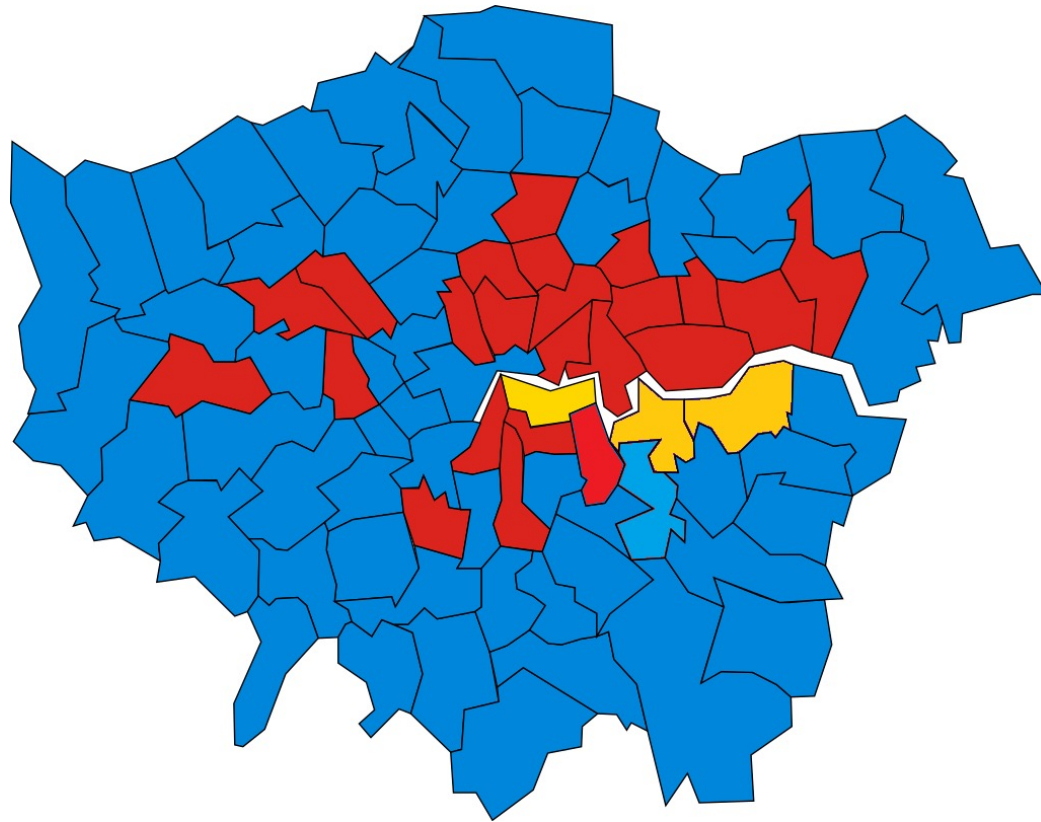


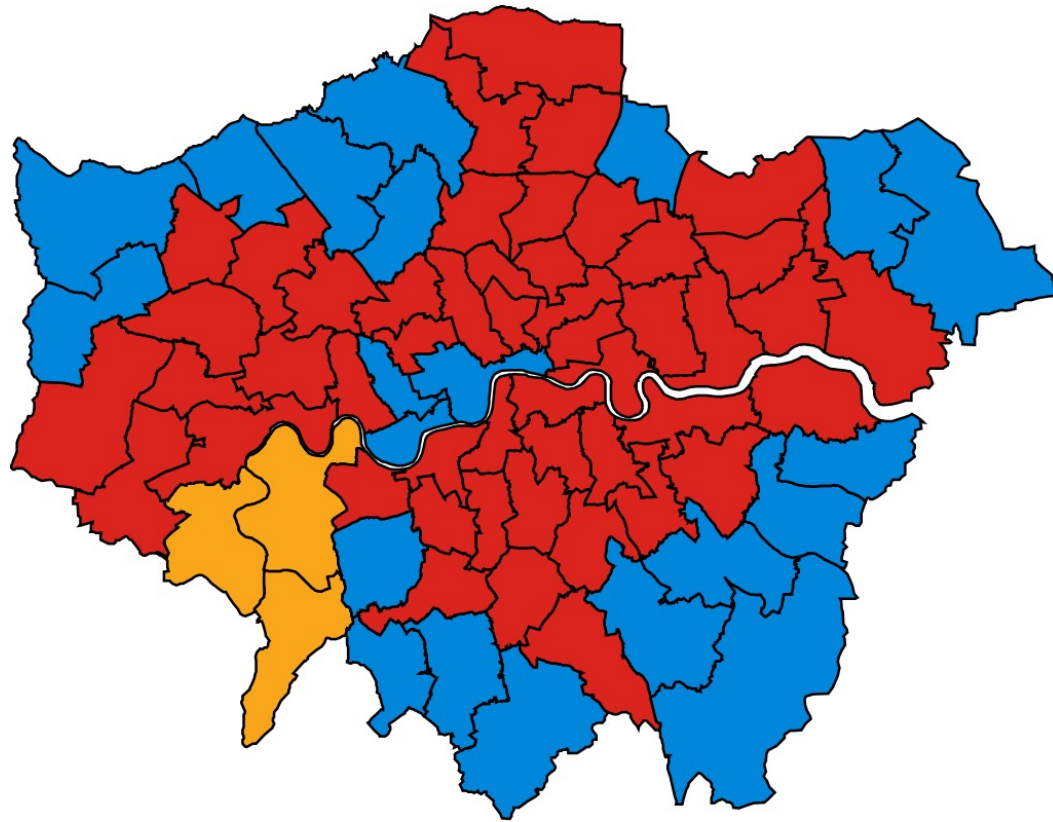
# The Conservative Party in London: Introductory remarks

