

# **Myths and Realities in Social Attitudes**



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# Three Myths?

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- Young people don't vote nowadays because they are cynical about/have lost interest in politics.
- Attitudes to tax and spend constitute a major social division and are the key to the outcome of general elections.
- In a consumer society people want choice in how public services are delivered.

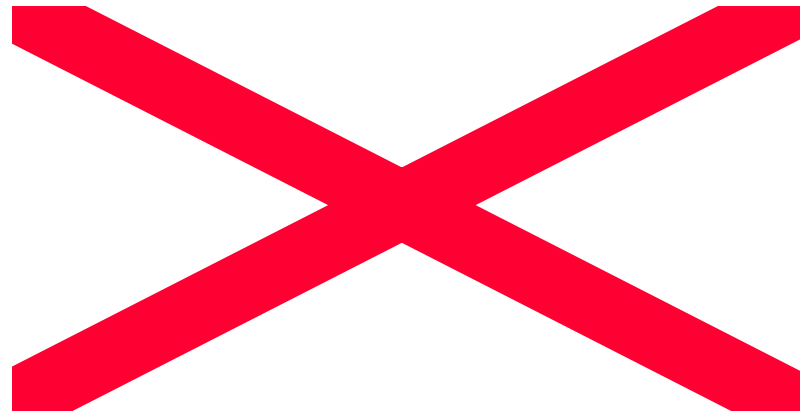
# Testing the Myths

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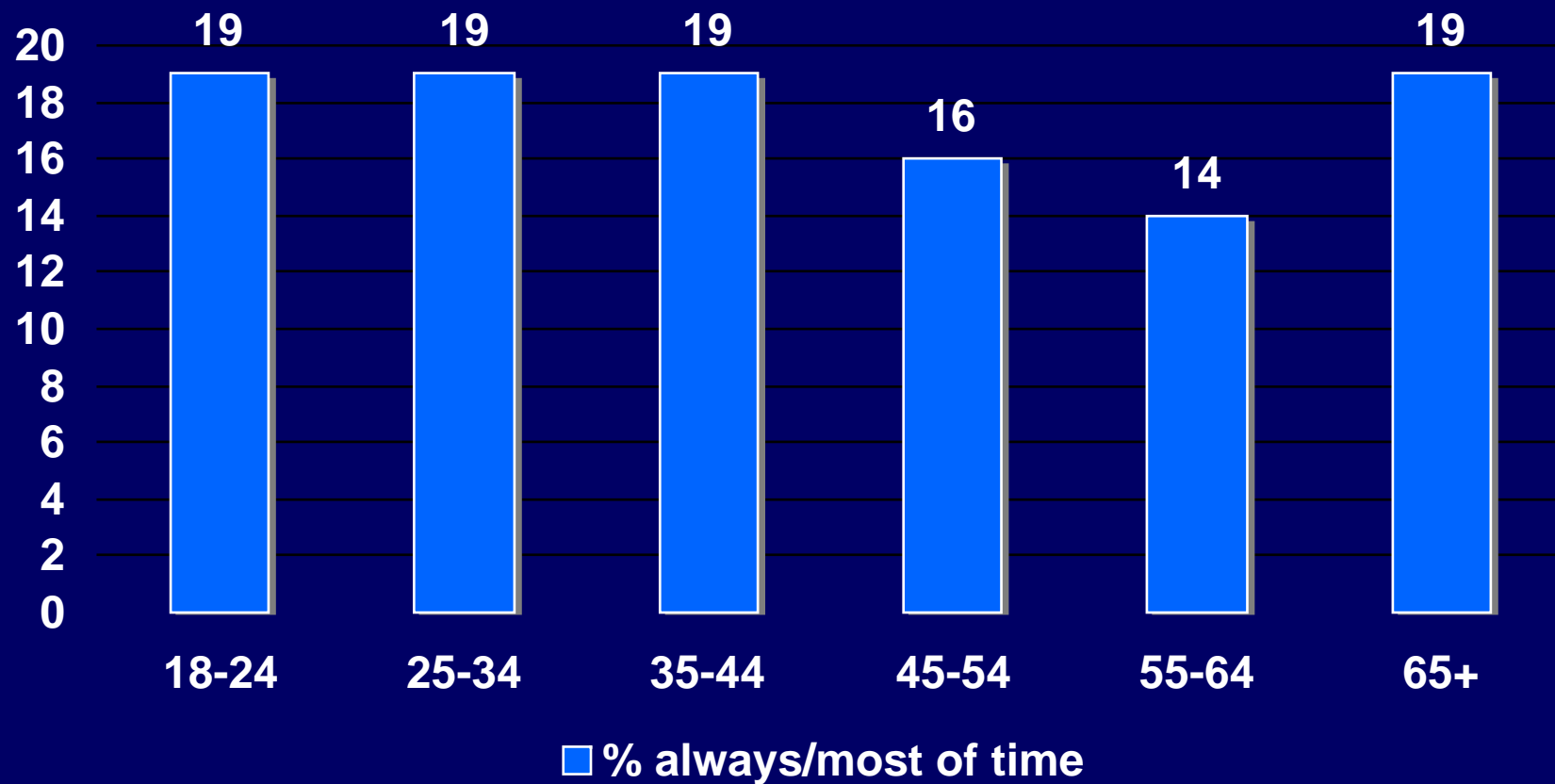
- Statements about society, not just individuals
- Quantitative social survey data
- NatCen's British Social Attitudes series
- In-depth questioning plus annual time series since 1983
- Annual reports - next in Jan. 2007!

