

Part One – Young voters in the U.K.: lowering the voting age

Document 1 -Voting age to be lowered to 16 by next general election

BBC News, 17 July 2025 - Becky Morton, Political reporter, Adam Smith and Jonelle Awomoyi (extracts)

Sixteen and 17-year-olds would be able to vote at the next **general election****, under government plans to lower the voting age. The pledge is part of a raft of measures being introduced through a new Elections Bill.

Other changes include expanding forms of voter ID to include UK-issued bank cards, moving towards automatic voter registration and tightening rules on political donations to protect against foreign interference.

5 The minimum voting age is already 16 for **local council elections**** in Scotland and Wales, and elections to the **Senedd**** and **Scottish Parliament****. However for other elections, including to the UK Parliament, local elections in England and all elections in Northern Ireland, it is 18. Lowering the voting age to 16 across the UK would be the biggest change to the electorate since it was reduced from 21 to 18 in 1969.

10 A pledge to lower the voting age to 16 was included in Labour's election manifesto but it did not feature in last summer's **King's Speech****, which sets out the government's priorities for the months ahead. The government has now confirmed it is planning to introduce the change in time for 16 and 17-year-olds to vote at the next general election, which is due to take place by 2029 but could be called earlier than this.

Deputy Prime Minister** Angela Rayner told the BBC: "I was a mum at 16, you can go to work, you can pay your taxes and I think that people should have a vote at 16."

15 However, Conservative **shadow minister**** Paul Holmes said the government's position was "hopelessly confused". "Why does this government think a 16-year-old can vote but not be allowed to buy a lottery ticket, an alcoholic drink, marry, or go to war, or even stand in the elections they're voting in?" he asked in the Commons.

Critics of the idea argue it could benefit Labour as young people are more likely to vote for left-wing parties. However, polls suggest Labour's youth vote is at risk of being chipped away at – by the Greens, Liberal Democrats and Reform UK.

20 In the UK 16 and 17-year-olds make up only around 3% of the population aged 16 and over so researchers say the impact on overall vote share is likely to be negligible, particularly as turnout tends to be lower for younger age groups.

The government has rejected claims it is introducing the change because it will benefit Labour. "This isn't about trying to rig votes for a particular party. This is about democracy and giving young people an opportunity to have a say," Rayner said.

25 Voter ID

Among the other plans set out by the government are expanding the list of accepted ID to vote in Great Britain to UK-issued bank cards. Labour opposed the introduction of voter ID under the Conservatives in 2023 but in its election manifesto the party only promised to "address inconsistencies" in the rules "that prevent legitimate voters from voting", rather than scrapping the policy entirely. Some 4% of people who did not vote at last year's general election said this was because of voter ID rules, according to the Electoral Commission.

30 But the Conservatives suggested allowing bank cards as voter ID could "undermine the security of the ballot box".

The government said it would also work towards creating an automated voter registration scheme over the coming years, with safeguards so that people are aware of their registration status and can opt-out if they wish.

35 Currently people in the UK need to register in order to vote, which can be done online or using a paper form. The Electoral Commission estimates that nearly eight million people are incorrectly registered or missing from the electoral register entirely, with the issue disproportionately affecting private renters and young people. (...)

The government said its plans would mean eligible voters could be directly added to the electoral register through better sharing of data between government agencies. (...)

40 The National Union of Students described lowering the voting age as "a major victory for young people". It called on the government to make it as easy as possible for 16 and 17-year-olds to vote by scrapping voter ID laws, implementing automatic voter registration and promoting political literacy in schools and colleges.

Foreign donors

Meanwhile, the government said changes to the rules around political donations would help to tackle foreign interference.

45 Currently political parties can only accept donations from individuals registered on a UK electoral register or UK-registered companies which carry out business in the country.

However, there have been concerns that foreign nationals could get around the rules by donating through a foreign company that is registered in the UK.

50 The issue came to the forefront at the end of last year, when it was reported that US billionaire Elon Musk could make a donation to Reform UK through the British arm of his social media company X.

Under the plans, political parties would have to assess companies they receive donations from. (824 words)

Document 2 - Why the voting age should be lowered to 16

Young voters are becoming disillusioned with elections. Catch them early and teach them the value of democracy
The Economist, Feb 4th 2017

HOW young is too young? Rich democracies give different answers, depending on the context: in New Jersey you can buy alcohol at 21 and cigarettes at 19, join the army at 17, have sex at 16 and be tried in court as an adult at 14. Such thresholds vary wildly from place to place. Belgian youngsters can get sozzled legally at 16. But on one thing most agree: only when you have turned 18 can you vote. When campaigners suggest lowering the voting age, the riposte is that 16- and 17-year-olds are too immature. This misses the real danger: that growing numbers of young people may not vote at all.

The trend across the West is disturbing (see article). Turnout of American voters under 25 at presidential elections fell from 50% in 1972 to 38% in 2012; among over-65s it rose from 64% to 70% (data for the 2016 election are not yet available). For congressional races, the under-25 vote was a dire 17% in 2014. A similar pattern is repeated across the rich world.

Young people's disenchantment with the ballot box matters because voting is a habit: those who do not take to it young may never start. That could lead to ever-lower participation rates in decades to come, draining the legitimacy of governments in a vicious spiral in which poor turnout feeds scepticism towards democracy, and vice versa.

The disillusionment has many causes. The young tend to see voting as a choice rather than a duty (or, indeed, a privilege). The politically active tend to campaign on single issues rather than for a particular party. Politicians increasingly woo older voters—not only because they are more likely to vote but also because they make up a growing share of the electorate. Many young people see elections stacked against them. It is no surprise, then, that many of them turn away from voting.

Some countries make voting compulsory, which increases turnout rates. But that does not deal with the underlying disillusionment. Governments need to find ways to rekindle the passion, rather than continue to ignore its absence. A good step would be to lower the voting age to 16, ensuring that new voters get off to the best possible start.

This would be no arbitrary change. The usual threshold of 18 means that young people's first chance to vote often coincides with finishing compulsory education and leaving home. Away from their parents, they have no established voters to emulate and little connection to their new communities. As they move around, they may remain off the electoral roll. Sixteen-year-olds, by contrast, can easily be added to it and introduced to civic life at home and school. They can pick up the voting habit by accompanying their parents to polling stations. In Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds were eligible to vote in the independence referendum in 2014**, an impressive three-quarters of those who registered turned out on the day, compared with 54% of 18- to 24-year-olds. In 2007 Austria became the only rich country where 16-year-olds could vote in all elections. Encouragingly, turnout rates for under-18s are markedly higher than for 19- to 25-year-olds.