Lewis Baston  
Mile End Institute 12 July 2021

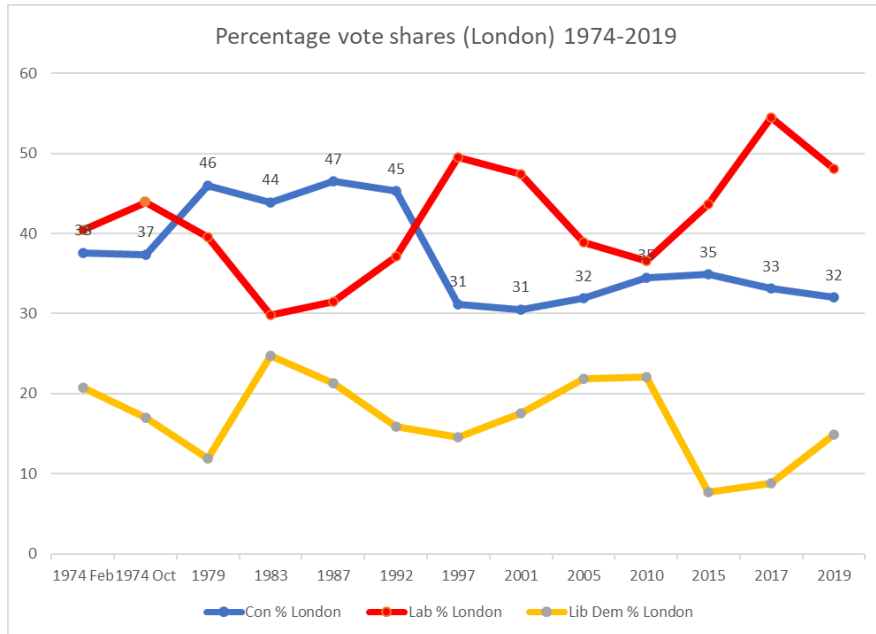
# 1987 - UK Conservative majority of 100



