

Daughters and Leftwing Voting

Andrew Oswald

Nick Powdthavee

The key idea

**Sons push you to the
right.**

The key idea

**Sons push you to the
right.**



**Daughters, by contrast,
push you to the left.**

They make you:



As people gradually acquire female and male children, their political preferences change.

This appears to happen subconsciously.

We somehow start to 'represent' our sons and daughters.

One unusual thought in passing

It seems to be accepted that parents' political attitudes rub off a little on their offspring.

But then:

**This raises the possibility that:
*a person's leftwing-ness may stem from a disproportionate number of females in their family's previous generations.***

*How large is the
child-gender effect?*

**According to our estimates,
each daughter increases a
person's probability of voting
Left by about 2 percentage
points.**

A preliminary taste of the evidence

In Britain:

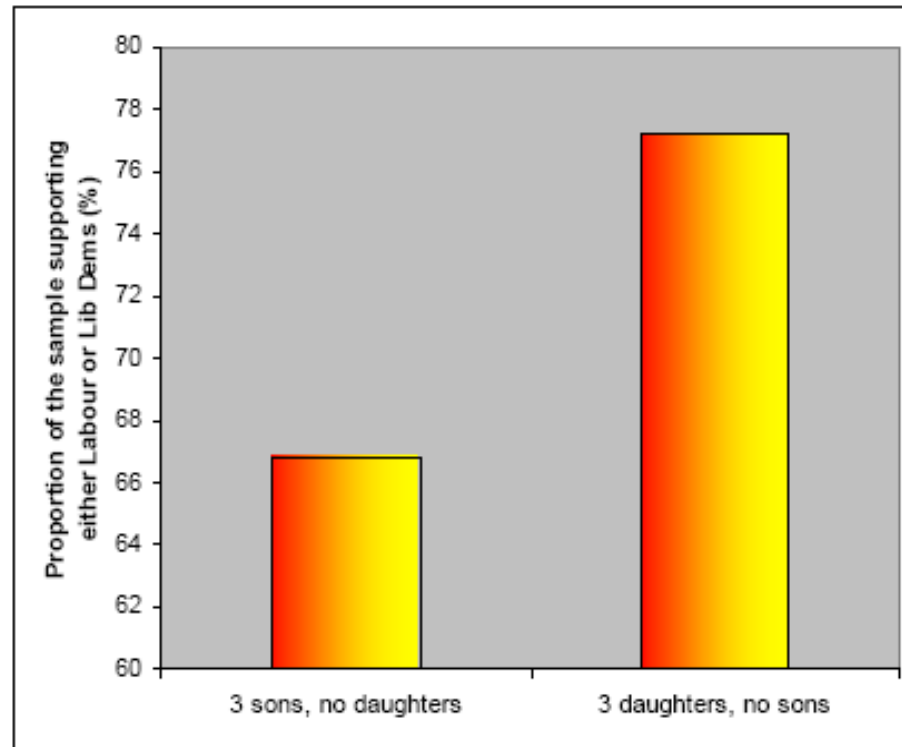
A preliminary taste of the evidence

In Britain in our data:

About 78% of people with 3 daughters and no sons vote Labour-LibDemocrat

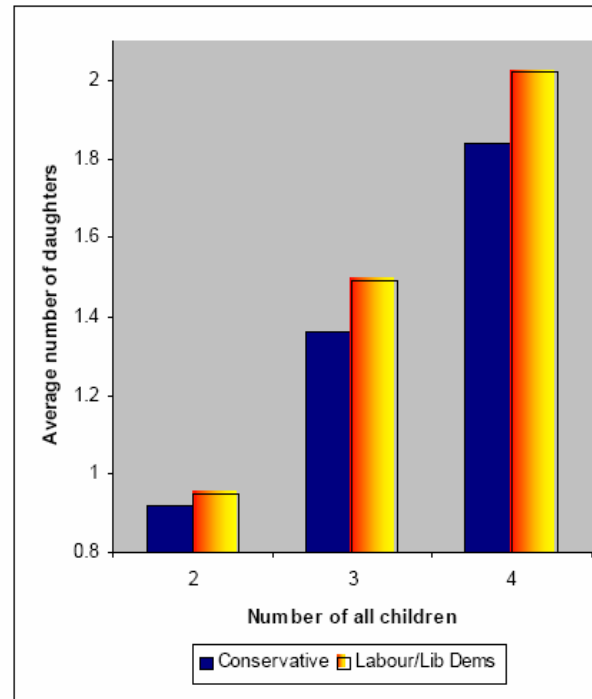
About 67% of people with 3 sons and no daughters vote Labour-LibDemocrat

