

Poverty and inequality

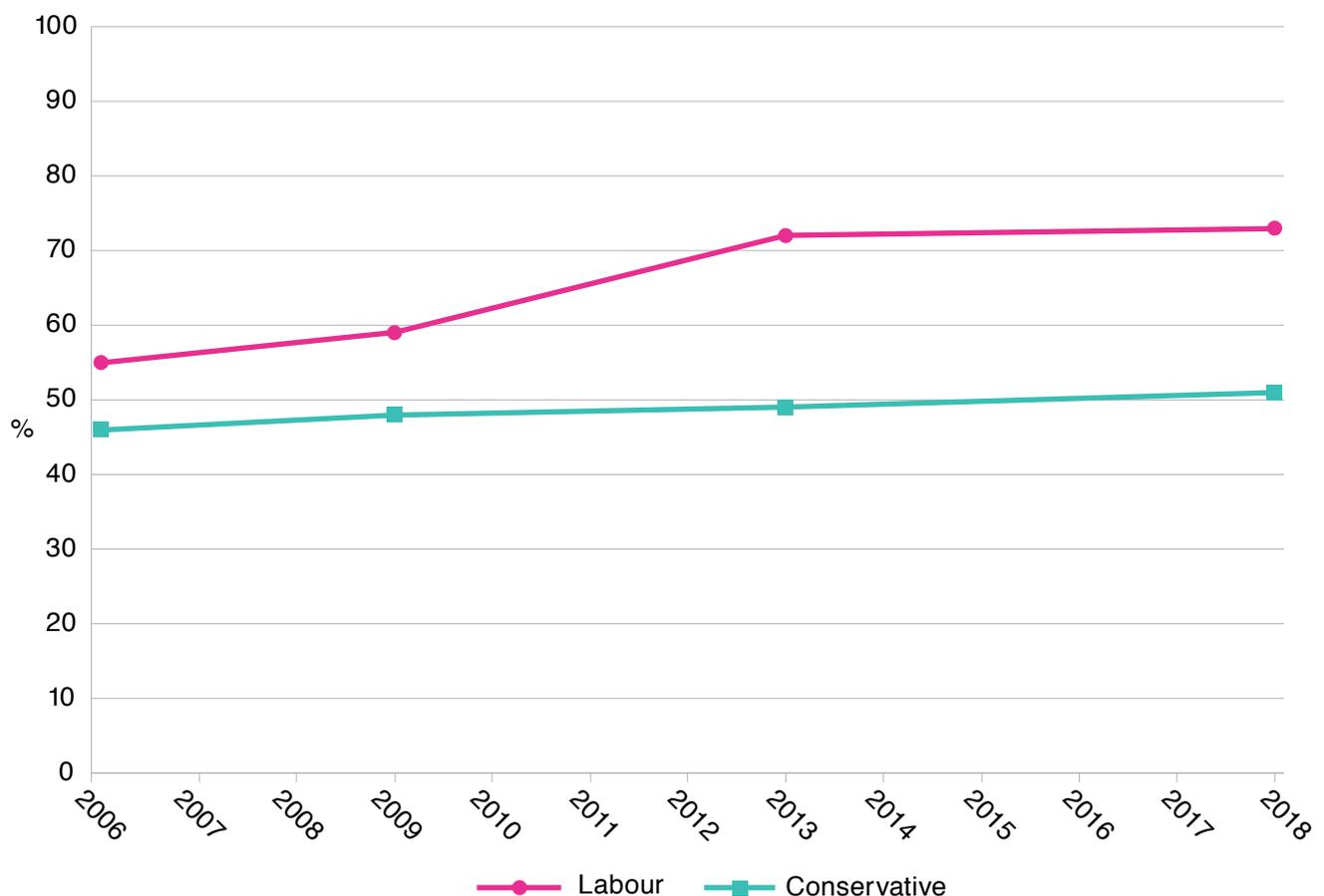
Have attitudes evolved in line with official trends or political and media discourse?

Current levels of poverty and inequality in the UK are similar to those reported around the time of the 2008 financial crisis, while political discourse and media coverage appear to suggest that they are unprecedented. Given this disconnect, this chapter examines how attitudes towards poverty and inequality in Britain are changing, and whether their evolution more closely aligns with official trends or developments in political and media discourse. On the whole, changes in perceptions of the scale, nature and acceptability of poverty and inequality more closely reflect trends in the portrayal of these concepts by politicians and the media, as opposed to the picture presented in official figures.

Spotlight

Labour Party supporters are much more likely than those supporting the Conservative Party to think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain.

Perception that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, by party political support, 2006–2018



Overview

Negative views have become more widespread

Negative perceptions regarding the scale and acceptability of poverty and inequality have become more widespread since the period before the 2008 financial crisis.

- 65% think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain. 62% believe that poverty has increased over the past decade and 61% anticipate that it will increase further in the next decade.
 - The view that there is “quite a lot” of poverty has increased by 13 percentage points since 2006, while perceptions that poverty has increased over the past decade and will increase over the next have increased by 30 and 18 percentage points respectively.
 - In 2016, around half (53%) thought that large differences in income are acceptable to reward talents and efforts – a decline of 11 percentage points since 2008.
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The views of Labour Party supporters have changed the most

The views of those sections of society most likely to be exposed to and influenced by political and media discourse have changed most markedly, while there is more limited evidence of divergent trends among those groups whose poverty rates are changing.

- 73% of Labour Party supporters think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, compared with 51% of Conservative Party supporters. The proportion of Labour Party supporters holding this view has increased by 28 percentage points since 2006, compared with a rise of 5 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters.
 - Since 2006 there has been an 19 percentage point increase in the view that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain among broadsheet readers, while there has been no change among tabloid readers.
 - 66% of those with children in the household (for whom projections suggest poverty is set to rise) think poverty will increase over the next decade, compared with 51% of people who are retired (among whom poverty has declined). The popularity of this view has increased more markedly among those with children (a rise of 19 percentage points, compared with an 11 percentage point rise among those who are retired).
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Given the apparent disconnect between objective trends and public discourse, it is timely to examine how attitudes to poverty and inequality in Britain may be changing

Introduction

Rates of poverty and inequality in the UK today are broadly similar to those reported around the time of the 2008 financial crisis – although overall trends mask the fact that rates of poverty for particular groups have evolved in different ways (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019a). Yet political discourse and media coverage would appear to suggest that current levels of poverty and inequality are unprecedented. Political discourse, and that of the Labour Party in particular, increasingly presents poverty and inequality as a pervasive and growing problem requiring an immediate focus and resolution (Letter from Jeremy Corbyn to Theresa May, 2018). At the same time, media coverage of poverty and inequality, particularly in the context of welfare reform, has increased substantially over the past decade, reflecting the trend in the discourse of politicians (see, for example, Chauhan and Foster, 2014; Wells and Caraher, 2014).

