

Title: Representations of Economic Inequality and Redistribution in British Party Manifestos (2005 - 2024)

Authors: Daniel Walsh, Sonja Zmerli, Blaise Mouton, Linnéa Warnberg

Université Grenoble Alpes

1. Abstract

Drawing on a corpus of mainstream party political manifestos from UK General Elections between 2005 and 2024 (655,528 words), we explored representations of ‘economic inequality’ and ‘redistribution’. We used a mixed-methodological approach. Key-word analyses supported by natural language processing described semantic frequency trends in ‘economic inequality’ and ‘redistribution’, comparing results against national-level objective indicators of economic inequality. We also explored the semantics of economic inequality and redistribution qualitatively, focusing on the regular affects and metaphors through which these concepts were understood within society.

Our results suggested that the limited relationship between objective measures of inequality and the semantics of economic inequality likely relate to differences in underlying concepts. Specifically, political communicators focused on ‘equality of opportunity’, particularly concerns for discrimination and social mobility, rather than on distributions of wealth and income. We found an emphasis on mechanisms for redistribution in the welfare state over extended discussions of economic inequality. This likely related to the affective value placed on esteemed social groups (e.g., dignified pensioners, hard-working families), who were brought into public attention through redistributive policies (e.g., the pensioners’ triple lock). We also found that political parties were not neutral to economic inequality or redistribution. Instead, there was evidence that the politicization of these concepts and their effects on socialization were related to practices that held alternative parties responsible for perceived failures in the ‘British dream’. These issues included the Global Financial Crisis and EU membership.

Our research highlights the basis for public opinion on economic inequality and redistribution. We point out that how economic inequality and redistribution are considered by the public cannot be thought of solely as predicated on abstract knowledge or general motivations. Instead, these issues are, in part, derived from how they are propagated in society by elite political communicators.

2. Introduction

Despite substantial evidence showing that economic inequality harms political, societal, and economic spheres (Stiglitz 2012; Schäfer, Schwander 2019), it is still surprising that high levels of income and wealth inequality do not necessarily lead to greater demands for redistribution (Choi 2019; Franetovic, Castello 2022; Haddon, Wu 2022; Reyes, Gasparini 2022; Schulz et al. 2022). In other words, more inequality does not always result in increased public discontent that can be used for political gain. This contradicts the well-known ‘median voter’ hypothesis (Meltzer, Richard 1981), which suggests that higher inequality should lead to more political pressure for redistribution.

There seems to be a significant disconnect between how citizens personally experience, perceive, and evaluate economic inequality and the actual extent and trends of inequality in society. Various explanations have been proposed for this widespread phenomenon. From a structural perspective, it is suggested that in more unequal societies, people live in socio-economically segregated communities. This segregation reduces opportunities for people to meet and compare themselves with those who are either better or worse off (Schulz et al. 2022; Willis et al. 2022). Psychological explanations highlight the negative effects of comparing oneself with wealthier individuals. These comparisons can harm self-esteem and well-being, making people less likely to focus on the

economic situation of the better off. Alternatively, they may create justifications for the wealth of others (Condon, Wichowsky 2020). Both of these factors reduce the likelihood of individuals demanding more redistribution.

Despite the complex and often inconsistent relationships between individual and macro-level economic inequality, a recent Chilean study has found strong connections between how people perceive different types of income inequality and their general attitudes towards wealth redistribution¹ (García-Castro et al. 2022). These perceptions often relate to pay differentials, personal experiences of inequality, or societal assessments represented in diagrams. The study's analyses suggest that attitudes towards inequality, though closely linked to perceptions, also need to be examined (García-Castro et al. 2022: 285). This suggests that, under the right conditions, people have the capacity to relate their evaluations of inequality and redistribution. However, this socio-cognitive approach does not consider the wider socio-political basis for why certain situations are perceived as signs of inequality in everyday life or the moral framework used to evaluate them, rendering it difficult to establish ecological validity for findings or suggest possible policy implications.

2.1. Theoretical & Methodological Framework

In this study, we aimed to understand the socio-political basis for how 'economic inequality' was recognized in society and the beliefs that influenced these evaluations and proposed solutions. Inequality and redistribution were not treated as neutral concepts; instead, they were seen as part of a process of politicisation, which shaped social norms and values. Empirical studies have confirmed that politicians and political parties significantly influence the agenda by offering ideological cues and exerting priming effects (Brooks 2012; Camargo 2012; Ervasti 2012; Goodman, Jowett 2019). Elite discourses and their relationships with the mass media play crucial roles in maintaining social norms and shaping how inequality and redistribution were evaluated (de Melo Resende, Ramalho 2013; Larsen 2013).

We focused on elite British political communications, specifically General Election party manifestos from 2005 to 2024. We consider party manifestos to provide insight into the basis of lay understanding, as manifestos likely shape public thinking on economic inequality and redistribution through their influence on media discourses and the policy environment (Eder et al., 2017). This policy environment, in turn, likely affects everyday aspects of society such as housing, education, and health, providing opportunities for recognizing inequality in everyday life (Jovchelovitch, 2019).

By examining British political party manifestos from 2005 to 2024, we argued that economic inequality was not an abstract concept but one that was reproduced in society. We appreciated that different political groups may propagate different versions of economic inequality. For example, the Labour party's vision of economic inequality could differ significantly from that of the Conservative party. Moreover, economic inequality was not considered in isolation; we considered how it may compete with alternative visions of what was good or bad, right or wrong, fair or unfair, including beliefs concerning social mobility, poverty, and other forms of inequality.

By exploring possible competing representations of economic inequality and redistribution, we were able to critically engage with explanations of political behaviour offered by the median voter hypothesis (Meltzer, Richard 1981) and its subsequent revisions. In these rational choice models, consensus on the nature of economic distributions and associated redistributive solutions are largely taken-for-granted. Namely, from a rational choice perspective, it would have been expected that the recognition of economic inequality in political discourse would parallel the formulation of redistributive solutions by mainstream parties. However, our research did not uncritically accept this assumption. Instead, we carefully explored what was treated as 'economic inequality' or 'redistribution' and the possible logical relations between them. We also considered that what was treated as

¹Attitudes towards income inequality were measured using a single-item scale adapted from ISPP (2017). Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "In Chile, income differences are too large." General attitudes towards wealth redistribution were measured using a two-item scale adapted from Dawtry et al. (2015). Participants were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements: "I think the government should redistribute wealth by charging higher taxes to rich people" and "Wealth in this country should be distributed more equitably, also reaching groups with fewer resources".

‘economic inequality’ might not necessarily relate to distributions of income or wealth. Instead, it could align with the speaker's motivations, such as beliefs concerning poverty, discrimination, or social mobility. Furthermore, we were sensitive to the idea that what was treated as ‘value,’ and thus subject to redistribution, might go beyond ‘income’ or ‘wealth’ and include values attributed through recognition of identity, which could be rewarded or devalued in society, aspects of which pay subtly implied through ritualised metaphors (e.g., the broadest shoulders), symbols (e.g., triple-lock) and affects (e.g., dignity)..

2.2. Summary of contributions.

Based on these methodological considerations, we will trace the usage of the semantics of ‘economic inequality’, as well as ‘redistribution’ in all major British political parties' manifestos over a period of 20 years. By tracing the development of how these concepts are represented by political parties, we will identify four key findings: (1) rarely are discussions of mechanisms for redistribution evoked in discussions of economic inequality and are aligned with macro-level economic inequality, (2) equality is equated with 'equality of opportunity' by most parties irrespective of their ideological stance, (3) parties regularly evoke the metaphor of the 'British Dream' and use distance-blame-stigmata patterns, and (4) explicit references to class are rare.

3. Data Collection

3.1. Corpora Construction:

We collated UK General Election Party Manifestos from mainstream parties between 2005 - 2024. The party manifestos were retrieved in PDF format if available from the Manifesto Project or the Internet Archive which saves historical versions of party websites. National election years for the UK were 2005, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2024. We included the three largest parties in terms of Members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons: the Conservative and Unionist Party (Conservatives), Labour Party, Scottish National Party (SNP), and Liberal Democrats (LibDems). During this period, Labour and the Conservatives were the two largest parties, while the LibDems and SNP varied between being the third and fourth largest parties. This captured between 94.7% and 97% of the MPs elected to Parliament. At the time of writing, the UK had called a snap election to be held on July 4th, 2024. At the point of writing, the SNP had not produced a party manifesto, and so no data is reported on the SNP in 2024. This resulted in a corpus of 23 manifestos totaling 655,528 words. Manifesto lengths ranged from 6,858 to 35,115 words, with an average of 22,678 words.

