



English Local Elections 6 May 2021

This briefing contains a detailed summary of the candidates standing for election in the English local elections, to be held on 6 May 2021.

This data includes by-elections in England, but does not cover the estimated 2,000 town and parish councils holding elections on 6 May.¹

The data is drawn from 4,115 Statements of Persons Nominated published by English councils on 8-9 April 2021, and was manually collected and checked by Democracy Club's nationwide network of volunteers. All numbers reflect our database as of 13 April 2021.

The full candidate CSV datafiles can be downloaded from [our Candidates database](#).

Details of candidates per party and ward can be found [here](#).

Democracy Club would like to thank the hundreds of people who volunteered their time between 8-12 April 2021 to collect the data which made this analysis possible.

Voters can get locally specific information at WhoCanIVoteFor.co.uk.

About Democracy Club

Democracy Club is a Community Interest Company which builds digital tools to support everyone's participation in UK elections. We believe that information about upcoming elections should be easy to find, especially online.

Our free and accessible tools and databases are used by millions of UK voters each year. Democracy Club works closely with local government, and is a data provider to The Electoral Commission.

Democracy Club's vision is of an electoral system which is fit for the digital age.

¹ Town and parish councils estimate courtesy of the National Association of Local Councils.

Key summary

- Combining scheduled elections and by-elections, exactly 5,000 councillors are to be elected on 6 May.
- Due to the postponement of elections during the coronavirus pandemic, 6 May will see a record number of by-elections for a single day: 352.
- 157 parties are standing candidates, a number largely unchanged from 2019 (156).
- The Conservatives and Labour are both contesting over 90% of seats. The Liberal Democrats are contesting 73%.
- The Greens have doubled their seat coverage from 2019, while the number of UKIP candidates has collapsed, from 16% to 3%.
- The political landscape is far more fragmented than in 2019. The number of minor party candidates has risen substantially, driven in large part by Reform UK and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.
- There are only four uncontested elections, three of them in the Scilly Isles.
- 189 ballot papers will only have two party options.

Election overview

In total, 5,000 English councillors will be elected on 6 May. Of these, 4,648 will be elected in scheduled elections (2,662 rolled over from 2020), and 352 will be elected in by-elections postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to the Scottish Parliament and Senedd elections, there will also be one council by-election in Scotland, and 10 in Wales (excluded from this analysis)

Scheduled Elections

144 English local authorities are holding scheduled elections on 6 May 2021.² 44 councils (including 21 county councils) are electing the entire council, six are electing half the council, and 93 are electing one third. The total number of councillors to be elected is 4,648, across 3,864 wards.

By-elections

By-elections occur following the resignation, disqualification or death of a sitting councillor.

Council by-elections were suspended during the Coronavirus pandemic. Consequently, there will be 352 council by-elections to fill vacancies in English councils on 6 May. Of these, 95 will take place alongside a scheduled election (ie. as a double, or in one case, triple-seat election), while 257 standalone by-elections will also be held, across 251 wards in 132 councils.³

The figure of 352 is the largest number of council by-elections held on a single day in modern UK political history. By way of comparison, the 2019 English local elections saw 40 by-elections.

The council with the most by-elections on 6 May is West Suffolk, with six. Four councils have five each: Allerdale, Croydon, Islington and Stockton-on-Tees.

² Including the council of the Isles of Scilly. Six councils which were expected to hold elections on 6 May have had them postponed pending consultation on proposals to create new unitary authorities. The six councils are: Carlisle, Craven, Cumbria, North Yorkshire, Somerset, South Lakeland.

³ By-election data courtesy of Andrew Teale, with additional work by Stuart Orford.

Seats contested per party

There are a total of 19,110 *candidacies* across England, representing 157 political parties, as well as 1,190 independents.

However, the number of individual *candidates* involved will be lower than this headline figure. This is because the 2020 and 2021 electoral years have been combined, meaning that some individuals will contest more than one seat (for example, district and county seats in the same area). Based on our initial dataset (before detailed de-duplication), we estimate that at least 1,300 individuals are standing for two seats, and at least two are standing for three.

Table 1 gives the number of seats contested by the four largest parties, as well as a combined total for minor parties and independents. The final column gives that figure as a proportion of all English seats up for election.

Table 1: seats contested by major parties

Party	Seats contested	% Seat coverage
Conservative Party	4,872	97.44%
Labour Party ⁴	4,653	93.06%
Liberal Democrats	3,658	73.16%
Green Party	2,956	59.12%
All other parties	1,787	-
Independent Candidates	1,190	-

Two points are immediately striking when compared with previous years.

The first is the strength of the Green Party. In 2018 the party contested 49% of seats, while in 2019 it fought 29%. This year it is fighting 59% of seats.

The second is the collapse of UKIP, which contested 15% of seats in 2018 and 16% in 2019. This year the party is fighting only 3%, contesting 144 seats down from 1,388 in 2019.

⁴ According to figures kindly provided by the Co-Operative party, 690 council candidates are standing as Labour/Co-Operative.

