



Political Studies Association

European Elections in the UK Media Briefing

7th May 2014



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*UKIP support in the European
Parliament election set to
to the 2015 General Election*

Professor Jane Green
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UKIP support in the European Parliament election set to translate to the 2015 General Election

PSA media briefing 7 May 2014

Professor Jane Green, University of Manchester

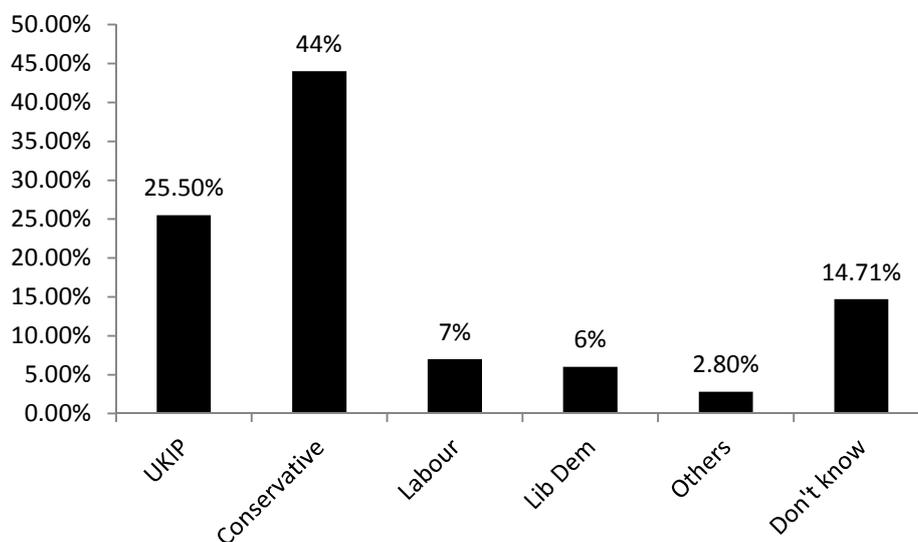
The UK Independence Party tends to poll significantly better in European Parliament elections than it does in Westminster general elections. A good result for UKIP in the European Parliament elections is a blow for the three major parties, but the major parties traditionally take comfort in the likelihood that a UKIP European Parliament election swing will not be replicated come the next general election. Newly released data from the British Election Study reveal that such comforts may now be misplaced. The translation of UKIP votes from the European Parliament elections on May 22nd 2014 to the Westminster general election on May 7th 2015 is likely to be much higher.

British Election Study data released today (collected between February and March 2014) shows that 17% of people intend to vote for UKIP in the May European Parliament elections. That figure drops to 11% of people who also intend to vote for UKIP in the 2015 general election. However, this drop is far smaller than the comparable drop in 2009 when the last European elections took place. Using British Election Study data collected after the European Parliament elections in 2009, we can see that the proportion of people reported having voted UKIP in the 2009 European Parliament elections was 20%, but only 4.3% of people intended to vote for UKIP in the 2010 general election. UKIP secured 16.5% of the overall vote in the 2009 European Parliament elections but just 3.1% of the final share of vote in the 2010 general election.

Which parties are likely to lose out from a higher conversion of UKIP votes in the 2014 European Parliament elections to the 2015 Westminster general election?

