UNITED KINGDOM

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UNITED KINGDOM
British National Party (BNP)
United Kingdom Independence
Party (UKIP)

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CONTENT

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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economic policies in Europe.

THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN EUROPE

Since the early 2010s, right-wing populist parties (RWPPs) have been on the rise across Europe. This development has taken place at the expense of the mainstream: while the average electoral score of RWPPs has been steadily increasing over time, support for both the mainstream left and right has declined.

The right-wing populist momentum sweeping Europe since the early 2010s has three features:

1. ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE

Many RWPPs have improved their electoral performance over time. The French Rassemblement National (RN) (formerly Front National - FN), the Austrian Party for Freedom (FPÖ), the Greek Golden Dawn (GD) and the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) have all increasingly managed to mobilise voters beyond their core support groups. Countries previously identified as 'outliers' because of the absence of an electorally successful RWPP are no longer exceptional in this respect – for example, Portugal with the rise of Chega and Spain with the rise of Vox.

2. ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT

A substantial number of RWPPs have either recently been part of governing coalitions, or served as formal cooperation partners in right-wing minority governments. These include the Lega (Italy), the FPÖ, the Polish Law and Justice (PiS), the Hungarian Fidesz, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and Independent Greeks (ANEL), the Finns Party (PS), the Danish People's Party (DF), the National Alliance (NA) (Latvia) and the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE).

3. ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE POLICY AGENDA

RWPPs such as the RN (France), the SD (Sweden) and UKIP (UK) have successfully competed in their domestic systems, permeating mainstream ground and influencing the agendas of other parties. As a result, mainstream parties on the right and, in some instances, on the left have often adopted accommodative strategies – mainly regarding immigration.

PATTERNS OF RWPP SUCCESS ACROSS EUROPE

A close look at the parties' support trajectories reveals interesting regional patterns:

WESTERN EUROPE

In much of Western Europe, RWPP success takes the form of systemic entrenchment – i.e. the gradual ability of niche parties to permeate mainstream ground. Most Western European RWPPs commenced as niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system. They increased their support beyond their secure voter base by becoming progressively embedded in the system either as coalition partners or as credible opposition parties.

SOUTHERN EUROPE

RWPP success has varied significantly across Southern European countries. Greece has had RWPPs both in government (LAOS, ANEL) and opposition (GD). In contrast, RWPPs in Cyprus, Spain and Portugal for a long time failed to make substantial electoral gains despite economic grievances and immigration. But this trend is changing. These countries are no longer 'exceptional' cases. ELAM has gradually increased its support in Cyprus. Spain and Portugal have been experiencing the rise of Vox and Chega, respectively.

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

The Nordic countries have witnessed considerable RWPP success. The Danish DF has exerted substantial policy influence as a recognised cooperation partner of the centre-right parties since the early 2000s. The Finns Party (PS) turned in its first good result in 2007, making its electoral breakthrough in 2011, and in 2015 even joining a centre-right coalition government. In Sweden – a 'deviant' case until recently – the Sweden Democrats' (SD) achieved their electoral breakthrough in 2010. While a *cordon sanitaire* strategy has kept them out of government, this consensus may be changing, as the SD has recently become more influential in local coalitions.

EASTERN EUROPE

Eastern Europe has some of the most electorally successful RWPPs, including Fidesz in Hungary, PiS in Poland, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and the NA in Latvia. The dominant pattern is a radicalisation of the mainstream. Formerly mainstream parties have radicalised in government, increasingly adopting populist, illiberal and authoritarian policy positions. Given the low levels of immigration in the region, Eastern European RWPPs tend to target domestic minorities. In the more ethnically homogenous countries such as Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, mobilisation occurs along socially conservative lines. In the more ethnically pluralistic societies, such as Estonia and Latvia, RWPPs have mobilised against larger politicised ethnic groups, most notably the Russian minorities that reside in these countries.

UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS OF RWPPS

What factors are influencing support for RWPPs across Europe? Conventional wisdom emphasises the political climate of RWPP normalisation and systemic entrenchment, where issues 'owned' by these parties are salient: immigration, nationalism and cultural grievances. The importance of cultural values in shaping voting behaviour and the strong empirical association of cultural concerns over immigration and RWPP support at the individual level have led to an emerging consensus that the increasing success of RWPPs can be best understood as a 'cultural backlash' (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020).

This report contests the view that the rise of right-wing populism should be predominantly understood as a 'cultural backlash'. A sole focus on culture overlooks:

(1) the predictive power of economic concerns over immigration and the critical distinction between galvanising a core constituency on the one hand and mobilising more broadly beyond this core constituency on the other (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020)

(2) the strategies RWPPs themselves are pursuing to capitalise on multiple insecurities, including both cultural and economic; and

(3) the role of social policies in mitigating those insecurities that drive RWPP support.

To address these issues, the report looks at three levels – what we call the Three Ps: People, Parties and Policies:

1. People: How do cultural and economic grievances affect individuals' likelihood of voting for a RWPP? How are those grievances distributed among the RWPP electorate? And how does this distribution compare to the distribution of the same types of grievances among the centre-left and the entire country electorates?

2. Parties: What strategies do RWPPs adopt to capitalise on their core and peripheral electorates? How do they employ nationalism, populism and welfarism in their narratives and programmatic agendas?

3. Policies: Do policies matter, and if so, what type of policies can mitigate the economic risks driving different social groups within the electorate to support RWPPs?

