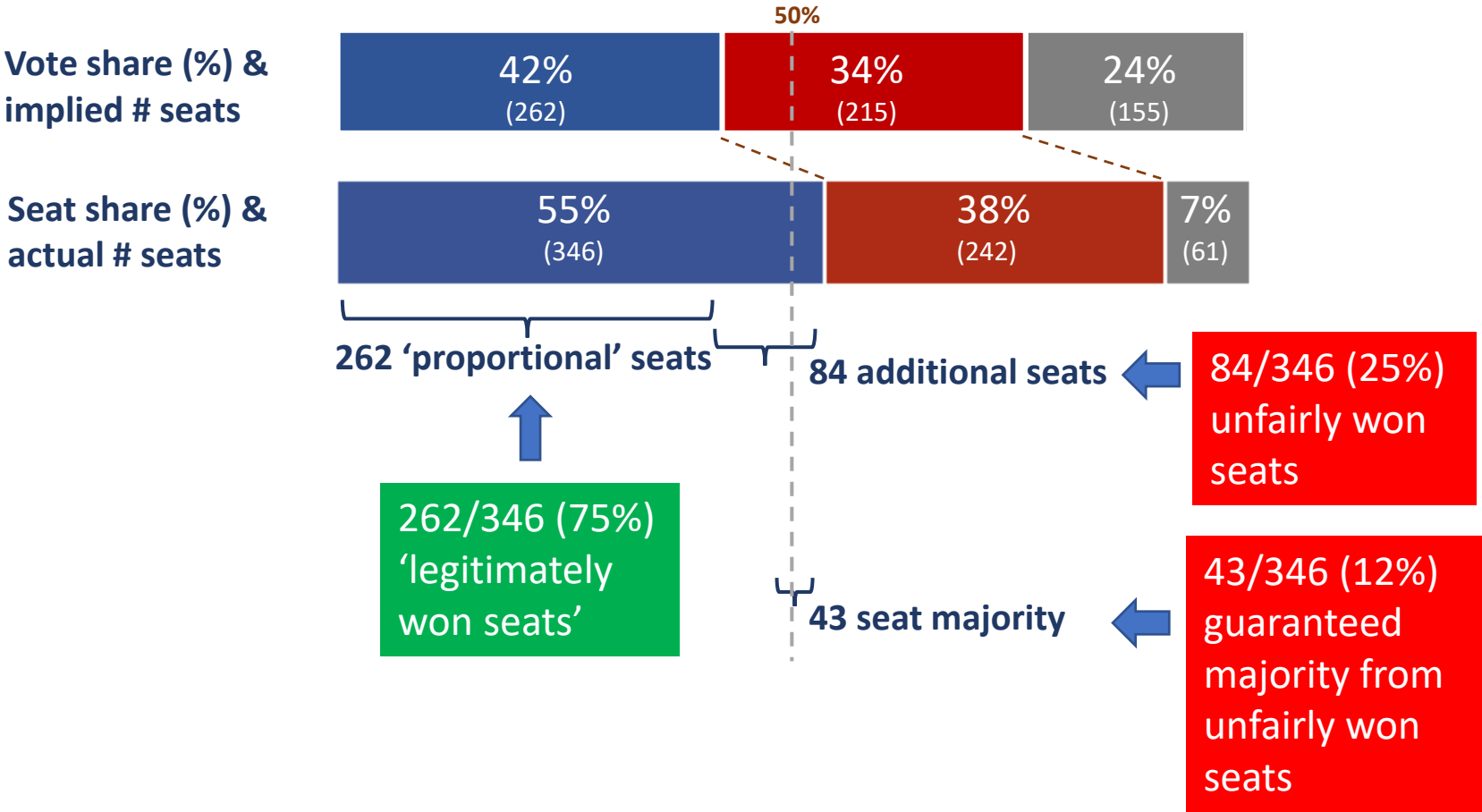
But how does 42% of votes turn into a 55% majority of seats?

FPTP bias to the right

- 2/5 of all votes on average since 1979 translates to > 1/2 of all seats
- 1/4 (84/346) of all seats the Tories typically win result from another 'quirk' of the FPTP system
- This is the winner-takes-all 'quirk' where all that is needed in a seat is to be the largest party; sometime a set is won with under 30% of the eligible vote

Key takeaway – mapping votes to seats shows that in the UK, it is a pure arithmetic quirk of the FPTP system that produces majority governments

Average vote share: Tory election wins 1979 - 2019



WTF?

Source: House of Commons Library



Verdict

Is the 'mean spiritedness' cultural?

X

Is it something to do with the two-horse race?

✓

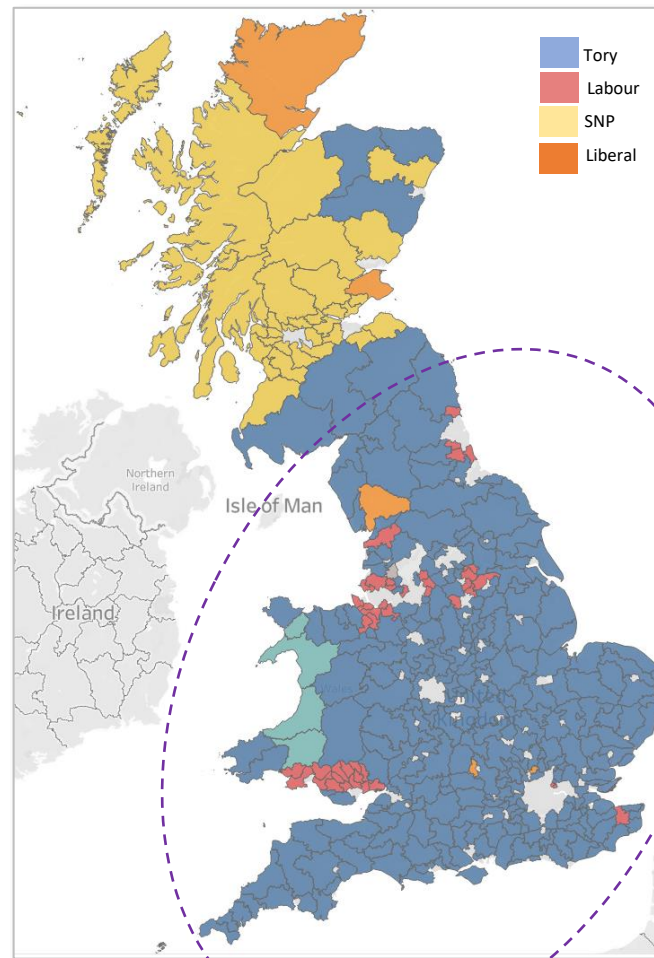
Is it do with where people live?

?

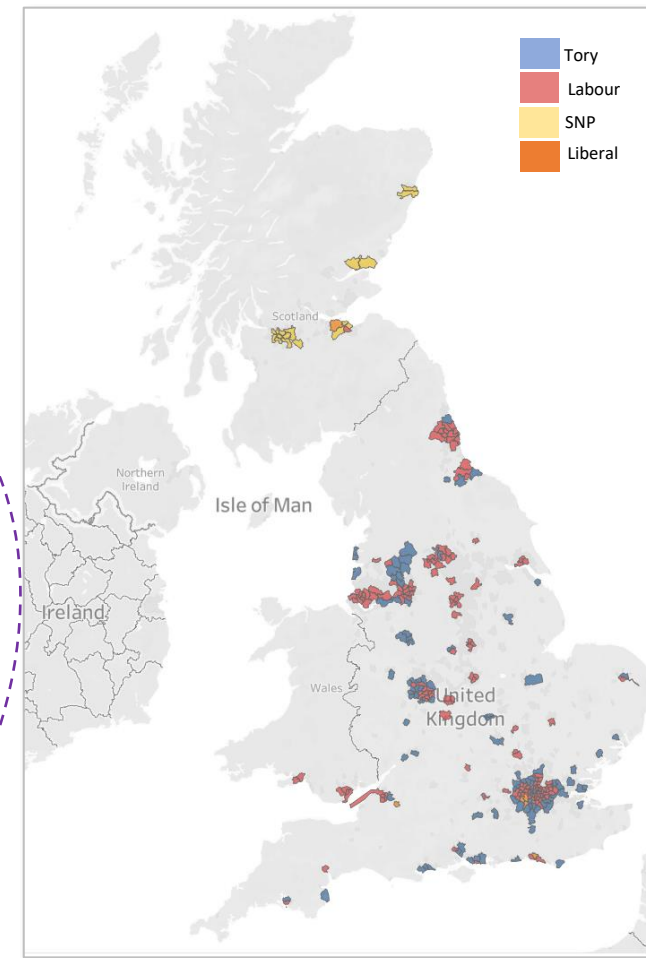


- As per most countries, rural areas harbour conservative attitudes.
- But in rural England, conservatism really is historically, deeply rooted;
 - no civil wars / upheaval to land ownership for over 400 years (unlike Scotland with the Jacobite rebellion in 1700s)
 - centuries old culture of deference to landed class & monarchy (unlike Scotland where the Jacobite rebellion diluted / eliminated this)
- The sheer concentration of Tory voters across the English country seats give the Tories a huge advantage under FPTP
- In 2019, the Tories won 3 in every 4 county seats in the UK; over 250 of these were in England.

341 County Seats – GE 2019



307 Borough Seats – GE 2019



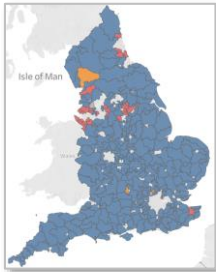
Source: House of Commons Library

Key takeaway - conservatism and the countryside go hand in hand giving the Tories a big advantage

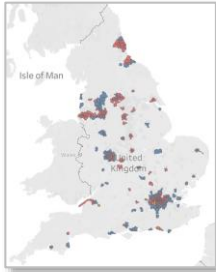




UK GEs - Tory wins: English seats 1979 - 2019



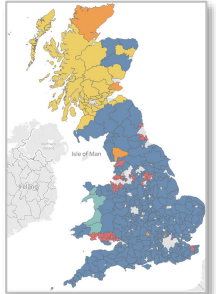
Counties



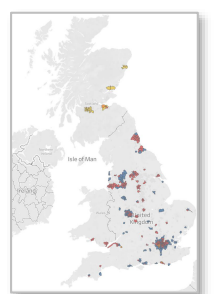
Boroughs



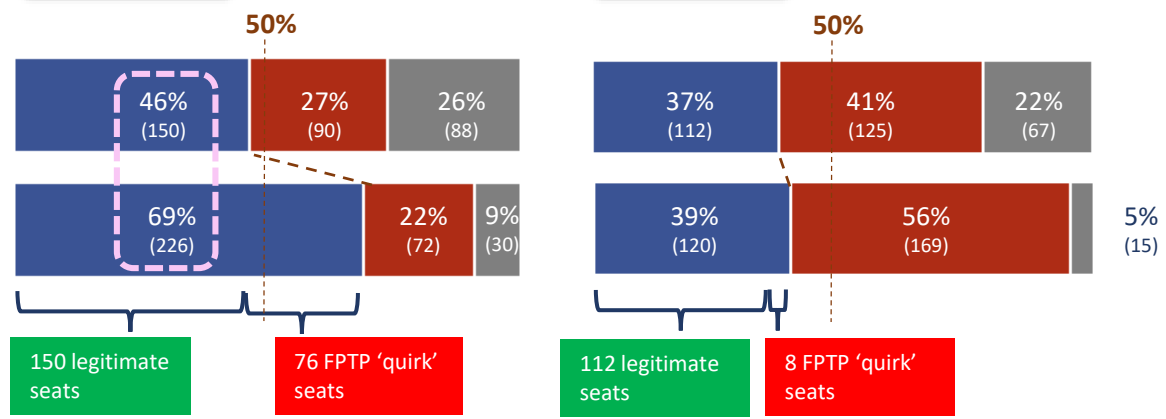
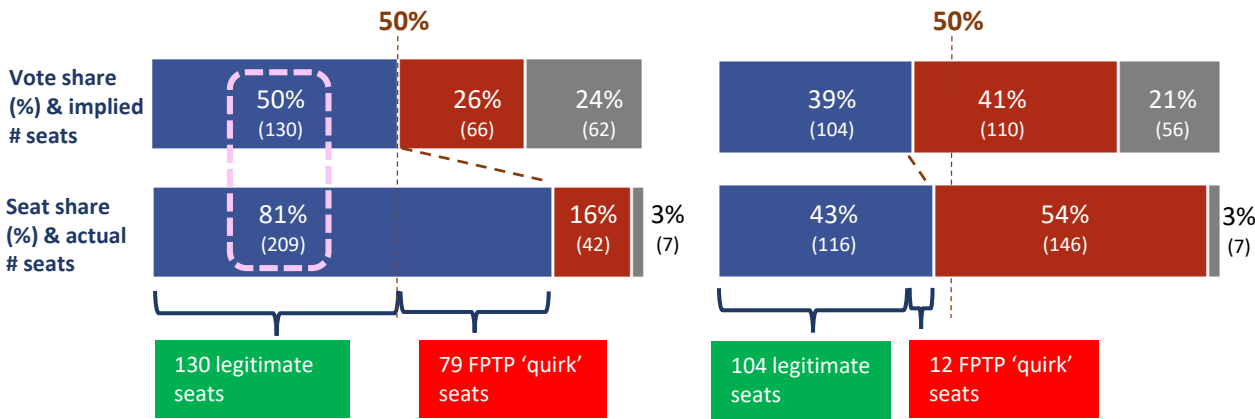
UK GEs - Tory wins: all seats 1979 - 2019



Counties



Boroughs



Source: House of Commons Library

- Tories win 1 in 2 English county votes; winning 4 / 5 seats
- Tory vote in boroughs high enough too to win 12 extra seats

- Total English 'quirk' seats both higher than UK totals (79>76 & 12>8)
- Tories get 7 fewer seats in Scotland (5) and Wales (2) than their vote share would warrant (i.e. they are the victims of FPTP's unfairness in these cases)

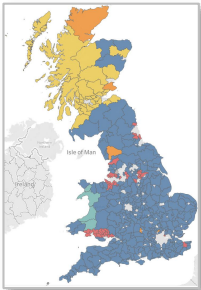
Key takeaway – Tories have a votes to seats ratio of 1:1.6 across rural England



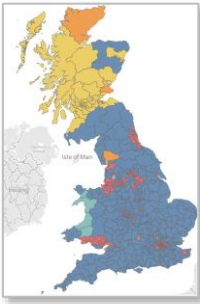
securing the huge majorities of seats achieved at UK level...