Given the apparent disconnect between objective trends and public discourse, it is timely to examine how attitudes to poverty and inequality in Britain may be changing, and what might help to explain any observed change. In this chapter, we use data from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey and European Social Survey (ESS) to examine changes in people's definitions of poverty and inequality, views on their acceptability and perceptions of their prevalence. Have attitudes remained broadly stable at the societal level, in line with trends in official statistics, perhaps with more pronounced changes in relation to and among those sections of society where poverty is increasing or is in decline? Or, does the public now perceive greater levels of poverty and inequality in society and increasingly take the view that these are unacceptable, in line with changing political and media discourse (with the evolution of views in this direction being most marked among those most exposed to and influenced by this discourse)? Reflecting on the answers to these questions, we conclude the chapter by considering their implications for potential approaches to poverty and inequality adopted by the main political parties in future.

Poverty and inequality: official trends and public discourse

We start our discussion by examining trends in levels of poverty and inequality over the past decade and in political and media discussion of these issues. On the basis of these trends, we consider how we might expect attitudes to poverty and inequality to have changed since the period immediately before the 2008 financial crisis.

Approaches to defining and measuring poverty and inequality remain highly contentious

Trends in official statistics

Approaches to defining and measuring poverty and inequality remain highly contentious – with both concepts being measured in a range of ways by the UK government and others. Currently the government measures ‘absolute’ and ‘relative’ poverty, both before and after housing costs (BHC and AHC). Relative poverty is defined as a household having an income of below 60% of the median household income, with absolute poverty defined in relation to the 60% median income threshold from 2010-2011, adjusted in line with inflation, enabling analysis of trends over time. The most widely used measure of income inequality, meanwhile, is the Gini co-efficient (reported in Official Statistics), which measures inequality across the whole of society and provides a number to signify how diverse incomes are, while alternative approaches compare specific income groups or provide ratios to indicate how much people at one level of the income distribution have, compared with another.

These approaches to measuring poverty and inequality attract frequent criticism, with a tendency for politicians, the media and campaigners to report single measures selectively and in isolation (see for example Full Fact, 2015). In light of the limitations of these measures, a number of alternative approaches have been proposed. Most recently, the Social Metrics Commission (SMC) has been formed to,

Develop a new approach to poverty measurement that both better reflects the nature and experiences of poverty that different families in the UK have, and can be used to build a consensus around poverty measurement and action in the UK. (Social Metrics Commission, 2019)

The Commission published its recommendations for a new measure of poverty in September 2018 (Social Metrics Commission, 2018). On 17th May 2019, the Department for Work and Pensions released a statement indicating that, from the second half of 2020, the department would publish new experimental statistics, taking the Social Metrics Commission measure as a starting point (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019c).

In addition to this plethora of definitions, different methods are employed by politicians, the media and campaigners to quantify the populations experiencing poverty or inequality at any one time – including presenting ‘rates’ (the proportion of a population or group in poverty), absolute numbers (inevitably also impacted by population trends) and the composition of poverty (the proportionate size of a particular group, among the entire population of those in poverty).

It should be emphasised that current measures exclude certain elements, which many people are likely to regard as indicators of poverty and inequality – due to the fact that the official measures are based on annual incomes and only consider those in private

households. These might include, among others, the proliferation and increasing use of food banks, the short-term hardship experienced by those with changing benefit circumstances (such as those moving to Universal Credit who currently have to wait five weeks until their first payment (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019b) and the documented rise in homelessness over the past eight years (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2017). Indeed, qualitative research has demonstrated that people do not think of poverty purely in terms of income, preferring to define this in relation to a person's ability to meet their basic needs (Hall et al, 2014). The new measure of poverty proposed by the Social Metrics Commission seeks to address these limitations to some extent – by taking account of all material resources, not just income, and by including an assessment of housing adequacy (by counting those sleeping rough as being in poverty) (Social Metrics Commission, 2018).

Taking the standard measures together, levels of poverty and inequality, at the population level, have remained relatively stable or have declined slightly since the time of the 2008 financial crisis

Accepting these limitations and the lack of consensus regarding their measurement, it is nevertheless clear that, taking the standard measures together, levels of poverty and inequality, at the population level, have remained relatively stable or have declined slightly since the time of the 2008 financial crisis. The latest statistics, for 2017-2018, indicate that the percentage of individuals with a relative low income has risen since 2013-2014 (to 17% BHC and 22% AHC) but remain virtually identical to those recorded in 2006-2007, before the onset of the financial crisis. On the other hand, absolute poverty has fallen over the same period for both BHC and AHC measures. Interestingly, analysis of the new measure of poverty developed by the Social Metrics Commission also suggests that the overall poverty rate has remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 21% and 24% over the past 15 years (Social Metrics Commission, 2018). Meanwhile, the Gini coefficient, measuring income inequality, has remained largely flat since its reduction between 2009-10 and 2010-2011, currently standing at 34% BHC and 39% AHC (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019a).

However, more detailed analysis and projections reveal that this overall picture of stability conceals a number of divergent trends. In this chapter, we focus on those which are most pronounced and consistent, and would thus be most likely to affect public perceptions. Most markedly, poverty rates for pensioners have declined over the past decade across all measures, following an earlier, even more marked, period of decline¹. On the other hand, while the proportions of households with children in poverty are somewhat lower on relative measures than those seen a decade ago, on absolute measures, following a fall in the first part of the decade, these had risen by 2017-2018² - and, moreover, are predicted to rise

¹ Since 2006-2007, poverty rates for pensioners have declined as follows: 23% to 18% (relative BHC); 19% to 16% (relative AHC); 23% to 15% (absolute BHC); 19% to 15% (absolute AHC) (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019a).

² Poverty rates for households with children in 2017-2018 are very similar to those reported in 2006-2007: 22% and 22% (relative BHC); 31% and 30% (relative AHC); 23% and 18% (absolute BHC); 31% and 26% (absolute AHC) (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019a).

further. Recent analysis by the Resolution Foundation focusing on how poverty changes over the life-course, has projected that those born between 2016-2020 are expected to face the highest rates of relative child poverty to date, at close to 40% at the age of two (Rahman, 2019).

Political discourse and media coverage

However, despite a picture of relative stability (at the population level at least), political and media discourse and coverage would seem to suggest that poverty and inequality have reached unprecedented or problematic levels. While a number of Theresa May's early speeches as Prime Minister centred around the theme of inequality, this trend is particularly evident for the Labour Party, in its opposition to austerity and welfare reform. Its 2017 election manifesto stated, "After seven years of rising poverty and inequality, Labour will rebuild and transform our social security system" (The Labour Party, 2017), while in late 2018, its leader Jeremy Corbyn declared UK poverty levels as a "national emergency" (Letter from Jeremy Corbyn to Theresa May, 2018). There has similarly been a substantial focus on poverty and inequality from other actors in the political sphere, leading Philip Alston, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, to conclude in November 2018 that,

...the full picture of low income well-being in the UK cannot be captured by statistics alone. Its manifestations are clear for all to see. The country's most respected charitable groups, its leading think tanks, its parliamentary committees, independent authorities like the National Audit Office and many others have all drawn attention to the dramatic decline in the fortunes of the least well-off in this country. (Alston, 2018)

Logically, we might expect the media to reflect the considerable focus on poverty and inequality that has evolved in the political sphere. Research examining the representation of poverty in the UK media has primarily focused on its content and tone (finding it to focus on foreign policy, with domestic coverage most frequently featuring child and pensioner poverty, and to be largely negative) (Chauhan and Foster, 2014; Skipplit and Tranchese, 2015). However, some attempts have been made to quantify media coverage of poverty; research conducted in 2007 showed poverty to be 'a marginal issue in mainstream media' (McKendrick et al, 2008), with commentary attributing this to the limited public awareness of the issue within the UK at the time (Hanley, 2009).

