

# Right-wing populists and extremists in the European Parliament: a threat for European democracy?

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# Introduction

Electoral factors explaining increase in UK Eurosceptic representation in European Parliament over past 20 years

What impact do UK Eurosceptics have in the European Parliament?

Summary and questions for thought/discussion

# United Kingdom Independence Party (Ukip)

Founded in 1992 as single-issue anti-EU party

Ideology can be summarised as 'right-wing populist'

Eurosceptic, anti-immigration, socially conservative,  
economically liberal or 'Thatcherite', climate change-  
sceptic

Attract older, poorer, blue-collar voters who are comparatively  
less educated

# European Parliament Elections as 'Second Order' Elections

Low Turnout

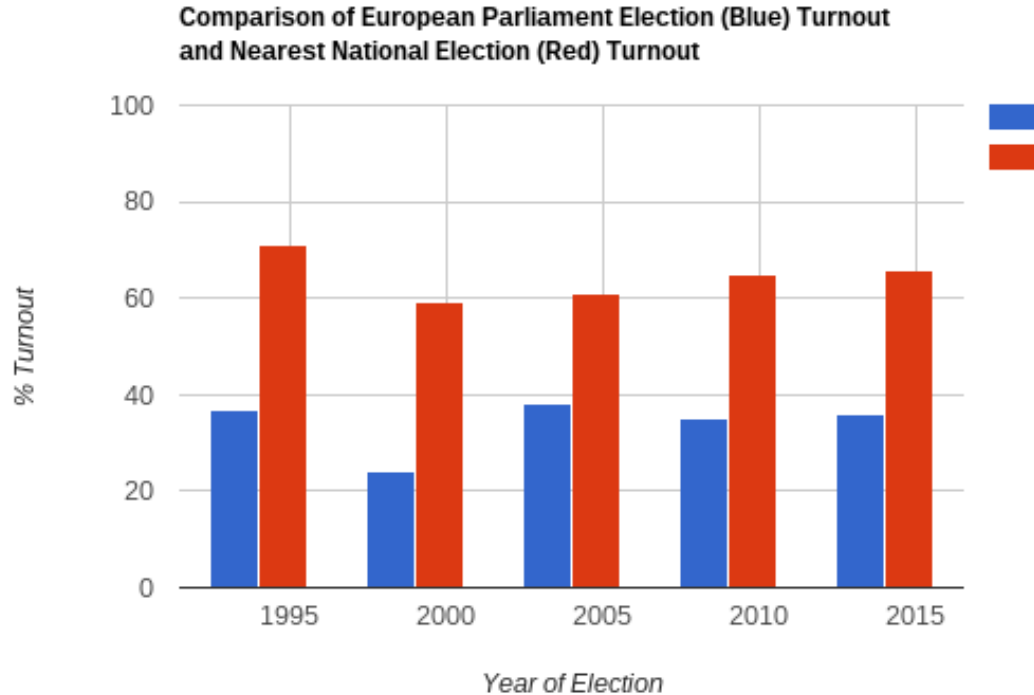
Perceived as less important than national elections/general elections

