

Voters need to take back control of the UK

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It is a travesty of justice that Labour had a landslide victory at last year's UK general election with the support of just 20% of the UK electorate. We need electoral reform, and we need it now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMKaVxyTTDM?si=lvBAETCn3vQuJqYJ>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=qn9yh-18a7b83-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

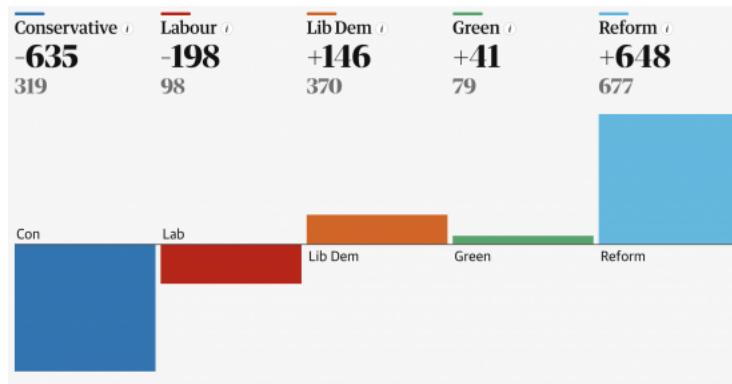
Voters need to take back control of the UK.

I know that taking back control has been a very popular political slogan for the last decade or so in this country. But in this case, what I'm talking about is the fact that ordinary people, you and me, do not control the electoral process in this country, and it is time that we did.

What I'm talking about is the need for proportional representation in UK elections, but the issues that I'm going to address are deeper than that, and in this video I want to explain why I think we really do need a profound electoral reform in this country to

ensure that the political hierarchy of power in the UK is brought back under the control of the people of this country so that we get the politicians that we want, need and even deserve.

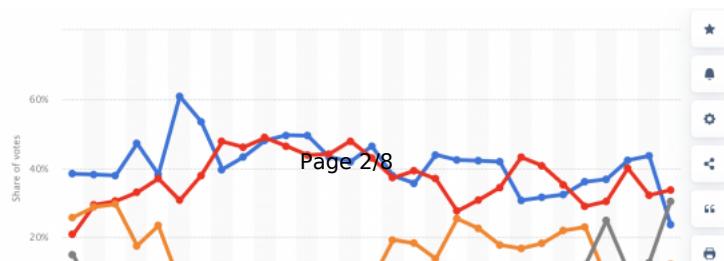
Let me look at a chart. It is of the results that were reported for the local council elections in England alone in May 2025. [[Chart from the Guardian](#)]



If you look at the numbers, you will see that the Conservatives lost heavily, as did Labour. The other three parties that are reported to have gained are the Greens, the Liberal Democrats and Reform. But if you add up the losses and the gains, what you will find is that Labour and the Conservatives, the traditional parties of power in the UK, lost 833 seats, and the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and Reform, the challengers to those traditional parties of power in the UK, won 835 seats. There were some independents involved as well, by the way, which is how the equation balances, but fundamentally, when we just look at political parties, the parties who are committed to the two party, first-past-the-post electoral system in this country, who are the Conservatives and Labour, lost this election and the parties who are committed to electoral reform, in other words, to the introduction of proportional representation, who are the Liberal Democrats, the Greens and Reform, won this election.

The people of this country have already, in effect, spoken. They have said that they've had enough of conventional political power in the UK. They do not want the Conservatives and Labour in office anymore in the way that they have traditionally dominated elections in this country, and they're looking elsewhere.

