

# Everything you ever wanted to know about the United Kingdom general election campaign and results, 2010

## United Kingdom general election, 2010

All 650 seats to the House of Commons.

First party

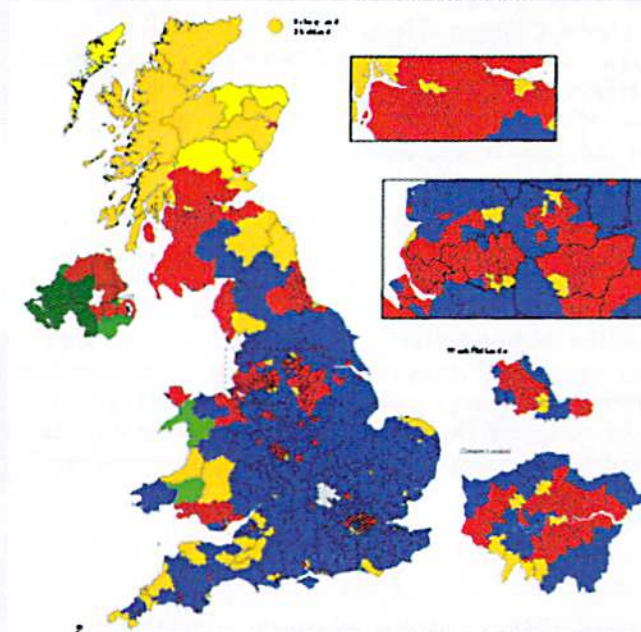
Second party

Third party



Leader	David Cameron	Gordon Brown	Nick Clegg
Party	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Leader since	6 December 2005	24 June 2007	18 December 2007
Leader's seat	Witney	Kirkcaldy & Cowdenbeath	Sheffield Hallam
Last election	198 seats, 32.4%	355 seats, 35.2%	62 seats, 22.0%
Seats before	209	349	63

Seats won	306 <sup>^</sup>	258	57
Seat change	▲97	▼90	▼6
Popular vote	10,692,131	8,595,341	6,822,741
Percentage	36.1%	29.0%	23.0%
Swing	▲3.7%	▼6.2%	▲1.0%



<sup>^</sup> Figure does not include the speaker

## Introduction

The United Kingdom general election of 2010 was held on Thursday 6 May 2010 to elect members to the House of Commons. The election took place in across the United Kingdom under the first-past-the-post system. None of the parties achieved the 326 seats needed for an overall majority. The Conservative Party, led by David Cameron, won the largest number of votes and seats but still fell twenty seats short. This resulted in a hung parliament where no party was able to command a majority in the House of Commons. This was only the second general election since World War II to return a hung parliament, the first being the February 1974 election. However unlike then, this time a hung parliament had been widely expected and therefore the country was better prepared for the constitutional process that would follow such a result. The coalition government that was subsequently formed was the first coalition in UK history to eventuate directly from an election outcome.

Coalition talks began immediately between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats and lasted for five days. There was an aborted attempt to put together a Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition (although other smaller parties would have been required to make up the ten seats they lacked for a majority). To facilitate this Gordon Brown announced on the evening of Monday 10 May that he would resign as Labour Party leader. On Tuesday 11 May, Brown announced his resignation as Prime Minister, marking the end of 13 years of Labour government. This was accepted by Queen Elizabeth II, who then invited David Cameron to form a government and become Prime Minister. Just after midnight on 12 May, the Liberal Democrats emerged from a meeting of their Parliamentary party and Federal Executive to announce that the coalition deal had been "approved overwhelmingly", sealing a stable coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats.

None of the three main party leaders had previously led a general election campaign, a situation which had not occurred since the 1979 election. During the campaign, the three main party leaders engaged in a series of televised debates, the first such debates in a British general election campaign. The Liberal Democrats achieved a breakthrough in opinion polls after the first debate in which their leader Nick Clegg was widely seen as the strongest performer. However, on polling day their share of the vote increased by only 1% over the previous general election, and they suffered a net loss of five seats. Still, this was the Liberal Democrats' largest popular vote since the party's creation, and they found themselves in a pivotal role in the formation of the

### The key dates were:

Monday 12 April	Dissolution of Parliament (the 54th) and campaigning officially began
Tuesday 20 April	Last day to file nomination papers, to register to vote, and to request a postal vote
Thursday 6 May	Polling day
Tuesday 11 May	David Cameron became Prime Minister through a coalition with the Liberal Democrats.

new government. The share of votes for parties other than Labour or the Conservatives was 35% and was the largest since the 1918 general election. In terms of votes it was the most "three-cornered" election since 1923, and in terms of seats since 1929. The Green Party of England and Wales won its first ever seat in the Commons, and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland gained its first representation since 1974. The result in one constituency, Oldham East and Saddleworth, was declared void on petition due to illegal practices during the campaign.

