WINNING 150

UNDERSTANDING LABOUR'S TARGET SEATS

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Acknowledgements

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

The next general election is fast approaching: if an election is held in spring 2023, then we are halfway through the parliament and a year and half from the start of the official campaign.

This paper examines the challenge facing the Labour party in that election. It does so by painting a statistical picture of the 150 non-Labour seats where the party came closest to winning in the 2019 election. With Labour needing to gain 123 seats to have a majority of one, this is the pool of constituencies which might become Labour's target seats.

Since there is a strong chance of an election in the first nine months of 2023, our analysis is based on existing constituency boundaries. An election at a later date will be fought with new seats but the general pattern of results we present will not change much: the job will just become a little harder.

There are no shortcuts to a Labour government. Our analysis of the 150 potential target seats shows the party must appeal to a very broad range of people and win seats across the length and breadth of the country. Labour cannot 'slice and dice' the electorate by seeking to prioritise any one grouping of seats, whether that is the Red Wall, the Blue Wall, or any other type of place.

In England and Wales, there are 125 target seats**:**

- **They are mostly made up of towns and villages.** Ninety-five of the 125 constituencies are made up of towns (or sometimes villages), with many of these in the north, midlands and Wales and usually not adjacent to core cities.

- **They are a diverse group of seats and often not 'extreme'.** We looked at where the target seats sit by looking at their distribution across five quintiles made up of all constituencies. For all the measures we examine, the target seats range widely in their characteristics. On some measures the seats are evenly distributed between five quintiles of seats; or are clustered around the middle three quintiles. This is the case with respect to ethnicity, age, homeownership, and numbers of voters in C1 households.

- **On some measures the target seats skew a little in one direction.** Compared to the median seat in England and Wales, the target seats tend to have fewer graduates, more voters in C2 and DE households, more leave voters, lower house price inflation, and lower employment growth.

- **Most are *not* formerly loyal Labour seats.** Only 41 are seats in England and Wales that used to be loyally Labour and were lost in 2015, 2017 or 2019. More than half of the 125 are seats that have not been consistently held by Labour – they have either moved between parties in recent times or have never been in Labour hands.

- **More target seats have been slipping away from Labour than have been moving towards the party.** Relative to Labour's England and Wales vote share in each election, more seats have been moving away from Labour than growing more supportive:, 79 target seats have a lower relative vote share in 2019 compared to 2005, while only 46 have seen this relative vote share increase. There has been a large drop in support, in seats where there are: fewer graduates, more Brexit supporters, more 'working-class' DE households; and in places that have experienced low house price inflation and low employment growth. A smaller number of seats have been moving at a slower pace towards Labour: these are often seats the party has never or rarely won before; they have more graduates, more remain supporters, fewer working-class voters and are places with above average house price inflation and employment growth.

In Scotland, there are 25 target seats. They all saw an increased vote for the SNP in 2019 and are seats in the middle-ground of Scottish politics: they are clustered around the Scottish median in the extent for their support for remaining in the EU and for the SNP.

Looking forward, Labour should have four priorities:

1. **Win over 'swing' seats and seats last won in 2005.** There are 51 seats in England and Wales in this group: 34 last voted Labour in 2005; 17 have switched more than once between the parties in the last five elections. Together they make up a major, and recently overlooked, group of constituencies.

2. **Reverse the decline in formerly loyal seats**. There are 41 seats in England and Wales that were formerly loyal to Labour. While the majorities tend to be smaller, they have been moving away from Labour for some time and this could be challenging to reverse.

3. **Win back seats in Scotland**. The opinion polls show a country still split on independence but with a little appetite for an immediate referendum. A large percentage of Scots want to see stronger cooperation between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Labour needs to demonstrate it is the party that can build a strong partnership between the nations, with a vision for a progressive Britain that devolves power away from Westminster and into the nations and regions.

4. **Exploit smaller, slower-moving demographic changes in previous 'no-go' areas.** Thirty-three seats that are within reach, have never or rarely voted Labour (ie 2001 at the most recent), though many of these have substantial majorities to overcome. Winning a few extra seats by capitalising on demographic changes would be the icing on the cake, but seats like this are too few in number to put Labour in range of minority government, let alone a majority.

FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF LABOUR'S TARGET SEATS (ENGLAND AND WALES)
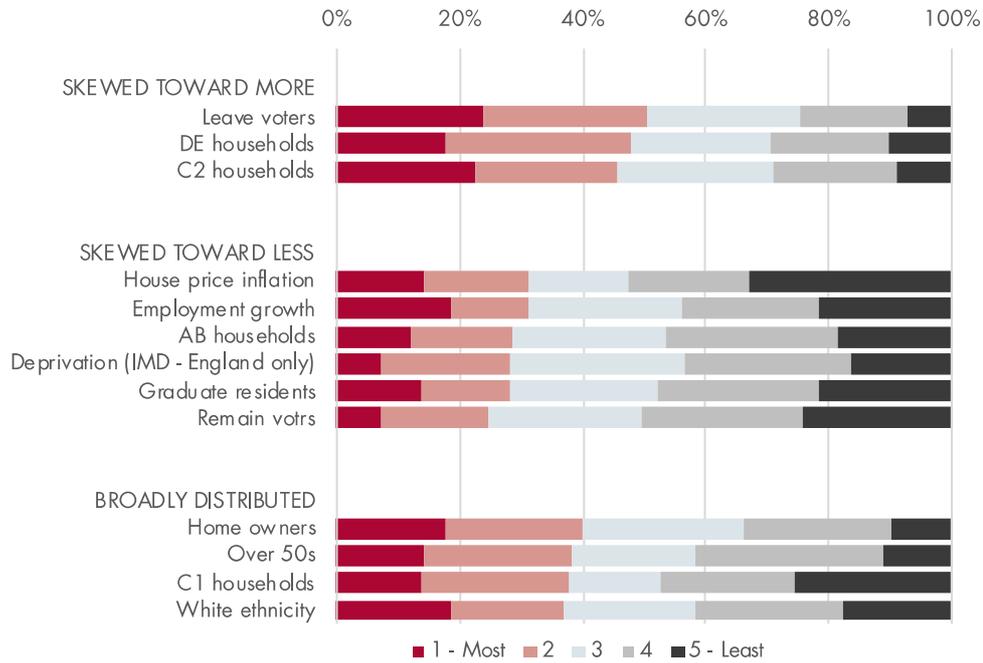
FIGURE 2: SUMMARY OF LABOUR'S TARGET SEATS
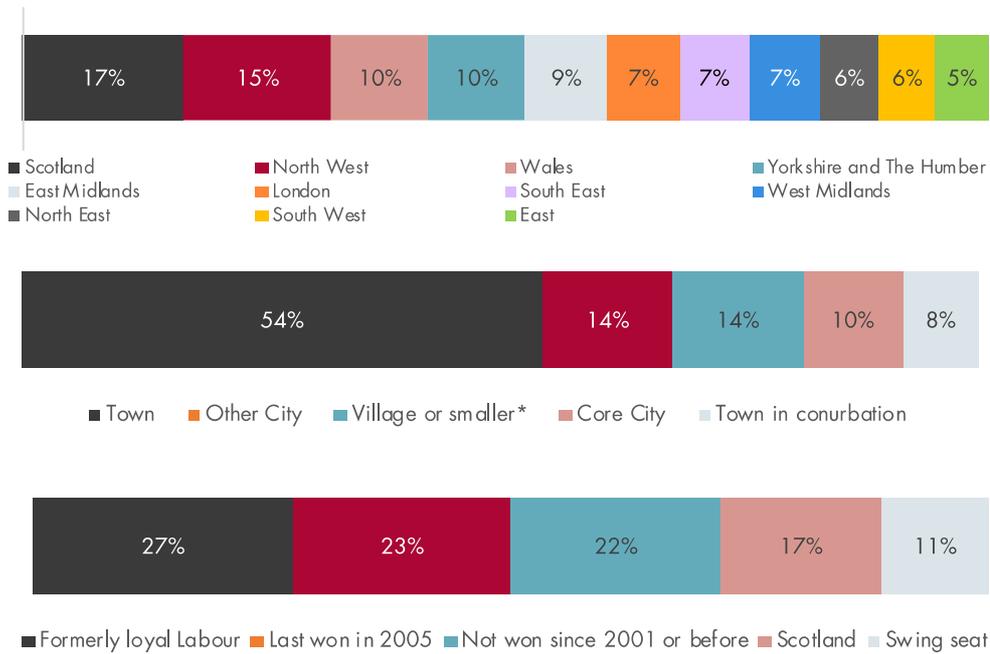
INTRODUCTION

We could be halfway through this parliament if an election is called in the first half of 2023, as some now expect. For Labour to win that election, the party has a mountain to climb.

This paper looks forward to that next election and faces up to that challenge, by seeking to understand the places where Labour needs to win. To win a majority of one the party needs to gain 123 seats over its disastrous 2019 result. For this reason, the Fabian Society has examined a pool of 150 potential target seats where Labour needs to compete – diverse places with diverse politics and diverse voters.

These 150 seats we have chosen are the ones where, in 2019, Labour came closest to the winning party in terms of share of the vote.[i] When it comes to selecting seats to target, the result in 2019 should not be the only criterion. But this is a sensible starting point and any set of target seats will look very similar to the ones we have here.

Our analysis is based on existing constituencies, on the assumption that an election is most likely in 2023. New constituency boundaries will take effect in late 2023 and overall these are likely to make Labour's job harder: one projection suggests Labour would enter a 2024 election notionally holding 194 of the new constituencies, meaning it would need to gain 132 seats to win.[ii] However, in terms of the profile of the places the party would need to gain, the picture we present here based on existing seats would change little.

This paper focuses on some of the characteristics of constituencies that we know are most politically important. As we describe these seats, it is important not to reduce them to simple caricatures based on the dominant group within them – all types of voter are present in all types of constituency, and just because one group is well represented within a place, that doesn't mean they will necessarily be politically decisive. But it does give a rough idea of the direction Labour will need to take to stand a chance of winning enough seats to form the next government. The Scottish challenge is the subject of its own section – it has been written in conjunction with the Scottish Fabians, who have published their own report to complement this one.

1. Electoral history (GB)

Context

The way a seat has voted in the past is a good sign of which way it will vote in future. Recent commentary has focused mainly on former Red Wall seats that used to be loyally Labour, in the North, Midlands and Wales, Recently there has also been talk of a Blue Wall - longstanding Conservative seats that have moved away from the party in recent elections. Commentary since the 2019 election has paid less attention to swing seats or seats Labour last won in 2005.

Analysis

Labour must win seats with very different political histories – from constituencies Labour has never won, to seats that were loyally Labour until 2017 and 2019. Figure 3 below summarises the political history of the 150 seats.

FIGURE 3: LABOUR'S 150 TARGET SEATS

Electoral history	Description	No. of seats
Formerly loyal Labour	Seats lost in 2015, 2017 or 2019 that had usually been in Labour hands for decades (though we've included 2 seats that voted Lib Dem in 2010)	41
Swing seat	Seats that changed hands between Labour and Conservatives over the 2010, 2015 and 2017 elections	17
Not Labour since 2005	Seats last held by Labour in 2005 that the party lost when it left office in 2010	34
Rarely or never Labour	Seats never held by Labour or last won by the party in 2001	33
England and Wales		**125**
Scotland	The 25 Scottish seats where Labour is most competitive. All were held by Labour prior to 2015.	**25**
Great Britain		**150**

Most of the formerly loyal Labour and swing seats are concentrated in the North, the Midlands, Scotland and Wales, as Figure 4 below shows. Seats last won in 2005, or never/rarely won, tend to be spread fairly evenly around England and Wales.

FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR'S 150 TARGET SEATS
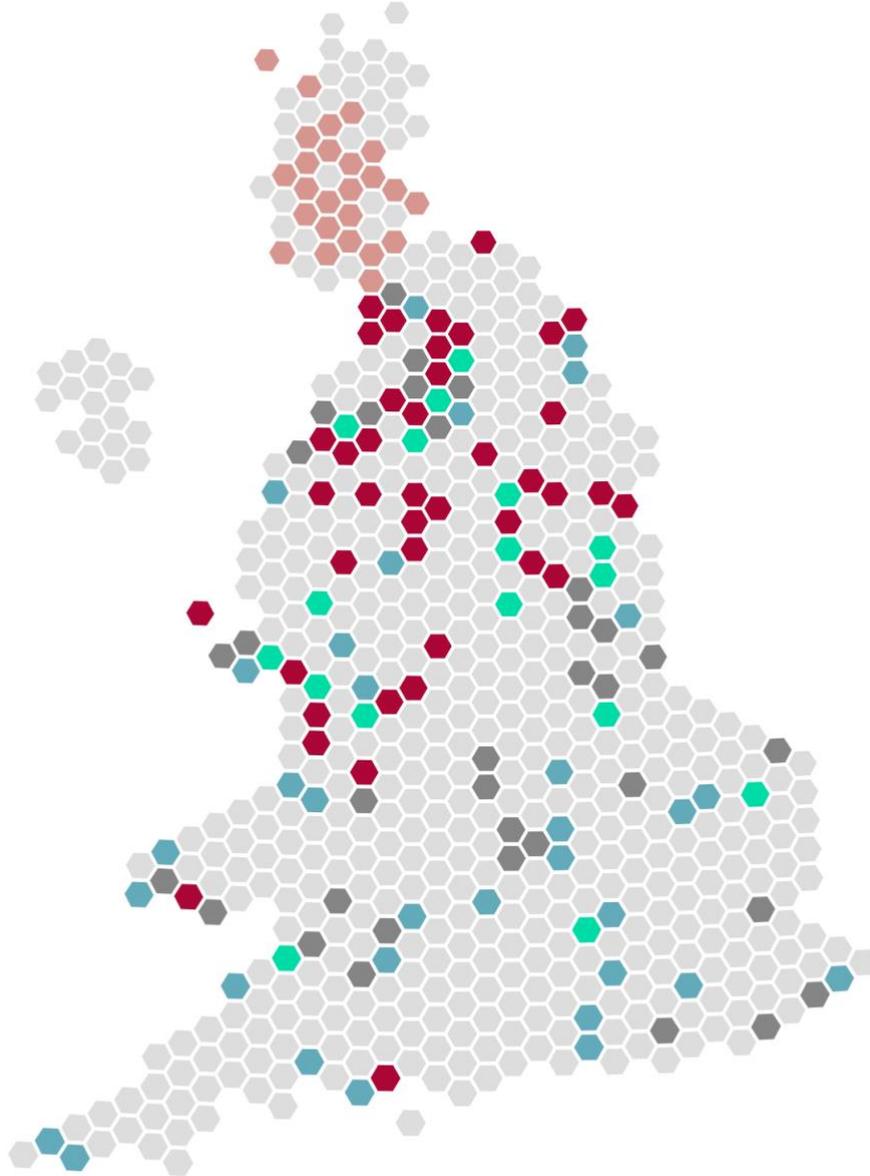
Created with Datawrapper

Figures 5 and 6 below show the challenge ahead for Labour:

- **Within each of these groups of seats, some are more marginal than others.** As figure 5 shows, many are currently a long way from voting Labour, requiring a local electoral swing of 10 percentage points or more. The groups with the most winnable constituencies on average are swing seats and formerly loyal Labour seats. The most challenging groups are those rarely or never held, and the Scottish seats, followed by those last won in 2005. But even these groups have some 'low hanging fruit'.

- **No one group of seats combines the size and 'winnability' required for Labour to gain power.** Figure 6 shows that for each notch of progress Labour needs to make, there are seats to be targeted across all the types of constituency. A huge diversity of seats will be needed for Labour to do well enough to either form a government or win an overall majority.

To make progress, the party needs to reverse changes in voting patterns which have been underway for more than a decade. Figures 7 and 8 look at Labour's performance in recent elections in different groups of seats, compared to its overall nationwide performance in the same year.

- **Labour's vote has become increasingly concentrated in the seats it held in 2019**. Figure 7 shows how, collectively, the 150 seats have drifted slightly away from Labour since 2010 when compared to the party's national vote share; while the party's vote share in seats it held in 2019 has increased. As well as seeking to increase its national vote share, Labour will find it much easier to win if it can reverse this trend and advance more in the 150 target seats than across the country at large. [iii]

- **There has been a huge slump in the Scottish target seats in 2015, and a more gradual but significant decline in formerly loyal Labour seats since 2005.** Figure 8 looks within the group of 150 and shows their different trajectories by their electoral history. More positively, swing seats and seats never or rarely won have on average have trended gradually towards Labour since 2010, compared to the party's nationwide performance.

This data on trajectory needs to be taken into account when thinking about which seats to prioritise. Constituencies that have been moving towards Labour, relative to nationwide performance, could be more winnable than their 2019 result would suggest. This means that some of the seats last won in 2005 or never or rarely won may be more obtainable than they first appear. Conversely, it might be harder than it appears to win seats that have been slipping away.

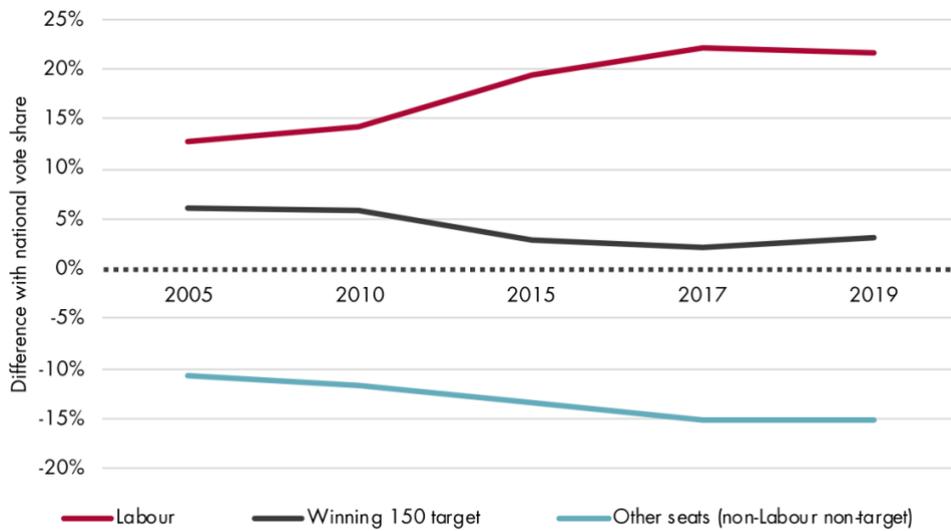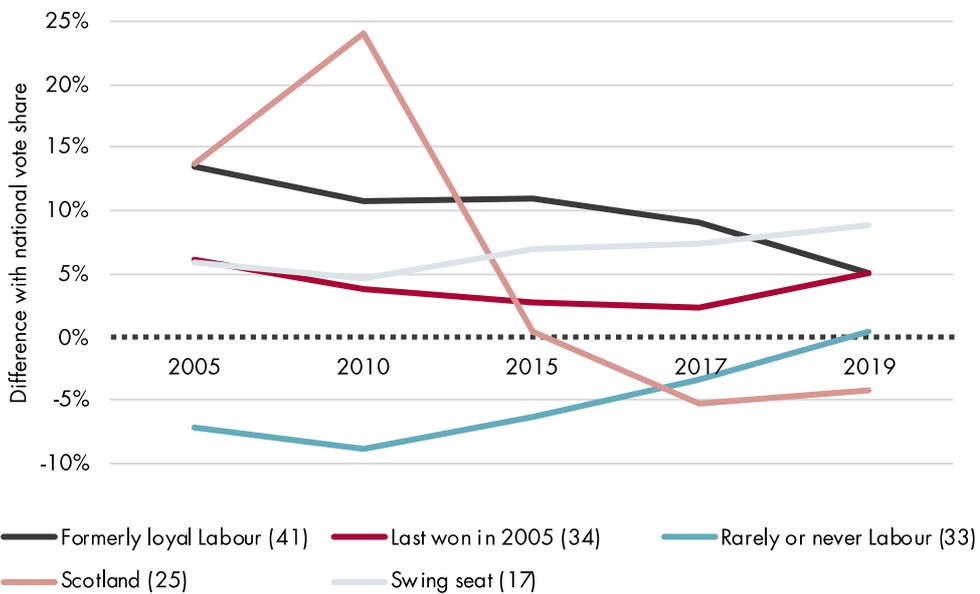## FIGURE 5: REQUIRED SWING IN TARGET SEATS GROUPED BY ELECTORAL HISTORY
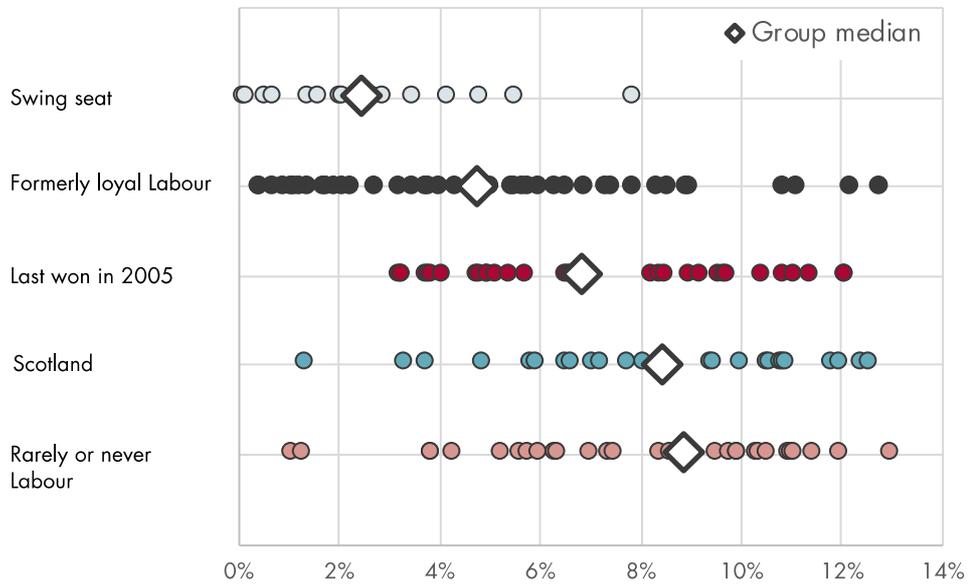
FIGURE 6: TARGET SEATS BY REQUIRED SWING AND ELECTORAL HISTORY
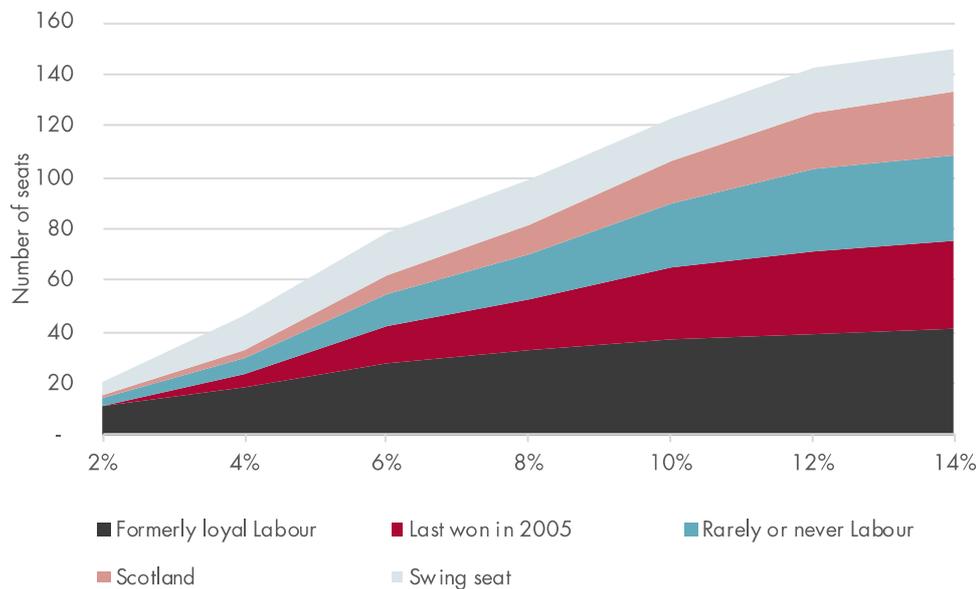
FIGURE 7: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF SEAT, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN EACH YEAR (1)

FIGURE 8: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF SEAT, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN EACH YEAR (2)

2. Region and nation (GB)

Context

Labour has traditionally been strongest in London, the North, Wales and Scotland. Seats in these regions and nations have formed the bedrock of Labour's parliamentary party. But in 2019, Labour is far weaker than in 2005: in the North, the number of Labour seats won was 127 in 2005 but only 88 in 2019; in the Midlands, seats won fell from 63 to 23; and in Wales from 30 to 22. In Scotland, Labour's vote collapsed in 2015, and the number of Labour MPs fell from 41 to 1 (see section 3). Some of these seats did come back to Labour temporarily in 2017 however.

Analysis

-   **Labour's target seats are mostly in Scotland, the North, the Midlands and Wales.** 47 are in the North (23 in the North West alone), 25 are in Scotland, 24 in the Midlands, and 15 in Wales. Just 39 of the 150 are in southern England including London and the East of England, despite these regions making up 270 seats overall.

-   **There is a disproportionate number of target seats in Wales** – 15 Welsh seats are now Labour targets, making up 38 per cent of Wales' total seats.

-   **Labour's performance in the target seats has been improving, relative to the national picture, in southern England (and a little in Wales**). It has been declining in the West Midlands and North East – and dramatically so in Scotland.

-   **Ultra-marginals and more challenging seats are spread evenly across the country.** The North West and Wales have the most 'low-hanging fruit'.