A small number of attempts have been made to quantify how coverage of poverty and related concepts in the print media has changed over time. A comparison of news coverage between two randomly chosen one-month periods in 2001 and 2011 found the number of articles covering poverty in four mainstream newspapers

to have risen from 112 to 162 (Chauhan and Foster, 2014). Meanwhile an analysis of coverage of benefit recipients identified two peaks, in the late 1990s and in 2010-2011 – the latest point at which data was collected (Baumberg et al, 2012). Alternatively, an analysis of newspaper coverage of food banks found no newspaper articles before 2008 across nine national UK titles, with few before 2012, after which the number increased dramatically (Wells and Caraher, 2014). Content analysis has also identified a tendency for poverty and related issues to be covered more frequently and sympathetically in the broadsheet and left-wing media (Sippit and Tranchese, 2015). The aforementioned analysis of articles on food banks in nine publications found 79% of these articles to be concentrated in three publications that were either left-leaning and/or broadsheets (ibid). Beyond print media, 2013 saw the emergence of a new genre of television programmes termed ‘poverty porn’, including ‘We pay your benefits’, ‘Benefits Britain’ and ‘Benefits Street’ (Jensen, 2014).

Perceptions of the prevalence of poverty and its causes appear to react to economic circumstances, with people perceiving higher levels of poverty during and following periods of recession

How might we expect the divergent trends in rates of poverty and inequality and their coverage in political and media discourse to impact on people’s attitudes to these issues – given what we know about how these attitudes have evolved in the past? Previous research has shown that perceptions of the prevalence of poverty and its causes appear to react to economic circumstances, with people perceiving higher levels of poverty and adopting a more sympathetic stance during and following periods of recession (Clery, Lee and Kunz, 2013). This might lead us to anticipate that the public perceived greater levels of poverty and inequality during and immediately after the 2008-2009 recession, with views levelling off after that, mirroring broad trends in poverty rates as officially recorded. However, we might also expect attitudes to reflect the fortunes of different sections of society – both in general and for the individuals affected. So, for instance, the marked decline in pensioner poverty might have led the public to perceive less poverty among this group and to be more accepting of it, while pensioners themselves might have experienced a particularly marked shift in attitudes.

On the other hand, there is substantial evidence of attitudes in this area moving in line with political and media discourse. During the late 1990s and 2000s, attitudes to welfare among Labour Party supporters changed dramatically, reflecting a shift in the policy position of ‘their’ party (Curtice, 2010). An analysis of attitudes to poverty up to 2011 identified the same pattern, with the views of supporters of different political parties becoming much more alike, primarily because of a shift in the views of Labour Party supporters (Clery, Lee and Kunz, 2013). Moreover, analysis of the media coverage of poverty has identified a link between exposure to certain coverage and individual attitudes, with those exposed to a greater number of stories about benefit fraud being more likely to vastly over-estimate its prevalence (Baumberg et al, 2012). We might therefore expect attitudes to move in line with political and media discourse, with its greater focus on poverty and inequality in Britain leading to

The recent rises in homelessness and food bank use, are more likely to serve as visible signs of poverty than longer-term trends in household income, captured in official measures

greater levels of public awareness and recognition of, and concern about, these issues, with this shift being particularly pronounced among those most exposed to or influenced by this discourse, be they supporters of the Labour Party or other opposition parties or those with higher levels of exposure to the media. On the other hand, the phenomena and trends discussed in political and media coverage related to poverty, such as the recent rises in homelessness and food bank use, are more likely to serve as visible signs of poverty, encountered in people's day-to-day lives, than longer-term trends in household income, captured in official measures, especially given that people tend to define poverty in relation to a person's basic needs, as noted previously. Consequently, these phenomena and trends may possess a greater power to shift attitudes than those reflected in official statistics, resulting in public attitudes to poverty and inequality, and media coverage of these issues, moving in tandem.

Poverty and inequality: definitions, acceptability and prevalence

To test these theories, we begin by examining how people's definitions of poverty and inequality and perceptions of their acceptability and prevalence have evolved over the past decade.

Definitions of poverty and inequality

Poverty and inequality are subjective constructs and, as noted above, there is an ongoing debate about their definition and measurement. To explore the public's understandings of the term 'poverty' we regularly ask respondents the following three questions:

Would you say that someone in Britain was or was not in poverty if

...they had enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy

the things most people take for granted?

... they had enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they needed?

... they had not got enough to eat and live without getting into debt?

Table 1 presents the responses given in 2018 and at several other points since the period immediately prior to the 2008-2009 recession. Quite clearly, people have different views about what constitutes poverty. Almost everyone, around nine in ten, thinks that someone would be in poverty "if they had not got enough to eat and live without getting into debt". This reflects the findings of qualitative

research which has shown that the public tend to define poverty in relation to a person's ability to meet certain basic needs (Hall et al, 2014) – and may explain why the rise in food banks has received considerable attention from the media in the past decade, as they are a visible sign of 'poverty', as defined by the vast majority of the public. However, people are divided as to whether someone who met these criteria, but did not have enough "to buy other things they needed", would be in poverty; slightly more than half think this is the case. Finally, slightly fewer than three in ten think that someone who has "enough to buy the things they really need, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted" is in poverty.

Table 1 Views on different definitions of poverty, 2006-2018

	2006	2010	2013	2018	Change 2006-2018
Enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted	%	%	%	%	
Was in poverty	22	21	19	28	+6
Was not in poverty	76	77	78	69	-7
Enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they needed	%	%	%	%	
Was in poverty	50	54	47	55	+6
Was not in poverty	48	45	51	42	-6
Not enough to eat and live without getting into debt	%	%	%	%	
Was in poverty	89	91	87	88	-1
Was not in poverty	10	8	11	11	+1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	3240	3297	3244	2884	

Figures showing change between 2006 and 2018 in this table are calculated from the unrounded data, rather than the data rounded to the nearest whole number that are reported in the table. As a result, they will sometimes vary from the difference between the rounded figures by +/-1 point

The proportion who support the broadest view of poverty – that someone is in poverty if they do not have enough “to buy the things that most people take for granted” – has risen by 6 percentage points since 2006

Adherence to different definitions of poverty has remained relatively stable over the past decade (and indeed over the period since these questions were first asked in 1986), although there has been a slight rise in support for the more inclusive definitions. Specifically, the proportion who support the broadest view of poverty – that someone is in poverty if they do not have enough “to buy the things that most people take for granted” – has risen by 6 percentage points since 2006, while there has been an equivalent rise in the proportion thinking that the term ‘poverty’ can be applied to someone who has “enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy the other things they needed”. This trend, while slight, may nevertheless be important for understanding attitudes to the prevalence of poverty, which we consider next. In addition to our hypotheses that views about poverty

and inequality have remained stable (in line with trends, as officially measured) or that the public perceive a rise in poverty (in line with political and media discourse), we might add a third possibility – that people perceive a slight rise in poverty and are less accepting of it, because the situations they now define as constituting poverty have become less prescriptive.

