# Kemi Badenoch faces historic test to revive Conservative Party amid Reform UK surge



Kemi Badenoch has taken the helm of the Conservative Party during a period of unprecedented crisis, following a devastating electoral defeat that has seen the party plunge from 402 seats to a mere 121 in the House of Commons. This loss marks a historic low, and as the party scrambles to reclaim its footing, Badenoch's leadership will be under intense scrutiny. To say she faces an uphill battle would be an understatement, as the Conservatives are now perceived as a party in disarray, desperately in need of a realignment of core values and strategies.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith has sounded alarms over the party's ongoing leadership turmoil, expressing concern that the relentless quest for a 'Messiah' is undermining the party's stability. Citing historical precedence, he argued that true leadership, akin to Margaret Thatcher's, requires time to cultivate. His candid observations reflect a broader anxiety: “The public think we are panickers. In less than ten years, five prime ministers have departed, and the electorate is sick of it.” Such instability will inevitably tarnish the party's credibility and further alienate disillusioned voters.

As she assumes this critical role, Badenoch must navigate a treacherous political landscape dominated by rising populist sentiments, where Reform UK has recently surged in both visibility and support. With reports suggesting they could capture up to 30% of the vote, the pressure is intensifying for her to articulate a clear and compelling vision that addresses the electorate's concerns. Farage’s vocal rejection of coalition-building with the Conservatives underscores the irreparable damage the established party has done to the nation. He positions his movement as a staunch alternative, refusing any compromises that would dilute their hardline stance.

Recent local elections reflect this shifting tide, with Reform UK not only gaining significant council seats but also capturing Runcorn and Helsby, a former Labour stronghold. This marks a seismic shift in local politics, disrupting decades of Conservative and Labour dominance. Analysts note this is part of a larger populist wave that is reshaping political landscapes across Europe and the US, leading to uncomfortable questions about the relevance of the traditional two-party system in the UK.

While Badenoch's elevation is a historic milestone—making her the first Black woman to lead a major UK political party—her leadership is far from uncontroversial. As she attempts to unify her party amidst growing dissent, her polarising rhetoric on social issues may further alienate moderates. Critics are keen to point out that she must not only consolidate her base but also bridge the gap with an electorate increasingly drawn to alternatives like Reform UK.

As she steps into this pivotal role, the stakes could not be higher for Badenoch. Her leadership will not only shape the future of the Conservative Party but also determine the trajectory of British politics in an era marked by a significant realignment. The real question remains: can she rally her party and create a narrative compelling enough to win back the electorate, or will the growing appeal of Reform UK continue to overshadow the Conservatives, rendering them obsolete?