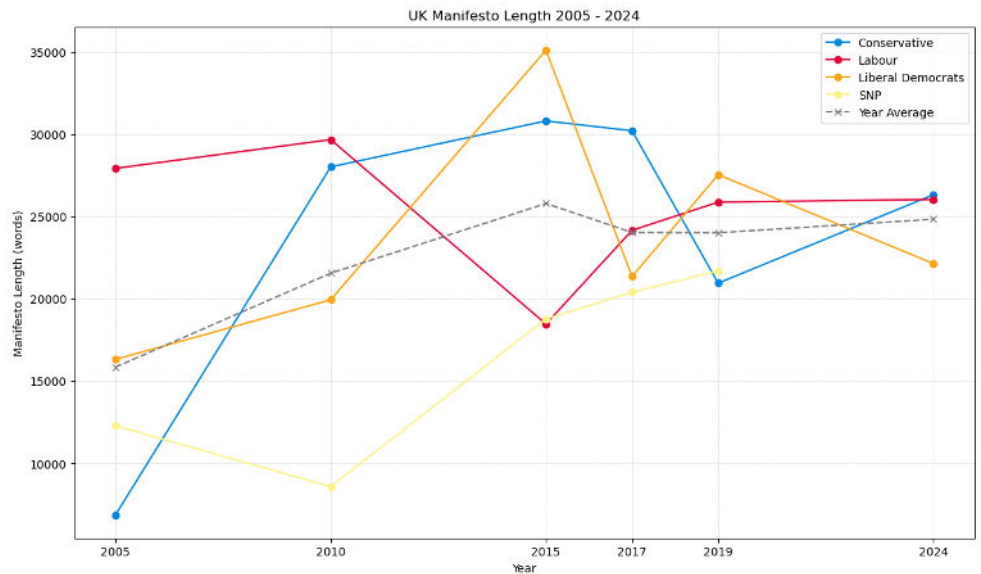
We have detailed text lengths of party manifestos below in table 1 and graph 1.

Table 1: UK Main Party Manifesto Text Lengths in words 2005 - 2024

Year	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Scottish National Party	Year Average
2005	6858	27929	16317	12272	15844
2010	28018	29676	19940	8583	21554
2015	30811	18466	35115	18776	25792
2017	30217	24161	21355	20397	24032
2019	20950	25876	27541	21693	24015
2024	26324	26040	22141	NA	24835
Party	23863	25358	23734	16344	22678

Average					
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Graph 1: UK Main Party Manifesto Text Lengths in Words 2005 - 2024



As we see significant variation in manifesto length over time, both within and between parties, measures of keyword frequency were normalised by party manifesto length (table 1 & graph 1). We have also included raw frequencies for ease of interpretation.

Each corpus was retained in its original form as a PDF. This ensured a multi-modal version was available for subsequent qualitative analysis in MAXQDA 24, including the original layout, images, text sizing, italics, colouring, and bold features. The text from PDFs was extracted using TextEditor and uploaded from a natural language processing environment in Python 3. To enable text analysis, standard preprocessing was applied. This included the removal of standalone numbers (e.g., page numbers, section numbers), elimination of non-alphabetic characters (e.g., punctuation marks, special characters), normalisation of white spaces to ensure consistent spacing between words, and transforming all text to lowercase. English stop-words were removed using standard NLTK packages². Effects of pre-processing were manually checked by a native speaker. For each party and each election year, all text segments were concatenated into a single continuous string, which was then segmented into chunks of exactly 50 words.

3.2. Analysis 1: Quantitative Trends in Economic Inequality & Redistribution

In this initial analysis, we will describe semantic trends related to economic inequality and redistribution. To model trends we employed a keyword approach. We modelled texts according to their relative frequencies of keywords within a 50-word segment normalised by manifesto length. We classified a text as containing keywords related to 'Economic Inequality' and/or 'Redistribution', with results categorised by individual parties. We chose not to aggregate results by political orientation, as separating them by political party allowed us to determine whether economic inequality and redistribution were salient political concerns or strategies of individual political parties rather than general political ideologies. In this exploratory analysis, we also considered if trends in the semantic frequencies of economic inequality and redistribution related to an objective measure of economic inequality, the GINI coefficient.

² These stop-words are common words such as 'the,' 'is,' and 'and' that are typically filtered out in text processing to focus on more meaningful terms. By eliminating these words, the analysis can better highlight significant keywords and patterns in the text, providing clearer insights into the data

3.2.1. Measures:

3.2.1.1. Economic Inequality Key-Words

Key-words to refer to a concept of economic inequality were informed by McGovern et al., 2023, which traces the development of semantics of economic inequality in the UK and USA between 1990 - 2015. McGovern sets out that the semantics of economic inequality include discussions of economics (salary, wage, compensation, pay) as well as inequality (inequality, distribution, and differentials). This formed the basis of our analysis. We examined as a binary of True/False, whether within a 50-word span the text included both categories of ‘economics’ and ‘inequality’.

Table 2: Top-10 Words associated with Inequality & Equality in British Party Manifesto 2005 - 2024

Inequality only	Equality only	Inequality or Equality
equality	inequality	poverty
poverty	poverty	opportunity
government	opportunity	sex
people	sex	people
progressive	people	government
reduce	government	country
social	country	tackling
problems	tackling	work
better	work	marriage
family	marriage	children

As a co-occurrence analysis revealed that the most commonly associated word with inequality was equality, and visa-versa, we also included ‘equality’ as a search term (Table 2). A full list of search terms is included in the appendix 7.1. The results of the keyword search on 'economic inequality' are presented in table three. Keyword frequency scores normalised by manifesto length are presented in table four.

Table 3 : UK 2005 - 2024 Economic Inequality Semantic Frequency

Year	Conservative	Labour	LibDem	SNP
2005	3	5	7	4
2010	13	6	5	0
2015	6	5	15	16

2017	10	19	10	11
2019	1	24	16	9
2024	3	6	8	

Table 4: UK 2005 - 2024 Economic Inequality Semantic Frequency Normalised by Manifesto Length *100

Year	Conservative	Labour	LibDem	SNP
2005	0.0437	0.0179	0.0429	0.0326
2010	0.0464	0.0202	0.0251	0.0
2015	0.0195	0.0271	0.0427	0.0852
2017	0.0331	0.0786	0.0468	0.0539
2019	0.0048	0.0928	0.0581	0.0415
2024	0.0114	0.023	0.0361	

3.2.1.2. Redistribution Key-Words

To determine keywords for policy instruments for redistribution we utilised the House of Commons Library pages on welfare and pensions. This information is publicly available at [House of Commons Library](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/topic/social-policy/welfare-pensions/) (https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/topic/social-policy/welfare-pensions/), which we accessed on 03.06.2024. The data spans from 09.04.1998 to 29.05.2024. To develop a list of search terms, words indicating mechanisms for redistribution were extracted. This list includes various social welfare benefits and support schemes available in the UK, such as allowances, pensions, support payments, grants, and tax credits. These programs cover a wide range of needs, from disability and unemployment support to child and family assistance, ensuring financial aid and essential services for different segments of the population. Search terms were checked against party programs to verify relevance and suggest any supplementary terms. Effort was made to include names in full and acronyms (e.g., JSA = Job Seeker's Allowance) and to be sensitive to linguistic changes in the policy environment, such as one-off names (e.g., Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme) or replacements of benefit names (e.g., the replacement of 'Job Seeker's Allowance' with 'Universal Credit') to be sensitive to the sample as a whole. The full list of terms is available in appendix 7.2 The results of the keyword search on 'redistribution' are produced as raw figures and normalised by manifesto length in tables five and six respectively.

