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REFORM UK

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



SEPTEMBER 2024



HOPE not hate

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Contents

Introduction: The Threat of Reform	4
From UKIP to Reform UK: A Timeline	7
A Short History from UKIP to Reform UK	8
What You Need to Know About Nigel Farage	14
Farage's Far-Right Friends	18
The Extremism of Reform UK	22
Reform UK is Far Right: Here's Why	26
Reform Voters: Who are they and what do they want?	28

Introduction: The Threat of Reform UK

At 10pm on 4 July 2024, the night of the general election, all those worried about the rising far right took a sharp intake of breath as the exit poll predicted Reform UK would win an unprecedented 13 seats. When the votes were finally all counted and the group had only won five seats, many were relieved.

This result was inconceivable just a month before. The party had underperformed at the May local elections, picking up just two councillors, and with Richard Tice as leader, Reform looked unthreatening in the general election polls.

This all changed when Nigel Farage re-entered the fray and replaced Tice as leader. Reform surged in the polls and on 14 June, the party overtook the Conservatives for the first time. By the day of the election, it was clear that Reform was likely to have a good night.

With 4.1 million votes – 14.3% of the total – the result represents the largest ever vote share for a far-right party at a general election. Reform came second



Lee Anderson

place in 98 constituencies, 89 of which were won by Labour, including large swathes of the North East, Midlands and South Wales, and gained above 20% of the vote in 148.

Newly crowned-leader Nigel Farage scored a convincing win in Clacton, taking 46.2% of the vote and a majority of 8,405 over the Conservative incumbent. This represents a swing of 45.1% from the Conservatives to Reform in the constituency, the largest in the country.

The party's sole incumbent MP, Tory defector Lee Anderson, was rewarded by avoiding the fate of most of his former Red Wall Tory colleagues. He netted a commanding 42.8% of the vote to defeat the Labour candidate in Ashfield, though with a slightly lower vote share and majority to his 2019 victory.

Tice and Rupert Lowe, the former Brexit Party MEP and Southampton FC chairman, also won their seats of Boston &



Skegness and Great Yarmouth, though with lower majorities of 2,010 and 1,426 respectively.

The one breakthrough from Reform's candidate list, which largely consisted of paper candidates, was James McMurdock of Basildon South and East Thurrock, who beat the Labour candidate with a wafer-thin majority of just 98 votes.

The party would later add another name to their caucus: Jim Allister, leader of the hardline Ulster unionist party Traditional Unionist Voice, who announced that he would accept the Reform party whip at Westminster.

Part of an Ecosystem

The election result, shocking as it was, did not occur in a vacuum. The rapid rise of Reform emerged from an existing climate of prejudice and anger that has been fostered for years by mainstream politicians and elements of our media. Whether it is endless newspaper headlines demonising Muslims and asylum seekers, or then-home secretary Suella Braverman describing the arrival of desperate people by boat as an "invasion", all have fed into the climate that Farage and Reform UK exploited.

Most prominent is GB News, an increasingly influential media outlet for far-right opinion that regularly pushes radical right and conspiratorial narratives. While viewpoints vary across its programmes, a number of GB News's most high-profile presenters use the platform to promote harmful conspiracy theories and socially divisive, hyper-partisan political narratives. Importantly, the channel has also provided Farage, Anderson and Tice with their own shows.

Beyond GB News, there is also a growing roster of columnists in *The Telegraph* and *The Spectator* who seem obsessed with fighting back against "wokeness" and the "liberal elite".

In addition to all of this is the impact of social media, most notably the toxification of X (formerly Twitter) under Elon Musk's ownership. While social media has always posed a problem, X, with its lax moderation policies, poor enforcement and embrace of formerly banned extremists, has become a safe place for extreme people and politics to flourish.

All of this has combined to help foster a fruitful climate for a party like Reform UK.

A Growing Ground Game

One of the most troubling aspects about Reform's success at the general election is that it was achieved with very little party infrastructure.



Richard Tice

Reform is not a traditional political party but a limited company, with Farage as the company director and majority shareholder.

During the election, the "party" lacked a significant activist base and had very few functioning branches. Despite its lack of a professional ground game consisting of organised activists targeting constituencies informed by data insights, it still came away with over 14% of the vote.

In the months since the election, the party has already claimed that it will democratise and build a formidable ground operation with a stated aim of setting up 120 new branches across the country. A smattering of meetings have already taken place.

The party is now able to draw on a significant registered supporter base that grew dramatically upon Farage's return, rising to an estimated 76,000. How many of these will be converted into activists remains to be seen.

However, one major issue Farage will continue to grapple with is how to deal with the extremist activists within the party. On 5 July, during his first speech as an elected MP, Farage vowed:

"Above all what we're going to do from today is we're going to professionalise the party, we're going to democratise the party and those few bad apples that have crept in will be gone, will be long gone, and we will never have any of their type back in our organisation."

However, Farage's prospects of "professionalising"

and detoxifying the project appear dim. Every one of his prior vehicles has been dogged by scandal and disorder, and Reform’s anti-migrant, reactionary, conspiracy theory-tinged platform will continue to act as a magnet for bigots and eccentrics.

Remain Outsiders

Despite now boasting MPs in Westminster, Reform will continue to pose as insurgent outsiders.

Some commentators have wrongly argued that radical right populists in positions of power will struggle because they lose their ability to claim they represent the “pure people” against the “corrupt elite”. This is not likely to be the case with Reform, especially as it has such a small number of seats.

Reform MPs will present themselves as islands of “common sense” and champions of “the people” *within* parliament. If anything, we can expect them to use their new positions to “expose” how corrupt/out of touch/dangerous the “elite” really is from inside the “belly of the beast”.

Centre Ground Shifts Right

Reform is now well-placed to exert a toxic influence on the rest of British politics.

Reform itself will seek to present this election as “proof” that it represents the true voice of “the people”, especially in relation to its core issues, notably immigration.

This claim will be aided consciously and inadvertently by some media framing. While 14% is a deeply concerning statistic, it remains a small minority of the public, especially when turnout is factored in.

One unhelpful side effect of overstating Reform’s strength is that mainstream parties will then seek to pander to a distorted vision of what “the people” supposedly want, shifting the centre ground ever further right on a range of issues. The Conservative Party will be especially susceptible to this.

However, Labour is also not immune to this danger. Social democratic parties have a long history of shifting right on issues such as immigration in a misguided attempt to undercut a growing radical right threat. The evidence is very clear that this does not work.

Another risk is that Labour decides not to expend its resources fighting Reform with full force, believing that its success is to Labour’s advantage because it will continue to split the right-wing vote and/or unite the centre and left against a more worrying threat.



What Now?

Sadly, there is little evidence that Reform has peaked, with some recent polls still placing the party above the Conservatives. In coming months, we are likely to see the growth of a nationwide branch structure which will aim to mobilise activists in communities already susceptible to the far right.

Farage has already identified the English County Council elections as his “first big target”. Reform hopes to field over 2,000 candidates and co-opt the Labour vote via similar ground-level local campaigning that UKIP used effectively in the early 2010s. Reform will also likely prioritise the 2026 Senedd elections in Wales. The ultimate aim however, is to “replace the Conservative Party” as a national contender at the 2029 general election.

With the cost of living crisis still raging and the Labour government’s honeymoon period ending, the divisive and opportunistic politics offered by Farage and Reform has far from reached its ceiling.

The real danger comes if the government fails to meet the material needs of the communities that Reform is targeting. Worse still, if the government seeks to occupy Reform’s space with ever more right wing rhetoric on immigration and asylum seekers, this will only serve to legitimise Reform’s politics, increase the salience of its issues and thereby boost its electoral success in the long term.

With local and Welsh elections fast approaching, there is no time for complacency. The time to understand and oppose the threat is now.

From UKIP to Reform UK: A Timeline

- 1993** ■ **3 September 1993:** UKIP is founded by Alan Sked
- 1997** ■ **May 1997:** Sked is forced out of the party by a faction led by Nigel Farage, who would dominate the party for the next two decades
- 1999** ■ **10 June 1999:** UKIP wins 696,000 votes (6.5%) in the European elections, gaining three seats in the European Parliament, including Farage
- 2006** ■ **12 September 2006:** Farage begins the first of two stints as official UKIP leader
- 2013** ■ **23 January 2013:** David Cameron pledges a referendum on EU membership should he be re-elected at the next general election
- **2 May 2013:** UKIP wins 1.1 million (24%) in the local elections, gaining 147 council seats in its first major domestic breakthrough
- 2014** ■ **22 May 2014:** UKIP wins the European elections with 4.4 million votes (27.5%), winning 24 MEPs
- 2015** ■ **5 May 2015:** UKIP wins 3.9 million votes (12.6%) at the general election but gains only one MP
- 2016** ■ **23 June 2016:** Britain votes to leave the European Union, with 17.4 million votes (51.9%)
- **4 July 2016:** Farage steps down as leader of UKIP, saying that his “political ambition has been achieved”
- **12 November 2016:** Farage is the first international politician to meet with new US President Donald Trump
- 2017** ■ **29 September 2017:** After a divisive contest, Henry Bolton becomes UKIP leader, prompting a number of splinter groups
- **14 April 2018:** Gerard Batten becomes UKIP leader, taking the party in an explicitly anti-Muslim, street protest-oriented direction
- 2018** ■ **4 December 2018:** Farage resigns his membership of UKIP, citing its anti-Muslim “fixation”
- 2019** ■ **12 April 2019:** Amidst political deadlock over Brexit, the Brexit Party officially launches
- **23 May 2019:** The Brexit Party wins the European elections with 5.2 million votes (31.6%), gaining 29 MEPs
- **12 December 2019:** The Brexit Party stands 275 candidates but receives 644,000 votes (2%), failing to win a single seat. The party is subsequently “mothballed”
- 2020** ■ **31 January 2020:** The UK officially leaves the EU
- 2021** ■ **6 January 2021:** The Brexit Party re-registers as Reform UK
- **7 March 2021:** Farage hands the leadership of Reform to Richard Tice
- 2024** ■ **3 June 2024:** Farage returns as leader of Reform and announces his candidacy in Clacton
- **4 July 2024:** Reform receives 4.1 million votes (14.3%) and wins five MPs at the 2024 general election, including Farage

A Short History from UKIP to Reform UK



On 5 July this year, Nigel Farage took to the stage to deliver his first speech as an elected MP at a triumphant Reform UK event in London.