# 2019 - UK Conservative majority of 80

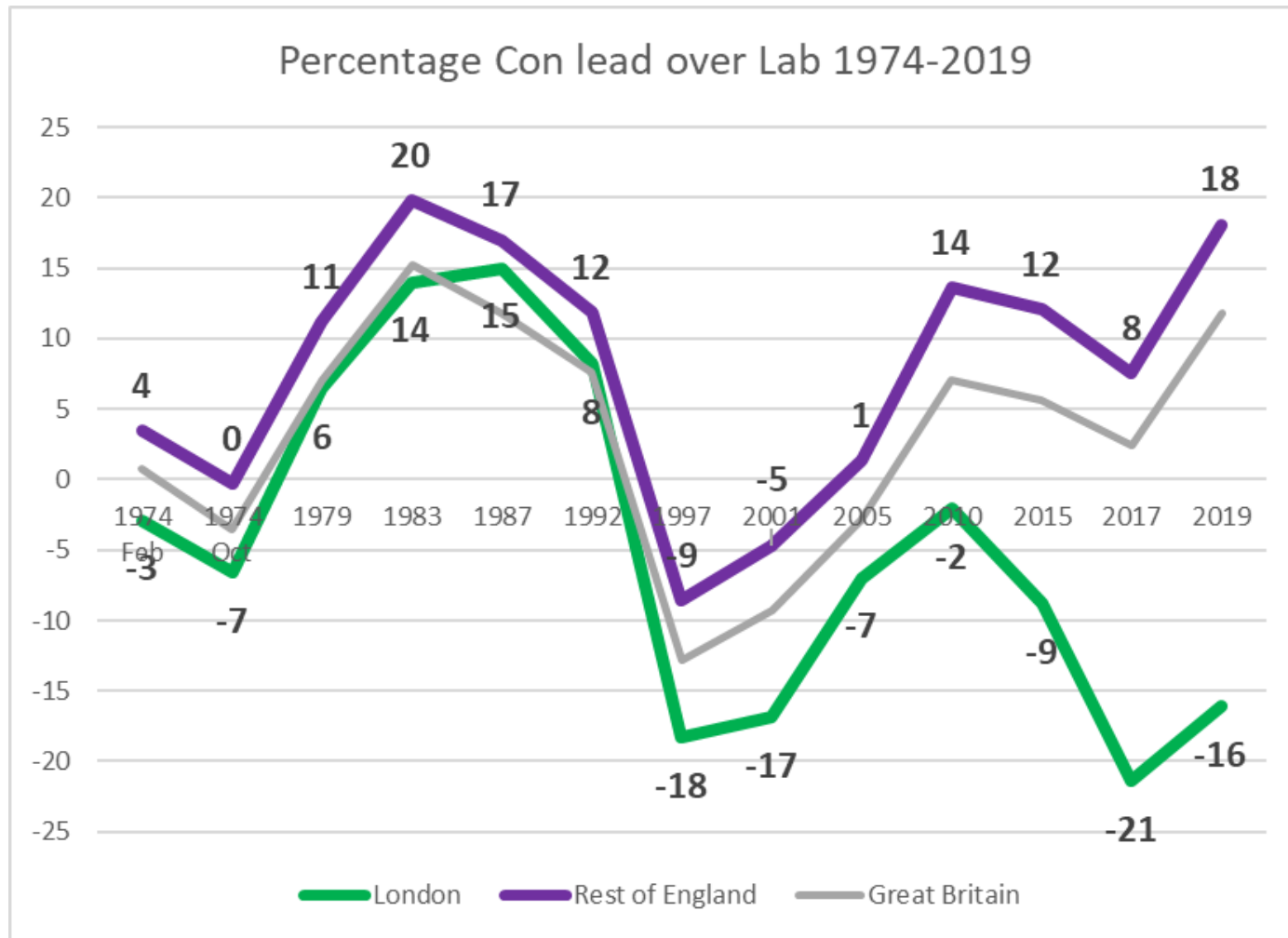


# Not always a Labour city...

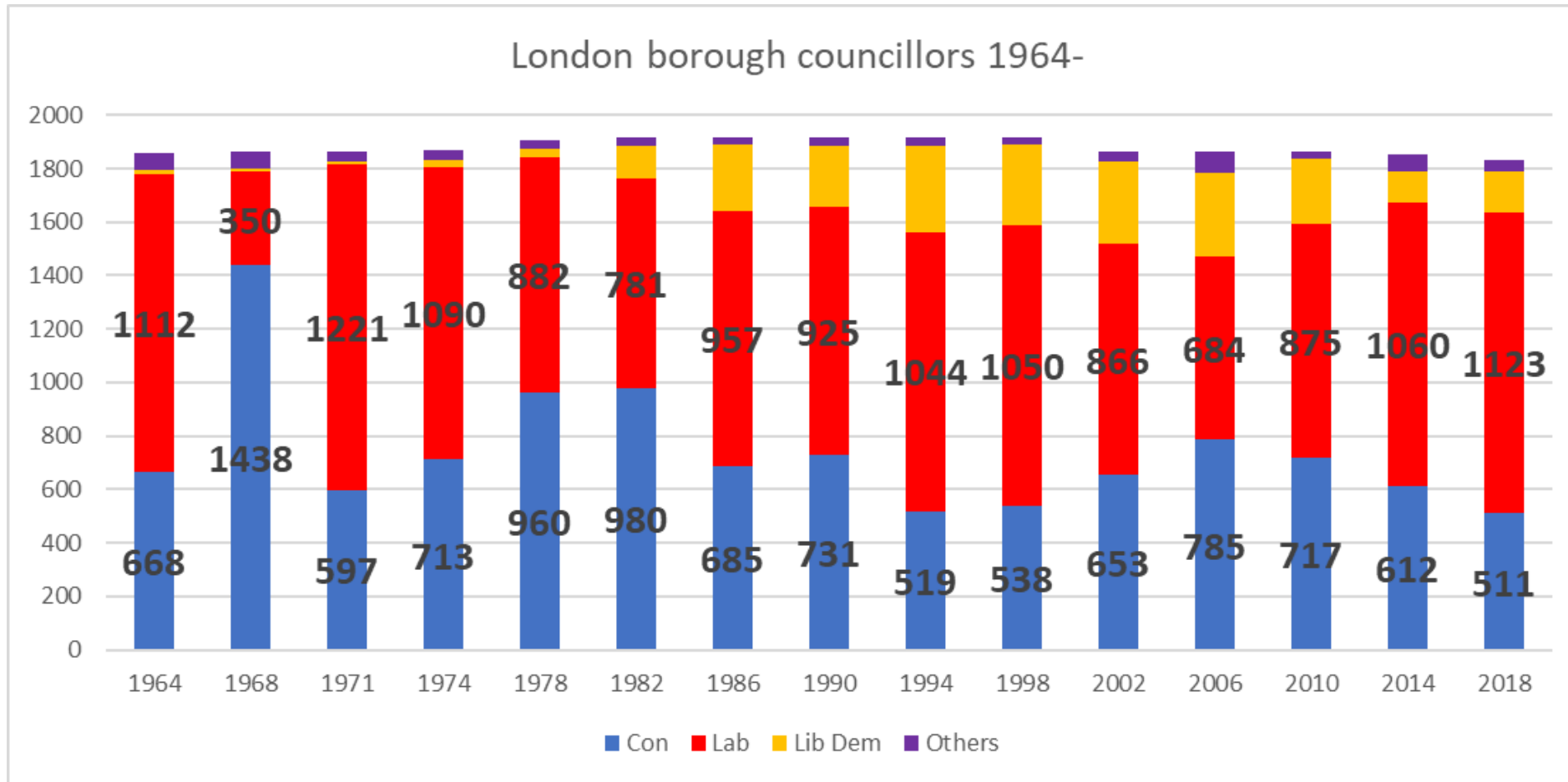


- ▶ Before 2010 the Conservatives usually 'won' London if they were winning nationally
- ▶ The London Conservative vote share has stagnated at around 32 per cent ever since 1997
- ▶ The main source of 'swing' since then is movements between Labour and third parties

