

# SOMETHING ROTTEN IN THE HEARTLANDS?

ETHNIC COMPETITION, WORKING CLASS DISAFFECTION AND THE BNP  
CHALLENGE

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**Abstract.** The British National Party (BNP) is the most successful extreme right party in Britain's electoral history and is the fastest growing political party in twenty-first century Britain. The resurgent BNP has registered its strongest electoral results in areas that are politically dominated by the governing Labour party. Why has the extreme right done best in the heartlands of the British left? To examine this puzzle, we utilize a unique aggregated survey dataset which includes the largest ever sample of self-identified supporters of the British extreme right. We find that support for the BNP is concentrated among social groups who might be described as 'traditional' Labour supporters: older, less educated working class men living in the declining industrial towns of the North and Midlands regions. This pattern of support is quite distinct from that which underpinned the last electorally relevant extreme right party in Britain – the National Front (NF) – whose base was young working class men in Greater London and the West Midlands. Extreme right voters in contemporary Britain express exceptionally high levels of anxiety about immigration and disaffection with the mainstream political parties. Constituency level analysis of BNP support suggests that the party prospers in areas with high employment rates, low education levels and where there are large Pakistani and African populations. Such constituencies also tend to be Labour dominated: over 90 per cent of the BNP's strongest constituencies have Labour party incumbents. Our analysis therefore concludes that the BNP is emerging as a significant challenger to the Labour party among social groups and in geographical areas where Labour has traditionally been dominant. Its appeal to traditional Labour supporting groups builds upon their disaffection with the incumbent government and with the mainstream partisan alternatives and their anxieties over immigration and Islam.

The British National Party (BNP) is the most successful extreme right party in British electoral history and is the fastest growing political party in twenty-first century Britain. The BNP has monopolized the extreme right milieu since the disintegration of the National Front (NF) in the mid-1980s. Founded by a former Chairman of the NF in April 1982, the BNP's support has risen sharply in each general election since 1987, from 7,000 votes in 1992 to nearly 200,000 votes in 2005 (see Table 1). Unlike its predecessors, who achieved only scattered and ephemeral successes in local elections, the BNP has acquired over 50 local councillors and one seat on the Greater London Assembly (GLA) and has recruited a durable electoral following.<sup>1</sup> The BNP's electoral rise has attracted considerable political and academic interest. Some, such as Labour MP Jon Cruddas, suggest that the extreme right has become a 'home for many disgruntled former Labour voters', and that the BNP is 'beginning to establish itself as a rival to Labour in many of our traditional heartlands'.<sup>2</sup> Other Labour leaders interpret the BNP's rise as 'a result of local political failure', suggesting that the party performs well on '[E]states that have been ignored for decades' and among 'white skilled working-class voters who feel politicians live on a different planet'.<sup>3</sup> Pointing toward severe economic recession and public concern over immigration, others compare current BNP voting to an earlier wave of extreme right voting for the 1970s NF.<sup>4</sup> However, despite rising concern about the spread of extreme right voting, the social bases of BNP support remain under-researched.

This article adds to the ongoing debate about the factors driving the surge in support for the BNP and makes three key contributions. Firstly, we utilize the largest ever individual level dataset of self-identified extreme right party supporters in Britain to conduct a first quantitative analysis of the social background and political priorities of contemporary BNP voters. We find that support for the contemporary extreme right

is concentrated among less educated, older working class voters in the industrial regions of the Midlands and North England, who express very high levels of anxiety about immigration and disaffection with all of the mainstream political parties.

Secondly, we compare our results with a previous analysis of supporters of the BNP's predecessor, the NF, conducted in 1977-8. Comparing these two groups, we show that the modern day BNP is quite distinct from Britain's main previous extreme right movement: its support is older, more Northern and more disaffected with mainstream politics. Thirdly, we examine the influence of social context on BNP support using multi-level analysis of our survey dataset and aggregate analysis of the BNP's performance in the last two general elections. We find that the BNP is strongest in constituencies with high employment rates, low education levels and large Pakistani or black African populations. Our results suggest that the rapid rise in support for the BNP is the result of growing political disaffection among traditional working class Labour supporters, allied with rising anxiety about immigration and ethnic competition, which appears to be particularly triggered by the presence of large Pakistani or African communities in the local area.

### **The Resurgence of Extreme Right Politics in Britain**

Whilst founded in the early 1980s, for much of its first two decades the BNP languished in the electoral ghetto, being more noteworthy for issues of public order than electoral relevance. Under the leadership of John Tyndall, the BNP never fully committed itself to electoral politics, adhering instead to a strategy of 'very limited involvement' in elections that led activists to describe it as the 'no-to-elections

party'.<sup>5</sup> In the general election in 1983, the BNP fielded candidates in over 50 constituencies yet delivered election addresses in only five; in 1987 the party officially abstained, and in the election in 1992 it stood only 13 candidates.<sup>6</sup> Rather than seriously contest costly elections, under Tyndall the party adopted the extreme right's traditional tactic of using confrontational rallies and demonstrations to raise its profile and attract new members. During the first twenty years of its existence, the party's only election 'success' was the short-lived election of a single local councillor: a former school bus driver in Millwall ward, Tower Hamlets in 1993.

Following the election of Cambridge-graduate Nick Griffin as the second BNP Chairman in October 1999, the party has pursued a strategy of 'modernization' that has entailed three things: downplaying fascist nostalgia, replacing confrontational tactics with an emphasis on community-based activism, and moderating its ideological appeals by adopting themes reminiscent of parties such as Flemish Interest (VB) in Belgium and the National Front (FN) in France. In this respect, the BNP has sought to adopt the ethno-pluralist doctrine and anti-establishment (but not overtly anti-democratic) populism of the more successful 'new' radical right (see Rydgren, 2005).

In terms of strategy, inspired by the French FN, the British Liberal Democrats and earlier experimentation within the British NF, Griffin's BNP has developed its own brand of pavement politics, encouraging branches to target local grievances in an article manner and make face-to-face contact with residents (Goodwin, 2010a). Party 'modernizers', who had begun to experiment with community-based activism in London's East End in the early 1990's, referred to the new tactics as follows: 'We must stop talking just about what we like to talk about and start talking about the things that local people are crying out to hear'.<sup>7</sup> Implicit in the emphasis on intensive,

locally-orientated campaigns is the party's goal of cultivating an image of legitimacy in targeted local arenas. Whilst rates of activism inevitably vary from one local authority to the next, indicative of the BNP's renewed emphasis on community-based politics is the finding in one study that many residents in three northern towns experienced more face-to-face contact with BNP activists than their 'mainstream' counterparts (JRCT, 2004). The BNP's strategic focus has also moved away from traditional bastions of extreme right support in London's inner East End toward deindustrializing districts in Northern England and white working class outer-London areas like Barking and Dagenham. In these districts, the party has developed more professional campaigns, urging activists to be better dressed and abandon extremist rhetoric, employing a 'language and concepts discipline manual' which advises supporters to avoid terms such as 'fascist' and 'racialist' in favour of 'right-wing populist' and 'ethno-nationalist'.<sup>8</sup> The party also fields Jewish and half-Cypriot candidates in an attempt to claim a more 'respectable' activist base and has sought links with members of the Sikh community on a joint 'anti-Islam' ticket (e.g. the BNP's European election broadcast in 2004 was presented by a Sikh).

