

Quantifying the Changing Age Structure of the British Electorate 2005-2025

*Researching the age demographics of the
new parliamentary constituencies*

Prepared for Age Concern

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Introduction

Britain will soon possess an age profile never seen before in its history, and as society ages so does the electoral register. This report details how the demographic transformation will change the age-profile of every Westminster constituency in Britain, starting with the current period and projecting into the future to see how Britain's voters will look in 2025.

This data will show how most seats in the House of Commons will elect MPs based on a turnout where grey voters are the majority. It uses the new parliamentary boundaries that will be introduced for a large swathe of seats for the first time at the next general election in 2010. Of course, none of this would be significant if older voters were identical in every way to younger voters. But as we already know, they do differ in their electoral behaviour, not least in their much higher participation rates. There are also variations in attitudes across different cohorts and generations. Furthermore, as we age our experience of society and the issues that impact the most directly on our quality of life shift and change.

This project builds and extends upon previous research published by Age Concern before the general election in 2005 that was based on quantitative data from Dr Scott Davidson and qualitative interviews with older voters in marginal constituencies conducted by Opinion Leader Research

The New Parliamentary Boundaries

Constituency boundaries are determined by the Boundary Commissions for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Every 8 to 12 years the Commissions are required by the *Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986* to undertake a general review of arrangements.

In general constituencies are intended to be based on local authority areas, unless a case is made to run across more than one local authority boundary. Although this is still generally the situation, there are now a significant number of seats which straddle two, sometimes three, local authority areas.

In England the general review was completed and ratified by Parliament in 2007. The review has resulted in some major changes with an increase of seats in England from 529 to 533, and the majority of constituency boundaries now being different to those used at the general election in 2005. The review for Wales was completed in 2006 and although the total number of seats remains the same at 40, as elsewhere there are some significant changes to a number of seats. Boundary changes for seats in Scotland had already been

implemented in time for the 2005 general election, and no subsequent changes are required for 2010.

Notional Results for the New Seats

As the majority of seats in England will be fought on new boundaries at the next general election, comparisons with the results of the 2005 election become problematic – primarily because in the UK results are declared for whole constituencies without being broken up into individual ward results. In some cases a constituency may have kept the same name but will be comprised of a different set of wards with differing sets of social and political characteristics. To draw up a more useful set of data to enable comparisons with 2005 *notional* results need to be estimated - in other words, estimating how the 2005 results would have looked if votes had been counted on the basis of the new constituencies.

Of course there are limitations on how far notional results can be taken as an estimate of what *would have* happened. For example, we cannot assume that tactical voting patterns would be replicated under the new boundaries. Furthermore notional results are calculated by incorporating local authority election results to obtain a *multiplier* for each party, but these calculations are done in the knowledge that some voters do not replicate their national voting habits at local level contests.

However, with these caveats in mind the notional results provide us with a very useful model for evaluating the new political geography created by the boundary reviews.

This research is using the notional results calculated by Rallings and Thrasher at the Local Government Elections Unit at Plymouth University. These estimates are widely used and respected by the research community. Their estimates will also form the basis of the election reporting for the Press Association, the BBC, ITN and Sky News and are publicly available at: election.press.net/constituencies.html

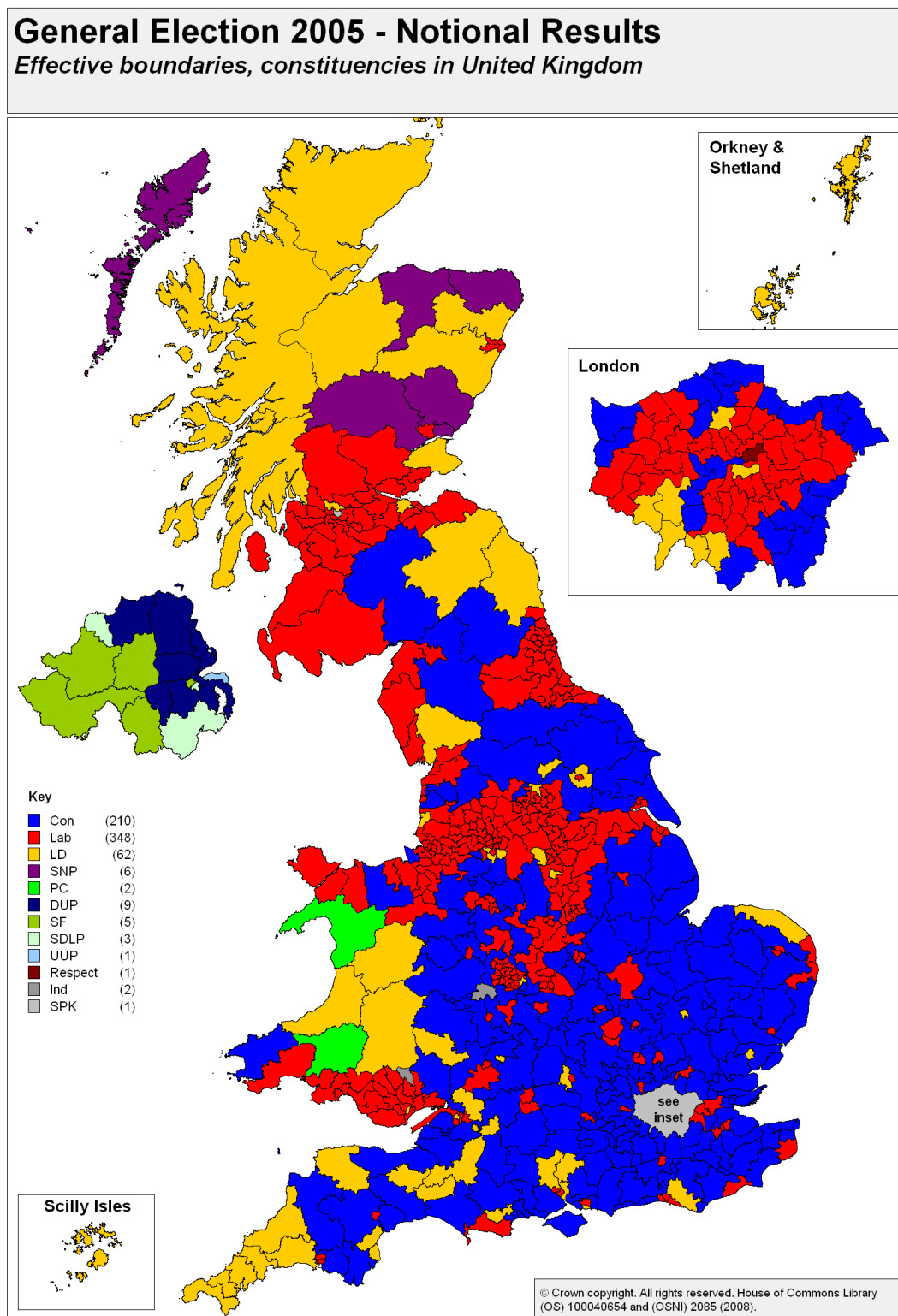
Overall the Rallings & Thrasher projections see the Labour government losing 7 seats and the Conservative party gaining 12. The Liberal Democrats remain unchanged but Plaid Cymru lose one seat.