FIGURE 9: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS, IN DIFFERENT NATIONS AND REGIONS, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE FOR EACH YEAR
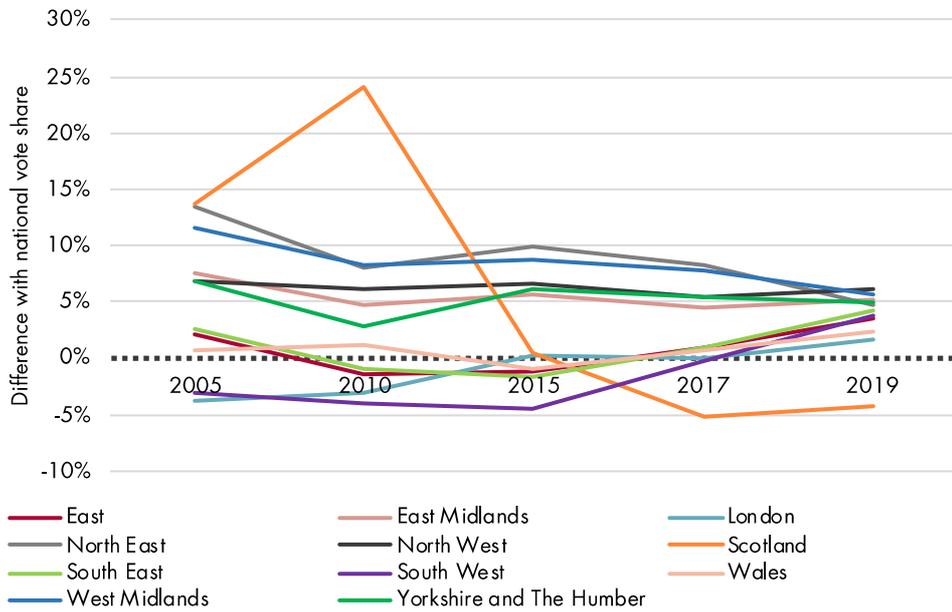
FIGURE 10: TARGET SEATS BY REQUIRED SWING AND NATION/REGION
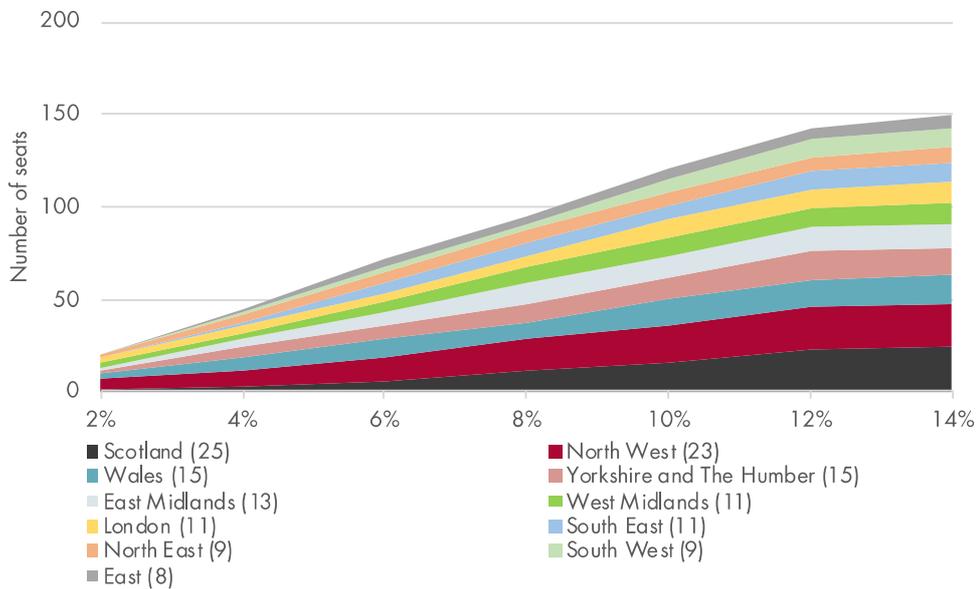
3. Scotland

Context

Scotland has been a cornerstone of all Labour majorities in the past, but in 2015 Labour was all but wiped out as a political force in Scotland, retaining only one seat and losing 40. With 25 of the party's target seats located in Scotland, making progress north of the border is essential if Labour is to form a majority government. It is important not to view a vote for the SNP as a proxy vote on independence. Polling suggests that 40 per cent of Scots are not strongly pro-independence or pro-union and that the leadership of Nicola Sturgeon, and the vision represented by the SNP, attracted many of these voters in both 2019 and 2021.[iv] This is the group Labour must target to find people who might consider shifting their vote from the SNP to a Labour party that is pro-devolution, proudly Scottish and seems capable of winning at Westminster (these voters are less likely to support the stridently pro-Union Conservatives).

Analysis

- **Labour's Scottish target seats typically have higher majorities to overturn than target constituencies in England and Wales**. All are held by the SNP, and their median majority is 16 per cent, ranging from 3 per cent (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) to 25 per cent (Livingston).

- **The target seats are centred on Scotlands's political middle ground** – preferring remain to leave, marginally opposed to independence in 2014 but now supporting the SNP.

- **The party needs to address the legacy of the independence referendum and win SNP voters.** It is impossible to win most of Labour's Scottish target seats without winning voters directly from the SNP. But only three of the target seats have a larger majority of votes for pro-independence parties than for pro-union parties in the 2019 election.

FIGURE 11: SCOTLAND CONSTITUENCIES BY EXTENT OF
SUPPORT FOR REMAINING IN THE EU AND SNP VOTE SHARE IN
2019 (LINES CROSS AT MEDIAN)
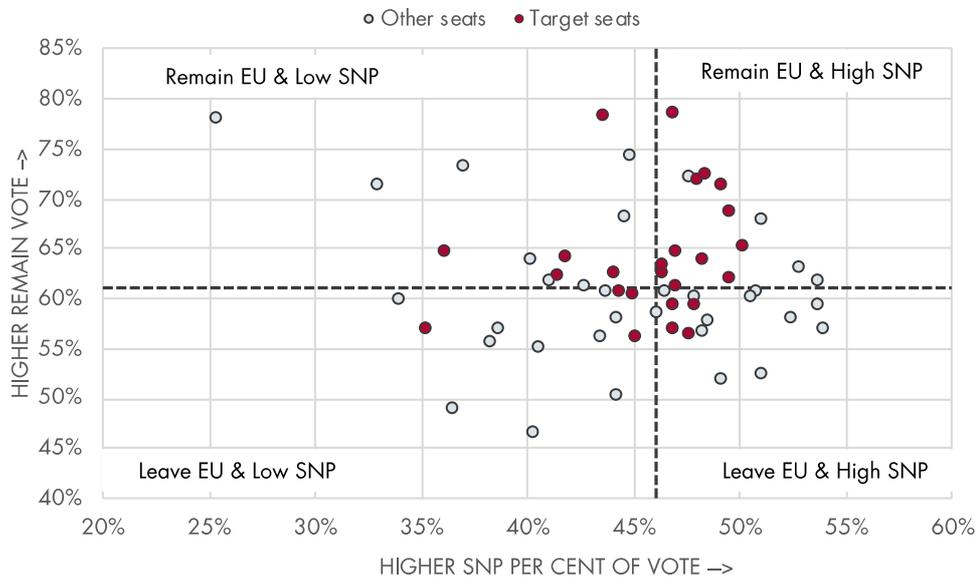
4. City, town and village (E&W)

Context

Constituencies made up of towns have long been key electoral battlegrounds. Historically, Labour has dominated in major cities and post-industrial towns, in London and the North and Wales, while the Conservatives have held rural areas, particularly in the south. At the 2015, 2017 and 2019 elections, many of the seats which fell to the Conservatives were also towns.

Analysis

- **Labour's 125 England and Wales target seats are concentrated outside of cities:** [v] 95 comprise towns outside conurbations, towns within conurbations, or villages and smaller communities. 30 are core city or 'other city' seats. [vi]

- **Most of non-city target seats are *not* recently lost, formerly loyal Labour seats**: only 34 of the 95 non-city seats were lost between 2015 and 2019; 14 are swing seats, 24 were last won in 2005 and 23 have never or rarely been won.

- **68 of the target seats are in towns that are *not* part of wider conurbations**, with 52 of these in the North, Midlands and Wales – places such as Darlington or Wrexham.

- **Labour's performance has declined relative to its national results in most of the 68 target constituencies made up of towns outside conurbations**. In the 10 town constituencies that are part of conurbations, changes in Labour vote have mirrored the national average.

FIGURE 12: TARGET SEATS (BY CITY/TOWN/VILLAGE)
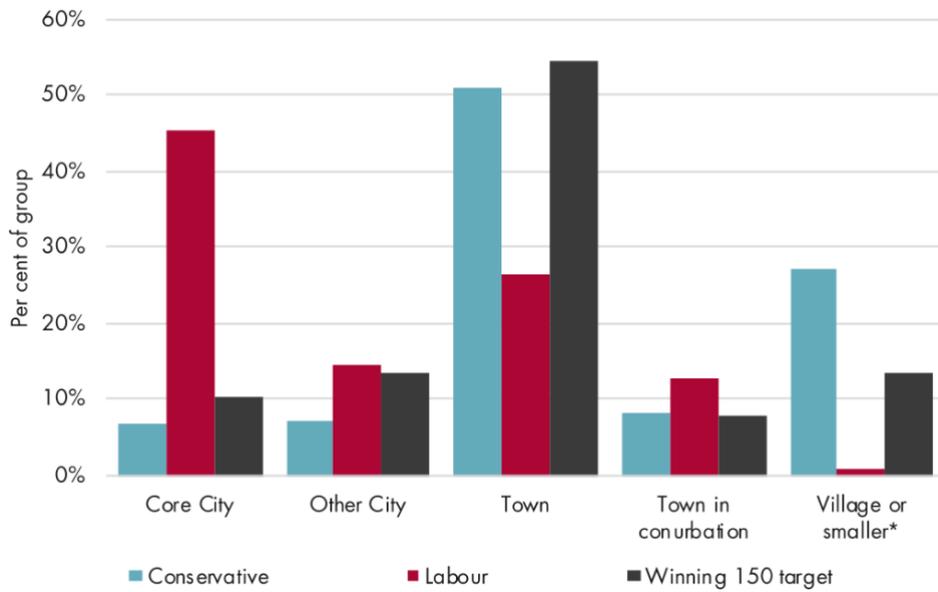
FIGURE 13: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF SEAT, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE FOR EACH YEAR (BY CITY/TOWN/VILLAGE)
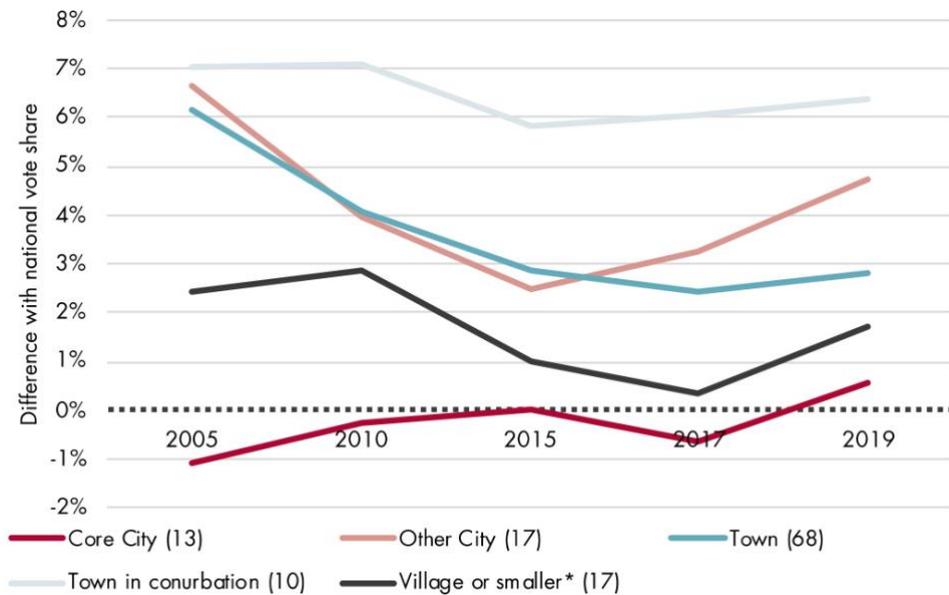
5. Age (E&W)

Context

In England and Wales, younger voters currently tend to vote Labour and older voters overwhelmingly vote Conservative. The youngest voters have tended to vote Labour since at least 1992, but Labour has at times won more older voters – mot recently in 2010. A stark crossover pattern for age emerged in 2015, and widened in 2017 and then again in 2019.[vii] In 2017 the crossover point – the age at which more of a cohort voted Conservative than Labour – was 47.[viii] In 2019 this dropped to age 39. Sixty-seven per cent of those aged 70+ voted Conservative in 2019, and only 14 per cent voted Labour.

Analysis

- **Labour mostly needs to win places that are neither extremely old nor extremely young.** Most target seats are in the middle in terms of age profile. Figure 14 shows that 94 of the 125 target seats in England and Wales are in the middle three-fifths when it comes to their percentage of residents over 50. Only a few target seats are either extremely young or extremely old.

- **This contrasts with the seats Labour currently holds.** Half of Labour's existing seats are in the fifth of constituencies with fewest older people. This includes seats such as Sheffield Central, Manchester Central and Liverpool Riverside, where 40 to 50 per cent of the adult population is aged 18 to 30. Only 10 per cent of Labour's target seats are in this quintile.