The political outsider, who has made seven unsuccessful runs for office, had been elected in Clacton, finally securing a seat in Westminster. However, he had barely opened his mouth before cries of “racist” rang out. “We haven’t organised this very well, have we?” he sighed, as a fourth protestor stood up to berate him.

The moment befitted his political career. Over three decades, Farage has headed a series of insurgent political vehicles that, despite their chaotic and unprofessional nature, have exerted a considerable and highly divisive influence on the UK political landscape.

By looking back at the history of UKIP, Leave.EU, the Brexit Party and now Reform UK, we can gain a clearer picture of this influence, as well as insights into what Farage’s recent victory may mean.

UKIP

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) was founded in September 1993 by Alan Sked, a lecturer at the London School of Economics, out of the ashes of the fringe Anti-Federalist League, launched two years prior. Operating as a single-issue hard



Eurosceptic pressure group, UKIP remained a fringe concern for the next decade, a home for political anoraks and libertarians more concerned with infighting than winning seats. The party averaged just 1.7% at parliamentary elections over its first ten years.

After narrowly surviving a series of internal wars, including the toppling of Sked by a Farage-led faction in 1999, UKIP slowly built momentum under Labour rule in the 2000s. During this period, the party increasingly leant into populist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. This shift gathered pace after Farage finally became the group's official leader in 2006, following a near-ruinous internal row with its celebrity recruit, Robert Kilroy-Silk, the previous year.

However, UKIP was also plagued by exposés of its links to the extreme right, an association the party was desperate to avoid, despite the fact that a 2004 study concluded that UKIP and the fascist British National Party (BNP) “draw from the same reservoir of support”. UKIP polled well in European Elections, winning 16.1% and 16.5% in 2004 and 2009 respectively, but was often beaten by its more extreme competitor in local battles. UKIP therefore increasingly incorporated reactionary domestic policies, draped in an appeal to traditional notions of Britishness. This gambit was also intended to play to Conservative Party members alienated by the socially liberal leanings of David Cameron, who had dismissed UKIP as “fruitcakes”, “loonies” and “closet racists” in 2006.

It was only in the 2010s, after the collapse of the BNP and the election of Cameron's Conservative-led coalition government, that UKIP emerged as an electoral force domestically. This owed in large part to the leadership of Farage, who resumed the role in 2010 after the brief premiership of the deeply Islamophobic Lord Pearson. Farage's carefully confected public image as a free speaking, pub-dwelling “man of the people”, and his flair for political drama, enabled him to successfully exploit the disillusionment that followed the MP expenses scandal and financial crisis.

The party also adopted a new campaign strategy: targeting working class former Labour voters via concerted local campaigning and a reactionary, populist and anti-immigration platform. Despite Farage's attempts to portray UKIP as a “non-sectarian, non-racist party”, negative attention increased in tandem with its national profile and numerous representatives were outed for various forms of bigotry and other scandals. Nonetheless, the group's proactive media strategy meant that Farage was frequently in the public spotlight, blaming a wide range of issues on immigration,

the established parties and ultimately the EU. This formula would result in UKIP's highest vote shares: 1.1 million (24%) in the 2013 local elections, winning 147 council seats, and 4.4 million (27.5%) in the 2014 European elections, winning 24 MEPs. UKIP membership hit a historic high of 45,000 in May 2015, the same month it won 3.9 million votes (12.6%) in the 2015 general election, gaining a single MP but coming second in 120 constituencies.

Crucially, the electoral threat perceived by Cameron was such that he had pledged a referendum on EU membership should he be re-elected. This promise would have enormous ramifications.

The Brexit Campaign

Farage had never been so high profile and divisive as he was in the run up to the 23 June 2016 EU Referendum.

Kept at arm's length by mainstream Brexiteers, Farage became the face of Leave.EU, the unofficial Brexit campaign co-founded by the





multi-millionaires Aaron Banks and Richard Tice. Capitalising on the 2015 migrant crisis and influenced by Donald Trump's aggressive, goading style, Leave.EU relentlessly linked the EU to immigrants and Muslims, and thereby to violence and decline. This highly emotive output was accompanied by expensive data-based social media campaigning.

Meanwhile, the official Vote Leave campaign built on UKIP's arguments and rhetoric while simultaneously seeking distance from Farage and his party. In doing so, Vote Leave hoped to disassociate such arguments from UKIP's toxic reputation while tapping into their wider appeal.

Emblematic of this campaign was an infamous UKIP poster unveiled by Farage just days before the vote. The poster featured a crowd photo of Syrian refugees alongside the slogan "Breaking Point", and was widely decried as racist and even compared to Nazi propaganda. This enabled Farage, in classic populist fashion, to claim unfair victimisation from the political/media

establishment, further polarising the debate.

Of course, Farage and his allies claimed credit for the successful Brexit vote. Indeed, there can be little doubt that UKIP was instrumental in securing the referendum, and also in transforming Brexit into a lightning rod for populist and anti-immigrant sentiment, thereby helping to mobilise 17.4 million voters (51.9%). In 2016, the British Election Study found that over two-thirds of Leave voters had "at least dabbled with UKIP" at some stage. The fact that the Leave vote far outstripped that of UKIP at any prior election owes to the fact that the UKIP vote is "extremely volatile at the individual level, from election to election and poll to poll."

After the referendum, Leave.EU was struck by numerous scandals, including large fines for failing to declare election spending and data protection violations. Both Farage and Richard Tice sought to distance themselves from the increasingly toxic outfit as they planned their next move.

UKIP Post-Brexit

UKIP would be a casualty of its own success. Bereft of its central cause, the party has entered a protracted death spiral that continues to this day. Having long chafed under the mundane realities and restrictions of leadership, Farage himself greatly expedited UKIP's decline by abdicating just days after the referendum. As he pursued lucrative media opportunities and courted President Trump, a long succession of subsequent UKIP leaders proved unable to fill the void, reverting instead to bitter factionalism.

Without the unifying goal of Brexit, the party's abiding ideological divisions came to the fore. In 2017, following disastrous results under Farage's protégé Paul Nuttall – including 1.8% at the general election – UKIP endured the most turbulent leadership contest in its history, dominated by rows over the candidacy of the anti-Muslim extremist Anne Marie Waters. The moderate winner, Henry Bolton, was swiftly forced out after the revelation that he had left his wife for a young party member who was herself promptly embroiled in a racism scandal. This fiasco triggered a membership haemorrhage and the formation of several splinter groups.

Founding member Gerard Batten took the helm in April 2018 and plunged UKIP headlong into far-right territory, adopting a strongly anti-Muslim agenda and a street protest strategy. This approach temporarily boosted membership



Henry Bolton Photo: Njharris1997



Gerard Batten with Tommy Robinson

and saved the party from imminent bankruptcy. However, the candidacies of notorious far-right social media personalities, and Batten's frequent collaborations with the former EDL leader and serial criminal Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson), proved highly divisive.

Batten's old rival Nigel Farage was among many high profile figures to abandon UKIP in protest, lambasting his former party for its anti-Muslim "fixation" in December 2018. This allowed Farage to reposition himself as a more moderate figure as he re-entered the fray.

The Brexit Party

On 12 April 2019, after years of excruciating Brexit negotiations and in a climate of intense division and soaring Eurosceptic anxieties, the Brexit Party officially launched.

The Brexit Party had been formally established months earlier by former UKIP candidate Catherine Blaiklock, who officially led the party until she was forced to resign that March, after HOPE not hate uncovered her racist history. Farage replaced Blaiklock as leader and publicly downplayed her importance, despite having earlier stated that the party was "her idea entirely".



Despite this inauspicious start, the slick operation proved a much more acceptable vehicle than UKIP and swathes of the current and former membership flocked to the new venture, including whole branches and almost all its MEPs. The outfit's status as a limited company, of which Farage owned a controlling share, meant that it had no formal membership or democratic processes. He therefore steered a vehicle that incorporated chunks of the UKIP infrastructure but over which he had total control.

The Brexit Party built on UKIP's populist framing but with a simplified message, and fielded well-known candidates unassociated with Farage's former party to broaden its appeal. Its effective online campaign quickly mobilised support ahead of the 2019 European elections, and within months of its launch, it won 5.2 million votes (31.6%) and 29 MEPs — cannibalising the vote of UKIP (3.3%) and the Tories (9.1%).

Awash with donations and new supporters, Farage vowed to contest every constituency at the next general election. However, his party's support was squeezed when Boris Johnson, a Brexiteer, succeeded Theresa May as prime minister in July and borrowed the populist anti-EU rhetoric of Farage. This resulted in intense pressure from his erstwhile allies and the right-wing media to stand down to avoid splitting the pro-Brexit vote.

Farage buckled in November and unilaterally stood down candidates in all 317 seats held by the Conservatives, a move that angered many within his party and undercut its populist credentials. Moreover, the group's woeful vetting processes resulted in numerous candidates outed by HOPE not hate and others for various forms of extremism.

On 12 December, the Brexit Party received 644,000 votes (2%), averaging 5.1% across its 275 candidates and failing to win a single MP. While Farage portrayed the huge Tory majority as his success — claiming that his efforts to attract Labour supporters had allowed Conservatives to win — some analysts have concluded that the Brexit Party may in fact have weakened the Tory majority. Meanwhile UKIP received just 0.1% of the overall vote, the lowest since its establishment.

With the UK officially leaving the EU on 31 January 2020, Farage "mothballed" the Brexit Party and retreated from frontline politics once more.

Reform UK

The remnants of the Brexit Party eventually relaunched in January 2021 as Reform UK, attempting to capitalise on populist/libertarian anti-lockdown sentiment. Other policies included abolition of the House of Lords, introduction of



proportional representation and a written UK constitution, while leaning heavily into “anti-woke”, culture war rhetoric.

