

8 October 2019

## **Voter Volatility: Statistics from the British Election Study**

### **High levels of individual vote switching**

The general elections of 2015 and 2017 saw the most vote switching since the BES began in 1964.

- 13% of voters switched between the 1964 and 1966 elections
- 43% of voters switched between the 2010 and 2015 elections
- 33% of voters switched between the 2015 and 2017 elections

Across the three elections 2010/15/17, only 51% voted for the same party in each election.

### **Voters switching between the Conservative and Labour parties**

2017 saw the highest switching between Labour and Conservative voters in BES data – 11% of 2015 Lab or Con voters went from one party to the other.

- 1 in 8 Conservative voters from 2015 switched to Labour in 2017
- 1 in 11 Labour voters in 2015 switched to Conservative in 2017

### **Small parties don't hold onto voters**

In 2017, small parties lost many of their 2015 voters:

- 47% of 2015 Lib Dem voters defected in 2017
- 78% of 2015 UKIP voters defected in 2017
- 88% of 2015 Green voters defected in 2017

In 2015, some smaller parties lost a huge proportion of their previous voters:  
76% of 2010 Lib Dem voters defected in 2015

Even the small parties which did well in 2015 lost a lot of their previous supporters.

- 46% of 2010 Greens defected even though Green vote share tripled.
- 38% of 2010 UKIP defected even though vote share up from 3% to 13%.

The increasing relevance of smaller parties is adding volatility to the electorate.

### **The EU Referendum and party support**

- Of 2015 Conservative voters, 60% were Leave
- Of 2015 Labour voters, 62% were Remain

- Of 2015 Lib Dem voters, 73% were Remain
- 31% of Conservative Remain voters defected in 2017
- 28% of Labour Leave voters defected in 2017
- Of 2017 Conservative voters, 72% voted Leave
- Of 2017 Labour voters, 68% voted Remain
- Of 2017 Lib Dem voters, 80% voted Remain

## **Scotland**

90% of Yes voters voted SNP in 2015.

The EU referendum cut across the Scottish independence referendum.

In 2017:

- 84% of Yes-Remain voters voted SNP
- 57% of Yes-Leave voters voted SNP
- Of No-Remain voters, 40% voted Labour and 33% voted Conservative
- Of No-Leave voters, 65% voted Conservative, and 23% voted Labour
- 24% of 2015 Labour voters in Scotland switched to the Conservatives in 2017