FPTP bias to the right

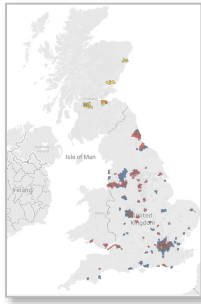
Counties of the UK



All constituencies of the UK



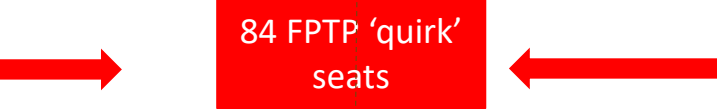
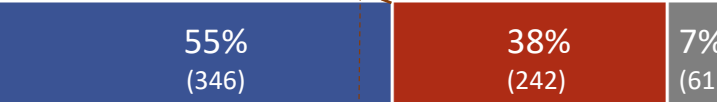
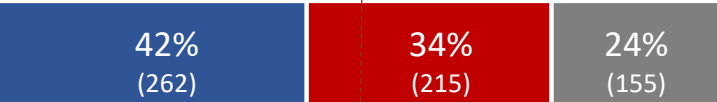
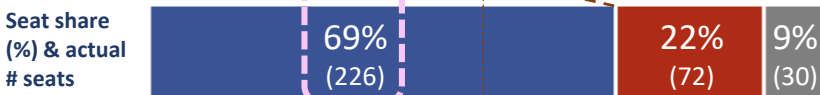
Boroughs of the UK



50%

50%

50%



43 seat majority

Source: House of Commons Library

Key takeaway: the 'quirk' seat haul of the Tories is what gifts them such power in UK politics



Verdict

Is the 'mean spiritedness' cultural?

X

Is it something to do with the two-horse race?

✓

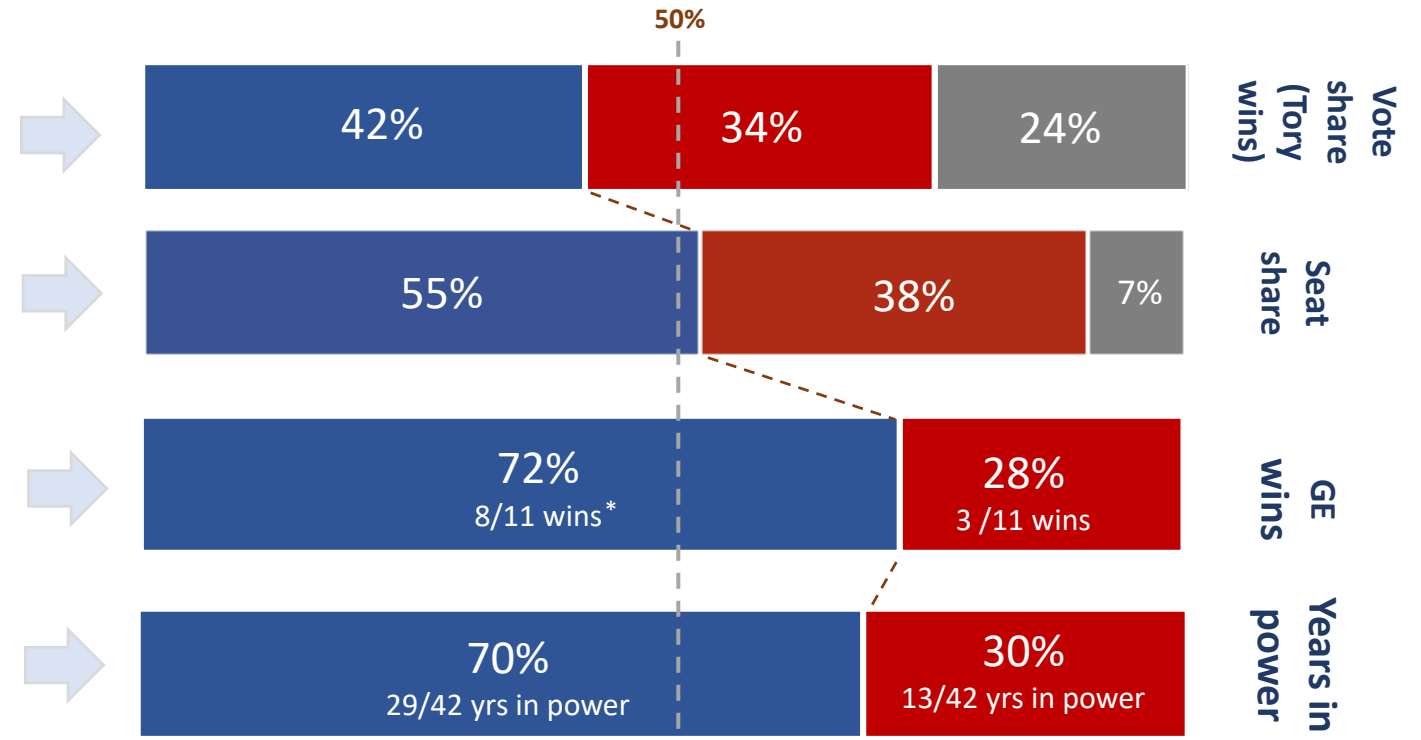
Is it do with where people live?

✓



Vote, seat and power share summary: UK politics 1979 – 2020

- UK voters know there are only two credible choices for government with the Tories getting the balance of their colossal combined 76% share
- The dispersal of 7.5m Tory voters across the English counties means that 1 in every 3 seats won by the Tories is in addition to their proportionate share
- The massive exaggeration in seat share from the English counties transforms a minority vote share into 8/11 (72%) of all elections in the 40 years since 1979
- This has given the Tories single party, majority rule for 29 from the 40 years since 1979

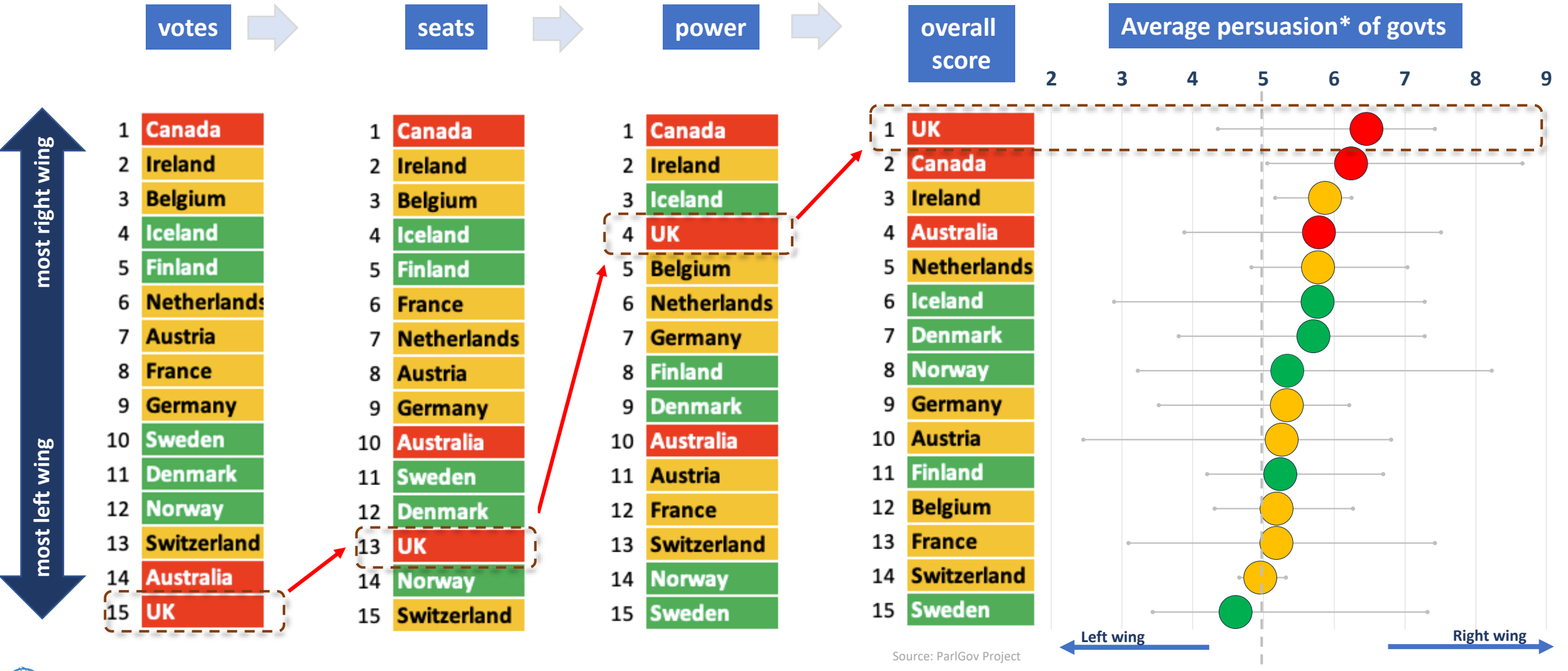


Source: House of Commons Library

Key takeaway: FPTP is inherently biased in favour of right-wing outcomes

* strictly speaking, the Tories have won 7/11 with the 8th a coalition with the Libdems but the Tories dominated it as the largest party, driving through a conventionally Tory agenda including Europe's most extreme austerity programme

Average left v right votes, seats and power share: 1979 - 2020



* Political leaning / persuasion score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

- FPTP two horse race and geographic concentration in rural seats gives the right leaning party a huge advantage
- In the UK, this advantage has gifted 8/11 Tory election victories since 1979, ruling for 29 out of 42 years



But, again, who cares?

All that matters is that the country is successful, prosperous and happy, right?

The hidden evils of FPTP

I. FPTP and narrow democracy

II. FPTP: a 2-horse race

III. PR: a culture of compromise

IV. FPTP and its bias to the right

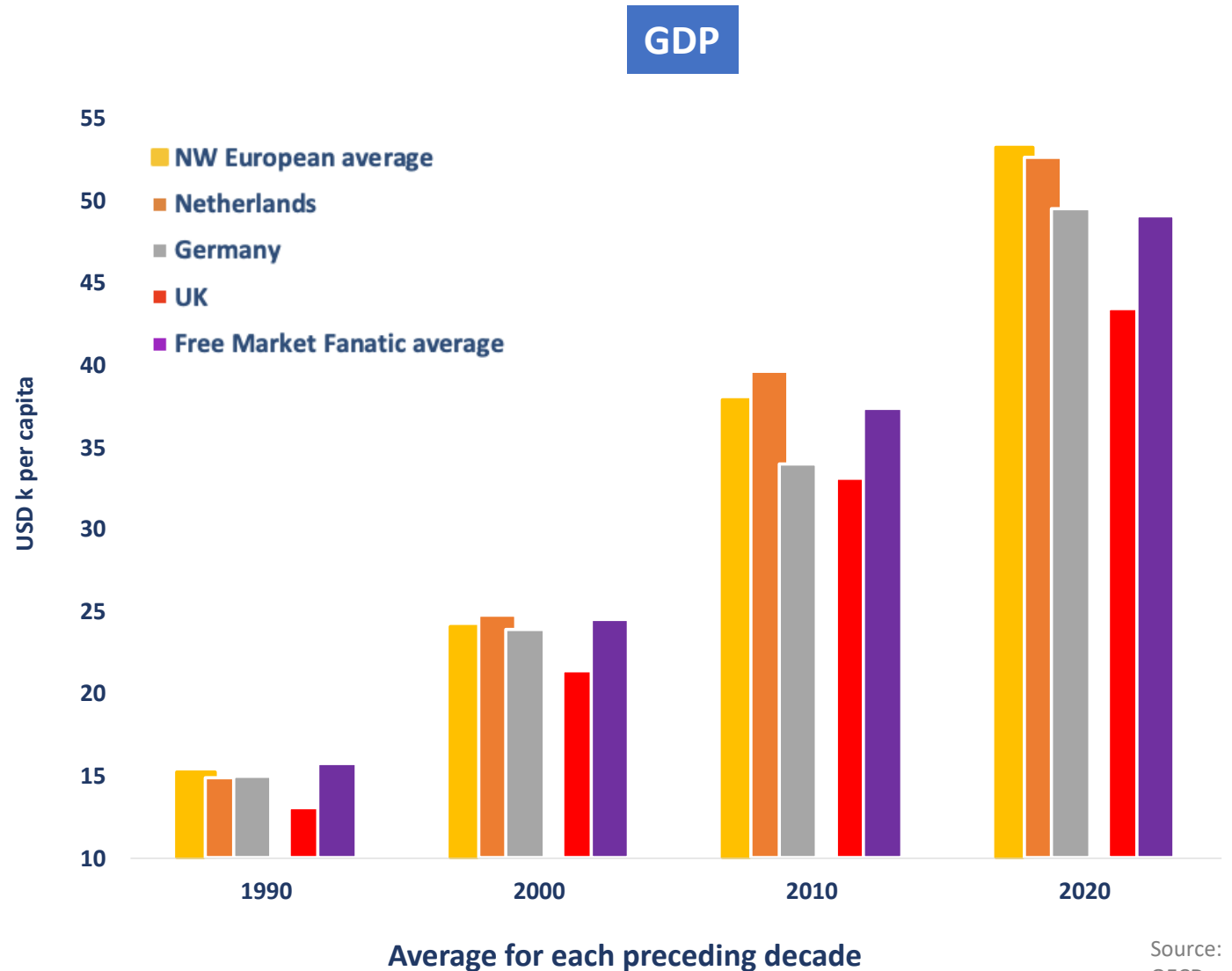
V. The Data's verdict: time-out for FPTP

