

ELECTIONS 2021

WHAT THEY
SHOW ABOUT
DEVOLUTION
ACROSS THE
NORTH OF
ENGLAND

A report by the
Northern Powerhouse Partnership



FOREWORD

"The old model of trying to run everything . . . from the centre of London is broken. We will go much further and deliver radical devolution to the great cities of England. I say to [them]: it is time for you to take control of your own affairs. ... This is a revolution in the way we govern England."

George Osborne, former Chancellor of the Exchequer
Chair, Northern Powerhouse Partnership, speaking in 2015

The polls of May 2021 were the largest set of local elections in a generation. A significant part of this was down to the expanding number of contests for Britain's newest and most high-profile politicians – Metro Mayors. They are the embodiments of the move to devolve more power within England, ensuring greater spending from Whitehall departments came with a mandate to deliver real local change.

In the North and West Midlands, popular incumbents of both main parties did considerably better than their parties. West Midlands Conservative Mayor Andy Street secured 54% of the vote (in line with outcome predicted in Opinion Poll commissioned by Northern Powerhouse Partnership), and both Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham saw results which were among Labour's best in England. Hartlepool, for so long a rock-solid Labour seat, changed hands on the coat tails of a seismic Metro Mayoral win for Ben Houchen on Teesside. The long-awaited Metro Mayor for West Yorkshire saw the first female Mayor elected – Labour's Tracey Brabin.

The Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP) has long advocated further devolution within England – bringing decision making closer to communities. We are still advocating further powers for existing Metro Mayors and new deals in places like Cumbria, York & North Yorkshire, Cheshire & Warrington, Lancashire and the North Bank of the Humber. If deals had been agreed in these areas they would, based on Police and Crime Commissioner results, lead to four more Conservative Metro Mayors, with only North Bank of the Humber predicted to narrowly go to Labour.

In this short report we have looked back at the results and analysed how the first stages of English devolution across the North have performed compared to how their political parties fared on the same day. What we found is that across the North of England, the new Metro Mayors have caught the imagination of the public. Established Metro Mayors are providing a more visible presence and leadership, and they are driving up turnout at a local level – in all cases in the North outperforming their party brands.

These new regional political power bases are already an increasing impact on the national stage as not only do they provide a more direct presence in local decision making, but they also provide a voice which at times do challenge central government. This challenge – which has been demonstrated by Conservative Mayors as well as Labour – will continue, unless they are given the powers to exercise directly. To lead rather than plead.

As the NPP has long argued, the current arrangements are huge step forward and the results from the elections this year already show a significant increase in public engagement. Communities rightly look to their new representatives to speak up for the interests of their local areas. Across the North of England this will mean pushing the Government to deliver on its levelling up agenda by trusting them to allow the implementation and delivery in areas like skills and local transport, such as improving buses and integrated travel. The challenge for central government is to see these powers not as a threat but as a vindication of a functioning new form of local representation the government put in place to make it possible to close the North-South divide permanently, making the nation overall better off.

Henri Murison, director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership

2021 Elections to devolved areas in the North of England

Elections for four Metro Mayors in the North of England took place this year. In the case of Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region and Tees Valley these were the second time these elections have taken place with the previous elections in May 2017. We also saw the first ever election for a Metro Mayor for the whole of West Yorkshire. Below is list of these areas and the local councils that are included within them.

Greater Manchester.

All ten councils in Greater Manchester

- 1.Stockport
- 2.Oldham
- 3.Bolton
- 4.Bury
- 5.City of Manchester
- 6.Rochdale
- 7.Salford
- 8.Tameside
- 9.Trafford
10. Wigan

Liverpool City Region

The five councils in Merseyside and Halton

- 1.Halton
- 2.Knowsley
- 3.Liverpool
- 4.Sefton
- 5.St Helens
- 6.Wirral

Tees Valley

A combination of five unitary councils.