We address these questions using empirical evidence from both quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, we perform statistical analyses using nine waves of the European Social Survey (ESS) to analyse objective and subjective individual characteristics associated with RWPPs' support and thus identify the conditions that drive the RWPP vote at the individual level (demand). Second, we analyse RWPP manifestos using the Comparative Manifestos Project (MARPOR) dataset to map RWPP positions and identify the supply-side conditions that facilitate their success (supply). Third, we draw on our research matching ESS data with social policy datasets to determine the extent to which social policies mediate the risks that drive individuals to vote RWPP (policy).

OUR ANALYSIS SHOWS THE FOLLOWING

At the **people** level, both cultural and economic concerns over immigration increase the likelihood of voting for an RWPP. While cultural concerns are often a stronger predictor of RWPP voting behaviour, this does not automatically mean that they matter more for RWPP success in substantive terms because people driven by economic concerns are often a numerically larger group. The main issue to pay attention to here is **size**: both the size of the effect, and also the size of the voter groups that are subject to this effect. Voters primarily concerned with the cultural impact of immigration are core RWPP voters. Although they might be highly likely to vote RWPP, they also tend to be a numerically small group. By contrast, voters that are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration are peripheral voters. They are also highly likely to vote for RWPP, but in addition they are a numerically larger group. Since the interests and preferences of these two groups can differ, successful RWPPs tend to be those that are able to attract both groups. What determines RWPP success is therefore the ability to mobilise a coalition of interests between core and peripheral voters (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020).

At the **party** level, we emphasise the importance of nationalism, as opposed to populism, as a mobilisation tool that has facilitated RWPP success. We argue that RWPPs in Western Europe employ a **civic nationalist** normalisation strategy that allows them to offer nationalist solutions to all types of insecurities that drive voting behaviour (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013). This strategy has two features. First, it presents culture as a value issue and justifies exclusion on ideological grounds; and second a focus on social welfare and emphasis on welfare chauvinism. Eastern European RWPPs, on the other hand, remain largely **ethnic nationalist**, focusing on ascriptive criteria of national belonging and mobilising voters on socially conservative positions and a rejection of minority rights.

At the **policy** level, this report documents the previously overlooked importance of welfare state institutions (Rathgeb and Busemeyer 2021; Vlandas and Halikiopoulou 2021). Our analysis illustrates that welfare state policies moderate a range of economic risks individuals face. This reduces the likelihood of support for RWPPs among insecure individuals – for example, the unemployed, pensioners, low-income workers and employees on temporary contracts. Our key point here is that political actors have agency and can shape political outcomes: to understand why some individuals vote for RWPPs, we should not only focus on their risk-driven grievances, but also on policies that may moderate these risks.

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND? POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis suggests that co-opting right-wing populist policy agendas is, by and large, not a winning strategy for the centre-left. This finding is consistent with the recent literature suggesting that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that employing accommodative RWPP 'copycat' strategies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021).

The current hype about 'new' issues such as immigration and cultural grievances often overlooks significant economic concerns among voters. Indeed, a large share of the electorate is concerned about inequality. These concerns are not niche, nor are they confined to a shrinking voter group that is becoming irrelevant. Even within the context of emerging cleavages, inequalities are embedded in – and shape the salience of – 'new' issues.

Instead, a more beneficial strategy for the centre-left is to try to (re)capture these voters by reclaiming ownership of (in)equality. Articulating a vision of an equitable society will allow progressive parties to re-build their broad voter coalitions and pioneer a strategy that mobilises voters on an issue the left already 'owns'.

UNITED KINGDOM

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

British National Party (BNP)

United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)

The UK's majoritarian electoral system and subsequent two-party system have long prevented RWPPs from gaining substantial parliamentary representation or entering governing coalitions. For this reason, paradoxically, RWPPs in the UK have relied heavily on European Parliament election performance and support at the local level. Despite some, but limited, electoral success in national elections, the adoption of RWPP positions – notably Brexit and immigration scepticism – by mainstream parties has resulted in the systemic entrenchment of some RWPP ideas.

