# Opposition surge disrupts Scottish political landscape ahead of 2026 Holyrood election



The recent surge of a certain opposition party, propelled by the polarising and dynamic figure at its helm, has caused significant unrest in the Scottish political landscape. This rise challenges the long-held assumptions about voter behaviour in Scotland. Once seen primarily as an English populist movement, the party's growth signals a growing discontent among the Scottish electorate, re-examining the motivations driving voters towards its agenda.

In particular, the SNP, which has long held a firm grip on Scottish politics, has unwittingly paved the way for this rise. Having been entrenched in power since Alex Salmond's reign in 2011, the party has often brushed aside the concerns of a considerable number of citizens who feel sidelined by condescending political rhetoric. This dismissal has morphed into rampant frustration, with an increasing number of Scots no longer afraid to voice dissenting opinions for fear of the “woke” backlash. Under Nicola Sturgeon, the SNP has shifted focus from the independence movement to a misguided agenda—out of touch with the everyday realities faced by many—causing a noticeable shift in voter allegiance.

Amid this political upheaval, the opposition party has celebrated a significant achievement, growing its membership to 7,000 and surpassing the Scottish Conservatives. This growth underscores a burgeoning demand for a political alternative that resonates with disillusioned voters spanning the political spectrum, from Labour to the SNP. Recent polling suggests that the party could secure as much as 11% of the seats in the upcoming 2026 Holyrood election, tapping into economic anxieties rooted in job losses, particularly in the oil and gas sectors linked to the Scottish Government’s impractical climate goals.

However, challenges loom large. The leader of the Scottish Conservatives has voiced concern, accusing the party of lacking a coherent strategy specifically for Scottish voters. He warns that the party's rise could inadvertently aid the SNP by splitting the opposition vote, thereby cementing the government's power. This caution highlights a broader apprehension that while the opposition party may capture widespread frustration, it risks failing to offer meaningful solutions that genuinely resonate with Scottish citizens.

Critics from established parties express alarm over the perceived far-right approach of the opposition party, which starkly contrasts the progressive aspirations of many Scots. This opposition not only signifies ideological fissures but also illustrates an urgent call for established parties to address the surging wave of populism. SNP officials have called for a concerted effort to counter the enticing rhetoric that has taken hold, stressing that complacency among traditional parties could lead to alarming consequences for Scottish governance.

The forthcoming Holyrood election stands as a crucial litmus test for reformist ideas and the electorate’s willingness to embrace a party still met with scepticism by many. The potential for the opposition to disrupt the entrenched political order is evident, yet whether it can solidify this momentum into a lasting political presence remains uncertain. As voters grapple with pressing issues such as the cost of living and ineffective governance, their alignment with this emerging party may ultimately be an act of defiance against the perceived shortcomings of Scottish leadership, signalling a pivotal shift not just in party loyalty, but also in the overarching political narrative of the nation.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/opinion/5255054/snp-reform-nigel-farage-jim-spence/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/bb41b97a-aaf5-47c3-be0b-993b3f34dfbc> - Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, has gained significant traction in Scotland, with its membership reaching 7,000, surpassing the Scottish Conservatives. The party, riding a populist wave, criticises policies like the net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target and advocates for increased oil and gas exploration. Reform aims to attract discontented voters from Labour, the SNP, and the Conservatives. Recent polls suggest Reform could secure 11% of seats in the 2026 Holyrood election. The party emphasises economic concerns, linking job losses in the oil and gas sector to government policies on renewable energy. Reform’s rise has taken established parties by surprise, and internal polling indicates potential significant representation in Holyrood. The party's officials have acknowledged the need to adjust their stance on immigration to suit the more welcoming Scottish electorate. Reform aims to be the new home for Scottish Conservatives and disillusioned voters, with ambitions for influence in a likely fragmented parliament.
3. <https://www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk/news/national/reform-will-only-help-snp-by-splitting-vote-scottish-tory-leader-claims-122747/> - The leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Russell Findlay, has claimed that the rise of Nigel Farage’s Reform UK will only benefit the SNP by splitting the vote. He criticised Reform for lacking Scottish policies and leadership. Findlay expressed disappointment over two of his councillors defecting to Reform and emphasised the need to persuade voters that the Conservatives understand their problems. A spokesperson for Reform UK Scotland responded by stating that the Tories offer no real change for Scottish people and that voters are tired of their vague old promises.
4. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/nigel-farages-reform-uk-accused-of-hiding-away-from-scottish-voters-4968765> - Scottish Conservative leader Russell Findlay has accused Reform UK of 'hiding away' from Scottish voters as Nigel Farage’s party threatens to halve his number of MSPs at the 2026 Holyrood election. Despite polls showing Reform could win up to a dozen seats at the crunch election, Findlay told The Scotsman’s Steamie podcast that he is 'not even thinking about Reform', and is instead focusing on his party’s own messaging.
5. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/nigel-farages-reform-party-doomed-fail-scotland-4797983> - An opinion piece argues that despite Reform UK's recent polling and general election results in Scotland, the party's chances of winning a seat at the 2026 Holyrood election are slim. The article highlights internal disagreements within the party, lack of Scottish policies, and the absence of a clear leader as factors contributing to its potential failure in Scotland.
6. <https://greens.scot/news/election-results-show-that-far-right-ideas-must-be-challenged-not-copied> - The Scottish Greens have expressed concern over Reform UK's rise, stating that the party's success in recent elections underscores the dangers of Labour’s complacency and the importance of Scottish independence. They argue that Reform UK's policies, which they describe as 'far right', should be challenged rather than copied, and emphasise the need for transformative change in Scotland.
7. <https://communist.red/scottish-first-minister-calls-for-firewall-against-farage/> - SNP leader John Swinney has called for a liberal cross-class alliance of political parties and trade unions to stem the rise of Farage’s Reform in Scotland. The article discusses the growing support for Reform UK in Scotland and the SNP's response to this development, highlighting the need for a united front against the party's influence.