

FPTP & Inequality

Part III

FPTP and the emasculated of the UK Labour party

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2022



Image: Poster Man

FPTP and the emasculation of the UK Labour party

I. FPTP and the limp left

II. False dawn

III. Conclusion

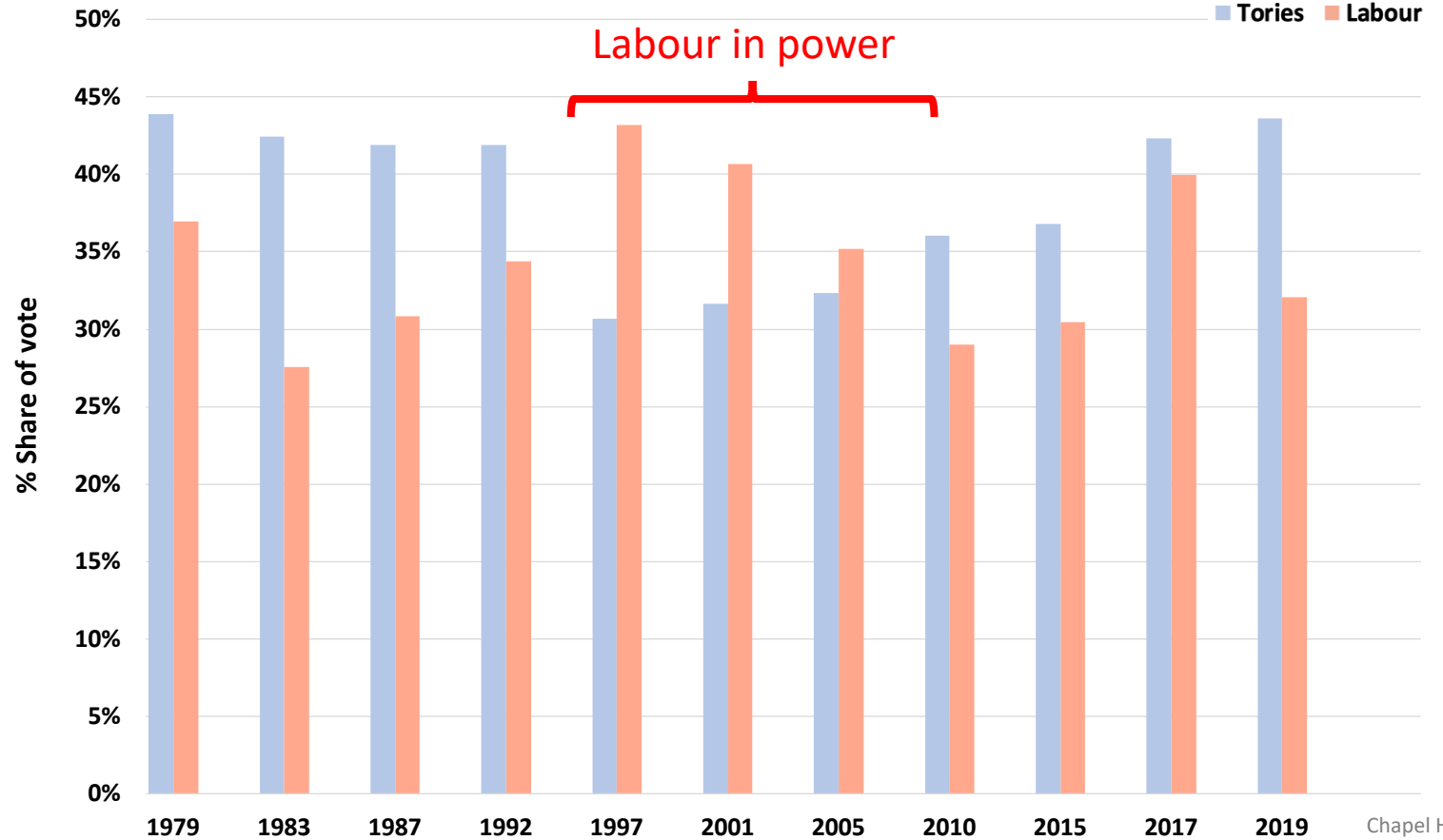


The Tories have bullied Labour into obscurity since 1980...

- After 19 years of ever more extreme Thatcherism, the English had had enough and voted for Labour in 1997
- Chillingly though, when Thatcher was asked what her greatest achievement was she answered 'Tony Blair'
- Thatcherism, bolstered by Tories' FPTP advantage, had bullied Labour out of its socialist roots, embracing private schools, marketism and war
- But then the Tories came back and that's where they've remained for over 12 years delivering austerity, Brexit and ever greater inequality

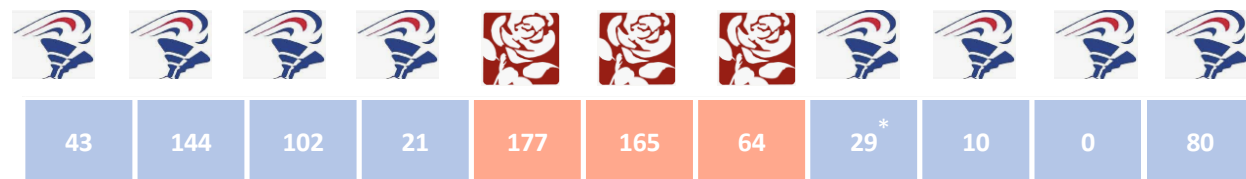
Key takeaway - since 1980, Labour has been marginalised from power and pushed to the right

UK General elections 1980 – 2019: vote share and majorities



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Gov party
Parl majority (# seats)



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

- The UK Tories are the 10th MOST right wing governing* party since 1980
- Operating in the UK's two horse system, the Tories are the UK's sole right wing / right of centre party to achieve power, where as all other European peers have at least 2 and some with 3 (Finland & Belgium)
- Note the UK's single right of centre party is not simply 'centre-right' it is full on 'right wing'



Key takeaway – in our FPTP system, the Tories are THE 'right wing' horse, amongst the more right wing of all parties in peer group

Governing* right-wing parties ranked by most right wing to least: 1980 -2020

party	score	country
1 Conservative Party of Canada	8.7	Canada
2 Freedom Party of Austria	8.3	Austria
3 Progressive Democrats	8.0	Ireland
4 Conservative Party	7.9	Norway
5 Moderate Party	7.9	Sweden
6 Rally for the Republic	7.5	France
7 Union for a Popular Movement The Republicans	7.5	France
8 Independence Party	7.5	Iceland
9 Australian Liberal / National Coalition	7.5	Australia
10 Conservatives	7.4	United Kingdom
11 Swiss People's Party	7.4	Switzerland
12 People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	7.3	Netherlands
13 Liberal Party	7.3	Denmark
14 National Coalition Party	7.2	Finland
15 Conservatives	7.2	Denmark
16 Christian Democrats	7.2	Sweden
17 Party of Liberty and Progress Flemish Liberals and Democrats	7.0	Belgium
18 Liberal Reformist Party	6.9	Belgium
19 Reformist Movement	6.7	Belgium
20 Finnish Party True Finns	6.6	Finland
21 Austrian People's Party	6.5	Austria
22 Fine Gael (Family of the Irish)	6.4	Ireland
23 Swedish People's Party	6.4	Finland

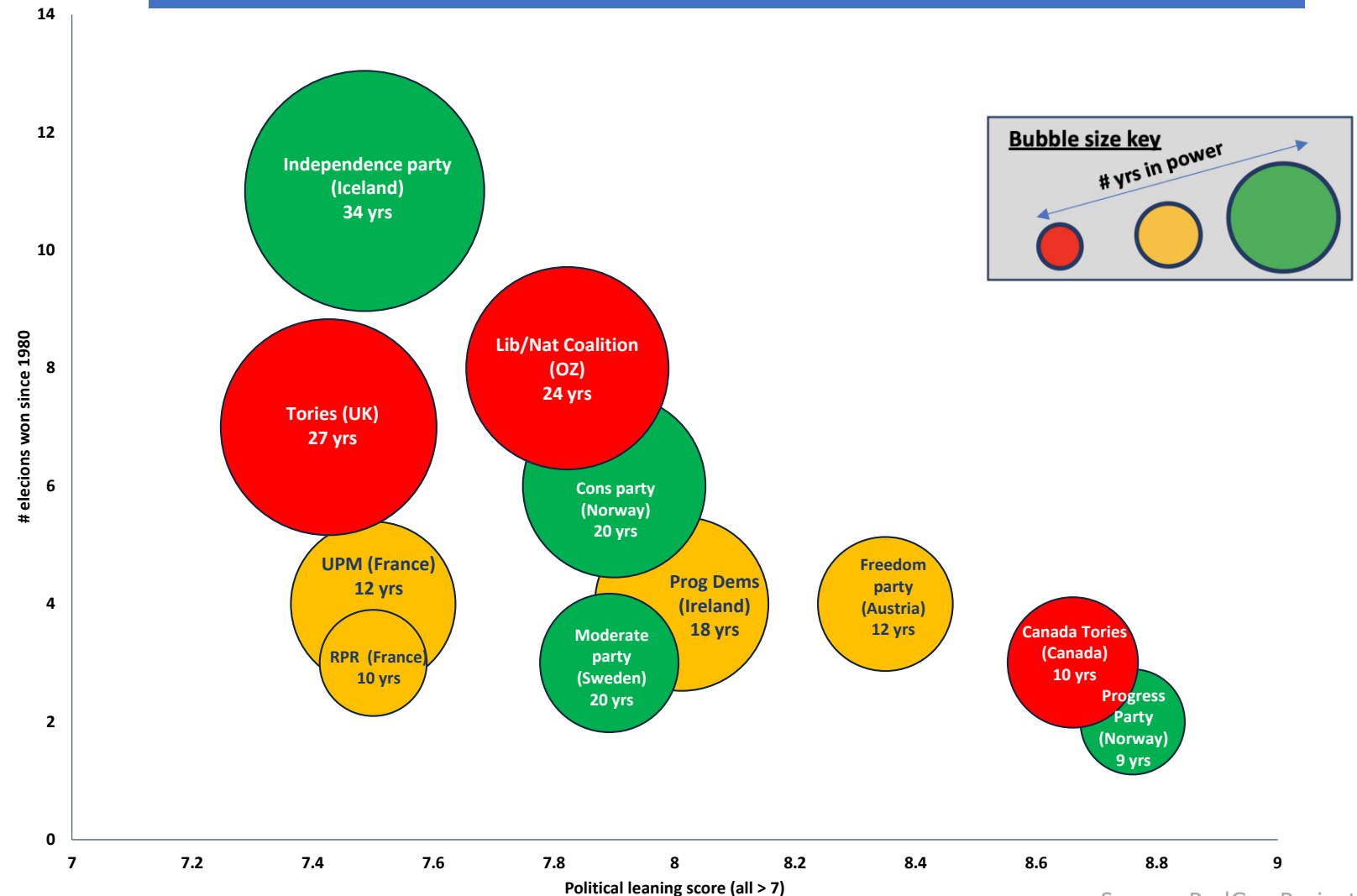


* 'governing' means all right-leaning parties that have been involved in at least 3 govt cabinets since 1979

- The UK Tories have been in government for more time than any other party over 40 years (other than the Icelandic Indy party, always in a coalition)
- In terms of right wing score, UK Tories are at the lower end v peer parties across Europe

Key takeaway - UK Tories above average for time in power but less right wing than other elected European peers