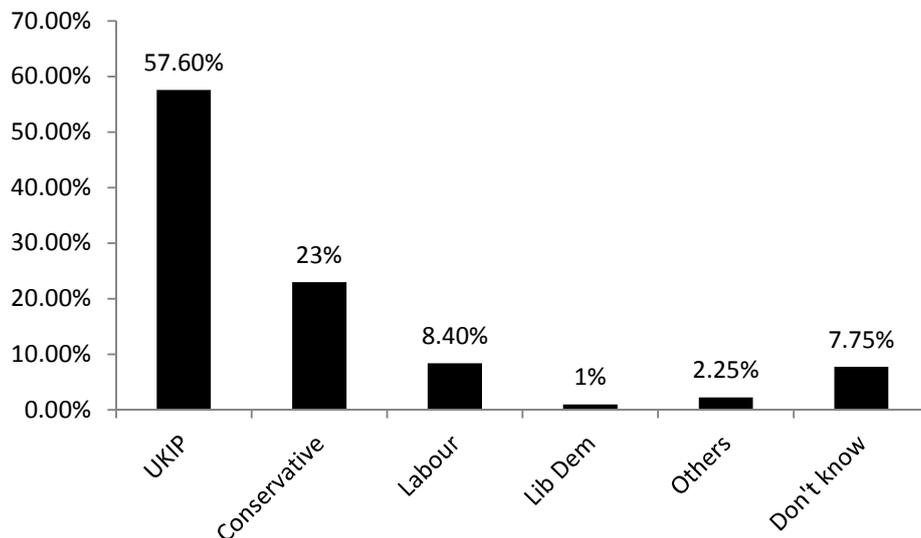
The following figure shows the 2010 general election vote intentions of those people who said they voted UKIP in 2009.

**General Election vote intentions among European Parliament election UKIP voters in 2009
(2009 British Election Study internet panel survey)**



The next figure shows the 2015 general election vote intentions of those people who say they will vote UKIP in 2014.

**General Election vote intentions among European Parliament election UKIP voters in 2014
(2014 British Election Study internet panel survey)**



More than half of people (57.6%) intending to vote for UKIP in the May 2014 European Parliament election also intend to vote for UKIP in the 2015 general election, whereas the same proportion was half that number (25.5%) in 2009. The extra UKIP votes in 2014 appear to be at the expense of the Conservatives, and also (though to a much lesser extent) at the expense of the Liberal Democrats. UKIP European Parliament voters are also more decided about how they will vote in the general election next year than they were about the 2010 general election in 2009. This is reinforced by answers to a British Election Study question in 2014 asking how certain people are about the party they report they intend to vote for in the 2015 general election. Only 10% of people who said they intended to vote UKIP in the European Parliament elections and also in the 2015 Westminster general election said they were anything but certain about their intended 2015 vote choice.

Those people who intend to vote UKIP in 2015 are mainly drawn from supporters of the major parties in the last Westminster general election in 2010. Of those people intending to vote UKIP in 2015, 44% voted Conservative in 2010, 17% voted Liberal Democrat, 11% voted Labour and 11% didn't vote. 9% voted UKIP.

These findings will be cause for concern to the major British parties - especially the Conservatives - and will mean the results of the forthcoming European Parliament elections will be taken especially seriously when looking ahead to the likely vote shares of the parties in 2015. A vote share of 11% for UKIP will not translate into an MP for Nigel Farage's party unless UKIP's support can be concentrated in one or more parliamentary constituencies, but it would reveal much stronger support for UKIP in the country and it will have important political consequences in the months and years ahead.

What is behind these vote intention figures?

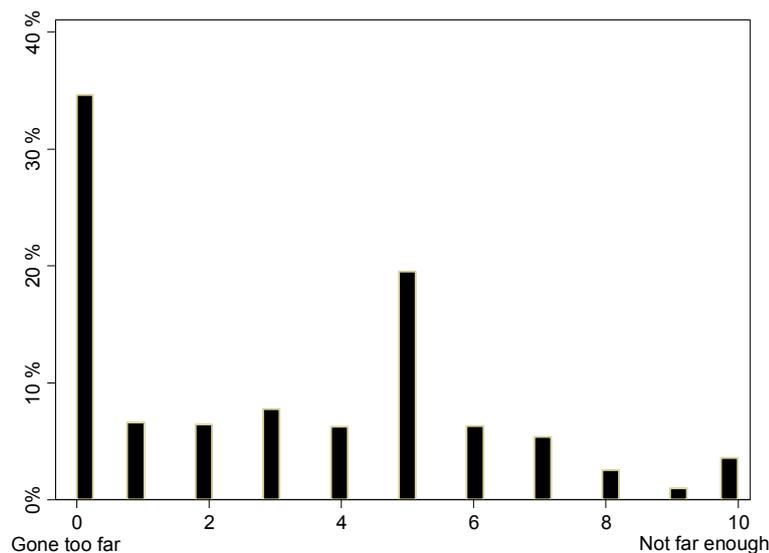
It is well-known that British public opinion is more euro-sceptic than europhile. Both the Conservative party and UKIP have long held policy positions closest to the majority of British voters in terms of euroscepticism, but UKIP appears to be benefiting. Part of the explanation for this fact lies in the following BES findings.

