

The 2024 General Election

Party Policies

Labour

- Add VAT to private school fees to recruit 6,500 more teachers in state schools.
- Set up GB Energy, a publicly owned energy firm, to invest in clean energy and create jobs.
- Fund 13,000 more neighbourhood police to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Create a Border Security Command with counter-terrorism powers to stop people trafficking.

Conservatives

- Cut 2% off National Insurance to allow people to keep more of the money they earn.
- Introduce National Service for 18-year-olds, either serving in the military or in the local community.
- Raise defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2030.
- Send asylum seekers to Rwanda to deter crossing the English Channel by small boats.

Liberal Democrats

- Aim to allow everyone to see a GP within 7 days.
- Clean up the UK's rivers and waterways.
- Introduce proportional representation to elect MPs to Westminster.
- Invest in free personal care, offering more support to unpaid carers.

SNP

- Reach for another Scottish independence referendum.
- Rejoin the European Union after Scotland leaves the UK.
- Invest in a 'just transition', helping people move to net zero by supporting those who lose their jobs.

- Demand an immediate ceasefire and end to fighting in the Middle East.

Reform UK

- Reach net-zero immigration: the same numbers immigrate to the UK as emigrate elsewhere.
- Raise the amount someone earns before paying income tax from £12.5k to £20k, allowing people to keep more of their earnings.
- Scrap VAT on energy bills and cut fuel duty on petrol and diesel.
- End net zero policies and invest in cheaper oil and coal.

Green Party (England and Wales)

- Aim to reach net zero by 2040, investing £40bn a year in a 'green economy'.
- Scrap university tuition fees so students don't have to pay back debt over their adult life.
- Introduce a wealth tax on the 'super-rich', those with assets over £10m.
- Nationalise the railways, water companies and energy companies.

The Campaign & Leaders

The campaign began on a rainy Wednesday when Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the general election. At this time, Labour was roughly 23 points ahead of the Conservatives in the polls, so many wondered why Sunak decided to call the election when one didn't need to be held until January 2025.

The Conservative's campaign relied heavily on 'the plan' that Sunak and Chancellor Jeremy Hunt had been following, which had reduced inflation and cut the rate of national insurance. However, they faced a tough Labour campaign that promised to end 14 years of 'Tory chaos' and return to calmer politics. Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats, conducted many stunts highlighting social issues, such as paddleboarding in the Lake District to highlight sewage released into rivers and lakes. Nigel Farage initially said he wouldn't stand for Reform UK and would help with the national campaign, but eventually changed his mind and stood in the Essex seat of Clacton. The Greens campaigned heavily in Bristol and Waveney Valley, the seats where their co-leaders Carla Denyer and Adrian



Ramsay were running, respectively. The SNP were surprised by the election, as leader John Swinney was elected just weeks earlier.

Over the course of the campaign, Reform UK surged in the polls, and some had them ahead of the Conservatives. Labour locked onto its position in the polls, rarely dropping below a 20-point lead. The Lib Dems and Greens saw minor increases in their polling performance, whilst the SNP slowly reduced.

Rishi Sunak's character was questioned frequently during the campaign, with many accusing him of being out-of-touch with Brits. He was criticised for leaving a D-Day anniversary celebration early, with Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron taking his place with other world leaders. He was also ridiculed for his proposal of National Service, a policy intended to appeal to older voters but was heavily criticised by younger voters. Keir Starmer, on the other hand, was seen as a safer pair of hands by many, with a duller personality than previous leaders. His task, essentially, was to maintain Labour's lead in the polls, which he did successfully. Through television debates with Sunak, Starmer put himself forward as the change candidate who would end 14 years of 'Tory chaos'.

Results

Party	Seats (/650)	Seat Change	Votes (%)	Vote % Change
Labour Party	412	+211	33.7%	+1.6%
Conservative Party	121	-251	23.7%	-19.9%
Liberal Democrats	72	+64	12.2%	+0.7%
Scottish National Party	9	-38	2.5%	-1.3%
Sinn Fein	7	n/c	0.7%	+0.1%
Independents	6	+6	2.0%	+1.4%
Democratic Unionist Party	5	-3	0.6%	-0.2%
Reform UK	5	+5	14.3%	+12.3%
Green Party	4	+3	6.8%	+4.1%
Plaid Cymru	4	+2	0.7%	+0.2%
Others	5	-1	2.8%	-1.0%

As you can see in the table above, the Labour Party won a landslide victory with 412 seats out of a possible 650. This is the biggest majority since Tony Blair's victory in 1997.



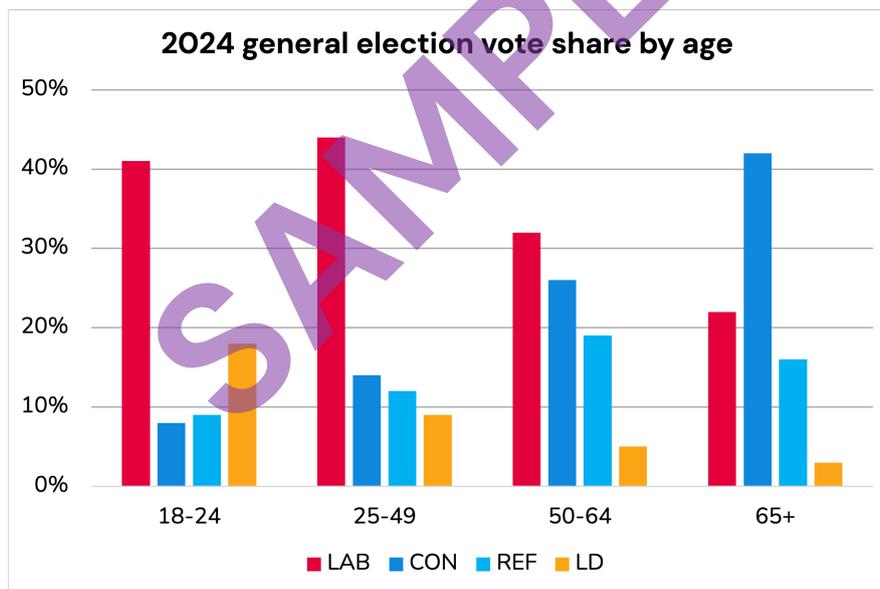
The Conservatives saw their worst result since 1906 with just 121, down an incredible 251 seats since the last election.