The Boundary Review gives us 13 wholly new constituencies.

1. Broadland
2. Chelsea and Fulham
3. Chippenham
4. Derbyshire Mid
5. Devon Central

6. Filton and Bradley Stoke
7. Kenilworth and Southam
8. Meon valley
9. Northamptonshire South
10. St Austell and Newquay
11. Witham
12. Wyre and Preston North
13. York Outer

Map: Notional results of the 2005 general election if contested on the new boundaries set to come into effect for an election in 2010. Source: House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/SG/4691.

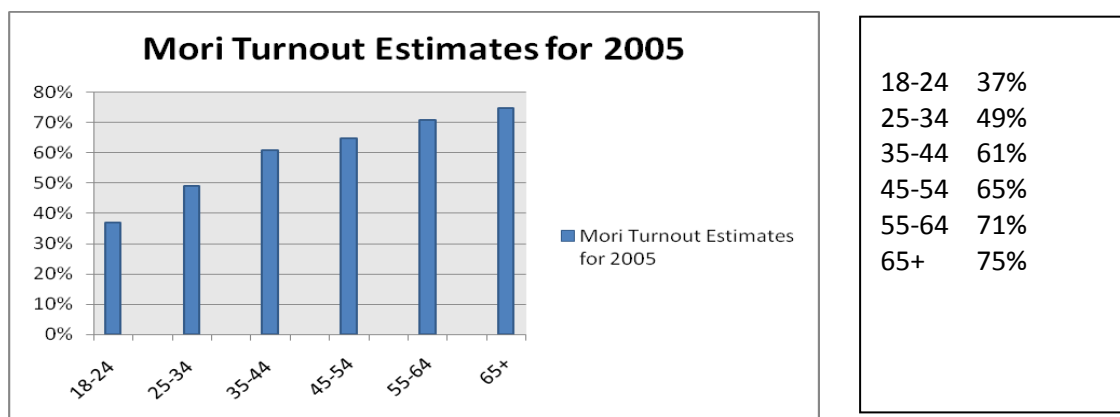


Turnout Rates

In the UK there is no official data for turnout by age. The most generally accepted estimates for turnout by age are the ones produced by MORI's Aggregate Analysis of the election. These figures have been widely used by the Electoral Commission.

Based on these estimates the model uses these turnout rates for the 2005 election, and for practical purposes assumes there are no age-related changes in turnout for the next general election.

The MORI turnout estimates are:



The size of the eligible electorate is made through the simple calculation and inclusion of all people aged 18 or over.

The model assumes all voters are on the electoral register. As younger voters are more likely to be unregistered, if this were to be factored into the data it would serve to further increase the proportion of turnout comprised of older voters.

The analysis in this report includes a category of all voters aged over 55 and refers to this category as the "Grey Vote". This is justified because, although much research on age and voter behaviour often focuses on the post-state-retirement electorate, entirely justified and understandable considering the profound social and economic implications of retirement. However, ageing, and ageing issues do not begin to effect voters the day after retirement. They are, arguably, of life-long concern, however, in the final decade approaching state retirement age these issues become increasingly pertinent to the concerns and standard of living for voters. For voters aged over 55, ageing issues such as retirement income, age discrimination, the quality of health services, long-term care (particularly for their older parents and relatives) become increasingly important. Even if a 55 year old would not

consider themselves "old", in many ways other people and agencies have already started to treat and portray them differently.

Methodology

This research is based on a model which combines data on electoral behaviour and population changes to estimate the age breakdown of turnout across constituencies for general elections in the current period. The base data for the model is the latest available Office for National Statistics population projections for 2006. These projections use the 2001 Census as a baseline and drawing on current demographic trends estimate the population changes in the last five years for each area. The data uses the new parliamentary boundaries that will be contested in the next general election of 2010.

The base data for the model is the UK Statistics Authority's 2006 sub-national population projections that update and estimate how the population of the country has changed since the 2001 Census. For specific local data in Wales the research uses statistics produced by the Statistical Directorate of the National Assembly for Wales, and for Scotland the General Register Office.

The report took this data to show the age breakdown of the turnout at the last general election in 2005 based on the new constituency boundaries.

A key problem in conducting research that it is primarily concerned with the changing demographic characteristics of Westminster constituencies is that for future projections the ONS only produces data based on local authorities. ONS produce data for the current period for the new seats, but they do not produce data for these seats projected into the future. However, the data does exist at local council level, and can be translated across, although this is a fairly time consuming process. But once completed, this research is in a position to produce incredibly interesting and useful information on the future UK electorate that is not easily available elsewhere.

To calculate the changing age profile of seats in the future the following process was used.

The ONS' sub-national projections for future population change by local authority was used as a starting point.

Each seat was cross referenced with its ward composition to see it was wholly within one local authority area or whether it stretched across two or more.

Where a seat was co-terminus with a local authority the percentage change in the age profile of the electorate in the local authority area was calculated

and then applied to the base 2005 age profile of the Westminster constituency – and turnout rates applied accordingly.

Where a seat's boundaries ran across more than one local authority area an estimate was made of the proportion of voters in the seat living in the different local authority areas. If this proportion was significant a qualified rate of change was calculated. In some cases where only one ward was located in a second local authority area the dominant local authority's data was used without qualification.

The 2005 General Election

Overall at the national level for Britain there are only some moderate changes from the estimates for 2005 made in the last report.

The table below shows the estimated age-breakdown of turnout of the 2005 general election. The table shows that the 65+ vote is almost identical to the previous research report published in 2004 based on earlier ONS estimates, but that the 55+ has increased by 1.4% in this short time period - as the first cohorts of boomers move into near-retirement:

Table: Estimated age breakdown of turnout in the 2005 General Election

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All 55+
GB (not inc NI)	7.1	13.3	19.4	17.5	17.5	25.1	42.6
England	7.2	13.5	19.6	17.4	17.4	24.9	42.3
Wales	7.2	11.3	17.8	17.4	19.0	27.4	46.3
Scotland	7.0	12.3	19.3	18.5	17.7	25.1	42.9

Election 2005: Voters aged over65 –

A headline finding is that it is now estimated that “pensioners”/voters aged 65 and over GB accounted for over half of the votes cast in three parliamentary seats (Christchurch, Clacton and New Forest West). This research has based its estimates on the latest 2006 ONS estimates (within 12 months of the election), and shows a significant increase from the estimates for the oldest seats used for the 2004 report which were based upon the 2001 Census figures (a full five years before the election). The combination of using the latest ONS estimates and the effect of the boundary changes (For example,

the population covered by Christchurch's boundaries have changed by nearly a fifth) result in a significant increase in the age profile of a range of seats.

