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UNDERSTANDING
POLITICAL CHANGE
IN BRITAIN

The Radical Right's Expansion in Britain: 2015 - 2025

How political insurgents shook Britain's electoral landscape

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RESEARCH PAPER
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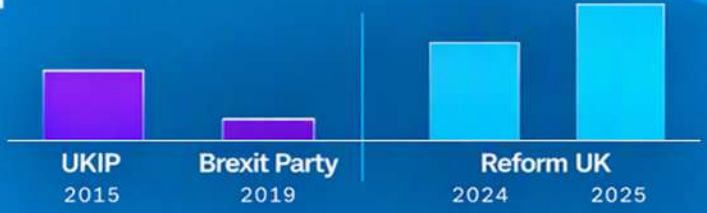
UNDERSTANDING
THE RADICAL RIGHT'S
GROWTH IN BRITAIN



Core Findings:

This paper explores the increase in support for the radical right in the last decade of British politics (2015-2025). In summary, our research finds that:

1. Continuity remains in who primarily supports the radical right. They tend to be former Conservatives who are older, white British and identify with the Church of England (they are traditional Britons).
2. Their support has also grown partly among highly educated voters who, on average, earn more, breaking stereotypes about who supports the radical right.
3. Reform has also gained by securing new voters who break historic left/right socio-political divisions, such as former Labour voters who are left-wing and rent their accommodation.
4. Those supporting the radical right have consistently perceived politics differently. They more frequently prioritise immigration and trust the radical right to deliver on the issue. They look upon Farage and his party more favourably.
5. Those switching to the radical right are often unhappy with government performance on the core issues of the economy, immigration and the EU.
6. The voters increasingly supporting the radical right disproportionately view immigration and the EU negatively. They disproportionately trust Farage to handle these issues.
7. The radical right's bae have mixed economic views. They do lean rightwards by less often favouring redistribution, but those switching from Labour tend to favour greater government intervention.
8. Radical right support has primarily derived from those unhappy with government performance on their core concerns and a belief Farage's party can deliver better outcomes.

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Research Report – Capture Politics. Author: James Prentice

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Introduction

The rise of the radical right has been a dominant news feature since Labour's landslide victory in 2024. Despite being a relatively new party, Reform performed strongly in the 2024 general election, securing 14% of the vote - four million votes. This marked a 12%p increase from what their predecessor party, the Brexit Party, secured in 2019. It also surpassed UKIP's watermark tally in 2015, which gained 12.6% of the vote - 3.8 million votes. Reform's rise to the top of the polls has been rapid, with the party consistently finishing first among all the pollsters by 2025. The rise in support has allowed them to win hundreds of new councillors and take control of councils, despite historically not featuring in contests. This raises the question: how has Reform risen so rapidly? It also raises questions of who is awarding Reform additional support, where have they historically existed, and what the core reasons are for them joining this new insurgent party?

With Farage's decision to return to frontline politics in June 2024, the recent uptick in Reform support is often associated with his leadership. Without his leadership, the radical right has often performed poorly, and UKIP vanished shortly after he decided to move post-Brexit. Yet, some might argue that Farage is merely riding a wave of sentiment that is assisting Radical Right parties across Europe. Specifically, concerns around increasing waves of migration are cited as a possible cause. Further, the EU's inability to deal with increased numbers of asylum seekers and illegal immigration has raised questions around European governments' ability to manage immigration. This, on top of cost-of-living squeezes, is raising questions around government competence. In the UK, the increased inflation post-Covid may have increased doubt in the mainstream parties' ability to deliver. Further, pressures on the Eurozone economy and international issues like climate change have encouraged more EU intervention, raising questions around national sovereignty. This has raised

questions about the EU's legitimacy, and in the UK, the debate around EU membership has helped the radical right form a clear political grouping.

Therefore, feelings on the EU, immigration and dissatisfaction with worsening economic conditions could also explain the radical right's rise, as well as Farage's appeal. The purpose of this paper is to establish the most impactful factors that explain the radical right's rise in the UK over the last decade. It argues that the radical right's support has primarily derived from those unhappy with government performance on their core concerns and a belief that Farage's party can deliver better outcomes.

Who are Reform's voters and where are they coming from?

Who are they & how do they differ?

Demographically, the largest differences between Reform voters and the rest of the country are age and education levels. These groups' disparities have also grown over the last decade. Further, some disparities have remained constant, indicating Reform is gaining considerable support from demographics that either considered or voted for UKIP. Reform has increased support amongst older, white groupings that are disproportionately male and homeowners. Yet, key differences have allowed Reform to surpass UKIP's historic base of support. They have gained more support from highly educated, middle-class, high-income voters. The securing of additional voters from these demographics has allowed Reform to break through and become the largest party in the polls.

Age: Benefiting from an ageing electorate

Reform is clearly appealing more to an older generation than to younger first-time voters. Voters for parties led by Nigel Farage have skewed older, with at least 48% of their supporters being over 55 in the 2015, 2024, and 2025 elections. The share of voters coming from over-55s increased across

the decade. This was highest in the 2025 election, where over-55s made up 57% of all Reform supporters, creating a 10%p increase from 2015 to 2025. By contrast, only 37% of all survey respondents fell into this age category, demonstrating Reform's reliance on older voters. They have also been less successful in capturing the younger vote; only 13% of Reform supporters were under 36 in 2024, decreasing to 10% by 2025. They have particularly captured older voters from the Conservative Party, with 74% of all Tory switchers being over 55, with this only being 44% amongst captured Labour voters. This demonstrates that the radical right has expanded its base with voters who reside within an ageing electorate, particularly amongst those who once voted Conservative. Therefore, this suggests that Reform has increased its support by appealing to older voters' concerns.

Education: Low, but becoming higher

Reform supporters also have different educational backgrounds from the rest of the UK; see Figure 1. Reform has been disproportionately supported by less educated voters and has secured a lower share of support from university graduates. The highest qualification achieved by most Reform supporters is a GCSE or equivalent, comprising around a third of UKIP and Reform supporters in 2015, 2024, and 2025.

Yet, it should not be overstated that their rise in support has come through a large increase in less educated voters. Whilst 21% of UKIP supporters were indeed educated to below a GCSE level, this is only the case for 16% of Reform 2025 supporters. This reflects a 5%p drop in their share of the vote originating from lower-educated voters. However, it is notable that they are generally less educated than the rest of the UK, with only 10% of people nationwide having qualifications below level 2 (GCSE) in 2025.
In contrast, Farage's support has increased amongst more highly educated voters. 31% of Reform supporters had been educated to degree level or higher, compared to 48% of the whole population, in both 2024 and 2025. Yet, it should be noted that the proportion of the radical right's vote that is

educated to a university-level has increased by 7%p since 2015, showing how the party is gaining amongst groupings often not associated with supporting Farage's movement. Interestingly, this trend was consistent regardless of the party an individual had switched their support from. This all reflects how Farage's bid to moderate his political operations may have helped him expand his base beyond the natural support that UKIP secured.

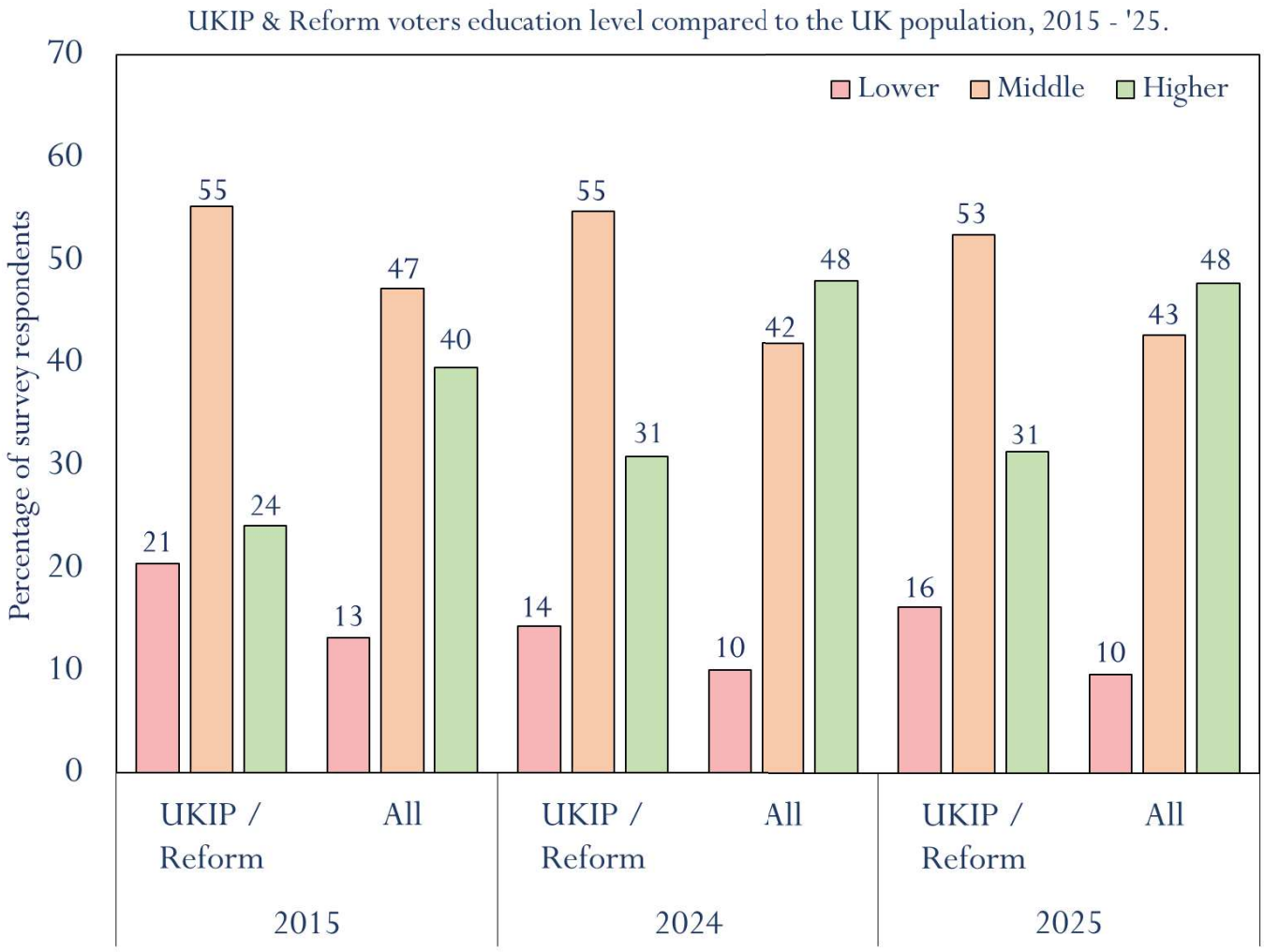


Figure 1: Radical Right supporters and their educational background. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

Class, Income and Tenure:

Despite Reform's repeated appeals to the working class, the class composition of Reform voters does not greatly differ from the wider population. The proportion of Reform voters who have a routine occupation is slightly higher than the whole of the UK. However, the gap between the two decreased between 2015 and 2025. The proportion of Reform voters in

routine occupations was 6%p higher than the whole of the UK in 2015, but this gap had halved by 2025. In fact, a smaller proportion of Reform's 2025 supporters reside within routine (working-class) occupations, having decreased by 3%p across the decade.