## Background

The Prime Minister Gordon Brown went to Buckingham Palace on 6 April and asked the Queen to dissolve Parliament on 12 April, confirming in a live press conference in Downing Street, as had long been speculated, that the election would be held on 6 May, five years since the previous election on 5 May 2005. The election took place on 6 May in 649 constituencies across the United Kingdom, under the first-past-the-post system, for seats in the House of Commons. Voting in the Thirsk and Malton constituency was postponed for three weeks because of the death of a candidate.

The governing Labour Party had campaigned to secure a fourth consecutive term in office and to restore support lost since 1997. The Conservative Party sought to gain a dominant position in UK politics after losses in the 1990s, and to replace Labour as the governing party. The LibDems hoped to make gains from both sides and hoped to hold the balance of power in a hung parliament. Since the televised debates between the three leaders, their poll ratings had risen to the point where many considered the possibility of a Liberal Democrat role in Government. Polls just before election day saw a slight swing from the Liberal Democrats back to Labour and Conservatives, with the majority of final polls falling within one point of Conservatives 36%, Labour 28%, Liberal Democrats 27%. However, record numbers of undecided voters raised uncertainty about the outcome. The Scottish National Party, encouraged by their victory in the 2007 Scottish parliament elections, set themselves a target of 20 MPs and were hoping to find themselves in a balance of power position. Equally, Plaid Cymru sought gains in Wales. Smaller parties who have had successes at local elections and the 2009 European elections (UK Independence Party, Green Party, British National Party) looked to extend their representation to seats in the House of Commons. The Democratic Unionist Party looked to maintain, if not extend, their number of seats, having been the fourth largest party in the House of Commons.

Tuesday 18 May	New Parliament (the 55th) assembled
Tuesday 25 May	State Opening of Parliament
Thursday 27 May	Voting took place in the delayed poll in the constituency of Thirsk and Malton

## **MPs declining re-election**

This election had an unusually high number of MPs choosing not to seek re-election with more standing down than did so at the 1945 election (which on account of the extraordinary wartime circumstances came ten years after the preceding election). This has been attributed to the expenses scandal and the fact that redundancy-style payments for departing MPs may be scrapped after the election.

In all, 149 MPs (100 Labour, 35 Conservatives, 7 Liberal Democrats, 2 Independents, 1 Independent Conservative and 1 member each from Plaid Cymru, the SNP, the DUP, and the SDLP) decided not to contest the election.

## **Boundary changes**

Each of the four national Boundary Commissions is required by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992) to conduct a general review of all the constituencies in its part of the United Kingdom every eight to twelve years to ensure the size and composition of constituencies are as fair as possible. Based on the Rallings and Thrasher studies using ward by ward data from local elections and the 2005 general election, the new boundaries used in 2010 would have returned nine fewer Labour MPs had they been in place at the previous election; given that there are to be four more seats in the next parliament this notionally reduces Labour's majority from 66 to 44.

Following Boundary Commission for England recommendations, the number of seats in England increased by four, and numerous changes were made to the existing constituency boundaries.

## **The contesting parties**

All three main parties went into the general election having changed leaders since that in 2005. David Cameron became Conservative leader in December 2005, replacing Michael Howard. Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister in June 2007. Nick Clegg was elected as leader of the Liberal Democrats in December 2007, succeeding Menzies Campbell who had replaced Charles Kennedy in January 2006. The last time all three main parties went into a general election with new leaders was in the 1979 election, when James Callaghan as Labour leader, Margaret Thatcher for the Conservatives, and David Steel with the then-Liberal Party took to the polls.

The prospect of a coalition or minority government was being considered well before polling day. Gordon Brown made comments about the possibility of a coalition in January 2010. In 2009, it was reported that senior civil servants were to meet with the Liberal Democrats to discuss their policies, an indication of how seriously the prospect of a hung parliament was being taken. Nick Clegg and Menzies Campbell had

continued the position of Charles Kennedy of not being prepared to form a coalition with either main party and of voting against any Queen's Speech unless there was an unambiguous commitment in it to introduce proportional representation.

## **Other parties**

Other parties with representation at Westminster after the previous general election include the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru from Wales, and Respect – The Unity Coalition and Health Concern, each of which held one parliamentary seat in England. Since that election, the SNP has won the 2007 Scottish Parliament elections and currently control the Scottish Government and also won the largest share of the 2009 European Parliament election vote in Scotland. In Wales, the Labour Party remained the largest party in the Welsh Assembly, although Plaid Cymru increased their share of the vote and formed a coalition government with Labour.

