Northern Ireland Assembly

Research and Information Service Research Paper

9 July 2024

Dr Raymond Russell

Election Report: Westminster General Election, 4 July 2024

NIAR 128-24

This paper presents an analysis of the Westminster General Election, held on 4 July 2024, and compares the outcome with that of the 2019 election. The paper also includes trends over time in voter turnout and results by party and constituency.

Paper 128/24 **9 July 2024**

Research and Information Service briefings are compiled for the benefit of MLAs and their support staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public. We do, however, welcome written evidence that relate to our papers and these should be sent to the Research and Information Service, Northern Ireland Assembly, Room 139, Parliament Buildings, Belfast BT4 3XX or e-mailed to RLS@niassembly.gov.uk

Key Points

- The 2024 Westminster general election left the parties with the following number of seats:
-

Sinn Féin	7
Democratic Unionist Party	5
Social Democratic and Labour Party	2
Alliance	1
Ulster Unionist Party	1
TUV – No Sea Border	1
Independent	1

- There were a number of changes compared with 2019. While the Sinn Féin seat tally remained unchanged at seven, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) lost three seats (North Antrim, South Antrim and Lagan Valley); the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) retained their two seats (Foyle and Belfast South); Alliance lost North Down (to an Independent) and gained Lagan Valley; while the TUV – No Sea Border gained North Antrim.

- Sinn Féin had the highest share of the vote (27.0% - up from 22.8% in 2019); followed by the DUP (22.1%) - down from 30.6% in 2019; Alliance (15.0% - down from 16.8% in 2019); UUP (12.2% - up from 11.7% in 2019), and the SDLP (11.1% - down from 14.9% in 2019). TUV – No Sea Border, who did not contest the 2019 election, achieved 6.2 per cent of the vote.

- Of the 18 MPs elected in July 2024, five are women (4 elected in 2019).
- Turnout in the election was 57.5 per cent (compared with 62.1% in 2019).
- A total of 136 candidates contested the election (compared with 102 in 2019).

Contents

Key Points 3

1 Introduction 6

2 New Parliamentary Boundaries....6

3. The Candidates....7

4. Turnout 8

5 Overall Results....11

6 Individual Party Performance 15

7 Women in the 2024 Westminster Election (NI) 17

8 Summary 18

Annex A. No. of Valid Votes by Party and Constituency 19

Annex B. Share of Vote (%) by Party and Constituency 20

1 Introduction

On 22 May 2024, the Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak) announced he had requested permission from the King to dissolve parliament, and called a general election for 4 July. Parliament was prorogued on 24 May and dissolved on 30 May, with the vote taking place 25 working days later. This process was carried out in accordance with the *Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022*.

The general election resulted in a victory for the Labour party, with an overall majority of 172 seats. The result was: Labour (411), Conservative (121), Liberal Democrats (72), SNP (9), Reform (5), Plaid Cymru (4), Green Party (4), Speaker (1) and Others (23). While Labour achieved a substantial majority of seats, their vote actually fell, from 10.296 million in 2019 to 9.660 million in 2024. The party received 33.7 per cent of the vote (compared with 32.2% in 2019), while the Conservative share fell from 43.6 per cent in 2019 to 23.7 per cent in 2024, a drop of 19.9 percentage points. A total of 263 female MPs (40.5%) were elected on 4 July 2024, compared with 220 in 2019. Turnout across the UK was 60.0 per cent, compared with 67.3 per cent in 2019.

