

# **WE DIVIDE THEY CONQUER**

**If Labour struggles to win alone,  
what is to be done?**

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### **About Compass and this project**

Compass is platform for a good society, a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build networks of ideas, parties and organisations to help make systemic change happen. Our strategic focus is to understand, build, support and accelerate new forms of democratic practice and collaborative action that are taking place in civil society and the economy, and to link that up with state reforms and policy. The meeting point of emerging horizontal participation and vertical resources and policy we call [45° Change](#). The question we are trying to help solve, as we endeavour to #BuildBackBetter, is not just what sort of society we want, but, increasingly, how to make it happen?

# Introduction

The Tories have been in office for a long and miserable decade. Progressive parties have suffered four defeats in a row. Many of the advances the last Labour government put in place have been undone. The General Election a year ago was so bad it looks entirely possible that we could be talking about just that: the last Labour Government.

Of course under new leadership and with some uplift in the polls, members search for reasons to be cheerful and hope springs eternal. It is true that Labour is doing better, but the odds are stacked against it. Like the gambler putting another coin in the election slot machine, hope alone is simply not good enough. It's not good enough for Labour and not good enough for everyone who needs a change of government.

At the next election - expected in 2024, but very possibly sooner given the Fixed Term Parliament Act is being repealed - Labour needs to gain 124 seats to win with a majority of just one. That would be equivalent to a uniform swing of 10.52%, larger than the Labour landslides of 1997 and 1945. And while uniform swing is known to be an imprecise measure, it's enough to give us an idea of the scale of the challenge ahead.

This “best case” scenario also assumes that Labour can make a big comeback in Scotland. Discounting Scottish seats leaves Labour needing an unprecedented uniform swing of 13.8%, and winning all 124 seats would require constituency swings of as high as 15%. Add in looming boundary changes, and the fact that the Brexit Party won't be around to deflect votes from the Tories, and it gets worse still. In 2019, the number of votes for the Brexit Party was larger than Labour's majority in 27 seats, places like Dagenham & Rainham, Doncaster North and Central, Houghton and Sunderland South, and Hartlepool.

But we do live in unprecedented times. Why rule out an unprecedented Labour comeback? Few saw Brexit or Trump coming - surely something can turn up? That is the gamble some might take. But why put all our eggs in one (very small) basket? At the very least, Labour will need a backup plan, an insurance policy, in the event that this vanishingly remote chance of (just about) winning doesn't play out as hoped.

The electoral facts point to one conclusion: Labour will struggle to win alone. So the party can choose to lose alone and remain in opposition, or build cross-party alliances, lead a new government and transform the democratic landscape.

But this isn't just about winning office, as critical as that is. It is also about governing the country effectively and meeting the incredibly complex challenges and opportunities we face: a post-Covid recovery, the threat of austerity, climate breakdown, the tech revolution changing work and behaviour, the care crisis, the democracy crisis and the rise of national

populism. Even if the odds are beaten and we get a Labour government with a tiny and unstable majority, how do we meet all that? It isn't just a new government we need, but a new politics.

New party leaders like Keir Starmer and Ed Davey are bound to focus on getting their own house in order; that is understandable. But if electoral alliances are to work, and the evidence suggests that they must, then we need to invest in them now. Trusted relationships and a common agenda will take time and patience to establish. Unless that work begins now, we won't be ready to dial up cooperation when it's needed.

A last-minute panic when the polling odds can no longer be defied will look like a coalition of losers. And indeed it will be.

If we start now, then it can be a new politics for a new society.

## The Electoral Challenge

If Labour needs 124 extra seats for a majority of one, where might those seats be found? First, in areas which are most marginal. There are 105 seats across the country where a swing to Labour of 8.9% or less would be needed. Even assuming that Labour can win every single one of these seats, and suffer no losses, that still leaves a shortfall. [Thomas Prosser suggests that voter realignment along lines of education level opening up additional seats to Starmer's Labour that were previously out of reach.](#)

This at first seems like a promising line of enquiry, particularly when we consider that many highly educated Conservative voters, despite their discomfort with Brexit and Johnson's leadership style, [stuck with the party in 2019 through fear of a Corbyn government.](#) However, Prosser can only identify a further 13 seats which become winnable for Labour under this logic<sup>1</sup>. These, combined with the 202 seats already held plus the 105 seats with a swing of less than 8.9%, would deliver Labour 320 seats. This position would then depend on [non-voting groups of MPs](#) for a (barely) working majority.