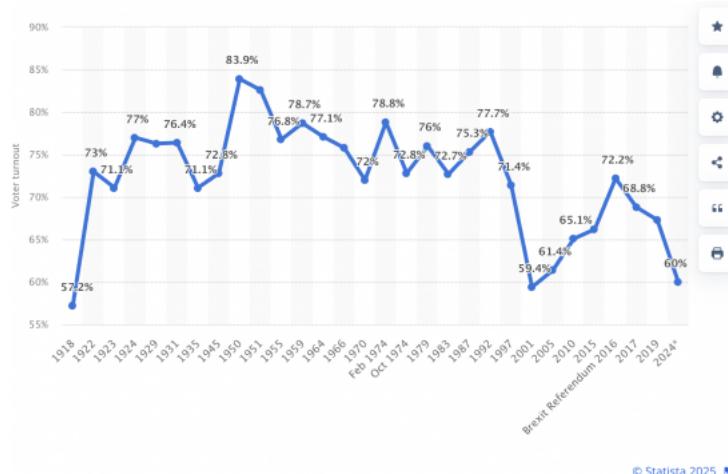
And this is also seen if we look at long-term changes in the pattern of voting for those parties. [The chart](#) I'm now putting up comes from a company called Statista, but it's free, open-access data, and it shows the share of votes of political parties in UK general elections since 1918. In other words, since the end of the First World War and the beginning of the introduction of a universal franchise in this country, which was achieved when all women got the vote in 1928.



And what you will see is something quite dramatic. Labour and the Tories absolutely dominated for decades. In fact, once things settled down, and the Liberal Party began to fade away in the 1920s and early 1930s, we went through long periods of time when there was going to be no challenge of any sort whatsoever to the power sharing between Labour and the Conservatives. They are the top two lines there, using their traditional colours; blue for the Conservatives; red for Labour, and you can see how they swap positions, but they were never really threatened.

But that has now changed. If we look at the 2024 election result, we'll first of all see that the Liberal Democrats did not do as well as they had sometimes done during the course of this period, but Reform were clearly challenging, but also we have to take into consideration the challenges from other parties, including the Greens, Plaid Cymru in Wales, and the SNP in Scotland. Put them together, plus the votes that are cast in Northern Ireland for different parties as well, and what you see is that we are facing an entirely different electoral future from that which we have had even in the recent past. The power of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party to dominate British elections is changing.

At the same time, there's another indication of this disenchantment with the power of those two parties. [This chart](#) looks at voter turnout in the UK; in other words, the percentage of people who are registered to vote who actually vote. And as you'll see, this went up dramatically after 1918, because in that year many people didn't vote because they were either still away at things like war, or they had yet to get their heads around the fact that they could vote, and it reached a peak of 83.9% of registered voters actually casting a vote in the early 1950s, when people cared about creating the post-war consensus.



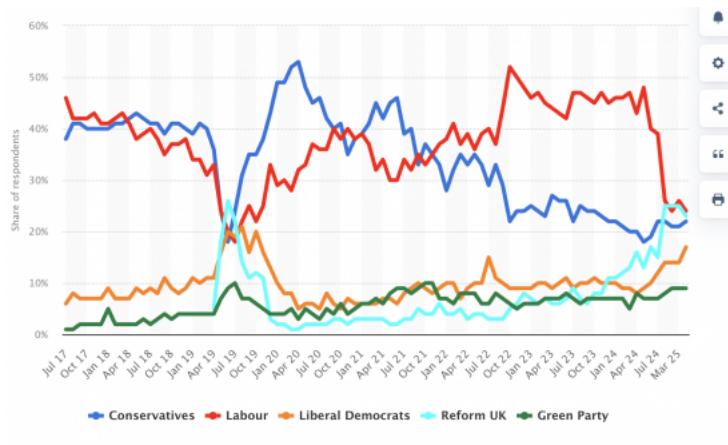
And that level of concern for our future survived right through until the mid-1980s, into the Thatcher years, when it seems as though something quite dramatic happened. As we saw the collapse of Thatcher and the failure of the Tory government that followed, riddled with all sorts of stories about corruption, ineptitude and everything else under John Major's Prime Ministership, we saw a collapse in the number of people who voted.

That happened in 1997. Tony Blair was elected with 71.4% of the vote, and in 2001, he was elected with just 59.4% of the vote.

This time in 2024, there were just 60% of people who were registered to vote who did actually vote.

It went up a bit in the meantime, but we have never captured the idea of voting again as we did in the post-war years because people feel alienated from the process because, as they so often say these days, 'they're all the same'. And the reality is that they probably are.

