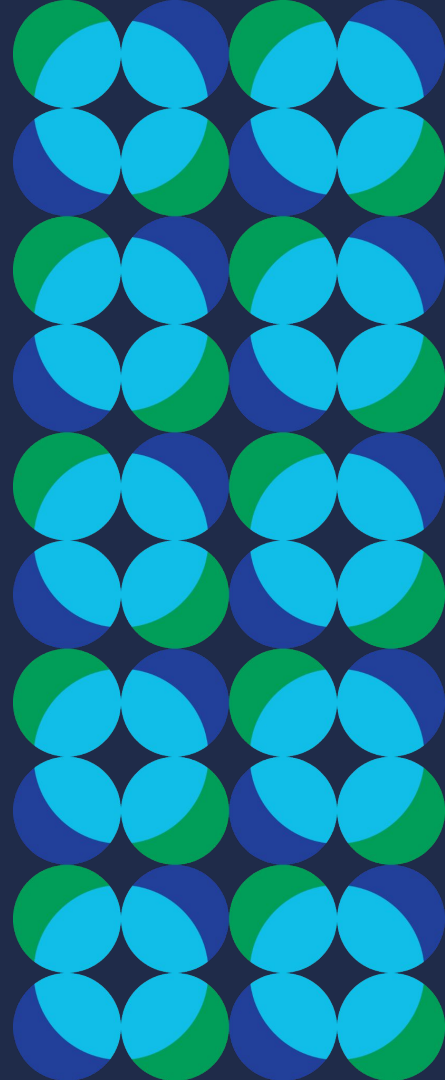




More in
Common

No overall control

British politics in an era of fragmentation



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**What do the
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Local elections in England

The insurgent election

In England, we saw **the next stage of the breakdown of the two-party system**, as insurgent parties across the left and the right undermined Labour's key urban strongholds, and the Conservatives experienced further losses.

We saw a gravitational pull toward small parties.

The first thing that came into my head was like, in football there was the top four in the Premier League and now it just seems like, would it ever go back to being just the top two? I don't know. It doesn't look like it, to be honest. Especially if things continue the way they're going, the unknown, the instability.
Soloman, London

Holyrood elections in Scotland

The "meh" election

In Scotland, voter disenchantment defined this election. With widespread dissatisfaction toward incumbents in Holyrood and Westminster alike – and no obvious change candidate – we saw widespread apathy and resignation.

We saw record fragmentation, and low turnout.

I don't even know if, is there any party that's going to get in and there's going to be a huge difference with the SNP and for how many years the place is falling apart? It's just nothing ever changes, nothing. We went for Boris Johnson to Keir Starmer, nothing ever changes.
Karen, Midlothian

Senedd elections in Wales

The change election

In Wales, we saw **a vote for change**: with Labour facing a double-incumbency effect, momentum rising particularly behind Plaid Cymru but also Reform UK as carriers of change, yet doubts remain about whether they're ready for government.

We saw seismic losses for the Labour Party, and record high turnout.

I voted for Plaid this time and I'm really hopeful that we'll see some big change and quite proud actually that Wales will have a voice in Westminster.
Lindsay, South Wales

Key takeaways from the 2026 elections: part 1

Fragmentation is the new normal

For the first time since the 1970s, a majority of British councils are under No Overall Control, and Labour and the Conservative's combined estimated national vote after these elections is just 36%. Five UK-wide parties now poll above 10% in the polls and on average wards were won on around a third of the vote. The 2026 elections show Keir Starmer's shallow 2024 majority was a preview of British politics to come, not an anomaly.

Reform is increasingly becoming the only truly national party

Reform is now competitive in every nation and region, after sweeping Labour's 'Red Wall' and eating Conservative votes in the Essex-Kent corridor of England. Reform also shattered Labour's hold in the Welsh Valleys where the Conservatives never managed, while breaking into urban working-class Scotland, hoovering up the votes of right-leaning Unionists. It now has a coalition of 'squeezed middle' voters across Great Britain.

Labour's vote has contracted to its core

After the 2026 locals Labour increasingly looks like a 'fringe' urban party. Labour has lost its post-industrial heartlands across England's Red Wall, taken a hit in Scotland's Central belt and lost control of the Senedd for the first time since its creation. What remains – younger, graduate renters – is a demographic that represents its most loyal support, but also that which is under threat from the Greens in inner cities and university towns.

Key takeaways from the 2026 elections: part 2

The Conservatives have ceded much of the right to Reform

After being wiped out in former strongholds like Essex, the Conservatives are retreating to affluent pockets of the South East and North and West London, and have collapsed back to their pre-2014 map in Scotland. Their remaining voter base increasingly resembles the Liberal Democrats, and they tend to now do well where they are the more 'palatable' right choice to Reform among social liberals.

Financial insecurity, not the culture war, is reshaping the electorate

The cost of living was the key national issue heading into these elections. However, varying experiences of hardship have sent voters in different directions – squeezed, young urban renters to the Greens, financially insecure voters relying on support from the State to Labour, and 'squeezed middle' homeowners on the outskirts or urban areas to Reform UK. Deprivation is pulling voters away from Labour and the Conservatives.

Change is the name of the game

Incumbency is toxic at a time when the social contract is seen to be broken. 'Insurgents' – Reform, the Greens and Plaid – are displacing incumbents because they are associated with change, while Labour and the Conservatives are just 'more of the same'. Only the SNP in Scotland avoided this curse, though even here their vote share dropped and focus groups found a deep lack of enthusiasm for the SNP. Insurgents now hold a structural advantage to the two main parties.

The Seven Segments

Progressive Activists



...an outspoken group that is politically engaged and globally minded, championing social justice but feeling alienated from mainstream politics

Incrementalist Left



...a group that leans left and trusts institutions, often stepping back from the news and avoiding politically fraught debates

Established Liberals



... a prosperous group that is confident in institutions, values expertise, and believes the system broadly works

Sceptical Scrollers



...a disengaged group that has lost trust in mainstream institutions and increasingly looks online for sources of truth

Rooted Patriots



...a patriotic group that feels overlooked by elites and wants leaders with common sense to protect local identity

Traditional Conservatives



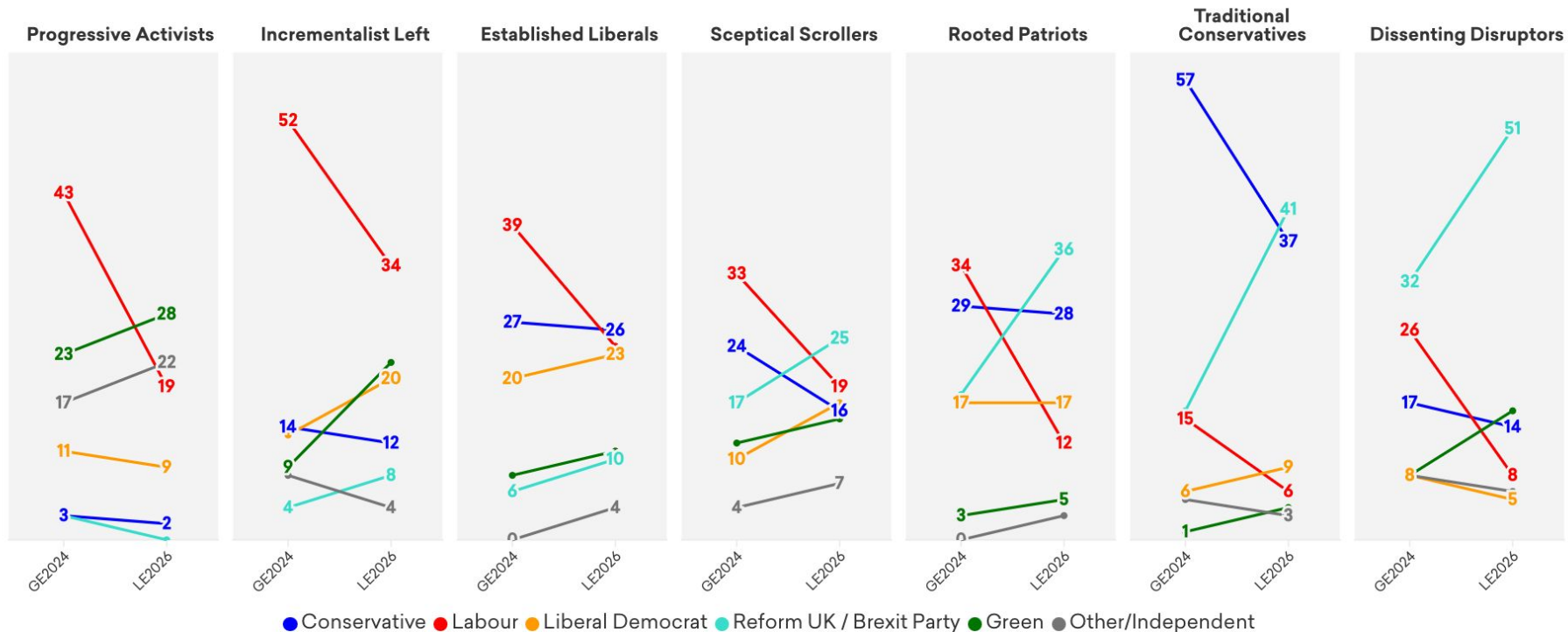
... a nostalgic group that respects tradition, authority and personal responsibility, while remaining sceptical of rapid change

Dissenting Disruptors



... a frustrated group that craves radical change and backs strong leaders who promise to shake up a broken system

How the segments voted in the English local elections



The national mood ahead of the 2026 elections




Many Britons feel like they are not getting a fair deal


In the run up to 7 May 2026, voters across the political spectrum – from young Green voters in Central London to Reform-backing retirees in the Welsh Valleys – were united by their conviction that the social contract in Britain is broken.


Ahead of May, over six in ten (61 per cent) said the social contract was broken, compared to only 23 per cent who said it was still in tact. Over half of Britons (51 per cent) said hard work does not pay, versus the 37 per cent who said people who work hard get ahead.

How that discontent manifested itself differed between voter groups. Those thinking of opting for the Greens or independents often described feeling like they had ‘done the right thing’ – went to university, got a degree, got a decent job – yet remained locked out of the housing ladder and burdened by student debt.

Meanwhile, those voting for Reform UK described feeling like a ‘mug’ for playing by the rules, arguing welfare disincentives work and that asylum seekers are looked after while ordinary people are squeezed by the cost of living.

 *The working class is the classes that's getting hit the hardest (...) the actual people that are working, paying their taxes, paying their national insurance and paying for the country to keep running, you are getting the brunt of it, but you're carrying the country, so how does that work?*
Denzel, Engineering manager, Birmingham

 *It's about the betterment of society and the betterment of our day-to-day lives(...)our children and probably their grandchildren are going to be the first in history, they're not going to be better off than their parents. That's a real line in the sand I think.*
Julie, Charity Worker, Wrexham

 *I was going to say it's also harder to ... I think it's also harder to climb the social ladder, I feel like, whereas before it might've been a bit more attainable to get into the middle class, whereas now ever, lower middle class doesn't feel middle class.*
Sima, Teacher, Birmingham

Voters think this government is offering more of the same – and is just as untrustworthy as any other

Despite Labour's 2024 pledge of "change," most Britons now see the current government as "more of the same" – the hope that mobilised its 2024 coalition has largely disappeared. Over three in four think things are getting worse in the UK today, comparable to sentiment before the 2024 General Election, while just 1 in 20 think things are getting better.

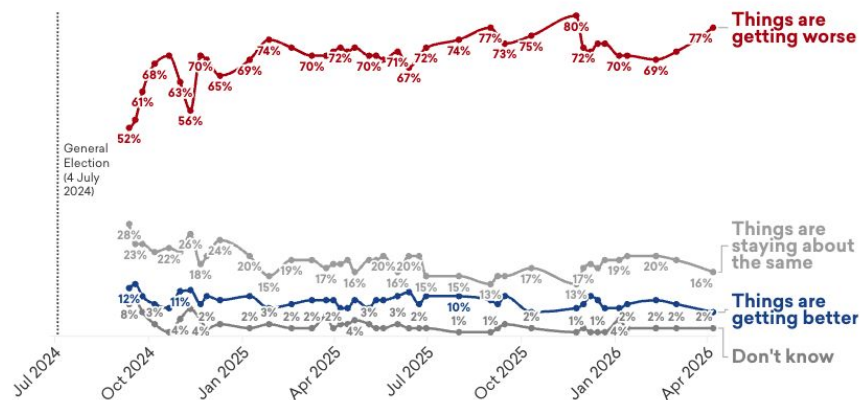
Casting a shadow over the 2026 local elections was the Mandelson scandal, which hardened a conviction that whichever party is in office, those running it cannot be trusted – every politician, voters say, has some sort of skeleton in the closet.

Around a third describe Nigel Farage and Keir Starmer as corrupt, while almost half say the Prime Minister doesn't respect the public.

The impact landed hardest on 2024 Labour voters, who had backed the party hoping it would be different from the Conservatives. For many, the scandal was substantive proof that nothing fundamental has changed.

Three in four Britons say things are getting worse

Thinking about the UK today, would you say...



They've all got skeletons in their closet. It's a given. Every single one of them will have something that they've done 10 years ago, 20 years ago. That's always going to come out.

Emma, Nurse, Newcastle

Many voters were casting their ballots for change on 7 May

Various scandals did not diminish voters' desire for change – even if, by 7 May 2026, many Britons no longer believed the government could provide it.

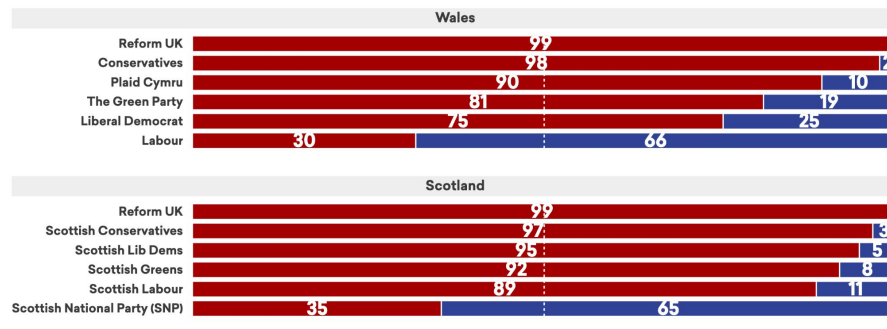
Ahead of voting day, more than a third of people in England (36 per cent) felt their local area was heading in the wrong direction. Meanwhile, ahead of the Holyrood elections, more than three quarters of Scottish people (77 per cent) said it was "time for change" – a sentiment that cut across partisan lines, including Conservative (97 per cent), Reform (99 per cent) and Labour voters (89 per cent). Even among those intending to vote SNP, more than a third still believed change was needed.

In Wales, the mood was similar. More than eight in ten Welsh people (84 per cent) said "it's time for change". The backdrop was a deeply dissatisfied national mood: in late April, over half of Welsh people (60 per cent) said things were getting worse in Wales, often describing the country as "poor," "struggling" and "broken."

Welsh and Scottish voters wanted change

Which of the following comes closest to how you are feeling about the upcoming Welsh Senedd / Scottish Holyrood elections?

● It's time for change ● We need to stick with the plan



There's no any great choice in any of the politicians just now. For me it's either vote for change to hope that something can happen, or else you vote just to remain the same and go along the same way we've been going the last 19 years.

Stephen, Edinburgh

Cost of living was the dominant national issue going into this election

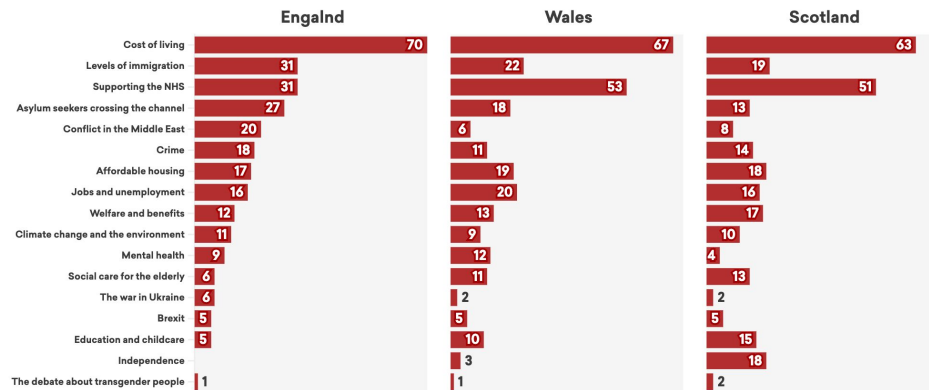
Ahead of 7 May the public said that the top three issues facing the country were the cost of living (71 per cent), the NHS (33 per cent) and levels of migration (31 per cent). The cost of living was seen as the most important issue facing England, Scotland and Wales by respondents in each.

Across all three nations, the cost of living functioned less as a single issue than as the frame through which voters assessed parties' abilities to improve their lives and bring about change.

As the elections approached, almost six in ten of the public said they felt the cost of living crisis would never end. In focus groups, respondents described feeling financially exhausted after years of squeeze in which housing costs and food prices have risen while wages stagnated, leaving many feeling they work to survive, not to live, rising energy bills. Many were frustrated that their government(s) had been unable to resolve the issue – for some, this added weight to the idea that 'the system' does not work for ordinary people.

