

UK 2017 General Elections Overview

June 29, 2017

On June the 8th 2017, the General Elections called by Prime Minister Theresa May took place in the United Kingdom and Northern Island. This past elections, just like the previous ones was held on a Thursday. A particular that was emphasized by the Fixed Term Parliament Acts in 2011, yet this characteristic of the UK general elections hasn't changed since 27 October 1931 when the Britons voted on a Tuesday.

In order to vote in a General Election you must:

- be registered to vote;
- be 18 or over on the day of the election ('polling day');
- be a British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen;
- be resident at an address in the UK (or a British citizen living abroad who has been registered to vote in the UK in the last 15 years);
- not be legally excluded from voting¹.

A General Election is the democratic process through which the people who have the requirements over mentioned, elect their Members of Parliament who will represent their local area, the so called constituency, in the House of Commons. The electoral system is named "first-past-the-post" in which the UK is separated in 650 constituencies, the candidate who receives the greatest amount of votes in the ballots will be elected representative of that area. Therefore the candidate only needs a simple majority to secure his spot at the House of Commons.

According to the previously mentioned Fixed Term Parliaments Act from 2011, the general elections are to be held every five years; however there are two scenarios that can result in a call for general elections:

- a motion of no confidence passes the government by a simple majority and 14 days pass without the House passing a confidence motion in any new Government formed;
- a motion for a general election is agreed by two thirds of the total number of seats in the Commons including vacant seats (currently 434 out of 650)².

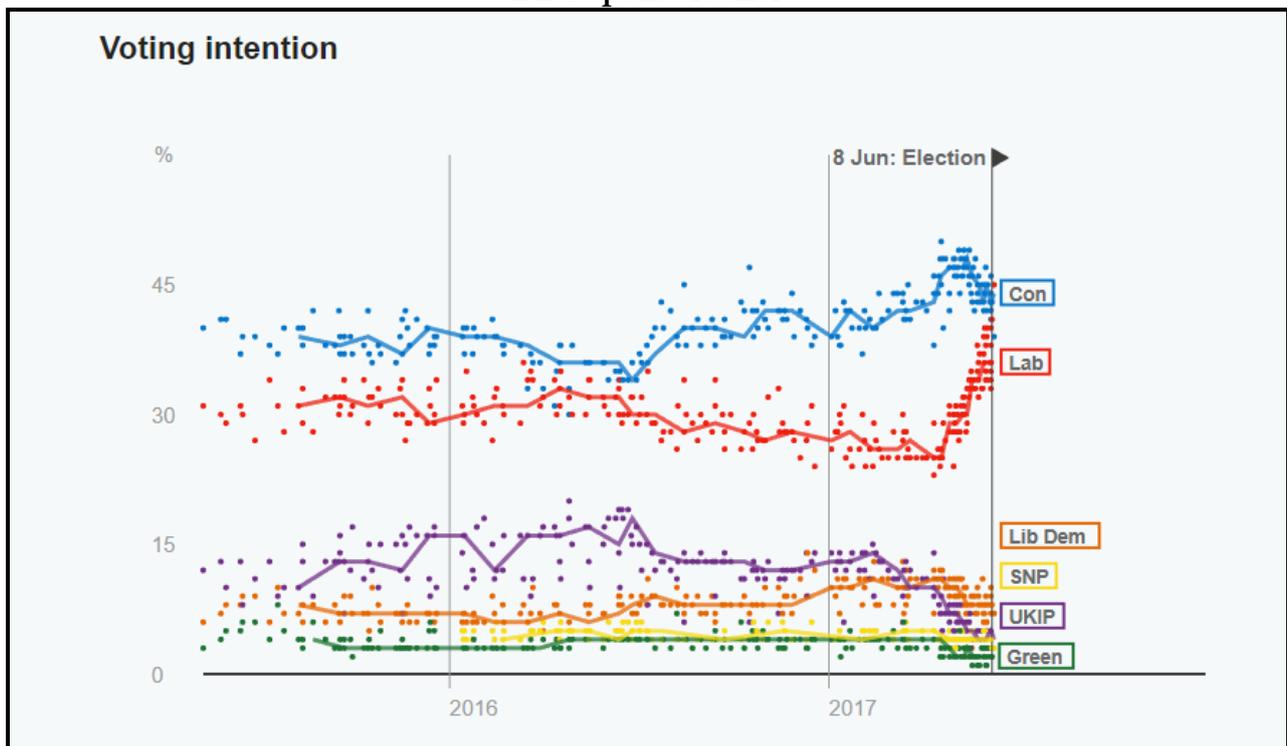
¹ UK Government - '*Types of election, referendums, and who can vote*'. Source: Gov.uk.

