

MNI POLITICAL RISK – What To Watch Out For On UK Election Night

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In this article we present an hour-by-hour guide as to the key events to watch out for during the course of the UK's general election night.

All times are approximate.

2200GMT (1700ET, 2300CET, 0600HKT)

- Polling stations close across the UK and within seconds the exit poll will be released. This is likely to be a significant market-moving event.
- In 2017 the exit poll correctly projected the result of the Conservatives losing their majority. It is not infallible, though, with the 2015 exit poll simply projecting the Conservatives as the largest party, rather than the eventual result of a Conservative majority.

2201-0100GMT (1701-2000ET, 2301-0200CET, 0601-0900HKT) – Seats Declaring: 7

- Very little of note to occur during this period, with most constituencies still counting.
- All seven of the constituencies set to announce their results in this period are safe Labour seats with little-to-no chance of an upset. Labour holds do not necessarily indicate a strong night for the party.
- **Newcastle Central** and **Sunderland and Houghton** will race, as has become custom, to be the first constituency to declare their result.

0100-0130GMT (2000-2030ET, 0200-0230CET, 0900-0930HKT) – Seats Declaring: 10

- First important swing seat to be declared in this period, with the Labour-held seat of **Workington** giving its name to the 'Workington man' demographic that became a focal point of the campaign. Working class, Leave-voting, but historically Labour supporting, 'Workington man' is the voter the Conservatives need to win over in droves to gain a majority. Seen as a toss-up in the YouGov MRP, the Conservatives winning Workington could be the first sign of a good night for Prime Minister Boris Johnson's party.
- **North Down** declares in Northern Ireland. Long-standing independent unionist Lady Sylvia Hermon standing down at this election, with the seat becoming a three-way tussle between Democratic Unionist Party, Ulster Unionist Party, and cross-community Alliance. The latter could support Jeremy Corbyn's Labour in a hung parliament.
- A hold for Labour in the central Scottish seat of **Rutherglen and Hamilton West** against the Scottish National Party (SNP) could point towards a better night than expected for Labour north of the border.

0130-0200GMT (2030-2100ET, 0230-0300CET, 0930-1000HKT) – Seats Declaring: 4

- Only a few seats in this period. **Darlington** is another Conservative target in northern England's 'Red Wall', and if Johnson's party wins it for the first time since 1987 it could be another early sign of a Conservative majority in the offing.

0200-0230GMT (2100-2130ET, 0300-0330CET, 1000-1030HKT) – Seats Declaring: 77

- **Election night begins proper** with 77 seats due to declare in this time period.
- **Lanark and Hamilton East** a key Conservative-SNP marginal currently held by the latter, a gain for the Conservatives would be a notable blow to Sturgeon's party.
- The wealthy, Remain-supporting south west London seat of **Putney** is one of the few seats that Labour has a strong chance of actively winning off the Conservatives. Its outgoing MP Justine Greening left the party over its Brexit policy.
- **Bury North** and **Bury South** both due, and both seen as essential gains for the Conservatives if they are to win a majority. Outgoing former Labour Bury South MP Ivan Lewis has taken the step of endorsing the Conservative candidate despite standing as an independent himself.
- **Clwyd South** is the first Welsh marginal seat to declare, with the Conservatives pinning it as one of several Labour-held seats in north Wales forming the westernmost edge of the Red Wall.
- Should the Conservatives win the Lancashire seat of **Leigh**, held continuously by Labour since 1922, it would be a signal that the Conservatives are not just on for a majority, but a landslide win.
- Two seats held by former 'big beats' set to declare. Former Labour Deputy leader Tom Watson's **West Bromwich East** and former Chancellor Kenneth Clarke's **Rushcliffe** (held continuously by Clarke since 1970) both on course to remain Labour and Conservative respectively.

0230-0300GMT (2130-2200ET, 0330-0400CET, 1030-1100HKT) – Seats Declaring: 22

- **Angus** is another Conservative-SNP marginal, with an SNP gain hinting towards notable losses for the Conservatives in Scotland – something Johnson's party had been seeking to arrest in the last week of campaigning.
- The southern Welsh seat of **Gower** due to declare. Should the Conservatives take it off Labour it would be a significant blow to Corbyn's party which won it in a hard-fought contest in 2017. The reverse is the case in the London commuter town of **Watford**, where a Labour gain from the Conservatives would almost certainly signal Johnson is short of a majority.

0300-0330GMT (2200-2230ET, 0400-0430CET, 1100-1130HKT) – Seats Declaring: 198

- **The biggest half hour for seat declarations of the night. Result will almost certainly be clear by the end of this time period.**
- Several historic strongholds for the Conservatives at risk from Remain-supporters abandoning the party. Incumbents Dominic Grieve and Anne Milton are contesting **Beaconsfield** and **Guildford** respectively as independents after leaving/being ejected from the Conservatives over their Brexit policy. Grieve has the better chance of causing an upset, whereas Milton could siphon votes from the Conservatives to allow the Liberal Democrats through to take Guildford. **Chelsea and Fulham**, **Wimbledon**, and the **Cities of London and Westminster** all have strong Liberal

Democrat challenges and very large Remain votes. In **Wokingham**, veteran Eurosceptic John Redwood is at risk from a Liberal Democrat challenge in the leafy, Remain-supporting commuter town. Redwood has held the seat since 1987, but former Conservative MP Philip Lee is offering a robust challenge having switched seats from neighbouring Leave-voting Bracknell. The loss of these seats would almost certainly deny the Conservatives a majority.