% Voting Labour-LibDem



Note: there were 1,050 observations with 3 sons and no daughters, and 947 observations with 3 daughters and no sons. The *t*-test statistics [p-value] of whether the proportion of people supporting either Labour or Liberal Democrats between the two groups is equal is -3.035 [0.002]. The adjusted *t*-test statistics [p-value] for clustering by personal identification of whether the proportion of people supporting either Labour or Liberal Democrats between the two groups is equal is -1.531 [0.127].

The correlation seems to be strong:

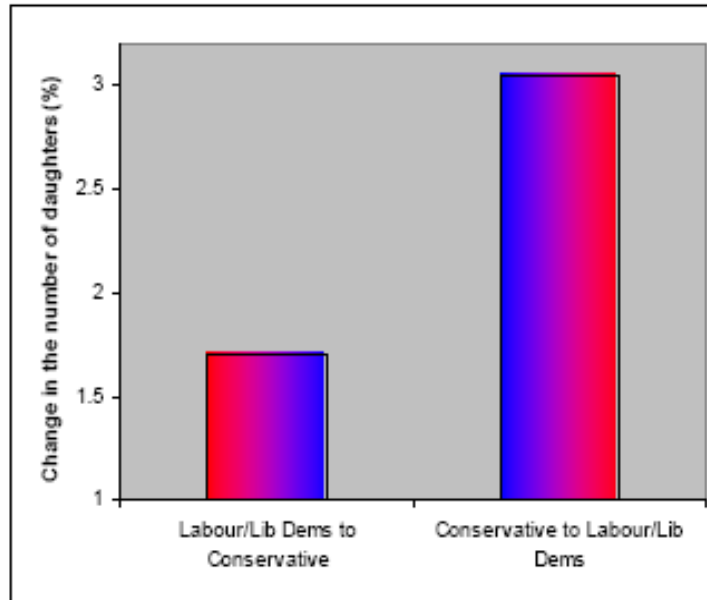


Note: there were 3,859 (7,453) observations preferring Conservative (Labour/Lib Dems) over other parties with 2 children; 1,171 (2,534) observations preferring Conservatives (Labour/Lib Dems) with 3 children; and 217 (601) observations preferring Conservatives (Labour/Lib Dems) with 4 children. The *t*-test statistics [p-value] of whether the mean number of daughters between the two groups is equal are -2.535 [0.000] (*N* of children = 2), -3.999 [0.000] (*N* of children = 3), and -2.577 [0.000] (*N* of children = 4). The adjusted *t*-test statistics [p-value] for clustering by personal identification of whether the mean number of daughters between the two groups is equal are -0.822 [0.411] (*N* of children = 2), -1.354 [0.176] (*N* of children = 3), and -0.844 [0.377] (*N* of children = 4).

These are, admittedly, just simple cross-section patterns.

To try to explore causality, it is more interesting to look at 'switchers'.