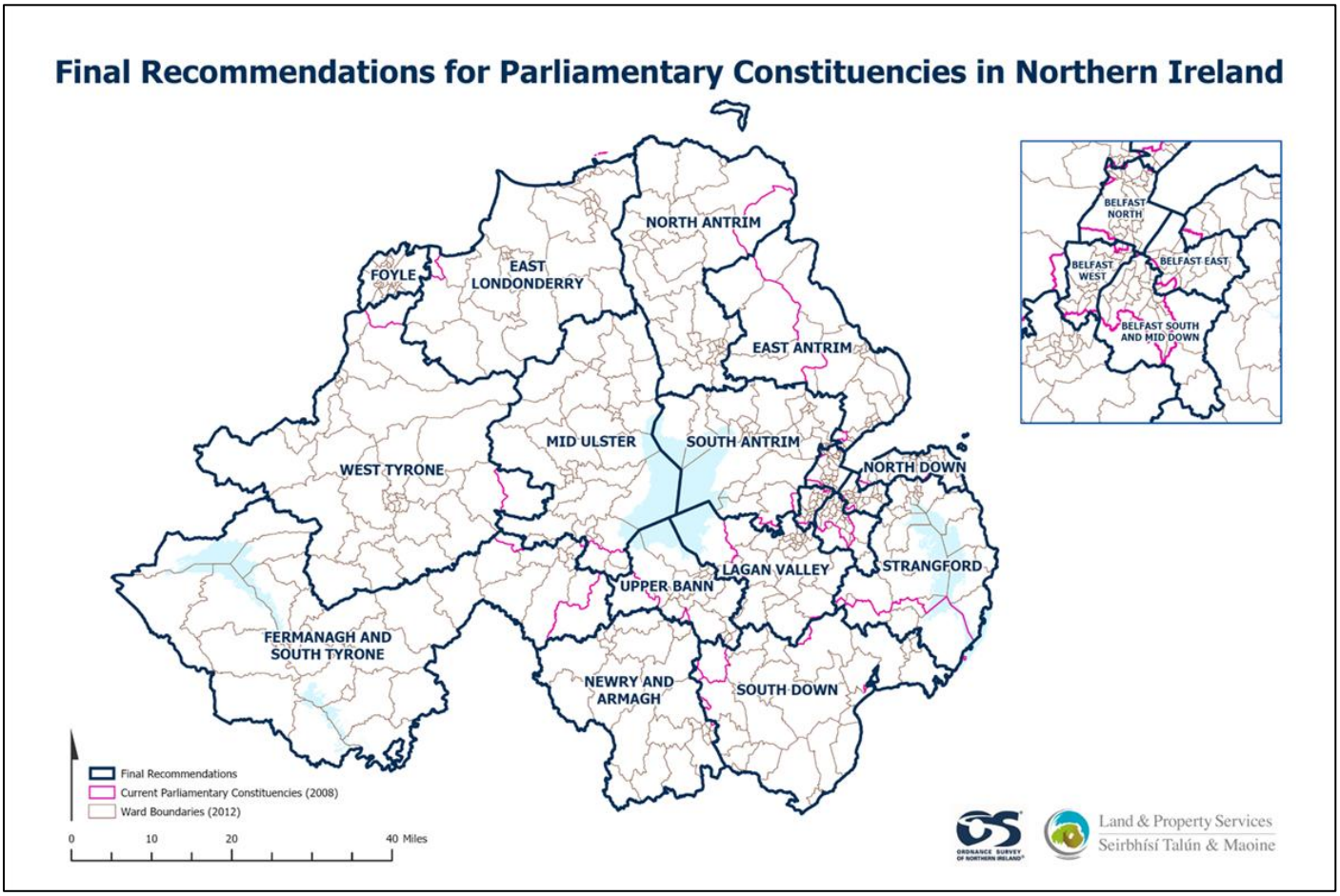
The remainder of this Briefing Note will review the election in Northern Ireland. Unless otherwise stated, all election statistics have been drawn from Electoral Office returns.

2 New Parliamentary Boundaries

In accordance with the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020, the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland reviewed the Westminster parliamentary constituency boundaries in 2023. The review resulted in the revision of all 18 of Northern Ireland's parliamentary constituencies [1], with one being renamed.

[1] The previous Westminster parliamentary boundaries were established in 2008. In 2012, a review of local government boundaries resulted in 56 of the 462 new wards no longer aligning with the existing 2008 Westminster boundaries. Instead, they were split across two or more constituencies. The Boundary Commission review (2023) aligned 46 of these split wards wholly within single constituencies.

The final review, which came into force on 29 November 2023, recommended that the constituency of Belfast South be abolished, with the area to be re-shaped into a new constituency of Belfast South and Mid Down. The changes took effect at the Parliamentary election in July 2024. The changes to the 18 constituencies will also apply to future elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, as Section 33, Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that Assembly Members shall be elected on the basis of the Westminster parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland.



© Crown copyright (2023), reproduced by permission of Land & Property Services, June 2024.

3. The Candidates

A total of 136 candidates stood for the July 2024 election in Northern Ireland, 91 males and 45 females (Table 3.1 overleaf). This compares with 102 in December 2019, representing a rise of one-third (33.3%). The Alliance Party

and SDLP fielded candidates in all 18 constituencies, followed by the UUP (17), DUP (16), TUV and Sinn Féin (both 14). The Green Party were next with 11 candidates, followed by Aontú (10), the Conservative and Unionist Party (5), and the People Before Profit Alliance (3). The Cross-Community Labour Alliance (CCLA) put forward one candidate, and there were 9 Independents.