FIGURE 14: CONSTITUENCIES BY SHARE OF POPULATION AGED 50+
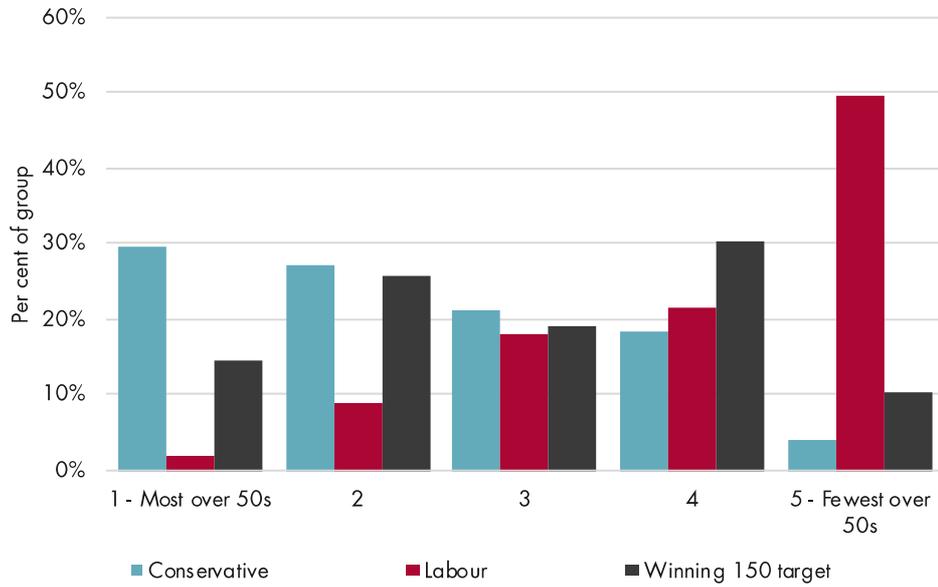
FIGURE 15: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
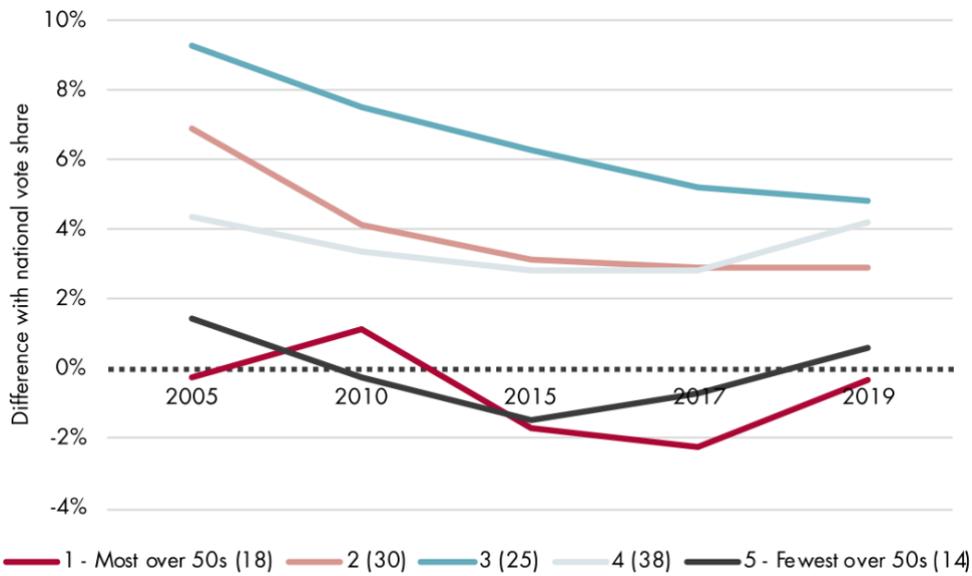
6. Education level (E&W)

Context

Current Labour voters tend to have a higher level of formal qualification. Even if we factor in a person's age, there appears to be something about degree-level education which influences people's views, particularly around national identity, immigration, the EU and diversity.[ix][x] The link between education and politics has changed dramatically over the last 50 years: the population as a whole has become much more educated; and lower educated voters are now more likely to vote Conservative than Labour.[xi] In 2019, 71 per cent of the voters who voted Conservative for the first time did not have a degree-level qualification, compared to 61 per cent of the population as a whole.[xii]

Analysis

- **Labour mainly needs to win in places with low and middling numbers of graduates**. Sixty of the 125 target seats in England and Wales are in the two-fifths of constituencies with the fewest graduates (figure 16). At the moment, the party does best in places with very high or very low proportions of graduates.

- **Target seats with fewest graduates have been trending away from Labour** – places like Bolsover and Ashfield. Seats with the most graduates have moved toward the party, but there are fewer of them – 35 in the top two quintiles for numbers of graduates compared to 60 in the bottom two quintiles.

FIGURE 16: CONSTITUENCIES BY SHARE OF GRADUATES

FIGURE 17: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
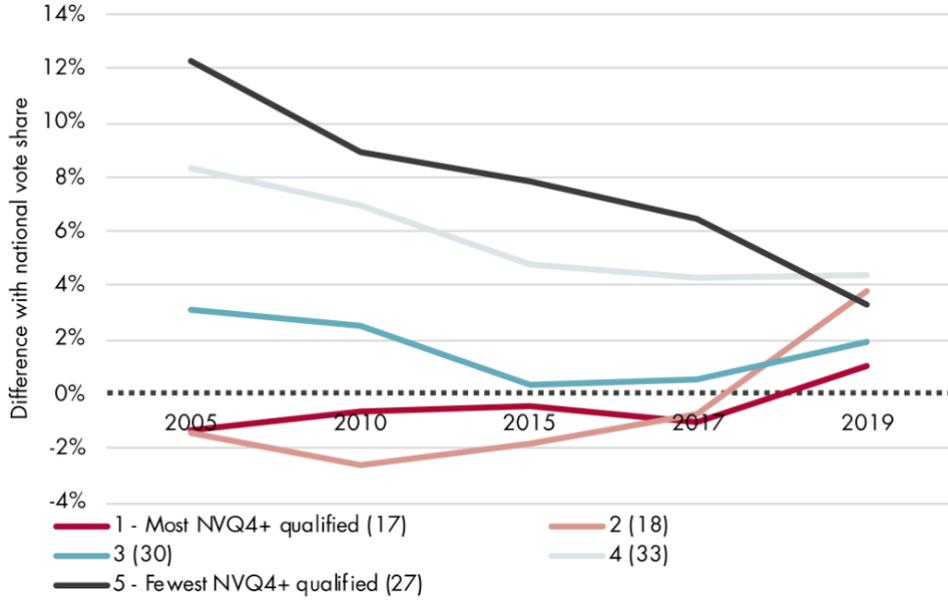
7. Social grade (E&W)

Context

Both major parties are cross-class coalitions – and they always have been. There have always been a significant number of working-class Tories: Labour's support base was once overwhelmingly working-class; but the working class did not all support Labour.[xiii] Class is complex, but here we use the NRS/MRS social grade classification, a household measure derived from the occupation or former occupation of the household member with the highest income. In recent years, the 'working-class' (C2DE) group has declined in size and has also shifted significantly toward the Conservatives, especially in 2019.[xiv] But this obscures differences within this group. It is important to discuss the large C1 and C2 groups, which tend to be decisive in elections.

Analysis

- **The seats Labour currently holds tend to have high numbers of DE households, but not C2 households.** Two-thirds of Labour 2019 seats are in the two-fifths of seats with most DE voters. But the C2 group, often paired with DE, shows a very different political distribution – 60 per cent of Labour's seats are in the two quintiles with the lowest share of C2 voters. This shows that places with the most skilled/upper working class households skew away from Labour, while places with more lower skilled/lower working class, unemployed and stat pensioner households skew toward the party.

- **Labour's target seats tend to skew away from AB, slightly toward DE and C2, and are highly varied in their proportion of voters in C1 households**. Figures 18-21 below show the different distributions.

FIGURE 18: CONSTITUENCIES BY SHARE OF AB HOUSEHOLDS
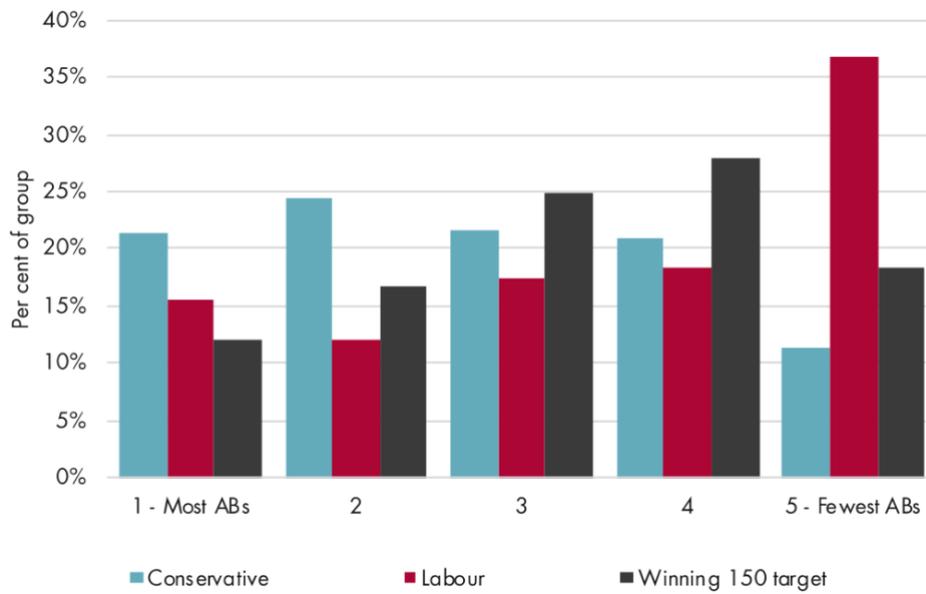
FIGURE 19: CONSTITUENCIES BY SHARE OF C1 HOUSEHOLDS
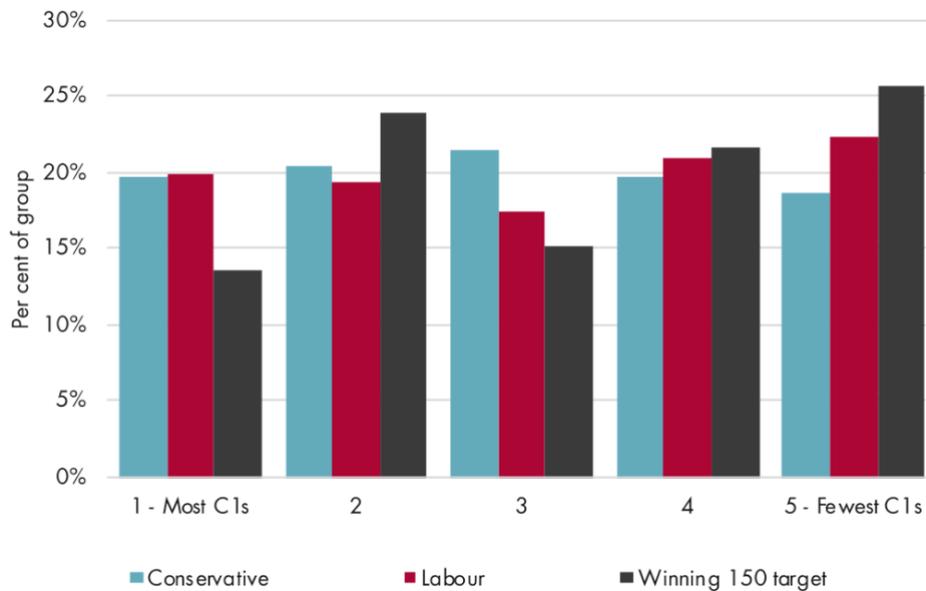
FIGURE 20: CONSTITUENCIES BY SHARE OF C2 HOUSEHOLDS
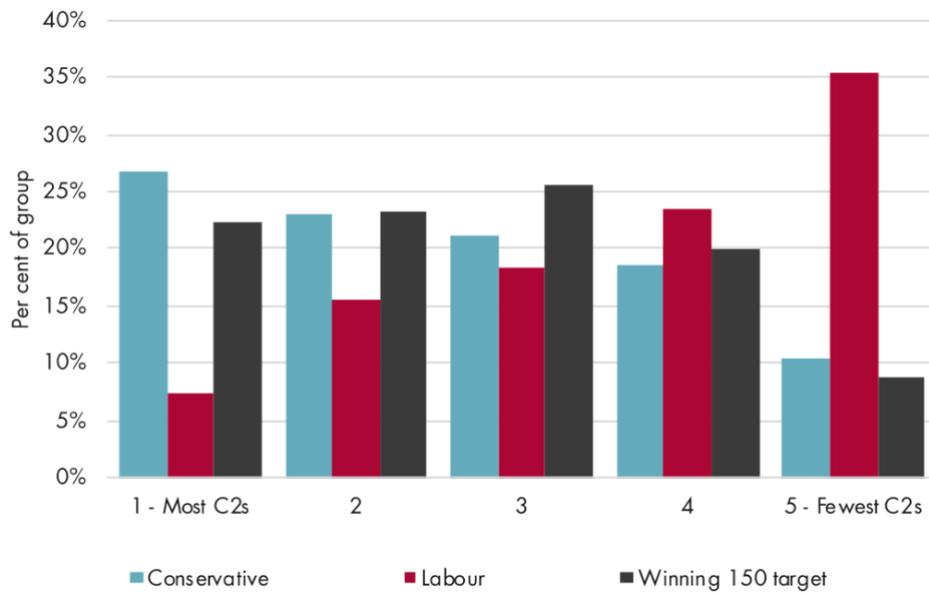
FIGURE 21: CONSTITUENCIES BY SHARE OF DE HOUSEHOLDS
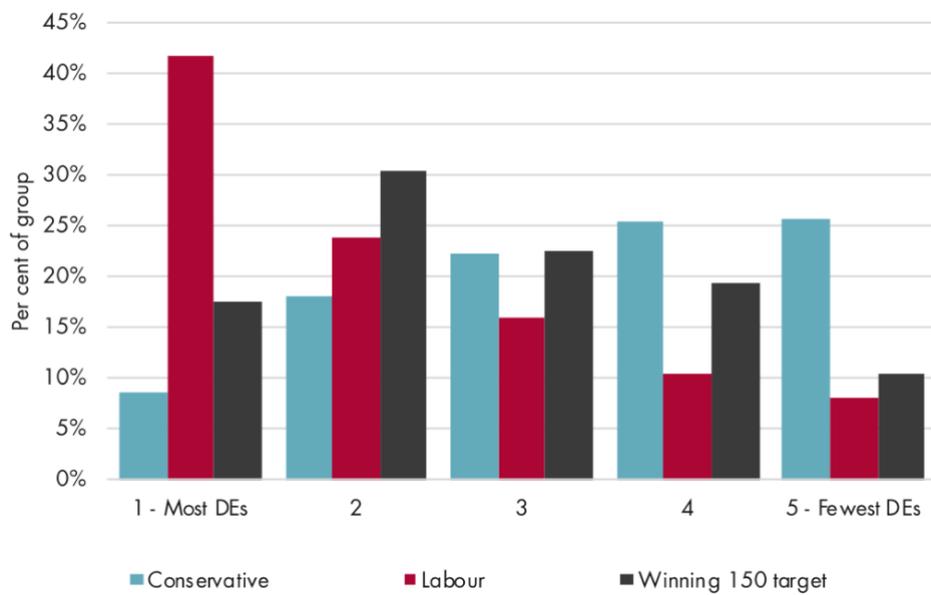
8. Housing tenure (E&W)

