

The UK Independence Party: analysing its candidates and supporters¹

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Abstract

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) came second in the 2009 European Parliament elections, but small parties, especially those associated with a single issue, face a dilemma about how to progress. If they move too far beyond their core issue, they risk losing their niche position and support base, but if they are to grow their representation, they need to develop a broader platform. Using surveys of UKIP candidates at the 2009 European and 2010 general elections, we assess the political attitudes and views on party strategy of UKIP candidates and compare them with the views of UKIP supporters using opinion poll data. We demonstrate that UKIP's candidates and supporters are closely aligned, with both groups placing themselves largely on the centre right, being strongly Eurosceptic, favouring tighter immigration policies and distrusting the main parties. There is broad acceptance within UKIP that the party should campaign on issues beyond EU membership, but there are differences over how to approach competition with the Conservative Party

The UK Independence Party: analysing its candidates and supporters

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) achieved its best election performance in the 2009 European Parliament elections, coming second with 16.5% of the vote and 13 MEPs. As a ‘hard’ Eurosceptic party committed to withdrawal from the European Union (EU),² it mobilised Eurosceptic sentiment and capitalised on the unpopularity of the main parties. But small parties, particularly those strongly associated with a single issue, face a dilemma about how to progress.³ If they move too far beyond the issue for which they are best known, they risk losing their niche position and support base, but if they are to expand their representation, they need to develop a wider range of policies. This can cause internal disagreements. Using original surveys of UKIP candidates at the 2009 European and 2010 general elections, and a series of non-attributable interviews with UKIP MEPs, candidates and officials, we assess the political attitudes and views on party strategy of UKIP candidates. We then compare these with the views of UKIP’s supporters using opinion poll data. This represents the first systematic attempt to map UKIP candidates’ views, to compare their views with those of UKIP supporters, and to assess the attitudes of UKIP voters at the 2010 general election. We show that UKIP’s candidates are united around its core policy of withdrawal from the EU and the need to campaign on issues beyond this, but that there are some differences on how far the party should engage with the mechanics of the European Parliament (EP) and how it deals with the Conservative Party. We also demonstrate that UKIP’s candidates and supporters are closely aligned, with both groups placing themselves largely on the centre right, being strongly Eurosceptic, favouring tighter immigration policies and distrusting the main parties.

UKIP’s development

UKIP was formed in 1993 by Alan Sked in the wake of the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. It stood in the 1994 European elections but was overshadowed in the 1997 general election by the Referendum Party which polled 800,000 votes. The winding-up of the Referendum Party after the death of Sir James Goldsmith in July 1997 helped UKIP become the predominant Eurosceptic voice in the British party system. UKIP won three seats in the EP in 1999, then a surge in support in 2004 brought 12 MEPs and 16% of the vote, and UKIP came second in the 2009 contest. General election performances have been far less impressive. UKIP was fourth-placed in nationwide share of the vote in 2010, polling 3.2% but failing to win a seat.

Like many small parties, UKIP has suffered internal disputes over its direction and had frequent changes of leader.⁴ Robert Kilroy-Silk, the former Labour MP and television presenter, was a media star of the 2004 European elections, but received insufficient support for his attempt to seize the leadership and left the party. In his first period as leader (2006-09), Nigel Farage sought to shed UKIP’s image as a single-issue party by broadening its narrative. Policies such as a flat tax, a five-year freeze on immigration and opposition to identity cards were presented within a populist anti-establishment narrative that criticised the ‘Lib/Lab/Con’ for ignoring public opposition to the EU and immigration. This anti-establishment message was evident in the European elections when the MPs’ expenses scandal diverted attention from the European issue, and the 2010 general election when UKIP invited voters to ‘Sod the Lot’. UKIP gained its first representatives at Westminster when former Conservatives Lord Pearson of Rannoch and Lord Willoughby de Broke joined in 2007.⁵

Farage stood down in 2009 to focus on his role as leader of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group in the EP, and his (unsuccessful) attempt to unseat John Bercow in Buckingham. Pearson succeeded him and campaigned for greater use of referendums and a ban on the wearing of the burqa in public places. The former reinforced UKIP’s anti-establishment message;⁶ the latter introduced a theme prominent on the European populist radical right.⁷ Pearson resigned in August

2010 having appeared uneasy with the demands of leadership and Farage was comfortably re-elected.

UKIP candidates' survey

To understand views on party policy and strategy within UKIP, we conducted surveys of its candidates for the 2009 European elections and 2010 general election. 'Hard' Eurosceptic parties such as UKIP have had to decide how far to engage in the activities of the EP, an institution which it opposes but which offers publicity and funding.⁸ Furthermore, UKIP faces questions over how far it should move beyond its core Eurosceptic position to campaign on other issues, and how to deal with rival parties. Using the responses to our questionnaires, we focus on candidates' views on four issues: (1) the role of UKIP MEPs; (2) attitudes to European integration; (3) whether and how UKIP should expand its range of policies and (4) competition between UKIP and its principal rivals, particularly the Conservatives, but also the British National Party (BNP) and Labour.

The surveys were conducted using the online tool 'Survey Monkey'.⁹ Emails were sent to candidates in three waves before, during and after the campaigns. Where email addresses were unavailable, postal surveys were sent.¹⁰ The response rate for the survey of European election candidates was 68%; for the general election survey it was 53% of all candidates (55% of those contacted). The surveys asked about candidates' views on European integration, political attitudes, party competition, personal background and experience. Of the general election survey respondents, 265 identified their constituency and a further nine the region where they were standing, allowing us to identify the region of all but 6% of respondents. Response rates for the general election survey were highest from candidates in Scotland (61%) and the South East (59%) and lowest from London (37%) and the West Midlands (40%). 12% of survey respondents were women, compared to 15% of the total number of UKIP candidates. Chi-squared tests of the representativeness of the sample compared with the population of UKIP's general election candidates in terms of sex and region indicate that the survey is representative on these variables.¹¹ Unless stated, the data presented are from the general election survey as this is the most recent and had the largest number of respondents. There were few significant differences between the responses of European and general election candidates. This section also draws on non-attributable interviews with UKIP MEPs, candidates and officials.