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2059825/tories-decapitate-leader-messiah> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/9884a5b8-c8d7-48fb-a7a2-d326d97abcaf> - Reform UK has firmly rejected the prospect of forming coalitions with the Conservative Party at the local council level, despite Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch indicating openness to power-sharing agreements. Reform's leader, Nigel Farage, stated that the Conservatives had damaged Britain nationally and locally over the past 14 years. Although local government coalitions, including cross-party collaborations, are not uncommon, Farage insisted Reform would not participate in such arrangements with the Tories. The comments come ahead of local elections on May 1, where Reform hopes to secure over 200 of the 1,600 seats. The Conservatives, expected to lose seats, suffered a historic general election defeat last year and have since trailed behind Reform in opinion polls. While some donors push for greater cooperation between the parties to avoid splitting the right-wing vote, Badenoch reaffirmed that Tories must uphold core Conservative values and ruled out any national electoral deals with Reform. She emphasized that Reform’s stated goal of destroying the Conservative Party precludes any formal alliance. Despite historical examples of local collaboration, such as in Hartlepool in 2019, current party leaderships remain publicly opposed to formal unity.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/197d3cf6-8719-49dd-b3b4-63fa41382d65> - Labour and the Conservative Party are facing a major political challenge after Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, made sweeping gains in local elections, disrupting Britain’s traditional two-party dominance. Reform captured 677 council seats and narrowly won the Runcorn and Helsby parliamentary by-election. Labour lost 186 seats while the Conservatives suffered a massive setback, losing 676. The emergence of Reform, now leading national opinion polls, reflects a broader populist shift similar to trends seen in the US and across Europe. Farage has positioned Reform as a hardline alternative, pledging to scrap carbon targets, intensify immigration controls, confront liberal elites, and push for more state intervention in key industries. Labour Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer acknowledged the significance of the results, promising hard work on issues like the NHS and immigration, while cautioning against simplistic solutions. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch, facing criticism for lack of policy clarity, is under pressure to revive the party's prospects. Despite Reform’s breakthrough, party chair Richard Fuller warned of the challenges in governance. Reform gained control of 10 councils, while the Liberal Democrats also made notable advances. BBC projections suggest a national vote share of 30% for Reform, more than any other party.
4. <https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/11/02/royaume-uni-kemi-badenoch-une-elue-d-origine-nigeriane-nouvelle-cheffe-de-file-des-conservateurs-britanniques_6372515_3210.html> - Kemi Badenoch, une politicienne d'origine nigériane réputée pour ses propos controversés, est devenue la nouvelle chef du parti conservateur britannique, remplaçant Rishi Sunak. À 44 ans, Badenoch, une fervente partisane du Brexit, a critiqué le « wokisme » et les revendications LGBT+. Elle devra reconstruire son parti, fortement affaibli après une défaite historique aux élections générales de juillet, laissant les conservateurs avec seulement 121 sièges à la Chambre des communes contre 402 pour le Labour. Badenoch a promis transparence et responsabilité, affirmant que le parti doit se préparer à reprendre le pouvoir lors des prochaines élections. Sa nomination marque un virage à droite pour les conservateurs, continuant une tendance amorcée avec le Brexit. Malgré des positions modérées en apparence, la politique controversée de Badenoch sera scrutée de près. Sa nomination est également saluée comme un symbole d'inclusivité dans la politique britannique.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/bd73343d5508fc7aa936471629f5730b> - Kemi Badenoch has made history as the first Black woman to lead a major UK political party, the Conservative Party. Born in London to Nigerian parents, she experienced the challenges of Nigeria's economic struggles, shaping her belief in smaller government and innovative policies. Returning to the UK at 16, she worked various jobs before studying computer systems engineering and law. Badenoch entered politics via the London Assembly in 2015 and Parliament in 2017. She served in various government roles before resigning in 2022 amid Boris Johnson's administration collapse. Though unsuccessful in her initial leadership bid, she became trade and business secretary under the short-lived government of Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak. Despite her party's heavy defeat in the latest election, her supporters admire her outspoken, Thatcher-inspired free-market approach. Critics, however, note her controversial remarks and conflicts with colleagues.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/20598c6b-3884-4f31-a874-e5a3a827cc4d> - The May 1, 2025 local elections in England marked a seismic shift in British politics, with Nigel Farage's Reform UK delivering a devastating blow to both the Labour and Conservative parties. Reform UK achieved a symbolic victory by winning the Runcorn and Helsby by-election, previously one of Labour’s safest seats, and went on to dismantle decades-long Conservative control in councils such as Kent, where their presence fell from 62 councillors to just five. Tory officials described the outcome as "apocalyptic", and leadership questions loom over current leader Kemi Badenoch. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer also faced setbacks as Reform siphoned traditional Labour support, driven by voter discontent and economic anxiety. While Starmer plans to counter the populist surge with centrist reforms and trade agreements, criticisms over policy decisions, such as cuts to winter fuel payments, have hurt his standing. The rise of Reform UK threatens the historic two-party system, drawing parallels to previous political realignments. Despite internal unrest, both Badenoch and Starmer pledged continued leadership, but their respective parties face existential challenges in the face of Farage’s growing momentum. Meanwhile, the mood among Conservative ranks is bleak, foreshadowing tough months ahead.
7. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/global/la-diputada-kemi-badenoch-nueva-lider-partido-conservador-oposicion-britanica.html> - Kemi Badenoch ha sido elegida nueva líder del Partido Conservador del Reino Unido, convirtiéndose en la líder de la oposición al Gobierno laborista. Badenoch, exministra de Comercio de 44 años y de origen nigeriano, ganó con el 57% de los votos frente al 43% de Robert Jenrick. Asume el liderazgo en un periodo crítico para el partido tras su gran derrota en las elecciones generales de julio, donde perdieron 251 escaños. Badenoch, defensora del Brexit y considerada discípula de Michael Gove, ha prometido enfrentar los errores del pasado y presionar al primer ministro laborista, Keir Starmer, para desarrollar un plan claro. Starmer felicitó a Badenoch, destacando su importancia como la primera líder negra de un partido en Westminster. Sin embargo, Ellie Reeves, presidenta del Partido Laborista, criticó su elección como una continuación de las políticas fallidas de Sunak.