

Webber Phillips briefing release: *‘Red Walls falling and the parallels with migration and gentrification’*

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Undertaken by Webber Phillips, using the Origins data tool, this analysis looks at two factors: a) 2010-19 cumulative swings between Labour and the Conservatives in seats across England and Wales, and b) changes in the level of the non-white British (non-WB) population during the same time span. The correlations at play tell a story about migration and social change.

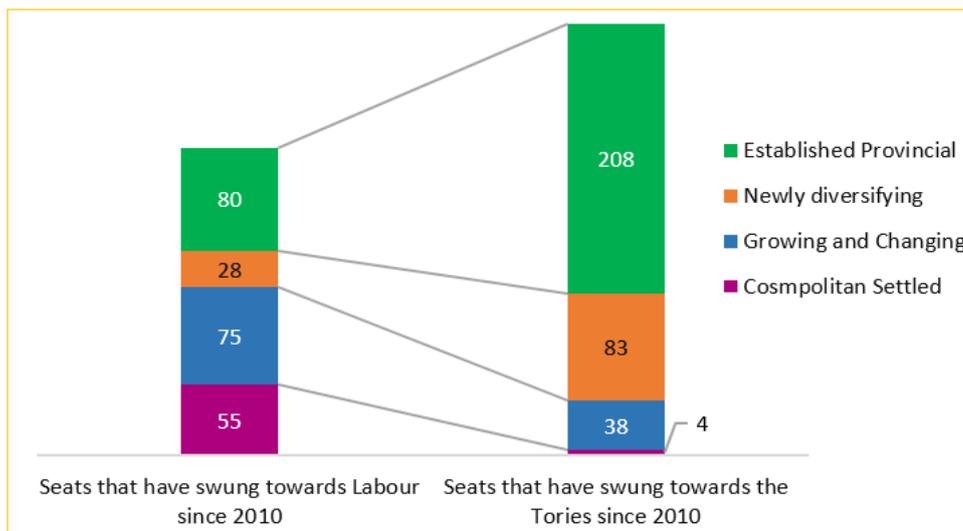
Key findings:

- Big swings to Labour have occurred in seats which already had a diverse electorate in 2011. Of 82 seats which were over 30% non-WB, 72 swung to Labour in the subsequent decade.
- Labour has done especially well in diverse areas that are getting *less* diverse. There are just 21 seats across England and Wales where the non-WB population has shrunk since 2011; 19 of these have swung towards Labour. All are places which historically had high migration.
- Meanwhile, large Conservative swings have occurred in seats that were not diverse in 2011. Of 62 seats that were under 5% non-WB, 54 have swung to the Tories in the period since.
- The Conservatives have done particularly well in places which are rapidly diversifying. In the 49 constituencies where the non-WB population has increased by more than a third since 2011, 44 have swung to the Tories.
- The upshot of this is that seats with big Labour swings between 2011 and 2019 are diametrically different to those with big Tory swings, in terms of non-WB level and change. (See table below).

	Average 2011 non-WB % level	Average 2011-19 non-WB % point increase
15%+ swing to Tories (24 seats)	7.38%	2.25%
15%+ swing to Labour (15 seats)	38.11%	1.79%
England and Wales average	15.95%	2.10%

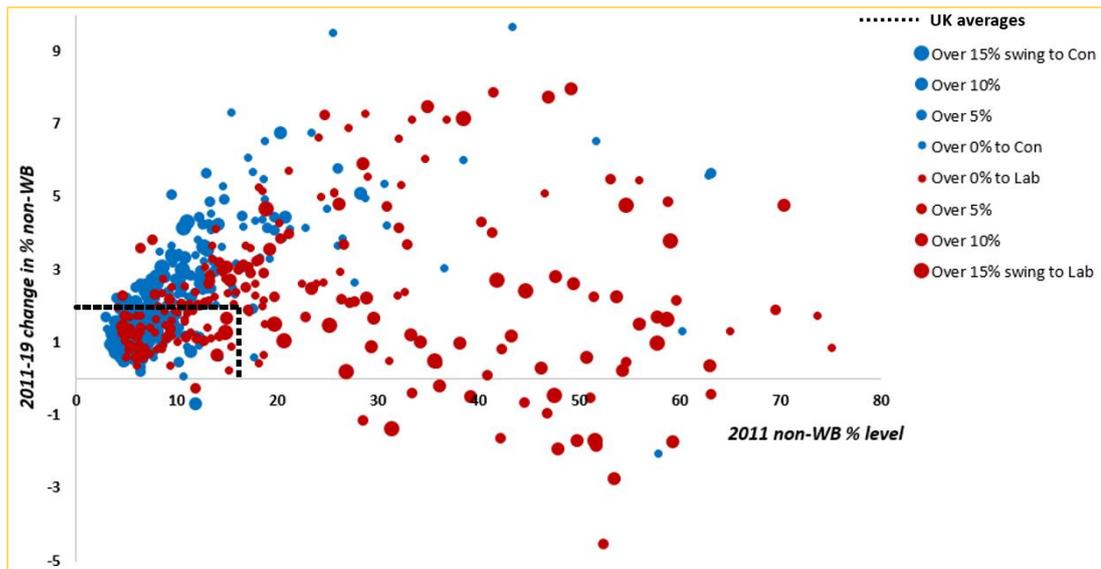
- Labour has seen its biggest successes in seats that were more than twice as diverse as the UK average in 2011, but where the non-WB population is bucking the national trend and growing slowly or in some cases not at all – probably as a result of gentrification and studentification.
- The Conservatives have seen their most dramatic upticks since 2010 in seats where the 2011 non-WB population was half the UK average, but where change was more rapid than the UK average – i.e. those experiencing significant migration for the first time.