UKIP in the European Parliament

The question of whether UKIP should take up seats in the EP was a thorny issue in the party's early days. Those in favour argued that it would bring financial benefits, enhance the party's profile and help UKIP inform voters of the costs of EU membership. This is now the settled will of the party, with 91% of survey respondents agreeing/strongly agreeing that 'UKIP MEPS should take their seats in the European Parliament' (see Table 1). UKIP MEPs approach their role in different ways. Marta Andreasen, a former European Commission chief accountant, is active on the Budgetary Control Committee, whereas Farage uses plenary sessions to generate publicity. Others, like Paul Nuttall, prefer to campaign in Britain. Our survey of European election candidates asked about the importance of various roles performed by UKIP MEPs. 'Articulation of the Eurosceptic case in the EP', 'representation of the UK national interest' and 'scrutiny of EU institutions' were considered by some 80% to be of 'great importance', but 46% believed that 'working on EU legislation' was of 'little importance'.

[Table 1 about here]

The issue of group membership in the EP has provoked divisions within UKIP. Group membership brings benefits such as finance and speaking time in plenary sessions. But UKIP has few natural

allies in the EP as it is unusual in being born solely from Euroscepticism and committed to withdrawal. The ‘hard’ Eurosceptic Danish People’s Movement against the EU is a single-issue party but is allied to the European United Left-Nordic Green Left group.¹² Beyond this, most Eurosceptic parties in the EP are ‘soft’ Eurosceptics who favour reform of the EU.¹³ For them, Euroscepticism is one of a set of ideological positions or the result of strategic decisions by the leadership rather than their defining feature. UKIP is the only one of nine parties in the EFD, many of them from the populist radical right, to demand withdrawal. The EFD is a marriage of convenience providing the benefits of group status but allowing members to vote as they see fit. It is the least cohesive group in the EP, with the Lega Nord frequently voting in favour of EU integration and UKIP opposing it.¹⁴

This freedom of manoeuvre did not satisfy some. Nikki Sinclair and Mike Nattrass left the EFD in 2010, the former having the whip withdrawn while the latter remains a UKIP MEP. Sinclair believes that group membership ‘helps the EU to work’ and that sitting with parties who do not favour withdrawal and have ‘extremist views’ compromises UKIP’s position.¹⁵ However, 72% of survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that UKIP MEPs should be part of a political group (see Table 1) within the European Parliament’. They were divided on whether ‘UKIP MEPs should be part of a transnational political party’: 35% agreed/strongly agreed, and 35% disagreed/strongly disagreed. Parties may gain additional EU funding if they form a ‘European political party’. Farage argues that an alliance of Eurosceptic parties would bring additional funding, but the 2010 UKIP conference backed a motion calling for a referendum of party members before the issue is settled.

These results provide further evidence of the difficulties Eurosceptic parties must overcome to make a real impact in the EP. These problems include the ideological heterogeneity of Eurosceptic parties, divisions between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ Eurosceptics, the fragility of Eurosceptic party groups, and questions about whether activism in the EP amounts to accommodation with the EU.¹⁶

Views on European integration

Candidates were asked about areas where European integration has negatively affected the UK. Here, unsurprisingly, over 90% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that European integration had a negative impact on British democracy, British national identity, British sovereignty and British economic competitiveness. Regarding EU policies, for the Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, Common Foreign and Security Policy and employment and social affairs policies, over 90% of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that European activity had been beneficial. However, regional funding was seen slightly less negatively, with 86% stating that they disagreed/strongly disagreed that the UK had benefited. The single European market was viewed positively by 14% of respondents, suggesting that this is one area in which some UKIP candidates do believe Britain has gained.

When asked for their views on strategies that the European Union should pursue, respondents overwhelmingly disagreed that the EU should have strategies in any of the areas highlighted,¹⁷ although the strength of opinion varied. Regarding human rights in EU member states, immigration, regulation of financial services and social inclusion, over three quarters of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that the EU should have strategies. Some areas attracted slightly more positive responses with 34% strongly agreeing/agreeing that the EU should have a counter-terrorism strategy and 23% holding the same opinion regarding deregulation. So some UKIP candidates do see a role for EU action in limited areas.

Beyond a single-issue party

Single-issue or niche parties maintain their distinctive position in the party system by eschewing comprehensive policy platforms and focusing on novel issues that do not coincide with existing fault-lines.¹⁸ UKIP emerged when European integration was dividing the Conservative Party and becoming a more salient issue for an increasingly Eurosceptic electorate, but its salience has since declined.¹⁹ The main parties played a part in this. Labour defused the differences between the main parties, deferred decisions and promised referendums on Economic and Monetary Union and the Constitutional Treaty.²⁰ The Conservatives downplayed the issue after their 2001 ‘save the Pound’ campaign.

The reduced salience of the European issue provides an incentive for UKIP to broaden its appeal, but there are dangers inherent in doing so. Firstly, although UKIP is generally recognised as being on the political right, Euroscepticism has a broader appeal. Promoting neo-liberal policies might provoke internal dissent and deter some supporters. Secondly, UKIP needs to ensure that a wider policy platform does not dilute its core message as niche parties suffer internal divisions and losses among their core support if they moderate their radicalism on the issue on which their distinctive appeal is based.²¹ Euroscepticism remains central to UKIP’s identity and is a significant driver of support for the party.

UKIP candidates are, unsurprisingly, united in support of the party’s central objective: 99% agreed/strongly agreed that Britain should ‘withdraw from the EU’. However, there has been debate about the mechanics of departure. The leadership position is that the UK should negotiate favourable terms for withdrawal (e.g. a free trade agreement), possibly after a ‘no’ vote in a referendum. In our survey, 91% strongly agreed that UKIP should campaign on ‘a referendum on UK membership of the EU’. In the 2010 leadership contest, Tim Congdon proposed ‘unconditional unilateral withdrawal’, with a free trade agreement a consequence of withdrawal rather than a condition for it.²² On options after withdrawal, most survey respondents supported ‘a stronger trade relationship’ with the Commonwealth and NAFTA, and ‘bilateral trade agreements with the EU’ (see Table 2). Support for ‘membership of the European Economic Area’ (EEA) was lower (62% agreed/strongly agreed), perhaps reflecting a concern that EEA states have to implement much EU law.