# Always less interested?

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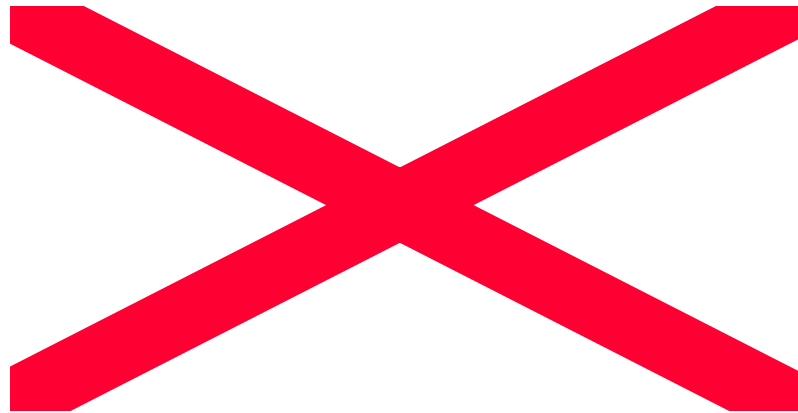


# Trust Governments



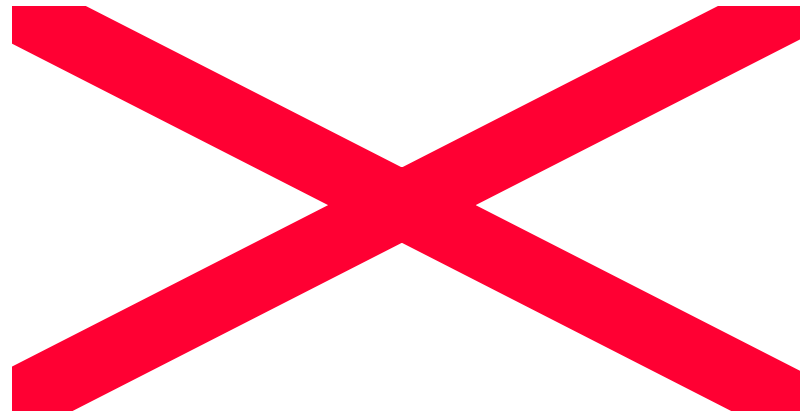
# MPs lose touch

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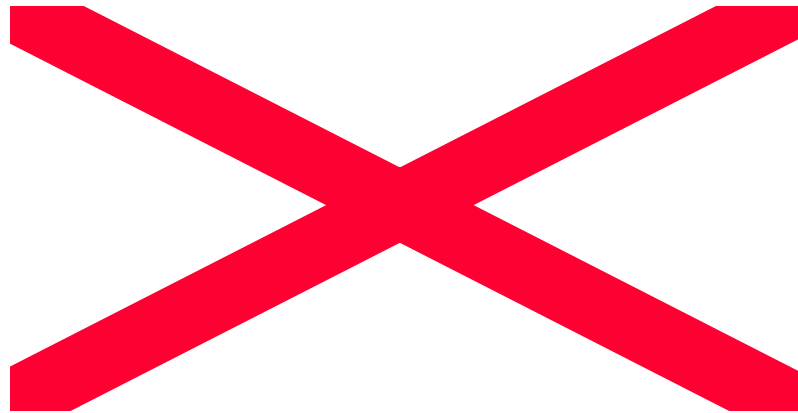
# Participate, don't vote?

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# Participate and vote?

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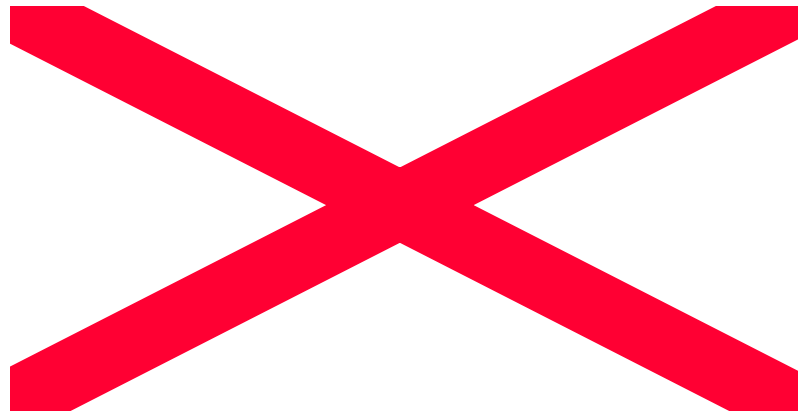
