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Local Government Elections 2017 : Composition of Councils

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This briefing analyses the political make-up of Scotland's councils following the local government elections held on 4 May 2017.

**POLLING
STATION**

**11 July 2017
SB 17/47**

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Executive Summary

- Local government elections were held on 4 May 2017 using the Single Transferable Vote system.
- No council has a majority administration. 12 councils are now led by a minority administration (six SNP, six Labour), 17 are in a coalition, and the remaining three are led by independent councillors (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Shetlands and Orkney Islands).
- Some councils took more than a month to make up their political administrations. The last council to do so was Edinburgh Council, with Labour and the SNP signing a coalition agreement on 16 June 2017.

Background

The local government elections held on 4 May 2017 saw 2,572 nominations put forward and 1,227 councillors elected (47.7% of candidates). Turnout was 46.0% excluding rejected ballot papers, or 46.9% including rejected papers.

SPICe Briefing [SB 17/35 Local Government Elections 2017](#) provides more information on the local government elections.

Council seats

All the figures in this briefing for the 2017 local elections, unless otherwise specified, are those provided to the Electoral Management Board for Scotland.

Figure 1 shows council seats by party (this refers to political parties as well as groups e.g. independent councillors) and by local authority after the 2017 local elections.

Figure 1: Proportion of seats by party and by local authority, post-2017 local government elections