[Table 2 about here]

Support from candidates was evident for the UKIP leadership’s efforts to broaden the party’s narrative: 94% agreed/strongly agreed that it should have ‘a policy platform [that] encompasses a wide range of issues, built around the core theme of withdrawal from the EU’ (see Table 3). Candidates were presented with eight policy areas and asked whether UKIP should campaign on them. Over 80% strongly agreed that UKIP should campaign on immigration and the economy. 50% strongly agreed (and 33% agreed) that UKIP should campaign on ‘Islamic extremism in the UK’, while 45% strongly agreed (35% agreed) that it should campaign on ‘climate change scepticism’. Respondents could add their own issues: judicial matters, political reform and defence were mentioned most frequently.

[Table 3 about here]

Further information on candidates’ policy preferences was gauged from the party website. Candidates were presented with three issues by the party – ‘stop paying the EU £45 million every day’, ‘take back control of Britain's borders’ and ‘bring the power to make UK laws back to Westminster’ – and asked to provide two local issues of importance. 503 candidates provided a total of 994 statements. The most frequently mentioned issues were employment, housing and planning, tackling crime, lower taxes and local referendums. UKIP candidates want the party to campaign on a

wide range of issues but, beyond immigration and the economy, there is some variation on those regarded as most important.

Political attitudes and party competition

UKIP's main rivals on the right are the centre right Conservative Party and the far right BNP. UKIP's position between the two has seen it stereotyped as either a refuge for 'hard' Eurosceptic Conservatives or as the 'BNP in blazers'. It has tried to dissociate itself from the BNP, not always successfully, by proclaiming itself a non-racist party and focusing on the constraints on British immigration policy created by EU membership.²³ Our survey asked candidates about their political attitudes and views on party competition. Firstly, candidates were asked to place themselves, UKIP, its voters and other parties on a left-right ideological scale (see Table 4). Most respondents placed themselves, UKIP and its voters to the right of centre (at an average of 6.4 on the 0-10 scale), with almost half locating UKIP on the centre right. Very few placed themselves, UKIP or its voters on either the left or the far right. Respondents saw little difference between the ideological position of the party and its supporters. Only 36% placed the Conservatives on the right. Most located the BNP on the far right but a sizeable minority (22%) regarded it as left wing, presumably because of its economic interventionism.

[Table 4 about here]

The position of UKIP and the BNP is better understood in terms of 'new issue cleavages' such as Europe and immigration rather than the traditional social class cleavage. Some respondents thus questioned the utility of the left-right scale. We also asked candidates to place themselves, UKIP, its voters and other parties on scales concerning attitudes to European integration and immigration (see Table 5). UKIP candidates are strongly Eurosceptic and see their party in the same light. They view UKIP voters as Eurosceptic, but not to quite the same degree. The BNP is regarded as Eurosceptic, but less so than UKIP, with Labour and particularly the Liberal Democrats seen as favouring further integration. On the 11 point scale, 25% of respondents placed the Conservatives on the Eurosceptic side (receiving scores of 0-4), but 58% felt they support further integration (with scores of 6-10). 58% agreed/strongly agreed that one of UKIP's roles should be to put pressure on the Conservatives to adopt a more Eurosceptic position. 80% disagreed/strongly disagreed that 'parties respond to the views of their own supporters' on the issue of European integration.

[Table 5 about here]

On immigration, respondents perceived their own views, UKIP's position and the views of its voters as similarly supportive of a tougher immigration policy, with mean scores of 0.5 and 0.6 respectively on a 0-10 scale.²⁴ 72% placed themselves at the far end of the scale favouring a significant tightening of the regulation of immigration, with 67% locating UKIP voters there. There was no clear view on the Conservatives' position, although many respondents placed them near the centre with an average score of 5.2. The BNP was seen as having a tougher position than UKIP (a score of 0.3 on average). Two-thirds agreed/strongly agreed that 'the presence of the BNP makes it more important that UKIP campaigns on immigration and community relations'.

These results suggest that UKIP candidates mainly see their party as being on the centre right, as distinctive in terms of its 'hard' Euroscepticism, and as taking a tougher line on immigration than the main parties but not the BNP. This fits with UKIP's attempts to position itself as distinctive from the three main parties not only on Europe but also on the salient issue of immigration, while shunning the extremism of the BNP.

UKIP and the Conservatives

UKIP candidates are, then, hostile to the Conservative position on Europe. The party has adopted both adversarial and accommodating positions towards the Conservatives. In adversarial mode, it has targeted the political space vacated by the Conservatives since Cameron's move to the centre, developing a broad centre right platform (e.g. support for grammar schools and tax cuts) and appealing directly to disaffected Conservative voters to 'lend us your vote'. But an approach that is too adversarial could damage UKIP's prospects of attracting donations,²⁵ defectors and Conservative voters.

Farage offered to stand down candidates in the general election if the Conservatives promised a binding referendum on EU membership. The offer was refused. There have also been discussions within UKIP on whether it should field candidates in Westminster constituencies which have a Eurosceptic MP. The 2004 conference voted to contest seats held by Eurosceptics. In Farage's first spell as leader, the position was that UKIP would not stand against MPs who supported the Better Off Out (BOO) campaign. But it would stand against candidates who supported BOO because their position had not been tested in parliament, and against non-BOO Eurosceptic MPs because they had not proved their commitment to withdrawal.

The position became less watertight under Pearson. UKIP chose not to stand against five Conservatives and one Labour candidate in 2010. But it fought some BOO supporters (e.g. Austin Mitchell) whilst not standing against some Eurosceptic who did support BOO (e.g. David Drew). Pearson also angered some local associations by requesting publically that more candidates withdraw. None stepped aside and some threatened to call an extraordinary general meeting.