Merely lowering the voting age is not enough, however. Youth participation in Scotland might have been still higher if more schools had helped register pupils. Governments also need to work harder at keeping electoral rolls current. Some are experimenting with automatic updates whenever a citizen notifies a public body of a change of address. Civics lessons can be improved. Courses that promote open debate and give pupils a vote in aspects of their school lives are more likely to boost political commitment later in life than those that present dry facts about the mechanics of government.

Standing up to gerontocracy

A lower voting age would strengthen the voice of the young and signal that their opinions matter. It is they, after all, who will bear the brunt of climate change and service the debt that paid for benefits, such as pensions and health care, of today's elderly. Voting at 16 would make it easier to initiate new citizens in civic life. Above all, it would help guarantee the supply of young voters needed to preserve the vitality of democracy. Catch them early, and they will grow into better citizens. (712 words)

See also "[Millennials across the rich world are failing to vote](#)" – *The Economist*, Feb 2017

Democracies are at risk if young people continue to shun the ballot box

VIDEO Document 3 – Sixteen-year-olds to get vote in UK - but 'half don't want it'

ITV News – July 17 2025

Lewis Denison reports - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ucn9-rdGbyM&ab_channel=ITVNews

Document 4 - What happens when 16-year-olds get the vote? Other countries are already seeing the benefits

Christine Huebner



They turn out at high rates and are engaged, but don't expect electoral shocks – they're as politically diverse as anyone
The Guardian, Thu 17 Jul 2025

The government has announced it will lower the voting age to 16 for all UK elections in time for the next general election. In 1969, the UK became the first major democracy in the world to lower the voting age from 21 to 18. Few people knew what to expect from this change.

Things are different now. In places such as Austria, Argentina and Brazil, as well as parts of Germany and, in the UK, Wales and Scotland, 16- and 17-year-olds are already allowed to vote in some or all elections.

We can learn a lot from these places about what happens when 16- and 17-year-olds get the vote. My colleagues and I have spent years researching this, and our main finding is simple: nothing bad happens when the voting age is lowered to 16.

Including 16- and 17-year-olds in the electorate does not change election outcomes and it does not make elections less representative. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds are just as qualified to vote as other, older voters. Research from Germany and Austria shows that they are able to pick a political party or representative that best represents their views to the same extent as other, slightly older voters.

But some things may get better for young people and for democracy overall, especially if young people are taken seriously as voters and receive good education on political issues. Here is what to expect when 16- and 17-year-olds get to vote in the UK general election.

Higher turnout among the youngest first-time voters

When 16- and 17-year-olds get to vote at the next UK election, expect them to turn out in about the same numbers as other voters, and slightly more often than other first-time voters (those aged 18 to 20).

In Austria, Latin America, Scotland, Wales and German federal states that lowered the voting age to 16, my colleagues and I consistently find that, when allowed to vote, 16- and 17-year-olds turn out at higher rates than young people who were enfranchised at age 18.

We believe this happens because younger people who are in full-time education and often still live at home can make for better, more engaged first-time voters compared with 18- to 20-year-olds, who often experience their first election in a highly transitory phase of their lives, while moving out of the parental home, taking up work or further education.

No major changes to election outcomes

A lower voting age is unlikely to change election outcomes. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds make up between 1.5% and less than 5% of the population in **constituencies**** across the UK. They will have a very small impact on vote shares – and only in the most extreme (and improbable) scenario that all 16- and 17-year-olds turned out to vote and decided to vote in the same way.

Those who say that lowering the voting age to 16 is Labour's move to secure more votes at the next general election might be mistaken. Young people as a group have diverse political attitudes; they do not all vote for the same political parties. In Brazil, young people voted quite similarly to other age groups in the 2022 presidential election and in Austria, where young people have been enfranchised since 2007, the inclusion of 16- and 17-year-olds in the electorate did not change the political landscape.

Even for marginal elections, such as **Scotland's 2014 referendum on independence****, my colleague Jan Eichhorn from the University of Edinburgh showed that the inclusion of 16- and 17-year-olds did not change the outcome of the referendum as the youngest first-time voters cast their votes in diverse ways.

Political parties and a media that engage with younger voters

Any political party can win the support of first-time voters. To do so, political parties have to engage with young people and offer attractive policy proposals, as Laura Serra shows.

We might also see the media show more younger voters in their reporting. In 2014, BBC Scotland raised the visibility of 16- and 17-year-olds by creating a diverse panel of young first-time voters, who provided input into programmes, were panellists on productions on different political topics, and audience members for the final referendum TV debate.

Young people who are allowed to vote also influence the adults in their lives. If young people are allowed to participate in elections at 16 and 17, when most are still living at home with their parents, they have the potential to shape political discussions within the family or household. In an ageing society, political parties and a media that engage with younger voters, and dinner-table conversations about political issues and across generations, can be a good outcome.

A potentially stronger democracy

In the longer term, including 16- and 17-year-olds in the electorate might make democracy more resilient. In Austria and Latin America, young people who were enfranchised at 16 or 17 were more satisfied with democracy and democratic institutions – parliament or political parties.

55 The lowering of the voting age might also provide an opportunity to address inequalities in who participates in elections. Across all ages we see stark differences in who turns out to vote and who does not. After the lowering of the voting age in Scotland, however, we found 16- and 17-year-olds to be equally engaged with elections, regardless of their social background.

60 Schools and colleges play a crucial role in compensating for the lack of parents or peers to get young people voting. Good and statutory civic education for all young people makes a big difference for democracy in the long term. Austria has done well in combining the lowering of the voting age with a big reform of and investment in civic and citizenship education. In Scotland, young adults who remembered taking classes in school in which political issues were discussed were more likely to turn out in elections throughout their 20s. (969 words)

Christine Huebner is a lecturer in quantitative social sciences at the University of Sheffield

Opinion - Young people

Document 5 - Votes for 16-year-olds? Sorry, but I'm not convinced

If Starmer is serious about bringing young people into his 'social contract', then protecting them from the tech giants must be his priority

Simon Jenkins, *The Guardian*, Thu 17 Apr 2025 (adapted)

I remember being 16 in the 1960s. The prime minister seemed geriatric and I was sure he should be in care, while a group of us went to meet our young MP, a certain Margaret Thatcher. She was young, but she didn't 5 seem as if she was with the times. We could not dream of voting for someone like her. Matter closed.

Sixteen-year-olds are great fun but they are not grown up. They cannot marry in England and Wales, drive, smoke, get a tattoo or buy alcohol on their own. They are 10 legally classed as children and are supposed to be in formal education or training to 18. Sixteen-year-olds have not taken to the streets demanding the right to the franchise, like the Chartists or suffragettes did.

So why has Keir Starmer suddenly reiterated that he 15 intends to enfranchise them to vote in UK-wide elections? The only plausible answer is that he hopes they will vote for him. In a desperate attempt to justify this manoeuvre, he says that, if 16-year-old soldiers "are old enough to take a bullet for our country", they should get the vote. 20 (Likewise if they are "old enough to work" and "pay taxes".)