However, Reform spent the next few years struggling to unify support and failing to break into the national consciousness. This owed in part to Farage handing the leadership to Richard Tice, a man with a fraction of his public profile or internal popularity.

More importantly, the party no longer had a clear campaign that enthused its base. During its hibernation, many of its councillors and campaigners had defected to the Conservatives or established their own groupings, and did not rejoin after the rebrand. The lack of grassroots activists, and Reform's enduring structural deficits, meant it was essentially a shell of a political party, propped up by Tice's own finances.

The group achieved unimpressive results even in seats that had voted strongly for the Brexit Party in 2019, including a dismal 1.2% in the Hartlepool parliamentary by-election in May 2021 (down from 25.8%). That year, the group's 270 candidates in the local elections won just two seats nationally.

Throughout 2022, a series of truly remarkable self-inflicted calamities befell the Conservative Party, the support of which tanked in sync with the economy. Reform support duly swelled in nationwide polling with some favourable coverage in the reactionary press. Nonetheless, it appeared as though many disaffected Tory voters simply declined to vote rather than back Reform. In 2023, it won seats in just two wards in the local elections and polled 1-4% in by-elections throughout the year.

A much-needed boost came with its best-ever by-election result in Wellingborough (13%) in February 2024 and its first MP in March, after Lee Anderson (Ashfield constituency) was ejected from the Tories for anti-Muslim racism. However, Reform was still only able to muster 323 candidates in the local elections that May, 12% of the available seats (winning two nationwide). Reform could harm the Conservatives, but appeared unable to achieve successes of its own.

Return of Farage

This all changed with the return of Farage on 3 June 2024, four weeks ahead of the snap general election. Having spent the intervening years consolidating his following via his primetime GB News show, and boosting his public profile (and bank balance) with reality TV appearances, he announced his candidacy in Clacton, the only seat in the country previously won by a UKIP candidate.

Importantly, over the past four years Farage had also been at the forefront of a shift across the UK's radical and far right: exploiting fears over cross-Channel migration. While no stranger to anti-immigrant politics, Farage now targeted a supposed "invasion" of small boat crossings with a new degree of alarmism. As we have outlined elsewhere, this shift has bled into the right-



wing press and into sections of the increasingly desperate Conservative Party.

In Farage's words, this was "the immigration election", and the first two of Reform's five core policies were freezing immigration and halting small boat Channel crossings. Unsurprisingly, as covered elsewhere in this report, Reform's feeble vetting procedures meant that numerous candidates were again outed for bigotry and other scandals.

Reform stood 609 candidates and won 4.1 million votes (14.3%), winning five MPs – two in the East Midlands and three seats in the East of England, all seats that previously had Conservative MPs. Notably, it also came second in 98 constituencies (89 of which returned Labour MPs).

Farage had achieved the largest vote for a far-right party ever in a general election, coinciding with the Tory's greatest ever loss. While only marginally higher than UKIP's vote in 2015, Farage's party at that point was an experienced campaigning machine with significant grassroots support, while Reform in 2024 had little formal structure or time to prepare. This is an impressive – and worrying – feat.

Looking Forward

There is little doubt that Reform's recent wins owe in large part to the unprecedented degree of disarray and unpopularity of the Conservative Party. As such, Farage's fortunes hinge upon whether the Tories can successfully regroup, especially considering the extreme historic volatility of the Farage vote. It may also struggle to win new supporters among Labour's current base with its economic and radical anti-migrant platform.

However, a larger game is being played. Whatever the fortunes of Reform as a party, Farage's biggest victory – so far – has been the normalisation not only of Euroscepticism, but of toxic populist and anti-migrant politics. Recent years have borne witness to a meaningful shift towards the right in the political and media mainstream. Farage and his various vehicles have played no small role in this shift, pulling the Tories towards them.

Reform now has a presence at the heart of British politics and a profile greater than ever. It is also leaning into discriminatory politics as never before. We must be wary of the further damage it could achieve.

What You Need to Know About Nigel Farage

Nigel Farage is a far-right politician with a long history of extreme, outlandish and xenophobic comments. He has always adamantly rejected that he is either racist or far right, but here is a selection of his comments over the years that prove otherwise.

Racism and Xenophobia

Farage has for decades made overtly racist and xenophobic remarks.

Even as a young student at Dulwich College, an expensive south London private school, numerous teachers reportedly raised concerns about his extreme views, with one alleging that Farage “marched through a quiet Sussex village very late at night shouting Hitler Youth songs”.

Farage is a well-known admirer of Enoch Powell, who gave the infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech. Farage asked Powell for his support in a by-election in 1994, and drove Powell to a UKIP rally in 1993, writing: “That meeting, with a man who had achieved so much and sacrificed so much for his principles, awoke all sorts of aspirations in me which I had not even acknowledged before. It inspired me.”



Nigel Farage

Nigel Farage asked former Conservative MP Enoch Powell to back Ukip

Farage has reiterated his support for Powell over the years. “While his language may seem out of date now,” Farage has said, “his principles remain good and true.” He has also claimed: “I would never say that Powell was racist in any way at all. Had we listened to him, we would have much better race relations now than we have got.” Farage has elsewhere agreed with a section of the Rivers of Blood speech, claiming that the “basic principle” was correct and has even recited sections of the speech from memory.

Throughout his long political career, Farage has regularly made racist statements directed at a range of minority groups.

The founder of UKIP, Alan Sked, claimed that when he objected to Farage’s decision to drop the ban on former National Front members, he responded by saying, they shouldn’t “worry about the n****r vote. They will never vote for us.”

In 2014 on LBC Radio, Farage famously said: “I was asked if a group of Romanian men moved in next to you, would you be concerned? And if you lived in London, I think you would be.” Upon being asked whether he would object to living next door to German children, he replied: “You know what the difference is.”

That same year, Farage claimed that parts of Britain were “unrecognisable” and “like a foreign land”. He had also said he felt “awkward” when he heard people speaking other languages on the train.

When asked in another 2014 interview with *Newsweek Europe* who he thought should be allowed to come to the UK, he said: “People who do not have HIV, to be frank. That’s a good start. And people with a skill.” During the 2015 general election campaign, he deployed misleading statistics about foreigners with HIV in a TV debate.

During the EU referendum, Farage produced the infamous “Breaking Point” poster, which was widely compared to Nazi propaganda. Despite this, Farage refused to apologise for it.

In this period, he also collaborated with Leave.EU, the unofficial Brexit campaign run by

Farage and the Riots



In the immediate aftermath of the horrifying murder of three children in Southport, Merseyside, on 29 July this year, Farage published a deeply irresponsible video on X/ Twitter in which he suggested the “truth” about the identity of the alleged perpetrator was being withheld.

His comments were made as social media was awash with misinformation wrongly claiming that the attacker was a newly-arrived asylum seeker and/or a Muslim. When challenged about his video, he declined to retract it, instead arguing: “I don’t believe we’re being told the full truth yet about this person. I want to know.”

He also asked whether the suspect was on an MI5 watch list, a dog whistle suggesting the attacker may have been a Muslim.

Farage’s longtime ally Arron Banks and co-founded by Reform’s chairman Richard Tice, which relentlessly sought to link immigrants and Muslims to violence and societal decline. Both Farage and Tice have distanced themselves from Leave.EU since the referendum, as multiple scandals have struck the outfit.

While leader of UKIP, Farage defended a candidate’s use of the racist slur “ch*nky”, stating: “If you and your mates were going out for a Chinese, what do you say you’re going for?”

Farage has also propagated antisemitic conspiracy theories. For example, in 2017, on LBC, he named the so-called US “Jewish lobby” as one of his concerns. He also used well known coded language including discussing the “new world order” and the threat of “globalist” government, describing the Jewish philanthropist George Soros, who is a regular target of conspiratorial antisemitism, as “the biggest danger to the entire western world”. When Jewish groups condemned his comments, he dismissed them as “pathetic”.

Farage has increasingly targeted Muslims and migrants. Following the Westminster terrorist

attack, Farage spoke of a “fifth column living inside these European countries” on Fox News. “If you open your door to uncontrolled immigration from Middle Eastern countries, you are inviting in terrorism,” he said. Farage also made “fifth column” comments in the wake of the 2015 Paris attack.

During the recent general election campaign, Farage argued that it “should be the immigration election” and called for a “freeze” on non-essential immigration and declared that “net migration should be zero”.

Speaking on Sky News during the campaign he said, “We have a growing number of young people in this country who do not subscribe to British values, [who] in fact loathe much of what we stand for.” When asked if he was talking about Muslims he responded, “We are.”

Far-Right Support Farage and Reform UK During General Election

During this year’s general election, a broad sweep of far right and extreme right groups and figures, including Tommy Robinson, Britain First, Patriotic Alternative and the Homeland Party, all urged their supporters to vote for Reform UK.

Mark Collett, leader of the neo-nazi group Patriotic Alternative, stated that the British National Party’s (BNP) old election leaflets “were actually markedly tamer than Farage’s current rhetoric,” arguing that: “The same man who boasts about destroying the BNP is now standing on a platform that is more explicitly about demographics than the BNP did at its height.”

Collett was especially excited by Farage’s pledge to “leave the ECHR and deport all illegal migrants to stop the boats.” In a livestream, he said: “Now this sounds rather familiar, because I’ve spent the last few weeks working on election leaflets for a number of nationalist candidates. [...] These leaflets read ‘Deport All Illegal Immigrants’. It’s almost like Nigel has been aware of this and, to put it politely, is copying our homework. If one was to be less polite they might say he stole our policy.”



Mark Collett

Misogyny

In addition to his long history of racist comments, Farage also has a worrying track record of sexism.

Most famously, Farage defended Trump's "grab them by the pussy" remarks as "locker room banter" and "alpha-male boasting".

He has also offered his opinion on breastfeeding mothers who he said should "sit in the corner" in order not to be "openly ostentatious".

Farage claimed that, in banking, women were "worth far less" than men if they chose to have a family:

"If a woman with a client base has a child and takes two or three years off work, she is worth far less to her employer when she comes back than when she went away because that client base won't be stuck as rigidly to her".

