

2017 general election

Urban-Rural differences

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Urban-Rural classifications

Constituencies are allocated to six types:

Major Urban: Defined as those constituencies where at least 50% of their population within one of the major urban areas of Great Britain (see appendix for complete list of major urban areas). There are 188 such constituencies in Great Britain with a combined population of over nineteen million or approximately a third of the population of Great Britain (see table below).

Large Urban: Defined as those constituencies which contain at least 50% of their population within or one of the Large Urban areas in Great Britain (see appendix for complete list of large urban areas). There are 75 such constituencies in Great Britain with a combined population of 7.2 million or approximately 12% of the population (see table below)

Other Urban: Defined as those constituencies which have less than a third of their population in rural areas and are not part of a Major or Large urban area. There are 151 such constituencies in Great Britain with a combined population of nearly fifteen million or approximately a quarter of the entire population (see table below).

Rural 75: Defined as those constituencies which have at least 75% of their population living in areas classified as rural. There are 96 such constituencies in Great Britain with a combined population of 8.8 million or approximately 14% of the population.

Rural 50: Defined as those constituencies which have between 50% and 74.99% of their population living in areas classified as rural. There are 58 such constituencies in Great Britain with a combined population of 5.4 million or approximately 9% of the population.

Sig Rural: Defined as those constituencies which have between 33% and 49.99% of their population living in areas classified as rural. There are 64 such constituencies in Great Britain with a combined population of almost six million or approximately 10% of the population.

Type	Number of constituencies	Population	Population share %
Major Urban	188	19,296,402	31.4
Large Urban	75	7,217,381	11.8
Other Urban	151	14,718,552	24.0
Rural 75	96	8,792,748	14.3
Rural 50	58	5,381,436	8.8
Sig Rural	64	5,964,796	9.7

Table 1, Rural-urban classifications and populations of British parliamentary constituencies (Source: 2011 UK Census)

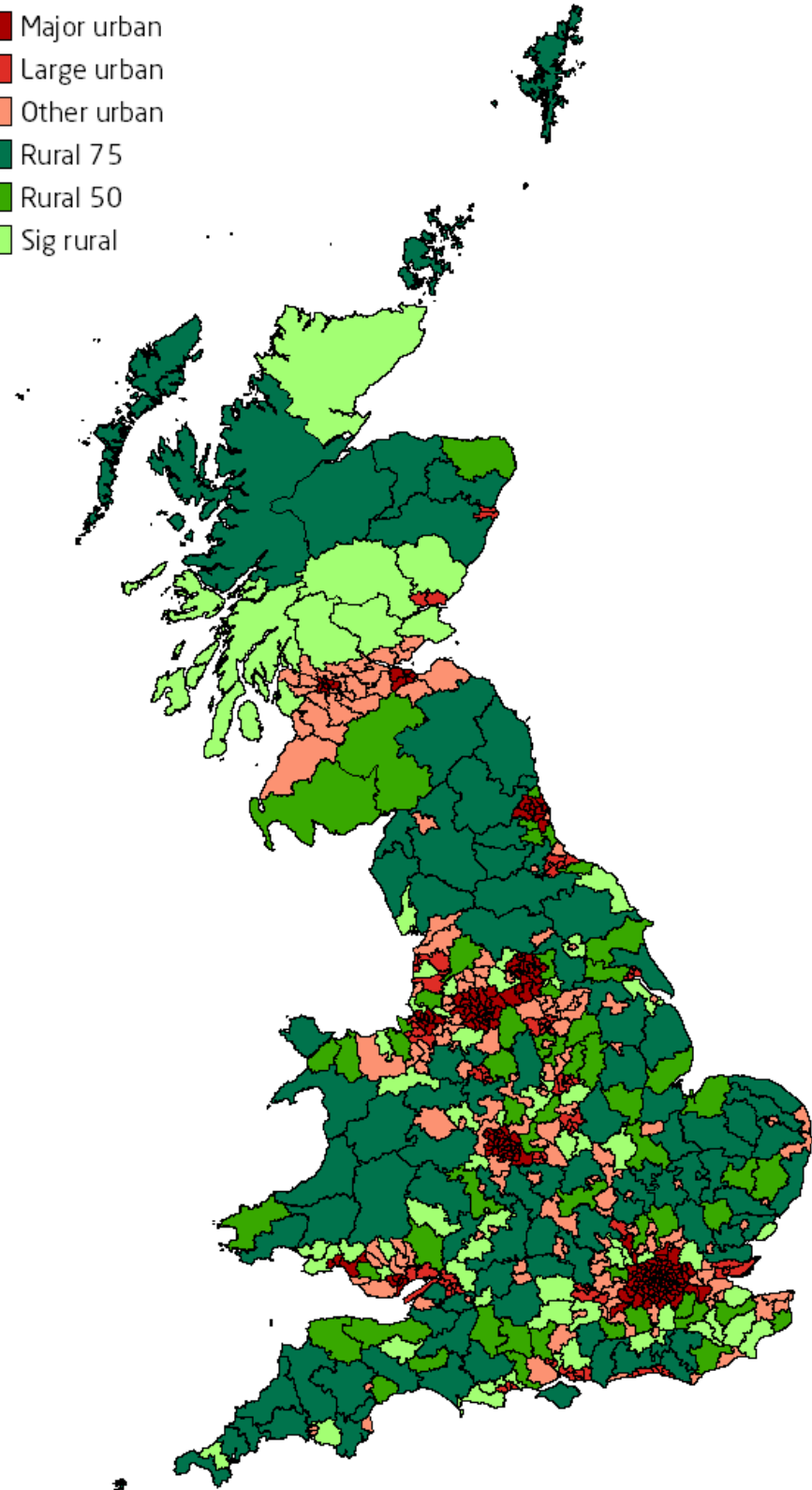
Party, year	Major urban	Large Urban	Other Urban	Rural 50	Rural 75	Sig Rural
Con, 2017	47	28	72	45	80	45
Con, 2015	55	31	82	42	75	45
Con, 2010	53	30	76	41	68	39
Con, 2005	36	19	33	33	63	27
Lab, 2017	128	43	59	12	6	14
Lab, 2015	120	38	44	13	7	10
Lab, 2010	119	39	65	13	7	15
Lab, 2005	137	52	107	21	9	23
LD, 2017	4	0	4	0	3	1
LD, 2015	2	1	1	0	4	0
LD, 2010	16	4	10	2	17	8
LD, 2005	14	3	11	3	20	11
SNP, 2017	9	3	16	0	3	4
SNP, 2015	11	4	24	2	7	8
SNP, 2010	0	1	0	1	2	2
SNP, 2005	0	1	0	1	1	1
Plaid, 2017	0	0	0	1	3	0
Plaid, 2015	0	0	0	1	2	0
Plaid, 2010	0	0	0	1	2	0
Plaid, 2005	0	0	0	0	2	0