While the *oldest* seats are now in the position of holding pensioner majorities there is strong evidence of a much wider impact of retired voters on the social personalities of parliamentary seats. 287 seats in Britain are now estimated to have a third or more of votes cast by people aged 65+ and only in 45 urban constituencies is the 65+ vote lower than a quarter of turnout.

The table below shows the 40 seats in mainland Britain estimated to have the highest proportions of voters cast by people aged 65+ in 2005.

Although the south coast and the South West dominate the very *oldest* seats, note how there is a wide geographical spread in this chart of 40 constituencies. Labour hold five seats in this list which are particularly vulnerable to swings to the Conservative Party, and there are several seats which are keenly contested between the Conservative and the Liberal Democrats:

Table: The 40 seats with the highest proportions of turnout comprised of voters aged 65 and over in the 2005 general election

Parliamentary Constituency	% turn 65+	2005 Result	2005 Maj	Region
Christchurch	53.3	Con (n)	14234	S.West
Clacton	52.1	Con (n)	4524	East
New Forest West	50.2	Con (n)	15985	S.East
Worthing West	49.5	Con	9379	S.East
Bexhill and Battle	48.2	Con (n)	15753	S.East
North Norfolk	47.5	LD (n)	8177	East
East Devon	46.8	Con (n)	9175	S.West
West Dorset	46.0	Con	2461	S.West
Eastbourne	45.8	Con (n)	755	S.East
Lewes	45.4	LD	8474	S.East
Bognor Regis and Littlehampton	45.2	Con	7822	S.East
Totnes	44.4	Con (n)	2722	S.West

Chichester	44.0	Con	10860	S.East
Tiverton and Honiton	43.7	Con (n)	9193	S.West
Aberconwy	43.5	Lab (n)	243	Wales
Suffolk Coastal	43.5	Con	9685	East
Clwyd West	43.2	Con (n)	111	Wales
Dwyfor Meirionnydd	43.0	PC (n)	8101	Wales
Wirral West	42.9	Lab (n)	283	N.West
Poole	42.7	Con	5988	S.West
Newton Abbot	42.7	LD (n)	4573	S.West
Louth and Horncastle	42.4	Con	9896	E.Mids
Southport	42.4	LD	3838	N.West
Torbay	42.3	LD (n)	2755	S.West
Isle of Wight	42.2	Con	12978	S.East
North Thanet	41.9	Con (n)	6103	S.East
North West Norfolk	41.9	Con (n)	7856	East
Blackpool North and Cleveleys	41.9	Lab (n)	3540	N.West
Fylde	41.7	Con (n)	10008	N.West
Arundel and South Downs	41.5	Con	11309	S.East
Westmorland and Lonsdale	41.5	LD (n)	836	N.West
Brecon and Radnorshire	41.3	LD	3905	Wales
West Worcestershire	41.3	Con (n)	3594	W.Mids
Sefton Central	41.1	Lab (n)	5542	N.West
South Thanet	40.9	Lab (n)	854	S.East
Waveney	40.8	Lab (n)	5936	East
Truro and Falmouth	40.7	LD (n)	5131	S.West
North Herefordshire	40.6	LD (n)	1297	W.Mids
Bournemouth West	40.6	Con (n)	2608	S.West

The Grey Vote: Voters aged over 55

As with the data on voters aged over 65, the headline results show that in the oldest seats there has been further ageing since the 2004 estimates. Voters aged over 55 –or the “grey vote” – are now estimated to have accounted for more than two thirds of votes in four constituencies.

In the previous research it was estimated that in the 2005 general election there were 24 seats with a “grey majority” i.e. over 50% of votes cast on polling day came from the grey vote. The previous section tells us the model estimates there are three seats with a majority of voters aged 65+, and the results from this projection are now estimating there were 268 seats in mainland Britain with grey majorities. The table below shows the 40 seats with the highest proportion of turnout estimated to be made up of people aged 55+:

Parliamentary Constituency	% 55+ turn	2005 Result	2005 Maj	Region
Christchurch	69.8	Con (n)	14234	S.West
Clacton	68.1	Con (n)	4524	East
New Forest West	66.5	Con (n)	15985	S.East
North Norfolk	66.1	LD (n)	8177	East
Bexhill and Battle	65.0	Con (n)	15753	S.East
Worthing West	64.0	Con	9379	S.East
West Dorset	63.8	Con	2461	S.West
East Devon	63.5	Con (n)	9175	S.West
Totnes	62.9	Con (n)	2722	S.West
Louth and Horncastle	62.1	Con	9896	E.Mids
Lewes	62.0	LD	8474	S.East
Dwyfor Meirionnydd	61.7	PC (n)	8101	Wales
Tiverton and Honiton	61.2	Con (n)	9193	S.West
Bognor Regis and Littlehampton	60.9	Con	7822	S.East

Suffolk Coastal	60.8	Con	9685	East
Chichester	60.5	Con	10860	S.East
Aberconwy	60.4	Lab (n)	243	Wales
Clwyd West	60.4	Con (n)	111	Wales
Isle of Wight	60.2	Con	12978	S.East
Eastbourne	60.2	Con (n)	755	S.East
West Worcestershire	60.1	Con (n)	3594	W.Mids
Brecon and Radnorshire	60.1	LD	3905	Wales
Ludlow	59.9	Con (n)	2027	W.Mids
Newton Abbot	59.9	LD (n)	4573	S.West
Arundel and South Downs	59.8	Con	11309	S.East
Westmorland and Lonsdale	59.6	LD (n)	836	N.West
North Herefordshire	59.6	LD (n)	1297	W.Mids
North West Norfolk	59.4	Con (n)	7856	East
St Ives	59.4	LD (n)	9574	S.West
Torridge and West Devon	59.3	Con (n)	2581	S.West
Wirral West	59.1	Lab (n)	283	N.West
North Cornwall	58.8	LD (n)	5477	S.West
Torbay	58.7	LD (n)	2755	S.West
North Thanet	58.4	Con (n)	6103	S.East
Thirsk and Malton	58.4	Con (n)	14687	Yorks
Bridgwater and West Somerset	58.4	Con (n)	9755	S.West
Boston and Skegness	58.3	Con	5907	E.Mids
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr	58.2	Lab (n)	6569	Wales
Poole	58.1	Con	5988	S.West
Truro & Falmouth	58.1	LD	3,931	S.West

Election 2010

As should be expected the projected results for a general election in 2010 reveals a step growth in the size and influence of the grey vote.