And this we now see turning into voter volatility. My [next chart](#) shows the change in opinion polls between July 2017 and March 2025. Voter volatility is very clear. People are getting fed up with the traditional parties. Labour might have done particularly well between 2021 and 2024 when the Tories were just doing so abysmally after Boris Johnson got booted out, Rishi Sunak was unpopular, Liz Truss was unbelievably bad, and Labour did well. But the truth is that if you look at the underlying trend of the period from April 2020 onwards, when Covid happened to now, you'll see that other parties are rising in popularity. Whether that be Reform, whether that be the Liberal Democrats, whether that be the Greens, we are seeing other parties, and of course, in Wales and in Scotland, their own respective parties, Plaid Cymru and the SNP, growing in strength. The hegemony of those two major political parties is collapsing. So, not only are fewer people voting, but fewer people are voting for them as well.



There's another particularly important point to note at this time, and that is that the Register of Voters is becoming smaller in the UK. The data [that I now have on screen](#) looks at this particular issue, and it shows the estimated degree of completeness of the voter register for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The figures are separate for the two. Great Britain is the blue line. Northern Ireland is the red line, and as you'll see, the blue line, which represents, of course, by far the biggest number of voters, is falling.

Levels of local government register completeness

for Great Britain and Northern Ireland



There were 96% of people who were believed to be registered to vote in the 1950s and sixties.

That number has now fallen to the mid-eighties, at best. Around 15% of people in the UK who could vote aren't even on the electoral register, and more recent moves made by the last Conservative government have made harder, of course. There are impediments put in the way of people who try to vote now. Students find it quite hard because they do not have a place of permanent residence. People who do have a place of permanent residence, but who don't have conventional forms of ID because they don't need a passport, they haven't got a driving license or whatever else, find it very difficult to get onto that electoral register.

And the consequence is quite clear. In 2024, only 60% of people voted. Of those people, only 39% voted for Labour. As a consequence, Labour was elected with 23.4% of those people who were registered to vote supporting them. But if we take into account the fact that only 86% of people in the UK were actually registered to vote, the number of people who actually voted for Labour fell to just 20.1% of the UK adult population with an entitlement to vote. Just one in five people chose a government with a supposed landslide majority.

This is not democracy at work.

This is not voters having control of the electoral system or of our politics, or of how we wish to be governed.

And let's be clear, there are other problems inside this issue which are actually hidden by those raw statistics.

For example, in Scotland, the estimated number of voters is only estimated to be 81% of the total potential electorate, and the numbers also vary by ethnicity. 87% of people who are white are registered to vote, but only 80% of Asian people are, and only 72% of black people are.

Now, this, again, emphasises that there are massive social differences and obstacles to potential voting here. It's therefore clear that we have a non-functioning electoral system in the UK. We need, very urgently, to ensure that voters can take back control of British politics if we are going to be governed by people who we want to be in charge of this country.

And to me this seems to be absolutely fundamental to the future well-being of the UK as a whole, or to its individual member countries if they decide to become independent, and to the administration also of local authorities, wherever you might be in the UK as a whole, and whichever country you might be living in.

Therefore, we need to think about what we need to do to put things right.

There are some things which are incredibly simple and straightforward and do not have to do with voting. For example, we should be banning all foreign money from involvement in UK elections.

We should be banning all donations to political parties from anyone of more than £10,000 a year.

We might consider banning all corporate donations to parties because companies can't vote, so why should they be able to make payments to political parties unless they're looking for favours, and we really don't want to go there.

We do need to provide funding to candidates who want to stand for election in the UK, because why should there be a wealth criterion still in place, meaning that unless you can get access to funds, you can't stand for election?

Now, I'm not suggesting that money should be handed out to anybody who wants to stand. I suggest that maybe somebody should be required, depending on the election, but I'm talking about a general election here, to get at least the support of 500 people inside a constituency before they might be allowed to stand. But once they do, I think they should get state funding to assist them to do so, up to a reasonable level. And there should be a decided cap on the total amount that any candidate should be able to spend.

