

We don't get more conservative as we age: it ju...

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These paragraphs were in an article written by Dana Rosenfeld, a Reader in Sociology at Keele University, on ageing on the academic comment website [The Conversation](#) this morning. They address the issue of whether we become more conservative as we age:

Not so. Imagine ten people: one aged ten, one 20, one 30 and so on. The oldest is less liberal than the 60-year-old, who is less liberal than the 40-year-old, and so on. You might conclude people get more conservative with age. But you'd be incorrectly assuming that each person started out with the same political outlook.

A 100-year-old woman, born in 1918, formed her baseline political opinions in a very different time. What was liberal in the 1940s is conservative now (consider race relations, feminism and sexual norms). What you're seeing is a 100-year-old whose political opinions have become less conservative, but remain more conservative than her children's or grandchildren's opinions, who began their lives on a more liberal footing. This is what researchers in the US found in their study of political attitudes among different age groups over 30 years. They concluded that "change is as common among older adults as younger adults".

I admit I had not looked at the issue in that way before. And it is an interesting insight.

As is well known, it is older generations (of which I am a part) who voted Brexit and who are inclined to keep the Conservatives in office. It has been said that as those generations (with my father still alive I can still think there are multiple older generations) pass on the world will get more liberal. That, though, depends upon the thesis noted above being true.

In other words, we don't drift right but actually drift left as society gets more liberal but started further to the right, and so seemingly always stay on the conservative side of the spectrum. In net terms overall society does , however, get more liberal.

I hope so.