Perceptions of prevalence of poverty and inequality

To measure perceptions of the extent of poverty in Britain, we ask:

Some people say there is very little real poverty in Britain today. Others say there is quite a lot. Which comes closest to your view ... that there is very little real poverty in Britain, or, that there is quite a lot?

To place their responses in context, we also ask respondents whether they think poverty in Britain has been “increasing, decreasing or staying at about the same level” over the past ten years, and about what will happen in relation to levels of poverty in Britain over the next ten years.

As shown in Table 2, around two-thirds think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain. A slightly lower proportion think that poverty has been increasing over the last ten years, and will increase further over the next ten years. Clearly, all of these views have gained substantially in popularity since the period before the financial crisis. The popularity of the view that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, held by around half in 2006, rose steadily over the subsequent 12 years, by 13 percentage points. More markedly still, the view that poverty in Britain has been increasing over the last ten years rose by 30 percentage points over the same period, with all of this increase occurring by 2013 but being sustained until 2018. And, over the same period, the view that levels of poverty will increase over the next decade rose by 18 percentage points, with the bulk of this rise again occurring by the first half of the decade.

Around two-thirds think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain

Table 2 Views on levels of poverty in Britain, 2006-2018

	2006	2009	2013	2018	Change 2006-2018
How much real poverty in Britain today	%	%	%	%	
Very little	45	39	35	31	-14
Quite a lot	52	57	62	65	+13
What has happened to poverty levels in the last 10 years	%	%	%	%	
Increasing	32	48	63	62	+30
Staying the same	23	14	8	8	-15
Decreasing	39	34	26	25	-14
What will happen to poverty levels over the next 10 years	%	%	%	%	
Increase	44	56	59	61	+18
Stay same	16	11	10	8	-8
Decrease	35	29	27	25	-9
<i>Unweighted base</i>	3240	3421	3244	2884	

See note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years

74% of people who think that someone would be in poverty if they had enough to buy the things they really needed, but not the things most people take for granted, think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain

These evolving perceptions of levels of poverty are clearly at odds with objective trends, as measured by official statistics. Rather they lend support to our second theory – that the rise in political and media discourse around poverty has influenced perceptions of its prevalence. Arguably, they could also logically result from the fact that people’s definitions of poverty have become slightly broader than they have been in the past. In support of this theory, we find that the more inclusive a person’s definition of poverty, the more likely they are to think there is a “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain (with the difference remaining relatively stable over time). For instance, 74% of people who think that someone would be in poverty if they had enough to buy the things they really needed, but not the things most people take for granted, think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, compared with 55% of those who think that this definition does not constitute poverty.

The timing of these shifts in attitudes is also interesting, given they largely occurred before the election of Jeremy Corbyn to the leadership of the Labour Party in 2015 and its increasing focus on poverty and inequality. We know that views on the past, current and future prevalence of poverty become markedly more negative during and after periods of recession (Clery, Lee and Kunz, 2013); but what is surprising here (and at odds with changes in attitudes that followed the recession of the early 1990s) is that these more negative perceptions of prevalence have been sustained. It may be that the political and media focus on poverty has therefore prevented views on its prevalence returning to more expected levels.

However, this conclusion does not mean that actual trends in levels of poverty had no role to play in shifting attitudes. As noted previously, rates of poverty as measured by official statistics (and projections regarding future trends) have diverged for different sections of the population, with pensioners having fared particularly well and households with children facing a more negative outlook. It may be that actual trends in poverty for these groups have had some effect on the attitudes held towards them specifically. We can test this theory by examining two questions from the European Social Survey (ESS), asked in its 2008 and 2016 welfare module. Respondents were asked:

What do you think overall about the standard of living of pensioners? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means extremely bad and 10 means extremely good.

What do you think overall about the standard of living of people who are unemployed? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means extremely bad and 10 means extremely good.

For pensioners there has been a shift away from the view that their standard of living is “bad”

Table 3 presents responses to these questions, with a number between 0-3 being interpreted as a “bad” standard of living, numbers between 7-10 as a “good” standard of living and the intervening numbers as being “neither bad nor good”. Around one quarter of people in each case felt that pensioners and people who are unemployed had a “bad” standard of living in 2016, with the most popular response in both cases (for around half) being categorized as “neither bad nor good”. While, for people who are unemployed, these proportions are not substantially different to those seen in 2008, for pensioners there has been a shift away from the view that their standard of living is “bad”; more than one third expressed this view in 2008, compared with less than one quarter in 2016, a decline of 12 percentage points. These data therefore present some evidence that attitudes to the living standards of specific groups reflect objective trends in their fortunes.

Table 3 Views on standard of living for pensioners and people who are unemployed, 2008-2016

	2008	2016	Change 2008-2016
Pensioners	%	%	
Bad	36	24	-12
Neither bad nor good	45	46	+1
Good	18	28	+10
Unemployed	%	%	
Bad	26	29	+2
Neither bad nor good	53	53	0
Good	17	16	-1
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2352	1959	

Source: UK respondents to the European Social Survey wave 4 (2008) and wave 8 (2016)
See also note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years

Given that the findings so far lend overwhelming support to the view that attitudes have evolved in line with shifts in political and media coverage, and the fact that much of this discourse focuses on the unacceptability of poverty and inequality, we might also expect a rise in the view that poverty and inequality, and their current levels, are unacceptable.

Acceptability of poverty and inequality

Since the inception of BSA in 1983, we have asked respondents about their views of income inequality:

Thinking of income levels generally in Britain today, would you say that the gap between those with high incomes and those with low incomes is...

...too large, about right, or, too small?

Currently, a substantial majority – 78% – say that the gap between those on high and low incomes is “too large”, while almost everyone else (16%) thinks this is “about right”. Just 2% regard the gap as “too small”. The proportion favouring the view that the income gap is too large has remained relatively stable across the lifetime of the survey, fluctuating between 72% and 85%. Along with objective measures of income inequality discussed previously, the proportion expressing this view has remained relatively stable over the past decade (76% took this view in 2006). On this basis, it is arguable that attitudes here align more closely with objective trends in inequality than political and media discourse around this issue – although the fact that a substantial majority support this view means there is less potential to see an upward shift in views.

The European Social Survey includes two measures relating to the acceptability of differences in income and living standards, which can

Currently, a substantial majority – 78% – say that the gap between those on high and low incomes is “too large”, while almost everyone else (16%) thinks this is “about right”

be considered to further test this theory. Respondents are asked how far they agree or disagree with the following two statements:

Large differences in people's incomes are acceptable to properly reward differences in talents and efforts

For a society to be fair, differences in people's standard of living should be small

People are more divided about the acceptability of differences in incomes and living standards when asked their views in theory, rather than in terms of what is happening in practice

Table 4 presents responses to these statements given in 2008 and in 2016. The findings indicate that people are more divided about the acceptability of differences in incomes and living standards when asked their views in theory, rather than in terms of what is happening in practice. In 2016 around half agreed that “for society to be fair differences in people’s living standards should be small”, while one quarter disagreed with the view that “large differences in people’s incomes are acceptable to properly reward differences in talent and efforts”. Interestingly though, support for both views increased slightly between 2008 and 2016; the proportion agreeing that for a fair society differences in standards of living should be small rose by 4 percentage points between 2008 and 2016, while there has been a rise of 6 percentage points in disagreement with the view that large differences in income are acceptable to reward talents and effort. Perhaps because these questions measure people’s hypothetical views, rather than their perceptions of what is currently happening, it is unsurprising that the extent of this change has been more muted than that witnessed with regard to levels of poverty. Nevertheless, these findings lend some support to the view that theoretical attitudes to inequality have moved in line with the increased political and media focus on the unacceptability of this phenomenon, largely with reference to levels of inequality in Britain today.

