

What Would be The Impact of Changing the Voting System in European Elections?

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24 July 2013

European Parliament Elections

- Each EU member state can choose its own electoral system, as long as it is a form of proportional representation (PR)
- “**closed-list**” PR – where parties present lists of candidates and voters choose between parties – is used in England, Scotland and Wales (as well as in France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Spain)
- “**open-list**” PR – where voters choose between candidates AND parties – is used in 18 countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden)
- Single-Transferable-Vote system – where voters rank individual candidates – is used in Ireland, Malta, and Northern Ireland.






A Hypothetical “Closed-List” Ballot Paper

Vote for one of the parties below.

			Vote Choice
1	Conservative Party 	1. Evelyn Preston	○
		2. Dom Courtney	
		3. Ken Chase	
2	The Green Party 	1. Kimberley Franks	○
		2. Andy Kingsley	
		3. Andrew Linden	
3	The Labour Party 	1. Jessica Hunter	○
		2. Kenny Greene	
		3. Richard Grey	
4	Liberal Democrats 	1. Nigel Wyatt	○
		2. Christine Kendall	
		3. Harry Stern	
5	United Kingdom Independence Party 	1. Rosie Travers	○
		2. Rowan Jarod	
		3. Conor O'Brien	

A Hypothetical “Open-List” Ballot Paper

Vote for one of the candidates below.

			Vote Choice
1	Conservative Party	1. Richard Grey	<input type="radio"/>
		2. Conor O'Brien	<input type="radio"/>
		3. Jessica Hunter	<input type="radio"/>
2	The Green Party	1. Dom Courtney	<input type="radio"/>
		2. Andy Kingsley	<input type="radio"/>
		3. Kimberley Franks	<input type="radio"/>
3	The Labour Party	1. Christine Kendall	<input type="radio"/>
		2. Rowan Jarod	<input type="radio"/>
		3. Andrew Linden	<input type="radio"/>
4	Liberal Democrats	1. Kenny Greene	<input type="radio"/>
		2. Nigel Wyatt	<input type="radio"/>
		3. Rosie Travers	<input type="radio"/>
5	United Kingdom Independence Party	1. Ken Chase	<input type="radio"/>
		2. Harry Stern	<input type="radio"/>
		3. Evelyn Preston	<input type="radio"/>

Our Survey

We conducted an on-line survey, via YouGov, of 8,000 representative people. This is the largest survey of its kind

We asked each respondent to:

1. Place themselves on a Pro-/Anti-European (0-10) scale
2. Vote on a hypothetical ballot paper (either closed-list or open-list)
3. Tell us how easy or difficult they felt the ballot paper was to use

The names on the ballot papers were randomly chosen and randomly ordered within and between the parties (Con, Lab, Green, Lib Dem, UKIP)

To simulate a real election, for some of the respondents we provided information about the European positions of the candidates. So, the experiment had 4 equal-sized “treatment groups”:

- Closed-list*, with no information about candidates’ positions
- Closed-list*, with information about candidates’ positions
- Open-list*, with no information about candidates’ positions
- Open-list*, with information about candidates’ positions

Candidate Information

The non-partisan group **Britain Out of Europe**, which advocates a repatriation of democratic powers to the UK, has endorsed the following Eurosceptic candidates:

Evelyn Preston, Conservative Party

Andrew Linden, The Green Party

Rowan Jarod, The Labour Party

Dom Courtney, Liberal Democrats

Harry Stern, Rosie Travers, Andy Kingsley, United Kingdom Independence Party

The non-partisan group **Britain In Europe**, which advocates full British involvement in a strong European Union, has endorsed the following pro-European candidates:

Kenny Greene, Conservative Party

Jessica Hunter, The Green Party

Conor O'Brien, The Labour Party

Christine Kendall, Liberal Democrats

How We Showed the Information

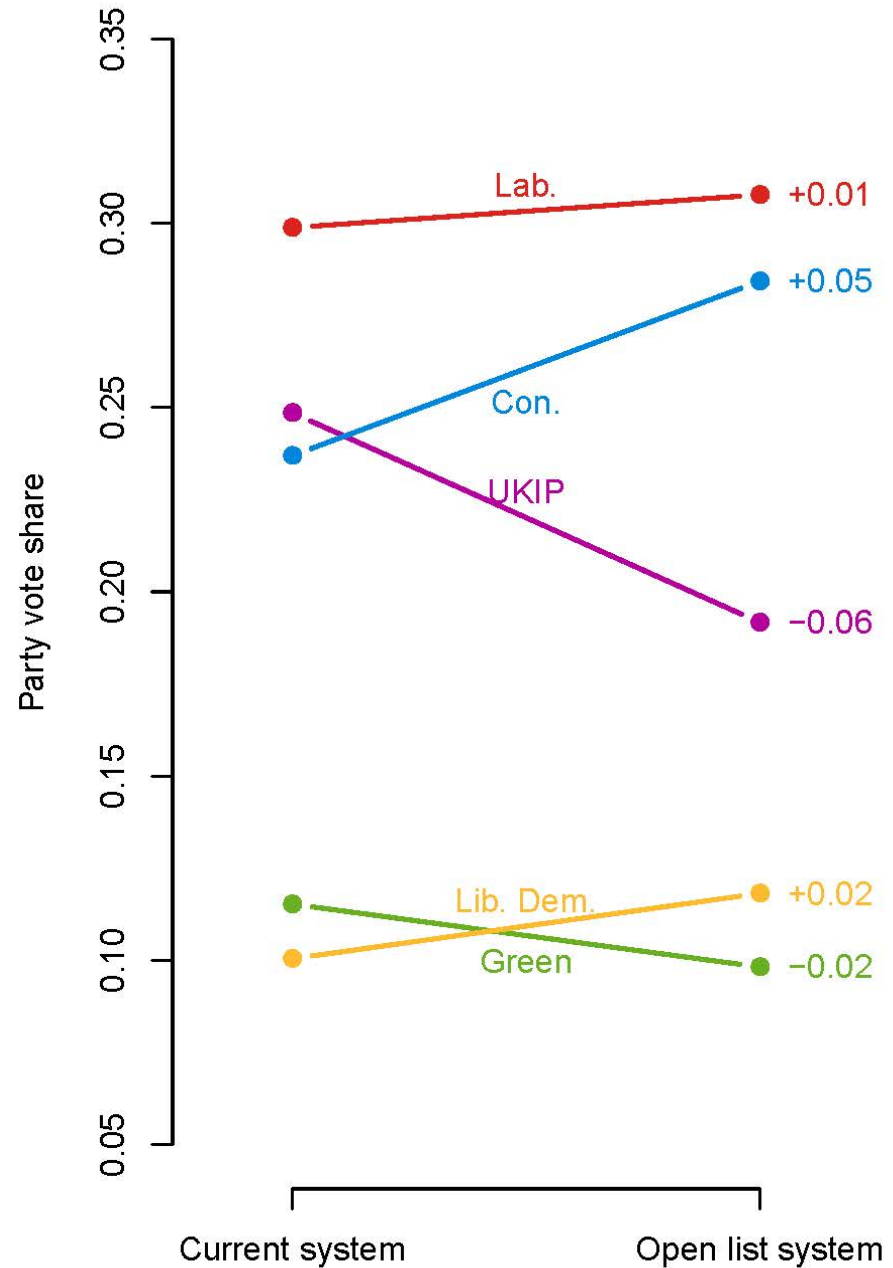
Vote for one of the candidates below.

		Vote Choice	Endorsements	
			Britain in Europe	Britain Out of Europe
Conservative Party 	1. Conor O'Brien	<input type="radio"/>		✓
	2. Christine Kendall	<input type="radio"/>		
	3. Harry Stern	<input type="radio"/>	✓	
The Green Party  Green Party	1. Jessica Hunter	<input type="radio"/>	✓	
	2. Richard Grey	<input type="radio"/>		
	3. Dom Courtney	<input type="radio"/>		✓
The Labour Party 	1. Kimberley Franks	<input type="radio"/>		
	2. Nigel Wyatt	<input type="radio"/>	✓	
	3. Kenny Greene	<input type="radio"/>		✓
Liberal Democrats  LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	1. Ken Chase	<input type="radio"/>		✓
	2. Evelyn Preston	<input type="radio"/>		
	3. Andy Kingsley	<input type="radio"/>	✓	
United Kingdom Independence Party 	1. Rosie Travers	<input type="radio"/>		✓
	2. Andrew Linden	<input type="radio"/>		✓
	3. Rowan Jarod	<input type="radio"/>		✓