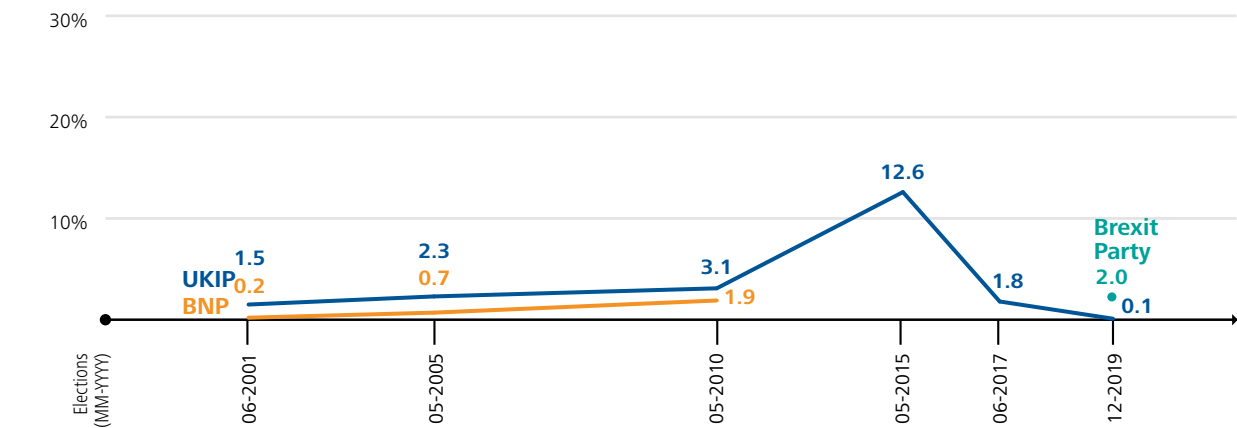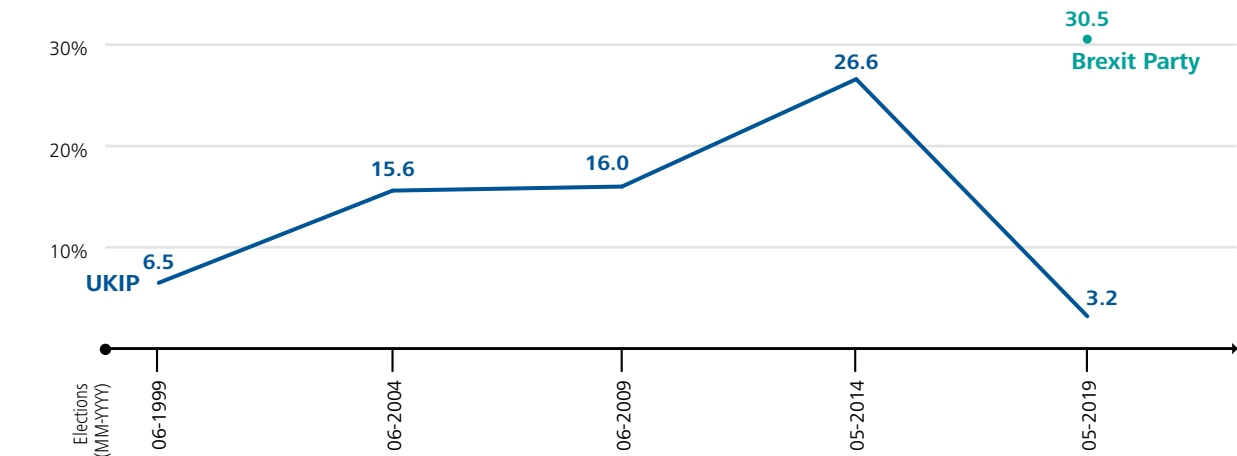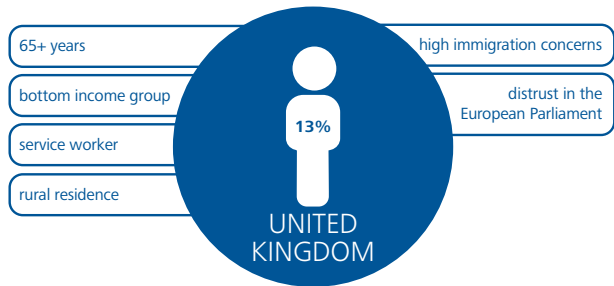Figure 1: **RWPP national election history in UK 1999-2021**

Figure 2: **RWPP European Parliament election history in UK 1999-2021**
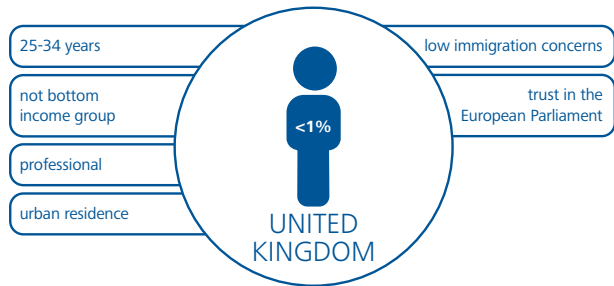

DEMAND: WHO VOTES FOR RWPPS IN THE UK?

The UK is similar to other cases in Western Europe in that voting takes place at the intersection of a value cleavage and a materialist cleavage. The British case is unique, however, in that RWPP success has been driven primarily by a single issue: EU exit. UKIP was able to mobilise a coalition of diverse constituencies through the adoption of a successful civic nationalist narrative scapegoating the EU. The highest probability of voting for UKIP comes from older and economically left-behind voters who reside in rural areas, distrust the EU and dislike immigrants for predominantly cultural reasons. While cultural concerns over immigration are the strongest predictors of UKIP support, a significant proportion of UKIP's voters have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration, as well as no concerns at all. This finding indicates both a direct economic insecurity mechanism and an indirect one via immigration and opposition to the EU.

Figure 3: **Who is the most likely right-wing populist party voter?**

65+ years
bottom income group
service worker
rural residence

high immigration concerns
distrust in the European Parliament

13%

UNITED KINGDOM

Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

Figure 4: **Who is the least likely right-wing populist party voter?**

25-34 years
not bottom income group
professional
urban residence

low immigration concerns
trust in the European Parliament

<1%

UNITED KINGDOM

Probability to vote for a Right Wing Populist Party (%)

SUPPLY: WHAT MAKES THESE PARTIES NARRATIVES [UN]SUCCESSFUL?

The signature theme of RWPP in the UK is the explicit emphasis on hard Euroscepticism. UKIP's opposition to the EU has been underpinned by a civic nationalist rhetoric that emphasises the British nation's right to sovereignty and political independence. The party's streamlined rhetoric proved more palatable than that of the BNP, appealing to a broader range of voter constituencies and driving party competition in its favour.

BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY (BNP)

The British National Party (BNP) falls within the extreme right category, or the 'old' far right. The party made some efforts to modernise during Nick Griffin's leadership (1999-2014), but unsuccessfully. While it gained some support in local and European elections between 2003-2010, the party did not manage a nation-wide electoral breakthrough, primarily because it remained extreme-ethnic nationalist. The BNP ultimately lost its support to UKIP. It remains marginalised in British politics.

THE BNP'S VALUE PROFILE: ETHNIC NATIONALISM

During the period 1982-1999, the BNP was explicitly ethnic nationalist and racist. All its positions derived from a racial understanding of the nation. The party perceived immigration as a racial problem, a threat to the racial homogeneity and character of the British population The BNP opposed all immigration and called for 'a massive programme of repatriation or resettlement of coloured immigrants and their offsprings' (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2010). The commencement of Griffin's leadership in 1999 is a critical juncture of the BNP's transformation or 'modernisation'. During this period, the BNP made some attempts to shift the emphasis from ethnic to civic elements of British national identity in an (ultimately unsuccessful) move to resemble the discourse of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Although race still figured prominently in the party's materials, these also featured an increasing number of references to civic values such as liberal sovereignty and the rule of law, individual freedom, equality before the law and private property. The party had previously explicitly rejected such values as 'liberal sickness'.

THE BNPS ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

The BNP identified economic nationalism as a key pillar of its ideology. This economic nationalism was based on a set of protectionist policies, including the nationalisation of British industry, aiming to preserve the British economy from foreign competition and intervention. Post-1999, the party's economic nationalism became increasingly governed by civic principles. This included the rejection of immigration, increasingly justified on the basis of its potential economic and social impact, such as unemployment, welfare dependency and educational failure (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2010). The party is explicitly welfare chauvinist, famous for its slogan 'British jobs for British workers'.

UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY (UKIP)

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was established in 1993. Initially a single-issue party advocating EU exit, it gradually evolved to a fully-fledged RWPP (Klein and Pirro 2021). Its performance peaked under the leadership of Nigel Farage (2006-2009 and 2010-2016) under the single-issue banner of EU withdrawal. Farage resigned from the party's leadership in 2016 in the aftermath of Brexit, finally departing from the party in 2018. This resulted in a programmatic shift to the far right grassroots sector, and a change on almost all the party's positions. Under Gerard Batten's leadership (2018-2019), far-right activists infiltrated the party, resulting in the establishment of War Plan Purple (WPP) as the culturalist branch of UKIP in July 2018 (Klein and Pirro 2021).

UKIP'S VALUE PROFILE: EUROSCEPTICISM AND CIVIC NATIONALISM

UKIP's opposition to the EU has been underpinned by a civic nationalist rhetoric that emphasises the British nation's right to sovereignty and political independence. UKIP supported a purportedly inclusive concept of British nationality with common citizenship and shared values. In accordance to its civic nationalism, one can be British if one accepts liberal values. The unity of the British nation is primarily based on political institutions, including British common law, parliamentary sovereignty and individual freedom over state control. Following the Brexit referendum the party shifted its agenda. Under Batten's leadership, the party focused less on the EU and increasingly positioned itself against multiculturalism (Figure 5). At the same time, it moved closer to grassroots politicism establishing formal links with far-right activists, for example former English Defence League (EDL) leader Tomy Robinson (Klein and Pirro 2021).

Figure 5: **UKIP's stance on euroscepticism and multiculturalism**
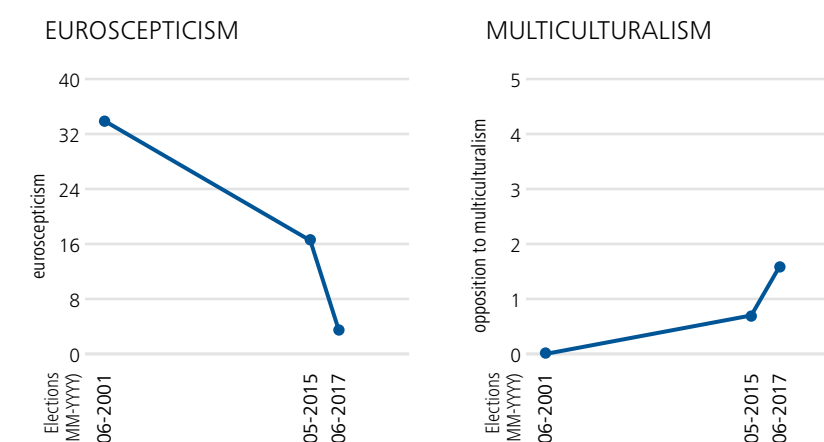
UKIP'S ECONOMIC AND WELFARE POLICY PROFILE: ECONOMIC LIBERALISM AND WELFARE CHAUVINISM

UKIP's economic and welfare policy may be described as 'blurry' or inconsistent, in line with other RWPPs that draw on economically liberal narratives, but also emphasise welfare chauvinism in their attempts to appeal to a range of diverse constituencies. Overall, the party has devoted a small share of its electoral manifestos to social policy (Enggist and Pingera 2021). It has still, however, emphasised welfare chauvinism in its programme (Figure 6) and made explicit links between the economy and immigration in its campaigns. During Farage's leadership, UKIP stressed the negative implications of EU red tape for British companies, and at the same time presented immigrants as labour market competitors to British people. In accordance with this narrative, the party suggested that large waves of immigration hinder the performance of the British economy. Its electoral campaigns claimed that British workers were 'being hit by unlimited cheap labour' originating from the EU, thus resembling the BNP's narrative. Under Batten's 'culture wars' narrative, the party emphasised economic freedom and self-reliance.