Table 2, Number of seats won by each of the major parties by Rural-Urban constituency type since 2005

The map on the following page shows how the different Rural-Urban types are distributed across the 632 British constituencies.

Rural-Urban classification

- Major urban
- Large urban
- Other urban
- Rural 75
- Rural 50
- Sig rural



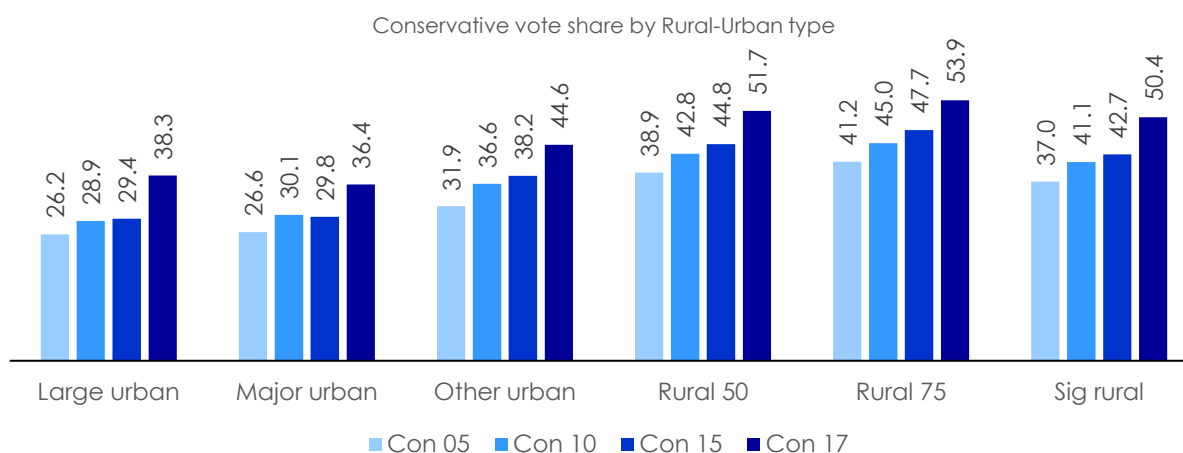
Vote share patterns by Rural-Urban type

The charts below show how each of the main political parties have performed in each of the Rural-Urban types in the general elections held since 2005. **Note:** The 2005 results are notional, as there were significant boundary changes to constituencies in 2010.

