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*Using Aggregated Search and
Polling Data to Forecast the
Outcome of the 2015 UK General
Election*

prepared by Mavens of London
on the 30th March 2015



*Mavens of London insights:
Using aggregated data to
forecast the UK 2015 election*

*Another hung parliament; and potentially a
re-run election*

1

NO PARTY WILL OBTAIN A CLEAR MAJORITY ON MAY 7TH; THE CONSERVATIVES WILL HOLD THE LARGEST NUMBER OF SEATS

2

THE ONLY TWO-PARTY COALITION WITH SUFFICIENT SEATS TO FORM AN OVERALL MAJORITY WOULD BE LABOUR AND THE CONSERVATIVES

3

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS WILL LOSE THE MAJORITY OF THEIR SEATS, WHILE THE SNP DOMINATE THE RESULTS IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

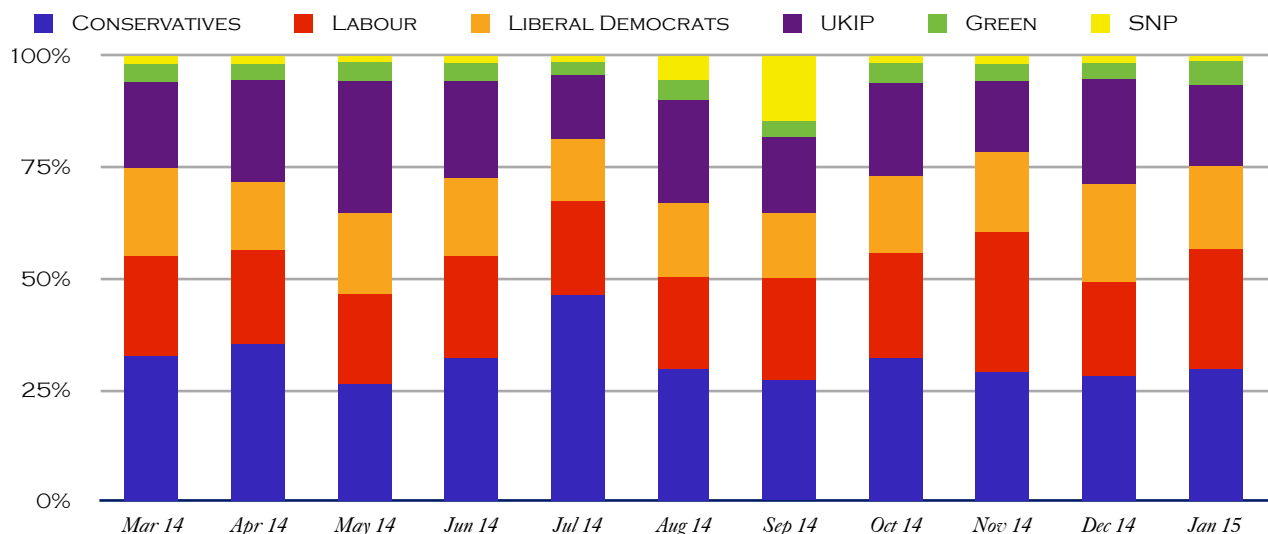
A rapidly changing political landscape, characterised by growing interest in parties that had previously attained only marginal support, and a perceived collapse in support for parts of the establishment has made the 2015 general election one of the most difficult to call in recent years. Polls show volatility, with parties shifting by significant margins depending on the sampling method, size of poll or the news of the day.

[Mavens of London](#) has developed an entirely new approach to the modelling of the election based on our experience as aggregators of digital data, and will be publishing updates in the run up to the election in May. Our approach combines traditional polling results with search data to give a rich and granular view of voter intentions. We hypothesise that relevant search, for example for a local candidate, is a strong indicator of intent to swing.

Use of search data to predict election outcomes was used [successfully](#) in the 2012 US election, but Mavens has developed a new model and applied it to the UK's complex political landscape in which 650 constituencies are competed for by (at least) six major parties.

The graph below shows the nationwide levels of search interest in candidates from the six largest parties. While nationally, the Conservatives have consistently held the majority of share of search, much of this is driven by interest in key cabinet figures and provides little insight at a local level. By comparing search on a per-constituency basis, we have developed metrics that are indicative of interest in political parties at a highly granular level.

Party candidate share of search over the last 12 months



Results; another hung parliament, and potentially a re-run election

The overall share of search for the UK main parties has shifted over the last six months, with an increased rolling average for Labour and the Greens. Both UKIP and the Liberal Democrats have experienced marginal declines in their share.

Initial results show that 592 out of the 650 UK constituencies exhibit behaviour that indicates one party is now significantly far ahead enough of its rivals to call a winner.

Where we have been unable to produce results, the most common reason is that an insufficient number of candidates have been confirmed to produce a clear picture of search interest.

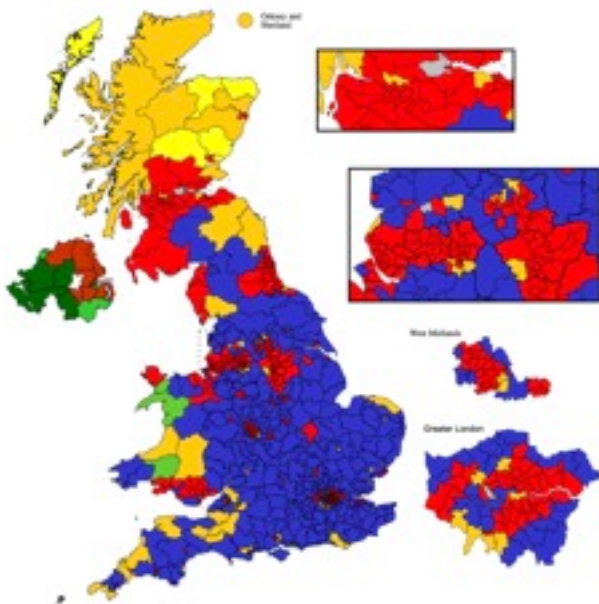
From 592 results, we have produced four main conclusions; **NOTE** for now we have assumed that seats we have not been able to forecast will remain with their incumbents:

- The Conservatives will retain the largest number of seats, but will fail to attain an overall parliamentary majority; Labour will lose some seats, but is incumbent in a number of constituencies we have not yet been able to forecast.
- The Liberal Democrats stand to lose heavily, with their number of MP's expected to more than halve. It is unclear as to whether another

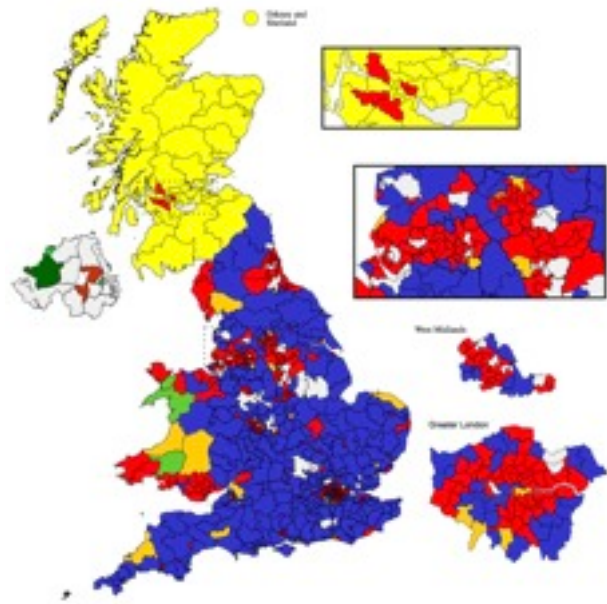
Conservative/Liberal coalition would still have a mandate.

- The SNP will win in Scotland, taking at least 46 additional seats. However, a Labour/SNP coalition does not look likely to have the 326 seats necessary to take power, indicating a broader pact with Plaid Cymru, the DUP and even the Liberal Democrats would be necessary for a left-led coalition.
- UKIP, despite significant gains in the overall share of the vote, will not gain a significant number of seats (we estimate three only).

Incumbents



2015 forecast results



RESULTS The key finding from the forecast is that there is no clear majority for any one party, and that it seems unlikely that any obvious coalition could easily be formed. Neither a combination of the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives nor Labour and the SNP would have a substantive mandate to form a majority government.

Two likely outcomes remain; either the Conservatives or Labour may seek to form a minority government by way of informal agreement with the SNP, or we could be looking at another election later in the year. Whatever the outcome, the political landscape looks to shift dramatically in the coming months. ■

Party	Incumbent Seats	Forecast Seats	Forecast Total	Change
Conservative	303**	286	301	-2
Labour	256	222	252	-4
Liberal Democrat	56	18	19	-37
UKIP	2	3	3	1
Green	1	1	1	0
SNP	6	52	52	+46

Party	Incumbent Seats	Forecast Seats	Forecast Total	Change
Plaid Cymru	3	3	3	0
DUP	8	2	8	0
Sinn Fein	5	2	3	-2
SDLP	3	1	5	2
Respect	1	1	1	0
Independent/Other*	6	1	2	-4

* MPs currently under suspension from their parties are treated as independent; ** includes the Speaker of the House of Commons

Our Approach

INTRODUCTION TO MAVENS Mavens of London is a research & strategy agency with experience in providing insight, research, measurement, and strategy to some of the world's largest brands. Our data sources span all countries & languages and we use our sources alongside a unique method that combines qualitative & quantitative approaches that can deliver real business benefits to our clients.



OUR APPROACH For this research our methodology involved creating a master list of terms indicating interest in parties, candidates and issues down to a constituency level. With more than 2,500 candidates already announced by their parties, the interest in the candidates themselves provides a rich data source.

Where candidate search is unusually high due to an overlap with other well known individuals, such as UKIP's Mark Webber (who shares a name with a well known racing driver), we have adjusted the tracking of the search term, in this case Mark Webber UKIP, to minimise any potential ambiguity. Duplicate names for candidates in some constituencies have been accounted for by including reference to the area or party for example, "William Cash Conservative" & "William Cash UKIP".

Finally, we have attempted to offset national interest in higher profile figures, such as cabinet members, by restricting search volumes for

them to those from the areas close to their constituency, for example, only searches for Nick Clegg from the Sheffield area are included.

We have tracked the changing volumes of interest over the last 12 months. This approach reveals approximately two million relevant searches per month in the UK relating to parliament and the election, recently peaking in September (to coincide with the referendum on Scottish independence) at 2.34m.

Further to this, Mavens of London has aggregated detailed statistics from the results of the 2010 election, providing details of parties, candidates and swing in order to correctly establish a baseline from which the model can calculate outcomes.

We have presumed that much of the search for candidates (with some notable exceptions) relates to the searcher's intent to understand more about them, and hence we theorise that a relationship exists between search volume for candidates and the swing the candidate can expect.

While local interest in specific candidates provides a highly granular vision of interest, we have worked to understand how voter loyalties on party lines have shifted since the last election, providing a baseline for swing across the major regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is then offset by local interest in the declared candidates.

Polling data has also been aggregated as a supplement to the collected digital data sources. Mavens of London recognises that digital sources are one of many methods that can be used to forecast the outcome of the election. However, with roughly two million relevant searches tracked per month, this model represents perhaps one of the largest samplings of potential voter interest currently available.

For further information; please contact Tom Mowat at info@mavens.co.uk ■