# Reality - 1?

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- Young people are, if anything, less cynical about politics than their elder.
- Young people are less interested in politics - but always true.
- Other ways of participating are in addition to voting, not a substitute for it.

# Tax & Spend by Income

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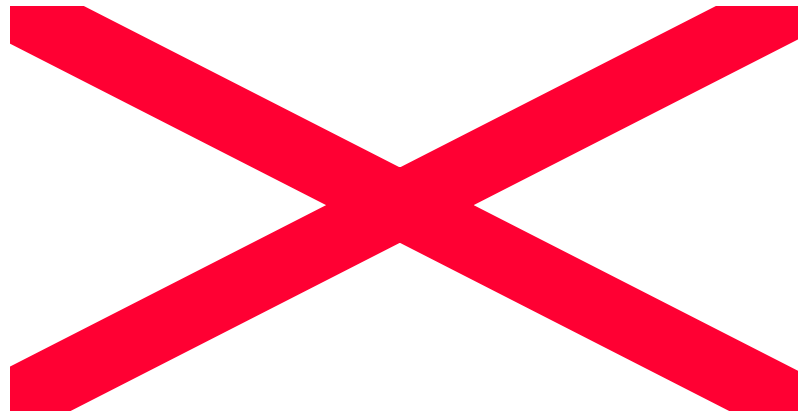
# Tax & Spend by Class

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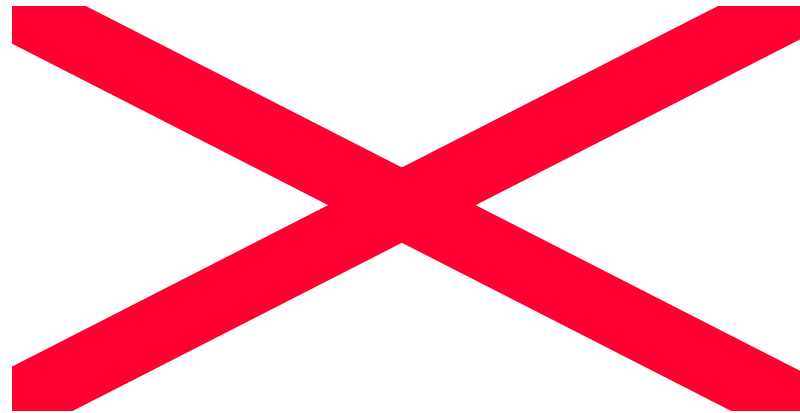
# Tax & Spend by Party ID

