



Understanding the Social and Cultural Bases of Brexit

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Understanding the Social and Cultural Bases of Brexit*

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Abstract

We use data from a large scale and nationally representative survey to explore the social and cultural bases of Brexit. There are strong age and educational gradients in Brexit support. Net of individual characteristics, regional differences within England become insignificant. In fact, once local level of immigration is taken into account, people living in the English regions are less pro-Leave than Londoners. It is social status, not social class, which predicts Brexit support. Economic deprivation does not predict Brexit attitude. Individuals living in areas with a higher concentration of migrants are actually less pro-Brexit. But recent increase in immigration level has the opposite association. Individuals for whom being British is important are more likely to support Leave. But those who choose national identity over sub-national identity and those reporting omnivorous cultural consumption are less supportive of Brexit. Those who live in the county in which they were born are more pro-Leave, but those who have stronger ties with their neighbours and neighbourhood, and those who are more involved in civic associations are pro-Remain. Overall, our results do not support the ‘left-behind’ narrative of Brexit. Instead, we show a strong cultural dimension in Brexit support.

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1 Introduction

On 23 June 2016, Britain voted by a margin of 52% to 48% to leave the European Union. How do we understand the social bases of Brexit? What are the social and cultural underpinnings of Euroscepticism in the UK? Clearly, the support for Leave (or Remain) is multidimensional in nature. A diverse set of issues, including the economic consequences of Brexit, immigration and its impact, Britain's ability to make its own laws, . . . all played their parts, to differing degrees and in different mix, in the mind of voters (Curtice, 2016). Correspondingly, there are different narratives of the referendum outcome. But, broadly speaking, they fall into two types.

The first type starts with the observation that Leave-Vote share tends to be higher in the economically deprived areas of the country. The inference is then made that many Leave-voters are those left behind by the economic boom fuelled by globalisation in general and European integration in particular (e.g. Runciman, 2016). It is for this reason that the warning of the adverse economic impact of Brexit did not resonate with them: when you have little, you have little to lose. In other words, this narrative attributes the referendum outcome to voters' material circumstances and how they understand where their material interests lie. As one Mancunian puts it memorably, 'If you've got money, you vote in. If you haven't got money, you vote out' (Harris, 2016).

But quite apart from material circumstances, there is also a subjective dimension to Brexit. And the second narrative speaks to cultural issues and questions of identity, e.g. whether people see themselves as English, Scottish, British, European, and so on. In this paper, we use data from a large scale and nationally representative survey to evaluate both Brexit narratives. In particular, we explore whether geographical mobility, attachment to local community, civic participation, national identity, etc. relate to the support for Brexit, while taking into account of the social-demographic characteristics of individuals and the characteristics of the area in which they live.

1.1 The economic and cultural bases of Brexit

Some papers on the social bases of Brexit are based on ecological or aggregate-level data. Goodwin and Heath (2016), for example, analyse the share of Leave-Vote across local authorities and show that, among other things, 'public support for Leave closely mapped past support for UKIP. And . . . that support for Leave was more polarised along education lines than support for UKIP ever was' (Goodwin and Heath, 2016, p. 323). Becker *et al.* (2017, p. 3) also analyse aggregate data and report that exposure to the European

Union (as measured by levels of immigration or EU-trade), the quality of local public services, or the impact of the austerity policy since 2010 explain relatively little of the variation in Brexit support across local authorities. However, local authorities with a higher ‘share of the population with little or no qualifications . . . areas with a strong tradition of manufacturing employment were more likely to vote Leave, and also those areas with relatively low pay and high unemployment’ (Becker *et al.*, 2017, p. 32).

Brexit has been linked to globalisation. Hobolt (2016), for example, uses data from the 7th Wave of the British Election Study Internet Panel, and argues that ‘the “winners” of globalization—the young, well-educated professionals in urban centres—favour more open borders, immigration and international co-operation, whereas the “left-behind”—the working class, less educated and the older—oppose such openness’ (Hobolt, 2016, p. 1265).

In contrast, Kaufmann (2016) argues forcefully for a cultural explanation of Brexit: ‘Britain’s choice to vote Leave, we are told, is a protest by those left behind by modernisation and globalisation. London versus the regions, poor versus rich. Nothing could be further from the truth. Brexit voters, like Trump supporters, are motivated by identity, not economics.’ In particular, citing evidence from the 2015 British Election Study Internet Panel (waves 1–3), Kaufmann notes that support for the death penalty, which is *not* an issue raised by any side during the campaign, ‘strongly correlates with Brexit voting intention’. To Kaufmann, this speaks to a divide between ‘order versus openness [which] is emerging as the key political cleavage, overshadowing the left-right economic dimension.’

Striking a middle ground, Inglehart and Norris (2016) acknowledge that the electoral appeal of populist politicians, such as Trump or the Brexit campaign, can partly be explained by the economic woes facing the ‘have-nots’ or the ‘left-behinds’ in Western societies. But they also argue that populism represents a cultural backlash against the progressive value change over the past few decades. By pooling waves 1–6 (2002–2014) data of the European Social Survey, they show that support for populist parties in Europe is indeed associated with both economic insecurity and cultural values such as anti-immigration feelings, mistrust of global and national governance, authoritarian values as well as right-wing identity.

1.2 Anywheres and Somewheres, Cosmopolitans and Locals

In his book, *The Road to Somewhere*, Goodhart (2017) articulates a prominent cultural account of Brexit. He accepts that economic considerations

are important to many voters in the Brexit referendum. But he argues that ‘Brexit and the election of Donald Trump . . . will come to be seen as the moment when the politics of culture and identity rose to challenge the politics of left and right’ (Goodhart, 2017, p. 1). In particular, ‘[t]he old distinctions of class and economic interest . . . are increasingly over-laid by a larger and looser one—between the people who see the world from Anywhere and the people who see it from Somewhere’ (p. 3). For Goodhart, Brexit is a revolt of the Somewheres against the erstwhile dominant Anywheres.

In Goodhart’s estimation, Anywheres comprise ‘20 to 25 per cent of the population’ (p. 4). They are the products of higher education and geographical mobility, ‘belong[ing] to the mobile minority who went to a residential university and then into a professional job, usually without returning to the place they were brought up’ (p. 23). Most of the Anywheres are economically comfortable if not well-off. ‘There is a left-of-centre wing—in caring professions like health and education, and the media and creative industries—and a right-of-centre wing in finance, business and traditional professions like law and accountancy’ (pp. 23–24). So there are Anywhere supporters for all of the main political parties. However, Anywheres tend to embrace what Goodhart calls an ideology of ‘progressive individualism’ (p. 5), which is akin to the postmaterialist values of autonomy and self-expression (Inglehart, 1990). As ‘individualists and internationalists [Anywheres] are not strongly attached to larger group identities, including national ones; they value autonomy and self-realisation before stability, community and tradition’ (p. 24); they are unlikely to feel that they ‘belong to their neighbourhood’ (p. 38); indeed, ‘[p]rogressive individualism usually celebrates escape from community and communal obligation’ (p. 115).

