

## The Impact of the anti-Brexit tactical vote in 2017

Summary of Dr Abigail Lebrecht report by Best for Britain

[New research](#) points to how grassroots Brexit-related voting may have had a significant impact on the 2017 general election. A constituency by constituency analysis suggests that, while a significant number of leave voters appear to have switched to the Conservatives, many remain voters supported the party in their constituency most likely to beat the Conservatives (mostly Labour). These new findings suggest that the Conservatives will struggle to win an election by relying solely on supporters of Brexit, while Labour could get closer to win a majority if it does more to attract anti-Brexit voters who are still backing the Tories.

In a recent [YouGov poll](#), 'other' is now more popular than Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn as the UK's prime minister of choice. Yet only four months ago, both the Conservatives and Labour polled more votes than ever before. Has political feeling drastically changed in the UK since the election, or was the election result not as straightforward as it appeared? An answer can be found in research released by [Best for Britain](#) which shows the possible impact Brexit-related voting had on the election, and the lingering impact of the referendum on the British electoral landscape.<sup>1</sup>

### *The impact of grassroots Brexit-related voting in the 2017 general elections.*

The [British Electoral Study](#) (BES) reported in August that 1 in 3 voters were most concerned about Brexit when voting and the Best for Britain model finds that around 30% of voters appeared to vote in line with their referendum vote.

Looking at the 2015 result and the referendum result in each constituency, this research identifies a **Brexit-related vote** for both remain and leave voters. Significant numbers of leave voters appear to have switched to the Conservatives, but a constituency-by-constituency analysis suggests that **many remain voters supported the party in their constituency most likely to beat the Conservatives.**

For example, in Bristol North West (Lab: +16.2%; Con: -2.1%; LD: -1.0%; Lab gain from Con), which had a strong remain vote in the referendum (61.1%) and where Labour won with a

---

<sup>1</sup> This analysis only looks at election results for England and Wales (as Scotland had a completely different tactical voting programme and a Conservative party putting out a less uncompromising line on Brexit).

relatively small majority in 2017 (2017 Lab majority: 4,761; 2015 Con majority: 4,944), the evidence points to tactical voters for Labour, as well as remain voters leaving the Conservatives, being likely to have delivered the seat for Labour. In contrast, in seats where there was another more pro-remain party, Labour's vote increased much less than the national average (e.g. Oxford West & Abingdon: LD: +14.8%; Con: -3.3%; Lab: -0.1%; LD gain from Con; 2017 LD majority: 816; 2015 Con majority: 9,582; remain votes: 61.8%).

While UKIP voters joining the Conservatives was expected and well documented before the election, the organic flow of remain voters to whoever the main challenger of the Conservatives was in their constituency as a stand against the Conservative Brexit has been underreported up until this point. With the evidence from our previous studies, the [BES](#) and [Ipsos Mori](#) post-election polls, we can conjecture with some confidence that **the grassroots anti-Brexit vote may have not only denied Theresa May her majority but is also likely to have boosted the Labour Party's successful campaign.**

*What conclusions can be drawn?*

#### *Conservatives*

This research suggests that **the Conservatives will struggle to win an election by relying solely on supporters of Brexit.** Despite successfully appealing for the votes of previous UKIP supporters and other leave voters, the grassroots anti-Brexit vote is likely to have denied the Conservatives their majority.

#### *Labour*

These new findings suggest that **many voters may have picked Labour as the anti-Brexit vehicle in 2017.** These voters are likely to have lent Labour their vote and not made a long-term commitments (yet). This suggests that **by appealing to remain voters Labour will likely be able to maintain and extend their gains made in 2017.** According to [Ipsos Mori](#), Labour has the votes of 54% of remain voters to hold onto in the next election. Meanwhile the Tories have 26% of remain voters still to lose.