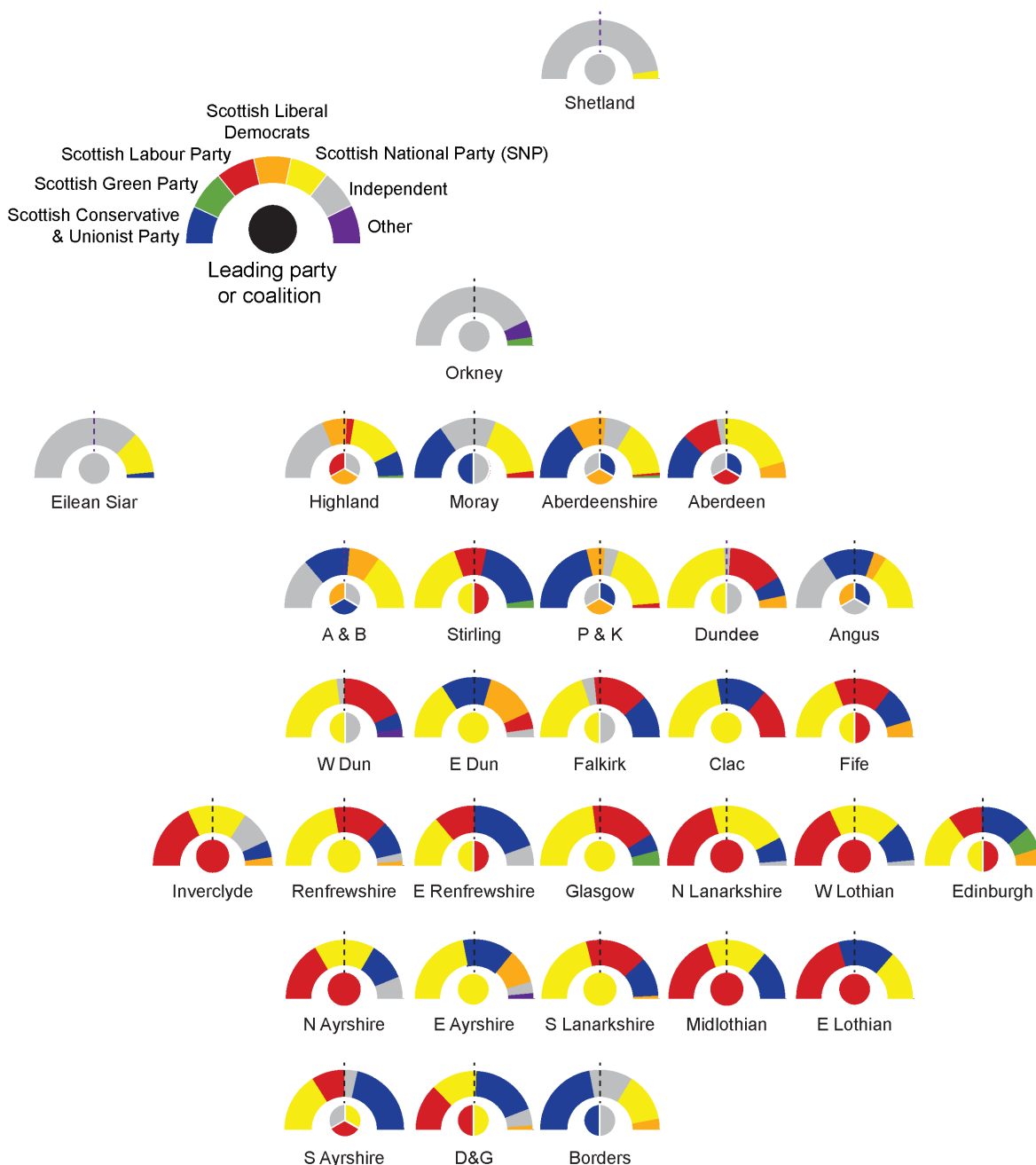


Table 1 shows the different types of administrations across Scotland's councils. 12 councils have a minority administration, with the Scottish National Party (SNP) and

Scottish Labour (Labour) each leading six councils. There are also 17 coalitions, with a SNP-Labour administration leading five councils.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the Shetland Islands and the Orkney Islands, where independent candidates won a majority of seats (74%, 95% and 86% respectively), are also led by independent councillors.

Table 1: Council make-up by administration type, post-2017 local government elections

Political administration of council ¹	Number of councils	% total Councils
SNP minority	6	18.8%
Labour minority	6	18.8%
SNP & Labour	5	15.6%
Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party ("Conservatives") Independent & Scottish Liberal Democrat Party ("Liberal Democrats")	4	12.5%
SNP & Independent	3	9.4%
Independent	3	9.4%
Conservatives & Independent	2	6.3%
Conservatives, Labour* & Independent	1	3.1%
Independent, Liberal Democrats & Labour	1	3.1%
SNP, Labour & Independent	1	3.1%

* Aberdeen Labour

Prior to the 2017 local government elections, there were 4 Labour-Conservative coalitions (Aberdeen City, East Lothian, South Ayrshire and Stirling). There are none post-2017 local elections.

Figure 2 compares the make-up of council administrations before and after the 2017 local government elections, and shows the council leader's party as well as the largest party in terms of council seats.

Table 2: Political administration by Council, post-2017 local government election