The number of female candidates rose from 29 in 2019 to 45 in 2024. This resulted in a rise in the proportion of female candidates, from 27 per cent in 2019 to 33 per cent in 2024. Alliance had the highest number of female candidates of the main parties (8), followed by the SDLP (7), and the Green Party plus Aontú (both with 6).

Table 3.1 2024 Election Candidates by Party and Gender

	Male	Female	Total
Alliance Party (APNI)	10	8	18
SDLP	11	7	18
UUP	14	3	17
DUP	13	3	16
TUV – No Sea Border	12	2	14
Sinn Féin	9	5	14
Green	5	6	11
Aontú	4	6	10
Independent	8	1	9
Conservative and Unionist	2	3	5
PBP	2	1	3
CCLA	1	0	1
Total	91	45	136

4. Turnout

Table 4.1 (overleaf) presents the voting statistics for Election 2024. The total eligible electorate was 1,363,961 (compared with 1,293,971 in 2019), an increase of 69,990 (5.4%). The total number of votes polled was 783,909, down from 803,367 in 2019, representing a decrease of 19,458 votes (2.4%)

compared with the December 2019 parliamentary election. The official turnout [2] was 57.5 per cent of the eligible electorate, a decrease of 4.6 percentage points [3] on the December 2019 figure (62.1%).

Table 4.1 2024 Voting Statistics by Constituency

	Eligible Electorate	Votes Polled [4]	% Turnout
Belfast East	72,917	42,890	58.8%
Belfast North	74,240	40,745	54.9%
Belfast South and Mid Down	74,749	43,757	58.5%
Belfast West	75,346	40,003	53.1%
East Antrim	73,302	39,817	54.3%
East Londonderry	75,707	41,430	54.7%
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	77,828	51,340	66.0%
Foyle	73,496	38,765	52.7%
Lagan Valley	82,201	49,243	59.9%
Mid Ulster	74,000	45,691	61.7%
Newry & Armagh	78,244	46,236	59.1%
North Antrim	74,697	41,361	55.4%
North Down	73,885	43,464	58.8%
South Antrim	77,058	43,089	55.9%
South Down	76,248	45,472	59.6%
Strangford	74,525	39,046	52.4%
Upper Bann	81,249	47,595	58.6%
West Tyrone	74,269	43,965	59.2%
Northern Ireland	1,363,961	783,909	57.5%

Table 4.2 (below) shows that, compared with 2019, turnout fell in all 18 constituencies, with the largest percentage drops recorded in Belfast North (13.5%), Foyle (11.0%) and Belfast South and Mid Down (9.4%). The highest

[2] Turnout is calculated by taking the total number of votes cast (including invalid votes) and dividing by the eligible electorate.
[3] Percentage points refer to the difference between two percentages, e.g. the difference between 40% and 50% is 10 percentage points.
[4] Votes polled includes invalid votes.