V. Conclusion



- Dominance of right leaning, single party majority govts has allowed implementation of neo-liberal policies, making labour markets much more flexible and stacked in favour of the employer
- Despite this, Average **Free-market Fanatics'** GDP per cap has lagged and been consistently lower than the European average since 1990, now trailing Europe by \$4k (8%)
- The UK has lagged both the EU average, the NL and Germany individual in each of the 4 decades under review, now trailing Europe by \$10k (22%)

Key takeaway - so much for UK's **Free-market Fanaticism**; it lags its own peer group, Europe and its closest **Mainland Moderate** neighbours

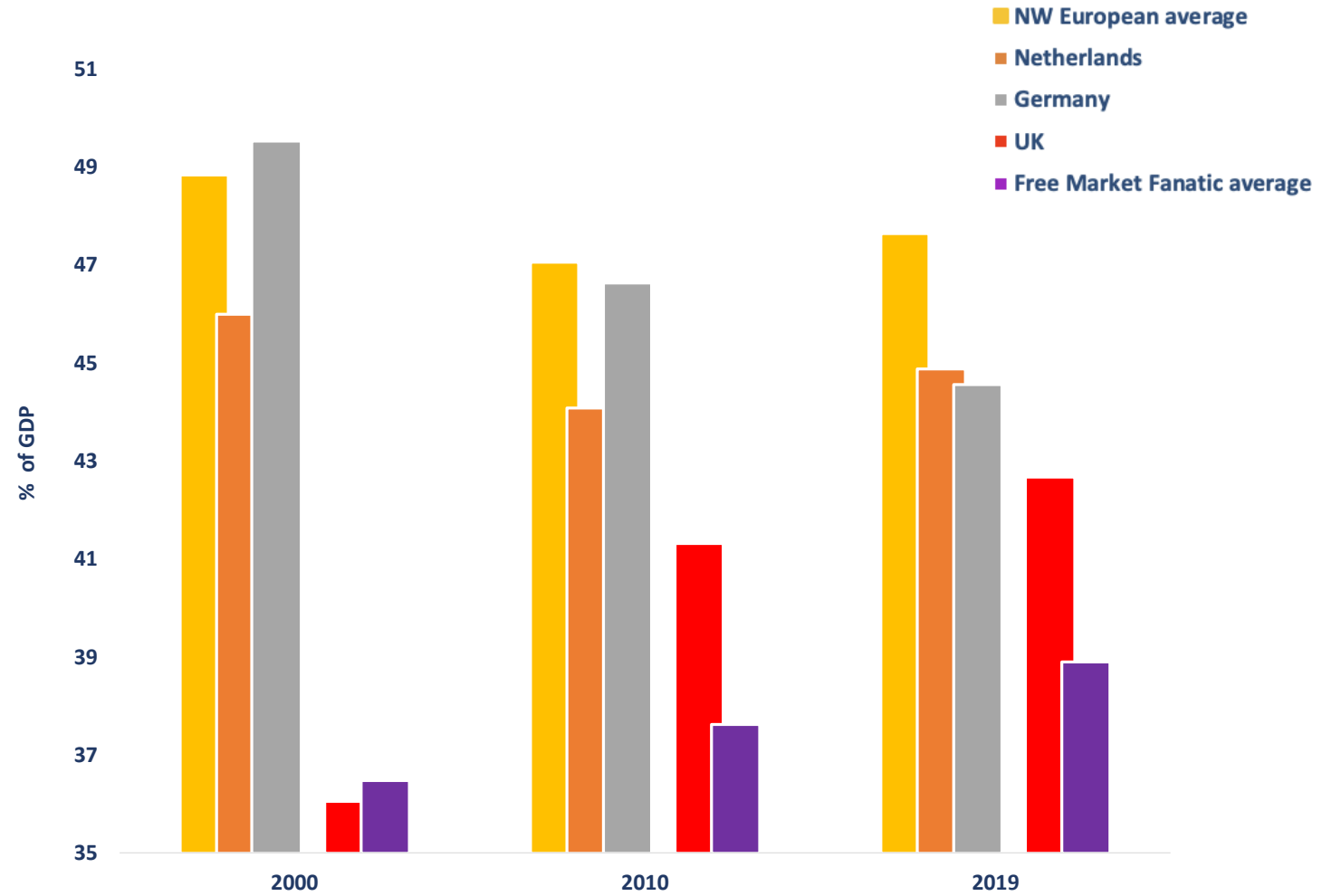


Source: OECD

- Overall levels of Govt spending have increased across **Free-market Fanatics** mostly due to the GFC of 2007
- The UK spent more than twice the **Free-market Fanatic** average in the naughties largely due to the UK's particularly acute exposure to the GFC
- Between 1990 and 2010, the gap between Europe and the UK closed from a staggering 29% to 13%
- Even by 2020, the UK still lags European average and peers by around 10%, 5% and 4% respectively

Key takeaway - govt spending gap closing due to GFC but UK still lags European peers by along way

Govt spending as % of GDP*



Average for each preceding decade

*NB only ' % of GDP ' data available for this metric on OECD site back to 1980; ' Govt spending per capita ' data only to 2000

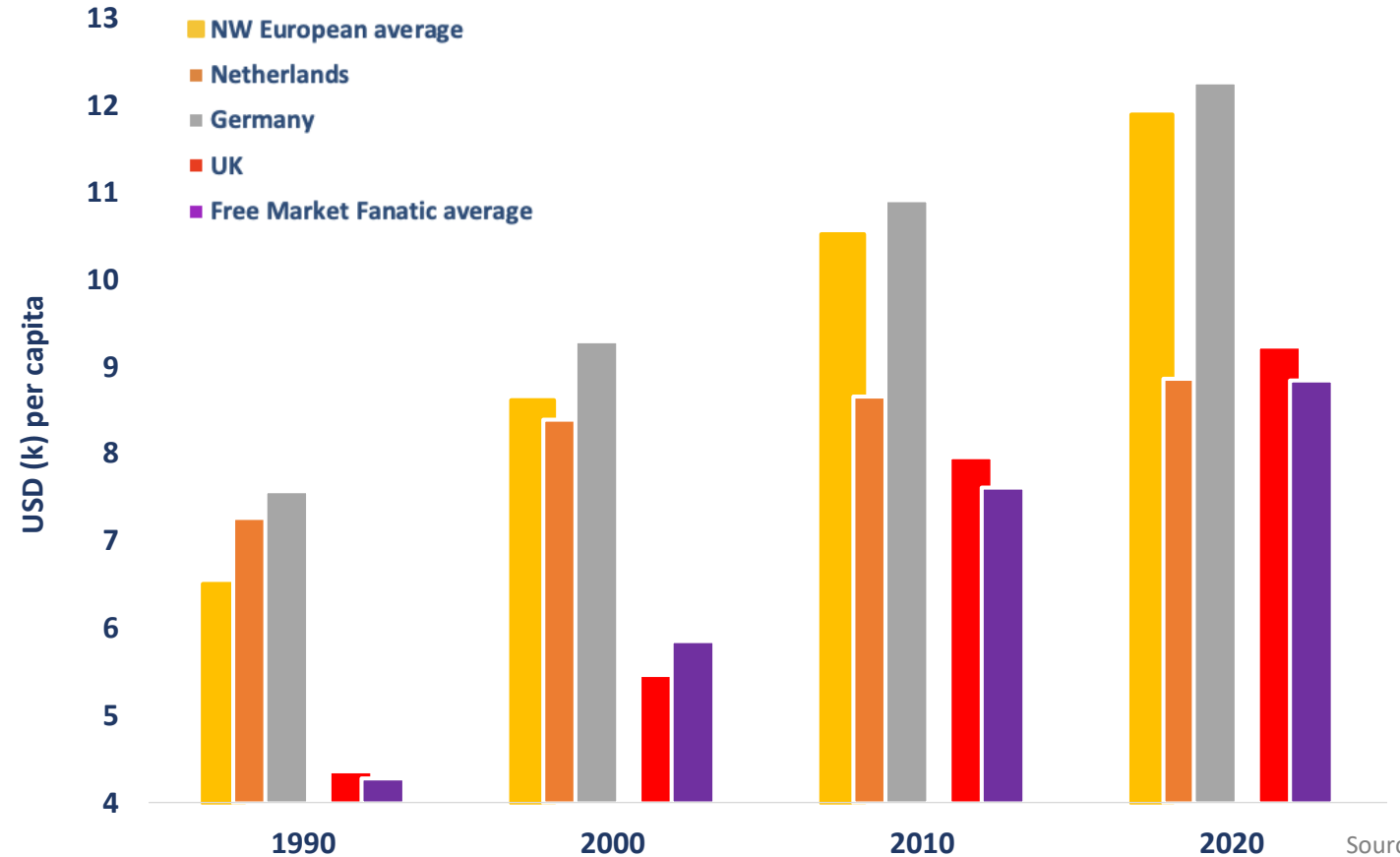
Source: OECD



- Until 2020, **Free-market Fanatic** social spending per cap was around 50% of that of the European average
- This is aligned with the neo-liberal ethos of the **Free-market Fanatics** that social spending is not money 'efficiently' spent
- The UK has lagged the European average by 50% in 1990, 57% by 2000, 32% in 2010 and 28% in 2020
- The compound effect of a huge legacy of underinvestment can be seen in the materially inferior social outcomes achieved by the UK and the other **Free-market Fanatics** over the period

Key takeaway - govt spending gap closing due to GFC & COVID furlough but UK still lags European peers materially

Social Spending per capita (USD k)



Source: OECD

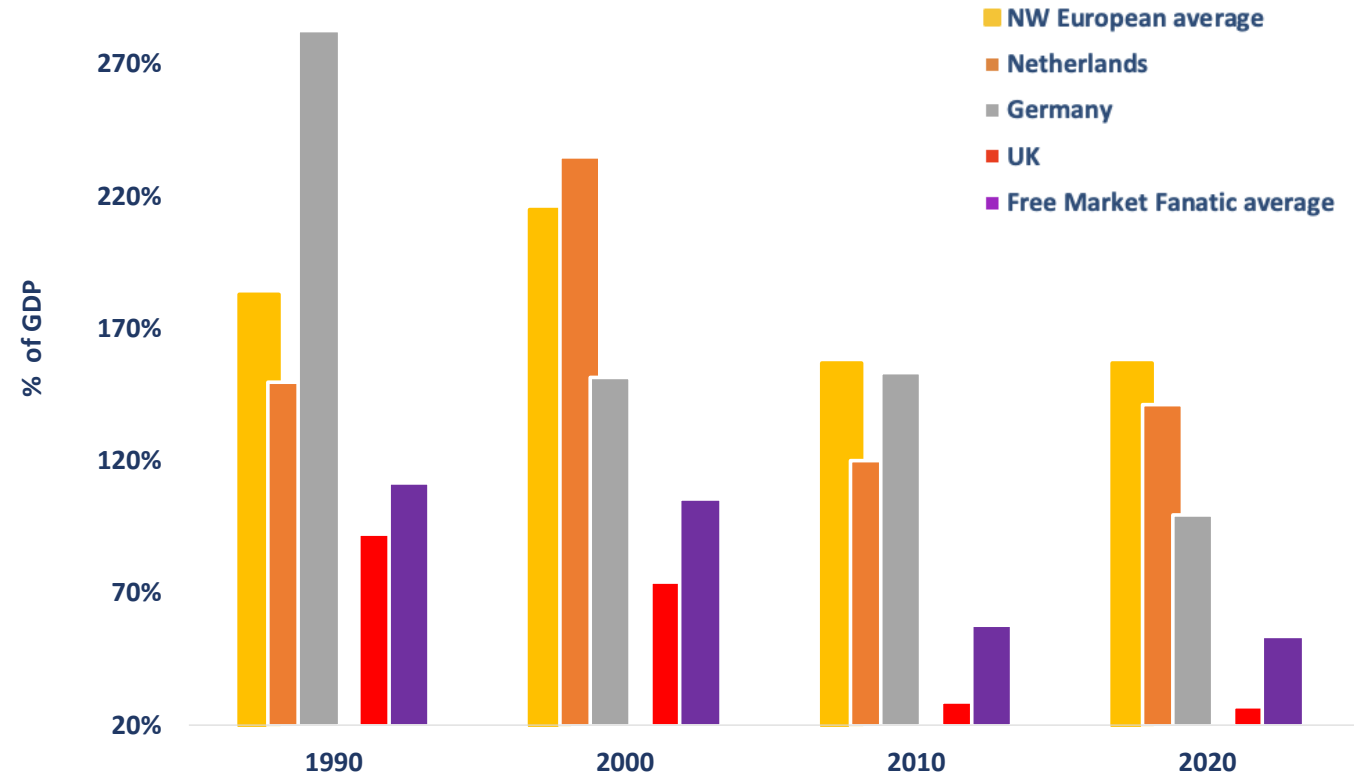
Average for each preceding decade



- **Free-market Fanatic** spending on unemployment benefits has come down consistently over the 40 years, as the neoliberal ethos right wing administrations set down their roots
- This is aligned with the neo-liberal ethos of the **Free-market Fanatics** that unemployment benefits encourage sloth
- UK's European peers have maintained healthy levels of support for unemployment; note that the non-directional nature of change across NL and German data indicating that different govts have changed tack unlike the UK where FPTP right wing bias has consistently driven benefits down