In fact, 16-year-olds are not old enough to "take a bullet", since frontline army service is banned for under-18s. Meanwhile, precious few 16-year-olds work, 25 since Starmer's own party, when last in power, made it supposedly compulsory for them to remain in education or training to 18. As for taxes, younger children already pay VAT when they spend their pocket money. The whole argument is slapdash.

30 Even the expected electoral gain to Labour is dubious. Well under half of 18-24s turned out at the last general election. There is some evidence from Scotland, which lowered the voting age to 16 in 2014 for the independence referendum and in 2016 for Scottish parliamentary 35 elections, that the new group would be active, though novelty may recently have been a factor in turnout. In Wales, which lowered the voting age to 16 in 2021 for *Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist*

Senedd and local government elections, early evidence 40 suggests that the new group plans to vote at a similarly low rate to other age groups under 55. Either way, Starmer would be lucky to see more than half of his 1.5 million new voters actually turning out, with perhaps about a third of those voting for him. Even then, the general assumption that the young are leftwing has taken a bruising recently 45 from rightwing influencers.

Where Starmer must be right is in wanting to bring young people into what he pompously calls his "social contract" with gen Z. Here, his absolute priority should not be the ballot box, but how he proposes to prepare the new 50 cohort for their responsibilities. With social media so clearly dominant over the views and behaviour of those whose support he seeks, its proper regulation should be a priority for any such reform.

The present government shows no interest in such 55 regulation. Indeed, if anything, quite the reverse. Rumour has it that Starmer, in his attempt to reduce tariffs, is on the brink of pledging no further curbs on the tech giants, in view of their closeness to Donald Trump. This would follow the cabinet's apparent capitulation to those same 60 giants in the matter of copyright and artificial intelligence. All this suggests a complete lack of concern for what must currently be the greatest threat to the mental health of gen Z. All Starmer has done is boast that he watched Adolescence. So what now: voting at 13?

65 The truth of the matter is that teenagers are acquiring many skills and attitudes from social media. It is online that they are gaining a whole new context for their personal and social lives. They are doing so from the worst possible 70 sources: biased, uncensored, unmediated and unregulated. It must be the worst preparation for that most sacred of democratic rituals – the vote. This is the grim reality of Starmer's new social contract. (664 words)

Part Two – Young voters in the U.S.: analysing the 2024 elections

DOCUMENT 7 - How young voters helped to put Trump in the White House

The Economist, 27 May 2025 (abridged)

The 2024 election unfolded like a political thriller, replete with a last-minute candidate change, a cover-up, assassination attempts and ultimately the triumphant return of a convicted felon. But amid the spectacle, a quieter transformation took place. For the first time, millennials and Gen Z, people born between 1981 and 2006, comprised a plurality of the electorate. Their drift towards Donald Trump shaped the outcome.

5 Millennials and Gen Z are the most diverse and educated generations in American history, traits long thought to favour the Democratic Party. Yet a new report from Catalist, a left-leaning political-data firm, shows that although Democrats still won a majority of young voters, their long-standing advantage over the Republican Party was reduced by nearly two-thirds. In 2024 Kamala Harris's margin of victory among these voters was 12 points smaller than was Joe Biden's in 2020, a bigger swing than for any other cohort. The exodus was caused in large part by non-whites and helped propel Mr Trump back into the White House. But many of these voters lack firm partisan loyalties. They are still up for grabs.

10 Younger voters appear highly sensitive to economic pressures. They earn less than their elders and are less likely to own their home or have substantial savings. America's overall unemployment rate was a healthy 4.2% in November 2024. But the figure was nearly double that for 20- to 24-year-olds and roughly triple that for 18- and 19-year-olds. Younger voters were more likely to say that the economy was the most important issue to them and substantially less likely to cite immigration. [...]

15 One reason all groups of young people swung against the Democrats in 2024 seems to be their perceptions of the economy. In polling conducted by YouGov/The Economist before the election, 18- to 29-year-olds gave Mr Biden a net rating of minus 23 percentage points on his handling of inflation, for example. Indeed, The Economist's analysis of the Consumer Expenditure Surveys found that young people's consumption habits meant they were exposed to higher rates of inflation in 2021 and 2022, when prices were rising at their fastest. The Fed reports that used cars and fuel make up a larger portion of young people's (and especially Latinos') spending. Prices for those goods rose dramatically in 2021 and 2022.

20 Yet economic stress is not the only plausible explanation for young voters' desertion of the Democratic Party. They are also more likely to consume news from non-traditional sources. YouGov's pre-election polling showed that six in ten young people had learned something new about Mr Trump from social media; one in four had heard new information about him from podcasts. In the final days of the campaign Mr Trump went on a tour of "bro podcasts", fishing for viral moments. Social media were also a hotbed for left-wing criticism of Mr Biden and Ms Harris, especially of their handling of the conflict in Gaza. Analysis by Blue Rose Research, a Democratic firm, found that voters who got their news from TikTok were substantially more likely to switch to the Republican Party, even after controlling for other factors. [...]

DOCUMENT 8 - How COVID Pushed a Generation of Young People to the Right

Derek Thompson, *The Atlantic*, 18 February 2025 (abridged)

For decades, America's young voters have been deeply—and famously—progressive. In 2008, a youthquake sent Barack Obama to the White House. In 2016, voters ages 18 to 29 broke for Hillary Clinton by 18 points. In 2020, they voted for Joe Biden by 24 points. In 2024, Donald Trump closed most of the gap, losing voters under 30 by a 51–47 margin. In one recent CBS poll, Americans under 30 weren't just evenly split between the parties. They were even more pro-Trump than Boomers over 65.

Precisely polling teens and 20-somethings is a fraught business; some surveys suggest that Trump's advantage among young people might already be fading. But young people's apparent lurch right is not an American-only trend. [...]

10 What's driving this global [rightward shift]? It's hard to say for sure. Maybe the entire world is casting a protest vote after several years of inflation. Last year was the largest wipeout for political incumbents in the developed world since the end of the Second World War. One level deeper, it wasn't inflation on its own, but rather the combination of weak real economic growth and record immigration that tilled the soil for far-right upstarts, who can criticize progressive governments on both sides of the Atlantic for their failure to look out for their own citizens first.

15 There is another potential driver of the global right turn: the pandemic.

Pandemics might not initially seem to cash out in any particular political direction. After all, in the spring of 2020, one possible implication of the pandemic seemed to be that it would unite people behind a vision of collective sacrifice—or, at least, collective appreciation for health professionals, or for the effect of vaccines to reduce severe illness among adults. But political science suggests that pandemics are more likely to reduce rather than build trust in scientific authorities. One cross-country analysis published by the Systemic Risk Center at the London School of Economics found that people who experience epidemics between the ages of 18 and 25 have less confidence in their scientific and political leadership. [...]

