

# Electoral faultlines across Britain

The battleplans are being drawn. As party conference season draws to a close, the shape of the 2015 general election is becoming clear. Labour and the Tories, harried by the insurgent forces of Ukip and the newly confident Scottish nationalists, are reinforcing their heartlands, and likely to achieve only narrow victories outside their traditional territory. The beleaguered Lib Dems are hunkering down, intent on limiting the casualties among their sitting MPs. Britain is separating along political lines – the Tories holding fast in the south outside London, Labour dominating the north, our electoral future shaped by furious skirmishes in a limited number of crucial battlegrounds. **Toby Helm** surveys the scene and selects examples of the type of seats that will be critical. Graphic by **Pete Guest**

BAR CHARTS SHOW 2010 SHARE OF VOTE



## STRUGGLE IN THE NORTH

THE TORY CHALLENGE



Tories need to make big gains in the north to win a Commons majority but face an uphill struggle. Large swaths of the urban north are Tory-free, especially after five years of austerity. Their task will be harder as disgruntled Lib Dems are more likely to switch to Labour. Then there is Ukip. Will they split the centre-right vote, or take support from Labour, or both? In Tory-held constituencies such as Pudsey, they could lose if Lib Dems return to Labour. A similar trend could undermine efforts to win Tory targets such as Bolton West. In Berwick-upon-Tweed the Tories could make a gain if the Lib Dem vote collapses.

## MIDLAND MARGINALS

THE KEY BATTLEGROUND



Many believe the Midlands is where the election will be decided. It has 39 marginals – most close Tory versus Labour seats. Here both believe the argument will be all about the economy. Tories are hopeful that in more prosperous areas the recovery will boost their vote. Labour thinks its message about falling real wages and living standards will resonate. Tories are eyeing seats like Labour-held marginal Birmingham Northfield and Walsall North where the Conservatives came close second. But Ukip and the BNP had a strong presence in 2010, and could complicate the picture. Labour is hoping to take Tory-held marginals like Nuneaton and Cannock Chase, if Lib Dem deserters switch to them.

## CHALLENGE IN THE WEST

LIB DEMS AT BAY



Tories need to make strong gains against Lib Dems to make up for a likely lack of a breakthrough in the north. But Lib Dem resilience, the rise of Ukip, and Labour tactical voting could mean successes are limited. Tories look well placed to topple Lib Dems in seats like Mid Dorset and North Poole, where Labour was distant third in 2010. Lib Dems are masters at digging in, and hope strong local organisation in seats like St Ives, together with help of Labour supporters who may hold their noses and cross the Lib Dem box to keep a Tory out, could see off challenges. Ukip's presence may also depress the Conservative tally.

## SCOTS CHOOSE AGAIN

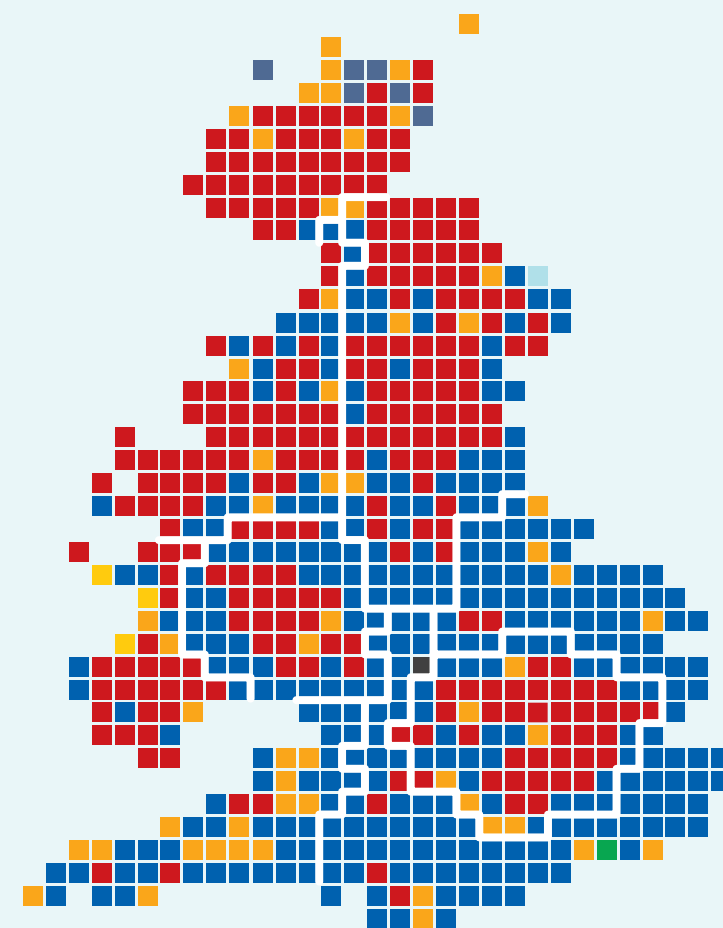
AFTER THE REFERENDUM



The referendum has thrown everything in the air as far as Scotland's 59 Westminster seats are concerned. If Scottish MPs are to be downgraded to second-class citizens in Westminster, how will that affect how Scots vote? Polls suggest Labour has lost a mass of support, and could cede 20 of its 41 seats to the SNP. The Lib Dems, who currently have 11, are likely to suffer for being in government with the Tories. The SNP will need to make huge gains to win seats from Labour but seem confident in Glasgow and the central belt. Tories are hopeful that they can win seats from Lib Dems such as Aberdeenshire West and Kincardine.