Table 5: UK 2005 - 2024 Redistribution Semantic Frequency

Year	Conservative	Labour	LibDem	SNP
2005	11	13	9	5
2010	12	25	22	5
2015	27	20	32	33
2017	24	26	22	49
2019	12	30	14	46

2024	22	10	23	
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Table 6: UK 2005 - 2024 Redistribution Semantic Frequency Normalised by Manifesto Length *100

Year	Conservative	Labour	LibDem	SNP
2005	0.01604	0.0465	0.0552	0.0407
2010	0.0428	0.0842	0.1103	0.0583
2015	0.0876	0.1083	0.0911	0.1758
2017	0.0794	0.1076	0.103	0.2402
2019	0.0573	0.1159	0.0508	0.212
2024	0.0836	0.0384	0.1039	

3.2.1.3. GINI Coefficient

To explore possible relations in semantic trends and an objective measure of inequality we included GINI coefficient scores. The GINI Coefficient is a common measure of economic inequality for countries. We represent the GINI coefficient as a percentage ranging from 0% (perfect equality) to 100% (perfect inequality). We have produced a table of GINI Coefficients for financial year end (FYE) 2005 and 2022, including year on year percentage changes (table 7). An average of GINI coefficients by election period up until 2019, as well as alternative measures of income inequality considered, are contained in the appendix³. The data on the Gini coefficient of the United Kingdom from 1977 to 2022 was accessed via Statista as an Excel data file. The source of this data is the Office for National Statistics (UK), which conducted the survey during the period from 1977 to 2022. This publication, authored by the Office for National Statistics (UK), was released in January 2023. The original source of this data is found in "The effects of taxes and benefits on household income," table 9, identified by ID 872472.

Table 7: Year-by-Year Changes in GINI Coefficients to two decimal points FYE 2005 - 2022

Year	GINI	Year-on-Year Change (%)
2004/05	34.3	
2005/06	35.9	1.6

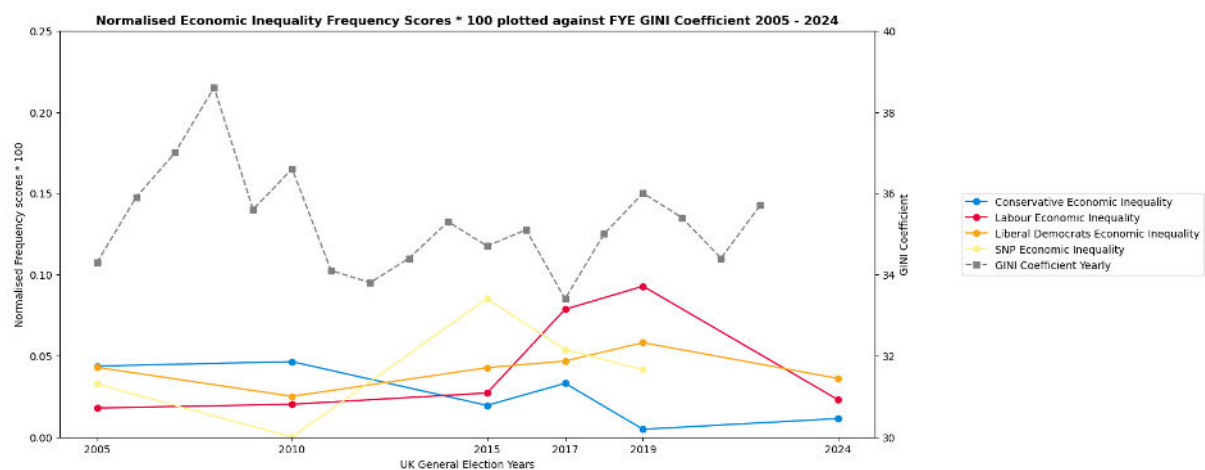
³ We also considered S80/20, P90/10, and Palma ratios. The S80/20 ratio measures the total income of the richest 20% of the population (top quintile) compared to the total income of the poorest 20% (bottom quintile). Higher values indicate greater inequality. For example, if the S80/20 ratio is 5, the richest 20% earn five times more than the poorest 20%. The P90/10 ratio is the ratio of the income at the 90th percentile to the income at the 10th percentile. Higher values also indicate greater inequality. For example, if the P90/10 ratio is 10, those at the 90th percentile earn ten times more than those at the 10th percentile. The Palma ratio measures the income of the top 10% of the population compared to the income of the bottom 40%. Again, higher values indicate greater inequality. For example, if the Palma ratio is 2, the top 10% earn twice as much as the bottom 40%.

2006/07	37.0	1.1
2007/08	38.6	1.6
2008/09	35.6	-3.0
2009/10	36.6	1.0
2010/11	34.1	-2.5
2011/12	33.8	-0.3
2012/13	34.4	0.6
2013/14	35.3	0.9
2014/15	34.7	-0.6
2015/16	35.1	0.4
2016/17	33.4	-1.7
2017/18	35.0	1.6
2018/19	36.0	1.0
2019/20	35.4	-0.6
2020/21	34.4	-1.0
2021/22	35.7	1.3

3.2.2. Trends in GINI Coefficients compared to Economic Inequality and Redistribution Semantics

We will now discuss trends in semantics of economic inequality and redistribution by trends in GINI coefficients.

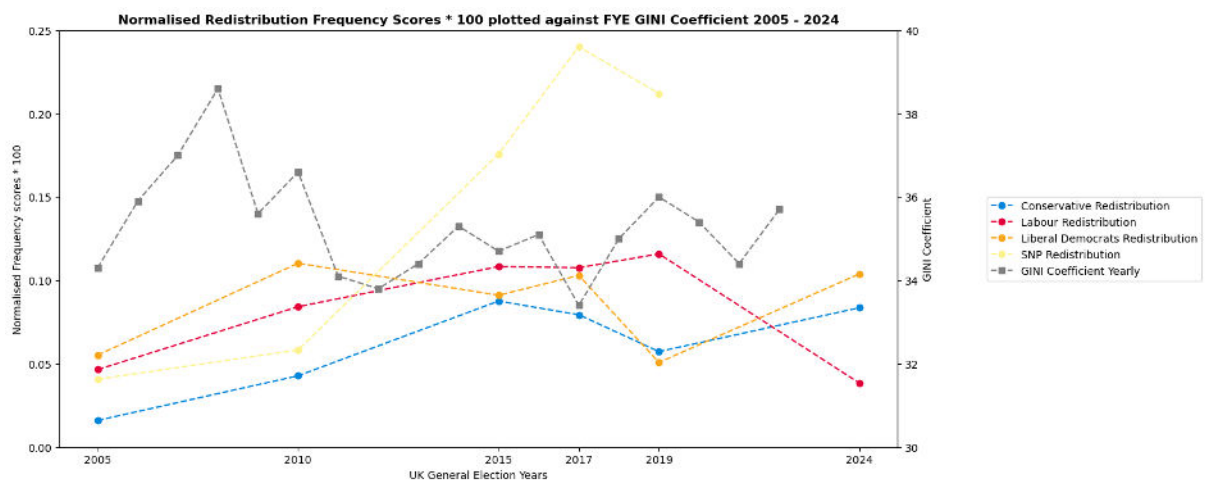
Graph 2: UK 2005 - 2024 Semantic Trends in Economic Inequality Normalised by Manifesto Length Plotted Against FYE GINI Coefficients



Overall, the GINI coefficient appears to have a mixed and weak relationship with trends in the semantic frequencies of economic inequality and mechanisms for redistribution (Graphs 2 and 3). Between 2005 and 2022, GINI coefficient scores peaked in the fiscal year ending (FYE) 2008 at 38.6% and reached their lowest in FYE 2012 at 33.8% (table 7). Within this period, GINI scores showed periods of both stability and fluctuation. The data indicates that between FYE 2005 and 2008, the GINI coefficient rose year by year, with a total increase of 4.3% over three years. By 2010, GINI levels had returned to pre-Global Financial Crisis levels but remained elevated by UK historical standards (Szreter, 2021). Between 2011 and 2022, overall, the GINI coefficient increased slowly, although similar rates of year-on-year increases to those following the Global Financial Crisis can be found between 2012 and 2014 and 2016 and 2019, although not reaching the magnitude of inequality found in 2012.

There is little to suggest that the semantics of economic inequality matched objective trends in economic inequality as measured by the GINI coefficient. No parties showed notable increases in references to economic inequality in the 2010 election compared to 2005 (table 4), following the global financial crash, although it should be noted that GINI coefficients would reach pre-crisis levels by FYE in 2011, highlighting the challenges in making comparisons across data sets collected at different time-points. Yet, even when elections occurred every two years between 2015 and 2017, there was a notable increase in Labour mentions of economic inequality in 2017 (table 4), as opposed to the overall fall in the GINI coefficient between 2015 and 2017 (table 7).