Figure 6: **UKIP' stance on welfare, market economy, and the left-right spectrum**
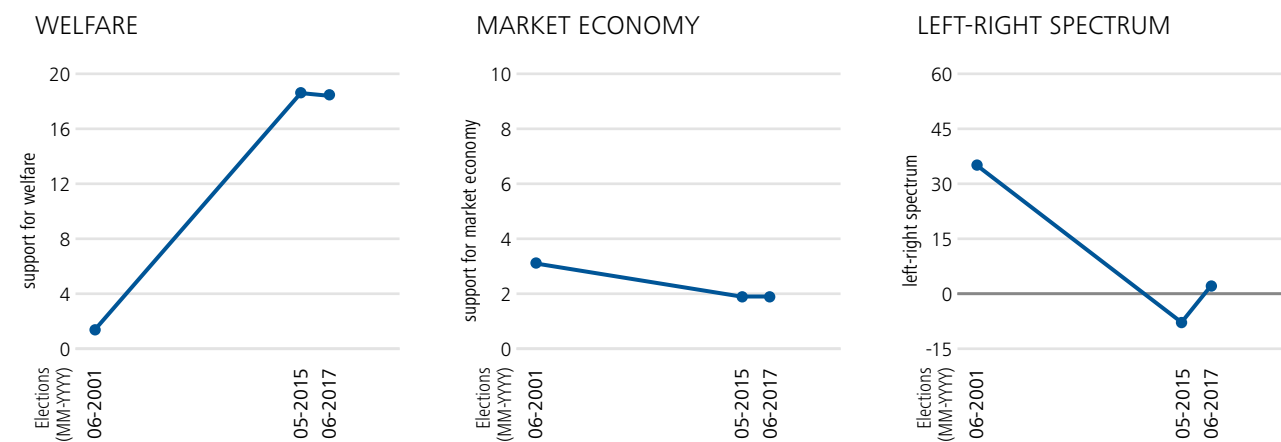
ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE RISE AND FALL OF RWPPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Britain's 'immunity' from RWPPs was shaken in 2002 when Burnley, a manufacturing town in Lancashire, Northern England, became the first place to elect BNP councillors. This trend continued initially in areas that suffered more from de-industrialisation and accompanying public-sector cuts, such as a range of northern coal-mining English towns. In the 2008 local elections, the party gained representation in a number of councils around the country and secured a seat in the London Assembly. In the 2009 EP elections, the BNP increased its support, receiving for the first time since its establishment 6.2 per cent of the vote and two seats in the EP. The party's performance was strong in left-behind areas where rapid shifts away from manufacturing lead to redundancies and declining job prospects. The BNP capitalised on economic discontent and social alienation by linking these concerns to the immigration issue and cultivating a racist opposition to multiculturalism. Because of its association with racism and extremism, however, and its inability to moderate its image successfully, it was unable to increase its electoral support.

UKIP, instead, left aside the issue of race, utilising a civic nationalist narrative that focused on the EU and the negative impact of labour mobility on the UK's economy. It overtook the BNP as its streamlined rhetoric was more palatable to a broader range of voter constituencies. The party's performance peaked in the 2014 EP elections, when the party received 27.5% of the vote and 24 seats in the European Parliament. In the subsequent 2015 national elections the party received 12.6%, its highest percentage. Although in 2017 its electoral support decreased to 1.8 per cent, this should be understood within the context of systemic entrenchment: both mainstream political parties co-opted its main campaign issue, i.e. Brexit. The rise and decline of the Brexit Party can be understood within the same context. Led by Farage, it was established in 2019 with a clear plan to deliver Brexit during a time of turmoil, when the mainstream had problems sealing a deal with EU. The Brexit Party gained the largest share of votes in the 2019 EP election (30.5%), in contrast to UKIP's 3.2%, by occupying the 'Brexit niche' (Dennison 2020). However, following a change in Tory leadership and Johnson's subsequent promise to deliver a deal, the 2019 UK General election produced a strong result for the Tories at the expense of the Brexit Party.

Overall RWPP support in the UK may be understood within the context of a successful civic nationalist narrative (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou 2010) scapegoating the EU and mobilising a coalition of diverse constituencies. ESS data confirms that the strongest probability of voting for UKIP comes from older, economically left-behind voters (especially bottom income groups), and/or service workers and operators who reside in the countryside, distrust the EU and dislike immigrants for cultural reasons (Figure 8). While cultural concerns over immigration are the strongest predictors of UKIP support, a significant proportion of voters among UKIP's electorate have both cultural and economic concerns over immigration, as well as no concerns at all (Figure 7). This suggests the presence of both a direct economic insecurity mechanism and an indirect one via immigration and opposition to the EU.

The economically insecure are more likely to see themselves as the 'losers' of European integration – and modernisation more broadly. This actual or perceived deprivation is likely to drive anti-EU positions either as a form of protest vote, as a punishment of the establishment, or opposition to free movement of labour and immigrant access to welfare and jobs. While, therefore, the salience of the immigration issue has played a key role in both support for UKIP and Brexit, immigration should not be understood simply as a cultural issue, as many voters with anti-immigrant attitudes, especially labour market outsiders, see themselves as competing with immigrants for jobs, welfare, and more broadly, for access to the collective goods of the state (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2017).

