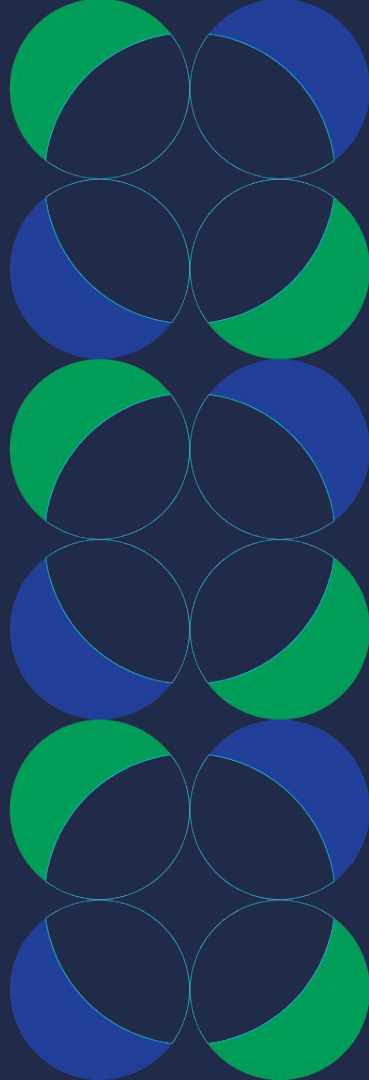




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# May 7 Briefing

A pre-election webinar by More  
in Common



# It's less than three weeks until elections on May 7th...



## Local elections in England

5,014 council seats up for election across 136 local authorities, including all London boroughs. Seats were mostly last contested in 2022.



## Holyrood elections in Scotland

129 MSPs to be elected, 73 from constituency elections under FPTP and another 56 from proportional representation via regional lists.



## Senedd elections in Wales

New electoral system with 96 MSs to be elected, with 6 members across each of 16 PR wards.

# All the main party leaders have negative approval

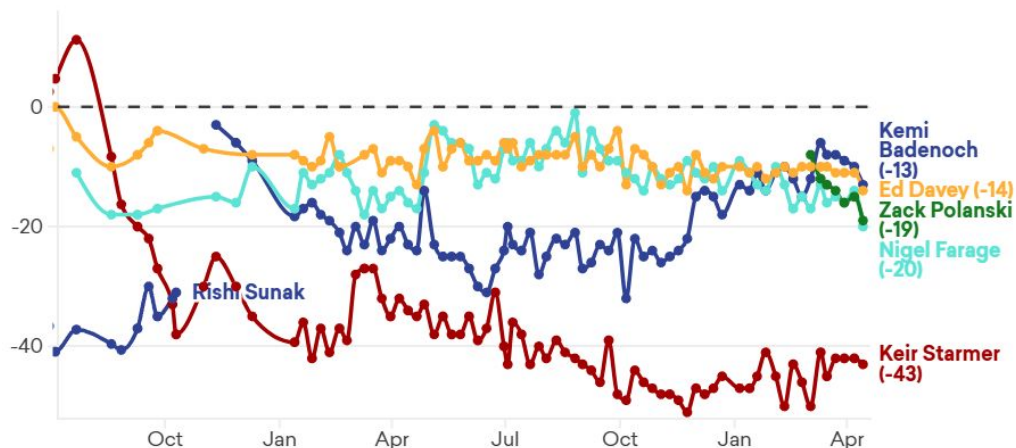
**Keir Starmer's ratings have recovered slightly from their all-time low towards the end of last year. However, his score at -43 is still leagues below rivals and comparable to Rishi Sunak's before he lost the last General Election.**

The rest of the party leaders are more clustered together and, while more popular than than the PM, are all still firmly underwater. Kemi Badenoch's scores have improved in recent months, putting her narrowly ahead of Farage, Polanski and Davey.

## 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?



# Meaning these elections are another call for change

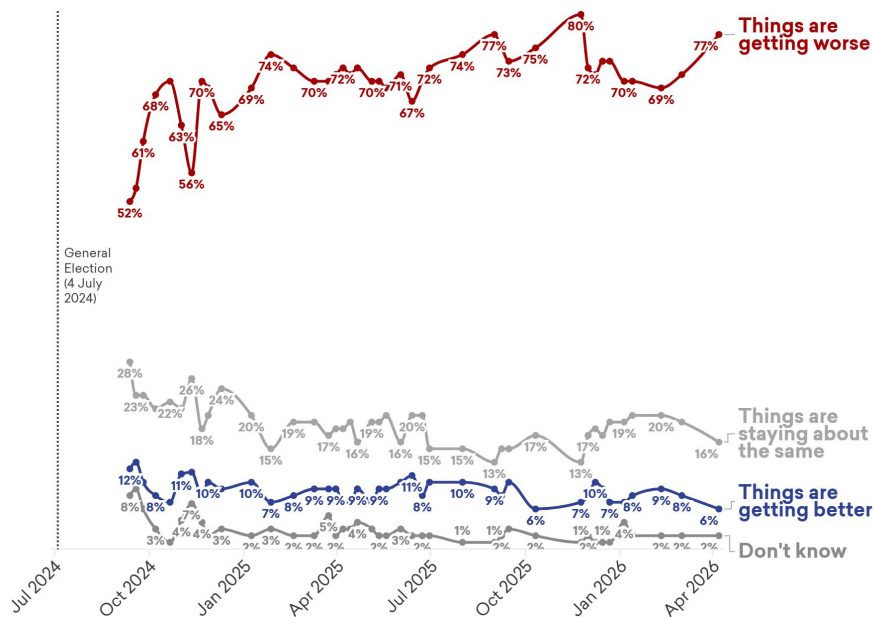
Britons remain pessimistic about the country and frustrated at the lack of change. Most Britons think the current Government is 'more of the same'.

Over three in four think things are getting worse in the UK today – which is comparable to before the 2024 General Election.

Only 1 in 20 think things are getting better.

## Three in four Britons say things are getting worse

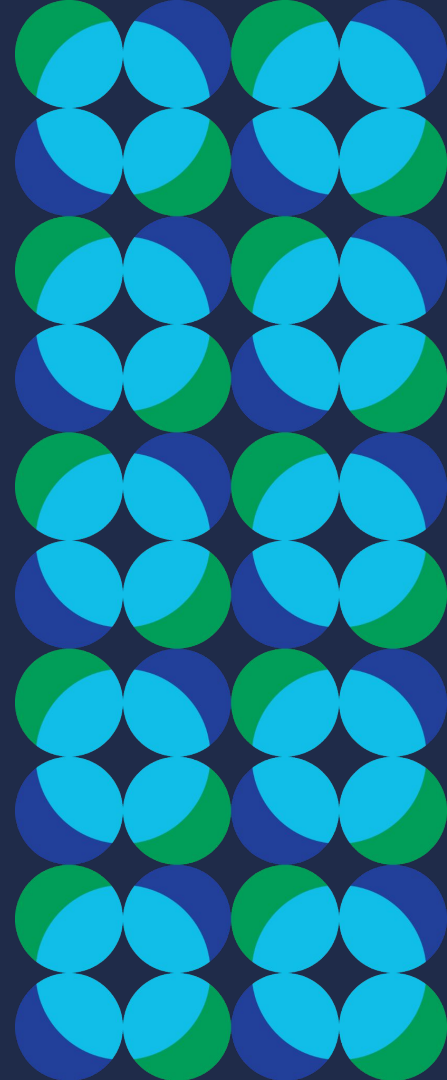
Thinking about the UK today, would you say...





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# The English Local Elections



# Where elections are happening in England?

5,014 councillors will be elected with more than half of these being in either London or the South East.

The Government tried to delay 6 county council elections already deferred from last year but faced legal challenges and ultimately abandoned the plan.

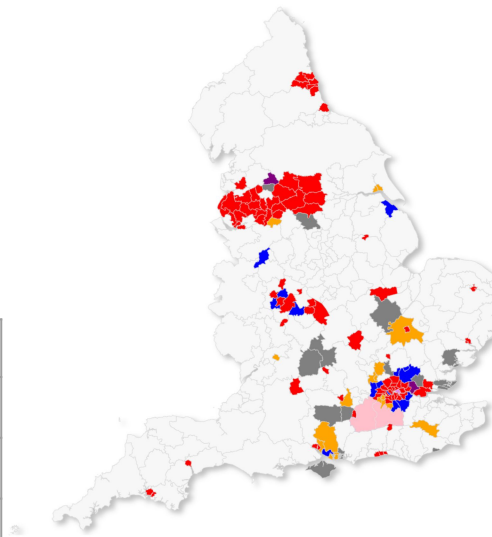
Some of these councils will only be electing in thirds, so not all seats are up for selection (e.g. all 10 in Manchester, Southampton, West Oxfordshire and Hastings).

Compared to last year's local elections these elections are taking place on much more Labour territory, including London.

Party	Number of councillors held
Labour	2,196
Conservative	1,134
Liberal Democrat	663
The Green Party	170
Reform UK	78

Lower tier councils up for election in May

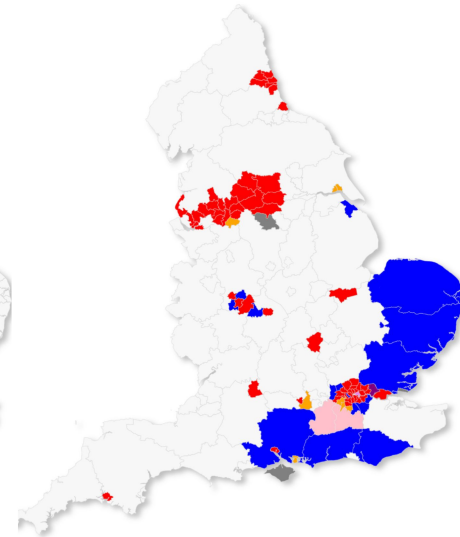
Current largest party: ● Labour ● Liberal Democrat ● Conservative ● No Overall Control ● Independent ● Other ● New authority (2026)



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Upper tier councils up for election in May

Current largest party: ● Labour ● Liberal Democrat ● Conservative ● No Overall Control ● Independent ● Other ● New authority (2026)



Source: Open Council Data More in Common

Source: Open Council Data

# What happened at last year's locals?

**The 2025 local elections saw Reform UK make sizeable gains across England while the traditional mainstream parties suffered.**

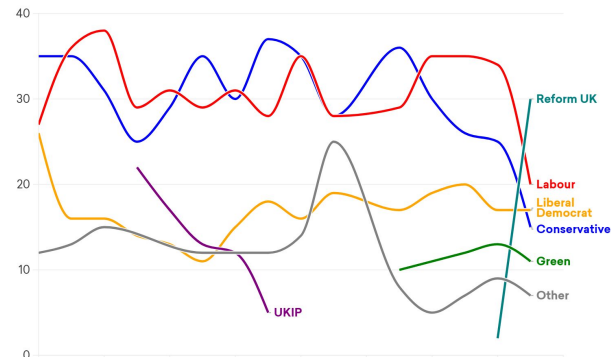
Losses hit the Conservatives in particular. Their seat win total was less than a third of that of 2021, when the party was at an electoral high under Boris Johnson following the vaccine bounce.

Last year's results were particularly dramatic given the areas in which local authorities were up for election. More rural and coastal Conservative heartlands such as Lincolnshire and Kent collapsed to Reform UK, while the Liberal Democrats also made gains in councils such as Oxfordshire in a pincer movement.

Labour losses were less pronounced as there were fewer urban-based local authorities being contested. But where they did hold seats in places such as Doncaster, the party made significant losses. 2026 will, however, look quite different as more urban areas are up for election across London and other major cities.

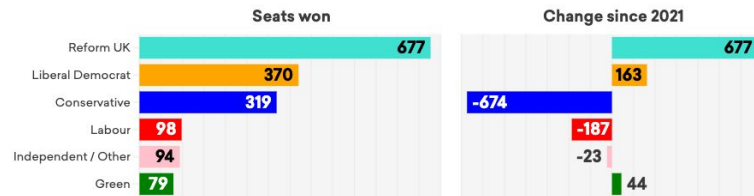
**Labour and the Conservatives had record poor performances in 2025**

BBC / Curtice Projected National Share (PNS)



**Reform won big in 2025 at the expense of the Conservatives**

Seats won in the 2025 local elections and change from 2021



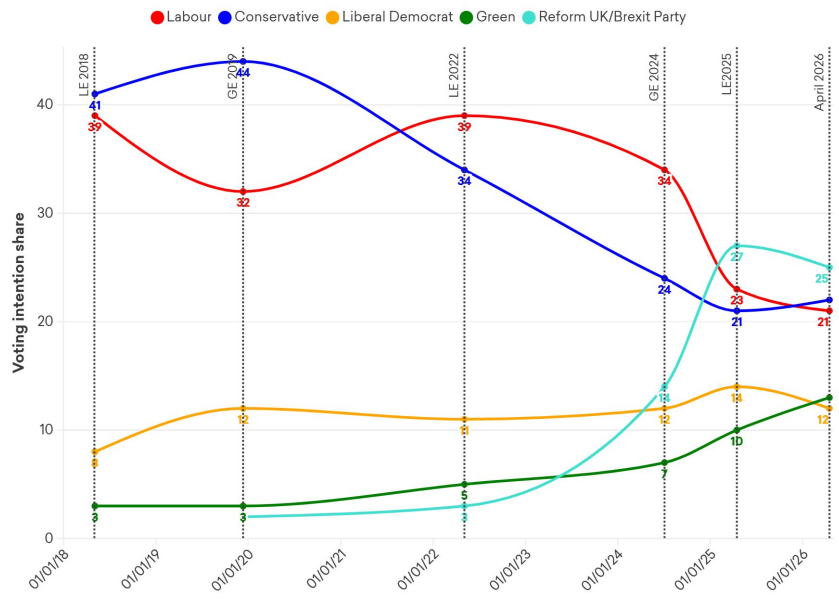
# What has changed since 2022?

The 2022 local elections came as the Conservatives' electoral successes of 2019–21 began to collapse.

In May 2022, YoY CPI inflation hit 9.1%, while the partygate scandal had been rumbling on for several months and had recently been given new life when Boris Johnson was issued a fixed penalty notice in April. The elections came shortly before the release of the Sue Gray report, and a couple of months before the Chris Pincher scandal brought the Johnson Government down.

In 2022, the Conservatives lost 336 of 1414 councillors in England, and 10 out of 45 English councils that they had previously controlled. Among these, Labour marginally benefited (+22 and +3 respectively), and the Liberal Democrats did well (+194 and +3 each), as did the Green Party (+63 councillors).