- 1.Darlington
 - 2.Hartlepool
 - 3.Middlesbrough
 - 4.Redcar and Cleveland
- Stockton-on-Tees

West Yorkshire

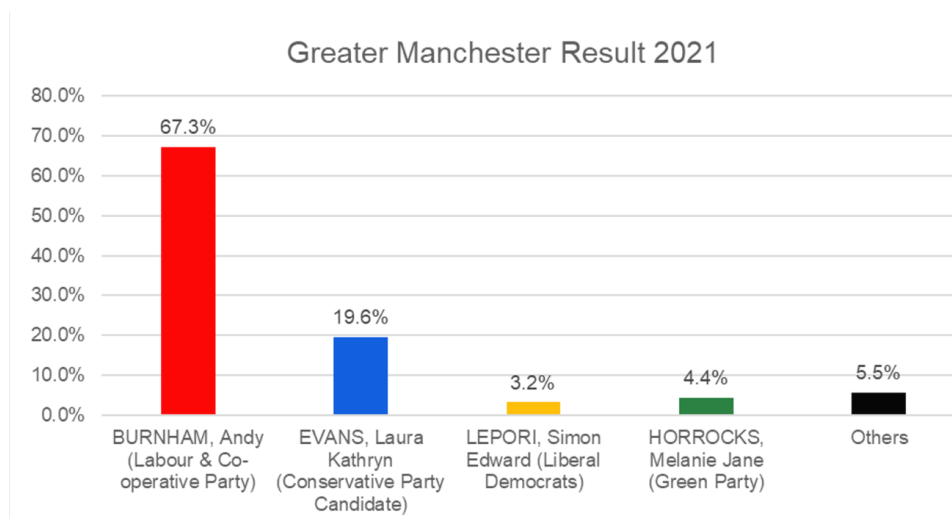
The five councils of West Yorkshire.

- 1.Bradford
- 2.Calderdale
- 3.Kirklees
- 4.Leeds
- 5.Wakefield

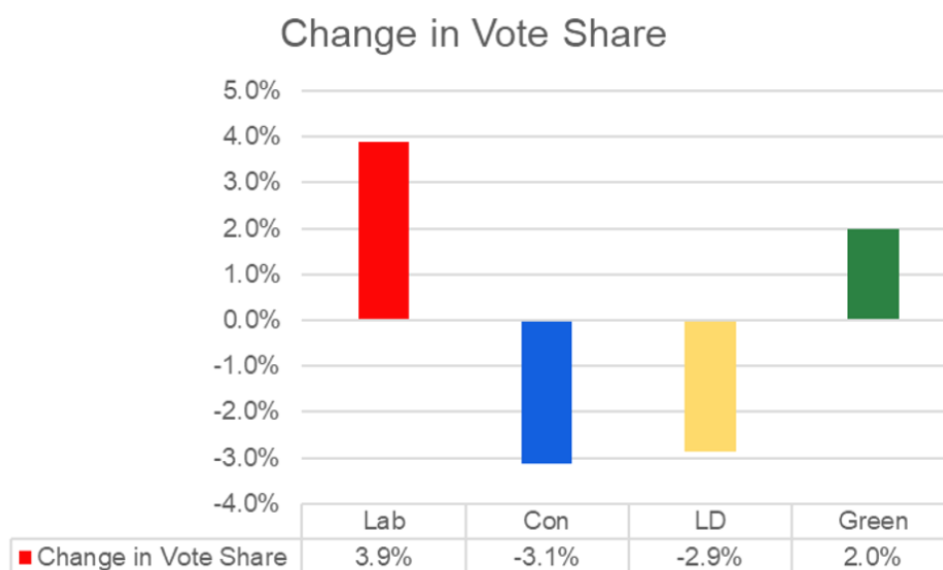
GREATER MANCHESTER

Former Cabinet minister Andy Burnham was arguably the highest profile candidate for any of the Metro Mayor contests when they were first contested in 2017. With a second victory now under his belt, we can examine the difference between the two elections and crucially how those performances compare to other elections taking place to the local councils on the same day.

The result as set out below showed an overwhelming victory for Andy Burnham.



The below chart shows the change between the two Mayoral elections. The effect of these changes was a swing to Labour (Burnham) of 3.5% from the Conservatives.



Turnout

Turnout in the elections rose from 28.7% (2017) to 34.2%. A total of 150,000 more voters took part than in 2017.