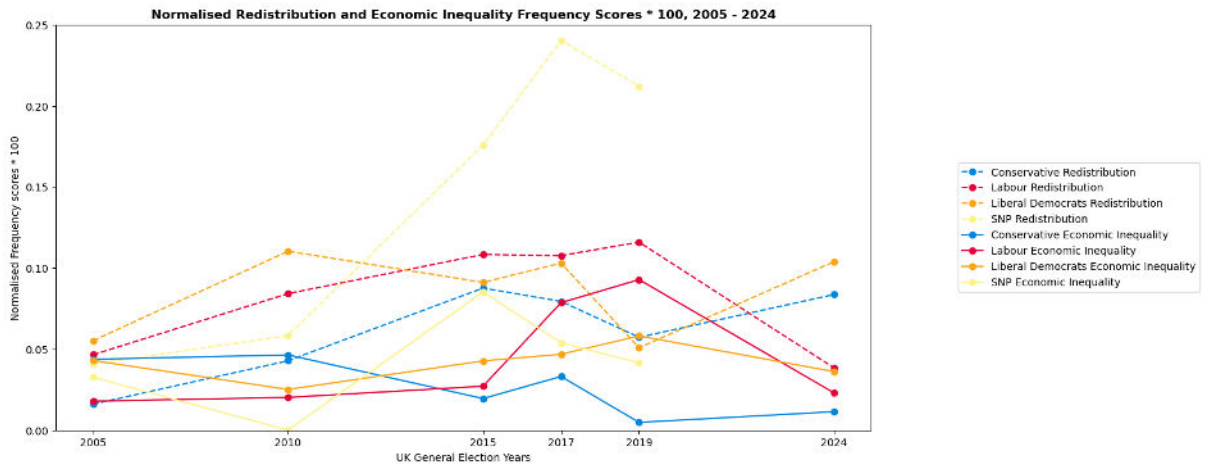
Graph 3: UK 2005 - 2024 Semantic Trends in Redistribution Normalised by Manifesto Length Plotted Against FYE GINI Coefficients



Tentatively, there may be a closer relationship between the semantics of redistribution and trends in GINI coefficients (Graph 3). We can see increased discussions of redistribution in 2010, following the global financial crisis. Discussions of redistribution continued to increase across the political spectrum into the 2015 general election. Whilst GINI coefficients were in fact 0.9% lower in 2015 compared to 2010 (table 7), this period largely showed increases in the GINI coefficient from 2011 onwards, and remained elevated by historical standards (Szreter, 2021). However, whilst the period of 2017-2019 showed comparably rapid increases in the GINI coefficient, relative frequencies of redistribution only marginally increased for the Labour party and decreased in all other parties.

3.2.3. Trends in Economic Inequality and Redistribution Semantics

Graph 4: UK 2005 - 2024 Semantic Trends in Economic Inequality and Redistribution Normalised by Manifesto Length



We also find weak relations between trends in semantics of economic inequality and redistribution (Graph 4). There were points of common trends in economic inequality and redistribution semantic frequencies. From 2017 - 2024, we found the Labour party and conservative parties largely moved in parallel on these measures. In addition, between 2010 and 2015, we find semantics of redistribution and economic inequality for the SNP also moved in parallel. Yet, overall, the semantics of economic inequality were rarely discussed concurrently with government policy instruments used for redistribution. Specifically, across the political spectrum, it was rare for both words related to ‘economic inequality’ and government policy instruments for redistribution to be found within a 50-word segment of party manifestos (table 8)

Table 8: UK 2005 - 2024 Economic Inequality and Redistribution Semantic Frequency

Year	Conservative	Labour	LibDem	SNP
2005	2	1	2	0
2010	1	0	0	0
2015	0	0	0	2
2017	1	0	0	3
2019	0	1	1	1
2024	0	0	2	

We also find tentative evidence that the mechanisms for redistribution may be emphasised in political manifestos in the UK in relation to economic inequality (graph 4). Overall keywords related to government policy instruments for redistribution were more frequent compared to economic inequality. The only time references to economic inequality equal references to redistribution is the conservative party manifesto in 2010. In all other party manifestos, raw and normalised frequencies were larger for keywords on ‘redistribution’ than ‘economic inequality’. Yet, we should be careful how to interpret frequencies, as a higher frequency does not necessarily mean greater importance. Indeed, this finding could reflect a methodological artefact. The keywords ‘Economic inequality’ were more focused on ideological or abstract concepts. As such, it is possible that they may feature in headlines, but less frequent overall. However, as the differences between economic inequality and redistribution keyword frequencies varied over time, it is unlikely that this finding was only solely a methodological artefact. For example, the difference between economic inequality and redistribution keyword frequencies for the Labour Party between 2005 and 2015 were more than double the difference between 2015 and 2024. This difference is particularly notable in the third parties, widening in 2010 for the Liberal Democratic Party, narrowing between

2010-2019, and widening again in 2024. Conversely, the difference becomes negligible in 2010 for the Conservative Party, but shows more frequent words on redistribution in other years. The SNP follows its own trajectory: in the aftermath of the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum, references to redistribution increased substantially in elections between 2015 and 2019. While references to economic inequality were elevated in 2015, they subsequently decreased in 2017 and 2019.

Patterns in which the party is speaking about economic inequality and redistribution have a tenuous relationship with overall party ideology, as suggested on a traditional left-right spectrum, but likely relate to party leadership and status in government or opposition. For example, following the change in leadership in the Labour Party in 2015, from Edward Miliband to Jeremy Corbyn, the 2017 and 2019 manifestos saw increased raw and normalised figures in discussions of economic inequality. In addition, as the leadership of the Labour Party changed again in 2020, we found a sharp decrease in references to economic inequality and redistribution. These changes are also likely related to the party's expectation of being in government. At the point of the Labour Party manifesto release, the average of polls suggested a Labour lead of 20 points⁴ compared to the Conservatives. Between 2019 and 2024, Labour and Conservative frequencies on redistribution inverted. This suggests that parties contesting an opposition status in government, such as the Conservatives, may continue to discuss government policy instruments for redistribution. However, in contrast, Labour, the party expecting to be in the next government, rarely speaks about either economic inequality or redistribution in 2024.

3.2.4. Interim Summary

In summary, from 2005 to 2022, the GINI coefficient showed periods of fluctuation and stability, peaking in 2008 and reaching its lowest in 2012. Political discussions on economic inequality did not consistently align with GINI trends, with notable disparities during and after the 2008 financial crisis. Quantitative results tentatively suggested that redistribution may be a more common feature of political programs relative to references to economic inequality. We also found limited evidence that references to economic inequality were conducted in parallel to discussions of policy instruments for redistribution. Additionally, parties showed significant variation in discussions of economic inequality and redistribution over time, in ways that may relate changes in party leadership, position in government or opposition, or other political aims (e.g., national independence.)

However, frequency scores of keywords provide an insufficient basis to make firm assessments on the relative importance of redistribution or economic inequality. In addition, the frequency of what is 'spoken' about provides a crude measure of concept salience. Foremost, it is possible that this keyword analysis may constitute specialised terminology and be insensitive to other linguistic forms of communication such as metaphor and symbol (e.g., "the fabric of society," "the widest shoulders"). Furthermore, we should be careful not to assume that even when something is spoken about, it only has one meaning; for example, discussions of inequality may refer to alternative implied concepts such as meritocracy, social mobility, discrimination, or poverty. In addition, we have assumed that economic inequality and redistribution are logically related. This assumption, taken a priori from the median voter hypothesis, remains unverified. Indeed, we should be sensitive to the possibility that politicians may speak about policy instruments for redistribution for reasons other than economic inequality. For example, discussions of social security may relate to concerns about growth, education, or policing, rather than economic inequality per se.

We will address these concerns in the next section by exploring how keywords were used. We will address why keywords about economic inequality rarely appeared in the same segments as those about redistribution, and in particular consider the latent belief systems organising how and when economic inequality and redistribution mechanisms may be spoken about. Indeed, we will question if these words related to economic inequality are only about the distribution of income and wealth, as measured by the GINI coefficient.

3.3. Analysis 2: Qualitative Trends in Economic Inequality & Redistribution

3.3.1. Methods

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68079726> (Accessed 14.06.2024)

In this section, we aim to substantiate the proposition suggested in quantitative trend analysis of economic inequality and redistribution frequency semantics through a qualitative analysis of how and why keywords were used. To understand the changing frequencies and semantics of 'economic inequality' and 'redistribution,' we re-contextualized these words within party programs and conducted a qualitative analysis. This involved closely examining the segments indicated by the keyword search for 'economic inequality' and 'redistribution'. We employed principles of thematic analysis as outlined by Joffe (2011a), progressing through open, axial, and selective coding to identify underlying patterns in the representation of economic inequality and redistribution. Special attention was given to latent forms of representation, including the use of symbolic imagery and affective language, as well as structural elements of the documents (e.g., headings and subheadings). Research quality was ensured through the transparent presentation of results, including close readings of extended verbatim quotes. Qualitative data analysis was performed on MAXQDA 24. Validity was further maintained by systematically comparing the semantics of economic inequality and redistribution within and between parties and relating these findings to quantitative results. Coding concluded upon reaching theoretical saturation, as per Joffe (2011a).