In contrast, Somewheres account for roughly half of the population (p. 3).¹ They are geographically more dispersed and are found in small towns and suburbs across the country, and also in ‘the former industrial and maritime areas’. Somewheres tend to be older, on low to middling income, and most of them have not gone to university. They are socially conservative and ‘do not generally welcome change . . . they place a high value on security and familiarity and have a strong group attachments, local and national’ (p. 24). Politically speaking, Somewheres ‘lean towards the Conservatives and UKIP (many are ex-Labour)’ (p. 24).

Goodhart’s Anywheres–Somewheres distinction echoes Merton’s (1968) contrast between the Cosmopolitans and the Locals.² In a qualitative study

¹Goodhart calls the rest of society, i.e. those who are neither Anywheres nor Somewheres, the Inbetweeners.

²We thank John Goldthorpe for referring us to Merton’s work.

of influential individuals in a small town that he calls Rovere, Merton observes two types of local elites: the ‘local boys made good’, and the cosmopolitan ‘new-comer[s] to the community’ (p. 454). Compared to the Cosmopolitans, the Locals tend to be older, less well educated, and are more likely to be found in local businesses rather than in professional occupations (pp. 455–456). ‘But these differences in occupational or educational status do not appear to determine the diverse types of influentials’ (p. 456). Instead, ‘[t]he chief criterion for distinguishing the two is found in their *orientation* toward Rovere. The localite largely confines his interests to this community. Rovere is essentially his world . . . Contrariwise with the cosmopolitan type . . . He resides in Rovere but lives in the Great Society. If the local type is parochial, the cosmopolitan is ecumenical’ (Merton, 1968, p. 447).

Merton (1968) and Goodhart (2017) are not strictly comparable. For one thing, Merton speaks about elites whilst Goodhart is concerned with the whole population. But they refer to similar social processes that might structure the outlook and actions of individuals. We will extract from our survey dataset relevant measures of migration history, attachment to the neighbourhood, involvement in civic associations, and so on and test the relevance of these distinctions for understanding Brexit.

1.3 Social class, social status and cultural consumption

To Goodhart, Kaufmann, Inglehart and Norris, and others, Brexit is not just about economics or the traditional left–right issues of taxation, public services, and so on; cultural issues such as the death penalty, gay rights, national identity . . . play their parts too. In this regard, Max Weber’s distinction between social class and social status is relevant. Following Weber (1968), we understand social class as a structure of inequality that is rooted in the social relations of economic life, i.e. relations in labour markets and production units. Accordingly, social class should predict economic security (as indexed, for example, by the risks of recurrent or long-term unemployment), economic prospects (the age–earnings profile), and economic interests (the class–vote association). There is indeed empirical support for these predictions (see e.g. Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007).

In contrast, again, following Weber, we understand the status order as expressing a perceived and often accepted hierarchy of social superiority, equality and inferiority. Weber (1968) speaks of commensality and connubium as markers of social status. That is to say, people form intimate relationships, such as close friendship or marriage, with people they regard as social equals. Based on a multidimensional scaling analysis of friendship choice, Chan and Goldthorpe (2004) report that a status order, in the classical Weberian sense,

still exists in contemporary British society (see also Chan, 2010). Moreover, Chan and Goldthorpe (2007) show that while social class predicts left–right political attitudes, it is social status which predicts libertarian–authoritarian attitudes. Given these results, we will include measures of both social class and social status in the analyses below.

Related to this, Chan (2017) shows that cultural consumption pattern predicts attitudes about the EU. To elaborate, using latent class analysis, he identifies three groups of cultural consumers. First, there are the cultural omnivores who consume many different types of music and visual arts, whether they are highbrow, middlebrow or popular in appeal. The second group are the univores whose cultural consumption is restricted to popular genres only. And finally there are the paucivores whose cultural consumption pattern is in-between those of omnivores and univores. It turns out that omnivores and, to a lesser degree, paucivores are more likely than univores to think that ‘the UK’s membership of the European Union is a good thing’, and that ‘Taking everything into consideration, Britain has on balance benefited from being a member of the European Union.’ Chan (2017) interprets these findings as follows. Cultural omnivores (and paucivores) are essentially tolerant individuals who have a general openness to other cultural styles and, perhaps, a desire to experiment with different kinds of cultural consumption (see also DiMaggio, 1996); and it is this open and cosmopolitan disposition that explains why the omnivores are more supportive of the EU.³

1.4 Neighbourhood effects

In addition to individual experience and circumstances, neighbourhood might also matter. For example, Kawalerowicz and Biggs (2015) analyse the background of those arrested in connection with the London riot of 2011 and show that rioters tended to ‘come from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods . . . where ethnic fractionalization was high, . . . with few charitable organizations’ (2015, p. 673). Sturgis *et al.* (2014, p. 1286) analyse data from the Metropolitan Police Public Attitude Survey and ‘find neighbourhood ethnic diversity in London to be positively related to the perceived social cohesion of neighbourhood residents, once the level of economic deprivation is accounted for. Ethnic segregation within neighbourhoods, on the other hand, is associated with lower levels of perceived social cohesion.’

In the context of Brexit, the two most salient neighbourhood variables are economic deprivation and immigration. In the analyses below, we con-

³In the the paperback version of his book, Goodhart acknowledges the view that ‘the culture of art and architecture has become overwhelmingly Anywhere dominated’ (2017, pp. xi–xii).

sider not only the *levels* of these variables in 2011, but also the *change in the level* of deprivation and immigration between 2001 and 2011. The idea is that individuals might get used to local conditions, but changes to those local conditions could provoke responses. Thus, Laurence and Bentley (2016) analyse data from the British Household Panel Survey and report that neighbourhood ethnic diversity and change in the level of diversity affect subjective sense of social cohesion.

2 Data and measures

2.1 Data

The data that we analyse come from Understanding Society which is a nationally representative annual household panel survey which began in 2009–10. Data are collected through face-to-face interviews, using a stratified random sample.⁴ Compared to other data source, Understanding Society offers some important advantages.