Table 4 Views about acceptability of differences in income and standards of living, 2008-2016

	2008	2016	Change 2008-2016
Large differences in income acceptable to reward talents and efforts	%	%	
Agree	64	53	-11
Neither	16	20	+4
Disagree	19	26	+6
For fair society, differences in standard of living should be small	%	%	
Agree	50	55	+4
Neither	21	24	+3
Disagree	27	21	-6
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2352	1959	

Source: UK respondents to the European Social Survey wave 4 (2008) and wave 8 (2016)

See also note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years

In the data presented thus far, we have seen a degree of inconsistency in trends in attitudes to poverty and inequality over the past decade. This is unsurprising, given that the questions reviewed measure attitudes to different concepts (poverty, inequality, the income gap and living standards) and variably measure hypothetical views (which we would anticipate being more entrenched) and perceptions of current developments (which we would expect to be more fluid). Nevertheless, where attitudes have shifted, we can conclude that these have largely followed the direction of political and media discourse rather than aligning with objective trends in levels of poverty and inequality. We can test this provisional conclusion further by examining how the attitudes of specific sections of society have evolved over the past decade.

Whose views have changed?

Political party support

Given that shifts in attitudes over the past decade lend most support to our theory that these have moved in line with political and media discourse, we first consider whether change has been concentrated among those most exposed to and likely to have been influenced by this discourse – namely Labour Party supporters and those with a high degree of exposure to media coverage of poverty and inequality.

Table 5 shows trends in the definitions of poverty ascribed to by supporters of the main two political parties. It is clear that Labour Party supporters adopt a broader definition of poverty than do those who support the Conservative Party: 36% of Labour Party supporters agree with the most inclusive definition of poverty (that someone

Labour Party supporters adopt a broader definition of poverty than those who support the Conservative Party

is in poverty if they don't have enough to buy the things that most people take for granted), compared with 20% of Conservative Party supporters. There is a similar gap in support for the more stringent view (that someone is in poverty if they have enough to eat and live, but not to buy other things they need) while around nine in ten of both groups ascribe to the most stringent definition.

Table 5 Views on different definitions of poverty, by political party support, 2006-2018

% think is in poverty	2006	2009	2013	2018	Change 2006-2018
Enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted	%	%	%	%	
Labour	23	24	25	36	+13
Conservative	18	16	14	20	+2
All	22	21	19	27	+6
Enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they needed	%	%	%	%	
Labour	50	57	57	64	+14
Conservative	47	50	38	46	-2
All	50	54	47	55	+6
Not enough to eat and live without getting into debt	%	%	%	%	
Labour	90	92	90	86	-4
Conservative	90	91	87	89	-1
All	89	91	87	89	-1

The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter

See also note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years

However, this divergence in views has only emerged over the past decade – and primarily because of a shift in the views of Labour Party supporters. While the proportion of Conservative Party supporters agreeing with the most inclusive definition of poverty increased by just two percentage points between 2006 and 2018, the prevalence of this view increased by 13 percentage points among Labour Party supporters. Similarly, support for the view that someone is in poverty if they have enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they need rose by 14 percentage points among Labour Party supporters, but declined by 2 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters. Interestingly, much of the shift towards the most inclusive definition of poverty among Labour Party supporters occurred after 2013, and while we cannot pinpoint the precise timing of the change, might be viewed as an effect of the shift in policy and discourse after the election of Jeremy Corbyn in 2015 (although Labour Party supporters' agreement with the middle definition increased more gradually over time).

Much of the shift towards the most inclusive definition of poverty among Labour Party supporters occurred after 2013

The view that there is currently “quite a lot” of poverty increased by 19 percentage points among Labour Party supporters, compared with 5 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters

Turning to views on current, past and future levels of poverty, presented in Table 6, we see stark differences in the views of supporters of the two parties. Labour Party supporters are much more likely than those supporting the Conservative Party to think there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, that this has been increasing over the past ten years and that it is set to increase over the next ten years. However, we once again see that views on each of these measures have diverged over the past decade among supporters of the two parties. The view that there is currently “quite a lot” of poverty increased by 19 percentage points among Labour Party supporters, compared with 5 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters, while the view that poverty has been increasing in the last ten years rose substantially for both groups – but markedly more so for Labour Party supporters (38 percentage points, compared with 22 percentage points for Conservative Party supporters). However, views have diverged most in relation to future poverty levels; the proportion of Labour Party supporters who think poverty will rise in the next ten years has increased by 28 percentage points, compared with a 5 percentage point rise among Conservative Party supporters.

Table 6 Views on levels of poverty in Britain, by political party support, 2006-2018

	2006	2009	2013	2018	Change 2006-2018
Perception of poverty in Britain (% a lot)	%	%	%	%	
Labour	55	59	72	73	+19
Conservative	46	48	49	51	+5
All	52	57	62	65	+13
Last 10 years poverty increasing decreasing or stayed same (% increasing)	%	%	%	%	
Labour	32	48	72	70	+38
Conservative	28	44	53	49	+22
All	32	48	63	62	+30
Next 10 years poverty increase, decrease or stay the same (% increase)	%	%	%	%	
Labour	42	54	67	69	+28
Conservative	42	53	46	47	+5
All	44	56	59	61	+18

The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter

See also note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years

The timing of these shifts in attitudes is interesting, with the views of Labour and Conservative Party supporters appearing to diverge most markedly between 2009 and 2013. We have noted previously that,

during and after recessions, views about the prevalence of poverty tend to become more negative. However, at this disaggregated level, we might also consider the potential impact of the political party in power on the attitudes of different party supporters. There is considerable evidence that people tend to rate the record of ‘their’ party more favourably than that of parties they do not support across a range of policy areas (see, for example Appleby and Roberts, 2014), and this tendency may explain to some degree why the views of Labour Party supporters became more negative around the time of the election of the coalition government in 2010.

Disagreement with the view that large differences in income are acceptable to reward talents and effort increased by 15 percentage points among Labour Party supporters between 2008 and 2016, compared with a rise of 5 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters

We see a similar pattern in views about the acceptability of poverty and inequality. Table 7 presents the items about the acceptability of differences in income and living standards, fielded on the European Social Survey, by political party support. Once again, we see that Labour Party supporters are markedly more opposed to differences in income and living standards – and that their views have diverged from those of Conservative Party supporters over time. Disagreement with the view that large differences in income are acceptable to reward talents and effort increased by 15 percentage points among Labour Party supporters between 2008 and 2016, compared with a rise of 5 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters. And, while agreement with the view that for society to be fair, differences in living standards should be small has risen by 14 percentage points among Labour Party supporters over the same period, it has declined by 5 percentage points among Conservative Party supporters.

