

Elections in Northern Ireland - Dr David McCann

KEY:

DMcC: Dr David McCann

Most recent elections

DMcC: So thanks very much. This has been a great year for elections, but like buses, you're waiting for one and then three, turn up all at once.

As the South will go to the polls today. Sorry - will formally start their campaign for the 29th of November. So today I just thought we're going to look at elections. I'm sorry. Today we're just going to look at elections in Northern Ireland, and we've had quite a few of them, oh, there we go.

And we've had quite a few of them over the past number of years. We've had 12 elections or referendums since 2014. So that's quite a lot. Over the past decade, great for me, but not terribly great for the governance of Northern Ireland or for the governance of the United Kingdom with the political instability that we've had over the past decade.

Twelve elections and one referendum. So, of course we had the 2015 general election that, for those who have forgotten, was the election where David Cameron was the first Conservative leader in 23 years to lead the Conservatives to a majority win.

And he looked like he was in power for the foreseeable future. And of course, 13 months later, his premiership ended over the EU referendum. Then of course, in 2017, we had a general election then as well. We had 2019, a general election as well. And then 2024, of course, on July the fourth of this year the most recent one.

There's been a lot of political instability during that period, and it's been an incredibly busy decade, even at a UK level before you even get down to kind of the Northern Ireland level. It's been an incredibly busy political decade.

So four elections in nine years is an awful lot to go through. And it's also created a lot of churn in our local politics, as well as party fortunes have risen, fallen, and then risen again.

Voter turnout

DMcC: Okay, so let's go back to the basics then of what happened on July the fourth. Bit of a depressing turnout - 57%. It's the lowest in the history of Northern Ireland since the state was founded in 1921, 57% is the lowest. We've never been lower at a general election than we were on July the fourth. I'm going to take you through postal voting statistics and things like that as well, but it was down from the 62% that we had in 2019.

Just to remind you, in 2019, Northern Ireland had the lowest voter turn out at the 2019 general election of anywhere in the United Kingdom.

So the average turnout across the UK was about 68%. We were at just below 62, and again, that was the lowest in the UK. I think there was somewhere, I think Wales maybe, pipped us to the post this time for the lowest, but we were definitely the second lowest in 2024, this year. So 57%.

A lot of people opting not to take part in this year's general election. Lowest turnout in our history. The lowest turnout, sorry, that's a typo there, I'll fix that. That was 2010, which was just under 58%.

This is reflective of basically the near certain outcome that we had across the water. Again, there was no sense that Northern Ireland was going to play a balance of power role. There was no sense really that Northern Ireland MPs were going to have a pivotal role on political developments.

You also had the other thing of that Northern Ireland politics, it just become a bit boring by July. In February, this place got back up and running, the Executive was stable, whereas it's important to remember, that in 2017 and 2019, the two previous general elections, Stormont was down in both instances. So this didn't exist in 2024.

Again, the rationale to get out and vote just wasn't as strong as it once was. You also had the narrative of it being a boring campaign. This was certainly the consensus in the media. This wasn't one that I ever shared or argued for. I don't think there is such a thing as a boring election campaign but there was the sense that this was a boring campaign, okay? And again, fairly or unfairly (in my view, unfairly) that this was a boring campaign that didn't have any overarching narrative.

If you go back to 2019, remember we were coming to the tail end of three years of Stormont being down. You had the nurses strike, you had different things going on. And again, there was a sense because we were just coming out of the DUP Confidence and Supply agreement, that Northern Ireland with Brexit needed to express a view. Go back to 2017 where again, Stormont was down, and then of course, Northern Ireland did end up playing a very pivotal, unexpectedly pivotal role, of course in the formation of the Conservative minority government as well. So some depressing statistics there.

Just to carry on from what Clare I know was telling you before turnout was low, the lowest in our history of just over 57%. And again, that other absolute, the other thing that a lot of people hung their hat on for the low turnout, and again, a lot of politicians have kind of confirmed this to me, was literally the time of year it was held.

There were a lot of people just genuinely away on holiday. There were people who, again, from their registers they knew were reliable voters in any other circumstance, but sadly, getting their sun cream took priority over getting a postal vote for them. And many people were away on holiday.