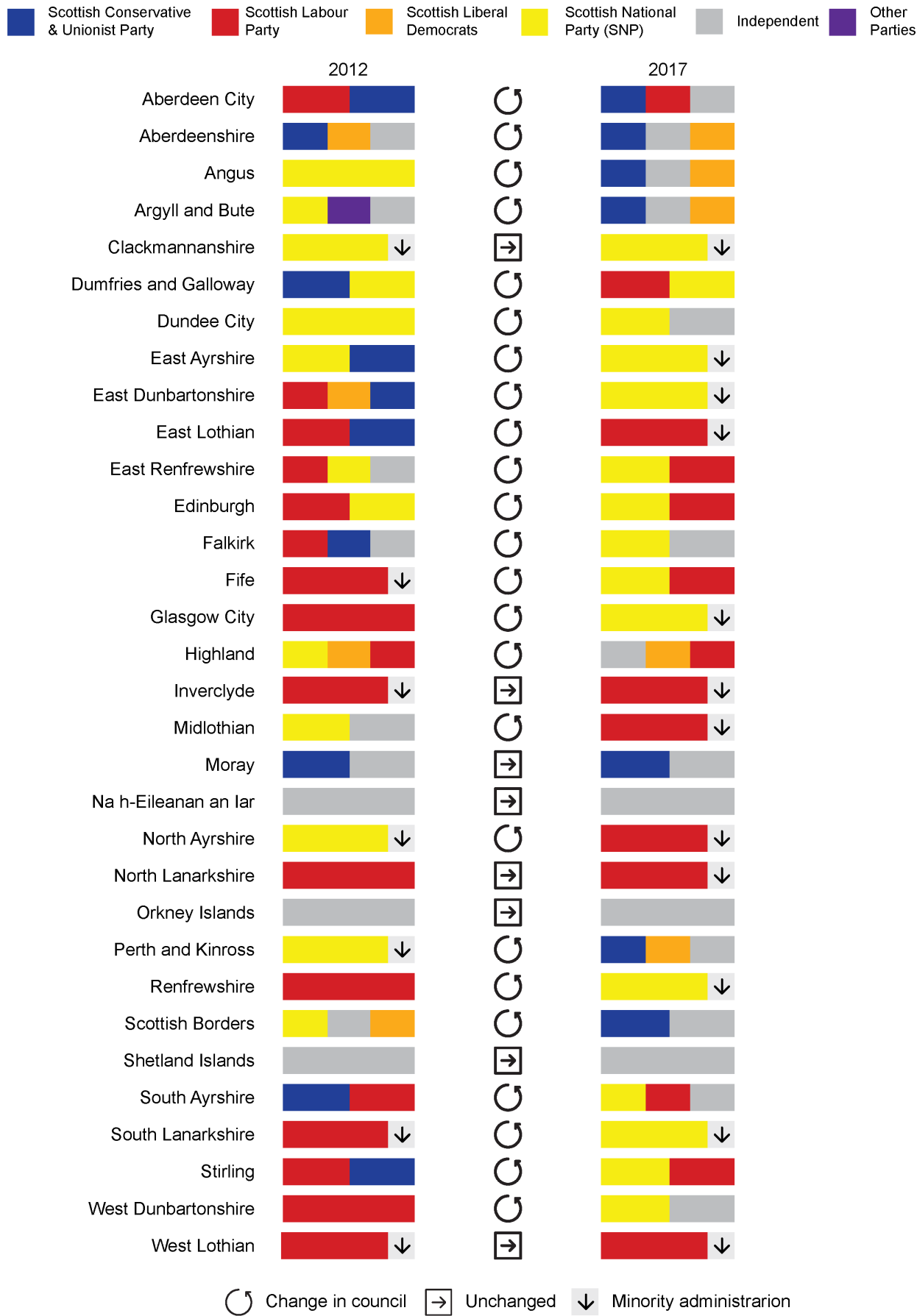
	Make-up pre-2017 elections ²	Make-up post-2017 elections	Leader's party	Largest party	Largest party in the political administration
Aberdeen City	Labour, Conservatives	Conservatives, Aberdeen Labour,* Independent	Aberdeen Labour	SNP	No
Aberdeenshire	Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Independent	Conservatives, Independent, Liberal Democrats	Conservatives	Conservatives	Yes
Angus	SNP	Conservatives, Independent, Liberal Democrats	Independent	SNP & Independents (same number of seats)	Independents : yes SNP: no
Argyll and Bute	SNP, Argyll First, Independent	Conservatives, Independent, Liberal Democrats	Liberal Democrats	SNP	No
Clackmannanshire	SNP minority	SNP minority	SNP	SNP	Yes
Dumfries and Galloway	Conservatives, SNP	Labour, SNP	Labour	Conservatives	No
Dundee City	SNP	SNP, Independent	SNP	SNP	Yes
East Ayrshire	SNP, Conservatives	SNP minority	SNP	SNP	Yes
East Dunbartonshire	Labour, Liberal Democrats, Conservatives	SNP minority	SNP	SNP	Yes
East Lothian	Labour, Conservatives	Labour minority	Labour	Labour	Yes
East Renfrewshire	Labour, SNP, Independent	SNP, Labour	SNP	Conservatives	No
Edinburgh	SNP, Labour	SNP, Labour	SNP	SNP	Yes
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Independent	Independent	Independent	Independent	Yes
Falkirk	Labour, Conservatives, Independent	SNP, Independent	SNP	SNP	Yes
Fife	Labour minority	SNP, Labour	Labour & SNP	SNP	Yes
Glasgow City	Labour	SNP minority	SNP	SNP	Yes
Highland	SNP, Liberal Democrats, Labour	Independent, Liberal Democrats, Labour	Independent	Independent	Yes
Inverclyde	Labour minority	Labour minority	Labour	Labour	Yes
Midlothian	SNP, Independent	Labour minority	Labour	Labour	Yes
Moray	Conservatives, Independent	Conservatives, Independent	Independent	SNP	No
North Ayrshire	SNP minority	Labour minority	Labour	Labour & SNP (same number of seats)	Labour: yes SNP: no
North Lanarkshire	Labour	Labour minority	Labour	SNP	No
Orkney Islands	Independent	Independent	Independent	Independent	Yes
Perth and Kinross	SNP minority	Conservatives, Liberal	Conservatives	Conservatives	Yes

