Appendix

*Characteristics of semi-structured interview respondents*

Participants in the semi-structured interviews are necessarily self-selected. There are more women (14) than men (7) in our respondents. Respondents come from a range of ethnic backgrounds (7 described their ethnicity as Indian/British Indian, 4 as mixed white and black Caribbean, 4 as Pakistani, and others from a range of different groups). The median age group was age 45-54, but 7 respondents were younger than 45, and 3 were older than 55.

*Supplementary analysis; parties other than Labour and the Conservatives*

The other national election in 2019 was the European Parliament election which took place in June. The UK had initially been expected to have left the EU by this point, but an exit deal had not been signed and the election was mostly fought on this issue, with the newly-formed Brexit Party (a successor party to UKIP) and the pro-EU Liberal Democrats in first and second place respectively. However, there is little evidence in our data that the Brexit Party or the Liberal Democrats were able to mobilise ethnic minority voters around the referendum divide as effectively as they did with the rest of the electorate. The panel for the 2019 European Parliament election in Table 1 shows that roughly 5% of Leavers from ethnic minority backgrounds who voted in the election supported the Brexit Party or UKIP; the Brexit Party won 31% of the whole electorate (including Remainers) and were the party that received the most votes overall.

It might be that the Brexit Party’s association with the figure of Nigel Farage[[1]](#footnote-1) whose party effectively mobilised anti-immigrant sentiment before the referendum was called (Ford et al., 2011; Ford & Goodwin, 2014), and during it (Sobolewska & Ford, 2020), meant that the party is seen as unattractive to Leavers among ethnic minorities. However, the Liberal Democrats were also unable to mobilise voters in favour of Remain; they received 20% of the vote at the national level, and were the second largest party in vote share, but received only 5% of the vote even among ethnic minority Remainers. This underlines the extent to which party politics among minority voters is very much a two-horse race; combined, Labour and the Conservatives received between 93% and 98% of votes of ethnic minorities in general elections since 2015. Nevertheless, it may also be that *Understanding Society* data suffers from reporting bias, as some respondents were asked to report both their 2019 general election vote and 2019 European Parliament election vote in the same survey. Given the lower turnout for European Parliament elections (even in this relatively politically salient election turnout was only 51%) it is possible that respondents were not able to accurately recall their vote in the earlier election.

*Voter support for parties and Leave/ Remain in general elections since 2015*

Table 1: Proportion of Remain and Leave supporters voting for each party in 2015, 2017 and 2019 elections (general and European Parliament in 2019), ethnic minority respondents only. Data: Understanding Society, weighted estimates.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2015** | **Conservative** | **Labour** | **Liberal Democrats** | **Others** |  | **N** |
| Remain | 18% | 69% | 7% | 6% |  | 298 |
| Leave | 31% | 62% | 3% | 5% |  | 155 |
| **2017** | **Conservative** | **Labour** | **Liberal Democrats** | **Others** |  |  |
| Remain | 13% | 84% | 1% | 2% |  | 1,407 |
| Leave | 26% | 70% | 1% | 3% |  | 598 |
| **2019 European Parliament** | **Conservative** | **Labour** | **Liberal Democrats** | **Others** | **Brexit Party/UKIP** |  |
| Remain | 14% | 75% | 5% | 4% | 2% | 497 |
| Leave | 36% | 57% | 0% | 2% | 5% | 210 |
| **2019 general election** | **Conservative** | **Labour** | **Liberal Democrats** | **Others** |  |  |
| Remain | 17% | 73% | 6% | 4% |  | 752 |
| Leave | 36% | 61% | <1% | 3% |  | 320 |

Table 2: Proportion of voters who supported Remain and Leave in 2015, 2017 and 2019 general elections, ethnic minority respondents only. Data: Understanding Society, weighted estimates.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2015** | **Remain** | **Leave** | **N** |
| Conservative | 53% | 47% | 102 |
| Labour | 68% | 32% | 300 |
| Lib Dem | 84% | 16% | 25 |
| Other | 68% | 32% | 26 |
| **2017** | **Remain** | **Leave** |  |
| Conservative | 54% | 46% | 338 |
| Labour | 74% | 26% | 1,604 |
| Lib Dem | 67% | 33% | 17 |
| Other | 65% | 35% | 45 |
| **2019** | **Remain** | **Leave** |  |
| Conservative | 53% | 47% | 239 |
| Labour | 74% | 26% | 747 |
| Lib Dem | 98% | 2% | 49 |
| Other | 75% | 25% | 37 |

*Data quality and turnout*

Like many surveys, *Understanding Society* has a lower proportion of respondents who say they supported Leave in 2016 than the proportion of voters who chose Leave in the referendum. 52% of respondents in wave 8 (2016-17) said that the UK should remain a member of the European Union and 43% said the UK should leave the EU[[2]](#footnote-2), compared to 52% of voters in the referendum who supported Leave, and 48% for Remain. This is compounded by the fact that *Understanding Society* did not ask about referendum vote choice or turnout, but instead posed the referendum question itself to respondents in wave 8, for which fieldwork took place in 2016-2017. This has the advantage that people who were interviewed before and after the referendum were asked the same question, but the disadvantage that we have no data on turnout in the referendum. However, all the respondents whose qualitative interviews we analyse said they voted Leave as well as supporting it, and also that they voted in the 2019 general election.

We do not consider general election turnout explicitly in this paper either, because this survey has low coverage of non-voters, and does not link to electoral register data. Most studies over-represent the views of politically engaged respondents, but this is particularly acute for *Understanding Society* because those who are more interested in politics are more likely to leave the panel over time. This has lead to the gap between the reported levels of turnout among respondents in *Understanding Society* and real world turnout increasing from 9.1 percentage points in 2010 to 12.4 in 2017 (Prosser et al., 2020). Moreover, the survey does not employ vote validation where turnout reported by respondents is checked against polling station data. Notwithstanding these limitations, we checked to see if there was any evidence of differences in turnout between ethnic minority Leave and Remain voters. There is no difference in 2019; reported turnout is 79% of Remainers and 80% of Leavers among minorities (data are weighted). In 2015 however there was a difference; turnout was 75% of Remainers and 87% of Leavers.

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1. Farage was a polarising personality among the whole electorate, with Leave campaign sources aware that basing their strategy on the then-leader of UKIP “being rude about Romanians” was likely to lead to failure (Shipman, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 4% said they didn’t know and 2% refused to answer. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)