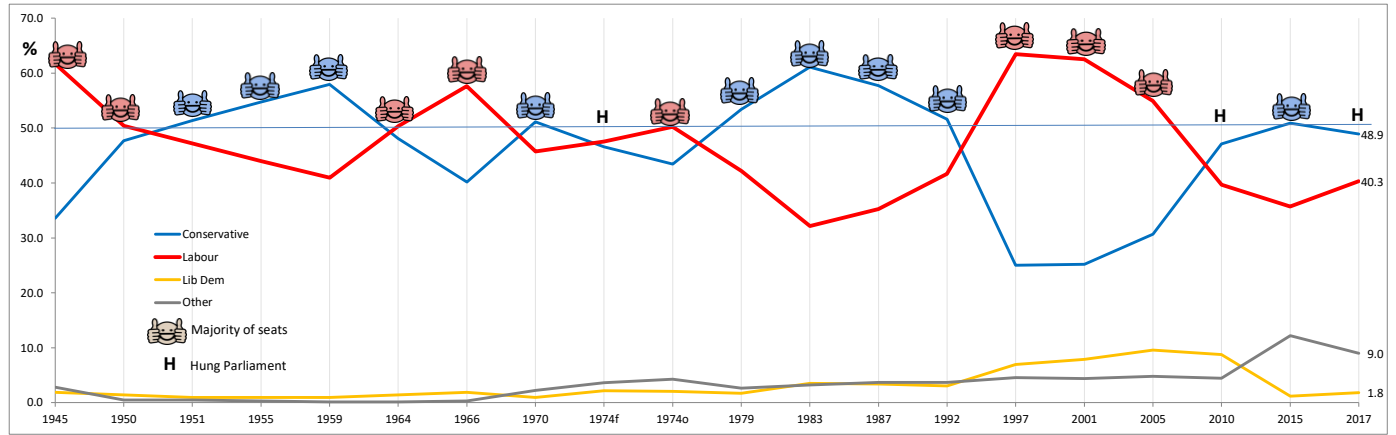


Percentage share of seats - post-war UK elections

Year	1945	1950	1951	1955	1959	1964	1966	1970	Hung Parl		1974f	1974o	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997	2001	2005	Hung Parl		2010	2015	Hung Parl		2017
Conservative	33.6	47.7	51.4	54.8	57.9	48.1	40.2	51.1	46.6	43.5	53.4	61.1	57.7	51.6	25.0	25.2	30.7	47.1	50.9	48.9						
Labour	61.7	50.4	47.2	44.0	41.0	50.3	57.6	45.7	47.6	50.2	42.2	32.2	35.2	41.6	63.4	62.5	55.0	39.7	35.7	40.3						
Lib Dem	1.9	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.9	1.0	2.2	2.1	1.7	3.5	3.4	3.1	7.0	7.9	9.6	8.8	1.2	1.8						
Other	2.8	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	2.2	3.6	4.3	2.7	3.2	3.7	3.7	4.6	4.4	4.8	4.5	12.2	9.0						



KEY: Majority government = 👍

What is 'first past the post'?

- UK elections are decided using what is known as the First Past the Post (FPTP) voting system. To become an MP a candidate simply needs the largest number of votes in their area. This is repeated in 650 constituencies.
 - As every MP will be elected with different levels of support, the proportion of seats a party gets in parliament will rarely reflect the proportion of votes the party received. See for example % of Liberal Democrat voters (bottom graph) compared to seats (in the top graph) in 1983.

How are governments formed under FPTP?

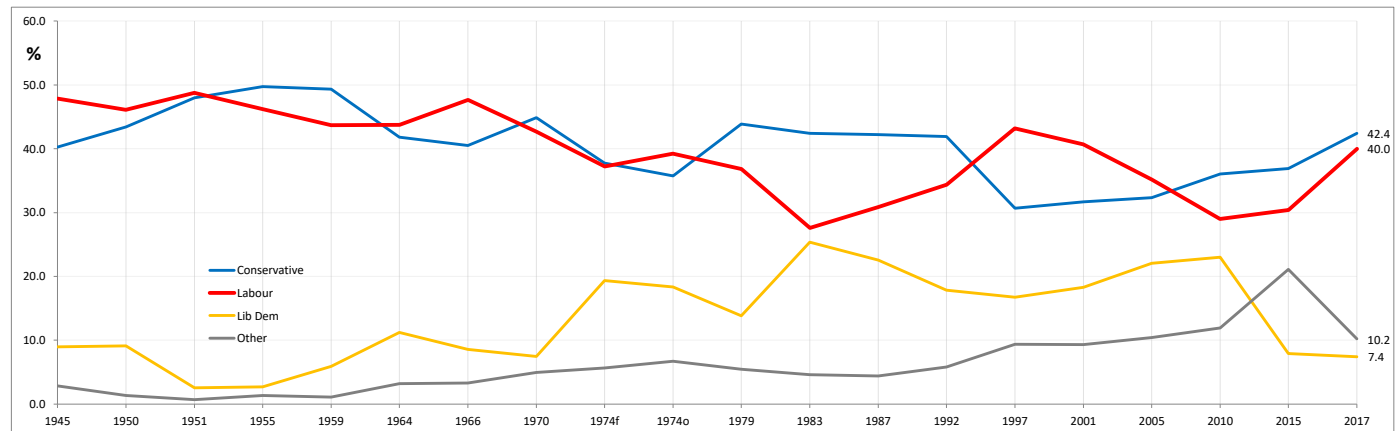
- A majority government is formed by a party that has an absolute majority of seats in parliament - to win the election outright, and the chance to form government, one political party needs to win an overall majority of the 650 seats ie above the 50% line on first graph (with a few caveats where have abstentionist seats, like Sinn Fein).
 - The alternative is a hung parliament.

So what happens in the case of a hung parliament?

There are two main possibilities:
 - [i] Two or more parties can agree to work together to govern the country. This happened in 2010 with the Conservative / Lib Dem coalition government.
 - [ii] The party with the most seats can also try to govern with a minority of seats in the Commons. If the party can't get enough support on an important vote, however, it risks defeat, which may force a general election. A variation on this scenario happened in 1974 after the February election (1974f) and led to an election in October the same year (1974o).

Percentage share of vote

Year	1945	1950	1951	1955	1959	1964	1966	1970	Hung Parl		1974f	1974o	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997	2001	2005	Hung Parl		2010	2015	Hung Parl		2017
Conservative	40.3	43.4	48.0	49.7	49.4	41.8	40.5	44.9	37.8	35.7	43.9	42.4	42.2	41.9	30.7	31.7	32.4	36.1	36.9	42.4						
Labour	47.9	46.1	48.8	46.2	43.7	43.8	47.7	42.7	37.2	39.3	36.9	27.6	30.8	34.4	43.2	40.7	35.2	29.0	30.4	40.0						
Lib Dem	9.0	9.1	2.6	2.7	5.9	11.2	8.5	7.5	19.3	18.3	13.8	25.4	22.5	17.9	16.8	18.3	22.1	23.0	7.9	7.4						
Other	2.9	1.3	0.7	1.3	1.1	3.2	3.3	5.0	5.7	6.7	5.5	4.6	4.4	5.8	9.4	9.3	10.4	11.9	21.1	10.2						



Infographic by Michael Lloyd Research
www.researchmlr.co.uk