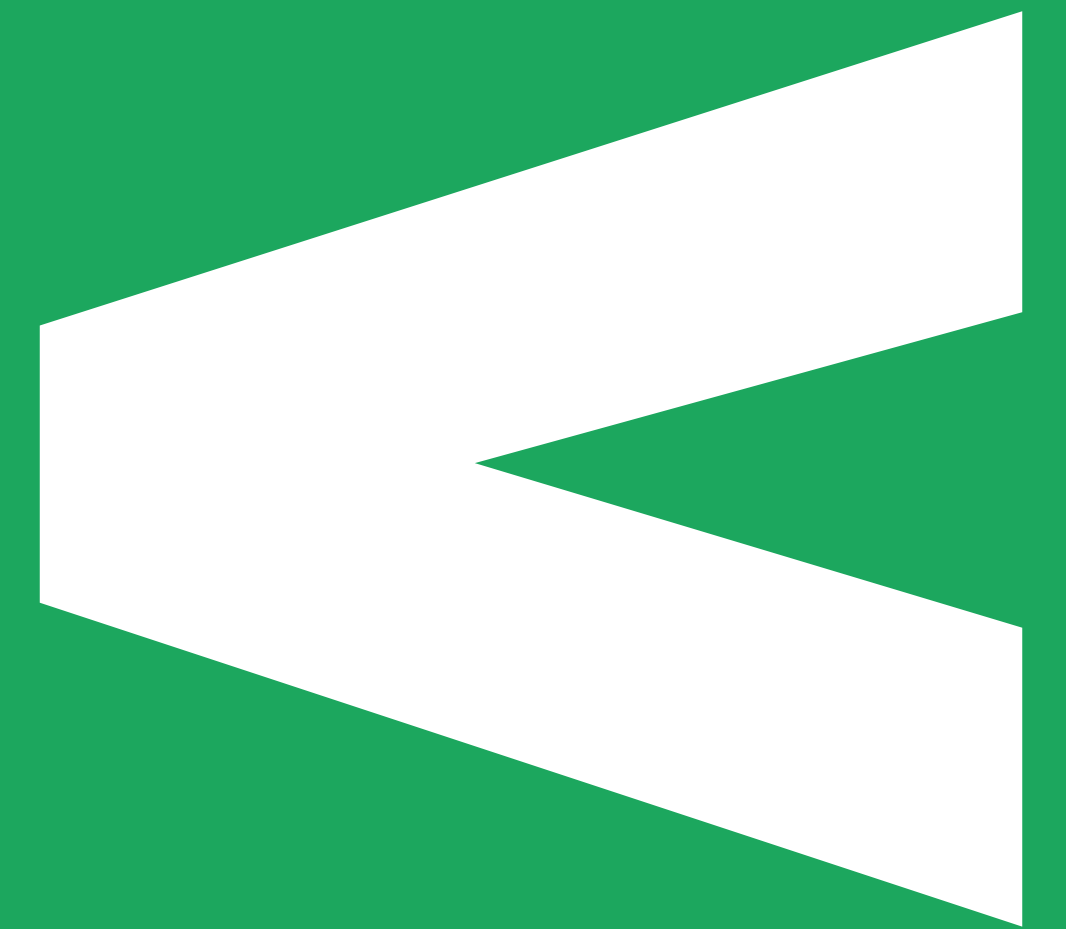


# Political Inequality

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Ben Ansell and Jane Gingrich  
University of Oxford

An IFS initiative funded  
by the Nuffield Foundation



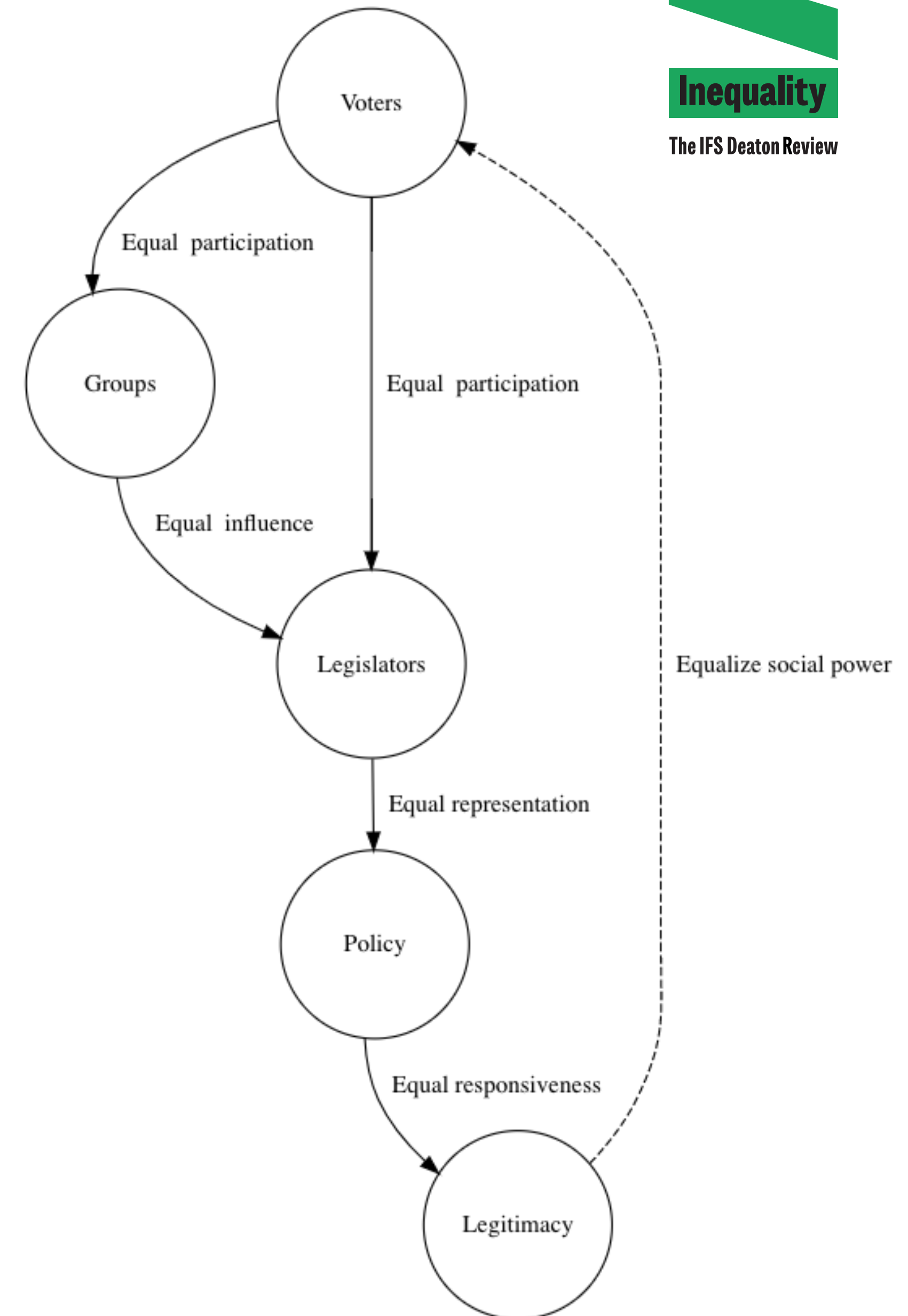
**Inequality**

**The IFS Deaton Review**

# WHAT IS POLITICAL INEQUALITY?

How do economic and demographic differences translate into politics?

1. Who turns out to vote?
2. Who do they vote for?
3. Who gets elected?
4. Who gets their preferred policy?
5. And who ends up happy?



# VOTING IN BRITAIN SINCE THE 1960S

How has voter turnout and voter behaviour changed over the past half century as economic inequality has risen?

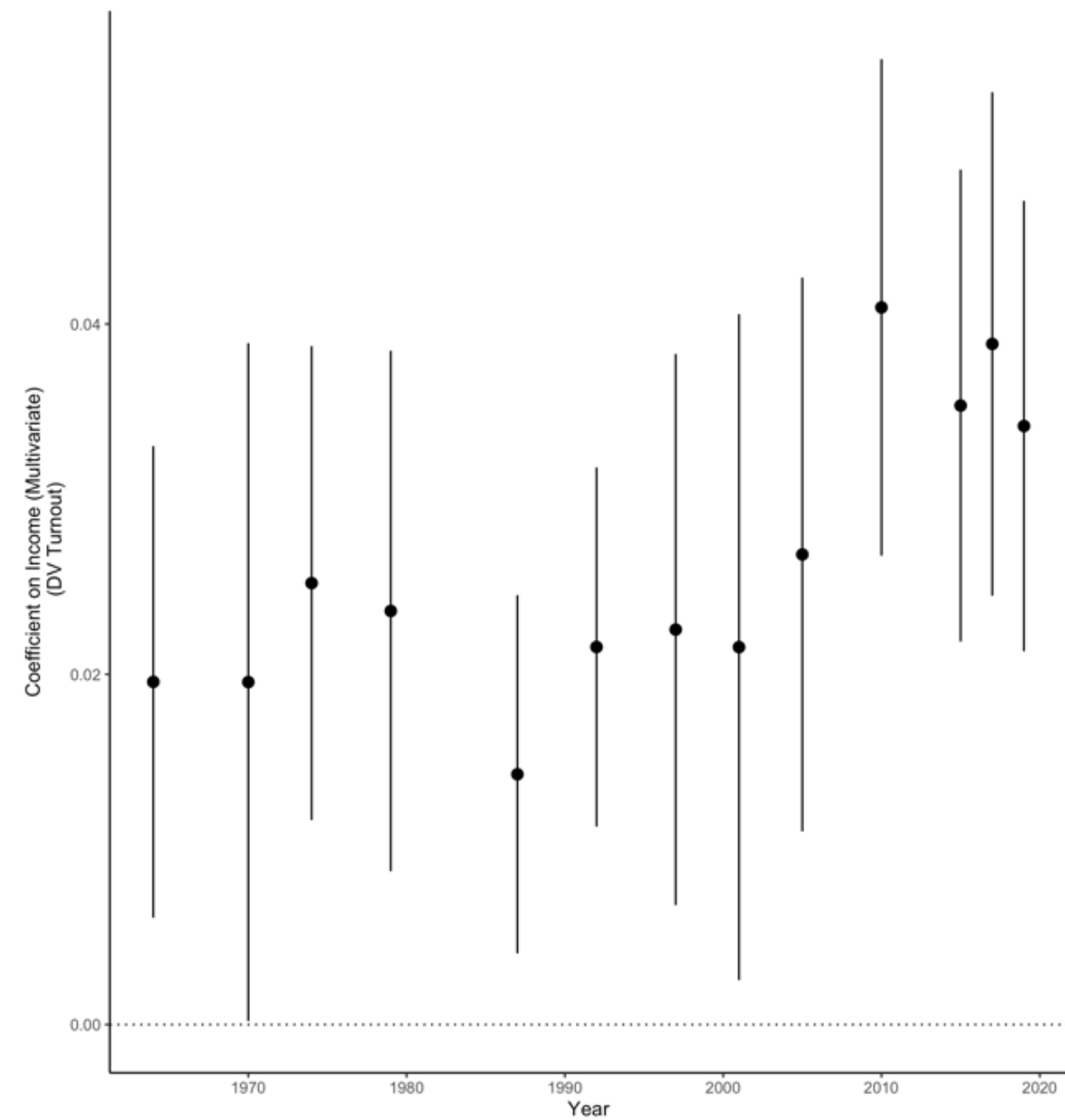
Political inequality can come from differential turnout and from the degree to which voting patterns match socio-economic status.