Context

Historically, the Conservatives have done best among homeowners, and Labour among social and private renters. This pattern broadly remains but society has slowly changed over the last 50 years: the number of owner occupiers has increased while social renting has decreased.[xv] In 2019, a small but significant proportion of social renters voted Conservative for the first time, although first-time Conservative voters were disproportionately homeowners.[xvi xvii]

Analysis:

- **The seats Labour needs to win are mainly in the middle with respect to the number of homeowners.** In contrast, the seats Labour currently holds have a very high skew towards places with few homeowners. 80 per cent of Labour seats are in the two-fifths of constituencies with least home owners (figure 22).

- **Labour's target seats are mainly around two-thirds owner occupier**. Formerly loyal Labour seats tend to have higher concentrations of social housing (21 per cent) while those not won since 2001 have lower concentrations (15 per cent).

- **The target seats with low levels of homeownership have been moving away from Labour**, even though most of the party's current seats also have low homeownership. In the 12 target constituencies in the bottom fifth of seats for homeownership, Labour's vote share has plummeted in recent elections – places like West Bromwich West, or Wolverhampton North East.

- **Some target seats with relatively high homeownership have recently moved slightly toward the party**. The 50 target seats in the top two quintiles for homeownership became more favourable for the party between 2017 and 2019.

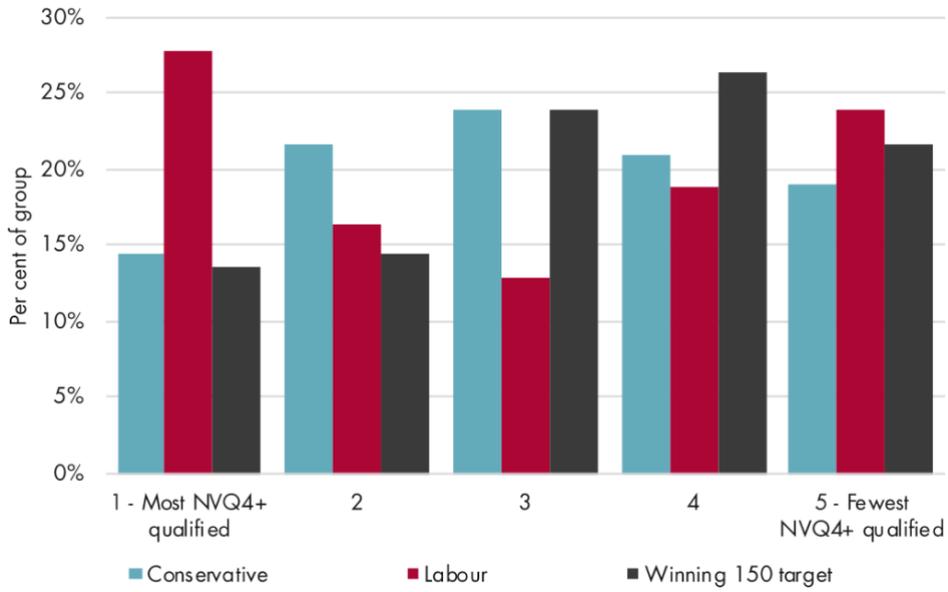## FIGURE 22: CONSTITUENCIES BY SHARE OF OWNER OCCUPIERS
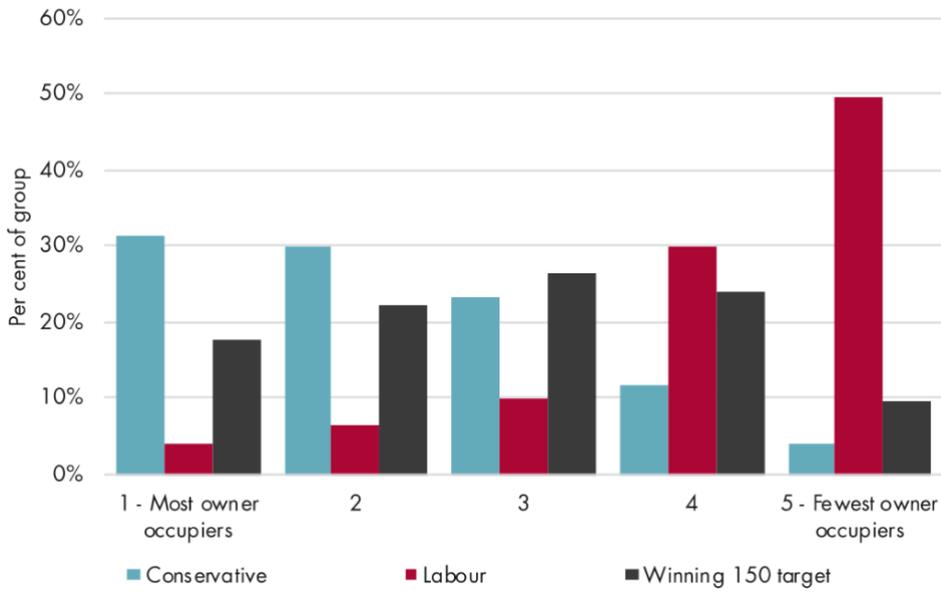
FIGURE 23: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
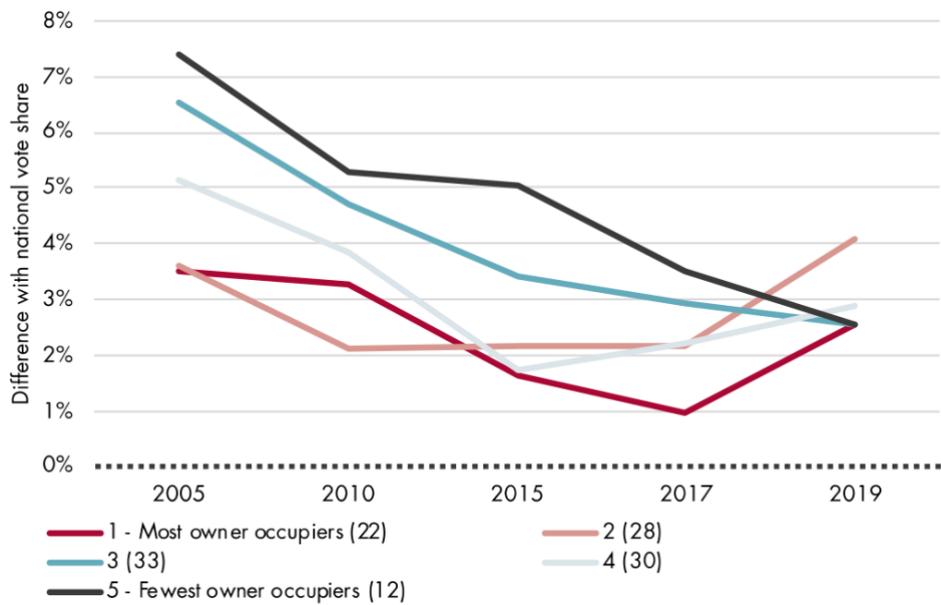
9. Ethnicity (E&W)

Context

Labour has tended to attract Black, Asian and minority ethnic voters, although this group is diverse and the Conservatives have made gains among some ethnic groups. Labour has historically won the most Black and ethnic minority voters, both on aggregate and across all minority ethnic groups. But Labour's lead has fluctuated, and different groups have very different voting patterns – ethnic groups are very diverse and don't vote as a bloc, as is sometimes assumed.[xviii] The Conservatives have recently been able to attract British Chinese and Indian voters.[xix]

Analysis

- **Labour's target seats are evenly distributed between places with high and low proportions of minority ethnic voters** (figure 24). Twenty-three seats are in the fifth of seats with the lowest share of ethnic minorities. These seats are all in villages and towns and as a group they have moved significantly against Labour since 2005.

- **22 target seats have populations in the fifth of seats with the highest share of minority ethnic residents.** Twelve of these target seats are constituencies in the north and midlands and have high Asian populations (such as Keighley and Pendle); 11 have high Black populations, primarily in the south (such as Milton Keynes North and Reading West); 14 have *both* high Black and high Asian populations, largely in London (such as Harrow East and Kensington). Target seats in places with the most minority ethnic voters have slightly increased their support for Labour, compared to the national average.

FIGURE 24: CONSTITUENCIES BY SIZE OF MINORITY ETHNIC POPULATION
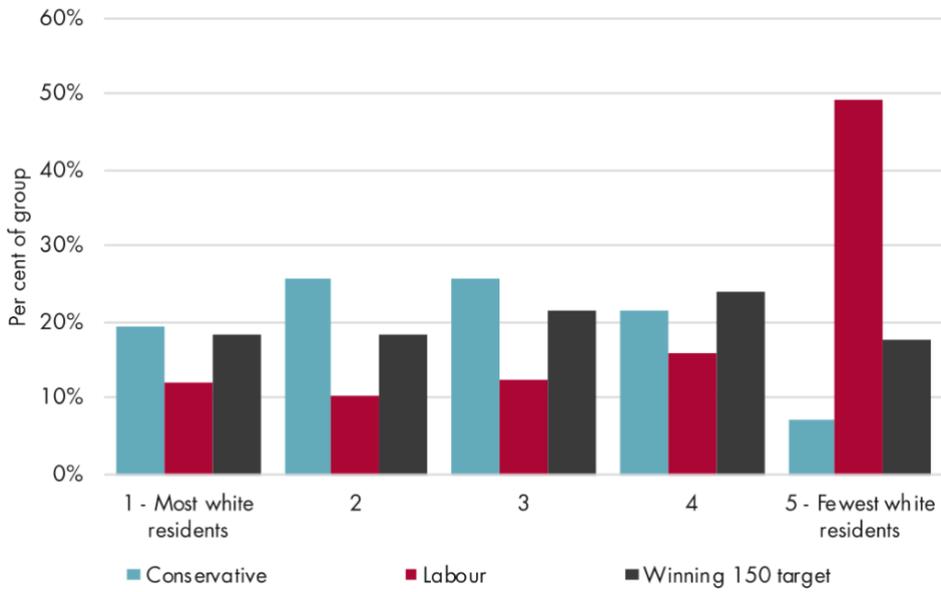
FIGURE 25: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
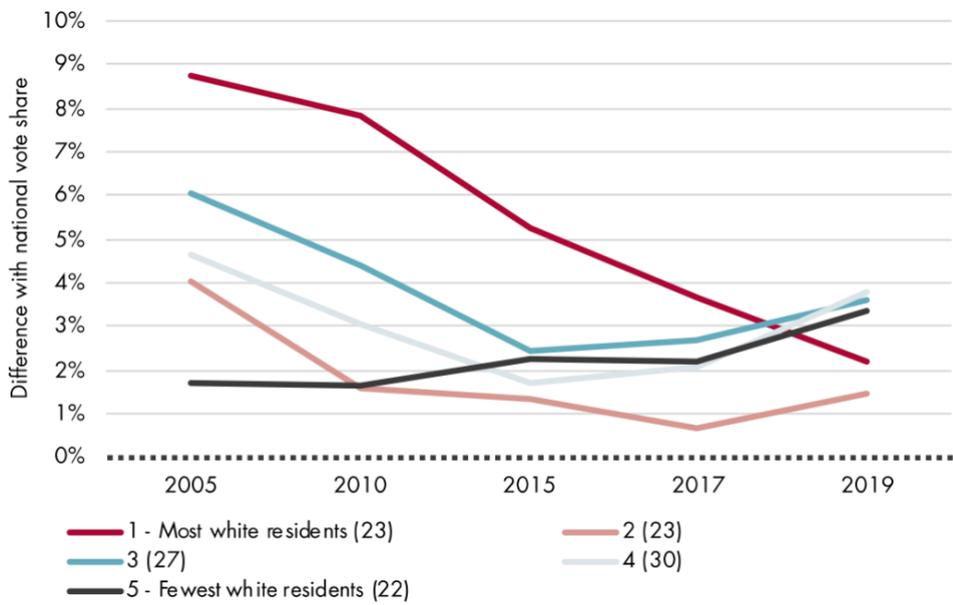
11. Deprivation (England)

Context

Labour has tended to do well in areas that are more deprived. In England, the index of multiple deprivation (IMD) is a measure, which picks up the many dimensions of poverty that affect people living in places. While London does have severe poverty, many of the most deprived constituencies by this measure are now concentrated in cities and towns outside of the capital (none are villages). The Conservatives have always held on to less deprived places, the majority of which are towns and villages – concentrated in the south, but not exclusively so.