- Two party leaders' seats due to be called, with votes for Labour's Jeremy Corbyn being 'weighed not counted' (implying a landslide win) in **Islington North**. Meanwhile Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson is facing a major SNP assault on her 5,339 majority in **East Dunbartonshire**. YouGov MRP has the seat only as 'leaning Lib Dem'.
- In two of the most closely watched seats for those not inclined towards the Conservatives, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab's **Esher and Walton**, and former Conservative leader Iain Duncan-Smith's **Chingford and Woodford Green** are both at risk of losing their contests against the Liberal Democrats and Labour respectively. If one or both go they will be claimed as 'Portillo moments' (referring to the famous defeat of sitting Cabinet Minister Michael Portillo in Enfield Southgate in Tony Blair's 1997 Labour landslide).
- A swathe of Labour held seats in northern England, north Wales, and the Midlands the Conservatives are seeking to win on their 'Get Brexit Done' manifesto due to be called. **Bedford, Bishop Auckland, Bolton North East, Delyn, Great Grimsby, Gedling, Hyndburn, Peterborough, Redcar, Southport, Stroud, Walsall South, Vale of Clwyd, and Ynys Mon** all important seats, with Labour holds potentially denying the Conservatives a majority, but Conservative gains redrawing the political map of England.
- **Sedgefield** at risk of going to the Conservatives, of course remembered as Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair's former seat.
- The Democratic Unionist Party's Westminster leader Nigel Dodds will be hoping to hold off a challenge from Sinn Fein in his marginal constituency of **North Belfast**.

0330-0400GMT (2230-2300ET, 0430-0500CET, 1130-1200HKT – Seats Declaring: 25

- Something of a lull during this period, with only a few key marginals in this half hour.
- **Aberconwy** in north Wales is a toss up between the Conservatives and Labour. Outgoing MP Guto Bebb lost the Conservative whip in October due to him voting against the government over Brexit. An essential seat to hold for the Conservatives.
- It is the same story in **Hastings and Rye** on the English Channel, where incumbent Amber Rudd is not standing after resigning from the Conservatives over Boris Johnson's Brexit plan. Rudd won with a majority of just 346 votes over Labour in 2017.
- SNP's shadow Leader of the Commons Pete Wishart faces a challenge from the Conservatives in his **Perth and North Perthshire** seat. If he is ousted it bodes well for a Conservative majority boosted by a healthy Scottish Conservative presence.

0400-0430GMT (2300-2330ET, 0500-0530CET, 1200-1230HKT) – Seats Declaring: 178

- **The second major half-hour for seat declarations of the evening.** If the result was not clear already, it should be by 0430GMT.

- The final bricks in the 'Red Wall' should either be holding fast or falling blue, with **Bassetlaw, Batley and Spen, Crewe and Nantwich, Penistone and Stockbridge, Rother Valley, and Scunthorpe** all Labour seats the party will be desperate to hold onto to deny Johnson a majority.
- Labour's seat numbers will receive a healthy boost as all the seats in Birmingham and Manchester declare.
- Several senior figures' seats to be called including Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott's **Hackney North and Stoke Newington**, former Prime Minister Theresa May's **Maidenhead**, and Leader of the House Jacob Rees-Mogg's **North East Somerset**. The first two are safe for the incumbents, and Rees-Mogg should also hold on, although his position as a figure of hatred/ridicule among opponents to the Conservatives could put his seat at risk.
- An eternal marginal seat, **Fermanagh and South Tyrone** on the Ireland-Northern Ireland border is set to come down to the wire between Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionist Party. In a strange state of affairs, Sinn Fein retaining the seat could benefit the Conservatives as the Irish republicans do not take their seats in the Commons (reducing the number required for a majority), whereas a UUP win could see another MP opposed to Johnson's Brexit deal.
- **St Albans** is set to be an easy gain for the Liberal Democrats from the Conservatives. However, the Conservatives are on course to reverse this loss, taking **North Norfolk** from the Liberal Democrats after long-standing MP Norman Smith stood down.
- Some key Scottish marginals set to be called, with **Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, Motherwell and Wishaw, and North East Fife** all coming in this half-hour. North East Fife was won by the SNP in 2017 with a two-vote margin over the Liberal Democrats. The SNP is also challenging the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in Berwickshire and Caithness respectively. The SNP themselves are holding off a two-pronged challenge from Labour and the Conservatives in Motherwell.
- The two Reading seats, **Reading West** and **Reading East**, both marginals, the former Conservative the latter Labour, due to call. Should Labour take both it could point towards Corbyn's party making major inroads in Remain-supporting south east England.