The sole Ulster Unionist Party MP subsequently resigned from the party, leaving them with no representation at Westminster. In 2009 the UUP and the Conservative Party announced they had formed an electoral alliance: the two parties will field joint candidates for future elections under the banner of "Ulster Conservatives and Unionists – New Force".

Many constituencies were contested by other, smaller parties. Parties that won no representatives at Westminster in 2005 but have seats in the devolved assemblies or European Parliament included the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, the Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, the British National Party, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and the Green parties in the UK: the Green Party of England and Wales, the Scottish Green Party, and the Green Party in Northern Ireland. In 2009, Nigel Farage announced his intention to resign as UKIP leader to focus on becoming an MP. Farage was replaced in an elected by party members by Lord Pearson of Rannoch, whose stated intention was for the electoral support of UKIP to force a hung parliament. The Green Party of England and Wales voted to have a position of leader for the first time; the first leadership election was won by Caroline Lucas, who successfully contested the constituency of Brighton Pavilion.

In addition, a new loose coalition, Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), contested a general election for the first time. TUSC was a grouping of left wing parties that participated in the 2009 European Parliament elections under the name of No2EU; members included the Socialist Workers Party, the Socialist Party, the Socialist Alliance, Socialist Resistance, and is supported by some members of UNISON, the National Union of Teachers, the University and College Union, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, and the Public and Commercial Services Union. Several members of these unions ran as candidates under the TUSC banner. However, some former members of NO2EU, such as the Liberal Party and the Communist Party of Britain, chose not to participate in the TUSC campaign. The coalition did not run candidates against left wing Labour or Respect candidates.

## The campaign

### April

The prospective Labour candidate for Moray, Stuart MacLennan, was sacked after making offensive comments on his Twitter page, referring to elderly voters as "coffin dodgers", voters in the North of Scotland as "teuchters", and insulting politicians such as Cameron, Clegg, John Bercow and Diane Abbott.

The UKIP candidate for Thirsk and Malton—John Boakes—died, causing the election in the constituency to be postponed until 27 May.

Philip Lardner, the Conservative candidate for North Ayrshire and Arran was suspended from the party for comments he made about homosexuality on his website, describing it as not "normal behaviour". Andrew Fulton, chair of the Scottish Conservative Party called the comments "deeply offensive and unacceptable", adding, "These views have no place in the modern Conservative party." However, he would still appear as a Conservative candidate because it was too late to remove his name from the ballot paper.

2,378 postal voters in Bristol West were wrongly sent ballot papers for Bristol East by mistake. Bristol City Council officials asked people to tear up the wrong papers and said "Every effort will be made to ensure delivery [of new ballot papers] by 30 April."

Gordon Brown, while in his car on 28 April, privately described a 65-year-old pensioner and Labour voter, Gillian Duffy, from Rochdale, Greater Manchester, as a "bigoted woman". She had asked him about vulnerable people not receiving benefits because non-vulnerable people are receiving them, adding, "You can't say anything about the immigrants because you're saying that you're... but all these eastern Europeans what are coming in, where are they flocking from?" He replied "A million people have come from Europe but a million British people have gone into Europe." Brown's conversation with his communications director Justin Forsyth (JF) went:

- "GB: That was a disaster....should never have put me with that woman. Whose idea was that?
- JF:I don't know, I didn't see her.
- GB: Sue's I think [Sue Nye - Brown's gatekeeper]. Just ridiculous...
- JF: What did she say?
- GB: Everything, she was just a sort of bigoted woman who said she used to be Labour. I mean, it's just ridiculous. Sue pushed her up towards me."

Brown's remarks were recorded by a Sky News microphone he was still wearing, and widely broadcast. Soon after the incident, Brown talked to Jeremy Vine live on BBC Radio 2 where he publicly apologised to Mrs Duffy. Subsequently Brown visited her house for 43 minutes in order to apologise in person. Upon emerging, he described himself as a "penitent sinner" while Duffy refused to speak to the press and would not

shake hands with him in front of the cameras. She said the incident had left her feeling more sad than angry and that she would not be voting for Labour or any other party.

The SNP failed in a court action to ban the broadcast in Scotland of the final party leaders debate. They had argued that "the corporation [the BBC] had breached its rules on impartiality by excluding the SNP." The judge, Lady Smith, ruled that "the SNP's case 'lacks the requisite precision and clarity'" and added she could not "conclude the BBC had breached impartiality rules." Additionally, broadcasting regulator Ofcom ruled that it had not "upheld complaints received from the SNP and Plaid Cymru about The First Election Debate broadcast on ITV1 on Thursday 15 April 2010."

The leader of the UK Independence Party, Lord Pearson, wrote an open letter to Somerset newspapers, asking voters to support Conservative candidates, rather than UKIP candidates in the Somerton and Frome, Taunton Deane and Wells constituencies. This action was criticised by UKIP candidates who refused to stand down.