Analysis

- **Labour's target seats are mostly places with average levels of deprivation.** Target seats are concentrated in the middle three quintiles for deprivation – places like Colne Valley, Morley and Outwood or Chingford and Woodford Green, which have average levels of deprivation.

- **Labour has been slowly losing relative vote share in more deprived target seats since 2010** – places like West Bromwich West or Stoke-On-Trent North have slipped away over the long term.

- **Labour has been slowly gaining relative vote share in less deprived target seats since 2015** – places like Altrincham and Sale West and Rushcliffe, some of which saw an uptick between 2017 and 2019 relative to Labour's national vote share.

FIGURE 26: CONSTITUENCIES BY LEVEL OF DEPRIVATION

FIGURE 27: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
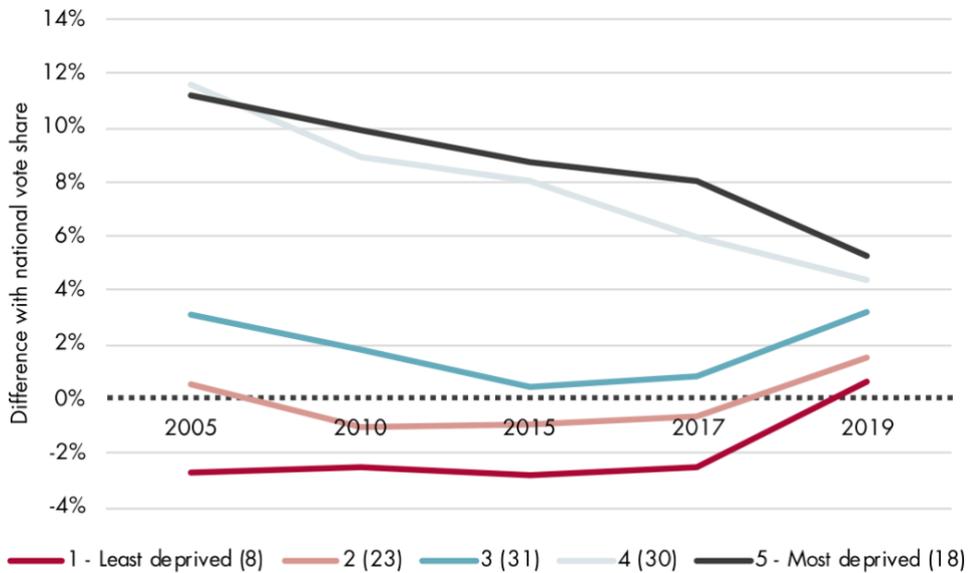
12. Economic change (E&W)

Context

Relative economic decline has become associated with Euroscepticism, to the Conservatives' recent benefit. Most people, wherever they live, share a deep interest in how their town or city looks and the direction they feel it is going in.[xx] The perception of decline in post-industrial or coastal towns was a major factor in people voting to leave the EU and then to voting Conservative, especially in the north and midlands.[xxi]

Analysis

- **Labour's target seats have had very different experiences in terms of job creation.** The party needs to win significant numbers of seats in places which have had high, medium and low levels of employment growth between 2010 and 2019 but more of these have had average or lower levels of employment growth. Places with lower employment growth, and some places where employment fell, tended to move away from Labour, while places high employment growth have moved toward Labour – despite these changes happening under a Conservative government.

- **Many target seats have seen low house price inflation.** A third of target seats are in the bottom quintile for house price growth, which is similar to some of the seats Labour currently holds, but very different from Labour's London seats, which have seen some of the strongest house price growth in the country.

- **Target seats which have experienced relative economic decline since 2010 have generally shifted toward the Conservatives**. The places experiencing the worst relative employment and house price changes under Conservative governments have been moving away from Labour. Target seats that have prospered the most have trended towards Labour.

FIGURE 28: CONSTITUENCIES BY PER CENT RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT GROWTH (2010-19)
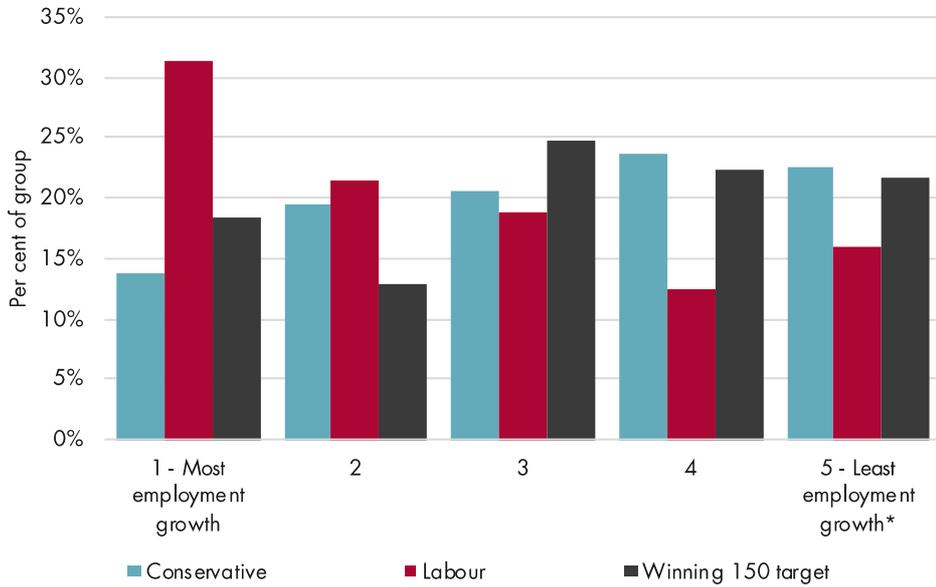
*Some constituencies saw a decline in employment

FIGURE 29: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
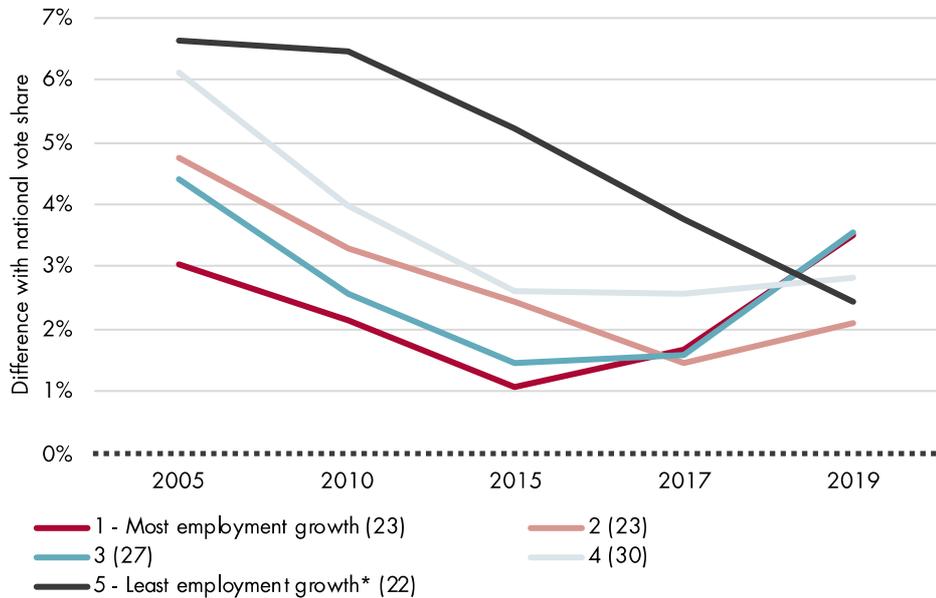
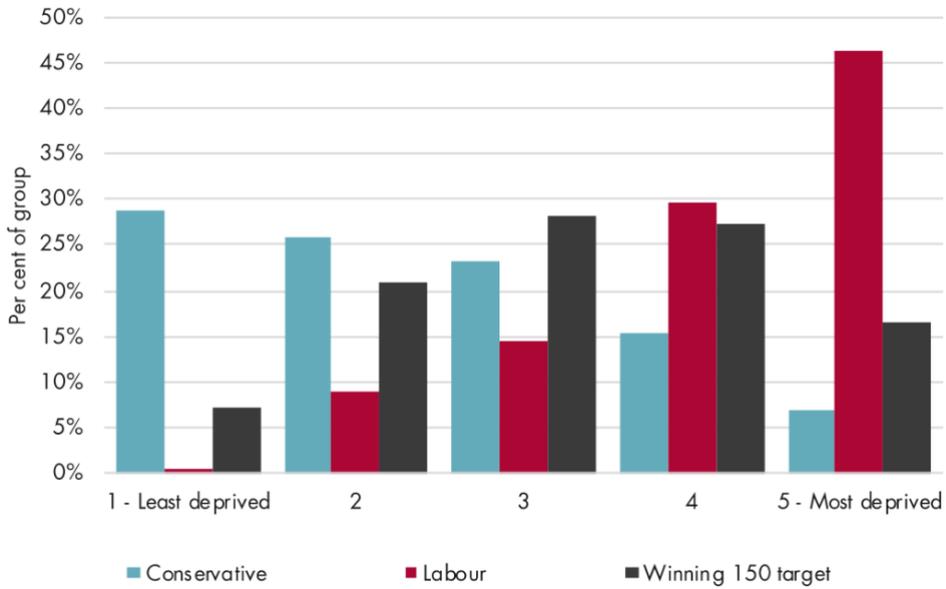## FIGURE 30: CONSTITUENCIES BY EXTENT OF HOUSE PRICE INFLATION (2010-19)
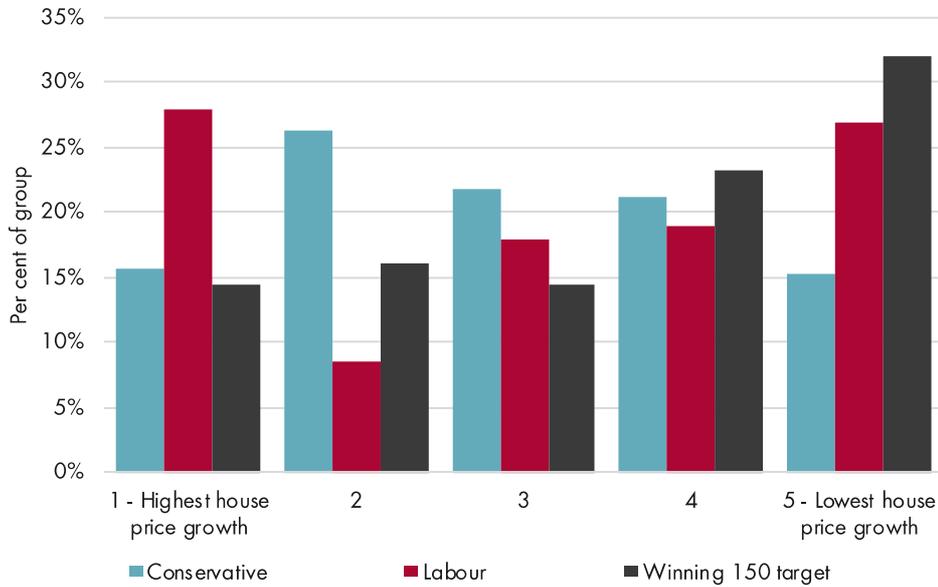
FIGURE 31: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
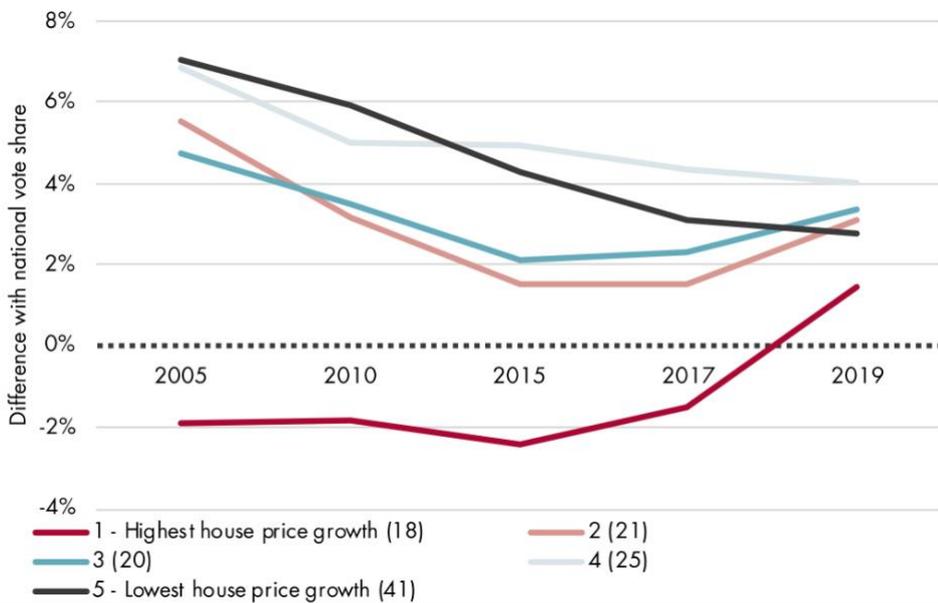
*Some constituencies saw a decline in employment