Across the United Kingdom, the cost of living is the most important issue

In your opinion, which are the most important issues facing your country today?



What am I working for? I've got no money for a holiday. I've got no money to go out for a night out or a nice meal or things like that. It's like, what am I working for? To sit in my house again at the weekend? I think that's what gets people down.

Laura, Rutherglen and Cambuslang

Energy bills have become a defining part of worry around the cost of living

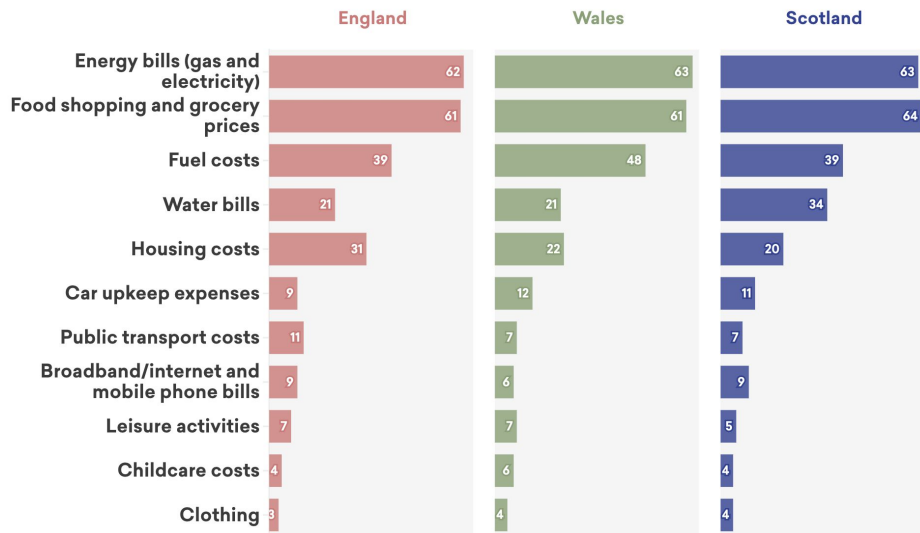
By the time of the local elections, 62 per cent of Britons named energy bills as the element of the cost of living they were most worried about. Fewer than one in five had not had to make any lifestyle adjustments to accommodate higher energy bills.

External shocks have only deepened this anxiety, with seven in ten Britons worried about the impact of the war in Iran on their bills. This anxiety has also reshaped how Britons think about climate, with parties' policies on renewables and Net Zero now shifting from the environmental realm to the economic one. Where there is opposition to both, this is driven by worry that clean energy will push bills up rather than down. Where clean energy is framed as economically practical, support is stronger.

This dynamic played out differently across the three nations. Those who believed the shift to clean energy will make life better were much more likely to say they would vote Labour, Lib Dem or Green in England, and SNP or Plaid in Scotland and Wales, ahead of the elections, while voters more sceptical of the costs went Reform.

Energy bills and food prices are the most worry parts of the cost of living for people in England, Wales and Scotland

Which of the following, if any, are causing you to be most concerned about the cost of living at the moment? Please select up to three.



Council tax was a key local issue in England

Heading into the local elections, a third of voters in England (31 per cent) said council tax levels would be one of the most important issues determining which party they would vote for.

This was closely linked to the cost of living – in focus groups, respondents shared their sense that council tax was contributing to the cost of living squeeze. Voters who described themselves as financially struggling (44 per cent) were more likely than those who are comfortable (28 per cent) to say council tax would be a key issue for them.

Council tax levels were a particularly strong driver for those voting for Reform (39 per cent) and Conservative (41 per cent) in England. Meanwhile, voters who were opting for Labour or the Greens were more likely to prioritise housing or planning – and those parties go on to perform better in English wards where the housing crunch is most acute, and rental electorate is largest.



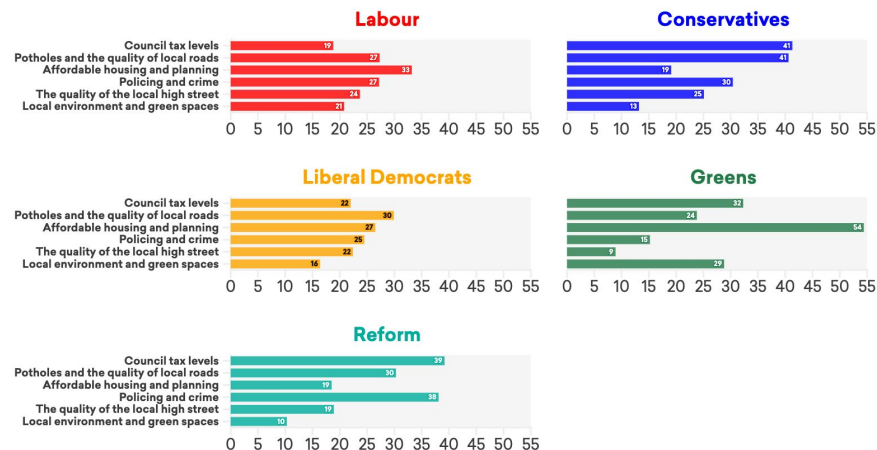
The council tax goes up every year but without any explanation. Without saying 'we're going to do more bins' or whatever. They're just putting it up, taking it out of your account.

Jeanette, Sefton

Council tax cut through with voters

Which of the following will be most important in determining which way you vote in the upcoming local elections?

● Labour ● Conservatives ● Liberal Democrats ● Greens ● Reform



The unpopularity contest

With tactical voting increasingly defining races across England, a key challenge for politicians and parties is to *avoid being hated*.

Labour and Reform are currently jostling for the most opposed party. If allowed to choose one party to vote against in a general election, 35 per cent would vote against Labour, while 32 per cent would vote against Reform.

While most voters on the left would vote against Reform, around a fifth (18/19 per cent) of Liberal Democrat and Green voters who would vote against Labour if they could.

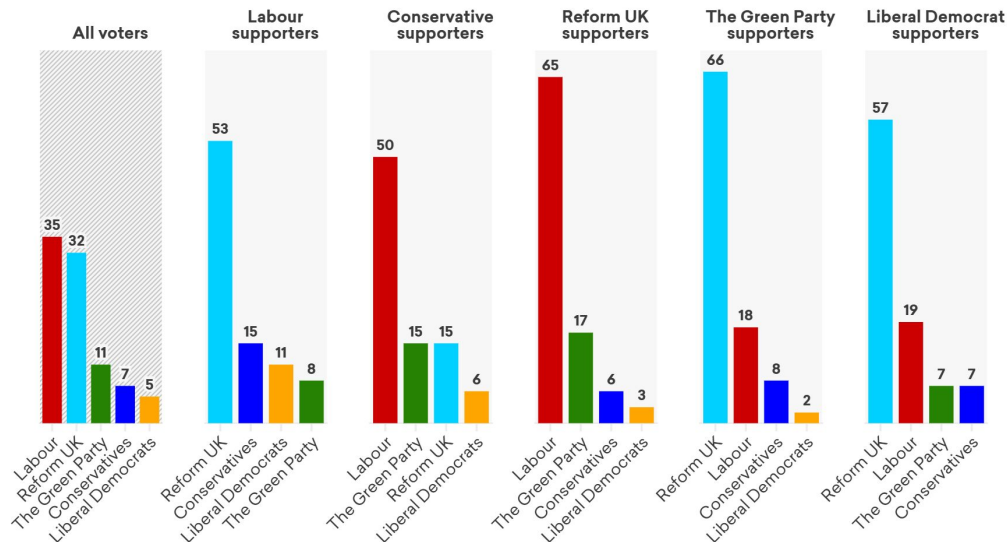
Interestingly, we've seen a sharp increase in recent months in the proportion of Britons who would vote against the Green Party – up from 3 per cent to 11 per cent since November.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives are far less hated than in 2024: only 7 per cent of likely voters would vote against them, fewer than Labour, Reform UK and the Greens.


Who would Britons vote against?

If you could vote against one party in a General Election, who would you vote against?

By current voting intention



**What happened
on 7 May?**

The background of the slide is a dark blue color. On the right side, there are two large, overlapping circles. The top circle is a lighter shade of blue, and the bottom circle is a vibrant green. The circles overlap in the center, creating a darker blue area. The text 'What happened on 7 May?' is positioned on the left side of the slide, written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

Local elections results show a fragmented electorate

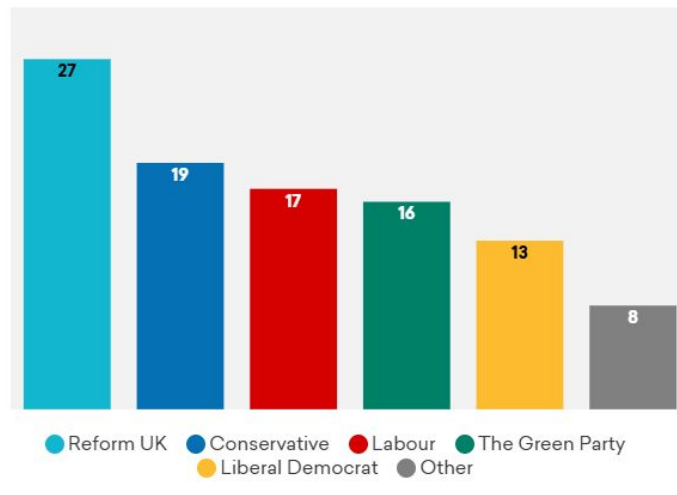
More in Common have projected what the votes cast at these local elections would mean if they were to play out nationally. This is not a perfect exercise, as turnout differs at local elections and people tend to vote in different ways to they would at a General Election, more motivated by local issues and open to protest.

Our figures estimate that Reform UK would have a 8-point lead over the Conservatives on 27 per cent, while no other party would gain more than a fifth of the vote. Combined, the Conservatives and Labour party would receive only 36 per cent of the vote, which would be a collapse in their vote since the 2024 General Election, already a historic combined low of 48 per cent.

This played out to varying extremes during this election but in councils like Redditch, for example, Labour and the Conservatives last won 87 per cent combined in 2022, but this time around their vote share collapsed to 38 per cent, in the face of surges from Reform and the Greens.

More in Common's Estimated National Vote Share

Projection of how votes cast in areas with Local Elections would play out nationally



Results were increasingly marginal at this election

Compared to the last time local elections were held in these areas, candidates won wards on much smaller vote shares. Most were winning on vote shares between 30 to 35 per cent, compared to nearer 50 per cent last time.

This shows that the 2024 fragmentation and Keir Starmer's shallow vote at the last election was not a glitch of the electoral system, but a new feature.

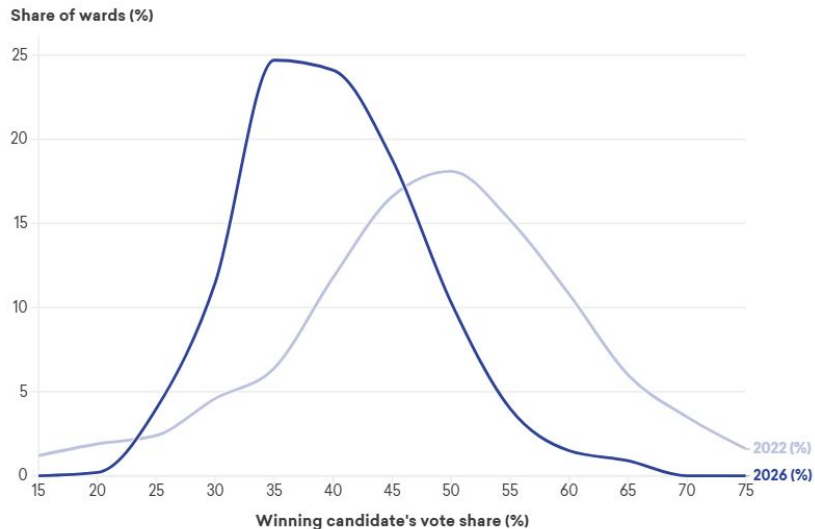
In the immediate aftermath of the election, focus group participants described being more open to voting for "protest" parties at these elections. They suspected this would be the new normal now insurgent parties showed they could win, and some questioned whether the First Past the Post electoral system would be suitable in this new era.

"People don't really have this diehard loyalty to parties anymore. They are happy to change their vote basically at every election if they feel that the party that they voted for last time isn't serving them anymore. And I potentially think that the kind of first past the post system does need to be looked at"

Sarah, London

Winners are winning with less

Distribution of winning vote share in England locals



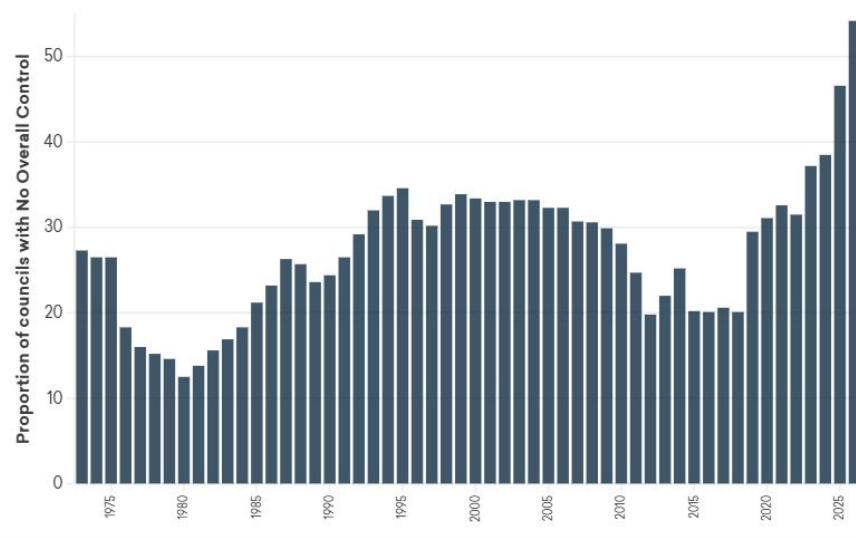
For the first time ever, most councils are under NOC

Splintering vote shares will also now have a real impact on how politics will be conducted at the local level. After these results, for the first time going way back to the 1970s, the majority (54 per cent) of councils across Britain are now under No Overall Control.

For comparison, a mere decade ago in 2016, it was nearer a fifth of all councils under no control (20 percent). This means to govern effectively, councillors will have to build coalitions with other parties, in a way that national leaders are not yet willing to discuss as a possibility.

Our analysis of the Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) at these local elections (which counts parties with significant electoral strength), shows this has risen significantly over the past decade with this being the highest ever, and second year in a row when it averages over four at local elections.

There are more councils than ever where no party has a majority



West Yorkshire typified the political earthquake across England

West Yorkshire – with its mix of urban graduate areas, Red Wall seats, rural communities, mill towns, market towns, and large minority communities – acted as a microcosm of the fragmentation we saw across England – with both Reform UK and the Green Party

Wakefield: Red Wall collapse

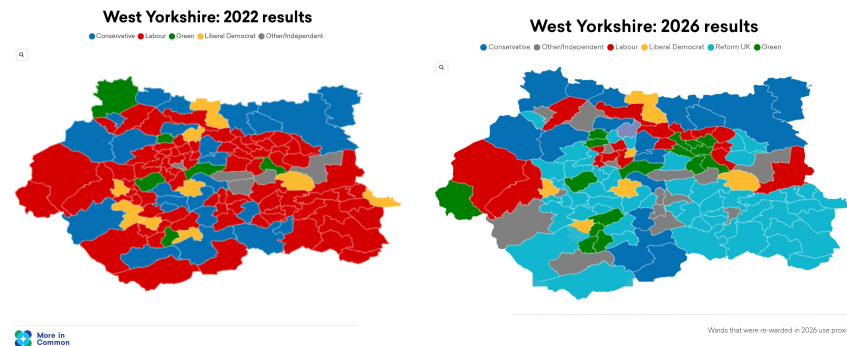
Wakefield is a post-industrial, Leave-voting area that has historically been a Labour stronghold. Labour had held a majority on the council since it was created in 1974, but in 2026 Reform won 58 of 63 seats, Labour retaining just one.

Calderdale: Bellwether mill towns

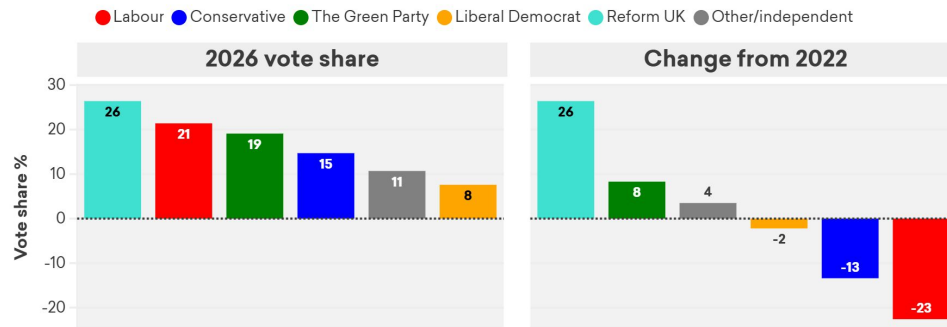
Calderdale reflects the politically diverse areas where insurgent parties are now battling: post-industrial Halifax alongside Hebden Bridge, one of the most liberal communities in the north of England, and many areas across the council have high Muslim populations. Reform won an outright majority, winning 34 of 54 seats. Labour were cut to 8, and the Conservatives were completely wiped out.