We use BES data for General Elections from 1964 to 2019, predicting (a) turnout and (b) voting Conservative from INCOME, EDUCATION, AGE, GENDER, and HOMEOWNERSHIP.

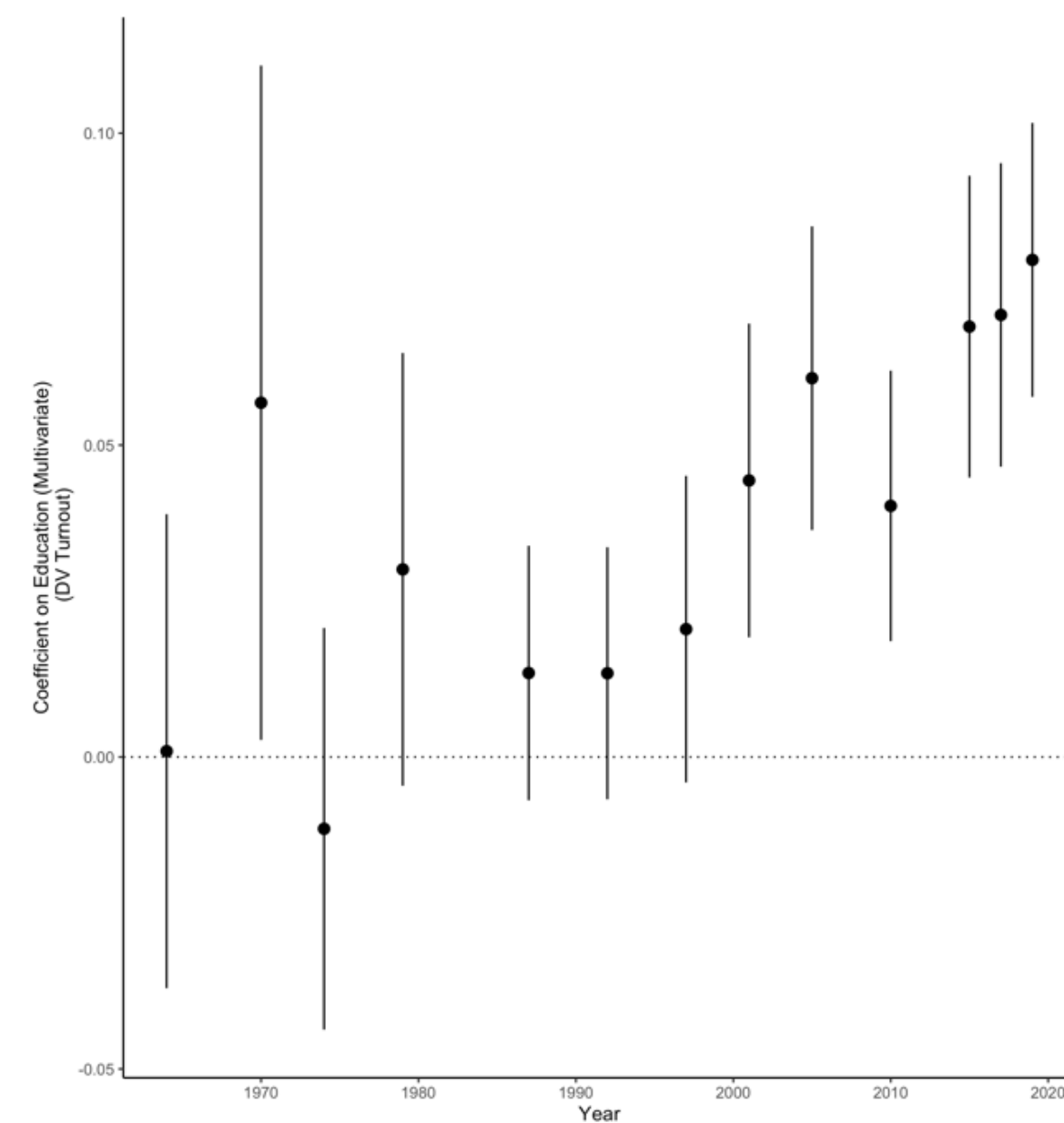


# WHO TURNS OUT TO VOTE?

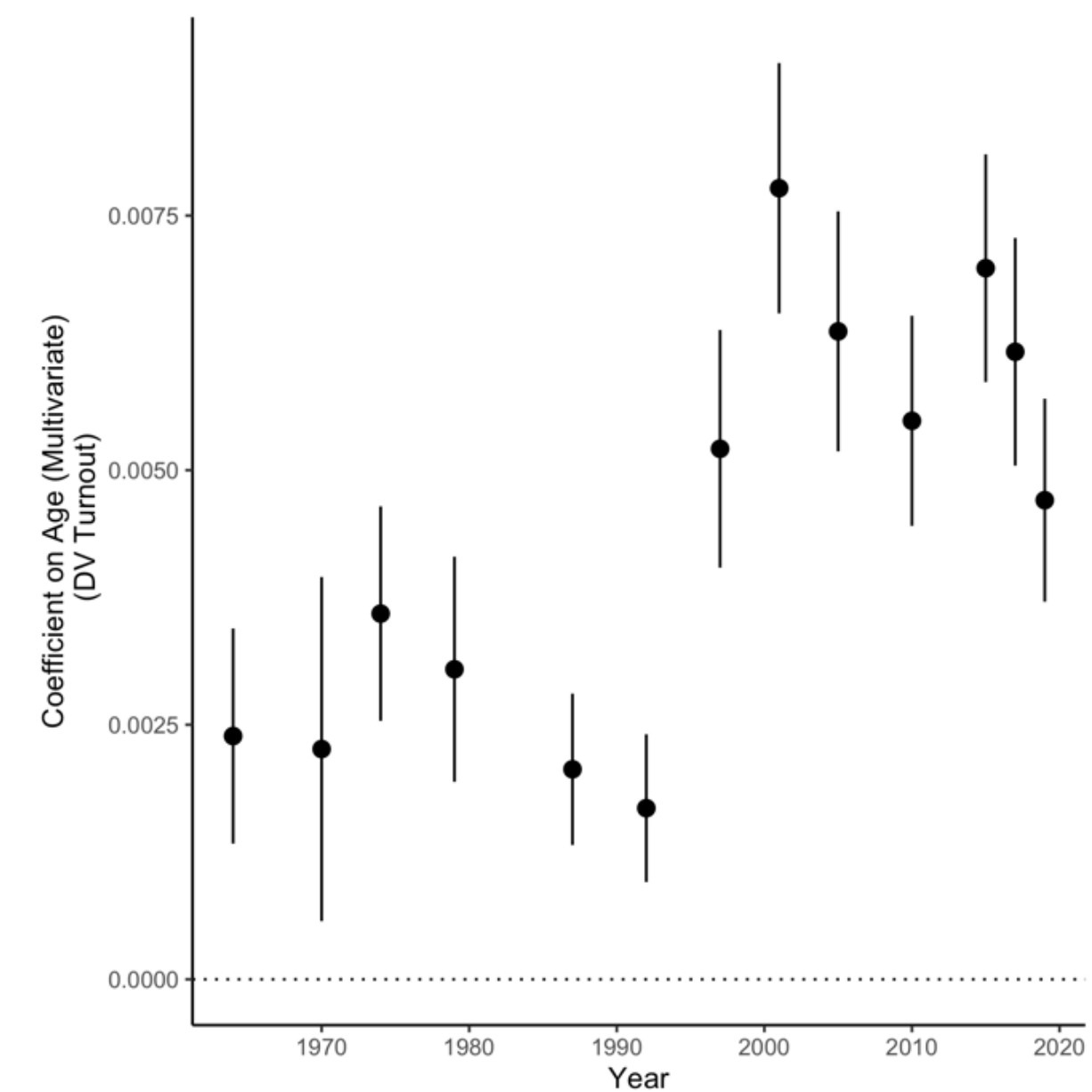
