

# **Myths and Realities in Social Attitudes**

A thick, horizontal yellow brushstroke with a textured, painterly appearance, extending across the width of the slide below the title.

**John Curtice**

**Strathclyde University/NatCen**

# Three Myths?

---

- Young people don't vote nowadays because they are cynical about/have lost interest in politics.
- Attitudes to tax and spend constitute a major social division and are the key to the outcome of general elections.
- In a consumer society people want choice in how public services are delivered.

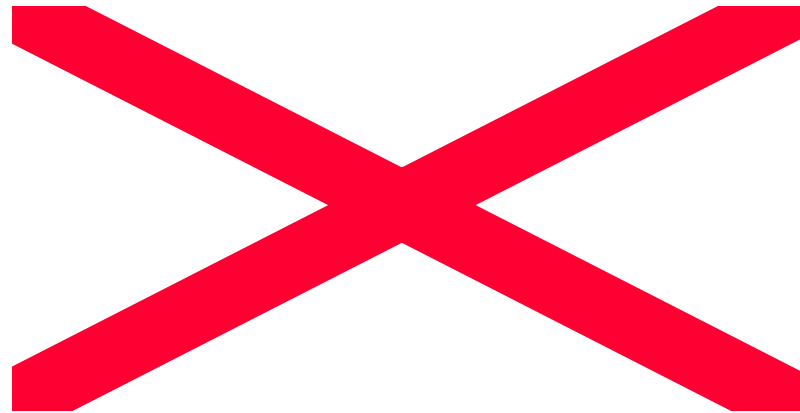
# Testing the Myths

---

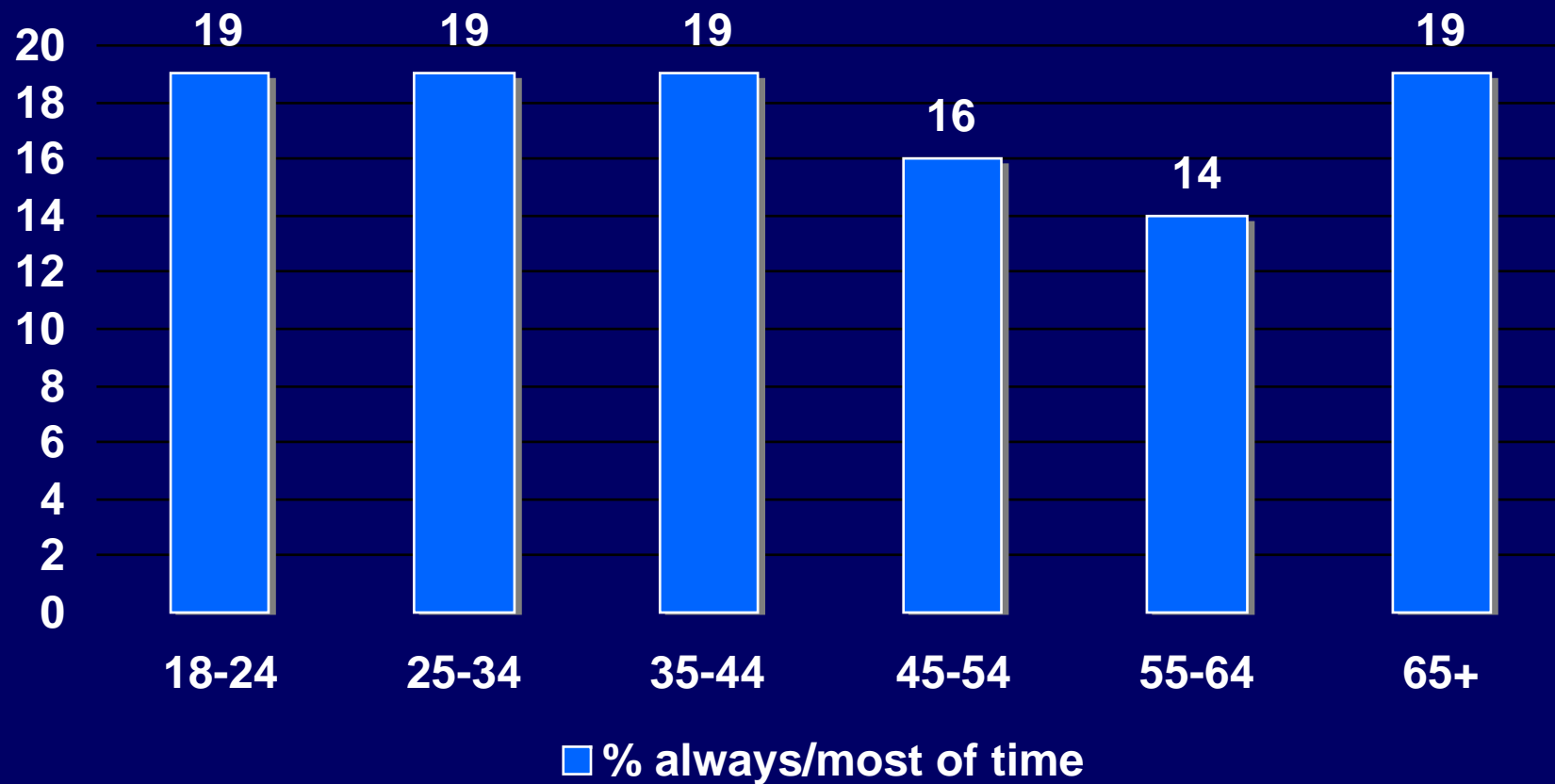
- Statements about society, not just individuals
- Quantitative social survey data
- NatCen's British Social Attitudes series
- In-depth questioning plus annual time series since 1983
- Annual reports - next in Jan. 2007!