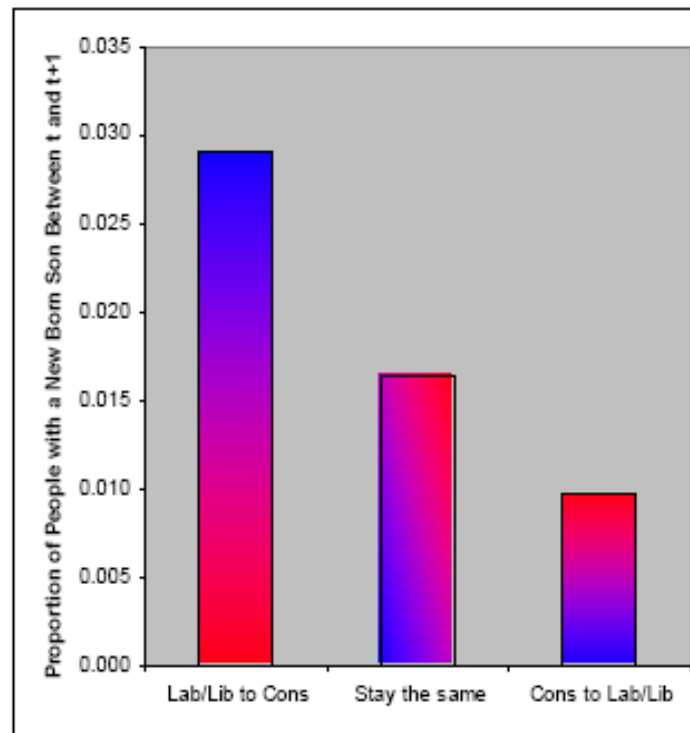
Having daughters is, on average, accompanied by parents moving to the Left



Note: there were 539 switches from Labour/Lib Dems to Conservative, and 802 from Conservative to Labour/Lib Dems. The adjusted *t*-test statistics [p-value] for clustering by personal identification of whether the change in the number of daughters between the two groups is equal is -3.131 [0.000].

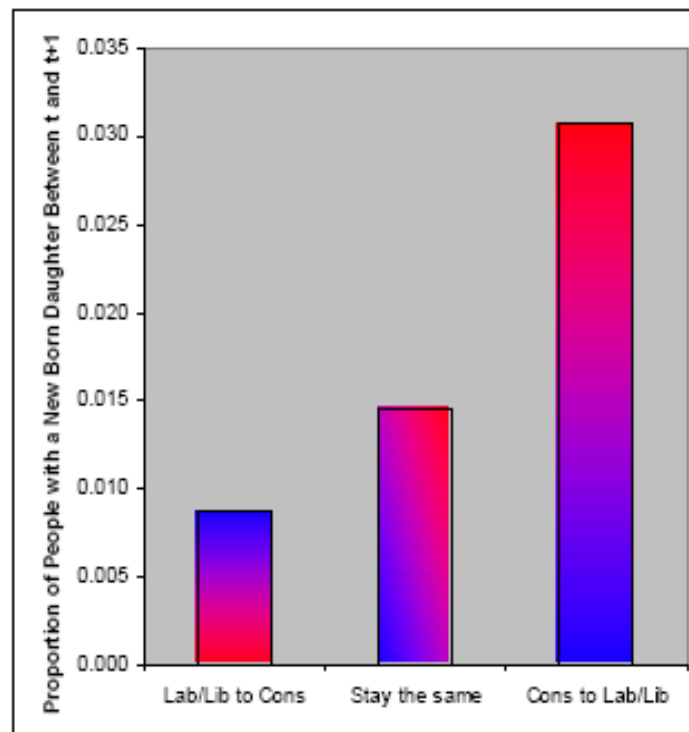
It is detectable in the birth year.

It is detectable in the birth year. After having a new boy baby:



Note: the sample is restricted to those with no previous records of having daughters or sons in the household. There were 344 switches from Labour/Lib Dems to Conservative, and 515 from Conservative to Labour/Lib Dems. There were 28,171 observations that stayed the same. The adjusted t -test statistics [p-value] for clustering by personal identification of whether the change in the number of daughters between the two groups of switchers is equal is 2.349 [0.0191].