The Conservatives

As the chart below shows, the Conservatives position has improved amongst all Rural-Urban types between 2005 and 2017. However, in 2017 its performance in Major Urban and Large Urban areas took something of a leap forward where previously it had stagnated. The party's improved vote share in rural areas, whilst unsurprising, has taken it beyond the fifty per cent barrier in rural Britain.

2005 national vote share	2010 national vote share	2015 national vote share	2017 national vote share
32.4%	36.1%	36.9%	42.4%



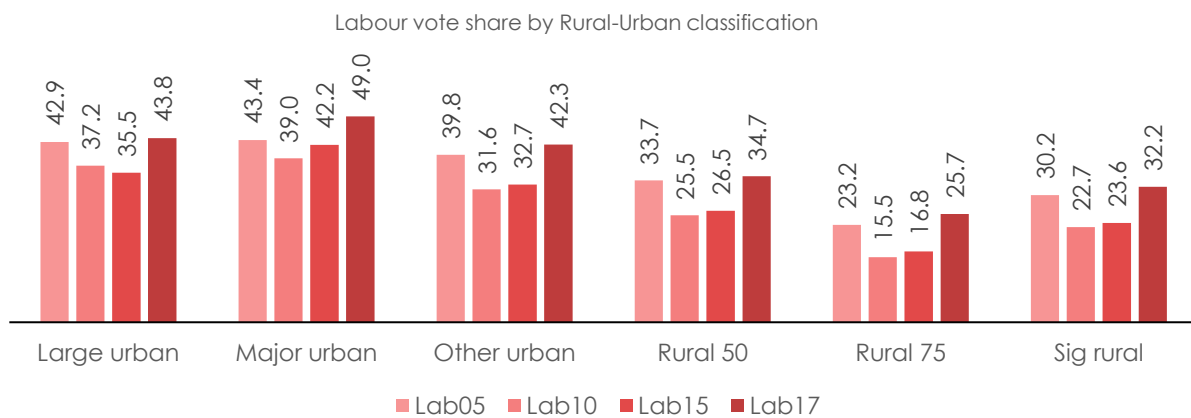
However, these improvements since 2015 have not necessarily translated into seat gains. The party lost twenty-one urban seats in 2017 whilst gaining just eight rural seats for a net loss of thirteen overall. Since 2010 the party has lost thirteen urban seats whilst gaining twenty-two rural ones, which is indicative of how the party has solidified its status in rural England.

The problem for the Conservatives is that each of the last three general elections has resulted in either coalitions with junior parties (2010, 2017) or a small working majority (2015). Given it may have exhausted its capacity for growth in rural England, if it wishes to secure a larger working majority it will need to win back the urban seats it has recently lost to Labour.

Labour

Between 2005 and 2010 Labour's position weakened in almost all Rural-Urban types consistent with their position nationally (Labour's national vote share went down 6.2% between 2005 and 2010). Between 2010 and 2015 Labour's vote share went up a modest 1.5% nationally, but exceeded that in Major Urban areas (+3.2%). The party underperformed its national performance in Large Urban (-1.7%) and Other Urban areas (+1.1%) between 2010 and 2015. However, in 2017 the party saw its performance improve markedly in all Rural-Urban types, moving beyond what it achieved in 2005 amongst them all.

2005 national vote share	2010 national vote share	2015 national vote share	2017 national vote share
35.2	29.0	30.4	40.0



Despite its vote share performance exceeding 2005 levels Labour has not returned to the number of seats it held in 2005. The party lost sixty-six urban seats between 2005 and 2015 although it regained twenty-eight of them in 2017. The party does not appear to be making significant enough progress in rural areas to convert that improvement to seat gains (the party has a net loss of three rural seats since 2010), meaning it is still reliant on winning around 300 urban seats to form a majority.