The BNP has modified its ideological appeals under Griffin; moderating its official discourse on race and immigration, downplaying anti-Semitism and shifting its emphasis toward more voter-friendly themes such as 'democracy', 'identity', 'freedom' and 'security' (BNP, 2005). After visiting with French FN elites in the late 1990s, BNP elites sought to adopt elements of the 'new' radical right ideological formula, replacing the crude anti-Black biological racism of the old NF with the new 'cultural racism' and downplaying its revolutionary critique of parliamentary democracy. BNP campaigns have also embraced anti-Islamic nativism, another theme common in the European radical right, portraying Islam as a religion incompatible

with 'British' values, Muslim communities as a threat to the demographic and economic security of native Britons and the party as a vehicle that is embroiled in a Huntington-style 'Clash of Civilizations'. Whilst BNP elites still recognize issues of race and immigration as powerful mobilizing devices, the party has sought to shed its single-issue status by developing a full manifesto of policies on socio-economic issues with a clear socially authoritarian and economically left-wing focus. The BNP's increased focus on left-wing themes is aptly reflected in the campaign slogan it has adopted in areas such as Sandwell; 'We are the Labour Party your grandfathers voted for'.<sup>9</sup>

The modernization of the BNP has taken place at a time when the issue agenda has tilted in the party's favour: public concerns about extreme right themes such as immigration, Islam and law and order have become much more salient since 1999 (e.g. McLaren & Johnson, 2007; also Eatwell & Goodwin 2010). Echoing findings produced about the NF in the 1960s and 1970s (see Eatwell, 2000), research indicates the electoral potential of the BNP in this environment continues to outstrip actual levels of BNP voting. Examining public support for the three core components of current extreme right ideology – authoritarianism, ethnic nationalism and xenophobia (Mudde, 2007) – Ford (2010) highlights how BNP proposals such as a total ban on immigration, the abolition of all multicultural policies in favour of coercive assimilation and a large expansion in police powers all enjoy support from majorities of British survey respondents. Whilst most Britons have become more accepting of ethnic minorities (Ford, 2008), and concern among some groups over demographic change and ethnic diversity has receded in the face of severe economic recession, hostility toward immigrants, asylum-seekers and Muslims remain widespread, particularly among older, less educated and working class Britons.

A few examples can be used to illustrate this point: over 70 per cent of white Britons in the 2003 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey consider birth and long-term residence important markers of Britishness; 42 per cent polled in 2006 denied that permanently settled immigrants could describe themselves as British; 32 per cent believed that being Christian is an important prerequisite to Britishness and 15 per cent agreed that being white was at least 'fairly' important for being regarded as British. In respect to views toward Islam, even prior to the terrorist attacks on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005, six in ten Britons believed that British Muslims were more loyal to Muslims abroad than to their British compatriots whilst in more recent polling, similar proportions agreed that Muslims needed to do more to integrate into society, and half of Britons surveyed expressed concern that the growth in the Muslim population threatens British identity. A significant minority - between a fifth and a third - also agreed with stronger anti-Muslim statements, such as arguments that Islam and Western democracy are fundamentally incompatible and that a large proportion of British Muslims condone Islamic terrorism. These figures suggest that the BNP could win over far more support than it currently receives if it succeeds in gaining recognition as a legitimate force in British politics.

The 'modernized' BNP has already been far more successful than any of its predecessors in electorally mobilizing these anxieties and has secured record results in a succession of elections held since 2004. In the European Parliament elections of 2004 over 800,000 citizens voted BNP, an eight fold increase on 1999 and the largest ever total vote for an extreme right party in a British election. In several Northern and Midlands regions, the BNP fell just short of the threshold necessary to return a first British extreme right representative to Strasbourg. European success was followed by record success in the general election of 2005 in which the BNP more than tripled its



number of candidates to 119, and saw its vote quadruple to over 192,000 (see Table 1). Whilst overall the party only polled 0.7 per cent of votes cast, in the seats they contested BNP candidates averaged 4.3 per cent. Moreover, in 31 constituencies BNP candidates surpassed the 5 per cent threshold required to retain their deposits and in a further three constituencies they polled over 10 per cent, performing most strongly in Barking where Richard Barnbrook received 16.9 per cent, the best result for an extreme right parliamentary candidate in British history. The BNP secured a third signal success in local elections the following year, more than doubling its total haul of councillors by winning 33 seats and becoming the official opposition on Barking and Dagenham Borough Council. In 2007, the BNP increased its local election vote by a further 25 per cent to nearly 300,000 votes and secured its best ever results in Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly elections. Most recently, in 2008, the party won its first elected seat outside local government, by polling 5.3 per cent of the list vote in the Greater London Assembly elections. The BNP candidate in the concurrent mayoral elections won the first preference votes of a record 70,000 Londoners, and the second preference votes of a further 130,000.

The BNP's electoral gains have been concentrated in three main regions of the country. Firstly, in economically deprived, deindustrializing districts in the North West and Yorkshire, often (though not always) towns with large Muslim populations. The first breakthrough came in Burnley in 2002, when the BNP gained three seats on the council. Since then, the party has added council seats in Blackburn, Bradford, Halifax and Kirklees among others. Secondly, local gains in areas such as Dudley, Sandwell and Stoke-on-Trent highlight continued support for the extreme right in parts of the West Midlands, an area that provided strong support to both the NF and Enoch Powell in the 1970s (Schoen, 1977). Thirdly, the BNP has become the latest

beneficiary of an extreme right political tradition in London's East End dating back to Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the 1930s. In local elections in 2006, the party secured 11 of 13 seats contested in Barking and Dagenham, also the site of the party's strongest general election result in 2005. The BNP's success in the London Assembly elections of 2008 was also grounded in a strong turnout for the party in this region: the party won more than 10 per cent of the list vote in the two East End constituencies.

In all three of these regions the BNP's gains have typically arrived in traditionally Labour dominated wards and constituencies. For example, in the 2005 general election, 32 of the 33 constituencies where the BNP polled over 5 per cent were won by Labour, and in only one of these did Labour win by a margin of less than 10 per cent. Meanwhile, at the local level the party has made particularly striking gains in areas such as Barking and Dagenham, Burnley and Stoke-on-Trent, all of which return Labour MPs and have local councils dominated (until recently) by Labour.

**Insert Table 1 about here**

### **Voting Extreme Right in Britain: An Overview**

Previous research on the British extreme right has come in two waves: the first analyzing support for the 1970s NF; the second examining the contemporary BNP. Prior to the emergence of the BNP, the NF was the only British extreme right party of any electoral significance. Founded in 1967 following a merger between several openly fascist movements, the NF polled particularly well following the much

publicized arrival of Ugandan Asians in the period 1972-4 and of Malawian Asians in 1976-7. After a parliamentary by-election in West Bromwich in 1973, in which the NF candidate polled over 16 per cent of the vote, the NF contested both general elections held in 1974, fielding 54 candidates and averaging 3.3 per cent in the February contest and fielding 90 candidates and averaging 3.1 per cent in the October election. Though receiving an appreciable 120,000 votes in the Greater London Council (GLC) elections in 1977, two years later the NF was effectively a spent force; internally the movement was beset by factionalism whilst in the external arena the rightward shift of the Conservatives under Thatcher left little room for manoeuvre.<sup>10</sup>

Studies of the NF's rise and fall advanced broadly consistent explanations for its support, stressing a working-class voter base and the important role of actual or perceived ethnic competition as key drivers of NF voting. Examining NF support in the 1977 GLC elections, the aggregate-level study by Whiteley (1979) found the strongest predictor of support to be the percentage of manual workers, and interpreted this finding as an expression of 'working-class authoritarianism'.<sup>11</sup> The study also indicated that the NF benefitted from distinct local political traditions, finding its support concentrated in the old East End and the transplanted East End along the Lea Valley. These East End districts were considered particularly susceptible to exclusionary campaigns as a result of local economic insecurities rooted in the casual labour system of the old docklands and the subsequent waves of immigration to the area (Husbands, 1983).<sup>12</sup>

Other studies investigated the relationship between NF support and ethnic diversity, suggesting a correlation between the proportion of immigrants and the NF vote (Fielding, 1981, pp.111-119). The observation that the NF polled well in areas such as Bradford, Coventry, Leicester, London's East End and Wolverhampton – all

of which had high concentrations of early Black and Asian immigrants– led some to suggest that the NF benefitted from a ‘backlash’ against the presence of non-white groups in local communities (Taylor, 1982). Summarizing these aggregate-level studies, Kitschelt (1995, p.255) notes how ‘it is only one further step to the conclusion that primarily economically marginal, culturally threatened white workers in heavy working-class districts felt attracted to the National Front’. Drawing on these earlier findings, he also suggested that NF voters arrived primarily from traditional, inner-city Labour clienteles and were most likely ‘workers who have never established or who have subsequently lost their ties to working-class political organizations’ (Ibid.).