² UK Parliament - '*General elections*'. Source: Parliament.uk.

This previous election was triggered through a motion passed in Parliament on April 19 after Theresa May announced on April 18 her intention to seek for an early General Election.

At the time the Conservative Party led by May had a solid advantage; according to YouGov, as on April 19, May's party was leading over the Labour Party by as many as 24 points.

BBC³ polls tracker



The Prime Minister, Theresa May, made official her intention to call for an anticipated election on April 18, stating:

"If we do not hold a general election now their political game-playing will continue, and the negotiations with the European Union will reach their most difficult stage in the run-up to the next scheduled election.

"Division in Westminster will risk our ability to make a success of Brexit and it will cause damaging uncertainty and instability to the country.

"So we need a general election and we need one now, because we have at this moment a one-off chance to get this done while the European Union agrees its negotiating position and before the detailed talks begin.

"I have only recently and reluctantly come to this conclusion. Since I became prime minister I have said that there should be no election until 2020, but now I have concluded that the only

³ BBC News - 'Election 2017 poll tracker: How the parties compare'. Source: [BBC Web page](#).

way to guarantee certainty and stability for the years ahead is to hold this election and seek your support for the decisions I must take”⁴.

The predominant political parties and their respective leaders who ran in the elections were:

Conservative Party (CON), Theresa May

The Conservative Party can trace its roots back to the 18th century. As Britain's main centre-right party, it has traditionally stood for free trade, private enterprise, individual liberty, low taxation and strong defence. Theresa May has been leader since 2016.

- Deliver a smooth and orderly departure from the EU.
- Increase NHS(National Health Service) budget in England by £8bn a year by 2022/23.
- An extra £4bn on schools in England by 2022.
- Restating commitment to bring net migration down to tens of thousands..
- Balance budget by 2025.
- Replacement of triple-lock pension pledge after 2020 with double lock.

Labour Party (LAB), Jeremy Corbyn

Founded by the trade union movement in 1900 to give workers a voice in Parliament, the Labour Party is Britain's main left wing party. It has moved towards the centre ground in recent decades but wealth redistribution and social justice remain key aims. Jeremy Corbyn has been leader since 2015.

- Bring an end to austerity and invest heavily in public services.
- Negotiate a Brexit deal that "puts the economy and living standards first".
- Nationalise a number of utilities including rail, post, water and the National Grid(Electric Power Transmission Service).
- Increase taxation on business and the highest paid.
- Invest in the British economy through a £250bn stimulus package.
- Abolish tuition fees for university students in England.

Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), Nicola Sturgeon

The SNP was formed in 1934 and its central belief is Scottish independence. Nicola Sturgeon has been leader since 2014.

⁴ BBC News - *‘Theresa May's general election statement in full’*. Source: [BBC Web page](#).

- End austerity and release £120bn for UK-wide public spending over next parliament.
- Hold a second independence referendum “at the end of the Brexit process”.
- Protect Scotland’s place in the EU single market.
- Raise the minimum wage to more than £10 per hour by 2021/22.
- Call on the new UK government to increase health spending per head of population in England to the current Scottish level, which is 7% higher.
- Support an increase across the UK in the Additional Rate of income tax - for those earning more than £150,000 - from 45p to 50p.