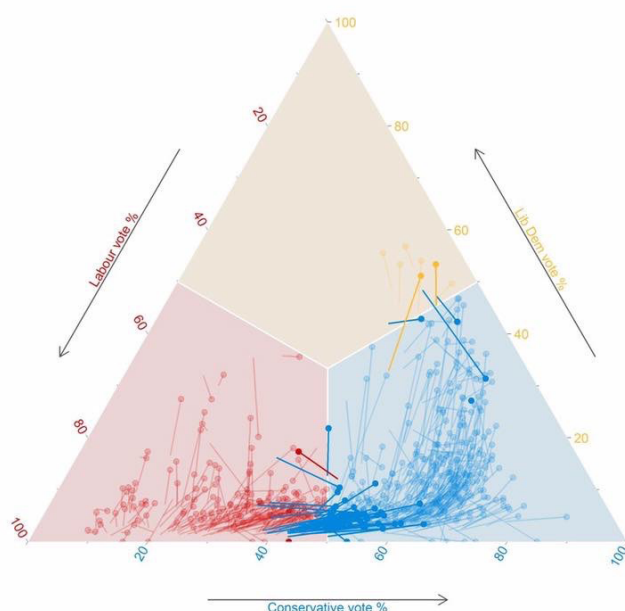
For the party to put all its hopes in such an unlikely outcome feels absurd. It's an argument that relies on voter volatility to win in those 13 crucial Labour gains, but also on stability to guarantee no Labour losses anywhere in the country. This level of realignment, which might see Labour winning seats like Basingstoke (which Labour have never won before and where the Conservatives currently hold over 50% of the vote) is unlikely to occur in a vacuum. Could Labour really win in places like Basingstoke while holding on in places like Coventry North West, where it holds a majority of just 208 votes? And this is before we consider the findings of [a recent report](#), that seats in the so-called "Red Wall" which fell to the Tories in 2019 may be "lost forever" if Labour continues to be seen as a "London-centric party".

## But the Conservatives can still lose

There is better news, though. Although the Conservatives hold an 80 seat majority, a uniform swing of only 3.18% away from them would be enough for them to lose it, What's more, the Liberal Democrats came second in 80 Conservative seats in 2019, of which 10 would require a constituency swing of less than 3% to flip.

Analysis of the 2017 and 2019 results show two clear battlegrounds emerging in British politics. One between Labour and the Conservatives, another between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives. There is barely any real fight between Labour and the Liberal Democrats (see graph).

Electoral shifts between 2017 and 2019 General Elections  
English constituencies only



Data from House of Commons library & @eldenvo | Plot by @VictimOfMaths

The Liberal Democrats are second in 80 Conservative seats where Labour has no chance of winning. Seats like Winchester, Esher and Walton, Cheltenham, Lewes St Ives, Eastbourne, and North Norfolk (see table). There are only a tiny handful of seats where Labour and the Liberal Democrats are in direct competition with each other: Sheffield Hallam, and some three-way marginals like Finchley and Golders Green, or the Cities of London and Westminster.

Constituency	Conservative Vote Share	Lib Dem Vote Share	Labour Vote Share
Winchester	48.3%	46.6%	4.6%

Esher & Walton	49.4%	45%	4.5%
North Norfolk	58.6%	30.3%	7.7%
Cheltenham	48%	46.4%	4.9%
Lewes	47.9%	43.5%	5.8%
St Ives	49.3%	41%	6.9%
Eastbourne	48.9%	41%	7%

Looking at the data, it's impossible to refute that - electorally speaking - Labour and the Liberal Democrats have no fight with each other. The Conservatives have to fight on two fronts, but can come out on top when their opponents fail to recognise this and, instead of uniting, fight one another. Just as the Brexit Party and the Conservatives in 2019 understood that, for all their differences, they could achieve far more through cooperation than opposition, Labour needs to take a long look at its electoral position and political principles, and consider who its real opponents are.

To illustrate this further, just look at the seats that could have been won from the Tories if - as was the case with regressive vote and the Brexit-Tory deal - the progressive vote had been more effectively utilised. Of course, voters are complex creatures and we are not saying that every vote can be transferred seamlessly between progressive parties. Nonetheless, most of these constituencies show a hypothetical progressive majority of over 1,000. In other words, this table shows quite clearly that every time progressives divide, the Right conquers.