Andy's majority of 335,271 beats Sadiq Khan's 2016 result as the largest-ever majority received by a British politician. Andy Burnham won every borough with over 60% of the vote and also won all 215 wards in Greater Manchester.

Comparisons

Burnham's result showed increased turnout and a very impressive result for the incumbent Mayor. Crucially we are also able to examine the Mayoral result against the local election results that took place across Greater Manchester on the same day.

The overall difference between performance in the local elections and the Mayoral elections is set out below.

2021 Elections in GM	Lab	Con	LD	Green
Council	46.2%	28.2%	11.4%	7.3%
Mayor	67.3%	19.6%	3.2%	4.4%

Looking in a bit more detail at the differences in performance we can see that there are very large differences in every part of Greater Manchester between the votes in the Mayoral and Council elections taking place at the same time. The below chart shows the difference in the overall % for each party between the Mayoral and local elections.

Andy Burnham is outperforming the Labour local elections results by 21% across the whole area and by a significant margin in every borough.

Mayoral v Council difference	Lab	Con	LD	Green
Bolton	28.8%	-12.6%	-7.5%	-1.4%
Bury	19.4%	-11.9%	-6.3%	0.1%
Manchester	12.3%	-2.6%	-7.1%	-4.7%
Oldham	23.3%	-3.6%	-7.5%	0.6%
Rochdale	17.3%	-11.9%	-8.1%	-1.2%
Salford	21.2%	-6.2%	-6.6%	-6.5%
Stockport	34.2%	-6.5%	-25.0%	-3.8%
Tameside	13.4%	-12.9%	0.7%	-6.0%
Trafford	21.2%	-11.3%	-5.5%	-7.7%
Wigan	18.7%	-11.3%	-2.8%	2.8%
Mayoral v Council difference	Lab	Con	LD	Green
Greater Manchester	21.1%	-8.6%	-8.2%	-2.9%

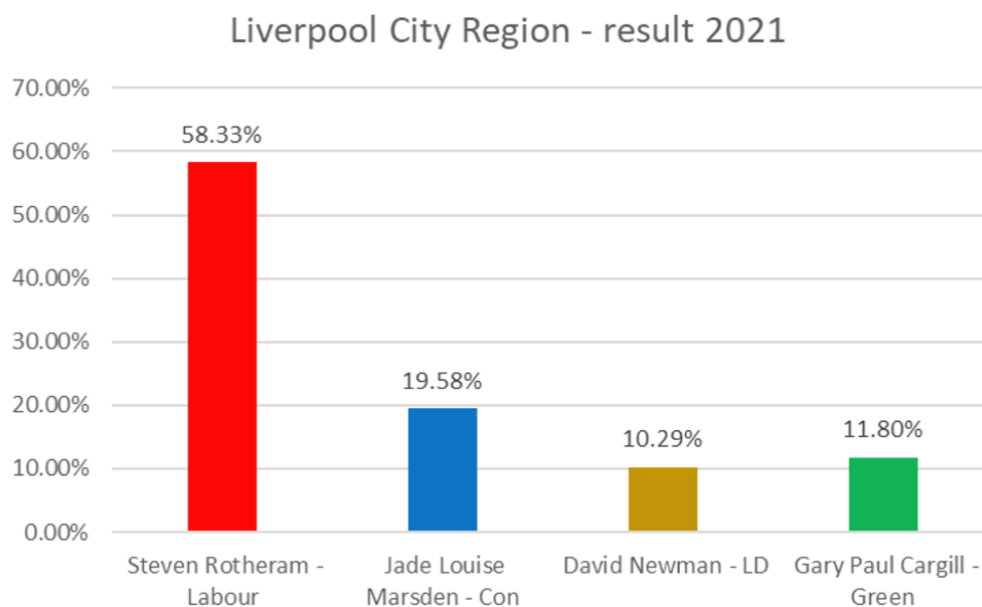
Summary

Andy Burnham has established himself as a truly effective voice for Greater Manchester on the local and national stage. His re-election in 2021 drove up turnout and showed how the devolved Metro Mayoral model can drive supporters of all political parties to think differently about local political decisions. The defining moment may have been his public refusal to accept government Covid restrictions in October 2020, but voters in Greater Manchester have seen the longer-term impact of local campaigns on issues including homelessness, transport and jobs.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Labour's Steve Rotherham was looking for a second term on the same day as local elections took place across the area.