Leeds: squeezed urban strongholds

In a diverse, graduate city, Labour was squeezed on all sides: Labour lost its majority, while Reform gained eight seats, and the Greens won six. The vote fragmented, with suburbs being taken by Reform or squeezed by the Conservatives; inner city graduate areas saw Greens make gains.



West Yorkshire 2026 Local Election results

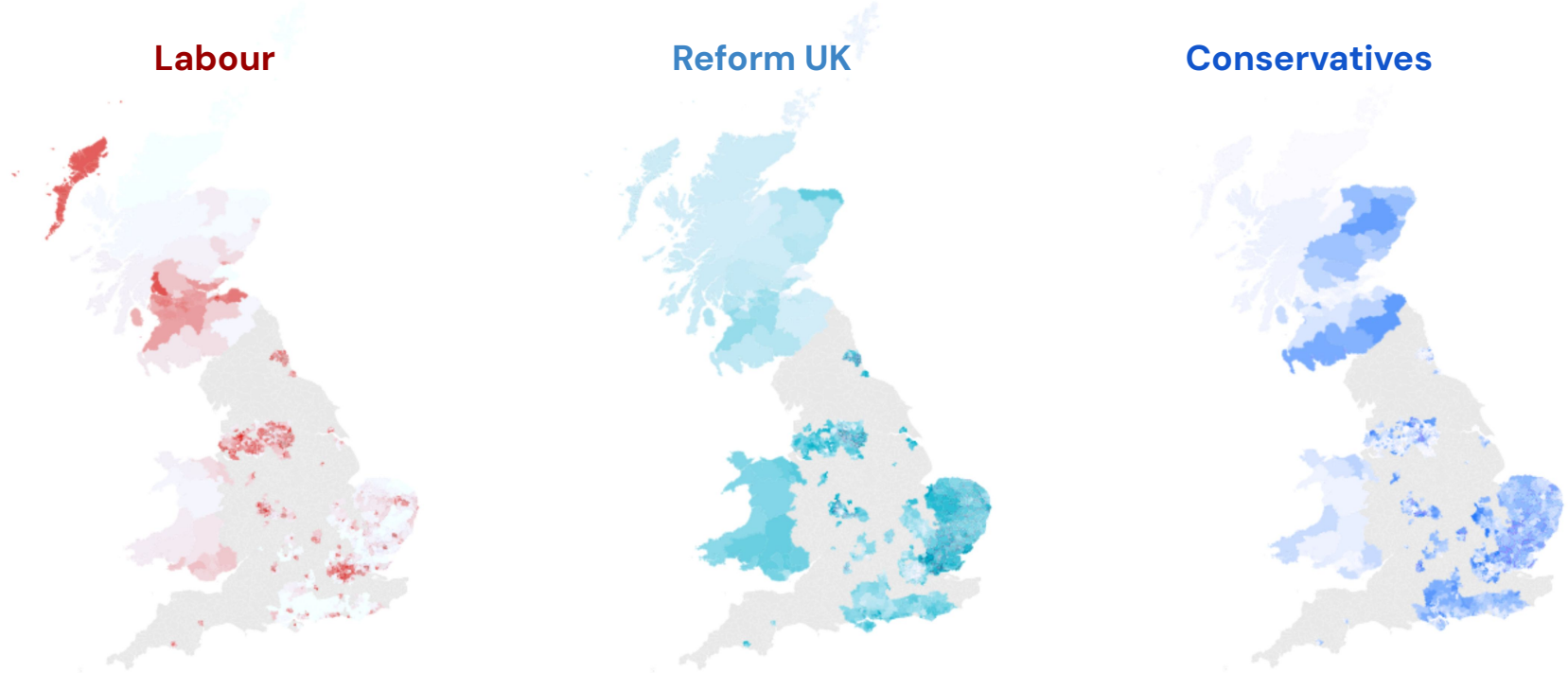


**Voter profiles:
Who's
supporting the
parties?**

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Reform looks like a national party, while Labour and the Conservatives are becoming regionalised.

Party vote share by ward or constituency



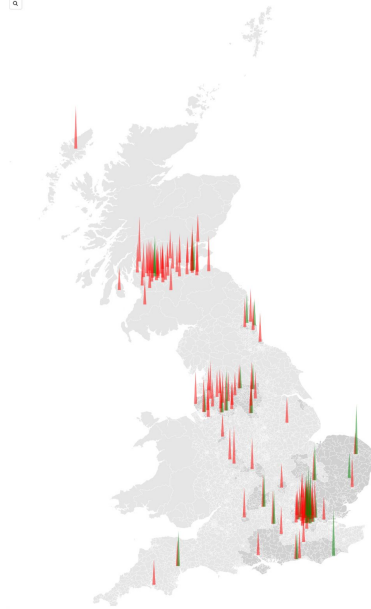
Labour's vote share is squeezed from both sides

The Greens are eating into Labour's vote share in inner cities

Spikes indicate council vote share by party; vote share >20% only

10 || 20
● Green ● Labour

α

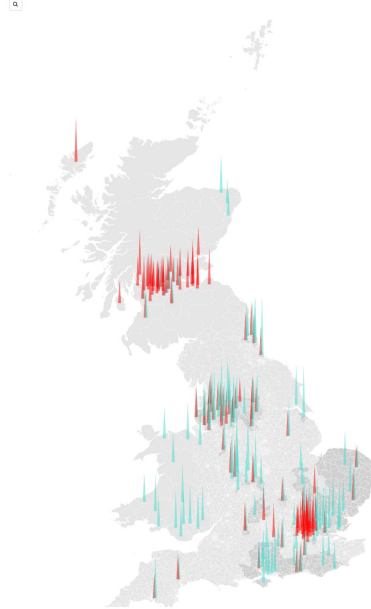


Labour do well in big cities, while Reform's vote share is more evenly spread

Spikes indicate council vote share by party; vote share >20% only

10 || 20
● Labour ● Reform UK

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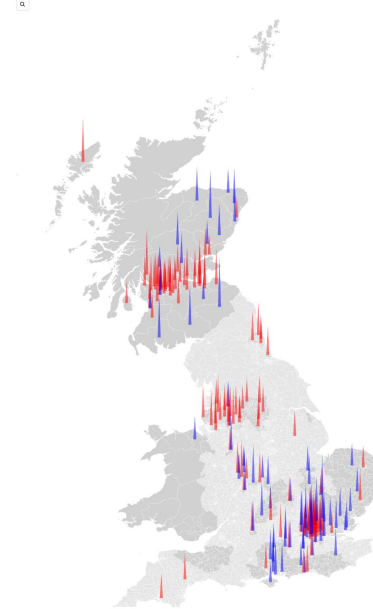


Both the Conservatives and Labour are falling back in their strongest areas

Spikes indicate council vote share by party; vote share >20% only

10 || 20
● Conservative ● Labour

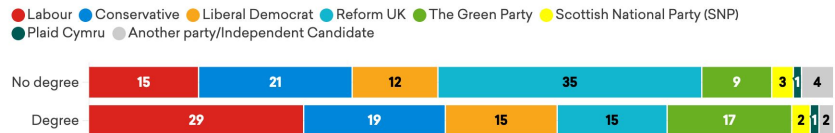
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Who is voting Labour?

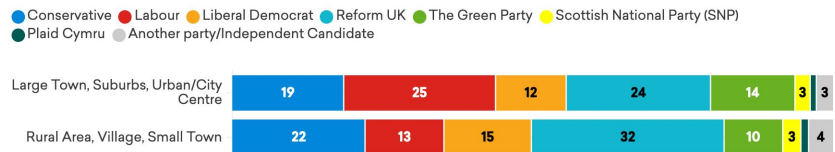
Labour now relies on a core of loyal supporters who are united by some shared traits: compared to the general public they're younger (typically under 45), live in urban areas, are less likely to own a home, and are more likely to be non-white. They are particularly more likely to be from black ethnic groups than an Asian background, in part because of the party's loss of support among British Muslims. Within this core are two groups: one made up of graduates in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties, living in cities. They're finding it difficult to save but are doing okay financially, and are often privately renting. They voted Labour in 2024, energised by the promise of change after years of Conservative government, and while disappointed with the government thus far many think Labour needs more time. The second is Labour's legacy support: lifelong Labour voters whose loyalty has weakened in recent years. They're older, live on the outskirts of big cities (potentially in social housing), are struggling financially, and are more likely to rely on state services.

Labour support is almost twice as high among graduates as non-graduates while Labour voters are more than 40 per cent more likely to be graduates than the average Briton



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

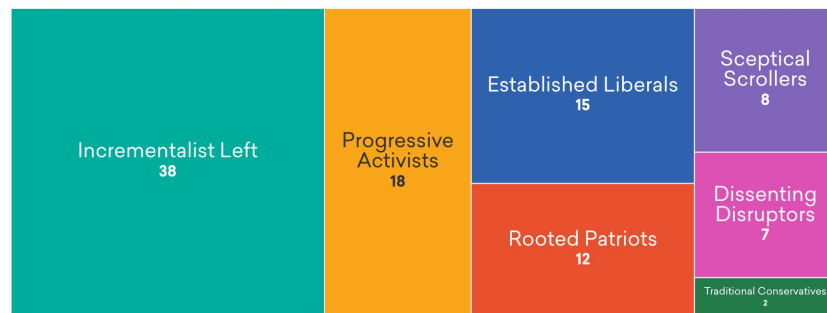
Labour support is much higher among voters living in cities and large towns



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

The Incrementalist Left and Established Liberals now make up a much larger share of Labour's voters than at the 2024 General Election

In 2024 the Incrementalist Left and Established Liberals accounted for only 37 per cent of Labour's base combined



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

Where is voting **Labour?**

Labour held on best in London (for instance, Merton, Hammersmith, Southwark, Greenwich) and pockets of the urban North West such as Chorley and Preston: areas that are broadly more diverse, with higher rates of social renting, and younger populations.

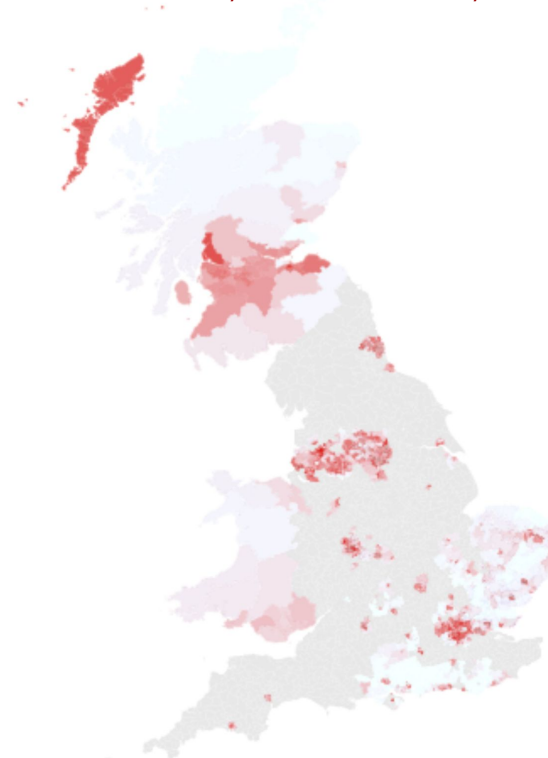
But these are islands in what is otherwise a story of widespread decline. Labour lost vote share almost everywhere, averaging around -19 percentage points.

The biggest collapses came in places where independents or the Greens broke through, such as Birmingham, Burnley, Manchester, suggesting Labour is losing from the left as well as to Reform. In Wales the picture was even starker: Labour was down 26 per cent on average from the 2024 General Election and didn't win a single Senedd constituency, shut out entirely by Plaid Cymru and Reform.

5  50

Labour performed best in inner cities

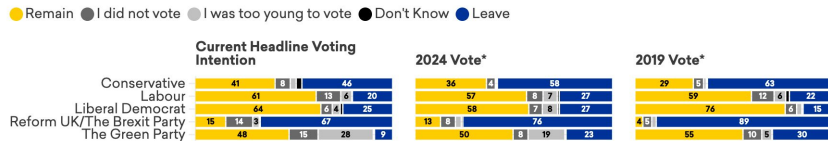
Vote share by ward or constituency



Who is voting **Conservative?**

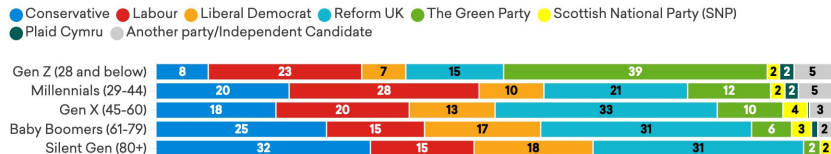
The average Conservative voter is now more likely to be found in particular parts of the country: suburban parts of the South and pockets of North and West London. They do best in areas where people are doing pretty well, with large numbers of professionals and graduates, higher rates of home ownership, and lower levels of deprivation. Tories today are often older (with many 65+), relatively comfortable financially, and they are less likely to be Leave voters than in 2016. Many are loyal Conservatives who stuck with the party in 2024, while some may have given Labour a chance at that election, but drafted back since

The Conservatives' current voters were far more evenly divided in how they voted on Brexit than their 2024 or 2019 coalitions



Source: More in Common (May 2026) • *More in Common (July, 2024)

The Conservatives are more popular among older voters



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

The Conservatives' coalition is of a broadly similar ideological makeup to their voters in 2024, just slightly smaller overall



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

Where is voting **Conservative?**

The Conservatives lost support across the board, though not as much as Labour, generally retreating to an affluent core, such as Westminster, Harrow, Bromley and Fareham.

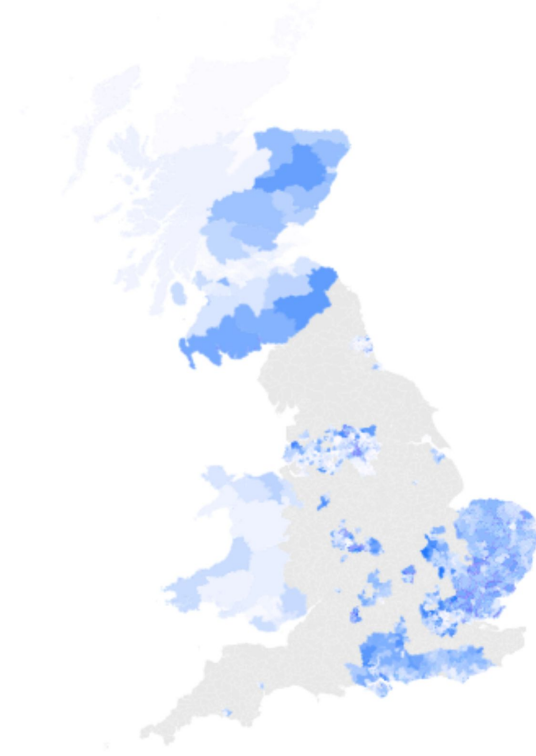
Their worst losses came in post-industrial and coastal areas where Reform ate directly into their leave voting base: North East Lincolnshire, Tamworth, Hartlepool and Plymouth. The mainly gained support in wealthy London boroughs like Kensington and Chelsea, suggesting the Conservative vote is consolidating around a regionalised, affluent base.

In Scotland, they held up best in the Borders and the rural North East, traditional heartlands for the party, but fell back sharply elsewhere.

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The Conservatives fell back to their affluent heartlands

Vote share by ward or constituency

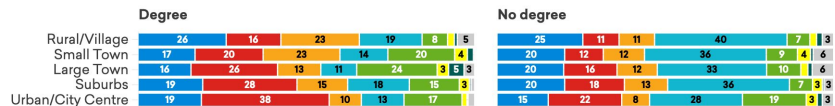


Who is voting Liberal Democrat?

Liberal Democrat voters are now very similar to Conservatives in many ways: they're relatively well-to-do, often being homeowners who are relatively comfortable, and live in suburban, professionalised areas with low levels of deprivation. The key difference is one of magnitude – Liberal Democrats tend to be slightly younger, are more likely to be graduates, are significantly more pro-Remain. This hints at how while they may hold conservative economic views, they tend to be more socially liberal on cultural issues like migration. While some Liberal Democrats are former Conservative voters who have shifted away from the party during its later years in government, about a fifth gave Labour a chance at the last general election, and have since shifted to the Liberal Democrats as an alternative on the centre-left that is more moderate than the Greens.