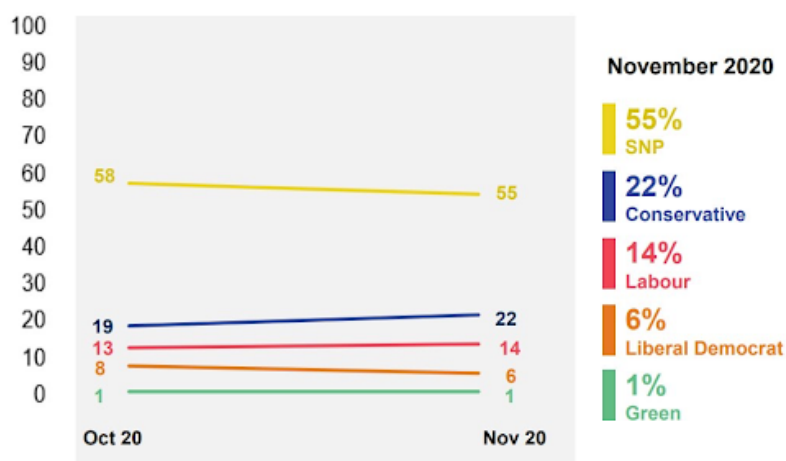
### The Progressive Tragedies in England and Wales

Constituency	Total Progressive Vote	Total Regressive Vote	Progressive majority
Wimbledon	32288	20373	11915
Chipping Barnet	31753	25745	6008
Kensington	26465	17152	9313
Cheadle	30209	25694	4515
South Cambridgeshire	35914	31015	4889
Chingford & Woodford Green	24963	23481	1482
Cities of London and Westminster	25448	17049	8399
Finchley and Golders Green	32288	24162	6785
Carshalton and Wallington	27033	21865	5168
Watford	31311	26421	4890
Cheadle	30209	25694	4515
Truro and Falmouth	31540	27237	4303

Wycombe	28549	24766	3783
Hitchin and Harpenden	30783	27719	3064
Southport	25266	22914	2352
Lewes	28470	26268	2202
High Peak	28152	26021	2131
Warrington South	31909	29822	2087
Rushcliffe	30722	28765	1957
Cheltenham	30426	28486	1940
Winchester	30168	28430	1738
Reading West	25999	24393	1606
Altrincham and Sale West	27774	26311	1463
Hendon	28197	26878	1319
Guildford	27495	26314	1178
Bury South	24795	23706	1089
Hazel Grove	22677	21592	1085
Bury North	23941	22900	1041
Filton and Bradley Stoke	27202	26293	909
Gedling	25415	24538	877
Milton Keynes North	31605	30938	667
Woking	26941	26396	545
Pudsey	26918	26453	465
Wokingham	31183	30736	449
Bolton North East	21917	21639	278
St Ives	25602	25365	237
Esher and Walton	31227	31132	95
Derby North	23215	23167	48
Dewsbury	28084	28053	31
Stroud	32696	32667	29
Sutton and Cheam	25252	25235	17
York Outer	27331	27324	7
Ynys Mon	21409	15143	6266
Aberconwy	17178	14687	2491
Bridgend	22232	20004	2228
Clwyd South	18616	17690	926
Delyn	19643	18727	916
Wrexham	17111	16421	690

Meanwhile, it doesn't look like Labour is making any sort of comeback in Scotland. Caught between the Unionist Conservatives and the increasingly popular SNP, the issue is not one of competence but political space. Labour is simply now starved of political oxygen north of the border.





## Boundary Changes

While tiny glimmers of hope may persist, the challenge ahead for Labour is enormous. The optimists call it 'a mountain to climb'. The pessimists call it 'impossible'. But the situation is even worse than it first appears. Whether their findings are implemented or not, independent reviews of constituency boundaries are required by law every five years. A new review has been commissioned to begin in 2021, and report in 2023. This means that, if enacted, the changes will be in place for the 2024 General Election.