Research confirms a significant association between the exposure of an individual or area to austerity-induced welfare reforms and the rise in support for UKIP, as well as support for the Leave in the 2016 referendum (Fetzer 2019). Indeed, UKIP performed particularly well in areas with large shares of residents in routine jobs and low-educated residents, with higher employment shares in retail and manufacturing as well as areas with significant exposure to benefit cuts (Fetzer 2019). Studies using British Election Study (BES) data confirm the correlation between UKIP and Leave voters, suggesting that older, white respondents, as well as those at higher risk of poverty, below the median income, with no formal education as well as workers in routine or low-skill occupations more exposed to immigration were more likely to vote for Brexit (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2017).

Research has also pointed to the importance of social alienation as a trigger for UKIP support (Bolet 2021). This explanation focuses on local support for RWPPs, suggesting that left-behind and economically insecure individuals share feelings of community loss and status decline, becoming more receptive to messages emphasising socio-cultural degradation and the costs of immigration. It also sheds light on the local dimension of support, explaining why, for example, increases in asylum-seekers in a local authority has been linked to higher support for RWPPs in the UK (Kenny and Miller 2020). Other analyses also confirm that status is a strong predictor of UKIP support (Carella and Ford 2020).
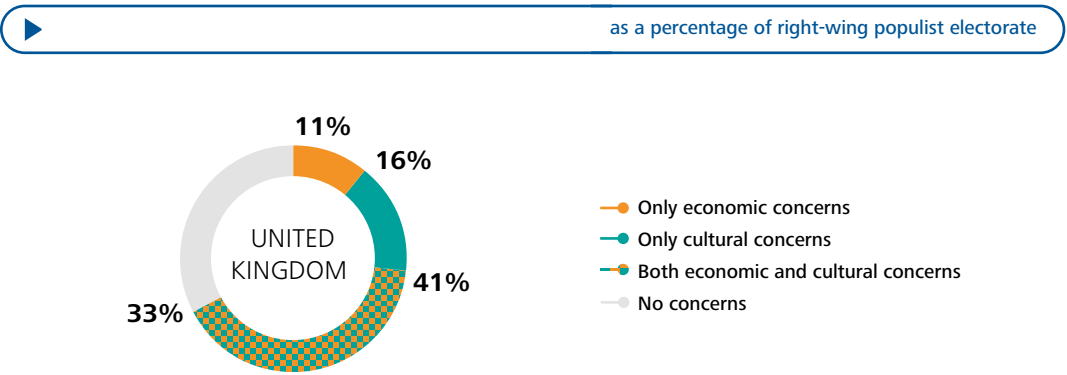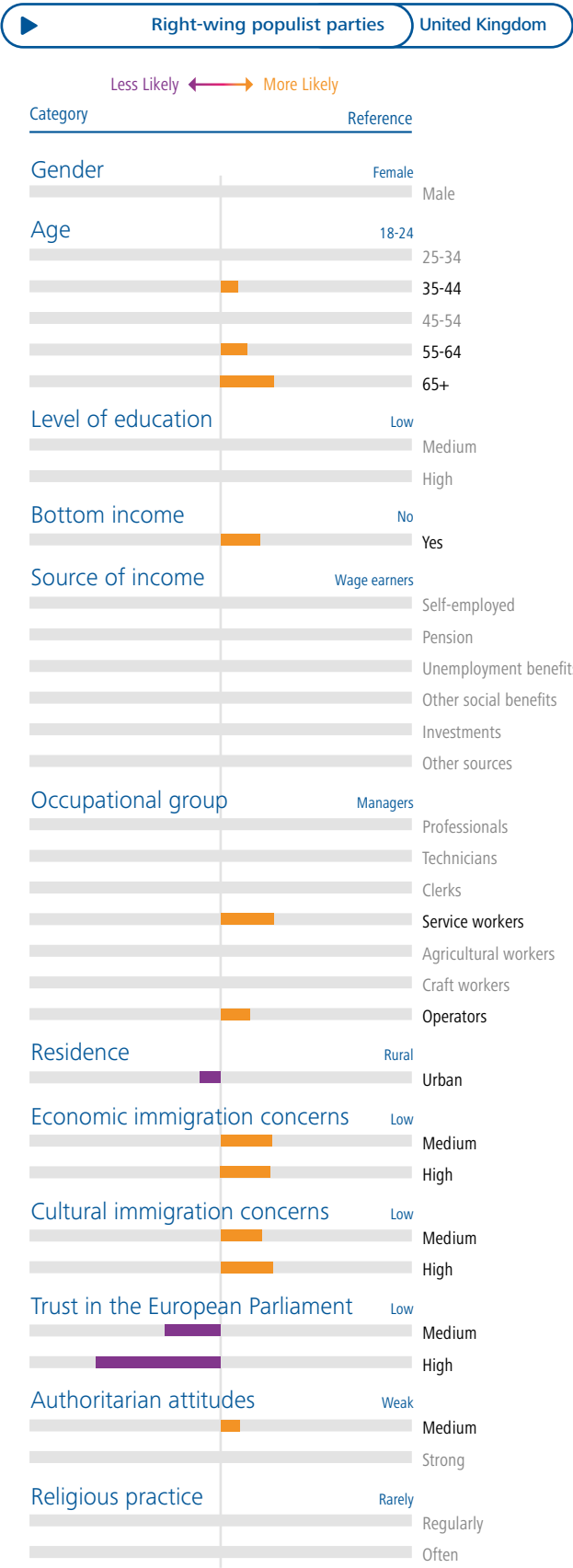
Figure 7: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

as a percentage of right-wing populist electorate

UNITED KINGDOM

11%
16%
41%
33%

- Only economic concerns
- Only cultural concerns
- Both economic and cultural concerns
- No concerns