## Nationwide support for Labour and the Conservatives has fallen since 2022



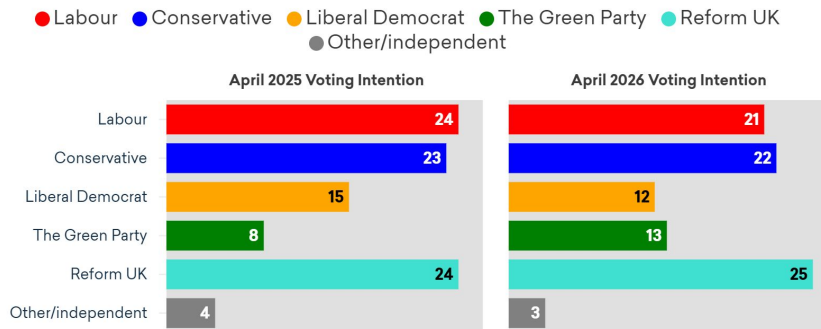
# What has changed since 2025?

Over the past year, Reform UK's vote share has stabilised. Despite having reached 30 per cent at points in the past year, they go into these local elections at a similar level of strength as they did in 2025.

The biggest material change since April 2025 has been the increase in support for the Green Party. They go into this election with a vote share of around 13 per cent, compared to 8 per cent last year.

Meanwhile, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives are polling slightly lower than they did at this point last year – already a historic low for the two main parties.

## How has the picture changed since last year?



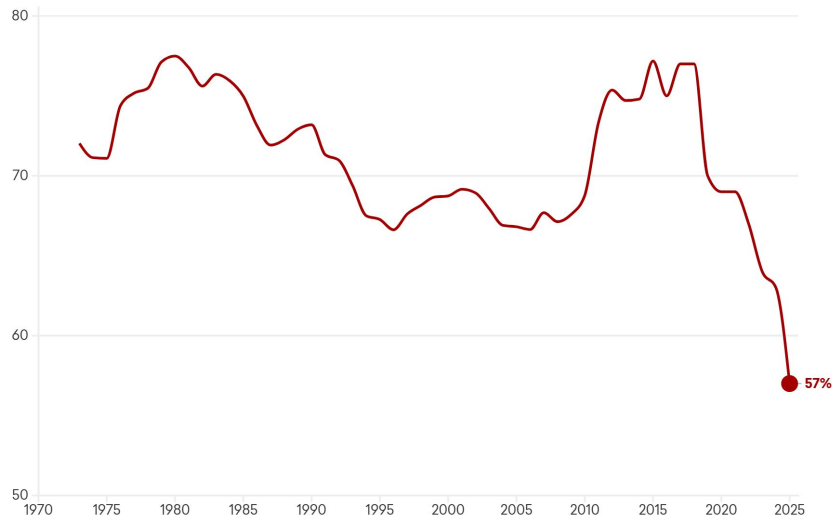
# Further fragmentation

Last year's local elections were a landmark for fragmentation – seeing the lowest combined proportion of seats for either main party for at least half a century.

This year's election looks set to continue that trend, with both Labour and the Conservatives potentially ending up on **700 seats or fewer**, while the Greens and Reform could be looking to gain over 1000 seats each.

## 2025 was the lowest proportion of seats controlled by Labour or the Conservatives since at least the 1970s

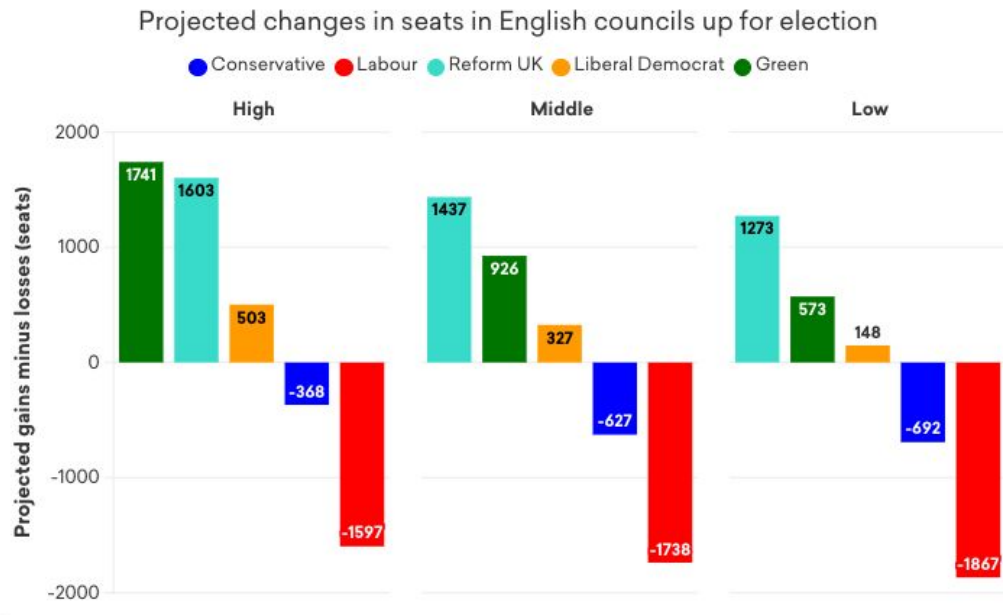
Proportion of council seats controlled by Labour or the Conservatives



# A power shift away from mainstream parties

Insurgent parties are expected to dominate the council election results. **Reform are projected to win the most seats**, with over 1,000 councillors, while on a good night the Greens could follow behind, reaching four-digit numbers of councillors. This could create real momentum for Reform, who lead in the polls, and the Greens, for whom the projected result would be an all-time best.

**Traditional parties are expected to fare much worse** – both Labour and the Conservatives are projected to lose seats by the hundred. Under our current estimates, Labour would lose more than 1,500 seats.



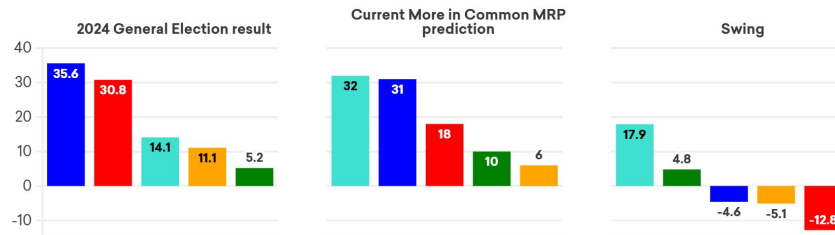
# Reform's threat to the Conservatives: Essex

Essex is similar to many of the other counties where Reform did well in the last general election at the Conservative's expense, digging into their heartlands.

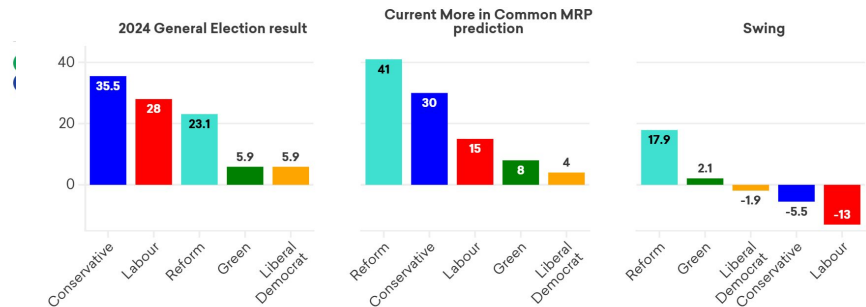
Reform could perform well in the back gardens of senior Tory figures: **North West Essex (Kemi Badenoch)** and **Bratintree (James Cleverly)** are both former Conservative strongholds that are projected to flip to Reform in a general election.

**If Reform win in these areas of Essex, it will suggest that they are continuing to win over the small towns and affluent villages that form the traditional backbone of the Conservative Party's support base.**

## Northwest Essex in a General Election



## Braintree in a General Election



# Reform's threat to Labour: Sunderland

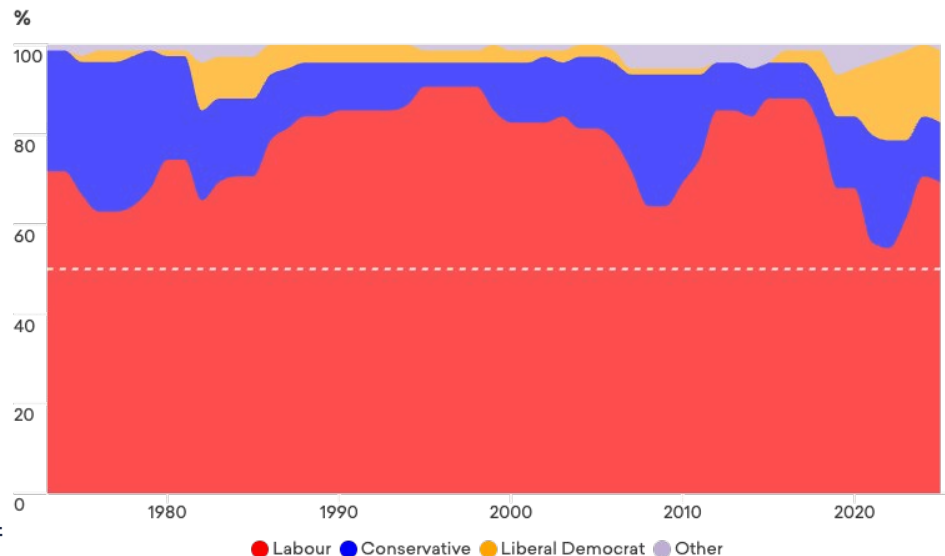
**Sunderland is one of the clearest example of Reform's threat to Labour in its heartlands.**

Sunderland City Council has been Labour-led since its formation, when the country was led by Harold Wilson.

This is a part of the country where Conservative support crept up in 2019 and support for Reform/Brexit Party has always been latent.

More in Common's Westminster MRP model this month projects Reform would win the Sunderland Central constituency in a general election tomorrow taking 37% of the vote, with Labour 12 points behind. Bridget Phillipson the Education Secretary would also lose her Houghton and Sunderland South seat.

**Sunderland Council Composition**



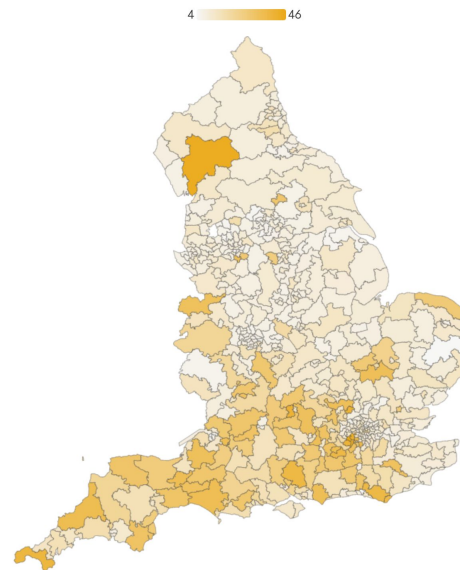
# Opportunity for Liberal Democrats to further cement themselves into the Blue Wall

The core test for the Liberal Democrats this May will be one of **retention**. In the small number of existing 'Blue Wall' councils up for election, there is little room for growth such has been the collapse in support for the Conservatives over the last few years.

Continuing to assert their overwhelming dominance on councils like Tunbridge Wells, St. Albans, Winchester, Cheltenham and South Cambridgeshire will be an important indicator that their support in the seats they gained at the 2024 General Election is resilient to any uptick in favour that the Conservatives are enjoying now they are in opposition.

Offensively the Liberal Democrats will want to show they can continue to be a threat in the Conservatives' heartlands in the new authorities up for election. The new East and West Surrey unitary authorities should be fertile ground for the party and on a good night, we would expect the Liberal Democrats to take control of these councils.

Liberal Democrat projected performance in More in Common's April 2026 MRP



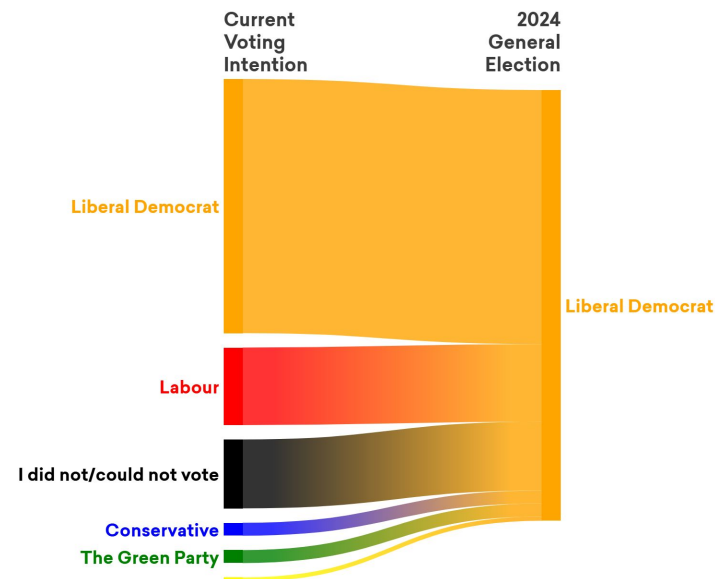
## Will the Liberal Democrats show they can be a thorn in the side of Labour as well?

While the recent post-Polanski surge has caught the attention of Labour strategists, **Labour has also lost a significant chunk of its 2024 vote (around 8 per cent) to the Liberal Democrats.**

While unlikely to secure the huge swings in urban areas we will see from the Greens, the Liberal Democrats will want to show that, in areas where they have historic strength, they can be the beneficiary of the collapse in Labour support.

Meaningful gains for the Liberal Democrats in Red Wall areas such as Barnsley, Birmingham and Preston, combined with strong showings in more progressive areas where they start with an upper hand compared to the Greens, like Oxford, Cambridge and Sheffield, will be important for proving there is a Liberal Democrat element to Labour's collapse.

