

UK's political center ground could be further to the left than thought, research suggests

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Table 1: Where strong party supporters and their parties are located ideologically

	Greens	Labour	SNP	Lib Dem	UKIP	Con
Where they place their party	2.30	3.44	3.55	4.63	7.28	7.82
Where they place themselves	2.40	2.97	3.65	4.40	6.77	7.53
Where we place them (‘objective’ measure)	1.65	1.60	1.86	2.88	2.62	5.08

Where strong party supporters and their parties are located ideologically. Credit: University of Sussex/Queen Mary University of London

The centre ground of British politics could be further to the left than we think, according to new research by the University of Sussex and Queen Mary University of London.

A study into the views of supporters of the main political parties in the country suggests that many are more left wing than they think they are.

The researchers asked enthusiastic supporters of the Conservatives, Greens, Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP and UKIP to place themselves,

the party they support, and the other five parties on an ideological scale from zero (very left-wing) to 10 (very right-wing).

They then asked them some direct, ideologically-charged questions in order to build up a picture of their underlying political attitudes.

The results, [published online](#), show a mismatch between these arguably more objective measures and the subjective answers given by the participants.

For example, diehard Conservative supporters locate their party at 7.82 on the left-right spectrum (ie considerably right of centre) and place themselves at 7.53. But the more 'objective' measure suggests their political leanings are only just right of centre, producing a score of 5.08.

The pattern is consistent across the six parties, with UKIP providing the most striking example. UKIP supporters see themselves as closer to the centre ground (6.77) than their party as a whole (7.28), while the researchers measured them as being considerably left of centre (2.62).

Table 2: Where supporters of each party place other parties on the Left-Right scale

Left (0) - Right (10) scores given to parties

Supporters ↓	Green	Lab	SNP	Lib Dem	UKIP	Con
Green	2.30	4.67	3.46	5.16	9.04	8.37
Lab	3.23	3.44	3.75	5.35	8.21	8.36
SNP	3.14	4.77	3.55	5.57	8.18	8.42
Lib Dem	2.74	3.40	3.27	4.63	8.46	7.94
UKIP	2.30	2.21	2.06	3.52	7.28	7.00
Con	2.26	1.98	1.37	4.12	7.52	7.82
Mean	2.73	3.41	2.78	4.74	8.28	8.02

Where supporters of each party place other parties on the left-right scale. Credit: University of Sussex/Queen Mary University of London

The researchers do strike a note of caution, however, in drawing too many firm conclusions.

Professor Paul Webb, Professor of Politics at the University of Sussex, said: "While our findings appear to show that we may be a more left-wing bunch than we commonly perceive, some of this could be down to the questions we asked to obtain our 'objective' score.

"Although we used a standard measure, it only satisfactorily taps into the

Provided by University of Sussex

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