Upon being asked if this was fair, he replied: "I can't change biology."

Under his leadership, UKIP's 2010 manifesto had a policy to abolish statutory maternity pay (SMP):

"Rather than playing the 'money-go-round' with the attendant administrative burden, UKIP would abolish SMP entirely and simply allow parents who stay at home with their children to claim a weekly parental allowance set at the same level as the basic cash benefit proposed in our welfare policy

On the NHS

Farage is a longstanding critic of the NHS, and has argued that the UK should move to a private insurance-based health service. He said: "I think we're going to have to think about healthcare very very differently and I think we're going to have to move to an insurance-based system of healthcare.

(in other words, around £64 per week for parents aged 25 and above) regardless of how long they are off work and regardless of the other spouse's income."

In 2010, when asked about women's football, Farage gave the following answer:

"Here's the bigger question. Do we think, chaps, when we're there in the front line, when the balloon goes up, with fixed bayonets, when the whistle's about to blow to go over the top, do we actually want to be there with women beside us? Do we? What an extraordinarily bizarre idea! I certainly don't think so. But maybe it's because I've got so many women pregnant over the years that I have a different view. I find it very difficult to think that we could stand up and run over the top together, into the machine guns or whatever. Men and women are different – thank God!"

A Man of the People?

Despite portraying himself as a "man of the people", Farage is actually a privately educated millionaire. He is the son of a wealthy stockbroker, and attended Dulwich College, one of the most elite schools in the country, as had several of his family members. Farage went on to send his sons to boarding school.

He became a metals trader in the city after being offered the job by a man he met on a golf course. Despite repeatedly railing against politicians for never having worked a "proper job", Farage described his work as "alcoholic like you cannot believe."

In 2016, Farage threw a party at the Ritz, during which he decried the "career, professional political class" to a room full of billionaires and multi-millionaires.

Despite claiming to be "skint" in 2017, the International Business Times estimated that he had a net worth of £2.4m the previous year. Farage also claimed in 2017 that he would not relinquish his MEP's pension from the EU.



Nigel Farage with Andrew Tate



In 2013, *The Mirror* revealed that Farage had set up an offshore trust fund on the Isle of Man, claiming that his “financial advisors recommended I did it”, and admitting it was a “mistake”, and that “I am not blaming them it was my fault”. In 2016, he also refused to release his tax returns, unlike a number of high-profile politicians, in the wake of the Panama Papers tax avoidance scandal.

In July 2018, *The Guardian* reported that Farage was the highest earning MEP outside the European Parliament of any of the 73 British MEPs, the seventh-highest earning MEP overall. The same article also claimed that, through his media work, he had earned between £524,000 and £700,000 in the previous four years.

His huge earnings again came to light when his disclosures were made in the latest Register of Members’ Financial Interests, an obligation for any MP, showing he is the UK’s highest earning MP. Farage earns over £1.2m a year on top of his MP’s salary of £91,346. Remarkably, he has declared a £81,607 payment from GB News for 32 hours work, a rate of more than £2,500 an hour.

Conspiracy Theories

Over the years Farage has repeated numerous conspiracy theories and at the 2024 general election his climate change scepticism led him to propose the scrapping of net zero targets and a return to fossil fuels by unlocking the UK’s remaining oil and gas reserves.

Farage has made at least six appearances on *InfoWars*, the American conspiracy show run by far-right pundit Alex Jones. Jones has been described as “the most prolific conspiracy theorist in contemporary America” by the Southern Poverty Law Centre.

In April 2018, when asked by Jones “Why is the left allied with radical Islam?” Farage replied:

“Because they hate Christianity. They deny, absolutely, our Judeo-Christian culture, which if you think about it actually are the roots, completely, of our nations and our

civilisation. They deny that. They also want to abolish the nation state – they want to get rid of it. They want to replace it with the globalist project, and the European Union is the prototype for the new world order.”

In June 2010, he referenced the Bilderberg group – a bugbear of conspiracy theorists – claiming: “These lunatics genuinely believe that they know what’s best for us, genuinely believe in this concept of global government, and it will be a disaster.”

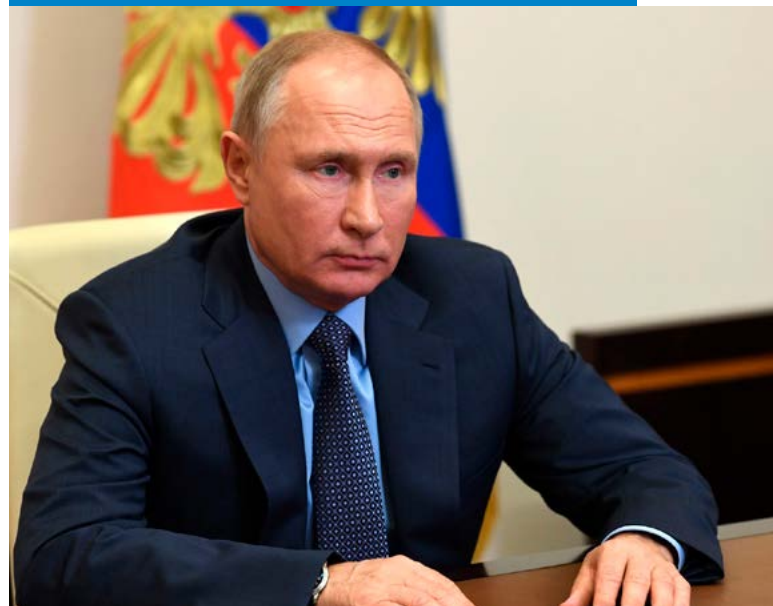
In December 2009, he claimed: “We have a political class across the world that are basically aiming for a form of global governance. If you don’t believe me, look at what’s happening in Copenhagen. Governments are sitting there trying to sign us up to treaties on a very, very questionable concept of global warming caused by CO2 emissions.”

On Putin and Ukraine

Farage has long been criticised for his sympathetic views towards Vladimir Putin, and during the recent general election campaign he faced widespread condemnation for comments about the ongoing war in Ukraine.

In 2014, when asked about his political idols, Farage said: “As an operator, but not as a human being, I would say Putin. The way he played the whole Syria thing. Brilliant.”

More recently, he was criticised for suggesting the West “provoked” Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, claiming that the war was “a consequence of EU and Nato expansion”. While accepting that Putin is at fault for the war, he has also said: “We provoked this war.”



Farage's Far-Right Friends

It is often said that you're judged by the company you keep.

In Farage's case, he has spent years collaborating, befriending and showering praise on a wide range of far-right politicians across the world.

European Parliament

While leader of UKIP and an MEP, Farage worked closely with a range of far-right actors as part of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group which included far-right parties such as Lega Nord, the Danish People's Party, Finns Party and the Slovak National Party.

In 2014, UKIP became the largest party in the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group. At the time Farage was widely criticised for joining forces with the Sweden Democrats, a far-right party with Nazi roots.



USA

DONALD TRUMP:

Farage has a long term relationship with the former US president, who he calls his "friend". Farage even went as far as to claim that Trump "learned quite a lot from me", adding: "I think it



goes both ways... He was watching my speeches in the European Parliament for many years... before he decided to run.”

During Trump’s 2017 presidential campaign, Farage fawned over him, and in 2018 he even called for Trump to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Farage defended Trump’s regular anti-Muslim outbursts when he was in the White House. When Trump retweeted a post from Britain First, the far-right anti-Muslim street movement that has carried out “mosque invasions” in the UK, Farage called the outrage “out of all proportion” and “ridiculous”.

Similarly, after Trump told four congresswomen of colour to “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came”, Farage said that whilst he initially felt uncomfortable, he then realised Trump’s comments were “genius”, that he “does things his way”, and called him “a remarkably effective operator”.

Another sign of their close relationship came in April 2024, when Farage held a birthday dinner to which Trump sent a video message of congratulations. With Trump back on the campaign trail ahead of the forthcoming US presidential elections, Farage has once again offered his unwavering support and initially said he planned to help Trump with his presidential campaign before taking up leadership of Reform UK instead.

Following the assassination attempt on Trump in July 2024, Farage travelled to the US to offer his support. although it seems he was snubbed by the presidential candidate and no meeting took place.

STEVE BANNON:

Farage is also a longtime associate of Trump’s ex-advisor Steve Bannon, a far-right organiser and former boss of the Breitbart News Network (where Farage once had a column).



The day Article 50 was triggered, beginning the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, Farage thanked Bannon and Breitbart, stating: “Well done Bannon, well done Breitbart, you’ve helped with this hugely.” Farage has described Bannon as “my kind of chap”, and reportedly even gave Bannon a portrait of him dressed as Napoleon Bonaparte.

In October 2017, Bannon offered Farage a role helping to “knit together this populist nationalist movement throughout the world”, telling him he would be “the perfect guy” to front it. Bannon mentioned the anti-Muslim, populist Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte as parts of this movement.

Steven Bannon is currently in prison in America after defying multiple subpoenas related to the investigation into the 6 January 2021 insurrection.

ROY MOORE:



At Bannon’s request, Farage addressed a pro-Roy Moore event in Alabama in 2017. Farage began his speech: “The phone rings. It’s Steve Bannon! He says, ‘Could you come to Alabama tomorrow, because we’d like you to put your voice behind a true, genuine conservative in the shape of Judge Roy Moore’ [...] it took me a whole 10 seconds to decide to drop everything and come here to be with you this evening.” Farage said Moore’s election was “important for the whole global movement across the West that we have built up and we have fought for.”

Moore, a homophobe and Islamophobe, has been accused by six women of pursuing romantic sexual relationships with them when they were teenagers, including one from a woman who was 14 when he was in his 30s. Two accused him of assault or molestation. Moore has denied these accusations. Despite campaigning for Moore after the allegations were public, Farage has since expressed regret for supporting him, saying “I should have thought about the whole thing far more deeply than I did, and it was a mistake.”



 **France**

MARINE LE PEN:

Farage openly supported Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front (since renamed National Assembly), in the 2017 French presidential elections, and provided her a friendly interview on LBC. Farage also stated in 2017 that “she has a huge amount in common with firstly the Brexit campaign and secondly with President Trump”.