Liberal Democrat (LD), Tim Farron

The Liberal Democrats were formed in 1988 by the merger of one of Britain's oldest political institutions, the Liberal Party, which stood for free trade and individual liberty, and the Social Democratic Party, a centrist offshoot of the Labour Party. Tim Farron has been leader since 2015.

- Hold a referendum on the final Brexit deal, with the option to remain in the EU.
- Add 1p to income tax to fund the NHS and social care.
- Rule out coalitions with the Conservatives or Labour – but want to make the Liberal Democrats the official opposition.
- Increase spending on early years, schools and colleges in England.
- Reverse some benefits cuts.

Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Arlene Foster

For more than three decades, the Democratic Unionist Party was a party of protest for unionists but since 2007 when it agreed to share power at Stormont with Sinn Féin, the DUP has become a party of government. Arlene Foster has been its leader since 2015.

- Protect Northern Ireland’s place in the United Kingdom.
- Restore devolution at Stormont as quickly as possible.
- Draw up a national reform plan for NI, which would see civil service reorganized.
- Resist attempts to "rewrite" NI's troubled past and assist innocent victims in obtaining justice.
- Create 50,000 new jobs in NI by 2021.

UK Independent Party (UKIP), Steve Crowther

The UK Independence Party was set up in 1993 to campaign for Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. Since the referendum vote to leave the EU, the Brexit negotiations remain its core focus, as well as a particular emphasis on cutting immigration. Paul Nuttall has led the party since 2016.

- Complete the Brexit process by 2019, without paying money to the EU.
- Restore "complete control" of UK's maritime exclusive economic zone.
- Cut net migration levels to zero within five years by almost halving immigration into the UK.
- Unskilled and low-skilled labour banned for five years, and skilled workers and students would need visas.
- Slash the foreign aid budget and spend it on domestic priorities like the NHS.
- Ban Sharia courts and the wearing of face coverings in public places.

Sinn Fein (SF), Gerry Adams

Sinn Féin's policies have long been based on a revolutionary socialist analysis of Irish history and the party is now the biggest nationalist party in Northern Ireland. Its leader has been Gerry Adams since 1983.

- Deliver special designated status for Northern Ireland within the EU
- Secure a referendum on the reunification of Ireland within five years
- End "swingeing cuts" it claims have been imposed on NI by the Conservatives
- Implement legislation to give official status to the Irish language
- Increase all-Ireland co-operation on some health service provisions⁵⁶.

⁵ BBC News Special - 'Key Priorities'. Source: [BBC Web page](#)

⁶ BBC News - Elections 2017 - 'General elections 2017: Manifesto guide on where the parties stand'. Source: [BBC Web page](#).

Composition of the House of Commons before 8 of June⁷:

Party	N. of Seats
Conservative (CON)	330
Labour (LAB)	229
Scottish National Party (SNP)	54
Liberal Democrat (LD)	9
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	8
Independent (IND)	4
Sinn Féin (SF)	4
Plaid Cymru (PC)	3
Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDL)	3
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	2
Green Party (GP)	1
Speaker	1
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	1

649

Composition of the House of Commons after 8 of June:

Party	N. of Seats	Δ
Conservative (CON)	317	-4% ↓
Labour (LAB)	262	+14% ↑
Scottish National Party (SNP)	35	-35% ↓
Liberal Democrat (LD)	12	+33% ↑
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	10	+25% ↑
Independent (IND)	1	-75% ↓
Sinn Féin (SF)	7	+75% ↑
Plaid Cymru (PC)	4	+33% ↑
Green Party (GP)	1	+0% →
Speaker	1	