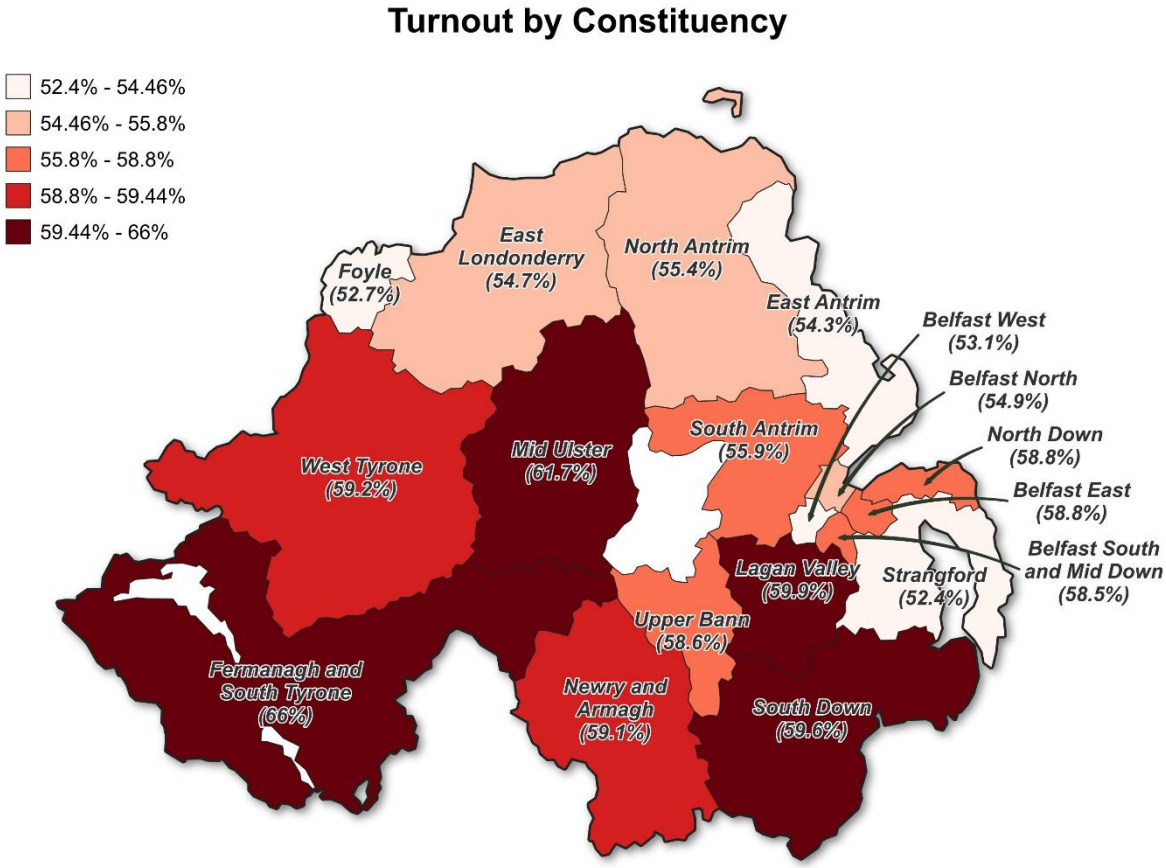
turnouts were in Fermanagh and South Tyrone (66.0%), followed by Mid Ulster (61.7%) and Lagan Valley (59.9%).

Table 4.2 Turnout in Westminster Elections 2010 – 2024

	2010	2015	2017	2019	2024	Diff 2019-24
Constituency	%	%	%	%	%	(percent pts)
Belfast East	58.7	63.1	67.7	64.3	58.8	- 5.5
Belfast North	56.8	59.6	67.6	68.4	54.9	-13.5
Belfast South and Mid Down	57.7	60.3	66.3	67.9	58.5	- 9.4
Belfast West	54.9	56.8	65.4	59.4	53.1	- 6.3
East Antrim	50.1	53.6	60.8	57.7	54.3	- 3.4
East Londonderry	55.5	52.2	61.6	57.0	54.7	- 2.3
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	69.3	73.0	76.1	70.1	66.0	- 4.1
Foyle	58.0	53.6	65.6	63.7	52.7	-11.0
Lagan Valley	56.2	56.2	62.2	60.2	59.9	- 0.3
Mid Ulster	63.7	60.9	68.6	63.8	61.7	- 2.1
Newry and Armagh	60.9	64.8	68.9	62.9	59.1	- 3.8
North Antrim	58.1	55.5	64.2	57.5	55.4	- 2.1
North Down	55.2	56.1	61.0	60.9	58.8	- 2.1
South Antrim	54.2	54.5	63.4	60.2	55.9	-4 .3
South Down	60.5	57.2	67.5	63.1	59.6	- 3.5
Strangford	53.9	53.1	60.4	56.3	52.4	- 3.9
Upper Bann	55.8	59.3	64.2	60.7	58.6	- 2.1
West Tyrone	61.5	61.1	68.2	62.4	59.2	- 3.2
Northern Ireland	57.8	58.4	65.6	62.1	57.5	- 4.6

During the past five elections, turnout has fluctuated between a peak of 65.6 per cent in 2017 and a low of 57.5 per cent in 2024. Map 4.1 (below) illustrates turnout by constituency, with the darker colours reflecting higher turnout. As in previous elections, turnout was higher in the West and South and somewhat lower in the North and East.

Map 4.1 Turnout (%) by Constituency, July 2024



Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0

5 Overall Results

Tables 5.1 and 5.2, plus Fig 5.1, present the results of the 2024 general election in Northern Ireland. Overall, there was a marked decline in support for the DUP, with the loss of three seats, and a rise in the number of votes cast for Sinn Féin, who retained their seven seats from 2019. In contrast to the last Westminster election, Alliance and the SDLP, while retaining their seats, both saw a fall in vote share. Both the UUP and TUV – No Sea Border gained a seat from the DUP.