Most importantly, as noted above, several papers and most popular commentary on Brexit are based on aggregate level data (e.g. Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Becker *et al.*, 2017). It is well known that such analyses are potentially subject to the ecological fallacy (Robinson, 1950). There are other papers on Brexit that draw on individual-level data. For example, Hobolt (2016) and Antonucci *et al.* (2017) use data from the British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) and Clarke *et al.* (2017) use data from the Essex Continuous Monitoring Survey (ECMS). Both BESIP and ECMS are internet panels conducted by YouGov.⁵ But as these studies are not based on probability samples, data representativeness is a concern, even when the data are weighted to match known population characteristics.⁶

⁴The main General Population Sample of Understanding Society is ‘a proportionally stratified, clustered, equal probability sample of residential addresses drawn to a uniform design from the small user Postcode Address File (PAF)’ (Boreham *et al.*, 2012, p. 3).

⁵Scott *et al.* (2017) also analyse data drawn from a YouGov internet panel.

⁶Comparing BESIP with the British Election Study which is a face-to-face survey with a stratified random probability sample, Mellon and Prosser (2017, p. 661) show that ‘the online survey’s polling error is primarily caused by undersampling nonvoters, then weighting respondents to represent the general population. Consequently, demographic groups with a low probability of voting are overweighted within the voter subsample.’

2.2 Dependent variable

Wave 8 (2016–17) of Understanding Society includes the question that appears on the referendum ballot paper: ‘Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?’ and respondents were given the same binary choice: ‘Remain a member of the European Union’ or ‘Leave the European Union’. The response to this question is our dependent variable.

Note that this variable does *not* measure how the respondents actually voted in the referendum. Instead, it measures their view about the UK’s EU membership on the day they were interviewed. The fieldwork of each wave of Understanding Society takes about two years to complete. The first set of the wave 8 interviews took place 170 days before 23 June 2016, and last batch of interviews took place 287 days afterwards. It is likely that, before the referendum, people’s attitude might be swayed by the opposing campaigns and also by various events, including the European refugee crisis which peaked in late 2015 and the murder of the MP Jo Cox on 16 June 2016. After the referendum, people’s attitude might be influenced by the actual outcome of the vote. Given this, it is not a surprise that the distribution of the dependent variable (55% Remain to 45% Leave) differs significantly from the actual referendum result (48% Remain to 52% Leave).

There are other reasons that might explain the discrepancy, including sampling variation, a higher non-response rate among Leave-Voters in the survey, and a lower turnout rate among those who support Remain (e.g. younger people). The Electoral Commission estimates that in December 2015 85% of those who were entitled to have an entry on the electoral register were registered (2016, p. 5). And among registered voters, the turnout rate in the EU referendum was 72%. It should be clear that whether individuals are registered on the electoral roll and, conditional on registration, whether they turn out to vote are not random events. The upshot is that those who voted in the referendum were *not* a random sample of the UK population. It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate this question further. Suffice it to note that we restrict our analysis to UK citizens aged 18 or over, and we apply in the analyses the interim weight supplied by the Institute for Social and Economic Research.⁷

⁷The weight we use is `indinub_lwtemp`, which is the weight for the combined General Population Sample, the Ethnic Minority Boost sample and the British Household Panel Survey sample.

2.3 Explanatory variables

Geographical mobility is a key part of Goodhart’s Anywheres–Somewheres distinction (and also of Merton’s Cosmopolitans–Locals contrast). So we compare information on current residence with that on county of birth, and construct a binary variable on whether the respondents live in their county of birth at the time of the interview.⁸

Attachment to the neighbourhood is another key variable that is supposed to set Anywheres and Somewheres apart. In waves 1, 3 and 6 of Understanding Society, there are eight items on how the respondents relate to their neighbours and neighbourhood: (1) I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood; (2) The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me; (3) If I needed advice about something I could go to someone in my neighbourhood; (4) I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours; (5) I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood; (6) I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood for a number of years; (7) I think of myself as similar to the people that live in this neighbourhood; (8) I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood.

There are five response categories to each of these items, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). We reverse the coding of the response categories, add them up and form an additive scale. This scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .88, with higher values denoting stronger attachment to the neighbourhood and better relationship with neighbours.⁹

A third explanatory variable of interest is civic engagement, measured as the number of types of organisations of which the respondents are a member.¹⁰ The data are taken from waves 3 and 6 of the survey.

⁸This is a non-trivial task, as the boundaries of some counties have changed over time. Indeed, some counties mentioned by the respondents no longer exist. To construct the ‘living-in-county-of-birth’ variable, we identify 149 unique county names mentioned by the respondents. These are then matched to the comprehensive sets of digital boundaries that we download from the Ordinance Survey, called Historic and Ceremonial counties of England, Wales and Scotland. For Northern Ireland, we draw on the digital boundaries from Ordinance Survey of Northern Ireland and UK Data Service Census Support. Details are available from the authors on request.

⁹The neighbourhood index and some other explanatory variables are based on items that appear periodically in Understanding Society. In order to minimise missing data, we use valid data from the most recent wave. For example, regarding the neighbourhood index, we use data from wave 6 if valid data for a respondent is available from that wave. But if wave 6 data are missing, but wave 3 data are available, we use wave 3 data; and if waves 3 and 6 data are missing, but wave 1 data are available, we use wave 1 data.

¹⁰The organisational types are: (1) Political party, (2) Trade Unions, (3) Environmental group, (4) Parents’/School Association, (5) Tenants’/Residents’ Group or Neighbour-

Fourth, in waves 1, 3 and 6, respondents were asked: ‘Most people who live in the UK may think of themselves as being British in some way. . . . how important is being British to you?’ There are eleven response categories ranging from 0 to 10; ‘0’ means that being British is ‘not important at all’ to the respondent and ‘10’ that it is ‘extremely important’.

Fifth, every wave of the Understanding Society contains a question about national/sub-national identity: ‘Looking at this card, what do you consider your national identity to be? You may choose as many or as few as apply.’ The options on the card are: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish, and Other. As this question allows respondents to report multiple identities, we construct a four-fold typology of national *and/or* sub-national identities: (1) sub-national only, (2) British only, (3) British and sub-national, and (4) others.¹¹ This variable helps capture the potentially multi-layered nature of national identity. If, for example, a respondent living in England identify herself as ‘British’ rather than, say, ‘English’ or ‘British and English’, we interpret this as reflecting a broader, more cosmopolitan outlook.

Sixth, the cultural consumption variable is derived from a latent class analysis of eight items of music and visual arts consumption taken from waves 3 and 5 of Understanding Society (Chan, 2017; Chan and Turner, 2017).¹²

The two neighbourhood characteristics that are particularly relevant to Brexit are economic deprivation and immigration. We define neighbourhoods as Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which is the second smallest spatial unit of the UK census. On average, each LSOA has a population of about 1,500 people. We use the Townsend index as our measure of economic

hood Watch, (6) Religious group or church organisation, (7) Voluntary services group, (8) Pensioners group/organisation, (9) Scouts/Guides organisation, (10) Professional organisation, (11) Other community or civic group, (12) Social Club/Working men’s club, (13) Sports Club, (14) Women’s Institute/Townswomen’s Guild, (15) Women’s Group/Feminist Organisation, (16) Other group or organisation.