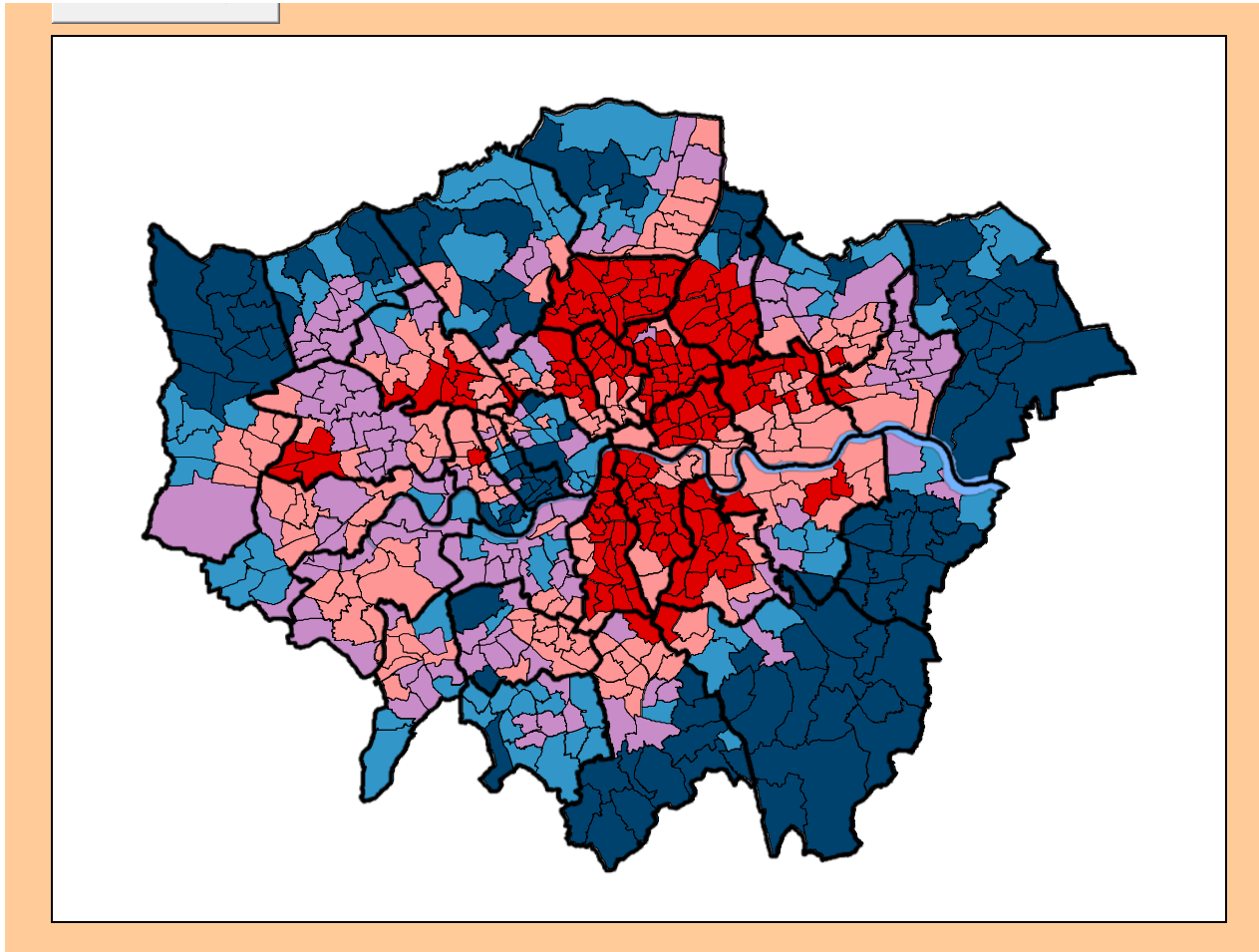
# Mind The Gap: London v England 1974-2019



# An eroding local government base



# London's Conservative vote, May 2021 Assembly (constituency) elections



# What causes Conservative problems in London?

1. Broad social, economic and political trends



# Conservatives have fared badly in most world cities and capital cities

- ▶ You are not alone!
- ▶ Other than Tokyo and Delhi, the conservatives do not run any of the democratic major world cities - Paris flipped from right to left in 2001 and hasn't gone back
- ▶ Across Europe capital city and principal city mayoral and senate elections are won by some sort of centre left or plural left candidate - Madrid, Berlin, Paris, Istanbul, Lisbon, Budapest, Zagreb, Prague, Warsaw, Rome, Milan, Amsterdam, Zurich... Athens is the main exception
- ▶ Conservatives are more viable at regional level - the big regions containing Madrid and Paris (Ile de France) are currently centre-right

# The main moving parts

- ▶ **Demographic change:** i.e. different sorts of people live in Edmonton now than did in 1987:
  - replacement of older white residents by younger BAME families
  - young people priced out of more central locations
- ▶ **Political change:** the sort of people who live in Battersea were sympathetic to the Conservatives in 2010 but aren't now:
  - young professionals
  - graduates, knowledge and finance workers
- ▶ Conservatives strongest in the least London-ish places in administrative London - Bromley and Bexley in 'Kent' and Havering in 'Essex'
- ▶ Note there are usually unanticipated consequences over the long term of attempts to 'engineer' demographics, (e.g council house building and sales)