This decrease was instead replaced by an increase from those middle-class occupations, with a majority of Reform voters having a middle-class background. Therefore, Reform's split amongst the classes is now fairly reflective of the UK population.

Similarly, they were slightly more likely to have an annual income below £30,000 than the wider population (44% of Reform voters compared to 38% of the country in 2025). However, the distribution of incomes among Reform supporters was very similar to that of the UK as a whole. It is also interesting to note that the number of individuals in higher-income brackets has increased. For example, there has been a 5%p increase in those earning more than £50,000, although the proportion earning this amount has increased more amongst the wider population.

Reform voters, generally, are more likely to be homeowners than other voters; see Figure 2. Just over 6 in 10 people (61%) owned their home in 2015, 2024, and 2025. Yet, 65% of UKIP supporters owned their homes in 2015, and 71% of Reform supporters in 2025. The rate of homeownership among these supporters has gradually increased over the last ten years – perhaps, in part, reflecting the increase in older voters across the same period. Simultaneously, between 2015 and 2025, the share of Farage supporters who rent private or social housing has dropped by 3 and 4%p respectively. Therefore, the increase in support among middle-class homeowners with higher incomes again highlights how Farage has expanded support by moderating to appeal to voters from outside the radical right's historical base.

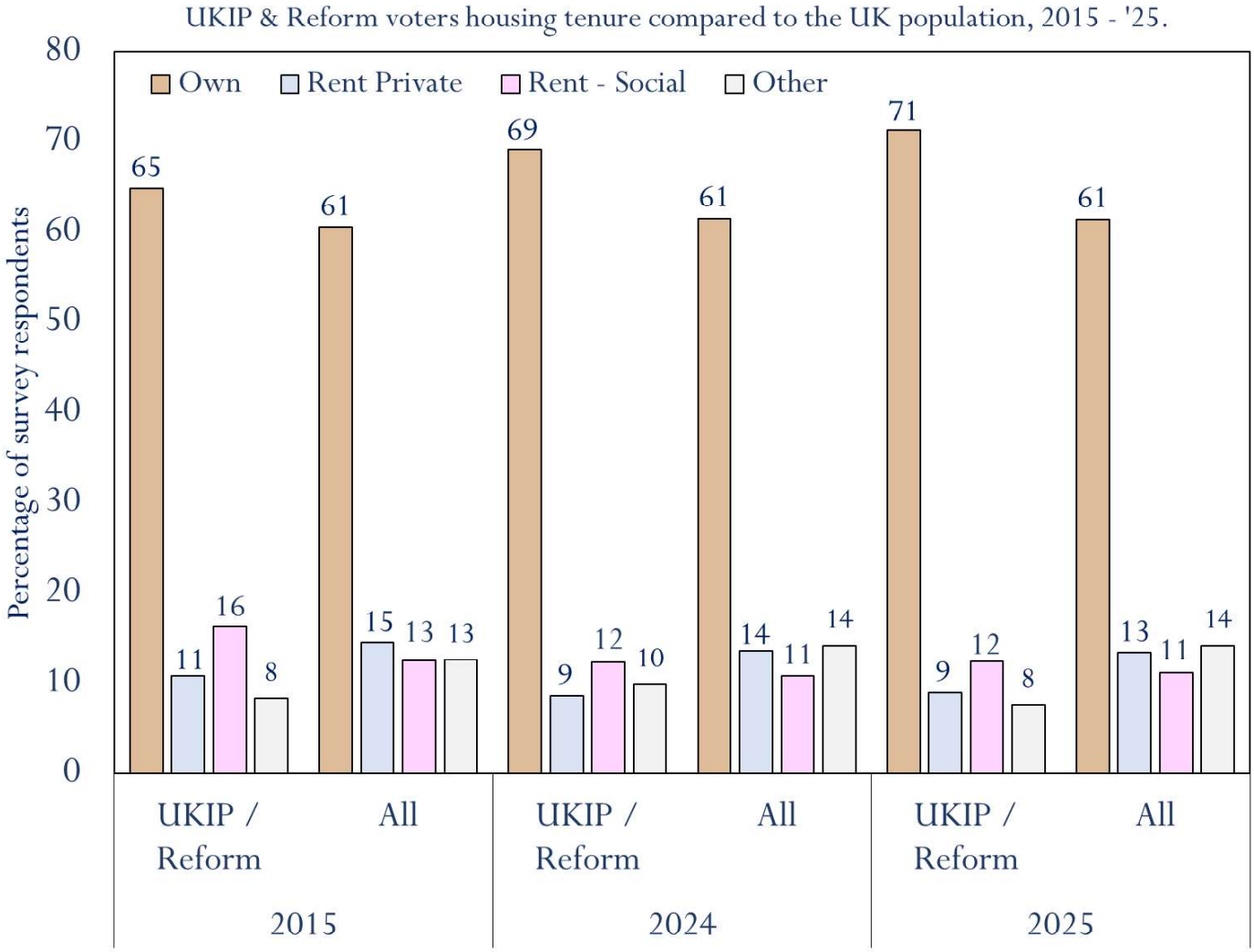


Figure 2: Radical Right supporters and their housing tenure. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

Continuity (Ethnicity, Religion):

Despite Reform expanding its base by attracting voters from outside its traditional demographics of support, continuity remains. As mentioned earlier, they still tend to be older. Reform supporters are also overwhelmingly and disproportionately White British. In 2025, 94% of Reform supporters identified as White British compared to 86% of the population. Of those who were not British, the majority came from a different white ethnic background. Less than 1% of Reform supporters in 2025 identified as BAME, compared to 6.5% of the wider UK population. These patterns were very consistent across the last decade.

Religious identity also remained consistent. Supporters of Farage's party have been disproportionately more likely to identify as part of the Church of England denomination. In 2015, there was an 8%p gap between the proportion of UKIP voters and the population identifying as part of the church of England. In 2025, this gap rose to 17%p, with 38% Reform supporters still associating with the Church of England. This indicates that the radical right has secured and grown its support amongst traditional older voters who are more likely to relate to the historic institutions of Britain. This can partly explain why, in 2025, those still identifying with the church of England disproportionately voted Conservative in 2025 (+23%p compared to those switching from Labour). Therefore, Reform may have appealed to these traditional voters by clearly communicating how they want to stop immigration from changing Britain.

The gender split amongst Farage's supporters has remained consistent, with both UKIP voters and 2025 Reform supporters being split 58% (men) to 42% (women).

Their political homes and ideology:

The polls have consistently shown that Reform has gained wider support since the 2024 general election, well surpassing UKIP's 2015 result. But where were these voters' former political home?

In 2015, Farage's previous party, UKIP, gained support primarily from Conservative voters, with 44% of their voters having supported the Conservatives in the 2010 general election. They also benefited from the breakdown of 2010 Lib-Dem support, with nearly 20% of their voters having previously supported Clegg's party. They also gained historic Labour support, with 16% of their voters having supported Labour in 2010; see Figure 3.

By 2024, Reform's base was predominantly composed of previous Conservative voters, with 81% of Reform voters having previously voted for Johnson's government. Only 5% of their voters had voted Labour at the last election, and 2% came from the Lib-Dems. They continued to gain from the Conservatives in 2025, with 62% of those who switched allegiance between 2024 and 2025 coming from the Conservatives.

Importantly, over 50% of those who voted Reform in 2025 had also voted Reform in 2024, demonstrating that they have managed to both retain and expand their support base over time.