If we take the average position of the general population on a scale ranging from (0) European Unification has gone too far, to (10) European Unification has not gone far enough, we find that the average position of the electorate is closest to the Conservative Party (measured by where survey respondents think the major parties' policies are on the same scale).

Survey respondent (average):	3.10
Conservative Party (average):	3.85
Labour Party (average):	5.67
Liberal Democrats (average):	6.12
UK Independence Party (average):	1.28

However, the average survey respondent placement hides the fact that the largest majority of people place themselves on the furthest eurosceptic end of the scale, as can be seen here:

Attitudes towards European Unification among British Election Study survey respondents (BESIP wave 1 2014; N = 8,458)



These attitudinal distributions have implications for understanding the increase in support for UKIP (among a wide range of other explanations for UKIP's support), but also for the likelihood of support

for a referendum on EU membership and the political and electoral consequences of the respective party's promises on a referendum. British Election Study data reveal that a referendum on EU membership, were it held tomorrow, would be on a knife edge, with the battleground being for the 15% of voters who are currently undecided.

Should Britain stay in the EU or leave (if there were a referendum tomorrow, how would you vote)? (British Election Study 2014; N = 20,850)

Stay in the EU:	39.79 %
Leave the EU:	40.72 %
Would not vote:	3.91 %
Don't know:	15.57 %

Source: British Election Study Internet Panel wave 1, 2014.

ENDS.



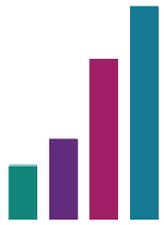
A graphic consisting of four vertical bars of increasing height from left to right, colored teal, purple, pink, and blue.