## INCOME



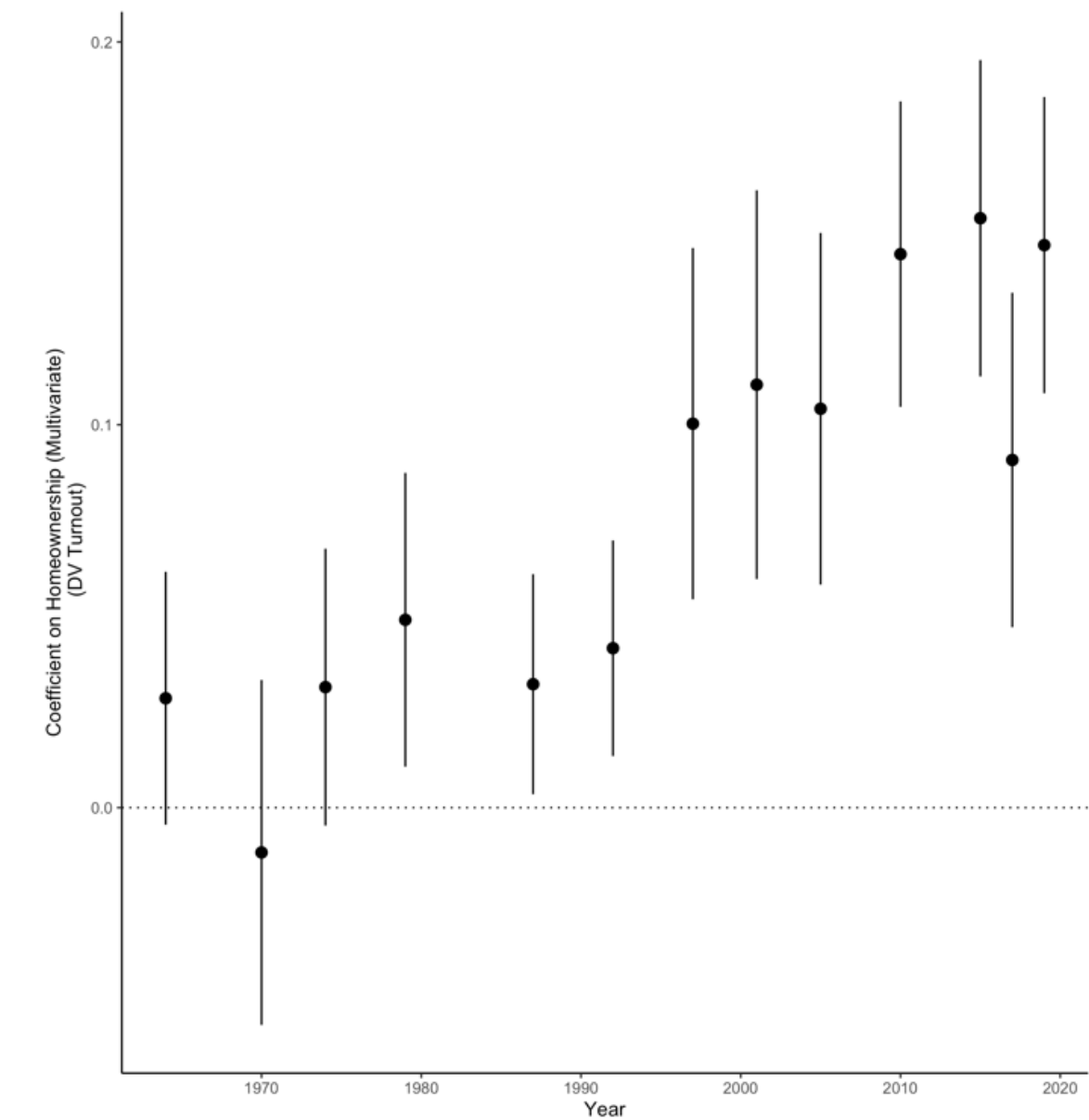
## EDUCATION



## AGE



## HOMEOWNER

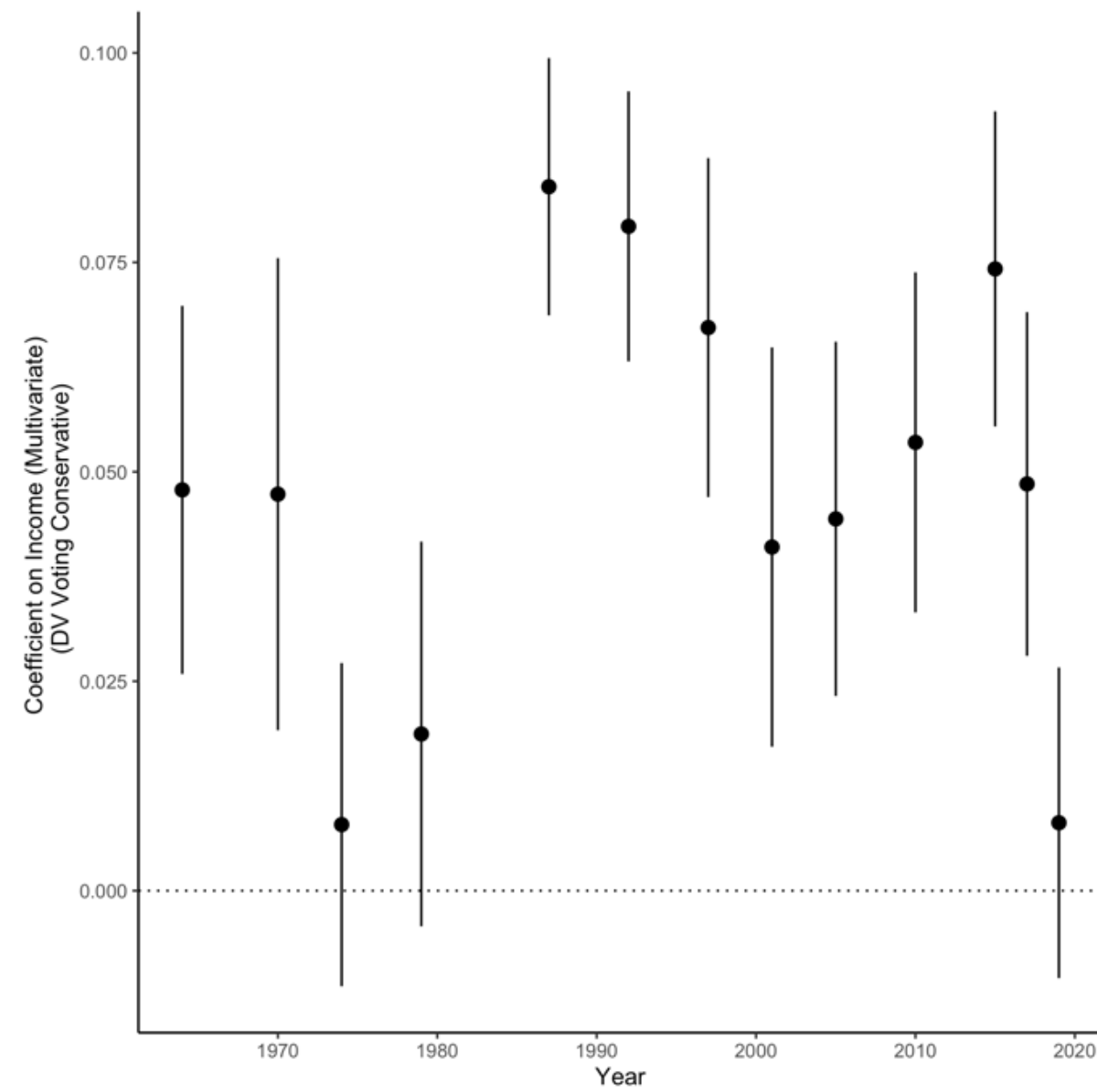


Older, more educated, richer, and home owning people  
have become ever more likely to vote