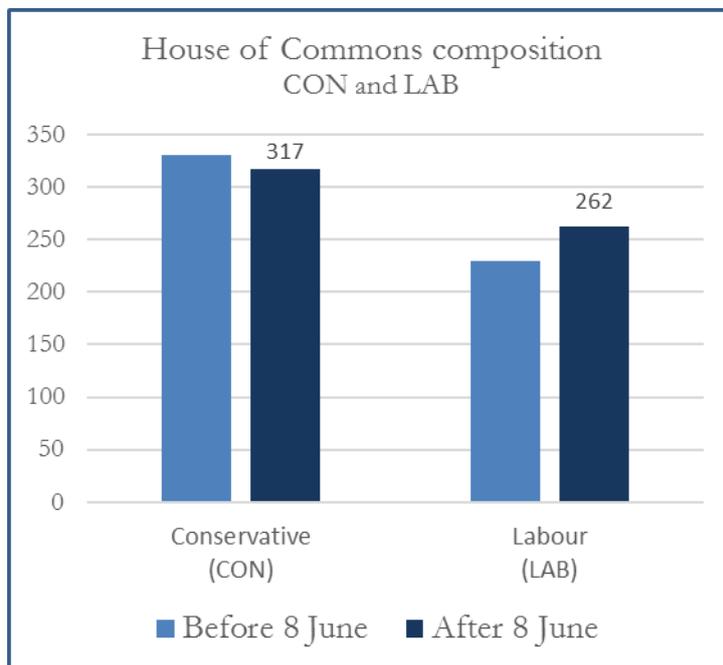
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Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDL)	OUT
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	OUT
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	OUT

⁷ UK Parliament - 'Current State of the Parties'. Source: [Parliament.uk](https://www.parliament.uk)

After the general elections the House of Commons composition has quite changed. The difference that stands out the most is that the Conservative Party lost its overall majority, dropping 13 seats from the previous mandate. On the other side their main contender, the Labour Party gained 33 seats after their fruitful efforts led during the campaign.

The other political sides saw important shifts as well. The Scottish National Party lost as many as 19 spots while the Liberal Democrats and the Democratic Unionists gained respectively 3 and 2⁸.



This awkward composition in which no party reached 326 seats and therefore an overall majority is defined hung parliament. In a hung parliament the previous government is allowed to form a coalition that would guarantee them the overall majority or try to govern with a minority of MPs.

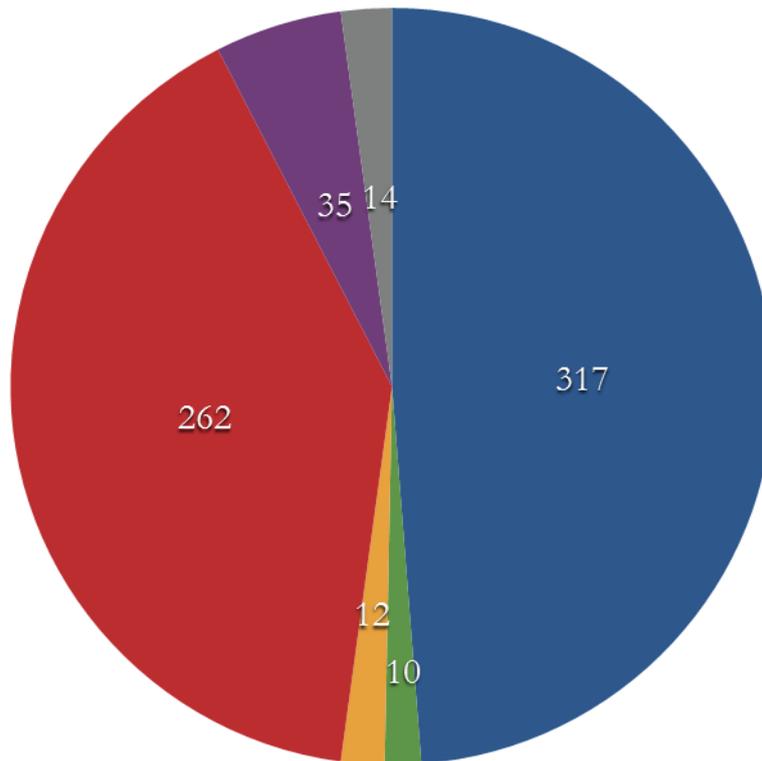
If the incumbent government is unable to govern and they lose a motion of confidence, the Prime Minister shall resign and the leader of the major opposition party may be invited to form a government⁹. Given that the Conservatives already had what they needed, which is an overall majority to pass reforms and lead the Brexit deals how they wanted to.