Key takeaway - **Free-market Fanatic** states unhindered by progressive opposition able to keep unemployment support at ever lower levels

Govt spending on Unemployment as % of GDP*



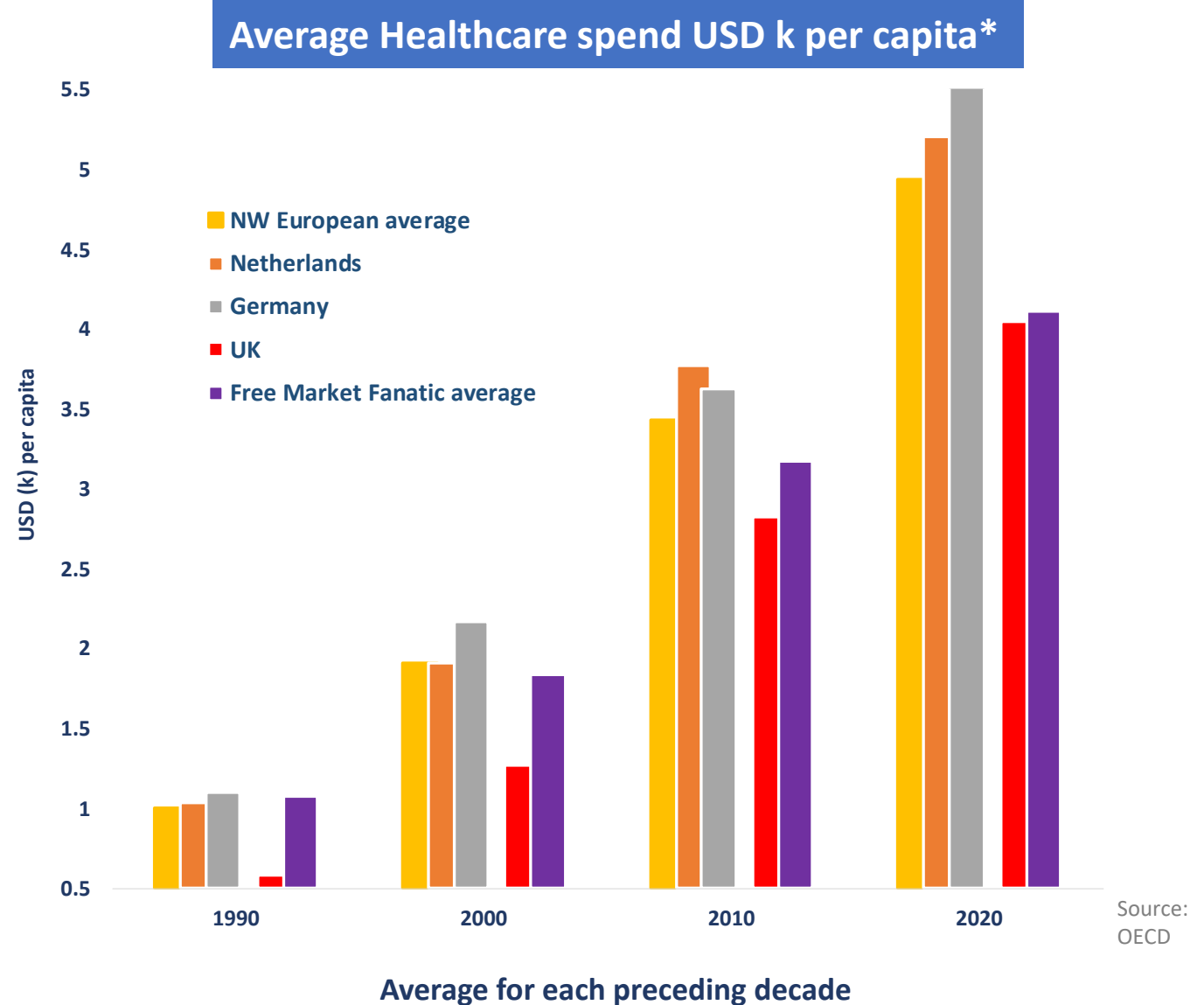
Average for each preceding decade

Source:
OECD

*NB only '% of GDP' data available for this metric on OECD site back to 1980; 'spending per capita' data only to 2000. 1980 to 1990 covers only Swe, Bel, Fin, Deu, NLD and GBP for European average

- **Free-market Fanatics** have lagged European averages for the 40 year period, despite both Tory and Labour speaking endlessly about their commitment to the NHS
- This is aligned with the neo-liberal ethos of the **Free-market Fanatics** where private wealth is encouraged to cover some of the collective need
- With no pressure from a credible left within the FPTP regime, UK investment was 70% below the European average in 1990 and is still 22% below in 2020

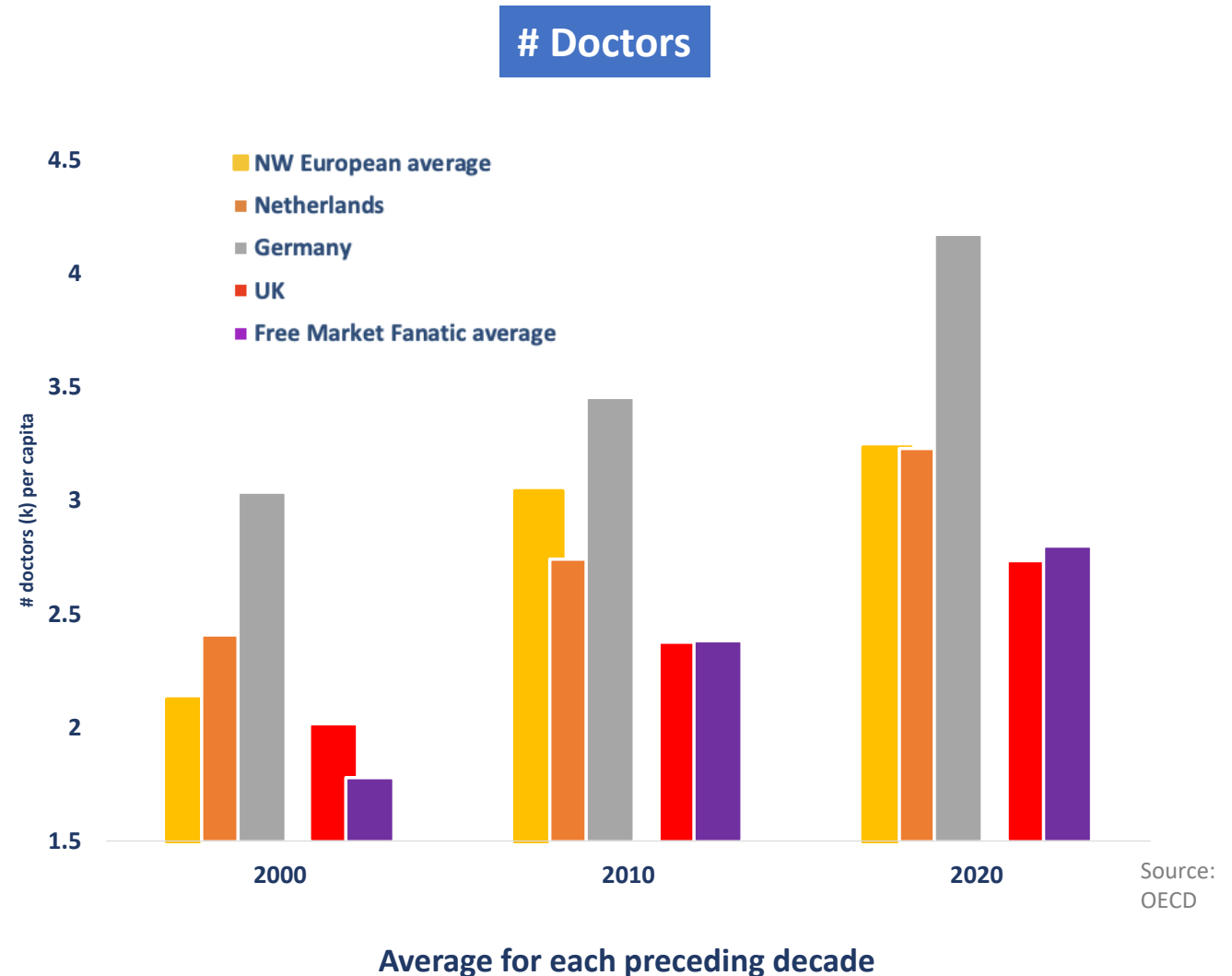
Key takeaway - impotence / absence of progressive lobby allows **Free-market Fanatic** govts to investment materially less in public health compared to European PR countries



* Does not include the US

- Between 2000 and 2010, the UK closed the doctor number gap v European peers under labour, but was still round 50% of the average
- But the UK now lags its **Free-market Fanatic** peers; over the 2010s even the much more marketized systems of Australia, Canada and the US have managed to engage more doctors
- Of course, only the UK has implemented policies that make it more difficult for 'foreigners' to work in the UK through Brexit which has contributed to its relative stagnation
- The bottom line is money; Germany spends €2bn per week on health more than the UK.

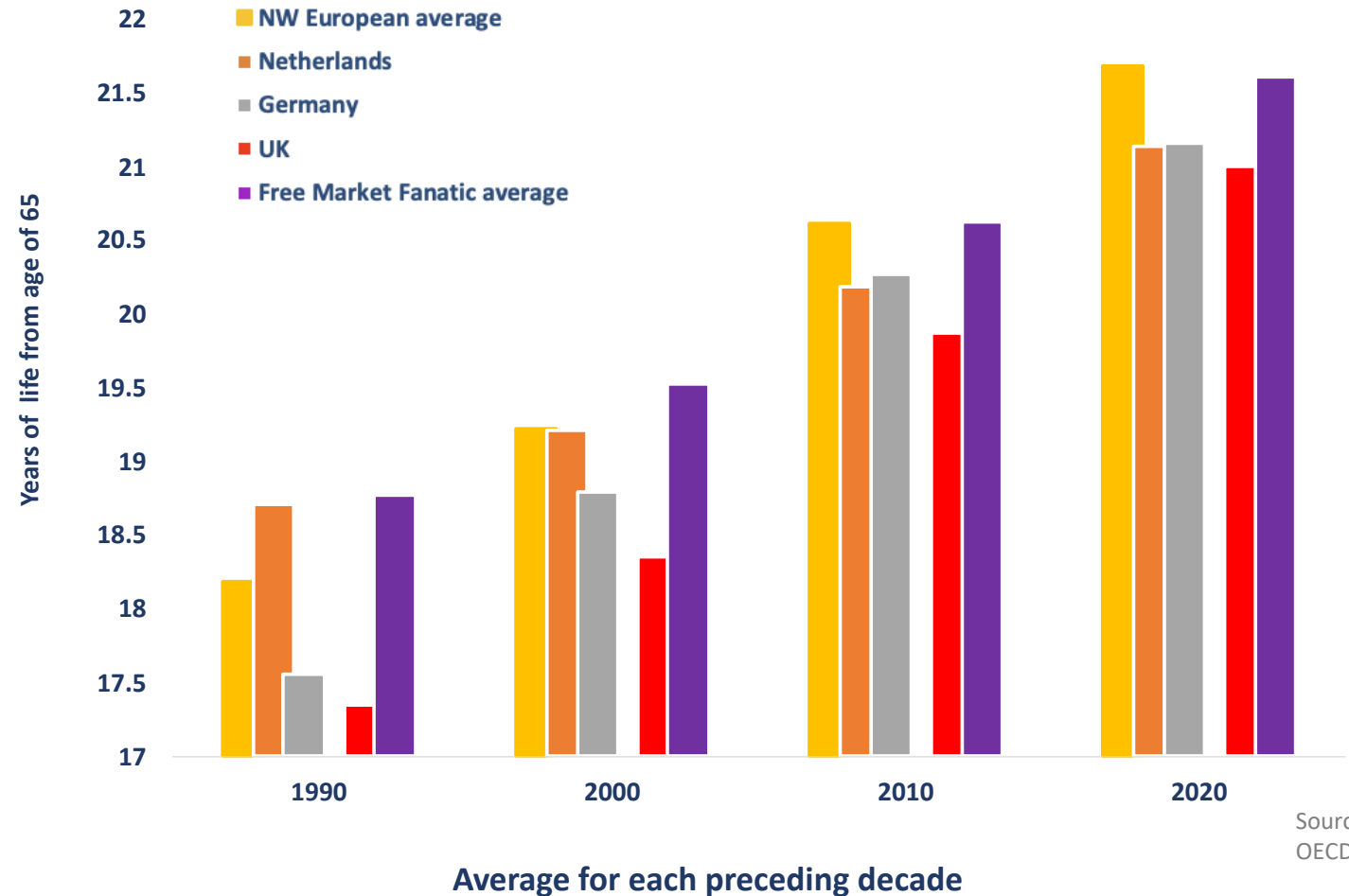
Key takeaway – a legacy of under-investment in the health service + the brain-drain of Brexit means the UK today has fewer doctors than any other peer



- In 1989, Germany absorbed 17m East Germans who had suffered a cruel communist regime for ½ a century; while lagging its mainland peers, by the end of the 90s re-united Germany were ahead of the UK
- In two decades, Germany is now ahead of the NL too – a country with a similar population to what was East Germany
- The UK has closed the gap with other **Free-market Fanatic** peers, but still lags the whole group