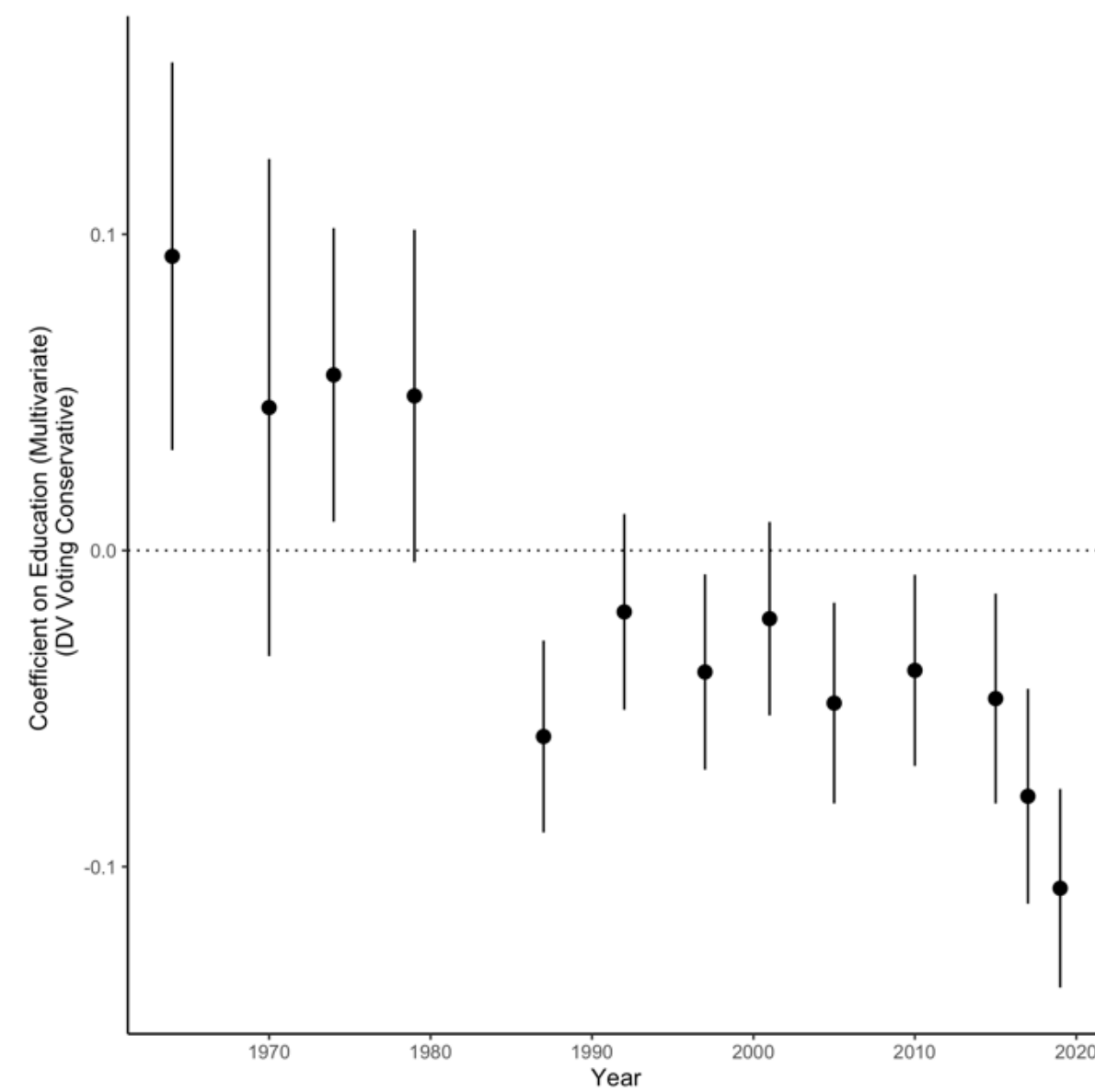


# WHO DO PEOPLE VOTE FOR?

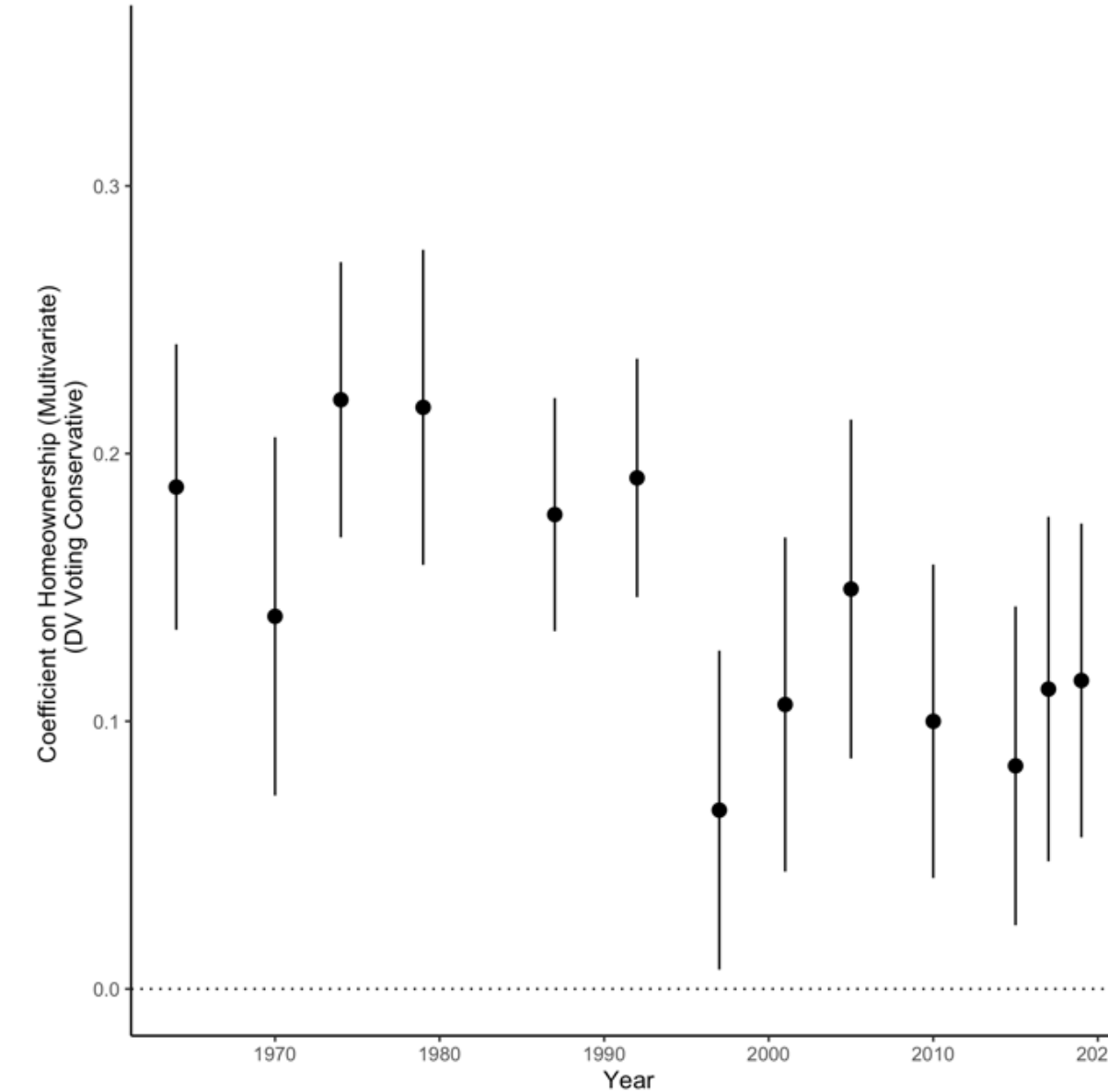
## INCOME



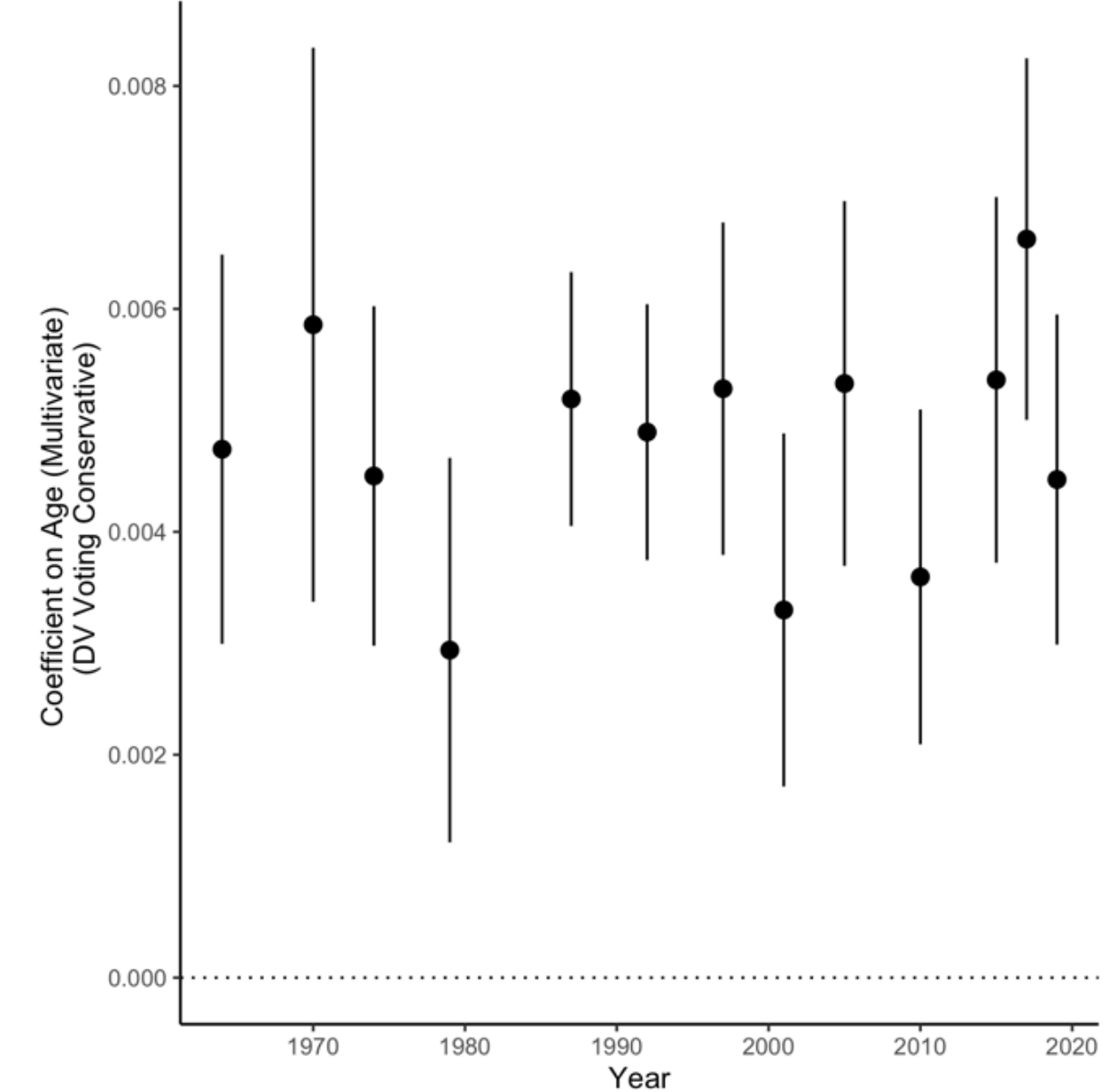
## EDUCATION



## AGE



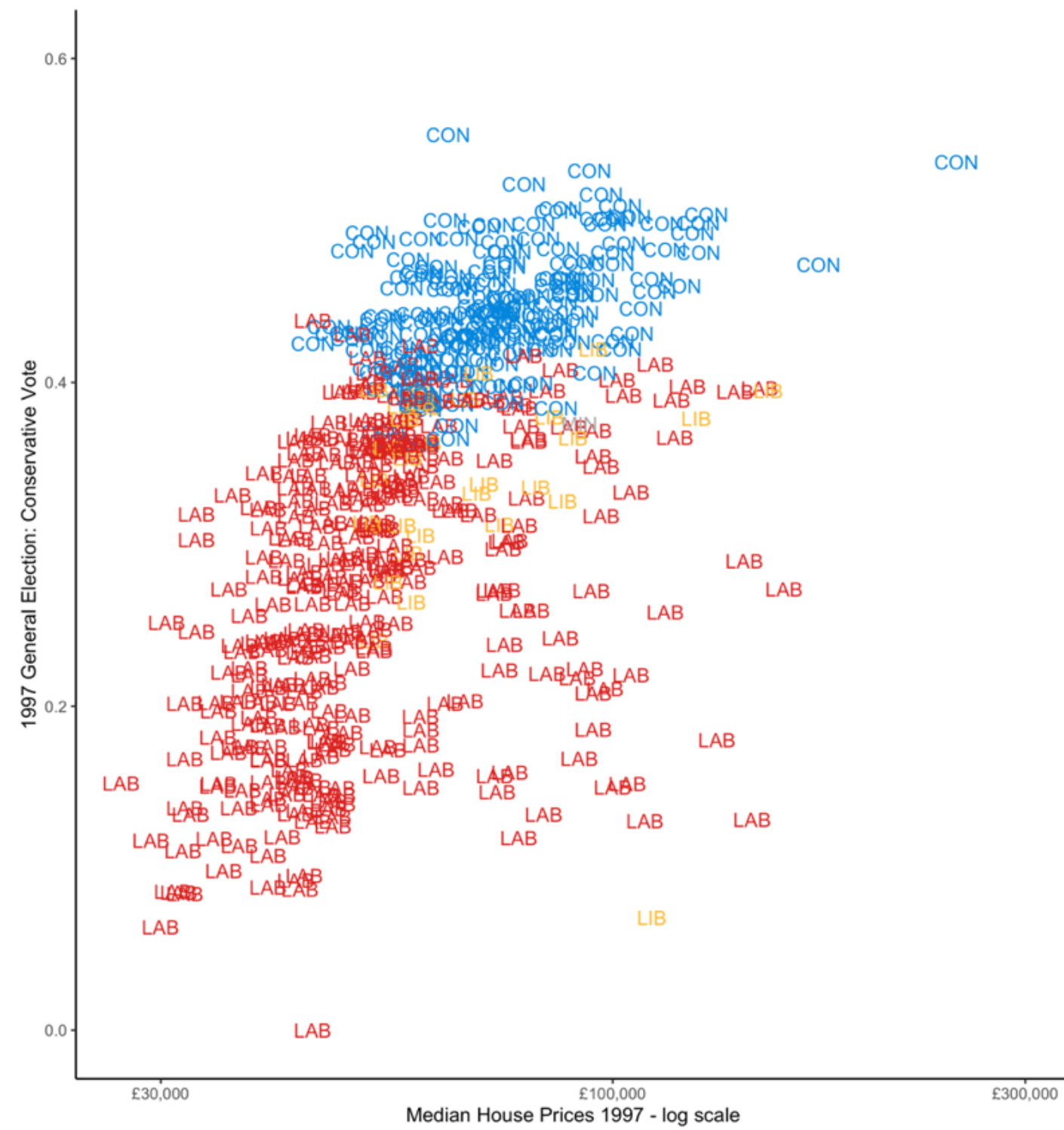