Four seats changed hands in the election: North Antrim, South Antrim, Lagan Valley and North Down. The DUP finished the election with 5 seats, while Sinn Féin remained unchanged with 7 seats. Alliance remained on one seat (with

the loss of North Down compensated by the gain of Lagan Valley) and the SDLP retained control of Belfast South and Mid Down and Foyle. TUV – No Sea Border gained North Antrin at the expense of the DUP, and Alec Easton (Independent) won North Down from Alliance. For the second election in a row there are nine seats at Westminster held by nationalist parties, compared with eight for unionists.

Table 5.1 reveals that, of the five main parties, Sinn Féin and the UUP were the only ones to experience an increase in vote share (compared with 2019]. The DUP saw a drop of 8.5 percentage points (pps.) in their share of the vote. There were also falls for the SDLP (3.8 pps.) and Alliance (1.8 pps.). The TUV – No Sea Border, who did not stand in 2019, received 6.2 per cent of votes cast. Two of the smaller parties, the Green Party and People Before Profit (PBP) saw a modest increase in vote share (0.9 pps. and 0.2 pp. respectively).

Table 5.1 Westminster Election 2024 – Overall Results

Party	Seats	+/-	Valid Votes	Vote Share (%)	2019-24 +/- (pp)
Sinn Féin	7	0	210,891	27.0	+ 4.2
DUP	5	- 3	172,058	22.1	- 8.5
Alliance Party	1	0	117,191	15.0	- 1.8
UUP	1	1	94,779	12.1	+ 0.5
SDLP	2	0	86,861	11.1	- 3.8
TUV – No Sea Border	1	1	48,685	6.2	+ 6.2
Independents	1	1	23,648	3.0	+ 2.8
Green	0	0	8,692	1.1	+ 0.9
PBP	0	0	8,438	1.1	+ 0.2
Aontú	0	0	7,466	1.0	- 0.2
Others	0	0	1,131	0.2	- 0.5