The Liberal Democrats are strongest among rural and small town degree holders

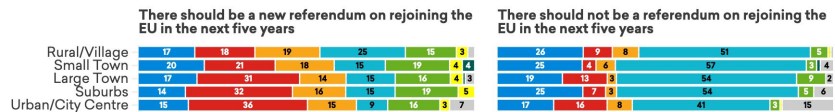
- Conservative
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- Reform UK
- The Green Party
- Scottish National Party (SNP)
- Plaid Cymru
- Another party/Independent Candidate



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

The Liberal Democrats are much stronger among supporters of a second referendum

- Conservative
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- Reform UK
- The Green Party
- Scottish National Party (SNP)
- Plaid Cymru
- Another party/Independent Candidate



Source: More in Common (April 2026)

Since 2024 the Liberal Democrats have become more reliant on Rooted Patriots, and less reliant on Progressive Activists



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

Where is voting **Liberal Democrat?**

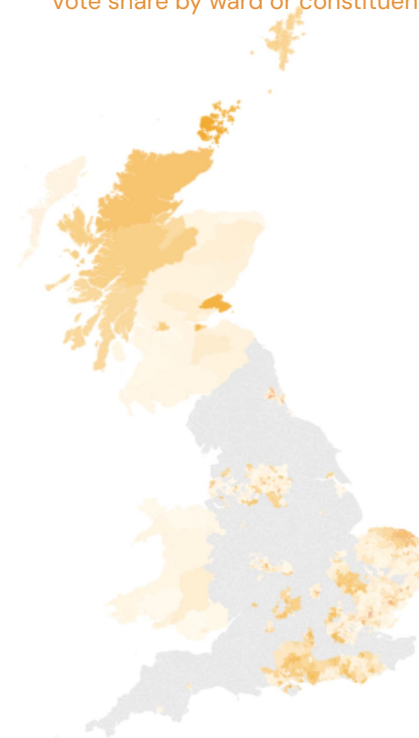
Liberal Democrat wins were concentrated in affluent, high-graduate commuter towns and suburbs, such as Richmond, St Albans, Sutton, Kingston, Cheltenham, Winchester and South Cambridgeshire: places with strong local party operations and where the Conservatives have lost ground but without Reform strength.

The Liberal Democrat demographic profile overlaps with the Tories on affluence and home ownership, but skews younger and less rural: these are generally professional suburbs rather than the shires. The Liberal Democrats were relatively stable, indicative of their classic local election performance that is relatively sticky and locally entrenched rather than driven by national swings. In Scotland, they won 4 constituencies across the Highlands and Islands, an area of traditional strength for the party.

The Liberal Democrats performed best in their traditional local strongholds

5 — 50

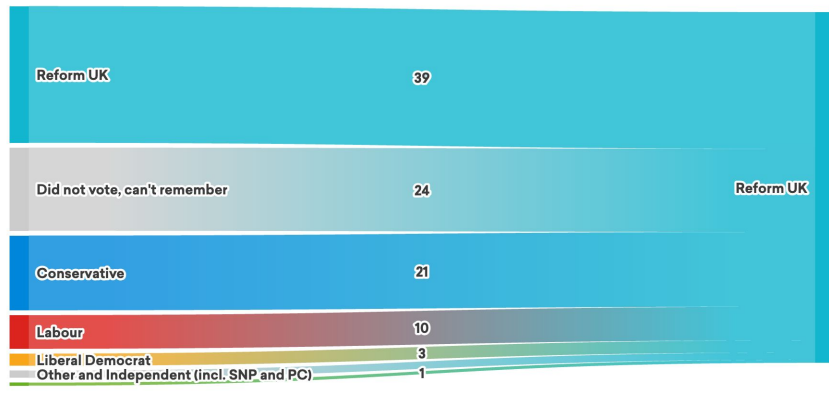
Vote share by ward or constituency



Who is voting **Reform UK?**

The typical Reform voter sits squarely in the "squeezed middle." They've often got a job or are retired and a home of their own, but lately they're feeling the pinch of the cost of living crisis. For some, their security in retirement is starting to loom as a worry. They tend to be older than the average Labour or Green voter, but younger than a typical Tory. They're likely not a graduate, and more likely to be found in the towns and outskirts of cities rather than urban centres themselves. Many are former true-blue Conservatives who now see Reform as the main party of the right, while others are voters from Labour's former heartlands who feel the party no longer speaks for them.

Reform's current voters largely backed either Reform or the Conservatives in 2024, with significant portions coming from previous non-voters and 2024 Labour backers



More mainstream moderate and right-of-centre voters now make up a larger share of Reform's base

Traditional Conservatives and Established Liberals now make up a quarter of Reform's support, up from 14 per cent in 2024



Where is voting **Reform UK?**

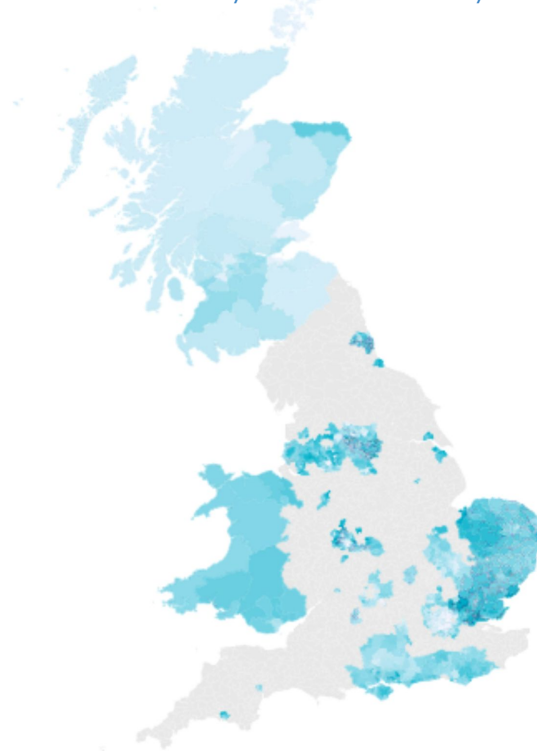
Reform won more wards than any other party, and is the only party contending in every part of the country. Their strongest areas were post-industrial towns, coastal areas, and urban peripheries in the North and Midlands, such as Cannock Chase, Tamworth, Hartlepool, Wigan, Thurrock and Dudley: places that are strongly white, non-graduate, and skew older. They tend to have higher rates of deprivation, and higher rates of home ownership.

In Wales, they won 5 of 16 Senedd constituencies, concentrated in the north-east borderlands and the eastern Valleys, but they performed well everywhere in Wales. Their Scottish support was concentrated in the Central Belt and North-East, but again they were competitive across the nation.

5  50

Reform's vote share was the most geographically even

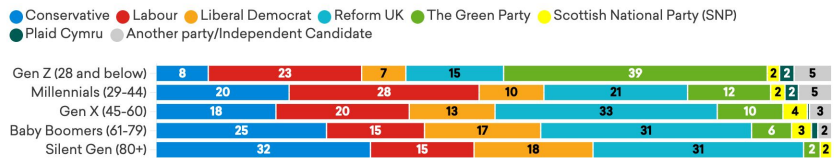
Vote share by ward or constituency



Who is voting Green?

While the Green retain some of their economically conservative, rural and environmentally conscious voters, their average supporter is now found in areas of former Labour strength, in urban areas with high numbers of graduates and students. A Green voter is likely a young graduate or student themselves (often in their twenties), struggling to make ends meet and living in privately rented accommodation. Like Labour voters, they are more likely than a supporters of other parties to be non-white – the Greens now do particularly well amongst Asian Britons and British Muslims. Greens supporters are often quite politically engaged, but not necessarily in the traditional sense – they're more active online and through activism than formal party structures.

The Greens dominate among the youngest voters



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

Green support is highest among the least financially secure groups



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

The Greens' base is now generally more left-of-centre than in 2024

Left-of-centre groups such as Progressive Activists and the Incrementalist Left account for three quarters of Green support, up from 61 per cent in 2024



Source: More in Common (May 2026)

Where is voting **Green?**

The Greens were strongest in inner-urban, young, graduate areas with high rates of private renting, such as in Manchester, Hackney, Lewisham, Hastings, Norwich, Oxford and Sheffield.

The party's biggest gains came primarily at the expense of Labour, in diverse urban seats, pointing to the Greens being now the main beneficiary of left-wing disillusionment with Labour in cities.

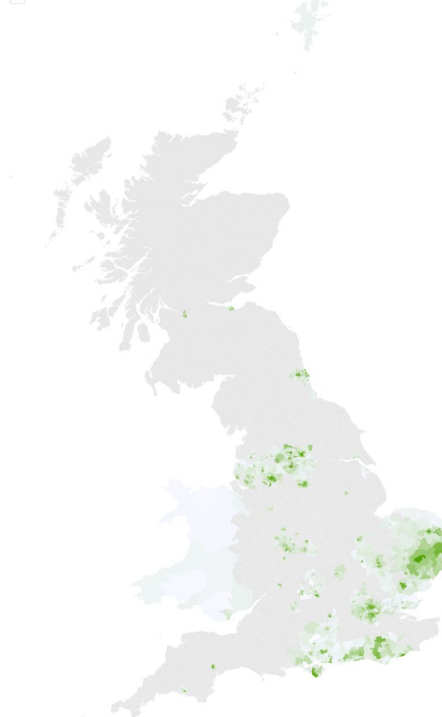
The Greens coalition is demographically the mirror image of Reform's: young renting graduates living in metropolitan cores.

The Green Party ate into Labour's urban strongholds

Vote share by ward or constituency

5 50

0

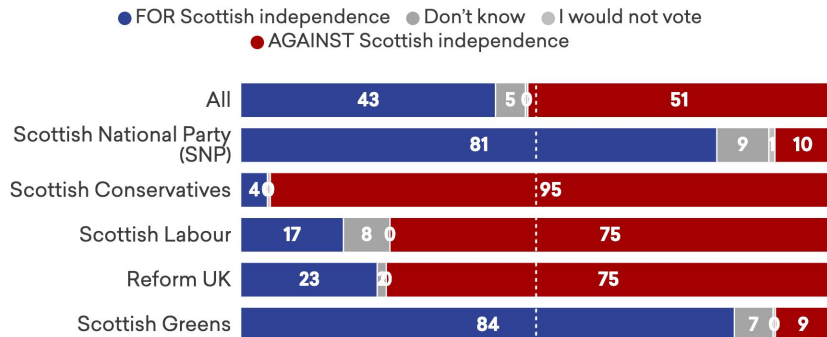


Who is voting SNP?

With independence still a key issue underpinning Scottish politics, SNP support still strongly tracks 2014 referendum vote. The average SNP voter tends to be a 'Yes' voter, often living in urban areas and towns in Scotland like Dundee or Falkirk. They are likely to not be a graduate, and are more likely than other Scots to not own their own home. Often they're relatively financial insecure, and live in areas that themselves are poorer. They're very likely to be pro-European.

Support for the SNP is primarily determined by support for independence

Support and opposition for Scottish independence in a prospective referendum held today



The SNP's base includes a diverse ideological cross-section which reflects their focus on Scottish independence

Though their supporters are predominantly Progressive Activists and members of the Incrementalist Left, they also rely on a number of Dissenting Disruptors and Rooted Patriots



Where is voting **SNP?**

The SNP won 57 of 73 Holyrood constituencies in this election but lost vote share uniformly everywhere. The party is still strongest in the Central Belt, such as in Glasgow, Cumbernauld, Coatbridge and Dundee. They are generally weakest in the Borders, the Islands, and some urban seats where the Liberal Democrats and Greens chipped away at their vote share.

The SNP's continued dominance owes less to its own strength than to the fragmentation of the opposition: the Conservatives and Labour both fell back sharply, meaning the SNP lost vote share without losing many seats. Scotland's electoral geography remains remarkably uniform compared to England: the SNP's vote share floor is around 15–20%, even in its weakest seats.

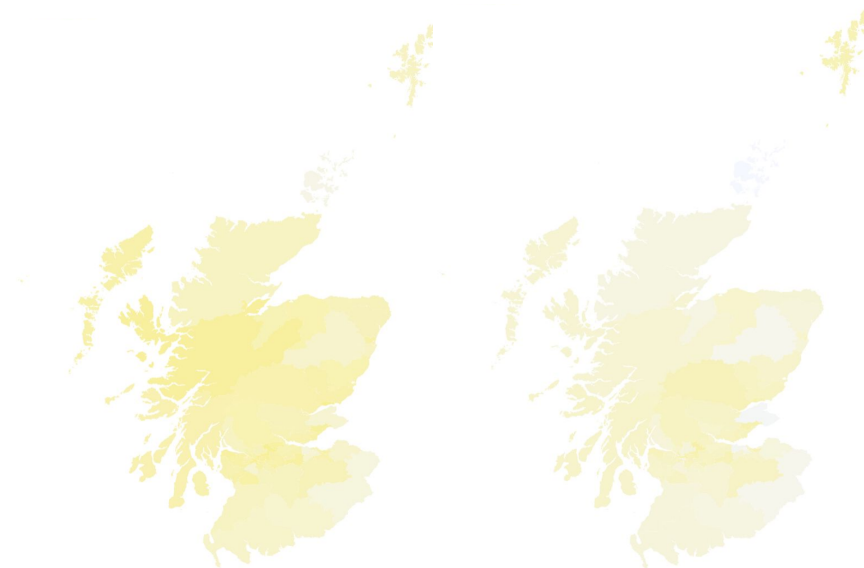
The SNP's vote share across Scotland is weaker than in 2021

Vote share by constituency

20  100

2021

2026



Who is voting for **Plaid Cymru?**

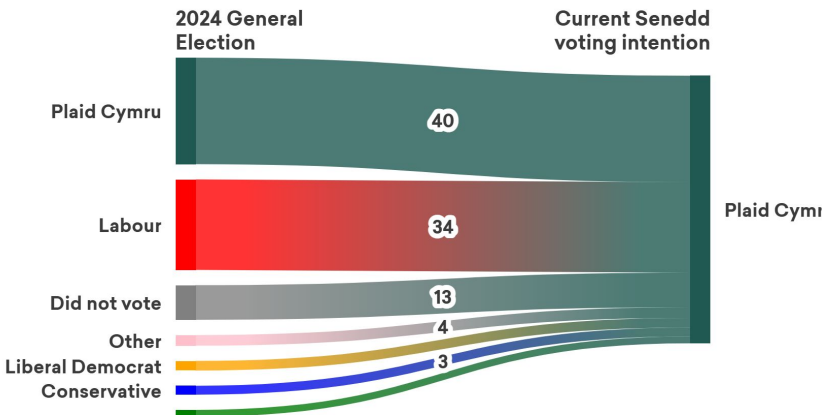
Since 2026, Plaid Cymru's voter base has broadened demographically, and moved further to the left. They now have two key voter groups:

- **Nationalist base:** Slightly older voters in rural, Welsh-speaking areas in the North and West of Wales. Historically would have voted Plaid Cymru.
- **Disillusioned urban progressives:** Younger graduates from urban areas, formerly voted Labour, and are comparable to Green voters in England.

In terms of age and gender, Plaid's voter base is broadly in line with the wider Welsh public, although they have a slightly higher concentration of 16–24 year olds.

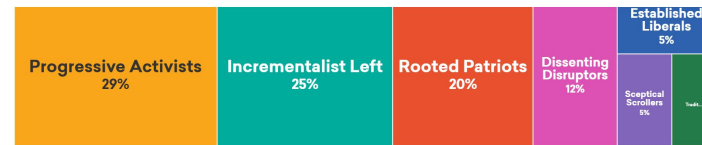
Much like the Greens in England and Scotland, Plaid Cymru has been fuelled by progressive defections from Labour. Around a third of Plaid's current supporters (34 per cent) voted Labour at the last General Election. Roughly a quarter voted Labour in the 2021 Senedd Election. The voter base now identifies as more left-wing than the party's 2021 voters.

More than a third of Plaid Cymru's supporters voted for Labour in the 2024 General Election



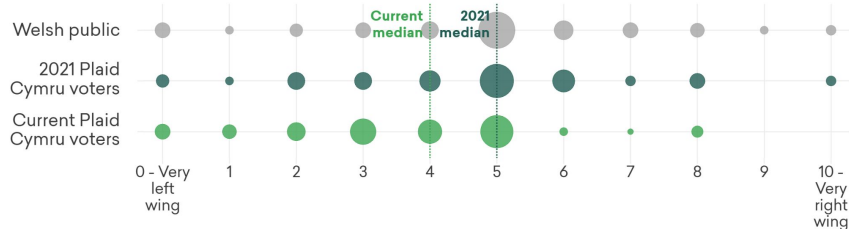
Plaid Cymru's voter base is increasingly progressive, although it also includes socially conservative voters

A growing proportion of Plaid voters are Progressive Activists as they've been driven by defections from Labour



The average Plaid Cymru voter has moved to the left since 2021

Sometimes politics is described as being on a left-right scale. Where 0 is very left wing, and 10 is very right wing?



Plaid Cymru geography

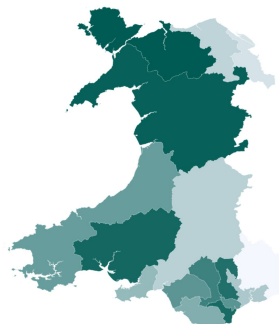
Plaid Cymru's broadening appeal now means that their support is spread across Wales. In 2024, their support was concentrated in Welsh-speaking areas in the North and West of the country; now, it is distributed across the country.

While Plaid's vote share is still strongest in their North-West heartlands, progressive defections from Labour mean they have strongholds in young, urban areas like Cardiff. Plaid Cymru now have two geographic poles: Caernarfon and Cardiff.