Yet at the same time, and as Kitschelt observes, whilst providing useful insight much of this research on extreme right support was weakened by its heavy reliance on ecological evidence which could not demonstrate individual level relationships. In the case of parties such as the NF, the task of gathering individual level data is especially problematic as standard random sample surveys generally produce too few supporters to allow for reliable analysis. One attempt to meet this challenge in the 1970s was the study by Harrop et al. (1980), which aggregated 22 commercial vote intention polls to produce a sample of 270 NF supporters polled between 1977-8.<sup>13</sup> The study found NF support to be concentrated among young, employed working class males in Greater London and the West Midlands. Support for the NF was particularly likely among skilled rather than semi-/unskilled workers, a finding interpreted as ‘consistent with those materially-based explanations of NF support that emphasize the importance of the economic locations where competition between indigenous and immigrant populations for scarce and valuable resources is felt most acutely’ (Ibid. p.276). Meanwhile, support was less strong among semi-skilled and unskilled workers; individuals at ‘the very bottom of the labour market ...[where] there may be fewer

scarce resources for indigenous whites to feel threatened about losing, at least in comparison with slightly more privileged, but also more insecure, strata' (Ibid.). As detailed below, in this study we compare our own findings with those of Harrop et al's survey analysis. Yet it is also important to note that others produced slightly divergent findings. Based on a survey of extreme right sympathizers in one-time areas of NF strength, Husbands (1983, pp.98-104) similarly noted a strong male bias but also found NF sympathy concentrated among skilled *and* unskilled manual workers.<sup>14</sup> Also, in respect to age strong NF sympathy was found to have a relatively even age-distribution whilst sympathy for the NF as a whole was stronger among those aged 25 years and under but also those aged between 46-55 years.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Studies of the BNP***

The recent sharp increase in BNP support has spurred a new series of academic studies, most of which have examined the party's historic and ideological development (Eatwell, 2004; e.g. Copsey, 2008; Goodwin 2010b). The few quantitative studies of BNP electoral support indicate that the party has performed strongest in economically deprived urban areas and areas with high proportions of skilled manual workers and individuals with no formal qualifications (Borisyuk et al. 2007; JRRT 2005). Aggregate-level analysis also indicates that the BNP polls strongest in areas with larger numbers of residents aged 45-69 years old and weakest in wards with large numbers of younger voters (John et al. 2006; JRRT 2005).

In terms of the relationship between ethnic composition and BNP voting, existing research suggests that anxiety about Muslim communities may be functioning as an important local factor mobilizing support. Whilst John et al. (2006, pp.16-17)

find no relationship between the numbers of asylum-seekers in an area and BNP support, at the ward level they find a positive correlation (0.224) between BNP support and proportions of ethnic Pakistani residents. Similarly, at council level they find a positive correlation between BNP support and the presence of Pakistani (0.380) and Bangladeshi (0.346) ethnic groups, a relationship that does not hold for the presence of Indian Asian groups.<sup>16</sup> Bowyer's (2008) multi-level analysis of local election results in the period 2002-03 also finds that the BNP performed strongest in deprived urban wards but that – at local authority level – the party is more likely to contest elections and win votes in councils where there is a large Pakistani and/or Bangladeshi population. While the BNP appears to perform strongest in districts with large Muslim populations, ward level support for the party appears concentrated in 'white enclaves' - homogenous white wards within diverse councils.<sup>17</sup>

This existing research provides important insights on the BNP, but suffers from several shortcomings which this study aims to address. Firstly, previous studies are driven by either aggregate level statistical analysis or qualitative interviews with small samples of BNP activists or voters (e.g. Rhodes, 2006). Prior to our study, there has been no statistical examination of a representative sample of individual BNP supporters. Secondly, existing studies have tended to treat the BNP as an isolated phenomenon, and have offered little comparison between the contemporary extreme right and support for the earlier 1970s NF. Our study compares BNP supporters with the only representative sample of NF supporters, that gathered by Harrop et al in the late 1970s. Thirdly, no existing study has examined the combined role of individual and contextual influences on BNP support. We employ multilevel analysis of our survey respondents to analyze the combined influence of individual and contextual factors. Finally, aggregate analysis of BNP support has been limited to local elections

where the influence of local factors may be greater than in general elections. Our study examines constituency level BNP support in the last two general elections, using the Tobit regression methodology employed by Bowyer (2008) to correct for the fact that BNP candidates do not stand in all constituencies, and compares these results with those from the multilevel analysis conducted on our survey data.

### **Data and methods**

To examine extreme right support at the individual level we utilise survey data gathered and aggregated by Ipsos-MORI from their twice-monthly omnibus survey<sup>18</sup> between mid-2002 to mid-2006. We have restricted our analysis to English respondents due to the different political environment in Wales and Scotland, where large nationalist parties have operated since the 1970s, and the longstanding focus of the BNP on England. Non-white respondents were also excluded from the analysis as whilst the BNP has made recent overtures to minority groups such as Sikhs the party remains a white ethnic nationalist movement (as reflected in its ‘whites-only’ membership policy).<sup>19</sup> The resulting sample contains 965 self-identified supporters of the BNP and NF, within a combined sample of nearly 150,000 white English respondents aged 15 years old or over: the largest sample of extreme right party voters in Britain ever assembled in a survey.<sup>20</sup> We use the data to conduct three analyses: first, we examine the social distribution of contemporary extreme right support and compare this with the distribution of NF support revealed in the (1980) study by Harrop et al.; second, we examine the attitudes and political priorities of contemporary extreme right supporters, and compare these with other party supporters

and with those of NF supporters in the 1970s; third, we employ multilevel modelling to examine whether particular constituency contexts are associated with higher levels of BNP support.

### **Individual-Level Predictors of ERP Support: 1977-8 and 2002-6**

In Table 2, we replicate the demographic analysis presented by Harrop and colleagues using our sample of contemporary extreme right supporters. Unfortunately, this earlier study did not examine some key variables such as education so these are not included in this initial comparison. The most striking continuity between the two samples is the strong gender bias, with men in each case making up around 70 per cent of the support base. While this pronounced gender effect is consistent with findings on supporters of the extreme right in other European cases (Mudde, 2007, pp.90-118), it also suggests that the BNP's efforts to promote a more moderate image have not succeeded in making the party more appealing to women.

### **Insert Table 2 about here**

While both samples are male dominated we find significant variation in other social background variables. First, BNP supporters are generally older than NF supporters in the 1970s sample. While 37 per cent of supporters of the earlier NF were under the age of 25, only 11 per cent of contemporary supporters in our sample were this young, below their share of the sample population. Overall, 39 per cent of BNP supporters



are between the ages of 35-54 years old -10 points higher than in the NF sample - and 36 per cent of BNP supporters are over 55, double the level in the NF sample.