13. Brexit vote (E&W)

Context

The Conservatives have profited significantly from the Brexit divide. In the North and Midlands, support for leaving the EU reflected a complex and longer term political change, rooted in the economic decline of many post-industrial towns. The Conservatives exploited this effectively in 2019: 86 per cent of the Conservatives' new voters in 2019 had voted Brexit (and they were distributed efficiently in former Labour Red Wall seats).[xxii] The seats Labour lost where overwhelmingly leave-voting.[xxiii] Despite Britain having now left the EU, the consequences of Brexit still work their way through our politics, particularly in England. Only a few people define their primary political identity by their Brexit vote, but few have changed their mind on the issue either.[xxiv xxv]

Analysis

- **The seats Labour needs to win are mostly more Brexit-leaning than the ones they currently hold**. Target seats are concentrated in places with average and above average levels of Brexit vote – 75 per cent of the Labour target seats in England and Wales are in the three-fifth of seats that were most Brexit-leaning. Only 7 per cent are in the most remain-leaning fifth of seats (a huge share of strong remain seats are already Labour).

- **Labour was losing ground in leave-voting target seats long before Brexit**: many of the target seats in the two-fifths of constituencies which had the most Brexit voters in 2016 were already slipping away between 2005 and 2010. Labour's relative vote share in target seats in the strongest leave voting quintile declined at every election after 2005. Some target seats in the three-fifths of seats with average or below average levels of Brexit support have been moving towards Labour – but at a much slower pace.

FIGURE 32: CONSTITUENCIES BY EXTENT OF SUPPORT FOR BREXIT
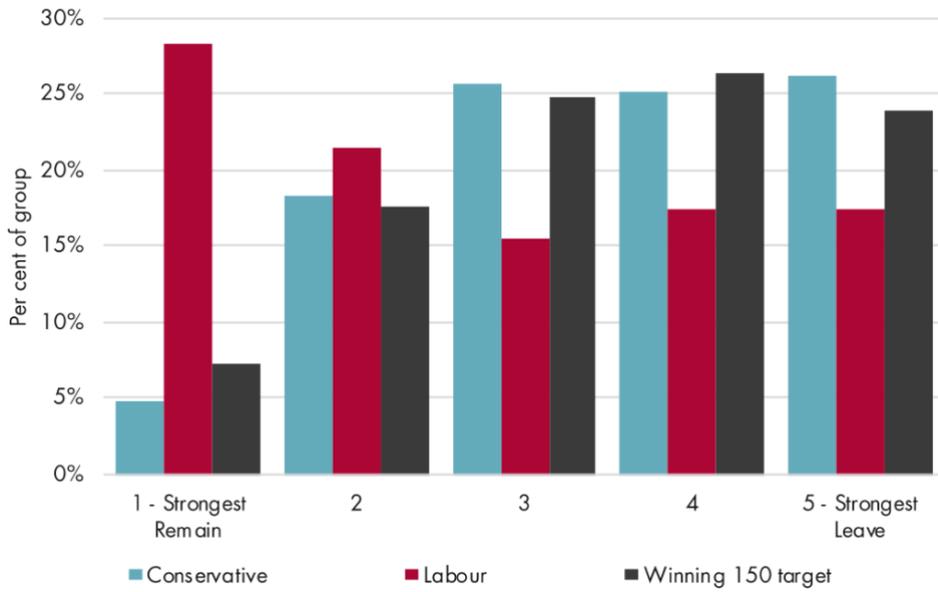
FIGURE 33: LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN TARGET SEATS IN EACH QUINTILE, COMPARED TO NATIONAL LABOUR VOTE SHARE IN THE SAME YEAR
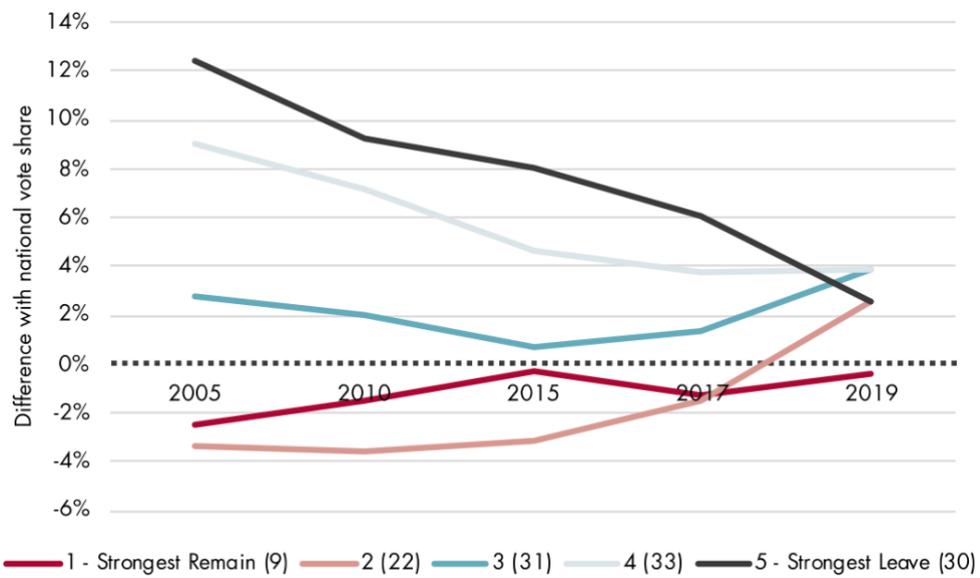
CONCLUSIONS

There is no shortcut to a Labour government. This analysis shows that Labour has a tough task ahead to appeal to a broad range of people and win seats across the length and breadth of the country. The seats Labour needs to win do not fit into easy stereotypes: they are different from one another and mainly very different from the seats Labour currently holds.

Many of the seats Labour needs to win are at neither extreme – they are concentrated within the middle three quintiles for the characteristics we have reported. That said, the target seats tend to have fewer graduates, more voters in C2 and DE households, more leave voters, lower house price inflation and lower employment growth.

Looking forward, Labour should have four priorities:

1. **Win over 'swing' seats and seats last won in 2005.** There are 51 seats in England and Wales in this group: 34 last voted Labour in 2005; 17 have switched more than once between the parties in the last five elections. Together they make up a major, and recently overlooked, group of constituencies.

2. **Reverse the decline in formerly loyal seats**. There are 41 seats in England and Wales that were formerly loyal to Labour. While the majorities tend to be smaller, they have been moving away from Labour for some time and this could be challenging to reverse.

3. **Win back seats in Scotland**. The opinion polls show a country still split on independence but with a little appetite for an immediate referendum. A large percentage of Scots want to see stronger cooperation between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Labour needs to demonstrate it is the party that can build a strong partnership between the nations, with a vision for a progressive Britain that devolves power away from Westminster and into the nations and regions.

4. **Exploit smaller, slower-moving demographic changes in previous 'no-go' areas.** Thirty-three seats that are within reach, have never or rarely voted Labour (ie 2001 at the most recent), though many of these have substantial majorities to overcome. Winning a few extra seats by capitalising on demographic changes would be the icing on the cake,

but seats like this are too few in number to put Labour in range of minority government, let alone a majority.

Geographically, Labour's priority is **towns** in the North, the Midlands, and Wales – particularly those that are not part of major cities – as well as Scotland. This doesn't just include places recently lost, although many are – it also includes traditional swing seats and places not won since 2005, alongside some of the places Labour has never won.

Labour's task of winning the next election is hard but not impossible. This analysis might appear to pull the party in different directions, and the mountain to climb is not to be underestimated: Labour needs to win a large number of very different seats. But this is always the case for any party coming from opposition. In the past, Labour has won towns, cities and villages in every corner of the country; the Conservatives have done so since 2010 – often against all odds, and flying in the face of traditional assumptions and data analysis. It is not beyond the abilities of a well-organised, focused Labour party to form the next government.

Annex 1: Target seats summary[xxvi]

1 = Highest --> 5 =lowest

CONSTITUENCY	POLITICAL HISTORY	SWING REQUIRED	REGION AND NATION	CITY TOWN AND VILLAGE	PER CENT AGED 50 AND OLDER	PER CENT WITH NVQ4+	AB - SOCIAL GRADE	C1 - SOCIAL GRADE	C2 - SOCIAL GRADE	DE - SOCIAL GRADE	HOUSING TENURE - PER CENT OWNER OCCUPIER	WHITE ETHNICITY	IMD 2019 (ENGLAND)	RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT GROWTH	HOUSE PRICE INFLATION	REMAIN VOTE
Bury North	Swing seat	0.1%	North West	Town in conurbation	3	4	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	3
Kensington	Swing seat	0.2%	London	Core City	4	1	1	1	5	5	5	5	3	5	1	1
Bury South	Formerly loyal Labour	0.4%	North West	Town in conurbation	4	2	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	5	3	3
Bolton North East	Formerly loyal Labour	0.4%	North West	Other City	4	4	4	4	3	1	4	4	5	2	4	4
High Peak	Swing seat	0.5%	East Midlands	Village or smaller*	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	1	2	5	4	2
Gedling	Swing seat	0.7%	East Midlands	Town in conurbation	3	4	3	2	2	4	1	3	2	5	3	3
Heywood and Middleton	Formerly loyal Labour	0.7%	North West	Town in conurbation	3	5	4	4	2	2	3	3	5	5	4	5
Blyth Valley	Formerly loyal Labour	0.9%	North East	Town	2	5	5	2	3	2	3	1	4	5	4	4
Stoke-On-Trent Central	Formerly loyal Labour	1.0%	West Midlands	Other City	4	4	5	4	3	1	5	4	5	4	3	5
Chipping Barnet	Rarely or never Labour	1.1%	London	Core City	4	1	1	1	5	5	3	5	2	1	1	1
Delyn	Formerly loyal Labour	1.1%	Wales	Town	1	5	3	5	1	2	1	1	.	5	5	3
North West Durham	Formerly loyal Labour	1.2%	North East	Village or smaller*	2	5	4	4	2	2	2	1	4	4	5	3
Chingford and Woodford Green	Rarely or never Labour	1.3%	London	Core City	4	2	2	1	5	4	2	5	3	1	1	2
Bridgend	Formerly loyal Labour	1.4%	Wales	Town	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	.	1	4	2
Dewsbury	Swing seat	1.4%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	4	5	3	5	3	2	2	5	4	4	5	4
Warrington South	Swing seat	1.6%	North West	Town	3	2	1	2	4	4	1	3	2	3	4	2
Clwyd South	Formerly loyal Labour	1.7%	Wales	Village or smaller*	2	4	4	5	1	2	4	1	.	1	5	4
Burnley	Formerly loyal Labour	1.7%	North West	Town	3	4	5	5	2	1	3	4	5	5	4	5