## HOMEOWNER



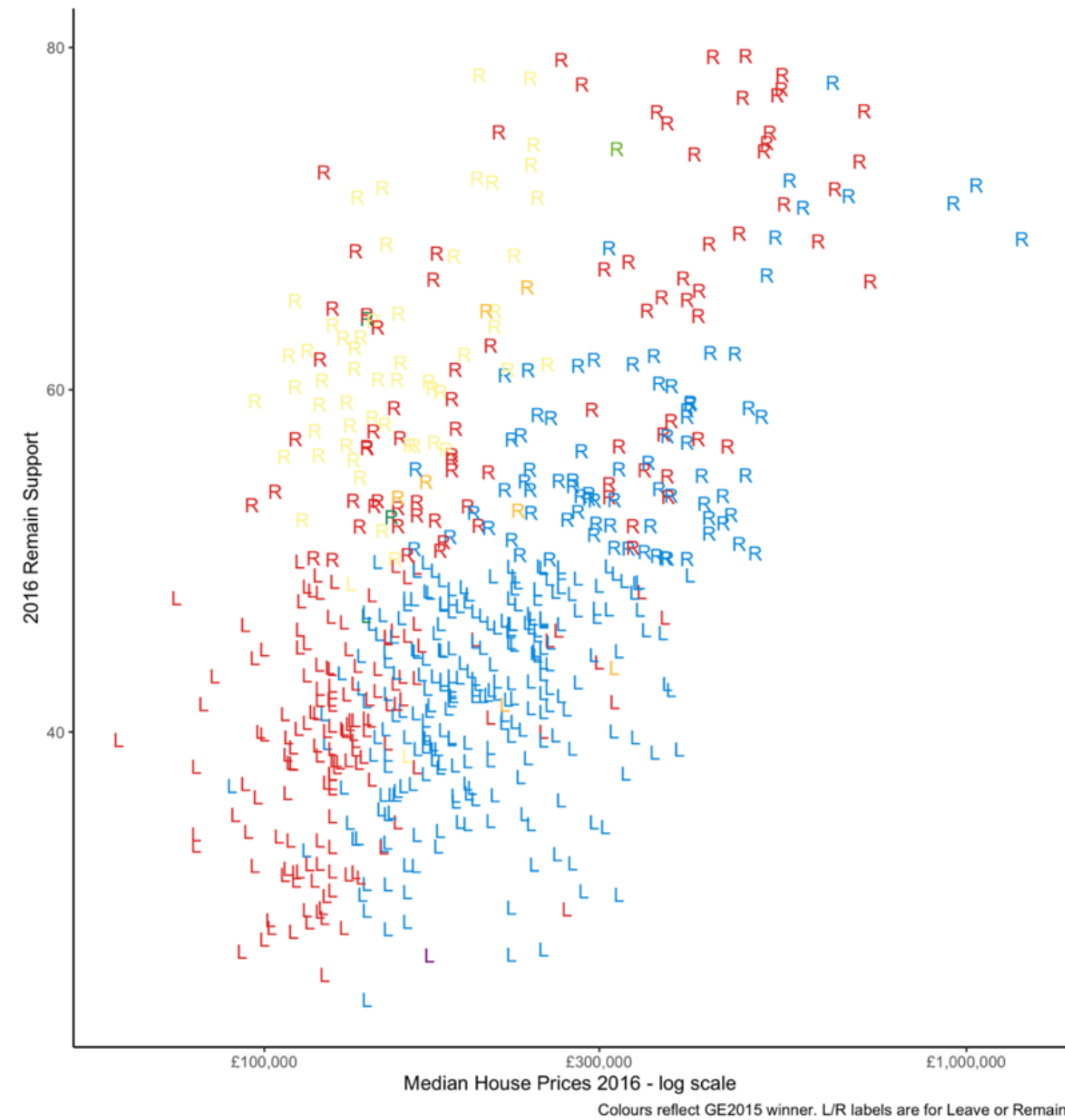
Older and homeowners still drawn to Conservatives  
Richer people also were, until 2019  
But... education has completely flipped since 1980s

