
UK Elections. Labour landslide, 'historic' breakthrough. Farmer: "Change begins"

"Labour has won this election. The British people have delivered a sobering verdict and I take full responsibility for this loss." At 4.30am - about an hour before Labour leader Keir Starmer secured a majority of 326 seats in the Westminster parliament - the outgoing prime minister, Conservative **Rishi Sunak**, opened the door of Downing Street to his opponent. Labour leader Keir Starmer is leading his party back into government for the seventh time in the history of the UK, compared with at least 20 previous Tory wins. **The crushing defeat of the Tory party.** The Conservatives lost at least 248 seats, and unless they succeed in moving to the centre with a moderate leader, they risk extinction. They could even be absorbed by the Reform Party, led by eurosceptic Nigel Farage, who is entering parliament for the first time with three colleagues. The Liberal Democrats did well with at least 71 seats, although they failed to replace the Conservatives as the leading opposition party. The Scottish nationalists of the SNP (Scottish National Party) suffered heavy losses in this election, with at least 38 less seats. Scottish Labour thus regained its traditional position as the dominant political party in Scotland. The turnout was remarkably low: 60%, the second lowest in UK history since 1885, according to the BBC. **A historic victory.** For Britain, this is a historic result because Labour - which won 411 out of 650 seats - has the capacity to bring about real change in this country where the bottom 50% of the population own less than 5% of the wealth and the richest 1% own 23%, and where the number of food parcels has increased by a staggering 37% between 2021 and 2022. And where, after 14 years of Conservative rule, pensioners are richer than families with young children. **The victory speech.** "We did it! Four-and-a-half years of work changing the party. This is what it is for. A changed Labour party ready to serve our country. Ready to restore Britain to the service of working people." "Change begins now." This was the victory speech of the newly elected PM, Keir Starmer, a former lawyer and public prosecutor who had only been in politics for nine years, although his parents, a mechanic and a nurse, both Labour stalwarts, named him after Keir Hardie, Britain's first parliamentary Labour leader. Starmer inherits a gross debt of £2,700 billion, or €3,185 billion, equivalent to 98.8 per cent of annual gross domestic product. And no one knows where he will find the money to reform healthcare, transport and education, as he has promised, since he pledged not to raise the main taxes, income tax, VAT and national insurance, health and pension contributions. **Votes and seats.** Under the UK's first-past-the-post electoral system, the candidate with the most votes in each constituency becomes an MP. The large number of seats won by Labour, two-thirds of Parliament, is not reflected in the percentage of the vote. In fact, looking at the votes, Labour won 33.8%, the Tories 23.7% (with a loss of almost 20%), 14.3% went to Farage's Reform (only 4 seats), the Liberals won 12.2%, followed by the Greens and other smaller formations. **The role of Brexit.** What role did Brexit - the UK's decision to leave the European Union, voted for in the 2016 referendum - play? "The two main political parties have avoided discussing the issue, and no political leader, with the exception of the Liberal Democrat Ed Davey, is talking about rejoining Europe for fear of losing votes and because the economic circumstances are too unfavourable", says Stefan Enchelmaier, Professor of Law at the University of Oxford. "However, the causes of the Tories' collapse are rooted in the exit from the EU: under Boris Johnson the Conservative Party was hijacked by a minority of fanatics who, led by Liz Truss, destroyed the economy and caused a surge in mortgages that impoverished millions of households. I hope that after this election the members of the party, even if they are older and anti-immigration, will understand that we need a moderate, centrist leader like the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the outgoing Treasury and Finance Minister, Jeremy Hunt. Conversely, should the Tories remain in the thrall of these right-wing anti-Brexit fanatics, the party will become like a sect, a cult, and will be absorbed by Reform, Nigel Farage's party". **The case of Scotland.** The last remarks are for Scotland. The desire for independence from London is still supported by around 50% of adults in Scotland. However, with the defeat of the

Scottish National Party, SNP risks becoming more of a cultural movement than a political one, a long-term ideal, given the extent to which Edinburgh's economy is dependent on the UK. Yet again, since an independent Scotland stands few chances of survival outside the EU, the Brexit factor plays an important role.

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