**Always less interested?**

---



# Trust Governments



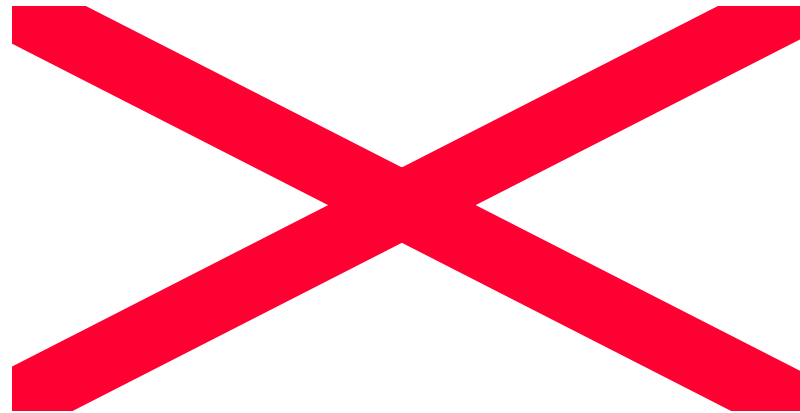
# MPs lose touch

---



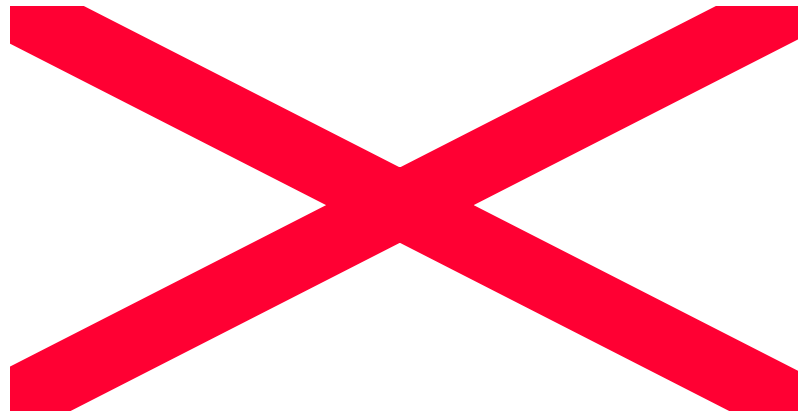
# Participate, don't vote?

---



# Participate and vote?

---





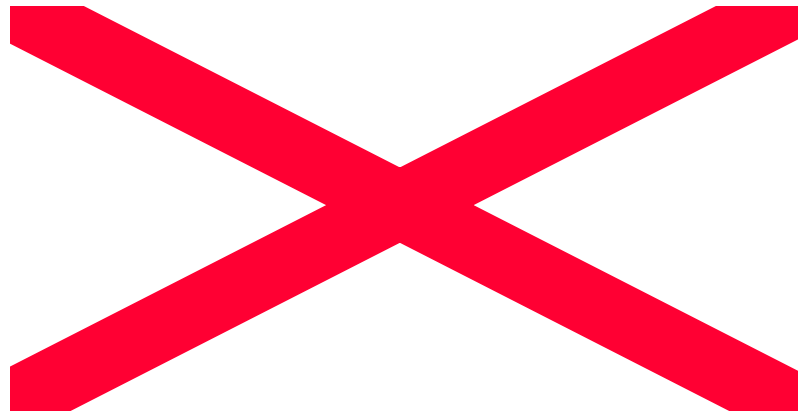
# Reality - 1?