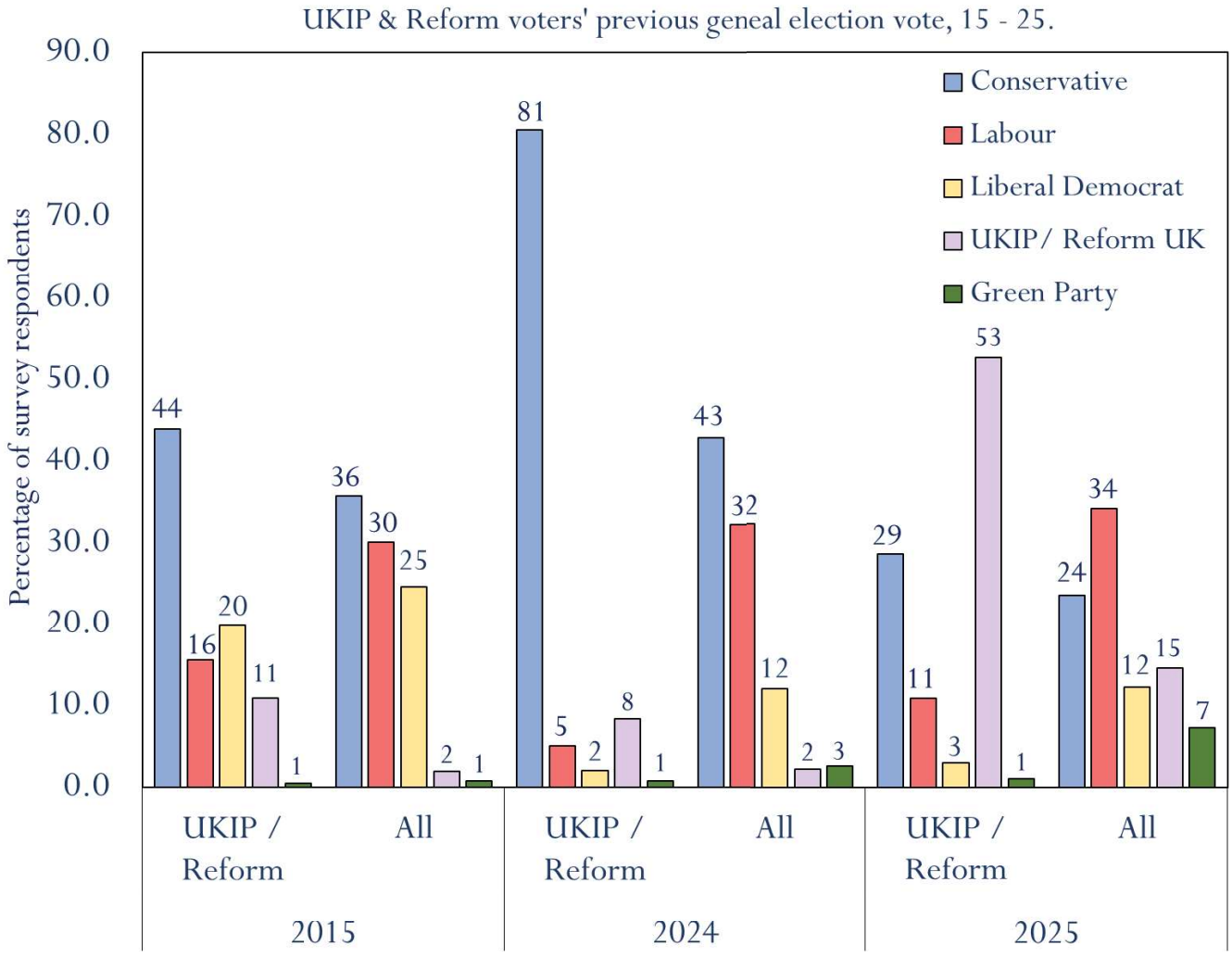


Figure 3: Voting history of radical right support in Britain 2015-2025. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

One key attribute that separates voters who switched from different parties is their ideological background. The traditional left/right divide has been broken by the rise of the radical right. Whilst right-wing voters have fueled their rise, those who moved from Labour have been disproportionately left-wing. For example, 16% of Labour-to-UKIP switchers were categorised as left-wing; see Figure 4. This was 7%p greater than those who had moved from Lib-Dems and 15%p greater than voters moving from the Conservatives. Voters moving from the Conservatives are clearly disproportionately right-wing, with 54% falling into this category. Yet, one thing that has remained constant is that they have overwhelmingly gained their support from authoritarian voters. Regardless of what party a voter had moved from, in 2015, over 80% could be defined as Authoritarian, with this rising to 90% in 2025.

These voters also differed in their economic background. Those moving from Labour were more often from a working-class (D/E) background, +5%p in 2015 and +11%p in 2025 (compared to those moving from the Tories). Those moving from Labour also had more frequently worked in routine occupations. These voters also disproportionately came from lower-income households (+8%p in 2015 and +6%p in 2025). Oppositely, secured former Tory voters were disproportionately from professional (A/B) backgrounds (+9%p in 20215 and +10%p in 2025). They also more often came from high-income households (+6%p in 2015 and +5%p in 2025).

There were also differences in terms of property ownership. Voters gained from the Conservatives have increasingly come amongst homeowners, whereas their gains from Labour have more frequently originated through renters. In 2015, there was minimal difference amongst gained voters and their ownership status. However, in 2025 the gap between former Tories and Former Labour voters was 26%p. Amongst renters, the gap was 22%p (Labour 35% and Tories 14%). Clearly, Reform has broken through by galvanising authoritarian voters who break historic left/right socio-political divisions. This indicates that Reform's focus on immigration and the EU,

issues that break the historic left/right divide, has helped them increase radical right support.

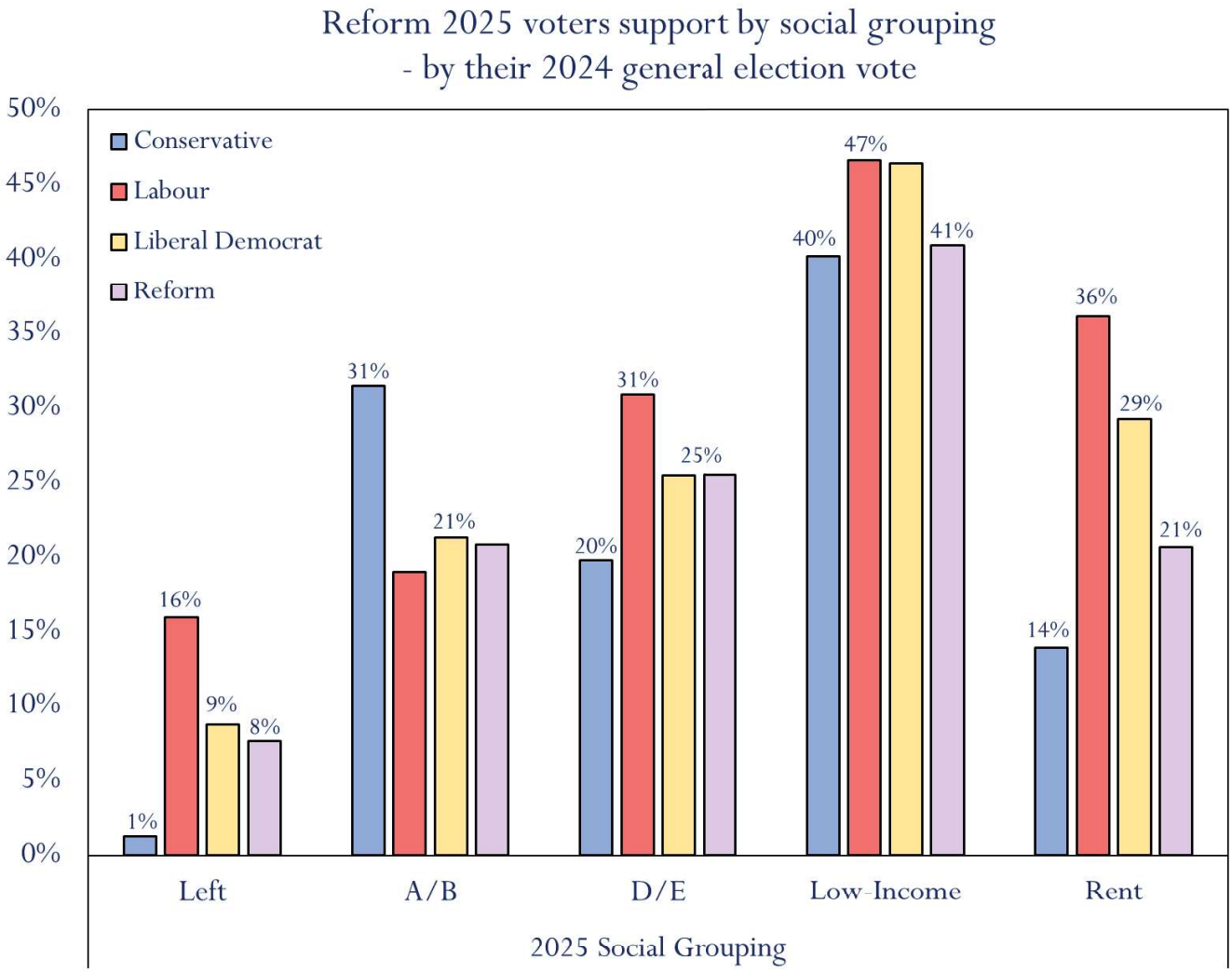


Figure 4: Differences in the demographic background of 2025 Reform supporters - by the party they supported in the 2024 general election. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

Perception of politics

Radical right supporters perceive politics differently from the wider electorate. Whilst the wider electorate doesn't understand Reform's appeal, they favour the radical right's general image. They also reject the mainstream, whilst many other voters support it.

A positive perception of Farage and Reform:

Unsurprisingly, supporters of Reform and UKIP have consistently had a favourable opinion of Farage. Just under 7 in 10 (69%) of UKIP voters had a favourable view of Farage in 2015, rising to 79% of Reform supporters in 2024, and 71% in 2025. The UK population had a less favourable view, with 56% reporting that they dislike Farage across successive elections. This would suggest that for those considering supporting the radical right, Farage has been an important component in galvanising support. Figures were relatively similar for the favourability of UKIP and Reform, though positive views of the party were higher than those of Farage. In 2025, there was a noticeable gap between liking Farage and strongly favouring Reform (+7%p).

In 2015, the percentage of respondents holding positive views about the party was 80%. Figures were similar, if slightly lower, in 2024 and 2025. Interestingly, the individuals who tend to dislike the party are also the ones who tend to dislike Farage. This suggests that around 1 in 5 individuals voting for the radical right are uncertain of the party they support or their leader. This is important given that the national opinion of Farage is considerably more negative, possibly meaning Reform voters are making distinctive choices partly because they perceive politics differently. It also highlights why Reform support is not concrete and explains why the party has slipped back in the polls after their strong local election performance.

The views of the wider public on Reform and UKIP are also similar to opinions of Farage; they are consistently mostly negative. Respondents' reporting that they disliked these parties comprised more than half of the sample in all three periods studied. However, the percentage of respondents who disliked radical right parties was at least 1%p lower than those who disliked Farage across all three elections. This suggests that Farage himself is slightly more controversial than his party. It also indicates that the radical right's support may be wider than one individual, indicating

a possible long-term place for the radical right in British politics. This also suggests that the issues and identities the radical right focus on, such as themes of tradition and immigration, have helped Farage to increase support for his party over the last decade.