This is despite Farage’s own prior condemnation of Le Pen’s party. In his book *The Purple Revolution*, published in 2015, Farage claimed that while “the problem is not with Marine [...] the fact remains that anti-Semitism is in the party’s DNA”. He also claimed that “The National Front is still a party that is fundamentally about race – the EU is an afterthought.”

In 2017, however, he wrote an article for *The Telegraph* titled: “I’m supporting Marine Le Pen, and if she fails this year, she will win in 2022,” adding she “would make a good leader of France”. He has since been critical of her economic policies.



 **Italy**

GEORGIA MELONI

Nigel Farage has praised Italy’s far-right leader Georgia Meloni for her approach to dealing with asylum seekers. Speaking on GB News he said: “If only we had the wit of course to do what Meloni has done. [...] Well done Meloni. It’s a much cleverer thing she has done than our idiots have managed.”

 **Germany**

ALTERNATIVE FOR GERMANY (AFD)

Nigel Farage addressed an event of the far-right, anti-Muslim AfD in Berlin in 2017, after he was invited by the AfD’s Beatrix von Storch, granddaughter of Hitler’s finance minister, who also welcomed him to the stage during the rally.

In 2016 Farage himself welcomed von Storch into his Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group in the European Parliament, saying: “I’ve watched the rise of the AfD with fascination, with interest, and I’ve been cheering on from the sidelines.”





Hungary

VICTOR ORBÁN:

In 2017 Farage claimed he “admires” Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán, saying that he is “the strongest and best leader in the whole of Europe”. He told Orbán: “Come and join the Brexit club, you’ll love it!”

Orbán and his party Fidesz have increasingly turned to nativist and authoritarian policies. The Council of Europe has criticised Hungary for human rights violations in respect of the treatment of immigrants, who have reportedly even been denied basic necessities such as food, as well as for new laws targeting the homeless (who are predominantly disabled, immigrants, refugees and Roma). The European Parliament has also opened the possibility of sanction proceedings after new laws were introduced threatening the independence of the country’s judiciary and media.

In 2024 both Farage and Orbán were speakers at the controversial National Conservative conference in Brussels.

The Extremism of Reform UK

Reform UK was beset by a series of scandals involving its candidates in the leadup to the 2024 general election, which saw the party deselect or disown dozens of candidates for racism and promotion of bizarre conspiratorial worldviews.

The party was initially prompted to suspend candidates once their views came to light, but this changed after Nigel Farage took over the leadership of the party on 3 June. Whereas the former leader Richard Tice would begrudgingly suspend candidates as soon as the party was approached for comment, Farage appeared much more reluctant. In some cases, Farage only announced that candidates had been dropped after repeated questioning during TV interviews.

When *The Times* revealed that a slew of Reform candidates had, for instance, accused “powerful groups” of Jews for “agitating for mass immigration” and referred to Black people as “acting like savages”, a party spokesperson initially responded to dismiss the report as “juvenile gotcha politics” that would only “horrify [...] London liberal sensibilities”.

While minimising the seriousness of such allegations, Reform also blamed the woeful crop of candidates at the 2024 general election on a vetting agency, saying it had “stitched up” the party by failing to complete thorough background checks on its candidate list.

But this feeble attempt to deflect responsibility did not address the key question: why were so many of those who applied to become candidates so extreme in their views, and what process had the party undertaken before selecting them?

Extreme Candidates

The racism expressed by Reform candidates, both at the 2024 local elections and general election, was diverse in its targets, including extreme prejudice against Muslims, Jews and Black people among others.

Edward Oakenfull, Reform candidate for Derbyshire Dales, was revealed to have posted on X/Twitter that “by importing loads of sub Saharan Africans plus Muslims that inter breed the IQ is

in severe decline”. Jonathan Kay, then-candidate for South Ribble, similarly stated that the UK was “importing so many 3rd world immigrants whose average nation IQ’s are between 68 -84, into a country whose indigenous populations IQ is 100”.

Other candidates had attacked the Jewish community for their supposed role in founding communism and encouraging immigration, the latter a version of the White Genocide conspiracy theory that constitutes a key tenet of neo-Nazi movements worldwide.

Reform’s then-candidate for Orpington, Mick Greenhough, argued on Twitter that “Ashkenazi Jews have caused the world massive problems” due to having “started socialism”. Paul Carnell, then a local candidate in Cannock Chase, recommended a pro-Nazi Holocaust denial documentary as showing “the other history not taught in Zionist Indoctrination Camps (schools)”.

These examples cannot be written off as insensitive language or outdated ways of thinking, but much more extreme manifestations of racist pseudoscience and antisemitic conspiracy theories. Some of those seeking office as Reform candidates are clearly people who have extensive engagement with material from the extreme end of the political right.

It is also notable that in many cases, these candidates had published their loathsome views under their own names and on public social media platforms, seemingly unconcerned about whether such posts might preclude them from a Reform candidacy.

Whatever the party might herald as its official position on race and immigration, it is clear that some of the most extreme racists in the UK view it as a church broad enough for their own brands of bigotry.

Authoritarianism

While Reform and its leadership harbour libertarian leanings economically, there is a clear authoritarian streak that runs through much of their political posturing.

Despite being among the most active promoters



of the idea that white and right-wing people are subject to a “two-tier policing” that favours left-wing and non-white Brits, Reform politicians themselves seek to create a society that enforces different tiers of justice and liberty depending on the citizens in question.

Following the riot in the Harehills area of Leeds on 19 July, for example, Lee Anderson MP was quick

to invoke far-right anti-immigration rhetoric and call for the harshest punishment of those involved:

“Disgraceful Scenes. Import a third world culture then you get third world behaviour. These animals need locking up for good”
 Lee Anderson MP on Twitter, Jul 19 2024

When footage emerged of a policeman at Manchester airport stamping on the head of an Asian man lying on the floor, with little information available about the context, Anderson said that the officer concerned should be “commended” and “deserved a medal”.

Yet he struck a very different tone just weeks later when speaking about the actions of those involved in the widespread rioting that broke out following the murders in Southport:

“I’m sure there’s a lot of young lads out there, the British working class lads, you know, throwing stones and damaging things, they’re not far-right thugs [...] we all do daft things when we’re young”
 GB News, 6 August 2024

He went on to suggest that the prime minister should “sit down with them, find out what the problem is and try to come up with some solutions rather than just banging them away”.

Similarly, senior figures like Farage and Tice have been unequivocal in calling for environmental protesters who commit acts of vandalism to be jailed, with Tice saying we should “lock them up & throw away the key”.

Yet senior Reform members have excused and encouraged vandalism by anti-ULEZ activists in London. Tice has approvingly shared videos of cameras being vandalised, while Farage has portrayed such crimes as an understandable response:

“When laws become enemies of men, men become enemies of laws. I have been firmly told that in our area no ULEZ camera will stay up for very long.”
 Nigel Farage MP on Twitter, 18 Aug 2023

Such double standards send a clear signal to candidates, activists and voters that Reform’s publicly stated positions on any particular issue are not to be generalised, and that the party will always make excuses for those it sympathises with while cracking down hard on those it does not.

A malleable view on matters of the law is incompatible with the idea of a democratic, pluralistic state, and it is therefore little wonder that some members of the traditional far-right view Reform as a vehicle through which their own ideology might flourish.

Reaction of the Wider Far Right

As covered elsewhere in this report, Mark Collett, the leader of Patriotic Alternative, the UK's largest fascist group, has praised Reform for "nakedly campaigning on a platform that's more right-wing than the BNP's was at the height of the party".

Another extreme-right commentator, the anonymous content creator known as "Morgoth", has also voiced his suspicion that the party contains numerous activists who are closer to his own Nazi sympathies than the party's manifesto would suggest:

"I would expect that Reform is actually riddled with our guys [...] As I say, I don't have any proof of that [but] there's something about Reform that tells me: we've got people on the inside"

Counter-Currents podcast, 3 July 2024

But perhaps more worryingly, both Collett and Morgoth have suggested that young extremists who have so far remained anonymous should join Reform in order to "drag the party even further" toward the far right.

In a live-streamed conversation with another far-right commentator, Collett warned that Reform would "hoover up the anti-immigration vote, anti-establishment vote" for years to come, and advised his followers that "nationalists now, if they want to play a role on an electoral level, the best thing they could do if they're not face-out, is engage in some kind of entryism of the Reform Party".

"It would be brilliant if Reform end up getting 80-something MPs at the next election and 10-15% of them were closet ethnonationalists who could help drag the party even further in the right direction"
Patriotic Weekly Review livestream, 10 July 2024

Aside from overt entryism, where activists join with the explicit intent of pushing the party along a particular path, the historical example of UKIP shows that we should be concerned by the radicalisation and networking opportunities that Reform might present in future.

A notable number of the more extreme individuals and groups active in the UK in recent memory were first politically active with UKIP, even prior to its lurch to the right under Gerard Batten in 2018. The defunct anti-Muslim party For Britain, for example, was a breakaway group established by the former UKIP candidate and 2017 leadership challenger Anne Marie Waters.

Another example is Katie Fanning, a well-known white nationalist and extreme antisemite, who became involved with UKIP in 2015. She served as



a member of UKIP's National Executive Committee from 2016-19 and National Coordinator of the party's youth group, Young Independence.

These issues will only become more pertinent as the party moves towards its stated goal of democratising its organisation and setting up a regional branch structure. The party announced in early September that it is setting up 120 local branches to target Labour-held seats and win council seats at local elections next year.

While we can expect this reform-of-Reform to stop short of a democratic structure that could threaten the leadership or bring about the internal disorder that plagued UKIP, any forum through which Reform activists are meeting and organising together will be vulnerable to entryism and radicalisation by more extreme elements.

The Road Ahead

The many extremists who applied to be Reform candidates — and who will likely make up a significant core of the active members in the new regional branches — did not do so by mistake. Irrespective of how Reform rejects the label of "far right", Nigel Farage's long history of dog-whistle politics and divisive rhetoric has ensured that many of those who seek a far-right government view him and whichever party he leads as their best hope of success.