### How did current Liberal Democrat supporters vote in 2024?

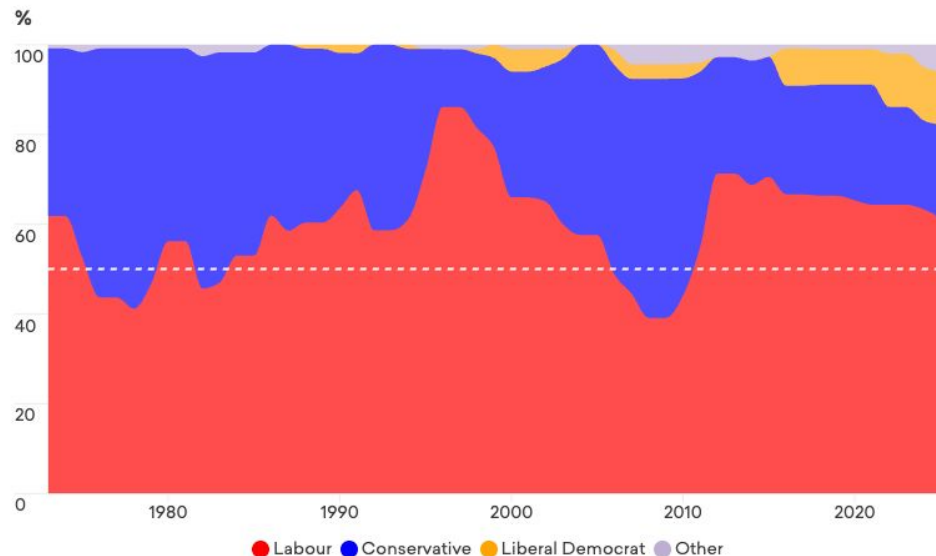


# Fragmentation: Birmingham

**Birmingham City Council has been held by Labour since 2011. Yet their presence in the area has been eroded since the last council elections, in particular by the fragmentation of a formerly Muslim vote to Gaza independents.**

Our Westminster MRP model this month projects that in a general election tomorrow Labour would win just four of the nine Birmingham constituencies. Independents would gain another seat and be close in others. Meanwhile this split on the left would enable Reform to take four Birmingham seats.

### Birmingham Council Composition



# Anti-incumbency fuelling fragmentation: Birmingham

**Labour’s challenges in Birmingham provides an example of both local and national dissatisfaction driving electoral fragmentation.**

Over half of Birmingham residents (55%) say the council is heading in the wrong direction. The bin strikes loom large for voters – 59 per cent cite it as a priority, and it ranks at the top of a list of factors that will decide how people vote.

In areas with large Muslim populations like Alum Rock, Labour will face challenges from pro-Gaza Independents and the Greens. On the outskirts of the city, the Conservatives and Reform will be hoping to make gains.

In a few words, what would you say is the WORST thing about the area that you live in?

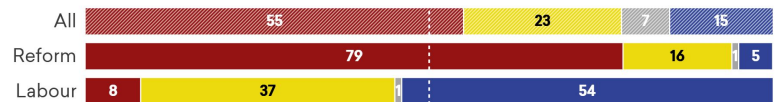


## Most voters think Birmingham is heading in the wrong direction

Do you think Birmingham City Council is currently heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?

● Wrong direction ● Neither / mixed ● Don't know ● Right direction

Council voting intention



## In their own words: focus groups in Birmingham



*It's shocking. It's terrible. I go outside my front door and I can see the neighbourhood just going downhill, more rubbish around, grass is overgrowing everywhere. It's just the basics. It's the standard of living. It's just the standards. I'm not asking for there to be lovely plants. If I go to Warwick or somewhere and I walk down the road, they have lovely streets. The streets are clean, they've got plants, they've got flowers, they've got hanging baskets. Everything's just much nicer. But I come to my area, and I'll be lucky to see if the rubbish is being picked up this week. It's just the basics. We're not asking for a lot. It's just the basics are not being done.*



*I voted Labour all the years I've been voting, but now I don't think I'd vote for them again... 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.*

Alice



*There's not enough evidence for us to see that there's been improvements. We don't see anything. I don't see anything that makes my life actually better or see anything that makes anything around me better. And I know the government's got a tough job and they have to consider lots of different things, but at the same time, me being selfish, I can't see anything that's improving my standard of living at all. If anything, it seems to be getting, and with everybody around me as well, it seems to be getting worse.*



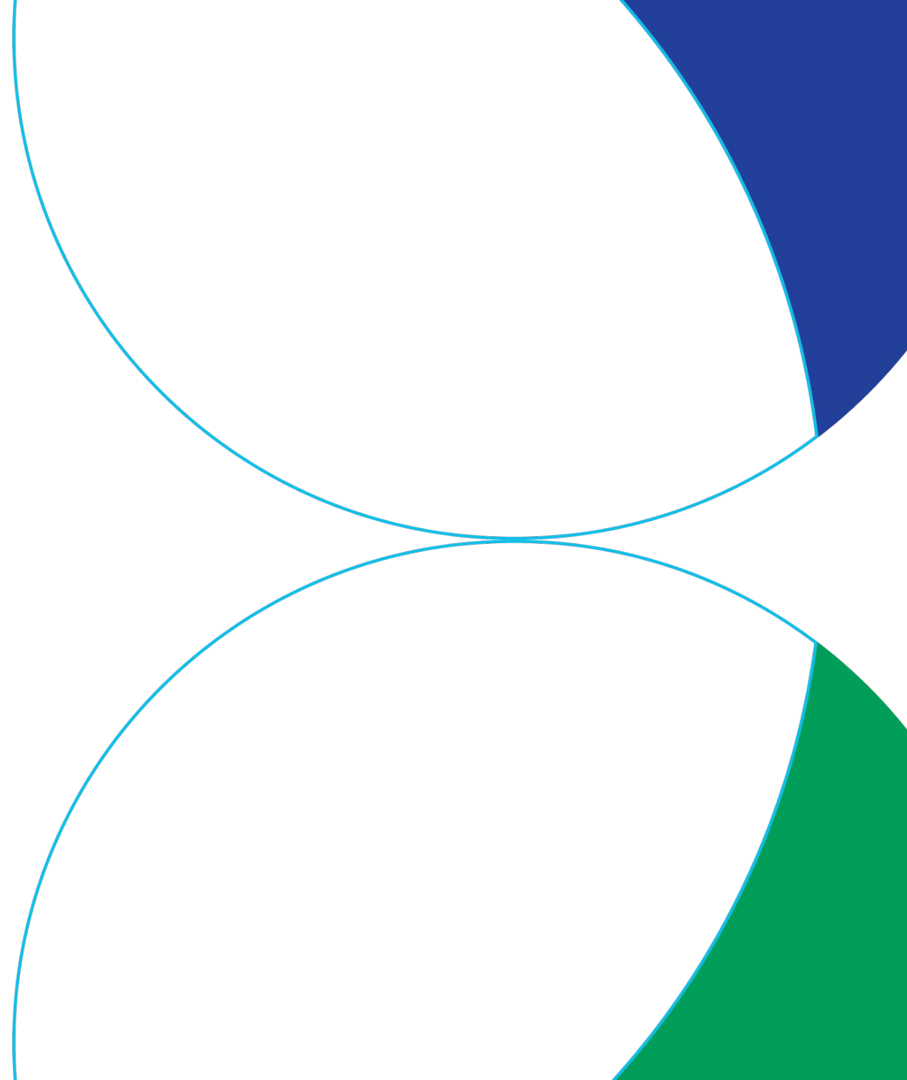
Joe

*What [Keir Starmer] is, he's a fraud. I remember when before the election he was saying, "Labour will do this for you. Labour will do this for you. Help this, help that." And he didn't stick to one thing.*

David

Ollie

**London**

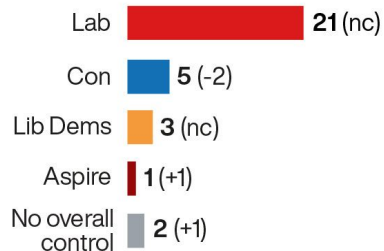


## Where are we starting from in London?

In 2022, Labour won 21 of the 32 London boroughs, making historic gains in traditionally Conservative strongholds.

The **Conservatives lost flagship councils** such as Westminster, Barnet and Wandsworth to Labour – but narrowly gained Harrow. They were left in control of just five boroughs.

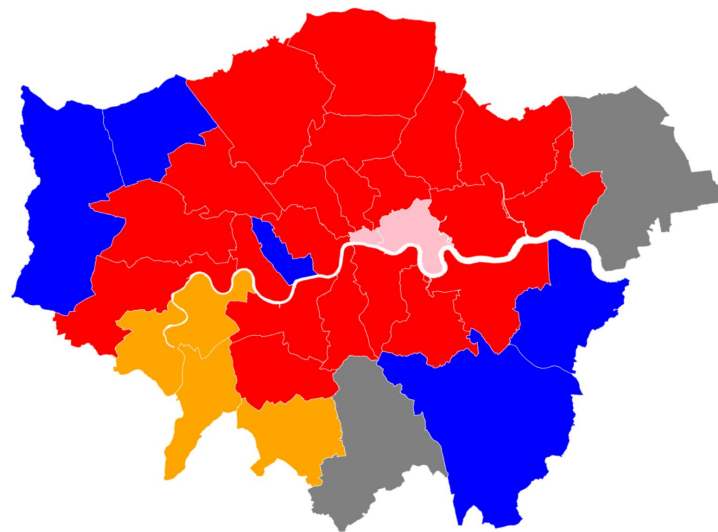
### State of the parties



## With an insurgent Reform and the Greens, the three traditional main parties have the most to lose in London

Which party currently controls each borough council?

● Labour ● Conservatives ● Liberal Democrats ● Other ● No overall control



# Where will the key London battlegrounds on the night be?

Labour will be facing threats from the Greens in inner London, who are hopeful of making gains in boroughs such as Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth, Newham, Hackney, Islington, Haringey and Camden – the latter two containing both the PM and DPM’s seat.

Meanwhile, **if the Conservatives are showing signs of recovery they will attack Labour in previous strongholds.** They would be hoping to increase their vote share – and potentially regain councils – in Wandsworth, Westminster and Barnet.

But it’s not just Labour facing the pressure – **the Conservatives are under threat from Reform in the South East.** Reform will be hoping to put themselves on the map in London and a good night could take Bromley, Bexley and Havering– while also eyeing up Labour’s Barking and wanting to make inroads in places like Sutton.

## Reform, the Greens and Conservatives could target gains across London

*Boroughs are labelled with the party currently in control*

● Reform targets ● Conservative targets ● Green targets



# Labour under siege from the Greens in London

**Given their recent surge in the polls, the Greens should make considerable progress** and a really good night for them could lead them to significant gains in inner London councils such as Hackney, Lewisham, Islington, Southwark, and Newham.

In focus groups with disaffected Labour voters in the capital, participants described a deep disappointment with the Labour Government. Voters lamented a lack of ambition and an inability to deal with major national issues.



*I voted Labour and I was quite enthusiastic to see the outcome (...) But yeah, it's been almost two years now. It's just been very disappointing, very disappointing. And Keir as our Prime Minister, again, has been equally as disappointing. I have no confidence in him. He needs to stand up for himself and stand up for the country really. And I think he doesn't have that in him.*

**Alison**



*I think [Starmer's] come at a time where it's very difficult ... You can only imagine what it's like to be a Prime Minister and to inherit the country at a time when it's demonstratively bad.*

**Michael**



*[The war in Gaza] is massive for me. It's been life-changing in a sense. I've read so much and I've read very deeply and I've sort of been unblinking. In some ways it's been very demoralising to realise how corrupt political systems are.*

**Naomi**

# Labour threat from the Greens: Hackney

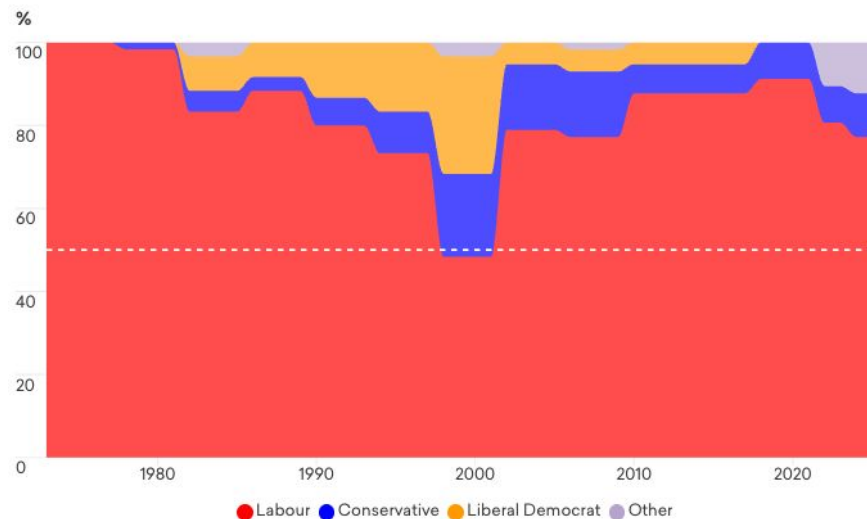
Hackney has long been a Labour stronghold in London, held by a Labour majority for all but one election cycle since its inception.

In 2022 the Greens gained two councillors in Hackney. Since then there has been a 15.5 point swing from Labour to the Greens in national voting intention.

**This election could see Labour receiving their lowest ever number of seats in Hackney:** from a previous low of 29 seats in 1998, they could now fall as low as single digits.

There is also a mayoral race in Hackney which the Greens will hope to win, along with Lewisham.

Hackney Council Composition



# A Reform breakthrough in the capital?

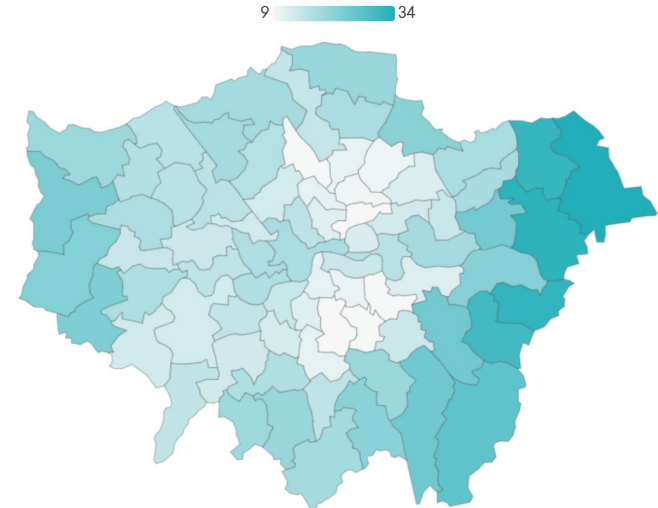
Reform are hoping to do well in parts of outer London like **Bromley, Bexley and Havering**. These outer borough are demographically comparable to Kent and Essex, where Reform has already won.