As the chart below shows the result was an overwhelming victory for Steve Rotherham.

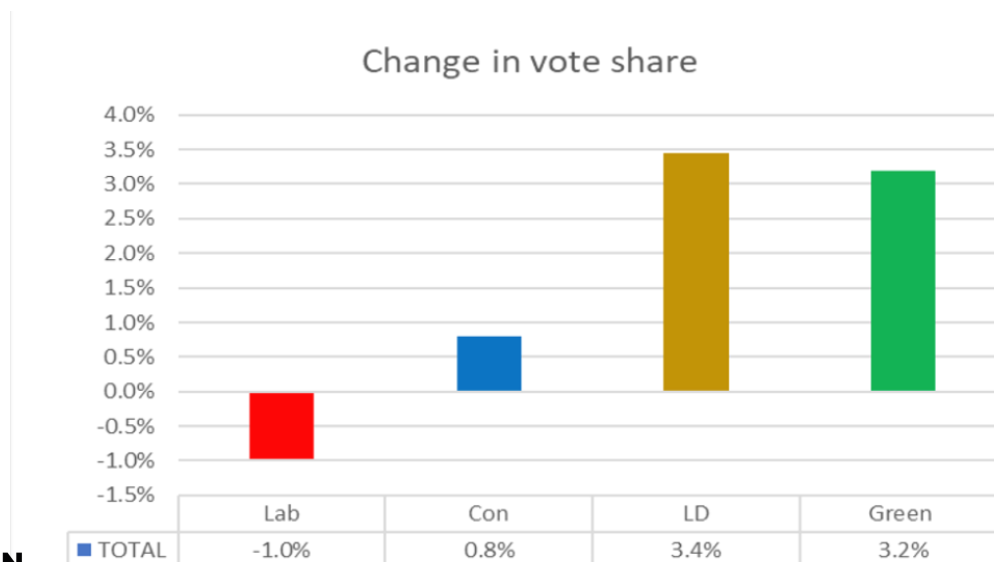


Turnout

Turnout rose from 26.1% in 2017 to 30.55% this year. Over 50,000 extra voters took part in the election compared to last time.