Because of course, as I don't need to tell anyone in this room, the English school holidays fall a lot different than they do here. Whilst teachers were hard at work over in England, still teaching students on July the fourth. Over here, of course, we're all sunning ourselves, away on our holidays.

So, on July the fourth, that has been reported back as a big reason for some of the drop off in turnout but I think some of these media narratives are incredibly important as well.

Here's a wee table I put together from after the general election results. You can see turnout figures there, and you see some of the changes in constituency. So you can see how they kind of mapped across the place. Again, not massively surprising variations.

Lagan Valley is the one that holds up the best - they were down just under 0.3 of a percentage point, which is very good. Their turn out broadly held on trend. But you can see everywhere else. There were massive drops in my own constituency of North Belfast - down nearly 10 points from 2019. You can see obviously Foyle as well had a massive drop in turnout down 11 points. In South Belfast there was an incredibly big drop there as well - you can see down also nine points as well.

So Belfast, you can see, has a massive drop in its turnout. Out west, it's not as bad. You can see places like Mid Ulster, which is down just about two points. North Antrim was down just over two points. But you can see how turnout really fluctuated across Northern Ireland.

Only two constituencies, I'm right in saying this? It is only two, isn't it? Yes, it is - only two constituencies had turnouts above 60%. And of course, that was out west in Mid Ulster, and then of course Fermanagh and South Tyrone, which typically does lead Northern Ireland in its turnout.

And of course, the nature of that is the closeness of the result in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. Whilst this time it wasn't actually that close, Fermanagh and South Tyrone now has Pat Cullen who has a bigger majority than Colum Eastwood in the House of Commons.

Believe it or not it did have the narrative of being close. And the other thing, just to speak a wee bit about this, we did have boundary changes, of course, this time.

Whilst they were around the margins and they, apart from South Belfast, and Mid Down, they didn't dramatically alter the demographic of constituencies, it is worth noting that there was actually some confusion - I was actually surprised after doing a number of Red Lines episodes, the amount of questions we would get about, why was I voting in South Down last time and now I'm voting in Strangford? Why am I voting in East Antrim now when I was North Antrim all this time?

So there was some degree of confusion among some people. I know there were quite a number of people who, there was actually a story about someone who was voting in West Belfast - they thought there were going to be voting for Philip Brett.

Why? Because they've been voting in North Belfast all their lives, and they were moved into West Belfast and they ended up with Brian Kingston, and of course Paul Maskey there as well. They didn't realise they'd been moved into West Belfast as well. So boundary changes are an important thing to note here. There was one constituency that we can point to that boundary changes did, I think, actually have an impact on the result, and that was East Londonderry. Of course, Gregory Campbell held that seat by a mere 179 votes. So the small changes that were done to that constituency, we can say that because a few hundred votes were moved out, we can say that that did have an impact.

But everywhere else it was broadly the same. Lagan Valley, as I was saying earlier, was the only one that broadly held its turnout. That's not totally a surprise for reasons we all know, that we don't need to dwell massively on.

Of course, the former seat of Jeffrey Donaldson, and, of course, Alliance were making a big push to take that seat, and it was seen as incredibly competitive as well. So you can see some of those turnouts as well.

Some of the lower turnouts, just to make some note of them. You can see places like Strangford, not a surprise. Strangford typically does have the lowest turnout across Northern Ireland. Typically, the lowest turnouts are in the eastern part of Northern Ireland.

So the more Unionist majority constituencies typically have the lower turnout. That was shown in the local government election, that was also shown in the Assembly election. Turnout is typically highest in the west.

It is typically highest in places where, to put it bluntly, there is a Nationalist majority. And that is largely proven by Sinn Féin effectively being able to get its vote out.

And I'll breakdown the overall results just to show what a good day Sinn Féin really had on July the fourth.

They were the star performers of that general election. They were the only party that could come away saying that they had got more votes. They had held their seats by greatly increased majorities.

Performance of Sinn Féin

DMcC: But those are basically the broad turnout figures and this leads me to Sinn Féin, and you see a very happy Pat Cullen in there, after winning Fermanagh and South Tyrone by more than 4,000 votes, which when you consider, Fermanagh and South Tyrone was decided by as much as four votes in 2010, it was decided by 52 votes in 2019, was a massive, massive margin.

So Sinn Féin had the strongest day of all the parties. You should have no question about it, July the fourth was definitely Sinn Féin's day. They polled 27% of the vote, which was one of Sinn Féin's, strongest vote shares.