- The research groups England and Wales constituencies into four categories: ‘Established Provincial’ seats which both started and ended the period with fewer than average non-WB electors; ‘Newly Diversifying’ seats where the proportion of non-WB residents has grown from a below average start point; ‘Growing and Changing’ seats where above average 2011 non-WB populations have continued to rise; and ‘Cosmopolitan Settled’, seats where the non-WB population has stabilised or declined since 2011, from a high base.
- Labour has improved its share of the vote in almost all ‘Cosmopolitan Settled’ seats – constituencies which are often located close to the centres of London or large university cities. These places are often culturally liberal, thanks in part to historical migration, but are now becoming more white due to gentrification and the cost-of-living.
- Labour has also advanced steadily in ‘Growing and changing’ seats. These are often situated in more affordable urban areas and in the suburbs of big cities.
- The Conservatives have gained ground in constituencies which prior to 2011 had little experience of diversity – doing more than twice as well as Labour in these ‘Established provincial’ seats. These tend to be located in towns or rural areas, away from universities and centres of professional employment.
- And the Tories have done even better in ‘Newly Diversifying’ constituencies. Their policies on the EU and migration may have had additional cut-through in less well-off places with more affordable housing, where migrant heritage populations are settling for the first time.
- From Labour’s perspective this presents a conundrum. As the chart below shows, there are many more of the sorts of seats where the Conservatives are advancing than of the sorts of seat where Labour is advancing.



- Hence, in terms of strategy, the big challenges for Labour are short-to-medium-term; only a fraction of UK seats are Cosmopolitan settled – and most of these have been won already.

- For the Conservatives, the challenges are long-term. As the UK gets more diverse and more seats become diverse, how do they avoid building in their own obsolescence?
- The scatter below uses Origins to show, for all seats in England and Wales, the initial non-WB level in 2011 (horizontal axis) and the increase in the subsequent decade (vertical). Red seats are swinging to Labour and blue seats to the Tories; larger dots signify larger swings.
- **Data is available upon request.**



Comment:

“The key conclusion is that seats with Tory advances since 2011 are strikingly dissimilar from Labour held and Labour gained seats,” said Professor Richard Webber, originator of ACORN, MOSAIC and Origins. *“Tory swings started from a situation of having low numbers of non-WB residents. Seats swinging towards Labour, on the other hand, have not seen a recent inflow of minorities, but rather have experienced either gentrification or studentification by younger white adults.”*

“This reveals underlying dynamics, thanks to the shifting demographics of the UK. The 2010s have seen a suburbanisation of the BME electorate, as gentrification and changes to the housing benefit system displaced minorities into post-war suburbs of London and provincial towns.”

“Clearly the results have implications for Conservative and Labour strategies. Some seats which in the past had been considered ‘safe’ will now become contestable, whereas many traditional ‘marginals’ may not change hands again for many years.”

Methodology note:

- We use Origins, a dataset based on name recognition of commercial data, to compare the ethno-cultural makeup of English and Welsh parliamentary seats in 2011 and 2019.
- By non-white British (non-WB) we mean those with names that are not Anglo-Saxon or Celtic – including new migrants, refugees, and second or third generation BME groups.

- Origins can drill down in much more detail, to specific nationalities and faiths. But this report focuses on the top-line 'non-WB' figure, as a proxy for historic diversity and pace of change.
- We deduce cumulative swing by comparing 2010 and 2019 GE results, revealing swings as high as 20% in some seats; we do not analyse seats in Scotland or Northern Ireland