25 Another way that COVID may have accelerated young people's [rightward shift] in America and around the world was by dramatically reducing their physical-world socializing. That led, in turn, to large increases in social-media time that boys and girls spent alone. The Norwegian researcher Ruben B. Mathisen has written that "social media [creates] separate online spheres for men and women." By trading gender-blended hangouts in basements and restaurants for gender-segregated online spaces, young men's politics became more distinctly pro-male—and, more to the point, anti-feminist, according to Mathisen. [...]

30 New ideologies are messy to describe and messier still to name. But in a few years, what we've grown accustomed to calling Generation Z may reveal itself to contain a subgroup: Generation C, COVID-affected and, for now, strikingly conservative. For this micro-generation of young people in the United States and throughout the West, social media has served as a crucible where several trends have fused together: declining trust in political and scientific authorities, anger about the excesses of feminism and social justice, and a preference for rightward politics.

DOCUMENT 9 - How Democratic Gen Z activists lost the Gen Z vote

Christian Paz, Vox, 14 January 2025 (abridged)

Six months ago, young Democrats were preparing for a very different conversation. They were breathing a sigh of relief after Joe Biden formally dropped out of the 2024 presidential contest. Gen Z, some said, was ready to feel the "#Kamalove" and break with the past that Biden represented. [...]

At least, that's what was expected.

5 Here's what happened instead. Donald Trump's favorability among young Americans continued to improve, trending up or remaining steady as it had been for most of the last year. He continued his strategy of campaigning through influencers and on unconventional media platforms and podcasts, betting his celebrity appeal and anti-establishment message would reach voters, especially young men, who didn't usually care for politics.

10 On the Democratic side, Harris's honeymoon period ended. The campaign would turn more negative, and polls showed Harris reaching a ceiling in youth support. [...]

I can tease out three structural reasons these youth vote groups might have struggled.

First, there was an overarching mismatch between the kind of people doing this youth outreach work and the kind of people they needed to persuade.

15 While not all of these youth activists and their organizations are the same, they do tend to take positions to the left of the mainstream Democratic Party and of the electorate at large. They are run by college students, recent graduates, or high school volunteers who might aspire to run for office themselves, or at least work in government. [...]

20 That level of education, ideological bent, political aspiration, urban residency, and engagement with political news and information makes them ontologically different from the average zoomer, who, if not conservative, has always tended to lean more centrist or ideologically moderate than is assumed, probably is not attending a prestigious or selective university (if they were working toward a college degree at all), and is not particularly attuned to political developments. [...]

25 This divide led to a second kind of mismatch. Youth organizations and their members doubled down on talking about issues, including Republican threats to reproductive rights; Trump's disregard for democratic norms and doubling down on stolen election and authoritarian rhetoric; and action on climate change, gun safety, and social justice. They thought — and had reason to believe, based on polling and qualitative research — these were topics young people cared about, and they hoped their focus on them could be enough to overcome discontent with the status quo.

30 Sure, they talked about the economy, about inflation, and about Harris's policy vision for a "new way forward," but some were hampered by their previous support of Biden, by being unable to present a case for Harris freed from Trump, or by doubling down on talk about jobs created, low unemployment, or rising wages, when that wasn't what young people believed.

All this made it more difficult to talk about campaign issues with voters who were distrustful of Democrats and not necessarily convinced to care more about issues other than the economy. [...]

35 There was one more structural limit to how much persuasion and campaigning these organizers could do online or through earned and paid media and advertising. Though it was hard to realize at the time, much of the messaging, digital organizing, and campaign outreach these youth groups were doing was happening in digital echo chambers.

40 Liberal and progressive influencers, celebrity endorsers, memes, and digital messaging may only have been reaching like-minded people, who didn't need much work to be convinced to vote at all and to vote for Harris. Here, the Brat summer and coconut-tree memes that filled social media in July and early August function as an easy stand-in. While it felt like the memes and jokes were ubiquitous, saturating young people everywhere, they may have only served to entertain and encourage those users who were already predisposed to like the Democrats or view Harris positively. [...]

DOCUMENT 10



Ted Rall, www.cartoonstock.com, August 18, 2023.



[Leaders](#) | Electoral volatility

Document 11 - Is British politics broken? Its centre is cracking

The two traditional parties of government are under siege as never before

The Economist, Sep 11th 2025

When Sir Keir Starmer was elected just over a year ago, Labour ministers warned that their government was Britain's last chance to see off populism. The political centre has sprung a leak even sooner than they feared. Just one in five voters now supports the government; Sir Keir's personal ratings as prime minister are dire. On September 5th Angela Rayner, his deputy, resigned over unpaid taxes, prompting a wide cabinet reshuffle.

5 The extremes, meanwhile, are all fired up. Whereas the Conservative Party is moribund, Nigel Farage, the leader of the hard-right Reform UK, told his party conference that he would be prime minister as soon as 2027. Although Reform has just four MPs, he is not delusional: were an election held tomorrow, Reform would have a coin-toss chance of a majority. Other insurgents sense their moment, too. Zack Polanski, a self-styled "eco-populist", is the new leader of the once-fusty Green Party, with a pitch to be the Farage of the left. Jeremy Corbyn, whose self-belief
10 is undented by four and a half calamitous years as the Labour Party's leader, is running a new hard-left outfit.

Britain is not the only democracy where the centre is crumbling. On September 8th France's centrist government fell over spending cuts, caught in a pincer of the hard left and right. In Germany the established centre parties have steadily lost votes, as the political system has fragmented. The middle is hollowing out in America, too, as voters are polarised between MAGA and a mob of fight-the-oligarchy lefties. The difference is that Sir Keir still has a
15 commanding majority in the House of Commons. He must use it.

Some believe the problem he faces is that British politics is plunged into incoherence. Voters, sick of low growth and failing public services, have become grouchy and fickle, ready to follow any party that lets them vent their frustration. The other theory is that Britons, fed up with immigration, are suddenly lurching towards nativism. Accordingly, Labour's stock is falling and Reform's is rising because voters are shifting en masse from the centre-
20 left to the radical right. Neither theory is correct.

In fact, the Brexit referendum of 2016 accelerated a trend in which age and education, rather than class, are the best predictors of voting behaviour. Work by the British Election Study, a research project, shows how this is splitting left-leaning young graduates from right-leaning pensioners. At the same time, voters see political parties as clustered in two ideologically distinct blocs, on the left and the right.

25 Most of the volatility comes from Britons switching among parties within "their" bloc, not from one bloc to the other. Labour is losing voters to parties to its left; the Tories to Reform. In the general election of 2024, the two old parties won a combined vote share of 57%. That was the lowest since 1910, but it was a triumph compared with today's polls, which give them a total of just 39%.