---

- Young people are, if anything, less cynical about politics than their elder.
- Young people are less interested in politics - but always true.
- Other ways of participating are in addition to voting, not a substitute for it.

# Tax & Spend by Income

---



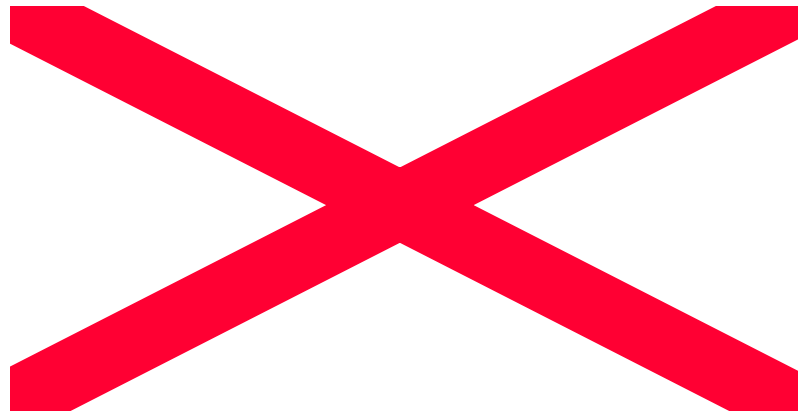
# Tax & Spend by Class

---



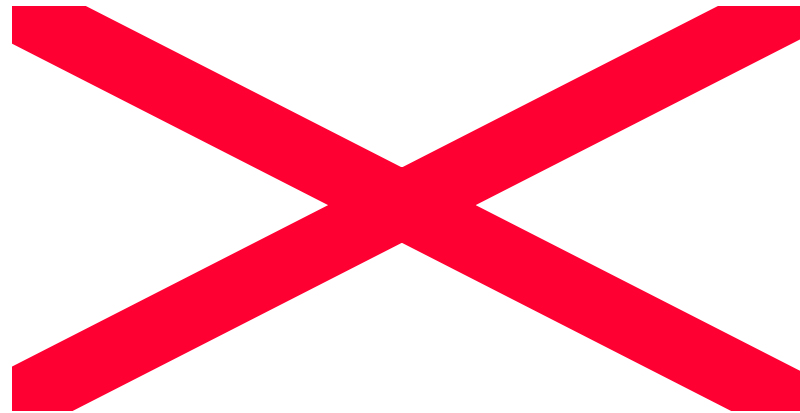
# Tax & Spend by Party ID

---



# Social Desirability?

---



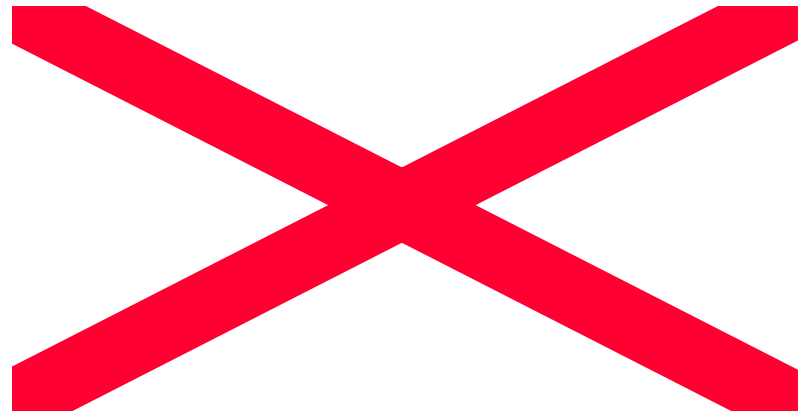
# Popular Spending!