⁸ *Idem.*

⁹ UK Parliament - 'Hung Parliament'. Source: [Parliament.uk](https://www.parliament.uk)

However, now Theresa May will now need to seek for a coalition with a smaller party in order to obtain the numbers to rule.

■ CON ■ DUP ■ LD ■ LAB ■ SNP ■ Others



The Queen's Speech - London, 21 June 2017

The Queen's Speech held on the 21st of June is a typical tradition of the British political system in which the Her Majesty reads the new government's plan, written by the new government, in the House of Lords. The full Queen's speech:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons.

My government's priority is to secure the best possible deal as the country leaves the European Union. My ministers are committed to working with Parliament, the devolved administrations, business and others to build the widest possible consensus on the country's future outside the European Union.

A bill will be introduced to repeal the European Communities Act and provide certainty for individuals and businesses. This will be complemented by legislation to ensure that the United Kingdom makes a success of Brexit, establishing new national policies on immigration, international sanctions, nuclear safeguards, agriculture, and fisheries.

My government will seek to maintain a deep and special partnership with European allies and to forge new trading relationships across the globe. New bills on trade and customs will help to implement an independent trade policy, and support will be given to help British businesses export to markets around the world.

My ministers will strengthen the economy so that it supports the creation of jobs and generates the tax revenues needed to invest in the National Health Service, schools, and other public services.

My government will continue to improve the public finances, while keeping taxes low. It will spread prosperity and opportunity across the country through a new modern, industrial strategy.

My government will work to attract investment in infrastructure to support economic growth. Legislation will be introduced to ensure the United Kingdom remains a world leader in new industries, including electric cars and commercial satellites. A new bill will also be brought forward to deliver the next phase of high-speed rail.

My government will continue to work to ensure that every child has the opportunity to attend a good school and that all schools are fairly funded. My ministers will work to ensure people have the skills they need for the high-skilled, high-wage jobs of the future, including through a major reform of technical education.

The National Living Wage will be increased so that people who are on the lowest pay benefit from the same improvements in earnings as higher paid workers. My ministers will seek to enhance rights and protections in the modern workplace.

My government will make further progress to tackle the gender pay gap and discrimination against people on the basis of their race, faith, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Legislation will be brought forward to protect the victims of domestic violence and abuse.

My government will reform mental health legislation and ensure that mental health is prioritised in the National Health Service in England.

Proposals will be brought forward to ban unfair tenant fees, promote fairness and transparency in the housing market, and help ensure more homes are built.

My ministers will work to improve social care and will bring forward proposals for consultation.

My government will ensure fairer markets for consumers, this will include bringing forward measures to help tackle unfair practices in the energy market to help reduce energy bills.

A priority will be to build a more united country, strengthening the social, economic and cultural bonds between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

My government will work in cooperation with the devolved administrations, and it will work with all of the parties in Northern Ireland to support the return of devolved government.

A new law will ensure that the United Kingdom retains its world-class regime protecting personal data, and proposals for a new digital charter will be brought forward to ensure that the United



Kingdom is the safest place to be online. Legislation will also be introduced to modernise the courts system and to help reduce motor insurance premiums.

My government will initiate a full public inquiry into the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower to ascertain the causes, and ensure that the appropriate lessons are learnt.

To support victims, my government will take forward measures to introduce an independent public advocate, who will act for bereaved families after a public disaster and support them at public inquests.

My ministers will continue to invest in our gallant Armed Forces, meeting the NATO commitment to spend at least two per cent of national income on defence, and delivering on the Armed Forces Covenant across the United Kingdom.