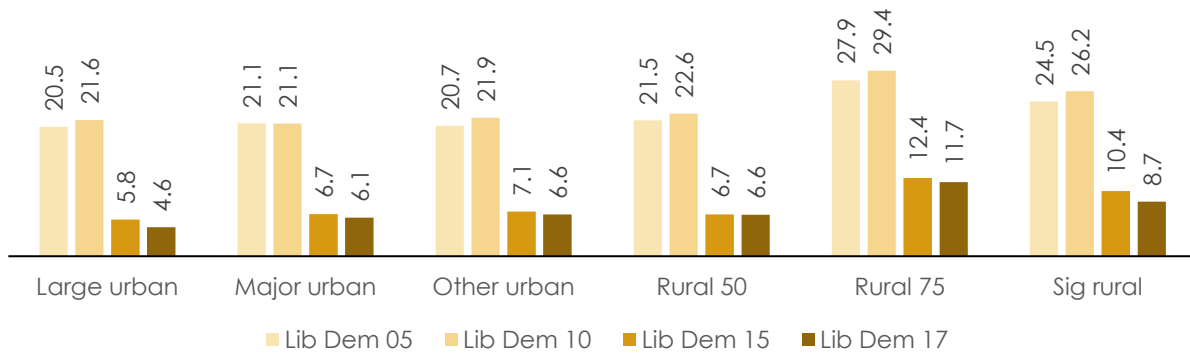
Labour's performance in urban areas improved in 2017 when compared to 2015 and 2010, both in terms of vote share and seats won. However, this marked improvement in urban areas (+8.2% from 2015) still left them well short of a majority. Somewhat remarkably, the party performed better in terms of vote share in urban areas in 2017 than it did in 2005 (45% vs 42%) but won sixty six fewer seats in 2017.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats show no sign of abating the decline they have experienced since 2010. Their performance is best in rural Britain, but they have still declined further even in rural areas.

2005 national vote share	2010 national vote share	2015 national vote share	2017 national vote share
22.0%	23.0%	7.9%	7.4%

Liberal Democrats vote share by Rural-Urban classification



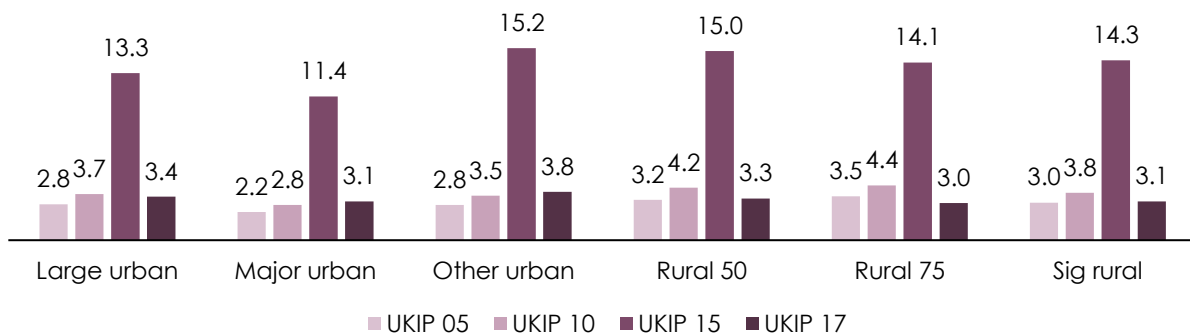
UKIP

The 2015 general election confirmed UKIP's retreat to their pre-2015 peak across all Rural-Urban types.

2005 national vote share*	2010 national vote share*	2015 national vote share*	2017 national vote share*
2.9%	3.7%	13.9%	3.3%

*Vote share percentages are calculated based on the seats where UKIP stood candidates in each election cycle