Labour candidate for Bristol East and former MP Kerry McCarthy revealed information about postal votes cast in the constituency on Twitter. Avon and Somerset police said they were "looking into a possible alleged breach of electoral law." Bristol City Council stated that "This is a criminal matter and [it] will be for the police to decide what action to take."

The former Prime Minister Tony Blair returned to the campaign trail for Labour, visiting a polyclinic in Harrow West, after a troubled Labour campaign.

Postal voters in the marginal Vale of Glamorgan constituency had to be issued with new ballot papers after mistakenly being told they did not have to sign applications for postal votes.

A group of entrepreneurs warned on the dangers of a Lib-Lab coalition in an open letter to *The Times* on 29 April.

### May

In Hornsey and Wood Green constituency, 749 postal voters were sent ballot papers "which asked voters to pick three candidates instead of one." Haringey Council had to deliver new ballot papers by hand.

The Metropolitan Police launched an investigation into allegations of bogus voter registration after revelations that fictitious names had been added to the electoral roll in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It was also reported that a last minute surge in applications to vote before the 20 April deadline had led to 5,000 names being added to the register without being checked, enough to sway the outcome of the election.



The Labour candidate for North West Norfolk, Manish Sood, described Gordon Brown as Britain's worst ever Prime Minister. The comments, which he repeated to a variety of news outlets, took attention away from the previous day's speech by Brown to Citizens UK, widely described as his best of the campaign.

A Conservative Party activist in Peterborough was arrested after alleged incidents of postal voting fraud.

Simon Bennett resigned as the head of the British National Party's online operation, then redirected its website to his own website on which he launches an attack against the party's leadership.

## Debates

Following a campaign by Sky News and with agreement of the party leaders, it was announced on 21 December 2009 that there would be three leaders' debates, each in primetime, and a subsequent announcement in March 2010 that a debate between the financial spokesmen of the three main parties, Alistair Darling, George Osborne and Vince Cable would be held on 29 March.

### Highlights

Instant polling after the event unanimously declared Nick Clegg the winner. This first debate caused a large, immediate, and unexpected impact on opinion polls in favour of the Liberal Democrats.

Nick Clegg and David Cameron came out best in the instant polls with Gordon Brown very closely behind. Nick Clegg, having received such a surge after the first debate, was judged to have fended off the Labour Party and Conservative Party attacks. Gordon Brown was judged to have drastically improved his performance, and David Cameron was judged to have overcome the nerves that commentators believed affected him in the First Debate. In the build-up, the Liberal Democrats were affected by claims Clegg had received secret donations from businessmen, although he subsequently released his financial statements to show that no improper conduct had occurred.

In the third and final poll, David Cameron was widely regarded as the party leader who made the best impression to the audience at home. At the end of the debating night, the Conservatives had gained a 5% lead over the Labour Party.

The SNP insisted that as the leading political party in Scotland in the latest opinion poll, it should be included in any debate broadcast in Scotland. On 22 December 2009, the UKIP leader, Lord Pearson stated that his party should also be included. Following

On the morning of polling day, the former leader of UKIP, Nigel Farage, was injured when a light aircraft in which he was a passenger crashed near Brackley, Northamptonshire. There were also several reports of voters being locked out of polling stations in Sheffield Hallam, Manchester and Leeds, "and police said one London polling station was open at 2230 BST." Counting in Londonderry was also suspended around 2300 UTC, after a car which was abandoned outside the counting centre caused a bomb scare.

The counts for the Foyle and East Londonderry constituencies were suspended due to a security alert.

