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# WHEN POLITICS ENTERS THE FAMILY: ELECTORAL OUTCOMES AND FERTILITY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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## When Politics Enters the Family: Electoral Outcomes and Fertility in the United Kingdom

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the relationship between political outcomes and fertility behavior by linking electoral results with individual-level fertility outcomes in the United Kingdom. Drawing on the narrative decision-making framework (Vignoli et al., 2020; Johnson, Bilovich, & Tuckett, 2023) and the role of political polarization in fertility outcomes (Dahl et al. 2022) it considers how alignment between one’s political preferences and the actual party in power shapes fertility behaviour. Specifically, the study tests whether this alignment increases the probability of a first birth using longitudinal data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS) over the period 1991–2020. We derive the month of conception from respondents’ birth histories and combine this information with measures of their political preferences (extrapolated to account for every month in the studied period). The results of a complementary log-log model indicate that the probability of conception is higher when an individual’s preferred party is in government.

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**Keywords:** fertility, uncertainty, narrative decision theory, voting behavior, United Kingdom

**JEL codes:** J13, D72, P16

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, rising political polarization and increasing uncertainty surrounding future economic, social, and political conditions have become defining features of many advanced democracies. Yet the relationship between electoral politics and childbearing remains underexplored. Elections and referenda are often interpreted as sources of economic, political, and social uncertainty (Baker, Bloom, Davis et al., 2020), which may shape individuals' perceptions of future stability and thereby influence childbearing outcomes. A growing body of research suggests that major political events – such as general elections and referenda – can be related to fertility at the aggregate level, potentially through changes in perceived uncertainty or expectations about the future (Comoli & Andersson, 2021; Dahl et al., 2022; Mavropoulos, 2024). However, because these studies rely on aggregate-level data, they are vulnerable to ecological fallacy – that is, drawing inferences about individual behavior from group-level patterns – and therefore cannot determine whether political uncertainty shapes childbearing decisions at the individual level.

This article addresses this gap by linking individual political preferences to childbearing outcomes in the United Kingdom. Using longitudinal data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study: Understanding Society (UKHLS) (ISER, 2024) and LabFam Individual Biographies (2025), we observe both respondents' party preferences and the timing of births. This enables us to track individuals monthly over time and construct a measure of political alignment: respondents are considered aligned when their preferred party is in government and non-aligned when it is in opposition. We then examine how political alignment – and changes in alignment following elections – affect the probability of conception.

We argue that political alignment is connected to childbearing behavior. We estimate complementary log-log models for the period 1991–2020 and find that individuals are more likely to conceive when their preferred party is in power.

We interpret these findings through two complementary mechanisms. First, political polarization may strengthen identity-based attachments to political parties (Akerlof & Kranton, 2010), making electoral outcomes personally consequential. Second, drawing on narrative frameworks and conviction narrative theory (Vignoli et al., 2020; Johnson, Bilovich, & Tuckett, 2023), we argue that individuals navigate uncertainty through subjective narratives about the future. Electoral victories for one's preferred party may generate more optimistic expectations about the future, thereby facilitating long-term life-course commitments such as parenthood.

This article makes three main contributions. First, to our knowledge, it provides the first individual-level study in the United Kingdom directly linking political preferences to childbearing outcomes. Second, the article makes an empirical contribution by approximating conception timing from birth histories and linking these trajectories to respondents' political preferences. This allows us to examine both long-term alignment. Third, the article contributes theoretically by integrating fertility research with narrative decision theory. Rather than treating elections solely as uncertainty shocks, we argue that their effects depend on how individuals interpret political outcomes through identity-based narratives about the future, drawing on Vignoli et al.'s (2020) narrative framework and Beckert's (2016) concept of fictional expectations. More broadly, we suggest that political and social uncertainty – not only economic uncertainty – can shape childbearing decisions.

These findings have implications for both demographic and political research. They suggest that childbearing is shaped not only by material conditions, but also by politically mediated perceptions of the future. More broadly, the results indicate that partisan identity may extend beyond the political domain and influence fundamental life-course decisions.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature and develops the theoretical framework. Section 3 presents the hypotheses. Section 4 describes the data and empirical strategy. Section 5 reports the results, Section 6 discusses the findings, and Section 7 concludes.