While Reform are unlikely to win outright in Barking and Dagenham, they could make gains in an area of former strength: **in 2022, Labour won all 51 seats in Barking and Dagenham; in 2026, their councillor count could drop significantly this year.**

**The Conservatives could also be hurt by Reform in London – potentially losing control of Bexley and Bromley.**

## Reform UK has strength in London's outer boroughs

More in Common's Westminster MRP – Reform UK vote share London

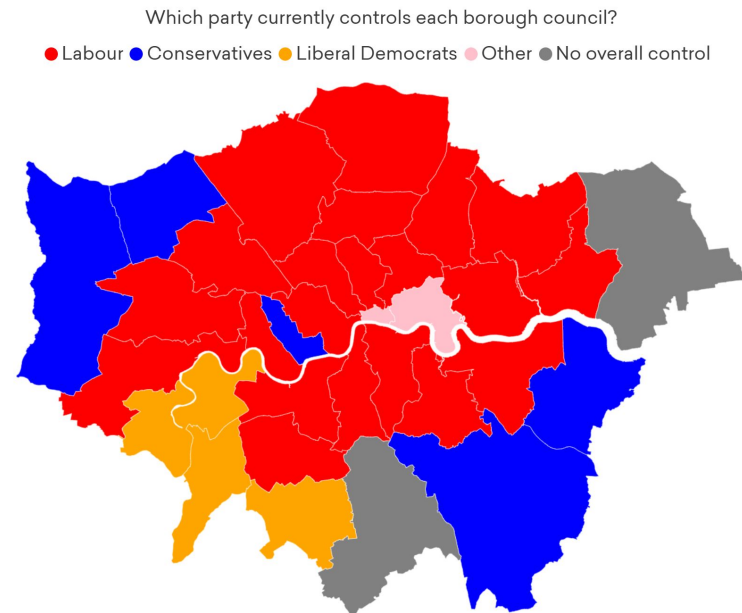


# Can the Liberal Democrats take more of South West London?

**2022 saw the Liberal Democrats almost eliminate the Tories in their affluent South West London strongholds –** the Tories were left with just three councillors across Kingston and Richmond. They will want to entrench this, and hold Sutton where more working class and Leave-leaning demographics may see Reform make gains.

**A good night should see Liberal Democrats replicating their 2024 General Election showing in Wimbledon and could see them emerge as the largest party in Merton.**

Elsewhere, the Liberal Democrats have a chance to show that, alongside the Greens, they are a threat to Labour again in the capital with gains in Southwark and Haringey where they have historical strength and, on a very good night, pockets in Brent, Ealing, Lambeth and Islington.

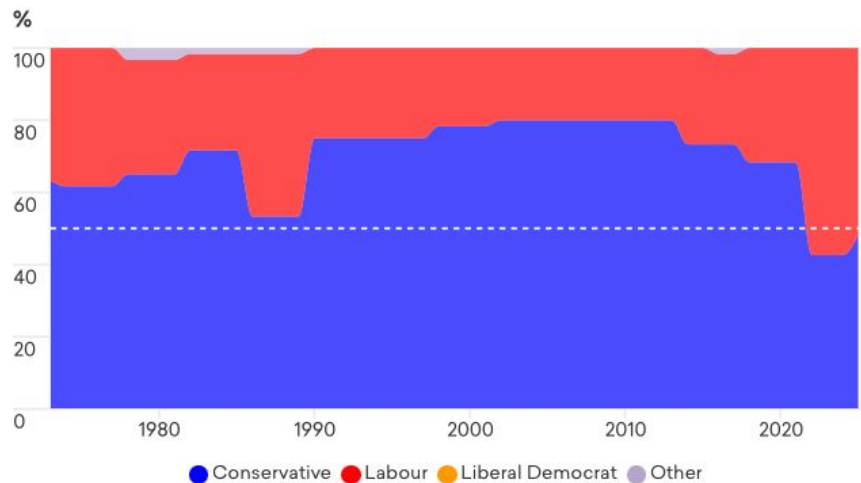


# Conservatives aim to build back in London

**Westminster and Wandsworth were long regarded as flagship councils** that remained in Conservative control even during the party's nadir in the 1990s. In 2022 the party lost both councils to Labour.

In a night that is unlikely to contain many good news stories for the **Conservatives, they will hope to regain these two councils and Barnet as a sign that the party is re-engaging some of its traditional base** and in particular is able to appeal to centre/centre-right voters who are not attracted to Reform UK.

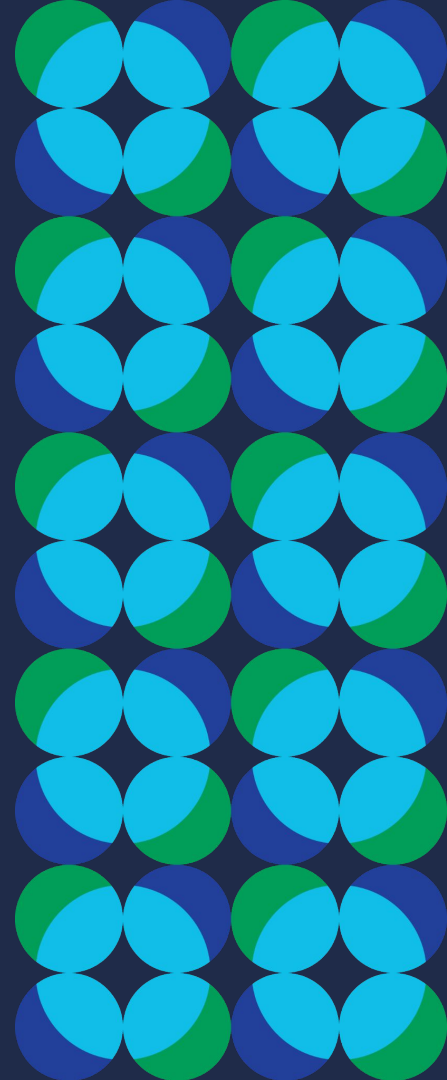
## Westminster Council Composition





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Wales



# The context: Labour and the Conservatives have a lot to lose

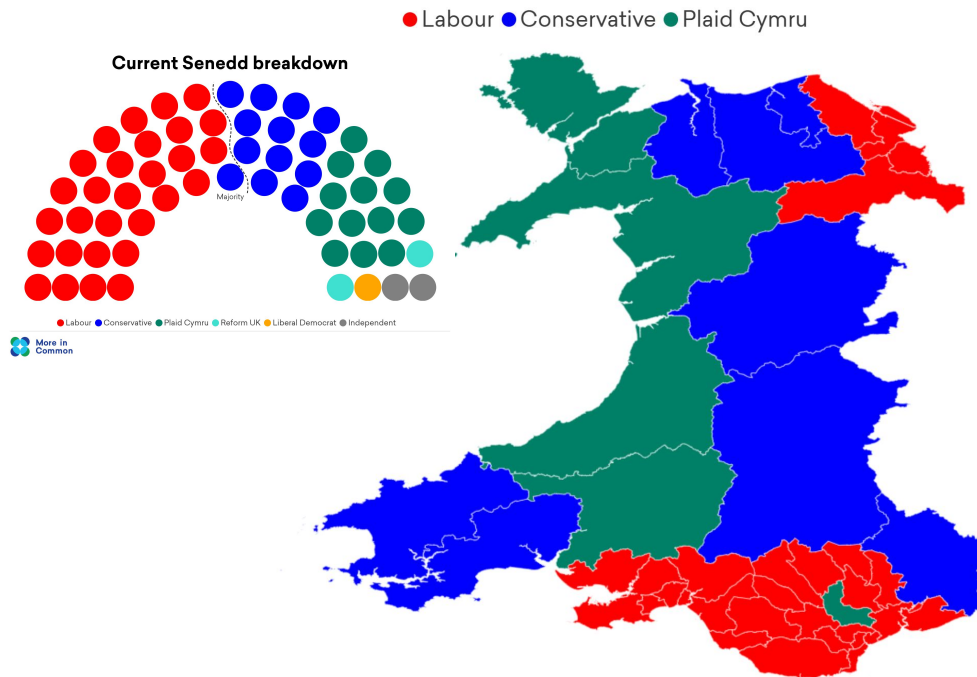
Currently, Labour hold 29 of the Senedd's 60 seats, while the Conservatives and Plaid Cymru hold 13 each. Reform UK has two seats, the Liberal Democrats one, and two are held by independents.

**The last Senedd Election, 2021, was a good year for Welsh Labour:** it won 30 of 60 seats in 2021 – equalling its best-ever result, and putting the party just a seat short of a majority. Mark Drakeford's popularity improved during the COVID pandemic, and Welsh Labour was viewed relatively positively at the time.

**2021 was also the Welsh Conservatives' best ever result in the Senedd:** they won 16 seats, five more than in 2016, and displaced Plaid Cymru as the second largest party.

While the new voting system limits direct comparisons, Labour and the Conservatives are both starting from a high base – while Reform and Plaid Cymru will be expecting to improve their standing in the Senedd significantly.

## Current Senedd Constituencies



## Wales in a word

The public mood in Wales is one of disillusionment.

Asked to describe the current state of Wales in a word, “poor”, “struggling” and “broken” rank highly – although “good” and “beautiful” also feature.

**More than half of Welsh people (53 per cent) say that things are getting worse in Wales** – albeit far lower than the 75 per cent of Britons who say the UK is getting worse.



*I think I feel sorry for the young kids starting off. I've got two of my own. The fact that, compared to when I started looking for jobs, it's like every job is now minimum wage.*

**Karen, administrator, Colwyn**

In a word, how would you describe Wales at the moment?



# A change election

## Labour is facing 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 halved as the party has lost support across the left, right and centre.

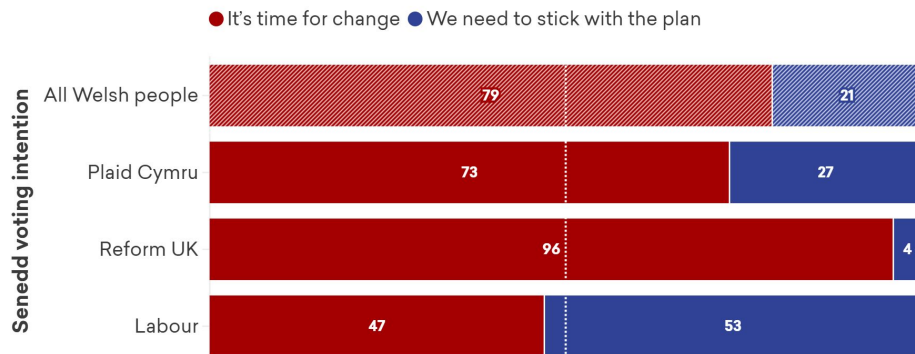


*It's been 26 years, I think. They've got big elections coming up, haven't they, in May? And I think it's time for change. But then again, what with?*

**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?



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

**Simon, retired, Colwyn**

# Is Devolution on the ballot?

**Reform UK has provided an electoral vehicle for voters disillusioned with devolution in Wales.**

A third of Welsh adults – and seven in ten Reform voters – support abolishing the Senedd. Meanwhile, 26 per cent of Welsh people, and more than three in five Reform voters, say devolution has been bad for Wales.

However, Welsh Labour voters are aligned with Plaid Cymru voters in their support for devolution.



*I think the Welsh Government layer itself should be removed. It's extra cost. Again, as I said earlier, they turned around and said that they haven't got money for this, money for that..*

**David, medical secretary, Pembroke Dock**



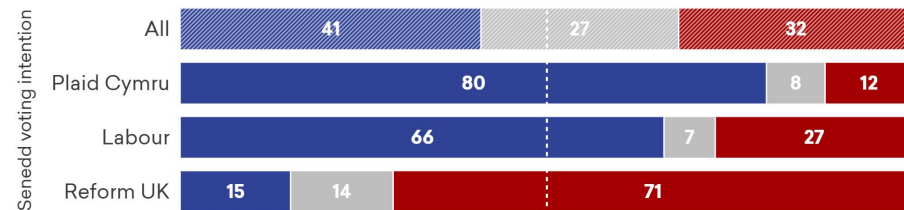
*They've got money for the 20 mile per hour thing, though.*

**Lynn, shop assistant, Pembroke Dock**

## A third of Welsh adults think the Senedd should be abolished

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

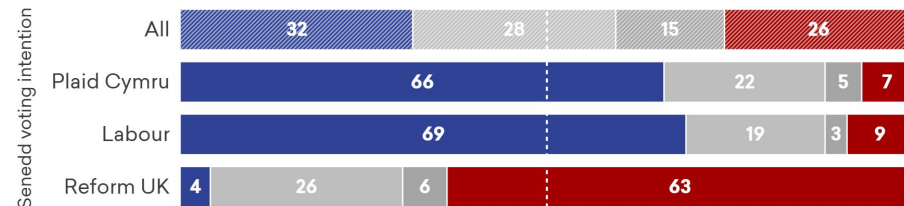
- The Welsh Parliament (Senedd) should NOT be abolished
- The Welsh Parliament (Senedd) should be abolished



## Most Reform voters think devolution has failed

Do you think the creation of the Senedd (Welsh Parliament) has been....

- A good thing for Wales
- Neither a good thing nor a bad thing for Wales
- Don't know
- A bad thing for Wales



# The respect crisis in Wales

**Respect is the public’s number one demand from politicians, and any government that hopes to win back public trust in an age of anti-politics will need to demonstrate real respect for “ordinary” Welsh people.**

This is a measure on which Rhun ap Iorwerth performs particularly well: 43 per cent of Welsh people say he respects the people of Wales – more than the proportion who say the same for any other leader.

This may also present an electoral liability for both Nigel Farage and Keir Starmer: majorities of Welsh people say that these leaders lack respect for the people of Wales.



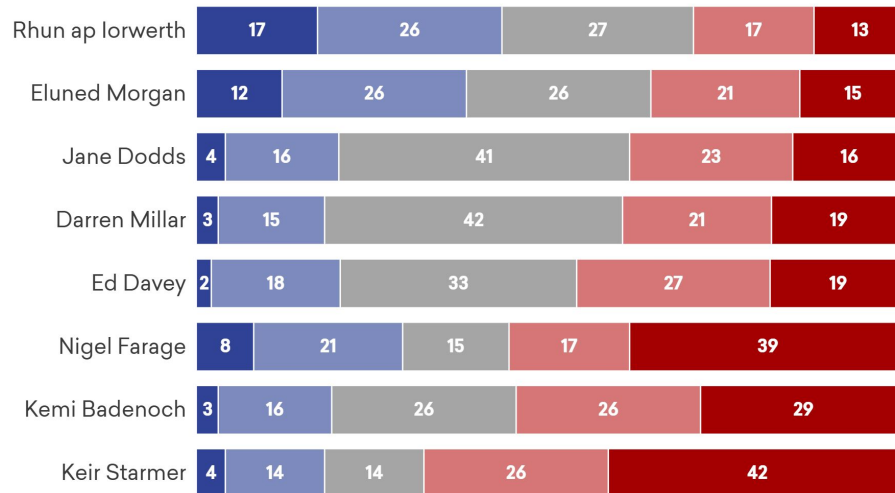
*There’s a kind of idea about Labour in Wales now that is this elite kind of political class that nobody’s really in touch with. And I feel Plaid are a more grassroots based kind of thing. (...) parties like Reform, we’ve had a big scandal recently about parachuting candidates and things like that.*

**Rod, call centre manager, Cardiff**

## Rhun ap Iorwerth is the leader most likely to be seen to respect the people of Wales

For each of the following, how much respect do you think they have for the people of Wales?