An injection of fresh competition into Britain's stale two-party system should be healthy. Voters have been badly
30 served; no wonder they are shopping around for something better. In practice, however, it could make Britain much harder to govern. When electoral fragmentation meets Britain's ancient first-past-the-post voting system, it produces unpredictable results. (...)

For most of the 20th century, the tendency of elections to be won from the centre ground by parties with broad, stable coalitions was a force for moderate, reforming governments. But when the centre crumbles, the fringes call
35 the shots. Prime ministers panic. They keep their bases sweet with giveaways or empty gestures. And they spend

political capital to rally their base against the enemy—which is why Sir Keir is eagerly pumping up the prospect of Prime Minister Farage.

40 These short-term measures have tactical advantages for the centre, but they are strategically self-defeating. When governing parties put off painful reforms that take time to pay off, they forgo the progress that ultimately boosts their chances of re-election.

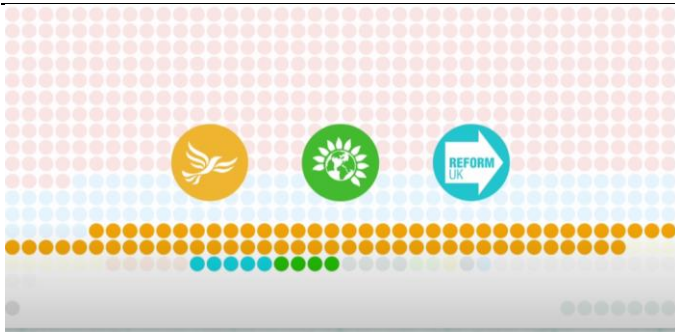
That should be a warning for Sir Keir. Labour's long-term interest, and the country's, is in pursuing reforms that help revive Britain's anaemic growth and ease public anger. There are signs Sir Keir understands this. (...) [If he fails,] rather than emerging as the fixer of Britain's broken centre, Sir Keir will have wasted the best chance to save it. ■

Document 11 – Infographic - How unpopular is Britain's Labour government?

Polling

<https://www.economist.com/interactive/2025-british-politics>

Document 12 - VIDEO – TDLR News - Is the UK Still a Two-Party System?



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNr_cIzHrnc

Britain Is Manifesting Nigel Farage as Its Next Prime Minister

By Sam Knight, *The New Yorker*, September 21, 2025



Nigel Farage, the leader of Reform U.K., speaking on Monday, in London. Photograph by Dan Kitwood / Getty

Nigel Farage's Reform U.K. Party—the latest incarnation of the right-wing, anti-immigrant political movement that he has led for twenty years—has been atop the British polls for the past six months. It is currently polling at thirty per cent, ten points ahead of the Labour government. If there were a general election tomorrow, there is a plausible chance that Reform would win hundreds of seats in the House of Commons; that the duopoly of Labour and the Conservatives, which has ruled British politics for a century, would be broken; and that Farage, once nicknamed Mr. Brexit by his friend Donald Trump, would be Prime Minister.

There are plenty of sane, sensible arguments for why this won't happen. For one thing, according to the law, there

15 doesn't need to be a general election until the summer of 2029. But British politics haven't been sane or sensible for a long time—since Brexit, really, the last time that Farage jolted the country's traditional two-party system off the rails. So, instead of looking upon the rise of Reform with

20 resolve or equanimity (the Party currently has five members of Parliament, less than one per cent of the total), everyone is losing their mind. Whether out of shock, revulsion, or genuine affection—according to the polling firm YouGov, Farage is the most popular politician in the

25 country—all that anyone can talk about is the unthinkable possibility of a Reform government, thus making it more thinkable by the day. The political center, occupied by Keir Starmer's Labour Party and what remains of the

moderate wing of the Conservative Party, is the most
30 morbidly mesmerized of all. Watching mainstream British
politicians obsess over the threat of Farage is a bit like
watching the video on the internet of the guy standing
motionless on the beach in Thailand, the water draining
around his ankles, waiting for the tsunami to arrive.
35 Farage, who is sixty-one, doesn't need the help. He is
already the country's most capable politician by a mile.
Earlier this month, I went to see him speak at a Reform
Party conference in Birmingham. Britain's main political
parties generally stage conferences in the fall, to debate
40 policy, raise funds, and gird themselves for the
parliamentary year ahead. In Reform's case, the gathering
felt more like a celebration: the culmination of a long
summer of Farage-led stunts, interviews, and speeches that
had successfully bored their way into the nation's brain.
45 The Party's messaging isn't subtle. In July, while
Parliament was in recess, Farage had staged a Lawless
Britain campaign, during which he claimed, variously, that
people were afraid to walk the streets of London after
9 P.M.; that "droves of unvetted men," a.k.a. asylum
50 seekers, were loose in the country, posing a threat to
women and girls; and that crimes such as shoplifting and
cellphone theft now go unpunished by the police. Parts of
the country, Farage warned, were facing "nothing short of
societal collapse."
55 The following month, Farage announced Operation
Restoring Justice, Reform's plan for the deportation of six
hundred thousand illegal migrants. Caught on their heels,
neither Labour nor the Conservatives particularly objected

to Farage's diagnoses of Britain's problems, just his
60 methods for addressing them.

The conference in Birmingham was branded "The Next
Step," and you could buy turquoise-and-white Reform-
branded soccer shirts with "29" on the back (indicating
victory in 2029), for forty pounds each. Up close, you are
65 reminded how thin and gimmicky the Party still is.
(Reform was formed in 2021, when Farage rebranded his
previous electoral vehicle, the Brexit Party.) A lot of the
conference booths in Birmingham belonged to blockchain
or crypto businesses. The most eye-catching display,
70 reaching upward to the conference-hall ceiling, was for
Direct Bullion, a gold dealer, decorated with pictures of
Farage clutching a gold coin.

And yet Reform possesses something that Britain's
traditional political parties can only dream of. "It was
75 weird to be at a party conference at the moment where
people were happy," Luke Tryl, the executive director of
More in Common U.K., a think tank, founded in 2016, that
explores political polarization, told me. As in the U.S.,
Tryl observed, the main fault line currently running
80 through British politics is not to do with left or right but
with whether voters feel pro- or anti-system. He said that
More in Common's most revealing research question for
understanding the British public was to test respondents'
reaction to the statement: "When I think about our political
85 and social institutions, I cannot help thinking 'just let them
all burn.' " "Crudely, you've got about sixty per cent who
are 'Preserve and improve,' but forty per cent who are
'Burn it all down,' " Tryl said. "Reform's popularity
comes from the 'Burn it all down.' "

Far-Right Rally in London Draws Huge Crowd and a Counterprotest

By Mark Landler, Reporting from London, *The New York Times*, Sept. 13, 2025

Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched
through central London on Saturday in a rally organized
by the far-right activist Tommy Robinson, setting off
sporadic clashes with the police and putting the British
5 capital on edge.