Key takeaway - more evidence of the price of under-investment in the NHS; over 4 decades the UK has had the worst life expectancy of all countries

Life expectancy in yrs from 65



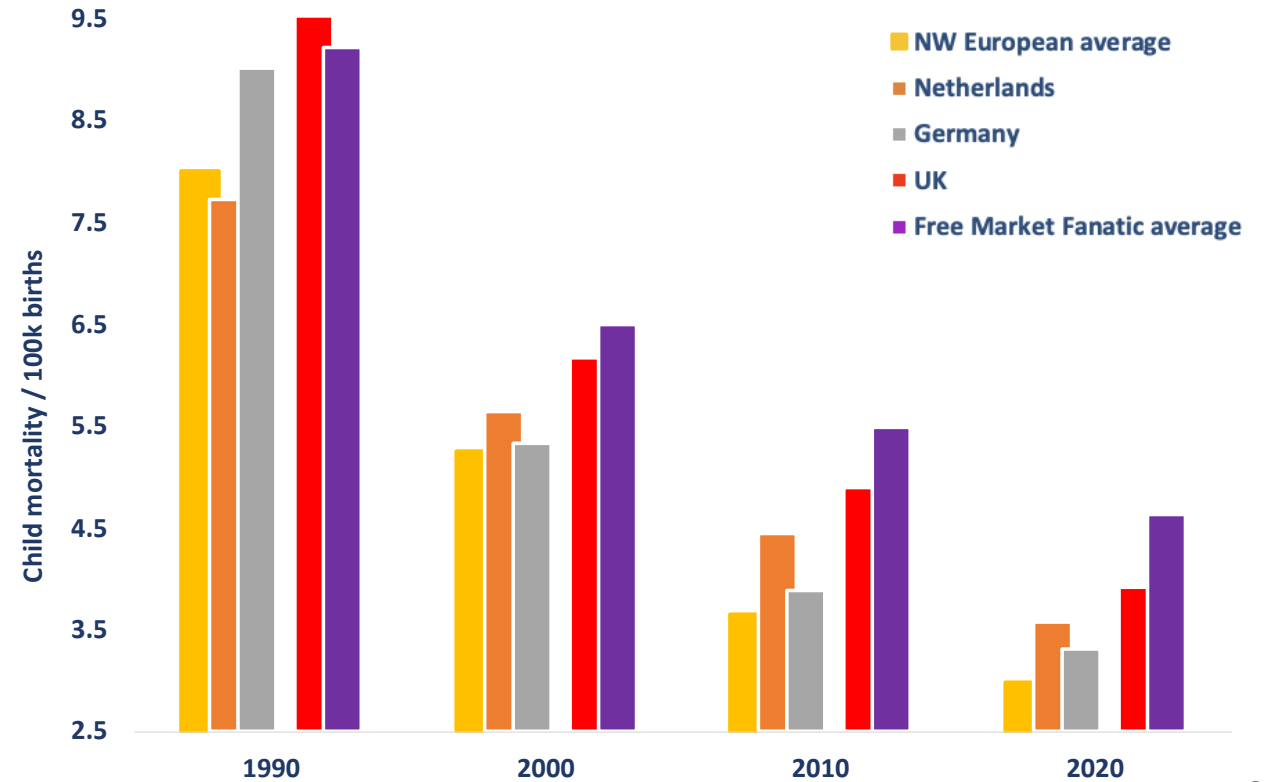
Source: OECD



- Surely the most disturbing statistic of all is the failure in **Free-market Fanatic** countries to save babies' lives
- Over 4 decades the evidence is clear: there is a structural or systemic link between FPTP, **Free-market Fanatics** and sub-developed world levels of child mortality

Key takeaway – no greater statement of failure of the **Free-market Fanatics** that a long term structural failure that the unnecessary deaths of babies; over the 4 decades, the gap has widened

Child mortality per 100k births



Source:
OECD

Average for each preceding decade



The hidden evils of FPTP

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The hidden evils of FPTP

- **FPTP two party systems typically give the right wing party the higher share of the vote** – the data shows that since 1980, FPTP states have normally had right wing governments (this is true also since the end of WWII*); the binary choice of parties creates a middle income / wealthy voter coalition that favours conservative politics
- **FPTP's 'winner-takes-all' mechanism turns a higher vote share into an outright seat majority** – on average, the small but many majorities across rural England allow the Tories to win many more seats than would be allocated on a proportional basis, transposing minority vote share wins into outright majorities
- **The UK's conservative party has been the most elected, longest serving and most powerful right wing party in Europe** – the UK Tories are the longest serving and the most right wing of any European party to have been in government in the last 40 years. It is also the only party (other than the UK labour party) to have been able to deliver its agenda through huge majorities and therefore authority, allowing them as per other **Free-market Fanatics** states, resulted in radical forms of neoliberalism
- **Clear evidence over 40 years that countries using FPTP systems consistently underperform their PR peers across major social outcome metrics** - against all 8 measures reviewed in this section over 4 decades, evidence indicates that FPTP countries are structurally unable to reach the social outcomes 'high bar' achieved by their PR peers

Key takeaway – over the long term, FPTP systems skew to the right with sub-optimal outcomes

* see Soskice and Iversen, 'Why some democracies distribute more than others' 2006



References



Scoring political parties - sources

ParlGov project

Project description

ParlGov is a data infrastructure for political science and contains information for all EU and most OECD democracies (37 countries). The database combines approximately 1700 parties, 1000 elections (9400 results), and 1600 cabinets (3900 parties).

The Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov) project provides two key services: A website that serves as an encyclopaedia of elections, parties and cabinets and corresponding ready-to-use datasets that can be easily integrated with other datasets for research projects. All in all the website has 37 countries, with around 1700 parties, 990 elections and 1600 cabinets. The database is maintained by Holger Döring and Philip Manow at the University of Bremen.

Party left / right positions

These positions are time-invariant unweighted mean values of information from party expert surveys on a 0 to 10 scale. The ParlGov project takes the average of left – right scores calculated in the four left-life frameworks developed by Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010. Arguably it would be more useful if ParlGov had been able to reflect changes in manifestos for each general election so these could be accounted for in the analysis. However, the four pieces of work they draw on are conveniently mapped to largely cover the timeframe of this research – 1983 to 2010 v 1980 to 2020; in which case a good enough proxy.

Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES)

Mission

The Chapel Hill expert surveys estimate party positioning on European integration, ideology and policy issues for national parties in a variety of European countries. The first survey was conducted in 1999, with subsequent waves in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2019. The number of countries increased from 14 Western European countries in 1999 to 24 current or prospective EU members in 2006 to 32 countries in 2019. In this time, the number of national parties grew from 143 to 277. The 2019 survey includes all EU member states, plus parties in Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey. Separate surveys were conducted in the Balkan candidate countries. Questions on parties' general position on European integration, several EU policies, general left/right, economic left/right, and social left/right are common to all surveys. More recent surveys also contain questions on non-EU policy issues, such as immigration, redistribution, decentralization, and environmental policy.

Scoring methodology

The dataset 1999–2019_dataset_means.dta combines data from the 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys.¹ In the 1999 survey, 116 experts estimated positioning of 143 political parties in the 14 largest EU member states (EU-14). For 2002, 250 experts evaluated 171 parties in the EU-14 countries plus 10 prospective EU members. For 2006, 235 experts provided evaluations on 227 political parties on European integration in all EU member states (24) apart from Luxembourg, Cyprus, and Malta. For the 2010 survey, 343 experts evaluated 237 political parties on European integration, ideology, and issue positions in all EU member states, except for Luxembourg, Cyprus and Malta. For the 2014 survey, 337 experts evaluated 268 parties in all EU countries, including Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus. For the 2019 survey, 421 experts evaluated 277 parties in all EU countries, including Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus.



Research into differences between Majoritarian and PR systems

In 2015 Holger Döring and Philip Manow found countries with majoritarian systems end up with right-wing governments 63 per cent of the time, while those with PR do so 44 per cent of the time. Using a slightly different methodology, David Soskice and Torben Iversen found in 2006 that majoritarian democracies have right-leaning governments three-quarters of the time, while proportional democracies have left-leaning governments three-quarters of the time.

In *Why Cities Lose* (2019), the Stanford professor Jonathan Rodden goes beyond counting the frequency of left- or right-wing governments under different voting systems, instead comparing the political leaning of countries' electorates with the political leaning of their parliaments. Essentially, this measures system bias. His book should become required reading for all progressives:

"...the European experience suggests that proportional representation creates no systematic bias in favour of either the right or the left. This may seem unremarkable on its own, but the contrast with majoritarian democracies is striking. In every industrialised parliamentary democracy with majoritarian electoral institutions, averaging over the postwar period, the legislature has been well to the right of the voters, and in most cases, the cabinet has been even further to the right."

Not only do countries with FPTP get more right-wing governments in absolute terms than those with PR, they also consistently get governments and parliaments that are more right-wing than their own voters.

This consistent partisan bias is partly a result of demographic geography. As Rodden explains, progressive parties across the world tend to pile up mountains of votes in urban areas. With PR this would not be a problem. Under FPTP, it means winning city seats by huge and effectively redundant margins of victory but losing across most of the country to a right-wing party whose vote is more evenly distributed. It is also, as Soskice and Iversen explain, because, broadly speaking, PR allows for low- and mid-income workers to vote for separate parties that then work together in coalition. With FPTP, both sets of voters need to rally behind a single party to avoid right-wing governments – which is extremely difficult to achieve. Döring and Manow endorse both of these explanations.

Across the world, PR shows no bias and consequently produces more progressive governments than FPTP, which consistently favours the right. Given that most people in the UK have voted for parties to the left of the Conservatives in 19 of the last 20 general elections, it is extremely likely that the UK under PR would conform to – rather than buck – this trend.

Extract from Laura Parker article in *New Statesman*, Apr 2021



Appendix 1

PR v FPTP systems



Electoral systems compared

PR High
PR Low

System	Country	Method	Allocating formula	Constituencies	Electoral Threshold	Comments
Proportional Representation	Netherlands	Party List	D'Honte	1	0.6%	Most countries use a party list system where voters choose preferred party from a list. To ensure the number of parliamentarians matches the number of votes as closely as possible, most countries use the 'D'Hondt' seat allocation formula, some use 'Sainte Lague'
	Austria	Party List	D'Honte	1	no min	
	Iceland	Party List	D'Honte	6	5%	
	Denmark	Party List	D'Honte	10	2%	
	Belgium	Party List	D'Honte	11	5%	
	Finland	Party List	D'Honte	13	no min	
	Switzerland	Party List	D'Honte	26	no min	
	Norway	Party List	Sainte Lague	19	4%	Same as above but different arithmetic used in Sainte Lague formula compared to D'Hondt (former favours smaller parties)
	Sweden	Party List	Sainte Lague	29	4%	
	Germany	Mixed Member PR	Sainte Lague	299	5%	Two votes - one FPTP / majoritarian, the other party list
	Ireland	Single Transferable Vote	n/a	39	no min	Where voters rank candidates and 2nd and 3rd votes go towards those candidates
Majoritarian	France	Two Round System	n/a	577	50%	FPTP system with two election days (rounds); winner must achieve at least 50% of total vote
	Australia	Alternative Vote (AV)	n/a	151	50%	FPTP system with transferable ranking method to find winner with min 50% of total vote
	Canada	First past the post (FPTP)	n/a	338	no min	Crude First Past the Post systems where a seat can be won with a proportion of total votes that is well below the 50% mark
	UK	First past the post (FPTP)	n/a	650	no min	
	USA	First past the post (FPTP)	n/a	435	no min	

Coalition governments
Single party governments

Scotland's devolved PR arrangement looks a lot like this...



