

Funding the Future

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The [Guardian](#) has noted that:

More than 85% of fraud allegations made by the public over the last five years were false, according to figures obtained by the Observer.

A freedom of information request to the Department for Work and Pensions discloses that between 2010 and 2015 the government closed 1,041,219 alleged cases of benefit fraud put forward by the public. Insufficient or no evidence of fraud was discovered in 887,468 of these. In 2015 alone, of the 153,038 cases closed by the DWP's Fraud and Error Service, 132,772 led to no action.

In this context comment from [Owen Smith](#), the shadow work and pensions secretary who I hold in high regard, seems appropriate. He said:

Where there are abuses of the system they should be dealt with swiftly. However, the government's constant attempts to paint honest people — like low-paid workers relying on tax credits and universal credit — as 'skivers' is creating a hostile and accusatory environment. The Tories should view these results with shame and pledge to turn the page on their divisive rhetoric.

I doubt that they will. Take this from a book review by [Andrew Sabisky for the Adam Smith Institute](#) this January:

The Welfare Trait has thus far attracted little media attention. This is perhaps a mercy. Were it to do so, its author, Dr Adam Perkins, would no doubt be forced to confront a howling hate mob outside his office twenty-four hours a day. Perhaps he would even have to move to an East Asian university, which these days is the usual route taken by European eccentrics (such as Nick Land and Neven Sesardic) who are determined to make fools of themselves in public by uttering unpalatable truths.

Painstakingly, Perkins constructs his core argument: that the welfare state, the foundational institution of modern Britain (the Church of England having sadly declined), contains the seeds of its own eventual destruction. A large body of evidence, which Perkins reviews, supports the intuitive idea that habitual welfare claimants tend to be less conscientious and agreeable than the average person. Such habitual

claimants also tend to reproduce at higher rates than the general population, a pattern found across nations and time periods. They also seem to adjust their fertility in response to changes in the generosity of welfare provision, having fewer children in times of austerity and more when governments turn on the spigot marked “spending”.

Over time, therefore, the work motivation of the general population is lowered. This occurs through both genetic and environmental channels. Personality traits are substantially heritable (meaning that a decent percentage of the variation in these traits is due to naturally occurring genetic variation). Given this fact, habitual welfare claimants with employment-resistant personalities are likely to have offspring with similar personalities.

What you see in this is the deliberate construction of an argument that those on benefits are genetically different from other people. The consequences that follow are inevitable and were all too apparent in the 1930s. And this comes from a UK think tank much beloved for Tory politicians.

Worry, a great deal.