Top 10 most successful 'right of centre' political parties: 1980 - 2020



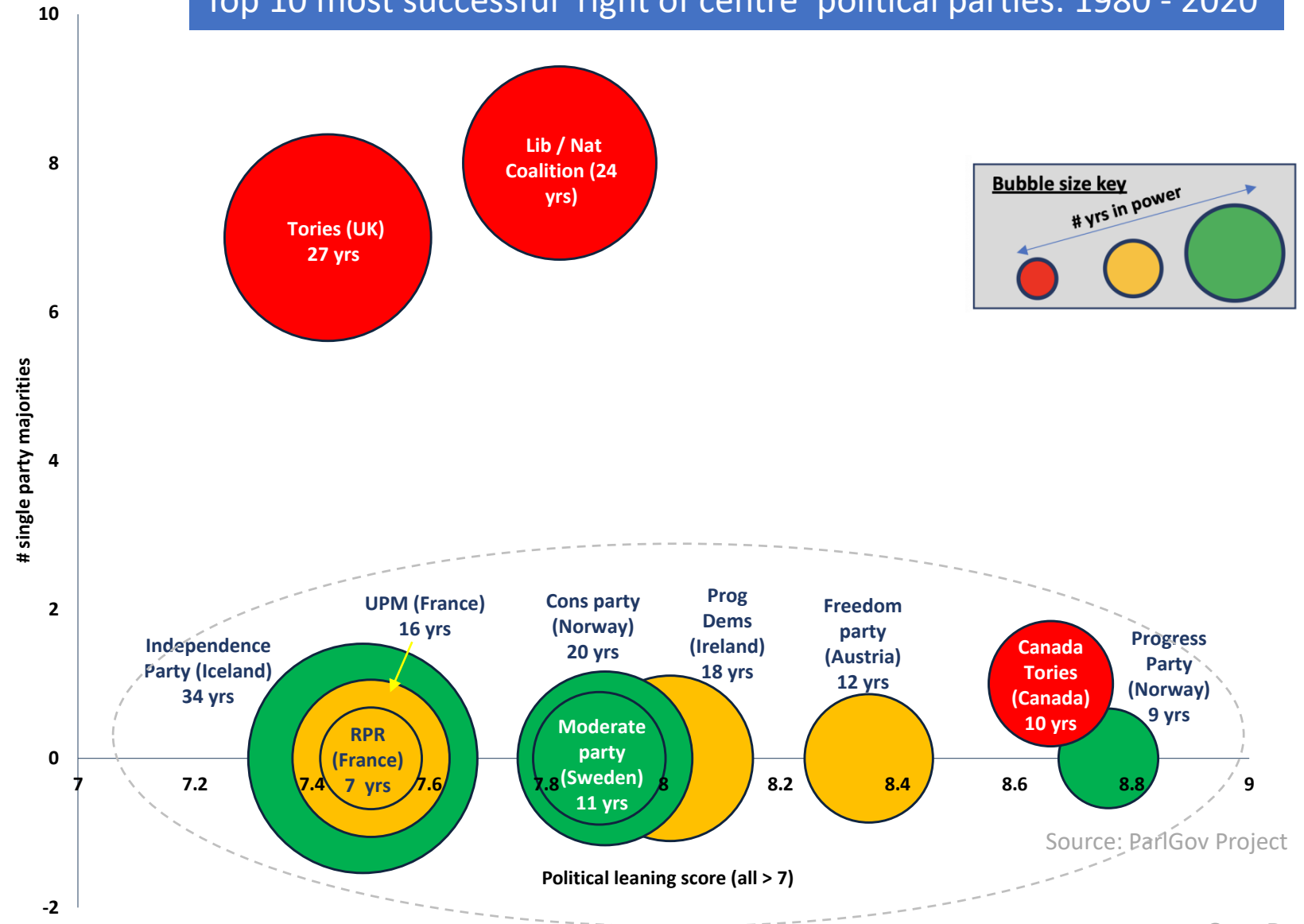
Source: ParlGov Project

but only FPTP states get total, unfettered access to power...

- Of other right of centre governing parties, the UK Tories are the only party to have enjoyed power as a single party majority
- But not just that; UK Tories have achieved 8 outright majorities from a total of 11 election victories over the period
- All other right wing parties have been tempered / shaped by belonging to coalitions

Key takeaway - Only the UK has been governed for ¼ century by its leading far right party, with total power...

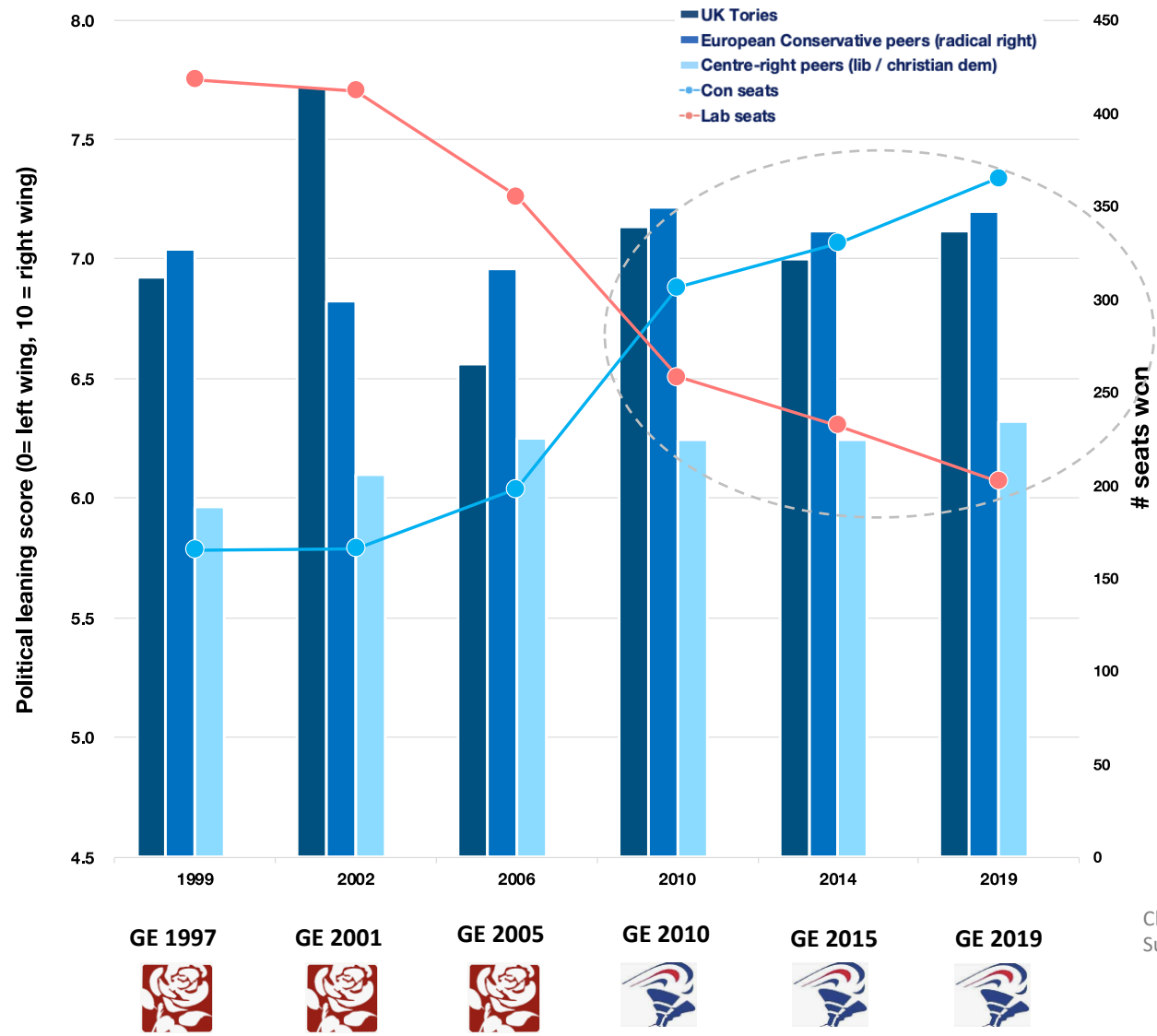
Top 10 most successful 'right of centre' political parties: 1980 - 2020



- The Tories are consistently much further to the right than centre-right peers (NL CDA, Merkel's CDU etc)
- Tories 'radical right' peer group are made of fringe parties many of whom rarely achieve power and if so, always in coalition
- The UK electorate are both oblivious to how far to the right the Tories are (but have no choice!)
- in 2009, Tories forced to leave the EPP (European People's Party) – the main centre-right grouping in the European Parliament, to join the Euro Conservative & Reformist group (included Alternatif fur Deutschland at the time)

Key takeaway – UK voters oblivious to how extreme the right wing agenda of the Tories is

UK Tories lurch to the right: 1999 - 2019



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All conquering, all powerful
Tories are becoming more
and more right wing



So what have Labour
been doing about it?

- Out of the 23 'left-leaning' parties that have achieved power over the period, the UK labour party is the 5th least left leaning according to the ParlGov project
- Most other countries have a 'spread' of multiple, electable left wing parties spanning the left spectrum e.g. Denmark (2), Switzerland (2), France (3), NL (2), Finland (3), Norway (2)
- In the FPTP countries, all 'progressive' hopes are pinned on one horse; UK (1) and Aus (1) and in Canada, there has not be a single left govt since 1980
- As per chapter II, they must move to the centre to win the trust of the middle / high income earners



Governing* progressive parties ranked by least left wing to most: 1980 -2020

party	score	country
1 Danish Social Liberal Party	4.9	Denmark
2 Catholic Conservative / Christian Democratic Peoples	4.7	Switzerland
3 Centre Party	4.7	Norway
4 Democrats 66	4.5	Netherlands
5 Labour	4.4	United Kingdom
6 Radical Party of the Left	4.1	France
7 Australian Labor Party	3.9	Australia
8 Social Democrats	3.8	Denmark
9 Social Democratic Party of Austria	3.7	Austria
10 Green League	3.6	Finland
11 Social Democratic Party of Germany	3.6	Germany
12 Labour Party	3.6	Ireland
13 Labour Party	3.6	Netherlands
14 Social Democratic Party of Finland	3.6	Finland
15 Social Democrats	3.4	Sweden
16 Norwegian Labour Party	3.4	Norway
17 Socialist Party	3.2	France
18 Socialist Party	3.2	Belgium
19 Greens	3.2	France
20 Socialist Party [Francophone]	2.9	Belgium
21 Democratic Union Left Alliance	2.2	Finland
22 Social Democratic Party of Switzerland	1.8	Switzerland
23 Left-Green Movement	1.2	Iceland

Centre Left (score <5)

Normal left (score <4)

Key takeaway - UK labour, a look-warm, one-size-fits-all, centrist party, is the only 'progressive', option for UK left-leaning voters

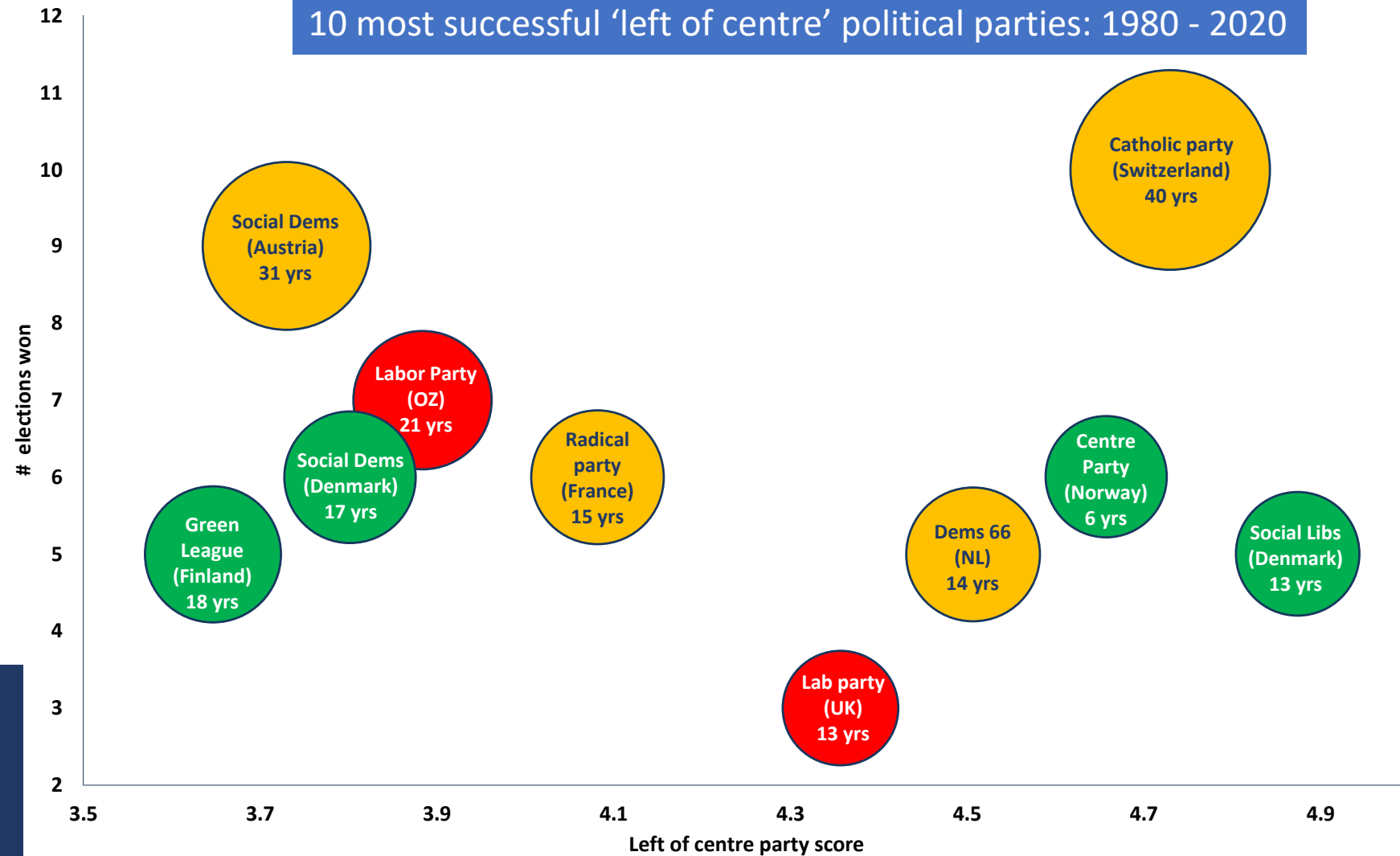
* 'governing' means all left-leaning parties that have been involved in at least 3 govt cabinets since 1979