Speaking to the crowd via video link, Elon Musk, who
helped raise Mr. Robinson's profile last year, said that the
left was "the party of murder" and urged protesters to
"fight back."

10 Thousands of antiracism protesters massed in a
counter-demonstration away from the far-right marchers.
About 1,000 police officers set up barriers between the
dueling protests near the Houses of Parliament.

Some far-right protesters battled with the police after
15 trying to breach the barriers. The Metropolitan Police said
that its officers had been assaulted and struck by bottles
and that it had brought in reinforcements on horses to keep
the crowd back. Video shared by the Metropolitan Police

showed protesters skirmishing with officers, who said they
20 had arrested nine people by 5 p.m.

Earlier, under the banner "Unite the Kingdom," they
marched across the Thames and past Big Ben, a sea of
Union Jacks and English and Scottish flags rippling amid
sporadic gusty downpours. Some carried placards calling
25 for the deportation of asylum seekers who cross the
English Channel in small boats.

It was a muscular display of support for Mr. Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon. A divisive figure who has roamed the fringes of the British right for 30 decades, he has served multiple prison sentences, most recently after being sentenced to 18 months in 2024 for defying a court order by repeating false claims about a teenage Syrian refugee who had sued him for libel.

Mr. Robinson, 42, was released in May after a court 35 reduced his sentence to seven months. He vowed then to organize a free-speech festival for his supporters, which took on greater resonance after the fatal shooting of the American right-wing activist Charlie Kirk this week on a college campus in Utah.

40 The organizers listed **Stephen K. Bannon**, former chief strategist to President Trump, as one of the speakers. On Thursday, however, Mr. Bannon said he had opted to stay in the United States to host his podcast, “War Room,” from Utah, before heading to Arizona, where Mr. Kirk 45 lived with his family.

Early in his career, Mr. Robinson founded the **English Defence League***, a nationalist, anti-Muslim group known for its violent street protests in the late 2000s and 2010s. His profile has waxed and waned since then, but it got a 50 lift in the last year because of Mr. Musk, who has championed him on social media, pinning the slogan “Free Tommy Robinson” to his feed on X.

Mr. Robinson was barred from the platform in 2018, when it was still called Twitter, for breaching rules on 55 “hateful conduct.” The following year, his accounts on Facebook and Instagram were also banned.

After Mr. Musk bought Twitter and renamed it X, Mr. Robinson’s account was reinstated. On Saturday, Mr. Robinson boasted about the size of the crowd — 60 “MILLIONS,” he claimed — and posted a video clip of a young Frenchman, wearing a Union Jack bucket hat, who said he had attended in “homage to Charlie Kirk,” adding, “we support you across the sea.”

Mr. Musk was the rally’s biggest draw, appearing on a 65 large screen to tell the crowd that “there’s got to be a



Getty images

change of government in Britain.” British people, he said, are “scared to exercise their free speech.”

The police estimated the turnout at 110,000, according to *The Guardian*, though crowd sizes are traditionally 70 difficult to estimate, while the counterprotest drew about 5,000. Video footage showed the main protest surrounding a large movie theater in Waterloo and later stretching along several city blocks. (...)

The police came under pressure last weekend after they 75 arrested more than 800 people at a rally in support of the pro-Palestinian group Palestine Action, which has been banned by the British government under terrorism laws. Those laws criminalize the wearing, display or publication of anything that “arouses reasonable suspicion” of support 80 for a banned group.

The arrests sharpened a debate in Britain over free speech, which both Mr. Robinson and critics on the left claim is being suppressed.

[Mark Landler](#) is the London bureau chief of *The Times*, 85 covering the United Kingdom, as well as American foreign policy in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. He has been a journalist for more than three decades.

After the far-right mass rally in London, Britain must learn lessons from abroad – and fast

Cas Mudde, *The Guardian*, Fri 19 Sep 2025

The size of Tommy Robinson’s “unite the kingdom” rally, as well as the violence of some protesters, should serve as a wake-up call for British democrats. It’s now time to abandon the failed fantasies and strategies. Time to accept that Britain, or more specifically, England – as the far right is much less prominent in Scotland and Wales – is not an exception to the global trend.

5 Here are some home truths from abroad. After this rally, the centre left should finally put to bed Labour’s illusion that it can compete with the far right on anti-immigration issues. As I argued in the *Guardian* in 2019: “Copying the far right isn’t going to save the left.” If decades of experiences in the rest of western Europe won’t convince Keir Starmer, then hopefully a recent authoritative study on his own policies will. Adopting nativist discourse and policies does not win back far-right voters. It leads to losses for centrist and leftwing parties. Moreover, it raises the salience 10 of the topic and the expectations of the government, which will always fall short in the eyes of far-right voters, as the “unite the kingdom” rally shows painfully.

For the centre right, the rally should end its fantasies that Brexit has prevented the rise of the far right in the UK. Obviously, that didn’t happen. The “unite the kingdom” rally follows a summer of anti-immigrant rallies, while

15 Reform UK has been polling first for months now, not just replacing the Tories as the party of the right, but also eclipsing Labour. This is not surprising, as Nigel Farage's various parties were never mere single-issue parties. In fact, Farage had already moved on to the immigration issue before Brexit, while immigration was the key issue for Brexit supporters in the 2016 referendum on European Union membership.

20 Moreover, it is high time for Britons from the left and right to shed their "British exceptionalism" and accept that the UK, and England in particular, is very much part of the fourth phase of the far right in the postwar era. This phase, which started at the beginning of this century, is characterised by the mainstreaming, radicalisation and globalisation of the far right – all of which were on display at the "unite the kingdom" rally.

25 It was already evident, not just in the continuous anti-migrant rhetoric and policies of the Starmer government, but also in the media coverage of the "unite the kingdom" rally. Notably, rightwing media such as the Spectator and the Telegraph exaggerated the number of protesters, while bending over backwards to emphasise that this was a "normal" rally and that the protesters were "no racists".

Several years ago, Tommy Robinson, or more accurately, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon – an extreme-right activist with multiple criminal convictions – was too toxic for anyone with something to lose in British politics and society to associate with. Today, he is the major challenger to Farage for the voice of the nativist right. That also explains, in part, why Farage continues to keep his distance from him.

30 Finally, the rally clearly illustrated the increasing globalisation of the far right, with speeches from international figures such as French politician Éric Zemmour and South African-US billionaire tech bro Elon Musk. (Steve Bannon from the US was slated to speak, but did not.) Musk is of particular importance here, as he has repeatedly expressed his preference for Robinson over Farage. Musk has been weighing in on far-right politics in various European countries, including Germany, where he made online appearances at meetings of the extreme-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party, even claiming that "only AfD can save Germany".