Plaid Cymru performed best in West and South Wales - as well as Cardiff

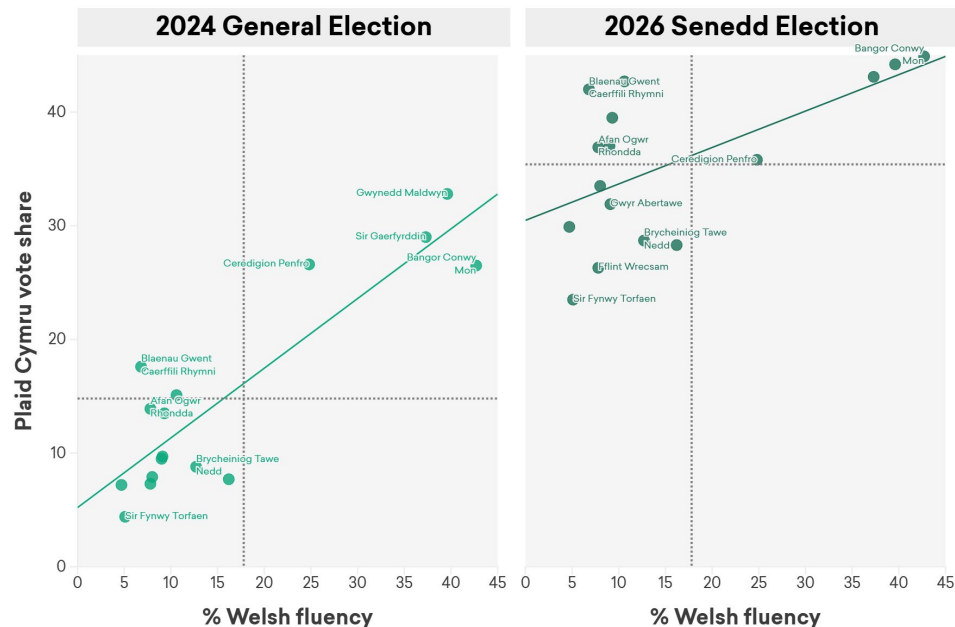
0 100

Vote share by constituency



Plaid Cymru's vote share was concentrated in Welsh-speaking areas in 2024 - but not in 2026

(Dashed lines show the average vote share and average Welsh fluency)



Two types of independents

Independent candidates surged in two very different parts of England: not just in high-Muslim urban areas (where community independents challenged Labour while competing with the Greens), but also in white, rural and small-town wards, where residents' associations took on the Conservatives and Reform.

Anti-Labour community independents

Urban, deprived, Muslim-majority, where independents pose a threat to Labour

Previous Labour strongholds in places like Birmingham, Burnley and London. Often driven by anger over the Government's stance on Gaza, as well as a wider sense that Labour has taken Muslim voters for granted. In many of these areas, independents are competing with the Greens over disillusioned Labour voters.

The most striking example was **Tower Hamlets**, where Aspire gained 9 seats at Labour's expense, and took control of the council.

Resident associations revolt

White, rural and small-town, where independents pose a threat to Reform and the Conservatives.

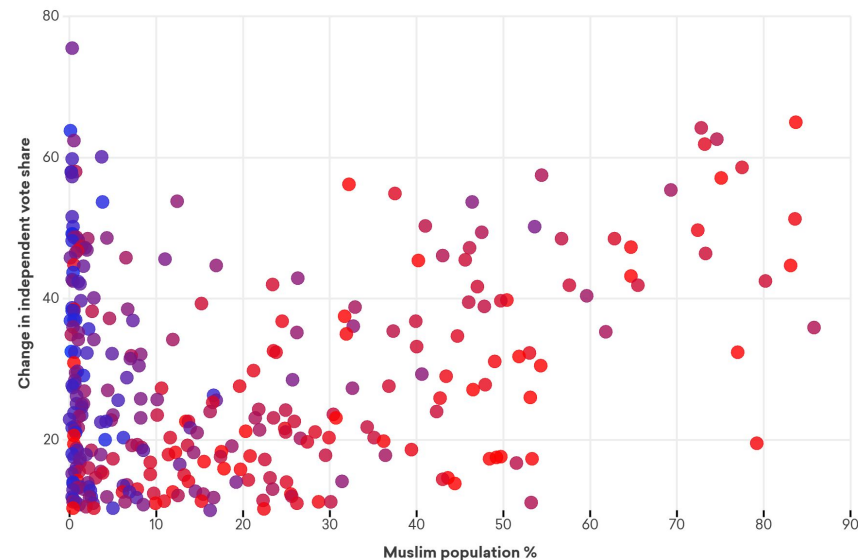
Often found in areas of previous Conservative strength, such as Essex and Norfolk. These independents and small parties are often battling Reform for the insurgent vote.

Great Yarmouth First/Restore Britain's success in **Great Yarmouth** is an outlier example of a specific localist party surging at the expense of Reform UK.

Two types of independent

Independents are challenging Labour in high-Muslim areas, but also performing well in wards with few Muslims and former Conservative strength

Previous Conservative lead over Labour -59.7 -84.9 Previous Labour lead over the Conservatives



Who are the party switchers?

2024 Labour voters now Green

The people that Labour are losing to their left tend to be millennial graduates in urban areas who are privately renting or have a mortgage. They are majority white, but more ethnically diverse than the wider population, and over-index on being muslim or not having a religion. They are more likely to have voted Remain.

They are economically insecure and are more likely to identify the cost of living, affordable housing and education as the biggest issues facing the country. They think Keir Starmer is doing a bad job, but their opinion is broadly in line with the rest of the public, whereas they overwhelmingly dislike Badenoch and Farage.

2024 Labour voters now Reform

Previous Labour voters who have turned to Reform are typically more likely to be male, non-degree holders who live in North West England and voted for Brexit. Their age profiles skew older with more baby boomers on average.

Like Green switchers, they also feel financially insecure, but in contrast are far more likely than the wider public to be concerned about immigration, boat crossings and crime. Nigel Farage is popular among this group and they are generally middling in their opinion of Kemi Badenoch, but strongly dislike Keir Starmer – even after having voted for him previously.

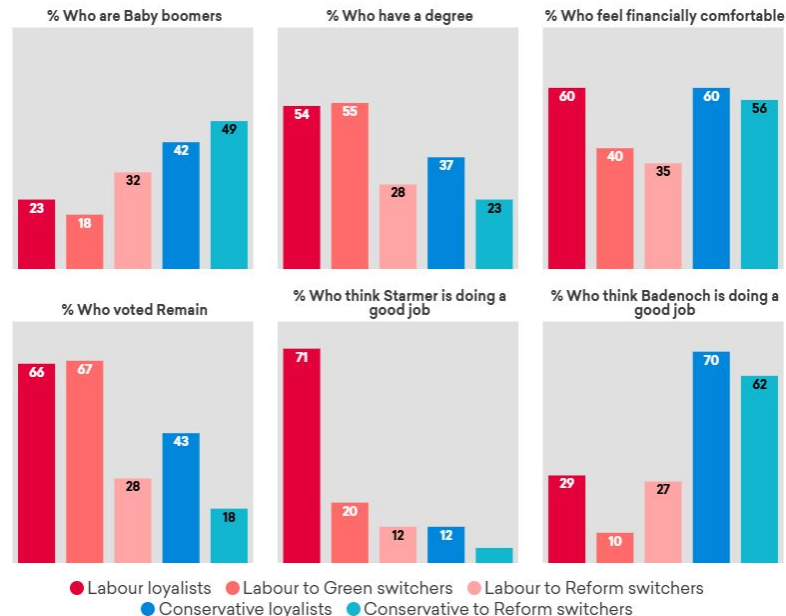
2024 Conservative voters now Reform

The profile of Conservative to Reform switchers is on average more male, older, white and tends to be concentrated in rural areas or suburbs.

They are far more likely to have voted for Brexit than Tory loyalists whose own profile is increasingly split on Europe. Similarly, they are less Christian than those sticking with the Conservatives, which aligns with their broader anti-institutionalist attitudes.

These voters stand-out from Labour switchers because they tend to be more financially comfortable. Their main concerns for the country are immigration and overspending on welfare and benefits. While they strongly dislike Keir Starmer, they are more likely on average to still be favourable towards Kemi Badenoch.

Labour switchers to both Green and Reform are less financially secure than loyalists



**What the
election results
tell us about
politics**

A decorative graphic on the right side of the slide. It features two large, overlapping circles. The top circle is dark blue with a thin light blue outline. The bottom circle is also dark blue with a thin light blue outline. The background of the entire slide is a dark blue color. In the top right corner, there is a small section of a bright blue circle. In the bottom right corner, there is a small section of a bright green circle.

A gravitational pull toward insurgent parties

Much like the 2019 and 2024 General Elections, 2026 was a vote for change. Britons used this vote to express a deep unhappiness with the status quo.

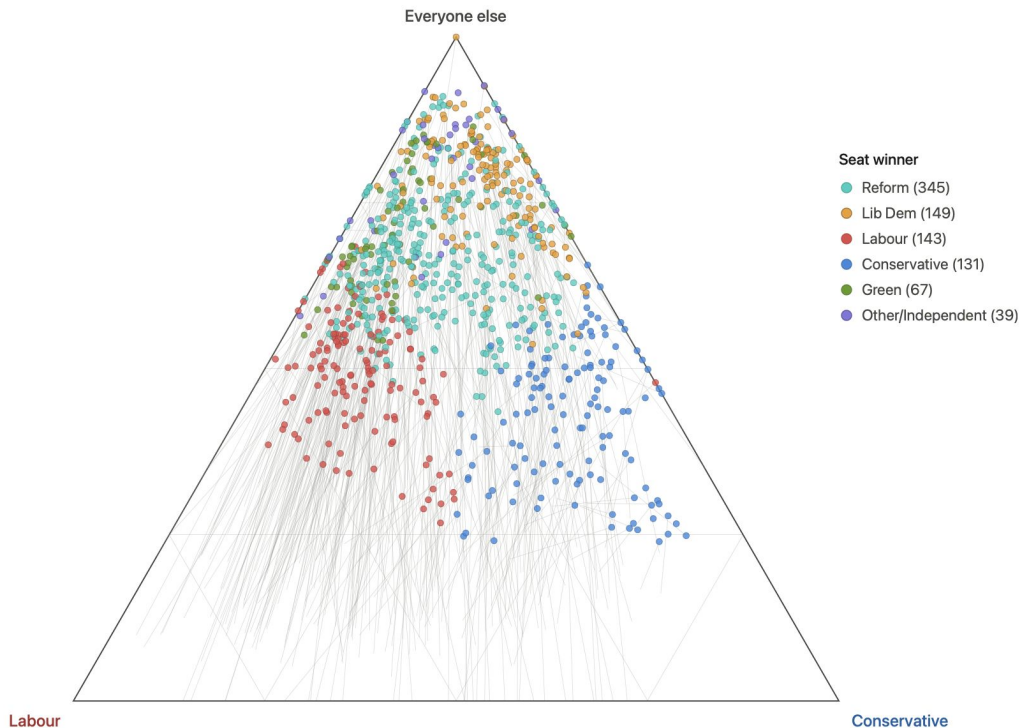
Yet the mechanism for expressing this discontent has changed: instead of flipping from one party to another, Britons now splinter in every direction toward insurgent parties, rejecting mainstream politics in general.



Is there a difference between Labour and the Tories? It's just a continuation of life being harder.

Matt, Sefton

Movement away from the two main parties
Change in ward level results 2022 to 2026



Not only a shift right, but a shift “outside”

This set of elections repainted the political map of local government in England.

The advent of Reform created a shift in votes from parties of the left to parties of the right – a fundamental political axis. But another shift was more seismic – a shift on the “*inside-outside*” axis that saw voters drawn away from mainstream parties (*inside the establishment*) towards insurgent parties (*outside the establishment*).

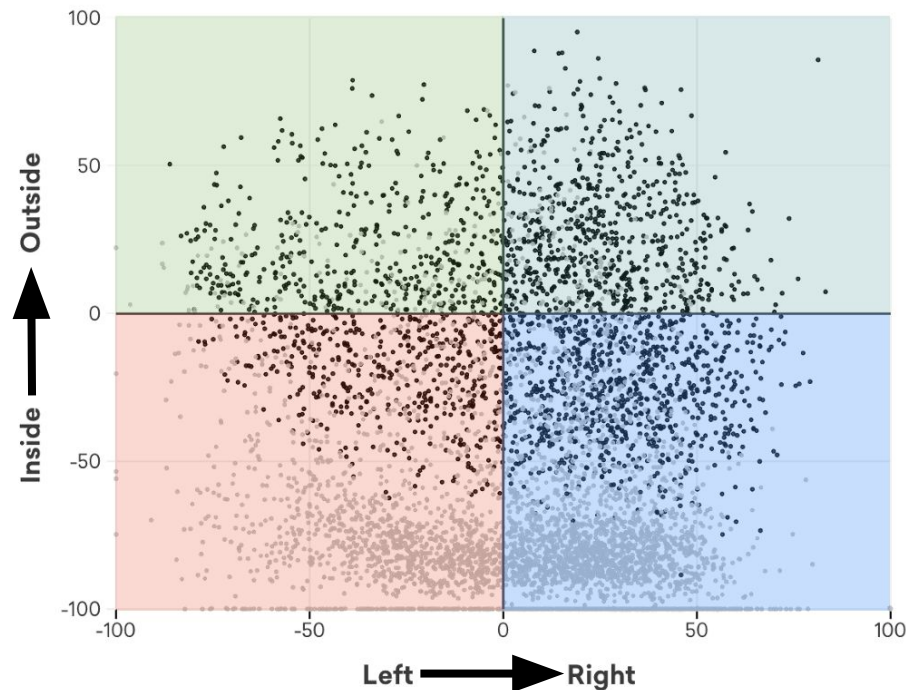
This reinforces that the left-right divide is no longer the primary faultline in British politics; voters are now divided by pro-system vs anti-system views, and willing to cross from left to right in order to challenge the status quo.

A shift outside the mainstream

Inside-outside defined as the percentage who are voting Reform, Green or Other minus the percentage voting Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat

Left-right defined as the percentage who are voting Reform or Conservative minus the proportion who are voting Labour, Green or Liberal Democrat

● 2026 ● Previous election




Hardship is driving voters away from the mainstream

Labour losses in this election were most profound in areas of high deprivation.

In focus groups, a key theme when discussing these elections is a sense that the social contract in Britain is broken.

Younger graduates moving to the Green Party describe following the rules, but still struggling to get on the housing ladder or to pay off their student debt.

Meanwhile voters moving to Reform UK describe a sense that “you’re a mug for playing by the rules” – that the welfare state disincentives work, asylum seekers get looked after and a cost-of-living crisis makes hard work pointless.

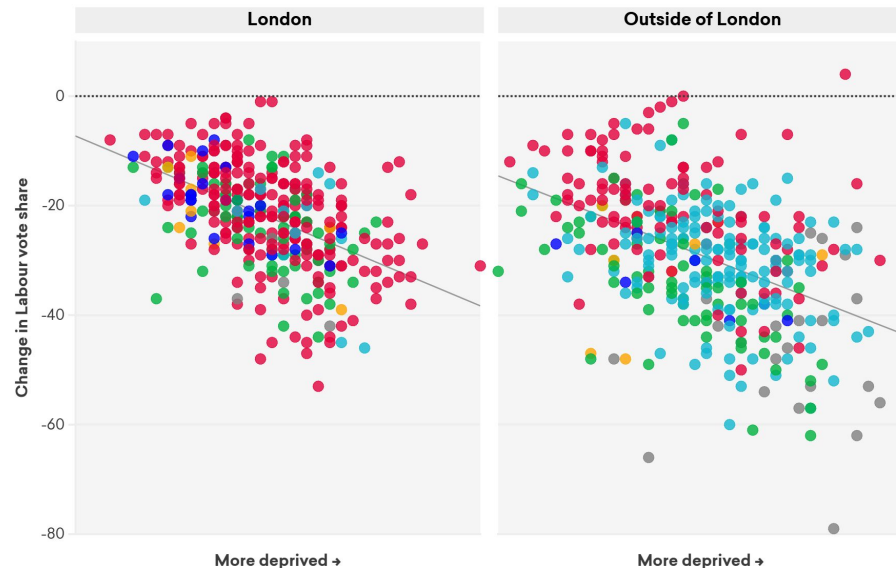
 *It just doesn't pay to work anymore. I've voted Labour all my life and I'm frustrated. They don't seem to be putting any effort into helping the working person. It's like we're not getting anything back.*

Dave, Sefton

Labour losses have been greatest in the most deprived wards

Changes in Labour vote share in wards they won at the last election

Largest Party ● Green ● Labour ● Other/Independent ● Reform UK ● Conservative ● Liberal Democrat



Labour is fighting on multiple fronts

In England Labour was under attack from all sides.

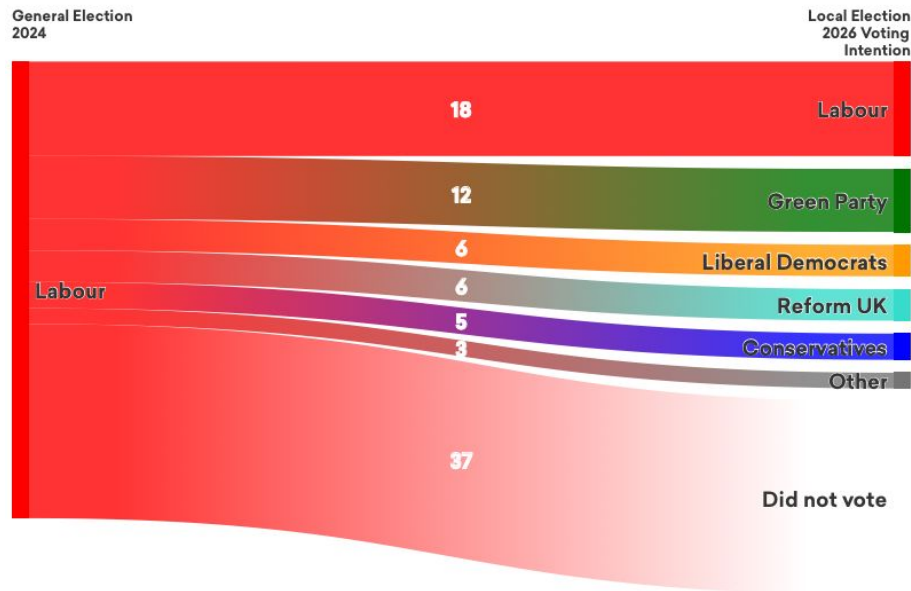
Just two years on from a landslide election victory, seven in ten local election voters who chose Labour in 2024 went with a different party this time.

