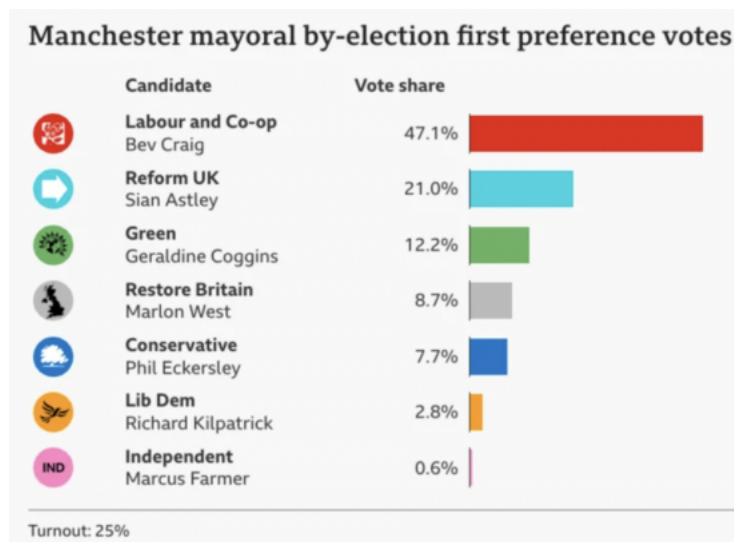


Is Farage over?

Published: August 2, 2026, 7:13 am

Farage and Reform failed again in the Manchester mayoral election on Thursday, which was announced late on Friday. This was the BBC's summary of the first preference voting:



On second preferences, Labour won by a 2:1 margin over Reform, with all other candidates having been eliminated.

There is a very clear pattern emerging here. Farage is losing. This is the third time this year he has lost in Manchester, an area where Reform has to win if it is to have any influence in creating a future government.

Admittedly, the result points to tactical voting. This, though, probably helped both Labour and Reform. The LibDem vote did, I suspect, either move towards Labour or the Greens, whilst the Tory vote presumably went to Reform. Something has to explain the Conservatives' abysmal performance and the increase in the Reform voter share on second preference, presumably from both Restore and the Tories, justifying my description of all three as being on the far right in the minds of voters.

That said, I think it's fair to draw some conclusions.

The first is that voter turnout was incredibly low, but nobody would choose to hold a by-election at the end of July, although I note Farage has opted to have one in the middle of August, showing how little he knows about these issues.

Second, whilst it is clear that Farage can still command the right, leaving both the Conservatives and Restore trailing, it is apparent that his appeal is fading. His own immature antics in calling a by-election in Clacton, his evasion of questions about his funding, and the sense of sleaze that now surrounds his party are all leading to a stench that is making it very hard for enough people to support Reform, wherever they stand, to secure sufficient votes to win when it matters. The fact that so many of their councillors elected in May have already quit does also provide an indication of the lack of suitability of those standing for this party to hold office.

Third, that said, as the second preferences revealed, one third of the UK electorate are willing to support the far right, ignoring the sleaze when doing so. There are no grounds for complacency in this result, but there are definite signs that the Farage bandwagon is coming off the road, and that the man himself has no clue how to deal with the problems that he has created for himself, his party and the credibility of far right politics in the UK, if it ever had any.