Figure 8: **Characteristics affecting the probability to vote**

▶ Right-wing populist parties   United Kingdom

Less Likely ◄——————► More Likely

Category	Reference
Gender	Female
	Male
Age	18-24
	25-34
	35-44
	45-54
	55-64
	65+
Level of education	Low
	Medium
	High
Bottom income	No
	Yes
Source of income	Wage earners
	Self-employed
	Pension
	Unemployment benefits
	Other social benefits
	Investments
	Other sources
Occupational group	Managers
	Professionals
	Technicians
	Clerks
	Service workers
	Agricultural workers
	Craft workers
	Operators
Residence	Rural
	Urban
Economic immigration concerns	Low
	Medium
	High
Cultural immigration concerns	Low
	Medium
	High
Trust in the European Parliament	Low
	Medium
	High
Authoritarian attitudes	Weak
	Medium
	Strong
Religious practice	Rarely
	Regularly
	Often

Only statistically significant results are shown.

HOW SHOULD PROGRESSIVES RESPOND?

How should progressive parties in the UK respond? Our comparison of the RWPP and centre-left electorates in the UK suggests that co-opting RWPP positions will likely be costly for the progressive left. This finding is consistent with recent literature, which suggests that the centre-left and RWPP electorates are considerably different (Abou Chadi et al. 2021) and that centre-left repositioning towards RWPP restrictive immigration policies may attract a small number of RWPP voters, but alienate a much larger proportion of their own voters (Chou et al. 2021). A more beneficial strategy for the progressive left is to instead compete on issues the left owns, such as equality.

First, RWPP core voters, i.e. those voters who oppose immigration on principle and have strong cultural concerns over immigration, are a minority in the UK, accounting for 10% of the whole electorate (Figure 9) These voters are principled RWPP voters and are unlikely to switch to the centre-left even if it adopts 'copycat' strategies. They identify more staunchly with a right-wing platform and are more likely to switch from 'far' to centre-right. They are the least likely centre-left constituency and do not constitute a centre-left target voter group.

Second, a comparison between the RWPP and centre-left voter profiles (Figures 8+10) shows considerable differences. Middle-aged, wage-earning urban dwellers who trust the EU are more likely to vote for the centre-left. These individuals are unlikely to have cultural concerns over immigration and are therefore unlikely to be attracted to cultural nationalist anti-immigrant narratives. Indeed, the RWPP signature theme has very little prevalence among the centre-left electorate (Figure 9) as only 9% of centre-left voters have cultural concerns over immigration.

Third, even among the RWPP electorate, individuals with exclusively cultural concerns over immigration (i.e. core voters) are a minority (16%). The RWPP electorate in the UK is composed of a significant percentage of people with either no immigration concerns (33%) or combined economic and cultural concerns (41%) (Figure 7). This suggests the majority of RWPP voters are protest or peripheral voters, i.e. voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. These voters are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. They likely feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system both at the domestic and EU levels. Because they have salient inequality concerns – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration, these voters can 'switch' to parties that emphasise issues related to equality and offer effective policy solutions to them. This voter group is a more likely centre-left target constituency through a broader 'equality' narrative.

Fourth, immigration concerns are not salient among the centre-left electorate, as indeed 56% of centre-left voters have no immigration concerns at all (Figure 9). This suggests that the centre-left voter constituency is not sympathetic to the RWPP agenda and will likely abandon the party if it shifts further to the nationalist right. This picture reveals a non-

beneficial trade-off: the adoption of nationalist anti-immigration positions by the mainstream left will likely result in substantial losses of the left's own cosmopolitan, urban pro-immigrant voters in exchange for very small – if any – gains from the RWPP electorate, whose cultural core voter is a principled right-wing voter who is highly unlikely to vote for the centre-left even if it adopts 'copycat' policies.

Labour can regain these voters by reclaiming ownership of the issue it knows best: equality. This will allow the party to rebuild its own broad voter coalitions and pioneer a strategy that mobilises voters on an issue it can credibly claim as its 'signature theme' that it is competent in handling, rather than copy an issue that other parties 'own'.