¹¹To be specific, for residents of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, answer category 1 refers to ‘English’, ‘Welsh’, ‘Scottish’, and ‘Northern Irish’ respectively. Similarly, answer category 3 refers to ‘British and English’, ‘British and Welsh’, ‘British and Scottish’, and ‘British and Northern Irish’ respectively. The category, ‘Others’, is of course ambiguous and difficult to interpret. They could be, for example, individuals living in England who identify themselves as Scottish.

¹²The eight items measure whether in the past 12 months the respondents had been to (1) an opera/operetta, (2) a classical music performance, (3) a rock, pop or jazz performance, (4) an exhibition or collection of art, photography or sculpture or a craft exhibition (not craft market), (5) an event which included video or electronic art, (6) street arts or public art display or installation (art in everyday surroundings, or an art work such as sculpture that is outdoors or in a public place), (7) a carnival or culturally specific festival (for example, Mela, Baisakhi, Navrati, Feis), and (8) a museum or gallery.

deprivation. The Townsend index is based on four indicators: (1) unemployment level, (2) home-ownership, (3) households without a car, and (4) overcrowding (for details, see Norman, 2016; Norman and Darlington-Pollock, 2017). Although the Townsend index takes into account fewer indicators than the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), it has the advantage of being constructed in a consistent manner across the UK and over time.¹³ Immigration level is measured by the percentage of residents in each LSOA who are foreign-born. For both economic deprivation and immigration, the latest value that is available is from the 2011 census. We also compute the change in the value of these two variables between the 2001 and 2011 censuses.

Finally, we include in our analysis the following social-demographic variables taken from wave 8 of Understanding Society: age (and a quadratic term of age), sex, ethnicity, marital status, employment status,¹⁴ number of children in the household,¹⁵ educational attainment (six levels), social class (coded to a sixfold version of NS-SEC),¹⁶ and a social status scale in the classical Weberian sense (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2004).¹⁷ Table 1 provides some descriptive statistics of the variables.

3 Results

3.1 Bivariate associations

Let us start with the bivariate associations. We put the respondents in ten groups of equal size according to when they were interviewed (from the earliest to the latest). The top-left panel of Figure 1 shows that prior to the referendum (23 June 2016 is in group 5), Leave support had generally been gaining ground. But there was no systematic trend after the referendum. Given this, we control for the date of interview in the multivariate analyses.

¹³The IMD has seven domains, each with multiple indicators. But different indicators have been used in the construction of the IMDs for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and also over time. This makes UK-wide analysis or over time comparison difficult. The Townsend index scores of 2001 and 2011 were kindly shared with us by Paul Norman of Leeds University.

¹⁴We contrast people who are in employment (as employees or self-employed) against all other employment status.

¹⁵This variable does not count children who have already left the household.

¹⁶NS-SEC stands for National Statistics Social Economic Classification, which is the official UK social class scheme, developed on the basis of the Goldthorpe class schema.

¹⁷At the top of this status scale are Higher professionals (estimated scale core being 0.5643), roughly in the middle are Managers and proprietors in services (-0.0453), and at the bottom are General labourers (-0.5979).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| EU attitude (6,537) | remain leave | 55.4 44.6 | Employment status (7,177) | not employed employed | 43.2 56.8 |
| Gender (7,179) | male female | 47.4 52.6 | Region (7,179) | North East North West Yorkshire East Midlands West Midlands East of England London South East South West Wales Scotland Northern Ireland | 4.9 11.8 9.7 8.2 9.9 10.5 9.5 15.7 10.5 2.5 5.2 1.8 |
| Marital status (7,159) | couple single sep/div/wid | 52.3 30.0 17.6 | | | |
| # children in household (7,179) | 0 1–2 3+ | 76.9 19.5 3.6 | | | |
| Race (7,174) | white asian blacks others | 92.8 3.4 1.3 2.5 | | | |
| Educational attainment (7,175) | degree further edu a-levels gcse sub-gcse no qual. | 24.6 12.5 22.7 20.2 9.3 10.7 | Live in county of birth (6,413) National identity (7,179) | no yes British sub-national Brit/sub-nat others | 45.7 54.3 25.6 44.5 21.1 8.8 |
| NS-SEC (6,805) | higher man/prof lower man/prof intermediate self-employed l.super/tech semi-rout/rout | 12.1 26.9 14.6 9.2 7.3 29.8 | Cultural consumption (6,658) | Univores Paucivores Omnivores | 56.9 28.8 14.3 |
| | | mean | s.d. | N | |
| days before vote | | 39.02 | 50.96 | (7,179) | |
| days after vote | | 38.44 | 51.72 | (7,166) | |
| age | | 50.52 | 18.86 | (7,179) | |
| age-squared/100 | | 29.08 | 19.52 | (7,179) | |
| social status | | .02 | .35 | (6,737) | |
| Townsend index 2011 | | -.24 | 3.29 | (7,173) | |
| change in Townsend 2011–2001 | | .66 | 1.10 | (7,152) | |
| % foreign-born 2011 | | 10.58 | 11.28 | (7,179) | |
| change in % foreign-born 2011–2001 | | 3.27 | 4.43 | (7,167) | |
| neighbourhood index | | 3.57 | .73 | (7,157) | |
| number of civic organisations | | .97 | 1.18 | (7,165) | |
| British identity | | 7.29 | 2.88 | (7,092) | |

Note: Numbers in Table are percentages, except for lower panel which shows mean and standard deviation. Numbers in brackets are N s in univariate distribution.

Figure 1 also shows strong bivariate gradients in Leave support by age, educational attainment, social class and social status.¹⁸ Consistent with previous research, younger people are relatively pro-Remain, as are individuals in advantaged positions on each of these socioeconomic dimensions.

In line with the official results, Figure 1 shows that Scotland and Northern Ireland are the most pro-Remain regions of the UK, and London is most pro-Remain part of England. In addition, there are large differences by marital status, ethnicity, employment status, membership in civic organisations, cultural consumption pattern, and whether the respondents live in their county of birth. By comparison, the difference in Leave support by gender, number of children, and the neighbourhood index are smaller or unsystematic.

