

A Big Lead in Opinion Polls Doesn't Mean Theresa May Should Be Sleeping Well

Time for Some Clarity

Calling a General Election is always a dicey business. You never know what a campaign will throw up or who will gain unexpected momentum. The general consensus so far, however is that for Theresa May this is going to be as close to a 'slam dunk' as she could dream for.

From what we see it doesn't look that simple.

How We've Chosen Our Leaders

General Elections in the past have tended to be decided on the basis of tribal affiliation, who looks like they could credibly be Prime Minister and crucially which party can convey a sense of economic competence and reassurance.

That approach to choice looks likely to be significant again, but at the moment it doesn't seem as important, because this doesn't look like a typical General Election.

So What Sort of a General Election is This?

This election appears to be different, because it is likely to be dominated by a single issue; how the United Kingdom approaches Brexit. That turns it into more of a referendum and we've seen how volatile they can be, and how more extreme views can come to the fore.

Coupled with this, what we're seeing is a much more volatile electorate. Often through frustration with how the world appears to be changing around them and the impact on their lives, people appear to be more prepared and empowered to 'overturn apple carts'.

The Brexit referendum last year and Trump's victory among significant events, seems to be giving people permission to challenge traditional perceptions and behaviour.

Who Are You Appealing To?

There is another oddity that could be giving Theresa May some sleepless nights. Her Brexit platform doesn't appeal to all of her 'tribe'. In fact many traditional

Conservative voters hate it. But it does appeal to a lot of traditional Labour voters. If she loses some of her 'tribe' will it be offset by gains from Labour, and will they be enough to translate into actual constituency wins? Will some of her 'tribe' go off to the Lib Dems?

We have talked to lots of people over the last year, whose allegiances are clearly changing and these shifts are difficult to track, both for the people themselves and for market researchers.

Who'd Like to Be a Pollster?

In the midst of all this are the opinion pollsters who have asked people in the abstract what they might do if there was an election. Now there is one and it looks to revolve around a single issue, those polls might become more volatile. For a part of the Market Research industry that wants to reassert its credibility, this could be another nail biting and sleep deprived election for them too.

We don't believe that any Prime Minister has called a General Election when the electorate has been so volatile, though Nicola Sturgeon might beg to differ on that. If we were Theresa May, we'd be preparing for anything and everything at the moment, and ensuring a good supply of sleeping pills.

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