While after having a new girl baby:

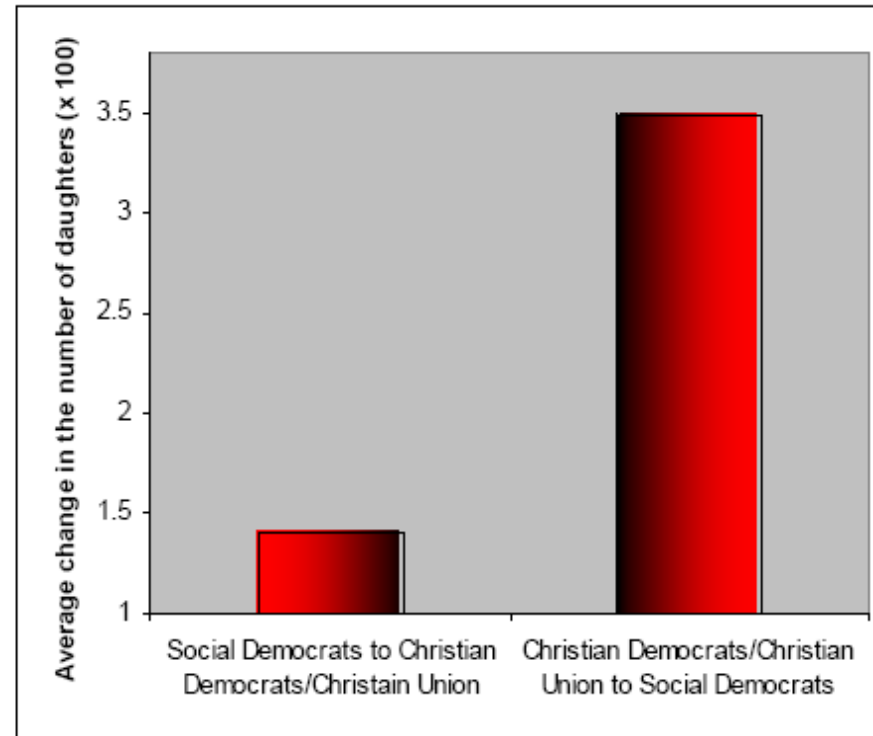


Note: the sample is restricted to those with no previous records of having daughters or sons in the household. There were 344 switches from Labour/Lib Dems to Conservative, and 521 from Conservative to Labour/Lib Dems. There were 28,445 observations that stayed the same. The adjusted t -test statistics [p-value] for clustering by personal identification of whether the change in the number of daughters between the two groups of switchers is equal is -1.981 [0.0479].

**Of course, this might be
some kind of coincidence in
British data.**

*We decided to try exploring the
German Socioeconomic Panel
between 1985-2002.*

Approximately the same pattern is found in Germany



Note: there were 638 switches from Social Democrats to Christian Democrats/Christian Union, and 660 from Christian Democrats/Christian Union to Social Democrats between T and $T+1$. The adjusted t -test statistics [p-value] for clustering by personal identification of whether the change in the number of daughters between the two groups is equal is -2.125 [0.034].

**What about the possible
confounding influences?**

In both countries:

The statistical link between daughters and leftwing voting seems to hold up when we control, using various kind of regression equations, for

age, education, income, etc

Pippa Norris of Harvard has shown that, in both the US and the UK, younger women seem gradually to be becoming more leftwing.