UKIP vote share by Rural-Urban classification



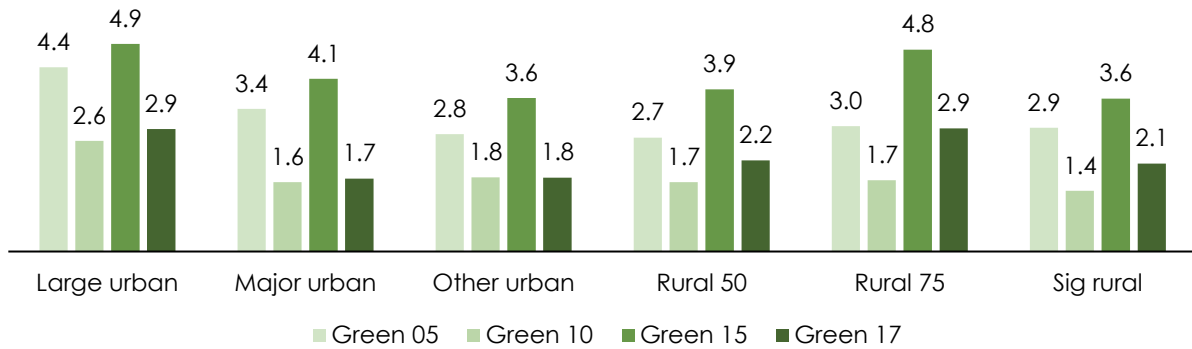
Greens

The Greens saw their vote share performance worsen in all Rural-Urban types between 2015 and 2017 but perhaps most largely in Major and Large Urban areas.

2005 national vote share*	2010 national vote share*	2015 national vote share*	2017 national vote share*
3.3%	1.7%	3.7%	2.0%

*Vote share percentages are calculated based on seats where the Green party stood a candidate in each election cycle

Green vote share by Rural-Urban classification



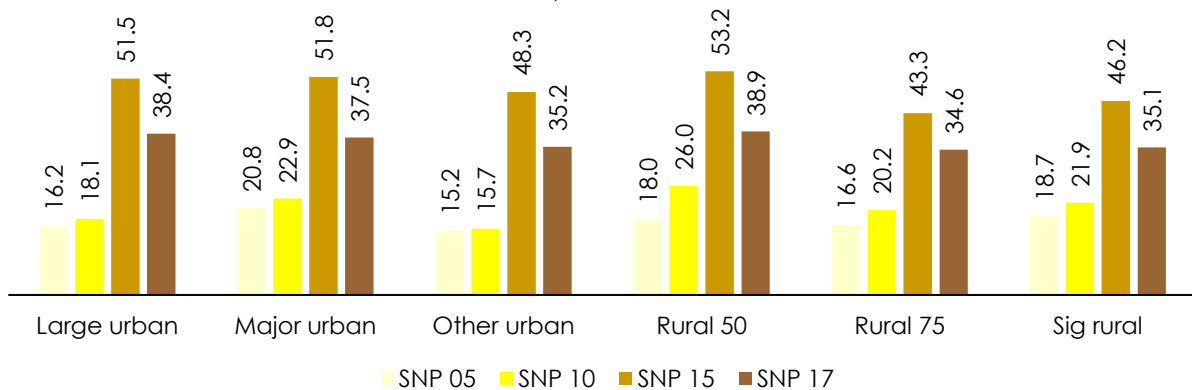
Scottish National Party (SNP)

The SNP slipped back from their high watermark of 2015 across all Rural-Urban types, with sizeable vote share reductions in Large Urban (-13.1%), Major Urban (-14.3%), Other Urban (-13.1%), Rural 50 (-14.3%), Rural 75 (-8.7%) and Sig Rural (-11.1%) types.

2005 national vote share*	2010 national vote share*	2015 national vote share*	2017 national vote share*
17.7%	19.9%	50.0%	36.9%

*Scotland only

SNP vote share by Rural-Urban classification

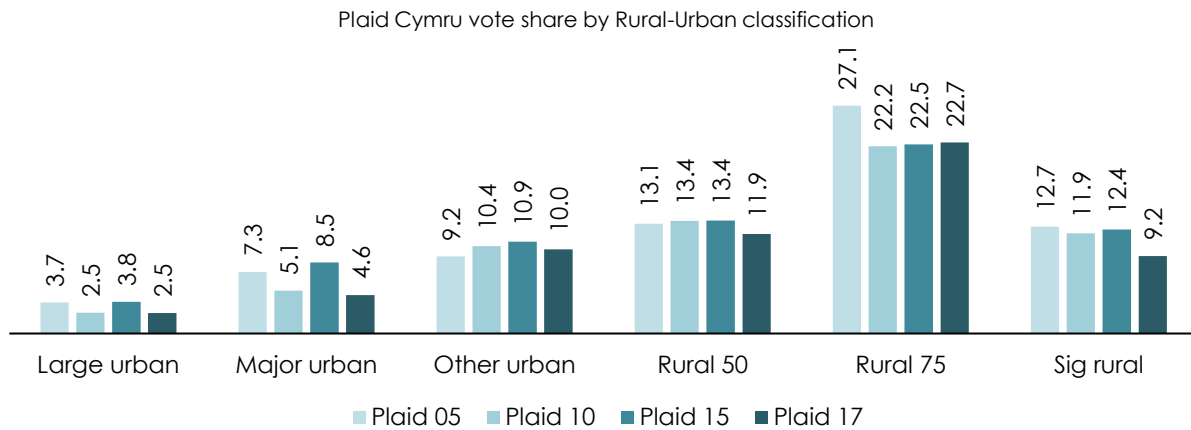


Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru's performance worsened between 2015 and 2017 in every Rural-Urban type except for the most rural constituencies. Whilst it has never achieved significant vote share in urban seats its position worsened still in those areas in 2017.