Our survey found strong support (88% agreeing/strongly agreeing) for the idea that UKIP should 'contest all seats' at the 2010 general election (see Table 6). When asked whether UKIP should 'field candidates in a seat where a Eurosceptic Conservative is standing', respondents were more divided: 48% believed it should, but 26% disagreed/strongly disagreed. A majority opposed 'an electoral pact with other Eurosceptic parties' and there was almost no support for an electoral pact with the BNP. When asked 'from which party do you think UKIP is most likely to win votes in your constituency', 30% named the Conservatives and 30% Labour. Regional variations were evident with those in the South West and South East much more likely to cite the Conservatives, whereas Labour was more frequently chosen by those in the North West and Yorkshire. 51% of respondents had been members of another party in the (sometimes distant) past: 30% had been Conservative members but only 4% Labour.

[Table 6 about here]

UKIP has had some difficulties in deciding how best to approach competition with the Conservative Party. While the bulk of respondents to our survey think UKIP should contest all seats, a substantial minority are unhappy with the idea of standing against Eurosceptic Conservatives. In order to probe further the challenges facing UKIP in terms of the range and type of policies it promotes and competition with other parties, we now assess the views of UKIP's supporters.

Support for UKIP

How closely aligned are UKIP candidates and voters, and does the broadening of the party narrative fit with the views of its voters? We address this using descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses of

data from two surveys carried out by YouGov. One took place in the run up to the 2009 European elections and included over 32,000 respondents, more than 4,000 of whom declared a voting intention for UKIP. The second was carried out shortly after the 2010 general election (6-21 May) and includes just under 70,000 cases, with a little over 2,000 of these being UKIP voters. These data are from two different types of electoral contest and there is evidence suggesting that European and national elections should be treated differently, with the former as second-order elections in which voters and parties are concerned mainly with national rather than EU issues.²⁶ Small parties tend to perform better in these contests and governing parties worse. While we concentrate mainly on the general election data, the fact that a large number of respondents participated in both surveys means we can make some comparisons, in terms of vote choice, between the contests. We use the 2009 data mainly to measure attitudes to European integration as questions on this did not feature in the 2010 survey. Before looking at the social characteristics, political attitudes and left-right positioning of UKIP voters, we briefly review the party's 2010 performance.

Aggregate analyses of UKIP support shows that it performs best in areas with a high proportion of people aged over 65, fewer people with a degree and higher numbers of self-employed. Geographically, the party's best results have been in non-urban southern England, particularly coastal areas.²⁷ UKIP fielded 558 candidates in 2010, averaging 3.5% of the vote in these seats. Its best result was in Buckingham where Farage won 17.4% in a seat where Labour and the Liberal Democrats did not stand. UKIP came third here and in three seats in the south west where Labour performed particularly poorly: North Cornwall, North Devon, and Torridge and West Devon. Deposits were saved in 100 constituencies, mainly in the West Midlands, South West England, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire. Correlations of constituency vote shares (Table 7) show that the UKIP's vote was positively correlated with that of the BNP, but there is a larger positive correlation between UKIP and Conservative vote shares.

[Table 7 about here]

UKIP's share of the vote dropped slightly, on average, in constituencies where it saved its deposit in 2005. This may be because UKIP has not learned how to build on success,²⁸ or because it was no longer the sole challenger to the main parties. The BNP stood in only two of the 38 seats where UKIP saved its deposit in 2005, and 19 had been contested by only four parties. The BNP stood in an additional 12 of these seats in 2010, while UKIP did not stand in two. UKIP was the only challenger to the main parties in 19 of the 100 seats where it saved its deposit. The BNP fielded 338 candidates (up from 199), and did best in urban constituencies in West Yorkshire, east Lancashire, the West Midlands and the east end of London.²⁹ In the 303 head-to-head contests between UKIP and the BNP, UKIP finished ahead in 126 constituencies and the BNP in 177.

Turning to UKIP's support at the individual level, Table 8 compares the social characteristics of UKIP voters and others, using data from the YouGov 2010 post-election survey. UKIP voters are slightly older, more likely to be male, white and drawn from social classes C2, D and E, but less likely to have a degree, compared with voters for other parties. They are more likely to be in the East of England, South East and South West than other voters, but less likely to be in Scotland or London. This fits with research on UKIP's support at the 2009 European elections.³⁰

[Table 8 about here]

Table 9 compares the attitudes of UKIP voters and supporters of other parties on European integration, immigration and trust in politicians. In line with the party's views, we find that UKIP voters agree more strongly, on average, that Britain should withdraw from the EU. The difference between UKIP and the BNP is small (0.2 points on the 1-5 scale) but statistically significant

($p < 0.001$). Also in line with the party's thinking are our findings that UKIP's voters are more likely to disagree that the EU promotes prosperity throughout Europe and more likely to side with the view that a great majority of decisions affecting daily lives are taken by the EU rather than by Westminster. Consistent with this, analysis of voting in the 2009 European elections showed that Euroscepticism was the most powerful explanatory factor in the decision to vote UKIP.³¹

Table 9 also shows voters' attitudes to immigration using two questions from the YouGov European election survey. UKIP voters are more concerned about immigration, on average, than voters for the three main parties, but less so than those supporting the BNP in the 2009 European elections. We find the same ordering, by party support, when we look at those general election voters who answered both the European and general election surveys. UKIP's focus on this issue looks astute in the light of these results. UKIP also campaigns on the lack of differences between the main parties. While the 2010 YouGov survey did not ask a question specifically on this, we can tap into this populism by looking at UKIP voters' views on the honesty of politicians. Here we find UKIP voters in 2010 rate elected politicians and general election candidates as less honest, on average, than do voters for the three main parties. BNP voters rate general election candidates equally as badly as do UKIP supporters and hold an even lower opinion of elected politicians.