## **2. Conceptual Framework and Related Literature**

### *2.1. Electoral politics and fertility*

A small but growing literature has examined the relationship between electoral politics and fertility. Comolli and Andersson (2021) analyze Sweden show that increases in support for the far-right Sweden Democrats at the municipal level were associated with declines in women's fertility, even after controlling for individual and contextual characteristics. In the United States, Dahl et al. (2022) demonstrate that the 2016 election of Donald Trump led to diverging fertility trends across counties depending on local political support, using aggregate total fertility rates. Similarly, Gemmill et al. (2020) found that the 2016 US presidential election led to increase in preterm births among US Latina women. It is explained by the anti-immigration policies that have been proposed and enforced in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, acting as a significant stressor in the lives of the US Latino population. Mavropoulos (2024) shows that the Brexit referendum was associated with

a decline in regional fertility rates in the United Kingdom, interpreting this effect as a consequence of increased uncertainty. Although, the results obtained by Marvopoulos (2024) has been challenged by Macmillan & Hannan (2025).

These studies provide important evidence that political events can shape fertility outcomes. However, they rely primarily on aggregate or contextual measures and therefore cannot directly observe how political preferences at the individual level translate into reproductive outcomes. This limitation motivates the individual-level approach adopted in this article. Moreover, we propose theoretical approach that involves a combination of identity-based cognition of political events, a decision-making process based on narrative representations, and political polarization.

## *2.2. Theoretical framework*

Electoral outcomes may affect fertility not by directly altering material conditions, but by shaping how individuals interpret the future (Vignoli et al., 2020). In established democracies, changes in government rarely produce immediate household-level changes. The mechanism, we argue, operates through narrative decision theory. In economics, Shiller (2017, 2019) popularized the concept of narrative economics, showing that widely shared social stories can themselves drive decisions by shaping perceptions and preferences at scale.

Vignoli et al.'s (2020) Narrative Framework argues that socially transmitted narratives about imagined futures play a central role in fertility decision-making under uncertainty. Because fertility decisions involve radical uncertainty, they are not well captured by rational cost-benefit theories alone; instead, individuals require mechanisms that simplify information and motivate action (Beckert, 2016). Shared narratives, disseminated through interpersonal networks and media, perform this role (Vignoli et al., 2022; Guetto et al., 2023; Weychert et al., 2026).

A complementary perspective is Johnson, Bilovich, and Tuckett's (2023) Conviction Narrative Theory (CNT), which explains decision-making under radical uncertainty as driven by narratives that generate the psychological conviction needed to act. According to CNT, individuals first make sense of the world through a selected narrative, then use it to simulate future scenarios. Political narratives – widely disseminated during election campaigns – shape causal interpretations of events and evaluations of key actors. A country governed by the "wrong" party is perceived as moving in an undesirable direction; identical policies may be evaluated differently depending on political alignment. When considering having a child,

simulated future scenarios will therefore differ depending on whether one's preferred party has won or lost.

Together, these frameworks suggest that electoral outcomes shape fertility by altering the narratives through which individuals imagine their futures – rendering childbearing more or less feasible, secure, and desirable. The role of uncertainty, but regarding economic stability, was proven to be important in shaping fertility decisions in Italy (Gatta et al. 2022). Therefore, the feeling of political uncertainty, influenced by congruence or lack of it with the governing party, could be a similar mechanism at play. Some evidence of this mechanism existing was documented by Matysiak & van der Velde (2025). They examined a major polarization-inducing political event in Poland, that is abortion ban and show that it led to a short-term decrease in fertility. Although the issue relates strongly to maternal health, it is also related to politics. It possibly increased political uncertainty and feeling of opposition towards the government.

In summary, we expect a general alignment effect: conception probability is higher when one's preferred party is in government. We also expect more period-specific effects in particular parliamentary terms: some electoral victories may have been more “powerful” in shaping the decision-making process. Election results consistent with one's preferences may reinforce an optimistic narrative about the future, thereby increasing childbearing propensity, while electoral defeat may have the opposite effect.

### *2.3. Political polarization*

Political polarization is a key factor linking electoral outcomes to childbearing decisions. Political identity shapes whether individuals perceive the "right" party to be in power, while simultaneously differentiating citizens across domains such as environmental policy, economic preferences, moral values, and immigration attitudes Dahl et al. (2022). In two-party-dominant systems like the United Kingdom's, these divisions tend to become especially pronounced, reinforcing polarization even in intimate relationships (Arpino & Di Nallo 2025).