It is important to caveat and note that Sinn Féin, even though this wasn't their best vote share, Sinn Féin did not run in every constituency across Northern Ireland.

So that 27% vote share, if they had have stood across Northern Ireland, they probably would've repeated their Assembly election result of about 29% of the vote, or 29 to 30% of the vote. So that 27%, it does seem a wee bit low, but it masked the fact that they didn't run in every seat.

They increased majorities in all seven of the seats that they held. So that was incredibly important. So you think about places like Fermanagh and South Throne, but also places like North Belfast as well. South Down, which Chris Hazzard only very narrowly held onto - it was one of the most marginal seats in Northern Ireland. He only narrowly held it in 2019. Again, won it quite handily. Chris Hazzard beat the SDLP in that constituency by more than 15 points. So it wasn't even close.

John Finucane as well - North Belfast massively increased his majority, had a very decisive win over the DUP in that constituency as well.

And then this is before you get back to Sinn Féin and out west Sinn Féin literally just had blowout wins. They were getting north of 50% of the vote and they had an incredibly good day.

Sinn Féin also came very close to gaining East Derry, which again, was the second safest DUP seat in Northern Ireland. Gregory Campbell had a majority of over nine and a half thousand votes going into that.

And of course, Kathleen McGurk, important to note, it wasn't Caoimhe Archibald as the candidate, it was Kathleen McGurk who's a councillor in East Derry. And the reason why I mention that is, that we forget sometimes in the kind of the Belfast Media League how big the western constituencies are, just in terms of size. So it's actually quite extraordinary that someone like Kathleen McGurk, who was a councillor in one part of that constituency, was able to run a long-term MP, Gregory Campbell, who'd been the MP since 2001, to within 179 votes.

Sinn Féin also had a decent day in the office in Foyle. They dramatically cut Colum Eastwood's majority, they more than halved it up in Foyle.

So again, very strong results, for Sinn Féin. Not their best vote share ever, that came in 2017 when the party did get around 29% of the vote. But once again, that has to be caveated with the fact that they didn't stand in every constituency.

The other thing to point out is that this came not long after Sinn Féin had a disappointing local government election in the Irish Republic.

And again, there was talk about the one thing that could wrongfoot Sinn Féin's campaign was that disappointing result. Sinn Féin's lead had evaporated in the Republic as well, just to keep that in mind as well. So their lead had evaporated as well, but again, this didn't harm them north of the border.

They had an incredibly strong result. And again, it was seen as a validation for Michelle O'Neill as well as First Minister. So they definitely had the best day out of all the parties.

Performance of DUP

DMcC: The DUP have not been able to catch a break since 2021. Find me a winning year for the DUP since then... since they blasted Arlene Foster out of office back in April 2021, they've literally been on the back foot in nearly every year.

The tragedy for them this year was that it did seem that they were just about getting their act together. They didn't have a bad local government election in 2023. Jeffrey Donaldson, of course, started 2024 with that big speech in the House of Commons attacking his rivals. He stared down his rivals internally within the DUP, led them back into government, and it looked like it was all plain sailing for them until Good Friday of this year, where we all kind of woke up to a massive political shock. The biggest political scandal, certainly in Northern Ireland history.

So again, the DUP had an incredibly difficult year, but where have they fallen from? The DUP had been the largest party at Westminster since 2005. So they have held that overall, not just within Unionism.

The DUP in this election fell back to where they were in 2001. So that was that really close election, for anyone who's got memory of it between the Ulster Unionists and the DUP where

the two of them fought it out very, very, very aggressively in a number of seats. The Ulster Unionists just came out on top in that election, but not by much.

The DUP had all the momentum. This is where the DUP ironically flipped places like East Derry. They came within just a few votes of winning East Antrim and places like that. So they gained places like North Belfast as well in 2001. So the DUP have fallen back to where they were then.

So remember the 2005 blowout, where the DUP pretty much wiped out the Ulster Unionist Party, the DUP are now back below that as well. So they lost three seats overall. Okay. And again, they're down to five seats, so they've lost three.

So they definitely lost a lot of political real estate and let's just go through them in bits of significance.