Appendix 2

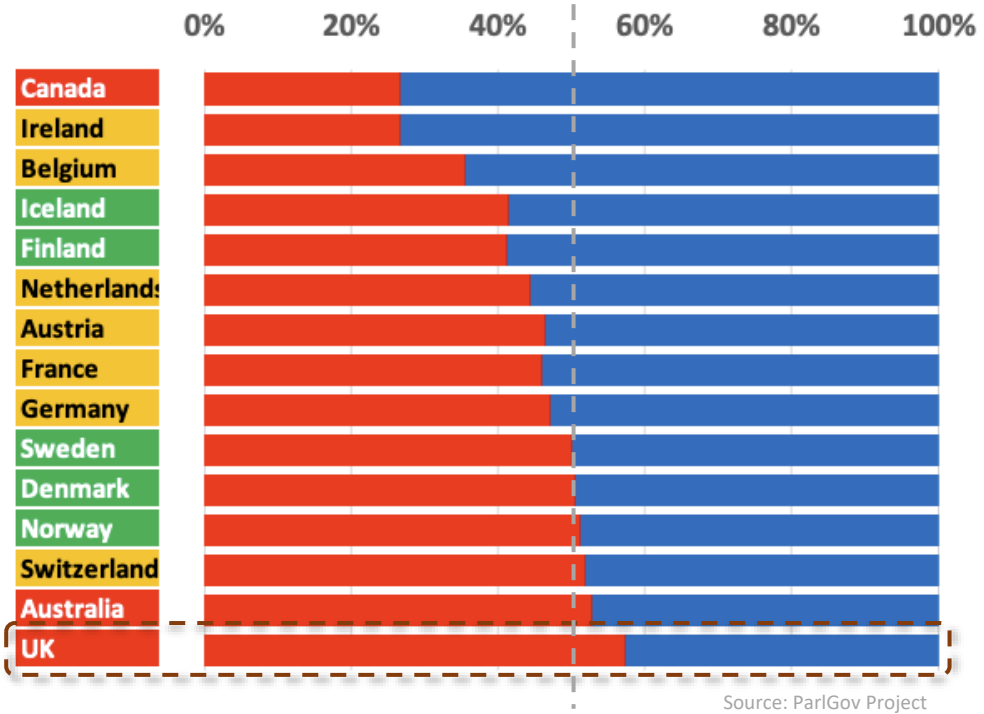
How FPTP fails to represent the will of the people



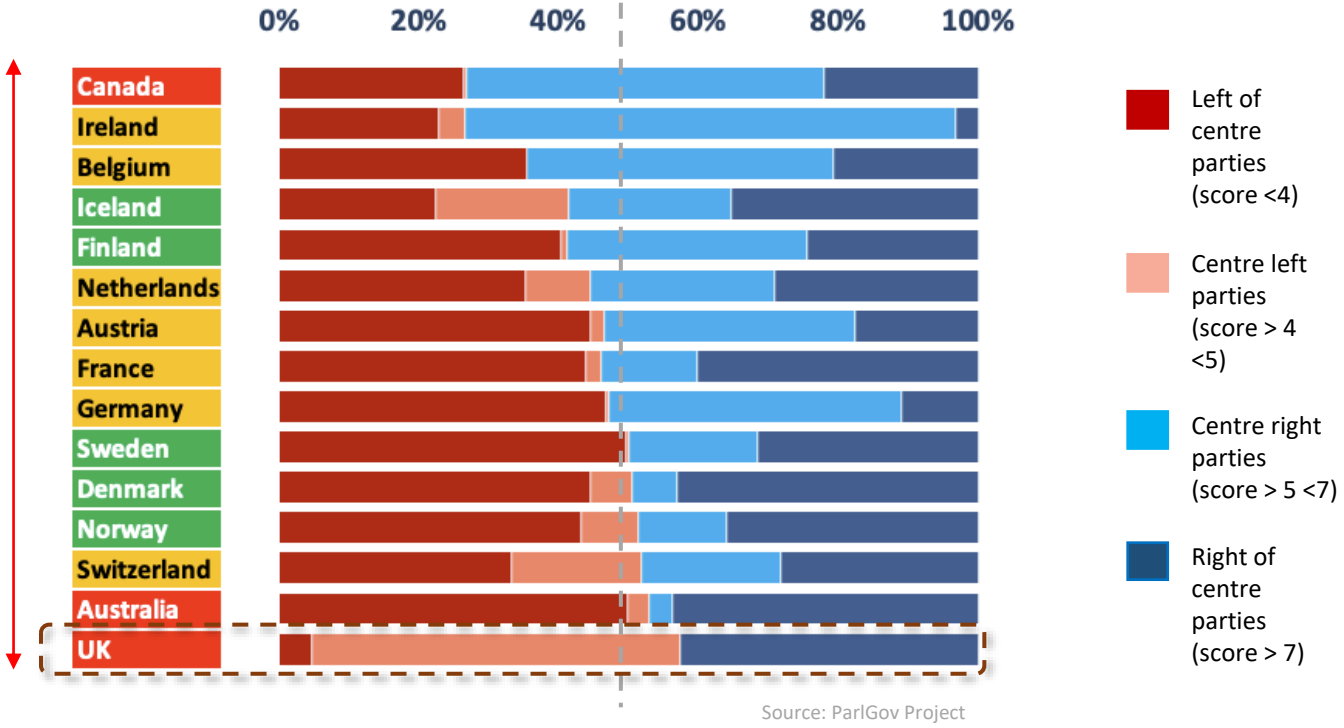
More left-leaning votes cast in the UK than in any peer country...

average total votes per election 1979 - 2020

left v right party vote share



left and right party breakdown

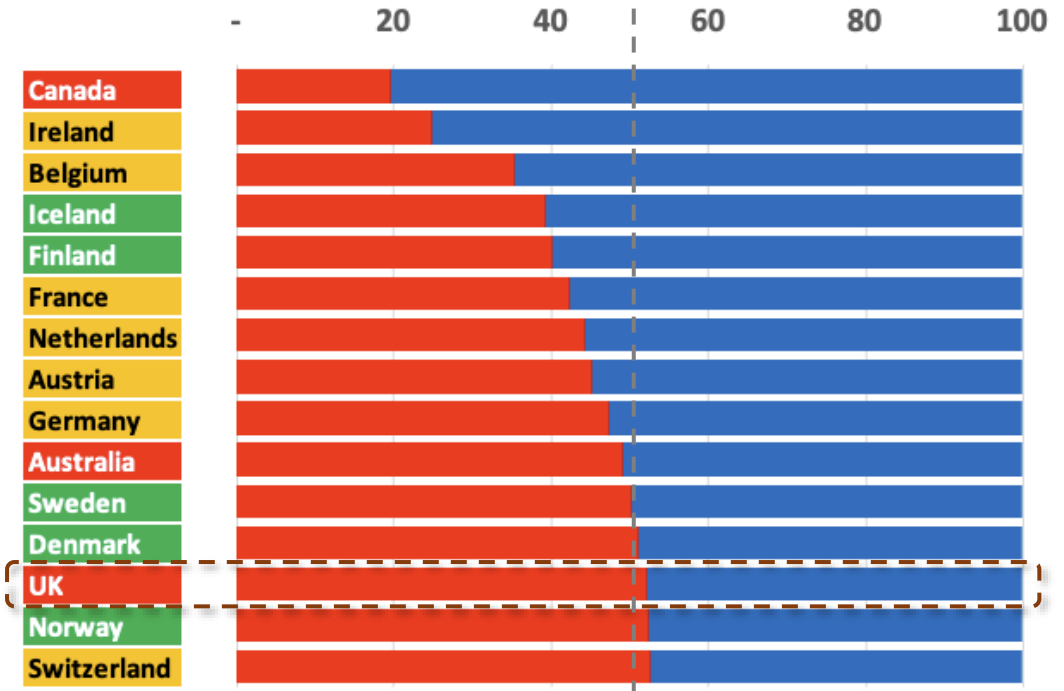


- On average, more votes for left of centre parties cast in the UK than any other peer country
- Australia, 1 of 3 **Free-market Fanatics**, has the second highest average level of voting for left leaning parties (due to compulsory voting)

- UK has both the largest average vote for centre—left parties as well as right of centre parties
- Australia has the largest left of centre vote, understood to be due to their compulsory voting system

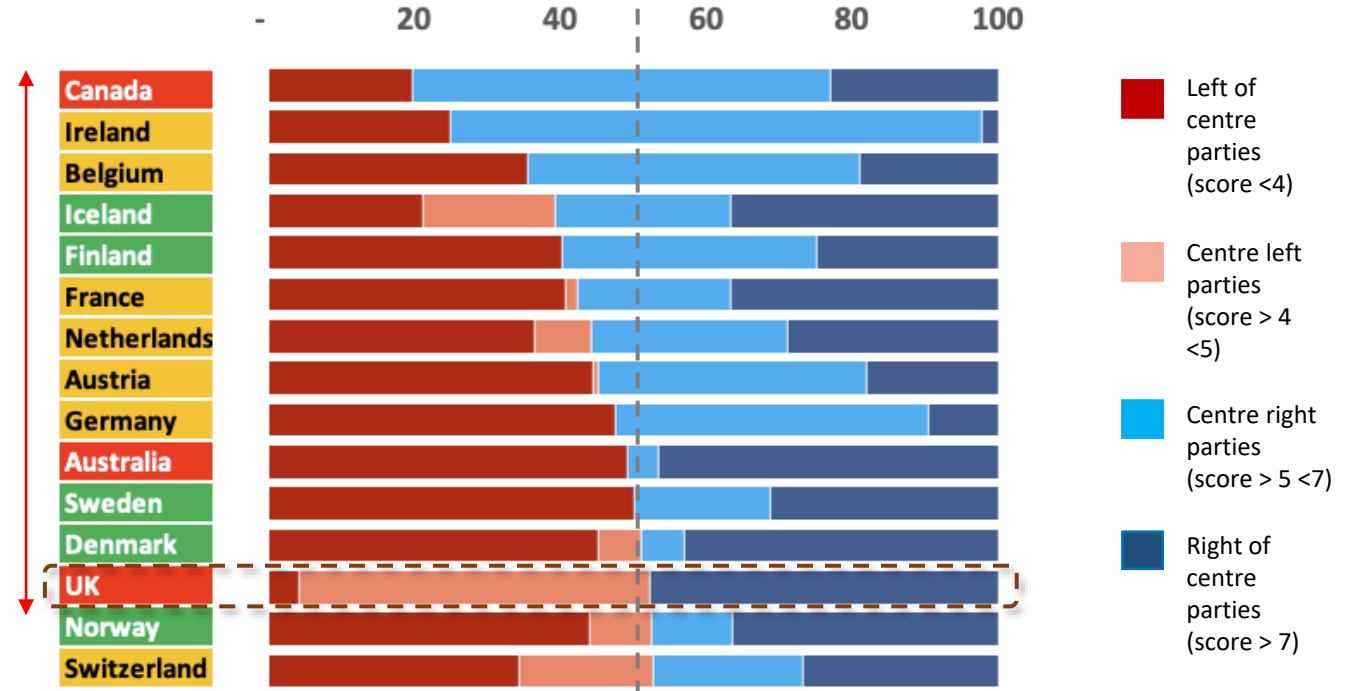


average left-right split – total seats 1978 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

average left-right split breakdown – total seats 1978 - 2020



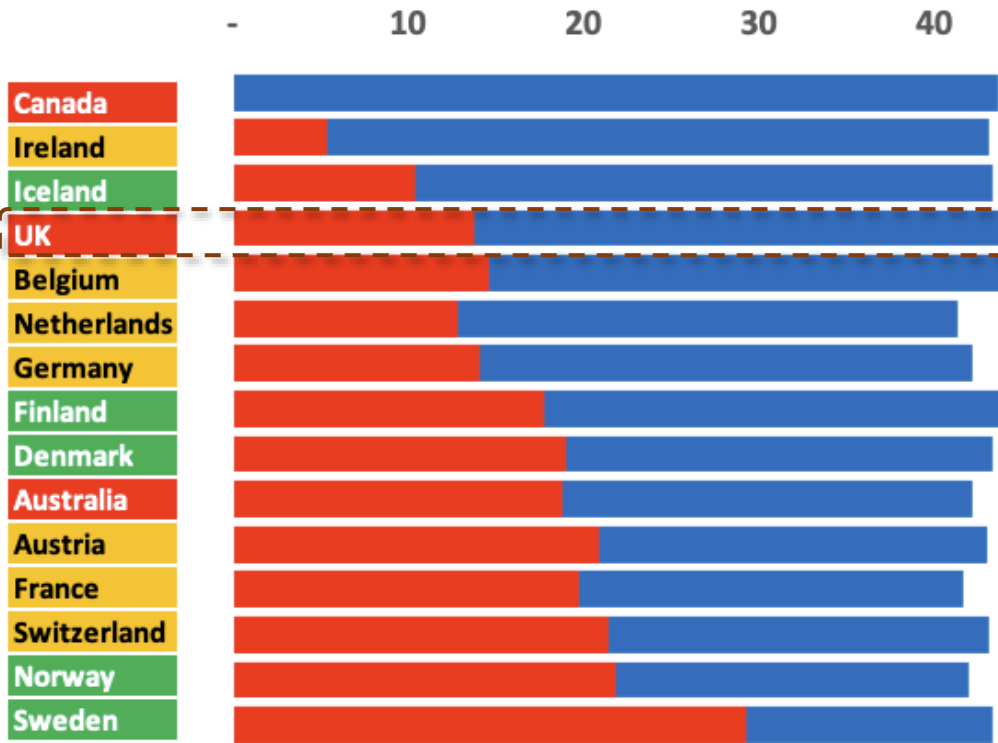
Source: ParlGov Project

- On average, only Norway and Switzerland have voted in more left leaning MPs than the UK
- Only 1 in 5 seats in Canada goes to a left leaning MP

- The UK has voted in the highest proportion of right of centre and the lowest proportion of left of centre MPs
- Australia has the 2nd highest proportion of left of centre (as opposed to centre left) MPs after Sweden