● A great deal ● A fair amount ● Don't know ● Not much ● None at all



# Is Reform “too English for Wales”?

The main barrier that Welsh voters say is stopping them from voting for Reform is **Farage’s support for Donald Trump**. 22 per cent of non-Reform voters say this while 15 per cent also object to Farage himself.

Beyond objecting to Reform’s leader, key issues were a **lack of trust on Reform’s support for the NHS and ability to manage the economy**.

**One in five stated that they would not vote Reform as they believe the party does not care about Wales**, suggesting that Reform’s ‘Englishness’ remains a barrier to Welsh support.



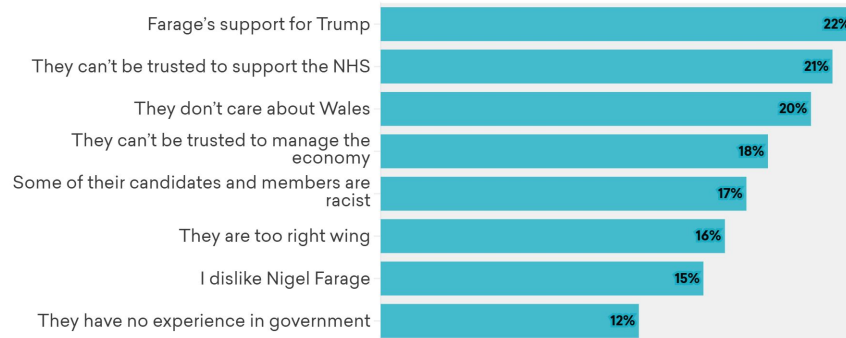
*Farage, he’s got no interest in the Welsh language or Welsh culture. He said on many occasions he wants to get rid of Welsh education in schools. He’d be an absolute disaster for this country. He has no pro-Welsh policies whatsoever.*

**Adrian, company director**

## A perception that Reform doesn't care about Wales is a key barrier among Welsh voters

In your view which of the following, if any, are the main reasons NOT to vote for Reform UK? Select up to three.

(Top 8 answers shown)



## Welsh voters share English concerns on migration – but see it as less of a priority

Wales is not distinct from England in attitudes toward migration, with three in five saying levels are too high.

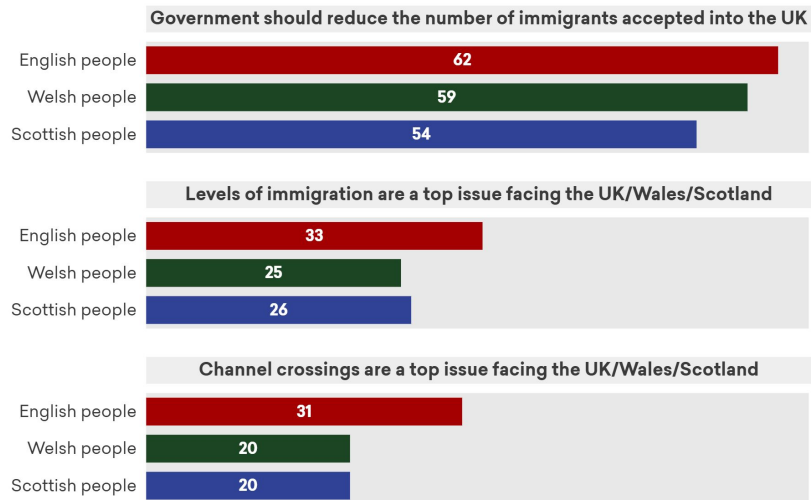
However, the issue is less salient in Wales.

Welsh voters are less likely than those in England to see immigration – or small boats – as top issues facing the country.

This gap also applies to Reform voters: **44 per cent of Welsh Reform voters say channel crossings are a top issue, compared to 64 per cent of English Reform voters.**

### Majorities in England, Scotland and Wales say levels of immigration are too high - but the issue is more salient in England

(% in each nation who believe the following statements)



# Plaid Cymru's changing voter base

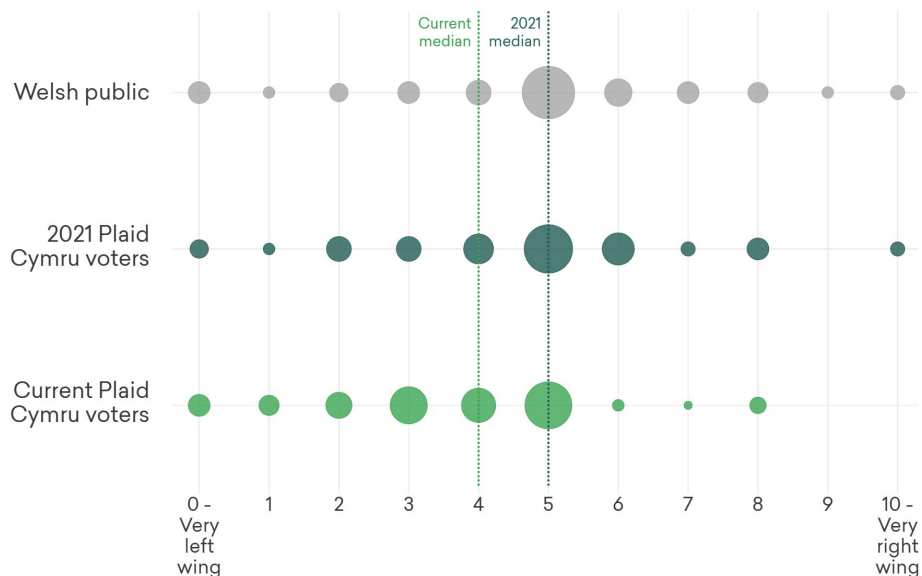
**Plaid Cymru has been fuelled by defections from Labour.** More than a third of Plaid's current supporters (36 per cent) voted Labour at the last General Election. Roughly a quarter voted Labour in the 2021 Senedd Election.

Much like the Greens in England and Scotland, Plaid has become a key destination for disillusioned progressives in Wales. This has implications for Plaid Cymru's voter coalition in the run-up to May.

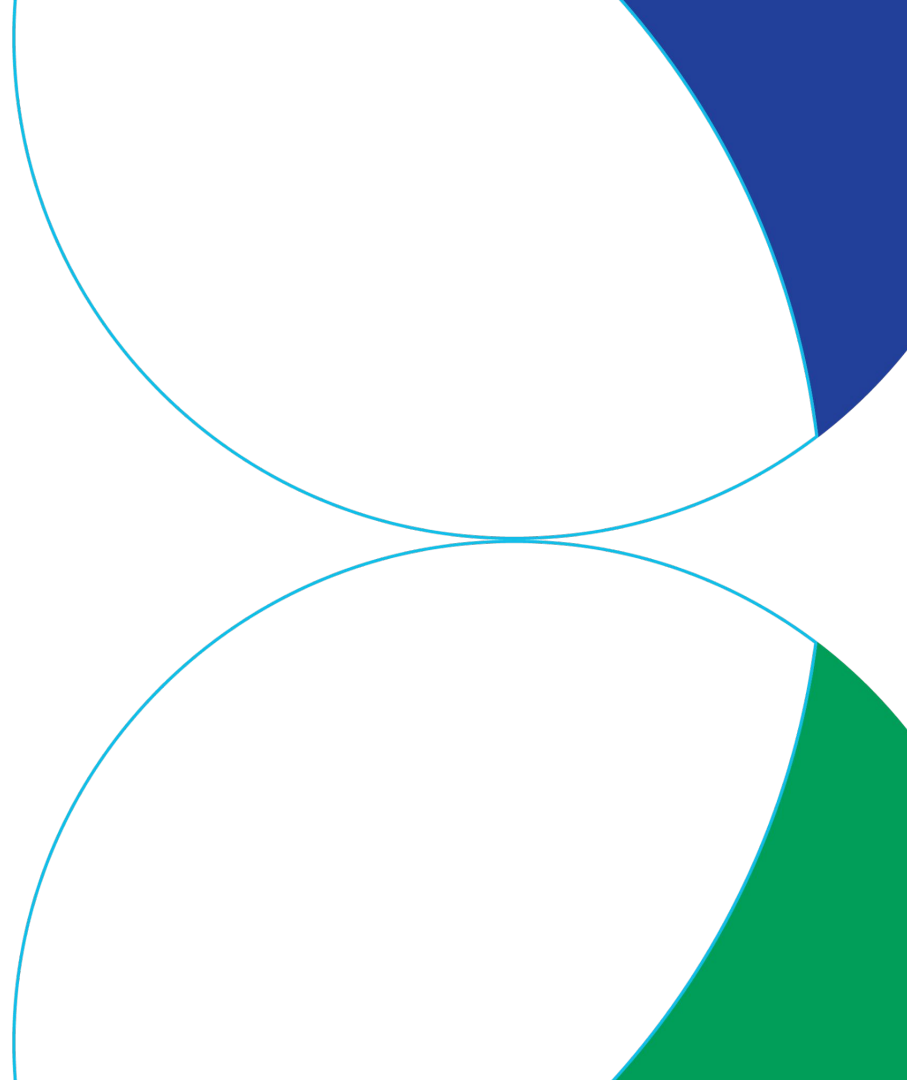
Asked to rate themselves on a 10-point scale, where 0 is "very left-wing" and 10 is "very right-wing", the median Plaid Voter now places themselves at 4, whereas in 2021 the median Plaid voter placed themselves at 5.

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

Sometimes politics is described as being on a left-right scale. Where do you put your own views on that scale, where 0 is very left wing, and 10 is very right wing?



# **More in Common's Senedd MRP**



# Welsh voting intention

More in Common’s MRP implied vote share finds Reform UK and Plaid Cymru joint–first on 25 per cent each, with Labour third on 21 per cent, the Conservatives fourth on 11 per cent.

**Labour’s 21 per cent is 18 points below their 2021 constituency share – by some distance the lowest the party has polled in Wales since devolution began.**

**The Conservatives, on 11 per cent, have roughly halved their support since their best–ever 2021 result. Plaid Cymru, by contrast, are up significantly from their 20 per cent in 2021.**

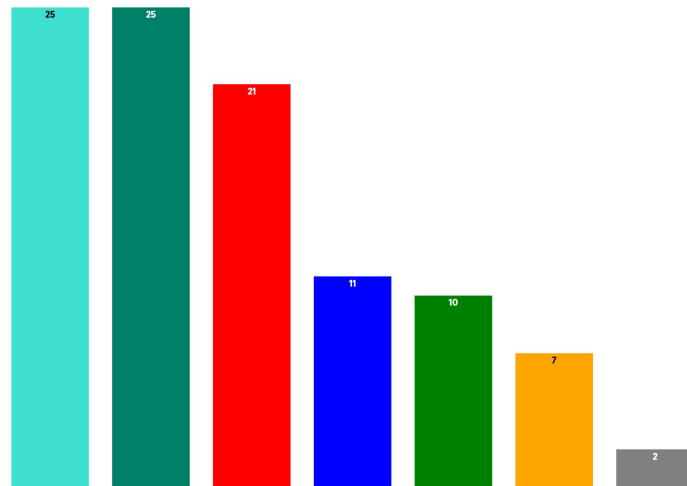
The Greens, on 10 per cent, and the Liberal Democrats, on 7 per cent, are both polling above their 2021 figures.

	Implied VI	Change since 2021 (List)
Reform UK	25%	23.94
Plaid Cymru	25%	4.3
Labour	21%	-15.2
Conservative	11%	-14.1
Green Party	10%	5.61
Liberal Democrats	7%	2.66

## Senedd Implied Voting Intention

How are you currently planning to vote in the Welsh Parliament (Senedd) elections due to be held on May 7?

● Reform UK 
 ● Plaid Cymru 
 ● Labour 
 ● Conservative 
 ● Green Party 
 ● Liberal Democrats 
 ● Other



# What will the new Senedd look like?

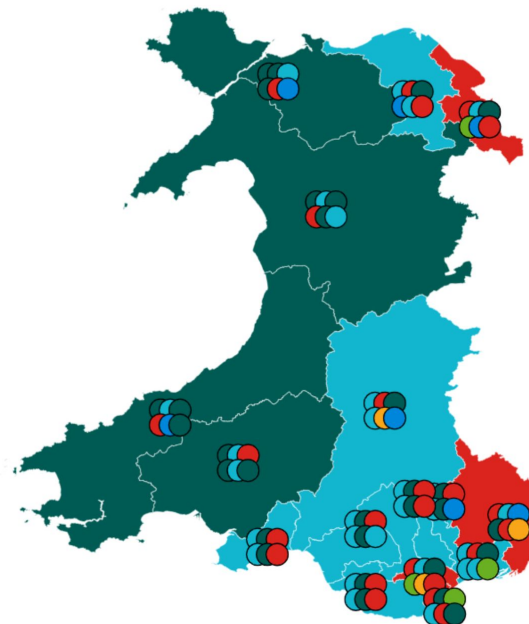
**More in Common's first Senedd MRP model suggests that the 2026 Senedd election will reshape Welsh politics.**

**Labour is set to be pushed into third** – behind Plaid and Reform – after 27 years in government.

Plaid Cymru is projected to become the largest party with 30 seats, Reform close behind on 28, and Labour reduced to 24, meaning Wales likely to have its first non-Labour First Minister since devolution.

Meanwhile the Greens are likely to see their first seats in the Senedd, with 4 MS's elected. The Conservatives could end up with just 7 seats, supplanted by Reform as the party of the Welsh right. The Liberal Democrats would have 3 seats on this estimate.

Reform UK Plaid Cymru Labour Conservative Liberal Democrat Green



# What could change?

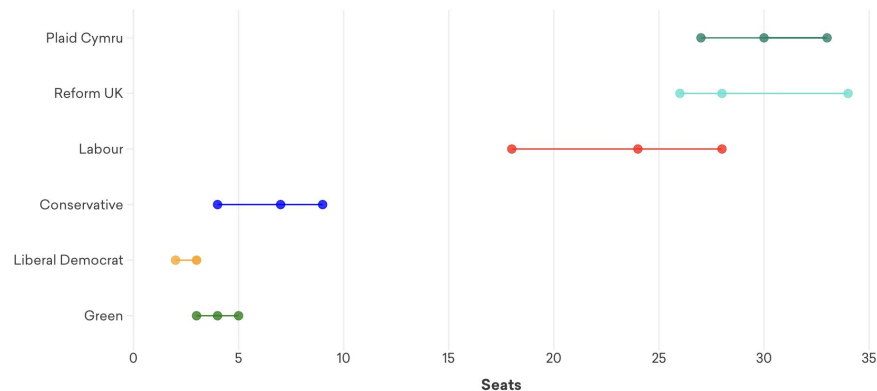
The Senedd election is a three-horse race, with Plaid Cymru, Labour and Reform UK projected to land within a handful of seats of each other.