Table 7 Views about acceptability of differences in income and standards of living, by political party support, 2008-2016

	2008	2016	Change 2008-2016
% disagree large differences in income acceptable to reward talents and efforts	%	%	
Labour	28	42	+15
Conservative	9	14	+5
All	19	26	+6
% agree for fair society, differences in standard of living should be small	%	%	
Labour	56	70	+14
Conservative	45	41	-5
All	50	55	+4

Source: UK respondents to the European Social Survey wave 4 (2008) and wave 8 (2016)

The base for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter. See also note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years

As noted previously, there has consistently been strong support for the view that the gap between those on high and low incomes is too

The substantial changes we have seen in attitudes to poverty and inequality over the past decade can largely, though not entirely, be attributed to the evolving views of Labour Party supporters

large, leading to little fluctuation on this measure. While Labour Party supporters are more likely to subscribe to this view, (this is the case for 83%, compared with 71% of Conservative Party supporters), the views of both groups, along with those of the population as a whole, have not changed significantly since 2006.

Overall then, the substantial changes we have seen in attitudes to poverty and inequality over the past decade can largely, though not entirely, be attributed to the evolving views of Labour Party supporters, reflecting the shifting discourse of their party. However, it is important to remember that political party allegiance is not static. It may be that some of this change can be explained by individuals, who increasingly perceive poverty in British society and regard it as unacceptable, having shifted their allegiance to the Labour Party from elsewhere, to better reflect their evolving views. These individual views could logically have been informed by other sources, such as the media. It is the role of the media which we consider next.

Media exposure

In this section, we consider both the extent and nature of media exposure to understand its effect on individual attitudes to poverty and inequality. Given the increasing media focus on poverty and inequality, we anticipate that those who engage with a wider range of types of media regularly are more likely to be influenced by the messages conveyed in the media on poverty and inequality. In addition, as noted previously, coverage of these topics is far more frequent and sympathetic in the broadsheet media, prompting us to examine whether shifts in attitudes have been particularly pronounced among those exposed to this section of the media.

Since the inception of the BSA survey³, we have asked respondents whether they “normally read any daily morning newspaper at least three times a week”. Since 2010, we have also asked respondents how often they “watch all or part of a news programme on television”, and how often they “look online at a news or newspaper website”. To obtain a measure of media exposure, we added together the number of these types of media which respondents said they viewed “at least several times a week”. Overall, 14% do not view any media with this regularity, while 39%, 38% and 8% respectively viewed one, two, or all three types of media.

There are very few differences in the views expressed by those with different levels of media exposure and these have not shifted in distinct ways over time

Across the measures of attitudes to poverty and inequality we examined, there were very few differences in the views expressed by those with different levels of media exposure and these had not shifted in distinct ways over time. However, we have seen that much of the increase in coverage that may have prompted a shift in attitudes is likely to have been concentrated in certain sections of the media, primarily the broadsheet press, prompting us to consider

³ Comparable analysis was not possible for the European Social Survey, as media exposure was not measured consistently in 2008 and 2016.

whether the attitudes of those who engage with different sections of the media have evolved differently. Respondents who read a daily morning newspaper at least three times a week are asked to identify which newspaper this is, enabling their classification as tabloid or broadsheet readers. Since we introduced a measure of online newspaper readership in 2010, we have asked a similar follow-up question, enabling a comparable classification (although many readers view websites not associated with particular newspapers).

When examining attitudes to poverty and inequality along these lines, we find stark differences between readers of tabloid and broadsheet newspapers – many of which have only emerged over the past decade. In 2006, as shown in Table 8, readers of tabloid and broadsheet daily newspapers were not significantly different in their levels of support for the idea that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain; over the subsequent decade their views diverged markedly, with the proportion supporting this view remaining the same among tabloid readers while increasing by 19 percentage points among broadsheet readers. Although data on online newspaper readership are only available alongside the poverty measures from 2013, we see similar patterns for readers of tabloid and broadsheet websites; over the five year period until 2018, the view that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain increased by 2 percentage points among the former group and 15 percentage points among the latter.

Table 8 Views on levels of poverty in Britain, by broadsheet and tabloid readership, 2006-2018

Perception of poverty in Britain (% a lot)	2006	2009	2013	2018	Change 2006-2018
Newspaper readership	%	%	%	%	
Tabloid	55	56	62	55	0
Broadsheet	48	52	58	68	+19
	2006	2009	2013	2018	Change 2013-2018
Newspaper website	%	%	%	%	
Tabloid	n/a	n/a	62	64	+2
Broadsheet	n/a	n/a	62	76	+15

The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter

See also note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years

n/a = not asked

Similar trends are evident in the evolution of attitudes to past and future poverty levels among broadsheet and tabloid newspapers (both in their traditional form and online). On these measures, readers of tabloid newspapers were previously more likely to think that poverty in Britain had been increasing over the past ten years and is set to increase further. Forty-eight per cent of readers of daily tabloid newspapers in 2006 expected poverty to increase over

the next decade, to compared with 35% of readers of broadsheet newspapers. However, by 2018 this picture had reversed – with 51% and 58% respectively taking this view – equating to an increase of 3 percentage points among tabloid readers and 24 percentage points among broadsheet readers. On the other hand, views on the acceptability of the income gap were almost identical in 2006 but, by 2018, had become markedly different, with the view that this is too large declining by 4 percentage points (to 74%) among readers of tabloid newspapers, while increasing by 10 percentage points (to 88%) among readers of broadsheet newspapers.

An individual's choice of newspaper is known to be associated with their level of education, as confirmed by BSA data for 2018, which indicates that 49% of readers of broadsheet titles have a degree, compared with 10% of readers of tabloid titles. Those with a greater number of educational qualifications have historically been more likely to perceive poverty in Britain than those with fewer qualifications; moreover, the degree of difference in views appears to have become more pronounced over time. For this reason, we cannot be certain whether the changing views among readers of tabloid and broadsheet newspaper are simply a product of their differing educational profiles (we seek to disentangle which characteristic is most important, in the final section of the chapter).

Moreover, as with political party affiliation, newspaper readership is not fixed. We may find that people who have become more concerned about poverty have changed from tabloid to broadsheet titles in the same way as those with similar concerns may have shifted their political allegiance to the Labour Party. Further, readership of daily newspapers itself is in continued decline, as readership of news online (which is harder to assign to a tabloid-broadsheet dichotomy) has increased⁴ – so these shifts in attitudes might, to some extent, reflect such movement. Before seeking to disentangle the impact of political and media discourse, and their inter-relationships, further, we consider what role, if any, actual experiences of poverty may have played in these shifts in attitudes.