Source: ParlGov Project



- The UK's only left wing party has been involved in fewer governments than any other major left-wing party across peers
- According to ParlGov, UK is mid table in its political score v other left of centre parties that have achieved meaningful power since 1979

Key takeaway - UK labour is the joint least successful left leaning party with average progressive ambitions v peers



Source: ParlGov Project

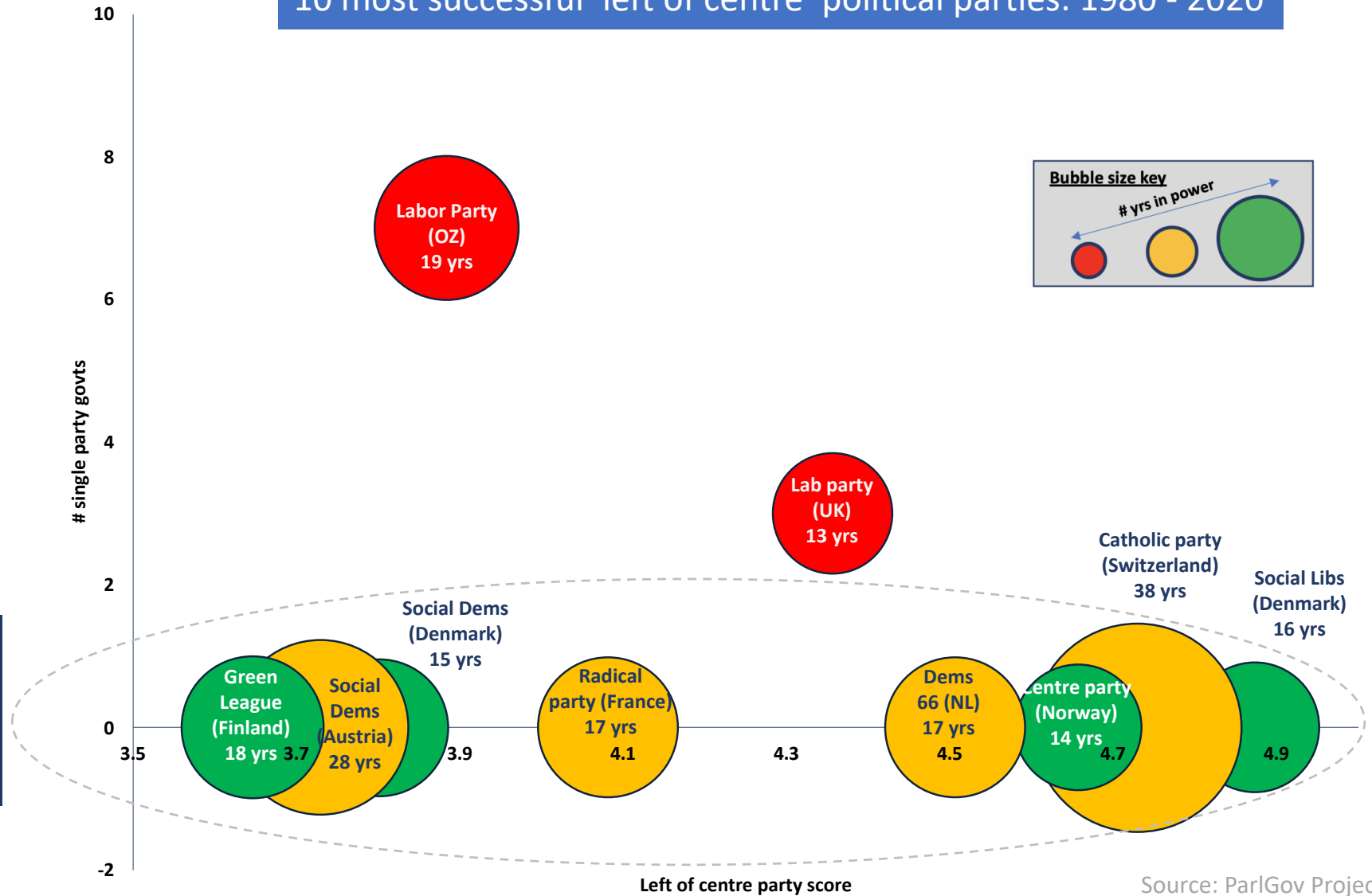
and when in power, always with single party majorities...

FPTP and the limp left

- Despite participating in fewer govts than any other left-leaning parties, the UK's labour party is the only European party that has enjoyed 'majority' power when in office
- This meant a clear path to execute 3 manifestos on the bounce.
- But these manifestos were very cautious in their progressive commitment to ensure the soft Tory vote they rely on was not spooked

Key takeaway – the UK's progressive hopes since 1980 all crammed into a single centre-left 12 years stint between 1997 and 2010

10 most successful 'left of centre' political parties: 1980 - 2020



Source: ParlGov Project

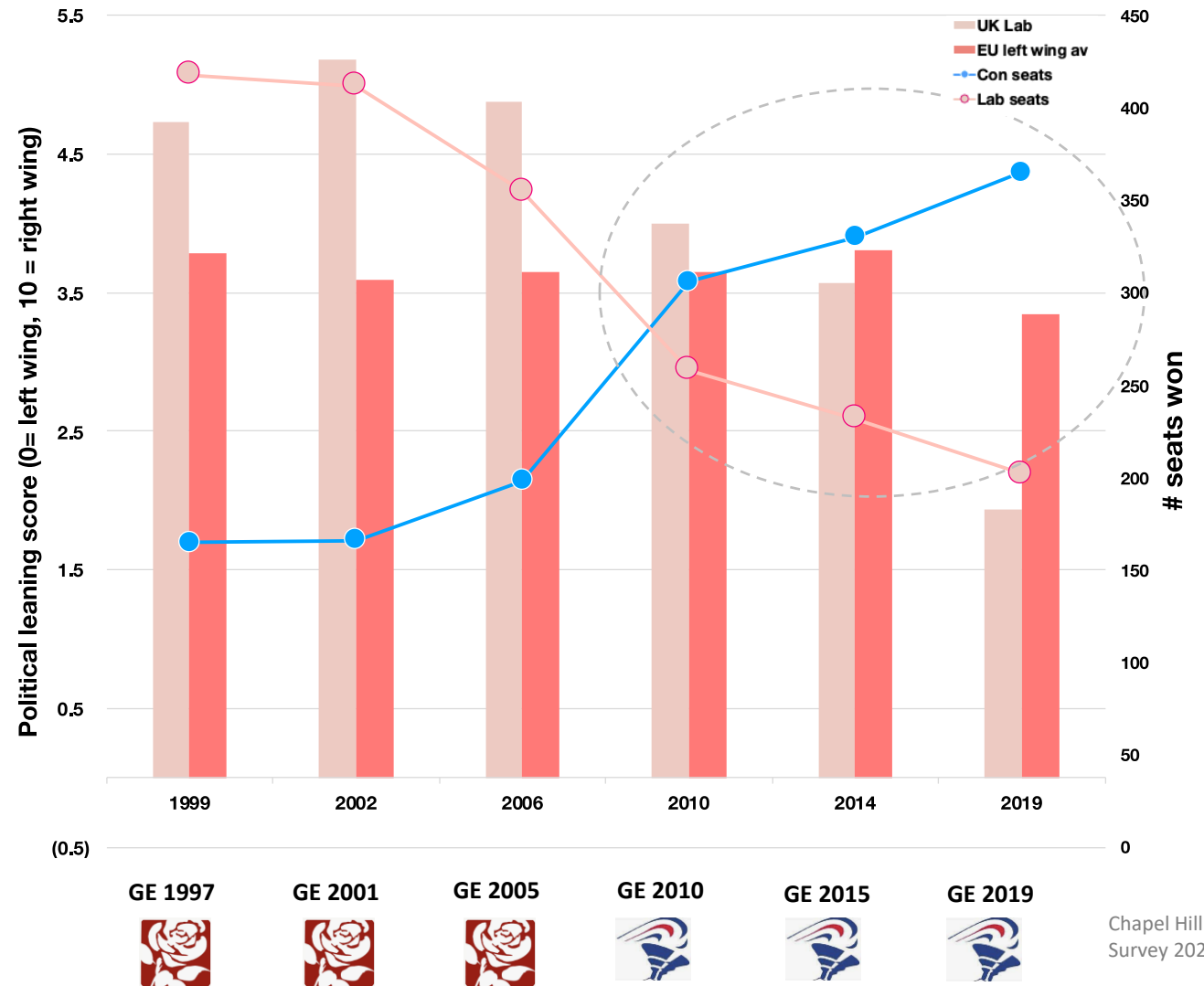


but only electable when they moved to the right...

- When labour came to power in 1997, they were the most right wing of all 'so-called' European social democrat parties (see graph)
- They won three elections with the most neoliberal / right wing agenda in Europe of any 'left-leaning' party in the 40 years to 2020
- However, from 2006 to date, UK labour have become more and more progressive, even more to the left than the peer group average between 2014 and 2019
- As a result, their franchise with middle / high earner UK has broken down, reverting to the Tories

Key takeaway - UK Labour can only achieve electability in the UK when they look sufficiently like the Tories

UK Labour's lurch to the left: 1999 - 2019



Labour has been bullied into becoming an unreliable and a barely left of centre option for UK voters:

- UK Labour in power less time than any comparable European peer
- UK labour the least left wing against any comparable European peer
- UK labour only electable when move to the right



So what impact does all this bullying have on Labour's performance when in power?

FPTP and the emasculation of the UK Labour party

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II. False dawn

III. Conclusion



***‘A new dawn
has broken,
has it not...’***

Tony Blair, 5 May 1997

new **Labour**
new **Britain**



In 2010, after 12 years in power, Labour claimed that the new dawn had delivered:

- *largest ever peace time investment in public service...*
- *Average hospital waiting time fell from 13 weeks to 4 weeks...*
- *44k more docs, 80k more nurses...*
- *Reduced inequality...*



new Labour
new Britain

Tony Blair, 21 Nov 2018

but their benchmark was always the Tories

False dawn

new Labour
new Britain



Benchmark



Relevance

The 'other' UK party: the most successful and one of the most extreme right wing parties anywhere in Europe

Sensible comparator?

X
nonsense!

new Labour
new Britain



The
Nordic
Nobles



The
Mainland
Moderates



The UK's most relevant peers: the countries with the best social outcomes anywhere in the world

✓
of course!