The electoral system creates a set of highly marginal “last seat” contests. The 6th MS in each region is typically decided on very fine margins, meaning small shifts in vote share can change which party wins that final seat.

These dynamics mean that overall seat totals are unusually sensitive to small changes in voting intention. This makes Labour and Reform’s positions highly precarious.

## Labour and Reform seats are most open to slight changes in support

Labour and Reform win the “last seat” or come runner up in a large number of constituencies, meaning slight changes difference in support or turnout could have a big impact on the election.



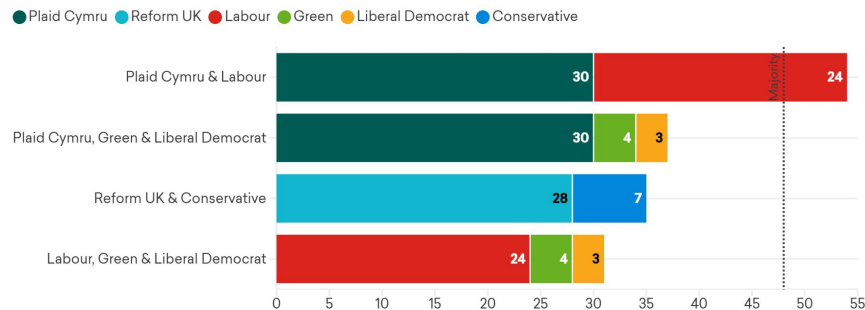
# Plaid Cymru on track to lead a coalition

With 30 seats, Plaid Cymru is set to narrowly become the largest party in the Senedd, but 19 short of the 49 needed to form a majority. Although Plaid leader Rhun Iwan Iorwerth has said he would rather lead as a minority government, this model suggests that **a Plaid-Labour coalition could be the only viable route to stable government.**

A coalition under this model would give the Government 54 seats, exceeding the 49 needed for a majority. Yet with Labour on 24 seats, this could look like an alliance of two parties with comparable voting power.

**This raises a strategic challenge for Plaid Cymru:** they are set to win the election fuelled by a desire for change, yet may end up beholden to a highly unpopular Welsh Labour Party. In focus groups, the prospect of a coalition arises as a question mark against voting Plaid for some.

## A Plaid and Labour coalition would be the only viable government



*I don't know much about Plaid. I did hear that they're supposed to be going in with Labour, aren't they?*

**Lynn, Pembroke Dock**

## Labour could lose votes in every direction, in every part of Wales

Since devolution, Labour has always been the largest party in the Senedd, and never fallen below 43 per cent of seats. Under this model, Labour would win just 25 per cent of seats.

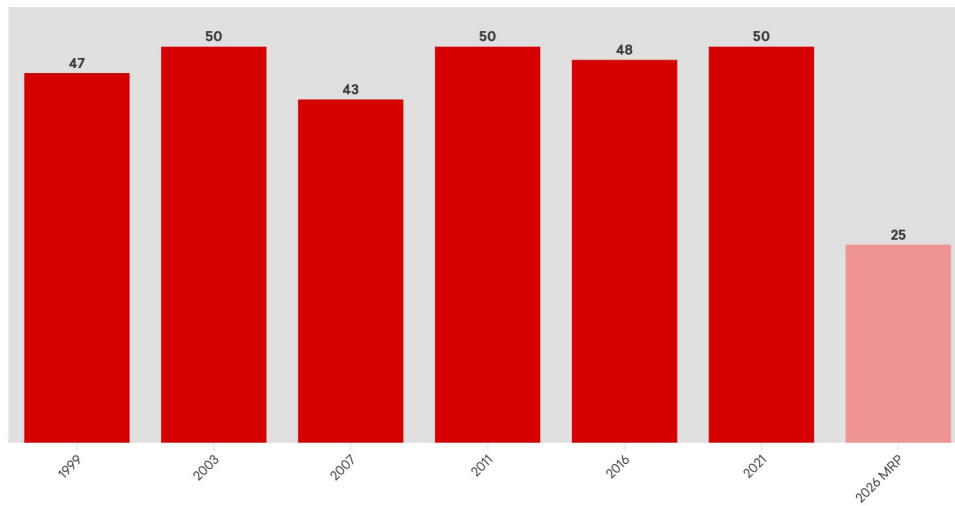
**Labour's collapse in Wales is not confined to one direction or one type of seat.** Labour is being squeezed from the right by Reform, and by Plaid Cymru and the Greens on the left. It is likely to lose its historic Welsh Valley strongholds, and see a fall in support in its urban base.

**Labour wins only 4 of the 16 constituencies, and does not top 25 per cent of the vote in a single constituency.**

The Welsh Valleys could instead be split three-ways between Labour, Plaid Cymru and Reform. Even in Cardiff, Labour is squeezed from both sides: in Caerdydd Penarth, Plaid Cymru is just two points behind, while in Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf, Labour and Reform are tied at 21.4%. The Greens are also set to make gains in Cardiff.

### In the 2026 Senedd Election, Labour could end up with just a quarter of Senedd seats

Proportion of Senedd seats won by Labour in every Senedd Election, and More in Common's 2026 Senedd MRP

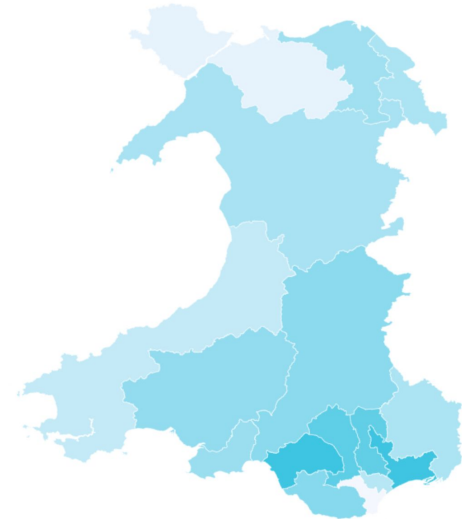


## Reform breaking through across Wales

Reform UK's 28 seats see the party almost tied for first place with Plaid Cymru's 30. Having barely contended the 2021 Senedd Election, Reform is now on track to form the official opposition in Wales.

Reform's strongest performances are in the south Wales valleys, but the party's reach extends across the whole country. Reform polls above 20 per cent in 13 of the 16 constituencies, reaching 23 per cent in even strongly Plaid-leaning areas like Sir Gaerfyrddin and Gwynedd Maldwyn

**Reform's support may be highest in the Valleys, but their vote would likely remain above 20 per cent in most constituencies**

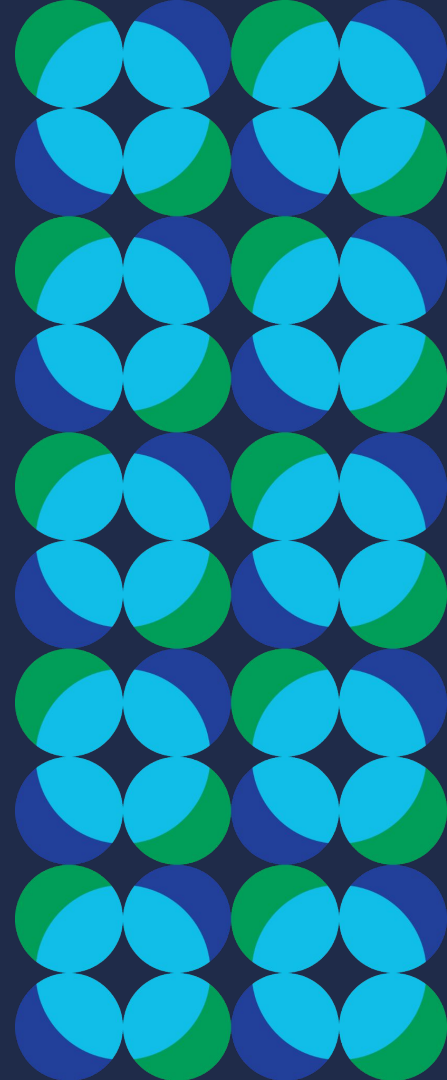




More in  
Common

# Scotland

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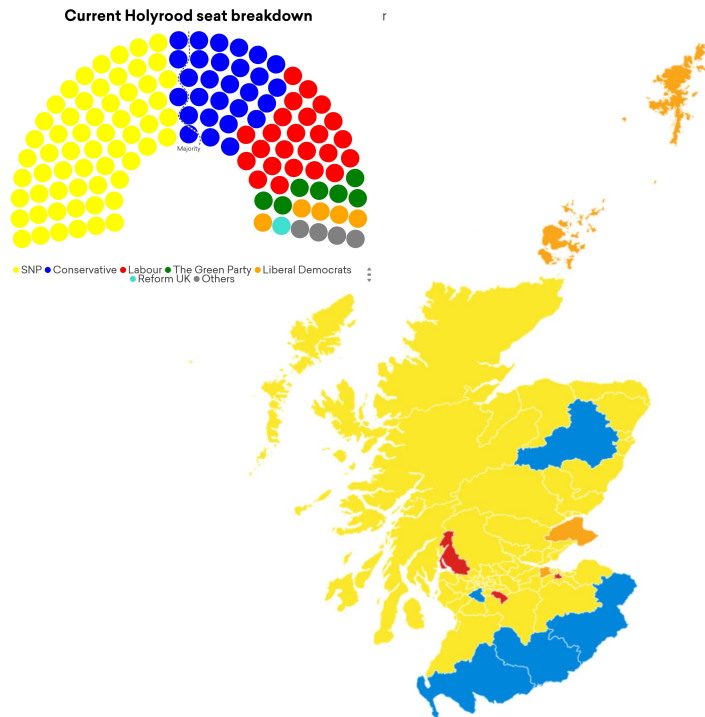
# The context: the SNP is defending a high base

Currently, the SNP hold 60 seats, the Conservatives 28, Labour 24, the Greens 7, the Liberal Democrats 5, Reform UK 1, and 4 members sit as independents.

**The last Holyrood election, in 2021, was the SNP's fourth consecutive victory, and one of their strongest.** They won 64 of 129 seats – just one short of an overall majority – and their highest-ever share of the constituency vote. The Conservatives held steady in second place on 31 seats, while **Labour had their worst-ever Holyrood result with just 22.**

The SNP and Conservatives are both entering 2026 from a high base. Reform UK – absent from Holyrood in 2021 – are set to break through north of the border for the first time.

## Current Scottish Parliament Constituencies



# State of the nation

**Nearly three in four Scots say that it's time for change. Widespread dissatisfaction with governments in both Holyrood and Westminster is driving Scottish voters away from the political mainstream.**

Just 27 per cent say that Scotland should "stick to the plan" as almost three quarters (73 per cent) think that it's time for change.

**Dissatisfaction is greatest amongst parties of the right.** Nine in ten Conservative (92 per cent) and Reform (89 per cent) supporters say that change is needed, and three in four Labour voters want a refresh.

**SNP supporters are the only voter group who want to stick to the plan:** 57 per cent hold this view, while 43 per cent of the party's support base say change is needed.

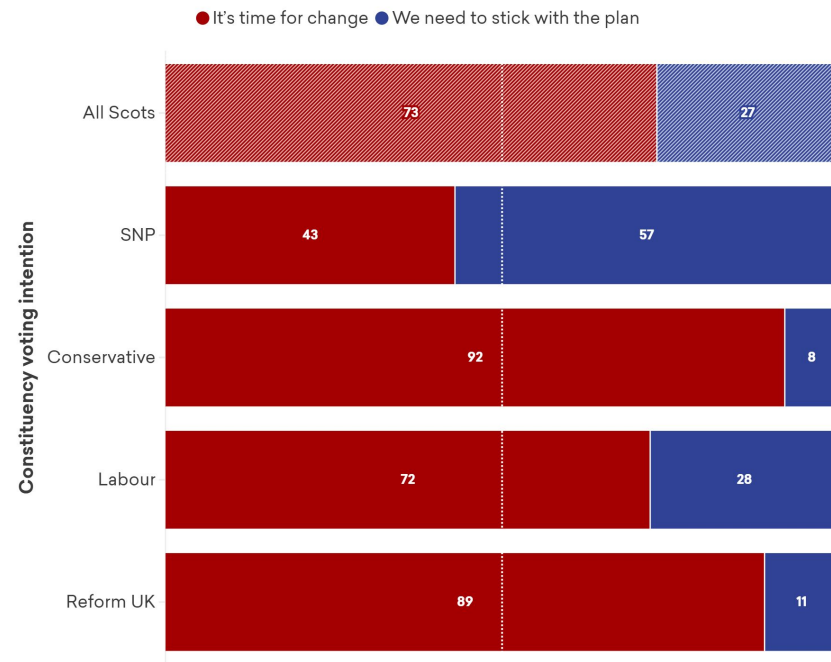


*Nah, I just don't trust any of them. I've never been more disinterested in, I don't think there's one good option really. I think they're all just liar. Can't trust them.*

**Luke, car salesman, Greenock**

## Seven in ten Scots think it's time for change

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



# Scots remain split on independence – but few consider it a priority

Attitudes toward independence have not shifted dramatically since 2014 – there remains around half of Scottish voters who would support independence. More in Common’s latest polling suggests an almost 50:50 split on the independence question.

Yet while there remains a significant constituency of Scottish voters who would back independence, there is limited appetite for a renewed indy debate: **fewer than 1 in 10 Scots** (9 per cent) **believe that Scottish independence is one of the top issues facing the country.** Even among those who support independence, only 20 per cent consider it a top issue.



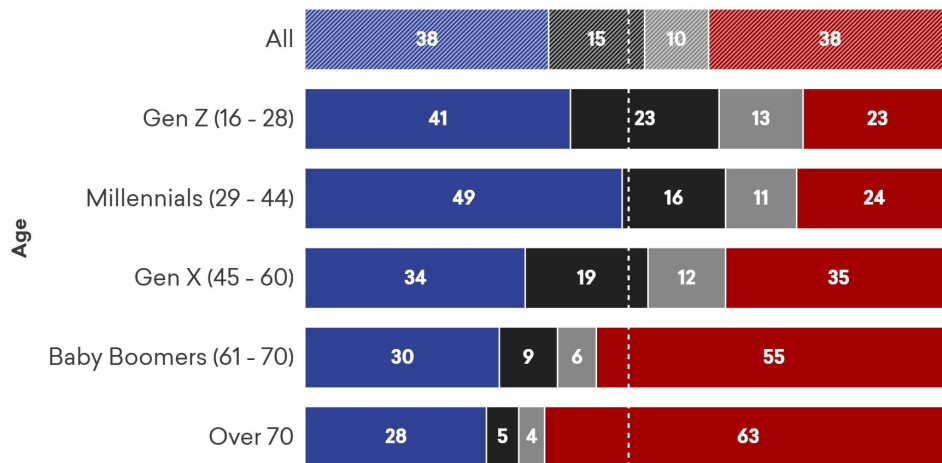
*Independence is always up there for the SNP. That's what they lead with. And then I think the last time I read something, the next one down was the NHS and that's the two most important things for me.*

**Emma, SNP voter, Dundee**

## Scots remain split on independence

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

● FOR Scottish independence ● I would not vote ● Don't know  
● AGAINST Scottish independence



# Reform UK represents change to Scots

Reform stands out as the only party seen to represent change, while others parties are perceived as being just 'more of the same' to Scottish voters. However, still less than half (44 per cent) agree, while a third (33 per cent) still say that Reform also means 'more of the same'.