## More young people

Median age in London is 35.6, in the UK it is 40.3

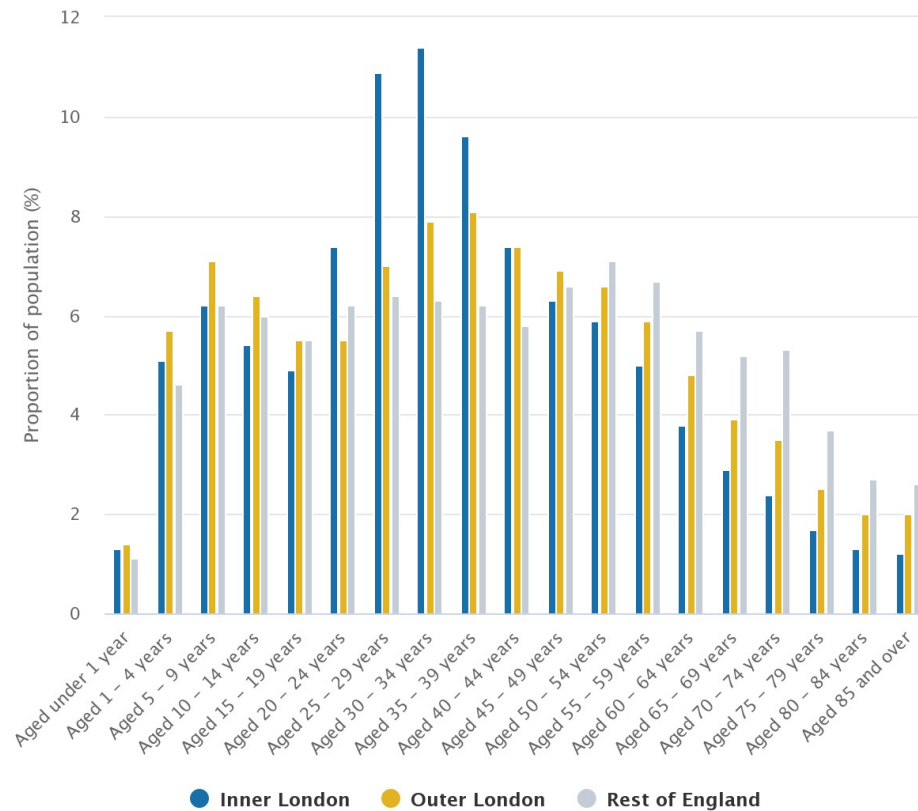
Proportion aged over 65 in London is 12 per cent, in the UK it is 20 per cent.

The Conservative share among under-35s was 24 per cent in 2019

The Conservative share among over-65s was 64 per cent in 2019

## Population by age-groups (2019)

Data source: Population estimates – local authority based by five year age band, Nomis API



## More graduates

Inner London's employed population is more than 60 per cent graduates

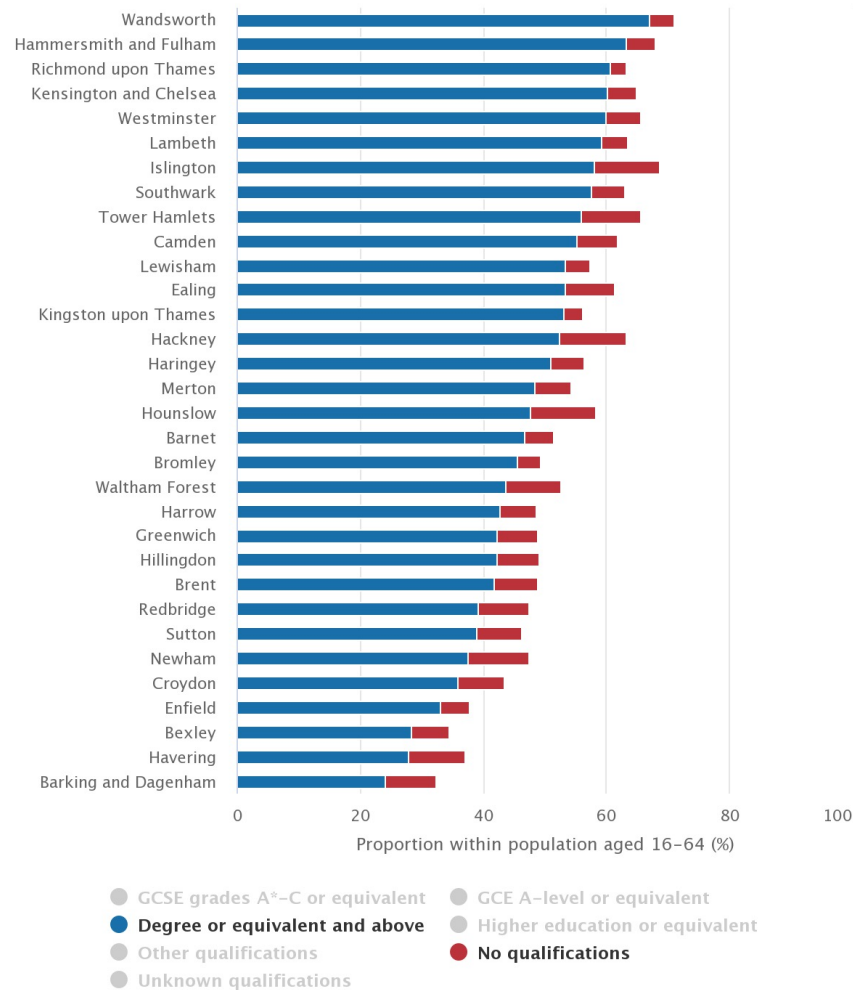
The UK average is 42 per cent, i.e. if it were a London borough, it would be in the bottom third, around Brent and Hillingdon

The North East is 29 per cent graduate

Conservative share among graduates in 2019 was 34 per cent, among people with no qualifications 59 per cent (Ipsos-Mori)