Constituency	Category	%	Region	Type												
Birmingham, Northfield	Formerly loyal Labour	1.9%	West Midlands	Core City	4	5	5	4	3	1	5	4	5	5	2	5
Wolverhampton South West	Swing seat	2.0%	West Midlands	Other City	4	2	3	3	4	2	4	5	4	1	4	3
Leigh	Formerly loyal Labour	2.1%	North West	Town	3	4	4	3	2	2	3	2	4	2	2	5
Keighley	Swing seat	2.1%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	2	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	4	3	5	3
West Bromwich East	Formerly loyal Labour	2.2%	West Midlands	Town in conurbation	4	4	5	5	1	1	4	5	5	1	4	5
Vale Of Clwyd	Swing seat	2.5%	Wales	Town	2	4	4	4	2	2	3	2	.	4	5	4
Ynys Mon	Formerly loyal Labour	2.7%	Wales	Village or smaller*	1	3	4	5	1	2	3	1	.	4	5	2
Peterborough	Swing seat	2.7%	East	Town	4	4	5	5	3	1	4	5	5	5	3	5
Derby North	Swing seat	2.7%	East Midlands	Other City	4	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	3
Stroud	Swing seat	2.9%	South West	Village or smaller*	2	2	2	4	2	4	1	1	1	3	3	2
Wrexham	Formerly loyal Labour	3.2%	Wales	Town	3	4	4	5	3	1	4	3	.	5	5	4
Aberconwy	Last won in 2005	3.2%	Wales	Village or smaller*	1	4	3	4	2	3	2	2	.	2	5	3
Pudsey	Last won in 2005	3.2%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	4	1	1	2	4	5	1	3	2	1	4	2
Vale Of Glamorgan	Last won in 2005	3.2%	Wales	Town	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	.	3	4	3
Lincoln	Swing seat	3.5%	East Midlands	Town	4	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	4	4	4	4
Hyndburn	Formerly loyal Labour	3.5%	North West	Town	3	4	5	5	1	1	3	4	5	4	5	5
Hastings and Rye	Last won in 2005	3.7%	South East	Town	2	5	4	2	2	2	4	3	5	1	2	3
Wakefield	Formerly loyal Labour	3.7%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	3	5	4	4	2	2	4	4	4	3	5	5
Darlington	Formerly loyal Labour	3.8%	North East	Town	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	3	5	4
Watford	Last won in 2005	3.8%	East	Town in conurbation	5	2	2	1	4	4	3	5	2	3	1	3
Hendon	Last won in 2005	3.8%	London	Core City	5	1	2	2	5	3	5	5	3	1	1	1
Wycombe	Rarely or never Labour	3.8%	South East	Town	4	5	2	3	4	4	3	5	2	4	2	2
Truro and Falmouth	Rarely or never Labour	3.9%	South West	Town	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	3	4	2
Don Valley	Formerly loyal Labour	4.0%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	2	5	5	5	1	2	2	2	4	3	5	5
Reading West	Last won in 2005	4.1%	South East	Other City	4	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	1	3
Colne Valley	Swing seat	4.2%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	4	3	4	4	2
Southport	Rarely or never Labour	4.3%	North West	Town	1	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	3	3	5	2
Redcar	Formerly loyal Labour	4.3%	North East	Town	2	5	5	5	2	1	3	1	5	4	5	5
Southampton, Itchen	Formerly loyal Labour	4.7%	South East	Other City	5	3	4	3	2	2	5	4	4	1	3	4
Arfon	Last won in 2005	4.8%	Wales	Village or smaller*	4	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	.	3	5	1
Stockton South	Swing seat	4.8%	North East	Town	3	3	3	2	4	3	1	3	3	3	5	4
Broxtowe	Last won in 2005	4.8%	East Midlands	Town in conurbation	3	1	2	2	4	4	1	4	1	4	3	3
Calder Valley	Last won in 2005	5.0%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Village or smaller*	2	2	2	3	3	4	2	2	3	3	5	3
Milton Keynes North	Last won in 2005	5.0%	South East	Other City	5	2	2	2	4	3	4	5	2	3	2	2
Norwich North	Last won in 2005	5.1%	East	Other City	3	3	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	2	4
Workington	Formerly loyal Labour	5.0%	North West	Town	1	5	4	5	1	2	3	1	4	1	5	4

Constituency	Category	%	Region	Type												
Filton and Bradley Stoke	Rarely or never Labour	5.3%	South West	Town in conurbation	4	1	2	1	4	5	2	4	1	2	2	2
Milton Keynes South	Last won in 2005	5.4%	South East	Other City	4	3	2	2	4	3	4	5	3	3	1	3
Sedgefield	Formerly loyal Labour	5.4%	North East	Village or smaller*	2	4	4	4	2	2	3	1	4	4	5	4
West Bromwich West	Formerly loyal Labour	5.5%	West Midlands	Town in conurbation	4	5	5	5	1	1	5	5	5	1	4	5
Ipswich	Swing seat	5.5%	East	Town	4	4	4	4	3	2	5	4	4	3	2	3
Altrincham and Sale West	Rarely or never Labour	5.6%	North West	Town in conurbation	3	1	1	3	5	5	1	4	1	4	2	1
Blackpool South	Formerly loyal Labour	5.6%	North West	Town	2	5	5	4	3	1	4	2	5	5	5	5
Northampton South	Last won in 2005	5.8%	East Midlands	Other City	5	4	4	3	4	2	5	4	4	2	2	4
Shipley	Rarely or never Labour	5.8%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	2	1	2	1	4	4	1	3	3	3	5	3
Bolsover	Formerly loyal Labour	5.8%	East Midlands	Town	2	5	5	5	1	1	3	1	4	2	4	5
Wolverhampton North East	Formerly loyal Labour	6.0%	West Midlands	Other City	4	5	5	5	1	1	5	5	5	3	2	5
Preseli Pembrokeshire	Rarely or never Labour	6.0%	Wales	Village or smaller*	1	4	4	5	1	2	2	1	.	2	5	3
Barrow and Furness	Formerly loyal Labour	6.3%	North West	Town	2	3	4	5	1	2	1	1	4	5	5	4
Rushcliffe	Rarely or never Labour	6.3%	East Midlands	Village or smaller*	3	1	1	2	5	5	1	3	1	2	3	1
Cities Of London and Westminster	Rarely or never Labour	6.3%	London	Core City	5	1	1	1	5	5	5	5	2	2	1	1
Rother Valley	Formerly loyal Labour	6.5%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	2	3	4	4	1	3	1	2	3	5	4	5
South Swindon	Last won in 2005	6.5%	South West	Other City	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	5	2	3
Loughborough	Last won in 2005	6.6%	East Midlands	Town	4	4	2	2	3	4	3	4	2	3	3	2
Worcester	Last won in 2005	6.6%	West Midlands	Town	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3
Copeland	Formerly loyal Labour	6.9%	North West	Village or smaller*	1	3	3	5	1	2	2	1	4	5	5	4
Pendle	Last won in 2005	7.0%	North West	Town	4	4	5	5	1	1	3	5	5	5	4	5
Northampton North	Last won in 2005	7.0%	East Midlands	Other City	4	3	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	4	2	4
East Worthing and Shoreham	Rarely or never Labour	7.0%	South East	Town	2	3	3	1	2	4	1	3	2	1	2	3
Morecambe and Lunesdale	Last won in 2005	7.0%	North West	Town	2	5	4	4	1	2	2	1	4	4	5	4
Penistone and Stocksbridge	Formerly loyal Labour	7.3%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	1	3	3	3	2	4	1	2	2	1	4	4
Wimbledon	Rarely or never Labour	7.4%	London	Core City	5	1	1	3	5	5	4	5	1	3	1	1
Ashfield	Formerly loyal Labour	7.4%	East Midlands	Town	2	5	5	5	1	1	2	1	4	5	4	5
Uxbridge and South Ruislip	Rarely or never Labour	7.5%	London	Core City	5	1	3	1	3	5	3	5	2	5	1	4
Stoke-On-Trent North	Formerly loyal Labour	7.8%	West Midlands	Other City	4	5	5	5	1	1	4	4	5	4	3	5
Crewe and Nantwich	Swing seat	7.9%	North West	Town	3	5	3	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	4	4
Harrow East	Last won in 2005	8.3%	London	Core City	4	1	2	3	4	4	3	5	2	2	1	2
Newcastle-Under-Lyme	Formerly loyal Labour	8.3%	West Midlands	Town	3	3	4	4	3	2	3	3	3	5	5	5
Crawley	Last won in 2005	8.4%	South East	Town	5	5	4	1	2	3	4	5	3	3	1	4
Clwyd West	Rarely or never Labour	8.4%	Wales	Town	1	3	3	4	1	3	2	2	.	5	5	3

Constituency	Status	%	Region	Type												
Corby	Last won in 2005	8.5%	East Midlands	Town	3	4	4	5	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	4
Scunthorpe	Formerly loyal Labour	8.5%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	3	5	5	5	1	1	3	3	4	4	5	5
Camborne and Redruth	Rarely or never Labour	8.6%	South West	Town	2	4	4	5	1	2	2	1	4	1	4	4
Colchester	Rarely or never Labour	8.8%	East	Town	5	4	3	1	4	3	4	4	3	1	1	3
Bishop Auckland	Formerly loyal Labour	8.9%	North East	Village or smaller*	2	5	5	5	1	1	3	1	4	3	4	4
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr	Rarely or never Labour	8.9%	Wales	Village or smaller*	1	3	4	5	1	3	1	1	.	4	5	3
Stevenage	Last won in 2005	9.0%	East	Town	4	1	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	3	1	4
Bolton West	Formerly loyal Labour	9.0%	North West	Town	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	4	3
Bournemouth East	Rarely or never Labour	8.9%	South West	Other City	4	3	3	1	4	3	4	4	3	1	3	3
York Outer	Rarely or never Labour	9.0%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	2	2	1	2	4	5	1	3	1	2	3	2
Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	Last won in 2005	9.2%	Wales	Village or smaller*	1	3	4	5	1	2	2	1	.	5	5	3
Shrewsbury and Atcham	Rarely or never Labour	9.5%	West Midlands	Town	2	3	2	4	2	4	2	2	2	3	4	3
Gloucester	Last won in 2005	9.6%	South West	Town	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	3	4
Carlisle	Last won in 2005	9.7%	North West	Town	2	4	5	5	2	1	3	1	3	3	5	4
Rossendale and Darwen	Last won in 2005	9.8%	North West	Town	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	3	4	2	5	4
Finchley and Golders Green	Rarely or never Labour	9.8%	London	Core City	5	1	1	2	5	5	5	5	2	5	2	1
Monmouth	Rarely or never Labour	9.9%	Wales	Town	1	2	1	4	3	4	1	1	.	2	3	2
Macclesfield	Rarely or never Labour	9.9%	North West	Town	1	3	1	2	4	4	1	2	2	4	3	2
Scarborough and Whitby	Rarely or never Labour	10.3%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	1	5	4	5	1	2	3	2	4	2	5	5
Croydon South	Rarely or never Labour	10.4%	London	Core City	4	1	1	1	5	5	2	5	2	4	1	2
South Ribble	Last won in 2005	10.4%	North West	Town	2	3	2	2	3	4	1	2	2	5	5	4
Welwyn Hatfield	Rarely or never Labour	10.5%	East	Town	5	2	2	1	4	4	5	4	2	1	1	3
Morley and Outwood	Formerly loyal Labour	10.8%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	3	4	3	1	2	4	1	3	3	5	4	4
South Thanet	Rarely or never Labour	11.0%	South East	Town	1	3	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	2	5
Erewash	Last won in 2005	10.9%	East Midlands	Town	3	4	4	4	1	2	2	2	3	4	3	5
Bournemouth West	Rarely or never Labour	11.0%	South West	Other City	4	3	3	1	3	3	4	3	3	1	3	4
Blackpool North and Cleveleys	Last won in 2005	11.1%	North West	Town	1	4	5	2	3	1	3	2	5	1	5	5
Great Grimsby	Formerly loyal Labour	11.1%	Yorkshire and The Humber	Town	4	5	5	5	2	1	4	2	5	5	5	5
Ceredigion	Rarely or never Labour	11.1%	Wales	Village or smaller*	1	2	3	2	1	4	3	2	.	5	5	2
Kingswood	Last won in 2005	11.4%	South West	Core City	3	4	3	2	1	4	1	3	2	4	2	4
Hexham	Rarely or never Labour	11.4%	North East	Village or smaller*	1	2	1	4	3	4	2	1	1	4	5	2

Bromley and Chislehurst	Rarely or never Labour	12.0%	London	Core City	4	1	1	1	5	5	3	4	2	3	1	2
Thurrock	Last won in 2005	12.1%	East	Town	5	4	5	2	2	2	4	4	3	1	1	5
Dover	Last won in 2005	12.1%	South East	Town	2	5	4	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	5
Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland	Formerly loyal Labour	12.2%	North East	Other City	2	4	4	5	2	2	3	2	4	4	5	5
Telford	Formerly loyal Labour	12.8%	West Midlands	Town	4	5	5	5	2	1	4	3	5	2	3	5
Basingstoke	Rarely or never Labour	13.0%	South East	Town	4	3	2	2	4	4	4	4	2	1	2	3

Annex 2: Scottish target seats

	Swing required	Remain vote share in EU referendum	SNP vote share in 2019
Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath	1.3%	56.7%	35.2%
East Lothian	3.3%	64.6%	36.2%
Glasgow North East	3.8%	59.3%	46.9%
Rutherglen and Hamilton West	4.9%	62.4%	44.2%
Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill	5.8%	61.2%	47.0%
Midlothian	5.9%	62.1%	41.5%
Airdrie and Shotts	6.5%	60.2%	45.1%
Glasgow South West	6.6%	59.1%	47.9%
Motherwell and Wishaw	7.1%	62.3%	46.4%
Glasgow East	7.2%	56.2%	47.7%
Glasgow North	7.7%	78.4%	46.9%
Glasgow Central	8.1%	71.2%	49.2%
Na h-Eileanan An Iar	8.4%	56.1%	45.1%
Inverclyde	9.4%	63.8%	48.4%
Glasgow South	9.5%	71.8%	48.1%
Dunfermline and West Fife	10.0%	60.6%	44.4%
Glasgow North West	10.5%	68.5%	49.5%
West Dunbartonshire	10.6%	62.0%	49.6%
Edinburgh North and Leith	10.8%	78.2%	43.7%
Lanark and Hamilton East	10.8%	64.0%	41.9%
Edinburgh East	10.9%	72.4%	48.4%
East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow	11.8%	63.1%	46.4%
Paisley and Renfrewshire North	12.0%	64.5%	47.0%
Paisley and Renfrewshire South	12.4%	65.2%	50.2%
Livingston	12.5%	56.7%	46.9%

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