2005 national vote share*	2010 national vote share*	2015 national vote share*	2017 national vote share*
12.6%	11.3%	12.1%	10.4%

*Wales only



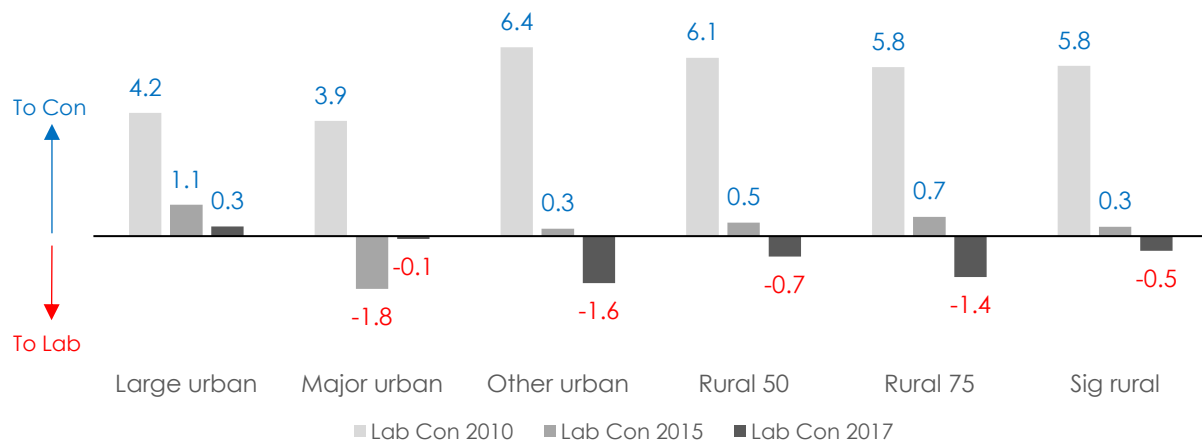
Swing between parties by Rural-Urban type

Labour to Conservative swing patterns since 2005

The chart below shows the swing between Labour and the Conservatives in each of the last three general election cycles. A **minus** figure indicates a swing in the other direction (from the Conservatives to Labour).

Lab-Con swing, 2005 to 2010	Lab-Con swing, 2010 to 2015	Lab-Con swing, 2015 to 2017
5.0%	-0.4%	-2.0%

Labour to Conservative swing by Rural-Urban type

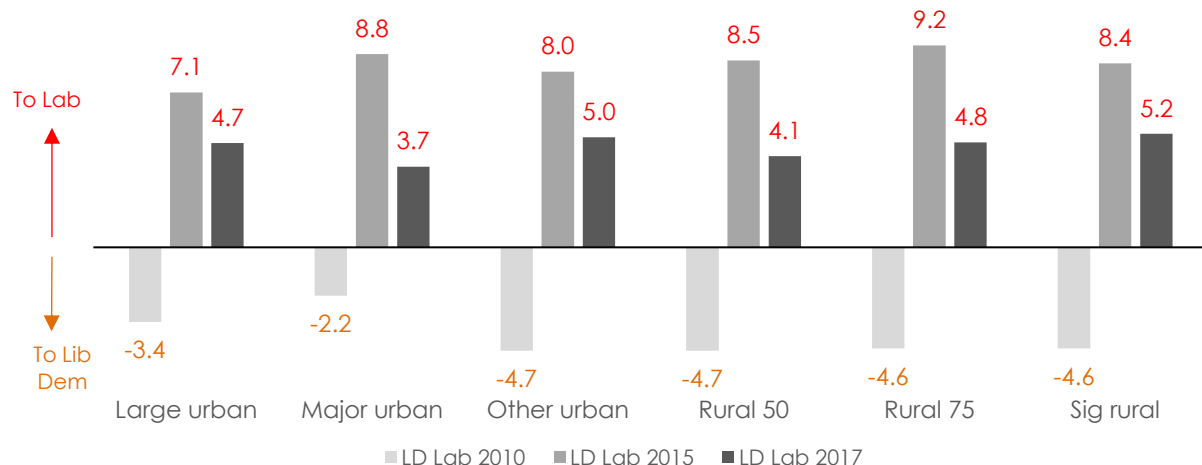


Liberal Democrat to Labour swing patterns since 2005

The chart below shows the swing between the Liberal Democrats and Labour in each of the last three general election cycles. A **minus** figure indicates a swing in the other direction (from Labour to the Liberal Democrats).