BRITISH ELECTION STUDY

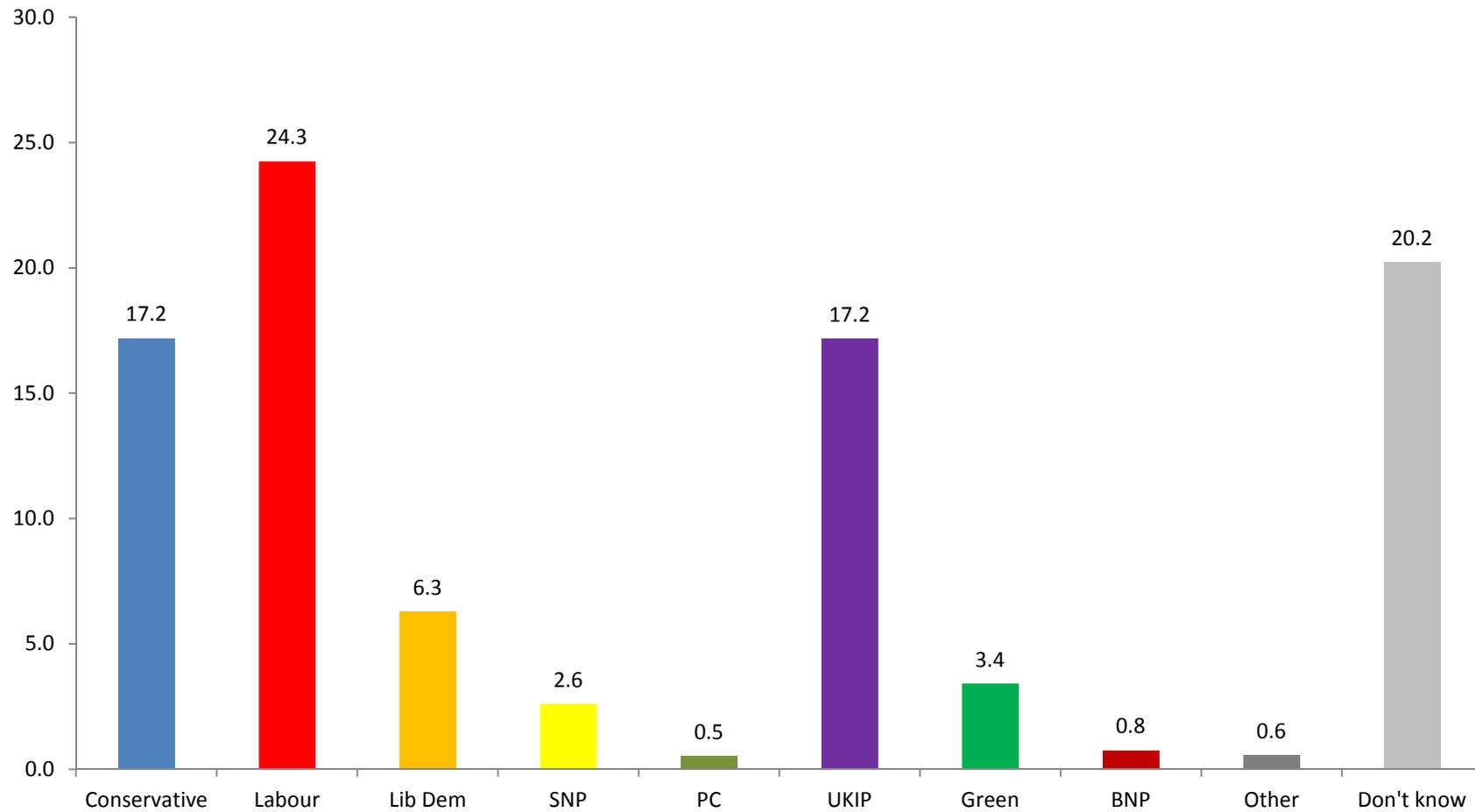
Insights into the European Parliament Elections