# CROSS-CUTTING PATTERNS

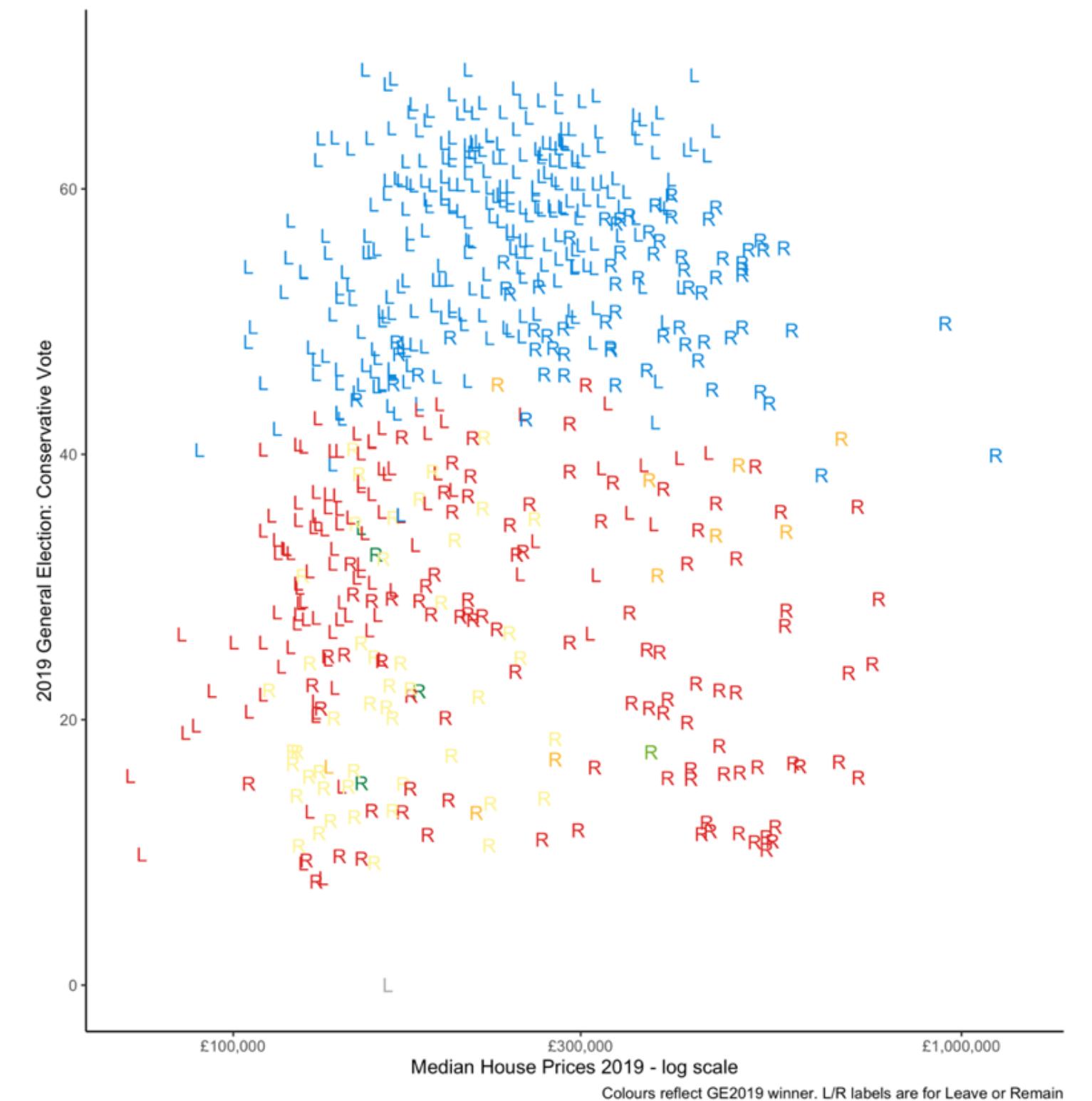
1997 GENERAL ELECTION



BREXIT



2019 GENERAL ELECTION



Wealthier / high educated areas traditionally voted Conservative but also voted for Remain.

By 2019, these opposing forces had removed connection between local wealth and voting.

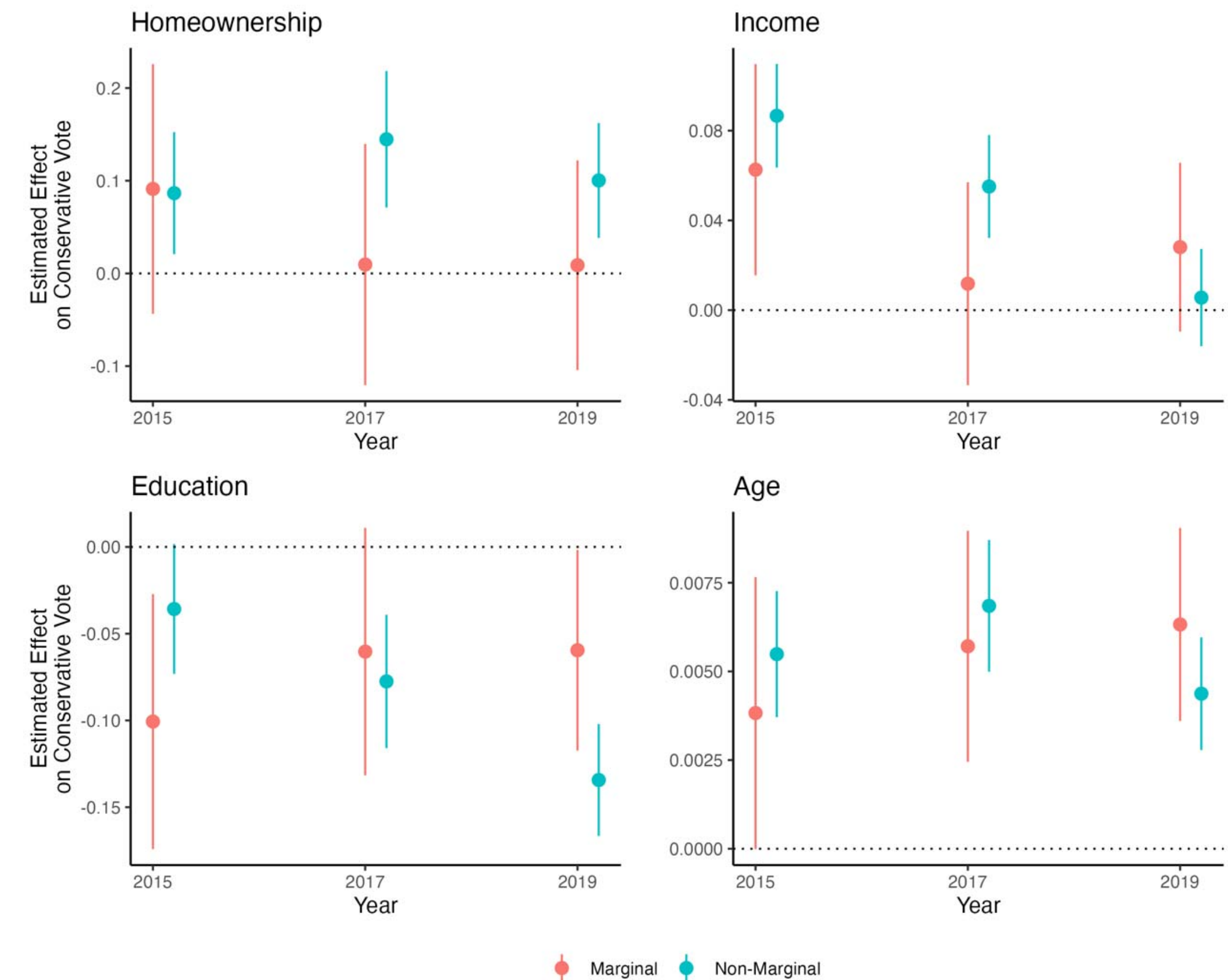
# A POLITICAL PARADOX?

Income and wealth gaps between rich and poor rose substantially over the last half-century, though this mostly ended by early 2000s.

Over the same period, the importance of income and local wealth in defining vote choice has been stable or declined (especially in last few years).

Polarisation by income has been replaced by polarisation by education.

Political inequality still exists but is as connected to education/age as much as material conditions.



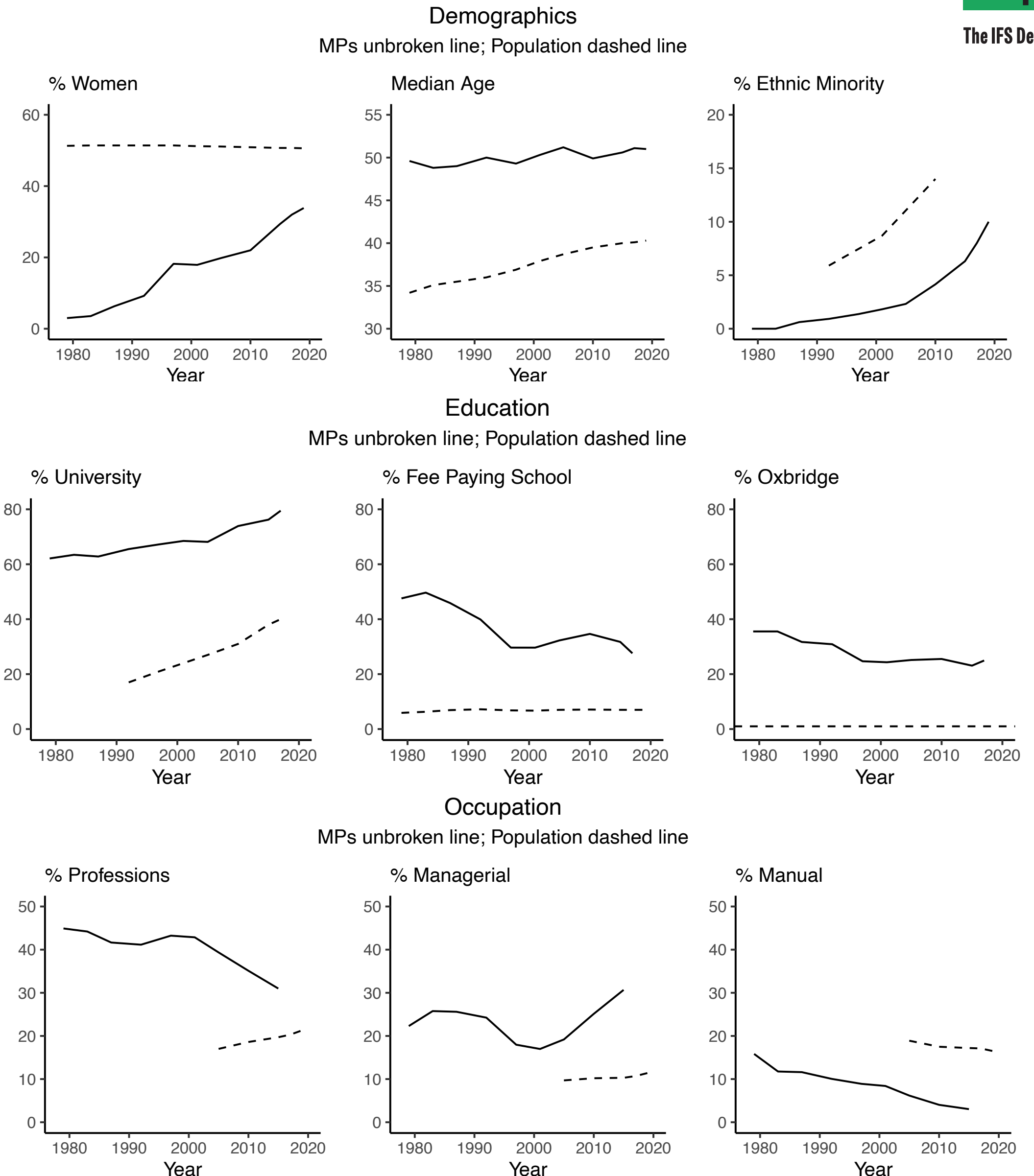


# WHO GETS ELECTED IN UK?

Parliament has converged to the country in gender, ethnicity, and private schooling.