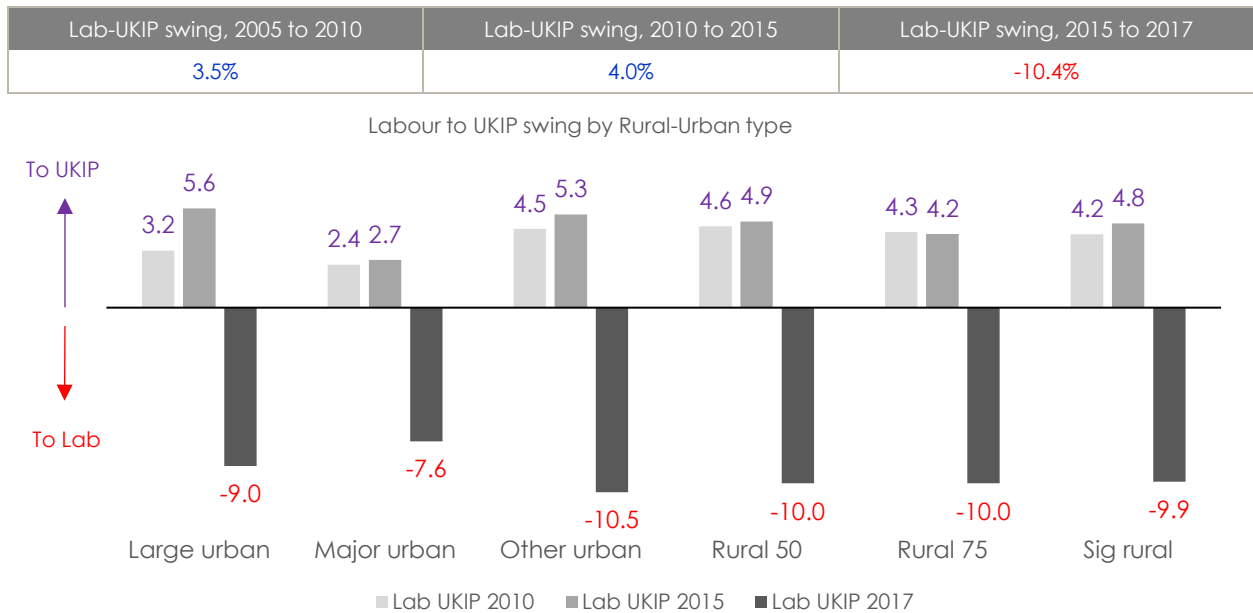
Lib Dem-Lab swing, 2005 to 2010	Lib Dem-Lab swing, 2010 to 2015	Lib Dem-Lab swing, 2015 to 2017
-3.6%	8.4%	5.1%