## Highest qualification levels obtained for working-age population by London borough (2019)

Data source: Annual Population Survey, NOMIS



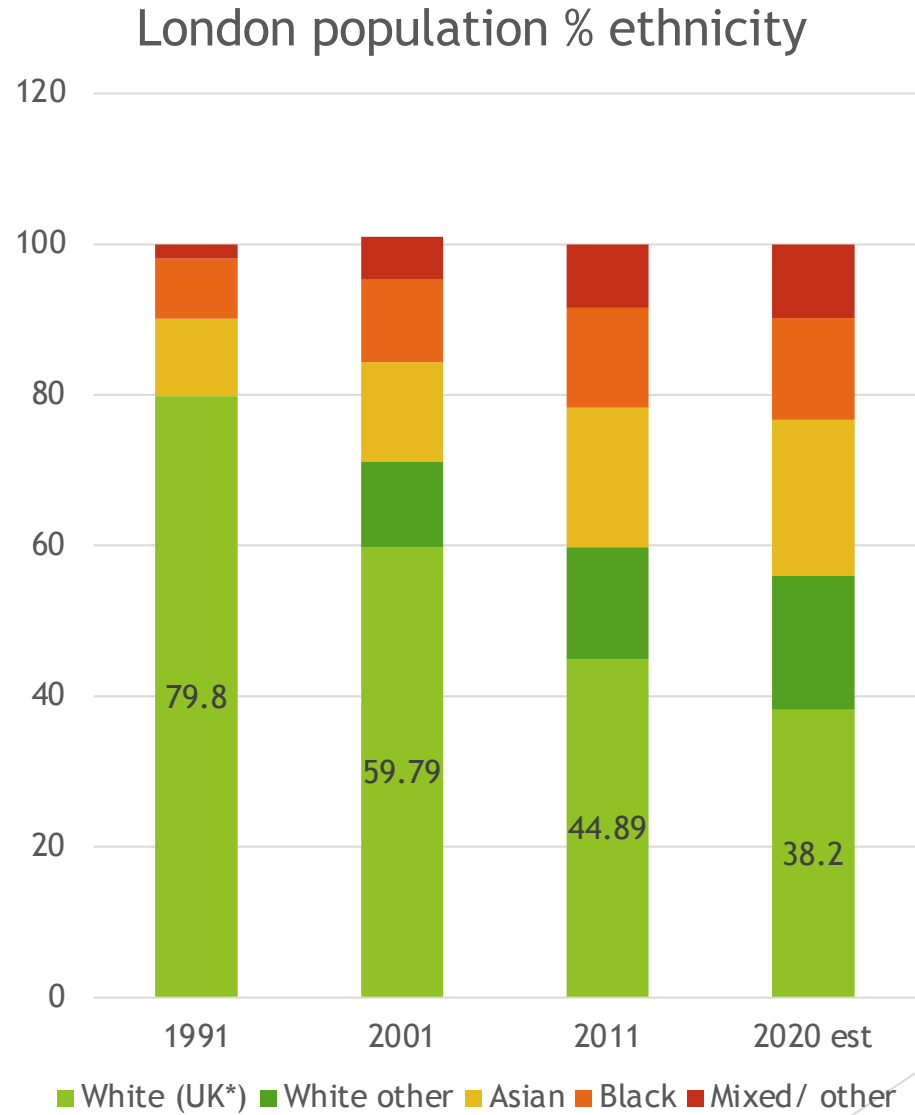
## More BAME people

Conservative support has not risen much since 1997 among BAME electors:

18 per cent in 1997

20 per cent in 2019

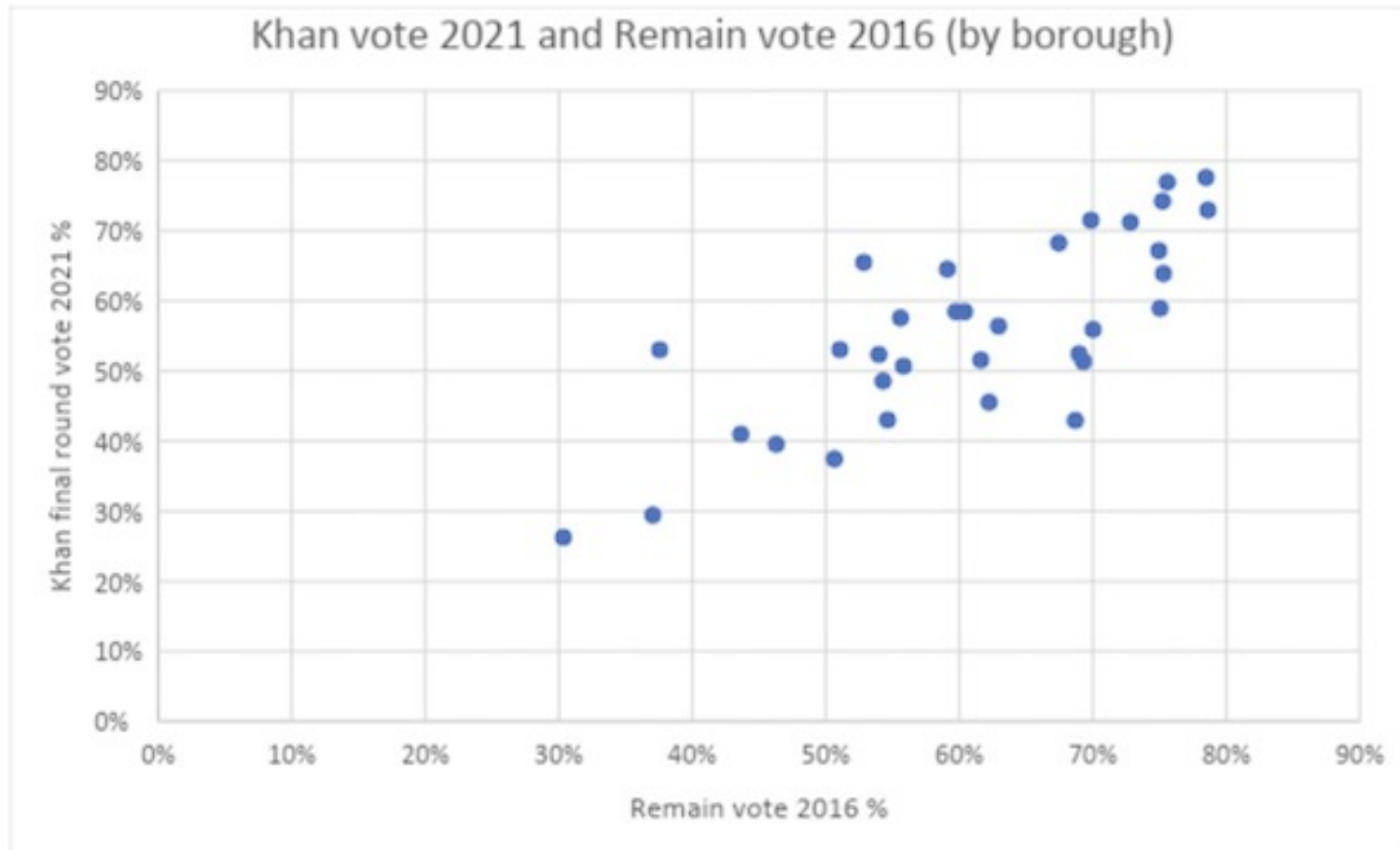
The up-tick to 23 per cent (possibly more) in 2015 has not been sustained