A negative Perception of mainstream parties:

The Conservatives:

Reform voters typically hold a fairly negative view of Conservative Party leaders; see Figure 5. This is despite more often being on the right of British politics, again showing how Reform voters perceive politics differently to most of the electorate. The percentage with a favourable view of their leader was no more than 19% across the years studied. There is greater uncertainty among radical right supporters about the Conservative leader than Farage. Around a third of Reform voters were unsure of their views on the Conservative leader in each year studied, compared to around 20% being uncertain of Farage.

Opinions on the Conservative leader differ in 2025 compared to 2024 and 2015. Amongst Radical Right supporters, there was greater uncertainty about Badenoch compared to Sunak or Cameron, for whom there was a plurality of negative sentiment. Also, Badenoch was less often recorded as having low favourability. This could be due to her views being closer to those of Reform, such as her pledge to leave the European Convention on Human Rights. Additionally, being in opposition greatly reduces media exposure, which would help explain the greater degree of uncertainty about Badenoch.

Interestingly, the Conservative Party itself does not see a similar effect in 2025. The main change came from a decrease in favourable opinions and a rise in uncertainty. This demonstrates that opinions about the Conservative Party have become less positive over the last ten years, although not necessarily fiercely negative. However, it is notable that 70% of voters who left the Tories for Reform registered an unfavourable view of the

Conservatives. This suggests that the reputational damage the Conservatives suffered during their time in government affected the party name more than the individuals within it. Therefore, the rise in negative sentiment during the Conservative Party's time in government may be one reason why Reform has gained in strength. It also indicates the Tories will find it hard to regain these voters.

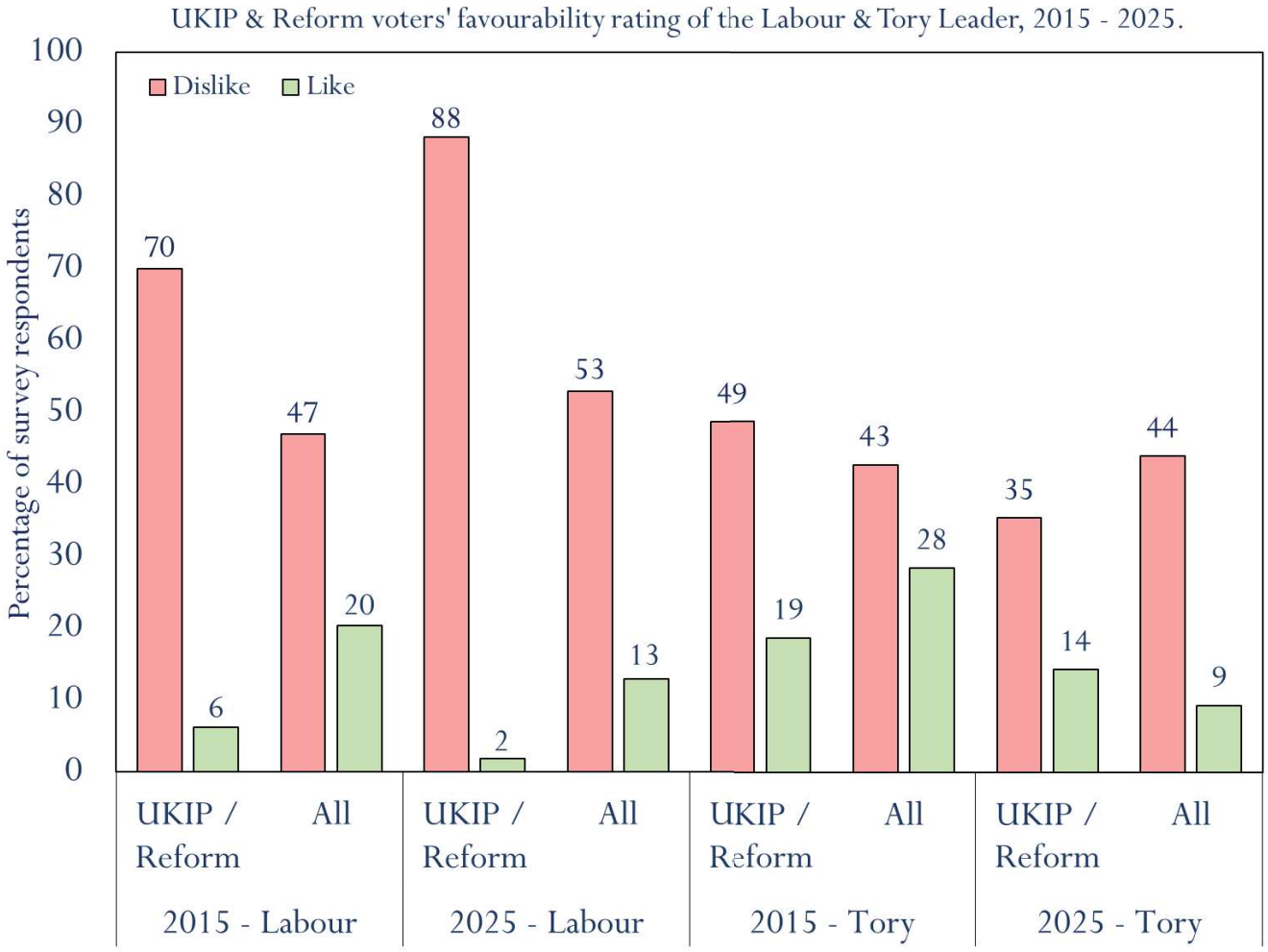


Figure 5: UKIP & Reform favourability of the Labour & Tory Leader 2015-25. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

Labour:

Figure 5 shows that opinions of Labour leaders have been consistently negative across each election. In 2015, 70% of UKIP voters disliked Miliband, which rose to 80% when asked about Starmer. The disapproval rating rose further when Labour entered government, with 88% of Reform voting

respondents disliking the Labour leader. This is a substantial difference from the general public. Reform voters' negative responses were at least 23%p higher in each survey. The largest difference was in 2024, when 41% of the country disapproved of Starmer, which is 39%p lower than Reform voters.

This dislike also extends to the wider party. A majority of UKIP and Reform voters held negative views of Labour generally across all years. However, the rate of dislike has grown considerably between 2015 and 2025. In 2015, 57% held a negative view of Labour. By 2024, 78% held that view, and by 2025, 87% of Reform voters disliked Labour.
The increasing dislike for Labour within this group suggests that Labour's more right-wing immigration policies have failed to appeal to Farage's voter base. This is supported particularly by the increase in the intensity of their dislike. Like/dislike in these surveys were measured on a 1-10 scale. The number of respondents recording the strongest possible dislike for the Labour Party increased from 47% of all responses in 2024 to 65% in 2025. Amongst voters who switched from Labour to Reform, this dislike rose from 24% to 58% in the same period. All this suggests that the appeal of Labour amongst Reform voters is both small and weakening. Therefore, Labour's decision to reject concerns about migration under Corbyn and move further leftwards decreased its popularity amongst this group of voters. It also highlights how the Labour government has disappointed these voters, thus pushing them towards the radical right.

The increase in dislike for Labour appears among Reform voters before that of the general public, with unfavourability remaining fairly similar in 2015 and 2024 before increasing by 15%p in 2025. Importantly, this all again indicates that Reform voters perceive politics differently from the wider electorate, and this likely leads them to make different choices from the wider public.

Different Priorities and trust in the radical right

Radical Right supporters perceive what issues most impact the country differently from the wider electorate. The most important issue for most Reform voters was immigration, with more than 60% of all radical right voters giving this response. This was the case regardless of which party a voter had moved from. This differs considerably from the wider public, where consistently less than a third consider this the most important issue. The most important issue for most voters was the economy, which is only the case for just under a fifth of Reform voters. This indicates that radical right voters more often think about non-economic concerns, immigration, rather than economic thoughts, such as the cost of living (even in times of economic hardship).