Fig 5.1: Constituency Results by Party

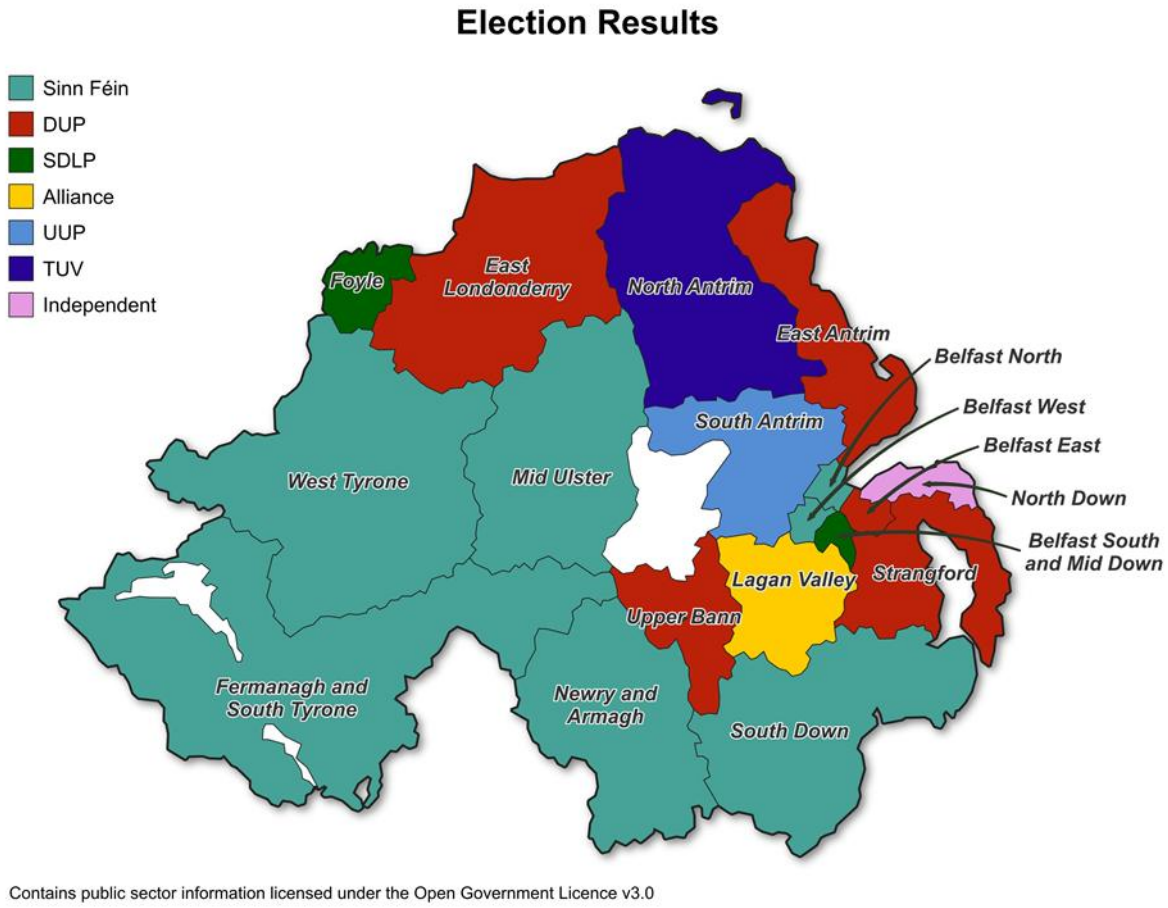


Table 5.2 shows the votes obtained by the main parties in 2019 and 2024. In spite of the smaller turnout, two of the five main parties – Sinn Féin and the UUP – recorded an increase in votes cast , while the other three parties (DUP, SDLP and Alliance) saw their vote decline. In the case of the DUP, the fall was notable, with the loss of 72,070 votes from 2019, representing a decrease of 29.5 per cent. A fall of similar magnitude was experienced by the SDLP (31,876, 26.8%). For Alliance, the drop in support was less precipitous (16,924 or 12.6%).

In terms of votes cast, the largest beneficiary was Sinn Féin, who captured 210,891 votes, compared with 181,853 in 2019, a rise of 16 per cent (see Table 5.2). The UUP had a modest gain of 1,656 votes compared with their 2019

performance. The TUV – No Sea Border, who did not field any candidates in 2019, obtained 48,685 votes.

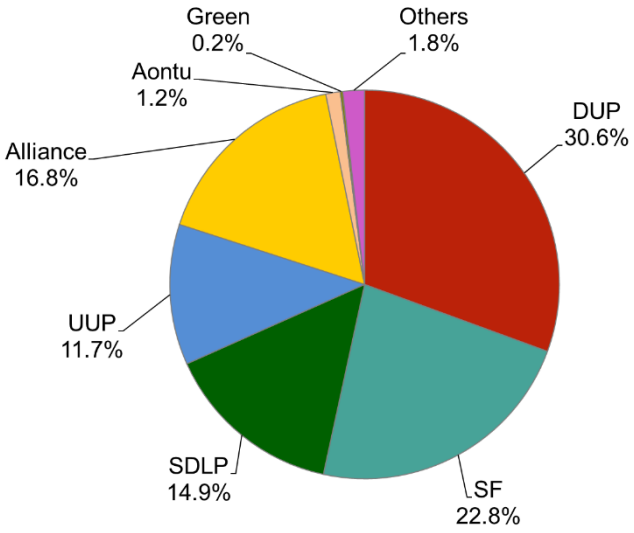
Table 5.2 Valid Votes by Party – Comparison with 2019

	2019	2024	Difference	% change
Sinn Féin	181,853	210,891	29,038	16.0
DUP	244,128	172,058	-72,070	-29.5
Alliance Party	134,115	117,191	-16,924	-12.6
UUP	93,123	94,779	1,656	1.8
SDLP	118,737	86,861	-31,876	-26.8
TUV – No Sea Border		48,685		
Green	1,996	8,692	6,696	335.5
PBP	7,526	8,438	912	12.1
Aontú	9,814	7,466	-2,348	-23.9
Independent/Others	7,743	24,779	17,036	220.0
Totals	**799,035**	**779,840**	**-19,195**	

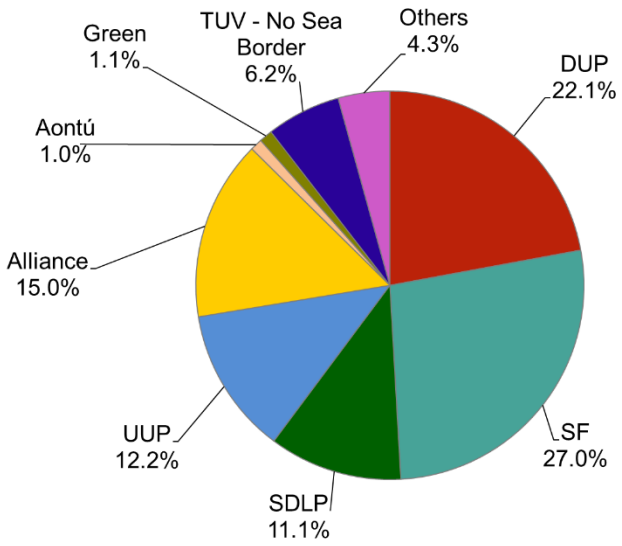
6 Individual Party Performance

This section analyses the performance of the main political parties. While the emphasis is on comparisons between 2019 and 2024, Tables 6.1 and 6.2 also contain data on the last five Westminster elections.