Two factors may be contributing to this ageing of the extreme right's support base. First, there is evidence of a generational shift in British racial attitudes with younger cohorts expressing much lower levels of prejudice towards black and Asian Britons (Ford, 2008). This would reduce the potential appeal of an extreme right party still associated with violent racism to younger voters. Second, those socialized during the 1970s - a period when political conflict over race and immigration was highly salient, Powellism could command significant support and NF mobilization was at its peak - may have retained a greater level of sympathy towards extreme right issues and parties. This cohort would now be in late middle age which is precisely where we see the highest contemporary support for the extreme right.

Turning to social class, Harrop et al. noted that NF support was concentrated among skilled manual workers, speculating that skilled workers were most concerned about losing favourable labour market positions to immigrant competition. In our BNP sample, extreme right support remains concentrated among the working class, but is now spread relatively evenly across skilled workers, unskilled workers and the residual class of those dependent on state benefits. While skilled labourers may have worried about immigrant competition for jobs and promotions, the more marginalized groups may be more concerned about competition for state benefits, or resentful about their poor economic position and willing to scapegoat ethnic minorities as a cause of this situation. However, there is little evidence that those dependent on the state for housing are more likely to turn to the extreme right: BNP supporters in our sample were no more likely to be council tenants than other voters.

Aside from age and social class, we also observe a significant shift in the geographical distribution of extreme right support. In the 1970s support for the NF was concentrated heavily in the West Midlands (e.g. Birmingham, Leicester and Wolverhampton) and Greater London, both regions with the greatest concentration of early Black and Asian immigrants to Britain. In the latter, NF strategists focused in particular on East End districts, such as Haringey, Islington, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. In contrast, the BNP appears much weaker in both of these regions. London, which remains a magnet for immigrants and is Britain's most diverse region, is the BNP's weakest region. Rather, we observe a decisive shift northwards in support for the extreme right: while the NF drew 62 per cent of its support from the south of England (i.e. Greater London, South East, South West and East Anglia), only 35 per cent of respondents in our sample reside in the Southern regions. The most striking difference in support is found in the North of England region: while the NF were weak or absent from the factory towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire these regions are now the strongholds of the contemporary BNP. Breaking down the Northern region, we find that Yorkshire and Humberside, with 10 per cent of the English sample population, accounts for 20 per cent of extreme right support, and that BNP support is also elevated in the North West and North East regions.

Where is the contemporary extreme right drawing its support from in political terms? Unfortunately, we do not have information about the prior voting behaviour of our survey respondents, but we are able to compare the social breakdown of extreme right supporters with those of the other major parties and of non-voters. We present these results in Table 3. The greatest overlaps with BNP support are with Labour and with non-voters. Labour voters show a similar class, educational and age distribution to BNP supporters, and Labour support is also strongest in the North of England.

Non-voting is concentrated among the least educated and the unskilled manual classes, like BNP support, but it is also far more common among the young than the old, while BNP support shows the opposite tendency. There is very little overlap between the pattern of BNP support and support for the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, both of whom tend to draw support from more highly educated, middle class and southern voters than the extreme right. The typical BNP supporter thus most closely resembles a typical Labour supporter, suggesting Labour may be the original source for much of the extreme right's current support.

**Insert Table 3 about here**

### **Attitudes and Priorities of BNP Voters**

The surveys which form the basis for this analysis do not ask questions about political attitudes on a regular basis, limiting our ability to probe the views and concerns of BNP voters. However, questions concerning issue priorities, satisfaction with the government and party leaders and opinions about economic prospects are asked regularly enough to compare supporters of the BNP with those of other political parties. The issues considered the most important problem facing Britain, as rated by different parties' supporters, are revealed in Table 4. As we might expect, BNP voters are overwhelmingly concerned with immigration, rated by almost 60 per cent as Britain's most important problem. The concern of BNP voters with this issue is not unique: immigration is rated as one of the top three problems by supporters of all political parties. Yet while other voters divide their attention between about half a

dozen issues, BNP supporters focus on immigration almost to the exclusion of all else.

**Insert Table 4 about here**

Table 5 details levels of dissatisfaction with the performance of the government and the leaders of the three major parties, and of pessimism about Britain's economic prospects. BNP voters emerge as a profoundly dissatisfied group of citizens; these voters are the most negative about the government's performance and are also the most dissatisfied with the performance of all three major party leaders. This dissatisfaction stretches beyond political performance as BNP supporters are also the most negative about British economic prospects. Nor does it seem to be simply the result of discontent over immigration: BNP supporters who do not rate immigration as the most important problem are no more positive than those who do.

**Insert Table 5 about here**

The intense discontent of BNP voters also distinguishes them from the supporters of their predecessor, the NF. Harrop et al. (1980, p.277) likewise found that NF supporters exhibited elevated levels of dissatisfaction with the government and with the Labour Party leadership of James Callaghan. Yet the levels of discontent among NF supporters were lower than those expressed by the BNP, and were comparable to those expressed by supporters of the Conservative party. Supporters of the NF were also much less hostile to the Conservative Party leadership of Mrs Thatcher than

supporters of the BNP in our sample were toward the Conservative leaderships of Iain Duncan-Smith and Michael Howard. In the earlier study, only 50 per cent of NF supporters disapproved of Thatcher's performance whilst more than one third held positive views toward her, a finding in fitting with the suggestion that Thatcher succeeded in appealing to supporters of the NF, particularly following her remark that some white Britons felt 'swamped' by immigration (see Husbands 1983, p.15; Taylor, 1982, pp.146-7). Researchers at the time reported significant overlap between the NF and the Conservative fringe, observing that disillusioned ex-Conservatives had become leading NF activists (Walker, 1977) and that in December 1972 members of the right-wing Monday Club had canvassed on behalf of the NF in an Uxbridge parliamentary by-election (Husbands, 1983, p.8). No such overlap exists between the contemporary Conservatives and the BNP. In this respect, the much higher levels of dissatisfaction among supporters of today's BNP may make them a harder group for the main parties to attract back into the mainstream fold.

## **Demographic and attitudinal predictors of BNP Support: Logistic Regression**

### **Analysis**

Which factors are most significant in driving support for the extreme right? In Table 6 we present results from a logistic regression analysis modelling extreme right support in the 2002-6 MORI dataset.<sup>21</sup> The multivariate model includes a period trend term to control for the significant rising trend in BNP support since 2002, and a dummy for 2005, the only election year in the sample, when BNP support levels were markedly lower, suggesting that some extreme right support drifted back to mainstream parties during the 2005 election campaign.<sup>22</sup>

### **Insert Table 6 about here**

The regression model confirms that extreme right support is a male, working class phenomenon, though in the multivariate model all three sections of the working class support the extreme right at similar rates. We therefore include a single dummy for all working class respondents.<sup>23</sup> The middle aged continue to be over-represented among the extreme right's support base once controls are introduced, but voters aged over 55 are not. This may provide some tentative evidence that the 35-55 age group, socialized during the 1960s and 1970s when political controversies over immigration and race were at their peak, have retained a greater propensity to turn to the extremist fringe. The concentration of extreme right support in Northern England and Midlands is also evident in the multivariate model. Extreme right support is significantly higher in all the Northern and Midlands regions than in London and the South East, even after controlling for the different social characteristics of voters in these different regions. Extreme right support is very rare among those with university education, though lower levels of education have no significant impact. Our model also tests the impact of deprivation. The effects are mixed: unemployed respondents are somewhat more likely to support the BNP, suggesting perhaps a greater concern with competition from migrants or minorities from those in search of a job. However, those who do not possess a car are less likely to support the extreme right. The latter group, however, may include many such as students or young professionals living in city centres, who are not really 'deprived'. Unfortunately, more nuanced measures of deprivation were not available in the surveys.