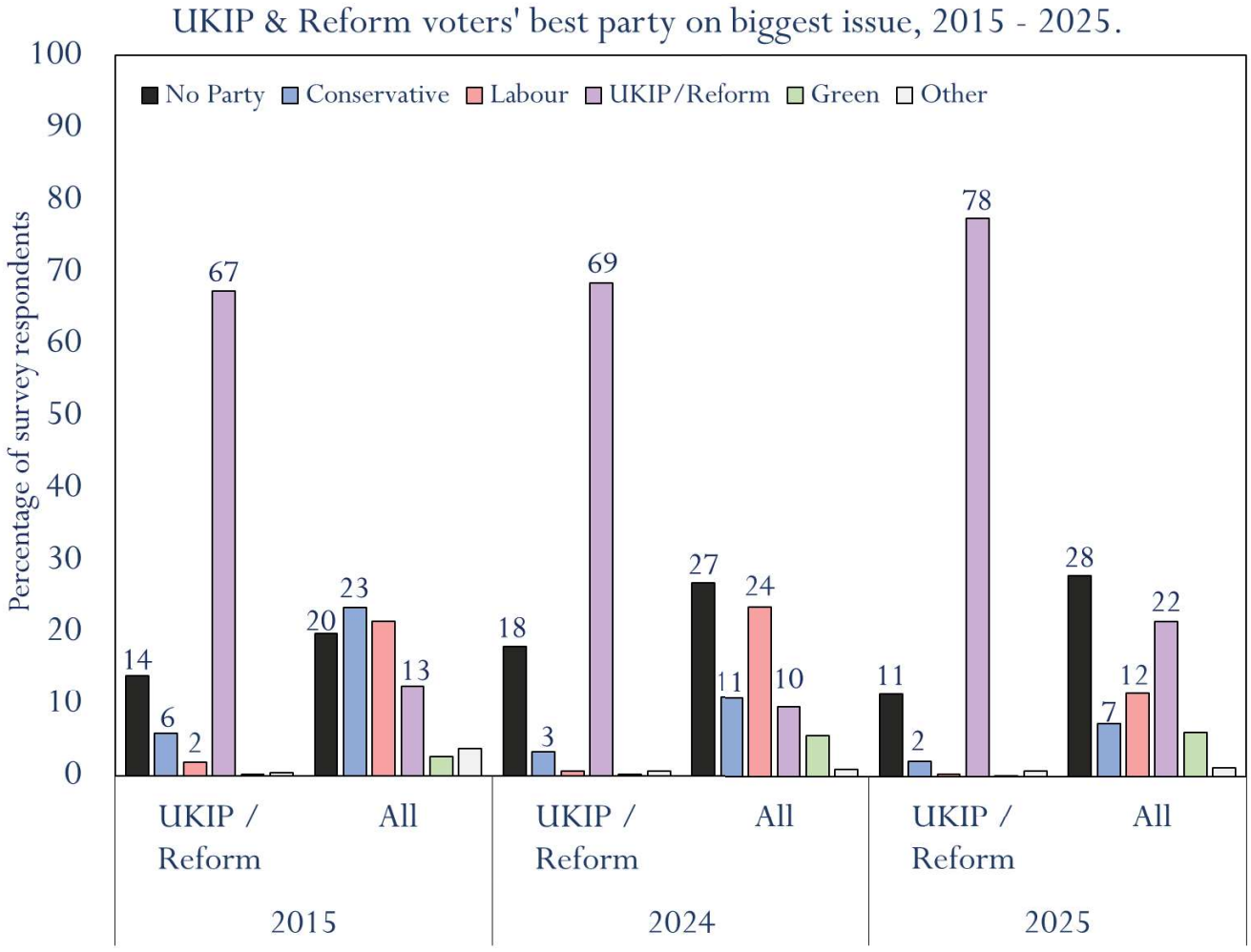


Figure 6: UKIP and Reform voters' best party on biggest issue 2015-'25. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

Most Radical Right voters have consistently felt that either UKIP or Reform was best able to handle their most pressing concerns; see Figure 6. Confidence in radical right parties increased over time, with 67% believing UKIP were best to tackle their biggest issue in 2015, compared to 78% stating the same of Reform in 2025. This confidence occurred regardless of where a voter had moved from, indicating a consistent trend. The rise in confidence in Reform corresponds with a decline in responses stating that another party would be better, as well as a decline in the belief that no party could effectively tackle this issue. This is particularly interesting, as responses from the country show an increase in voters who feel that no party can tackle its most important issue. This suggests that Reform voters have become more confident in their party during a time when voters have generally become less certain.

Reform voters have been pessimistic about both Labour and Conservative attempts to handle immigration. Nearly all (93%) felt the Conservatives were handling immigration poorly in 2015, and, in 2025, 96% felt the same about Labour. This is not to say that they had confidence in the opposition; 79% felt Labour would handle it poorly in 2015, and 62% felt the same about the Conservatives in 2025. They also consistently indicated this regardless of which party they had previously supported. This all suggests greater scepticism in the establishment parties' ability to handle the core issue of immigration amongst UKIP/Reform voters. This perceived inability to deliver on these voters' most prominent concern has likely contributed towards the growth of the Radical Right, who prioritise the migration issue. Therefore, by focusing on the issue, Farage may have convinced more voters that a radical right alternative could better handle the issue than mainstream parties. From this, he likely has gathered greater support for the radical right.

Interestingly, this pattern does not continue when considering their opinions on the economy. They consistently report that the Conservatives would handle the economy better, regardless of whether they are in power or in opposition. The opposite is also true for Labour. In 2015, 37% of UKIP voters

felt the Conservatives were handling the economy poorly (with 40% actively approving of economic policy) compared to 71% feeling Labour would do badly. Similarly, in 2025, 90% of Reform voters thought Labour were handling the economy badly, but only 40% felt the same about a potential Conservative government. Therefore, economic dissatisfaction alone is unlikely to be driving Radical Right support. Instead, it suggests that these voters' economic views aren't as much of a motivating factor as their concerns about immigration.

Culturally Conservative views on Immigration & Europe

Anti-Immigration:

Reform voters break historic left/right divisions partly because they have consistent views on salient non-economic issues. These views are most apparent on questions relating to immigration and Europe. Unsurprisingly, given Reform's central message, they are particularly united on immigration. Around 90% of Reform supporters believe the UK needed to reduce the number of immigrants allowed into the country across the decade. This is much more uniform than the rest of the UK, where around half of the population share this view. This demonstrates that greater consensus exists on immigration than on the party or its leader, suggesting these voters' loyalty is driven by immigration preferences. Therefore, these voters may partly be driven towards the radical right due to Farage's focus on minimising migration flows.

This is compounded when exploring how radical right party voters believe each party would handle immigration. At least two-thirds of UKIP or Reform voters believed Labour would allow many more immigrants into Britain. They were much more divided on how they thought the Conservative Party would handle immigration. Only 14% thought the Conservatives would reduce immigration in 2015, rising to 34% by 2025. However, this is hardly a

widespread view of confidence in the Conservatives' ability to lower immigration. Reform voters are also likely influenced by their beliefs about Labour and Conservative records on immigration whilst in office. In 2015, 93% of UKIP voters felt the Conservative government was handling immigration badly. By 2025, 96% of Reform voters felt this way about the Labour government. Around 90% of radical right voters believed that UKIP and Reform would allow many fewer immigrants into Britain, demonstrating that their voters generally have confidence that radical right parties align with their views on immigration. It also shows how these voters' disappointment with Labour and Conservative governments' inability to reduce migration may be increasing support for radical right alternatives.

Radical right voters also generally have pessimistic views of migration's impact on Britain. They are particularly concerned about immigration's perceived cultural impact. In 2015, 71% of UKIP voters felt immigration was undermining Britain's culture; a view shared by 76% of Reform's 2024 voters. Only 33% of the UK electorate shared this view in 2015, and this fell by 6% by 2024. They held similar views on the economic impact of immigration, though this pattern was slightly weaker. In 2015, 63% of UKIP voters felt migrants were bad for the economy, which rose to 68% of Reform voters in 2025. In comparison, only around 30% of the UK held this view. All trends on immigration views were consistent across the parties these new radical right supporters had joined from. This clearly shows that radical right voters believe that migrants are bad for the country, thus providing a rational explanation as to why they are attracted to the radical right, who deploy a strong and consistent negative message on the issue. For example, such voters may be attracted to Farage's negative messages on immigration, where they will likely agree with the sentiment that immigration has worsened the country.

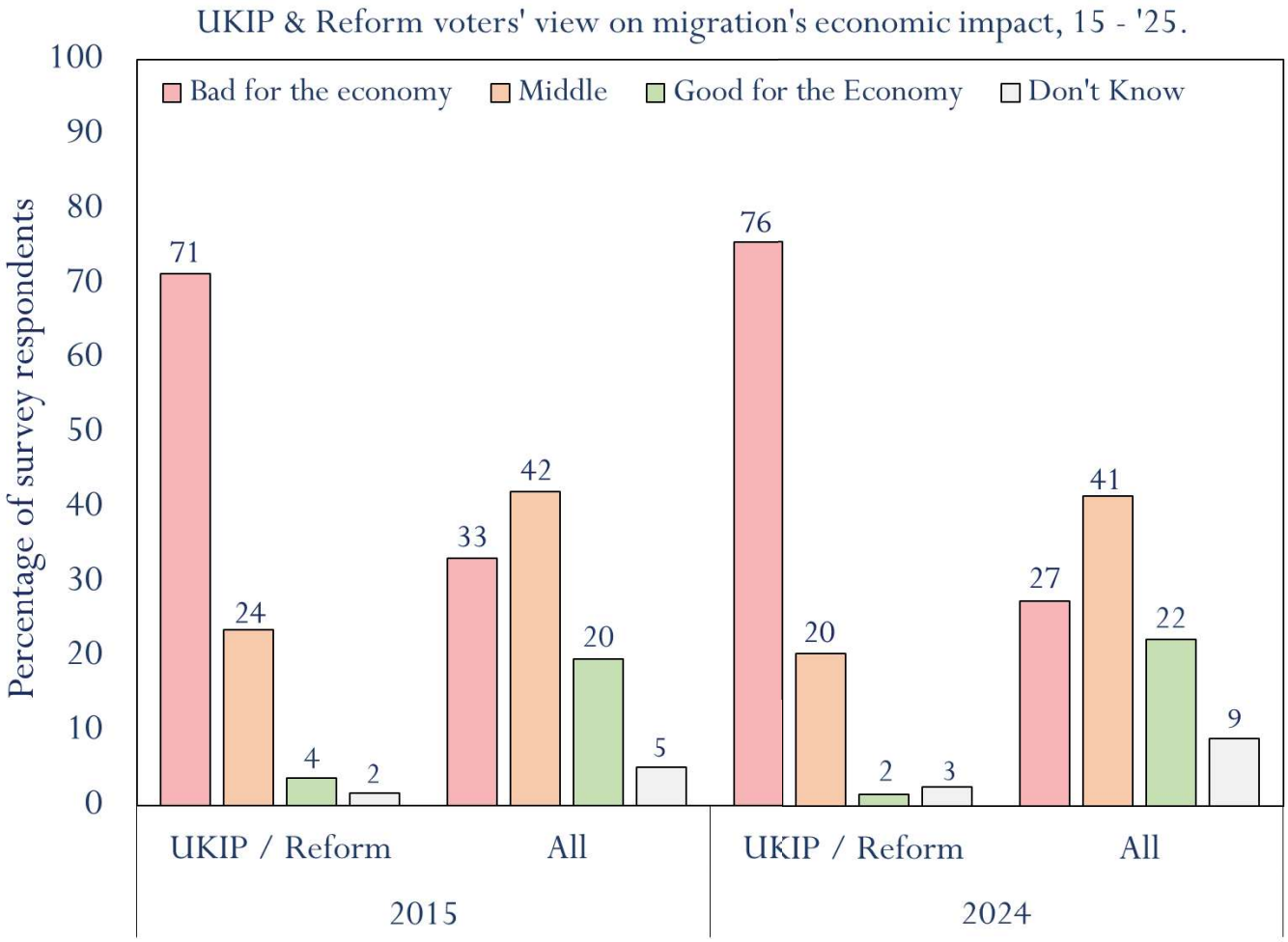


Figure 7: UKIP & Reform VOters' view on the economic impact of immigration. Source: BES 2015-'25.