3.3.2. 'The British Dream'

In this section, we propose that the weak relationship between the semantics of economic inequality and GINI coefficients may be explained by the finding that the semantics of 'economic inequality' rarely pertain to the distribution of income or wealth. Instead, they focus more on equality of opportunity, as exemplified by the so-called 'British Dream' (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p.3).

A qualitative analysis of keywords related to 'economic inequality' and mechanisms for redistribution suggested that a common representation in party manifestos and elections was a belief in the 'British Dream' (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p.3). Fundamentally, representations of the 'British Dream' functioned to maintain beliefs and expectations of what life in Britain should be. This dream, we will argue, emphasises individual opportunities for social mobility and freedom from discrimination, rather than a narrow focus on the distribution of wealth or income specifically.⁵

In 2005, the Conservative party launched a manifesto, headed by the title "*the British Dream*" (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p.3). We found that the discussions of 'fairness' were not only concerned with distribution of resources, but with the opportunity for "*fair play*"⁶, suggesting meritocratic beliefs (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p.3). Indeed, these meritocratic beliefs were held in opposition to concerns about discrimination and perceived limits on social mobility. For example, the Conservatives set out the "*British Dream*" as one of "*fair play*", in which "*being treated equally is a birthright, and discrimination is wrong. A Conservative Government will govern in the interests of everyone in our society – black or white, young or old, straight or gay, rural or urban, rich or poor*" (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p. 3). They promised to "*govern on behalf of the forgotten majority and their values*" (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p.3), who are considered to follow the rules of 'fair play'. Similarly, the Labour Party constructs a majority of individuals aligned in the value placed upon work, choice, and self-responsibility: "*We prize the liberty of the individual; but that means protecting the law-abiding majority from the minority who abuse the system*" (Labour Party Manifesto 2005, p. 43). Moreover, what is considered harmful is the perceived imposition of difference in opportunity between social groups (e.g. poor and rich) and between individual, family, and national values: "*people freed from barriers of class, building a better future for themselves and for the country*" (Labour Party Manifesto 2005, p. 8). Indeed, the Labour party, even in 2024, argues for the need to '*level the playing field*' (Labour Party Manifesto 2024, p.31) harking back to earlier concerns for 'fair play'.

⁵ Indeed, more generally, words associated with 'equality' and/or 'inequality' spoke to beliefs (e.g., opportunity) about what life (e.g., people, work, family, children) should be in Britain (e.g., nation).

⁶ Cultural historians have suggested that the language of 'fair play' has re-emerged in narratives of the welfare state to convey a belief in British exceptionalism in sportsmanlike competition (Duke-Evans, 2022).

Although concerns for an equality of opportunity commonly engaged with general social categories (e.g., race, gender, location), narratives of the welfare state emphasised specific social groups in representation. These social groups were determined by their perceived role in reproducing normative beliefs of the British dream, especially, ‘dignified pensioners’ and ‘working families’ (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, pg. 3). This is outlined at the start of the Conservative manifesto:

“For me the heart of politics is all about people – their hopes and aspirations. People want the freedom, security and opportunity to get on in life. They want the freedom to take the important decisions about their families and to keep more of the money they earn. They want the security that goes with owning your home, saving for your retirement, living in a safe neighbourhood. They want the opportunity provided by a good education and a thriving economy”. (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p. 1)

In this quote, the normative person strives for upward social mobility or to 'get ahead in life.' This is achieved through choices and responsibilities in saving and family, especially through homeownership, contributing to retirement, and promoting safety in one's neighbourhood. The foundations for this are set by a 'good education' combined with a 'thriving economy.'

Largely, this aspirational account of life in Britain, including its emphasis on equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination, remains in evidence to the current election. For example, the Labour party's third ‘mission’ is to “[b]reak down barriers to opportunity” [emphasis original](Labour Party Manifesto 2024, p. 13). This representation is shared across the political spectrum. The Conservative party pledge to “strengthen communities” is sub-headed by “Equality of opportunity” (Conservative Party Manifesto 2024, p. 59). Similarly, in Liberal Democrats 2024 Manifesto, we find the phrase “*birthright*” shared with the Conservative party’s 2005 manifesto, which is considered as “*every individual ... basic rights and dignity*” (Liberal Democrats, 2024. p.9).

Whilst, as will be discussed later, political parties regularly blamed other parties for failing to realise this vision for the majority of British citizens, they largely converge on their shared belief of what life should be in Britain. Namely, the belief in setting conditions for individual social mobility. The 2019 Labour party manifesto is an exception in this regard, as reflected in the increased number of references of inequality in 2019.

“They tell us we shouldn’t care about inequality, because social mobility allows those who work hard to get on. But nobody becomes a billionaire through hard work alone, and as inequality has grown, it has become more entrenched. For Labour, the true measure of fairness is not social mobility but social justice. Implicit in the notion of social mobility is the idea that poverty and inequality are acceptable provided some people can climb the social ladder. Social justice, on the other hand, demands that we end poverty, reduce inequality and create a society in which the conditions for a fulfilling life are available to everyone. (Labour Party Manifesto 2019, p. 64)

Although across the corpus, semantics related to economic inequality, social mobility, and discrimination were used ambiguously, in the quote above, we found that the Labour Party in 2019 explicitly separated social mobility from inequality. Specifically, in 2019, the Labour Party argued that the alignment of social mobility with inequality is false, as it ignores the conditions for accumulation. Moreover, the Labour Party argued that this 'implicit' alignment between social mobility, inequality, and poverty is not just incorrect but also unacceptable and unfair. Yet, even in this rare case, we can still sense a nascent concern for equality of opportunity through the focus on creating the 'conditions' for a 'fulfilling life.'

3.3.3. Distance-Blame-Stigma

We have proposed that the weak relations between GINI and semantics of economic inequality might relate to the common emphasis on individual social mobility in the ‘British Dream’ rather than a concern for distribution of income or wealth per se. We will advance a second proposition that the relatively higher frequency of references to mechanisms for redistribution may relate to the common practice of proposing protections for valued social groups, especially ‘working families’ and ‘pensioners’, through alterations to the social security system. In this section, we will show that arguments in favour of protecting these groups were regularly achieved through distance-blame-stigma patterns. These representations functioned to hold groups deemed alternative and distant to the British dream as responsible for failures in the welfare system and to call for renewed protections for valued groups. It is important to note that this focus on language protecting social groups would likely increase the frequency of keyword searches related to mechanisms for redistribution, but not for keyword searches related to economic inequality.

The British dream, as set out by the Conservative’s in 2005, sustains a belief in the need to protect the dignity and security of valued social groups. For example, in 2005, the Conservative Party advances a narrative in which the implementation of Labour policies is failing working families, promising:

“During the next Parliament, we will ensure that all working families who qualify for the working tax credit will receive up to £50 a week for each child under the age of five, irrespective of the type of childcare they choose. We will end Labour’s insistence on endless form-filling and enable families to choose between formal and informal childcare”
(Conservative Party Manifesto, 2005, p.7).

We find this common critique in the Liberal Democrat manifesto, who blamed the Labour government for: *“Over-complicated tax credits and means-tested benefits”* (Liberal Democratic Party Manifesto 2005, p.9). These criticisms, through their focus on the perceived failures of the welfare state, sustained a belief that the British dream is breaking or even broken. Indeed, the subsequent 2010 election were contested between Labour and the Conservative party in part on how to *“mend our broken society”* (Conservative Party Manifesto 2010, viii). Similarly, the SNP argues that the lack of independence over the Scottish welfare system perpetuates child poverty and *“blights the life-chances of so many young people”* (Scottish National Party Manifesto 2005, p. 7).