Although the findings of this review are not set to be published until 2023, [Electoral Calculus has projected their approximate impact based on its stated aims and criteria.](#) The stated remit of this review is to retain the current number of constituencies (650) but regulate the size of each constituency so that the number of voters in each seat is as near identical as possible across the country. Working with this criteria, Electoral Calculus has been able to calculate that new constituencies will be created in the South and South East of England and removed in most other areas.

A region of particular concern for Labour is Wales. When Labour has won nationally in the recent past, it has done well here. In 1997 and 2001, it won 34 out of 40 seats. In 2010 it won 29 out of 40. In 2019, Labour won 22 seats in Wales, but Electoral Calculus' projection has them winning just 16

under the new boundaries. That means, in theory, Labour needs to win an additional six seats next time just to hold the line in Wales.

A similar picture emerges in Scotland. Although much has been made of the rise of the SNP there, Labour's problems are far more fundamental. There were 72 Scottish constituencies in 2001. The coming boundary review will reduce that to 58. Labour have never won a General Election with less than 41 seats in Scotland. This implies that Labour will have to dominate Scotland at the next election in order to win nationwide. It also seems unlikely that they will be taking seats off the Liberal Democrats or Conservatives, as they failed to capture any more than 10% of the vote in any Lib Dem or Tory held seats in 2019.

Applying these predicted boundary changes retrospectively to the 2019 result (see table), the picture is once again grim. The Conservatives would have won more than twice as many seats as Labour, the Liberal Democrats would have their seat share almost halved, and the Greens would see their only seat disappear and lose all representation in the Commons. Based on these projections, Labour would need to win an additional 9 seats just to make up the difference - taking their required gains to win a working majority from 124 up to 133. This is before we consider the additional 15 seats projected for the Conservatives under these new boundaries. In order to close the gap here alone, Labour would need to win 148 more seats than in 2019.

Party	2019 Votes	Actual (old) Seats	Example (new) Seats	Change
CON	44.7%	365	380	+15
LAB	33.0%	203	194	-9
LIB	11.8%	11	6	-5
Brexit	2.1%	0	0	0
Green	2.8%	1	0	-1
SNP	4.0%	48	49	+1
PlaidC	0.5%	4	3	-1
Other	1.1%	0	0	0
DUP		8	10	+2
SF		7	5	-2
SDLP		2	3	+1
Alliance		1	0	-1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>0</b>

While many may decry an unfair or "rigged" boundary and voting system, as long as progressives are out of power we have no hope of reforming that system. We have to win under these rules before we can change them.

## What now?

The electoral calculus shows that Labour can't win alone, and that fighting a phoney war with the Liberal Democrats leads to progressive tragedies and missed opportunities across the board.

So, what can we do? Some say Labour could go for a 1997 type Big Tent approach, but that is neither desirable nor feasible in 2024. The benign economic and climate conditions of the mid 1990s no longer exist, the country is more polarised and the electorate more fluid. 1997 was possible precisely because New Labour offered no transformative threat to the free market economic system. That led to the 2008 crash. Next time we need power and radicalism. One Big Tent is not enough. It will take a campsite, with many multicoloured tents clustered around the campfire of shared values to pull off a victory for a political purpose next time.

In spite of all these challenges, there are real opportunities out there to do serious electoral damage to the Conservatives in 2024 - but only if we work together. We've already seen how, in 59 seats won by the Tories in 2019, the progressive vote outnumbered the Conservative and Brexit Party vote combined. We can't afford to waste opportunities like this again at the next election.

Sceptics will be keen to point out that voters are unpredictable and we cannot assume the existence of a defined "progressive" voting bloc. It's plausible, especially in this dynamic political landscape, that some Green, Labour, or Liberal Democrat voters may prefer to vote Conservative as a second choice, or not vote at all.

We do not dispute this. The calculations above are not intended as an electoral projection, but as illustration of something more foundational. Political identities are increasingly complex, fluid and malleable. That's why any collaboration between the progressive parties needs to be built on broader cultural shifts and a place of genuine shared aims and values.

