How to use the Democratic Dashboard

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By Democratic Audit UK   2015-5-1

*Democratic Audit UK recently launched the Democratic Dashboard, a new online tool which seeks to give voters completely impartial and accurate information about their local constituency which might be helpful to them in making up their own minds about how to vote at the 2015 general election. Here, **Carl Cullinane** and **Patrick Dunleavy** explain how to use the site.*

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To find your constituency from our home page:

- Either put your **postcode** into the search box in the main page,
- Or just enter the (rough) **constituency name** if you know it – we'll ask you to choose amongst any possible alternatives.
- Or if you don't have these details yet, just **click on your region on the map**. Use the Google map to zoom in and find the right constituency for where you live.

Of course you **can look at any constituency you like**, not just your local seat. For instance, why not have a look at the seats next door to you, or where your family or friends live.

On **election night**, 7 May, the Dashboard team will also be at live tweeting all evening on @DemocraticDash, and updating the site with the 2015 results as fast as we can. Check in on Friday 8 May to find out what happened in your constituency.

map

Constituency Pages

Starting at the top of the page and scrolling right down you'll find tons of stuff of interest. We begin with a **short pen-picture** of your seat, along with a **map** of your area showing which parties hold which seats. Click on the '2010' tab to show who won the seat in 2005. It also shows how boundaries changed between elections.

Just below that is the main recent results section, has three tabs to choose from:

- **General Elections** – what happened in your area in 2010 and in 2005. Hover your mouse or finger over each pie slice to get the precise vote share.
- **European Elections** – what happened in the 2014 and 2009 elections
- **Local/Devolved Elections** – what happened in your local seat in the last local government or devolved government election.

(See below for details on how these were calculated*)

Each tab has charts for the last two elections in that category, along with the full results in expandable tables. To see the vote shares for each party, hover over a slice to see the exact number. Click on the 'plus' icon to see the detailed

votes tables.

When you are thinking what this means for 2015, bear in mind that

- A lot has changed in British politics since 2010
- People do seem to vote differently in European and local elections from general elections, because of the issues and personalities involved

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The Last 5 MPs infographic shows which parties have won since 1992, the gender balance and when boundaries have changed. Hover over each figure to see the name of the winning MP in each election.

The candidates section gives you names, photos and social media links to this year's candidates from all the major parties. Go their Facebook, Twitter or website pages and find out more about their views and campaign.

[This data was kindly supplied by our friends at the crowdsourcing website YourNextMP.com. If something doesn't look right to you, you can edit the entry on their site].

background

The constituency background section shows some key facts about your seat and how it compares with the rest of the UK

– on social inequality

– how much the political parties spent on your vote in 2010 and

– how much power your vote in this seat has compared to others.

[The voter power index shows that the electoral system means that some votes are more equal than others – but it is based on what happened back in 2010, so subject to changes like the recent SNP surge].

The party finances chart show the party share of who spent what in the last election – and a second bar shows the share of donations received by your local parties in 2014.

[This data comes from the official Electoral Commission records].

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Some more background demographics show:

- How many people in your seat were born in the UK,
- How much unemployment is there compared to other seats?
- How much ill-health is there, again compared to other seats.

[The measure of bad health comes from the last Census, when respondents were asked to say how healthy they felt].

There are also charts showing what proportion of people in your seat are in different age categories, ethnicities,

social grades and housing types.

The green bar shows how many in your seat, and the black diamond marker shows how many in the average seat, for comparison. Is your seat older or younger than others? Do you have more renters or more homeowners?

forecast

Last but far from least at the bottom of every page is our **LOCAL FORECAST** of how your fellow voters in that seat will choose on 7 May. This is taken from the skilled team at ElectionForecast.co.uk, who are neutral academics at LSE, and Universities of Durham and East Anglia. It shows a well-informed *guess* about who will win your seat based on national polling, the social characteristics of your constituency, and historical trends.

But remember – real votes may be different on the day!

If there are **local constituency polls** we have put them also just below the forecast. Hover your mouse or finger over each pie slice to get the precise vote share.

Finally **the latest betting odds** for your seat are also included, taken from oddschecker.co.uk. They show another view of who's in the running to win in your area.

*Election results details:

- The 2005 General Election shows an adjusted result to show what the result would have been using the 2010 boundaries. This makes comparisons with 2010 more straightforward.

- The European Results show estimates of how people voted in your constituency in each European election. Results from each local authority were adjusted geographically to fit into Westminster Constituencies. More details about how this was done are here:

- The Local Results section shows how your constituency looks when you add up the most recent results in each ward in the constituency. If you live in Scotland, Wales or London there are results for your Devolved Assembly elections too].

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This site is designed by the Democratic Audit team at the London School of Economics lead by Professor Patrick Dunleavy FAcSS, and the chief designer was Carl Cullinane. The post represents the views of the authors and not those of Democratic Audit UK or the LSE. Please read our comments policy before posting.

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Patrick Dunleavy is Co-Director of Democratic Audit, Chair of the LSE Public Policy Group, and a Professor of Political Science at the LSE. He is also General Editor of the LSE's British Politics and Policy blog, the LSE Europp blog, the LSE USApp blog, and the LSE Impact of Social Sciences blog.