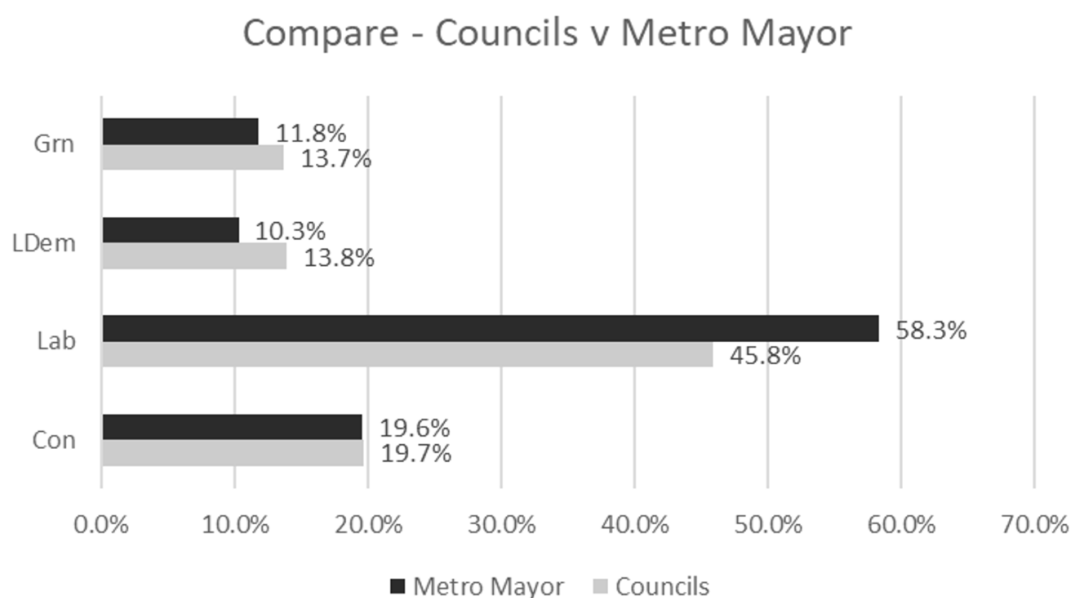
Change since last time

Direct comparisons are not as easy as Greater Manchester, as in 2021 there were only four candidates compared to eight in 2017. Nonetheless the below chart sets out the changes for the four parties contesting both Mayoral elections.



Comparisons

We can look at the totals for each of the four parties contesting the Mayoral and the local elections. The performance in each of these elections is set out in the chart below. We do need to bear in mind that in the local elections many wards have hugely different sets of candidates from all manner of minor parties as well as independent candidates. That said – the comparison is clear to observe. When it comes to the Metro Mayor contest the incumbent Mayor is, as in Greater Manchester, significant outperforming their party.



Another useful comparison is to look at the City of Liverpool itself. Not only did the City Council area have local and Metro Mayor elections, but there was also an election for the Mayor of Liverpool (council area) taking place. The below chart demonstrated how the same voters are making calculated choices about who to vote for in which election. In the case of Labour, the performance between the Mayoral candidates for the City Region and the City itself is stark.

Liverpool City Council Area	Con	Lab	LDem	Grn	Others
Local Elections	5.5%	50.0%	20.9%	14.1%	9.5%
Mayor of Liverpool (1st round)	4.1%	38.5%	17.0%	8.7%	24.7%
Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region	7.2%	65.8%	15.5%	11.5%	0.0%

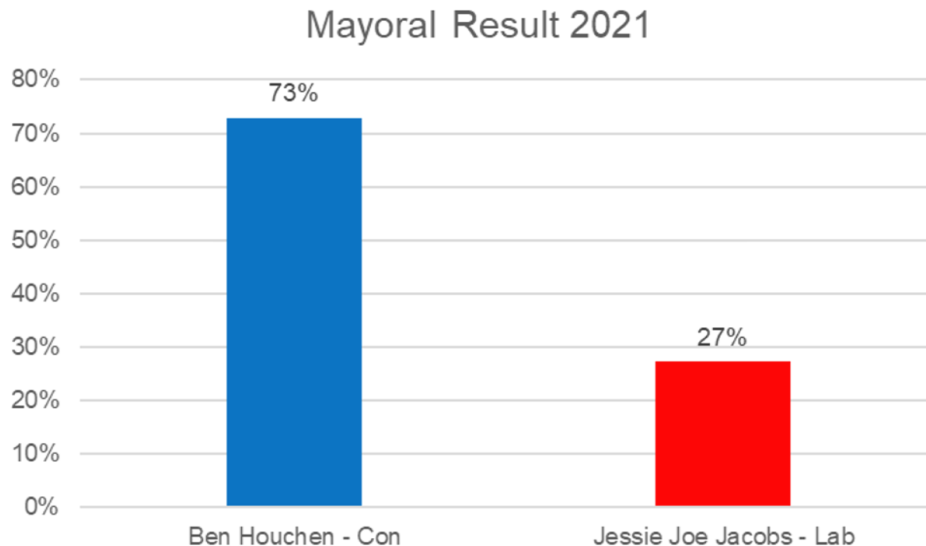
Summary

The elections across Liverpool City Region show again how voters are engaging with the additional choices they must make with extra devolved institutions. Voters are acting in a less tribal way making different decisions for different elections – while at the same time participating in greater numbers.

