

## How well is UKIP performing?

### – Local government elections results since the European elections

#### Opinion polls vs. local government election results

Relative to expectations five years earlier, the UK Independence Party's triumph in coming first in the 2014 European elections was one of the most remarkable upsets in British political history. But the European elections of May 2014 are very different from the UK general election of May 2015. A widely-held view in the London-based political commentariat is that UKIP support will fade over the next ten months, so that UKIP will struggle to achieve a vote share in the general election in the double digits per cent and will therefore fail to win a seat. In 2012 and 2013 the commentariat was hopelessly wrong in its assessment of UKIP's electoral prospects in 2014. On the evidence so far available, will it also be hopelessly wrong in 2014 in its assessment of UKIP's electoral prospects in 2015?

In these reports I have tracked the results of local government elections, as a cross-check on opinion polls. (Occasional local government elections are being held all the time – almost every week, in fact – to replace local councillors who leave office because of resignation, retirement, illness or death.) In late 2013 I argued – correctly, it seems in retrospect – that the well-known national opinion polls (YouGov, Populus) were under-estimating UKIP support. (They had, after all, totally failed to forecast the high UKIP vote shares in the 2013 county council elections.) I pointed out in a 13<sup>th</sup> January 2014 note that in the 23 local government elections held in December 2013 and early January 2014 UKIP had secured more votes than the Conservatives. These were actual votes in real elections, not the fantasy of a UKIP fruitcake. But what is happening now? Will UKIP continue to surge ahead or will the commentariat take their revenge?

#### Vote shares in local government elections in June and early July, since the European elections

	<i>Votes share overall</i>	<i>Vote share where UKIP stood</i>	<i>Vote share where UKIP stood, and votes of 'others and independent' are not included</i>
<i>All vote shares as % of total</i>			
<b>Labour</b>	33.3	34.4	39.2
<b>Conservative</b>	29.3	29.2	33.3
<b>UKIP</b>	12.8	13.3	15.1
<b>LibDem</b>	7.2	7.5	8.5
<b>Green</b>	3.3	3.4	3.9
Others and independents	14.0	12.3	

The table above gives the vote shares for the main parties (and others) on three bases. The total number of votes cast in the 24 local government elections since the European elections was almost 49,500. As always, warnings have to be given that the sample of 'seats' might not be representative of 'national opinion', but the problem is inevitable in an exercise of this kind. UKIP contested every seat which came up, apart from two in North Kesteven in Lincolnshire. (North Kesteven is very rural, prosperous and Conservative.)

In the latest local government elections the UKIP per cent share remains in the double digits, at just over 13% in the elections where it participated and about 15% in these elections when votes for 'others' and 'independents' are excluded. On this basis, the commentariat is too pessimistic about UKIP's position. On the other hand, the UKIP vote share in local government elections is down from the figure seen consistently in late 2013, of roughly 20%. It is also lower than in both the 2013 county council elections and this year's European elections. Indeed, it is roughly in line with the latest national opinion polls. (YouGov 13%, Ipsos MORI 12%.)

## Comments

The following comments are offered,

1. UKIP is still clearly ahead of the Liberal Democrats, who – if a big swing in public opinion does not now occur – face wipe-out in the 2015 general election.
2. The Conservatives are recovering strongly, far more than indicated by the opinion polls. (But the opinion polls did not indicate the depths to which they would fall in the county council elections or the European elections. The pollsters might protest that, throughout, they were asking about voting intentions in a general election. Ok, but that does not explain why the Conservatives have been doing so much better – 5% to 10% of the vote better compared with 2013 – *in local government elections* during the summer months of 2014.)
3. The Liberal Democrats are being massacred outside the areas where they are already represented and/or have strong branch associations. Note that the LibDems won two of the 24 local government elections covered here (one in Cheltenham, and the other in Pendle, in rural Lancashire), whereas UKIP did not win any of the 24 elections.
4. The Green vote appears to be running at over 3%, perhaps an insignificant point, except that it may indicate that voters with views of this sort are unimpressed with Ed Milliband. A 1% - 2% swing of left-wing voters from Labour to the Greens could harm Labour in marginal seats in 2015. The development needs to be mentioned, as it could have some similarity in its impact on Labour to the alleged damage to the Conservatives from UKIP's 3.1% vote share in the 2010 general election.



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23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2014

Name	Date	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	UKIP	Green	Others	Ind	Total
Clydesdale South - South Lanarkshire DC	05/06/2014	659	1492	0	233	104	1170	0	3658
Sleaford Quarrington & Mareham - North Kesteven District Council	12/06/2014	427	0	0	0	0	527	178	1132
Sleaford Westholme - North Kesteven District Council	12/06/2014	119	38	0	0	0	342	0	499
Bexhill Collington - Rother District Council	12/06/2014	378	102	0	311	0	0	570	1361
Soham South - East Cambridgeshire District Council	19/06/2014	363	71	191	201	0	0	228	1054
Southam - Stratford-on-Avon District Council	19/06/2014	493	398	0	259	0	0	0	1150
Swanwick - Amber Valley District Council	26/06/2014	474	298	32	245	0	0	252	1301
(3 seats) Colindale - London Borough of Barnet	26/06/2014	1387	6293	310	924	352	0	0	9266
Charlton Park - Cheltenham BC	03/07/2014	767	46	861	154	66	0	0	1894
Wivenhoe Quay - Colchester Borough Council	03/07/2014	629	857	127	129	90	2	0	1834
Skipton West - Craven Council	03/07/2014	131	185	143	126	67	0	120	772
Skipton West - North Yorkshire County Council	03/07/2014	355	181	309	238	194	0	391	1668
St James - Northampton Borough Council	03/07/2014	198	307	262	201	0	0	0	968
Braunstone & Crick - Northamptonshire County Council	03/07/2014	1019	989	0	506	0	0	0	2514
Brixworth - Northamptonshire County Council	03/07/2014	1297	248	69	500	228	0	0	2342
Old Laund Booth - Pendle Borough Council	03/07/2014	266	0	427	27	0	13	0	733
Manningtree, Mistely, Little Bentley & Tendring - Tendring Borough Council	03/07/2014	376	129	159	154	0	0	0	818
(3 Seats) Blackwall & Cubitt Town - Tower Hamlets Borough Council	03/07/2014	2454	2703	197	618	282	33	2249	8536
Penistone West - Barnsley Borough	10/07/2014	719	722	0	622	0	0	338	2401
Boughton - Chester West & Council	10/07/2014	469	614	70	131	86	0	0	1370
Winnington & Castle - Chester West & Council	10/07/2014	418	525	80	307	0	0	0	1330
Illogan - Cornwall County Council	10/07/2014	215	129	277	156	50	338	0	1165
Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo - North Hertfordshire DC	10/07/2014	734	116	57	203	74	0	0	1184
Kenwith - Torrington District Council	10/07/2014	136	26	0	99	28	0	167	456
<b>Total</b>		<b>14483</b>	<b>16469</b>	<b>3571</b>	<b>6344</b>	<b>1621</b>	<b>2425</b>	<b>4493</b>	<b>49406</b>