

# General election 2015

The 2015 general election was the most unpredictable in decades. Opinion was fiercely divided, right up until the polls closed at 10 p.m. on 7 May, on who would form the next government. One thing everybody, including the pollsters, was agreed on was that it was highly unlikely that any party would win an outright majority. How wrong they were...



**Labour loses the election**  
Ed Miliband resigned as the Labour Party leader after a 'very disappointing night'. Shadow chancellor Ed Balls, the Scottish Labour Party leader Jim Murphy and Douglas Alexander (the Labour Party's election strategist) all lost their seats. Labour did, however, manage to defeat the Respect candidate 'Glorious George' Galloway in Bradford West and the Conservative minister Esther McVey in Wirral West.

**Limited success**  
Nationalism in Wales was less successful with Leanne Wood's Plaid Cymru only winning 3 seats, the same as in 2010, and only increasing its share of the vote by 1%.

**Sturgeon and the SNP sweep Scotland**  
The SNP stole the show, winning 56 out of 59 of the seats available in Scotland, leaving Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats with one seat each. Nicola Sturgeon was said to be 'bursting with pride'. Twenty-year old Mhairi Black became the youngest MP since 1667 when she defeated Labour's Douglas Alexander. Alex Salmond remarked that 'the Scottish lion has roared'.

**Multi-party politics?**  
This election saw the emergence of multi-party politics. Seven leaders took part in televised debates and could potentially have occupied 10 Downing Street. By lunchtime on 8 May, three of these individuals had resigned as leader of their party. Nigel Farage was first, followed by Nick Clegg and then Ed Miliband.

**Just one seat**  
The Green Party leader Natalie Bennett failed to win her seat, but the Greens kept their one seat thanks to Caroline Lucas holding onto the constituency of Brighton Pavilion. The party significantly increased its share of the vote nationally.

**'A cruel and punishing night for the Liberal Democrats'**  
Although Nick Clegg kept his seat, many other high-profile Liberal Democrat MPs failed to do so, including Danny Alexander, Vince Cable, Charles Kennedy, David Laws, Simon Hughes, Ed Davey and Jo Swinson. The Liberal Democrats only won 8 seats compared to 57 seats in 2010. It was their worst result since 1970. Nick Clegg resigned as party leader, taking full responsibility for the defeat.

**Farewell to Farage? Not for long...and Reckless wrecks his chance**  
Douglas Carswell (the first Conservative MP to defect to UKIP) was the only UKIP candidate to be elected to the 2015 Parliament. He held onto the Clacton seat that he won in the October 2014 by-election. Mark Reckless (the second Conservative defector to UKIP) lost his seat. Nigel Farage resigned, temporarily, as UKIP party leader after failing to win his seat of Thanet South. Three days later, Farage was reinstated after the party refused to accept his resignation.

**Cameron's Conservatives conquer**  
David Cameron described the evening of 7 May 2015 as 'a very strong night for the Conservatives'. They won 331 seats, allowing them to form a majority government.  
The 2015-20 Parliament will comprise a record number of female MPs (now 28.8%, up from 22.8% in 2010) and ethnic minority MPs (now 6.3%, up from 4.2% in 2010).

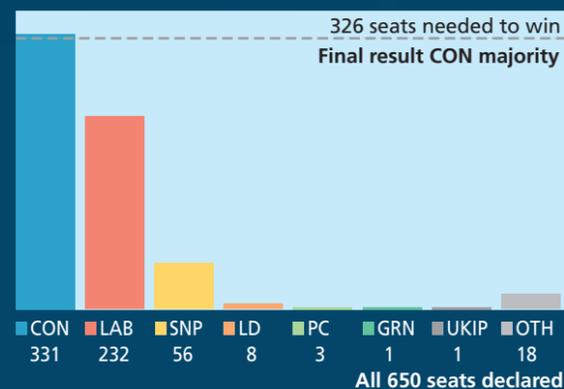


Figure 1 Final results (no. of seats won by each party)



Figure 2 The geographical distribution of seats won by each party

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