Fewer than a third of Scots (28 per cent) see the SNP as a vehicle for change as over half (55 per cent) say the party just means continuity.

Perceptions of the dominant Westminster parties are worse with almost two thirds saying the Conservatives (64 per cent) and Labour (63 per cent) represent 'more of the same'.



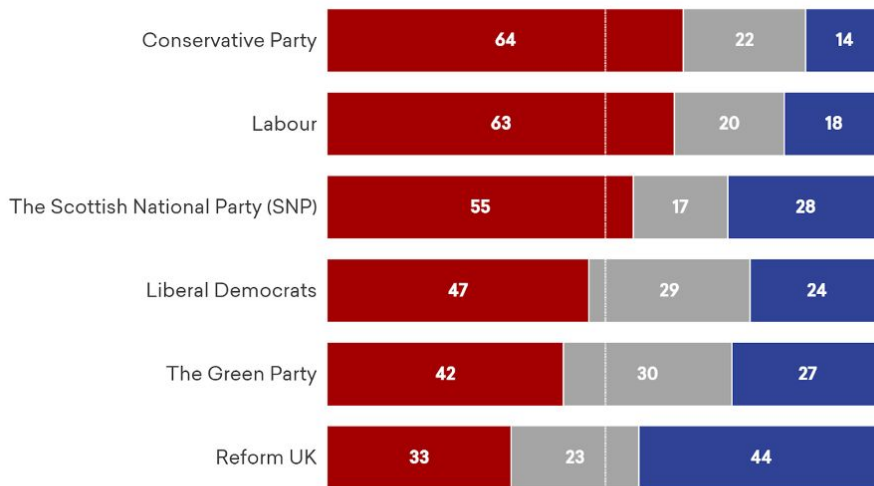
*This whole country needs shook up, upside down back front. I dunno whether Reform can do it. I mean I was looking back, we've always been either Conservative or Labour.*

**Stacey, supermarket assistant, Dumfries**

## Scots think the SNP and Labour represent 'more of the same' - and that only Reform represents change

Thinking about the following political parties, would you say they represent change, or represent more of the same?

● They represent more of the same ● Don't know ● They represent change



# What do Scots make of party leaders?

John Swinney is currently the only major Scottish party leader with positive net approval. His net approval has risen 17 points from -16 per cent in February to 1 per cent in March. A third of Scottish voters now say Swinney is doing a good job.

Anas Sarwar is the least popular leader currently with -12 per cent net approval.

Malcolm Offord has had limited cut-through.

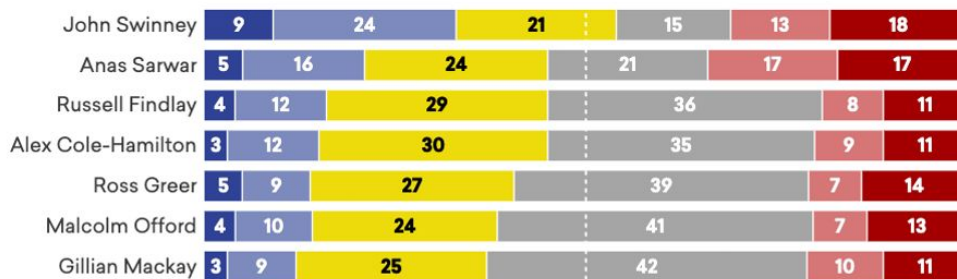
Nearly two thirds of Scottish voters hold no view on how a good a job he is doing.

Swinney and Sarwar have the greatest public awareness. Over half of the Scottish public have a take on whether each leader is doing a good or bad job.

## Swinney is the only major Scottish party leader with positive net approval

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

● Very good job ● Somewhat good job ● Neither a good job nor a bad job  
● Don't know ● Somewhat bad job ● Very bad job



*He [Swinney] is a very nice man but he's useless.*

**Tom, Reform voter, Dundee**

# A fragmented electorate

After a decade and a half of SNP electoral dominance, Scottish politics is now highly fragmented. Facing an electorate with a strong desire for change, traditional mainstream parties have begun to give way while insurgent parties gain.

This fragmentation is occurring on both sides of the independence cleavage. As support for the SNP drops, the Greens are likely to increase their vote share. On the unionist side, Reform, who previously have not been a competitive force in Scottish politics, are likely to capture a sizeable share of the electorate.

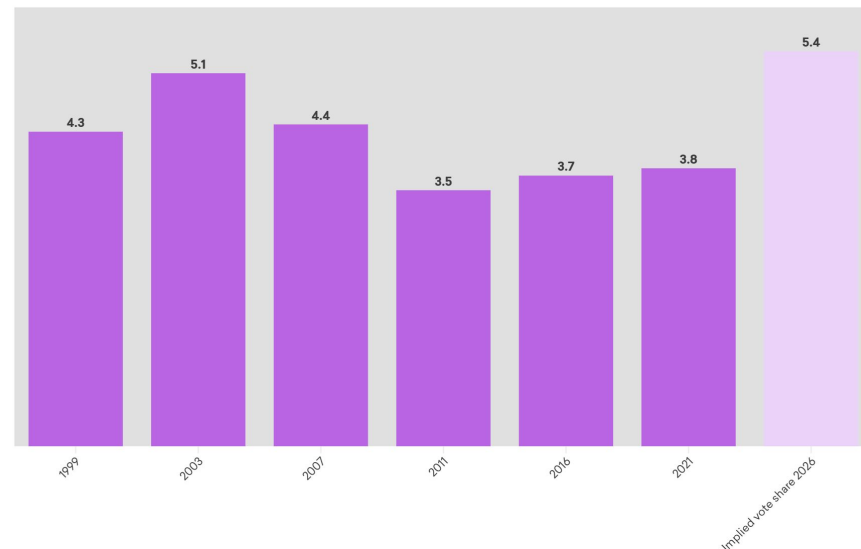
Votes may also transfer across the traditional independence divide as voters' desire for change grows and they increasingly view insurgent parties such as Reform, who place less of a premium on the issue of independence, as a vehicle for change.

This shift is reflected in the expected ENEP of the 2026 Holyrood election being the highest ever and a significant increase upon the previous three elections.

A high ENEP of 5.4 represents a remarkable destabilisation and fragmentation of Scotland's party system. On this estimate, 2026 will be even more fragmented than the 2003 election and could see a return to the "rainbow parliament".

## 2026 could be the most fragmented Holyrood election in history

Effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) estimates in the regional list vote of Holyrood elections



# Fragmentation is both helping and hindering the SNP

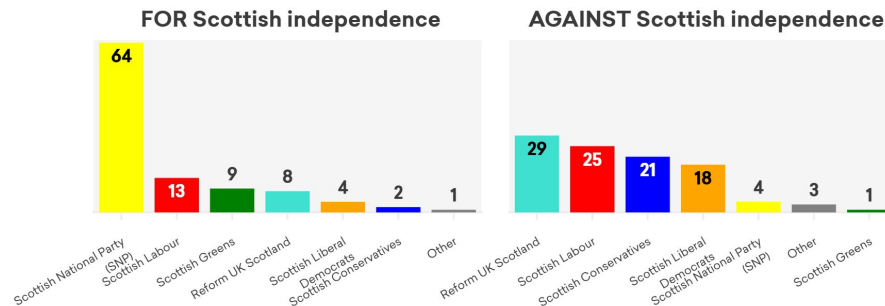
With Reform UK breaking through in Scotland for the first time, the unionist vote appears more fragmented than ever, with four parties commanding similar levels of support competing among anti-independence Scots. In previous elections, this would have been the perfect environment to springboard the SNP to a historic victory.

Yet the SNP's gains will be hampered by fragmentation on the nationalist side as well.

According to the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA), the years after devolution saw a strengthening relationship between support for independence and support for the SNP – culminating in 84 per cent of pro-independence Scots voting SNP in 2021. This election could see that trend reversed, as the SNP's monopolistic grip on the nationalist vote loosens, **possibly earning the SNP the lowest share among pro-independence Scots since 2003.**

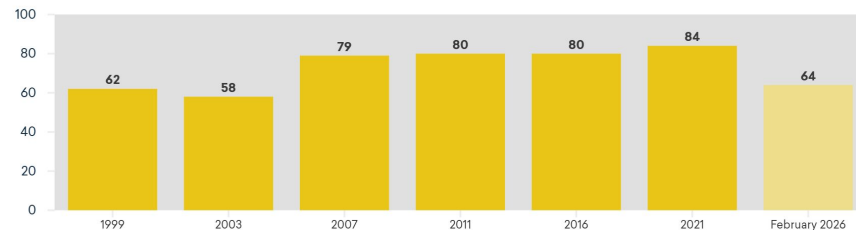
## Scottish Constituency Voting Intention by stance on independence

Fieldwork: 21st August - 1st September 2025



## This election could be the SNP's lowest vote share among pro-independence voters since 2003

SNP vote share among Scottish voters who support independence



# Labour's long-term decline in Scotland

**Labour's share of both the constituency and regional list votes has decreased at every single Holyrood election. Despite success in Scotland at the 2024 General Election, they are set to return to this downward trend in 2026.**

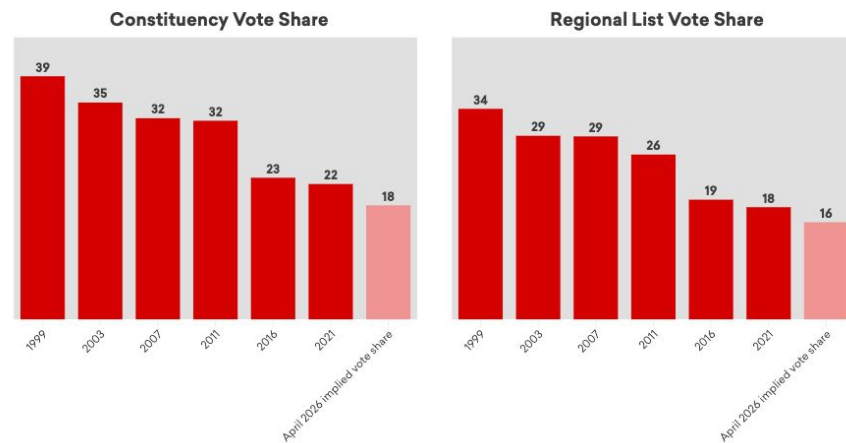
At the turn of the millennium, Labour rode the high of delivering devolution, winning both the 1999 and 2003 Holyrood elections. By 2016, its dominance had been firmly ceded to the SNP, as they finished third on less than a fifth of the regional list vote. 2021 saw a further marginal decline.

However, in the 2024 General Election, Labour went from a single Scottish seat to 37 and won over a third of the Scottish vote (35 per cent), increasing their share by 17 points.

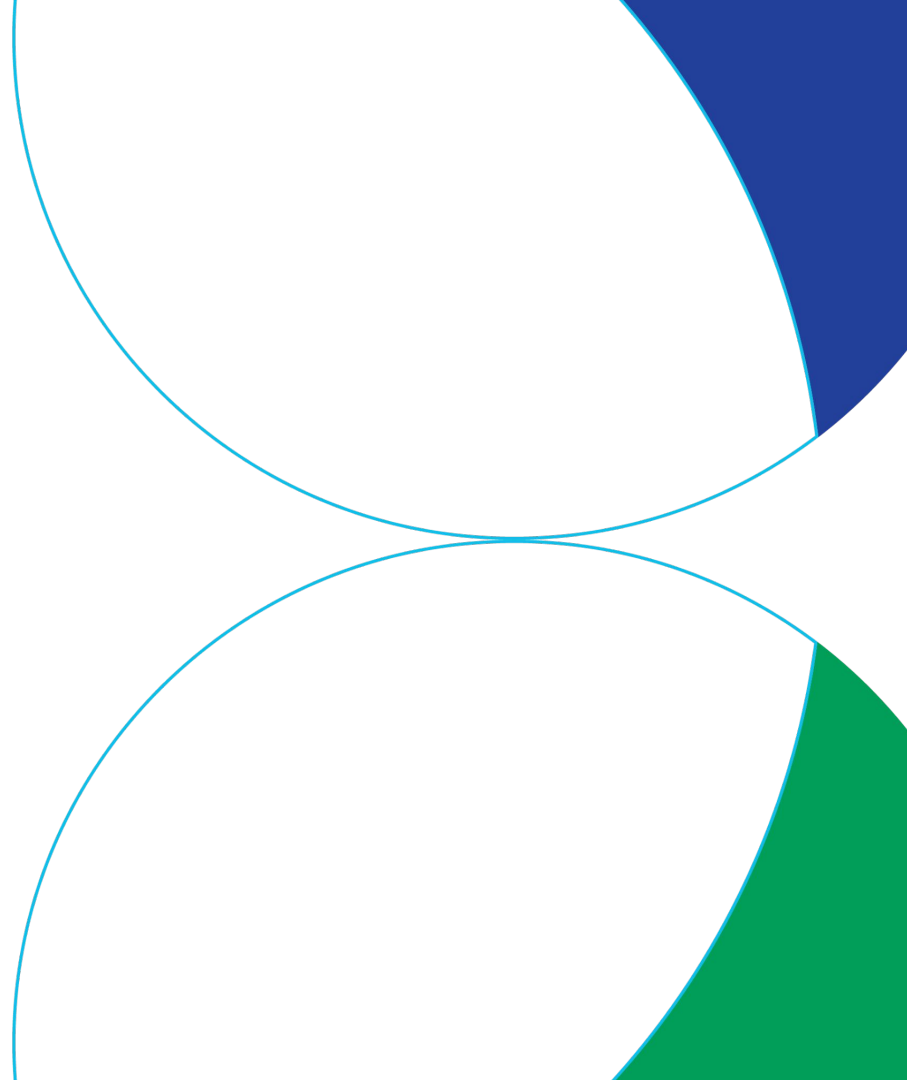
In spite of this 2024 high, current implied vote shares have Labour returning to their long-term trend of decline in this year's Holyrood election.