We could actually achieve this goal very simply. When somebody is registered to vote, they could indicate whether they were a supporter of a particular party or candidate, or could do so subsequently, and that would solve this problem of indicating support.

We should also be looking at automatic voter enrollment as well. I think that this one is absolutely fundamental now. Instead of putting impediments in the way of voting, which it appears that Conservative and Labour politicians have been keen to do, we should be looking at how we can get people to vote. So people should be automatically enrolled on the electoral register, on the basis of paying council tax, because councils know who is living in most properties. We should be doing so on the basis of passports and driver's licenses and maybe details of who and where old age pensioners are, or the recipients of benefits are, or who is registered at a surgery for GPs. All of these things could be used as the basis for registration without breaching confidentiality. We are, after all, only collecting names and addresses and nothing more, and for a decided social purpose, which is ensuring that people are allowed to vote.

We could consider mandatory voting, but personally, I think that might be going too far, although it works in countries like Australia and works very well, and I therefore think that it is not out of consideration here, but particularly, we should change our voting system. It is quite absurd that the UK still uses the first-past-the-post voting system, which is only used by one other country in Europe, which is Belarus, and you don't really want to be compared to Belarus when it comes to the efficiency of voting.

systems, because that's a dictatorship.

We should have a proportional representation system, in my opinion, based on what is called a single transferable vote, so that when we turn up at the polling booth, we can indicate our preference for candidates in order of priority.

So that I don't just vote for Labour or Green or Liberal Democrat or whoever else it might be that I choose to vote for; Tory or Reform, if I wanted. I could choose to vote for a Conservative candidate first, and a Liberal Democrat second, and a Labour third and a Green fourth, and a Reform fifth, if that was my preference.

The point is that then, once first preferences have been counted and the person at the bottom falls out, the rest of the votes begin to be reallocated, and we eventually end up with a list of candidates who will be elected.

Now, let's be clear. This does mean that we would have to change the way in which our constituencies work. Tory and Labour MPs say that this would destroy the relationship between us as voters and our elected member of Parliament. There must be a one-to-one relationship.

Well, that is complete nonsense. In my 67 years, I have never been to see my MP. One reason for that is that in my 67 years, I have hardly ever voted for the person who represents me in Parliament, so I'm not really very interested in going to see them.

What I would like is that there be constituencies with about seven MPs in them. That would on average represent about half a county in the UK; obviously slightly different inside metropolitan and city areas, but broadly speaking, a region of around seven MPs, is big enough to ensure that most leading parties would get a look in in that area and have a constituency MP, and you would vote for up to seven people as a consequence.

The voting will be complicated, I don't dispute it, but if we can't handle that, we can't handle anything in this country, and it would take a little longer to come up with a result, but so what? The point is we would end up with MPs who actually have been voted for by a majority of people in their constituencies.

They will be the people that we want.

They will therefore represent us, and there will be a variety of them, which again reflects the communities that we live in because I don't know a single community in this country which has ever been entirely Conservative or entirely Labour, or entirely Liberal Democrat, or anything else. No, they actually are made up of a wide variety of people, and that's what we should have here.

What will be the benefits?

Fair representation inside the electoral system. It will be truly democratic, and that has

to be brilliant.

Everyone is likely to have an MP they voted for. That will also increase the likelihood that people will be interested in politics.

We will see more political parties and we will see a greater diversity of opinion being put before us to choose between at elections, and I think that would be fantastic.

It would, of course, mean that Nigel Farage, as things stand, would have more members of parliament. And so he should. If more than 20% of people in this country want to vote Reform, then Parliament should reflect that fact. It is wrong that it does not, even though I do not like what his party stands for. That would mean that we would hold him accountable.

We would also break the control of the two-party system, and we need to do that because these two parties are now failing us, and they're failing us very largely because of their conceit about the fact that they're always going to be returned to power at some time in the future. They need to lose that certainty.

What we need now are strong ideas, people with the ability to cooperate and work with each other, and people who understand that they have to be accountable to people. Those are the people we need in parliament. That is what electoral reform would deliver, and that is what we need now in this country if we are going to see the opportunity for our country to be revived, led from the top.