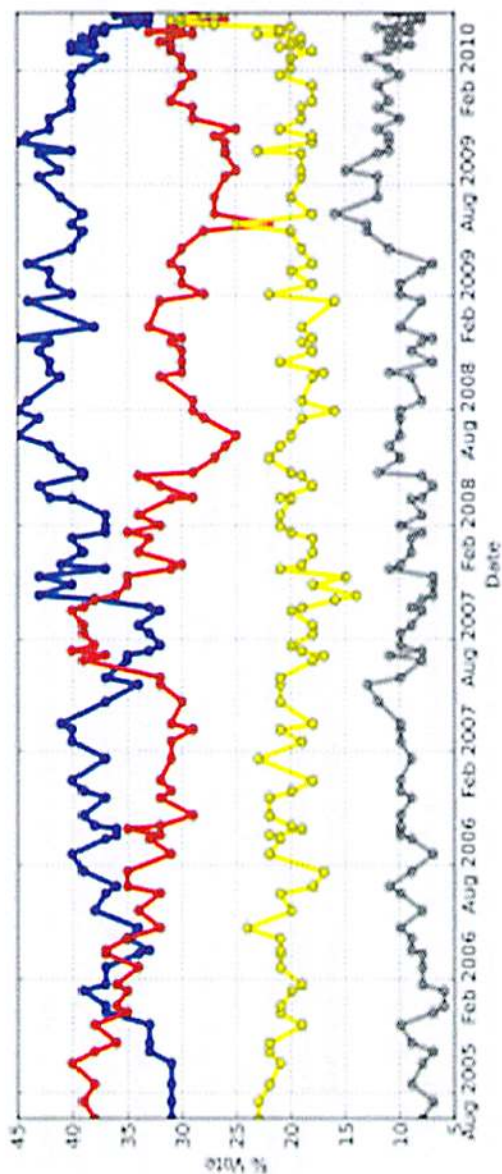
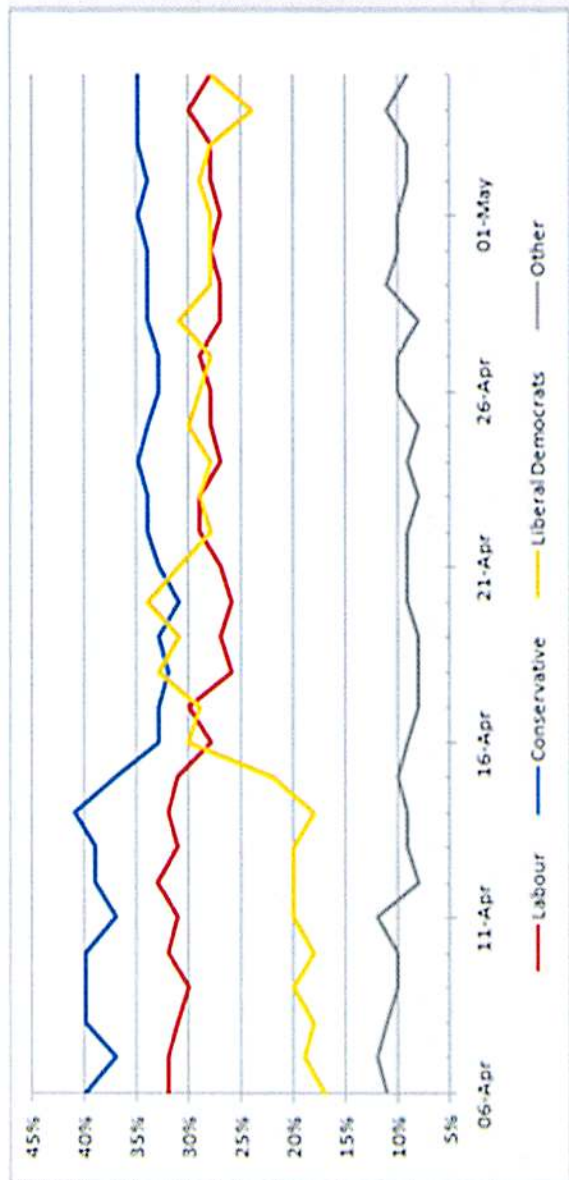
a decision by the BBC Trust not to uphold a complaint from the SNP and Plaid Cymru over their exclusion from the planned BBC debate, the SNP announced on 25 April that they would proceed with legal action over the debate scheduled for 29 April. The party said it was not trying to stop the broadcast but it wanted an SNP politician included for balance. The SNP lost the case, in a judgement delivered on 28 April.

## Polling

Since each MP is elected separately by the first past the post voting system, it is impossible to precisely project a clear election outcome from overall UK shares of the vote. Not only can individual constituencies vary markedly from overall voting trends, but individual countries and regions within the UK may have a very different electoral contest that is not properly reflected in overall share of the vote figures.

Immediately following the previous general election, the Labour party held a double-digit lead in opinion polls. However, over the course of 2005, this lead was eroded somewhat. By December 2005, the Conservative party showed its first small leads in opinion polls following the controversial 90 days detention proposals and the election of David Cameron to the leadership of the Conservative party.