---



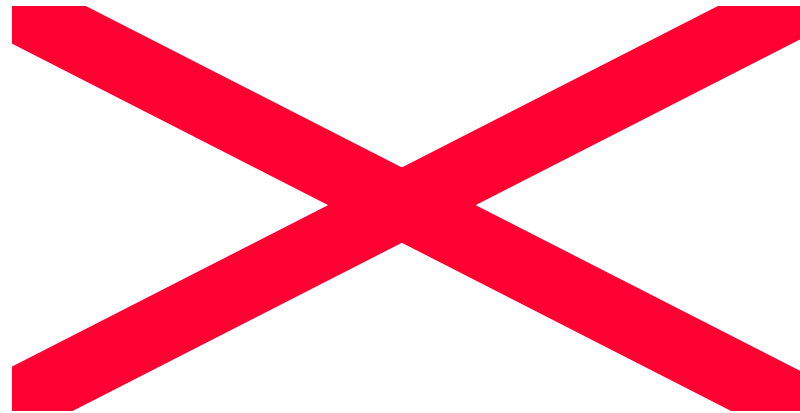
# Perceptions of unfairness

---



**And by party**

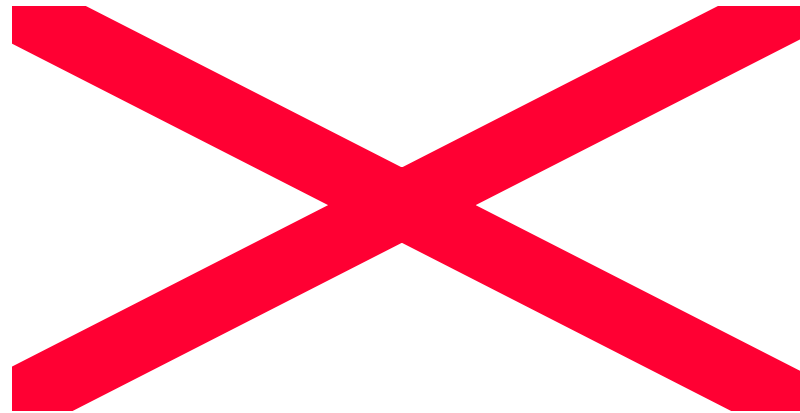
---





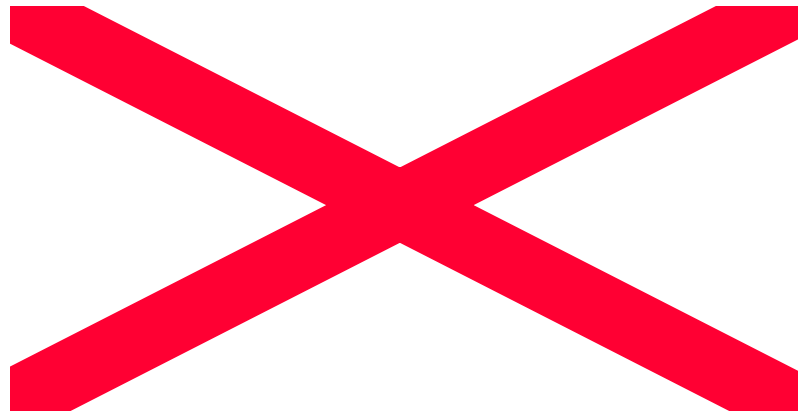
# Don't redistribute!

---



# The Political Divide

---



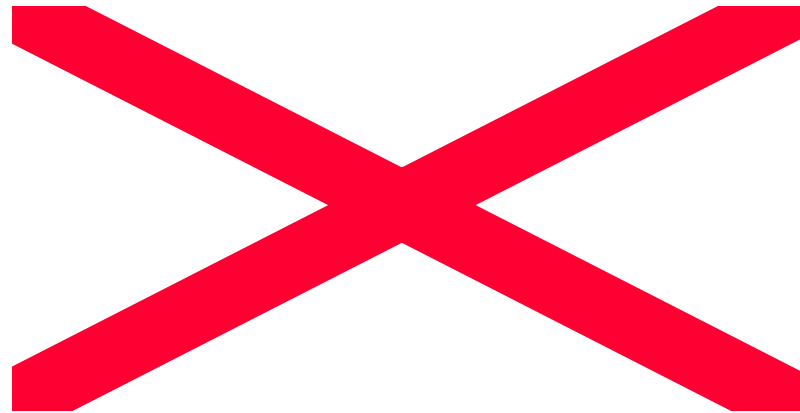
# Reality - 2?

---

- Social consensus about tax and (desirable) spend - and limited political division.
- Social - and political - division about need for and desirability of more redistributive policies.