Across the political spectrum, and continuing into the 2024 election, narratives of an idealised life course continued. For example, the Conservatives state: *“A Conservative government will make Britain the most family-friendly country in Europe”* (Conservative Party 2010, p. 35). Similarly, the Labour Party claims to have adapted the welfare state to promote families: *“The welfare state simply did not understand working women and families. Today, with family-friendly working and better childcare, it has at last begun to do so”* (Labour Party Manifesto 2010, p. 3). This rhetoric remained remarkably consistent. The Labour Party stated in 2015 and 2017 respectively: *“Older people deserve to live a fulfilling life”* (Labour Party Manifesto 2015, p.49) and *“Dignity for pensioners”* (Labour Party Manifesto 2017, p.54). Similarly, the Conservative party campaigned in 2019 and 2024 respectively as *“ensuring that older people have the security and dignity they deserve”* (Conservative Party Manifesto 2019, p. 16), and *“[o]ur plan to cut taxes and protect pensions... Our plan to support families... Our plan to get more people into work and build a fairer welfare system”* (Conservative Party Manifesto 2024, p. 1).

Groups represented in terms of normative life course were not considered neutrally or in isolation. Rather, the need to protect the dignity and security of pensioners and families was developed in contrast to the distrust attached to stigmatised groups. Namely, the mechanisms for redistribution were regularly associated with the symbols of protection. For example, using the symbol of the ‘lock’, the Labour party remains committed to *“keep the triple-lock so that the state pension increases by inflation,”* (Labour Party Manifesto 2024, p.79). This is held in opposition to groups held responsible for a *broken society*” (Conservative Party Manifesto 2010, viii) and the *“scars (of) inequality”* (Liberal Democratic Party Manifesto 2005, p. 2). For example, in the 2010 Conservative manifesto, along with the Labour party, the failure of the welfare state was in part blamed on a so-called

‘underclass’ of “*welfare dependants*” (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010 p. 56), “*ASBOs*”⁷ (Conservative Party Manifesto 2010, p. 56) and “*economic migrants*” (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010 p. 21). Yet, they were also represented as under threat from a hidden elite. For example, the Conservative party promised to:

“change Britain with a sweeping redistribution of power: from the state to citizens; from the government to Parliament; from Whitehall to communities; from Brussels to Britain; from bureaucracy to democracy. Taking power away from the political elite and handing it to the man and woman in the street” (Conservative Party Manifesto 2010, p. 63).

In this the elite is conceptualised in terms of non-elected ‘bureaucracy’, such as the UK civil service (e.g., ‘Whitehall,’ ‘government’) and European Union (EU) (e.g., ‘Brussels’). ‘Democracy,’ in contrast, is characterised by entities that individuals feel should have control, such as ‘parliament,’ ‘communities,’ and ‘Britain’.

We see these narratives sustained and shift with the political issue of the day. As the relations with the EU a leading feature of political life in the UK following the 2016 EU Referendum, the harms associated with the divisions of inequality were blamed on EU bureaucracy and the legacy of Labour Government:

*“UK Shared Prosperity Fund: The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be used to bind together the whole of the United Kingdom, tackling inequality and deprivation in each of our four nations. It will replace the overly bureaucratic EU Structural Funds – and not only be better targeted at the UK’s specific needs, but at a minimum match the size of those funds in each nation... We are committed to reducing health inequality. We will continue to repair the damage done by Labour’s disastrous PFI deals”*⁸ (Conservative Party Manifesto 2019, p.44).

Conversely, the Liberal Democrats blamed the values sustaining Brexit as the cause for inequality and poverty: *“It’s about who we are as a country and the values that drive our choices... Staying in the European Union will secure a £50 billion Remain Bonus, with the economy two per cent larger by 2024-25. We can invest that bonus in our schools, and in tackling in-work poverty and inequality.”* (Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2019, p. 7). Both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democratic Party in 2019, while holding fundamentally different views regarding membership in the EU, represented inequality in terms of harm. They blamed these harms on non-British values, fitting a common distance-blame-stigma pattern.

Attention to Scottish National Party Manifesto further illustrates this distance-blame-stigma pattern. Yet, in this case, the group represented as at risk, along with pensioners and working families, are the ‘Scottish people’, and the threat is ‘Westminster’. For example, in the Scottish National Party (SNP) 2010 Manifesto, the elite, as a grouping foreign to control over local decision-making, are represented as ‘London’ and ‘Westminster.’ This space is aligned with both the Conservative and Labour parties as a place that violates the consent of the Scottish people on tax, work, and public service provision:

“Running through this manifesto is the SNP vision of a new future for Scotland, independent, socially just, and economically secure. The real alternative to the discredited Westminster system is a fresh,

⁷ Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, commonly known as ASBOs, were introduced by Section 1 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and first used in 1999 (Home Office, 2002, p.6). The Home Office in 2002 recognized their value in the broad legal definition as behaviour considered to cause, or likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to one or more people who are not in the same household (Home Office, 2002, p.5). Common examples given include graffiti, abusive and intimidating language, excessive noise, litter, drunken behaviour, and drug dealing—examples which are considered regular occurrences in social housing, schools, and/or social services (Ibid).

⁸ The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was a government procurement policy aimed at creating public-private partnerships. It was launched in 1992 and considerably expanded by the Labour government under the leadership of Tony Blair (Hellowell, 2010). A defining feature of PFIs is the use of project finance (using private sector debt and equity underwritten by the public) to deliver services (Hellowell, 2010). Their usage remains controversial, and since 2018, they are no longer used for new infrastructure projects, although they remain a central feature of NHS trust management (Seaton, 2023).

independent future for our nation... The Labour Party now threatens cuts that will be 'deeper and tougher' than under Margaret Thatcher, and the Tories plan an additional £1 billion cut on Scotland each year by ripping up the current funding deal without the consent of the Scottish Government or Scottish people" (Scottish National Party Manifesto 2010, pp. 5-6).

In contrast to the Conservative party, the in-group whose control has been violated is not British citizens but the 'Scottish people.' Accordingly, the group considered foreign and immoral constitutes 'the Westminster system,' rather than the EU. Indeed, the SNP advocates for its own seat "*at the top table of Europe ... to have an enhanced role within the UK*" (Scottish National Party Manifesto 2010, p. 19). Similarly, in 2015 they stated, "*[d]evolving employment policy would allow us to take progressive action on low pay in order to tackle poverty and inequality ... regardless of the political balance at Westminster*" (Scottish National Party Manifesto 2015, p. 36). Again, in 2017, the represented threat is 'Westminster' and 'Tories': "A vote for the SNP will strengthen Scotland's hand against further Tory cuts and ensure that progressive policies, like those pursued by the SNP government in Scotland, are firmly on the agenda at Westminster" (Scottish National Party Manifesto 2017. p3).

In summary, in this section, we addressed the comparably frequent semantics of redistribution compared to economic inequality. We found representations that characterised British society as 'broken'. To address this perception, political parties regularly used language to maintain the protective features of social security. These claims were not neutral or equally applied. Rather, they functioned to sustain a belief in the need to protect valued social groups—especially the dignity and security of pensioners and working families—against the perceived risks posed by groups represented as to blame, including both an underclass and an elite. Indeed, we found a common distance-blame pattern across political parties, the content of which related to the perceived crises and political aims.

4. Discussion

Overall, trends in objective national measures of economic inequality, as measured by the GINI coefficient, showed weak relations with trends in the semantics of economic inequality or mechanisms for redistribution, as operationalized using keyword searches. We also found that discussions of the mechanisms for redistribution were a more regular feature of political communication than economic inequality. Care should be taken in comparing trends between the semantics of economic inequality and GINI coefficients in isolation. It is possible that keyword searches on economic inequality were insufficiently sensitive to identify possible effects: segments containing words related to 'economy' and 'inequality' ranged from 0 to 24 across the sample of manifestos (Table _). Similarly, it is possible that there may be a ceiling effect of economic inequality as measured by the GINI coefficient. Economic inequality increased precipitously from 25% in 1978 to 34.9% in 1990 in the UK. It is possible that the already heightened levels of inequality during the study period rendered possible effects of changes in economic inequality indiscernible. In addition, the variability in Gini coefficients might not align well with a measure of political communication that is only collected during election years. To make firmer statements on the relations between economic inequality semantics and objective measures of economic inequality, a larger corpus of political communication may be needed, containing yearly linguistic data expanded to include the years of Thatcher's conservative government (1979-1990).