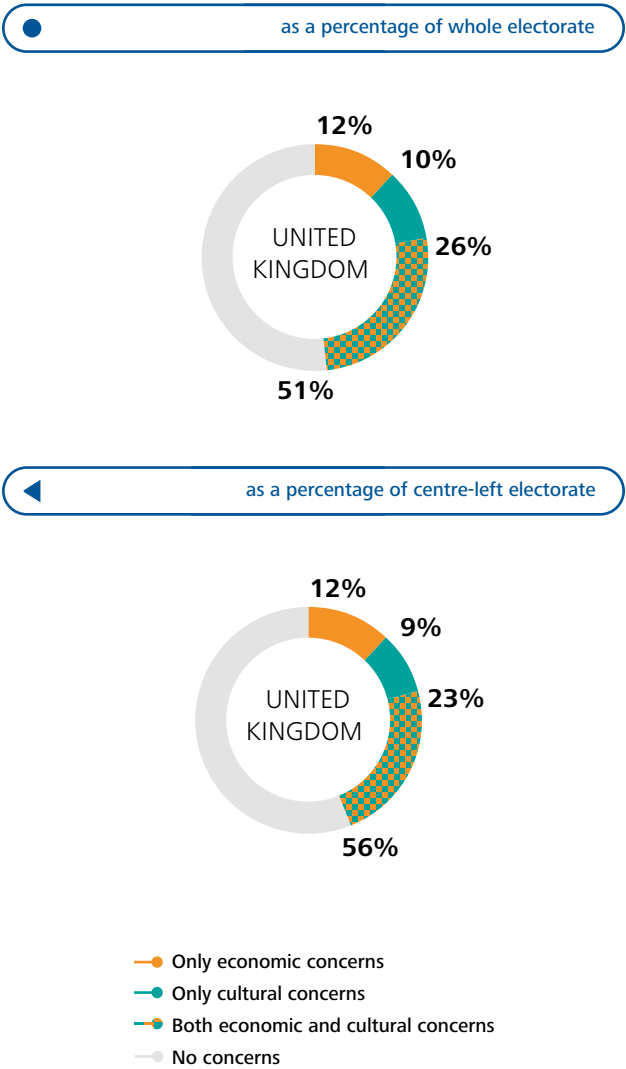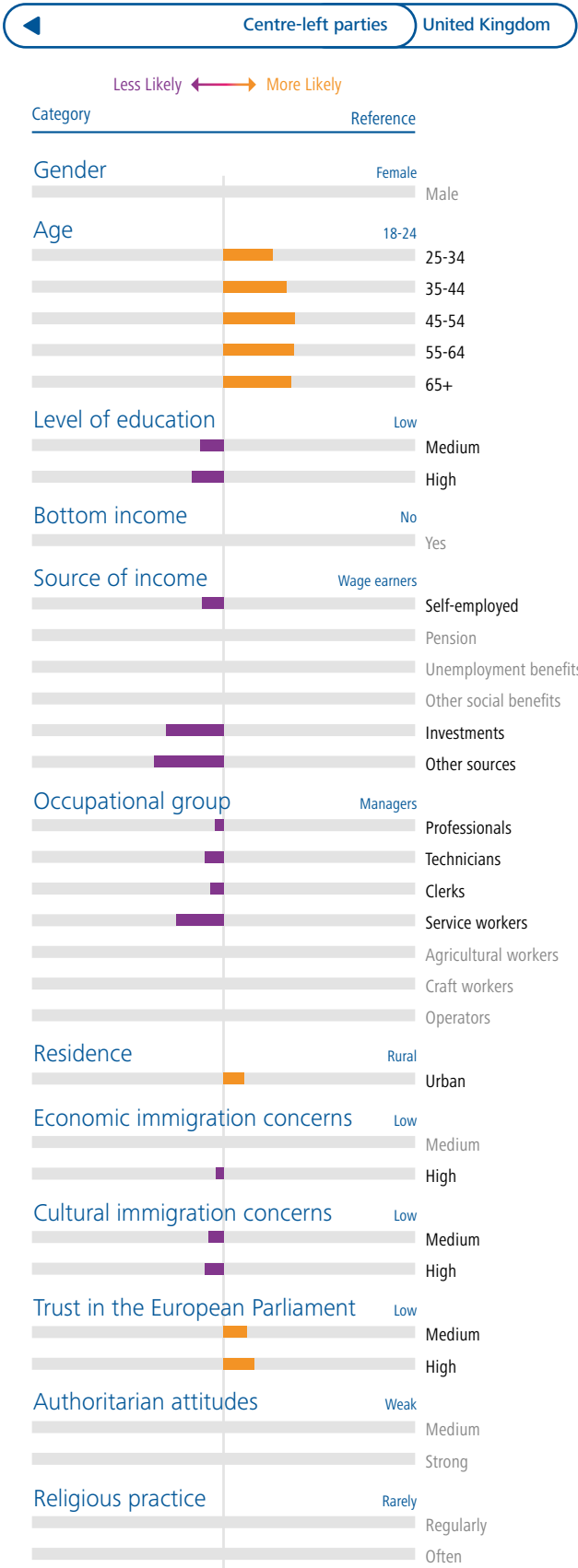Figure 9: **Distribution of immigration concerns**

as a percentage of whole electorate

UNITED KINGDOM

12%
10%
26%
51%

as a percentage of centre-left electorate

UNITED KINGDOM

12%
9%
23%
56%

- Only economic concerns
- Only cultural concerns
- Both economic and cultural concerns
- No concerns

Figure 10: **Characteristics affecting the probability to vote**

Centre-left parties   United Kingdom

Less Likely ⟵ ⟶ More Likely

Category	Reference
Gender	Female
	Male
Age	18-24
	25-34
	35-44
	45-54
	55-64
	65+
Level of education	Low
	Medium
	High
Bottom income	No
	Yes
Source of income	Wage earners
	Self-employed
	Pension
	Unemployment benefits
	Other social benefits
	Investments
	Other sources
Occupational group	Managers
	Professionals
	Technicians
	Clerks
	Service workers
	Agricultural workers
	Craft workers
	Operators
Residence	Rural
	Urban
Economic immigration concerns	Low
	Medium
	High
Cultural immigration concerns	Low
	Medium
	High
Trust in the European Parliament	Low
	Medium
	High
Authoritarian attitudes	Weak
	Medium
	Strong
Religious practice	Rarely
	Regularly
	Often

Only statistically significant results are shown.

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