

Labour and Lib Dems could create 'butterfly effect' to upset Tory march to victory

If the polls are to be believed, Theresa May is on course for a significant majority in June's general election. But behavioural science experts Decision Technology are warning the Prime Minister not to get complacent, highlighting that Jeremy Corbyn and Tim Farron could cause a significant upset if they apply behavioural principles to their approach in swing seats.

Henry Stott, Director at Dectech, said: "Most commentators are confident the Conservatives are on course for a landslide victory in this election. But if Labour and the Liberal Democrats direct their resources in the right way and manage to increase voter turnout in strategic seats, they could be heading into the next parliament with a much stronger presence than many expect.

"Having looked at the constituencies where the major parties won by five percent of the vote or less in the 2015 election, we think the Tories will be vulnerable in at least 50 seats. While an upset in all these areas may not change who is Prime Minister on 9 June, it would be enough to significantly impact how easy the Government finds it to get their policies through.

"In these swing seats, convincing people who are not currently planning to head to the polls that their vote will genuinely make a difference will be key to the outcome. One of the main reasons people don't vote is due to what's called the 'drop in the ocean effect'. That is, the belief that there's no point voting for their party because one person's contribution is tiny and insignificant in comparison to the size of the country as a whole. This is likely to be a significant factor in this year's election given the polls suggest the Conservatives cannot lose.

"But in swing seats, people are in a position to create what's known as a 'butterfly effect', in which a very small change in the initial conditions, such as a higher voter turnout, can lead to a significantly different outcome. The message from Corbyn and Farron in these areas in particular should be that whatever the national polls say, if more people head to the ballot box then they can bring about change. The challengers need to emphasise the value of voting, and create a stronger social norm by highlighting how many supporters do vote, so that not voting is seen as out of step with the majority."

The top 10 seats where the Conservatives are most vulnerable to either Labour or the Liberal Democrats, based on the 2015 election results, are:

1. Gower
2. Derby North
3. Croydon Central
4. Vale of Clwyd
5. Bury North
6. Morley and Outwood
7. Thurrock
8. Plymouth Sutton and Devonport
9. Eastbourne
10. Brighton Kemptown

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

1. The figures outlining the number of seats the different parties won in 2015 with a majority of 5% or less, and where either the Conservatives, Labour or the Liberal Democrats came second, were retrieved and calculated using data from Election Polling. This is also the source used to identify the seats held by the Conservatives which are most vulnerable to being taken by Labour and the Liberal Democrats:

<http://www.electionpolling.co.uk/battleground/targets/labour>

<http://www.electionpolling.co.uk/battleground/targets/liberal-democrat>

<http://www.electionpolling.co.uk/battleground/targets/conservative>

About Decision Technology

Decision Technology (Dectech) is an innovative research consultancy that specialises in helping businesses and policymakers understand and manage customer decision-making, from acquisition through to retention and all the points in-between. It applies insights and techniques from behavioural science, such as randomised controlled field trials and online behavioural experiments, rather than traditional market research surveys. It is a member of the Market Research Society and the Management Consultancies Association.