The people look more like parliament in age, university education, and occupational structure.

Descriptive representation has, broadly speaking, improved.



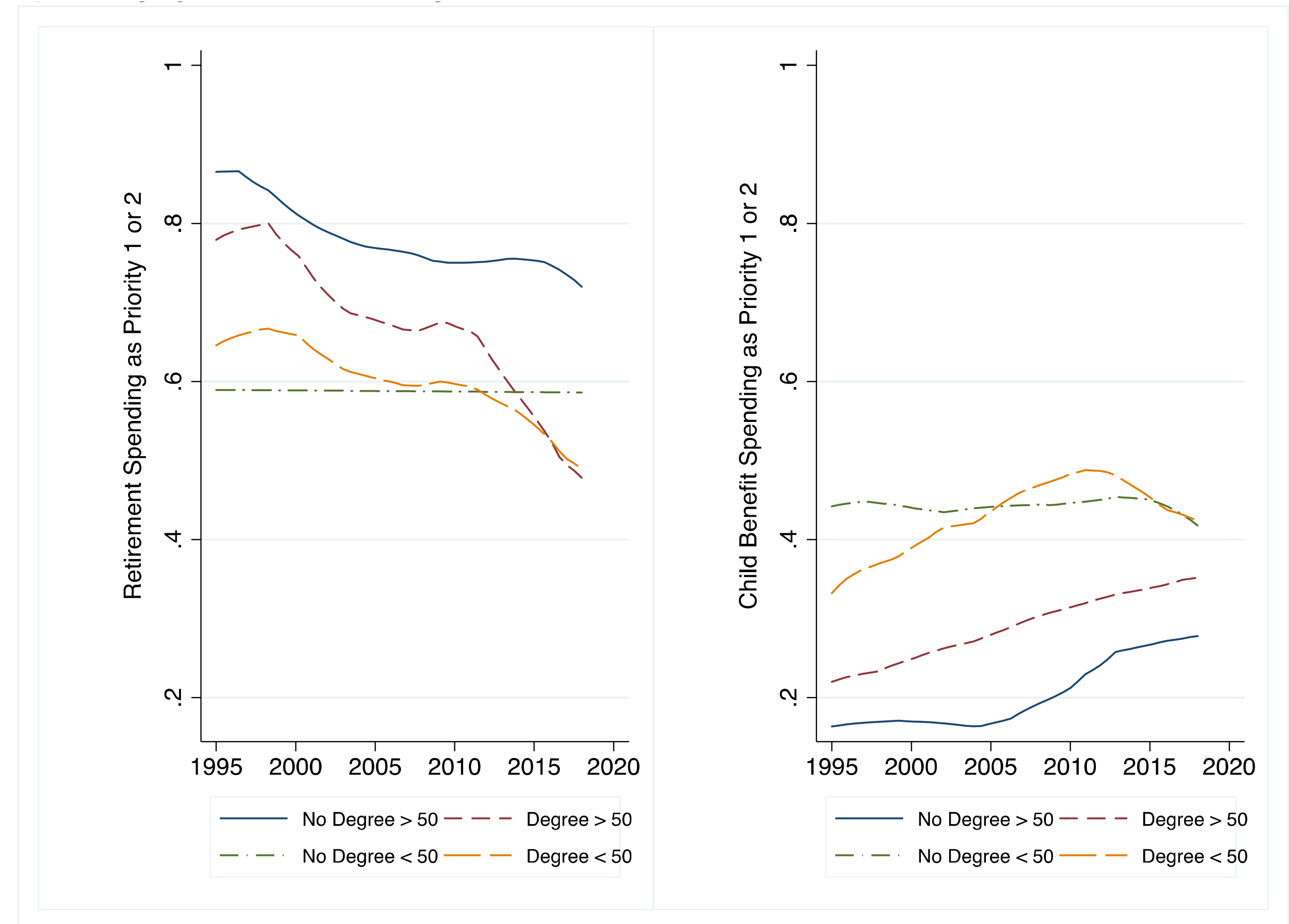


# WHO GETS WHAT?

Policymaking and public opinion have been broadly thermostatic.

Policymakers appear to have been more responsive to older voters' needs (pensions, limited house-building) and less so to younger voters, especially those on working age benefits.

This matches the patterns we see with who turns out to vote. But not the aggregate public support for different types of spending.