I'm going to start with North Antrim, which was for me the story of the election - the 54 year Paisley dynasty. I tried to go back and look for some research whenever we were doing the election programme. Has there ever been a longer family dynasty in modern British political history? And I can't actually come across one, I can't find one. Hilary Armstrong, her father was an MP, but they did 46 years, so the Paisley dynasty certainly surpasses that.

But in modern British political history, I can't think of anywhere where a family has literally held a seat for that long North Antrim was the safest DUP seat. Going into this election Ian Paisley was defending a majority of north of 12,000 votes on paper. This should never have even been in contention. It was the first ever seat to go to the DUP in 1970, it was a seat that had always been held by a Paisley since then, and again, it just should never have been in doubt, but of course they lost it by 450 votes to the TUV.

So Jim Allister, I think, joins Terence O'Neill as the only person to ever beat Paisley in a Northern Ireland head-to-head contest, I think Terence O'Neill, when he beat him in Bannside in 1969, was the only other time I could go back and find a Paisley losing an election in North Antrim.

So the Paisley Dynasty ended, 450 votes. We've now got the TUV on the benches of the House of Commons as well, which I'll get into a wee bit later.

Another heavy defeat was South Antrim. So Robin Swann winning South Antrim - it wasn't the surprise of him winning South Antrim, it was the fact that he won it by the margin that he did. South Antrim is the typical Unionist bellwether seat.

So if the DUP have a good day, they typically win that seat. If the DUP of a bad day, they typically lose that seat. So this seat has never been won by more than 3,500 in the 21st century, but Swann took it by 7,000 votes. So it was a massive blowout win for Robin Swann, it wasn't even close.

The incumbent, Paul Girvan, lost the seat quite handily. And Robin Swann again, just had a massive swing to him as well.

Then last, but not least, you have Lagan Valley in there as well. A seat that has always been in Unionist hands. Of course, Jeffrey Donaldson was the longest serving MP from Northern Ireland, elected in 1997.

We were anticipating he was going to run again in this election and again, we don't need to canvas the reasons why he's not. But Lagan Valley, again, a massively safe seat for the DUP.

So Sorcha Eastwood did poll a strong result in 2019. but again, the math to get a win was just incredibly difficult for her but she managed to circumvent that and overcome that.

And the DUP's Jonathan Buckley, who you can see here in the corner, lost the seat to Sorcha Eastwood, so it was a gain for the Alliance Party, and this was a very major defeat, not just for the DUP, but also for wider unionism not holding that seat.

This was a seat of two former unionist leaders, don't forget, Jeffrey Donaldson and Jim Molyneux, so the fact that they've lost that seat is a big setback as well. It wasn't all down for them - they did have some bright spots in some places.

First thing, the constituency we're in right now, East Belfast, Gavin Robinson held the seat. He didn't just hold it - he marginally increased his majority over Naomi Long and four times in a row now he's beaten Naomi Long.

So I think this is probably the end of the Long-Robinson battles. I think that Gavin, now, has probably decisively seen that off now. If Naomi couldn't do it this year, then you really have to ask 'when can she?'. So that was a positive - the DUP held their leader. Upper Bann as well - important context, of course, was the TUV did not stand in Upper Bann because of Carla's position on the Protocol.

But she did win with an increased majority in that seat as well. So, again, those were two bright spots for the Party in that election.

The other near misses that they had - I was telling you about East Derry with Gregory Campbell, 179 votes, but also East Antrim, Sammy Wilson was ran close. It was an interesting seat. There were three candidates. The top three candidates were within 1800 votes of each other. So that is going to be a real cracking three-way marginal seat contest next time.

The other reason to bring up East Derry and East Antrim, for the very simple reason, it's going to be incredibly unlikely, I would imagine, that in 2028 or 2029 that Sammy Wilson or Gregory Campbell will run again.

Okay? So I think those will be two seats to watch. Sinn Féin will throw everything at winning East Derry, not just the second Assembly seat in 2027, but also the parliamentary seat. And then East Antrim, you're going to have Alliance and the Ulster Unionists really throwing everything at winning that seat as well.

So the DUP definitely had a bad day at the office overall, but there were some bright spots.

Performance of Alliance Party

DMcC: The Alliance Party is a very interesting party in this as well. So they had a really mixed bag, and this really kind of just confirmed that the Alliance surge, as we've known it, certainly Alliance Surge 1.0 is over - their vote share was down, their vote went backwards in a number of constituencies.