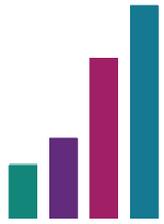
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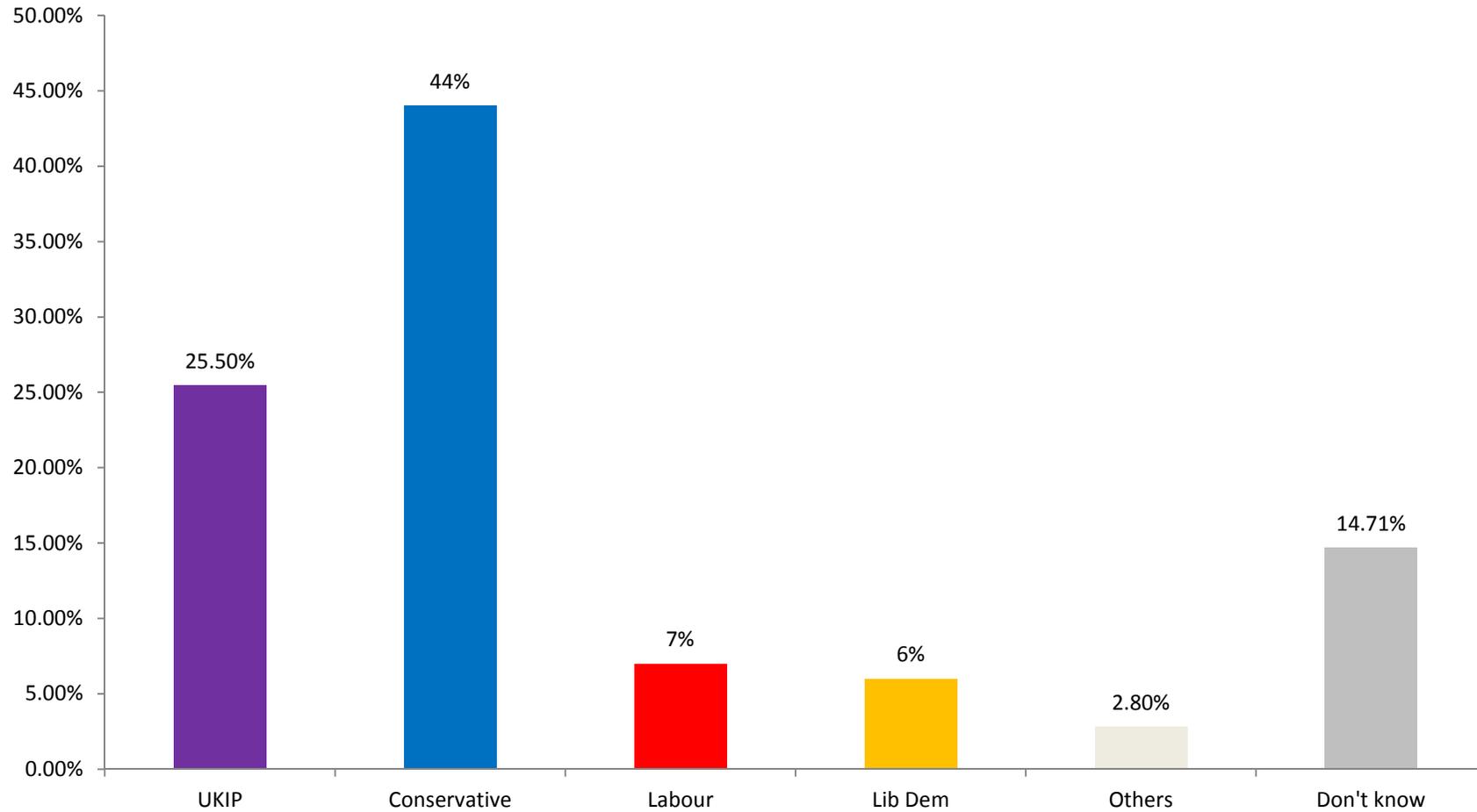