The literature offers several accounts of polarization phenomenon. Iyengar et al. (2012) point to the role of increasingly adversarial electoral campaigns, in which citizens are repeatedly exposed to messaging targeting the opposing side. Iyengar et al. (2019) document that affective polarization in the United States is driven less by policy disagreement than by partisan social identity and the animosity it generates toward political outgroups. Interian et al. (2022) further provide a broader review, highlighting echo chambers and information-filtering mechanisms as key drivers. Gidron et al. (2022) focus on the policy and institutional conditions –

such as coalition versus single-party governance – that have shaped affective polarization since the mid-1990s.

Beyond the U.S. context, affective polarization has also been examined in the United Kingdom, particularly through the lens of Brexit. Hobolt et al. (2020) find that Brexit-related identities are both persistent and deeply internalized, reaching levels of attachment comparable to traditional party identification.

Among the consequences of political polarization, the literature points to increased electoral participation, especially through the reinforcement of motivations to remain politically engaged over time (Phillips, 2024). This effect is particularly relevant for the context of the present study.

Under conditions of polarization, the fundamental identity divide lies in differing assessments of whether it is good – taking everything into account – that a given party governs, or whether it would be better for the main rival party to govern instead. Survey research shows that perceptions of, for example, whether the national economy is in good condition can differ substantially between supporters of different parties, and these views may reverse entirely after a change of government, even in the absence of corresponding changes in macroeconomic indicators (Coibion, Gorodnichenko & Weber, 2020).

One may therefore speak of polarization as generating variation in the perception of information and future scenarios depending on political identity (Bartels, 2002; Gerber & Huber, 2010; Brady et al., 2022). More broadly, this reflects cultural cognition theory (Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, & Braman, 2011), whereby identity-rooted beliefs shape how individuals interpret facts and new information. This may explain why assessments of the state of the economy or similar factors change depending on whether the party one supports happens to be in power.

Political identity and preference-based divisions become particularly salient during election periods (Hernández et al., 2021; Michelitch & Utych, 2018). Campaigns actively reinforce these divisions, as political actors seek to persuade voters of the importance of their party's victory. In highly polarized contexts, political narratives may frame an opponent's victory as harmful or even catastrophic, while portraying a victory of "our side" as highly beneficial for the country. As a result, individuals whose preferred party loses an election may come to expect a deterioration in both their personal situation and broader societal conditions, whereas those whose party wins may anticipate improvement. In this sense, the future scenarios individuals construct depend jointly on political identity and electoral outcomes,

with polarization amplifying the divergence between these scenarios across partisan groups. Political identity thus shapes which narrative about the country's future appears attractive and compelling. Within this framework, polarization should be understood less as an independent mechanism and more as an amplifying factor. The greater the level of polarization, the larger the divergence between positive and negative future scenarios associated with alternative electoral outcomes, and consequently, the stronger the expected impact of election results on decisions regarding childbearing.

#### *2.4. The UK context*

The United Kingdom provides a suitable context for studying both the significance of elections and the role of political polarization. It is a country with an open yet highly consolidated political system, in which two major parties – the Labour Party and the Conservative Party – have alternated in power for decades, only rarely forming broad coalition governments (Quinn, 2013). These parties have also occupied relatively stable ideological positions over time, although, as expected, they have evolved and their specific policy platforms have changed.

This institutional context facilitates the development of clear political polarization within society. Voters can almost always expect one of the two major parties to win elections and typically have a reasonably well-defined sense of which option is closer to their preferences. Moreover, changes in government can be understood in relatively narrow terms, as shifts between these two dominant parties.

Importantly, this form of polarization can be analytically distinguished from specific policy programs or government actions. Its core lies in identity-based attachment, whereby voters feel a stronger sense of affiliation with one of the two main political camps. At the same time, supporters of smaller parties, within the first-past-the-post electoral system, may be more inclined to engage in strategic voting for one of the two major parties (Duverger, 1954; Quinn, 2026). This setting therefore allows for the examination of the effects of political polarization and identity independently of particular policy decisions or outcomes. Elections themselves constitute key moments in this framework, as they amplify the emotions and perceptions associated with political polarization (Hernández et al., 2021; Michelitch & Utych, 2018).

Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom are typically held every five years, unless early elections are called. Over the past 35 years, general elections have taken place in 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2024. Elections resulting in a transition

of power from Labour to the Conservatives occurred in 2010, while those leading to a shift from the Conservatives to Labour took place in 1997 and 2024.

Moreover, an event crucial in increasing political polarization and evoking political identity was the Brexit referendum that took place on 23rd of June 2016, resulting in a victory of the 'Leave the EU' option, which we treat in this article as similar to an electoral victory for those voters who identified with Brexiteers across all political parties (Hobolt et al., 2021).

### 3. Hypotheses

The theoretical framework developed above implies that electoral outcomes influence fertility not uniformly across the population, but conditionally: depending on political alignment, the timing of observation relative to the election, the type of electoral outcome, and the party supported by the respondent. Accordingly, our empirical analysis tests hypotheses about both the existence and the structure of electoral effects on conception probabilities.

**H1. Political alignment and fertility:** The probability of conception is higher, *ceteris paribus*, in periods when the respondent's preferred party is in power compared to periods when the preferred party is in opposition.

This hypothesis captures the alignment effect implied by the narrative mechanism. If individuals are more likely to form positive expectations about the future when the governing party corresponds to their political identity, then conception probabilities should be systematically higher during periods of political alignment than during periods of political misalignment. In other words, what matters is not simply which party governs, but whether the party in power is the one preferred by the respondent.

**H2. Political preferences moderation hypothesis:** This hypothesis follows from the assumption that political parties may differ in the extent to which they are associated with future-oriented expectations relevant to family formation. For some voters, alignment with the governing party may increase perceived economic security, institutional trust, or optimism about the future, thereby encouraging childbearing. However, these effects may vary across party electorates because Conservative and Labour supporters may differ in their socioeconomic profiles, family values, sensitivity to economic policy, or expectations regarding economic policy of the preferred and not-supported parties. As a result, the same experience of political alignment may translate into reproductive decisions more strongly for one group of voters than for the other.

**H3. Age moderation hypothesis:** The association between political alignment and first birth probability will be strongest among women in the peak childbearing years (25-29 and 30-34), as these women face the most immediate and time-sensitive reproductive decisions. Women in the youngest age group (18–24) may be too early in their reproductive careers to translate political optimism into childbearing, while women aged 40-44 face stronger biological constraints that override the influence of political context.

**H4. Education moderation hypothesis:** The association between political alignment and first birth probability will be stronger among highly educated women than among those with lower educational attainment.

Highly educated women are usually more likely to be politically engaged, more interested in political developments, more attentive to policy outcomes, and more aware of the long-term economic and social implications of electoral results, making them more responsive to the political context when making reproductive decisions. Additionally, highly educated women have greater capacity to time and plan births of their children, which means their childbearing behavior is more sensitive to changes in perceived circumstances.

## 4. Data and Methods

### 4.1. Data sources

The empirical analysis draws on two linked British panel surveys: the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS; 1991–2008) and Understanding Society (UKHLS; 2009–2020), together constituting one of the longest running individual-level panel datasets in the UK. Following a discrete-time survival analysis framework (Allison, 1982; Mills, 2010), observations are expanded into monthly intervals using the LabFam Individual Biographies harmonization protocol (Weychert et al., 2025).

The analytical sample is restricted to women aged 18–44 who had not yet had a child at first interview. Women enter the risk set at their first interview and exit at first birth or last interview. Ethnic minority boost sample members from UKHLS are excluded to ensure comparability with the BHPS. For election-specific models, the sample is further restricted to Conservative and Labour supporters, estimated over a six-year window centered on each election date.

The outcome variable is a binary indicator equal to 1 if the woman experienced a first birth in a given month, and 0 otherwise. To account for the duration of pregnancy, each birth is

traced back nine months to approximate the month of conception. The dependent variable thus captures the probability of conception in a given month rather than the probability of birth.

#### *4.2. Variable of interest*

We estimate a general political alignment model using the variable *alignment*, which captures whether a woman's preferred party is currently in government. Party support is derived from the survey variable 'Which political party do you feel closest to?', 'Do you support a particular political party?' and 'Do you consider yourself closer to one party than others?'. Women who express no affiliation on any of these three questions are classified as having no political orientation and are excluded from models.