# What causes Conservative problems in London?

2. Political choices

# The Brexit hangover



# If you run against London, you can't expect London to vote for you

- ▶ The broad realignment of electoral forces in England has favoured the Conservatives powerfully. They have gained far more in seats (and a bit more in votes) than they have lost
- ▶ Writing off London is rational, from a cost-benefit electoral analysis
- ▶ Running against London, Sadiq Khan and the so-called metropolitan elite works with anti-London opinion in much of the rest of England
- ▶ But is it healthy, and is it respectable conservatism, to do so? Is it sensible to be systematically hostile to the principal sites of wealth generation and the political interests associated with them?



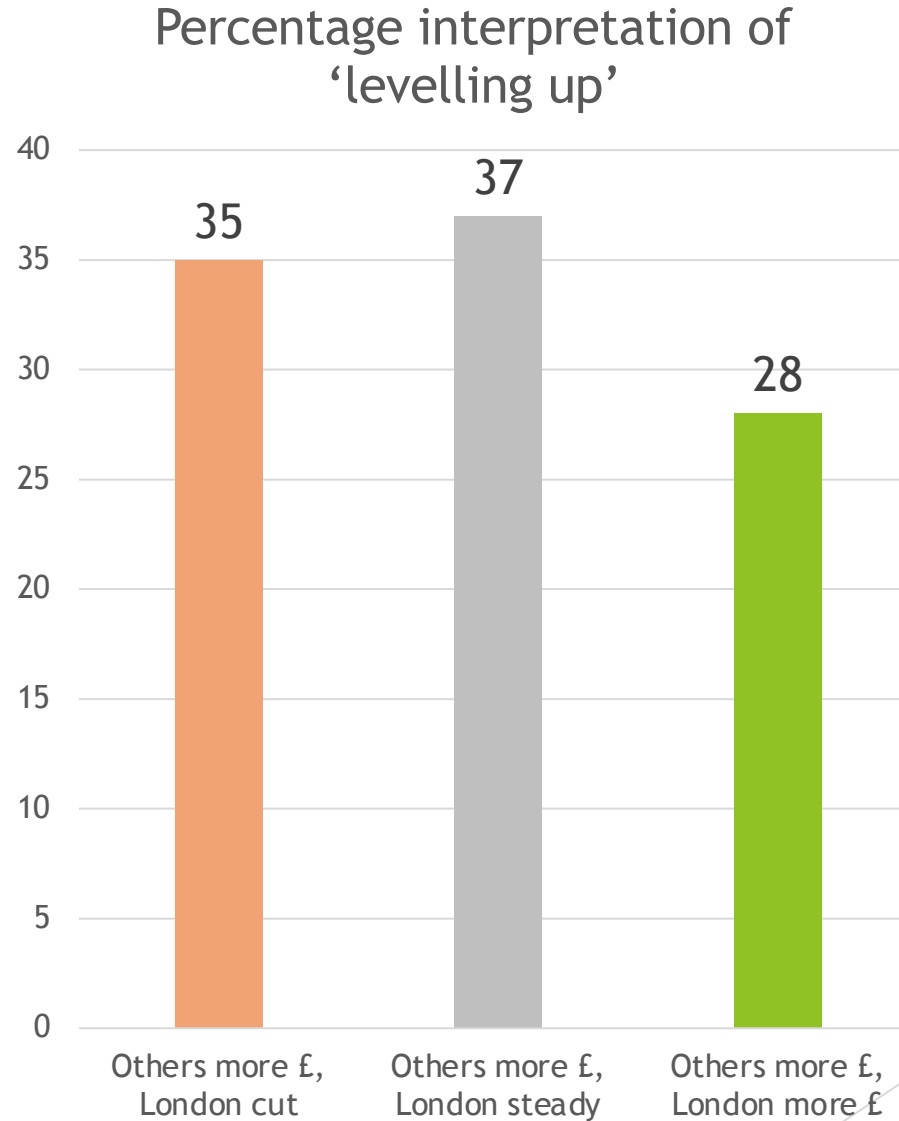
## Londoners and 'Levelling Up'

Boris Johnson and the Conservative Party have frequently declared their aim to “level up” the United Kingdom, particularly with a view towards addressing regional inequalities. As a Londoner, how have you interpreted this agenda?

(Redfield & Wilton 13/14 Jan 2021 online, London)

Consistent across party support, though young people more optimistic than the older.