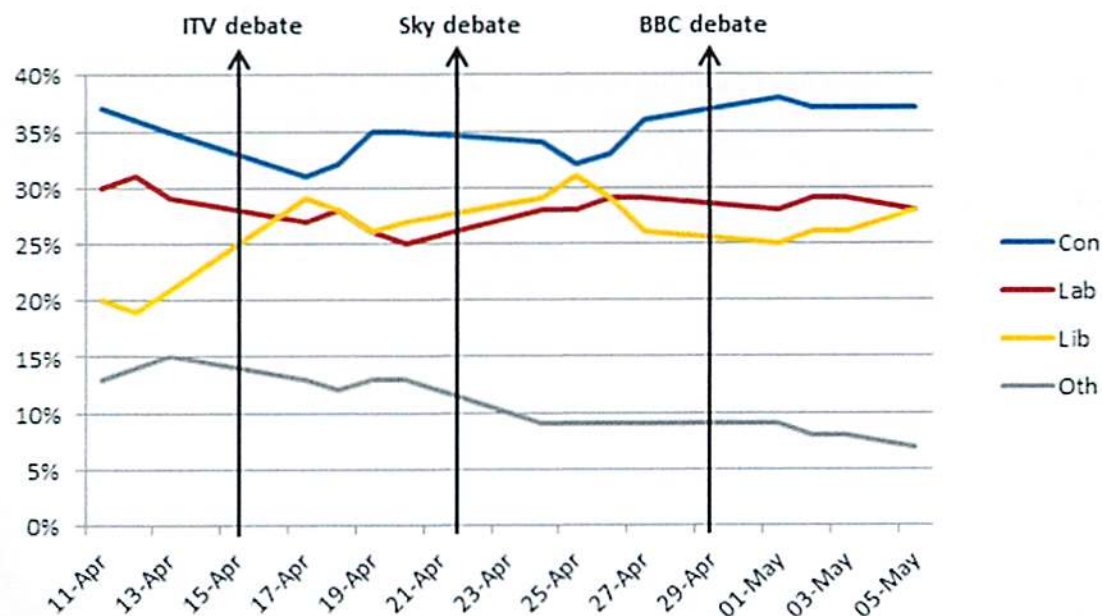
In early 2006, opinion polls were increasingly mixed with small leads given alternately to Labour and Conservative. From the May 2006 local elections, in which Labour suffered significant losses, the Conservatives took a small single-digit lead in opinion polls. Labour regained the lead in June 2007 following the resignation of Tony Blair and the appointment of Gordon Brown as prime minister. From November 2007, the Conservatives again took the lead and, from then, extended their lead into double digits, particularly in response to the MPs' expenses scandal, although there was some evidence that the lead narrowed slightly towards the end of 2009. By the end of February 2010, Ipsos MORI, ICM, YouGov and ComRes polls had all found a sufficient narrowing of the Conservative lead for media speculation about a hung parliament to return.



Conservative Labour Liberal Democrats Other Graph of poll results since 2005

From 15 April 2010, following the first televised debate of the party leaders, however, polling data changed dramatically, with the Lib Dem vote proportion rising to 28–33%, and the Conservative vote proportion falling. In some polls, the Liberal Democrats took the lead from the Conservatives. Under UNS projections, this made a hung parliament highly probable, if Lib Dem performance had persisted.

The following graph shows ComRes poll results recorded over the period 11 April – 6 May 2010, including annotations of the three TV debates:



After the second debate on 22 April the polls, on average, placed the Conservatives in the lead on 33%, the Liberal Democrats in second on 30% and Labour in third on 28%. If these polls had reflected the election day results on a uniform swing nationwide, Labour would have had the most seats in a hung Parliament.

## Exit poll

At 22:00 on election day, coinciding with the closure of the polls, the results of an exit poll collected for the BBC, Sky and ITV news services were announced. Data were gathered from individuals at 130 polling stations around the country. The results of the poll initially suggested a hung parliament with the Conservative Party 19 seats from a

controlling majority; this was later adjusted to 21 seats. The distribution of seats amongst the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats and other parties was initially suggested to be 307, 255, 59 and 29 respectively, although the seat numbers were later changed to 303, 251, 69, and 27 respectively.

Initial reaction to the exit poll by various commentators was of surprise at the apparent poor prospects for the Liberal Democrats because it was odds with many opinion polls undertaken in the previous weeks. However, the actual results showed that the exit poll was a good predictor.

A later BBC Exit poll (05:36 BST) predicted the Conservatives on 306, 20 short of an overall majority, Labour on 262, and Liberal Democrats on 55.



## Endorsements

### Newspaper endorsements

National newspapers in the United Kingdom traditionally endorse political parties before a general election. The following table shows which parties the major papers endorsed.

Dailies		Sundays	
Newspaper	Endorsement	Newspaper	Endorsement
<i>Daily Express</i>	 Conservative	<i>Sunday Express</i>	 Conservative
<i>The Guardian</i>	 Liberal Democrat	<i>The Observer</i>	 Liberal Democrat
<i>Daily Mail</i>	 Conservative	<i>The Mail on Sunday</i>	 Conservative
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	 Labour	<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	 Labour
		<i>The People</i>	 Coalition
<i>The Sun</i>	 Conservative	<i>News of the World</i>	 Conservative
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	 Conservative	<i>The Sunday Telegraph</i>	 Conservative
<i>The Times</i>	 Conservative	<i>Sunday Times</i>	 Conservative
<i>The Independent</i>	 Liberal Democrat	<i>The Independent on Sunday</i>	No party
<i>The Daily Star</i>	 Conservative		
<i>Evening Standard</i>	 Conservative		
<i>Financial Times</i>	 Conservative		

*The Independent* and *The Guardian* advocated tactical voting to maximise the chance of a Liberal Democrat/Labour coalition, in order to make electoral reform a possibility.