As regards the neighbourhood variables, Leave support has no clear association with the Townsend index score of 2011 or the change in the Townsend score between 2001 and 2011. But individuals living in LSOAs with a higher share of foreign-born are *less* pro-Brexit. The association between Leave-support and the change in the percentage of foreign-born between 2001 and 2011 is unclear.

The bivariate association between Leave support and British identity is quite complex. Generally speaking, people who attach greater importance to being British are more supportive of Leave. But this appears to apply only to those who choose their response from the upper half of the scale (5–10). For those choosing their response from the bottom half (0–4), there is no systematic pattern. It might be the case that if respondents do not think that being British is at least moderately important to them, they just pick an answer more or less randomly from the bottom half of the scale. Finally, when presented with both national and sub-national identities, those who see themselves as British only and eschew sub-national identity altogether are less supportive of Leave.

3.2 Multivariate analyses

Table 2 reports five logistic regression models with Leave support as the dependent variable. Model 1 contains the socio-demographic variables only. It can be seen that those interviewed earlier in 2016 are indeed less likely to support Leave. But there is no difference in the level of Leave support

¹⁸In the regression models below, age is entered as a continuous variable. But for the purpose of this bivariate plot, we group all respondents into six broad age groups. We do the same for other continuous explanatory variables, namely date of interview, social status, the Townsend index, the percentage of foreign-born, the neighbourhood index, number of civic organisations, and importance of being British.