Some will be those who believe that their own bigotry and dislike of minority groups is just common-sense, mainstream politics. Others will be committed members of the far right who consciously seek to push Reform UK further to the extreme. All should be a major concern to those who do not want to see the far right make the electoral gains here that we have seen across Europe in recent years.

Reform's Worrying Candidates

Despite suspending dozens of candidates before nominations closed, Reform UK still fielded a number of highly dubious candidates at the 2024 general election:

AMBER VALLEY – ALEX STEVENSON

Conspiracy theorist and former Conservative councillor Alex Stevenson shared a Facebook post alleging that the pandemic was “created and orchestrated fraudulently by a Global Criminal Organization” that includes Bill Gates, the Rothschild family and King Charles.



GRANTHAM & BOURNE – MIKE RUDKIN

The Reform candidate for Grantham & Bourne, Mike Rudkin was revealed to have shared a Facebook post from far-right activist Katie Fanning in which she referred to migrants as an “invasion” that was “imported by your Zionist government”.



BARNSELY NORTH – ROBERT LOMAS

Reform's candidate in Barnsley North, Robert Lomas, said in a social media post that Black people in Britain should “get off [their] lazy arses” and stop “grifting the race card” and “acting like savages”.



QUEEN'S PARK & MAIDA VALE – ANGELA CARTER- BEBBIE

Queens Park candidate Angela Carter-Begbie responded to a tweet about the war in Ukraine by saying that “banks want to make it a new place. They are owned by the Jews”.



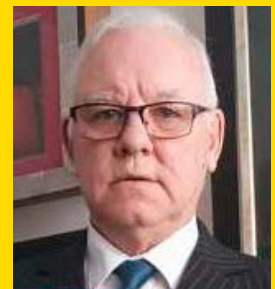
BEXHILL & BATTLE – IAN GRIBBIN

Ian Gribbin, the third candidate to be selected for the seat of Bexhill & Battle, was condemned for referring to women as the “sponging gender” and his belief that the UK “would be in a far better state today had we taken Hitler up on his offer of neutrality” and that only our “warped mindset values weird notions of international morality” had prevented it.



SOUTHEND EAST & ROCHFORD – LESLIE LILLEY

Southend East and Rochford candidate Leslie Lilley was exposed by *The Times* for comments including a vow to “slaughter” migrants and their families, saying: “I hope I’m near one of these scumbags one day I won’t run away I’ll slaughter them then have their family taken out.”



CHIPPING BARNET – HAMISH HADDOW

Chipping Barnet candidate Hamish Haddow shared posts from Tommy Robinson referring to Carol Vorderman as a “bitch”, declared that Taylor Swift is a Satanist and told pro-Palestine demonstrators to “fuck off to a Muslim country”.



WARRINGTON NORTH – TREVOR NICHOLLS

Reform's candidate in Warrington North threatened to “start the fires on the streets” if Sajid Javid, who is of Muslim ancestry but is non-practicing, became prime minister.



Reform UK is Far Right: Here's Why

With so much discussion about Reform UK's success at the general election, there has been a flurry of articles written about the party and Nigel Farage in particular. Worryingly, however, many of these refrain from calling the party far right, in favour of an ever-expanding set of euphemisms and vague or invented terminology.

The media used a dizzying array of terms to describe Reform UK, variously calling it “right-wing populist”, “classically right wing”, merely “populist”, or increasingly, the never defined term “hard right.”

Meanwhile Farage himself is described as everything from a “bog-standard Essex Man Thatcherite” to a “a renegade nationalist conservative”.

However, in truth both Nigel Farage and Reform UK fit comfortably within any accepted definition of the term far right.

In the words of Cas Mudde, the leading social scientist in the field: “Reform UK is far right! That is not an opinion, that is a fact!”

Don't Call Us Far Right!

In March this year, apparently after being contacted by lawyers acting for then-leader Richard Tice, the BBC issued a correction and apologised to Reform UK for calling the party far right. Tice then stated that they were “also in touch with other news organisations” for using the term, which he claimed was “defamatory and libellous”.

Clearly, one of the reasons so many journalists and media outlets have refrained from describing Reform UK accurately is through fear of legal repercussions. The party is adamant that it is not far right and is willing to litigate the point.

However, politicians rejecting the label is nothing new with most of those who fit into accepted definitions of “far right” feigning outrage when accurately described. Many Reform UK voters and activists genuinely see themselves not as extreme or fringe but rather as ordinary, normal exemplars of “the people”.

For this reason, those who oppose this supposed oppression are categorised by their supporters, not as modern versions of fascist or far-right “heroes” from yesteryear, but rather as new incarnations of traditionally progressive civil rights heroes or freedom fighters.

This stubborn refusal to accept that they are far right is sometimes contrived but is often genuinely held. Of course, that does not make it true. Their refusal to self-identify as far right does not mean that the term is not appropriate.

Why is Reform UK Far Right?

As well as the threat of legal action, and Reform UK's rejection of the label, the reticence of many journalists to accurately describe the party as far right is likely based on a misunderstanding how to actually define it.

For many people, the terms far right and fascist are mistakenly interchangeable, creating an inaccurate expectation that the label far right should only be applied to swastika-waving skinheads and Third Reich apologists. Despite having attracted its fair share of these sorts of extremists, the party itself is not fascist. But that doesn't mean it isn't far right.

In reality, “far right” is an umbrella term, and while useful, it is not a monolith, which is why academics and practitioners split it further into its constituent parts.

The historians David Renton and Neil Davidson essentially divide the right of the political spectrum into conservatives, the non-fascist far right and fascism. In these definitions Reform UK sits comfortably in the “non-fascist far right” category.

Similarly, Cas Mudde divides the term far right into the “radical right” and the “extreme far right”. The latter “rejects the essence of democracy, that is, popular sovereignty and majority rule” while the radical right “accepts the essence of democracy, but opposes fundamental elements of liberal democracy”.

The latter describes Farage and Reform UK well as the party rejects key elements of liberal

Photo: Twitter/
Howard Cox



democracy, most notably the concept that every human being has inherent dignity and universal rights. Perhaps the best example is Farage's own history of racism, xenophobia and misogyny and his calls for Britain to leave the European Convention on Human Rights.

In addition, while Reform UK generally accepts democracy, Farage has a worrying track record of seeking to undermine institutions and the wider democratic process. Like his close ally Donald Trump, Farage has regularly disputed election defeats including in Oldham in 2015, Peterborough in 2019 and Rochdale in 2024.

Another key element of radical right politics is a belief that the nation is in decay or crisis and radical action is required to halt or reverse it. The "nation", however defined, usually includes an in-group that perceives themselves to be under threat and an outgroup/enemy. For Reform UK, this outgroup is currently asylum seekers, Muslims and Islam more generally.

Much of the radical right can also be described as "populist" which Mudde defines as "a (thin) ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the pure people and the corrupt elite, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people".

Despite being a millionaire, Farage has always been adept at presenting himself and his parties as a defender of "the people" against the "corrupt elite". Most Reform UK supporters are united by a deep distrust of politicians and the political system more generally, believing that there is a

devious and sinister "elite" – sometimes domestic, sometimes international – who oppress and control them, often with the "tool" of political correctness.

With all this in mind, it is clear that Reform UK and Farage can and should be called simply far right or populist radical right.

Why Is This Important?

The reason that Tice described being called far right as "defamatory and libellous" is because, despite all the sloppy usage, it remains a powerful term.

People who are widely accepted as being far right are usually still marginalised from mainstream politics and discourse. However, part of the reason that figures like Farage can vault the *cordon sanitaire* so often and so easily is because many, perhaps even most, deny that he is a far-right figure. One of the main reasons for this is because too many journalists and media outlets refuse to accurately describe him and Reform UK as such.

Of course, the problem is broader than just Farage. The reticence to accurately describe policies and statements by supposedly "mainstream" commentators and politicians is a key factor in the normalisation of far-right politics.

The term far right still has some power and if accurately deployed it can help slow or maybe even reverse the normalisation and mainstreaming of far-right parties and politicians like Reform UK and Farage. So call them far right!

Reform Voters: Who are they and what do they want?

NICK LOWLES

HOPE not hate polled 4,000 Reform UK voters from across the country to better understand who they are, what motivates them and, ultimately, how the progressive movement can engage with them. Nick Lowles reflects on the findings

Immigration takes top billing but there's nuance amongst Reform UK voters

Immigration is the issue of greatest concern for Reform UK voters, but it coexists alongside a deep sense of economic and political pessimism, national decline and distrust in the political process and institutions.

However, it is important not to view Reform UK voters as one monolithic bloc, with those earning less than £30,000 a year being more economically left-leaning compared to those earning over £50,000 a year, who are more libertarian and small government in their outlook.