### Marginal seats

Following the Boundary Commissions' reports recommending changes to seats in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, various estimates have been made of the electoral effect of the changes in each constituency. The most respected of these estimates is *The Media Guide to the New Parliamentary Constituencies* compiled and edited by Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, which was published in February

2007. The website UKPollingReport has also compiled estimates. The various estimates differ in detail.

Arising out of those estimates, lists of the most marginal seats were compiled. They were the seats where a party needed to overturn the lowest percentage majority to win the seat. These were not necessarily the seats where it was easiest to do so, or the only seats that the party were actually targeting.



# Full Results

## Summary of the May 2010 House of Commons of the United Kingdom election results

Political Party	Candidates	Elected	Seats Gained	Seats Lost	Net Change in seats	% of Seats	% of Votes	Number of Votes	Change in % of vote
Conservative	631	306	100	3	+97	47.1	36.1	10,703,754	+3.7
Labour	631	258	3	94	-91	39.7	29.0	8,609,527	-6.2
Liberal Democrat	631	57	8	13	-5	8.8	23.0	6,836,824	+1.0
UKIP	572	0	0	0	0	0	3.1	920,334	+0.9
BNP	338	0	0	0	0	0	1.9	563,743	+1.2
SNP	59	6	0	0	0	0.9	1.7	491,386	+0.1
Green	310	1	1	0	+1	0.2	1.0	285,616	-0.1
Sinn Féin	17	5	0	0	0	0.8	0.6	171,942	-0.1
Democratic Unionist	16	8	0	1	-1	1.2	0.6	168,216	-0.3
Plaid Cymru	40	3	1	0	+1	0.5	0.6	165,394	-0.1
SDLP	18	3	0	0	0	0.5	0.4	110,970	-0.1
Conservatives and Unionists	17	0	0	1	-1	0	0.3	102,361	-0.1
English Democrats	107	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	64,826	0.2
Alliance	18	1	1	0	+1	0.2	0.1	42,762	0.0
Respect	10	0	0	1	-1	0	0.1	33,251	-0.1
Traditional Unionist Voice	10	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	26,300	N/A

Sneaker	1	1	0	0	0	0.2	0.1	22.860	0.0
Indenendent - Rodney Connor	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	21.300	N/A
Indenendent - Sylvia Herman	1	1	1	0	+1	0.2	0.1	21.181	N/A
Christian	71	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	18.623	+0.1
Scottish Green	20	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	16.827	0.0
Health Concern	1	0	0	1	-1	0	0.1	16.150	0.0
Trade Unionist & Socialist	41	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	12.275	N/A
Indenendent - Bob Spink	1	0	0	1	-1	0	0.0	12.174	N/A
National Front	17	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	10.784	0.0
Buckinghamshire Campaign for Democracy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	10.331	N/A
Monster Raving Loony	27	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	7.510	0.0
Socialist Labour	24	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	7.219	-0.1
Liberal	5	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	6.781	-0.1
Blaenau Gwent People's Voice	1	0	0	1	-1	0	0.0	6.458	-0.1
Christian Peoples	11	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	6.276	0.0
Mehrinn Kernow	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	5.379	0.0
Lincolnshire Independents	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	5.311	N/A
Mansfield Independent Forum	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	4.339	N/A
Green (ND)	4	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	3.542	0.0
Socialist Alternative	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	3.298	0.0
Trust	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	3.233	N/A

Scottish Socialist	10	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	3.157	-0.1
People Before Profit	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	2.936	N/A
Local Liberals People Before Politics	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	1.964	N/A
Independent - Esther Rantzen	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	1.872	N/A <sup>1</sup>
Alliance for Green Socialism	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	1.581	0.0
Social Democrat	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	1.551	N/A
Pirate	9	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	1.340	N/A
Communist	6	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	947	0.0
Democratic Nationalists	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	753	N/A
Workers' Revolutionary	7	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	738	0.0
Peace	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	737	0.0
New Millennium Bean Party	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	558	0.0
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>650</b>	-	-	-	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>29,691,780</b>	-

- <sup>1</sup> Note: this figure includes Philip Lardner in North Ayrshire and Arran, who is recorded by the BBC as an "Independent" due to him being disowned by the Conservative Party prior to polling day, but election rules prevented his nomination from being withdrawn and his ballot paper description could not be amended from "Scottish Conservative and Unionist" Statement - North Ayrshire and Arran, North Ayrshire Council
- <sup>2</sup> Note: this figure excludes John Bercow (Buckingham), who is recorded by the BBC as a "Conservative", despite the fact he is the incumbent Speaker



## Election Petitions

Two results were legally challenged by defeated candidates through election petitions.