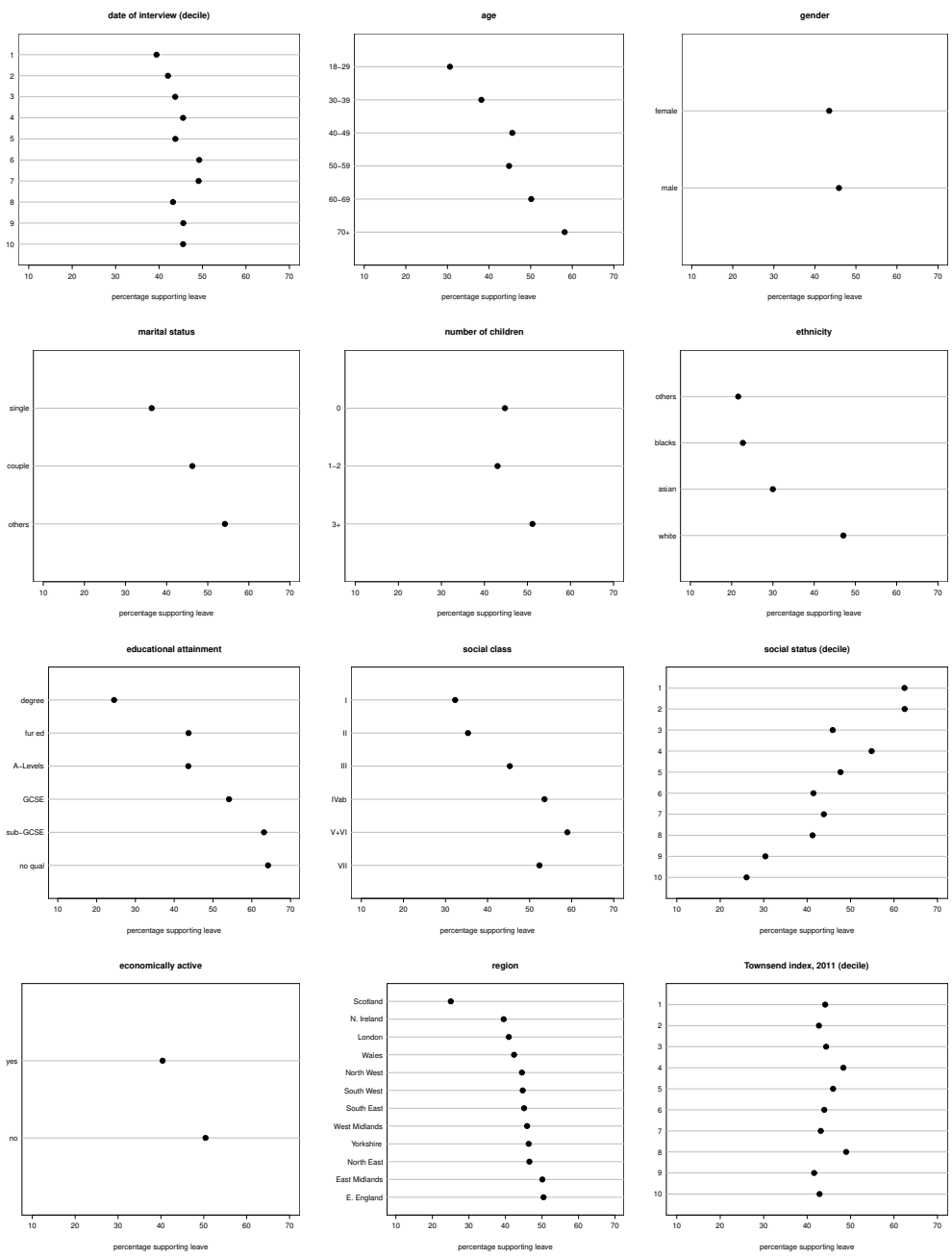


Figure 1: Bivariate association with support for leave

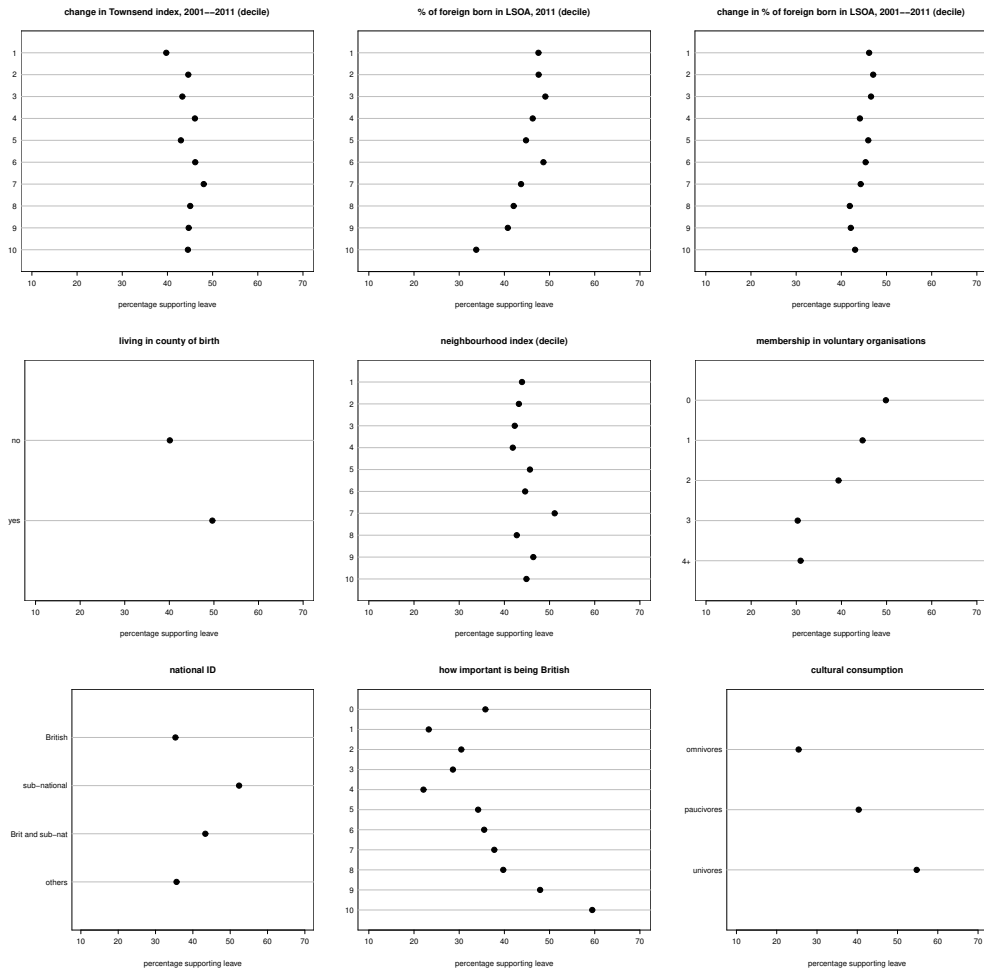


Figure 1: Bivariate association with support for leave (cont'd)

among those interviewed after the referendum. This is consistent with the bivariate association shown in Figure 1.

There are strong gradients by age and education, with older people and those with fewer qualifications being more pro-Leave. The educational parameters are large in magnitude, monotonic (except the last two categories), and statistically significant. These results are consistent with previous research and public commentary based on aggregate level data.

What is *not* consistent with previous findings is that, controlling for individual level covariates, there is no significant difference between the English regions and London in the level of Leave support (see Kaufmann, 2015). But individuals living in Wales, Northern Ireland and, especially, Scotland are less pro-Brexit than Londoners.

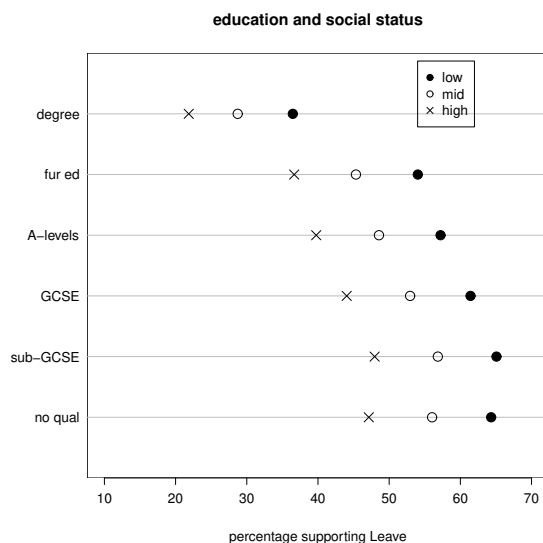


Figure 2: Predicted probability of leave support by education and social status

There is no difference in Leave-support by marital status or employment status. But women are less likely to support Leave, as are childless individuals, and ethnic minorities (though the difference between Asians and Whites is not statistically significant).

Finally, model 1 shows that, net of other covariates, it is social status, not social class, which predicts Leave support. To illustrate the magnitude of the status effect, we report in Figure 2 the predicted probabilities of supporting Brexit under model 1 for different combinations of educational attainment and social status. For respondents of middling status, their probability of supporting Brexit is .29 if they have a university degree, rising to .56 if they have no qualifications. Seen from a different angle, among those with A-levels (which is the qualification for university matriculation), the probability of Leave support is .40 for those at the top of the status scale, compared to .57 for those at the bottom. Thus, the status gradient is less steep than the educational gradient, but it is still very substantial.

In model 2, we add four neighbourhood-level covariates. It can be seen that the level of economic deprivation in 2011, as measured by the Townsend index, does not predict Leave support.¹⁹ The same is true of change in the Townsend index score between 2001 and 2011. This result is inconsistent

¹⁹In a sensitivity analysis (for England only), we have used the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) instead of the Townsend index, and obtained the same result.

with the view that economic deprivation is a major driver of the Brexit vote.

Net of other covariates, individuals living in LSOAs with more immigrants in 2011 are *less* likely to support Leave. But those living in LSOAs that have seen increase in the share of foreign-born between 2001 and 2011 are *more* likely to do so (cf. Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Laurence and Bentley, 2016).

Most of the parameter estimates under models 1 and 2 are very similar. The exceptions are the regional parameters. Specifically, with the percentage of foreign-born in the local vicinity controlled for, individuals living in the English regions are significantly *less* pro-Brexit than Londoners, which is opposite to the bivariate pattern reported in Figure 1.

In model 3, we include three variables that speak directly to the Anywheres–Somewheres distinction. Overall, 54% of our respondents live in their county of birth (see Table 1), and they are indeed more likely to support Leave, as Goodhart postulates. However, individuals who are more involved in civic organisations are *less* pro-Brexit, as are those who have stronger ties to their neighbours and neighbourhood (i.e. those with higher scores on the neighbourhood index), although the latter parameter is statistically significant at the 10% level only ($p = .08$). These results are inconsistent with Goodhart’s claims that Anywheres are less likely to feel that they ‘belong to their neighbourhood’ (p. 38) or that they ‘escape from community and communal obligation’ (p. 115).

In model 4, we include two sets of covariates that measure national identity. As might be expected, those who think that being British is important to them are significantly more pro-Brexit. The effect is quite large, the left-hand panel of Figure 3 shows that a university graduate for whom being British is not at all important (answer category ‘0’) has a 19% probability of supporting Leave. But if this graduate regards being British as extremely important (answer category ‘10’), the predicted probability is 37%.

But, as noted above, national identity is often a multi-layered phenomenon. When respondents were presented with both national and a range of sub-national identities, those who eschew sub-national identities altogether are less supportive of Brexit. The righthand panel of Figure 3 shows that among university graduates, 26% of those who see themselves as British only support Leave, compared to 36% of those who pick a sub-national identity, and 30% of those who pick both national and a sub-national identity. We should add that the meaning of sub-national identity is likely to vary across the UK. For example, the Scottish National Party which champions Scottish independence (from the UK) is also pro-Remain (in Europe). We have repeated model 4 for each of the four countries of the UK separately. The result for England is largely the same as those shown in Table 2, reflecting the numerical dominance of England (84% of the UK population live in England).