[Table 9 about here]

Having noted that UKIP candidates believe that the party should campaign on a range of issues, we now examine the issues that UKIP voters see as most important. The 2010 YouGov survey asked what respondents thought was 'the single most important issue facing the country at the present time'. UKIP voters were most likely to cite immigration as the most important issue, followed by the economy and then Europe.³² Immigration also topped the list of most important issues for UKIP voters in the European election survey, so this result is not specific to their general election supporters. This adds further weight to the view that UKIP is right to move beyond a single-issue approach. UKIP links immigration to the EU by noting that the UK cannot impose controls on migration from Member States. Research on support for UKIP in 2009 showed that voters believing immigration policy should be decided by each country rather than at the EU level were more likely to support UKIP in comparison with Labour and the Conservatives.³³

[Figure 1 about here]

Figure 1 shows the alignment of UKIP's supporters and general election candidates on the left-right spectrum. The upper panel shows the distribution of candidates based on our survey data, the lower panel the distribution of supporters using the YouGov 2010 survey. To ensure comparability across the two datasets, the responses in the candidate survey, which used an 11 point scale, were converted to a seven point scale as used in the voter survey data. Figure 1 shows that the mean value is very similar for candidates (4.9) and voters (4.7), with the latter slightly closer to the centre. Voters' views are more thinly spread than those of candidates with greater proportions of voters on the left and at the far right and a slightly higher standard deviation of 1.4 compared with 1 for candidates. The bulk of both groups are bunched around the centre right, but UKIP taps into a broader range of voters than is represented by its candidates with just under one-fifth of UKIP supporters placing themselves on the left. Looking at UKIP voters' recollection of their 2005 general election vote, we see that a plurality (38%) of those on the left voted Labour while 23% voted UKIP. This suggests that some of UKIP's left-wing support at the 2010 election came from disaffected Labour voters.

Given that UKIP performed much better in the European than general election and the differences between these types of contest, we also examine how its 2009 voters acted a year later. Of the

respondents to the 2009 YouGov survey, 17,535 (54%) after weighting, also responded to the 2010 survey, including 2,626 of the 4,252 UKIP voters in the European election survey. Of these, 48% switched to the Conservatives at the general election, while 16% switched to Labour, the same proportion to the Liberal Democrats and another 16% stayed with UKIP. UKIP thus benefitted considerably in 2009 from Conservative supporters taking up Farage's invitation to 'lend us your vote'.

When asked in the 2010 YouGov survey who they had voted for at the previous general election, 24% of UKIP's 2010 voters recalled also voting for UKIP in 2005, a further 23% claimed to have supported the Conservatives and 17% Labour. We can also roughly gauge how much of the vote for the main parties might have gone to UKIP if voters had voted sincerely rather than tactically. Of those who said they voted Conservative but either really preferred another party or had voted tactically, one-third said they preferred UKIP, the largest proportion for any party. The equivalent figure for those voting Labour in 2010 was 7% and 5% for Liberal Democrat supporters. Combined with the evidence of vote switching between European and general elections, this suggests that UKIP have more to gain from Conservative than Labour supporters.³⁴ Furthermore, when we look at UKIP general election voters' opinions of other parties, the Conservatives are the most favoured, with an average score of 5.6 on a scale where 0 = 'strongly dislike' and 10 = 'strongly like'. This compares with scores of 4.8 for the BNP and 3.5 for Labour.

Are there other differences between UKIP's general election and European election voters? Comparing the data in Table 4 with equivalent figures from the European election survey shows there is little difference in terms of age, which averages 52 at the European elections, sex (45% female at the European election) and education (23% of UKIP's 2009 voters stayed in education beyond 18). The regional distribution is also very similar. The main difference concerns social class, where UKIP's general election supporters are more evenly spread across the categories, with smaller proportions of AB voters and larger proportions of those in groups D and E compared to UKIP voters in 2009. On political attitudes, using the sample of respondents who took part in both surveys,³⁵ UKIP's general election voters have stronger anti-immigration and more populist views, on average, than those supporting them in European elections (with mean scores of 4.2 and 4.6 for the two immigration questions reported in Table 5). But when compared with BNP general election voters, UKIP supporters have weaker views on immigration and the dishonesty of politicians.

These findings differ somewhat from those of Ford et al. who identified UKIP's 'core supporters' using a question in the 2009 YouGov European election survey on voting intentions at the general election.³⁶ In the 2009 poll, 47% of those supporting UKIP in the European elections claimed that they also intended to vote for UKIP in the general election. Of those voters who also went on to answer YouGov's general election survey, only 28% who had said in 2009 that they would vote UKIP at the general election actually went on to do so – 31% went on to vote Conservative and 18% Labour. It is the case that UKIP benefits from Conservative defectors at European elections and that UKIP's general election supporters have harder views on immigration and populism than their European election supporters. But our findings contrast with those of Ford et al. in some ways. Firstly, UKIP's general election supporters appear to be bunched largely around the centre right of the political spectrum, are similar in terms of demographics to UKIP's European election supporters and remain distinct in these respects from BNP voters. Secondly, to the extent that UKIP's general election supporters are closer than their European election voters to those of the BNP in terms of attitudes, and to Labour in terms of demographics (although the latter is very limited), we would argue that this was also affected by a political context in which Labour was unpopular and had been in power for a long period. We are, then, cautious about describing the group identified by Ford et al. as UKIP's 'core supporters'.

Conclusions

UKIP is a maturing political party. We have shown that UKIP candidates are united around the core 'hard' Eurosceptic policy but that there are some differences over how to approach competition with the Conservatives, the other issues that the party should campaign on and the prospect of UKIP joining a transnational European party. This evidence is consistent with the problems faced by 'hard' Eurosceptic parties more widely. When looking at UKIP's voters in the 2009 European and 2010 general elections, we see a close fit on the party's policies towards the EU, the need to campaign on other policies such as immigration, and a critical stance towards the three main parties. UKIP's voters hold harder views on immigration and on the dishonesty of politicians than supporters of the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats, but also remain distinct from the BNP on many of these. UKIP's general election voters appear further to the right on issues of immigration and populism compared with its European election supporters but have similar social characteristics. Furthermore, we have shown that UKIP gained extensively from Conservative voters at the 2009 European election and that its general election supporters prefer the Conservatives to others.