Yet, care should be taken in considering only the quality and quantity of data without also questioning whether the distribution of income or wealth per se motivates political behaviour. According to the median voter hypothesis, people consider their position in terms of economic distribution (Rowley, 1984). However, there was limited evidence supporting this model of human cognition. Even when economic inequality was discussed, there was little to suggest that concerns were solely about the distribution of income or wealth. Instead, the focus was often on the ambiguous concept of 'equality of opportunity.' In this context, the language of economic inequality developed in relation to beliefs about what a normative life course in Britain should be. Indeed, even when economic inequality was discussed, the emphasis was on concerns for social mobility, meritocracy, and discrimination. What was considered 'fair play' for the 'forgotten majority' in the British Dream was the conditions for meritocracy that enabled social mobility and were hindered by discrimination (Duke-Evans, 2023). Moreover, there was little to suggest that the language through which the British social security system was known

was neutrally constructed individuals. Rather, we regularly found the redistributive features of the British social security system to construct and valence social groups, especially the esteemed status of working families and pensioners. The dignity and security of valued groups was represented at-risk from an ambiguous grouping of an 'under-class' (Tyler, 2013) and 'elite' (Hecht et al., 2022).

Our data suggests caution in making generalised claims about the motivations driving perceptions of inequality and redistribution. In line with previous political science literature, claims of economic self-interest and fairness beliefs were present (Cavaillé, 2023), and these were held in relation to maintaining self-esteem concerning an undesired out-group (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020). However, in each of these approaches, how people perceive social categories are treated as separable entities from how they perceive society and themselves. This relies on the assumption that social categorisation is a disinterested process. For example, it relies on the assumption that people are detached from the meanings ascribed to the 'elite' or the 'poor', and that these meanings are equally shared within cultures and unchanging over time.

Yet, what we find suggested in the data is an ecological basis for self-perception and social categorization, fitting a common distance-blame-stigma pattern (Joffe, 2011b). At points of perceived crisis, who was held to blame related to the ways in which people desired to see themselves as set out in the British Dream. For example, in 2010, the perception of a 'broken' society maintained a belief in dangers perpetuated by 'welfare dependents,' 'ASBOs,' and 'economic migrants,' as well as a bureaucratic elite. By 2019, however, the perceived risks shifted to emphasise regional divisions, blamed on the values of people supporting either retaining or removing membership of the European Union, alternately for the Conservative Party and Liberal Democratic Party, respectively. Moreover, for the SNP, the threat to the Scottish people was represented by the Labour and Conservative parties in Westminster. This suggests that what was represented as experienceable and valued was held in opposition to the 'distant' groups blamed for the perceived harms to 'our' society.

The illustration of a common distance-blame-stigma pattern (Joffe, 2011b) raises questions about how we interpret subjective measures of perceived inequality. Specifically, it challenges the extent to which people's perceptions of economic distributions can be separated from their beliefs about what their life in society ought to be like. This has important implications for subjective measures of perceived inequality. Current measures largely assume that people can distinguish between 'what is' and 'what should be'. For instance, the most widely used measure of perceived inequalities, adopted by the International Social Survey Project (ISSP, 2021), asks participants to select from five diagrammatic representations of 'types of society' that vary by the distribution of people in the minority or majority (e.g., a great mass of people at the bottom), and to place themselves on an 11-point scale between the 'top' and 'bottom' of society (ISPP, 2021).

Derived from this measurement is the repeated finding that people bias their perception of the income distribution according to reference groups related to their position in society, often resulting in the perception that they are either relatively richer or poorer than they actually are (Marandola & Xu, 2021; Willis et al., 2022). This creates an artificial peak in the frequency of the middle class (Marandola & Xu, 2021). This is especially problematic when the mid-point is salient, such as identifying as middle class on the social ladder or as an average earner (Marandola & Xu, 2021). This bias is regularly explained as an information-processing deficit, such as homophily in local social networks, which provides insufficient feedback on the actual composition of society (Kneel & Stix, 2020).

However, our research suggests that people are not neutral to the reference group. Rather, the reference group holds meanings that highlight the need to distance oneself from a degenerated 'poor' and 'elite', rather than an issue solely of information processing. For example, the Conservative Party in 2005 called for a defence of the British dream through a refocus on the values of the "forgotten majority" (Conservative Party Manifesto 2005, p.3), a belief developed to be at risk from an evolving category of rich and elite amidst changing crises and scandals. From this perspective, identification with the norm of the distribution is more than just a descriptive measurement of quantity; it is a reflection of one's values. Pursuing 'dignity' and 'security' according to the norms set out in the "British dream" involves more than simply understanding one's position in society—it also entails aligning oneself with the values and expectations embedded in that societal ideal.

To review, through this research we have reconsidered the propositions offered by the median voter hypothesis, and its subsequent revisions, to explain political party positions as set out in UK party manifestos between 2005 and 2024. We found limited evidence that trends in the semantics of economic inequality or redistribution parallel objective trends in economic inequality as measured by the GINI coefficient. We propose that the lack of clear relations between these measures goes beyond individual perceptual biases, as suggested in the political psychological literature. Rather, we found that ‘economic inequality’ and calls for protective features of ‘social security’ were made by political parties in ways that related to norms enshrined in the ‘British dream’. From this perspective, at points of perceived crisis, the harms associated with economic issues—such as the Global Financial Crisis or EU Membership—were blamed by political groups on an ambiguous grouping of distant ‘elite’ and ‘poor’ groups, as well as other political parties. Namely, they were represented as threatening the ‘dignity’ and ‘security’ one should experience, as set out in the British dream. This entails a possible reconsideration of standard measures of public opinion for measuring perceptions of economic inequality, and instead ask, whether these measurements may instead capture the motivated and cultural practice of representing one’s self in relation to perceived harms.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has explored the politicisation of economic inequality and redistribution using a corpus of party manifestos in UK general elections from 2005 to 2024. Our results suggest caution in assuming that ‘economic inequality’ is formulated in the same ways as objective measures, such as the GINI coefficient. Specifically, the way economic inequality is understood in society relates to normative beliefs about what life ought to be, emphasising positive representations of dignity and security for working families and pensioners, in opposition to perceived threats from an underclass and elite. Moreover, these representations are not fixed; they are developed differently by political parties according to their aims and in response to societal issues. Our research offers an alternative view to the general models of human motivation formulated in terms of a median-voter hypothesis and its subsequent revisions. Instead, we propose that what is considered desirable and in need of protection in the welfare state is driven in part by elite political communications on represented social issues.

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7. Appendix:

7.1. Economic Inequality Keywords:

Keywords derived from: McGovern, Patrick; Bauer, Martin and Obradovic, Sandra (2023). In search of a Tawney Moment: income inequality, financial crisis and the mass media in the UK and the USA. *The Sociological Review*, 71(5) pp. 1213–1233.

Category: Economic:

Wealth
Income
Economy
Salary
Compensation
Pay

Category: Inequality

Inequality
Equality
Distribution
Differential

7.2. Redistribution Keywords:

Attendance Allowance
Additional State Pension
Armed Forces Compensation Scheme
Bereavement Allowance
Bereavement Payment
Bereavement Support Payment
Budgeting Loan
Benefit Cap
Benefit Support for Housing Costs
Carer's Allowance
Carer's Credit
Child Benefit
Child Funeral Fund
Child Maintenance
Child Tax Credits
Christmas Bonus
Cold Weather Payment
Constant Attendance Allowance
Crisis Loans
Cost of Living Payments
Childcare Support for Students
Carer's Leave
Council Tax Reduction Schemes
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
Citizens' Rights Provisions