Main Result

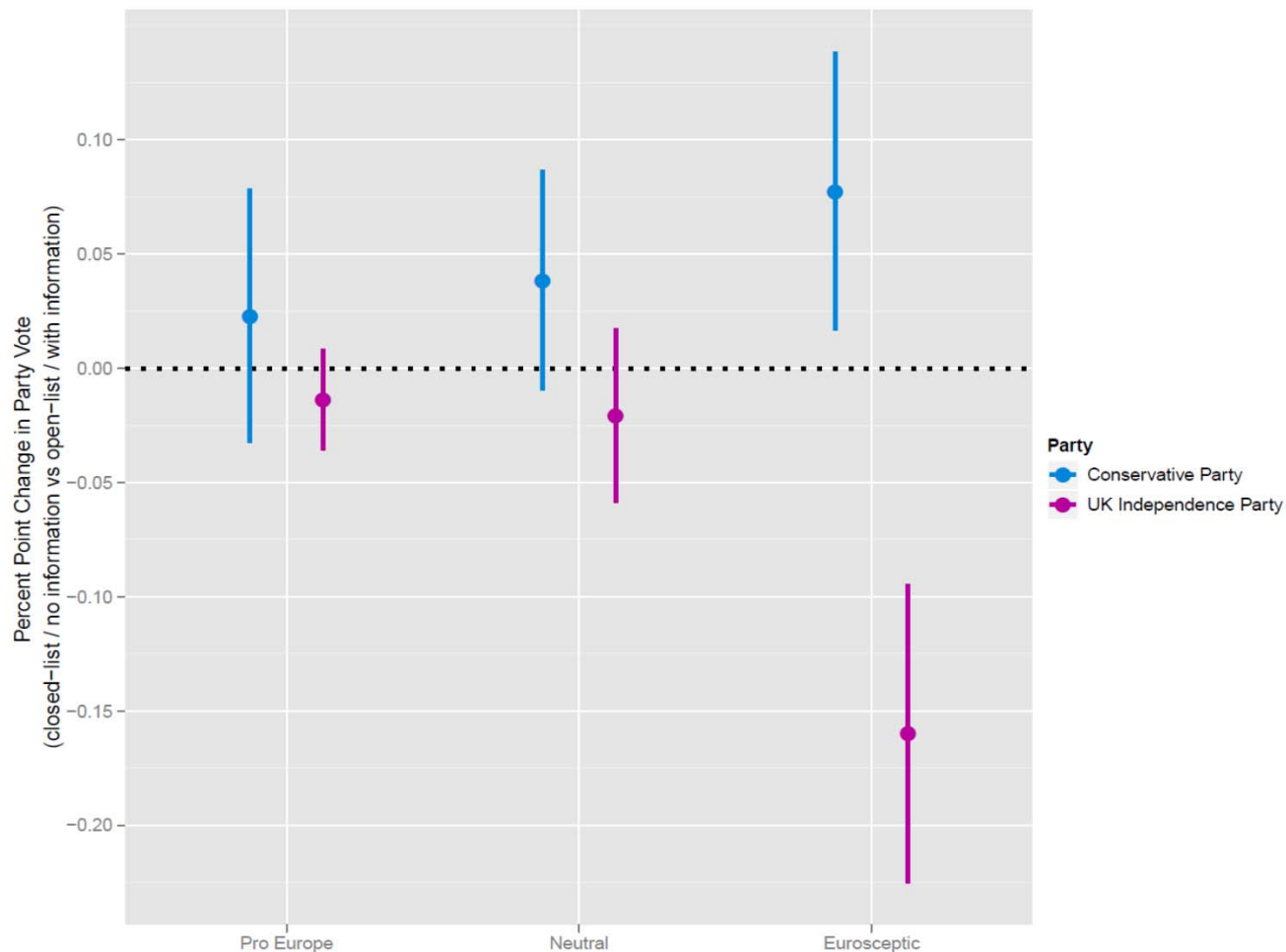
Under the current (closed-list) system, Labour would win, with UKIP second and the Conservatives third.

Under an open-list system, Labour and the Conservatives would be neck-and-neck and UKIP would fall to third place, a long way behind the top two parties.



Who Would Vote Differently?

Looking at the Anti-/Pro-Europe positions of the voters reveals that Eurosceptic voters would behave differently under the two systems: with 8% more Eurosceptic voters supporting the Conservatives, and 16% fewer supporting UKIP



The bars represent 95% confidence intervals around the average changes.

Percentage of Eurosceptic Voters Choosing Each Party

	Current system	Open list system
UKIP	57 %	41 %
Conservative Party	23 %	31 %
Labour Party	13 %	19 %
Green Party	4 %	5 %
Liberal Democrats	3 %	5 %
Total	100 %	100 %

In other words, an open-list system which allowed Eurosceptic voters to vote for a Eurosceptic candidate of a party other than UKIP would lead to greater proportions of Eurosceptic voters supporting all the other parties, and particularly the Conservatives and Labour.

The Research Team

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