The party's distinctive position on Europe has given it a clear identity but the party leadership and candidates recognise that it must have a broader platform. Further professionalization is also required. The 2010 leadership election saw serious debate on UKIP's future direction and was less rancorous than earlier contests. Farage has appointed a chief executive to manage the party, proposed greater control of candidate selection, sought to put the party's finances on a firmer footing, and renewed his efforts to develop a transnational party. The model of a dominant leader who is the public face of the party and determines its strategic direction, similar to that of Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, will test the extent to which party members are willing to sacrifice internal democracy in return for potential electoral gains.³⁷ The leadership also recognises the need to build from below if it is to make the breakthrough at Westminster. This will require a concentration of resources in areas of strength (e.g. parts of the South West, West Midlands and Eastern England) to develop a more visible local presence, win local council seats and then target Westminster constituencies. Here, the path taken by Lega Nord is of interest to UKIP.

Our analysis confirms that there is space in Britain's multi-party system for a Eurosceptic, anti-establishment party positioned between the Conservatives and BNP. But UKIP faces significant challenges if it is to cement and enhance its position. With Labour in power for much of UKIP's life time, it has garnered support from disillusioned Labour voters. Whether UKIP can continue to do so will only become apparent over time.

UKIP warned of the threat of Islamic extremism and proposed a ban on wearing the burqa when Pearson was leader. Farage supported the policy, but it has not featured prominently in UKIP discourse since the general election. The combination of Islamophobia, a hard-line position on immigration sentiment, populism and Euroscepticism has brought electoral dividends for populist radical right parties across Europe.³⁸ While it might appeal to voters who share these attitudes but regard the BNP as a pariah party, it would be a dangerous route for UKIP to take. Our analysis shows that, although UKIP candidates and voters favour a tougher immigration policy, they mainly position themselves on the centre right rather than at the extremes and are largely hostile to the BNP. UKIP has already been able to pick up some support from voters concerned about immigration without reproducing the xenophobia of the far right. Following in the footsteps of the radical right would contaminate the UKIP brand by associating it with extremism, undermining its efforts to improve the party image, and repel those who might be attracted to UKIP by its Eurosceptic,

libertarian and centre right policies at a time when the Conservatives are not delivering what some of their supporters had hoped for.

The advent of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition presents UKIP with an opportunity not only to persuade Eurosceptic Conservatives to lend UKIP their votes at the next European elections, but also to translate these strategic voters into committed UKIP supporters. Farage has positioned UKIP to challenge the Conservatives on a range of centre right policies and to exploit dissatisfaction with the main parties. Those who voted UKIP in 2009 but returned to the Conservatives at the general election may be disappointed by the dilution of Conservative Euroscepticism seen in the dropping of the manifesto commitment to repatriate powers from the EU and opposition to an in-out referendum. If the Alternative Vote is used for Westminster election, UKIP would expect to gain first preference votes from those voters, primarily Conservatives, who support UKIP in European but not general elections, but would still fall short of winning a seat at Westminster.

Table 1. Attitudes to the role of UKIP MEPs among UKIP candidates (% of respondents)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
UKIP MEPs should take their seats in the European Parliament	61	30	4	3	2
UKIP MEPs should be part of a political group in the European Parliament	40	32	19	7	2
UKIP MEPs should be part of a transnational political party	17	18	29	17	18

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Table 2. If the UK were to withdraw from the EU it should seek (% of respondents):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A stronger trade relationship with the Commonwealth	84	13	2	0	0
A stronger trade relationship with the North American Free Trade Area	76	18	6	0	0
Membership of the European Economic Area	39	24	18	13	7
Bilateral trade agreements with the EU	56	33	7	2	3

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Table 3. In the medium term, UKIP's role in British politics should be: (% of respondents)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
As a party whose policy platform encompasses a wide range of issues, built around the core theme of withdrawal from the EU	80	14	1	0	0	4
As a party whose policy platform is restricted to the core theme of withdrawal from the EU	6	13	11	40	24	6
As part of a broad Eurosceptic social movement mobilising public opinion	33	36	12	8	6	6
To put pressure on the Conservative Party to adopt a more Eurosceptic position	29	29	18	7	11	7

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Table 4. Left-right positions of UKIP candidates (% of respondents)

	Left 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Right 10	Mean value
Yourself	0	0	1	1	5	25	18	21	21	4	3	6.4
Your party	0	0	0	0	1	20	22	31	21	2	3	6.6
Your party's voters	1	0	0	1	4	21	22	28	20	2	1	6.4
Conservatives	3	2	7	11	16	25	19	7	4	3	3	4.9
Labour	13	12	21	20	17	9	3	2	2	0	2	2.9
Lib Dems	15	15	20	16	14	14	1	2	1	1	1	2.8
BNP	15	5	5	0	2	2	2	3	5	16	45	8.0

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Table 5. Attitudes towards European integration among UKIP candidates (% of respondents)

	European integration has gone much too far 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	The EU should become a federal state 10	Mean value
Yourself	89	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.2
Your party	92	6	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1
Your party's voters	71	13	9	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.6
Conservative	1	1	5	8	10	18	14	11	11	5	17	6.2
Labour	1	0	0	1	3	10	9	13	19	13	32	7.9
Lib Dems	1	0	1	0	2	1	3	3	11	17	60	9.0
BNP	74	8	6	3	2	4	0	1	0	0	3	0.9

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

Table 6: At the forthcoming general election, UKIP should: (% of respondents)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Contest all seats	63	25	6	6	0
Concentrate on a few seats where winning might be possible	15	19	11	40	16
Field candidates in seats where a Eurosceptic Conservative candidate is standing	26	22	26	22	4
Seek an electoral pact with other Eurosceptic parties	8	18	22	31	21

Note: Figures may not sum to 100 per cent because of rounding.