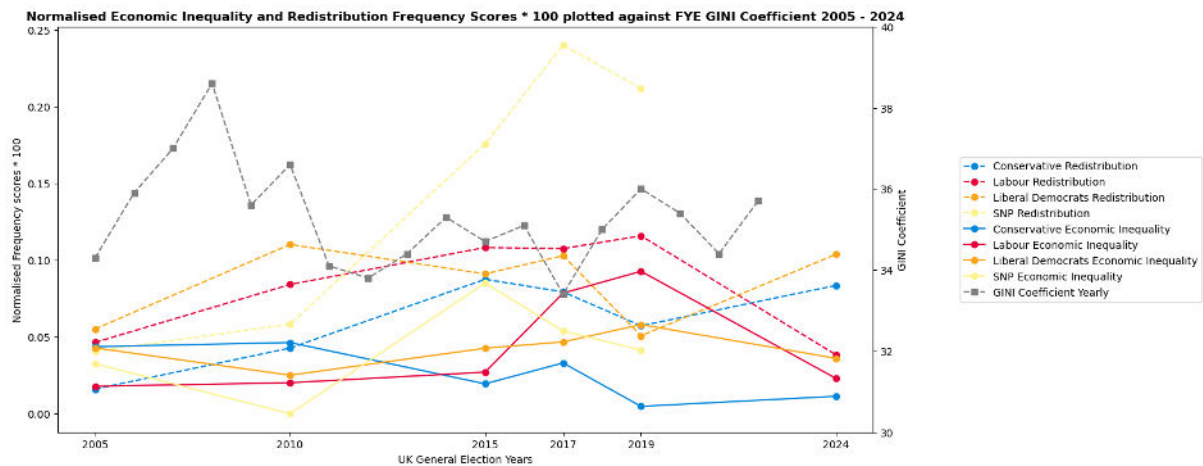
Disability Living Allowance
Disability Benefit Assessments
Discretionary Housing Payments
Domestic Abuse Support
DWP Benefit Sanctions
Employment and Support Allowance
ESA
Early Intervention Policies
Finance Support
Funeral Expenses Payment
Free School Meals Support
Furlough Scheme
Guardians Allowance
Help with Health Costs
Home Responsibilities Protection
Housing Benefit
Housing Benefit Extended Payment
Healthy Start Scheme
High Income Child Benefit Charge
Help with Childcare Costs
Help with Energy Bills
Household Support Fund
Income Support
Independent Living Fund
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
Jobseeker's Allowance
JSA
Local Housing Allowance
LHA
Maternity Allowance
Motability
National Insurance Number
No Recourse to Public Funds
Over 80 Pension
Pension Credit
Personal Independence Payment
PIP
Reduced Earnings Allowance
Redundancy Pay
Rent Safety Net
Severe Disablement Allowance
State Pension
Statutory Adoption Pay
Statutory Maternity Pay
Statutory Paternity Pay
Statutory Sick Pay
SSP
Sure Start Maternity Grant
Support for Mortgage Interest
SMI
Support for Single Parent Families
Social Security

- Supported Exempt Accommodation
- Tax Credits
- Test and Trace Support Payments
- Triple-Lock
- Universal Credit
- Universal Basic Income
- Universal Credit Uplift
- Universal Credit Assessment Period and Earned Income
- War Disablement Pension
- War Widow or Widower's Pension
- Widowed Parent's Allowance
- Winter Fuel Payment
- Working Tax Credit
- Work Capability Assessment

7.3. Objective Measures of Economic Inequality

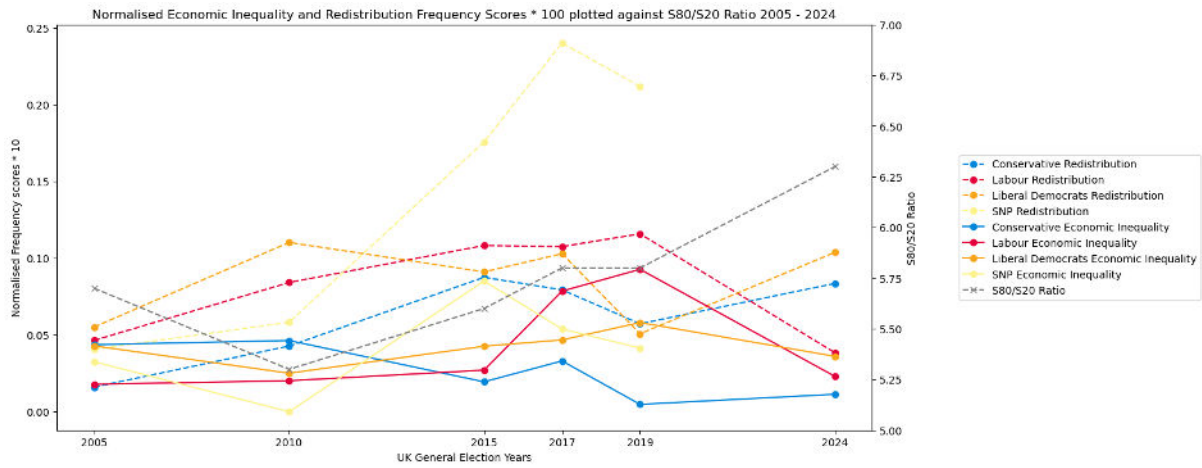
7.3.1. GINI Coefficient:

Graph 5: UK 2005 - 2024 Semantic Trends in Economic Inequality and Redistribution Only Normalised by Manifesto Length Plotted Against FYE GINI Coefficients



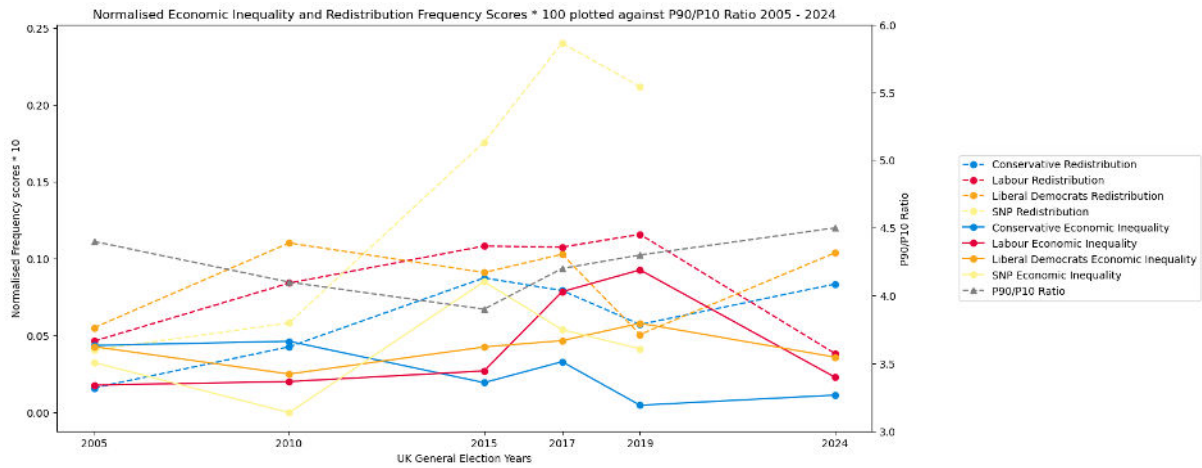
7.3.2. S80/S20

Graph 6: UK 2005 - 2024 Semantic Trends in Economic Inequality and Redistribution Only Normalised by Manifesto Length Plotted Against FYE S80/20 Ratio



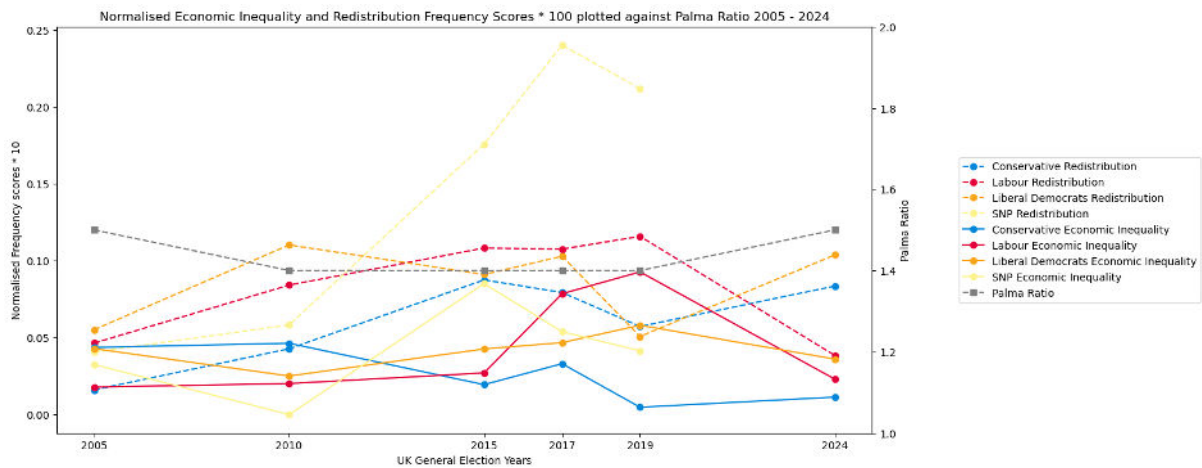
7.3.3. P90/P10

Graph 7: UK 2005 - 2024 Semantic Trends in Economic Inequality and Redistribution Only Normalised by Manifesto Length Plotted Against FYE P90/P10 Ratio



7.3.4. Palma Ratio

Graph 5: UK 2005 - 2024 Semantic Trends in Economic Inequality and Redistribution Only Normalised by Manifesto Length Plotted Against FYE Palma Ratio



7.4. Table 9: Changes in average GINI Coefficient Scores by UK General Election periods 2005 - 2019

Election Period	Average GINI Over Election Period
2005-2010	36.25
2010-2015	35.85
2015-2017	35.05
2017-2019	35.2