Let's look at how New Labour performed v **Mainland Moderates** and **Nordic Nobles** when in power between 1997 and 2010:



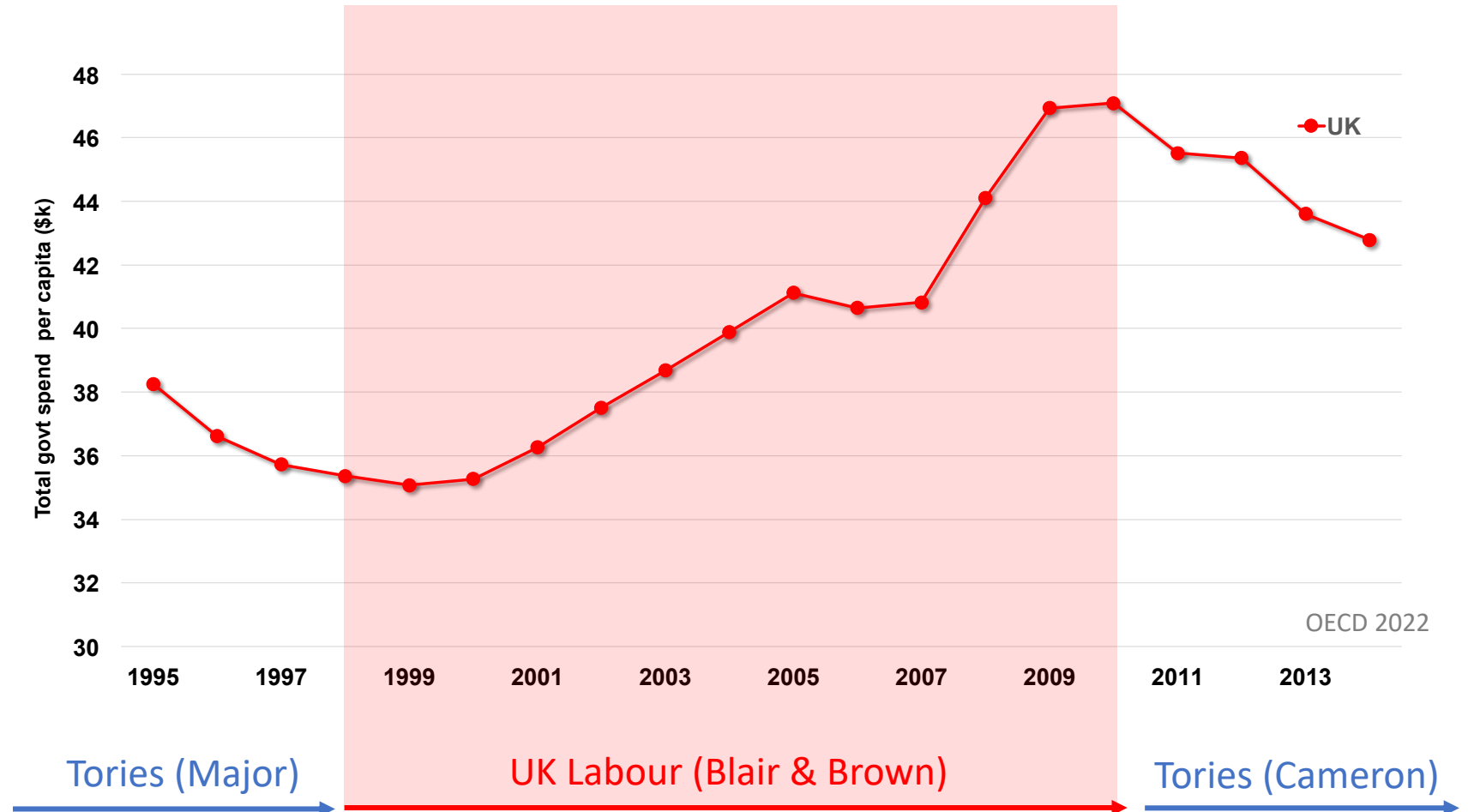
- I. Total government spend
- II. Social / welfare spend
- III. Healthcare spend
- IV. Cancer survival rates
- V. Life Expectancy from 65
- VI. Child mortality rates
- VII. Share of income of top wealthiest 1%

Case Study 1a

- As promised in manifesto commitments, new labour increased public spending year on year v the previous Tory administrations
- Govt spending increased by almost 1/3 between 1999 and 2005 (NB, this was partly to fund the Iraq war, Danny Dorling 2021)

Key takeaway - against the Tory record, new labour look like a successful, progressive administration

UK: Total government spending under New Labour: 1998 - 2010



OECD 2022



But the gap v European peers remained enormous...

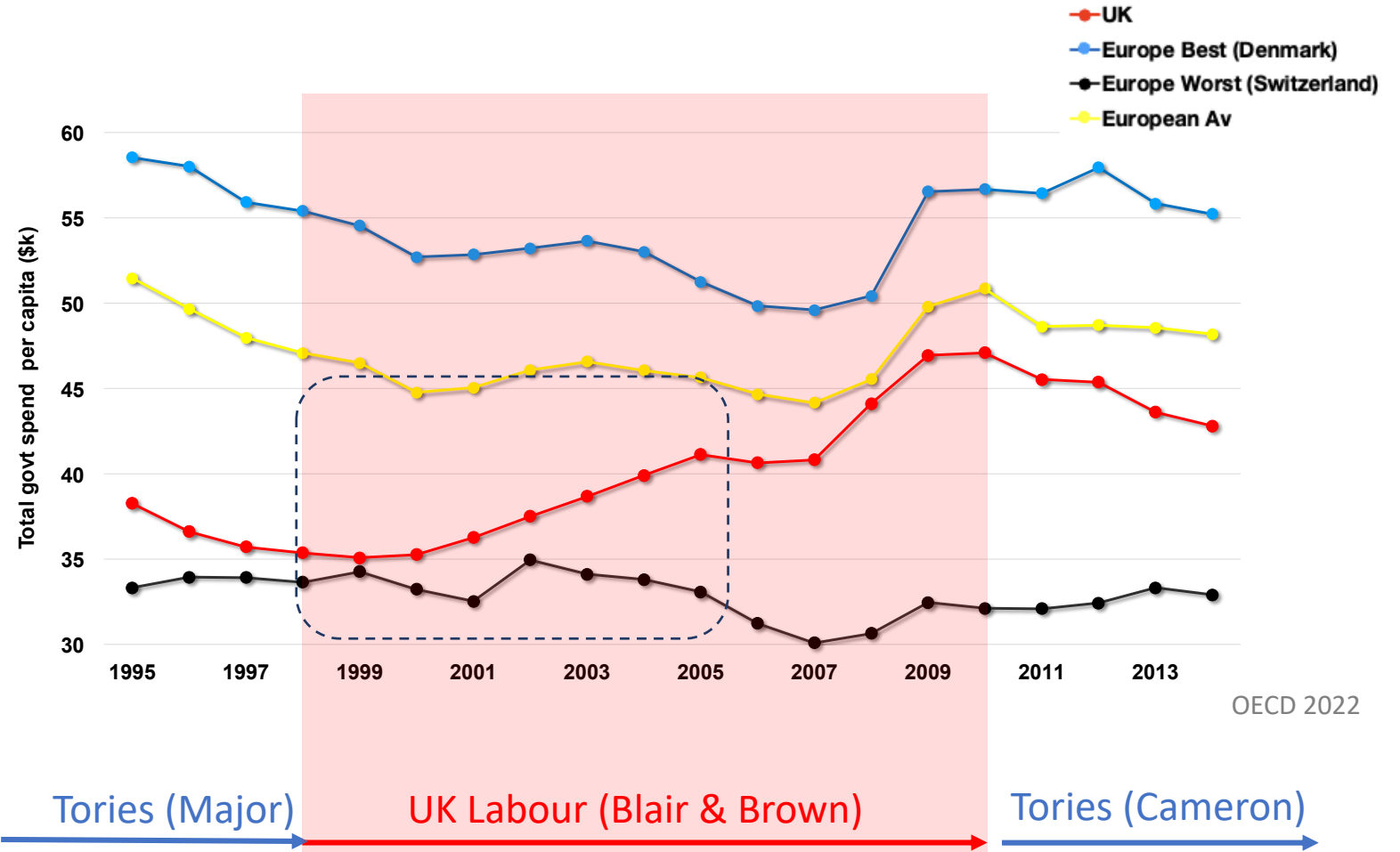
False dawn

Case Study 1b

- New Labour may have increased spending, but we still lagged the average of our Mainland peers by 4% in 2005
- Even though UK more affected by 2007 crash than other states, our spending levels remained well below average

Key takeaway - against the peer group, despite 3 huge majorities over 12 years, New Labour were unable to close the public investment gap v European peers

UK v peers: Total government spending under New Labour: 1998 - 2010



OECD 2022

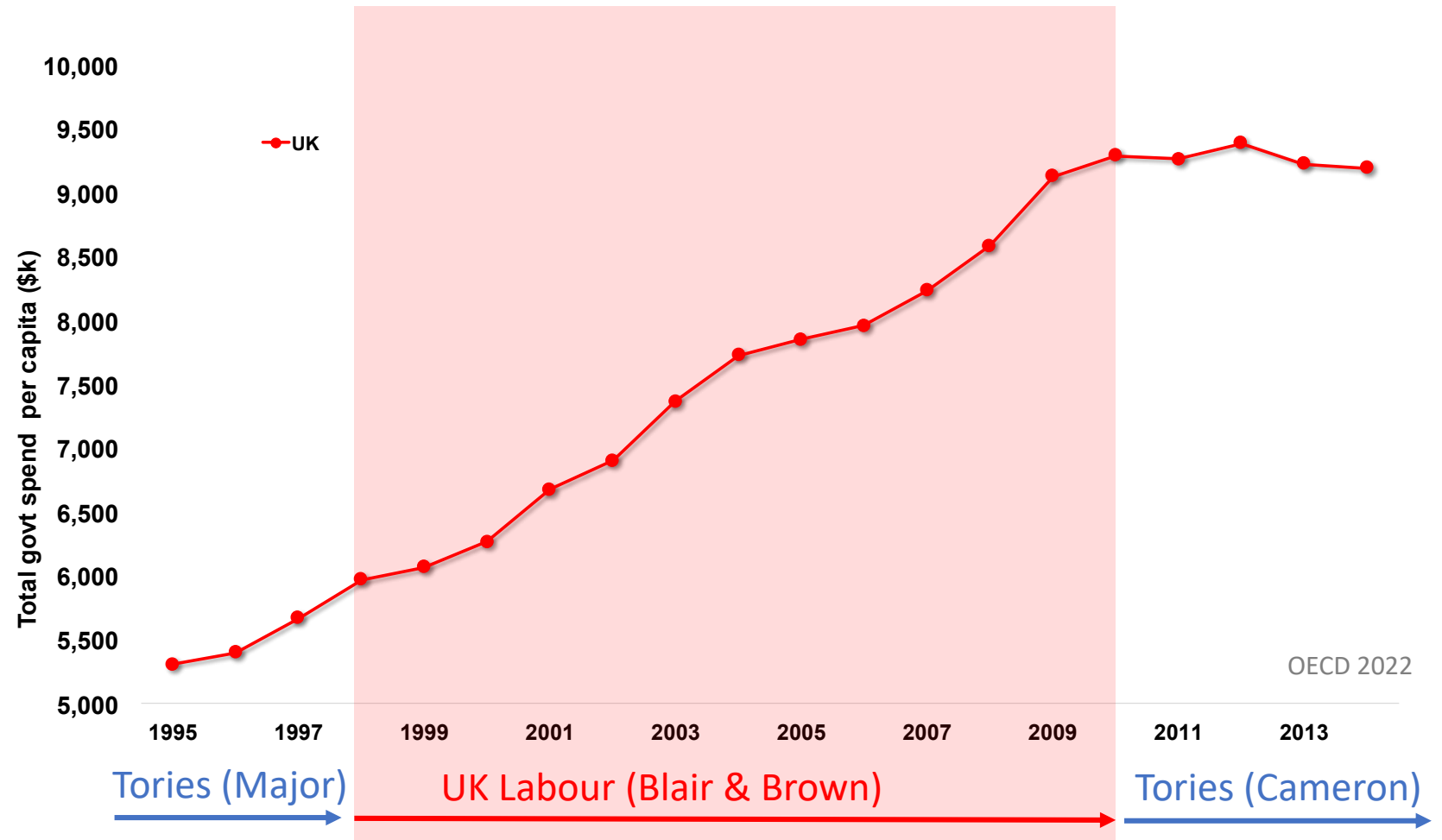


Case Study 2a

- New Labour's greatest impact was through raising benefits for young families and pensioners (source: Joyce & Sibieta* 2013)
- Particularly in their second term, when they were able to take more spending risks, they improved the plight of the poor in the UK v the previous Tory record

Key takeaway – Labour were able to positively impact poverty through more Welfare spending