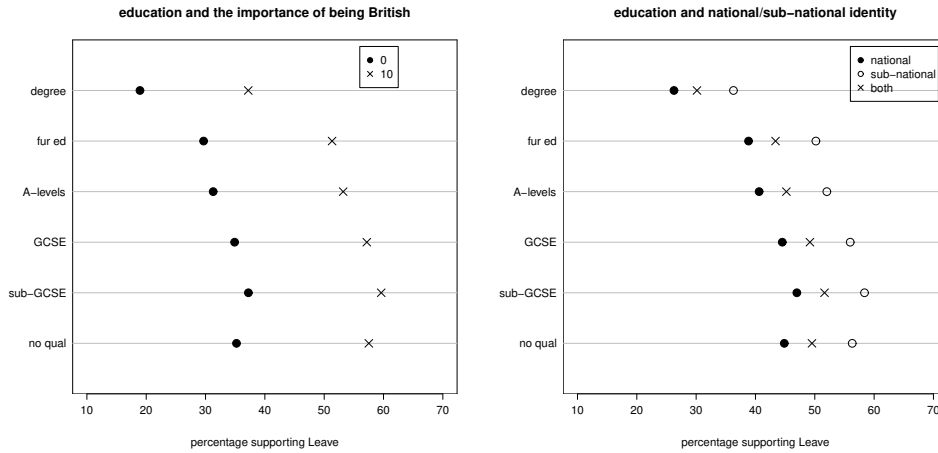


Figure 3: Effect size of education and national identity under model 3

But the N s for Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland are too small to give reliable results.

Finally, model 5 shows that cultural omnivores and, to a lesser degree, paucivores are less pro-Brexit. Figure 4 shows that these associations are in substantive terms very strong. Thus, 24% of graduate omnivores support Leave, compared to 38% of omnivores with no qualifications, 38% of graduate univores and 55% of univores with no qualifications. Chan (2017) interprets cultural omnivorousness as an expression of a cosmopolitan postmaterialist outlook. If that interpretation is correct, our result further underlines the importance of the cultural dimension in the Brexit vote.

4 Summary and discussion

In this paper, we use individual-level data from Understanding Society to investigate the social and cultural bases for Brexit. Our analyses confirm the results of some previous studies that are based on aggregate data, e.g. the age and educational gradients in Leave support. But we also show that, controlling for individual characteristics, there is no regional difference within England. Indeed, once immigration level in local areas has been taken into account, the English regions are less pro-Leave than London.

Generally speaking, our results do not support the ‘left-behind’ narrative of Brexit. Social class, which is a measure of the long-term economic security, prospects and interests of individuals, does not predict Leave support, once other socio-demographic variables are controlled for. At the neighbourhood

Table 2: Logistic regression with Leave support as dependent variable

| | model 1 | | model 2 | | model 3 | | model 4 | | model 5 | |
|------------------------------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|
| | β | s.e. | β | s.e. | β | s.e. | β | s.e. | β | s.e. |
| # days before | -.002** | .000 | -.002** | .000 | -.002** | .000 | -.002** | .000 | -.002** | .000 |
| # days after | -.000 | .000 | -.000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| age | .072** | .011 | .077** | .011 | .076** | .012 | .082** | .012 | .074** | .014 |
| age-squared/100 | -.056** | .010 | -.059** | .010 | -.056** | .011 | -.064** | .011 | -.059** | .013 |
| female ^a | -.149* | .066 | -.165* | .066 | -.162* | .070 | -.151* | .071 | -.133 | .073 |
| single ^b | .034 | .101 | .089 | .103 | .032 | .108 | .088 | .110 | .112 | .111 |
| sep/div/wid | .123 | .080 | .147 | .081 | .108 | .086 | .117 | .087 | .116 | .087 |
| 1-2 children ^c | .277** | .090 | .277** | .090 | .294** | .096 | .309** | .097 | .223* | .101 |
| 3+ children | .552** | .173 | .563** | .175 | .555** | .185 | .590** | .187 | .450* | .192 |
| Asian ^d | -.326 | .209 | -.054 | .218 | -.058 | .328 | .086 | .322 | -.063 | .334 |
| Blacks | -1.177** | .250 | -.990** | .259 | -.690 | .368 | -.619 | .380 | -.575 | .412 |
| Others | -1.043** | .264 | -.995** | .270 | -1.089** | .396 | -1.061** | .379 | -.868* | .405 |
| further edu ^e | .769** | .106 | .760** | .107 | .698** | .114 | .631** | .116 | .579** | .116 |
| a-levels | .914** | .100 | .899** | .100 | .826** | .107 | .713** | .108 | .678** | .111 |
| gcse | 1.107** | .102 | 1.085** | .102 | 1.000** | .110 | .890** | .111 | .811** | .114 |
| sub-gcse | 1.267** | .124 | 1.253** | .125 | 1.154** | .134 | .999** | .137 | .909** | .140 |
| no qual. | 1.231** | .134 | 1.218** | .136 | 1.069** | .149 | .905** | .151 | .745** | .155 |
| lower man/prof ^f | -.051 | .111 | -.068 | .111 | -.085 | .118 | -.091 | .120 | -.091 | .121 |
| intermediate | .110 | .138 | .094 | .138 | .086 | .147 | .095 | .149 | .080 | .151 |
| self-employed | .060 | .155 | .053 | .155 | .069 | .164 | .147 | .165 | .159 | .167 |
| l.super/technical | .157 | .188 | .129 | .190 | .175 | .199 | .173 | .203 | .154 | .209 |
| semirout./routine | .025 | .149 | .012 | .150 | .063 | .158 | .083 | .160 | .073 | .163 |
| social status | -.655** | .143 | -.647** | .144 | -.570** | .151 | -.559** | .155 | -.485** | .159 |
| in employment ^g | -.119 | .080 | -.123 | .080 | -.124 | .084 | -.122 | .085 | -.219* | .091 |
| North East ^h | -.201 | .192 | -.662** | .226 | -.729** | .243 | -.563* | .250 | -.512* | .259 |
| North West | -.252 | .159 | -.692** | .191 | -.770** | .207 | -.666** | .211 | -.626** | .218 |
| Yorkshire | -.159 | .165 | -.584** | .195 | -.682** | .211 | -.582** | .215 | -.585** | .223 |
| East Midlands | .004 | .164 | -.419* | .195 | -.546* | .214 | -.462* | .218 | -.419 | .227 |
| West Midlands | -.132 | .166 | -.534** | .192 | -.644** | .212 | -.569** | .214 | -.577** | .222 |
| East of England | .029 | .163 | -.394* | .187 | -.478* | .205 | -.410 | .209 | -.396 | .216 |
| South East | -.216 | .155 | -.588** | .178 | -.696** | .196 | -.606** | .200 | -.588** | .206 |
| South West | -.226 | .160 | -.649** | .189 | -.708** | .208 | -.592** | .211 | -.586** | .218 |
| Wales | -.439* | .193 | -.910** | .224 | -1.038** | .241 | -.943** | .247 | -.982** | .257 |
| Scotland | -1.178** | .184 | -1.664** | .221 | -1.702** | .240 | -1.520** | .245 | -1.536** | .255 |
| Northern Ireland | -.508** | .179 | -.949** | .213 | -1.006** | .229 | -.594* | .235 | -.636** | .244 |
| Townsend 2011 | | | -.005 | .013 | -.015 | .014 | -.009 | .015 | -.018 | .015 |
| ch Townsend | | | .006 | .034 | .001 | .037 | -.012 | .037 | -.019 | .039 |
| % foreign-born 2011 | | | -.029** | .006 | -.029** | .007 | -.025** | .007 | -.020* | .007 |
| ch % foreign-born | | | .045** | .013 | .046** | .014 | .040** | .015 | .035* | .015 |
| county of birth ⁱ | | | | | .228** | .070 | .183* | .072 | .163* | .074 |
| # civic associations | | | | | -.114** | .028 | -.114** | .029 | -.077* | .030 |
| neighbourhood | | | | | -.082 | .048 | -.117* | .048 | -.091 | .050 |
| British identity | | | | | | | .099** | .013 | .098** | .013 |
| sub-national ^j | | | | | | | .511** | .086 | .492** | .088 |
| Brit and sub-national | | | | | | | .207* | .097 | .198* | .100 |
| Others | | | | | | | .316* | .145 | .355* | .149 |
| paucivores ^k | | | | | | | | | -.249** | .079 |
| omnivores | | | | | | | | | -.736** | .115 |
| constant | -2.697** | .370 | -2.278** | .395 | -1.901** | .444 | -2.944** | .462 | -2.516** | .536 |
| N | 6109 | | 6082 | | 5482 | | 5444 | | 5182 | |
| R ² | 0.103 | | 0.107 | | 0.113 | | 0.129 | | 0.135 | |
| log-likelihood | -3803.20 | | -3771.80 | | -3409.09 | | -3325.25 | | -3140.41 | |