Election 2010: Voters aged 65+

As reported in the previous section it is estimated that on the new parliamentary boundaries there were three seats in 2005 with a majority of votes cast by persons aged 65 and over. In 2010, another two seats (Worthing West and Norfolk North) move past this stage post in the age-transformation of the electorate. On its own the results concerning voters aged 65 and over are quite striking. In a 2010 election it is estimated that 102 seats in mainland Britain will have 40% or more of turnout comprised of voters aged 65+, and to demonstrate the breadth of the impact – 368 seats will have at least one third of turnout comprised of voters aged over 65.

Chart: The 50 seats with the highest proportion of voters aged 65 and over at a general election held in 2010.

Parliamentary Constituency	2010 % turn 65+	Winner	2nd	Majority	Majority (%)
Christchurch	55.2	CON	LD	14,640	31.3
Clacton	54.0	CON	LAB	3,629	8.5
New Forest West	52.7	CON	LD	16,183	36.7
Worthing West	50.8	CON	LD	9,383	20.9
Norfolk North	50.7	LD	CON	8,575	17.3
West Dorset	49.5	CON	LD	2,461	4.6
Devon East	48.7	CON	LD	9,168	19.2
Lewes	47.5	LD	CON	7,889	16.9
Bognor Regis and Littlehampton	47.4	CON	LAB	8,617	20.1
Totnes	47.3	CON	LD	2,693	5.8
Eastbourne	46.6	CON	LD	672	1.4
Chichester	46.3	CON	LD	10,457	20.3
Suffolk Coastal	46.0	CON	LAB	9,674	18.4
Tiverton and Honiton	45.7	CON	LD	9,007	17.5
Louth and Horncastle	45.7	CON	LAB	9,813	21.1
Aberconwy	45.1	LAB	CON	1,070	3.9
Wirral West	45.0	CON	LAB	569	1.5
Newton Abbot	45.0	LD	CON	4,830	10.5
Poole	45.0	CON	LD	6,035	14.3
Clwyd West	44.7	CON	LAB	51	0.1

Dwyfor Meirionnydd	44.7	PC	LAB	8,706	29
Isle of Wight	44.7	CON	LD	12,978	19.4
Westmorland and Lonsdale	44.6	LD	CON	806	1.7
West Worcestershire	44.6	CON	LD	3,053	6
North West Norfolk	44.4	CON	LAB	8,417	18.3
Torbay	44.1	LD	CON	2,727	6
Southport	44.1	LD	CON	3,838	9.3
Herefordshire North	44.0	CON	LD	12,688	28.4
Ludlow	43.9	CON	LD	2,027	4.4
Fylde	43.8	CON	LAB	11,117	28.7
Brecon and Radnorshire	43.5	LD	CON	3,905	10.2
Bexhill and Battle	43.5	CON	LD	15,893	31.5
Bridgwater and West Somerset	43.3	CON	LAB	10,081	19.8
Waveney	43.3	LAB	CON	5,950	12
Thanet North	43.2	CON	LAB	6,118	15.3
Arundel and South Downs	43.1	CON	LD	12,291	23.8
Torridge and West Devon	43.0	CON	LD	2,732	5.4
Mid Norfolk	43.0	CON	LAB	7,793	16.3
Dorset South	42.9	LAB	CON	1,812	3.7
St Ives	42.9	LD	CON	10,711	24.5
Boston and Skegness	42.9	CON	LAB	6,391	14.8
Thirsk and Malton	42.8	CON	LAB	14,117	28.5
Blackpool North and Cleveleys	42.8	LAB	CON	3,241	8.5
Dorset North	42.8	CON	LD	4,200	8.6
Sefton Central	42.7	LAB	CON	4,950	12
Wells	42.7	CON	LD	3,040	5.7
Cornwall North	42.5	LD	CON	2,892	6.9
Truro and Falmouth	42.5	LD	CON	3,931	9.3
Scarborough and Whitby	42.5	CON	LAB	1,245	2.7
Thanet South	42.5	CON	LAB	810	1.8

Election 2010: The wider Grey Vote/Voters aged 55+

Previous reports have discussed the concept of the wider grey vote, as well as the emergence of Grey Majority constituencies – i.e. where over half of turnout is comprised of the grey vote.

This new research now estimates that in 2005, on the new boundaries, there were 268 seats in mainland Britain that held grey majorities. In 2010 the number of grey majority seats is estimated to increase to 319, meaning that in 2010 most seats in Britain will hold a grey majority.

Regionally, perhaps, despite some stereotypes, these seats are not all to be found in the south west and the south coast as 18 of the 50 *oldest* seats are to be found in the midlands, north and Wales

Chart: The 50 seats with the highest proportion of voters aged 55 and over at a general election held in 2010.

Parliamentary Constituency	Winner	2nd	Majority	Majority (%)	2010 % turn 55+	Region
Christchurch	CON	LD	14,640	31.3	70.9	South West
Clacton	CON	LAB	3,629	8.5	69.0	East
New Forest West	CON	LD	16,183	36.7	68.1	South East
Norfolk North	LD	CON	8,575	17.3	67.9	East
West Dorset	CON	LD	2,461	4.6	66.3	South West
Totnes	CON	LD	2,693	5.8	64.9	South West
Worthing West	CON	LD	9,383	20.9	64.8	South East
Devon East	CON	LD	9,168	19.2	64.4	South West
Louth and Horncastle	CON	LAB	9,813	21.1	64.1	East Midlands
Lewes	LD	CON	7,889	16.9	63.7	South East
Dwyfor Meirionnydd	PC	LAB	8,706	29	62.6	Wales
Suffolk Coastal	CON	LAB	9,674	18.4	62.5	East
Ludlow	CON	LD	2,027	4.4	62.4	West Midlands
Bognor Regis and Littlehampton	CON	LAB	8,617	20.1	62.3	South East
Tiverton and Honiton	CON	LD	9,007	17.5	62.2	South West
Chichester	CON	LD	10,457	20.3	62.1	South East