Lib Dem to Labour swing by Rural-Urban type



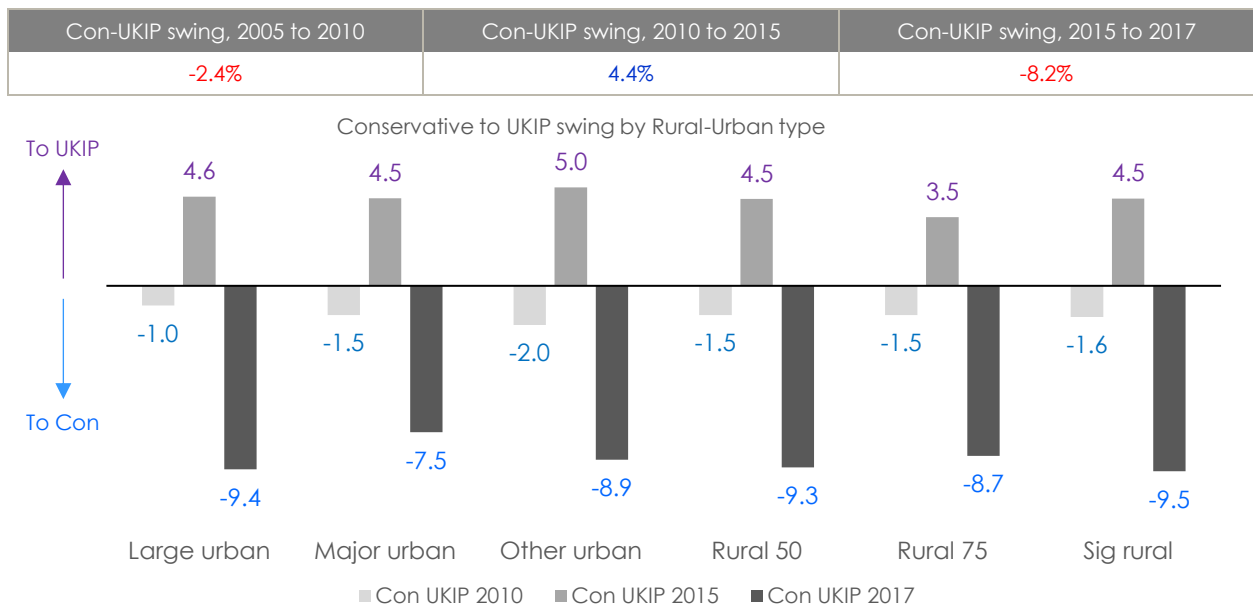
Labour to UKIP swing patterns since 2005

The chart below shows the swing between Labour and UKIP in each of the last three general election cycles. A **minus** figure indicates a swing in the other direction (from UKIP to Labour).



Conservative to UKIP swing patterns since 2005

The chart below shows the swing between the Conservatives and UKIP in each of the last three general election cycles. A **minus** figure indicates a swing in the other direction (from UKIP to the Conservatives).



The 'Other Urban' barometer

Of all the six types compared in this briefing the 151 Other Urban constituencies most closely resemble the national outcomes for both vote share and swing in each of the past four general elections. The table below shows how closely the results of these Other Urban constituencies come to the relative vote share and swing in each of these elections.

Type of event	Overall Result	Other Urban result	Difference +/-
Con, 2017 vote share	42.4	44.6	+2.2
Con, 2015 vote share	36.9	38.2	+1.3
Con, 2010 vote share	36.1	36.6	+0.5
Con, 2005 vote share	32.4	31.9	-0.5
Lab, 2017 vote share	40.0	42.3	+2.3
Lab, 2015 vote share	30.4	32.7	+2.3
Lab, 2010 vote share	29.0	31.6	+2.6
Lab, 2005 vote share	35.2	39.8	+4.6
LD, 2017 vote share	7.4	6.6	-0.8
LD, 2015 vote share	7.9	7.1	-0.8
LD, 2010 vote share	23.0	21.9	-1.1
LD, 2005 vote share	22.0	20.7	-1.3
UKIP, 2017 vote share	3.3	3.8	+0.5
UKIP, 2015 vote share	13.9	15.2	+1.3
UKIP, 2010 vote share	3.7	3.5	-0.2
UKIP, 2005 vote share	2.9	2.8	-0.1
SNP, 2017 vote share	36.9	35.2	-1.7
SNP, 2015 vote share	50.0	48.3	-1.7
SNP, 2010 vote share	19.9	15.7	-2.2
SNP, 2005 vote share	17.7	15.2	-2.5
Plaid, 2017 vote share	10.4	10.0	-0.4
Plaid, 2015 vote share	12.1	10.9	-1.2
Plaid, 2010 vote share	11.3	10.4	-0.9
Plaid, 2005 vote share	12.6	9.2	-3.4
Lab-Con swing, 2017	-2.0	-1.6	+0.4
LD-Lab swing, 2017	5.1	5.0	+0.1
Lab-UKIP swing, 2017	-10.4	-10.5	-0.1
Con-UKIP swing, 2017	-8.2	-8.9	-0.7

Appendix

Major Urban areas

Greater London

Greater Manchester

West Midlands

Merseyside

West Yorkshire

Tyneside

Cardiff

Swansea

Edinburgh

Glasgow

Large Urban areas

Nottingham

Sheffield

Bristol

Brighton

Portsmouth

Leicester

Bournemouth

Reading/Wokingham

Teesside

The Potteries

Coventry/Bedworth

Birkenhead

Southampton

Hull

Southend

Preston

Blackpool

Dundee

Aberdeen

Newport