### Fermanagh and South Tyrone

The defeated Unionist 'Unity' candidate, Rodney Connor, lodged a petition against the successful Sinn Féin candidate, Michelle Gildernew, in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, alleging irregularities in the counting of the votes had affected the result. Gildernew had won with a majority of four votes. However the Court found that there were only three ballot papers which could not be accounted for, and even if they all went against Connor, Gildernew would have had a majority of one. The election was therefore upheld.

### Oldham East and Saddleworth

On 28 May 2010, the defeated Liberal Democrat candidate Elwyn Watkins lodged a petition against the election of Phil Woolas (Labour) in Oldham East and Saddleworth constituency. The petition challenged leaflets issued by Woolas' campaign as having contained false statements of fact concerning Watkins' personal character, which is an illegal practice under section 106 of the Representation of the People Act 1983. The statements attempted to link Watkins with Muslim extremists and death threats to Woolas, accused him of reneging on a promise to live in the constituency, and implied that his campaign was funded by illegal foreign political donations.

During the court case a number of emails between Woolas and his campaign team emerged. In one, Woolas' agent, Joe Fitzpatrick, emailed Woolas and campaign adviser Steven Green, to say: "Things are not going as well as I had hoped ... we need to think about our first attack leaflet." A reply from Fitzpatrick said: "If we don't get the white vote angry he's gone." Some have criticised these tactics in light of significant existing racial tensions in the area. The court hearing finished on 17 September 2010, with the judges reserving their judgement until 5 November 2010. On that day Woolas was found to have breached section 106 of the Representation of the People Act 1983. The judges ruled the election void, requiring a fresh election for the seat. Phil Woolas is expected to apply for a judicial review into the ruling. In a statement released through his lawyer, Woolas stated that "this election petition raised fundamental issues about the freedom to question and criticise politicians." and that it "will inevitably chill political speech".

### Notable results

At 9:41am on 7 May, the BBC confirmed a "hung parliament", as it was by then impossible for the Conservative party to gain the number of seats needed to form a majority government, the number being 326 or 323 for a majority, as the five Sinn Féin MPs are expected to boycott the House of Commons. At that time the Conservatives stood at 290 seats, Labour at 247 and Liberal Democrats at 51. One constituency seat

was contested on 27 May due to the death of the UKIP candidate and was won by the Conservative party, whilst another seat later had its result declared void; a rerun of this election is forthcoming.

The national result showed an overall 5% swing from Labour to Conservative, greater than the 4% achieved by the Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher in 1983.

Of the 532 seats contested in England (a final seat was contested on 27 May), the Conservatives won an absolute majority with 61 seats more than all other parties combined, and secured an average swing of 5.6% from Labour.

Each of Scotland's 59 seats was won by the party that won it at the 2005 election, with Labour regaining the two seats they lost in by-elections since 2005. There was a swing to Labour from the Conservatives of 0.8% (with Labour increasing its share of the vote by 2.5% and the Conservatives increasing by just 0.9%) This left the Conservatives with just a single MP representing a Scottish constituency.

There were 40 seats contested in Wales. The Conservative share rose from three to eight, taking one from the Liberal Democrats and four from Labour. Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru gained one extra seat, Arfon, from Labour. Overall, Labour lost four seats but remained the biggest party, with 26.

There were 18 seats contested in Northern Ireland. Both Irish nationalist parties, Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), held their seats. The unionist Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) (the latter in an electoral pact with the Conservatives), lost one seat each. This left the nationalist parties unchanged with eight seats, the main unionist parties with eight seats (all DUP), the Alliance with one seat and an independent unionist with one seat. It is the first time since the partition of Ireland that unionist parties failed to secure a majority of Northern Ireland's Westminster seats in a general election, and also the first time Sinn Féin obtained the largest share of the vote in Northern Ireland at a general election. Although an unusually large number of MPs stood down prior to the election (227 in all), there were several notable cases of incumbent MPs being defeated.

## Demographics

The election resulted in an increase in the number of MPs from ethnic minorities from 14 to 27, including the first black, Asian female Conservative MPs, Helen Grant and Priti Patel, and the first female Muslim MPs, Rushanara Ali, Shabana Mahmood and Yasmin Qureshi. The number of female MPs rose to 141, an increase from 19.5% to 22% of all MPs, and the highest ever total; the number of female Conservative MPs rose from 18 to 48.