It was not a switch from one party to another, but a splintering of Labour's coalition. The Greens scooped up one in four switchers, while around half as many voted for each of the Liberal Democrats, Reform UK and Conservatives.

The people who have been in the seats before - they haven't shown us anything, so they can't be upset when we vote elsewhere.

Robin, teaching assistant, Birmingham

Labour voters in England have splintered



Greens enter the progressive space vacated by Labour

Labour lost the greatest share of votes in areas where they had previously been the strongest, such as Inner London. Progressive voters who Labour might have considered their dependable left-wing flank turned to the Greens.

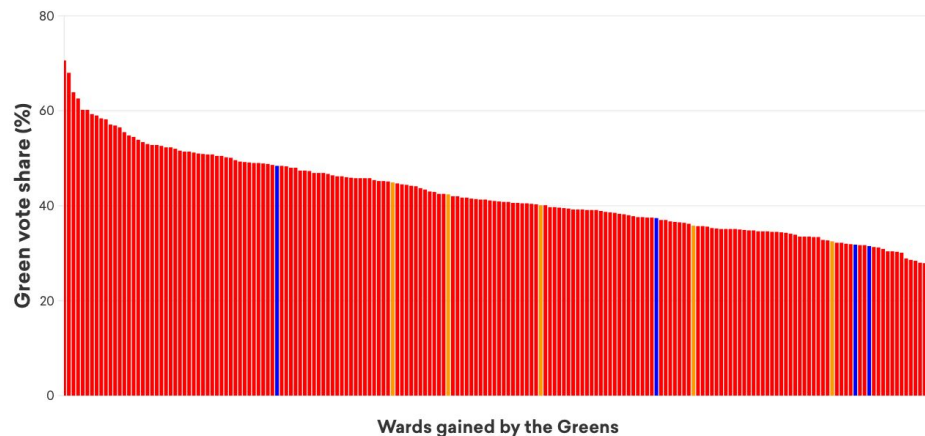
This breaking off of the progressive wing continued a trend seen at the 2024 General Election when independent voters won seats in Muslim cities. While Starmer's position on the conflict in Gaza seems to have been a breaking point for progressives, at these elections economic concerns were top of mind.

In focus groups conducted after the election, Londoners spoke about being motivated to vote Green due to the rising cost of living and its impact on rent prices across the capital. They shared frustrations that wealth inequality seems to be ever increasing across the country.

Greens performed best in areas of Labour strength

Displaying wards gained by the Greens

Previous winner ● Labour ● Lib Dem ● Conservative



It's something new. It's something fresh. It's something up and coming that I would never, ever have considered before, but what's the other option? You go back to what I've always done and nothing really seems to change.

Emma, nurse, Newcastle

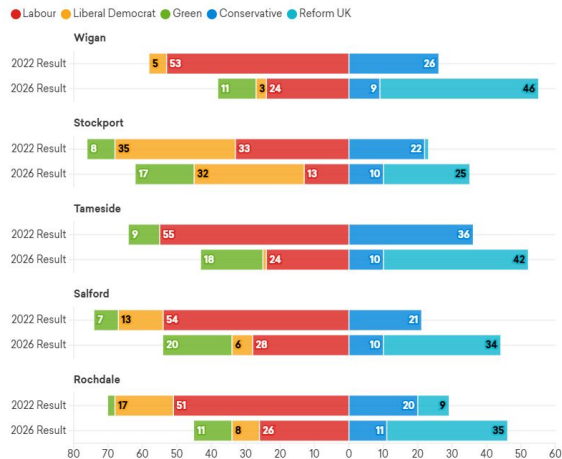
Voters are crossing traditional political lines

While a key story from this election has been Labour's threat from the left, these results would not have been possible without significant movement across left and right blocs.

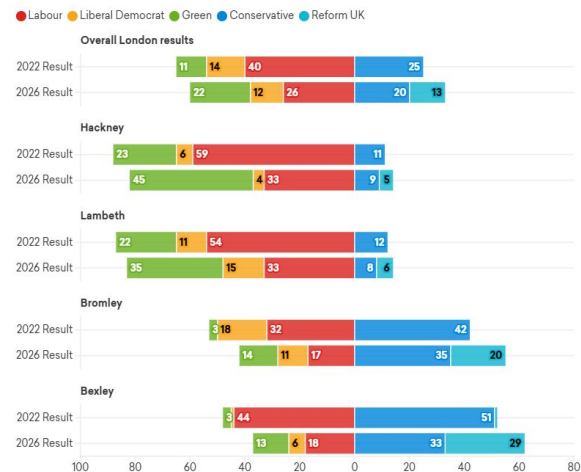
Across Northern England councils, the right bloc grew while the left bloc shrunk. In Salford, for example, 21 percent opted for a right wing party in 2022, but this more than doubled at this year, while the Labour vote share practically halved.

This was less pronounced in London, and particularly across inner city councils where the Greens performed well and voters swapped within bloc. However, it happened more obviously, in outer city boroughs like Bromley and Bexley.

Across councils in North England, the right wing bloc grew compared to 2022, while the left bloc shrunk



Whereas in London, shifting between blocs was less pronounced - particularly in inner London



👉 People don't really have this diehard loyalty to parties anymore. They are happy to change their vote basically at every election if they feel that the party that they voted for last time isn't serving them anymore.

Sarah, London

As well as switchers, Reform mobilises non-voters

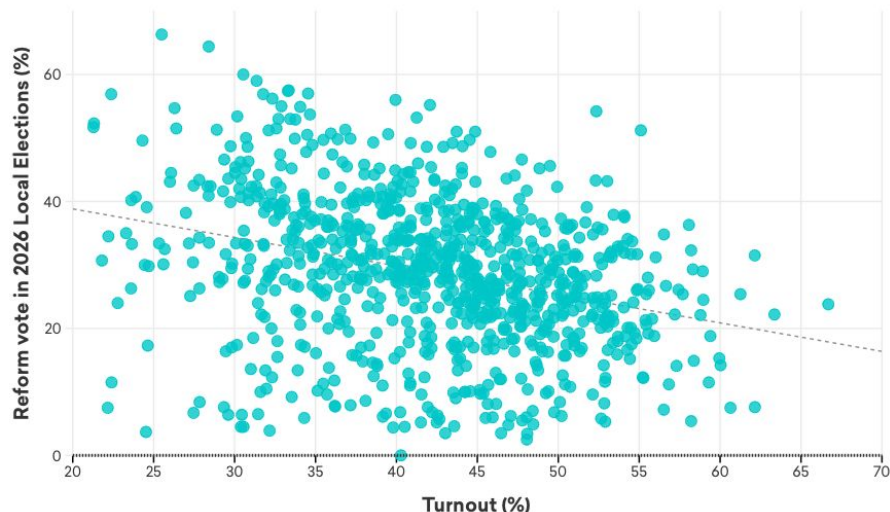
In Sunderland, the growth in Reform's vote share was three times as large as the decline in the Conservative vote share. Results like this are partly explained by turnout.

In areas where turnout is lower, Reform's vote share tends to be higher. This may illustrate **Reform's success at motivating voters who otherwise might not have turned out for the elections.**

Reform may also be helped by the disengagement of Labour voters. Ahead of the elections, only 58 per cent of those who intended to vote Labour said they were certain they would go out and vote. **Just 28% of those who voted Labour felt very enthusiastic about doing so, compared to 53 per cent of those who voted Reform.**

Reform gets more of the vote in low-turnout wards

Local authorities with elections



I would say he's [Farage] this country's last hope in a way. In some way, I hope he will help to restore that part that we've lost.

Sam, Birmingham

Brexit divide still underpins British politics

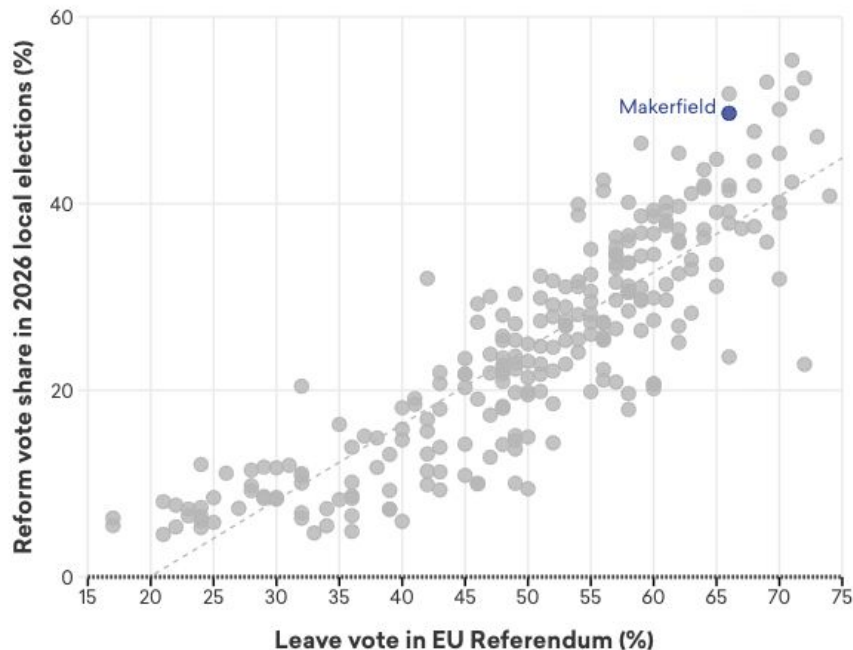
Brexit exposed a divide in British politics. Metropolitan hubs backed Remain while “left behind” areas voted Leave; which side of the debate people came down on was closely related to their educational attainment.

While the salience of Brexit as an issue in itself has faded, the divide exposed by the referendum isn't going anywhere. **Even a decade on, Reform's support was strongest in councils which voted to leave the European Union in 2016.**

Brexit particularly remains a dividing line in Scotland. 2024 SNP voters are three times as likely as 2024 Labour voters to see Brexit as one of the most important issues facing the country today. The SNP's position on rejoining the EU may represent an area of strength as the party looks to build back and reach new voter groups.

Makerfield's Leave vote makes it a prime Reform target

Wards included if held elections



Independence underlies rather than drives Scottish politics

Following these elections, there are now nationalist governments in three UK nations – yet the results do not directly reflect a surge in support for Scottish or Welsh independence.

Attitudes toward independence have not shifted dramatically since 2014 – there remains around two in five Scots (43 per cent) who would support independence, and a slightly higher proportion who would oppose (52 per cent).

But Independence did not drive the result: only 13 per cent of Scots named independence as a top issue for their vote. In Scotland, independence is still important to SNP identity: 38 per cent of SNP voters named it a key issue facing the country, but it ranked below cost of living and the NHS even among them.



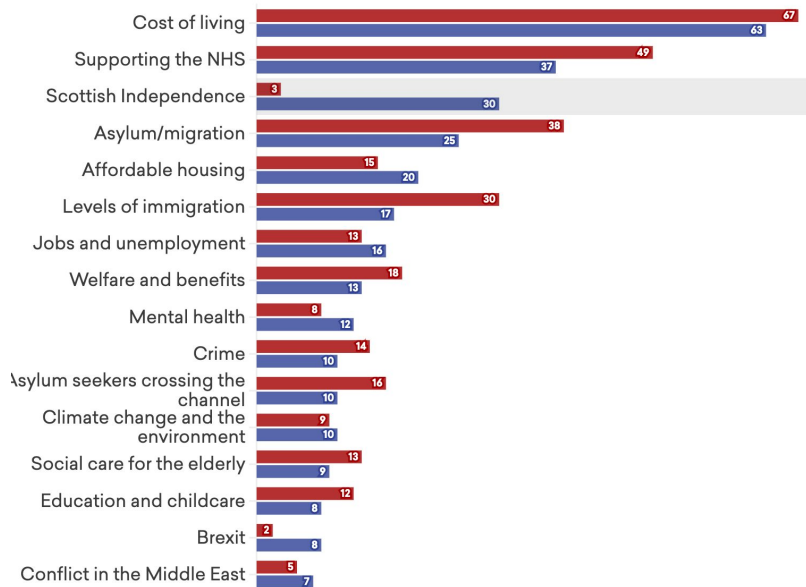
Independence is always up there for the SNP. That's what they lead with. And then I think the last time I read something, the next one down was the NHS and that's the two most important things for me.

Emma, Dundee

Scottish independence is the third biggest priority for pro-independence voters

Support for independence in a hypothetical referendum held today...

● Against Scottish Independence ● For Scottish Independence



In Wales devolution is the faultline

In Wales only a third support independence, and only 3 per cent see it as a top issue. The key faultline here is not independence but devolution: a third of Welsh adults support abolishing the Senedd – rising to seven in ten Reform voters. Reform and Plaid are pulling in opposite directions on devolution.

Arguably in Wales, **Plaid has broadened its appeal by pivoting away from independence**. Voters describe wanting a party that speaks specifically for Wales – particularly in the context of feeling like Labour has turned its back on Wales. By expanding to a broader, more inclusive style of nationalism, Plaid has appealed to a broader pool of voters who want a voice for Wales, not for independence. It is through this expansion that it has managed to broaden beyond its traditional North-Western, Welsh-speaking heartlands.

💧 I'd never voted for Plaid before. I felt like traditionally they had more of that (Independence) focus. But I do think that's changed.(...) which I think is why their policies around childcare and all those sorts of things really branch out from what they were offering traditionally.

Adele, Abergavenny

A third of Welsh adults think the Senedd should be abolished

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

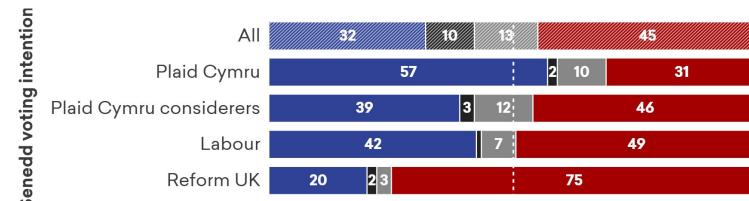
- The Welsh Parliament (Senedd) should NOT be abolished
- Don't know
- The Welsh Parliament (Senedd) should be abolished



While most Plaid supporters would back independence, the party's "considerers" would vote against it

And if the independence referendum was held today, how would you vote?

- For Wales becoming an independent country
- I would not vote
- Don't know
- Against Wales becoming an independent country



What happened in Wales?



A change election

Labour faced a double-incumbency effect in Wales.

After 27 years of Labour Government in the Senedd, four in five Welsh people (including 47 per cent of Labour voters) believe it is time for a change in how Wales is being run. After just 18 months in Westminster, Labour's support in Wales has collapsed as the party has lost support across the left, right and centre.

Much like in England, the Senedd was an insurgent election: Plaid Cymru and Reform UK surged to fill the vacuum left by mainstream parties, which many Welsh people feel had turned their back on Wales.

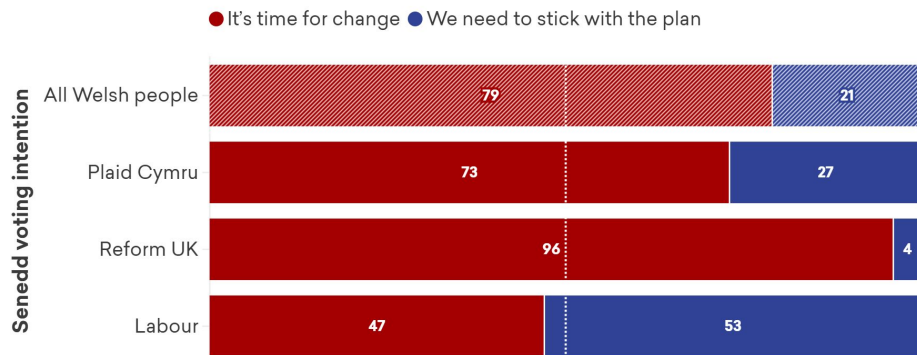


It's been 26 years, I think. They've got big elections coming up, haven't they, in May? And I think it's time for change. But then again, what with?

Sally, hospitality worker, Wrexham

Four in five Welsh people say it's time for change

Thinking about how Wales is being run at the moment, which of the following comes closest to your view?



Source: More in Common, February 2026



Absolutely anything to give Labour a bloody nose right now I think will be a good thing.

Simon, retired, Colwyn

An end of an era?

The last time Labour lost an election in Wales, women were not allowed to vote unless they were over the age of 30 and owned property. The year was 1918.

From 1922 until 2026 – as long as Britain has had universal suffrage – Labour never again fell below first place in a general election in Wales. And since the creation of the Senedd in 1999, Labour has always led the Welsh Government, never falling below 30 per cent of the vote.