2019 Share of Vote (NI)



2024 Share of Vote (NI)



The **Democratic Unionist Party** (5 seats) returned to Westminster with three fewer seats than before, having lost North Antrim to the TUV – No Sea Border, South Antrim to the UUP, and Lagan Valley to Alliance. The party held Belfast East with a reduced share of the vote. Overall, the party's share of the vote declined by 8.5 percentage points, from 30.6% in 2019 to 22.1% in 2024 (Table 6.2).

Table 6.1 Seats by Party

	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019	2024
Sinn Féin	5	5	4	7	7	7
DUP	9	8	8	10	8	5
SDLP	3	3	3		2	2
UUP	1		2			1
Alliance		1			1	1
TUV – No Sea Border						1
Independent/Others		1	1	1		1
Northern Ireland	18	18	18	18	18	18

Table 6.2 Share of Votes by Main Parties, 2010 - 2024

	2010 %	2015 %	2017 %	2019 %	2024 %	2019 – 24 (+/- pp.)
Sinn Féin	25.5	24.5	29.4	22.8	27.0	4.2
DUP	25.0	25.7	36.0	30.6	22.1	-8.5
Alliance	6.3	8.6	7.9	16.8	15.0	-1.8
UUP	15.2	16.0	10.3	11.7	12.2	0.5
SDLP	16.5	13.9	11.7	14.9	11.1	-3.8
Independent/Others	11.5	11.3	4.7	3.2	12.6	9.4
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sinn Féin finished the election with seven seats, the same as in 2019. The party's overall share of the vote rose by 4.2 percentage points, from 22.8 per cent in 2019 to 27 per cent in 2024.

Based on votes cast, **Alliance** maintained their position as the third largest party in 2024. However, they made no net gains in the election, as the loss of Belfast East to the DUP was compensated for by the gain of Lagan Valley from the same party. Compared with 2019, their vote share fell by 1.8 percentage points.

The **SDLP** retained their two seats (Belfast South and Foyle) The party's overall share of the vote fell by 3.8 percentage points, from 14.9 per cent in 2019 to 11.1 per cent in 2024.

The **UUP** gained one seat (South Antrim) from the DUP, and its vote share improved from 11.7 per cent to 12.2 per cent, a rise of 0.5 percentage points.

The **TUV – No Sea Border** topped the poll in North Antrim, at the expense of the DUP. The party fielded candidates in 14 of the 18 constituencies, and achieved a total of 48,685 votes, representing 6.2 per cent of all votes cast. They did not contest the 2019 election.

The **Green Party** were represented in 11 constituencies, and ended with 8,692 votes (1.1%). **Aontú**, who fielded candidates in ten constituencies, obtained a total of 7,466 votes (1.0%). People Before Profit (**PBP**) ran in three constituencies (Belfast North, Belfast West, and Foyle), harvesting 8,438 votes overall (1.1%).

7 Women in the 2024 Westminster Election (NI)

There were 45 female candidates (33%) and a total of five female MPs (27.7%) were elected from Northern Ireland on 4 July 2024 (Table 7.1). Sinn Féin has two female Members, with one each from the DUP, Alliance and SDLP.

Table 7.1 Seats by Party and Gender

Party	Male	Female	Total
Sinn Féin	5	2	7
DUP	4	1	5
Alliance		1	1
UUP	1		1
SDLP	1	1	2
TUV – No Sea Border	1		1
Independent	1		1
Totals	**14**	**5**	**18**

The Northern Ireland figure of 27.8 per cent exceeds Dáil Éireann, where 22.5 per cent of TDs are female (February 2020 election). Based on the July 2024 election, the Scottish Parliament has the highest percentage of female representatives (46%), followed by the National Assembly of Wales (43%) and the House of Commons (41%).

8 Summary

The Westminster general election of 4 July 2024 resulted in a large, overall majority for the Labour party. In Northern Ireland, four seats changed hands, namely: North and South Antrim, Lagan Valley and North Down. In terms of seats won, the UUP, TUV – No Sea Border, and an Independent were the main beneficiaries of the election, with the gain of one seat each. Three of the other main parties (Sinn Féin, Alliance, and SDLP) held onto the seats they won in 2019 with varying margins. The DUP was the main loser, with the loss of three seats, the fall in support evidenced by a drop of 72,070 votes and a smaller vote share (22.1%). Sinn Féin finished the election as the largest party, with seven out of the 18 seats.