Alignment variable equals 1 when the woman supports the governing party (Conservative before 1997 and after 2010; Labour from 1997 to 2010), and 0 otherwise. Therefore, our model examines whether in the whole studied period (1991-2020) UK citizens were more willing to conceive their first child if their preferred party was in power. This alignment framework follows the approach used in the other political uncertainty and fertility literature (Dahl et al., 2022).

Since individuals may change their political views over time, we assume that such changes occur at the point when a new preference is observed in the survey - that is, in the first month following a survey wave in which a respondent reports a different preference than before. For all months prior to the observation of a different political preference in the panel data, we assume that the respondent held the same political preferences as those reported in the previous survey wave.

#### *4.3. Control variables*

All models include a standard set of time-varying covariates that are well-established determinants of first birth timing in the demographic literature (Vignoli et al., 2020; Guetto et al., 2023). Age is included as a continuous variable with a quadratic term to capture the non-linear biological and social age pattern of first birth, or as a categorical variable with 5-year age groups. Educational attainment is coded as a binary variable distinguishing women with a university degree or above ('high') from those with lower qualifications ('low and middle'). Marital and partnership status is classified as single or married /cohabiting, or other (separated, divorced, widowed). Self-rated health is a three-category variable (poor, fair, good/excellent).

#### 4.4. Descriptive Statistics

Our analysis is restricted to respondents who report supporting either the Labour Party or the Conservative Party. These are the only parties that formed governments in the United Kingdom during the period under study. The only exemption was made for the supporters of the Liberal Democrats, since this party participated in a governing coalition between 2010 and 2015.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the sample we used.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for the full analytical sample (women aged 18–44, observed from first interview date, with no prior births). Political party support is based on non-missing responses only. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Variable	Category	Percent
Age	18-24	46.6
	25-34	37
	35-44	16.4
Education	Low & middle (below tertiary)	60.3
	High (tertiary degree or above)	35.6
Marital/partnership status	Single	70.5
	Married or cohabiting	26.7
Self-rated health	Poor	6
	Fair	14.7
	Good/excellent	53
Political party support	Conservative	10
	Labour	17.4
	Other party	69
	No political orientation	0.9
First birth (per person-month)	Event rate	0.483
Number of person-months	Full analytical sample	554230
Number of women		11145

Source: own elaboration.

<sup>1</sup> Following 2017 general election, the Conservative-Democratic Unionist Party confidence and supply agreement was reached, which would make it reasonable to count the DUP supporters as aligned for the 2017-2019 period. However, there are too few observations of DUP supporters in our sample, and also it was not a typical coalition that would include participating in the government and influencing policies by the smaller party.

#### 4.5. Empirical strategy

We model first birth timing using a complementary log-log (cloglog) model, estimated for the alignment hypothesis for the whole period. The cloglog link function is the standard choice for discrete-time survival models of rare binary events, as it represents the discrete-time analogue of the continuous-time proportional hazards model (Cox, 1972; Allison, 1982; Mills, 2010). It is preferred over logit or probit when the outcome is rare – as is the case here, with approximately 0.5% of person-months recording a birth – because it correctly handles the asymmetry of the hazard function.

Exponentiated coefficients (hazard ratios) are reported throughout and interpreted as the multiplicative change in the monthly hazard of first birth associated with being a supporter of the party in power. A hazard ratio below 1 indicates a lower probability of first birth among losing-party supporters relative to winning-party supporters, controlling for age, education, marital status, and health.

To test the first hypothesis (the alignment effect), we estimated complementary log-log model of the following form:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Alignment}_{it} + X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

- $Y_{it}$ : conception probability
- $X_{it}$ : controls, including age, age square, education, health and marital status

To test H2 H3 and H4 (interactions effect), we estimated complementary log-log models of the following form:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Alignment}_{it} \times \text{Supported party}_i) + X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Alignment}_{it} \times \text{Age group}_i) + X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Alignment}_{it} \times \text{Education level}_i) + X_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

- $Y_{it}$ : conception probability
- $X_{it}$ : controls, including age, age square, education, health and marital status

## 5. Results

To assess differences across groups, predicted probabilities and 83% confidence intervals are reported in the figures, following the guidance of Austin and Hux (2002): non-overlapping 83% confidence intervals correspond to statistically significant differences at the conventional 5% threshold. Regression tables report hazard ratios with standard errors. Robustness checks

using clustered standard errors yield substantively identical results for the 2010 election model, confirming that the main findings are not an artefact of within-person correlation in the error term.