35 In short, Britain is not exceptional and Brexit did not solve its far-right problem. If there is one thing that British democrats should learn from the activities of the far right, it is to look for lessons and support beyond the UK's shores.

40 They should heed the mistakes of others. Both Labour and Tories must see that copying the far right does not work. And Labour has to accept that it has not lost most of its voters to Reform but to the Liberal Democrats and Greens.

Moreover, given the increased fragmentation of British politics – again, a broader phenomenon evident in other countries – democrats must accept that they will be increasingly dependent on coalition politics. The natural coalition partners of Labour are the centrist and leftwing parties, particularly as long as the Tories continue to try to out-Reform Reform. So Labour should think ahead. Continuing its nativist, authoritarian policies and rhetoric will not only lose the party more voters to those parties, but it will also make coalition formation with them more difficult.

45 In the future, the ability to do that may be crucial.

- Cas Mudde is the Stanley Wade Shelton UGAF professor of international affairs at the University of Georgia, and author of *The Far Right Today*



Soutien à Tommy Robinson, fondateur du mouvement d'extrême droite English Defence League, lors d'un rassemblement à Londres, le 27 juillet 2024. HENRY NICHOLLS / AFP

A contemporary history of Britain's far right – and how it helps explain why so many people went to the Unite the Kingdom rally in London

The Conversation, September 24, 2025

Aaron Edwards, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Leicester

The recent “Unite the Kingdom” rally in London shows how easy it is for the radical right to mobilise a mass protest by repackaging a perennial issue as a moral panic. It did so by fusing together fears of migration and crime

5 with a rising distrust in government.

There were calls for “remigration”, mass deportation and even the dissolution of parliament as well as violent clashes with police. There was also a level of confusion among some of the thousands of people who

10 attended as to whether they were protesting for freedom of speech or lending their voices to a racist cause.

Although the scale of the demonstration was surprising to many, far-right activism has a long history in the UK.

In the contemporary era, it dates back to the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s. But it was the increase in immigration in the 1950s – the Windrush era – that saw a new generation of far-right activists emerge.

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In the years that followed, Britain's far right switched its focus from antisemitism to opposing migration from the country's colonies and former colonies. This was captured best, perhaps, in the infamous “rivers of blood” speech delivered by Conservative MP Enoch Powell in 1968.

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By the 1980s, the British National Party (BNP) emerged, growing to make considerable electoral headway in the 1990s and 2000s before its base ultimately crumbled due to its toxic image.

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In its wake, the far-right morphed into street protest movements like the English Defence League (EDL) and the Football Lads Alliance. Extremist “direct action” groups like Combat-18, a neo-Nazi group that grew out of the BNP in the 1990s, would also be replaced by National Action and the Patriotic Alternative.

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These violent fringe groups were banned but others have replaced them and grown in influence. They include the cultural nationalist movement coalescing around former EDL leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, known popularly as “Tommy Robinson” – the man behind the Unite the Kingdom rally in London.

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Extremism expert Chris Allen has noted how the re-emergence of radical right protest activism had its medium-term origins in the 2016 Brexit referendum. This relates to how some pro-Leave politicians promoted issues that had “a clear resonance with the traditional and contemporary radical-right” – such as border security and sovereignty.

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Rightwing extremist activity ranged from the murder of Jo Cox MP a week prior to the Brexit referendum to street agitation whipped up by other fringe far-right groups, like Britain First. According to the Tony Blair Institute for

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narrative on key political and social issues, including immigration, Brexit and Islam”.



Protestors on the Unite the Kingdom march, organised by the far right, block the path of counter-protesters in London. Alamy/Leo Bild

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The anxiety around immigration had already found its way into mainstream political discourse on the doorsteps during the 2015 general election. Narrative tropes about “taking back control of our borders” became part of everyday political rhetoric. In the aftermath of the election of that year, prime minister David Cameron made cracking down on immigration a priority.

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As antagonism towards the EU began to recede in the years after the Brexit referendum, the fear of irregular immigration came much more to the fore. So too did a rise in racism and race-related hate crimes.

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Many of these hate crimes happened in the wake of Islamist terror attacks in 2017, though the arrival of the COVID pandemic superseded fears surrounding terrorism. And as the UK re-emerged from COVID lockdowns, little consideration was given by the British state to the growing security challenge posed by irregular immigration.

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It was in this context that a tipping point was reached. In July 2024, after the murder of three children in Southport, radical-right social media influencers and other bad actors stirred up riots across 27 towns and cities in England and Northern Ireland. Thousands of people were radicalised by the language of a moral panic, played out in the new domain of social media.

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Illegal immigration as a form of moral panic

Sociologist Stanley Cohen coined the term “moral panic” in his important 1972 book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. He described how a “condition, episode, person or group...emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests” and is then presented in a stereotyped fashion by the media.

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Perhaps the most famous of these moral panics came in the immediate aftermath of a huge 1964 brawl in the seaside town of Clacton between mods and rockers, two rival youth counter-cultures. Cohen's argument was that the reaction ended up being wildly disproportionate to the

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severity of the original incident. Local authorities in towns and cities as far away as Belfast were forced to issue statements reassuring the public they did not have a “hooligan problem”.

In 2002, Cohen demonstrated how the same phenomenon was being playing out in relation to immigration. He remarked that the once morally untouchable category of political refugee was becoming “deconstructed”. In Cohen’s opinion, British governments were starting from a broad consensus that “we must keep out as many refugee-type foreigners as possible” and that “these people always lie to get themselves accepted”. To be accepted, they must be “eligible” and “credible”.

It was in the ensuing decades, one could argue, that moral panics centring on the triumvirate of migration, crime and security began to emerge in Germany, Italy and the UK.

The British tabloid media led this new moral panic, greatly aided by two intersecting and overlapping empirical realities: the rising tide of concern over increasing immigration in the UK – and Europe more broadly – and the repackaging of ethnically competitive politics as a new form of everyday reality. In the far-right worldview, politics is about the zero-sum nature of power relations between different ethnic groups.

Old tropes, new moral panics

● The Guardian Lexicon

Populist, nativist, neofascist? A lexicon of Europe’s far right

[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*, Tue 18 Jun 2024

They are known, variously, as far right, national-conservative, radical right, anti-Islam, nativist, and Eurosceptic. Also as extreme right, populist, “alt-right”, neofascist, anti-immigration, nationalist, authoritarian, and assorted combinations of the above.

As the dust settles on the results of this month’s [European parliamentary elections](#), it is worth examining what some of the terms routinely used to describe Europe’s wide array of far-right parties mean – and whether they are always the right ones.

Radical right

Based on the work of [Cas Mudde](#), an expert on populism and the far right at the University of Georgia, **radical right** parties are defined as those that espouse two core ideologies: **nativism** (seen as the most significant), and **authoritarianism**.