Respondents were also regularly asked which newspapers they read, which allows us to test whether the priming effect of media coverage has an impact on British voters. We created a dummy variable for readers of the three main British right wing tabloid papers noted for hostile coverage of Muslims, immigrants and asylum seekers – the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* and *The Sun*. This dummy variable is significant, suggesting that readers of these papers are more likely to support the BNP even after controlling for their social characteristics. While it is of course possible that this is a selection effect, with xenophobic voters attracted to papers that reflect their views, this finding provides suggestive initial evidence that high profile anti-immigrant campaigns such as those run by these papers could promote support for the extreme right, a finding mirrored in other studies on the extreme right in Europe (Arzheimer, 2009; Ivarsflaten, 2005).

Our initial analysis suggested that BNP voters are attitudinally as well as socially distinctive, expressing very high levels of pessimism and political disaffection. Table 7 presents results from logistic models testing the impact of these political attitudes on BNP support. Model 2 includes political attitudes alone: from this model it is clear that political disaffection, economic pessimism and anxiety about immigration are all strongly correlated with BNP support, with each having a highly significant impact. Model 3 tests whether these effects are robust after controlling for the demographic variables from Model 1.<sup>24</sup> The combined model confirms that political and social attitudes have a strong impact on BNP support even after controlling for demographic factors: BNP support is concentrated among those who disapprove of the government and of the opposition parties, who are pessimistic about economic prospects, and who view immigration as the most important problem facing the country.

**Insert Table 7 about here**

### **The Local Context of BNP Support: Deprivation and Ethnic Competition**

At the individual level, we have established that the BNP is drawing support primarily from politically disaffected middle aged working class men in the North of England. The modern BNP's focus on intense local campaigns suggests, however, that local context is an important factor driving support for the party. Studies by John et al (2006) and Bowyer (2008) have shown that the BNP has performed most strongly in deprived areas with concentrations of less educated white working class voters, while Bowyer (2008) has also shown how the presence of a large Muslim minority in the local authority is associated with greater BNP support levels in white working class wards. Yet these studies suffer from two shortcomings: firstly, they focus on local elections, and it is not clear whether the contextual influences they find will also operate in national elections, where local issues are likely to be less salient; secondly, as these studies focus only on aggregate correlations we do not know for certain whether the aggregate relationships they find actually hold at the individual level.

To address these problems, we carry out two contextual analyses. The first replicates the Tobit regression methodology of Bowyer (2008) to examine the influence of local conditions on BNP candidacy and vote in the general elections of 2001 and 2005.<sup>25</sup> The Tobit regression method corrects for the fact that the BNP stand in only a limited range of constituencies by conceptualising BNP support as a continuous latent variable which is only observed when it exceeds a certain threshold. The regression model estimates the impact of predictors on both the probability that



the variable exceed the threshold – i.e. that the BNP stands a candidate in a constituency – and on the expected vote that the candidate will receive.<sup>26</sup> Our second contextual model is a multi-level logistic regression analysis nesting individual respondents from the MORI surveys within constituency social contexts. This multi-level methodology enables us to test whether constituency conditions influence BNP support after controlling for individual level characteristics.

**Insert Table 8 about here**

The Tobit regression models for BNP support in England in the 2001 and 2005 general elections are presented in Table 8. In both years, BNP support is strongest in constituencies with high employment rates but low education levels. Other measures of constituency deprivation were also tested (i.e. unemployment and long-term unemployment rates, council tenancy rates, and car ownership rates) but these had no effect on BNP support and were dropped from the final models. The aggregate analysis also highlights the importance of ethnic competition, although crucially not all ethnic groups seem to trigger extremist responses from white voters. In 2001, the BNP is significantly stronger in constituencies with large Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Black African populations. The first two groups are almost exclusively Muslim, while the Black African group also includes many Muslims and is the least well established large minority group in Britain (most black Africans have arrived since the mid-1990s). In 2005, the presence of Pakistanis has a much stronger effect on BNP voting, while the presence of Bangladeshis no longer has a significant impact. This may reflect the BNP's move northwards; Bangladeshis are primarily located in London, the party's weakest region while Pakistanis live mainly in the North. It may also

reflect the greater sense of threat generated by the presence of the Pakistani ethnic group which, following the events of 9/11 and 7/7 has been the British minority most strongly associated with Islamic extremism and terrorism.

Aggregate analysis of BNP candidacy and support in the two most general elections thus largely supports the conclusions drawn by John et al (2006) and Bowyer (2008) using local data: the BNP draws its strongest support in constituencies where white voters with low education levels congregate. However, economic deprivation does not seem to trigger extreme right support: measures of material deprivation are not associated with a greater BNP presence, and constituency employment levels are positively correlated with BNP support. The aggregate evidence suggests ethnic competition is a more important contextual trigger of BNP candidacy and support: the presence of large Pakistani or African local communities is strongly correlated with BNP candidacy and support. However, other ethnic groups have no such impact: there is no correlation between the presence of Indians and BNP support, and a large Afro-Caribbean population in the local area actually discourages BNP candidacy and support. This suggests that the appeal of the modern BNP is more subtle than the crude racism and xenophobia of the old NF whose support was correlated with the presence of any non-white ethnic group. In contemporary Britain, Indian and Afro-Caribbean minorities are a more established and accepted part of society (Ford, 2008), but the more socially and geographically segregated Muslim minorities continue to be perceived as threatening, as do the most recent arrivals from Africa.

Table 9 shows the results of a multi-level logistic model which tests whether these constituency level effects continue to operate after controlling for individual level predictors of BNP support. The constituency effects in the multi-level models

are broadly similar to those in the general election aggregate analysis. We find higher concentrations of BNP support in constituencies with less education and higher employment rates, even after controlling for individual education and employment status. The same pattern of constituency ethnic effects also obtains: the presence of Pakistani and black African communities is also associated with higher levels of BNP support, Indians and Bangladeshis have no significant effect, and BNP support is lower in areas with large Afro-Caribbean populations. The multi-level analysis thus confirms that BNP support is significantly concentrated in constituencies with low average education levels, high employment levels and large ethnic minority communities. However, not all ethnic minority groups trigger an extremist mobilization: only the Pakistani group, associated with Muslim extremism in recent years, and the black African group, the most recently arrived British minority, trigger this response.

**Insert Table 9 about here**

## **Conclusion**

In his seminal study of the 1970s National Front, Christopher Husbands (1983, p.147) warned against an interpretation of extreme right support in Britain that subscribed to Hofstadter's epigram; 'Third parties are like bees: once they have stung, they die'. Rather, Husbands drew attention to the way in which - in some local districts - the NF successfully mobilized support by drawing on sensitivities and susceptibilities that were deeply entrenched in working class culture. Consequently, Husbands found it difficult to escape the judgement that a successor organization to the NF, one with a

similar appeal but which eschewed the Front's political ineptitude, could achieve a similar or greater level of electoral success.

Consistent with this prediction, the early years of the twenty-first century have seen unprecedented levels of support for the latest representative of the extreme right, the British National Party. Our analysis of the first individual level dataset of extreme right supporters in contemporary Britain, and also of the local conditions in areas where the BNP has performed strongest, demonstrates that the party is drawing support principally from older and less well educated working class males in Northern and Midlands industrial areas. These citizens, coming from social backgrounds and areas with strong 'old' Labour sympathies, have become highly disaffected with the governing 'New' Labour party and with the political mainstream more generally, and are overwhelmingly concerned about immigration and its effects. BNP support is also stronger in areas where there are large concentrations of lesser well-educated working class white voters who live in close proximity to significant Pakistani Muslim and black African populations. In some areas, this combination of working class disaffection and actual or perceived ethnic competition has yielded strong electoral returns for the modernized BNP.