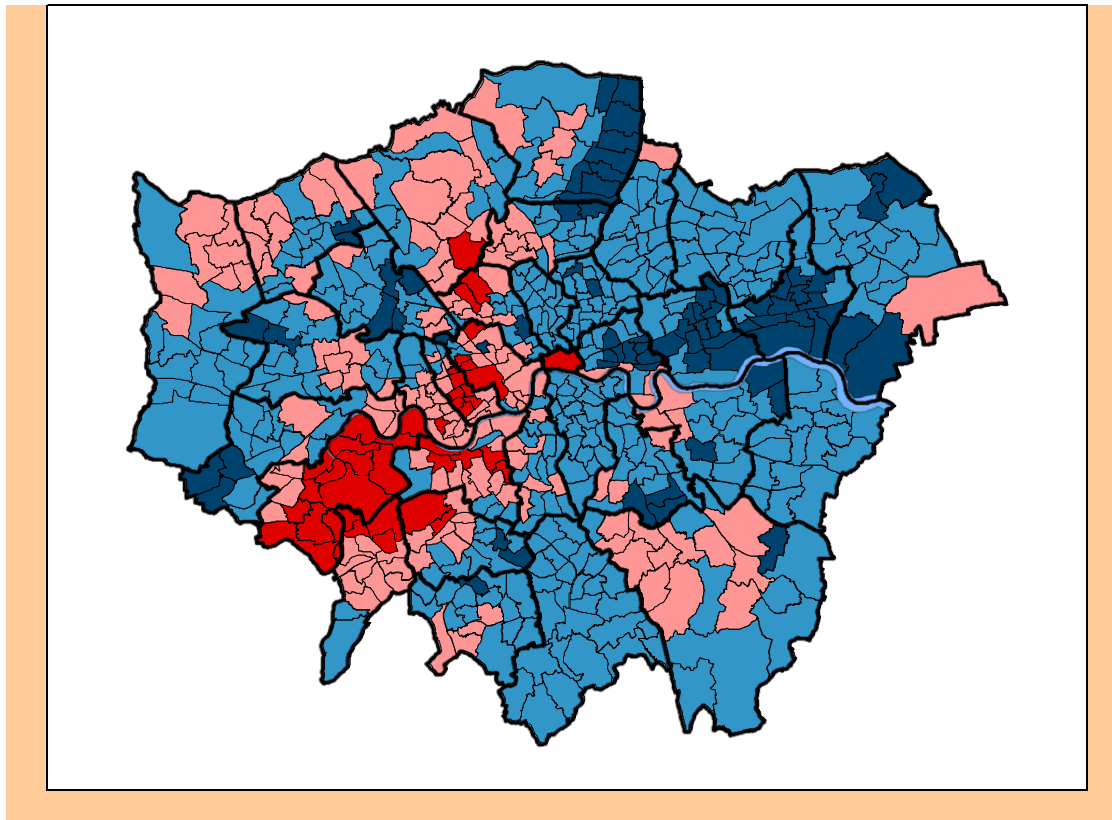
Punitive approach to big cities in other countries - Budapest and Warsaw



# The 2021 elections and the future

The background of the slide is white with abstract green geometric shapes on the right side. These shapes include overlapping triangles and polygons in various shades of green, from light lime to dark forest green. A thin, light grey line also extends from the bottom right towards the center of the slide.

# An emerging map? *Mayoral swing 2016 to 2021*



# Voting by TfL fare zone, Mayoral election 2021

Zone	Bailey round 1	Khan round 1	Bailey % round 1	Khan % round 1	Lead % round 1	Swing 2016/21	Bailey % round 2	Khan % round 2	Lead % round 2
1	40,974	52,524	31.6	40.5	-8.9	-1.4	42.1	57.9	-15.8
2	130,306	265,034	24.0	48.8	-24.8	0.8	32.2	67.8	-35.7
3	149,763	270,783	26.3	47.6	-21.3	2.0	34.6	65.4	-30.8
4	209,415	208,108	38.7	38.4	0.2	4.5	48.1	51.9	-3.9
5	199,852	140,096	45.4	31.8	13.6	3.2	55.9	44.1	11.8
6	162,497	75,597	53.2	24.8	28.5	0.8	64.6	35.4	29.1

# Potential upsides for the London Conservatives?

- ▶ Vote was severely tested in 2021 by the Mayoral contest, but it held and even increased 0.3 %
- ▶ Positives in the Bailey approach?  
Ability to communicate with working class and BAME voters on gut issues
- ▶ Mobilisation of suburbs - nostalgia politics and motoring interests can count even in (parts of) London
- ▶ Little fragments of “Red Wall” in Dagenham and Enfield
- ▶ Not completely detached from rest of England
- ▶ Labour’s coalition in London is very wide and may not hold together:  
Diversity of BAME Londoners (and examples of Barnet Jews and Harrow Hindus)  
Social liberals/ conservatives  
Wealthy and renters
- ▶ Turnout
- ▶ Rise of the Greens
- ▶ Labour as municipal establishment

# Future trends?

- ▶ A tough ask to grow London Conservative support at the next General Election, given that 2019 probably a national high point
- ▶ London has been growing strongly since 2001. Possible reversion with COVID, home working and decentralisation? Loss of rank as a world city?
- ▶ Densification, planning and housing
- ▶ Next stage of outward movement from London into the South East - just as the Conservative position eroded in outer London will it do so in the outer metropolitan area from Chesham and out to Surrey, Sussex, Southend...
- ▶ Cities always surprise us.

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