0430-0500GMT (2330-0000ET, 0530-0600CET, 1230-1300HKT) – Seats Declaring: 15

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson's seat of **Uxbridge and South Ruislip** set to declare. Could be the most dramatic of moments should the sitting prime minister lose his seat and set off a flurry of activity if this comes despite a Conservative majority coming together.
- Two marginals to keep an eye on, one for each major party. **Preseli Pembrokeshire** in far west Wales held by former Conservative minister Stephen Crabb by 314 votes over Labour in 2017, while Labour had the shock result of the night in 2017, winning wealthy **Kensington** off the Conservatives. Liberal Democrats making a strong challenge in the latter, with Conservative defector Sam Gyimah their candidate.

0500-0530GMT (0000-0030ET, 0600-0630CET, 1300-1330HKT) – Seats Declaring: 89

- **Last major period of seat declarations of the night.**
- Another round of Conservative-held Scottish marginals, with **West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, Banff and Buchan**, and **Gordon** all due to give results. YouGov MRP has the former two as narrow Conservative holds, but the third – once former SNP leader Alex Salmond’s seat – is too close to call.
- Labour MP since 1970, Denis Skinner’s **Bolsover** could fall to the Conservatives, alongside **Stoke-on-Trent Central** and **Stoke-on-Trent North**. All three would represent losses of Labour seats in historic Labour heartlands.
- The Liberal Democrats will be hoping for a better night than polls suggest in taking **Winchester** and **South East Cambridgeshire** off the Conservatives.
- Former Conservative Justice Secretary David Gauke will be looking to cause an upset and retain the Remain-supporting **South West Hertfordshire** as an independent candidate. He was another who lost the Conservative whip over voting against the government on Brexit.
- Labour target **Southampton Itchen**, won by the Conservatives by just 31 votes in 2017, should deliver its result. YouGov MRP has it as a likely Conservative seat but result within the margin of error.

0530-0600GMT (0030-0100ET, 0630-0700CET, 1330-1400HKT) – Seats Declaring: 4

- Seats declaring dries up from hereon in. If the election result is not clear by this point, it could take until mid-morning for final results to come in. The four seats set to declare in this period are all fairly tight, though.
- Environment Secretary and prominent Leave campaigner Theresa Villiers is projected to lose her north London **Chipping Barnet** seat to Labour.
- Staying in north London, two Conservative constituencies with large Jewish populations, **Hendon** and **Finchley and Golders Green**, are both vulnerable. Labour have made a comeback in Hendon, after initial damage done by the party’s anti-Semitism scandal. In neighbouring Finchley and Golders Green, a Jewish former Labour MP, Luciana Berger, is standing for the Liberal Democrats.
- Finally, on the north-west coast of England, **Barrow and Furness**, a centre of English shipbuilding and nuclear submarine construction is a likely Conservative gain from Labour. Its outgoing MP John Woodcock is another former Labour holder of the seat now advocating voters to support the Conservatives.

0600-0700GMT (0100-0200ET, 0700-0800CET, 1400-1500HKT) – Seats Declaring: 12

- One of the very few seats in which an independent candidate could win, **East Devon** is due to call. Incumbent Conservative Sir Hugo Swire faces a tough challenge from independent Claire Wright, whose independent group became the largest group on the East Devon council in the 2019 local elections. The seat and its predecessors have been held by the Conservatives since 1835, the longest period of unbroken representation by a single party of any seat in the country.
- Conservative Zac Goldsmith is likely to lose his **Richmond Park** constituency to the Liberal Democrats. Won by just 45 votes in 2017, the leafy, affluent seat in west London voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, leaving the Leave-supporting Goldsmith with only a slim chance of holding on.

0700-0800GMT (0200-0300ET, 0800-0900CET, 1500-1600HKT) – Seats Declaring: 4

- **Brighton Pavilion** is set to deliver the sole Green MP of the election with former party leader Caroline Lucas set to hold on, while the other two Brighton constituencies, **Brighton Kemptown** and **Hove**, will deliver two safe Labour holds.
- The Conservatives are looking to hold onto **Truro and Falmouth** in Cornwall, with the YouGov MRP projecting a narrow Conservative win, but a collapse in Liberal Democrat support could give Labour a boost from second to first here.

0800-0900GMT (0300-0400ET, 0900-1000CET, 1600-1700HKT) – Seats Declaring: 1

- The south-westernmost constituency in the UK, **St Ives** is likely to be a close contest between the incumbent Conservatives and challenger Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives won the seat from the Liberal Democrats in 2015 and held on by just 312 votes two years later.

0900-1000GMT (0400-0500ET, 1000-1100CET, 1700-1800HKT) – Seats Declaring: 1

- Only one constituency due to declare this hour, and it is a safe Conservative hold: **St Austell and Newquay**. Should this change hands then the Conservatives will already have lost the election.

1000GMT Onwards (0500ET, 1100CET, 1800HKT Onwards) – Seats Declaring 2

- The final two seats to declare, both in the far-southwest of England in Cornwall. South East Cornwall should be a routine hold for the Conservatives, but a poor night for the Conservatives and outperformance by the Liberal Democrats could put North Cornwall – held by the Liberal Democrats until 2015 – into play.