UK: Total welfare spending under New Labour: 1998 – 2010



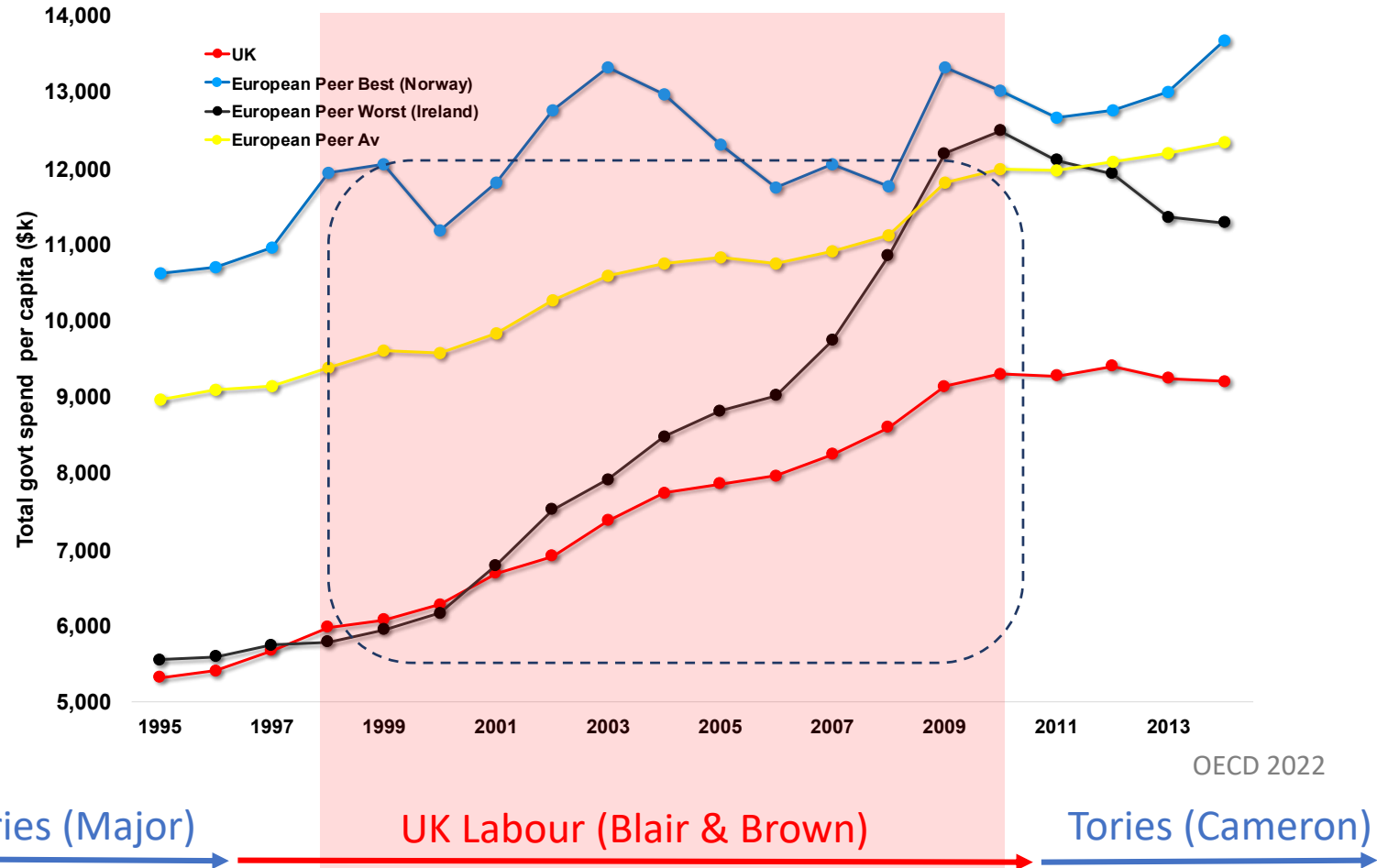
* Under New Labour "poverty among families with children and pensioners both fell particularly strongly, although the extremely ambitious relative child poverty target was still missed in 2010/11. However, the incomes of low-income working-age adults without dependent children, a group not favoured by tax and benefit reforms, rose very little over the period, and hence their relative poverty rate actually increased". (source: Joyce & Sibieta 2013)

Case Study 2b

- Against peers, Labour only closed half of the Tory Welfare spending gap from 62% to 80% of peer average in 13 years.
- In that time, Ireland, the poorest of all peers, leap-frogged the UK as well as the peer average
- Unlike UK labour, the Irish govts were able to much more generously use the proceeds of growth to address inequality

Key takeaway - despite 3 huge majorities over 12 years, New Labour re-confirmed the UK status as the most miserly provider of Welfare across whole peer group

UK v peers: Total welfare spending under New Labour: 1998 - 2010



OECD 2022

Tories (Major)

UK Labour (Blair & Brown)

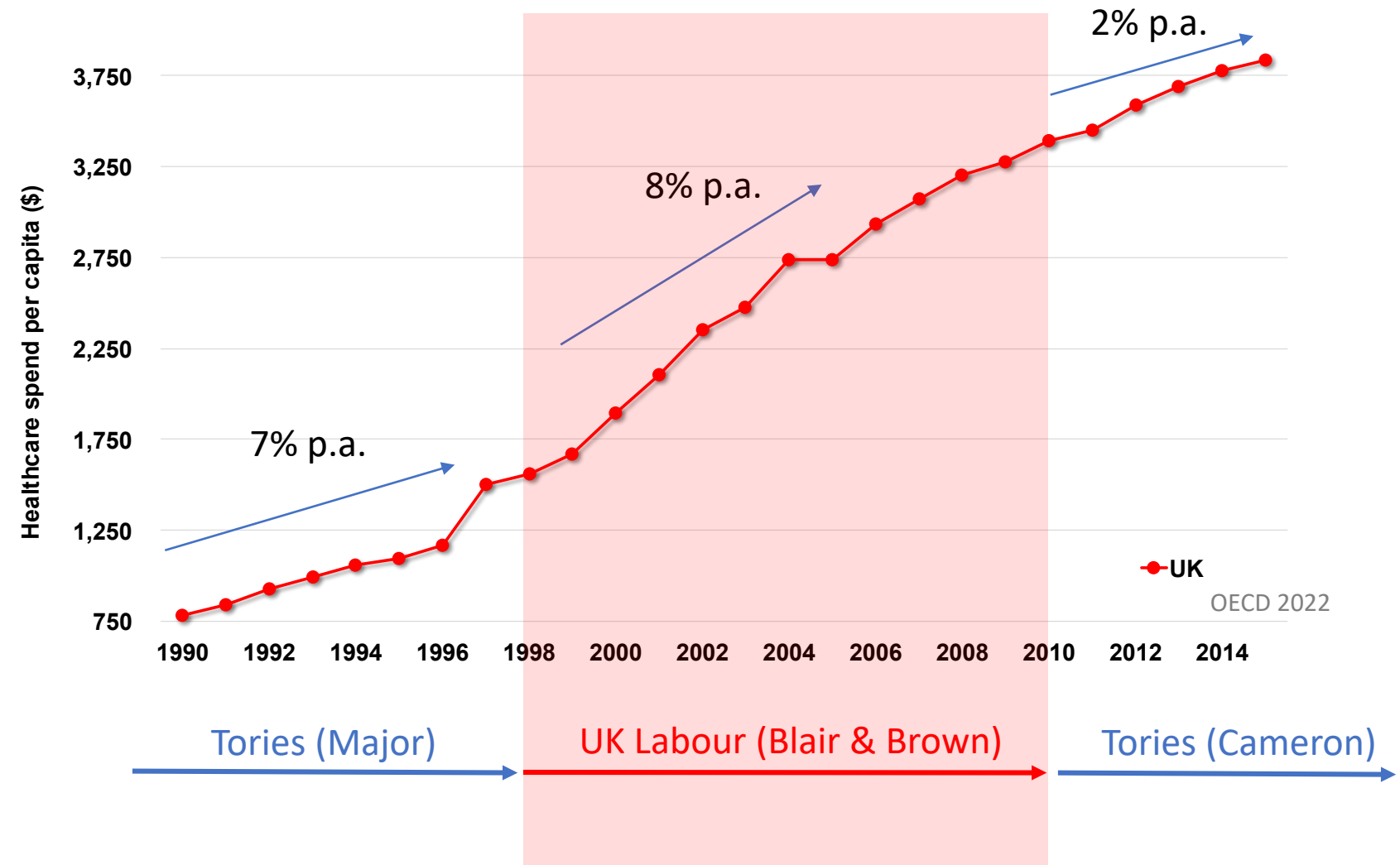
Tories (Cameron)

Case Study 3a

- New Labour were very proud of their healthcare spending record
- They increased healthcare spending per capita by > \$2k or 8% annually between 1998 and 2010

Key takeaway - against the Tory record, New Labour's health spending record looked much more progressive

UK: Health spend under New Labour: 1998 - 2010



But the gap v European peers actually widened...

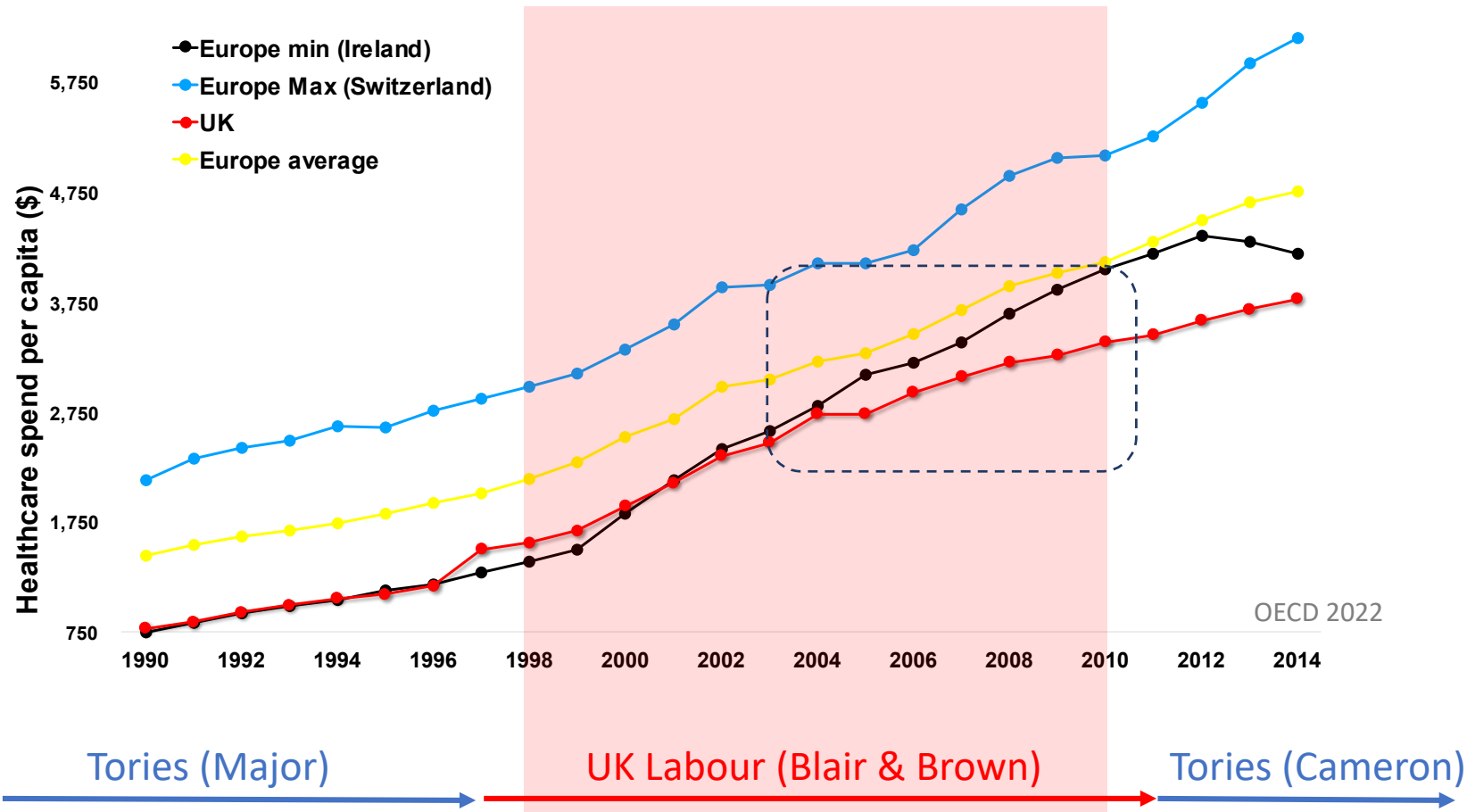
False dawn

Case Study 3b

- However, Labour were spending far less than our European peers, ranking bottom of whole peer group
- In fact, the gap between the UK and peer average widened under Labour rule
- By 2010, Germany was spending in excess of €1bn per week on Healthcare more than the UK
(Source: Danny Dorling, 2021)