Herefordshire North	CON	LD	12,688	28.4	62.0	West Midlands
West Worcestershire	CON	LD	3,053	6	61.9	West Midlands
Westmorland and Lonsdale	LD	CON	806	1.7	61.8	North West
Aberconwy	LAB	CON	1,070	3.9	61.5	Wales
Isle of Wight	CON	LD	12,978	19.4	61.5	South East
Brecon and Radnorshire	LD	CON	3,905	10.2	61.5	Wales
Clwyd West	CON	LAB	51	0.1	61.5	Wales
Newton Abbot	LD	CON	4,830	10.5	61.3	South West
Bexhill and Battle	CON	LD	15,893	31.5	61.3	South East
North West Norfolk	CON	LAB	8,417	18.3	60.9	East
Torrige and West Devon	CON	LD	2,732	5.4	60.9	South West
Wirral West	CON	LAB	569	1.5	60.8	North West
Eastbourne	CON	LD	672	1.4	60.8	South East
Arundel and South Downs	CON	LD	12,291	23.8	60.6	South East
Berwick-upon-Tweed	LD	CON	8,585	23.6	60.5	North East
Bridgwater and West Somerset	CON	LAB	10,081	19.8	60.5	South West
St Ives	LD	CON	10,711	24.5	60.4	South West
Boston and Skegness	CON	LAB	6,391	14.8	60.1	East Midlands
Thirsk and Malton	CON	LAB	14,117	28.5	60.1	Yorks&Humber
Derbyshire Dales	CON	LAB	8,810	20.8	59.9	East Midlands
Yorkshire East	CON	LAB	6,284	13.3	59.9	Yorks&Humber
Torbay	LD	CON	2,727	6	59.8	South West
Sefton Central	LAB	CON	4,950	12	59.8	North West
Cornwall North	LD	CON	2,892	6.9	59.8	South West
South East Cornwall	LD	CON	5,485	11.8	59.7	South West
Fylde	CON	LAB	11,117	28.7	59.7	North West
Southport	LD	CON	3,838	9.3	59.6	North West
Dorset South	LAB	CON	1,812	3.7	59.6	South West

Poole	CON	LD	6,035	14.3	59.6	South West
Scarborough and Whitby	CON	LAB	1,245	2.7	59.4	Yorks&Humber
Waveney	LAB	CON	5,950	12	59.4	East
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr	PC	LAB	6,551	17.5	59.3	Wales
Dorset North	CON	LD	4,200	8.6	59.3	South West
Mid Norfolk	CON	LAB	7,793	16.3	59.2	East

Election 2010: The Grey Battleground

For many campaign strategists and national media there is particular interest at general elections in seats that may change hands, either because they have narrow majorities, or because of some other factor such as a high profile or controversial independent candidate. If the projections are filtered to look at grey majority seats that are also highly marginal we generate an important list.

For an election in 2010 the data suggests there are 46 grey majority seats in mainland Britain where the notional majority within the new boundaries is very marginal i.e. a winning majority of five per cent or less. Of these 46 seats 14 are held by Labour, 9 by the Liberal Democrats, 1 by the SNP and 22 by the Conservative Party.

Chart: The 46 highly marginal seats with a majority of grey voters (turnout) at a general election held in 2010.

Parliamentary Constituency	2010 % turn 55+	Winner	2nd	Majority	Majority (%)
Clwyd West	61.5	CON	LAB	51	0.1
Sittingbourne and Sheppey	50.6	CON	LAB	22	0.1
Solihull	55.7	CON	LD	124	0.2
York Outer	52.7	LD	CON	203	0.4
North East Somerset	54.4	CON	LAB	212	0.5
Romsey and Southampton North	51.6	LD	CON	204	0.5
Ceredigion	57.0	LD	PC	218	0.6
Cheltenham	50.4	LD	CON	316	0.7
Shipley	51.6	CON	LAB	450	1
Somerton and Frome	57.7	LD	CON	595	1.1
Eastbourne	60.8	CON	LD	672	1.4
Gravesham	50.0	CON	LAB	654	1.4
Wirral West	60.8	CON	LAB	569	1.5
Preseli Pembrokeshire	57.8	CON	LAB	601	1.5
Westmorland and Lonsdale	61.8	LD	CON	806	1.7
Thanet South	58.8	CON	LAB	810	1.8
Arfon	50.0	LAB	PC	456	1.8
Stroud	55.0	LAB	CON	996	1.9
City of Chester	51.5	LAB	CON	973	2.2
Hereford and South Herefordshire	57.0	LD	CON	1,089	2.4
Hastings and Rye	56.2	LAB	CON	1,156	2.5
Scarborough and Whitby	59.4	CON	LAB	1,245	2.7

Calder Valley	50.1	LAB	CON	1,303	2.7
Stourbridge	52.2	LAB	CON	1,280	2.9
The Wrekin	51.9	CON	LAB	1,187	2.9
Taunton Deane	56.1	LD	CON	1,868	3.3
Vale of Glamorgan	52.1	LAB	CON	1,574	3.4
Ynys Môn	58.7	LAB	PC	1,242	3.5
Shrewsbury and Atcham	55.9	CON	LAB	1,808	3.6
Dorset South	59.6	LAB	CON	1,812	3.7
High Peak	51.1	LAB	CON	1,750	3.8
Aberconwy	61.5	LAB	CON	1,070	3.9
Staffordshire Moorlands	57.2	CON	LAB	1,618	3.9
Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale	51.9	CON	LAB	1,738	3.9
Stafford	53.4	LAB	CON	1,852	4
Angus	50.7	SNP	CON	1,601	4.2
Forest of Dean	57.2	CON	LAB	2,049	4.3
Weston-Super-Mare	56.1	CON	LD	2,088	4.3
Selby and Ainsty	51.6	CON	LAB	2,060	4.3
Ludlow	62.4	CON	LD	2,027	4.4
West Dorset	66.3	CON	LD	2,461	4.6
Chippenham	53.4	LD	CON	2,183	4.7
Brighton, Kemptown	51.0	LAB	CON	1,853	4.8
Burton	50.5	LAB	CON	2,132	4.8
Meon Valley	55.3	CON	LD	2,378	4.9
Central Devon	58.6	CON	LD	2,338	5

The Government's current working majority is 62, so the loss of 32 seats would be enough to lose that majority at the next election. While clearly there will be a diverse range of seats that count as marginals, it is interesting to note that if the Labour government were to fail to retain the 36 grey marginals where it holds majorities of less than 5,000 votes, it would also fail to retain its majority in the House of Commons.

If the categorisation of the highly marginal seats is adjusted to include any seat where the majority last time around was 5,000 votes or less we see a grey battleground in 2010 of 94 seats.

Grey marginals in 2010. By winning party in 2005:

- Labour 38
- Conservative 34
- Liberal Democrat 19
- SNP 2
- Independent 1

Chart: The 94 marginal seats with majorities of less than 5,000 and an estimated majority of grey voters (turnout) at a general election held in 2010.