Yes, they gained Lagan Valley, which was an impressive, impressive win by Sorcha Eastwood, no question about that. But they lost North Down by a pretty decisive margin. Stephen Farry's vote fell from 45% to 31%. So there's no other way of bandaging that up - it was a comprehensive defeat.

It is worth noting that even when Naomi Long lost East Belfast in 2015, Alliance were able to kind of comfort themselves that, whilst yes, they lost it, her vote share did increase in 2015.

Stephen Farry can't really say any of that - it was a decisive rejection and also there were people who would have voted for the Alliance Party in 2019 that had clearly gone over to Alex Easton - they wanted to reverse the transaction that they had made in 2019.

And this continues one of my statistics is that Alliance have never re-elected an MP -they've always elected one, but they've always been one term wonders - they've never won a second term. So Sorcha Eastwood will not want to continue that trend or tradition of being a one term wonder.

And of course, Stephen Farry has gone off to bigger, better things at some leading higher education institutions.

So lost North Down by a big margin, the Party failed to make in-roads elsewhere, and that is the other kind of critical problem for them going into the next Assembly election.

So, Alliance have never lost an Assembly seat in the history of Northern Ireland. Indeed with the very sad news yesterday of Anna Lo's passing - she was actually the first gain for the Party in its modern history when she took South Belfast in 2007.

But the Party has never lost an Assembly seat. So they've held what they've had since 1998, and of course, they had that big explosion in seats in 2022. Now they've gained them, they have to defend them, and that is going to be an issue for the Alliance Party going in and the Westminster election shows that North Antrim, South Down will be under threat.

Upper Bann will also be under threat. So their new deputy leader, Eoin Tennyson - Sinn Féin will be licking their lips at that seat as well, trying to make a gain there. But there are three or four seats that are going to be incredibly vulnerable for the Alliance Party to hold, and they can't afford a big swing away.

So they took 13.5% of the first preference vote in that election - if they dip down to 12 or 11.5, some seats will fall. There's no question about it.

So Alliance had a very much a mixed bag as they failed to make in-roads. And also worth noting, even in places where they increased their vote, places like East Antrim, they only just marginally increased their vote. They were up like half a point in those seats. So even the places they increased their vote, they didn't increase it by much.

And again, outside of Lagan Valley, there really wasn't anything else to write home about for the party.

So certainly this iteration of the Alliance surge is over and, again, it remains to be seen whether Alliance can continue that trajectory going forward.

Performance of the Ulster Unionist Party

DMcC: Now what about the Ulster Unionist Party? Some positive news, although the Ulster Unionist Party didn't see the election this way - they're back on the benches of the House of Commons for the first time since 2017.

So South Antrim was a real success for the Party. Doug Beattie, I think, deserves a lot of credit. This was his idea to move Robin Swann into East Antrim and remember, Robin was not having, I think, his second iteration as Health Minister, all four months that he did in the job, was not as much of a success.

I think people were starting to question the pandemic era, where it was seemed like heresy to question Robin Swann. And like, you know, if Robin Swann said 'Lock it down', we just had to go along with it.

That was very different. That was very, very different this year. There was a lot more scrutiny and criticism of Robin Swann, and we saw that in the Executive where Sinn Féin and the DUP refused his requests for funding or for the increases in funding that he said, and they would go on and attack him on TV about it. Which parties tried to do at the start of the last pandemic, if you remember it, boomeranged and backfired on them, and you saw the DUP and Sinn Féin never went back and did that again because of the reaction. It was very different this year.

So I say that and credit to Doug Beattie because Robin Swann did not have the same gloss that he had in 2022. And it was a real success. It was a real success.

He had a comprehensive win in South Antrim. South Antrim, of course, is that bellwether DUP / UUP seat. It was won by Danny Kinahan in 2015 by the Party. They had lost it in 2005. So it's been a real back and forth seat between the DUP and the Ulster Unionist Party.

Another promising seat for them is East Antrim. In East Antrim the Ulster Unionist vote went up substantively, it went up more than seven points. The Alliance Party stagnated in the seat. So John Stewart, the Party's MLA, I think will make a real push to try and take that seat in 2029.

So, if I was looking at a top target gain for the Ulster Unionist Party, it wouldn't be Fermanagh and South Tyrone - it would be East Antrim. That's where they should put their resources into a win next time.