## **Progressive parties are already highly aligned on many issues**

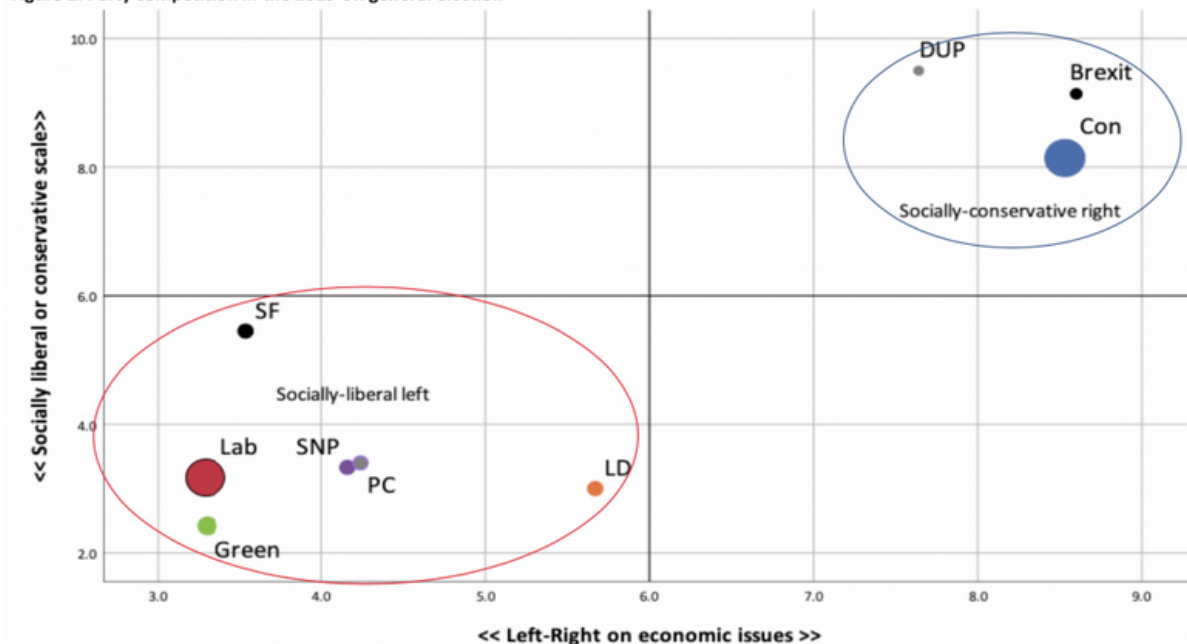
Fortunately, the foundations for such a cooperative project are already in place.

First of all, although it's often forgotten amid the adversarial tribalism of FPTP, Labour and the Liberal Democrats have a long and productive history of mutually beneficial collaboration. Perhaps the most well known example is the [Cook-Maclennan agreement of 1997](#), but this style of operating has been [a feature of progressive politics in Britain throughout the 20th century](#). The 2017 "Progressive Alliance" campaign - though hastily arranged and imperfect in its application - also proved that the appetite and capability for this work exists across all parties of the centre Left<sup>2</sup>. Labour has successfully shared power in the recent past in Scotland with the Liberal Democrats and is doing so again now in Wales.

Second, analysis of the party manifestos in 2019 shows the political distance between Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, SNP,

and Plaid Cymru to be small or non-existent on a wide range of policies.

Figure 2: Party competition in the 2019 UK general election



**Left-Right:** "Parties can be classified by their current stance on economic issues, such as privatization, taxes, regulation, government spending, and the welfare state. Those on the left want government to play an active role in the economy. Those on the economic right favor a reduced role for government. Where would you place each party on the following 0-10-point scale?"

**Social liberalism or conservatism:** "Parties can also be classified by their current social values. Those with liberal values favor expanded personal freedoms, for example on abortion rights, same-sex marriage, and democratic participation. Those with conservative values reject these ideas in favor of order, tradition and stability, believing that government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues. Where would you place parties on the 0-10 point scale?"

Source: Pippa Norris. **Global Party Survey**, Nov 2019 pre-release.