Nor is this interplay between extreme right support and Muslim presence restricted to the British case. Examining municipal level support for the extreme right Vlaams Blok (VB; since renamed Vlaams Belang) in Belgium, Coffé et al. (2007) also find a positive relationship between the proportion of residents from Islamic countries and higher levels of support for the VB, a relationship that does not hold with immigrants from other, non-Muslim countries. Drawing on these findings, and consistent with our analysis above, others suggest that the literatures on extreme right support and ethnic competition theories should expand the typically narrow focus on

economic competition to examine ‘what cultural factors cause voters to swing to the radical right’ (Van der Brug & Fennema, 2007, p.10). In respect to the pan-European study of right-wing extremism, these scholars also note that more research is needed on the role of the media in influencing extreme right party support, a suggestion we would also advance based on our indicative evidence presented above.

Yet there are other substantial changes that appear unique to Britain and which have arguably created political space for the modernized BNP. Firstly, the rise of the BNP should be set within the context of the decay of local grassroots democracy more generally. The decline of local Labour Party organizations coupled with the redirection of campaigning efforts toward a small number of marginal seats is arguably a major contributory factor to the marginalization of traditional Labour groups, in particular skilled and unskilled workers. As Wilks-Heeg (2009) notes, one of the most noticeable characteristics in areas of BNP strength has been a marked decline in Labour Party support; in areas such as Barking and Dagenham, Epping Forest, Sandwell, Burnley and Stoke, BNP gains have been the sequel to a significant decline in Labour Party representation. In the latter two authorities, and alongside the ascendancy of local Independent groups, the BNP’s rise disrupted almost continuous Labour rule since 1945. We find a similar pattern in both our survey data and the 2005 general election data. BNP support is strongly concentrated in Labour dominant areas: more than 90 per cent of the BNP’s strongest constituencies in both datasets currently have a Labour MP and more than half of these BNP strongholds have elected only Labour MP’s in the postwar political era.<sup>27</sup>

Secondly, at national level Labour has arguably failed to convince its traditional support base that three terms in office have resulted in beneficial change. Whether or not Labour’s economic policies have delivered economic recovery or

employment opportunities to areas that have struggled with the onset of post-industrialism, many in Labour's support base perceive that 'New' Labour has little to offer. A third factor concerns the increased salience of identity politics, in particular the effects of rising (and changing) migration patterns since 1999, public anger over the poor administration of the asylum system and concern over Islam which is often fuelled by some sections of British media. Labour has not found an effective strategy for neutralizing these issues, or of convincing its core support that it is dealing with them effectively.

All of these factors run deeper than the moral panic over migration to which the BNP's success is commonly attributed. Our findings suggest that those citizens who are defecting to the BNP are doing so out of a deep seated sense of political disaffection with the main parties. Labour's perceived failure over immigration is perceived as just symptomatic of a broader feeling of abandonment which is growing among their formerly core working class constituencies. Local party decline, continuing economic and social deprivation and the belief that local ethnic minority groups get a better deal are all part of this world view. The BNP have developed an effective ideology for articulating these feelings of resentment and abandonment, and effective local organizations for mobilizing them electorally. Labour faces a serious threat from the large scale defection of traditional heartland supporters to the BNP, and conversely the BNP has an unprecedented opportunity to emerge as a serious political force by fully mobilizing its large pool of potential support among politically disaffected and socially marginalized working class men.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to the BNP a short-lived splinter group from the NF, the National Party (NP), elected two councillors in 1976 in Blackburn whilst the interwar British Fascist (BF) movement elected two candidates in 1926 in Lincolnshire and Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) elected one candidate in Suffolk in 1938. In 1993, the BNP elected one local councillor in Millwall ward, Tower Hamlets.

<sup>2</sup> Kite, M. (2006) 'BNP case 'a wake-up call to Labour'', *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 November

<sup>3</sup> H. Blears (2008) 'How to beat the BNP', *The Guardian*, 22 November

<sup>4</sup> For example Travers, T. (2009) 'Eventuality of a BNP win', *Local Government Chronicle* 5 March

<sup>5</sup> On limited involvement see BNP (1985) *Members' Bulletin* (Jan); on 'no-to-elections' see T. Wells (1991) 'The next election; what we must aim at', *Spearhead* (Feb), p.14

<sup>6</sup> BNP (1983) *British Nationalist* (July), p.4. In 1987, two unofficial candidates represented the BNP in two constituencies in south London.

<sup>7</sup> No Author (1992) *Spearhead* No. 281, p. 9

<sup>8</sup> BNP 'language and concepts discipline manual'. Available online:

[http://www.bnp.org.uk/organisers/store/general\\_guides/language\\_discipline.pdf](http://www.bnp.org.uk/organisers/store/general_guides/language_discipline.pdf) (accessed 1 February 2009).

<sup>9</sup> M. Collins (2006) 'The white flight to the right', *The Times* 20 April

<sup>10</sup> In the general election in 1979 the 303 NF candidates averaged just 1.3 per cent of the vote.

<sup>11</sup> In adopting a 'working class authoritarianism' approach Whiteley drew on work by Lipset (1969) and Lipset and Raab (1971), who argued that radical right support stemmed from blue-collar workers, and was the result of factors such as low education, low levels of political and civic participation, economic insecurity and authoritarian family patterns and status anxiety of whites faced with the challenge of aspirant blacks: S.M. Lipset and E. Raab (1971) *The Politics of Unreason: Right Wing Extremism in America 1790-1970*. London: Heinemann.

<sup>12</sup> As Husbands (1983, p.34) notes: 'The concept of 'political tradition' is evoked to accommodate the fact that NF voting often either contained an episodic history of race-related mobilization (one that might go back to before the turn of the century) or else took advantage of a specific and distinctive local political culture'.

<sup>13</sup> The authors asked NOP Market Research to cumulate 22 studies of voting intentions conducted between October 6 1977 and April 5 1978 as part of its regular random (weekly) omnibus surveys. Each of the surveys was a national probability sample of the adult British population conducted in a total of 120 constituencies, with one cluster drawn per constituency per week. Interlocking weights by age, sex and region were applied to each survey. A supporter of the NF was defined as anyone in England who mentioned the National Front or the National Party (an NF offshoot) when asked: 'How would you vote if there were a General Election tomorrow?' or subsequently, 'Which party are you most inclined to support?'

<sup>14</sup> Husbands (1983, p.101) put forward two possible explanations for these divergent findings: first, past surveys such as that by Harrop et al. (1980) were based on nationally-representative samples where as Husbands' focused on areas of known NF strength; second, Husbands operationalized social class slightly differently, not using 'social class of head of household' but rather classified on the basis of the individual respondent rather than the head of household.

<sup>15</sup> Husbands (1983, pp.103-4) speculated that NF sympathy among older voters may have been a legacy of their partisan political socialization in the late 1940s and 1950s.

<sup>16</sup> As John et al. (2006, p.16) also observe a tipping point in that when Asian groups constitute up to 7 per cent of the population in a council area electoral support for the BNP increases with the percentage of Asians in the local population whilst above this level support for the extreme right actually decreases.

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<sup>17</sup> In respect to the British case it is also worth noting that perceptions of ethnic competition and threat, in particular linked to Islam and Muslim communities, also figure prominently in the motivational accounts of BNP activists (Goodwin 2010b).

<sup>18</sup> The survey uses a nationally-representative quota sample. There are 210 sampling points, each consisting of a census ward or ward-sized area of approximately 3,500-8,000 households. Each sampling point is carefully selected to ensure that the sample universe is representative at regional level on a large number of demographic and other criteria. Within each sampling point, an interviewer is set a quota of ten interviews, with a different quota for each sampling point based on its census profile - quotas are set on gender, age, housing tenure and work status (full time workers versus others). Respondents were asked, 'How would you vote if there were a general election tomorrow?' and then shown a card listing 'Conservative', 'Labour', 'Liberal Democrat' and 'other'. All those who replied that they were undecided or who refused to answer were then asked a second question: 'Which party are you most inclined to support?' Voting intention for each party combines those who expressed support at either the first or second question. Self-identified supporters of the extreme right were those respondents whose verbatim answer recorded support for 'British National Party', 'BNP', 'National Front', 'NF' or any obvious variant of those. The vast majority of respondents (around 90 per cent) volunteered a BNP affiliation, and MORI have suggested that much of the small remaining minority of NF supporters may be accounted for by respondents' tendency to misremember the names of political parties, for example continuing to refer to the Liberal Democrats as the Liberal party twenty years after the latter became defunct (MORI, personal communication to authors, April 2009).