Encourages 'experimentation' with smaller/new parties

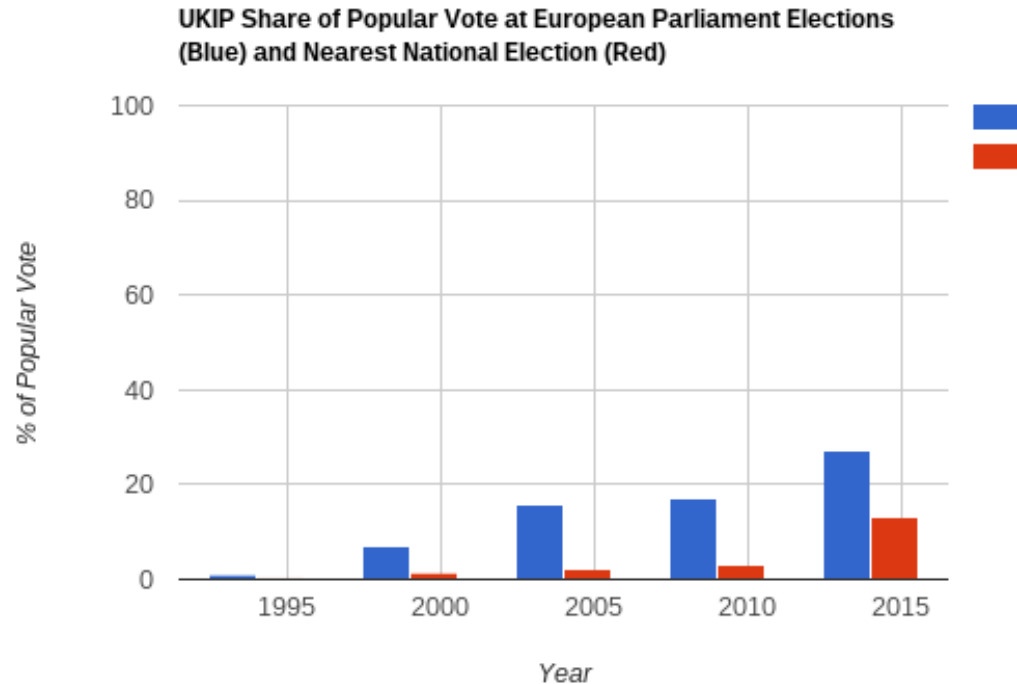
Enables smaller parties to gain a larger share of the vote

Less strategic voting

# Election Turnout: An Important Factor



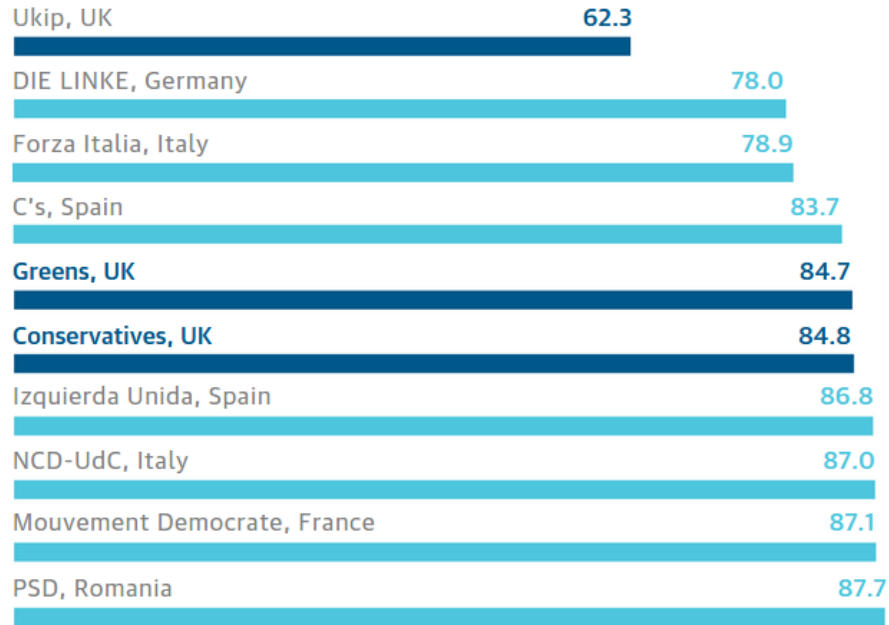
# Ukip at European Parliament and UK Elections



# Ukip in the European Parliament - The Laziest!

## The laziest MEPs

Participation rate, %



Source: VoteWatch, EP votes between July 2014 - May 2015

# Ukip in the European Parliament

Ukip vote against any law that gives EU more power

Impact on Parliament legislation is minimal given that over 70% of parliamentarians are not Eurosceptic

Eurosceptic parties tend to be bad at organising

Impact of Ukip success in European Parliament elections is **indirect**

Impacts UK government and major parties' policy and rhetoric



## Outlook/Summary

Ukip thrive partly due to nature of European Parliament elections which encourage low participation and vote experimentation

Ukip have not demonstrated any 'threat' to European legislative process or policy-making

Impact of Ukip in European Parliament is **indirect**

## Questions for Discussion

- What are the other 'indirect' effects of the election of Eurosceptics to the European Parliament? For example, hate speech during campaigning?
- How can we encourage voter turnout in European Parliament elections which are perceived as unimportant?

How much does Euroscepticism have to do with the voting of Eurosceptic parties?!