Two-tailed tests, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Reference category: ^a male, ^b married or cohabiting, ^c no children, ^d Whites, ^e degree, ^f higher professionals or managers, ^g not in employment, ^h London, ⁱ not living in county of birth, ^j British, ^k univores.

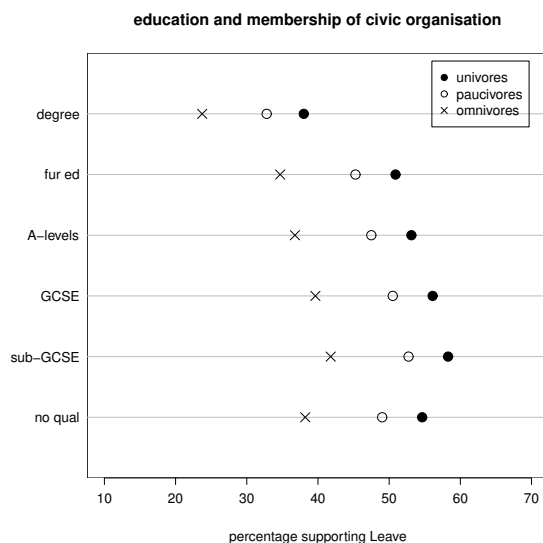


Figure 4: Predicted probability of leave support by education and cultural consumption

level, economic deprivation does not predict Brexit support either.

By comparison, there is a good deal of support for the view that cultural issues matter. Net of other covariates, social status predicts Leave support. This is consistent with Gidron and Hall’s (2017) claim that ‘status anxiety [is] a proximate factor inducing support for populism.’ We also show that individuals professing stronger British identity (when considered on its own) are more likely to support Brexit. When British identity is juxtaposed with sub-national identities, those who go for sub-national identities (either on its own or along with British identity) are also more pro-Brexit. Furthermore, cultural consumption pattern is predictive of Leave support. Together, these results strongly suggest that Brexit is, in part, about people’s basic outlook; whether they take a cosmopolitan or a more insular view of the world.

Educational attainment is the strongest predictor of Brexit support. But instead of a binary divide between university graduates and non-graduates, as Goodhart claims, it is more accurate to describe our result as showing an educational gradient. That is to say, except for those with no qualifications, Leave support declines progressively as we go up the educational scale.

Consistent with Goodhart’s Anywheres–Somewheres distinction, people who live in their county of birth are more pro-Brexit. However, we also find that those who are more involved in civic associations or those with stronger ties to their neighbours and neighbourhood are actually pro-Remain. So

it would be misleading to describe Remain-supporters as Anywheres if this label implies a group of rootless individuals with weak commitment to other people or their local communities, as might be inferred from Theresa May’s speech to the 2016 Conservative Party conference, ‘if you believe you’re a citizen of the world, you’re a citizen of nowhere. You don’t understand what the very word “citizenship” means.’

In the Introduction to the paperback edition of his book Goodhart (2017, p. xii) claims that Anywheres ‘can still be quite rooted in *new* places and networks. Indeed, they are often connected to strong “chosen” communities in liberal Anywhere hot-spots like Brighton and Stoke Newington ...’ But, as we have already noted, elsewhere in his book Goodhart also claims that Anywheres are unlikely to feel that they ‘belong to their neighbourhood’ (p. 38); and that ‘[p]rogressive individualism usually celebrates escape from community and communal obligation’ (p. 115). So, at the very least, Goodhart is not entirely consistent in his argument, and that some of our results do not support a reasonable interpretation of his Anywheres–Somewheres distinction.

Finally, the impact of immigration on Leave-support is quite subtle. People living in areas where there is a concentration of immigrants are actually *less* pro-Leave. This finding is consistent with the contact hypothesis in the intergroup relationship literature (Allport, 1954). But it is also possible that immigrants gravitate towards areas where they expect less hostility from the local population. We also show that increase in migration level in the local vicinity is associated with a more pro-Brexit stance. This might suggest a local capacity issue for absorbing further immigrants, as areas that have seen increase in immigration level are also those with higher share of immigrants to start with. But it can also be argued that because individuals do tend to get used to local conditions, if immigration provokes anti-EU feelings, such sentiments might be transitory in nature.

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