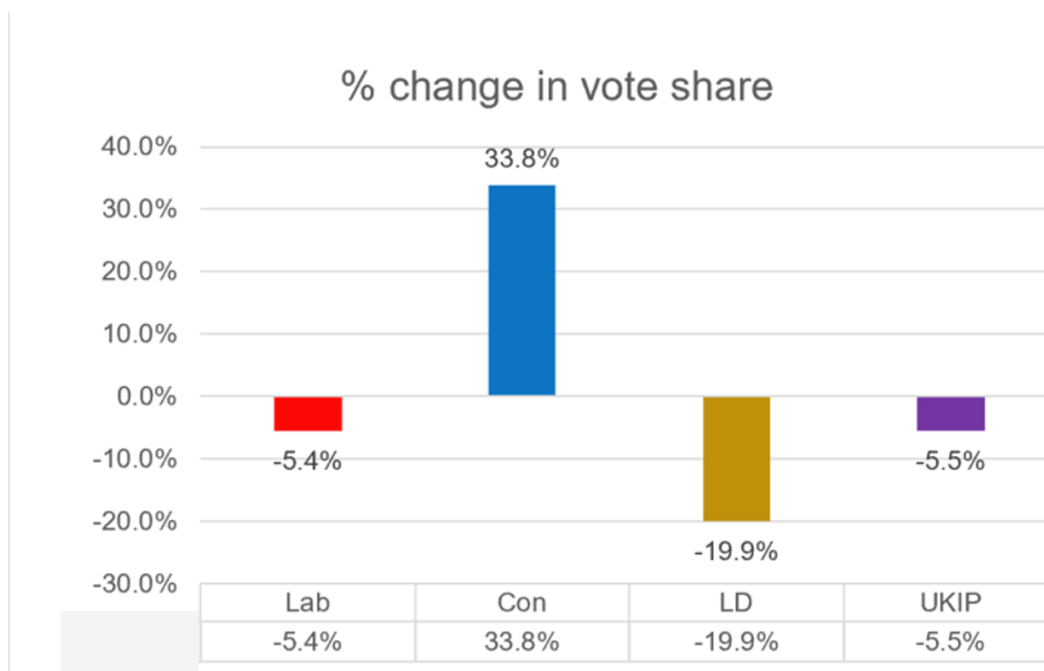
TEES VALLEY

The results from Tees Valley demonstrate that the trends already outlined in Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region are not restricted to Labour Mayors.

In 2017 Ben Houchen won a very tight contest, winning the first round by under half a percent. The results this time could not have been more different, with just two candidates standing. Mayor Houchen secured a landslide re-election. The result is set out in the charts below.



The swing from the previous election was enormous in scale.



Turnout

Traditionally a low turnout area, the election in 2017 saw a turnout of just 21%. In 2021 this climbed to 34% with over 60,000 more people taking part in the election.

Comparisons

Four of the five councils in Tees Valley also had local elections on the same day. Only having two candidates in the Mayoral race makes it harder to make direct comparisons with the local elections, but we can assess the difference between Labour and the Conservatives in both contests. The chart below sets this out.

Undoubtedly the Westminster by-election occurring in Hartlepool will have had some impact, however there is a clear trend with Ben Houchen. Like the other incumbent Mayors, he is outperforming his own party.