European Parliament vote intentions



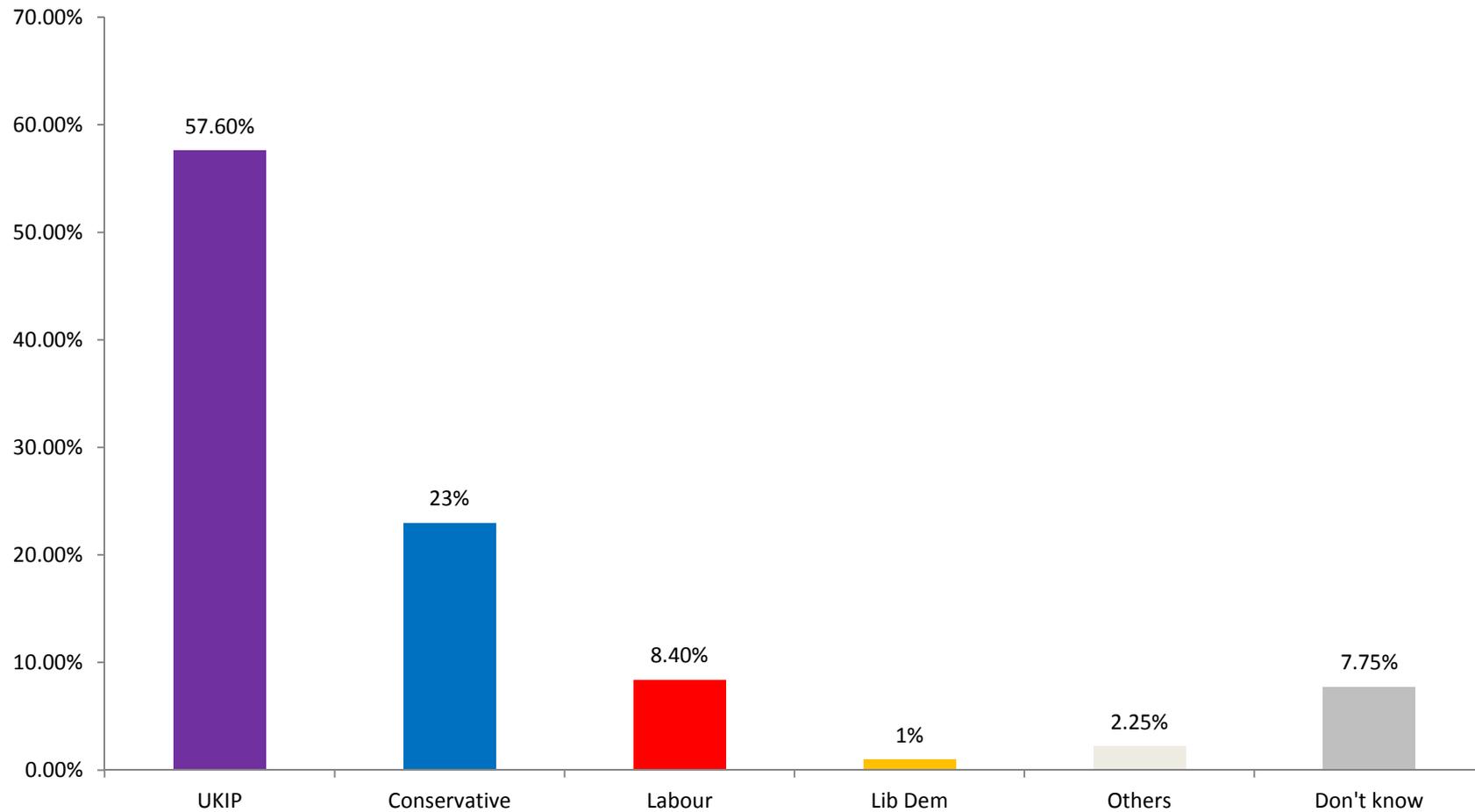


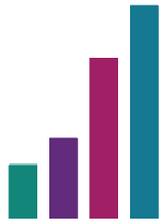
2010 election vote intention if voted UKIP in 2009