Parliamentary Constituency	2010 % turnout 55+	Winner	2nd	Maj	Maj (%)
Sittingbourne and Sheppey	50.6	CON	LAB	22	0.1
Clwyd West	61.5	CON	LAB	51	0.1
Solihull	55.7	CON	LD	124	0.2
York Outer	52.7	LD	CON	203	0.4
Romsey and Southampton North	51.6	LD	CON	204	0.5
North East Somerset	54.4	CON	LAB	212	0.5
Ceredigion	57.0	LD	PC	218	0.6
Cheltenham	50.4	LD	CON	316	0.7
Shipley	51.6	CON	LAB	450	1
Arfon	50.0	LAB	PC	456	1.8
Wirral West	60.8	CON	LAB	569	1.5
Somerton and Frome	57.7	LD	CON	595	1.1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	57.8	CON	LAB	601	1.5
Gravesham	50.0	CON	LAB	654	1.4
Eastbourne	60.8	CON	LD	672	1.4
Westmorland and Lonsdale	61.8	LD	CON	806	1.7
Thanet South	58.8	CON	LAB	810	1.8
City of Chester	51.5	LAB	CON	973	2.2
Stroud	55.0	LAB	CON	996	1.9
Aberconwy	61.5	LAB	CON	1,070	3.9
Hereford and South Herefordshire	57.0	LD	CON	1,089	2.4
Hastings and Rye	56.2	LAB	CON	1,156	2.5
The Wrekin	51.9	CON	LAB	1,187	2.9
Ynys Môn	58.7	LAB	PC	1,242	3.5
Scarborough and Whitby	59.4	CON	LAB	1,245	2.7
Stourbridge	52.2	LAB	CON	1,280	2.9
Calder Valley	50.1	LAB	CON	1,303	2.7
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	52.3	SNP	LAB	1,441	10.4
Vale of Glamorgan	52.1	LAB	CON	1,574	3.4
Angus	50.7	SNP	CON	1,601	4.2
Staffordshire Moorlands	57.2	CON	LAB	1,618	3.9

Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale	51.9	CON	LAB	1,738	3.9
High Peak	51.1	LAB	CON	1,750	3.8
Shrewsbury and Atcham	55.9	CON	LAB	1,808	3.6
Dorset South	59.6	LAB	CON	1,812	3.7
Stafford	53.4	LAB	CON	1,852	4
Brighton, Kemptown	51.0	LAB	CON	1,853	4.8
Taunton Deane	56.1	LD	CON	1,868	3.3
Ludlow	62.4	CON	LD	2,027	4.4
Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	58.9	LAB	CON	2,043	5.3
Forest of Dean	57.2	CON	LAB	2,049	4.3
Selby and Ainsty	51.6	CON	LAB	2,060	4.3
Weston-Super-Mare	56.1	CON	LD	2,088	4.3
Wolverhampton South West	51.6	LAB	CON	2,114	5.3
Burton	50.5	LAB	CON	2,132	4.8
Pendle	50.6	LAB	CON	2,180	5.3
Chippenham	53.4	LD	CON	2,183	4.7
Central Devon	58.6	CON	LD	2,338	5
Meon Valley	55.3	CON	LD	2,378	4.9
Rugby	52.0	LAB	CON	2,397	5.2
West Dorset	66.3	CON	LD	2,461	4.6
South Ribble	52.6	LAB	CON	2,528	5.4
Cleethorpes	55.0	LAB	CON	2,640	6.1
Totnes	64.9	CON	LD	2,693	5.8
Torbay	59.8	LD	CON	2,727	6
Torrige and West Devon	60.9	CON	LD	2,732	5.4
Camborne and Redruth	57.1	LD	LAB	2,733	7.1
Chesterfield	53.3	LD	LAB	2,733	6.4
Bournemouth West	54.3	CON	LD	2,766	7.6
Cornwall North	59.8	LD	CON	2,892	6.9
Dumfries and Galloway	53.5	LAB	CON	2,922	5.7
Wells	58.9	CON	LD	3,040	5.7
West Worcestershire	61.9	CON	LD	3,053	6
Great Yarmouth	59.0	LAB	CON	3,055	7.4
Beverley and Holderness	56.5	CON	LAB	3,097	6.2
Brigg and Goole	55.0	LAB	CON	3,217	7.8

Dudley South	52.6	LAB	CON	3,222	8.9
Blackpool North and Cleveleys	57.8	LAB	CON	3,241	8.5
Wirral South	59.2	LAB	CON	3,538	9.3
Clacton	69.0	CON	LAB	3,629	8.5
Cheadle	55.3	LD	CON	3,672	7.4
Southport	59.6	LD	CON	3,838	9.3
Brecon and Radnorshire	61.5	LD	CON	3,905	10.2
Truro and Falmouth	58.3	LD	CON	3,931	9.3
Halesowen and Rowley Regis	54.3	LAB	CON	4,010	9.7
Harborough	54.0	CON	LD	4,047	8.1
East Dunbartonshire	50.1	LD	LAB	4,061	8.7
Dudley North	52.4	LAB	CON	4,106	11.1
Dorset North	59.3	CON	LD	4,200	8.6
Swansea West	53.4	LAB	LD	4,269	12.9
Gedling	51.5	LAB	CON	4,335	9.6
North West Leicestershire	51.9	LAB	CON	4,477	9.5
Monmouth	59.1	CON	LAB	4,527	9.9
Bolton North East	51.2	LAB	CON	4,527	12
Basildon and Billericay	50.7	CON	LAB	4,559	11.2
Wyre and Preston North	58.1	IKHC	CON	4,613	9.5
Vale of Clwyd	58.4	LAB	CON	4,629	14.2
Newton Abbot	61.3	LD	CON	4,830	10.5
Barrow and Furness	55.4	LAB	CON	4,843	12.5
Morecambe and Lunesdale	55.2	LAB	CON	4,849	11.7
Keighley	51.6	LAB	CON	4,852	10.5
Sefton Central	59.8	LAB	CON	4,950	12
Hexham	58.8	CON	LAB	4,957	12
Dover	57.3	LAB	CON	5,005	10.4