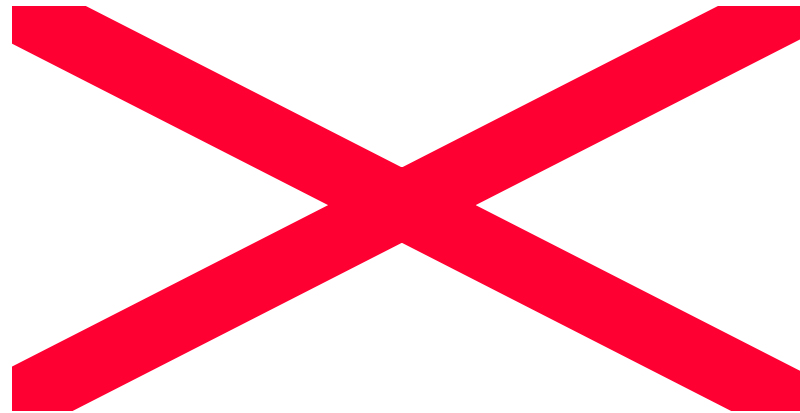
# Wanting and Getting Choice

---



**Everyone wants it!**

---



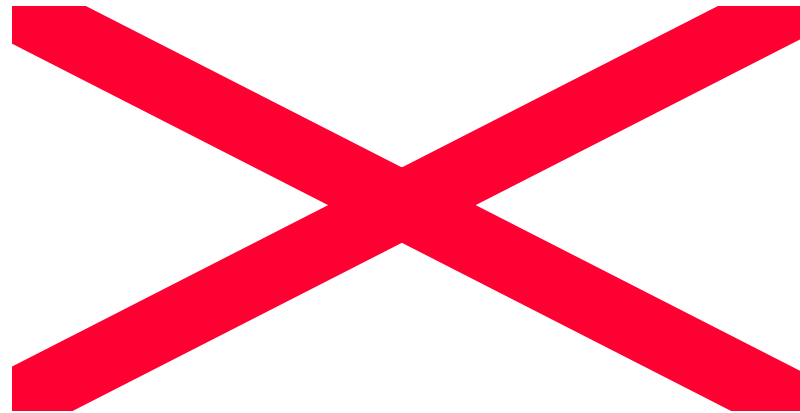
# Correlates of Satisfaction

---

- Get o/p appt in 3 months
- Hospital buildings
- Hospital choice
- GP appointments
- 999 waiting time
- A&E waiting time
- O/P seen in 1/2 hr
- Easy to complain
- Non-emergency ops waiting
- Consultant appt waiting

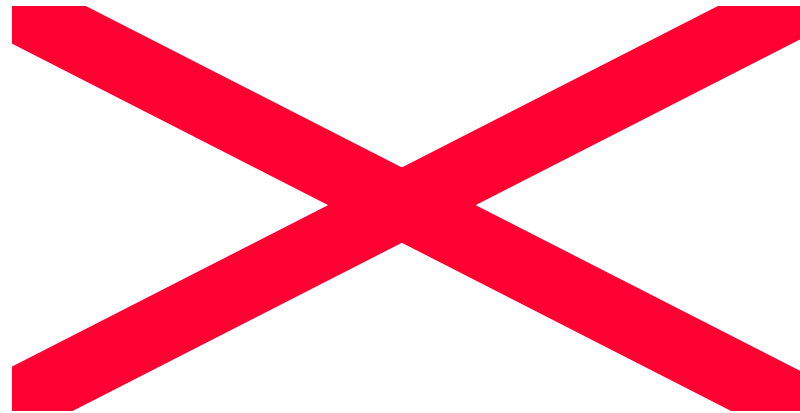
# Satisfaction, choice and waiting

---



# Trends in o/p in 3 mths

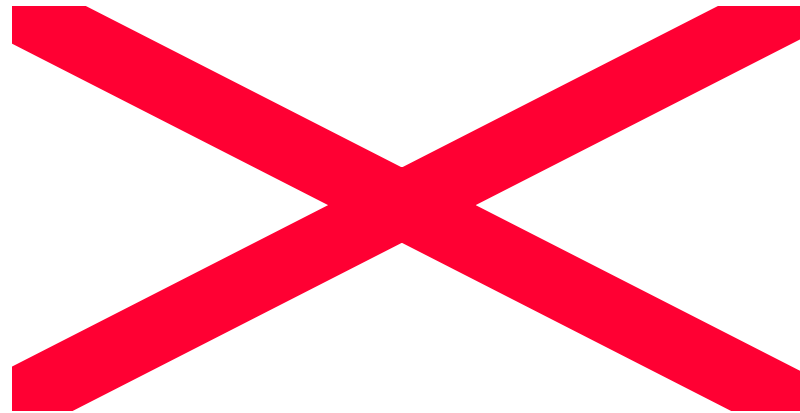
---





# Trends in consultant waiting

---



# Reality - 3?

---

- Choice is wanted - and is (was) not being thought to be being delivered in NHS.
- But perceived waiting times (still) matter more in generating satisfaction with NHS.
- Choice is desirable - but speed is essential

# Sources of Myth?

---

- Ideological preference
- Social circles
- Rational thought!
- ...of those in power, with influence, in media

# Social Attitudes Research

---

- Shows such sources are not (always) (necessarily) reliable
- Can help us better understand what does influence attitudes - and when changes really have occurred
- So long as we (continuously) ask the right questions!