2015 election vote intention if intend to vote UKIP in 2014



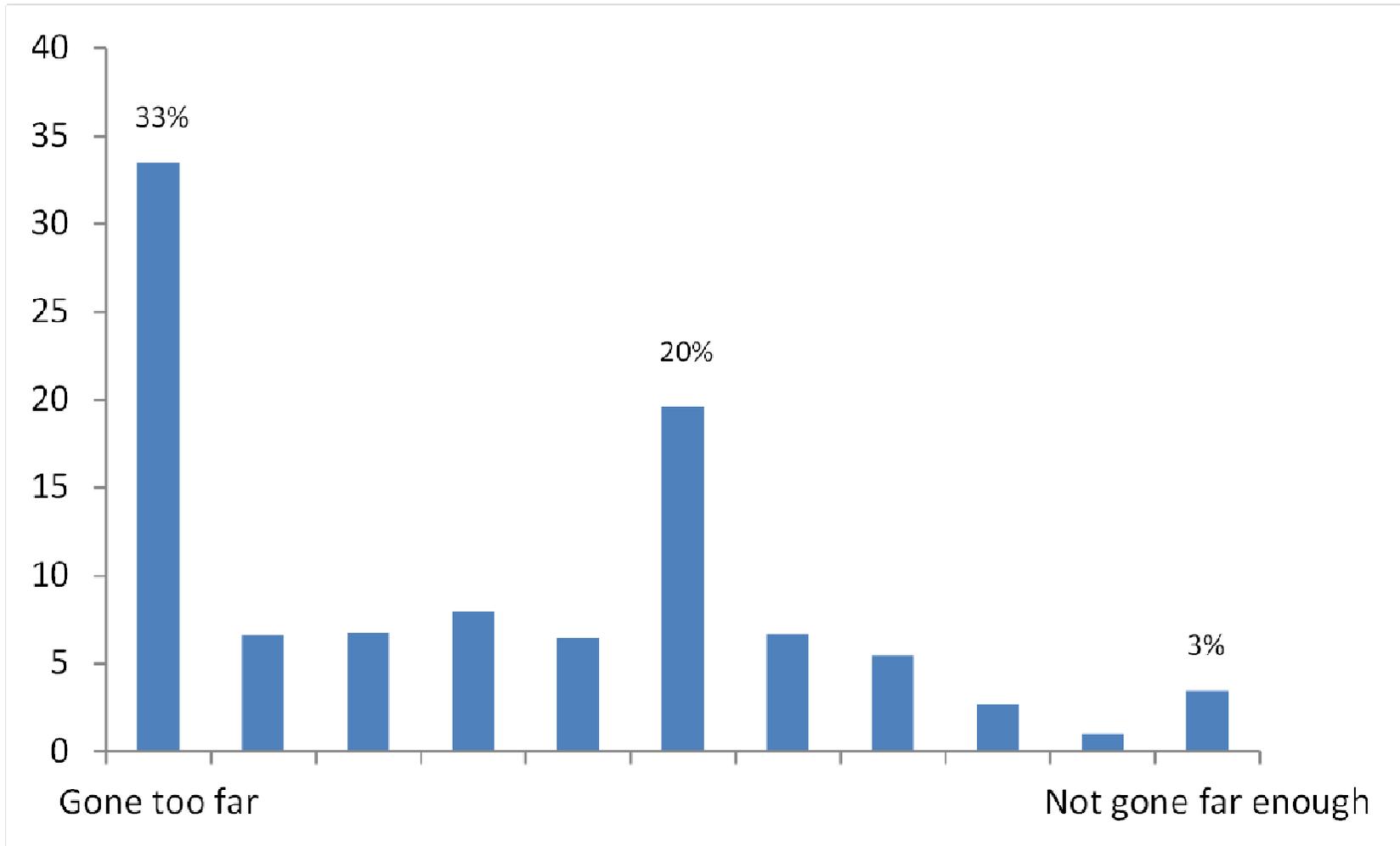


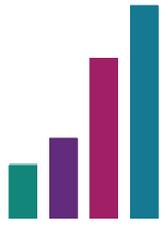
Average respondent and perceived party policy on EU integration

Survey respondent (average):	3.10
Conservative Party (average):	3.85
Labour Party (average):	5.67
Liberal Democrats (average):	6.12
UK Independence Party (average):	1.28



Distribution of opinion on EU integration





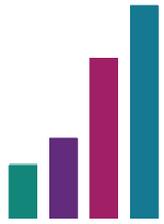
How Britons would vote in a referendum on EU membership

Stay in the EU: 39.79 %

Leave the EU: 40.72 %

Would not vote: 3.91 %

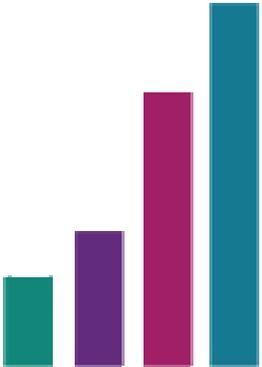
Don't know: 15.57 %



Multiple explanations

- Decline in identification with mainstream parties
- Perception that there are no major differences between the parties because their policies are pretty much the same
- Labour no more trusted than Conservatives or Liberal Democrats to deliver lower costs of living, standards in the NHS, better economy, etc.
- Coalition, and likelihood of another coalition
- Increase in tendency to vote for 'others'
- Sense of abandonment by major parties
- Closer to public opinion on European integration and potentially on immigration

www.britishelectionstudy.com



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ELECTION STUDY**

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