*5.1. Political alignment with the party in government*

**Table 2.** Political Alignment and First Birth Probability: Complementary Log-Log Models with Age Group and Education Interactions, UK 1991–2020

	Alignment	Alignment × Supported Party	Alignment × Age group	Alignment × Education
(Intercept)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.000*** (0.000)
Age	2.608*** (0.214)	2.473** (0.748)		2.608*** (0.214)
Age squared	0.984*** (0.001)	0.985** (0.005)		0.984*** (0.001)
Education level: High	0.852+ (0.075)	0.644 (0.238)	0.906 (0.081)	0.888 (0.119)
Marital status: married/cohabiting	1.306** (0.117)	0.629 (0.267)	1.344** (0.122)	1.307** (0.117)
Marital status: other	7.247** (5.141)		7.494** (5.328)	7.264** (5.152)
General health: fair	0.780 (0.157)	0.263+ (0.201)	0.777 (0.156)	0.778 (0.156)
General health: good/excellent	0.634** (0.112)	0.508 (0.273)	0.627** (0.111)	0.633** (0.112)
General health: missing	0.654* (0.124)	0.185 (0.208)	0.638* (0.121)	0.652* (0.124)
Alignment: Aligned	1.240* (0.107)	1.301 (0.792)	1.453 (0.612)	1.279* (0.148)
Supported party: Labour		1.535 (0.843)		
Aligned × Supported party: Labour		0.786 (0.580)		
Age group: 20-24			0.926 (0.337)	
Age group: 25-29			2.754** (0.937)	
Age group: 30-34			4.656*** (1.578)	
Age group: 35-39			1.580 (0.622)	
Age group: 40-44			0.511 (0.303)	
Aligned × Age group: 20-24			0.869 (0.420)	
Aligned × Age group: 25-29			0.962 (0.427)	
Aligned × Age group: 30-34			0.665 (0.297)	
Aligned × Age group: 35-39			1.153 (0.581)	
Aligned × Age group: 40-44			1.034 (0.758)	
Education: High × Aligned				0.932 (0.161)
Num.Obs.	107008	6416	107008	107008
AIC	6753.9	449.0	6763.9	6755.7
BIC	6849.7	523.4	6936.3	6861.1