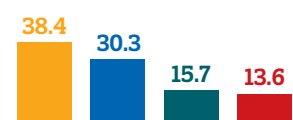
## BRITAIN'S RED/BLUE DIVIDE

Unlike a geographic constituency map, this schematic map of the 2010 election results gives each constituency equal area.



SCOTLAND

### Aberdeenshire West and Kincardine



Lib Dems could lose to Tories or SNP

### Glasgow East

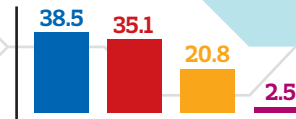


Labour could lose to SNP, if there is a huge move towards them

NORTH-EAST

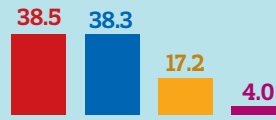
NORTH-WEST

### Pudsey



Slim Tory majority of 1,659. Could go to Labour if Lib Dems move to them

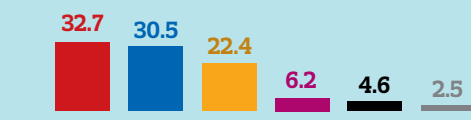
### Bolton West



Tiny Labour majority of 92. The Ukip effect and Lib Dem deserters could help Labour hold on

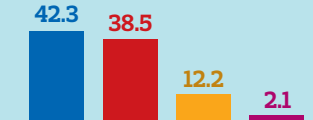
YORKS & HUMBER

### Great Grimsby



Ukip threatens Labour's tiny majority of 714

### Enfield North

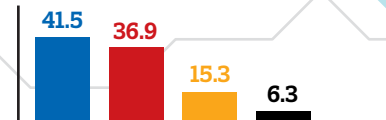


Labour hopes to win from Tories

NORTH-EAST

NORTH-WEST

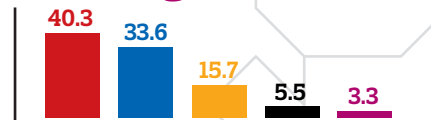
### Nuneaton



Labour could topple Tory majority of 2,069 with help of returning Lib Dems

EAST MIDLANDS

### Birmingham Northfield

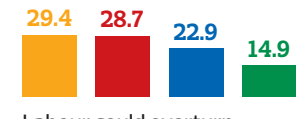


Tories could do well on economic growth, if Ukip and BNP don't split the vote

WALES

WEST MIDLANDS

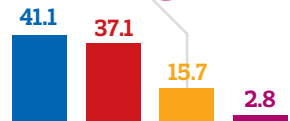
### Norwich South



Labour could overturn Lib Dem majority of 310

EAST OF ENGLAND

### Hastings and Rye

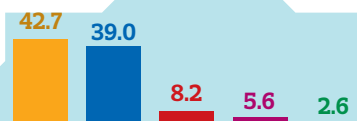


Labour could gain from Tories

SOUTH-WEST

SOUTH-EAST

### St Ives



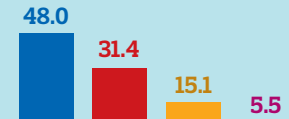
Tactical voting by Labour supporters could help Lib Dems defend majority of 1,719

### Mid Dorset and Poole



Tories could topple Lib Dems' tiny majority of 269

### Thanet South



Nigel Farage is standing and threatens Tory majority of 7,617

## LONDON SPLIT

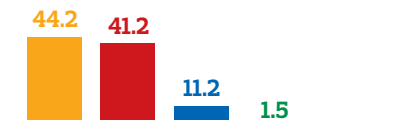
THE FIGHT FOR THE CAPITAL



Conservatives underperformed in the capital in 2010 and want to use their record on the economy – and the commitment by Labour and the Lib Dems to a mansion tax – to seduce voters, particularly in wealthier areas and suburbs. Labour did well in the May local elections, and believes it can take seats from Lib Dems, and perhaps even the odd one, like Enfield North, from the Tories. The Lib Dems look vulnerable to Labour in seats like Brent Central, where Sarah Teather is stepping down, and Hornsey and Wood Green. Tories hope to win Labour-held seats like Tooting and Hammersmith. There are 73 Westminster seats in Greater London: 38 Labour, 28 Tory, 7 Lib Dem.

LONDON

### Brent Central



Labour may gain at expense of Lib Dems

## THE ELUSIVE SOUTH-EAST

LABOUR'S SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT



As with the Tories in the north, Labour needs to break through in the south to win a decent majority. But it does not feel like 1997, when Tony Blair swept Tory strongholds. Labour is eyeing seats like Lib-Dem held Norwich South, where it was second in 2010, and has a strong base. It believes it could win in outposts like Hastings and Rye, where it lost out narrowly, if Lib Dem voters come back to the fold. Cameron's plans for tax cuts are designed to appeal where Ed Milliband's centre-left message may have less resonance. The Conservatives could make gains in Lib Dem seats like Eastbourne and Portsmouth South.