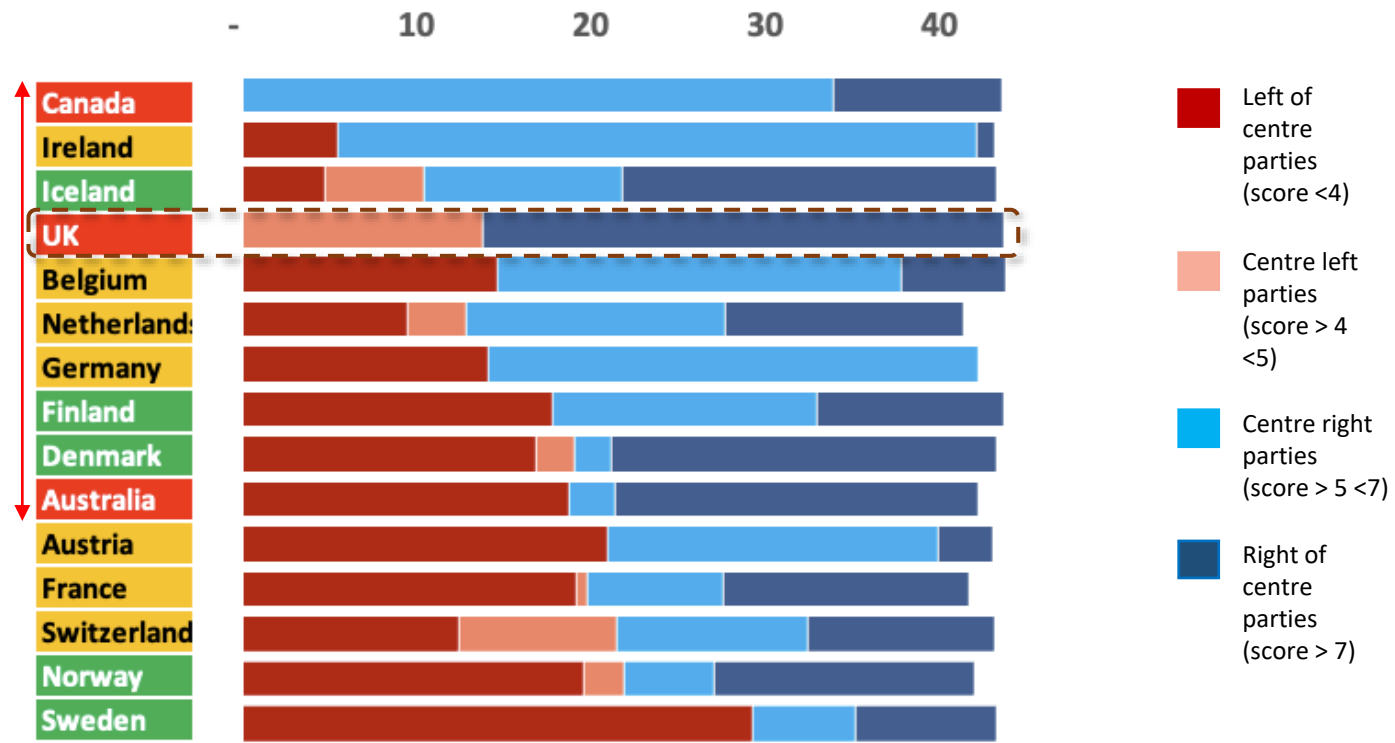


Total years in power – left-right split 1978 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

Total years in power – left-right split breakdown 1978 - 2020



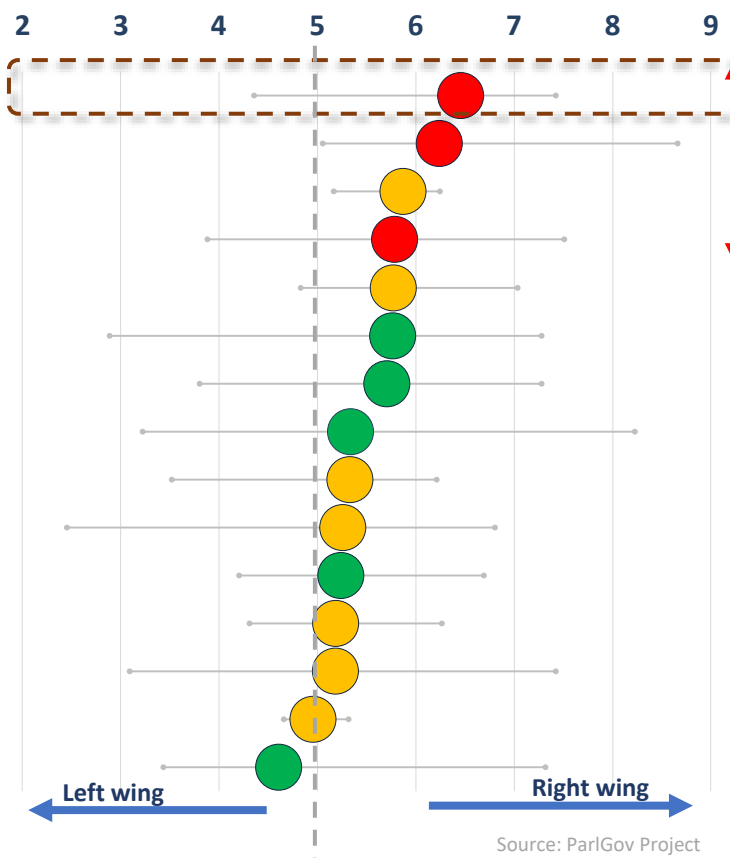
Source: ParlGov Project

- Despite a balance of left leaning votes and seats, UK has experienced the 4th highest number of years under a right of centre government (blue bars = right of centre)

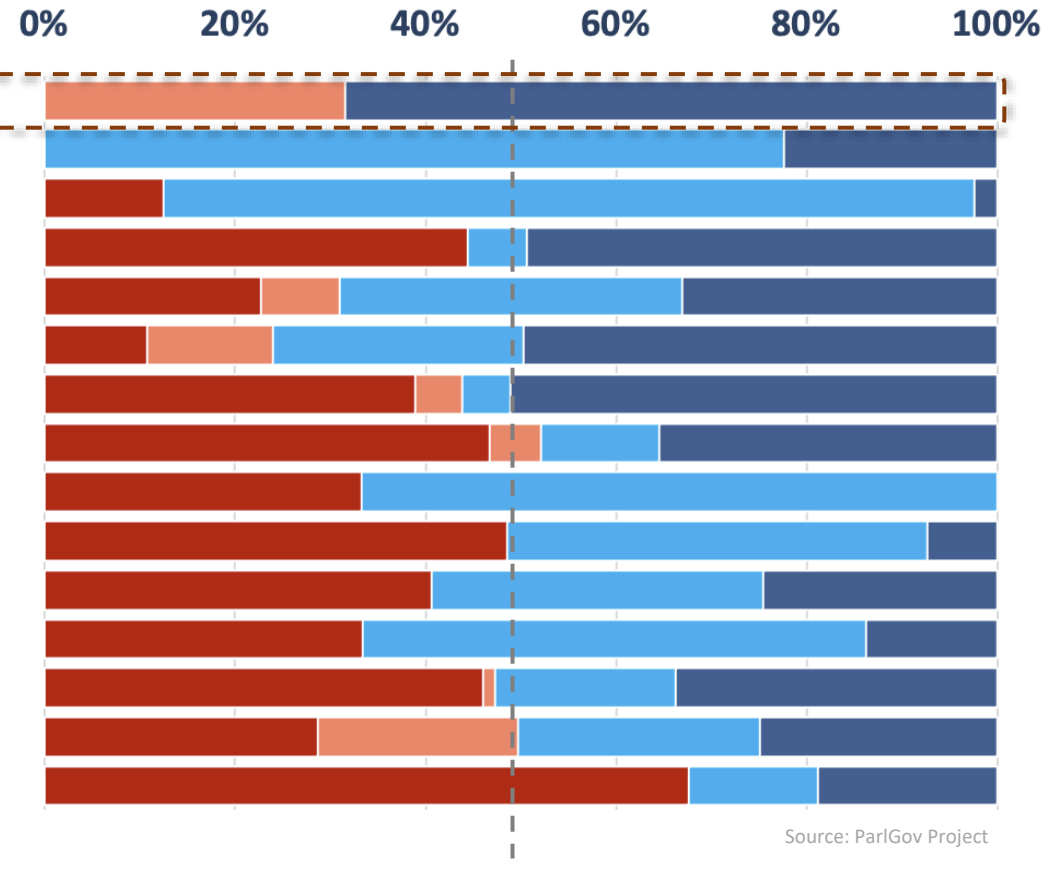
- UK spent more time than any other peer under centre—left parties as well as right of centre parties
- Surprisingly for an FPTP country, Australia has spent more time under a left of centre govt than any peer (ex Sweden); this is related to their compulsory voting regime



Average persuasion* of govts: 1979 - 2020



Average persuasion* of govts (breakdown): 1979 - 2020



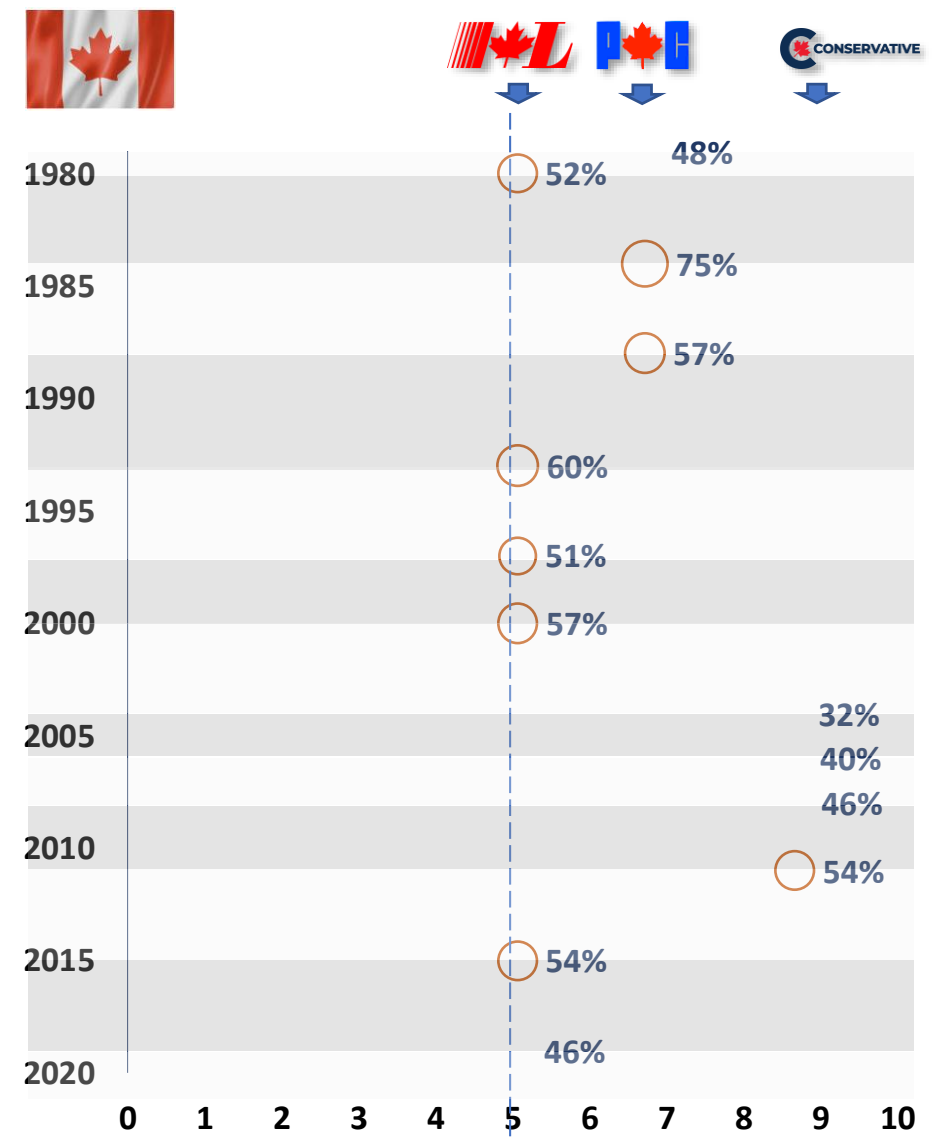
- on average, govts in the UK had the most right wing score, taking account of length of service and political persuasion as per parlgo.

- This results from both the dominance of the high scoring right of centre Tories and the relatively high scoring (centrist) labour party



- Canada is the most extreme FPTP regime in the sample; it's a classic 'two-party' system. Since 1980, it has never once had a left of centre government
- Canada demonstrates more emphatically than any other FPTP state how the mechanism drifts further to the right with the emergence of the Conservative party of Canada which completely supplanted the more centrist progressive Conservatives from 2005
- 5 of Canada's 13 governments since 1980 have been minority administrations
- Canada has tried to move to PR which was promised in 2015 by Trudeau's liberals only to be dropped following a landslide victory that year

Leading political parties across Canadian elections 1979 - 2020



Time between elections
Party of Prime Minister

* Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

Source: ParlGov Project

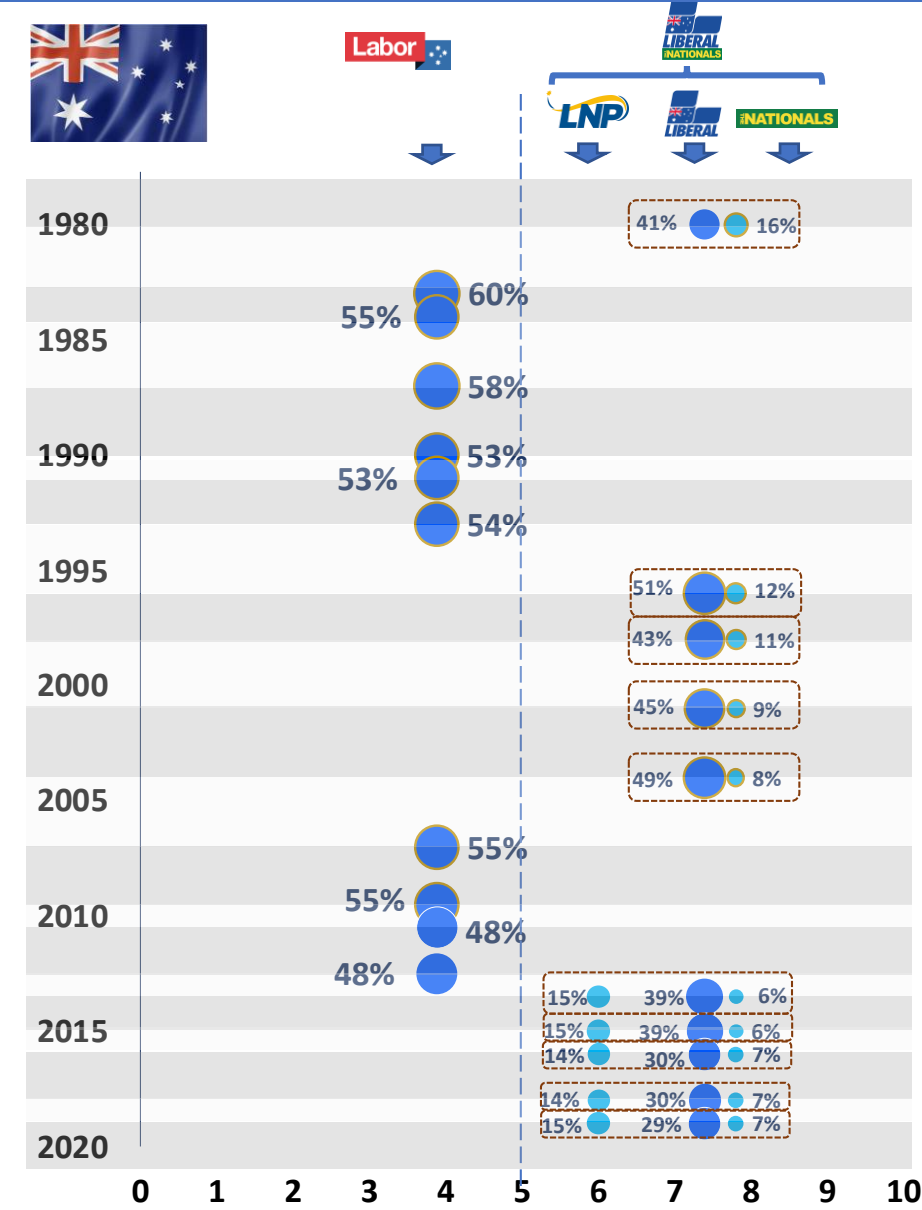


Oz is 'FPTP central' with its own idiosyncrasies...