Key takeaway - UK labour no more than a 'caretaker' between Tory stints

UK v peers: Health spend under New Labour: 1998 - 2010

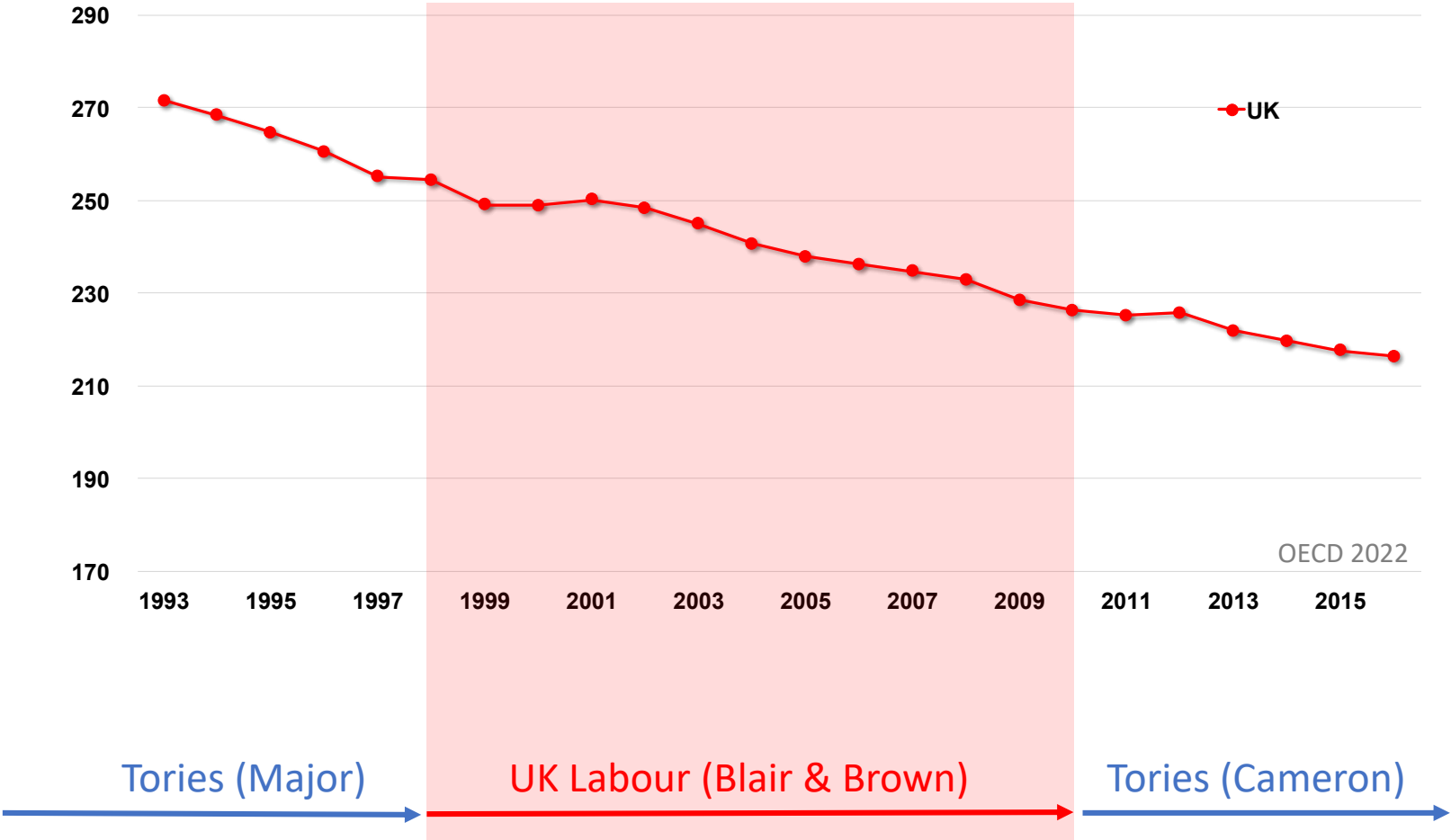


Case Study 4a

- New labour still crows today about getting NHS waiting times down from 13 weeks to 4 weeks
- And New Labour oversaw a reduction in cancer deaths during their 12 years in power

Key takeaway - against the Tory record, new labour look like a successful progressive administration

UK: Cancer Deaths per 100k - New Labour : 1998 - 2010

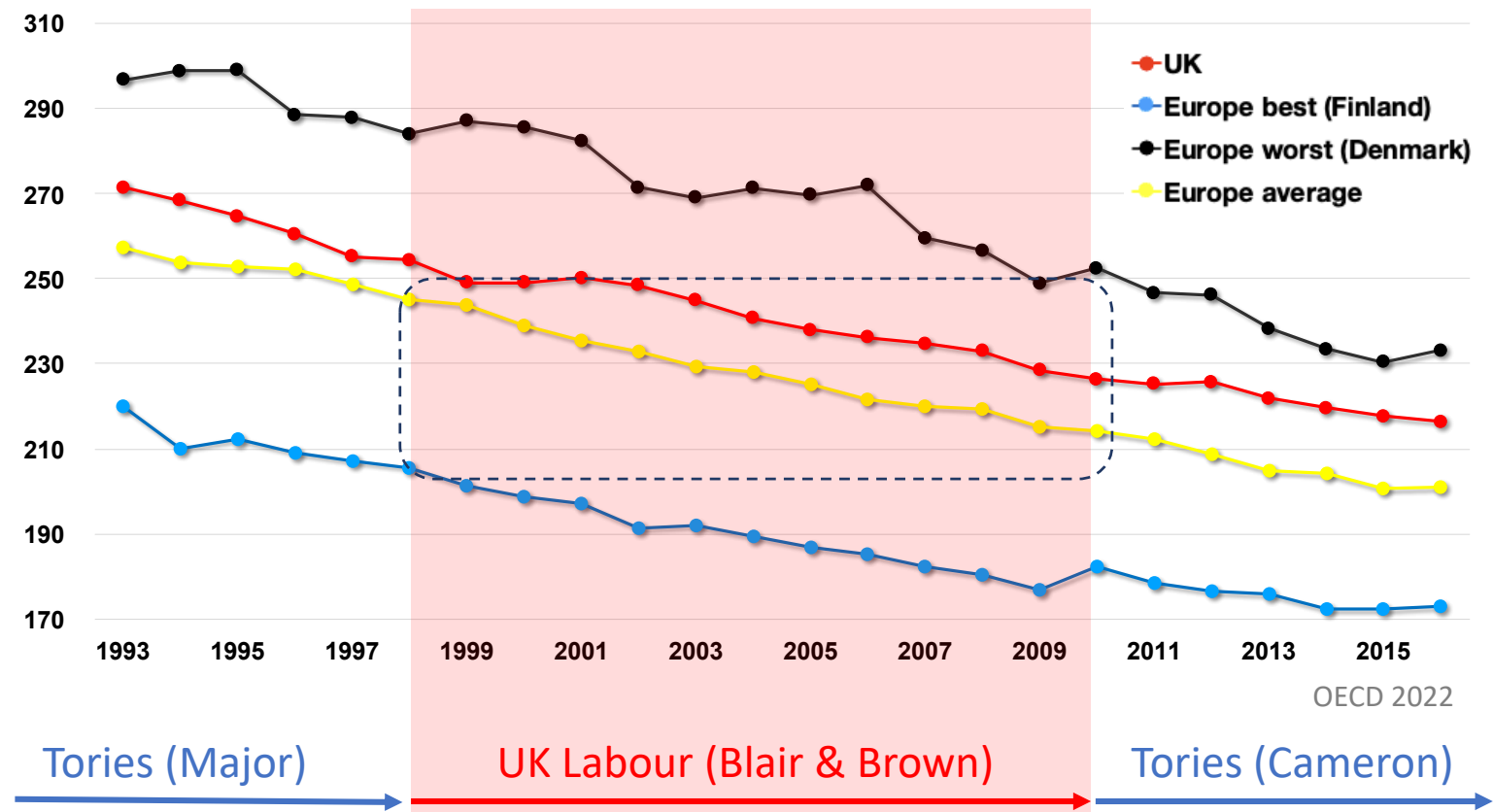


Case Study 4b

- When New Labour came to power, c. 16 more people per 100k died from cancer in the UK compared to the EU
- But the cancer survival gap v the European peer average remained unchanged when they left in 2010

Key takeaway - despite 3 majorities over 12 years, UK labour did not close the cancer survival gap v peers

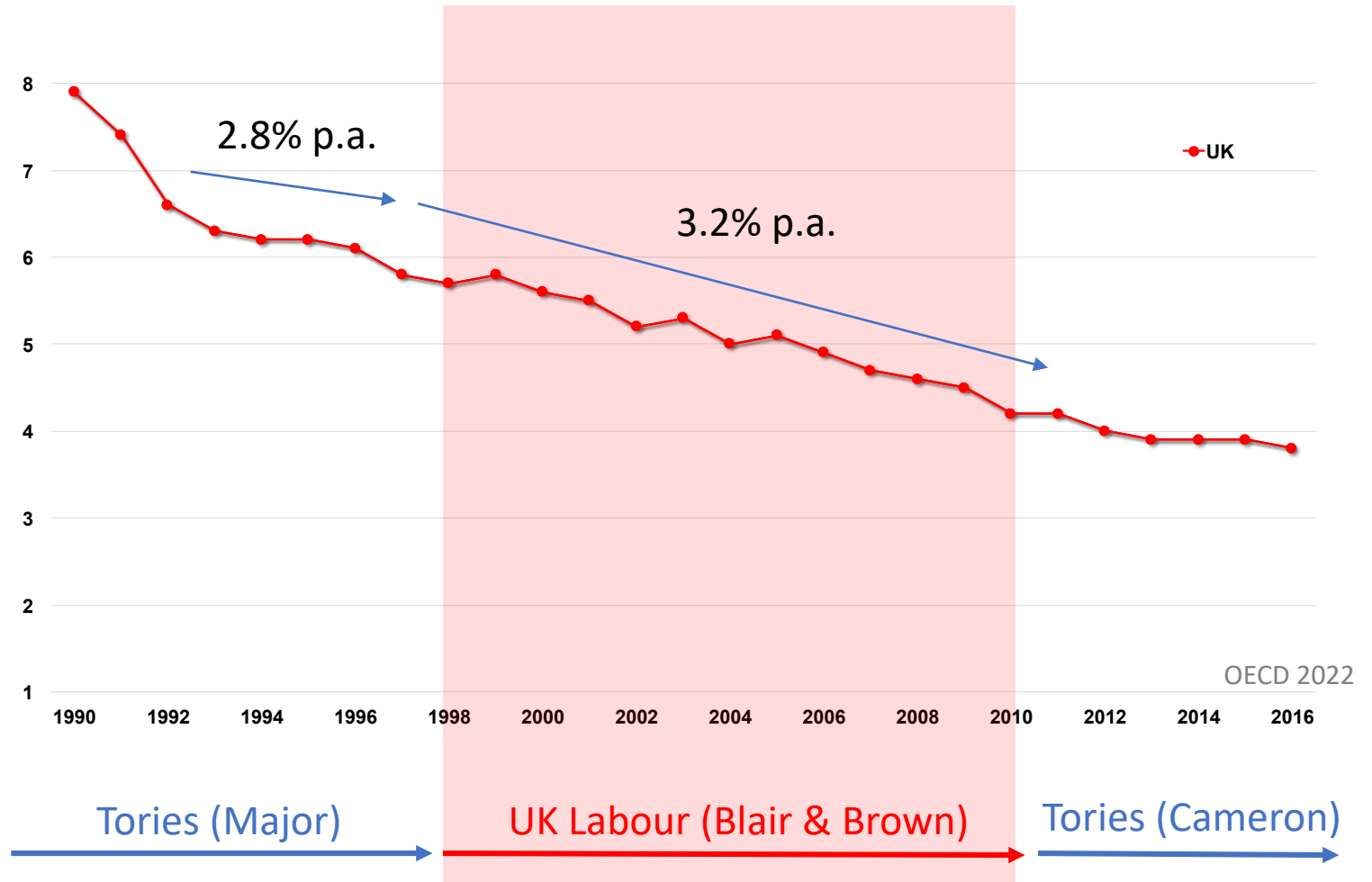
UK v peers: Cancer Deaths per 100k - New Labour : 1998 - 2010



Case Study 5a

- Between 1998 and 2010, new labour reduced the rate of child mortality from 2.8% p.a. under Major to 3.2% under Blair
- Under new labour, child mortality fell from c. 6 deaths per 100k to just over 4 when they left office