Nativism is the belief that “states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the ‘native group’, and that ‘non-native elements’ fundamentally threaten the homogeneous nation state”.

That explains the core focus on immigration of radical right parties such as Marine Le Pen’s National Rally (RN) in France, Freedom Party (PVV) in the Netherlands, Vox in Spain or Fidesz in Hungary.

Nativism is a prominent form of **exclusionism**; radical right parties are typically also exclusionist towards other “outgroups” besides non-natives, including people of different religions (Muslims, for example) or gender and sexual orientation.

What we are now seeing is a new politicisation of a long-running issue. Humanitarian responses to asylum seekers have been replaced with the trappings of a moral panic about irregular immigration.

Moral panics do not, as Cohen reminds us, necessarily reflect the reality of the situation, only the anxiety of those who spread it. That does not mean there are no serious concerns underpinning these issues, only that they have been magnified and, importantly, amplified by the far-right’s sophisticated embrace of new technology. This situation is, at its core, a crisis in confidence between a section of the population and the government.

As we move towards towards the next UK election, further disillusionment is more likely to manifest itself in increased electoral support for parties like Reform UK and Advance UK, particularly if they continue to play to hardline supporters. In a recent YouGov survey, 44% of those surveyed said Reform’s immigration policy, which includes mass deportation was about right or not tough enough.

While radical-right demonstrations promoting the totemic policy of “remigration” remain largely peaceful, there is a danger that the mainstreaming of such extremist rhetoric will only serve as a driver towards radicalisation for a new generation of far-right extremists.

Authoritarianism is “the belief in a strictly ordered society” in which infringements are “punished severely”, hence a second key focus of the far right: a hardline approach to law and order, as seen, for example, in Germany’s AfD or Austria’s FPÖ.

Unlike **extreme right** parties, **radical right** parties generally operate within the boundaries of the democratic framework: they are not working actively to subvert the democratic system, and they tend not to approve the use of violence.

Extreme right

Extreme right parties share the same two central ideologies of radical right parties, but unlike them, their ultimate objective is to overthrow the existing democratic order, and they have no objection to violence in achieving their ends.

While it participates in elections, the Dutch Forum for Democracy (FvD), which promotes conspiracy theories and the establishment of a “countersociety”, is generally considered **extreme right**, as too is Greece’s [neo-Nazi Golden Dawn](#).

Far right

Many political scientists, including those involved in The PopuList, use the term “**far right**” as a catch-all descriptor for parties considered **radical** or **extreme** right. This can be because there is a doubt about which category a party falls into – for example, because some elements within a party may be more extreme than others so its messaging is inconsistent, or because a party’s position has changed or is changing.

“In practice, it’s often difficult to decide,” said Matthijs Rooduijn, a leading member of The PopuList team. “Some party members may make multiple extremist dog-whistles, but in its formal statements it may just be radical.”

Parties that are only moderately far right, or whose positions have moderated over time, may be described as **borderline far right**.

Populist

Populist parties, again using the definition proposed by Mudde, are defined as those that “endorse the ideas that society is ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, a ‘pure people’ v a ‘corrupt elite’”.

Populist parties also argue that politics should be “an expression of the will of the people”. Anything that stands between “the will of the people” and policymaking they dislike and, in power, may try to weaken: a free press, an independent judiciary.

Many, but not all, far-right parties are obviously also populist. When that is the case, however, said Rooduijn, “it’s always best to say so. Just ‘populist’ can make them seem more moderate than they are.”

(Populism is not, of course, confined to the far right: many leftwing and far left parties are also considered populist, such as the Smer (Direction) party of Slovakia’s prime minister, Robert Fico, or France Unbowed (LFI), led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon.)

Hard right

Hard right is a term that has been widely used by media outlets, including *the Guardian* (and *The Economist*). Rooduijn advised against it. “I think it’s more confusing than anything else,” he said.

Often, the term is used to describe parties that may have moderated their tone or stances while campaigning for an election, or once they are in government. “Parties do change over time; they can become more, or less, moderate,” Rooduijn said.

“But we avoid changing parties’ classifications when they’re in government. Parties have to compromise if they’re in a coalition with more moderate partners, they have to be less radical. But once they’re out, often you see their identity hasn’t changed.”

Conservative, Eurosceptic, climate-sceptic

To a greater or lesser extent, Europe’s **far-right** parties – besides their core focus on **nativism** and other **exclusionary** ideologies and, in most cases, their **populist** approach – can share a multitude of other ideological stances.

To differing degrees, many are **Eurosceptic**, with beliefs ranging from “outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration”, and of one’s

country’s membership, to “contingent or qualified opposition”.

Some, particularly in central and eastern Europe, are socially **ultra-conservative**, promoting the concepts of duty, patriotism and traditional values, family structures, gender roles and sexual relations.

Increasingly, many are also **climate-sceptic**, either rejecting the science of climate change entirely or resisting and seeking to delay efforts towards the green transition.

Many are also **illiberal** – setting out to capture the judiciary and media, usurping constitutional bodies, attacking civil society – and “**anti-woke**”.

But what matters most, said Rooduijn, is that core ideology. Is it **nativist**, **exclusionary of outgroups**, **authoritarian**?

Then you have a far-right party.

So which parties qualify?

By these criteria, **Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)**, which finished second (ahead of all three members of the governing coalition) in the European parliamentary elections in Germany, can be classified as far right, populist – and with an extremist element.

RN, which finished first in France with a victory so crushing it prompted Emmanuel Macron to dissolve parliament, is far right and populist, although relatively leftwing – albeit nationalist – in socioeconomic policy.

Despite its relative moderation as regards cooperating with the EU and running national economic policy, Giorgia Meloni’s **Brothers of Italy**, whose roots are widely considered neofascist, qualifies as far right, populist and socially conservative.

The Finns, currently constrained by being in coalition, are far right and populist; the Sweden Democrats, also with extreme-right roots, are now far right and populist; the Danish People’s party is far right – although arguably more moderate than many.

Vox in Spain is far right and populist as well as anti-feminist and economically rightwing. **Chega** in Portugal is far right and populist, with a strong focus on immigration, Islam, and “political correctness”.

Austria’s **FPÖ** is far right and populist, as are **PVV** in the Netherlands (with an emphasis on Islamophobia), Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz in Hungary (also illiberal, and with strong anti-LGBTQI+ views) and Poland’s **Law & Justice** (PiS).

Finally, a number of Europe’s mainstream centre right parties, including France’s Les Républicains (LR), the Netherlands’ VVD and Britain’s Conservatives, have adopted nativist policy platforms, most notably on immigration.

In The PopuList’s 2023 iteration, only the fact that exclusionism was not a core component of their ideologies prevented the academics from classifying them as borderline far right.