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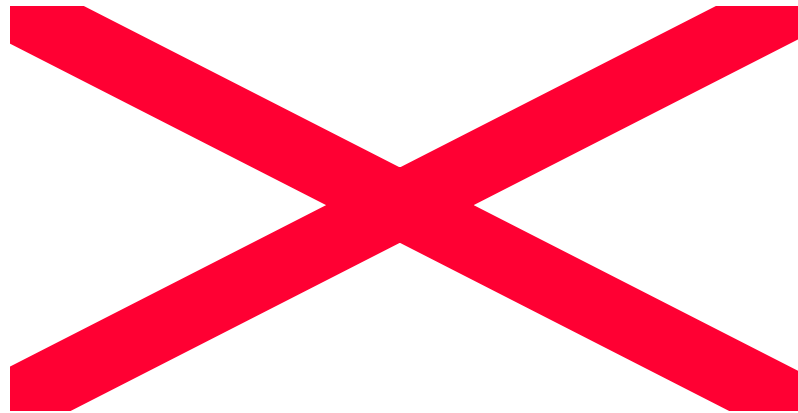
# Social Desirability?

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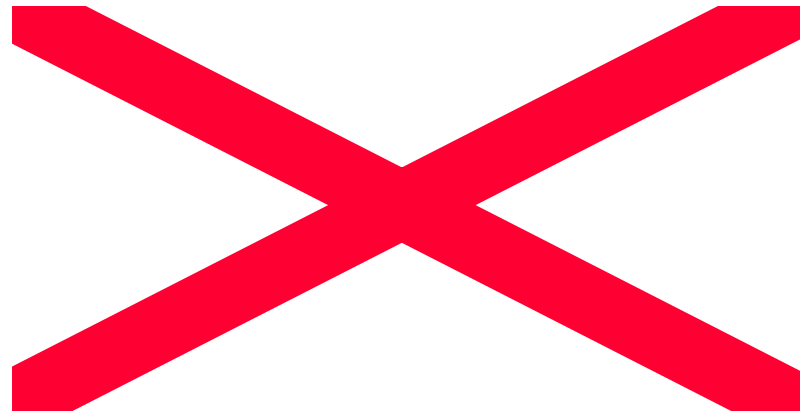
# Popular Spending!

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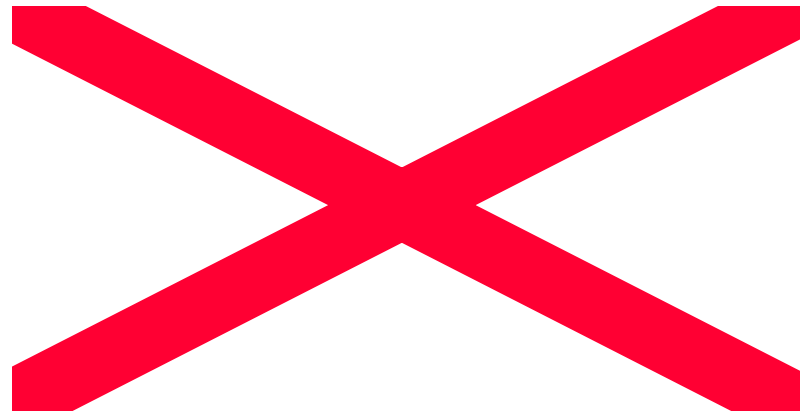
# Perceptions of unfairness

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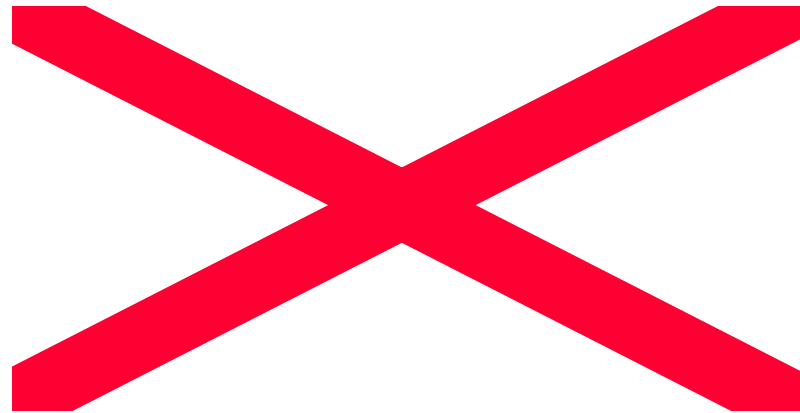
**And by party**