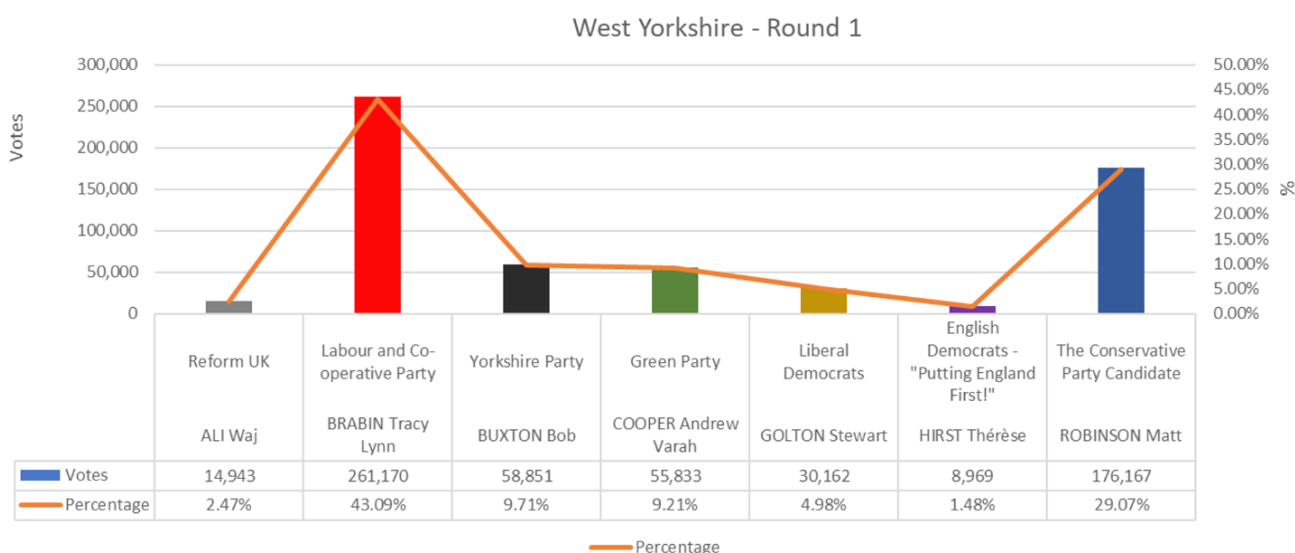
	Local elections		Mayoral election		Local elections	Mayoral election
	Con	Lab	Con	Lab	Con lead	Con lead
Darlington	46.7%	15.6%	74.5%	25.5%	31.1%	49.0%
Hartlepool	35.6%	24.1%	72.6%	27.4%	11.5%	45.2%
Redcar and Cleveland	48.5%	18.4%	75.0%	25.0%	30.1%	49.9%
Stockton-on-Tees	57.9%	18.7%	72.7%	27.3%	39.3%	45.4%

Summary

Ben Houchen recorded a near 20% swing in an area that was neck and neck when the first Mayoral election took place in 2017. His performance demonstrates yet again that strong, powerful and visible Mayors are reshaping local democracy. Like the others he outperforms his party at the ballot box. By adding 13% to the turnout since the last election, Ben Houchen's re-election has been hugely successful at engaging more people in local democracy.

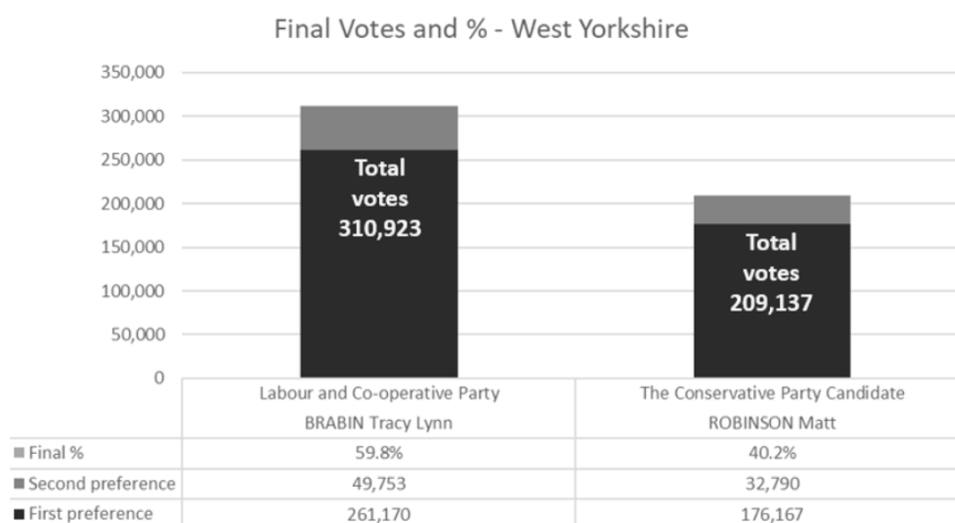
WEST YORKSHIRE

Unlike the three other contests, the election for a Metro Mayor for West Yorkshire was the first time this role had been contested. While Tracy Brabin (the Labour candidate) had a 14% lead, she did not achieve 50% of the vote in the first round. Those first round results are set out below.



The electoral system used for Mayoral elections allows for a second round where no candidate secures more than 50% of the vote from the first preferences. In the second round only the top two candidates stay in the contest. The second preferences of those who first preference has been eliminated are now added to the final two candidates providing that their second preference is one of the final two candidates.