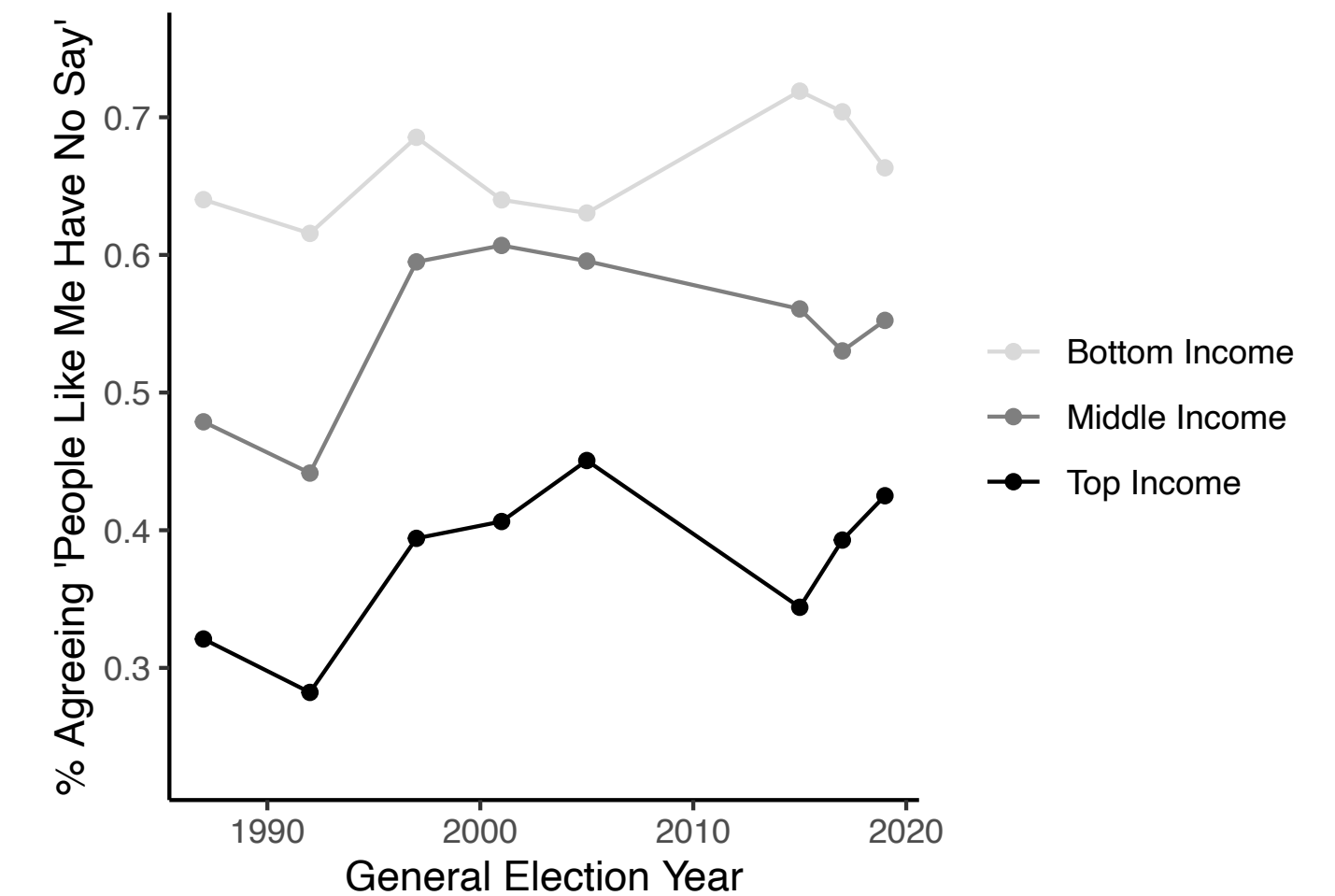
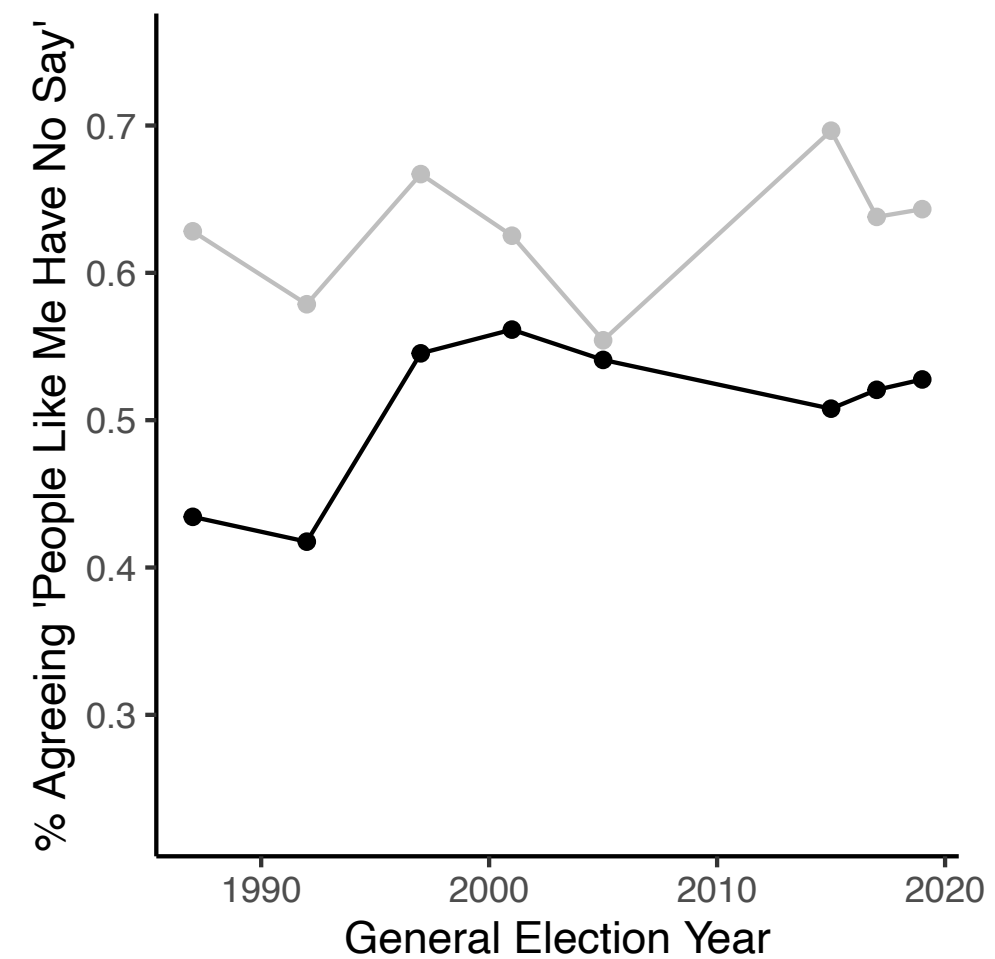
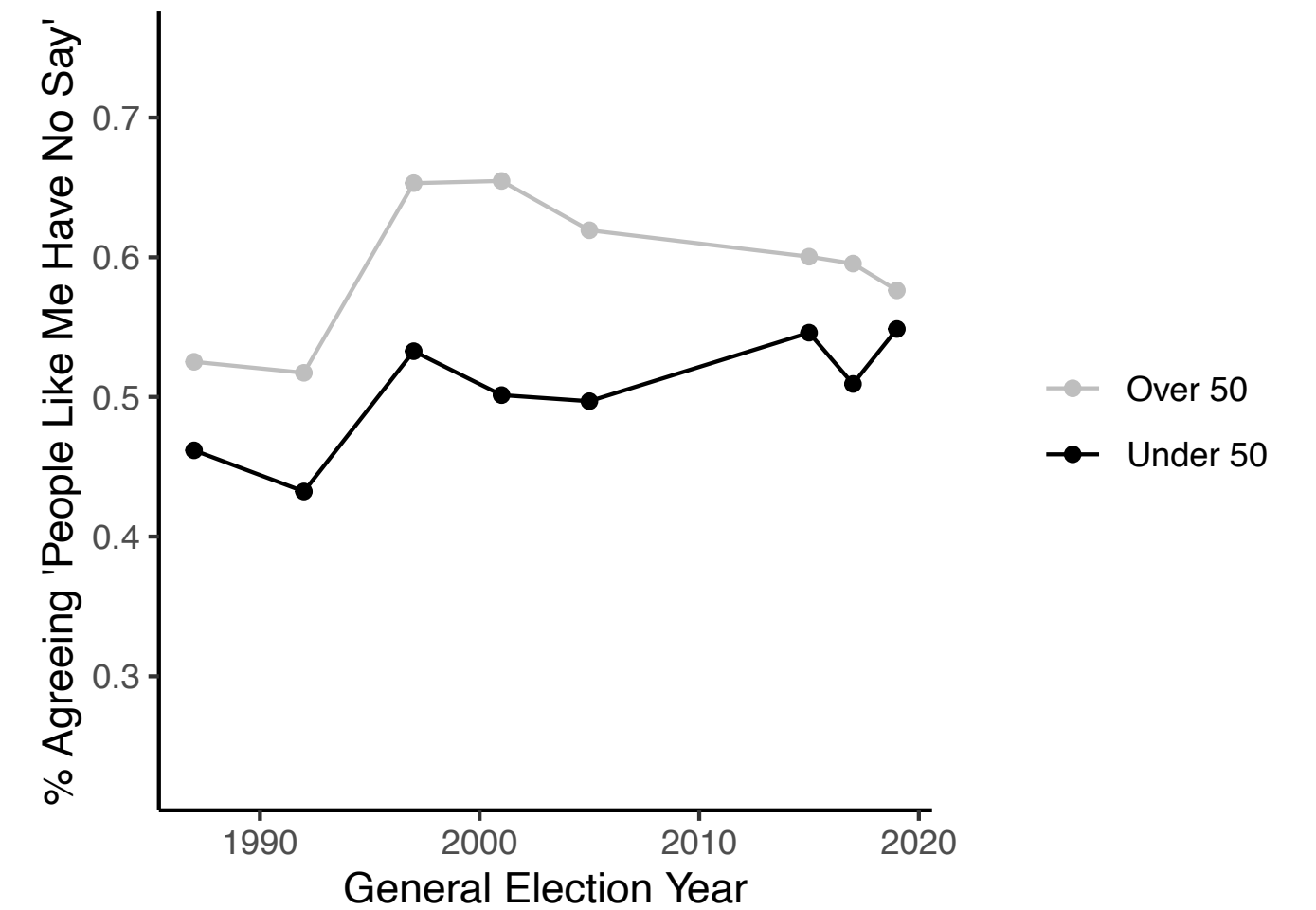
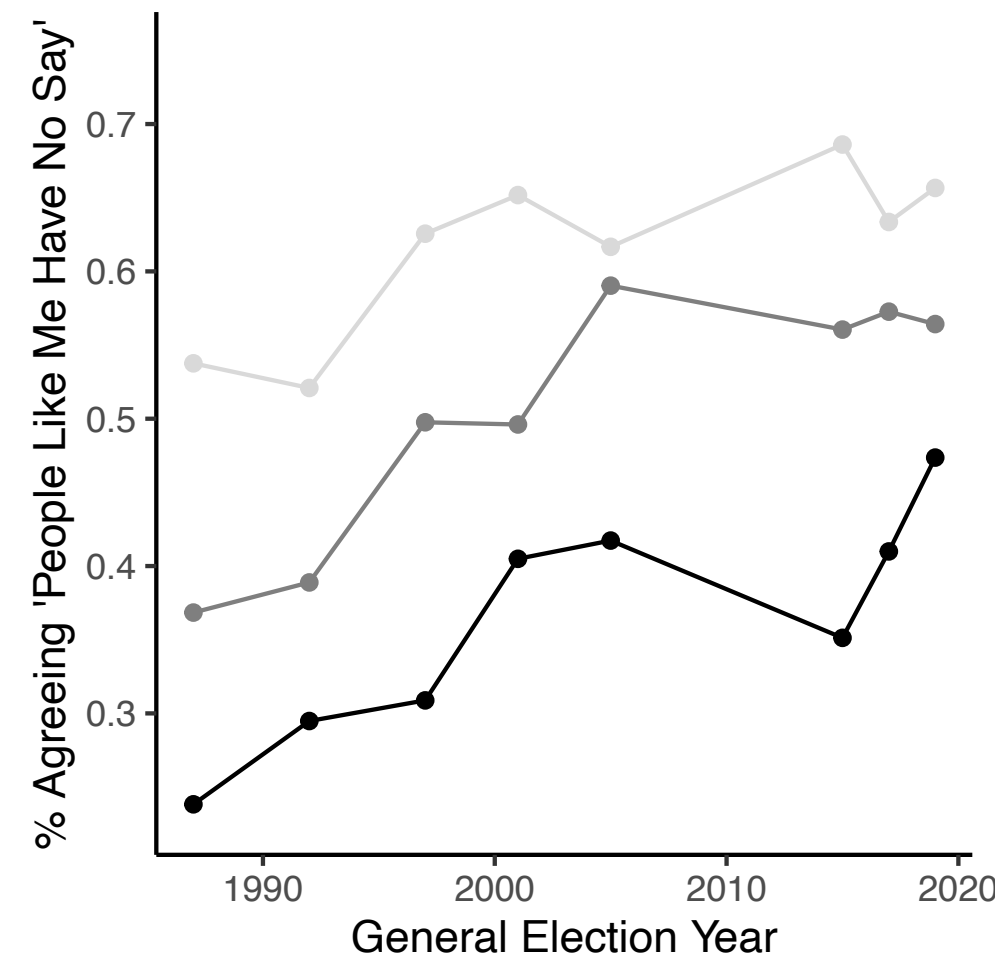


# RESPONSIVENESS

In general, people with lower education, lower income, who rent, or who are older feel government doesn't listen to them.

But gaps have narrowed in past few elections.

Angry winners?



# TAKE HOMES

1. Inequality in political participation has widened dramatically
2. High income and highly educated people have moved in opposite directions in party choice.
3. Poorer and richer regions now have more similar voting patterns. Polarisation increasingly around education.
4. Parliament looks increasingly like the public. Policymakers have been broadly in tune with public opinion but with age-bias.
5. Legitimacy remains low but gaps have narrowed.