Chart: Labour's 38 Grey Marginals in Britain at the 2010 General Election

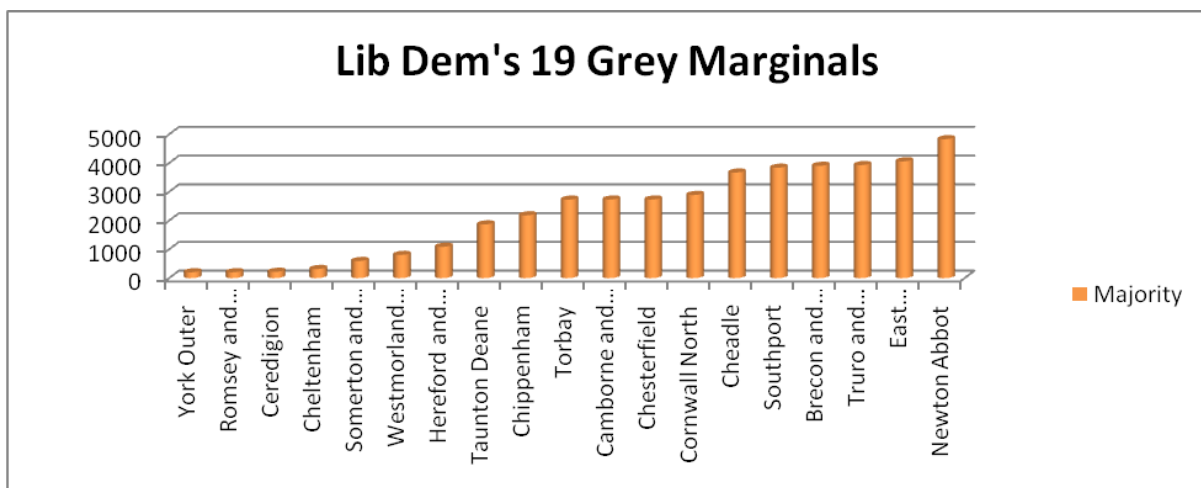
Parliamentary Constituency	2010 % turn 55+	Winner	2nd	Majority	Majority (%)
Arfon	50.0	LAB	PC	456	1.8
City of Chester	51.5	LAB	CON	973	2.2
Stroud	55.0	LAB	CON	996	1.9
Aberconwy	61.5	LAB	CON	1,070	3.9
Hastings and Rye	56.2	LAB	CON	1,156	2.5
Ynys Môn	58.7	LAB	PC	1,242	3.5
Stourbridge	52.2	LAB	CON	1,280	2.9
Calder Valley	50.1	LAB	CON	1,303	2.7
Vale of Glamorgan	52.1	LAB	CON	1,574	3.4
High Peak	51.1	LAB	CON	1,750	3.8
Dorset South	59.6	LAB	CON	1,812	3.7
Stafford	53.4	LAB	CON	1,852	4
Brighton, Kemptown	51.0	LAB	CON	1,853	4.8
Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	58.9	LAB	CON	2,043	5.3
Wolverhampton South West	51.6	LAB	CON	2,114	5.3
Burton	50.5	LAB	CON	2,132	4.8
Pendle	50.6	LAB	CON	2,180	5.3
Rugby	52.0	LAB	CON	2,397	5.2
South Ribble	52.6	LAB	CON	2,528	5.4
Cleethorpes	55.0	LAB	CON	2,640	6.1
Dumfries & Galloway	53.5	LAB	CON	2,922	5.7
Great Yarmouth	59.0	LAB	CON	3,055	7.4
Brigg and Goole	55.0	LAB	CON	3,217	7.8
Dudley South	52.6	LAB	CON	3,222	8.9
Blackpool North and Cleveleys	57.8	LAB	CON	3,241	8.5
Wirral South	59.2	LAB	CON	3,538	9.3
Halesowen and Rowley Regis	54.3	LAB	CON	4,010	9.7
Dudley North	52.4	LAB	CON	4,106	11.1
Swansea West	53.4	LAB	LD	4,269	12.9
Gedling	51.5	LAB	CON	4,335	9.6
North West Leicestershire	51.9	LAB	CON	4,477	9.5
Bolton North East	51.2	LAB	CON	4,527	12
Vale of Clwyd	58.4	LAB	CON	4,629	14.2
Barrow and Furness	55.4	LAB	CON	4,843	12.5
Morecambe and Lunesdale	55.2	LAB	CON	4,849	11.7
Keighley	51.6	LAB	CON	4,852	10.5
Sefton Central	59.8	LAB	CON	4,950	12
Dover	57.3	LAB	CON	5,005	10.4

The Liberal Democrats in 2010

It is also worth noting that a significant proportion of the seats that will be defended by the Liberal Democrats are to be found in this list of grey majority marginals. There are 19 Liberal Democrat grey marginals in Britain where they are defending notional majorities of less than 5,000:

York Outer	Camborne and Redruth
Romsey and Southampton North	Chesterfield
Ceredigion	Cornwall North
Cheltenham	Cheadle
Somerton and Frome	Southport
Westmorland and Lonsdale	Brecon and Radnorshire
Hereford and South Herefordshire	Truro and Falmouth
Taunton Deane	East Dunbartonshire
Chippenham	Newton Abbot
Torbay	

Chart: In a 2010 general election 19 highly marginal grey seats for the Liberal Democrats



Election 2025

If we project this data forward to 2025 we can see the bigger picture of the rate of change in the age transformation of the British electorate.

The last general election in 2005 saw voters aged 65 and over go past for the first time the one in four voters mark. As we would expect this figure increases incrementally, so that by an election in 2025 over 30% of turnout will be from the over 65s. However, as the rate of ageing in Wales and Scotland is set to run faster than in England, by 2025 over a third of votes cast in Wales and Scotland will come from the over 65s. In these countries over a period 20 years the “pensioner” vote will increase from a quarter to a third.

Chart: The change from 2005 to 2025 in the proportion of turnout comprised of voters aged 65 and over

	2005 65+	2010 65+	2015 65+	2025 65+
England	24.9	26.3	27.6	30.3
Wales	27.4	29.2	31.1	34.8
Scotland	25.1	26.7	28.3	33.0
Great Britain (not inc NI)	25.1	26.5	27.8	30.8

In terms of voters aged 55 and over we also see steady and significant changes in the size of the wider grey vote. At the last election the grey vote (all voters aged 55+) was estimated as being 42.6% of turnout. On this report's assumptions that the age difference in turnout remains unaltered this will rise to 48.9% by 2025, but the grey vote will represent more than half of the votes cast in Wales and Scotland by 2025. The concept of a grey majority that applies to so many constituencies will by 2025 apply to at least 2 of the nations that comprise the United Kingdom.

Chart: The change from 2005 to 2025 in the proportion of turnout comprised of voters aged 55 and over

Grey Vote 55+	GE 2005	GE 2010	GE 2015	GE 2025
England	42.3	43.1	43.9	48.3
Wales	46.3	47.5	48.7	53.5
Scotland	42.9	44.6	46.4	52.4
Great Britain	42.6	43.5	44.4	48.9

Looking forward to 2025 – a post-age transformation electorate?

As we project further into the future we see an age composition of the electorate that is radically different from what we saw at the last general election in 2005.

Voters aged 65+

By 2015 there are now 8 seats projected to have a majority of votes cast by voters aged 65+, and this increases significantly further in 2025 to 39 seats. Although the constituencies in this list are primarily coastal, it should be noted how their distribution is more geographically widespread by 2025, with seats in the North such as Berwick-upon-Tweed, Hexham and Fylde now passing through this landmark figure.