Amongst those on lower incomes, there is

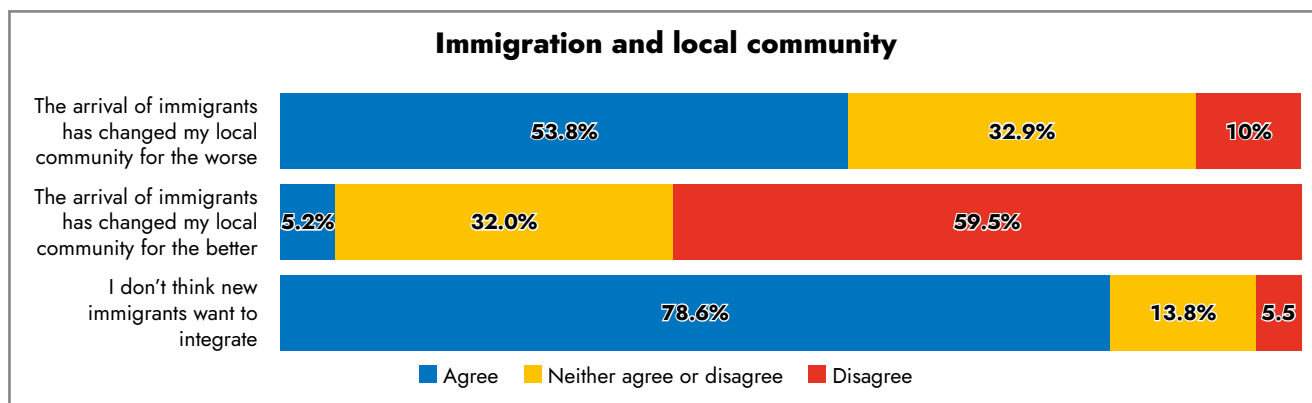
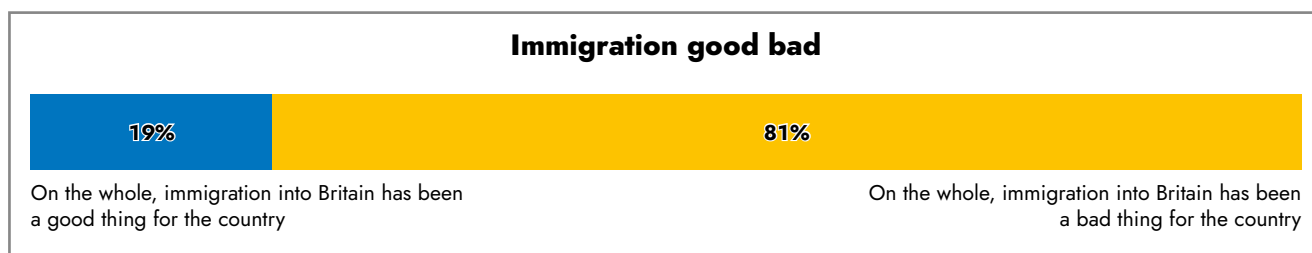
widespread support for punishing water companies for leaking sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas, bringing the railways under public ownership and, by a slightly smaller margin, improving workers' rights.

* * *

According to our poll, half of Reform voters had already decided to back the party when the election was called on 22 May, while a further 25% made the decision when Nigel Farage announced he was returning as leader and standing as a candidate. The remaining quarter of their voters, 24%, opted for Reform in the final few days of the campaign.

Asked to choose the three principal reasons why they voted for Reform, 65% of respondents in our poll picked Reform's policy of stopping immigration. In an indication of their disillusionment with politics, the next two most popular options were "Britain needed a change" and "Reform was the only party offering an alternative."

Perhaps predictably, Reform UK voters have a very negative view of immigration, Islam and multiculturalism. Over four in five respondents



(81%), believe that immigration into Britain has been a bad thing for the country. This compares to 54% of the British public overall.

Only 5% think that the arrival of immigrants has changed their local community for the better, whereas 54% think it has been changed for the worse. Four out of five (79%), believe that new immigrants do not want to integrate.

Over half of Reform voters (55%) picked “Immigration and asylum” as one of their three most important issues at the moment, with slightly fewer choosing “Cost of Living”. This differs from the general public, 72% of whom selected “Cost of Living” and just 25% “Immigration and asylum”.

There are equally negative views among Reform voters about the presence of racism within society. Only 1.7% strongly agreed that Britain is institutionally racist, while just 4.6% strongly agreed that Black and Asian people face discrimination in their everyday lives. There is very little support for footballers taking the knee as a symbol of opposition to racism; just 10% of Reform voters supported the footballers, with 67% opposing them (53% of whom opposed strongly).

There were mixed views amongst Reform voters about who should be considered British. Just 12% of Reform voters thought that someone who has successfully claimed asylum in the UK should be considered British, with 78% believing they were not.

Almost two thirds of Reform voters thought being ethnically British was a key component of being

Poll position: how Reform UK responded to polling

In April 2024, YouGov forecasted that Reform UK could come second in 36 seats. By 4 July, the reality was 98.

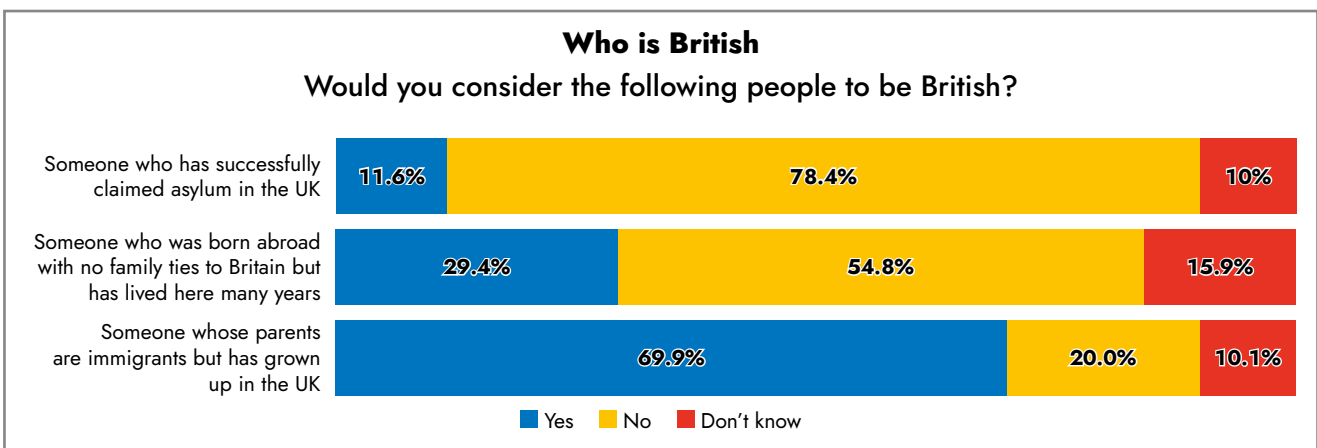
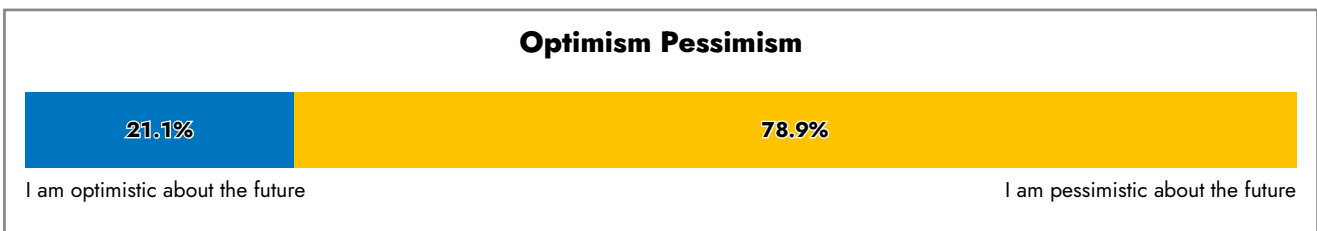
Of these, Reform UK’s ten highest polling constituencies were Barnsley North, Hartlepool, Doncaster North, Barnsley South, Pontefract, Castleford and Knottingley, Normanton and Hemsworth, Ashfield, Rawmarsh and Conisbrough, Kingston upon Hull East and Easington.

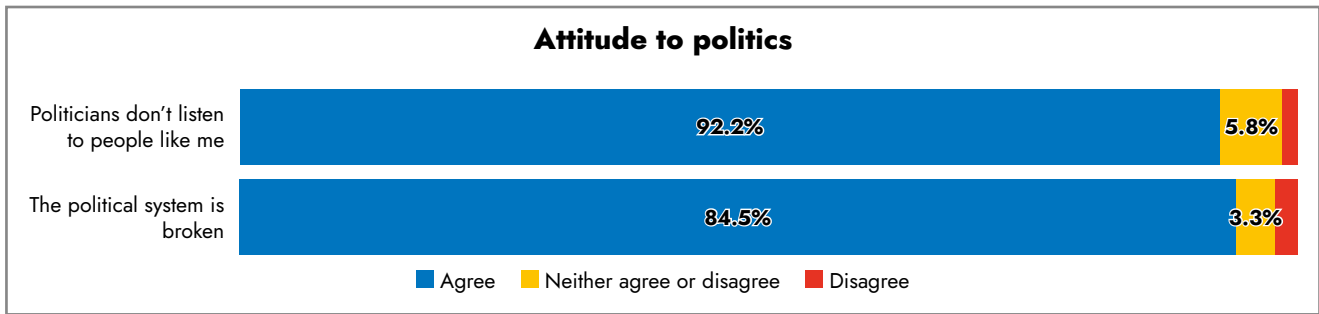
Yet in four of the ten seats, the Reform UK candidate was fired or swapped, including Richard Tice who swapped from Hartlepool to Boston and Skegness in May.

Tice was the announced candidate in Hartlepool for over 18 months, having run in the seat in 2019 and establishing a local office in the constituency. He explained away his abandonment of the seat at a Reform UK press conference, saying the “political scene is shifting” and that he wanted to be closer to Lee Anderson’s seat of Ashfield.

In the end, four of the Reform UK MPs elected were candidates for less than four months, except sitting MP Lee Anderson who defected to the party in March.

considered British, while an even bigger group, 98%, thought embracing and being proud of British customs and way of life was important.





Opinions towards multiculturalism were also depressingly poor. More than four in five Reform voters (84%) think that Britain's multicultural society isn't working, while an even bigger group, 89%, believe that there is an increasing amount of tension between different groups living in Britain.

HOPE not hate's research has consistently found a correlation between economic pessimism and fear and even hate of the other and our polling of Reform members is no different. Almost 80% of all Reform voters in our survey were pessimistic about the future, with only 21% being optimistic. Amongst those in social group C2DE, this split grew even wider, with 82% being pessimistic and 18% optimistic.

Connected to this pessimism is also a deep sense of national decline. An astonishing 95% of Reform voters think Britain is in decline, considerably higher than the average amongst the public at large. Just 2.8% of Reform voters disagreed with the notion of decline.

Asked why Britain is declining, Reform voters had

one clear answer – immigration. Just over 60% thought immigration has changed Britain beyond recognition, well ahead of the 48% of those who blamed a Government that is (supposedly) more interested in appeasing minorities than doing the best for the majority.

In a clear indication that cultural concerns dominate the mindset of Reform voters, economic factors lagged a long, long way behind. These included the UK leaving the EU, the economic rise of China and Britain no longer being the power it once was.