## Labour's declining Scottish fortunes

Scottish Labour's vote share in all Holyrood elections, and More in Common's latest Scottish voting intention for 2026



**More in  
Common's  
Holyrood MRP**



# Scottish voting intention

The implied voting intention from More in Common’s Holyrood MRP estimates the SNP on 33 per cent in the constituency vote and 29 per cent on the regional list – **the SNP’s joint-lowest constituency share since 2007 and lowest regional share since 2003, before they had ever been in government.** The **Conservatives support** since 2021, and **Labour are below their already historically poor 2021 figures.**

**Reform UK, absent from Holyrood in 2021, are polling in second place on both votes.**

The Liberal Democrats and the Green Party have both gained support since 2021.

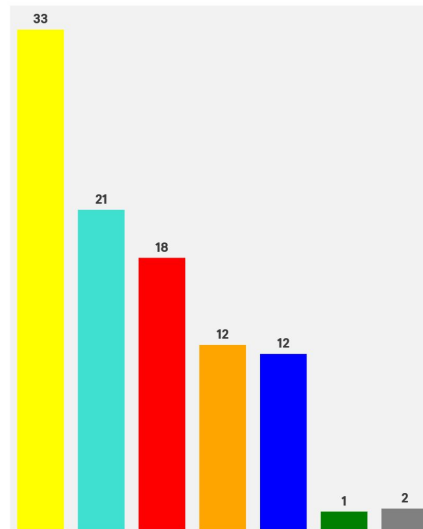
This is likely to be an anti-incumbency election: with 29 per cent in the regional list, **the SNP would emerge as clearly the largest party with the lowest ever regional vote share of a winning party in Holyrood’s history** (and a joint lowest constituency vote share).

## Holyrood voting intention

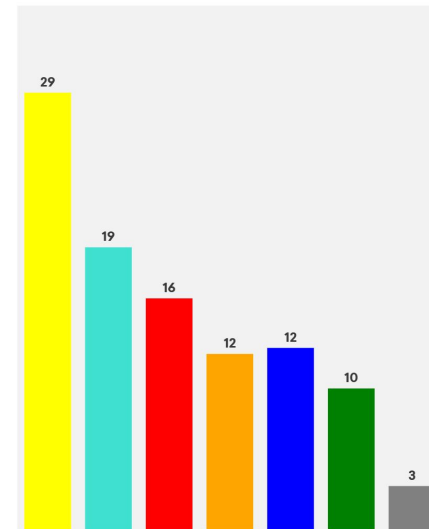
In the Holyrood elections on May 7, how will you vote in your [constituency/list] vote ?

- Scottish National Party (SNP)
- Reform UK
- Labour
- Liberal Democrat
- Conservative
- Other/Independent
- The Green Party

### Constituency



### Regional list



# Where will the balance of power be in Scotland?

**More in Common's first Holyrood MRP model suggests that the SNP is on track to lose seats but remain the largest party** – and will end up on 56 seats, down from 64 in 2021.

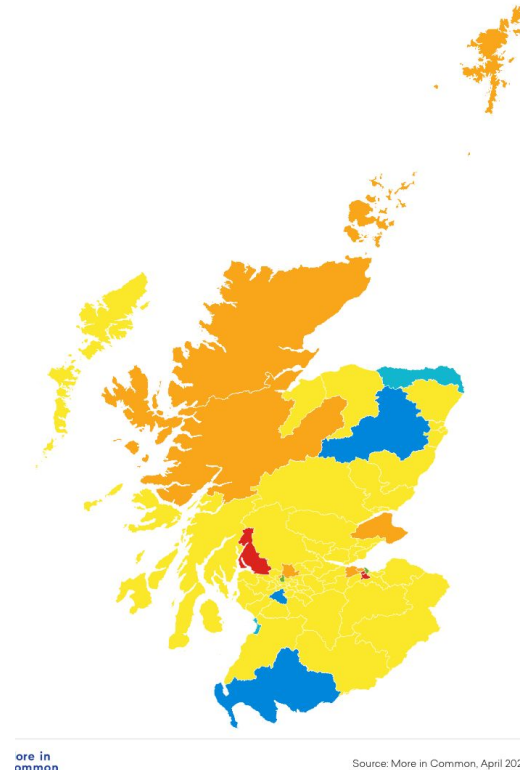
This means they will likely **be reliant on the Greens** to govern, who pick up eight seats, including their first constituency seats in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Together they could be one seat short of a majority.

**Reform are breaking through and look to become the second largest party in Holyrood** winning their first two constituency seats, and picking up a seat in every regional constituency, leaving them on 22 seats overall.

Meanwhile, the **Liberal Democrats are regaining seats** in their historic heartlands across the the Highlands, trebling their vote share since 2021. **Labour and the Conservatives face big losses.**

	Const. seats	List seats	Total seats	Change in total since 2021
<b>SNP</b>	55	1	56	-8
<b>Reform UK</b>	2	20	22	+22
<b>Labour</b>	3	14	17	-5
<b>Conservatives</b>	3	9	12	-19
<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	8	6	14	10
<b>Greens</b>	2	6	8	0

Conservative Reform UK Liberal Democrat Labour Green Party



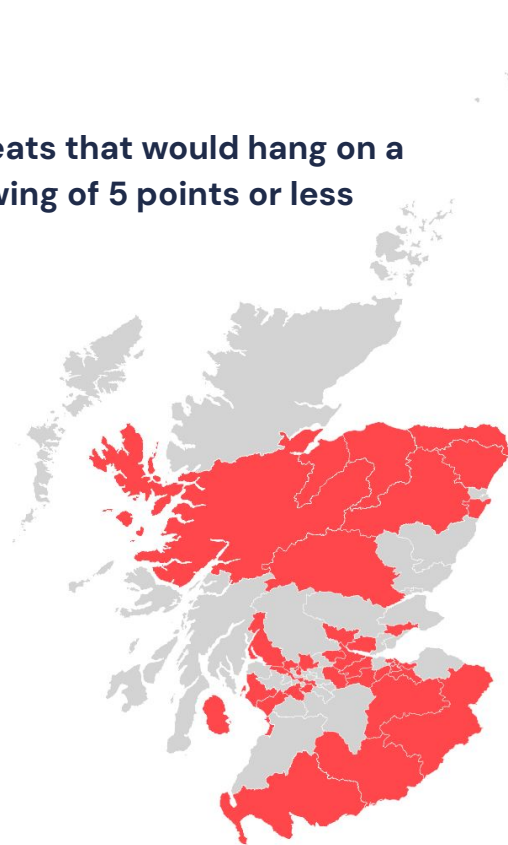
## Many seats will be highly marginal

In our model, there are **39 constituency seats which are being determined by margin of under five points** – these include three and four-way marginal seats. This means small vote share differences could lead to large changes.

**Across Southern Scotland, the right-wing vote is being split, leaving seats highly contested.** The tightest race is in Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, where the SNP and Conservatives are in a statistical deadheat, separated by less than a tenth of a percentage point.

Elsewhere, **Labour's longest held constituency seat is near impossible to call.** Labour, Reform and the SNP are all within less than one percentage point of each other. Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith presents a different kind of three-way squeeze, with Greens, Labour and the SNP separated by only two points.

**Seats that would hang on a swing of 5 points or less**



# What if the SNP win their marginal seats?

**Marginal gains for the SNP could mean a majority. The SNP marginally lose a large number of constituencies, flipping these would bring them to a majority at 65 seats.**

**The only party resilient to an SNP rout would be the Liberal Democrats.**

The SNP are within a margin of winning in just one of the Lib Dems' eight seats. Scotland's far North is safest, the two constituencies of the Shetland and Orkney Islands have always voted Lib Dem. Any progress made by the SNP in recent elections have been reversed with the Lib Dems now leading by over 30 points and Reform picking up a large number of votes in both constituencies.

Edinburgh Southern maintains its tradition as a safe seat for Labour in Scotland as they hold a ten-point lead over the SNP in second. Otherwise, they lose Dumbarton and Edinburgh Central.

While Reform and the Greens could win their first ever constituencies in Holyrood, these gains are marginal. Neither party, nor the Conservatives hold a lead of more than four points over the SNP in any seat.

● SNP ● Liberal Democrat ● Labour

**Constituency results if the SNP won all seats within 5 points or less**



# What if the SNP lose their marginal seats?

**If the SNP were to underperform on this MRP they could lose in 14 marginal constituencies. Reform would be the biggest winners in the case of a struggling SNP, gaining nine while Labour gain three and Conservatives two.**

**The SNP's greatest area of vulnerability is to Reform in the Central Belt.**

Reform threaten to snap up several historically post-industrial seats such as Airdrie and Bathgate. They are also close behind the SNP in rural coastal seats in the North-East such as Aberdeenshire East.

**Labour are close behind the SNP in 3 seats in more urban areas that had been Scottish Labour strongholds prior to their electoral decline.**

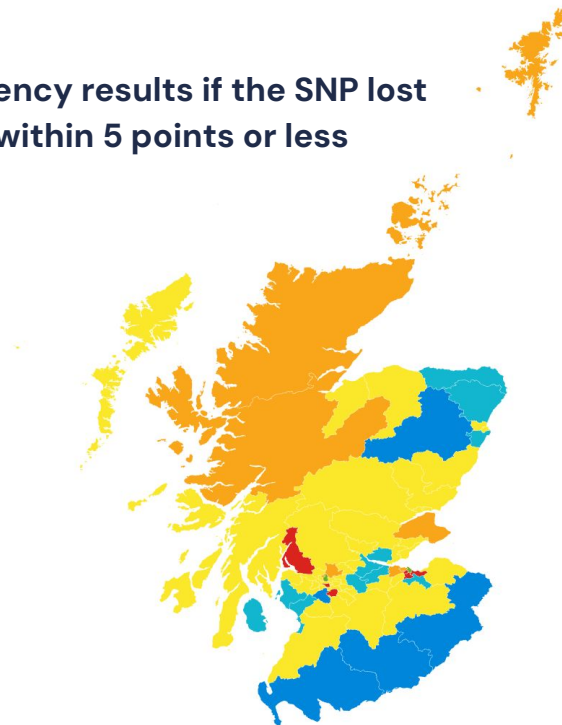
In Glasgow Southside, comfortably held by Nicola Sturgeon since 2011, the SNP's vote share from 2021 could almost half from 60 per cent to 36. This is explained not by a Labour uptick but by the inroads made by Reform and the Greens.

**Conservative gains could be made in two rural border seats:**

Dumfriesshire, and Ettrix, Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

● SNP ● Reform UK ● Conservative ● Liberal Democrat ● Labour ● Green Party

**Constituency results if the SNP lost all seats within 5 points or less**



# What if Reform win in their marginal seats?

**Reform are set to be highly competitive in a range of constituencies, from post-industrial to commuter towns and rural coastal areas. Should their vote share marginally increase in key areas, they could increase their constituency total from two to 14.**

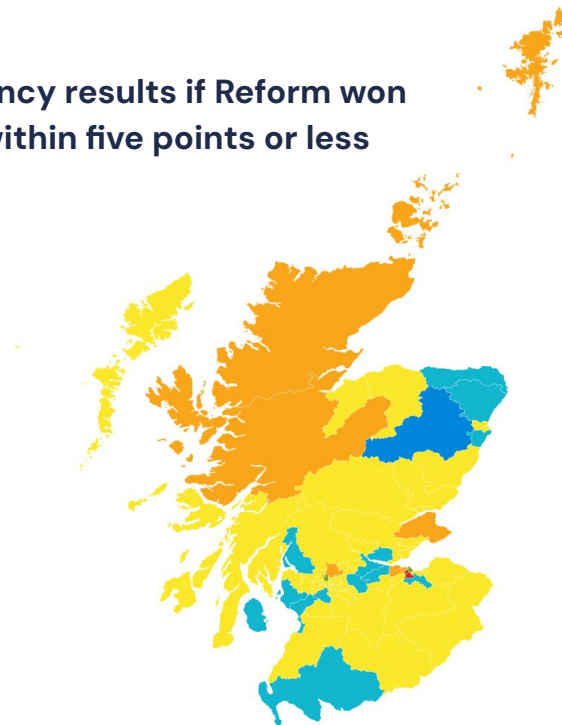
**The biggest losers to a strong Reform performance would be the SNP,** losing nine seats across the post-industrial Central Belt, and rural coastal areas.

**Labour are also at risk in post-industrial Scotland.** Dumbarton, which has been held by Scottish Labour deputy leader, Jackie Baillie, since 1999, will be one of the closest fought seats in 2026. While Labour win marginally, Reform and the SNP are both less than a point behind.

**The Conservatives could lose two of their three constituencies to Reform.** In rural Galloway and West Dumfries, Reform is in a very close third place just two points short. In the affluent commuter constituency of Eastwood, Reform is fractionally behind the Conservatives with both parties on 26 per cent. The SNP is again in the mix, three points short in third.

● SNP ● Reform UK ● Conservative ● Liberal Democrat ● Labour ● Green Party

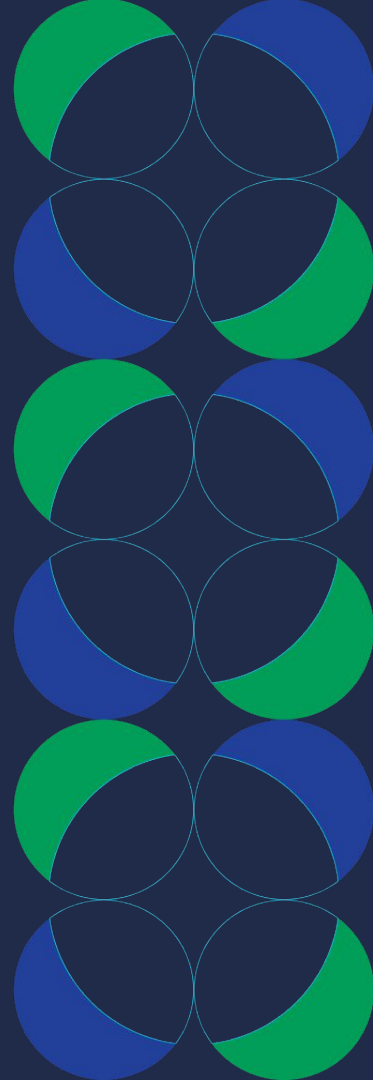
**Constituency results if Reform won all seats within five points or less**





**More in  
Common**

**Thank you**



# Reform's threat to the Conservatives: Essex

**The Conservatives have had a majority on Essex County Council for 25 years, but they could be set to lose it if this year's results follow a similar pattern to last year.**

Reform already have a foothold in the area – with Nigel Farage and former Reform MP James McMurdock winning Westminster elections here. Under our April MRP projection, in a general election tomorrow, Reform would win 16 constituencies in Epping – with just Epping Forest remaining Conservative, and the Lib Dems holding Chelmsford.

Elections were postponed last year due to local government reorganisation – meaning Reform has had additional time to gain momentum.

### Essex Council Composition