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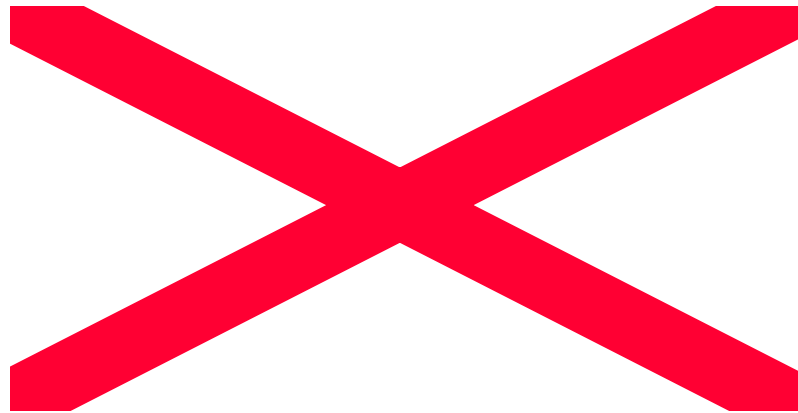
# Don't redistribute!

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# The Political Divide

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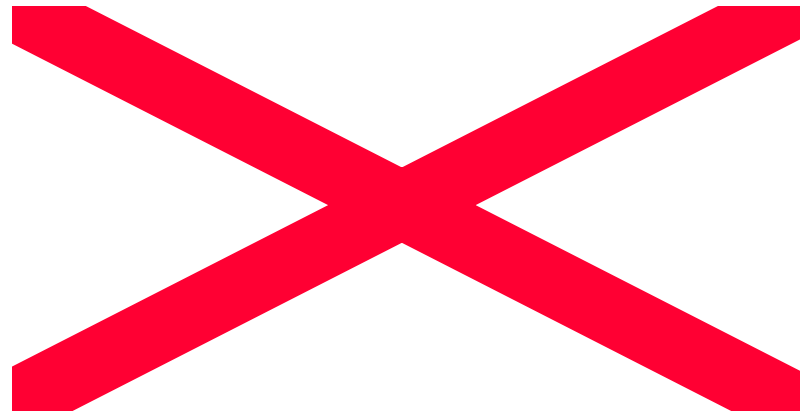
# Reality - 2?

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- Social consensus about tax and (desirable) spend - and limited political division.
- Social - and political - division about need for and desirability of more redistributive policies.