Seats with over half of votes cast by persons aged over 65:

2005	2010	2015	2025
<i>Christchurch</i>	<i>Christchurch</i>	<i>Christchurch</i>	<i>Christchurch</i>
<i>Clacton</i>	<i>Clacton</i>	<i>Clacton</i>	<i>West Dorset</i>
<i>New Forest</i>	<i>New Forest</i>	<i>New Forest</i>	
<i>West</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>New Forest West</i>
	<i>Worthing</i>	<i>Norfolk</i>	
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>Norfolk North</i>
	<i>Norfolk</i>		
	<i>North</i>	<i>West Dorset</i>	<i>Clacton</i>
		<i>Worthing</i>	
		<i>West</i>	<i>Bexhill and Battle</i>
		<i>Devon East</i>	<i>Totnes</i>
			<i>Louth and</i>
		<i>Totnes</i>	<i>Horncastle</i>
			<i>Ludlow</i>
			<i>Lewes</i>
			<i>Herefordshire North</i>
			<i>Worthing West</i>
			<i>Berwick-upon-Tweed</i>
			<i>Westmorland and</i>
			<i>Lonsdale</i>
			<i>Devon East</i>
			<i>Sefton Central</i>
			<i>Suffolk Coastal</i>
			<i>Southport</i>
			<i>Bognor Regis and</i>
			<i>Littlehampton</i>
			<i>Chichester</i>
			<i>Arundel and South</i>
			<i>Downs</i>
			<i>West</i>
			<i>Worcestershire</i>
			<i>Brecon and</i>
			<i>Radnorshire</i>

*Bridgwater and
West Somerset
Derbyshire Dales
Clwyd West
Isle of Wight
Aberconwy
Newton Abbot
Hexham
Wirral West
Tiverton and
Honiton
Torrington and West
Devon
Boston and
Skegness
Fylde
North West Norfolk*

Other landmarks for the persons aged over 65 category

This report has already noted the estimated majority of votes cast by people aged 55 and over in a majority of Westminster seats by 2025. At the next general election in 2010 it is also estimated that in most seats a third or more votes cast will come from people aged 65 and over. By the year 2025 466 seats will see at least one third of turnout comprised of voters aged 65 and over.

Number of seats with 40% or more aged 65+

2005 – 53

2010 - 102

2015 – 165

2025 – 294

Number of seats with a third of more of votes cast the over 65s

2005 – 287

2010 - 368

2015 – 411

2025 – 466

Chart: By an election in 2025 39 constituencies will see a majority of votes cast by voters aged 65 or over.

Parliamentary Constituency	2025 % turn 65+
Christchurch	60.1
New Forest West	59.2
Clacton	58.4
West Dorset	58.0
Norfolk North	57.6
Bexhill and Battle	56.8
Worthing West	55.4
Totnes	54.5
Lewes	53.6
Devon East	53.5
Louth and Horncastle	53.4
Southport	53.4
Bognor Regis and Littlehampton	53.3
Suffolk Coastal	53.0
Ludlow	52.9
Herefordshire North	52.8
Berwick-upon-Tweed	52.6
Chichester	52.5
Westmorland and Lonsdale	52.4
Sefton Central	52.1
West Worcestershire	51.9
Wirral West	51.8
Brecon and Radnorshire	51.2
Newton Abbot	51.1
Tiverton and Honiton	50.9
Eastbourne	50.8
Arundel and South Downs	50.7
Aberconwy	50.6
Poole	50.6
Isle of Wight	50.6
North West Norfolk	50.5
Bridgwater and West Somerset	50.5
Clwyd West	50.3
Hexham	50.3
Derbyshire Dales	50.2
Fylde	50.2
Torrige and West Devon	50.1
Boston and Skegness	50.1

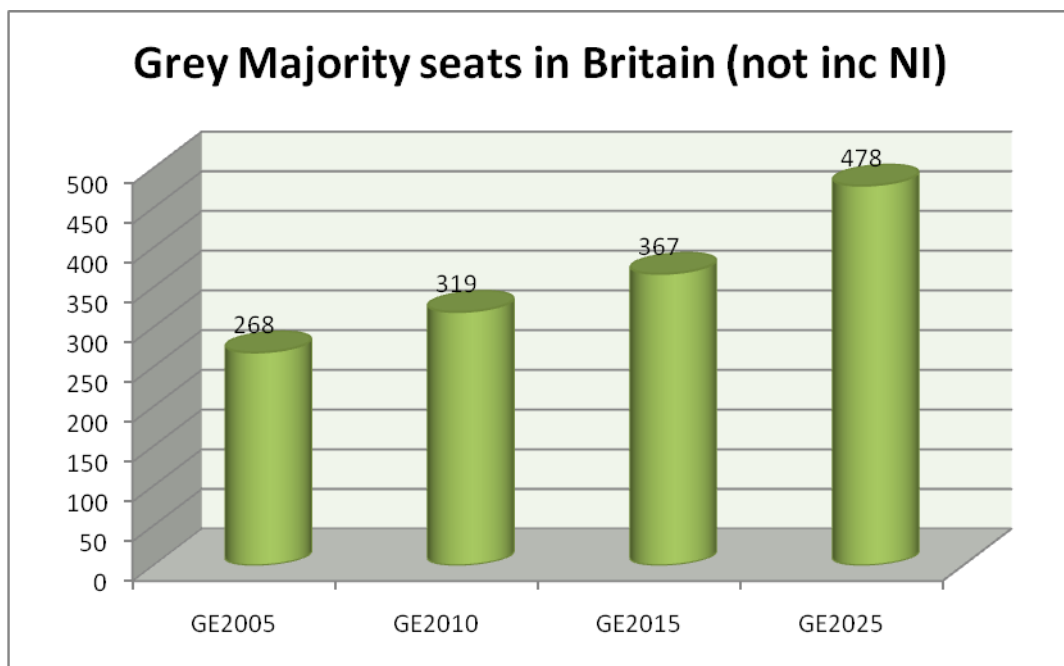
Hereford and South Herefordshire	50.0
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The wider Grey Vote

In 2005 there were 268 seats in Britain with a grey majority (i.e. where more than 50% of votes cast are estimated to come from voters aged 55 and over). For the next general election in 2010 this figure rises to 319, meaning that the majority of the 632 constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales will possess a “grey majority”.

Looking ahead to 2025 it is estimated that 478 constituencies will have a grey majority. In the 13 seats with the highest proportion of older voters 70% or more of turnout will be comprised of voters aged 55+. In 179 seats the grey vote will make up 60% or more of the turnout.

Chart: The Rise of the Grey Vote 2005-2025. Seats with a majority of votes cast by voters aged 55 and over.



Appendices

1. Estimated age composition of all seats in Britain in 2010
2. Estimated age composition of all seats in Britain in 2025
3. 150 seats in Britain with the highest proportion of voters aged 65 and over in 2010
4. 150 seats in Britain with the highest proportion of voters aged 65 and over in 2025
5. 150 seats in Britain with the highest proportion of voters aged 55 and over in 2010
6. 150 seats in Britain with the highest proportion of voters aged 55 and over in 2025
7. All seats in Scotland ranked by proportion of voters aged 65 and over in 2010
8. All seats in Scotland ranked by proportion of voters aged 55 and over in 2010
9. All seats in Scotland ranked by proportion of voters aged 55 and over in 2025
10. All seats in Wales ranked by proportion of voters aged 55 and over in 2010
11. All seats in Wales ranked by proportion of voters aged 55 and over in 2025