Experiences of poverty

While there is overwhelming evidence that attitudes to poverty and inequality have followed the direction of political and media discourse, it may be that objective trends have nevertheless had some part to play. We have already seen that views about the living standards of pensioners have followed the direction of trends in pensioner poverty over the past decade. To test this theory further, we examined shifts in attitudes among the two groups for whom objective changes in poverty rates have been (and, in the latter case, are expected to be) the most pronounced – pensioners and

⁴ 50% of respondents read a daily newspaper several times a week in 2006, compared with 24% in 2018. Since 2010, the proportion who read a news or newspaper website with this regularity has increased from 29% to 53%.

People who are retired (among whom poverty rates have declined) are less likely to perceive a lot of poverty in Britain today compared with those with children in the household

households with children (Portes and Reed, 2018). At the outset, it should be noted that when we ask respondents about their “feelings about their household’s income these days”, those who feel that they are not living comfortably on their present incomes are consistently more likely to adopt a more inclusive definition of poverty and to perceive significant levels of poverty in Britain, than those who define themselves as living comfortably. We might therefore logically expect objective trends in poverty rates to have influenced the attitudes of the sections of society affected by them over the past decade.

It is therefore unsurprising to discover, as shown in Table 9, that people who are retired (among whom poverty rates have declined) are less likely to perceive a lot of poverty in Britain today or to view poverty as having been increasing or being set to increase, compared with those with children in the household (among whom trends are set to move in the opposite direction). However, despite these differences, the perceptions of these two groups have evolved in a very similar way over time. The only marked difference is in perceptions about future poverty levels, where the proportion expecting these to increase has risen by 19 percentage points among those in households with children, compared with a smaller rise of 11 percentage points among those who are retired. While comparatively small, this difference lends some support to the idea that trends in attitudes to poverty respond to objective changes in experiences of poverty among different sections of society.

Table 9 Views on levels of poverty in Britain, by retirement status and whether children in household, 2006-2018

	2006	2009	2013	2018	Change 2006-2018
Perception of poverty in Britain (% a lot)	%	%	%	%	
Retired	43	47	57	58	+15
Children in household	54	61	63	67	+13
All	52	57	62	65	+13
Last 10 years poverty increasing, decreasing or stayed same (% increasing)	%	%	%	%	
Retired	30	44	58	56	+26
Children in household	36	48	66	66	+30
All	32	48	63	62	+30
Next 10 years poverty increase, decrease or stay the same (% increase)					
Retired	40	51	52	51	+11
Children in household	47	59	62	66	+19
All	44	56	59	61	+17

*The bases for this table can be found in the appendix to this chapter
See also note to Table 1 regarding the calculation of change between years*

Similarly, the move over the past decade to more inclusive definitions of poverty has been slightly more pronounced among those with children in the household, compared with people who are retired.

However, on attitudes to the acceptability of the income gap and living standards, where shifts at the population level have been more muted, there is little discernible difference in the evolving attitudes of people who are retired and those in households with children. And, even on the measure of the living standards of pensioners, the decline in the view that these are “bad” is only slightly more pronounced among those who would have experienced this shift – that is pensioners themselves, compared with the population as a whole. Taken together then, these data lend little support to the theory that changes in attitudes to poverty and inequality are the result of individuals’ experiences of objective changes in these concepts.

We have seen that many characteristics are associated with attitudes to poverty and inequality, with the public having become more divided in their views since 2006 due to changes in attitudes concentrated to a considerable degree among specific sections of society. However, many of these characteristics are known to be inter-linked; for instance, people aged over 65 are more likely to support the Conservative Party (and vice versa) – with both characteristics being associated with the adoption of more prescriptive definitions of poverty and less negative views about current, past and future levels of poverty in Britain. In our final section, we seek to take account of such relationships to identify which set of characteristics are primarily associated with attitudes to poverty – those relating to individual experiences of poverty or those linked to levels of political and media exposure and influence.

Understanding shifts in attitudes

To understand which characteristics influence attitudes to poverty, once their relationships with each other are controlled for, and whether this has changed since the time of the financial crisis, we ran two logistic regression analyses for our measure of whether people think that there is “quite a lot” or “very little” poverty in Britain; one for 2006 and one for 2018. We included as our explanatory variables those characteristics which were measured using an identical format by the two surveys and which had been shown to significantly relate to perceptions of poverty levels in Britain. We also added sex, which is known to link to views on the prevalence of poverty (with women being more likely to think there is “quite a lot”). Full details of the models are presented in Tables A.6 and A.7 in the appendix to this chapter.

In Table 10, we present, for 2006 and 2018, the specific characteristics that were found to be significant, once their links with other characteristics had been controlled for – in each case, compared to the reference category presented in brackets in the

An individual's definition of poverty is consistently associated with their perception of its prevalence

left-hand column. A (+) sign indicates a positive association between that characteristic and the view that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, whereas a (-) sign denotes a negative association. Those characteristics which we are most confident are associated with views on the prevalence of poverty have been emboldened.

A number of themes are evident. As we would expect, an individual's definition of poverty is consistently associated with their perception of its prevalence, with those who support a more inclusive definition being more likely to think there is “quite a lot” of poverty. Sex is also consistently associated with attitudes to poverty, although education only emerged as significant in 2018, and we can be less confident about this association than is the case for many of the other factors. Neither of the characteristics associated with the individual's own experience of poverty (age, as a proxy for being retired, and having a child in the household) were associated with perceptions of its prevalence in 2018, although age was significantly associated with attitudes in 2006. This is somewhat surprising; given that poverty levels have reduced most markedly for pensioners across the past two decades, we might have expected their views on its prevalence to have become more distinct.

Being a supporter of the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats or any other party is positively associated with the perception that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, compared with being a supporter of the Conservative Party

Instead, it is the characteristics linked with exposure to the political and media discourse around poverty that are consistently associated with perceptions of its prevalence in 2018, and more markedly so than was the case in 2006. Being a supporter of the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats or any other party is positively associated with the perception that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain, compared with being a supporter of the Conservative Party. Meanwhile, reading a tabloid newspaper several times a week is negatively associated with this view, although this relationship has reversed since 2006 when this association was positive. This analysis confirms the importance of the latter set of factors in influencing attitudes to poverty in 2018, and the fact that their role in this regard has increased since 2006.

Table 10 Characteristics influencing views about level of poverty, 2006-2018

Type of characteristic	2006	2018
Characteristics associated with own experience of poverty		
Age	Being aged 65+(-)	
Whether there is a child in household		
Characteristics associated with political and media discourse around poverty		
Political party identification (Being a Conservative Party supporter)	Being a Labour Party Supporter (+) Being a Liberal Democrat Party supporter (+)	Being a Labour Party supporter (+) Being a Liberal Democrat Party supporter (+) Being a supporter of another political party (+)
Type of newspaper read (does not read a paper)	Reads tabloid newspaper (+)	Reads tabloid newspaper (-)
Definition of poverty		
Definition of poverty (Person who does not have enough to buy things most people take for granted is in poverty)	Does not support broad definition (-)	Does not support broad definition (-)
Other demographic characteristics		
Highest educational qualification		Having a qualification at O-level or equivalent (-)
Sex	Being female (+)	Being female (+)

Conclusions

Evidence from the British Social Attitudes and European Social Surveys reveals that there has been a marked and largely consistent shift in attitudes to poverty and inequality over the past decade, with definitions becoming slightly more inclusive, and with both phenomena being more widely regarded as prevalent and unacceptable than in the past. These trends are at odds with objective trends in poverty and inequality, as measured by official statistics, and largely align with the direction of political and media discourse. This link is further confirmed by the fact that attitudes have shifted most markedly among those exposed to and influenced by this discourse, and the fact that political identification and media exposure have a comparatively bigger role in explaining attitudes than they did a decade ago. However, there is some evidence that attitudes have responded to objective trends in poverty, although, by comparison, these responses appear fairly muted.