Fermanagh and South Tyrone was a very big disappointment - also, a big disappointment for Unionism.

Unionism is basically, at Westminster level now, shut out of the West - the Western constituencies. Fermanagh and South Tyrone was the last kind of competitive constituency for them, but they lost it by more than 4,000 votes.

It's pretty hard to see a way back for them, for Unionism in general, for the Westminster seat. And that's literally the west gone - all that big Sinn Féin green. With the exception of Foyle up in the northwest, that is likely to continue unabated for the foreseeable future.

So, their local councillor there, who was the daughter of Harry West, Diane Armstrong, she lost the seat by big margin. She's of course now an MLA for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, in the constituency, after Tom Elliot went over to the House of Lords.

So this was a very big disappointment for them. Their vote chart was marginally up but ironically Doug Beattie's biggest success ended up ending his leadership because, of course, he has stood down, as you all know, over the selection of Robin Swann's replacement in North Antrim as well.

So, you know, the Ulster Unionists will always drop the most priceless of vases if you give it to them. So again, Mike Nesbit is now back as the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party. So interesting to see how Robin Swann gets on now as an MP for South Antrim and to see does that actually give them any more presence as well.

So the DUP now have some company on the Unionist side the benches in the House of Commons.

But the other thing just to note about the field within Unionism as well - this is the first time since 1997 that voters in Northern Ireland have sent three Unionist parties to represent them in the House of Commons as well. So that was back when you had Bob McCartney, if anyone remembers him, with the UK Unionists. You had the Ulster Unionists and you had the DUP back then as well. This is the first time since then that we've done this. So the DUP have some friends on the Unionist benches.

Performance of the SDLP

DMcC: So what about the SDLP? Well, they argued that their election was a success.

They kept their two seats, which is true - they went in with two seats, they kept their two seats. However, when you look under the bonnet of that there were swings away in places like Foyle. Colum Eastwood copped an 18 point swing to him in 2019, but he had a 17 point swing away from him in 2024.

So he lost nearly all of his gain. Yes, he was never gonna hold 57% of the vote, but he did have a substantive drop in his vote. His majority went from 17,000 to just over 4,500. So that was a substantive drop.

That was not the case in South Belfast, where Claire Hanna went in with a 17,000 vote majority and came out with a 15,000 vote majority. And yes, Sinn Féin did not stand, but the Alliance Party gave it a really good go this time in that seat and Claire Hanna held the SDLP vote and she also had her own massive personal vote.

Kate Nicholl underperformed the Alliance Party's South Belfast result by about five points. So there are clearly voters who like Alliance, but they like Claire Hanna as well.

So Claire does have in South Belfast and Mid Down some crossover appeal. Sinn Féin didn't stand and one of the big unspoken reasons why Sinn Féin didn't stand is because they thought Claire was going to get re-elected anyway. Claire is an incredibly popular MP, so that was a success for her.

Foyle was a disappointment, but however overall, it was the worst vote share in the SDLP's history at Westminster.

The SDLP, in places like North Belfast and places where they had held an Assembly seat like Upper Bann, they absolutely tanked. They were scoring around 3% of the vote which, again, doesn't auger well for them gaining back those Assembly seats in future.

Sinn Féin dominate the Nationalist vote as well. The SDLP are only taking around 20 to 25% of the Nationalist vote now, which is incredibly poor when you consider Sinn Féin are taking around 70% of the Nationalist vote - 70, 75% as well.

So again, an overall disappointing result for the SDLP. And of course there's been a change in leader since then with Colum Eastwood stepping down and Claire Hanna stepping up.

So one of the unanswered questions is, 'Can Claire translate her success in South Belfast and map that across Northern Ireland?' But we'll have to wait and see.

Overview of general election results

DMcC: Here's one I did in the early hours of July the fifth, when we got our final seat in at 7:00 AM, no, by 7:30 in the morning, East Derry was the last one to declare.

So you can see this is the lay of the land in Northern Ireland. Starting with the safest, I just want to point you over to this green - the top safest seats in Northern Ireland are all in the Nationalist column.

Most of them are within Sinn Féin's column. I just think that that is incredibly noteworthy. You're going down here to South Antrim before you hit a Unionist seat.