Areas of Particularly Strong Alignment Include:			
	Green Party	Labour Party	Liberal Democrats
Reform and/or replace Universal Credit	✓	✓	✓
Repeal 2020 Health & Social Care Act	✓	✓	✓
Build more social homes and affordable homes	✓	✓	✓
Stronger rights for renters	✓	✓	✓
Commitment to end rough sleeping within 5 years	✓	✓	✓
Expand roles of Local Authorities in super-vising schools	✓	✓	✓
Abolish SATs and Ofsted	✓	✓	✓

<b>Create a simpler and fairer tax system through the consolidation of multiple taxes</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Review or raise the National Living Wage</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Increase investment in public transport, with particular focus on restoration of axed bus routes and improving rail infrastructure in the north</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Major investment in green economy</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Step up broadband rollout, particularly to rural areas</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Reform or abolish the House of Lords, starting with the abolition of hereditary peerages</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Expand the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds</b>	✓	✓	✓

It is not hard to see that progressives across the UK share the same priorities and commitment to the key issues of climate, inequality, and democracy. Compared to the [Conservatives' pledges](#), for example, to move towards stronger immigration controls, increasing use of Stop and Search by the police, cuts to corporation tax, unambitious climate goals, lack of investment in renewable energy, and review of the Human Rights Act, it's clear where our energies of opposition are best placed.

## What needs to be done?

No one is calling for pacts or deals. There are too many corners to look round before any of that is even considered. When it is, there are a range of options available, from tactical electioneering or campaigning around joint issues, all the way through to open primaries and stand asides. Decisions need to be based on what works in any given area, be taken by all those involved, and be as open and transparent as possible.

In the heat of the snap 2017 election Compass helped broker stand asides in many key seats. There was no time for anything else. It almost worked to deny the Tories a bare majority, forcing them to turn to the DUP. But some Greens felt burnt by the process. Whatever cooperation there is in the future, it has to be beneficial to all parties. And anyway, stand asides don't work everywhere, and aren't always the best approach. [Take a seat like Canterbury](#): having a Lib Dem on the ballot meant soft Tory voters had somewhere to go and helped Labour get over the line first.

And it is clear cooperation will not start at the top - although it's sensible for progressive party leaders to work together where they can now. They need to show the British public that party leaders can work together when it's in the interest of the country - otherwise, why would we ever want to move to a more proportional system? The two parties with the most seats to win, Labour and the Lib Dems, both have new leaders who will be keen to strengthen their own parties before any cross party talks begin. Party members and other progressive activists should not look to them, but to themselves.

If the shift to alliance based politics is going to be real, enduring and radical then it needs to happen from the grassroots of politics - and it already is. Across the country, progressives of every stripe are working together to make their communities more equal, sustainable and democratic - and they are doing so despite the system, not because of it.

Here are just some of the places where cooperation has already been happening in Local Government:

Where	Who
Cumbria	Liberal Democrats, Labour
Herefordshire	Independents, Green (with unofficial support of Liberal Democrats and Labour)
North Somerset Council	Independent, Liberal Democrats, Labour, Green
Bedford Borough Council	Liberal Democrats, Labour, Independents
Milton Keynes Council	Labour, Liberal Democrat
Southend-on-Sea	Labour, Liberal Democrat, Independent
City of York Council	Liberal Democrats, Green
Broxtowe Borough Council	Labour, Liberal Democrats, Other
Cannock Chase District Council	Labour, Green
Colchester Borough Council	Liberal Democrats, Labour, Independents
Eden District Council	Liberal Democrats, Labour, Independents
Forest of Dean District Council	Independents, Labour, Greens
Lewes District Council	Liberal Democrats, Labour, Green
Malvern Hills District Council	Liberal Democrats, Green, Independent
North Hertfordshire District Council	Labour, Liberal Democrats
Richmondshire Council	Liberal Democrats, Independents
Rother District Council	Independents, Liberal Democrats, Labour, Greens
South Oxfordshire District Council	Liberal Democrats, Green
South Ribble Borough Council	Labour, Liberal Democrats
Thanet District Council	Labour, Green, Independent
Waverley Borough Council	Liberal Democrats, Independents

Any talks and cooperation need to be based not just on the understanding

that we can't win under the existing system, but on the deeper, shared sense of how we can change this country for the better.

We need a common agenda that focuses on a more equal, sustainable and democratic future, that looks at shared policy goals such as constitutional reform, progressive internationalism, universal basic services, a form of basic income, a four-day week, a Green New Deal and more. The details matter much less than the direction of travel. But one detail that does matter is electoral reform.

## Votes that count

In all of this, the moral and electoral injustices of the FPTP voting system has to be addressed. In addressing it, we sow the seeds of successful cross-party collaboration.