- Although behaviourally a two-party system, Australia is unusual in that it's right wing 'party' has operated as a stable coalition for more than a century
- Equally unusual for a FPTP state is the score of the left-leaning party; in the UK, Canada and the US, the left is very centrist since it has to move to the middle to win enough votes; but due to compulsory voting in Australia, the over turnout is much higher which means that poorer progressive voters have a louder voice; this allows the Labor party to hold more firmly to a progressive agenda
- Nevertheless, despite the greater strength of a progressive lobby, Australia still trails most PR peers in terms of inequality and other social metrics

Australia's govts over 40 years

Leading political parties across Australian elections 1979 - 2020



Time between elections
Party of Prime Minister

* Political leaning score based on a 0-10 scale mean value in left/right dimension with data from Castles/Mair 1983, Huber/Inglehart 1995, Benoit/Laver 2006 and CHES 2010; 0 = extreme left wing, 10 = extreme right wing

Source: ParlGov Project



Appendix 3

FPTP & PR voter coalitions; a worked example

**why FPTP in the long term guarantees to lock the poor
out of political life**

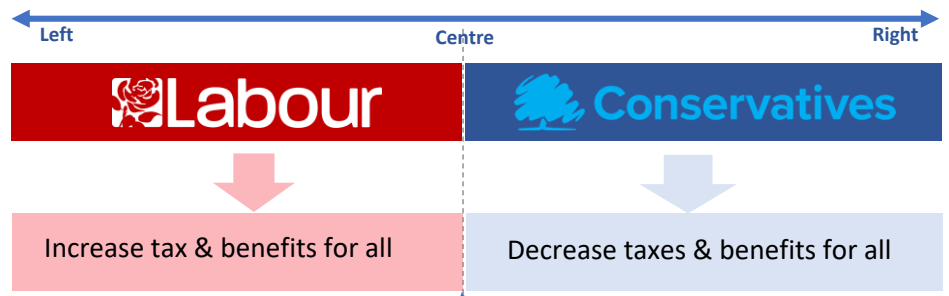


1

Election options

Political leaning
'Electable' party options
Manifesto pledges

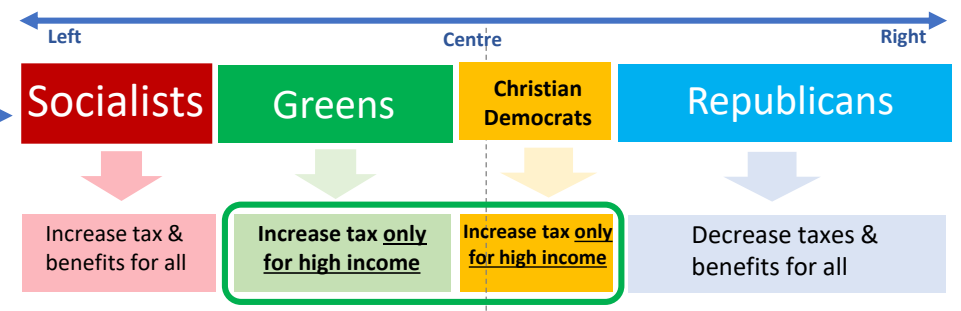
FPTP – UK style election



- **All know it's a 2 horse race:** Parties and voters know that 75% of whole electorate will vote for tory or labour

- **Policies for all, not specific groups:** Both parties therefore must appeal to the broad church, not specific groups

PR – NL style election



Source: Soskice and Iversen 2006

- **Bigger choice of 'viable' parties:** Voters perceive that there are 4 viable party options

- **Targeted offerings credible through coalition promises in manifestos:** upfront commitments to coalition possibilities with other parties e.g. the greens and the Christian dems in the above graphic

Single party majority expected: no one talks about coalitions, they almost never happen

Any number of coalitions possible: multiple outcomes based on different combinations of coalitions underpinned by a variety of specific voter issues or needs (e.g. only taxing high earners)



Example: step 2 – voter preferences

FPTP favours the right

1

Election options

FPTP – UK style election

PR – NL style election

Political leaning ← Left Centre Right →

'Electable' party options
Labour (Left) | **Conservatives** (Right)

Manifesto pledges
 Labour: Increase tax & benefits for all
 Conservatives: Decrease taxes & benefits for all

Voter income groups
 9% (poor) | 19% (low income) | 64% (middle income) | 7% (high income)

Voter tax/spend priorities
 49% (raise tax & spend) | 51% (no change / reduce tax and spend)

Political leaning ← Left Centre Right →

'Electable' party options
Socialist (Left) | **Greens** (Centre) | **Christian Democrats** (Right) | **Republicans** (Far Right)

Manifesto pledges
 Socialist: Increase tax & benefits for all
 Greens: Increase tax only for high income
 Christian Democrats: Increase tax only for high income
 Republicans: Decrease taxes & benefits for all

Voter income groups
 9% (poor) | 19% (low income) | 64% (middle income) | 7% (high income)

Voter tax/spend priorities
 49% (raise tax & spend) | 51% (no change / reduce tax and spend)

2

Voters

Source: Soskice and Iversen 2006

- Whether under FPTP or PR, voters tax and benefit attitudes driven largely by personal / family income brackets
- Lower earners vote for higher tax, higher earners vote for lower tax
- Middle income earners are split



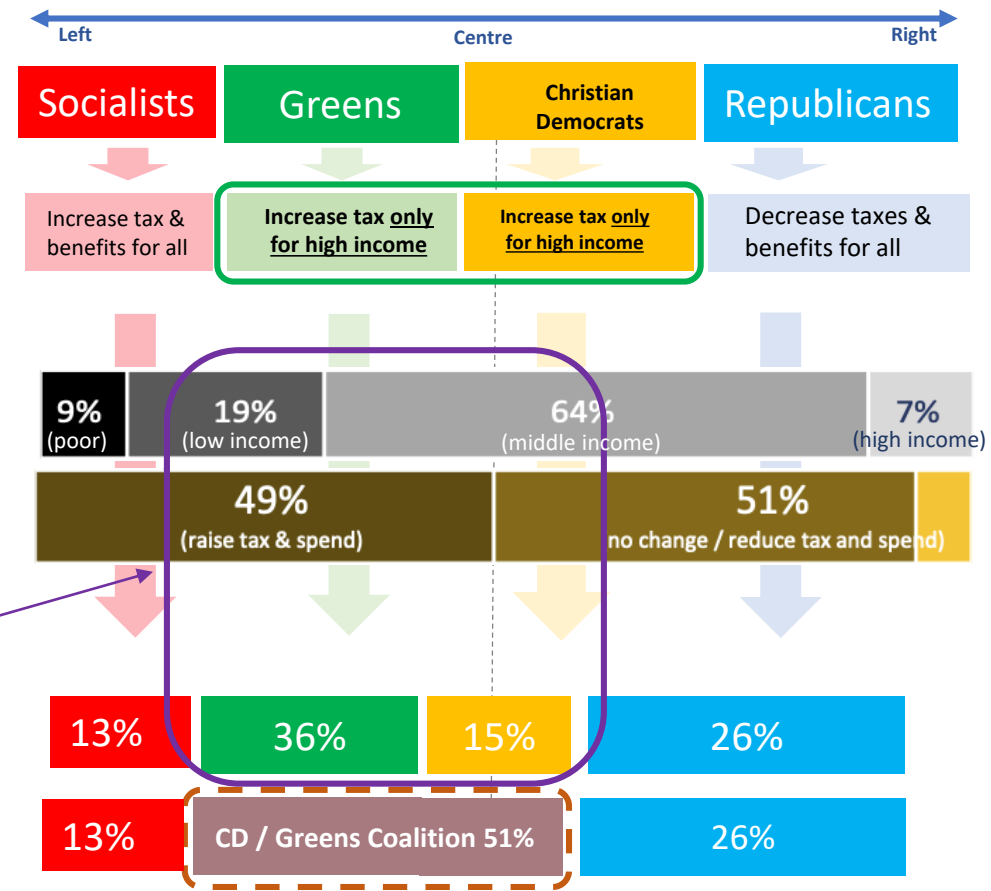
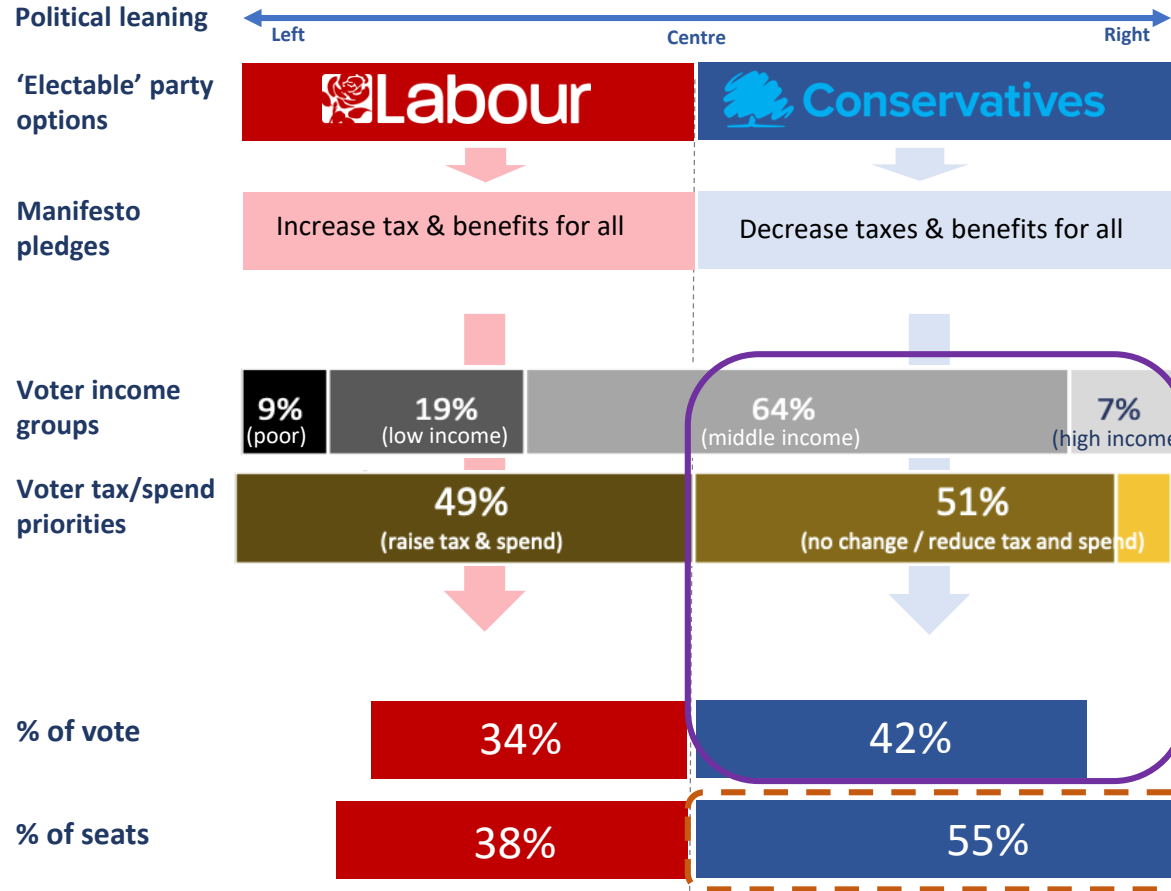
Example: step 3 – different ‘voter coalitions’

FPTP favours the right

FPTP – UK style election

PR – NL style election

1 Election options
2 Voters
3 Election outcome



Winning ‘voter coalitions’

- The Tories emerge with the largest share of the vote
- The dominant ‘voter coalition’ of the middle and high income earners results in right wing govt
- Under FPTP, the winner-takes-all mechanism turns a minority lead into a single party majority

- CD/green coalition has a 51% majority and forms the government
- In this case, the dominant ‘voter coalition’ was between the poor, the lower income and the lower end of the middle income voters

Source: Soskice and Iversen 2006