UK: Child mortality per 100k births - New Labour – 1998 - 2010

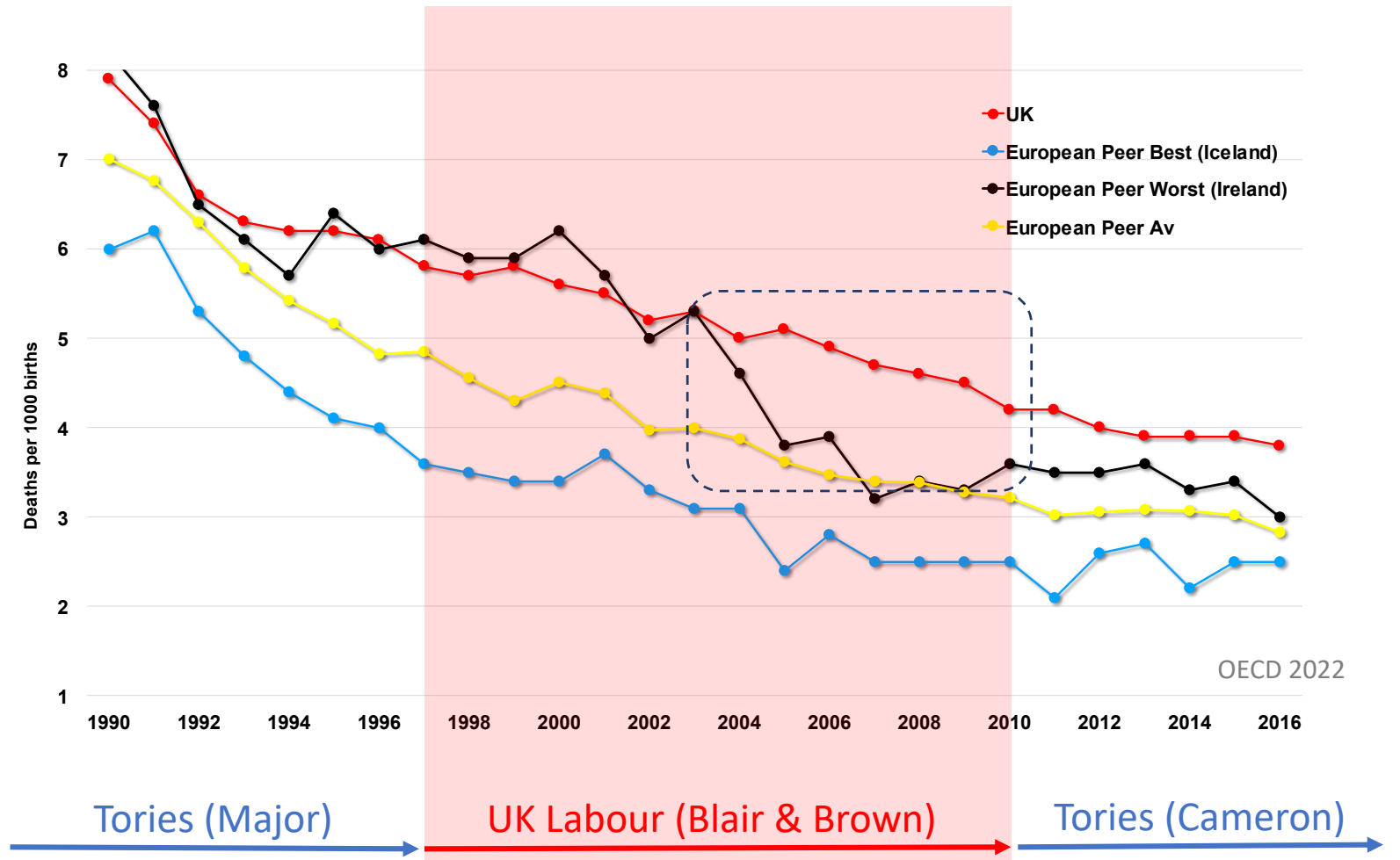


Key takeaway - against the Tory record, new labour look like a successful progressive administration

Case Study 5b

- When New Labour came to power, the UK's child mortality rate lagged the EU average by 1 death per 100k (5.8 v 4.9)
- However, although the UK's rate dropped from 5.8 to 4.2, the average of our European peers dropped by the same degree to 3.2, meaning no change in the gap.
- Also Ireland, the poorest peer of all, leap-frogged the UK in the middle of Blair's reign, to leave the UK with the highest child mortality rate across peers

UK v peers: Child mortality per 100k births - New Labour – 1998 - 2010

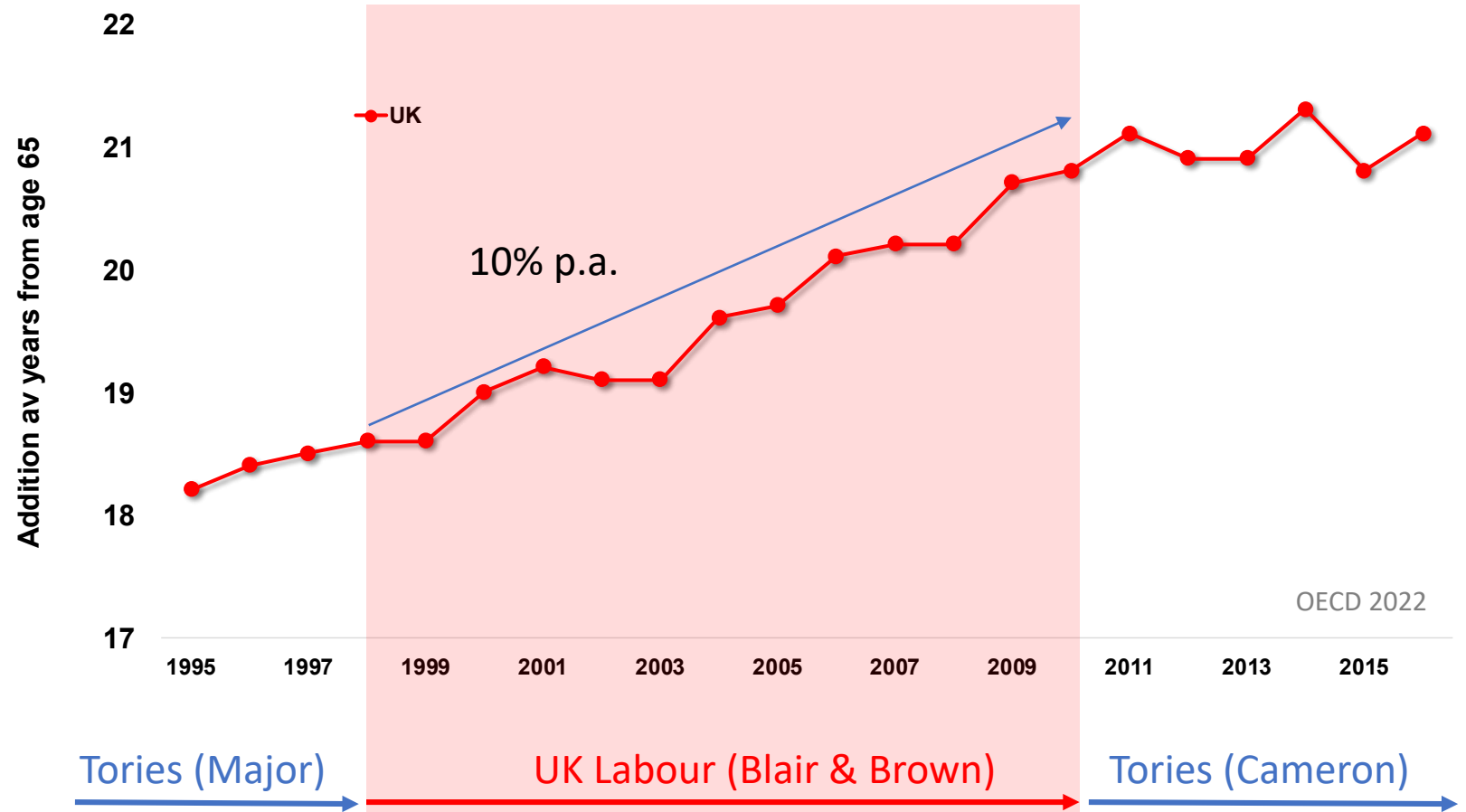


Key takeaway - despite 3 massive majorities and 12 years in power, UK Labour was unable to close the child mortality gap v European peers

Case Study 6a

- Between 1998 and 2010, New Labour oversaw a 10% increase in life expectancy for women increasing life expectancy of women from age 65 from 18.5 years to 20.8 years

UK: Life expectancy for Women from age 65 - New Labour – 1998 - 2010



Key takeaway - against the Tory record, New Labour looked like they'd achieved a healthy increase in life expectancy for women during their reign

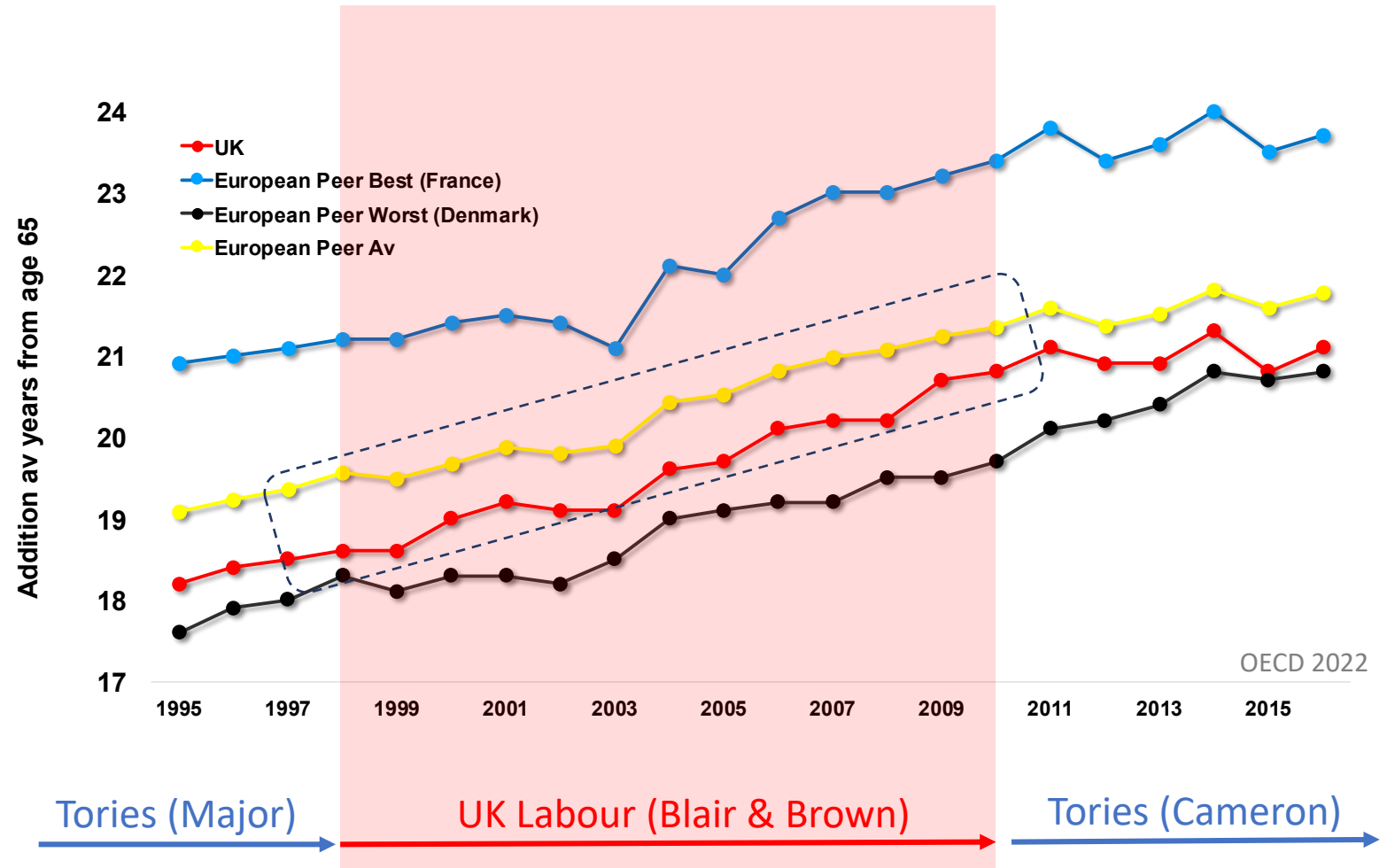


Case Study 6b

- Life expectancy for women at 65 in 1997 was already 5% higher on average across peers than the UK
- Life expectancy for woman from 65 improved by 8% on average in peer countries over the period New Labour were in power
- But under New Labour, the gap v peers closed by only 2% leaving the UK still lagging by 8% on leaving office