### In 2019 it took:

- 38,300 votes to elect each Conservative MP
- 50,817 to elect each Labour MP
- 334,122 to elect each Liberal Democrat
- 864,743 to elect the lone Green MP

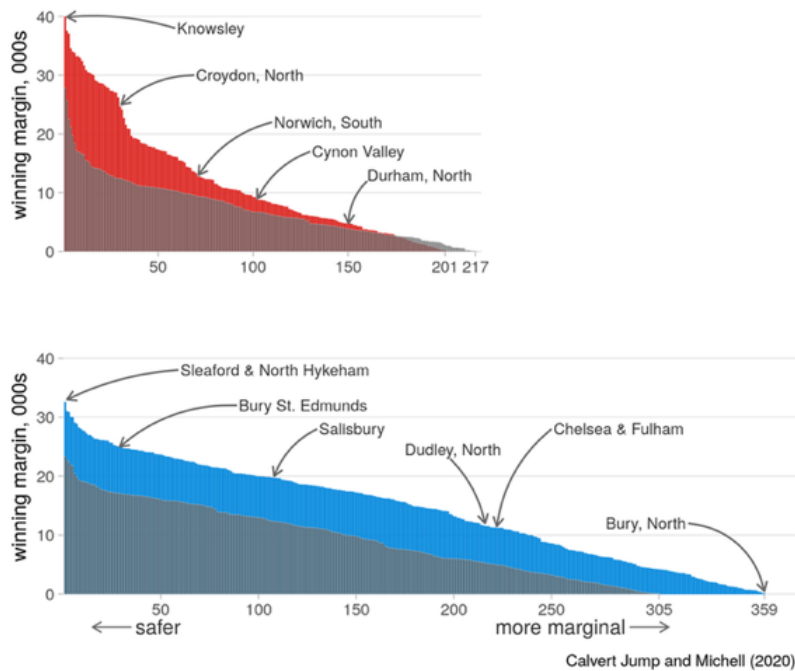
Indeed, one reason why Labour faces an improbable electoral challenge is that their support is concentrated in city heartlands, meaning the distribution of votes and seats works against them. Labour stacks up votes in cities, while losing by small margins in the towns and countryside. This is how the Conservatives could win 43.6% of the vote in 2019, and come away with 56.2% of seats in Parliament. Put bluntly, Labour votes are increasingly inefficiently spread.

FPTP is not just the Tories' friend. It is a moral outrage that feeds disillusionment with politics and accelerates the shift to the populist right. But it's not just the Left that loses out under FPTP. In the 2015 general election UKIP got almost 4 million votes and didn't win any seats beyond [holding onto a single defection from the Tory Party](#). This democratic injustice oiled the wheels of the Brexit vote a year later: this time, people knew their vote counted and they turned out in their millions - many with the famous desire to "Take Back Control".



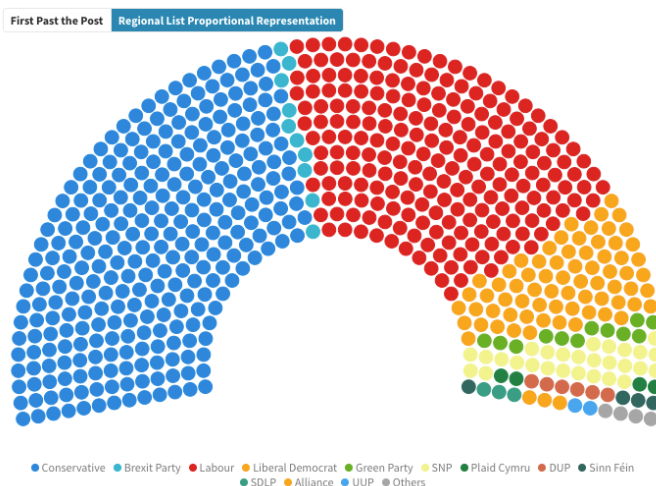
### Labour votes are increasingly concentrated in safe seats

Winning constituency margins in England and Wales in 2019 (Labour: red, Conservative: blue) and in 2010 (darker/grey)



A shift to PR would most likely mean Labour sharing some power most of the time, rather than having no power most of the time. But the New Zealand Labour Party shows you can still win a majority under PR. Even then, though, Jacinda Ardern was wise enough to invite the Greens into government, because of the scale of the climate crisis every country now faces. When the biggest challenge of all is saving the planet, why not engage with members of a party dedicated to doing just that? Who wouldn't want Caroline Lucas to be part of a government committed to change?