Smaller Parties

Although the number of parties overall is roughly the same as in 2019, the number of candidates standing for smaller parties is substantially up from previous years. In 2019, the largest number of seats contested by a party outside of the main parties (then including UKIP) was 44; this year it is 285.

Table 2: smaller parties contesting 15 or more seats

Party	Seats contested	% Seat coverage
Reform UK	285	5.70%
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	267	5.34%
UK Independence Party	144	2.88%
Freedom Alliance	95	1.90%
Social Democratic Party	70	1.40%
The For Britain Movement	61	1.22%
Hampshire Independents	46	0.92%
Yorkshire Party	44	0.88%
Rotherham Democratic Party	40	0.80%
The Liberal Party	37	0.74%
Heritage Party	30	0.60%
Workers Party of Britain	26	0.52%
Official Monster Raving Loony Party	24	*
Women's Equality Party	21	0.42%
Wycombe Independents	20	0.40%
Coventry Citizens Party	19	0.38%
Mebyon Kernow	19	0.38%
Independent Network	17	0.34%
Veterans and People's Party	15	0.30%

*OMRLP seat coverage is substantially lower than their candidate number would suggest, as the party is standing [13 candidates for a single-seat by-election in Kingston-upon-Thames](#).

As usual, a large number of parties are standing only a handful of candidates. *Table 3* gives a summary of the number of candidates per party: 43 parties are only standing a single candidate.

Table 3: Candidates per party

Candidates per party	Number of parties
15 or more	24
10-14	10
9-5	34
2-4	46
1	43
Total	157

Smaller party highlights

Ten parties contesting the elections were first registered with the Electoral Commission in 2021. Of these, only the Freedom Alliance is contesting more than 10 seats.

In [Liverpool](#), the Liberal Party (not to be confused with the Liberal Democrats) are contesting all but three seats, as well as the [mayoralty](#).

All 15 Veterans and People’s Party candidates are standing in [Hartlepool](#), where the party is standing more candidates than the Conservatives, despite not running a candidate in the [parliamentary by-election](#).

Table 4 gives the council areas where other minor parties are fielding the largest number of candidates.

Table 4: highest concentrations of minor party candidates

Party	Council	Seats contested
Reform UK	Derby	17
Trade Union and Socialist Coalition	Plymouth	15
UK Independence Party	Sunderland	19
Freedom Alliance	Buckinghamshire	27
Social Democratic Party	Leeds	18
The For Britain Movement	West Sussex	8

Uncontested seats

In 2019, we found 151 seats went uncontested in England (ie. only one candidate came forward to stand). In 2021, that number has plummeted to four.

Table 5: Uncontested elections

Seat	Winning party
Isles of Scilly: St. Agnes	Independent
Isles of Scilly: St. Martins	Independent
Isles of Scilly: Tresco	Independent
Shropshire: Albrighton	Conservative

The situation in the Isles of Scilly

[Scilly](#) has five wards (known as parishes), each electing one councillor except St. Mary's, which elects 12. The total number of councillors is therefore 16. 16 candidates have put themselves forward for election, but 13 have stood in St. Mary's, leaving the Bryher parish [without any candidates at all](#).

Under-contested seats

In addition to uncontested seats, there are a small number of wards where fewer than two candidates are standing per available seat. In these contests, parties with enough candidates are guaranteed a seat regardless of the result. *Table 6* shows the parties that stand to gain a candidate in this way. The majority of these are Labour wins in [Halton](#).

Table 6: under-contested gains

Party	Under-contested seats gained
Conservative Party	2
Labour Party	11

Two-way contests

For voters in 189 wards, there will only be two party options on the ballot. The Conservatives feature in 182 of these, and Labour in 121. *Table 7* provides a breakdown of these two-way contests, including areas where there are three or four candidates but only two parties running.

Table 7: Two-way contests

Party	Vs	Number of contests
Conservative Party	Labour	114
	Liberal Democrats	33
	Green Party	12
	Mebyon Kernow	3
	Other local parties	6
	Independent	14
Labour Party	Green Party	5
	Ashfield Independents	1
	Independent	1
Total two-way fights		189

Notes for Editors

Democracy Club is a non-partisan, non-profit Community Interest Company.

We're a large community of volunteers supported by a small core team .

Our database is built by our volunteers, who work together to manually collect and enter data from nominations papers into our database at candidates.democracyclub.org.uk.

We believe that information about elections - *relevant to the individual* - should be easy to find. Our websites and data services provide voters with key details such as where you can vote and who will be on your ballot. During 2019 alone, our database handled in the region of 6 million postcode searches for this information.

However, we believe much of this work should be done by the government. At present, the UK state does not collect lists of polling stations, candidates, or results, and provides no centralised database for voters to find these. We believe that this should change.

Citing this data

Please give attribution to any use of the data in this report or from the CSV downloads to *Democracy Club*, and provide a link where possible to democracyclub.org.uk.

Contact us

For further comment, or bespoke data analysis please contact: hello@democracyclub.org.uk.