What do these trends mean for political parties and policy makers? Clearly, the public are likely to have more of an appetite for

Any policy implementation that leads to an overall reduction in poverty levels, as officially monitored, may not necessarily reduce the widespread perception that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain and that this is on the rise

policies aimed at addressing poverty and inequality than they did a decade ago, although it appears that Labour Party supporters are substantively more supportive of this agenda than their Conservative counterparts. However, any policy implementation that leads to an overall reduction in poverty levels, as officially monitored, may not necessarily reduce the widespread perception that there is “quite a lot” of poverty in Britain and that this is on the rise. Our data suggests that public perceptions of poverty have become divorced from current official measures, although it will be interesting to see whether this divergence is reversed when the new measure of poverty, developed by the Social Metrics Commission, is introduced as an experimental statistic from 2020. Meanwhile, it may be that policy makers need to instead identify and devise policies that address the issues highlighted by politicians and campaigners and in media discourse around poverty relating to people’s basic needs – such as short-term deprivation, homelessness and food bank use, in order to regain a more positive view among the public.

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Appendix

The bases for Table 5 are shown below.

A.1 Views on different definitions of poverty, by political party support, 2006-2018				
	2006	2009	2013	2018
Enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Labour	1063	1011	1052	1001
Conservative	843	943	818	866
All	3240	3297	3244	2884
Enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they needed				
Labour	1063	1011	1052	1001
Conservative	843	943	818	866
All	3240	3297	3244	2884
Not enough to eat and live without getting into debt				
Labour	1063	1011	1052	1001
Conservative	843	943	818	866
All	3240	3297	3244	2884

The bases for Table 6 are shown below.

Table A.2 Views on levels of poverty in Britain, by political party support, 2006-2018				
	2006	2009	2013	2018
Perception of poverty in Britain	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Labour	1063	905	1052	1001
Conservative	843	961	818	866
All	3240	3421	3244	2884
Last 10 years poverty increasing, decreasing or stayed same				
Labour	1063	905	1052	1001
Conservative	843	961	818	866
All	3240	3421	3244	2884
Next 10 years poverty increase, decrease or stay the same				
Labour	1063	905	1052	1001
Conservative	843	961	818	866
All	3240	3421	3244	2884

The bases for Table 7 are shown below.

Table A.3 Views about acceptability of differences in income and standards of living, by political party support, 2008 and 2016

	2008	2016
% disagree large differences in income acceptable to reward talents and efforts	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Labour	430	359
Conservative	402	388
All	2352	1959
% agree for fair society, differences in standard of living should be small		
Labour	430	359
Conservative	402	388
All	2352	1959

The bases for Table 8 are shown below.

Table A.4 Views on levels of poverty in Britain, by broadsheet and tabloid readership, 2006-2018

	2006	2009	2013	2018
Newspaper readership	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Tabloid	1055	1043	776	413
Broadsheet	493	433	391	307
Newspaper website				
Tabloid	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	272	287
Broadsheet	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	322	444

n/a = not asked

The bases for Table 9 are shown below.

Table A.5 Views on levels of poverty in Britain, by retirement status and whether children in household, 2006-2018				
	2006	2009	2013	2018
Perception of poverty in Britain (% a lot)	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>Unweighted base</i>
Retired	774	854	959	930
Children in household	832	1007	807	722
All	3240	3421	3244	2884
Last 10 years poverty increasing, decreasing or stayed same (% increasing)				
Retired	774	854	959	930
Children in household	832	1007	807	722
All	3240	3421	3244	2884
Next 10 years poverty increase, decrease or stay the same (% increase)				
Retired	774	854	959	930
Children in household	832	1007	807	722
All	3240	3421	3244	2884

Table A.6 Predictor of perception there is “quite a lot” of poverty in 2006, logistic regression

	Odds ratio	Standard error	p value
Age (16-34)			
35-44	1.13	0.14	0.324
45-54	0.98	0.13	0.856
55-64	0.99	0.14	0.967
65+	**0.55	0.09	0.000
Political Party (Conservative)			
Labour	**1.37	0.14	0.002
Liberal Democrat	*1.39	0.18	0.014
Other party	1.37	0.27	0.108
None	1.09	0.15	0.525
Other/DK/Ref	1.08	0.20	0.696
Highest education qualification (degree or higher)			
Higher education below degree	1.11	0.20	0.581
A level or equivalent	1.04	0.17	0.811
O level or equivalent	0.91	0.14	0.528
CSE or equivalent	1.20	0.24	0.351
Foreign or other	0.60	0.24	0.212
No qualification	0.88	0.13	0.402
Enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted (is in poverty)			
Was not	**0.39	0.04	0.000
Don't know	0.58	0.17	0.070
Sex (Male)			
	**1.35	0.11	0.000
Has children under 17 in household (Yes)			
Doesn't have a child under 17	1.05	0.11	0.674
Don't know	1.10	0.70	0.887
Paper type (None)			
Popular (tabloid)	**1.33	0.12	0.003
Quality (Broadsheet)	0.99	0.12	0.931
Other	0.95	0.58	0.936
Constant			
	**1.70	0.33	0.006
<i>Unweighted base: 2974</i>			

*=*significant at 95% level***=*significant at 99% level*

Table A.7 Predictor of perception there is “quite a lot” of poverty in 2018, logistic regression

	Odds ratio	Standard error	p value
Age (16-34)			
35-44	1.12	0.19	0.506
45-54	1.28	0.21	0.130
55-64	1.13	0.21	0.501
65+	0.83	0.15	0.293
Political Party (Conservative)			
Labour	**2.22	0.27	0.000
Liberal Democrat	**1.76	0.37	0.008
Other party	**3.23	0.69	0.000
None	1.20	0.22	0.323
Other/DK/Ref	*1.55	0.33	0.045
Highest education qualification (degree or higher)			
Higher education below degree	1.03	0.20	0.874
A level or equivalent	1.21	0.20	0.261
O level or equivalent	*1.56	0.27	0.011
CSE or equivalent	1.17	0.23	0.409
Foreign or other	**0.30	0.12	0.003
No qualification	0.79	0.14	0.173
Enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted (is in poverty)			
Was not	**0.43	0.06	0.000
Don't know	0.97	0.40	0.945
Sex (Male)			
	**1.56	0.17	0.000
Has children under 17 in household (Yes)			
Doesn't have a child under 17	1.12	0.16	0.432
Don't know	0.67	0.35	0.445
Paper type (None)			
Popular (tabloid)	**0.68	0.10	0.007
Quality (Broadsheet)	1.19	0.20	0.293
Other	1.31	0.67	0.596
Constant			
	*1.69	0.40	0.028

Unweighted base: 2601

*=significant at 95% level

**=significant at 99% level

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