This is how things would have looked in now Westminster under PR at the last election - very different indeed.





But what does all this have to do with cross-party working? First, Labour making a firm commitment to back PR would be a game changer for the Lib Dems and the Greens, incentivising them to campaign and vote tactically. This would make it easier for progressives to elect a Labour led administration, with a big democratic mandate to introduce PR. The Tory's artificial dominance - enabled by FPTP - would be broken.

A plural future is within our grasp. But does Labour want it? There are tentative signs that a strategic and cultural shift could be on the cards. Starmer has opened the door to PR - and it's up to us to stick our foot in there. During the leadership election campaign he said, "We've got to address the fact that millions of people vote in safe seats and they feel their vote doesn't count." And now over 100 constituency parties have passed resolutions in favour of PR. There is a groundswell of support for a new democracy - advanced by organisations like Make Votes Matter, with their new campaign 'Labour for a New Democracy'. PR is key - not just to winning office but ensuring British democracy, and faith in it, is renewed and restored.

## So what next?

The only things that matter now are the widespread and shared understanding of the electoral mountain that progressives face and, therefore, the need to work together. For the next two years we need to build relationships of trust around values and ideas, and against one of the most incompetent governments in living memory. We need to test all the things that unite us and understand where we don't agree and why. We need to be combinational, open-minded and exploratory. We have the time - but not a moment to lose.

Cooperation under FPTP - an adversarial, winner-takes-all system - will not be easy. Political parties are tribal, and we need to respect that. But it is the "Open Tribe"<sup>3</sup> that adapts, thrives and survives in a future that will increasingly be negotiated not imposed.

Such cooperation is made harder still by support for Scottish independence - but again that is no reason not to try. Most who want independence do so to build a better society, however much anyone might disagree about the means to get there. And while it's hard if not impossible to see how the SNP won't hold the balance of power after the next election, the only way through such complexities is navigation via dialogue. We have to talk. Or the Tories will win.

In November we saw how, when progressives vow not to lose again, when they unite around a shared goal and see their struggles as connected, they can gain power. The Democrats knew that they could no longer afford to fight one another. Their fight was with someone else - and it was bigger than any one of them.

So they drew on the best of their party's traditions, their best policies, ideas and people. They built bridges between progressives, to find spaces where they could agree. They understood that they could not win as a small faction, they had to go bigger.

And they saw that compromise does not always mean concession. It can mean finding a winning combination, which unlocks the keys to power. All of the infighting would only serve to make them smaller, and turn people away. They understood that, if they co-operated, they could bring millions more with them. And they needed every single one of them.

It took progressives in the US four years, but they got there. They have secured a progressive majority. The team that won it included voter registration squads, grassroots organisers, community groups, trade unions, issue-led campaigners, political educators, independent media, thinktanks - and political parties. They all had a part to play - and respected one another's role in that winning coalition.

So, it takes an ecosystem. Compass will continue to work across and within the progressive parties to build understanding and support. We will also work in seats and communities where cooperation is needed. But we will also look beyond the parties, to all of those civic and community organisations and institutions who are crucial to our coalition - not just to win power, but to use it for a purpose. This is the rich soil of practices, principles and policies in which transformative cooperation can take root, such that when the party leaders are ready to talk, the digging and the planting has been done. It will take years for it to grow and flower - but only then can we expect it to bear fruit.

We have three years to get it right - maybe less. We cannot say we didn't know and weren't warned. We have to start now or face yet another Tory term from which progressives may never recover. Each year we spend out of power, people forget the difference a progressive majority can make. We need to remind them - and show why it's worth working for. This will take all of us.

Alone, Labour needs to win at least 124 seats - an almost impossible task.

Working with others it can win a more realistic 40 seats and still find itself leading a new government.

Or it can be on the Opposition benches again.

Which is to be?

## Endnotes

- 1** These are: Basingstoke, Beckenham, Bournemouth East, Bromley and Chislehurst, Ceredigion, Croydon South, Finchley and Golders Green, Hexham, Macclesfield, Monmouth, North East Somerset, Welwyn Hatfield, York Outer.
- 2** Langford, B. (2017), *All Together Now*, Biteback Publishing [g](#)
- 3** Goss S. (2014), Open Tribe, Laurence and Wishart Limited

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