Table 7. Correlations between party vote shares at the constituency level in the 2010 general election

	UKIP vote	BNP vote	Conservative vote
BNP vote	0.25**	-	-
Conservative vote	0.34**	-0.29**	-
Labour vote	-0.30**	0.40**	-0.76**
Lib Dem vote	0.02	-0.37**	-0.09*
Green vote	-0.06	-0.11	-0.18*

** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Source: May 6th 2010 British General Election Constituency Results Release 5.0, available at www.pippanorris.com

Table 8. Social and geographical characteristics of UKIP voters compared to others at the 2010 general election

	UKIP voters	Non-UKIP voters
Age (years)	53*	46
Female	44*	52
Social grade		
AB	22*	30
C1	25*	29
C2	27*	20
DE	27*	20
White ethnic origin	99*	95
Terminal education age		
18 or lower	76*	60
Greater than 18	21*	35
Currently at school or full-time student	3*	6
Region		
North East	4	4
North West	11	11
Yorkshire and the Humber	8	9
East Midlands	9*	8
West Midlands	9	9
East of England	13*	10
London	8*	13
South East	19*	14
South West	13*	9
Wales	5	5
Scotland	2*	9

Source: YouGov 2010 post-general election survey

Note: All figures are percentages apart from those for age. * indicates statistically significant differences between UKIP voters and others at the p<0.01 level.

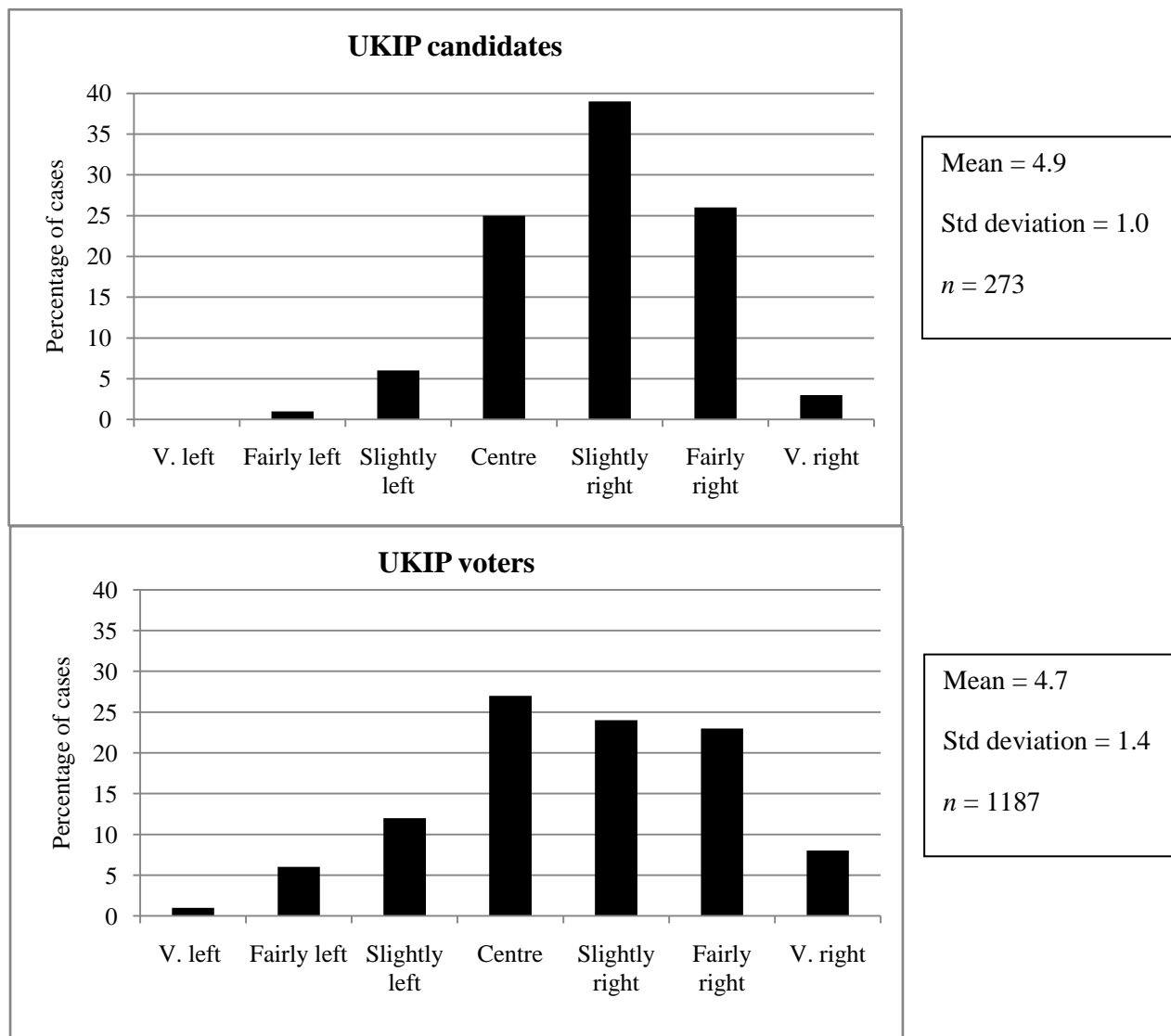
Table 9. Political attitudes of UKIP voters compared with others

	UKIP voters	Conservative voters	Labour voters	Liberal Democrat voters	BNP voters
The UK should withdraw completely from the European Union (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)	4.3	3.2	2.3	2.3	4.1
The existence of the EU promotes prosperity throughout Europe (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree)	4.1	3.4	2.6	2.7	3.9
A great majority of the important decisions that affect our daily life are taken by the European Union not by Britain's parliaments, assemblies or councils (1=completely untrue, 3=completely true)	2.7	2.4	2.0	2.1	2.6
Immigration in recent years has helped Britain's economy grow faster than it would have done (1=agree strongly, 5=disagree strongly)	4.0	3.6	3.0	3.0	4.4
All further immigration to the UK should be halted (1=disagree strongly, 5=agree strongly)	4.4	3.9	3.2	3.1	4.8
Thinking back to the recent general election campaign, how honest do you think most candidates were? (1=very honest, 4=not at all honest)	3.1	2.4	2.5	2.6	3.1
Overall how would you rate the standards of honesty and integrity of elected politicians in Britain today? (1=very high, 5=very low)	4.1	3.3	3.2	3.5	4.4

Sources: questions on Euroscepticism and immigration are taken from the 2009 YouGov European election survey, those on trust in politicians are from the 2010 YouGov post-election survey.

Note: the difference in means between UKIP and voters for each of the parties on each question is statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level except for UKIP and the BNP on the honesty of general election candidates, where the mean responses are the same.