Annex A. No. of Valid Votes by Party and Constituency

	Sinn Féin	DUP	Alliance	UUP	SDLP	TUV	Green	PBP	Aontú	Indep	Others	Totals
Belfast East		19,894	17,218	1,818	619	1,918	1,077			162		42,706
Belfast North	17,674	12,062	4,274		1,413	2,877	1,206	946				40,452
Belfast South and Mid Down		6,859	8,839	2,653	21,345	2,218	1,577					43,491
Belfast West	21,009	4,304	1,077	461	4,318	2,010	451	5,048	904	161		39,743
East Antrim	2,986	11,462	10,156	9,476	892	4,135	568					39,675
East Londonderry	11,327	11,506	3,734	3,412	5,260	4,363	445		1,043		187	41,277
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	24,844		2,420	20,273	2,386				529		624	51,076
Foyle	11,481	3,915	1,268	1,422	15,647			2,444	662	1,519		38,358
Lagan Valley		15,659	18,618	11,157	1,028	2,186	433					49,081
Mid Ulster	24,085	9,162	2,001	2,269	3,722	2,978			1,047	181		45,445
Newry & Armagh	22,299	5,900	2,692	3,175	6,806	4,099			888		83	45,942
North Antrim	7,714	11,192	4,488	3,901	1,661	11,642			451	136		41,185
North Down			13,608	6,754	657		1,247			21,030		43,296
South Antrim	8,034	8,799	4,574	16,311	1,589	2,693	541		367			42,908
South Down	19,698	7,349	3,187	1,411	10,418	1,893	444		797	46		45,243
Strangford	2,793	15,559	10,428	3,941	1,783	3,143	703			413	146	38,909
Upper Bann	14,236	21,642	6,322	3,662	1,496							47,358
West Tyrone	22,711	6,794	2,287	2,683	5,821	2,530			778		91	43,695
Northern Ireland	**210,891**	**172,058**	**117,191**	**94,779**	**86,861**	**48,685**	**8,692**	**8,438**	**7,466**	**23,648**	**1,131**	**779,840**

Annex B. Share of Vote (%) by Party and Constituency

	Sinn Féin	DUP	Alliance	UUP	SDLP	TUV	Green	PBP	Aontú	Indep	Others	Totals
Belfast East	0.0	46.6	40.3	4.3	1.4	4.5	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	100.0
Belfast North	43.7	29.8	10.6	0.0	3.5	7.1	3.0	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Belfast South and Mid Down	0.0	15.8	20.3	6.1	49.1	5.1	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Belfast West	52.9	10.8	2.7	1.2	10.9	5.1	1.1	12.7	2.3	0.4	0.0	100.0
East Antrim	7.5	28.9	25.6	23.9	2.2	10.4	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
East Londonderry	27.4	27.9	9.0	8.3	12.7	10.6	1.1	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.5	100.0
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	48.6	0.0	4.7	39.7	4.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.2	100.0
Foyle	29.9	10.2	3.3	3.7	40.8	0.0	0.0	6.4	1.7	4.0	0.0	100.0
Lagan Valley	0.0	31.9	37.9	22.7	2.1	4.5	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Mid Ulster	53.0	20.2	4.4	5.0	8.2	6.6	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.4	0.0	100.0
Newry & Armagh	48.5	12.8	5.9	6.9	14.8	8.9	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.2	100.0
North Antrim	18.7	27.2	10.9	9.5	4.0	28.3	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.3	0.0	100.0
North Down	0.0	0.0	31.4	15.6	1.5	0.0	2.9	0.0	0.0	48.6	0.0	100.0
South Antrim	18.7	20.5	10.7	38.0	3.7	6.3	1.3	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	100.0
South Down	43.5	16.2	7.0	3.1	23.0	4.2	1.0	0.0	1.8	0.1	0.0	100.0
Strangford	7.2	40.0	26.8	10.1	4.6	8.1	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.4	100.0
Upper Bann	30.1	45.7	13.3	7.7	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
West Tyrone	52.0	15.5	5.2	6.1	13.3	5.8	0.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.2	100.0
Northern Ireland	**27.0**	**22.1**	**15.0**	**12.2**	**11.1**	**6.2**	**1.1**	**1.1**	**1.0**	**3.0**	**0.1**	**100.0**