Rosie Campbell at Birkbeck

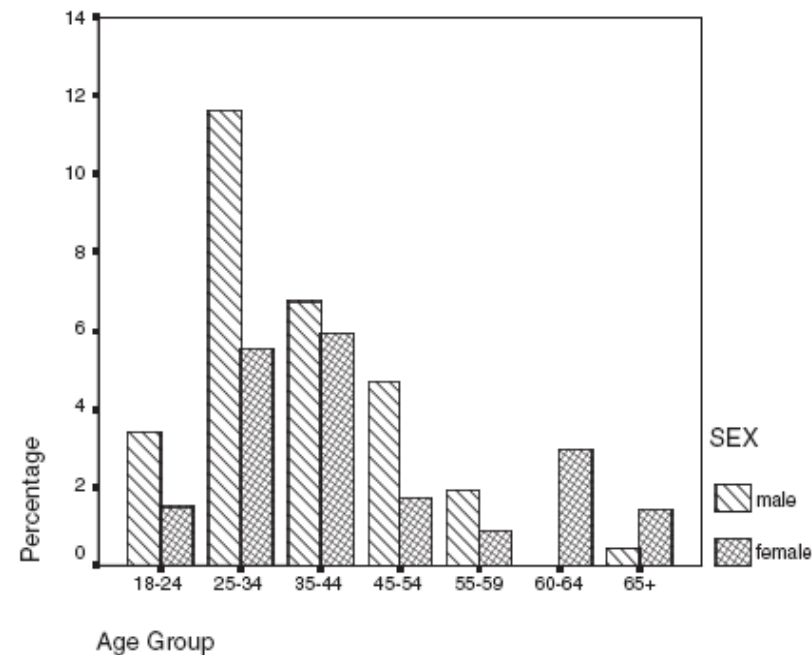
-- Has done interesting recent work looking at gender differences in attitudes here (BJPIR 2004).

She finds that, politically, British males and females have different priorities.

For example:

Men care more about taxes

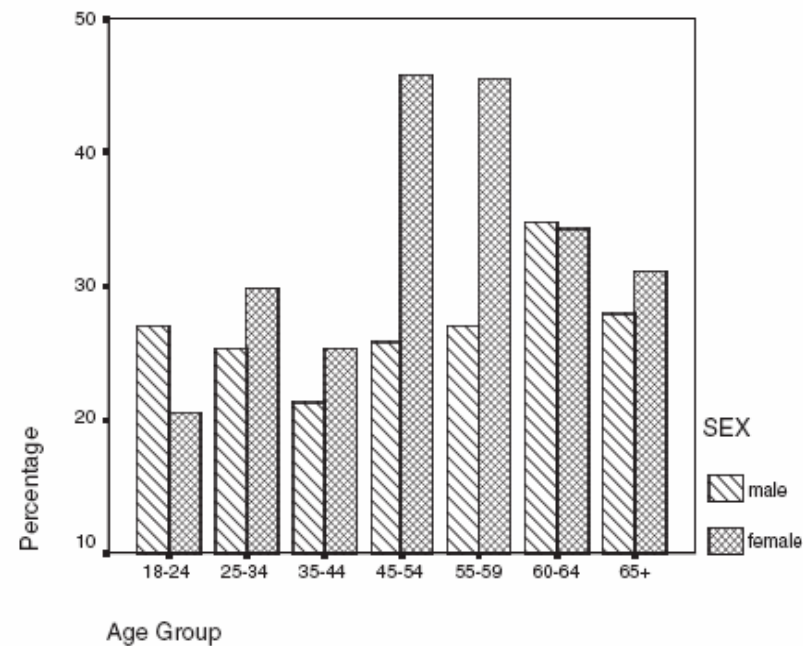
Figure 4: Respondents Who Stated that Taxation Was their Most Important Election Issue, by Age Group and Sex, from the 2001 BES



The difference between the sexes is significant at the 0.01 level for the respondents aged between 25 and 34. (Chi square test)

Women care more about NHS

Figure 2: Respondents Who Named the NHS as the Most Important Election Issue, by Age and Sex, 2001 BES



The difference between the sexes is significant at the 0.01 level for the respondents aged 55 to 59 and at the 0.001 level for the respondents aged between 45 and 54. (Chi square test)

In the paper we lay out a formal model in which

- There is pay discrimination against women**
- Women place a higher marginal value on public goods**

Then females are, in a sense, intrinsically more leftwing than males. Their fathers may conceivably subconsciously reflect that.

**Clearly other theories are possible.
All we know for sure is that there
appears to be a strong pattern in
the data.**

**Clearly other theories are possible.
All we know for sure is that there
appears to be a strong pattern in
the data.**

And how do I vote?



I am afraid I could not possibly say.

Daughters and Leftwing Voting

**Andrew Oswald
Nick Powdthavee**

Paper and supporting material downloadable at
www.oswald.co.uk