Figure 1. Comparing the left-right positions of UKIP's candidates and voters at the 2010 general election



¹ We are grateful to Joe Twyman of YouGov for making the polling data available. We also thank the candidates who completed our surveys and those who, along with party officials and MEPs, granted us interviews. This research was supported by the Leverhulme Trust (grant number F/00 212/AD).

² P. Taggart and A. Szczerbiack 'Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality', in P. Taggart and A. Szczerbiack (eds.), *Opposing Europe. The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism. Volume 2*, Oxford University Press, 2008 pp.247-8.

³ S. Usherwood, 'The Dilemmas of a Single-Issue Party – the UK Independence Party', *Representation*, 44, 2008, 255-64

⁴ A. Abedi and T. Lundberg ‘Doomed to Failure? UKIP and the Organisational Challenges facing Right-Wing Populist Anti-Political Establishment Parties’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62, 2009, 72-87.

⁵ Bob Spink claimed to be a UKIP MP after leaving the Conservatives in 2008, but within a year was describing himself as an independent. He stood as an independent in Castle Point in 2010, polling 27% of the vote. He did not face a UKIP challenge

⁶ A. Abedi and T. Lundberg, op. cit., note 4.

⁷ C. Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁸ G. Benedetto, ‘Explaining the Failure of Euroscepticism in the European Parliament’, in A. Szczerbiak and P. Taggart (eds.), op. cit., note 1, pp.127-50

⁹ www.surveymonkey.com

¹⁰ For the European election survey, 65 candidates were sent the survey electronically, four the postal survey only and 36 both after email contact proved unsuccessful. 27 candidates completed the electronic survey and 20 the postal version. Of the 558 UKIP general election candidates, 483 were contacted via email and 50 by post. We were unable to contact 25 candidates. 295 valid responses were received: 282 electronic surveys and 13 postal.

¹¹ For the regions, $p=0.72$ and for sex, $p=0.37$ indicating very strong support for the null hypothesis that the distribution of regions and sex in the sample is the same as in the population of UKIP candidates.

¹² C. de Vreese and M. Tobiasen, ‘Conflict and Identity: Explaining Turnout and Anti-Integrationist Voting in the Danish 2004 Elections for the European Parliament’, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30, 2007, 87-114.

¹³ Taggart and Szczerbiack, op. cit., note 2.

¹⁴ ‘Voting in the 2009-2014 European Parliament: the First Year’, June 2010, www.votewatch.eu/static/research.php [accessed 20.07.10].

¹⁵ ‘Why UKIP should leave the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) Group’, 19 January 2010, www.yourmep.org/freedom.html [accessed 22.01.10].

¹⁶ Benedetto, op. cit., note 8.

¹⁷ The areas about which candidates were asked were: climate change, consumer protection, counter-terrorism, deregulation, energy security, human rights in EU member states, immigration, international development, judicial cooperation in criminal matters, regulation of financial services, social inclusion.

¹⁸ B. Meguid, ‘Competition between Unequals: the Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success’, *American Political Science Review*, 99, 2005, 347-59.

¹⁹ B. Clements and J. Bartle, ‘The European Issue and Party Choice at British General Elections, 1974-2005’, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 19, 2009, 377-411.

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- ²⁰ K. Oppermann, 'The Blair Government and Europe: the Policy of Containing the Salience of European Integration', *British Politics*, 3, 2008, 156-82.
- ²¹ J. Adams, M. Clarke, L. Ezrow and G. Glasgow, 'Are Niche Parties Fundamentally Different from Mainstream Parties? The Causes and Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties' Policy Shifts, 1976-1998', *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 2006, 513-29.
- ²² Agreement between Tim Congdon and Gerard Batten MEP, 17 September 2010, www.timcongdon4ukip.com/docs/agreement.pdf [accessed 20.09.11].
- ²³ N. Farage, *Fighting Bull*, Biteback, 2010, p.132.
- ²⁴ Candidates were asked to place themselves and the same list of other groups as in Tables 1 and 2 on a 0-10 scale where 0 represented the view that 'Regulation of immigration to the UK should be significantly tightened' and 10 that 'Regulation of immigration to the UK should be significantly relaxed'.
- ²⁵ Stuart Wheeler donated £135,000 to UKIP in 2009 and became party treasurer after being expelled by the Conservatives.
- ²⁶ K. Reif and H. Schmitt, 'Nine Second-Order National Elections: a Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results', *European Journal of Political Research*, 8, 1980, 3-44.
- ²⁷ J. Curtice, S. Fisher and R. Ford, 'Appendix 2: the Results Analysed', in D. Kavanagh, and P. Cowley, *The British General Election of 2010*, Palgrave, 2010, p.404.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ J. Curtice et al, op. cit., note 21, p.405.
- ³⁰ R. Whitaker and P. Lynch, 'Explaining Support for the UK Independence Party at the 2009 European Parliament Elections', working paper, available at: <http://www.le.ac.uk/politics/centreright.html>
- ³¹ R. Whitaker and P. Lynch, op. cit., note 28; R. Ford, M. Goodwin and D. Cutts, 'Strategic Eurosceptics and Polite Xenophobes: support for the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in the 2009 European Parliament Elections', *European Journal of Political Research*, 2011, forthcoming.
- ³² We found the same ranking of issues among UKIP voters in the 2010 British Election Study internet pre-campaign panel survey.
- ³³ R. Whitaker and P. Lynch, op. cit., note 28.
- ³⁴ D. Sanders, H. Clarke, M. Stewart and P. Whiteley, 'Simulating the Effects of the Alternative Vote in the 2010 General Election', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 64, 2011, p.12, note that UKIP was the second preference of 29% of Conservative voters but only 9% of Labour voters in England, while 49% of the second preferences of UKIP voters were for the Conservatives, 17% for the BNP and only 8% for Labour.
- ³⁵ As there were no questions specifically on immigration in the 2010 survey, we are only able to measure UKIP general election voters' views on these issues for those who also answered the European election survey.

³⁶ R. Ford et al., op. cit., note 29.

³⁷ A. Abedi and T. Lundberg, op. cit., note 4.

³⁸ C. Mudde, op. cit., note 7.