Europe (Anti-EU and pro-Brexit):

Unsurprisingly, there is a clear negative outlook towards the EU and foreign institutions in general. This trend is consistent regardless of which party an individual voter switched from. This again indicates that culturally conservative opinions on key cultural questions, like the EU and immigration, are uniting factors that have forged a radical right support group. It also indicates that Farage has united a bloc of voters by clearly signalling that his party would take the UK out of the EU and keep it out.

Whilst negative views of the EU were also very strong among UKIP voters in 2015, the consensus on the EU among their voters has weakened over the

past ten years. In 2015, 86% of UKIP voters felt that the UK should avoid further integration with the EU, dropping to 71% of Reform voters in 2025. Whilst this is still a much greater consensus than the wider country (where 33% held this view in 2025), it shows a declining confidence in the radical right's position on the EU. This is reiterated by a slight drop (-6%p) in Reform voters' certainty on their EU position compared to UKIP voters in 2015.

The radical right are also slightly less defined by Leave/Remain positions in 2025 compared to 2015. Only 5% of UKIP voters in 2015 went on to vote Remain in the EU referendum. This rose to 13% by 2025. Whilst a majority (87%) had previously voted Leave, the proportion of Reform voters who backed Remain has more than doubled in ten years. This is also reflected in how respondents would vote in a second referendum. In 2024, 84% said they would vote to remain out of the EU, but a year later this had dropped to 76%. Whilst they clearly attract a high proportion of Leave supporters, this is less defining than in the past. This again indicates how other messages, such as a hardline stance on immigration, may explain the radical right's rise in support.

The decline of the Leave/Remain divide in particular is interesting, as it suggests that Reform supporters are more attracted to the radical right's immigration policies than to their EU position. It is also interesting that there is greater consensus regarding positions on immigration than overall confidence in the party and its leadership. Therefore, Farage has widened support for the radical right by focusing on issues that extend beyond Europe, such as immigration and law and order.

Ideological and economic perspectives are less uniform

Economic performance - a very negative outlook:

Voters for radical right parties have become more pessimistic about national and household finances over the past ten years. In 2015, UKIP voters were divided on the UK's economic performance. Just over 30% felt the national economy was getting worse (31%), whilst 39% felt it was improving. This feeling grew, with 43% of 2024 Reform voters feeling the economy was worsening compared to 28% who felt it was improving. However, by the following year, they became much more unified in their views. In 2025, 86% of Reform voters felt the economy was getting worse compared to 2% who felt it was improving.

Their views of their personal finances have similarly become less optimistic. In 2015, 40% of UKIP voters felt their personal finances were getting worse. In 2025, 60% of 2025 Reform voters shared this view. In 2015, 44% of UKIP voters felt their finances were staying about the same. In 2025, this dropped to 31% among Reform voters.

Similarly, when asked how they thought their finances would fare over the next 12 months, 37% of UKIP voters felt they would worsen compared to 54% of 2024 Reform voters. Whilst concerns around personal finances increased, 31% of 2024 Reform voters felt their finances would be relatively stable. This shows differences in experience among Reform supporters, but with a slant towards feeling financially disadvantaged when compared to 2015 UKIP voters. Importantly, this also shows how the ongoing cost-of-living squeeze may have increased disillusionment and, from this, helped new challenger parties, such as Reform, appeal to more voters. Therefore, Reform's message of lowering the growing tax burden may have resonated with right-wing former conservative voters. This may have helped

increase the radical right's appeal and secured unhappy Conservative Party supporters.

Mixed economic viewpoints:

As outlined earlier, a higher anticipated proportion fo Reform voters can be categorised as left-wing. Given the perceived incongruence of this finding, it is worth examining the ideology measure used in the British Election Studies from 2015-2025. The left-right scale is measured by a respondent's views on redistribution, workers' rights, and class equality. A participant who agreed that the government should redistribute income, the rich follow different rules than the poor, and businesses exploit workers where possible would be classed as left-wing. One who disagreed with those perspectives would be considered right-wing.

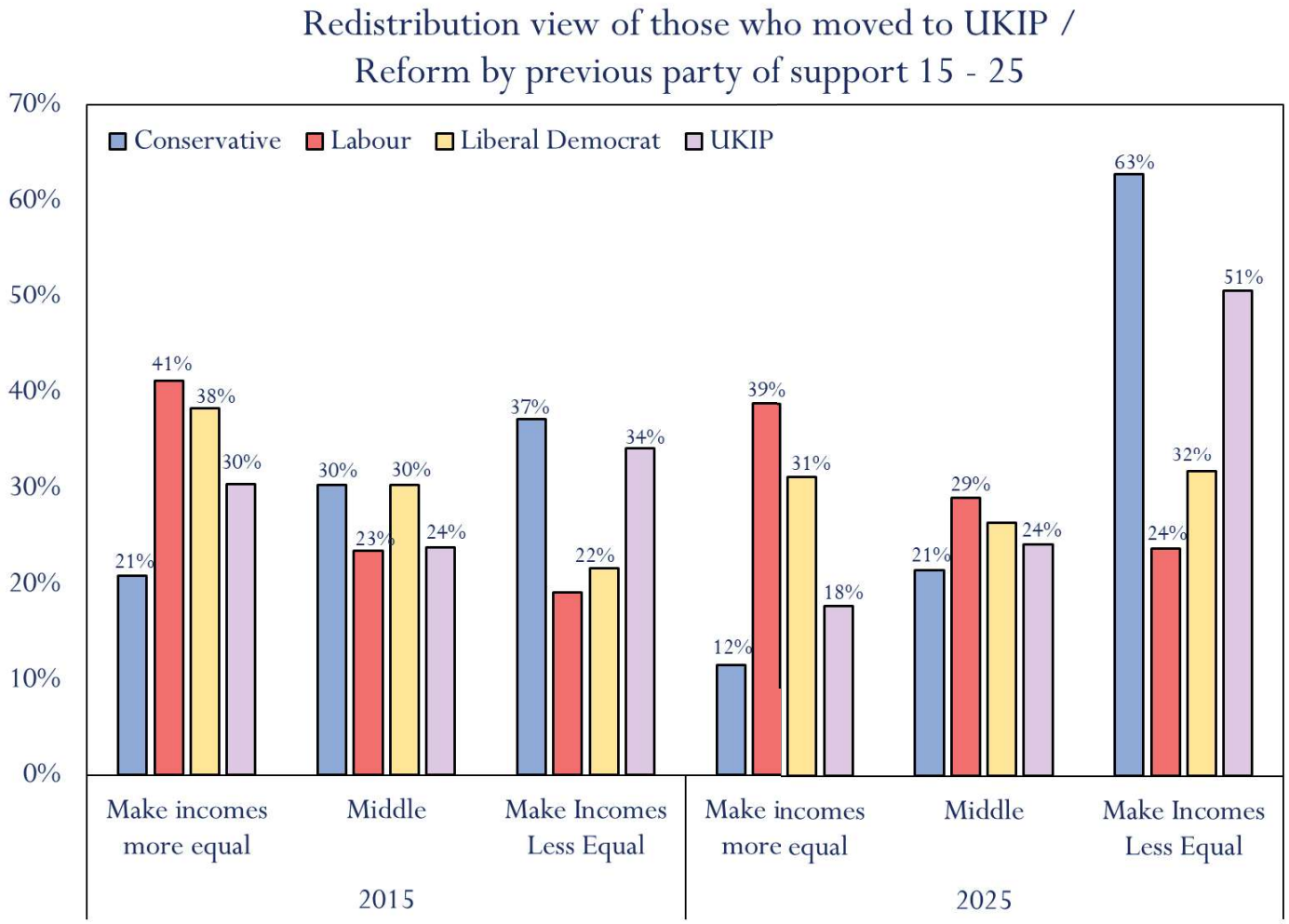


Figure 8: Views on redistribution viewpoint of radical right supporters 2015 - 2025, by the former party they supported. Source: BES 2015 and 2025.

Most interestingly, their supporters' views on wealth redistribution from the rich to the poor are very mixed, but lean less pro-redistribution; see Figure 8. This was more the case among Reform voters than UKIP voters; 29% of UKIP voters felt the government should redistribute less in 2015 compared to 47% of Reform voters in 2025. Yet, this anti-redistribution tendency is not shared across the different types of voters the radical right has secured. The voters Reform has gained from Labour tend to favour redistribution, with 41% of Labour-to-UKIP switchers and 39% of Labour-to-Reform movers having this viewpoint. This was far greater than the supporters gained from the Conservatives, with only 21% favouring redistribution in 2015 and 12% in 2025.
Further, their responses to the individual measures suggest they rank more left-wing partly because of their views on the exploitation of workers rather than only their views on redistribution. This is particularly interesting given Reform's repeated appeals to 'working people'.

Whilst views are mixed, the majority of Reform supporters are right-wing. As most of these new supporters were secured from the Conservative Party, this is why UKIP and Reform voters have historically leaned right when compared to the wider electorate. This suggests most Reform voters are not particularly attracted to Reform because of the party's economic ideology. Their lack of enthusiasm for redistribution, combined with their left-right position, suggests economic viewpoints are less impactful than other factors. Therefore, Farage's focus on non-economic concerns around Europe and immigration has probably increased support for the Radical right more than any economic messages he has advocated.

Drivers of radical right support

So far, the report has outlined key trends that have shaped radical right support and its growth. Yet, the question remains: which of these trends have driven the success of Farage's parties? To help answer this vital question, a logistic regression model estimating the likelihood that an individual would vote for UKIP in 2015 is constructed. This model is then replicated to determine Reform support in 2025.

The model takes which party a voter would vote for at the time of the survey as the dependent variable. Firstly, the model filters only those who would support the five main parties of England. A value of 1 is assigned to those who would support UKIP in 2015 and Reform in 2025, with a 0 allocated to all others. Then, to determine what has motivated support for the radical right, independent variables representing key trends are added.