• p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

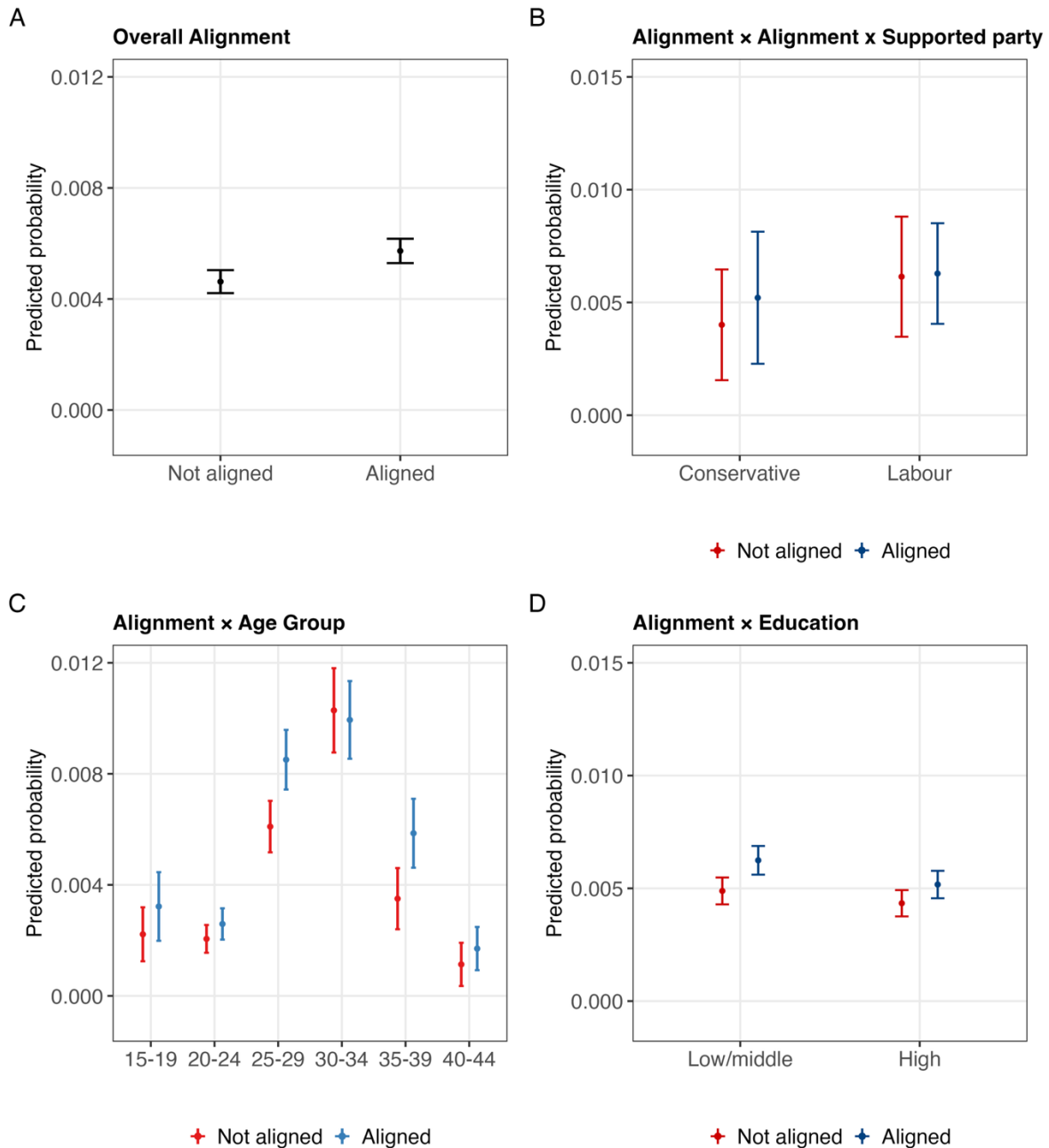
Source: own elaboration.

Table 2 presents the results of three complementary log-log models estimating the association between political alignment and the probability of first birth. Model 1

establishes the baseline alignment effect, Models 2, 3 and 4 introduce interaction terms with political preferences, age group and educational attainment respectively. Figure 1 displays the corresponding average predicted probabilities.

**Figure 1.** Predicted Probability of First Birth by Political Alignment, Age Group, and Educational Attainment, UK 1991–2020

Average predicted probabilities (83% CI)



Note: Average marginal predictions from complementary log-log models. Panel A shows the overall alignment effect. Panels B and C show alignment effects stratified by age group and educational attainment respectively, estimated from models including alignment × age group and alignment × education interaction terms. Whiskers represent 83% confidence intervals. Red = Not aligned (supporter of the party not in government); Blue = Aligned (supporter of the governing party). All models control for age, age squared, education, marital status, and self-rated health. Sample restricted to Conservative and Labour supporters, women aged 18–44. Source: own elaboration.

The results provide consistent support for H1. Being politically aligned with the party in power is associated with a higher probability of conception. Model 1 (table 3) shows that women who support the governing party have a significantly higher hazard of first birth compared to non-aligned women (RR = 1.240,  $p < 0.05$ ). The effect is modest but robust to the inclusion of standard demographic and health controls. Control variables behave as expected.

Panel A of Figure 2 illustrates the overall alignment effect: aligned women show a higher predicted probability of first birth (approximately 0.006 per person-month) compared to non-aligned women (approximately 0.005), with non-overlapping 83% confidence intervals confirming the statistical significance of this difference.

Models 2, 3, and 4 examine whether the association between political alignment and first birth varies by political preferences, age group, and educational level. Overall, the interaction terms provide limited evidence of heterogeneity. Political preferences, age and education do not show statistically significant interactions with political alignment for 95% confidence intervals, suggesting that the positive association between alignment with the governing party and first birth is broadly similar across socioeconomic subgroups.