The below chart shows how the valid second preferences votes were allocated to the final two candidates – along with the final result. The overall turnout was 36.5%.

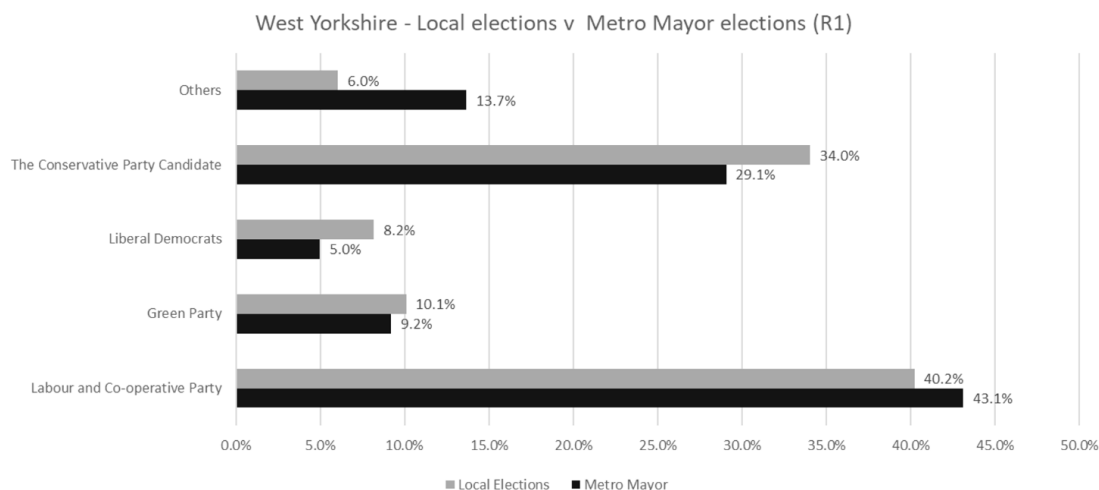


Comparisons

As this was the first ever West Yorkshire Mayoral contest there is no direct comparison with a previous contest. However, there were local elections taking place right across West Yorkshire at the same time so we can examine how the Mayoral result compared to those.

For the purposes of this comparison, we have only used the first preference votes from the Mayoral contest. Outside the four main parties we have also placed all the other candidates as 'Others'.

The chart below shows these results side by side across West Yorkshire.



Summary

As in the other contests, it is already clear that in West Yorkshire voting behaviour is different between the local and Mayoral elections. In the local elections the Conservatives trailed Labour by just 6% - yet on the first round of the Metro Mayor election that lead was 14%.

With this being the first-ever election these differences may well be down to campaign effects or the profile of the specific candidates chosen. It's early days for West Yorkshire's new Mayor – Tracy Brabin, but if the experience of the other Metro Mayors and their second elections is anything to go by then this first step of devolution is likely to be good news for West Yorkshire.

WHO WE ARE

The Northern Powerhouse Partnership (NPP) was established in 2016 and is a business-led organisation, bringing together Northern leaders to deliver the vision of the Northern Powerhouse, increasing productivity and growth and making a greater contribution to the UK economy. The ambition to deliver the Northern Powerhouse has been taken up by this government, with their agenda to level up the UK and create opportunities throughout the country.

Our leadership comes from our members (represented by the senior leaders from Addleshaw Goddard, Arcadis, Arup, Associated British Ports, Atkins, Barclays, Bruntwood, The Cooperative Group, CYBG, Drax, HSBC, Mace, Manchester Airports Group, Mott MacDonald, Sellafield, Siemens, TalkTalk and with sponsorship from EY), as well as our wider Board members including our Chair George Osborne, Vice-Chairs Lord Jim O'Neill and Professor Juergen Maier, Cllr Sir Richard Leese, John Cridland CBE, Metro Mayor Ben Houchen and Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell).

The Board and our Education and Skills and Transport committees set out our blueprint for how levelling up can be achieved, and the long-term, systemic changes that are required to truly rebalance the UK economy and create a North of England as prosperous as the South.

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