The turnout was 59.9%, down 7.4% from the last election and the lowest turnout since the 2001 general election, considered a low point for political engagement in UK politics.

Long-term Factors

Age

According to YouGov, younger people were far more likely to vote for the Labour and Green Parties this election. Labour won roughly 41% of votes from the 18- to 24-year-old age group, with the Greens on 18%. Older voters were more likely to vote for Reform UK and the Conservatives; however, the popularity of the Conservatives among older voters was lower this year than in previous elections. Among the 65+, the Conservatives received 42% of the vote, and Labour 22%.



Faith

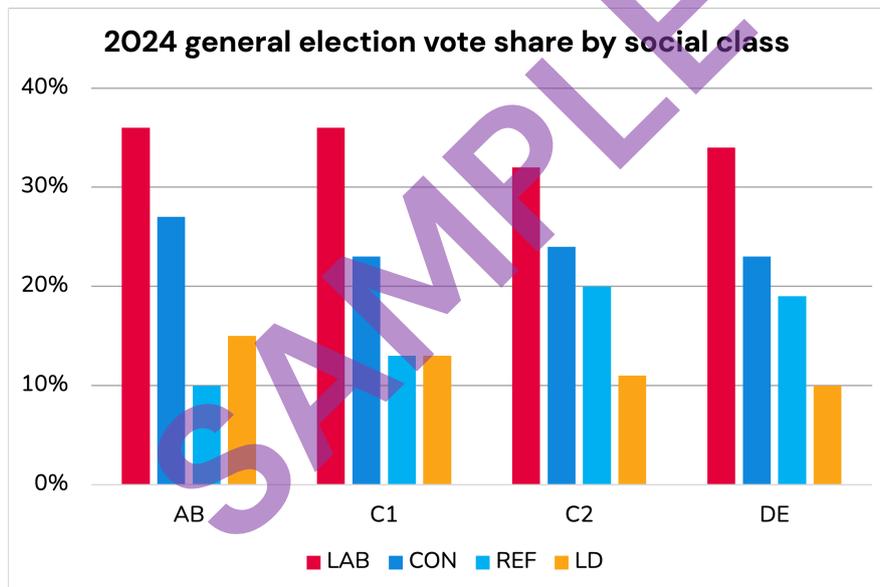
For the first time, this election has given some evidence that faith had a large impact on people's voting choices. Particularly during the war in Gaza, many independent candidates picked up seats standing on a platform of calling for a ceasefire. These were successful in areas with a large Islamic population, such as Islington North and Leicester South.

Region

Region as a factor affecting voting behaviour has reduced in prevalence significantly this election. Labour performed extremely well in urban areas, with the Conservatives picking up the vast majority of their seats in rural areas. The Liberal Democrats improved significantly in the South West of England, whilst the Green Party's performance was more sporadic, gaining Bristol Central, and the rural seats of Waveney Valley and North Herefordshire.

Social Class

Social Class played a limited role in determining voting behaviour. ABC1 voted 36% for Labour, 25% for the Conservatives and 11% for Reform UK, whilst C2DE voted 33% for Labour, 23% for the Conservatives and 20% for Reform UK.



Short-term Factors

Governing competency

After fourteen years in power, many felt tired with the Conservatives' record. Particularly in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, when national insurance was raised and immigration numbers did not fall as promised by former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, many Conservative voters felt 'betrayed' by the party. Paired with the controversy surrounding partygate, which drove many voters away for morality-based reasons, Conservative support plummeted throughout 2022 and never regained.

Image of the leader

Reform UK saw a dramatic increase in vote share as the campaign developed. Farage held a press conference in which he announced he was becoming leader of Reform UK and standing for the seat of Clacton in Essex. After this announcement, polling for Reform grew significantly, and they managed to win 14.3% of the total popular vote.

Keir Starmer of the Labour Party was seen by many as a 'boring' leader, but this was a fresh departure from some chaotic events during the previous few years of Conservative rule. From Liz Truss becoming Britain's shortest-serving Prime Minister to Boris Johnson's eccentric character, many felt that they wanted calm leadership.

Rishi Sunak never managed to win over voters with his charisma. He was seen by many as uninspiring and failed to turn around the Conservative's fortune after Johnson was removed by his backbenchers, and Truss lost power after just a few weeks. Many of his comments felt out of touch, including a resurfaced video from his university days where he said "I have working class friends, well... not working class".

The SNP also failed to show off their new leadership. John Swinney was just weeks into his new role as SNP Leader and First Minister of Scotland when the election was held. The SNP's poor polling could be attributed to a large increase in Labour support across the country, but the lack of media time given to Swinney could also have contributed here.