When asked for two policy changes that could reverse this decline, again immigration dominated their responses. Twice as many Reform voters (62%) selected the stopping of all new immigration into the UK than any economic solution.

Trust in politics

Reform voters are also more likely to view the political system and the politicians within it more negatively than the general population. Over eight in ten Reform voters (84%) think the political system is broken, while 92% believe that “politicians don't listen to people like me”. Amongst the general population, HOPE not hate's most recent national polling has found that 71% think the political system is broken and 69% think politicians do not listen to them.

Reflecting the authoritarian streak amongst some Reform voters, almost four in ten (38%) said that “having a strong and decisive leader who has the authority to override or ignore parliament” was a better form of government for the country than “having a liberal democracy with regular elections and a multi-party system.”

The riots

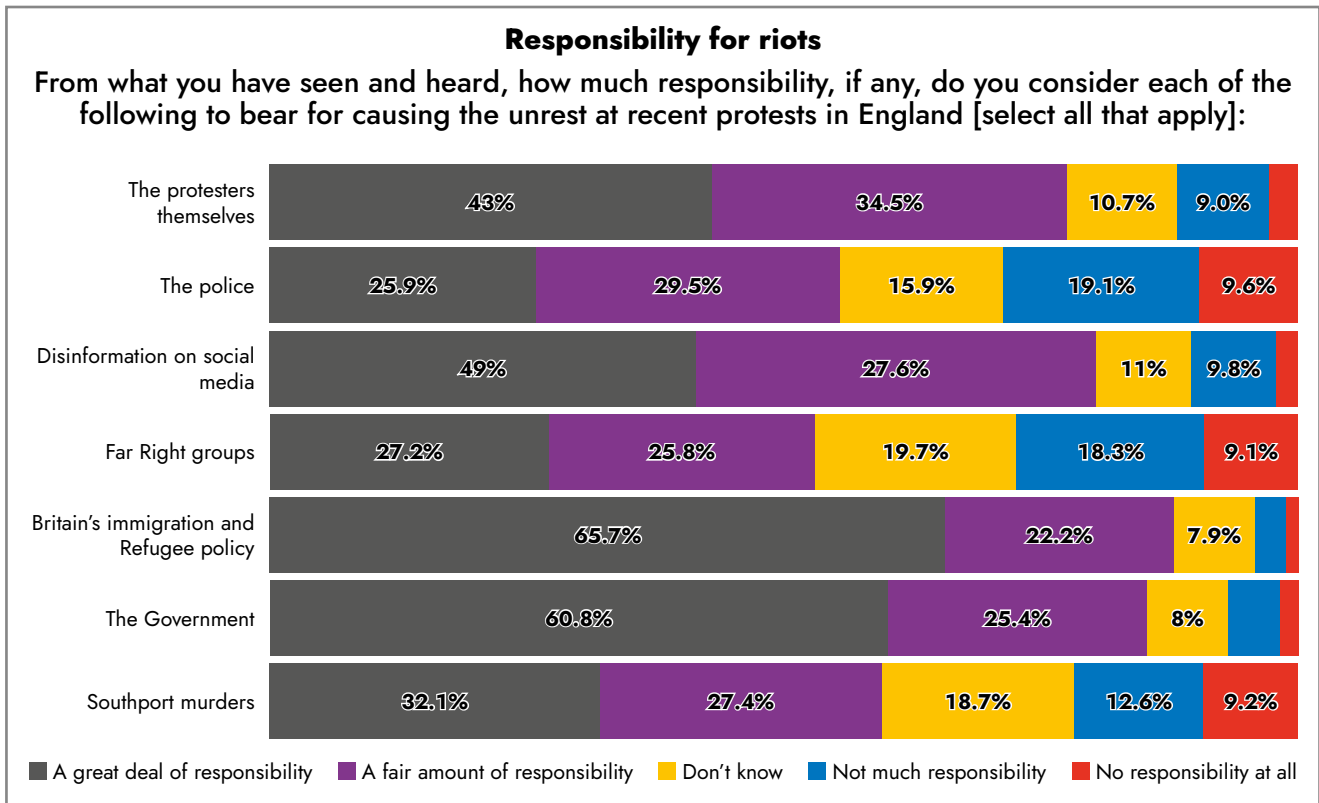
The attitudes of Reform voters to the riots is reflective of their political outlook and the news they digest. Two thirds thought that the protesters who took to the streets in the days after the Southport murders had legitimate concerns. Amongst the general public has a whole, just 40% thought the protesters had legitimate concerns.

Tommy Robinson supporters



Our poll has found that 28% of Reform voters support the far-right activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson). A slightly larger group, 30%, dislike him.

Those who like him are more likely to be even more strongly opposed to immigration and Muslims and are less likely to blame the far right and the protesters for the recent riots. Over 40% believe that violence is sometimes necessary, more than double the number who disagree.



Disturbingly, more Reform voters blamed the disorder on the Government and Britain's immigration and refugee policy than the protesters themselves. Bizarrely, more Reform voters blamed Muslims (54%) than far-right groups (53%).

Over a quarter, 27%, thought the far right bore little or no responsibility, higher than the 22% who thought Muslims were not to blame.

In a further sign of their distrust of the system, 55% of Reform voters believed the police bore responsibility for the disorder, while only 4% thought that Britain's immigration and refugee policy bore little or no responsibility.

Amongst the public as a whole, 73% thought far-right groups had some responsibility for the disorder.

Suspicious about the Government's motives were evident when asked about the police crackdown on those who encouraged disorder.

Almost six out of ten Reform voters agreed with the statement "The Government and police are targeting those who posted about the riots on social media as an excuse to clamp down on freedom of speech", while 42% believed that "the Government and police are targeting those who posted about the riots on social media because it incited trouble and spread disinformation."

When the same question was asked in a nationally representative poll, 69% of Britons thought "the Government and police are targeting those who

Next Conservative leader

As the Conservatives consider their next leader, our polling offers the candidates little hope. The vast majority of Reform voters do not feel they know enough about the candidates, with only a small minority holding any positive views about them.

Less than 3% have a "very positive" view of Robert Jenrick, the current frontrunner, despite taking the hardest line of any of the candidates on immigration. A further 11% have a slightly positive view of him. By comparison, 16% hold negative views towards him, but 70% feel they don't know enough about him to take a view.

Only 2% have a very positive view of James Cleverly, while 5% had a very positive view of Kemi Badenoch, with a further 17% having a "quite positive" view.

Tom Tugendhat, the most liberal of the candidates standing, is viewed more negatively than he is positively, but again, 71% of respondents do not feel they know enough about him to make a decision.

posted about the riots on social media because it incited trouble and spread disinformation," with just 31% believing that the police and Government were using the riots as "an excuse to clamp down on freedom of speech".

Divergence of views

If there is a near uniformity of views amongst Reform voters on immigration and multiculturalism, the same cannot be said for economic positions, with less wealthy Reform voters having more left wing views and the wealthier having more libertarian and small state positions.

When asked if the Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off, just over half (53%) of Reform voters agreed. However, amongst those in social class AB it was just 43%, while amongst those in C2DE the figure jumped to 64.4%. There were further differences between Reform voters who had voted Conservative in 2019 and those who had voted Labour. Amongst ex-Labour voters, almost three-quarters supported more equitable wealth redistribution, while under half of former Conservative voters thought likewise.

There are similar disparities between richer and poorer Reform voters on issues such as the NHS, taxation and public services.

Likewise, on workers' rights. While 25% of those in social group AB agree that "Many workers are not treated fairly at work: we should increase workers' rights", the figure is almost double that for Reform voters in social group C2DE. Amongst those Reform voters who backed Labour in 2019, the figure rises to 60%.

Again, economic insecurity appears to be a significant factor. Considerably more Reform voters who live in publicly and privately rented accommodation support an increase in workers' rights and protections than those who own their own homes.

One in ten Reform voters say they are "financially desperate: I currently cannot afford essentials such as food, rent or mortgage. I am already taking extreme measures such as skipping meals or missing rent payments." Unsurprisingly, these people have a more favourable view towards the state and public services.

While it may seem hard for anti-racists to properly engage with Reform voters on immigration, it is quite possible to see other routes to communicate with these voters, especially when we do not regard them as one monolithic bloc.

Our poll asked the 4,000 Reform voters whether they supported or opposed the key bills set out in the recent King's Speech, and the results were illuminating. Over three quarters (77.4%) of all Reform voters supported regulating water

companies in order to clean up rivers, lakes and seas in the UK.

Half of all Reform voters (49%) backed Labour's plan to "improve workers' rights by banning zero-hour contracts, ending fire and rehire and strengthening sick pay", while 46% liked the proposal to "bring the rail companies under public control".

The proportions in support of some of these policies swell even further amongst certain groups of Reform voters. While only 41% of Reform voters in social group AB back the improvement in workers' rights, this figure jumps to 58% amongst C2DE. This rises to 61% amongst Reform voters who backed Labour in 2019.

Clever campaigning

As anti-racists and political parties grapple with how to deal with Reform UK, and while the threat could well grow over the next few years, it is vital that we approach this issue with caution and knowledge. Launching head first into attempts to convince hardcore Reform voters that they are wrong to dislike immigrants is not only destined to fail but will be, if anything, counterproductive.

It will be much more productive to identify softer Reform voters, for whom concerns about immigration might stem from economic insecurity and pessimism. As our polling shows, there are many other issues on which we could engage Reform voters and, especially when done in partnership with other organisations, can achieve small local wins which will help us demonstrate that politics can change if communities come together.

More work is needed to really drill down further into the views of Reform voters, but this poll clearly shows that they are not one monolithic bloc. They, like supporters of every other party, are motivated by a number of pull and push factors. Understanding these motivations could allow us to split the Reform coalition and peel some supporters away by engaging with, and addressing, some of the underlying issues that have drawn them to Nigel Farage's party in the first place.

The poll of 4,088 Reform UK voters was conducted by Find Out Now between 19 and 28 August 2024. Find Out Now is a member of the British Polling Council and Market Research Society and abides by their rules



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