Key takeaway - despite 3 massive majorities and 12 years in power, New Labour were unable to match the peer group average for female life expectancy from age 65

UK v peers: Life expectancy for Women from age 65 - New Labour – 1998 - 2010



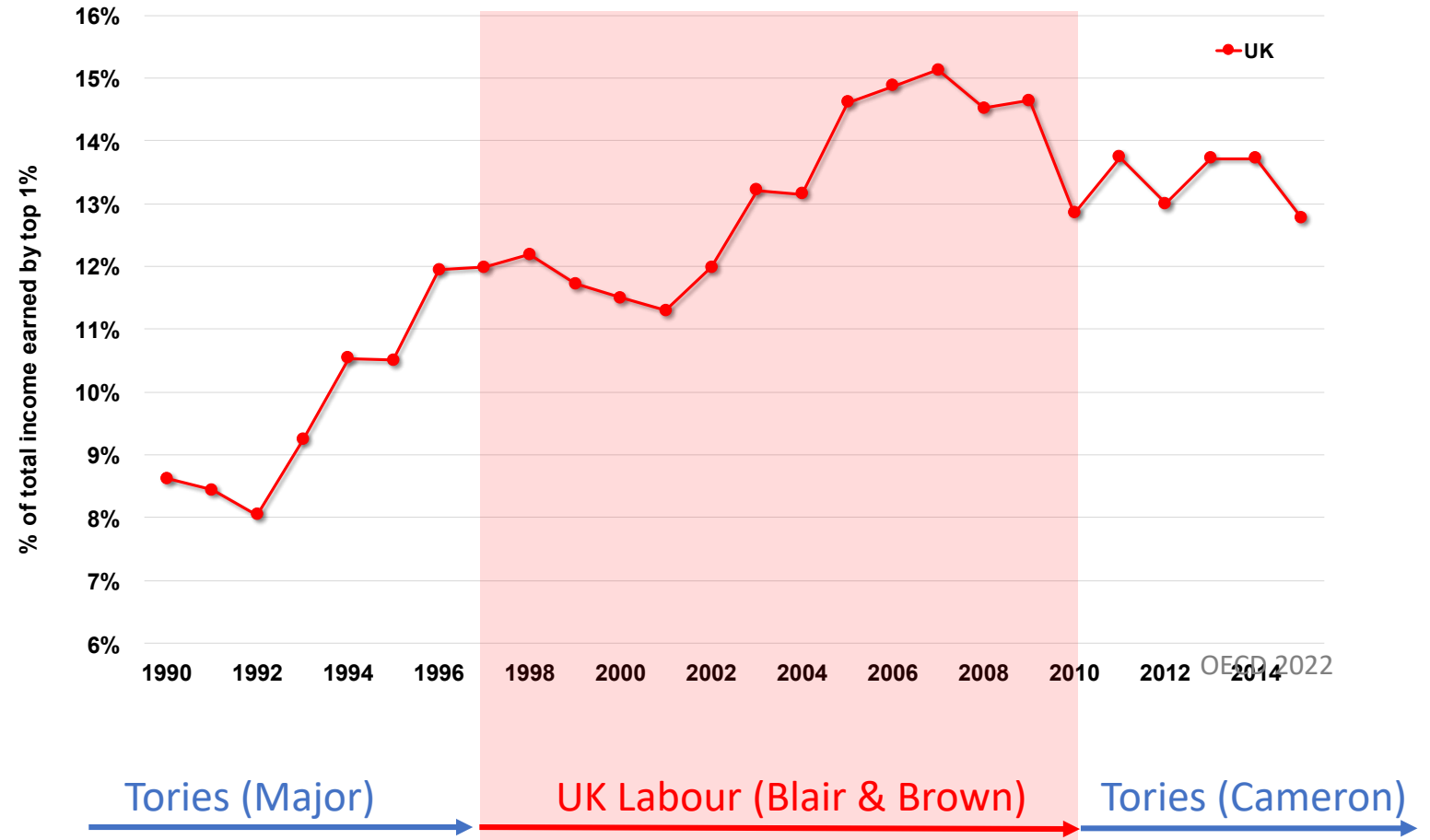
OECD 2022

Case study 7a

- When New Labour came to power, 12% of total UK income went to the top 1%, increasing to 13% when they left power
- Under New Labour, the income share of the top 1% achieved its highest ever level in the UK, higher than any Tory govt, peaking at 15.1% in 2007

Key takeaway - despite 3 massive majorities and 12 years in power, UK labour did not manage to close the gap on one of the most obvious inequality indicators

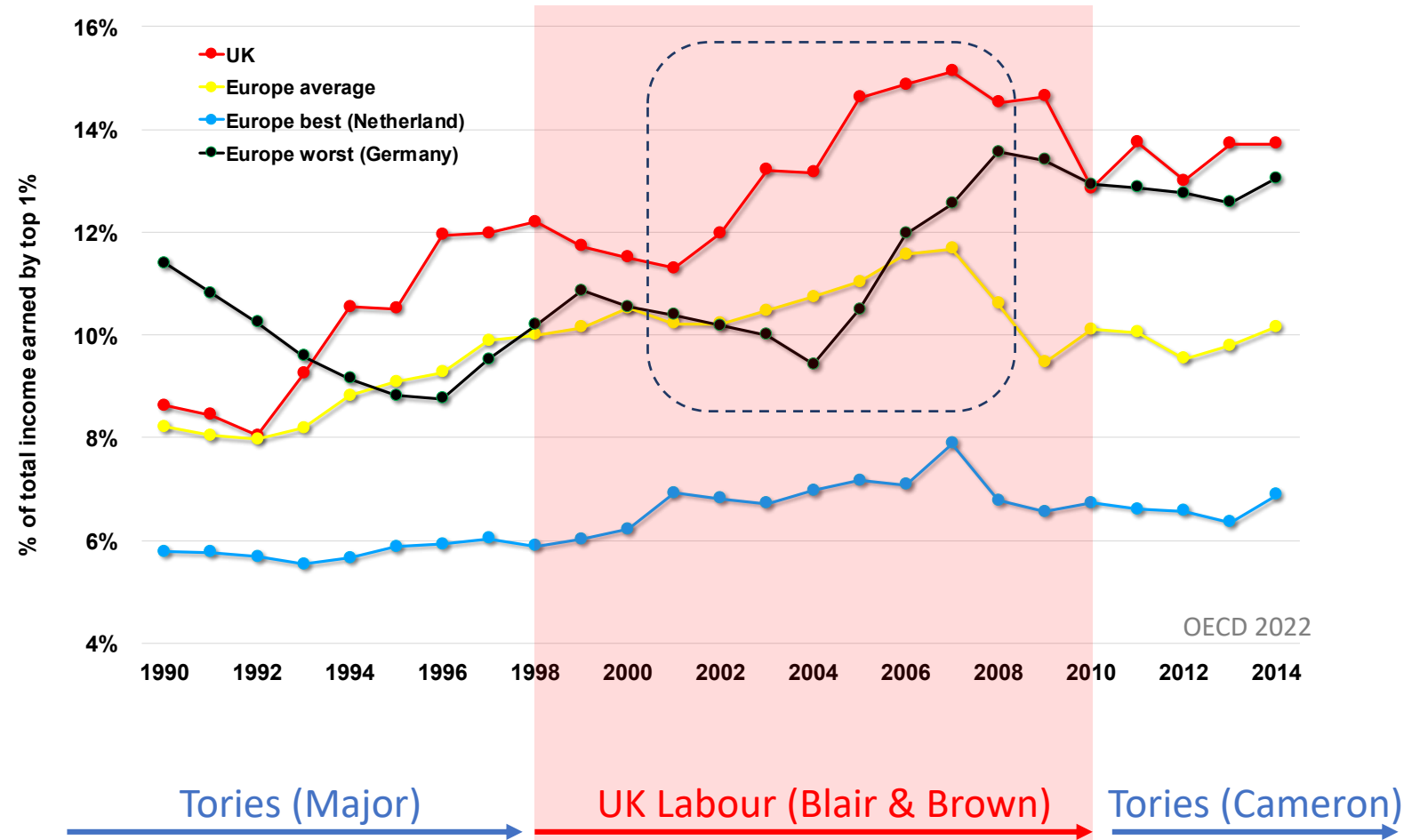
UK: Share of total income earned by top 1% - New Labour: 1998 - 2010



Case study 7b

- When New Labour came to power, UK top 1% earned 2% more of national income than the European peer average; when they left power, this gap had increased to 3%
- The all UK peak of top 1% at 15.1% of income share was also the all peak across all peer countries too.
- The increase in the UK's gini score under New Labour largely due to the increase in top 1%

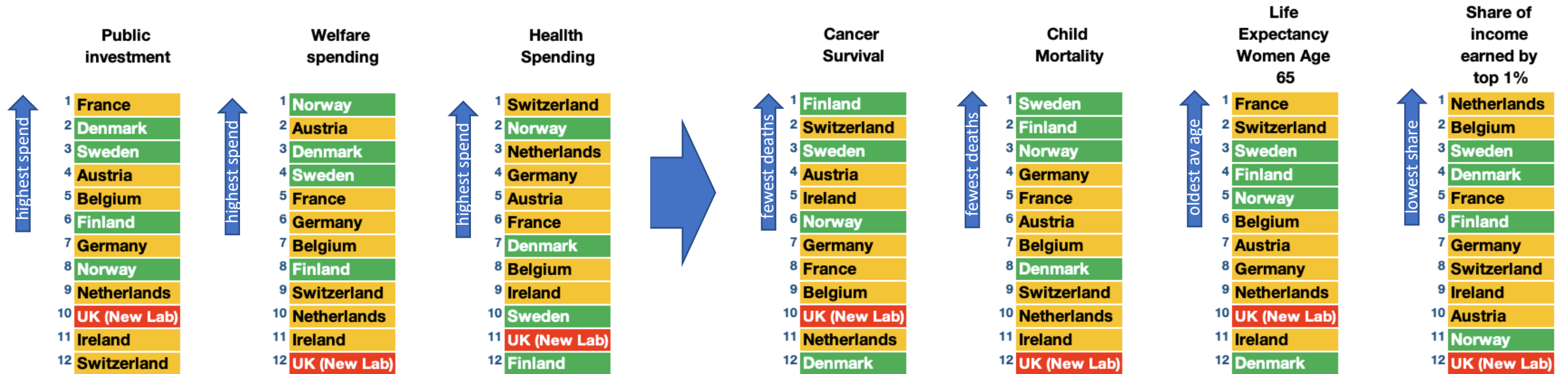
UK v peers: Share of total income earned by top 1% - New Labour: 1998 - 2010



Key takeaway – all peers have seen the top 1% share grow, but nowhere as much as New Labour’s UK

New Labour's govt spending v peers annual average 1997 - 2010

New Labour's equality outcomes v peers annual average 1997 - 2010



- New Labour's UK is in the bottom quartile in every metric; rock bottom in 3/7
- New Labour consistently under-spent and under-performed the governments of its European peers
- The track record of the UK under New labour no different to the Tories

If the aim was to draw the UK in line with peers, New labour's new dawn was a false dawn...

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III. Conclusion



- **Even with 3 consecutive governments enjoying huge single party majorities, Labour unable to move dial towards social outcomes of European peers** – no progressive party anywhere else in Europe could hope for the majorities, back-to-back mandates over 12 years and the single party authority achieved by New Labour in the UK; its inability to even start closing the inequality gap versus our European peers tells you everything about the impossibility faced by the left under FPTP
- **Little discernible long term impact of New Labour v peers since leaving office in 2010** – while New Labour did make a short term positive impact on poorer young families and pensioners through increases in benefits, there is little evidence of any structural improvement when comparing to trends across peers. Within a few years, the Tories had undone Labour's positive work through simply rolling back benefit payments.
- **FPTP's Tory bias has emasculated Labour governments to role of 'caretaker' at best** – the reality is that the mediocrity of New Labour's performance is the price of power; under the FPTP system, they must woo sufficient numbers of natural Tory voters (middle / high earners) and this means a materially watered down, progressive agenda
- **UK public oblivious to Labour's impotence since establishment happy to portray them as a credible / viable alternative to Tories** – because we want to believe we operate in a functioning democracy, the UK establishment happily portrays UK Labour as a viable alternative to the 'centre-right' Tories. It suits UK labour too, to be benchmarked against the Tories since this is the only measure whereby their record looks credible. As long as this bubble remains, UK public cannot see how far to the right the UK has moved and continues to move. This is disastrous....

Key takeaway – the real evil of FPTP is that it impedes the successful pursuit of social justice...