Before Thursday 7 May 2026, Labour dominance was a fundamental feature of Welsh politics. The party's collapse to just 11 per cent of the vote (tying the Conservatives) marked an end of an era in Welsh history.

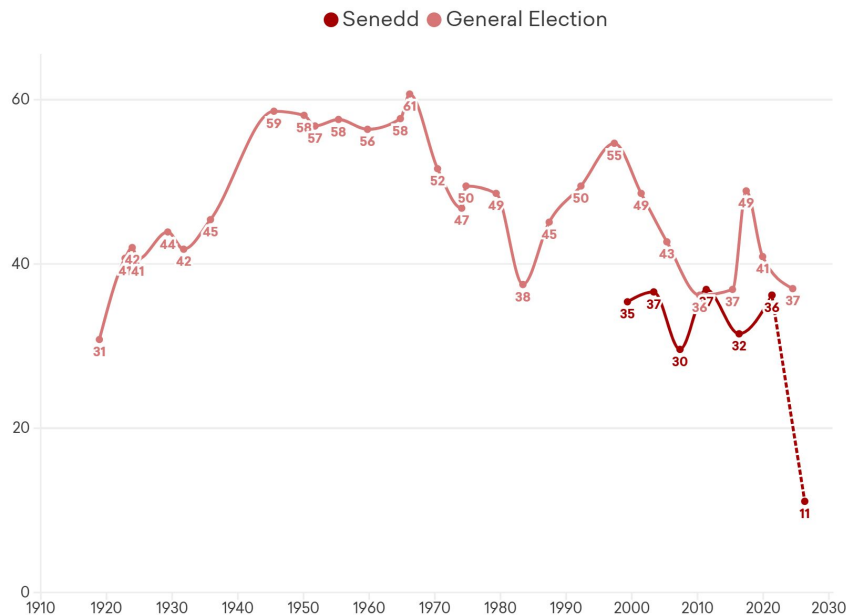


There's a kind of idea about Labour in Wales now that is this elite kind of political class that nobody's really in touch with. And I feel Plaid are a more grassroots based kind of thing. (...) parties like Reform, we've had a big scandal recently about parachuting candidates and things like that.

Rod, call centre manager, Cardiff

Labour's 2026 Senedd vote share was their worst Welsh result in modern history

Labour's vote share in Wales in general elections, and in Senedd elections after 1999



The Red Valleys have finally collapsed

Reform UK's gains were highest in Labour heartlands.

Reform earned more than 30 per cent in ten constituencies in Wales. Seven of these ten constituencies fit a similar profile: they all voted Leave in 2016, and Labour overperformed the Welsh national average in 2024.

The two Senedd Constituencies that had highest support for Labour in 2024 (both Welsh Valley constituencies) also saw some of the highest gains for Reform UK. These were also the two seats with highest support for Brexit.

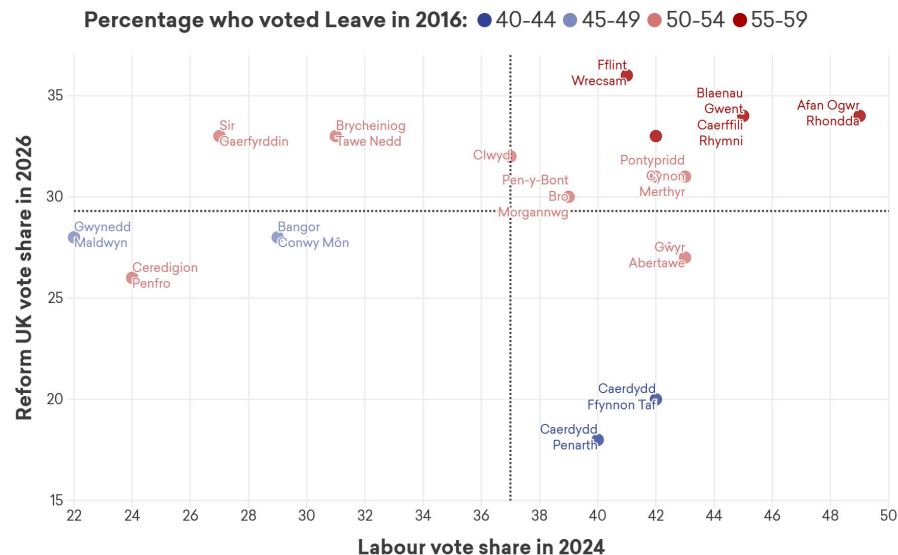
In winning these historic Labour strongholds, Reform UK has achieved something that the Conservative Party never managed. The 2019 General Election saw Labour lose the English Red Wall as Brexit became the key dividing line. But Labour's red valleys stayed resolute: despite similarly being post-industrial, pro-Brexit, they remained Labour's strongest areas of support.

South Wales have been quite strong at voting Labour for many, many years and it's kind of like that's all we know (...) So I think people have got kind of a bit fed up of what we know and want to change, but really don't really know what the change is.

Fiona, Caerphilly

In Wales, Reform UK performed best in Labour heartlands that voted for Brexit

In the 2026 Senedd Election, Reform UK's support was highest in areas that voted Leave in the 2016 EU Referendum, and voted Labour in the 2024 General Election



**What happened
in Scotland?**

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The big “meh”

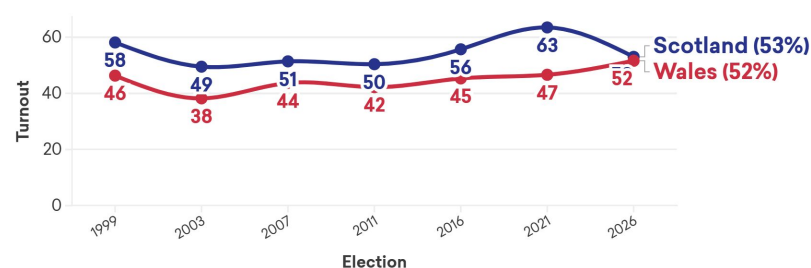
Voters in Scotland went into this election impatient for change: almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of Scots say that it is time for change in the country, while only 27 per cent think that Scotland should “stick to the plan”.

Yet Scotland is in an unusual position because while the public is impatient for change, **there wasn't a clear 'change' candidate – nor even a single incumbent:** many Scots describe a desire for something new after nearly two decades of the SNP, yet they are also often deeply disillusioned with the Labour Government in Westminster.

One of the clearest consequences of this was low turnout: on 53 per cent, it was ten points lower than 2021, and on par with Wales for the first time ever.

2026 saw turnout in Wales reach parity with Scotland for the first time

Turnout at Holyrood and Senedd elections



It's a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea. This is the first election where I'm really struggling, I've always voted SNP. This time I'm really not sure. My mum and dad, all their days, they voted Labour (...) even my dad, he's disgusted with them. It's very, very difficult.

Lorraine, Glasgow

SNP weakened across Scotland

Anti-incumbency sentiment struck both sides of the independence question.

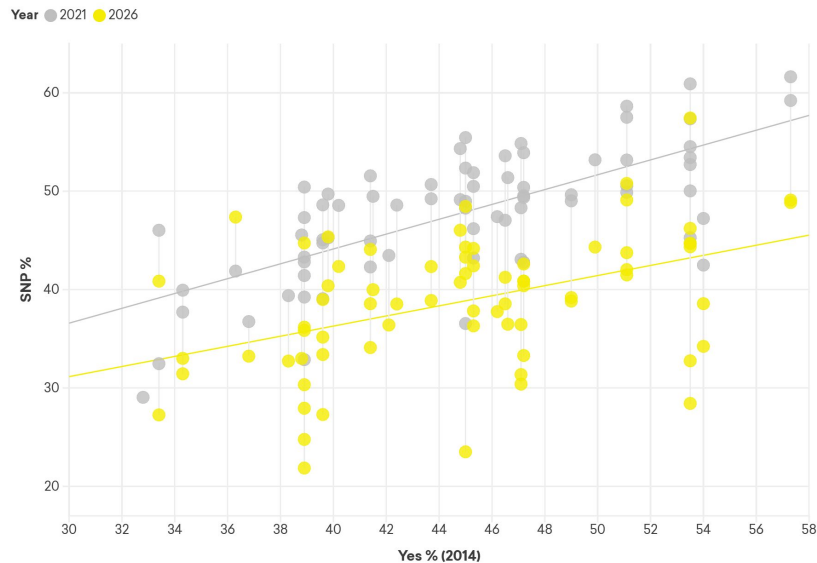
Despite their clear victory, these elections saw the SNP weakened – losing an average of 10 points in their constituency vote share and returning their weakest vote share since 2007.

Vote share fell across the independence divide suggesting this was not about a shift from independent parties to unionist.



There's a doom spiral, we need some kind of action or change. We're just stagnating (...) I don't think the SNP have a grasp on any of these problems; they've caused some of them. They've not got any solution or anything. That stagnation is particularly strong because we have two governments – in Scotland and in London. It feels like we're managed badly twice.

SNP vote has fallen across the independence divide



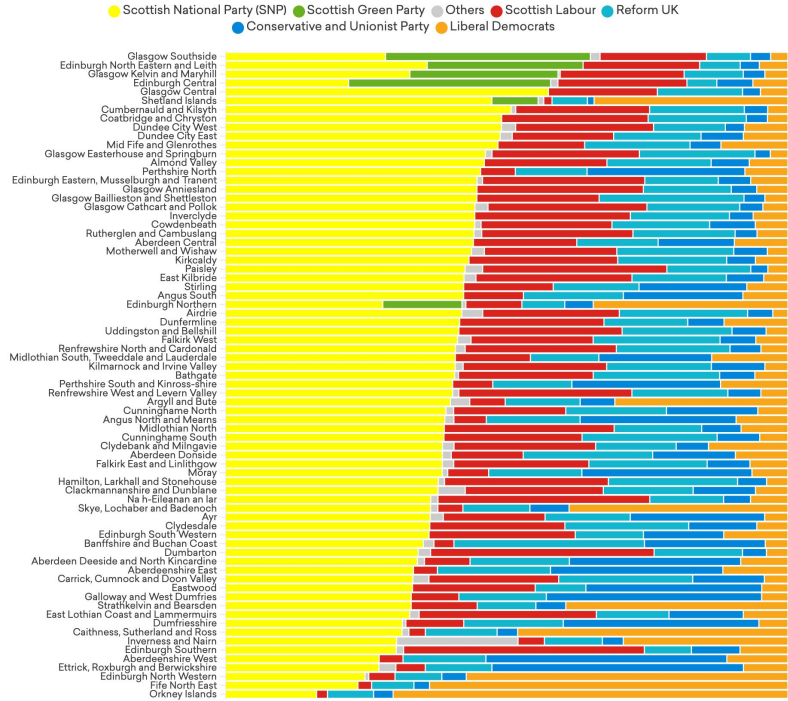
The SNP was boosted by unionist fragmentation

The electoral system gave the SNP a further helping hand. In the constituency vote, a first past the post system, Reform breaking through and splitting the unionist vote bolstered the SNP.

In several seats, the SNP saw a decline in vote share while Reform UK gained up to 20 per cent, yet the SNP held the seat because the unionist vote was more divided than ever.

Yet we also saw fragmentation in the nationalist vote: in seats where the Greens contested, they undermined SNP support, and in Glasgow Southside (Nicola Sturgeon's seat) and Edinburgh central, even took the seat.

SNP wins against a fragmented unionist bloc



Starmer dragged Sarwar down

The unpopularity of the government in Westminster was contagious.

Most of Scottish Labour's 2024 voters (51 per cent) said they would vote for another party in these Holyrood elections – more than a quarter (31 per cent) put their vote more down to the performance of Keir Starmer's government in Westminster than Swinney's government in Holyrood.

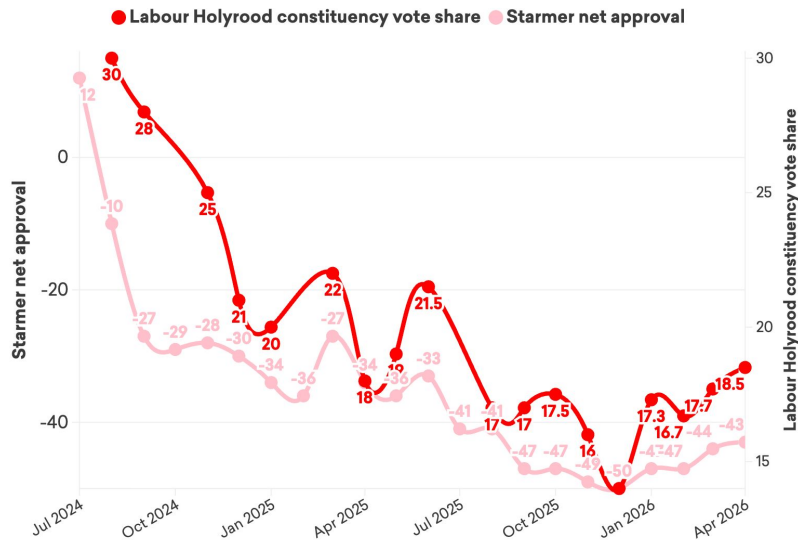
This weakened Labour's ability to coalesce the unionist vote behind them, and mount an effective opposition to the SNP for soft nationalists.



I think unfortunately for me, I think (Starmer) has been the best promotional tool for the SNP.

April, Retired, North Berwick

Labour's support in Holyrood moved roughly in line with the Prime Minister's approval ratings



The party leaders



All UK party leaders entered the elections with net negative approval ratings

No leader of a political party in England has **more supporters than detractors**. While the extent of this varies, it demonstrates the scale of the distrust of mainstream politics. Almost seven in ten Britons (67 per cent) say they have very little or no trust in politicians, and majority believe politicians don't respect people like them.



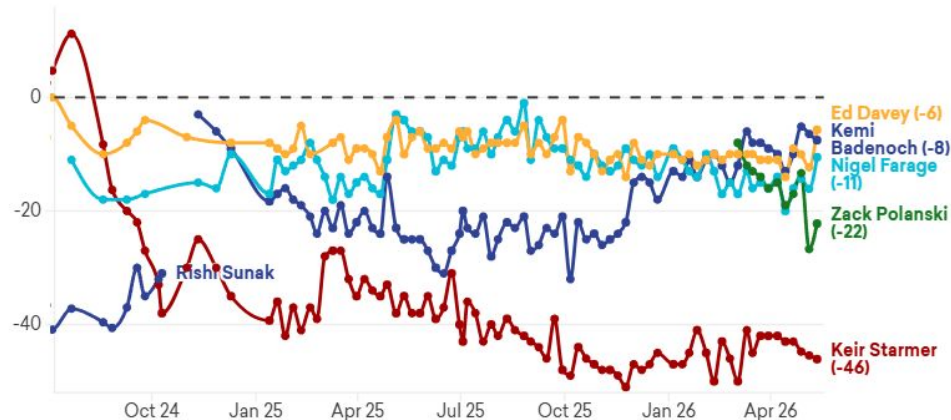
Nah, I just don't trust any of them. I've never been more disinterested in, I don't think there's one good option really. I think they're all just liars Can't trust them.

Luke, car salesman, Greenock

Leader approval ratings

Net approval rating

For each of the following, please indicate whether you think they are doing a good job or a bad job?



The insurgents

Zack Polanski, Green Party

The Greens' surge has been the big polling story of the past few months. Its fortunes have risen further following the election of Zack Polanski as leader in September 2025, with the party now polling at around 13 per cent nationally.

Appeal: The Greens entered the 2026 local elections with serious momentum, with many voters describing Polanski as a source of hope and optimism. To many, particularly younger voters, his focus on the cost of living, inequality and taxing the wealthy felt like a genuine alternative.

Barriers: Asked about their main barriers to voting Green in the week before 7 May, almost a quarter cited the party's lack of experience in government, 9 per cent said the party was unprofessional, and 10 per cent said they believed some of its candidates or activists were antisemitic. Over 50% said they felt more negatively toward Polanski after revelations he had not paid proper council tax on his houseboat.

After Polanski shared a post criticising the Metropolitan Police's handling of the Golders Green attack, his net approval rating fell by 14 points.. It may have been these concerns, as with Reform, that stopped the Greens from meeting their most optimistic seat targets, and from doing better in areas with larger Jewish populations such as Camden and Barnet.



It's just so refreshing to hear from a normal person who cares about the country he lives in.

Maddy, Leeds

Nigel Farage, Reform UK

In the year running up to the locals, Reform UK continued to comfortably lead the polls, surging ahead after a strong set of local election results last May in which the party took control of several councils from the Conservatives. Reform's poll numbers seem to be durable, with the party receiving between 27 and 33 per cent in vote intention polls.

Appeal: The party's ability to attract former Conservative voters. Around a quarter of those who backed the party in 2024 would now vote Reform, with this shift central to the party's success in areas like Kent in May 2025, and this time around on the outskirts of London and Essex corridor. Meanwhile, about a tenth of Reform's support comes from people who voted Labour last time. They are also mobilising former non-voters at a higher rate than any other party,

Barriers: Reform UK's vote share has stabilised recently, suggesting the party may have reached a natural ceiling in support after cannibalising the votes of many dissatisfied Labour and Tory voters. The "Trump problem" identified is the most plausible source of that ceiling: a barrier that Farage has so far failed to dismantle, alongside broader concerns about the party's professionalism and experience in government.