Panels B, C and D of Figure 1 display this interpretation. Panel B displays fairly overlapping confidence intervals within each of two subgroups reflecting the insignificance of the interaction effect of political preferences and main alignment effect. Panel C shows stronger heterogeneity by age group. Predicted probabilities are lowest among the youngest and oldest age groups and highest among respondents aged 25–34. Alignment is associated with higher predicted probabilities among respondents aged 25–29 and 35–39. However, among those aged 30–34, the aligned and non-aligned estimates are very similar, suggesting little difference by alignment in this group. Panel D indicates that education also moderates the alignment effect. For below higher education level, aligned women have higher predicted probabilities than non-aligned individuals, while among highly educated respondents the difference is smaller and insignificant.

Overall, the findings indicate that political alignment with the governing party is positively associated with conception, supporting the idea that politically congruent environments foster more favorable expectations about the future. This effect is uniform across political groups, although the size of this association varies across subgroups defined by age and education level.

## 6. Conclusion and Discussion

This paper examines the relationship between political alignment and fertility using individual-level longitudinal data from the United Kingdom. The results show that political alignment with the party in government is associated with higher probabilities of conception of the first child among British women. We consider H1 supported by obtained results. This effect of congruence of one's political preferences and fertility is heterogenous regarding education level and to some extent by age.

However, as stated in Section 3, we expected different interaction results regarding moderating effect of political preferences, age and education. We expected that highly educated woman rather than women with below high education level would be more prone to the political context of the fertility decisions. Obtained results suggest that it is actually women with lower education level that experience more significant effect of alignment. One possible explanation is that they are more prone to more emotional or dichotomous political narratives, placing more weight on political context in their narratives of the future in general, and in their procreative decisions. Therefore our results provide only limited evidence for moderation effect of education (H4). The same can be said of moderating age effect, since the group of women aged 30-34 displayed no significant interaction with alignment. However, as expected, the effect was significant for women aged 25-29, and also for women aged 35-39, which we did not explicitly expected. Based on these results we may claim that H3 received mixed or weak confirmation. Obtained results provide no support for H2, suggesting that alignment effect works uniformly among Conservative and Labour parties supporters.

Our results are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed in this paper such as Narratives of the Future Framework (Vignoli et al. 2020) and Conviction Narrative Theory (Johnson, Bilovich, Tuckett 2023). Political alignment in general may be associated with more optimistic assessment of the general state of the country, expectations about economic stability, social order, or conditions for family life, while misalignment may be associated with less favorable expectations and assessments.

One aspect worth noting is the overall downward trend in fertility observed throughout the analysed period, 1991–2020. We do not include a time variable in the model because our primary interest was to examine the alignment effect itself. Specifically, our research question was whether this effect was present over the entire period under study, rather than whether its magnitude changed over time. Moreover, given the relatively small number of first births, splitting the sample into shorter subperiods could attenuate the estimated effect and artificially

reduce its statistical significance. Future research, using broader data, could examine a more general alignment effect – including births of higher order and outcomes beyond women only – as well as its evolution over time. Such work could also investigate the causal impact of events such as general elections as ‘external shocks’ for fertility decisions. Future research could extend our analysis by examining causal impact of favourable or undesired election outcomes in the UK and by exploring similar mechanisms in other countries. Expanding the availability of data linking political preferences and fertility behavior at the individual level would also allow for a more precise identification of the mechanisms underlying the relationship between electoral outcomes and reproductive decisions.

## **7. Limitations**

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, conception is measured using a proxy based on birth dates shifted back by nine months, which introduces measurement error due to variation in gestation length and may attenuate short-term effects. Second, the data capture only successful conceptions resulting in live births, so we do not observe unsuccessful attempts or underlying fertility intentions. Third, the exact timing of fertility intentions is unobserved, limiting our ability to distinguish immediate from delayed responses to political events. Fourth, political preferences are observed only at survey waves and are interpolated between interviews, which may lead to misclassification if preferences change between waves. Fifth, despite extensive controls, unobserved confounding cannot be fully ruled out. Finally, by focusing on supporters of the two main parties, the analysis excludes voters of smaller parties, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Overall, these limitations suggest that the results should be interpreted as indicative of general patterns rather than precise causal estimates.

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