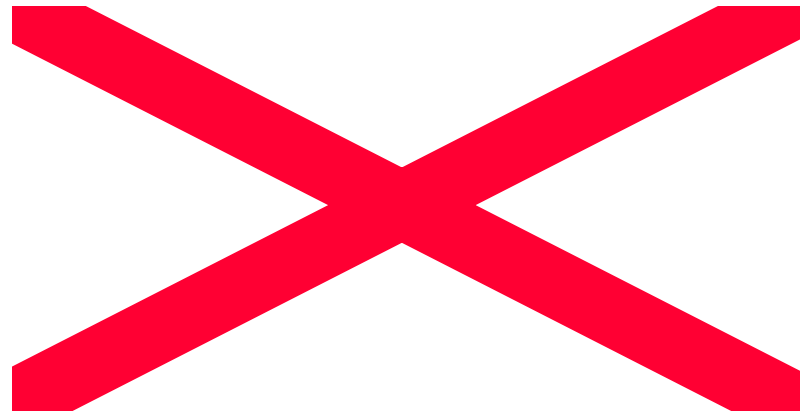
# Wanting and Getting Choice

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**Everyone wants it!**

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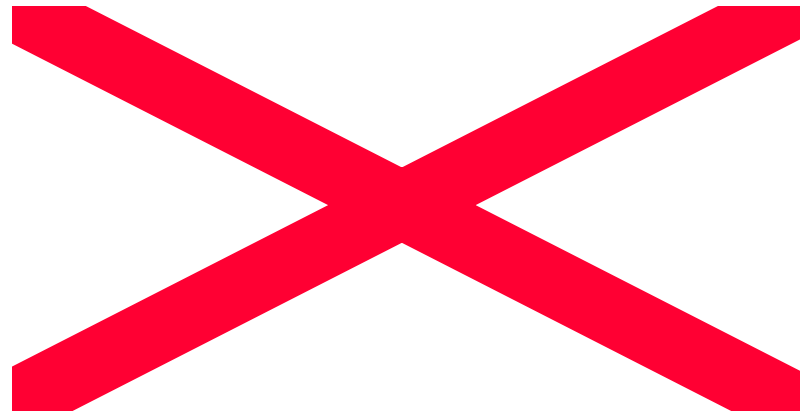


# Correlates of Satisfaction

- Get o/p appt in 3 months
- Hospital buildings
- Hospital choice
- GP appointments
- 999 waiting time
- A&E waiting time
- O/P seen in 1/2 hr
- Easy to complain
- Non-emergency ops waiting
- Consultant appt waiting

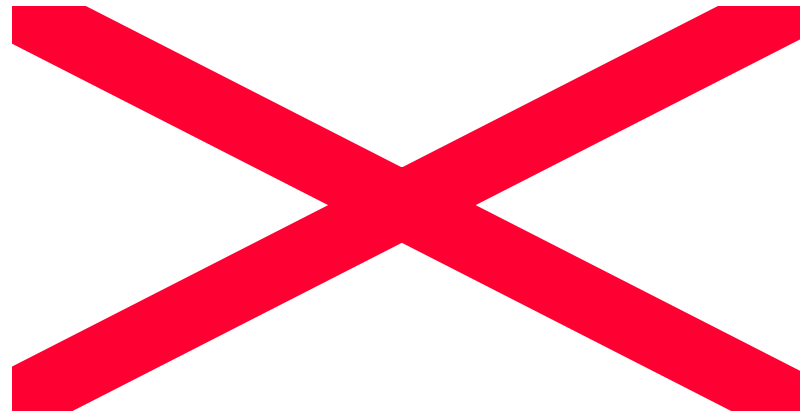
# Satisfaction, choice and waiting

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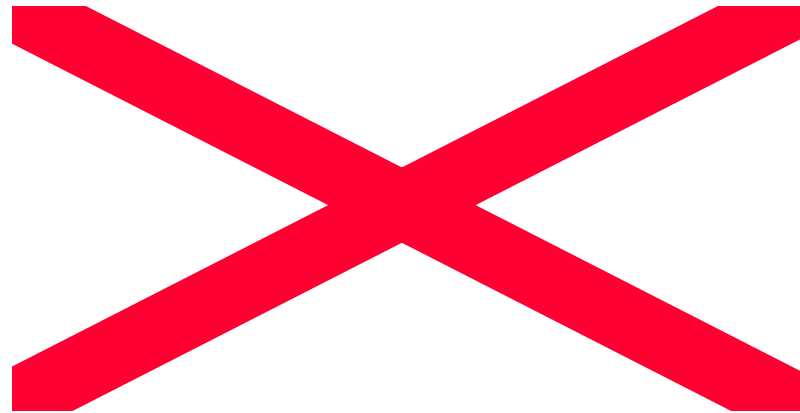
# Trends in o/p in 3 mths

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# Trends in consultant waiting

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# Reality - 3?

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- Choice is wanted - and is (was) not being thought to be being delivered in NHS.
- But perceived waiting times (still) matter more in generating satisfaction with NHS.
- Choice is desirable - but speed is essential

# Sources of Myth?

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- Ideological preference
- Social circles
- Rational thought!
- ...of those in power, with influence, in media

# Social Attitudes Research

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- Shows such sources are not (always) (necessarily) reliable
- Can help us better understand what does influence attitudes - and when changes really have occurred
- So long as we (continuously) ask the right questions!