If Nigel Farage does get in and he completely messes it up, I'm out of here, I can't cope with this country any longer. I feel like we've had it as a nation and there's nothing else that we can do.

We are at breaking point and it's going to get to the point where it either gets fixed or it's broken forever. **Jodie, Newport**

The established

Keir Starmer, Labour

Starmer's personal standing has followed the same trajectory as Labour's decline in the polls. His approval rating - the share of the public who think he is doing a good job, minus those who think he is doing a bad one - briefly tipped into positive territory after the 2024 victory before plunging to -38 within three months. By the eve of the elections on 7 May it had slid to -46, broadly comparable to Rishi Sunak's in the run-up to his 2024 defeat.

Appeal: Positive impressions of Keir Starmer have predominantly centred around the role he has played on the world stage, including his handling of President Trump. There is a residual sympathy for the state of the country he inherited.

Barriers: Last year, many Britons described the Prime Minister as a 'decent' man who might not be cut out for the job. The Mandelson saga was particularly damaging in changing that, with the perception that Number 10 had tried to shift the blame. Around 44 per cent of voters did not view Starmer as decent in early April 2026. Combined with a series of U-turns and perceived broken promises, this has left 61 per cent of Britons describing the PM as incompetent and 57 per cent as untrustworthy.

Kemi Badenoch, Conservatives

Kemi Badenoch was elected Conservative leader in November 2024, after a punishing general election result for her party. Her approval rating began below zero and quickly fell to almost match Starmer's, reaching -32 by her first Party Conference as leader. Since then, however, it has improved markedly.

Appeal: The 'Kemi bounce' of recent months has seen her personal approval rating reach -6 by the week of the 2026 local elections - higher than any other national leader. Voters in focus groups talk about like her straight talking and how she holds Starmer to account. This shift may have helped recover votes from those in parts of London where voters looked to a choice on the right that was not Reform UK - such as Bexley, Westminster and Wandsworth.

Barriers: Support for her personally has not translated into increased popularity for her party. The Conservative vote share has hovered around 20 per cent for the last year, and the party went into this year's local elections with a lower national vote share than at the same point in 2025. While many express admiration for Badenoch personally, they still feel unable to fully forgive her party for its time in government.

Ed Davey, Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats went into this election polling between 12 and 14 per cent nationally, broadly unchanged since the 2024 general election.

Appeal: Compared to other party leaders, few Britons dislike Ed Davey personally - only three in ten hold a negative view of him. In areas up for election where the party had a strong local presence, voters tended to speak of both the Lib Dems and Davey positively.

Barriers: Many Britons do not feel they know what he and his party stand for. As a result, where public disdain for Labour and the Conservatives propelled Reform and the Greens in the run-up to the 2026 elections, support for the Liberal Democrats remained flat. Davey's long history in frontline politics may limit his ability to capitalise on the desire for change.



My default is now to not believe a politician. Keir Starmer is about as reliable as exists currently (...) And it's a dirty word now, 'politician'.

Dominic, Calderdale

The nationalists

John Swinney, SNP

Ahead of the Holyrood election, many Scottish voters lamented a lack of powerful leaders, with the sense of respect they sought often extending even to figures on the opposite side of the constitutional question: staunch unionists spoke about Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond with a degree of admiration, while SNP voters said they missed figures with whom they had passionately disagreed, such as Ruth Davidson.

Appeal: Asked which of the main party leaders they would choose as First Minister, Swinney came out on top, but with a rather unenthusiastic response - just 34 per cent of Scots picked him as their first choice. John Swinney was seen by nationalists as a "decent man". Unlike many party leaders, he is not personally unpopular - and this gives him a platform to build from.

Barriers: Scots compared to unfavourable to the 'big beasts' of preceding elections, seeing him as without the "fire in the belly" of previous Scottish leaders. More than a quarter put their vote more down to the performance of Keir Starmer's government in Westminster than Swinney's government in Holyrood.



It's a choice between the devil and the deep blue sea. This is the first election where I'm really struggling, I've always voted SNP. This time I'm really not sure. My mum and dad, all their days, they voted Labour (...) even my dad, he's disgusted with them. It's very, very difficult.

Lorraine, Glasgow

Rhun ap Iorwerth, Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru has emerged as the change party of Wales. Asked to describe Plaid Cymru in a single word, the top options are "good", "hopeful" and "Welsh". As the party's support has grown, its support base has changed significantly: disillusioned former Labour voters are switching to Plaid Cymru, meaning progressives now make up more than half of its supporters. Rhun ap Iorwerth has capitalised on this by positioning Plaid as the progressive, anti-Reform option in Wales.

Appeal: Rhun ap Iorwerth was the most positively viewed politician in Wales, with a net approval rating of -3 in the run up to the Senedd election. Some 43 per cent of Welsh people said Ap Iorwerth respects the people of Wales, a higher share than for any other leader, and he rated particularly strongly among those who voted Labour in 2024, with a net approval of +15 with that group - a sign of the Senedd gains Plaid would go on to make at Labour's expense.

Barriers: ap Iorwerth's personal popularity belies the fact that he is still an unknown quantity to many Welsh people. In the run-up to the elections, two in five (38 per cent) said either he was doing neither a good nor bad job or didn't know.



And again, politicians are politicians at the end of the day so I don't give my full trust in them at all. But I do feel like they (Plaid) give a voice to Wales and they don't play down to Westminster

Nia, Colwyn

Makerfield



Makerfield is a prime Reform target

Makerfield is in many ways a seat tailor made for Reform UK.

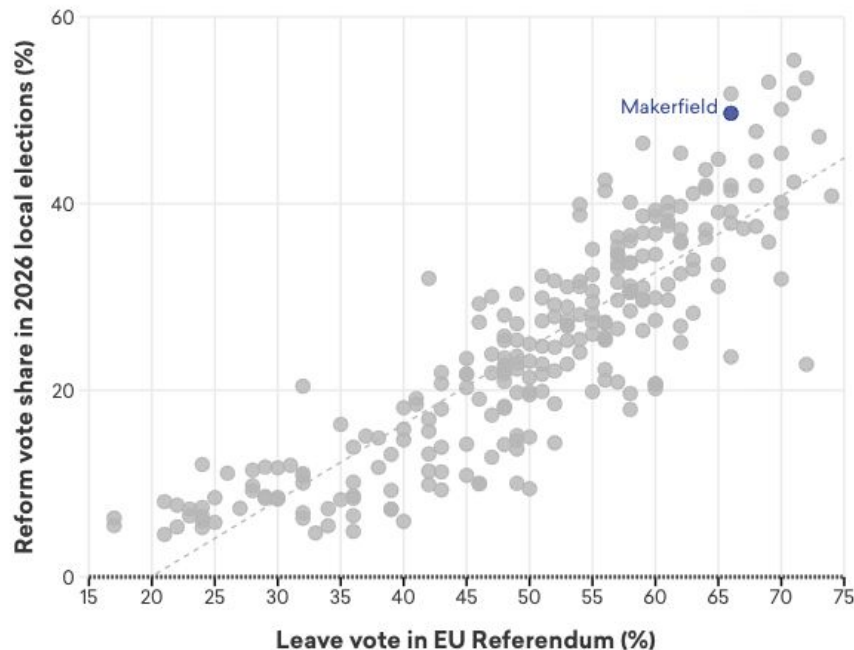
An estimated 65 per cent of Makerfield voters backed Brexit in 2016, making it the 75th most Leave-voting constituency in the UK.

This was one of Reform's closest second-place margins – they lost by 13.4 points, the 13th closest in the country and 7th closest where Labour was in first place. In total, Reform was in second place in 98 constituencies in the country.

Meanwhile in the local elections this year, Reform won in every single ward in Makerfield, topping 40 per cent of the vote.

Makerfield's Leave vote makes it a prime Reform target

Wards included if held elections



But the “Burnham factor” will have an impact

While Makerfield fits the demographic and political profile of a Reform target seat, in by-elections local dynamics and candidates have an outsized impact on the results. **How much can we expect Andy Burnham to overperform?**

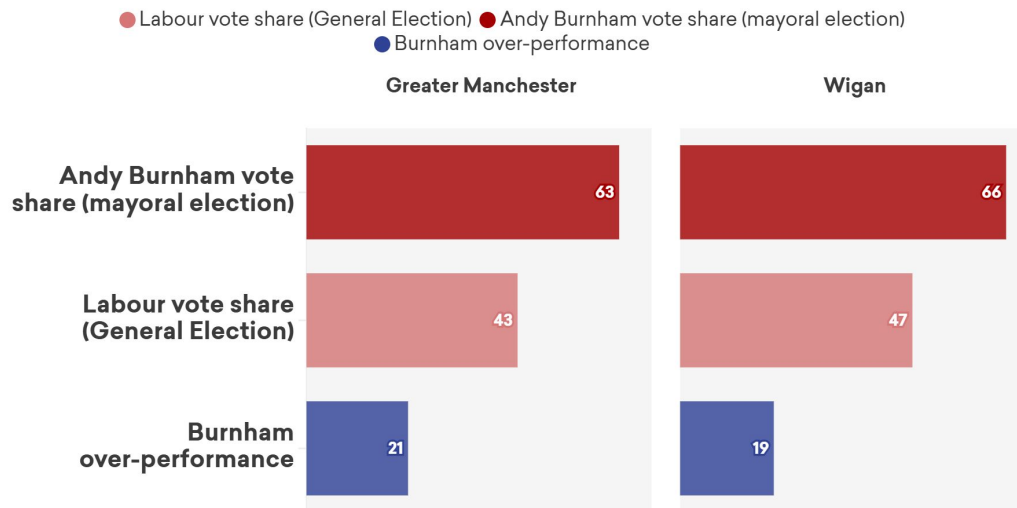
In 2024, Burnham outperformed Labour in Greater Manchester as a whole by 63.4 to 42.8 per cent between the mayoral election in May and the General Election in June (20.6 per cent).

In Wigan (the borough Makerfield is based in) he outperformed the party 66.1 to 47.1 per cent. (19 per cent).

This means that Andy Burnham overperformed his party by a margin of roughly 20 points in 2024.

Andy Burnham overperformed Labour by around 20 points in 2024

Andy Burnham vote share in Greater Manchester and Wigan in 2024 Mayoral Election, compared with Labour performance in both in the 2024 General Election



**What's next for
the parties?**

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The Conservative Party

The Conservative's base has shrunk to an affluent, suburban core

The party is now holding onto seats in South East London or the Scottish borders and winning back Westminster and Wandsworth because of the support of affluent graduate homeowners and older, professional workers.

The Conservatives have to face down the Reform – Liberal Democrat pincer

For frustrated voters on the right, Reform is now the default option, while some socially liberal, affluent voters in traditionally Conservative areas are opting for the Lib Dems. The challenge is to position itself against these competing pressures; its success in South East London as the less radical alternative to Reform may provide a blueprint.

The party should make the most of its edge on economic competence

The Conservatives are still much more trusted on economic issues than Reform. Given the continuing importance of the cost of living to voters, a strong economic pitch could pay dividends.

The median Briton is on the centre right, but doesn't currently feel represented

Just under one in three British adults considers themselves centre right, but past infighting and disaffection with the status quo alienated some of these voters from the Conservatives. With time, they could build on their suburban core to win this vote back.

The Labour Party

Labour's 2024 coalition has splintered to both its left and right

The coalition of voters who swept Labour into power in 2024 was a disparate group, ranging from the metropolitan soft left to disillusioned socially conservative voters ready to give another party a go. It has now fractured in several directions.

Labour's current base is different from its traditional one, but should be seen as a foundation to build upon

From the valleys of South Wales to Sunderland in the North East, Britain's post-industrial heartlands are no longer Labour's base. Most of Labour's support is younger people in urban, metropolitan areas; the need to solidify and strengthen its appeal to these groups, and prevent them looking at other alternatives such as the Liberal Democrats, should not be taken for granted.

The leadership question is only part of the issue

While Keir Starmer's unpopularity is clear, so too are most alternatives. Across many Labour figures tested, the public are more likely to say that the UK would be the same as it is now or worse with them in charge than that things would improve.

Winning back the deserters means addressing deprivation

What unites both left and right Labour 'deserters' is financial insecurity. Two-thirds (67 per cent) of those who voted for Labour in 2024 say that cost of living is one of the top issues facing the country, and Reform and Green Party voters shifted based on their different experiences of it. The challenge for Labour is delivering concrete action to address both.

Reform UK

Reform is now truly national, with the squeezed middle its base

Unlike other parties, Reform's appeal is now truly national, with the party having a presence in every part of the UK, thanks to its appeal to 'squeezed middle' homeowners in urban towns or suburbs. It is now the natural party of the right in many parts of the country, leapfrogging the Conservatives in Scotland and with a third of the vote in Wales, it can now reach voters across Britain.

It is mobilising the disaffected, but now will be scrutinised in power

Reform did better in areas with lower turnout, and the results in Sunderland demonstrate it was motivating voters who may not usually turn out in these elections. Yet here and in other areas where a Reform now holds a council majority, the question whether it can continue to harness or address this disaffection, or as incumbents be weakened by it.

Reform may have reached the limits of its ability to squeeze the Conservatives

The remaining Conservative vote, more affluent, more satisfied with the status quo, less leave voting and more institutionalist may not be amenable to voting for Reform UK. Reform has pivoted to the right on economics recently with the appointment of Robert Jenrick as Shadow Chancellor but its next reachable pool of voters are likely those with more left/populist economic views.

The Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrat's core support is similar to the Conservatives, but distinguished on social issues

Affluent, suburban or rural home-owning professionals are the party's base, and where competition with the Conservatives is strongest. It is on issues such as migration and Britain's relationship with Europe that the Liberal Democrats can distinguish themselves from the Tories.

The benefits of a concentrated vote disguise its underlying fragility.

In these elections the Liberal Democrat vote continued to be concentrated in the party's core areas – South West London suburbs, Surrey, Sussex, and the Scottish Highlands. This limits the number of gains it can make, as the Liberal Democrats become a hyper-local party and lose their edge as a protest party in other parts of the country.

There are opportunities on the left and right, but risks come with appealing to neither

Some disaffected Labour and Conservative voters who don't favour more radical alternatives have defected to the Liberal Democrats, but not in great numbers. The Party has avoided alienating both so far, but in doing so many Britons are unsure what the Party stands for, and it does not represent change – a problem when people now have more radical protest options on the left and right.

The Green Party

The Greens have a new and passionate base – but potentially fragile one too

The Green Party's supporters are now young, urban graduates in rented accommodation who struggle to make ends meet. This cohort is distinct, and even more left-leaning than the Party's former base, which incorporated some older, more conservative leaning, environmentally conscious voters. Finding ways to manage the enthusiasm and anti-system tendencies of the new while not alienating the old will be vital to maintaining its recent gains and the voter coalition it built ahead of the 2024 General Election.

The Greens need to overcome the public's key concerns around their professionalism

The top barrier Britons cite for not voting Green is their lack of experience in government. Polanski's intervention on the Golders Green attacks and recent revelations about his council tax and career history risk undermining his 'authentic' appeal. The party now has the opportunity in some high-profile councils, such as Hackney and Lewisham, to convince the doubters and show what it can deliver in office.

The Greens must now reach the next 15 per cent

One in four Britons (27 per cent) say they would consider voting for Green Party, but , only around 16 per cent are doing so. While their priorities are similar – and in fact more pronounced around climate change – they urgently want to see real change on bread and butter issues such as cost of living – but don't favour solutions that are as radical as some Green supporters

The Scottish National Party

A wide but shallow victory leaves the SNP vulnerable

The SNP's win was driven less by enthusiasm than by a sense that there was nowhere else to turn. Like Starmer's 2024 coalition, a shallow mandate leaves the SNP exposed to the same insurgent forces now reshaping British politics.

Delivery is the key test for the SNP

The SNP have been given another mandate by the Scottish people. They must seek to avoid traps like those the Starmer Government fell into, such as a perception of not prioritising the issues that matter most to the public. SNP voters are also the most financially squeezed in Scotland – showing competence on cost of living and public services will decide if the party can hold onto them.

Europe position is an underused strength

2024 SNP voters are nearly twice as likely as Labour voters to see Brexit as a top issue, and rejoining the EU is a position that speaks to Remain voters on both sides of the constitutional question.

Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru now has two voter groups that it must balance

Plaid Cymru has expanded far beyond its traditional rural base in Welsh speaking areas and is now also the main progressive party in Wales, with strongholds among younger graduates in urban areas. While the former view the party as a nationalist party of Wales, the latter also view Plaid as a left wing alternative to Labour. A key challenge for the party is leading in a way that meets the expectations of both.

Voters want a voice for Wales, not a voice for independence

Across politics, there is a widespread desire for a party that will put Wales, not Westminster, first. Pivoting away from independence during this campaign allowed Plaid Cymru to reach a wider pool of voters – it should not necessarily take its success as a mandate to pursue independence given it was such a low priority for many voters.

Some voters have doubts that Plaid Cymru are ready for government

Welsh people are more likely to say Rhun ap Iorwerth respects the people of Wales than to say the same of any other politician in Wales, and in focus groups people say they trust Plaid Cymru to do what's right for Wales. However, many have concerns that they are interested in government, and lack clarity in their manifesto. The key challenge now is tangible delivery.