

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOPE not hate first commissioned our *Fear and HOPE* research in 2011, when the organisation found itself on the front-line of a new politics of identity. At a time when the British National Party were in decline but the EDL were on the rise and UKIP were positioning themselves as a more respectable face to the radical right, we were dealing with a shift away from the politics of race and immigration of the past, towards a politics of culture, identity and nation.

We developed six 'identity tribes' to better understand the lines that divide us, what brings us together, and to understand what fears were driving hate in our communities, and where we could foster hope.

A decade later, we recommissioned our *Fear and HOPE* research to better understand how social attitudes have changed over the last decade. In the recovery from a global pandemic but heading into economic recession, amidst a political context of culture wars, Brexit fallouts and fracturing across the political spectrum, our research finds a new alignment of identity politics, and the emergence of a new reactionary right threat.

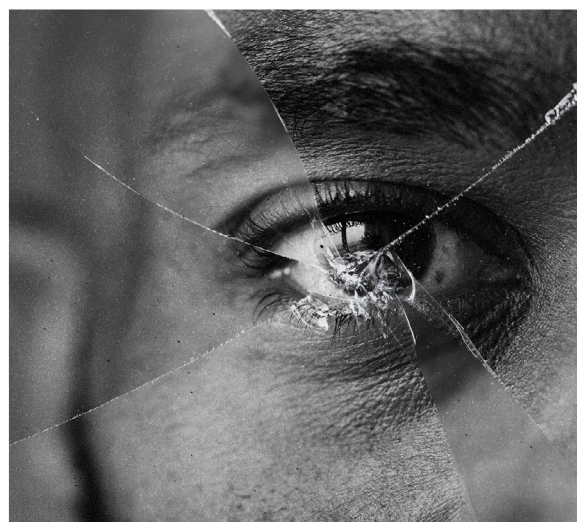
- Over the last decade, there has been a huge shift in public attitudes as overall, society has become more socially liberal. We are, on the whole, a far more open and tolerant society, and while many challenges remain, we are more confident to speak out about social injustices, especially around race and sexuality, than we were ten years ago.
- In 2011, just under half the population felt immigration had been good for the country (40%) while now a majority agree (56%). And while just 29% said that the different ethnic groups that make up this country get along well in 2011, a decade later this stands at 41%.
- But as a society, we are more likely to feel disappointed with our own lives (32%) than we were in 2011 (25%) and less in control of our own successes (35% compared to 25% in 2011). The precarity many feel as we enter a difficult economic period is likely to spread. And for some, this is articulated through an assertion of status based on identity.
- Anti-Muslim prejudice and anti-asylum narratives are deeply engrained, while the

'culture wars' have reframed questions of racial equality, gender and sexuality, to fuel a reactionary identity politics that kicks back against progressive norms. Attitudes on key social issues are now less structured by ideology than they were ten years ago, with a greater focus on single issues.

- Identity politics have increasingly been framed around a reaction to progressive values, cutting across multiple issues, from modern masculinity to structural racism and trans rights. Meanwhile a crystallisation among those with the most socially liberal views has meant a progressive worldview has increasingly been weaponised by the reactionary right to tap into new audiences.
- While our research reaffirms that the culture wars are not reflected in deep societal polarisation, as public attitudes remain balanced and often largely ambivalent on key 'culture war' issues, we do find that this

**HATE  
HOPE**  
CHARITABLE TRUST

## FEAR AND HOPE 2022 A REALIGNMENT OF IDENTITY POLITICS



strategy has had an impact in reframing political debates, and in turn, is shaping a more reactive identity politics. Not all issues have become 'polarised' in the same way. Indeed, as the politics of identity have played out over the last decade, certain attitudes, values, or framings on key issues have become more dominant.

- The new politics of identity is structured around four elements; attitudes around identity, political and institutional trust, attitudes towards different cultures and religions and openness to conspiracy theory.
- The far right have, for a long time, targeted a stable demographic of older, non-graduate, white British voters, more often male than female, and generally living in areas outside of core cities. But our research highlights that with a shift away from ideologically structured views, demographic characteristics are less of an attitudinal predictor.
- Rather than a unified bloc of 'far-right' voters, the new politics of identity opens up opportunities for those peddling hate to bring together a diverse collective of voters who hold reactionary views on certain issues. Our research highlights the importance of understanding how to engage with these new audiences.
- There is a worrying growth of reactionary identity issues amongst young people – and in particular young men. We find that it is younger people who are far more likely to voice support for a reactionary right party that stands against 'woke culture', while the strongest opposition comes from older respondents. This would seem to contradict trends, whereby younger people are more socially liberal overall, and more likely to vote for parties on the political left. But the changing nature of the political right, the rise of reactionary identity politics, and the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on young people has opened space for a new party on the right to gain ground with young voters.
- People's relationships with authority, trust and institutions will be a key battleground for the coming years. For most, politics is a 'one-way-street'. Overall, 65% of our poll agreed that voting is the best way to have your voice heard by those in power, with only 13% in disagreement. Just 26% said that they felt confident that local councillors act in their best interests, while a majority (54%) felt that none of the main political parties speak for them. 57% agreed with the statement 'the political system is broken'.
- Economic inequality continues to shape attitudes and create openings for division.

It is the growing economic difficulties that many people will face over the next year that offer the far right, as well as a populist or reactionary right, their best hope to expand. The impacts of the cost of living crisis, and the wider economic impact as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the implications of Brexit will all hit the poorest in society hardest.

- The new politics of identity has not evolved, and will not play out, spontaneously. Shifts in public opinion are strongly influenced by events and their political framings. In an increasingly issue based setting, being able to create and capitalise on events, moments and opportunities is essential. Just as the 'culture wars' have shifted the debate to a more reactionary place, the creation of moments and opportunities can turn the dial to a more progressive place.
- In response to the rise of reactionary youth as a new and key change in society, HOPE not hate is developing a new work stream to address this. We plan to make youth radicalisation a priority area for the organisation over the next few years, utilising skills and expertise from our research, education, policy and campaign teams.