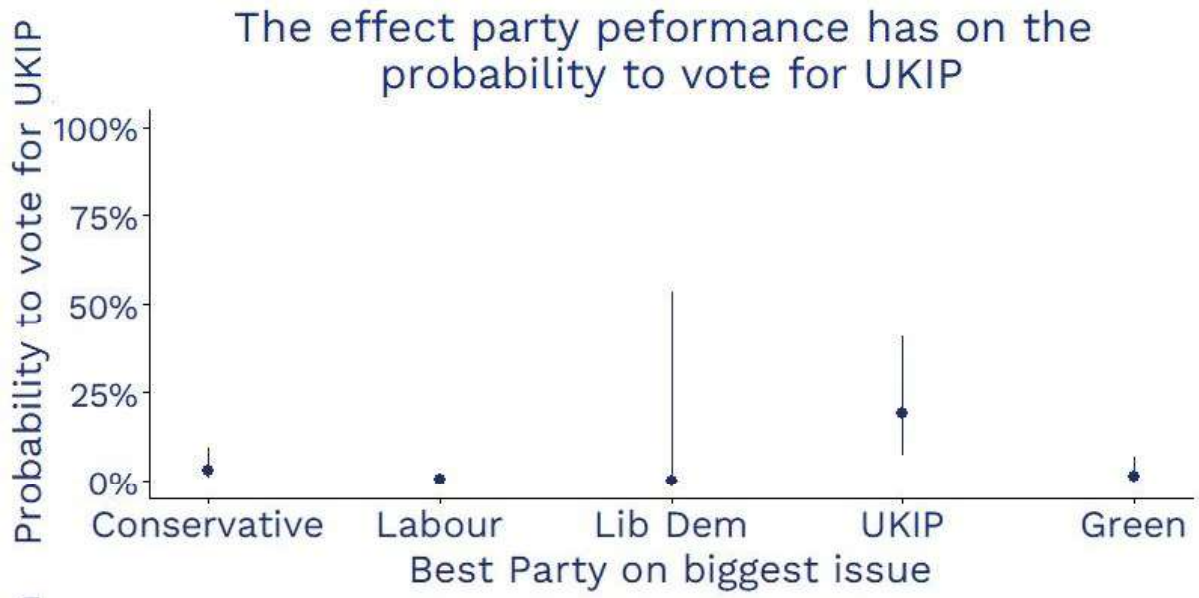
Firstly, to account for political perceptions, it includes which party performed best on a voter's core concern. It also includes how much voters liked Farage and the two main parties to assess how the perceptions of the parties and party leaders shaped support.

Secondly, it accounts for how views on newly salient non-economic issues shaped radical right support. It accounts for how well voters perceive the government to be managing immigration, interpret the economic impact of immigration and their support for Brexit.

Thirdly, it accounts for economic views by including thoughts around redistribution and how well they thought the government was handling the economy. Finally, the model includes both age and education measures to assess the extent to which demographics can explain the growth of radical right support. The model's full results are displayed in the appendix.

The model found that voters' perceptions of how well the parties performed on their core concern strongly increased support for both UKIP and Reform. It found that when Farage's party was trusted to handle a voter's most important issue, the radical right were likely to gain support;

see Figure 9. In 2025, UKIP was 17% more likely to receive support when an individual believed the party was best placed to handle their most pressing concern. They were significantly less likely to support UKIP when they still believed one of the three main parties could do better. For instance, they were 18% less likely to support UKIP when they felt Labour performed best on their core concerns. In 2025, Reform were 67% more likely to gain support than the Conservatives when they felt Reform could manage the issue they most prioritised. They were also 76% more likely to secure support than Labour when they were most trusted on a voter's primary issue. Again, their prospects of gaining support declined rapidly when a voter trusted one of the main parties more on their core issue.



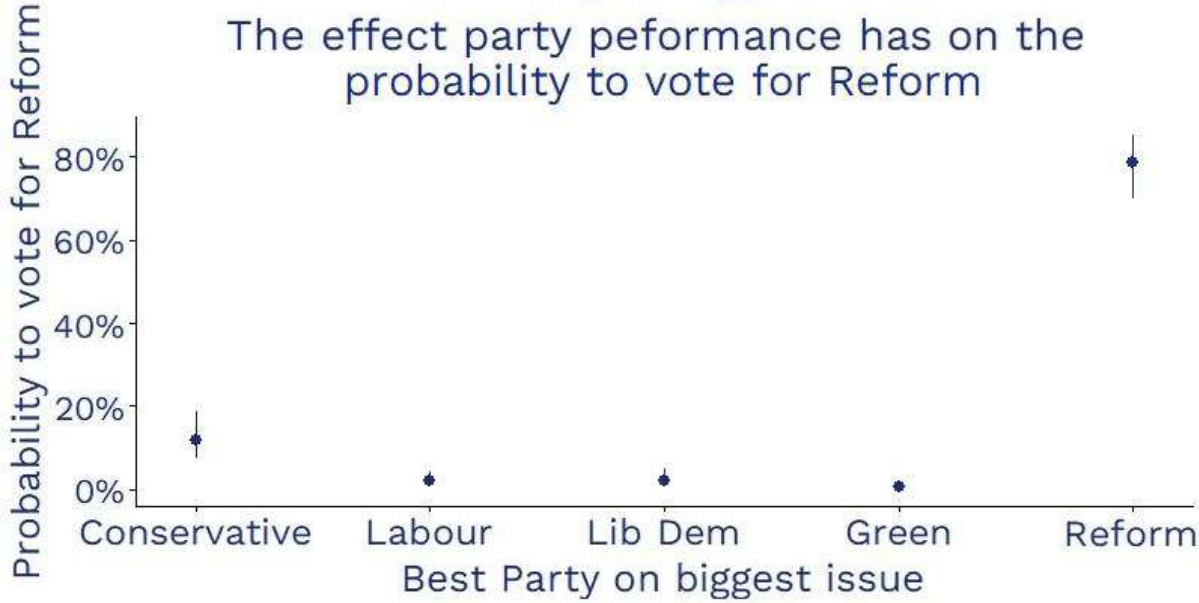


Figure 9: The effect of which party was seen as best to manage a voter's primary concern, 2015 & 2025. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

These results show how radical right support has mainly emerged and strengthened from a belief that the main parties can no longer deliver on voters' core concerns. Firstly, the ongoing cost of living pressures and a lack of economic growth may have dented voters' faith in the parties' ability to deliver a better economy. Secondly, the perceived failure of the main parties to manage migration, particularly the small boats issue, may have also caused more voters to question the historic parties' abilities. With the main parties' competence coming under greater scrutiny, challenger parties, such as Reform, have likely gained support through convincing voters that they are a better alternative to deliver on voters' core motivations. For example, on immigration, Farage's strong message on stopping the boats may have resonated with disillusioned voters who prioritise immigration, helping Reform gain support.

The model also found that Farage's popularity shaped the probability that a voter would support a radical-right party over the last decade. On a 0 - 10 scale, the more a voter "liked" Farage, the greater the likelihood was that they would vote for UKIP in 2015 and support Reform in 2025; see Figure 10. In 2015, when a voter said they had a very high favourability of Farage (10 or more), they were 30% more likely to support UKIP. In 2025, when a voter had a high rating of Farage (7 or more), they were 30% more likely to support Reform.

Those who awarded Farage the highest rating were over 70% more likely to vote for Reform. Those who have not been persuaded by the allure of Farage and his respective parties have been consistently less likely to vote for a radical right party. This is particularly the case for those who have retained a favourable view of the two main parties. In 2015, those who recorded a favourable view of the Conservative Party were 5% less likely to support UKIP. This was 3% when a voter had a positive view of Labour. In 2025, this trend remained consistent. In 2025, those who had a strongly

positive view of the Conservative Party were 37% less likely to support Reform. For those with a highly favourable view of Labour, it was 12% less likely. Therefore, the model highlights how the growth of the radical right has partly relied on the presence of Farage. This partially explains why support for UKIP increased as Farage's presence grew in the years leading to Brexit. Further, it explains why UKIP support vanished after he exited the party and why the Brexit Party performed poorly after he stood back in the 2019 general election. It also helps to explain why support for Reform rapidly grew after he became party leader and why it has continued to grow whilst he has led the parliamentary party.