But the rest, look how marginal the DUP seats are in Northern Ireland. DUP were some of the safest seats in Northern Ireland, now they are some of the most marginal as well.

So West Belfast, West Tyrone, Newry and Armagh, Mid Ulster - all in Sinn Féin hands.

Then you're getting to South Belfast and then you're getting up to South Down as well. All in the hands of Sinn Féin, apart from South Belfast and then South Antrim.

And then the safest DUP seat is Upper Bann with a majority of 7,406. Before this election, the safest DUP seat was North Antrim, held with a majority of north of 12,000 - just to give you a context of the scale of what happened.

You can see East Derry, now the most marginal seat in Northern Ireland, followed by North Antrim. And then you're getting into East Antrim, with 1300 votes, East Belfast, 2,600.

And then you've got Lagan Valley, which is Alliance as well. And then Foyle, that's the statistic I was telling you about, of course - Fermanagh and South Tyrone now has a bigger majority than Foyle does.

Now, again, Fermanagh and South Tyrone, just to remind, was decided by 52 votes in 2019.

And this is something that again I put together and worked out. So again, the constituencies in green are the ones with a Nationalist majority vote, the ones in blue are the ones with Unionist majority vote, and the other one, the ones in white, are the ones with no overall majority kind of vote in it.

It's just an interesting kind of technicality just to look at. You can see obviously places like out west are incredibly strongly Nationalist - Foyle, of course, with a combined Nationalist vote of around nearly 80%, West Belfast, of course, with a combined Nationalist vote of around 80% as well.

But if you map that over onto the Unionist side, you've got places like North Antrim - combined Unionist vote of 65%.

So again, you can see that there. South Belfast, of course, has a nationalist plurality, as does North Belfast, but they're just below the '50% plus one mark' as well.

And this is the other interesting thing about East Derry - even though Sinn Féin came incredibly close, it is worth noting that the combined Unionist vote is still a good few points ahead of the combined Nationalist vote as well.

So that's just the kind of the makeup of the pro-union versus pro-unity side. It's actually incredibly evenly balanced whenever you look at it overall.

Postal Votes

DMcC: Okay, so postal votes - postal votes issued. So there were 22,924 postal votes issued at this general election - that was up from the previous election.

There was a turnout of 89% amongst people who got a postal vote. So, believe it or not, even people who went through the trouble of getting a postal vote, which is much harder here than it is across the water – postal votes are very easy to come by across the water.

They're much more difficult to get here as anyone who had to fill out one will know. 89% returned theirs back. 8,627 proxy votes were issued. Fermanagh and South Tyrone had the highest number of postal votes as you can see up here - 2595.

You can see it by scale of order there. South Belfast and Mid Down were the next highest as well. Again, these are where the proxy votes were issued and were cast.

So again, just because we were holding ours during our summer holidays, there were quite a number of postal votes issued as well. So there's some numbers on those.

Overall Trends

DMcC: What's the overall trend lines?

So Sinn Féin took 67% of the pro United Ireland vote. The SDLP took just 28%.

For the pro Union party vote, the DUP got over 54%, the Ulster Unionists got 30%, and the TUV got over 15%. This is down for the DUP. The DUP consistently were taking around 61, 62, 63% of the Unionist vote.

So what has happened to the DUP? It's not that the Unionist vote is shrinking, it hasn't, the Unionist vote stayed at 43% across Northern Ireland. It's just that the DUP share of that cake is much smaller than it was before.

Now, how strong is the West, and the western constituencies are the ones I'm talking about here, for Sinn Féin? So 34% of their total vote is in just three constituencies - Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Mid Ulster and West Tyrone.

So the Sinn Féin average vote share here was 51.2%. So across those constituencies, a majority of voters are voting Sinn Féin, which is incredibly unusual for a 'first past the post' election.

This is against the Northern Ireland wide vote of 27%.

Nearly 24%, so nearly a quarter of the TUV's entire vote is with their leader in North Antrim. So the TUV vote is very heavily concentrated in one constituency as well.

17.2% of the UUP vote is based in South Antrim with Robin Swann. So again, nearly just under 20% of the entire UUP vote is in one constituency as well.

So that is just a base overview. I've probably thrown a lot of statistics at you, so I'm sorry about that.

But if you have any questions or anything, please feel free to ask and I hope you've enjoyed it.