<sup>19</sup> The lack of appeal the BNP holds for ethnic minority Britons is clear in our sample: not one of the over 12,000 ethnic minority respondents volunteered support for the party.

<sup>20</sup> 1,800 respondents aged 15-17 were retained in our analysis as the majority of these would be old enough to vote at the next general election. Replications of our analyses with these individuals excluded had no impact on the results.

<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, we have been unable to obtain the Harrop et al data in order to conduct a comparison regression analysis on previous NF support

<sup>22</sup> It is possible that the Conservatives' high profile campaign on immigration restriction in this election attracted some BNP supporters (see Hopkins, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Likelihood ratio tests confirm that a model with a single dummy for working class fits as well as one with three coefficients for each working class group (C2, D and E), so we opt for a single coefficient for parsimony.

<sup>24</sup> The effects of these variables is generally unchanged in the combined model, though significance levels are in many cases reduced by the much smaller sample size, so they are not shown for reasons of space. Full coefficients are available from the authors on request.

<sup>25</sup> Separate analyses of BNP candidacy (using logistic regression) and BNP vote share in seats where the party stood (using OLS regression) were also carried out, and produced similar results to those presented here.

<sup>26</sup> Further discussion of Tobit models can be found in Breen (1996) and Maddala (1983).

<sup>27</sup> We define BNP strongholds here as constituencies with greater than 1.5 per cent in the MORI sample and greater than 5 per cent in the 2005 general election.

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**TABLE 1****Support for the Extreme Right in General Elections, 1970-2005**

<b>Election year</b>	<b>Votes received</b>	<b>Constituencies contested</b>	<b>Average in seats contested</b>	<b>Highest vote (%)</b>	<b>Deposits retained</b>
<b>1970</b>	10,902	10	3.6	5.6	0
<b>1974 (Feb)</b>	76,865	54	3.2	7.8	0
<b>1974 (Oct)</b>	113,843	90	3.1	9.4	0
<b>1979</b>	191,719	303	1.3	7.6	0
<b>1983</b>					
	<i>NF</i> 27,065	60	1.1	3.7	0
	<i>BNP</i> 14,621	54	0.6	1.3	0
<b>1987</b>					0
	<i>NF</i> 286	1 <sup>27</sup>	0.6	0.6	0
	<i>BNP</i> 553	2 <sup>27</sup>	0.5	0.6	0
<b>1992</b>					
	<i>NF</i> 3,984	14	0.7	1.2	0
	<i>BNP</i> 7,005	13	1.2	3.6	0
<b>1997</b>					
	<i>NF</i> 2,716	6 <sup>27</sup>	1.2	1.2	0
	<i>BNP</i> 35,832	56	1.4	7.5	3
<b>2001</b>					
	<i>NF</i> 2,484	5	1.5	2.2	0
	<i>BNP</i> 47,129	33	3.9	16.4	7
<b>2005</b>					
	<i>NF</i> 8,079	13	1.6	2.6	0
	<i>BNP</i> 192,746	119	4.9	16.9	34

Source: Eatwell (2000, p.173), Taylor (1982) and J. Yonwin (2004) *Electoral Performance of Far Right Parties in the UK*. Available online: <http://www.parliament.co.uk/commons/lib/research/notes> (accessed March 12 2009).

TABLE 2

Social Distribution of Contemporary BNP and 1970s NF Support (England only)

	<i>% of adult population 2002-6</i>	<i>% of BNP/NF support 2002-6</i>	<i>% of NF support 1977-8</i>	<i>Diff BNP-NF</i>	<i>Diff BNP- all adults</i>
<b>SEX</b>					
Male	47	<b>69</b>	71	-2	+22
Female	53	31	29	+2	-22
<b>AGE</b>					
15-24 years	13	11	37	-26	-2
25-34 years	15	13	16	-3	-2
35-54 years	34	<b>39</b>	29	+10	+5
55 years +	38	36	18	+18	-2
<b>SOCIAL CLASS</b>					
Higher non-manual (AB)	20	<i>11</i>	6	+5	-9
Lower non-manual (C1)	29	<i>19</i>	22	-3	-10
Skilled manual (C2)	21	<b>32</b>	46	-14	+11
Semi-/unskilled manual and residual (DE)	29	<b>38</b>	26	+12	+9
<b>REGION*</b>					
Greater London	14	<i>6</i>	25	-19	-8
South East	16	<i>11</i>	17	-6	-5
South West	11	7	12	-5	-4
East Anglia	11	11	3	+8	0
East Midlands	8	9	5	+4	+1
West Midlands	10	<b>14</b>	23	-9	+4
North	30	<b>41</b>	15	+26	+11
<b>Working Status</b>					
Full-time	38	<b>45</b>	68	-23	+7
Not-full-time	62	55	32	+23	-7
<b>Property</b>					
Owner/mortgage	70	68	53	+15	-2
Local-authority rented	21	<b>24</b>	41	-17	+3
Privately rented/other	9	8	6	+3	-1
<b>Social class by age and sex</b>					
Male, 15-34, ABC1	9	<i>4</i>	13	-9	-5
Male, 15-34, C2DE	8	<b>17</b>	25	-8	+9
Male, 35 or more, ABC1	17	<i>13</i>	9	+4	-4
Male, 35 or more, C2DE	14	<b>36</b>	24	+12	+22
Female, 15-34, ABC1	8	2	3	-1	-6
Female, 15-34, C2DE	8	7	11	-4	-1
Female, 35 or more, ABC1	18	6	3	+3	-12
Female, 35 or more, C2DE	18	16	11	+5	-2
N	161,687				

Bold figures indicate groups over-represented among BNP supporters; italics indicate groups under-represented among BNP supporters

TABLE 3

**Demographic Breakdown of BNP/NF Support and Support for Mainstream Parties (England only)**

	<i>BNP</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Lib Dems</i>	<i>UKIP</i>	<i>Non-voters</i>
<b>SEX</b>						
Male	<b>69</b>	48	50	46	<b>61</b>	45
Female	31	<b>52</b>	50	<b>54</b>	39	<b>55</b>
<b>AGE</b>						
18-34 years	25	27	<i>16</i>	25	<i>15</i>	<b>42</b>
35-54 years	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<i>30</i>	37	35	35
55 years +	36	36	<b>53</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>50</b>	23
<b>SOCIAL CLASS</b>						
Professional/managerial (AB)	<i>11</i>	<i>17</i>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	18	<i>12</i>
Routine non-manual (C1)	<i>19</i>	26	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	24
Skilled manual (C2)	<b>32</b>	22	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<b>24</b>	23
Semi-/unskilled manual and residual (DE)	<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>	<i>18</i>	<i>20</i>	27	<b>41</b>
<b>Education</b>						
No qualifications	<b>34</b>	<b>31</b>	24	<i>18</i>	26	<b>30</b>
GCSE/O-level	<b>34</b>	27	27	22	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>
A-level	11	12	14	14	12	11
Degree/Postgraduate	6	18	20	<b>31</b>	<i>15</i>	<i>11</i>
<b>REGION (England only)</b>						
South (excl. London)	29	29	<b>47</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>53</b>	32
Midlands	<b>23</b>	18	18	<i>15</i>	20	21
Greater London	6	13	<i>10</i>	13	8	<b>16</b>
North	<b>41</b>	<b>36</b>	<i>24</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>18</i>	31
<b>PROPERTY</b>						
Owner/mortgage	68	<i>65</i>	<b>85</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>78</b>	<i>54</i>
Local-authority rented	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	9	<i>13</i>	<i>16</i>	<b>31</b>
Privately rented/Other	8	8	6	9	6	<b>15</b>