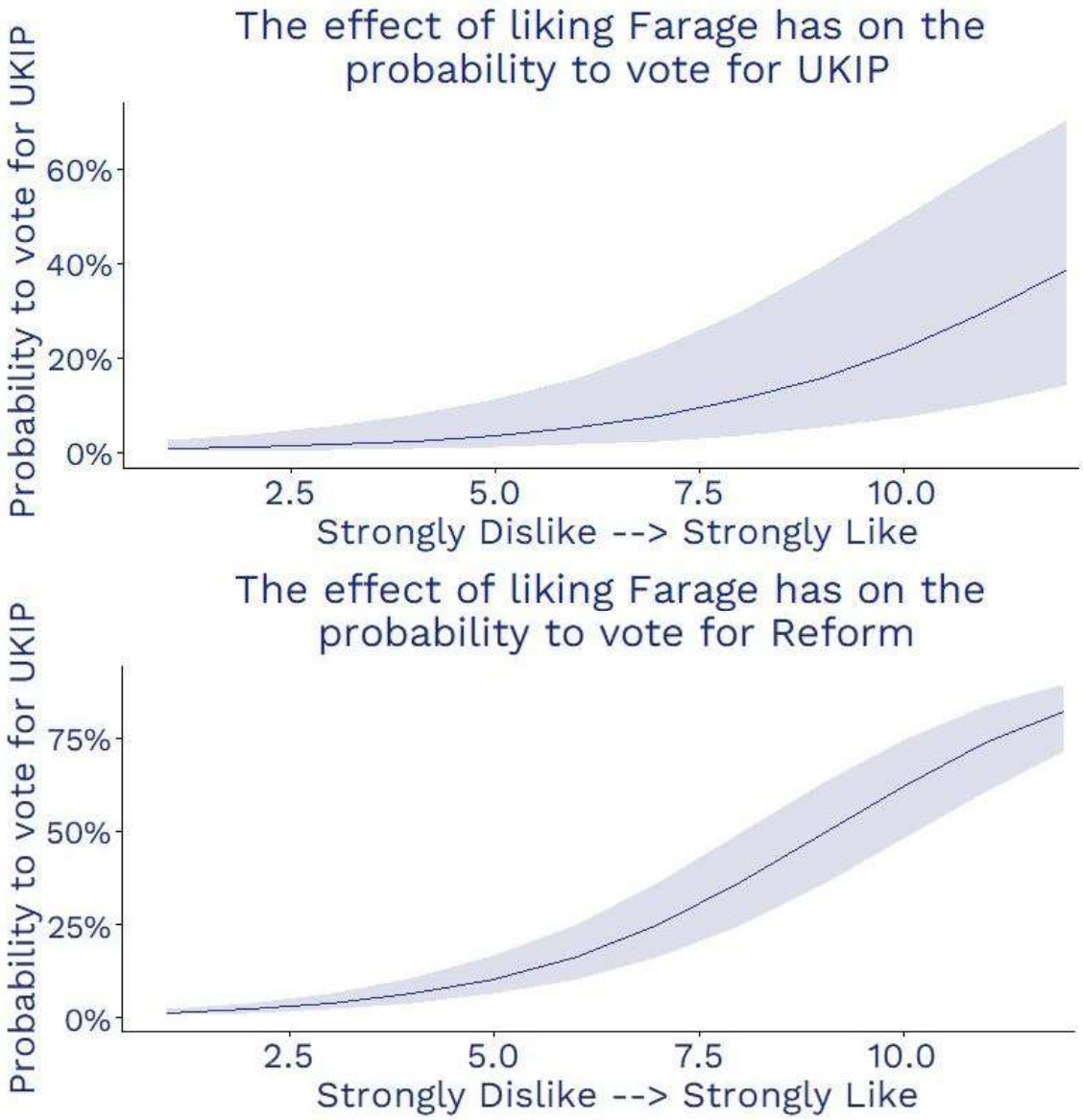


Figure 10: The effect of which party was seen as best to manage a voter's primary concern, 2015 & 2025. Source: BES 2015, 2024, 2025.

Another significant increase in radical right support has come from the Brexit vote. Both UKIP and Reform support have received a significant boost amongst those who had voted to Leave the EU and continue to support Britain's exit. In 2015, those who supported leaving the EU were 9% more likely to support UKIP than those who had voted to Remain. In 2025, those who voted to leave and continue to support this policy were 10% more likely to support Reform. Vitally, this shows how the EU divide has shaped the growth of radical right parties for at least a decade. It also highlights how Reform has been able to expand through galvanising the political coalition that still supports Britain's withdrawal from the EU. Therefore, Farage's focus on keeping Britain out of the EU in recent years has likely helped him strengthen and expand the radical right's support base.

Perceived competence of the two main parties' management of the economy was also significant. Firstly, in 2015, when a voter felt that the Conservatives were not handling the economy well, they were 3% more likely to vote for UKIP. In 2025, when the Labour government was perceived to manage the economy poorly, Reform was 8% more likely to gain support. This would indicate that ongoing economic dissatisfaction from the cost-of-living crisis has aided the rise of the radical right. It also indicates that ongoing economic pressures have dented faith in the main parties' ability to deliver, with Reform gaining from more voters who are willing to give a new party a chance. Historically, smaller parties have struggled to convince voters they are a party of government, with them often failing to persuade voters they can manage core issues like the economy. However, the failure of the centre has allowed the radical right to claim they can better deliver on core concerns, thus overcoming this historic barrier to expanding their support.

Voters' position on the traditional left/right debate, reflected in their desire to redistribute wealth, became less significant to the success of the radical right. In 2015, UKIP was 7% more likely to gain support when a voter was against the government redistributing wealth. Therefore, UKIP gained support primarily from right-wing traditional conservatives who were mostly against government intervention and redistribution. Yet, this trend lost its significance by 2025, as it no longer provided the radical right with increased support. This is most likely because of the increased proportion of voters supporting right-wing parties who favour greater redistribution. Vitally, this highlights how Farage has expanded his party's base by attracting left-wing voters who favour greater government involvement and redistribution. Again, this shows how the growth in support for Farage's party has partly originated through breaking traditional divides, allowing the party to form a large new electoral coalition. These divides instead seem to be united by a liberal-authoritarian divide, indicating that issues that tap into this divide, such as immigration, have been more significant in increasing radical right support. Therefore, Farage has likely increased his party's support over the years by focusing on issues that unite authoritarian voters, such as immigration.

Variables not significant throughout the last decade were age and education. Firstly, this shows that rather than an age divide, it is more likely that concerns about the main parties' ability to deliver on key issues are the driver of radical right support. These concerns most often centre around immigration and the economy. The perceived economic impact of immigration was also insignificant, most likely because these voters were concerned about the government's immigration policy and the perceived inability to manage migration numbers.

Conclusions

The growth in radical right support over the last decade (2015 - 2025) has largely stemmed from similar socio-economic groups. Both UKIP and Reform have relied upon older voters who have not accessed a university-level (or equivalent) education and have more often worked in manual (working-class) occupations. They also draw from a disproportionately white electorate that associates with historic symbols of Britain, such as identifying as being part of the church of England. While growing support among this bloc of voters explains much of the increase in radical right support, increased support from groups not associated with the radical right has allowed Reform to break through. Middle-class homeowners on average or higher incomes working in professional occupations are increasingly willing to support the radical right.

Reform has established a strong support base among those who had supported UKIP in 2015. Yet, they have expanded their natural support base by securing disillusioned Conservative voters. Whilst a small proportion of their overall increase in support, Reform have also increased support by securing disillusioned working-class Labour supporters.

Whilst Reform's increase in support has come from varying social groups and political parties, the constant derives from their views on non-economic issues. Specifically, issues that tap into a cultural value divide. This is most reflected in their authoritarian views on Europe and immigration. By securing those most supportive of Brexit and placing restrictions on migration, Reform has been able to amalgamate a larger voter base. These voters are disproportionately authoritarian and lean rightwards.

This group's formation has partly stemmed from dissatisfaction with the mainstream parties' performance on these two issues, particularly immigration. The perceived inability to deal with Brexit effectively and implement sufficient migration controls has encouraged these voters to

look elsewhere. With Reform focusing on immigration and reflecting these voters' preferences, they have moved to support Reform. Reform's capacity to convince these voters they can best handle these core issues is the largest factor in explaining the rise of the radical right in Britain.

Farage returning to lead Reform has also helped to create the rise of the radical right in Britain. Whilst across the wider electorate Farage has low ratings, amongst the voters supporting the radical right he has consistently had strong favourability. Farage has repeatedly appealed to the voters who have continued to support Brexit, are most concerned about immigration and most strongly support reducing migration flows. He has primarily done this through saying he will keep the UK out of the EU, place strong restrictions on migration and deport illegal immigrants. By giving his party this clear identity, he has created a positive brand for Reform among these voters, making the radical right more competitive than in previous general elections.

Although these voters have galvanised around Farage and Reform primarily because of immigration concerns being unaddressed, there are important differences among Reform's core supporters. These differences exist in economic viewpoints. Whilst the majority of the increase in radical right support has originated from former Conservative voters, some has derived from former Labour supporters. This means the majority of their support is right-leaning, but it is notable that they have captured a small proportion of left-wing support. Therefore, whilst the majority favour cutting taxes and less government intervention, former Labour voters who have allowed them to break through prefer more government intervention and wealth redistribution. Crucially, whilst these voters have united around authoritarian views on cultural issues, they are not as united around the left/right economic divide.

These tensions within the Reform base potentially present challenges for Reform going forward. Whilst these voters can coalesce around Reform on Brexit and immigration, if economic issues become more salient among

Reform's newfound support, they may split as they want different things. Additionally, Reform's support has also relied on both Farage and the party brand being popular among those considering supporting the radical right. Currently, this support is maintained through signalling strong anti-EU and immigration positions. Yet, if Farage's or Reform's image is dented by a lack of professionalisation, party scandals or being perceived as not possessing a credible government agenda, Reform's rise may not last.

Therefore, whilst the radical right in Britain has been rapid within the current parliamentary cycle, a further increase is not guaranteed, and Reform may not enjoy the high levels of support seen in 2025 at the next general election. Consequently, although a bigger Reform presence in the next parliament is likely, it is not certain they will form the government or even be the dominant opposition party.

Appendix

Variables	The probability of voting UKIP (2015)		The probability of voting Reform (2025)	
	Odds Ratios	*P - Value*	*Odds Ratios*	*P - Value*
Intercept	0.03 ***	**<0.001**	0.16 ***	**<0.001**
Best on biggest issue: Labour	0.14 ***	**<0.001**	0.15 ***	**<0.001**
Best: Lib-Dem	0.00	0.984	0.16 ***	**<0.001**
Best: Green	0.41	0.300	0.03 ***	**<0.001**
Best: UKIP/ Reform	7.78 ***	**<0.001**	27.41 ***	**<0.001**
Immig: Good for economy	0.40	0.194	0.68	0.236
Immig: govt manage well	0.31	0.156	0.68	0.487
EU Ref: I voted to Leave	4.36 ***	**<0.001**	2.02 ***	**<0.001**
Redistribution: Middle	1.61	0.209	1.09	0.629
Redistribution: Don't Redistribute	3.31 ***	**0.002**	0.99	0.964
Economy: Handle government well	0.25 ***	**0.001**	0.28 ***	**0.001**
Like: Farage	1.50 ***	**<0.001**	1.70 ***	**<0.001**
Like: Labour	0.89 *	**0.027**	0.87 ***	**<0.001**
Like: Conservative	0.84 **	**0.004**	0.65 ***	**<0.001**
Age	1.00	0.751	0.99 *	**0.025**
Education: Level 2-3	1.37	0.374	1.13	0.476
Education: High	1.25	0.550	1.05	0.777
Observations	1,631		10,236	
R^2 Tjur	0.705		0.872	
log-Likelihood	-238.756		-1173.041	
			** p<0.05*	*** p<0.01* **** p<0.001*