My government will bring forward proposals to ensure that critical national infrastructure is protected to safeguard national security.

A commission for countering extremism will be established to support the government in stamping out extremist ideology in all its forms, both across society and on the internet, so it is denied a safe space to spread.

In the light of the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London, my government's counter-terrorism strategy will be reviewed to ensure that the police and security services have all the powers they need, and that the length of custodial sentences for terrorism-related offences are sufficient to keep the population safe.

My ministers will ensure that the United Kingdom's leading role on the world stage is maintained and enhanced as it leaves the European Union.

As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, committed to spending zero point seven per cent of national income on international development, my government will continue to drive international efforts that increase global security and project British values around the world.

My government will work to find sustainable political solutions to conflicts across the Middle East. It will work to tackle the threat of terrorism at source by continuing the United Kingdom's leading role in international military action to destroy Daesh in Iraq and Syria. It will also lead efforts to reform the international system to improve the United Kingdom's ability to tackle mass migration, alleviate poverty, and end modern slavery.

My government will continue to support international action against climate change, including the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Prince Philip and I look forward to welcoming Their Majesties King Felipe and Queen Letizia of Spain on a State Visit in July.

My government will host the Commonwealth Summit in April of next year to cement its relevance to this, and future generations.

Members of the House of Commons:

Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons:

Other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels¹⁰.

In the Queen's speech the new government formed illustrates the issues that they will tackle and the bills that they will push for.

The speech addressed several different issues that Theresa May will face. The plan will have an operational length of 2 years, which means that the government will focus on this determined problems in that window of time. As everyone expected, a solid part of the speech is focused on Brexit, in which the government has pledged to "secure the best possible deal" when the country will leave the EU. Furthermore, there will be new national legislations on immigration, international sanctions, nuclear safeguards, agricultures and fisheries also because of the strong will to introduce a bill that will repeal the European Communities Act and consequently new deals on customs and trade. As May mentioned many times in her campaign, her government will try to support the National Health Service.

Regarding social issues, there is the commitment on closing the gender gap and inequality in the working place and the social context. Moreover the United Kingdom will tight cultural bonds even more with neighboring countries and the nations of the Kingdom. At the same time, the new government will maintain its commitment to the Paris Agreement and to NATO, facing the payment that this will imply. Furthermore the new administration will develop and enhance its counter terrorism measures, considered a priority by PM May. The speech also emphasized the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, which took place in London on June 14 and killed more than 75 people. The government will seek to open a public inquiry in order to understand the causes of such tragic accident.

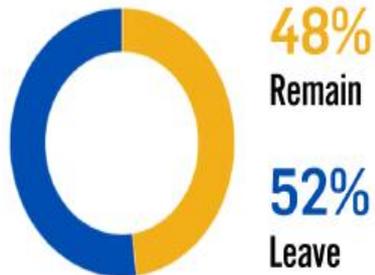
This program will be carried on by the Conservative party with the help of the Democratic Unionist Party. The DUP is a party based in Northern Ireland, which doesn't have identical views with the Conservatives but they are the most willing to compromise with Theresa May's party.

For both of them it is a win-win situation. On one side the Conservatives need the MPs in order to reach an overall majority and the DUP can push their agenda, especially the local one, through this coalition that will make the part of the majority as well. The two parties mainly

¹⁰The Spectator - *'Queen's Speech: Full text'*. Source: blogs.spectator.co.uk.

diverge on Brexit, as the majority of Northern Ireland voted to stay in the European Union one year ago, as it is shown in the map¹¹.

BREXIT VOTER BREAKDOWN BY REGION



Apparently, this component is forcing the Conservatives to go towards a softer Brexit than what they would have initially wanted.

‘Trinità dei Monti’ Think Tank

The Diplomatic Officer

Filippo Maria Margheritini

‘Trinità dei Monti’ Think Tank

The President

Pierluigi Testa

¹¹ CTV News – ‘Brexit voter breakdown by region’, Source: ctvnews.ca.