*N*

Bold figures indicate over-representation; italics indicate under-representation

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**TABLE 4**

**Most Important Problem Facing Britain, by Voting Intention (%)**

	<i>BNP</i>	<i>Labour</i>	<i>Cons</i>	<i>Lib Dems</i>	<i>UKIP</i>	<i>Full sample</i>
<b>Issue</b>						
Immigration	<b>59</b>	12	<b>21</b>	10	<b>27</b>	16
Defence/foreign affairs/terrorism	10	<b>24</b>	18	<b>24</b>	15	21
Crime/law & order	5	11	11	9	9	11
Health/NHS	5	12	11	12	8	11
Education	1	6	5	<b>8</b>	3	6
Economy	2	4	5	5	2	4
EU	1	3	<b>6</b>	4	<b>16</b>	4
Others	17	28	23	28	20	27
N	237	13,096	8,902	6,412	442	39,709

Bold: higher than average concern with an issue

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**TABLE 5****Dissatisfaction and Pessimism among Party Supporters (%)**

	<b>BNP</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Cons</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>UKIP</b>	<b>All voters</b>
<b>Dissatisfied with....</b>						
Government	<b>92</b>	31	<b>86</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>88</b>	61
Labour leader performance	<b>85</b>	27	<b>83</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>86</b>	58
Conservative leader performance	<b>64</b>	40	30	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	40
Lib Dem leader performance	<b>52</b>	23	<b>31</b>	14	<b>48</b>	24
Economy will get worse	<b>69</b>	27	<b>52</b>	41	<b>55</b>	40
<i>N</i>	263	13,333	9,319	6,684	479	38,358

Source: IPSOS-MORI political polls, 2002-6; England only  
Bold: More dissatisfied than average



TABLE 6

Logistic Regression Model of BNP Support

	<i>Model 1: Demographics</i>
<b>Intercept</b>	<b>-6.94***</b>
<b>SURVEY YEAR (ref: 2002)</b>	
Linear trend (2002=0)	<b>0.24***</b>
2005 (Election year)	<b>-0.75***</b>
<b>SEX</b>	
Male	<b>0.94***</b>
<b>AGE (ref: 18-24)</b>	
25-34 years	0.20
35-54 years	<b>0.34**</b>
55 years +	0.04
<b>CLASS (ref: AB)</b>	
Lower non-manual (C1)	0.11
Working class (C2DE)	<b>0.76***</b>
<b>HOUSING TENURE (ref: owner-occupier)</b>	
Rent privately	0.11
Rent from council	0.08
<b>DEPRIVATION</b>	
Unemployed	<b>0.31*</b>
No car in HH	<b>-0.33***</b>
<b>MEDIA</b>	
Reads anti-immigrant tabloid	<b>0.30***</b>
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
GCSE/NVQ	0.03
A-level	-0.21
Degree	<b>-0.88***</b>
Postgrad	<b>-1.24***</b>
<b>REGION (ref: London/S.East/S.West)</b>	
East Anglia	<b>0.41***</b>
East Midlands	<b>0.42**</b>
West Midlands	<b>0.69***</b>
North West	<b>0.33**</b>
North East	<b>0.49**</b>
Yorkshire/Humber	<b>1.01***</b>
Model fit (pseudo- R square)	0.065
<i>N</i>	149,655

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**TABLE 7**

**Political attitudes and BNP support**

	<i>Model 2: Political Attitudes</i>	<i>Model 3: Political attitudes with demographic controls</i>
<b>Political attitudes</b>		
Disapprove of the government	<b>1.54***</b>	<b>1.70***</b>
Disapprove of Conservative leadership	<b>0.49***</b>	<b>0.58***</b>
Disapprove of Lib Dem leadership	<b>1.04***</b>	<b>0.90***</b>
Don't know on Lib Dem leadership	<b>0.68***</b>	<b>0.49*</b>
Negative opinion of economic prospects	<b>0.57***</b>	<b>0.53***</b>
Immigration rated most important problem	<b>1.60***</b>	<b>1.52***</b>
Model fit (pseudo- R square)	<i>0.125</i>	<i>0.182</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>38,358</i>	<i>37,629</i>

**TABLE 8**

**Tobit Regression Models of BNP Candidacy and Support in the 2001 and 2005  
General Elections (English constituencies only)**

	<b>BNP support, 2001 General Election</b>	<b>BNP support, 2005 General Election</b>
<b>Constant</b>	<b>-30.5*</b>	<b>-18.3**</b>
<b>Diversity</b>		
% Black Caribbean	0.16	<b>-0.84*</b>
% Black African	<b>1.09*</b>	<b>0.82***</b>
% Indian	0.06	-0.04
% Pakistani	<b>0.33*</b>	<b>0.45***</b>
% Bangladeshi	<b>0.75***</b>	-0.42
<b>Deprivation</b>		
% not in employment	<b>-0.62*</b>	<b>-0.35**</b>
% unemployed	-1.07	-0.07
% no qualifications	<b>0.92***</b>	<b>0.68***</b>
% owning house	0.19	0.08
Sigma	6.72	4.85
Left censored observations	496	414
Uncensored observations	33	115
Pseudo-R squared	<i>0.146</i>	<i>0.140</i>
<i>N</i>	529	529

**TABLE 9**  
**Multilevel Logistic Regression Model of BNP Support\* (white English respondents only)**

<i>Model 4: Demographics and constituency context</i>	
<b>Intercept</b>	<b>-10.9***</b>
<b>SURVEY YEAR (ref: 2002)</b>	
Linear trend (2002=0)	<b>0.26***</b>
2005 (Election year)	<b>-0.71***</b>
<b>SEX</b>	
Male	<b>0.94***</b>
<b>AGE (ref: 18-24)</b>	
25-34 years	0.16
35-54 years	<b>0.33**</b>
55 years +	0.05
<b>CLASS (ref: AB)</b>	
Lower non-manual (C1)	0.04
Working class (C2DE)	<b>0.64***</b>
<b>HOUSING TENURE (ref: owner-occupier)</b>	
Rent privately	0.13
Rent from council	0.09
<b>DEPRIVATION</b>	
Unemployed	<b>0.32**</b>
No car in HH	<b>-0.39***</b>
<b>MEDIA</b>	
Reads anti-immigrant tabloid	<b>0.28***</b>
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
GCSE/NVQ	0.04
A-level	-0.21
Degree	<b>-0.79***</b>
Postgrad	<b>-1.09***</b>
<b>REGION (ref: London/S.East/S.West)</b>	
East Anglia	0.11
East Midlands	-0.01
West Midlands	0.13
North West	-0.23
North East	-0.08
Yorkshire/Humber	0.29
<b>CONSTITUENCY CONTEXT</b>	
% Pakistani	<b>0.05***</b>
% Bangladeshi	0.02
% Indian	-0.16
% Black Caribbean	<b>-0.22***</b>
% Black African	<b>0.12**</b>
% unqualified	<b>0.07***</b>
% full time employed	<b>0.05***</b>
Constituency -level intercept variance	<b>0.38***</b>
DIC** (single level model)	10,511
DIC (two level model, random intercept only)	10,501
DIC (two level full model)	10,474
<i>N</i>	149,655

\*Two level logistic regression model carried out in MLWin using an MCMC estimation procedure

\*\*Deviance Information Criterion: lower values indicate better model fit