	Make-up pre-2017 elections ²	Make-up post-2017 elections	Leader's party	Largest party	Largest party in the political administration
		Democrats, Independent			
Renfrewshire	Labour	SNP minority	SNP	SNP	Yes
Scottish Borders	SNP, Independent, Liberal Democrats	Conservatives, Independent	Conservatives	Conservatives	Yes
Shetland Islands	Independent	Independent	Independent	Independent	Yes
South Ayrshire	Conservatives, Labour	SNP, Labour, Independent	SNP	Conservatives	No
South Lanarkshire	Labour minority	SNP minority	SNP	SNP	Yes
Stirling	Labour, Conservatives	SNP, Labour	SNP	Conservatives & SNP (same number of seats)	SNP: Yes Conservative: no
West Dunbartonshire	Labour	SNP, Independent	SNP	SNP	Yes
West Lothian	Labour minority	Labour minority	Labour	SNP	No

* The BBC reported on 17 May 2017 that Scottish Labour's executive committee suspended Labour councillors in Aberdeen after they failed to stand down from a coalition with the Conservatives and Independents. ³

Figure 2 shows the political make-up of council administrations before and after the 2017 local government elections.

Figure 2: Change in council administrations at the 2017 local government elections



Minority administrations

Table 3 shows the Councils with a minority administration, and the share of seats won by the party in that administration.

Table 3: Councils with a minority administration, post-2017 local government election

Council	Political administration	Share of seats won by minority party in power	Is the party with the largest share of seats the one in the minority administration?
Clackmannanshire	SNP minority	44.4%	Yes
East Ayrshire	SNP minority	43.8%	Yes
East Dunbartonshire	SNP minority	31.8%	Yes
East Lothian	Labour minority	40.9%	Yes
Glasgow	SNP minority	45.9%	Yes
Inverclyde	Labour minority	36.4%	Yes
Midlothian	Labour minority	38.9%	Yes
North Ayrshire	Labour minority	33.3%	SNP got the same number of seats as Labour
North Lanarkshire	Labour minority	41.6%	No (SNP got 42.9%)
Renfrewshire	SNP minority	44.2%	Yes
South Lanarkshire	SNP minority	42.2%	Yes
West Lothian	Labour minority	36.4%	No (SNP got 39.4%)

Of the 12 councils led by a minority, six are SNP and six are Labour. East Dunbartonshire has the weakest minority administration in terms of share of council seats, with the SNP only holding 31.8% of seats. The strongest minority administration is in Glasgow, with SNP councillors holding 45.9% of seats.

In all but three councils, the minority party leading the administration also won the highest share of seats in the local government elections. In North Lanarkshire and West Lothian however, the party leading the council (Labour) got less seats than the SNP. In North Ayrshire there is a Labour minority administration and Labour and the SNP got the same number of seats.

Council leaders' party

Table 4 shows the number of leaders in different parties. Fife has chosen two co-leaders (SNP and Labour) so there are 33 council leaders in total. The SNP has the highest number of leaders, at 14, followed by independent councillors, six of whom are council leaders.

Table 4: Council leaders by party, post-2017 local government election

Party	Leader's party
SNP	14
Labour	8
Independent	6
Conservatives	3
Liberal Democrats	1
Aberdeen Labour	1
Total	33

Councils where the largest party was excluded from the political administration

Table 5 shows the councils where the party which won the highest share of seats did not end up in the make-up of the council, or if the two biggest parties got the same number of seats, one was excluded from the political administration. This was the case in eleven councils.

Table 5: Parties with the largest share of seats but excluded from the council administration, post-2017 local government elections

	Party with the largest share of seats but not in the political administration	Share of first preference votes of that party	Share of seats of that party	Political administration
Aberdeen City	SNP	32.4%	42.2%	Conservatives, Aberdeen Labour, Independent
Angus	SNP (same number of seats as Independents)	SNP: 31.2% Independents: 25%	32.1% each	Conservative, Independent, Liberal Democrats
Argyll & Bute	SNP	27.7%	30.6%	Conservative, Independent, Liberal Democrats
Dumfries & Galloway	Conservatives	37.2%	37.2%	Labour, SNP
East Renfrewshire	Conservatives	38.3%	38.9%	SNP, Labour
Moray	SNP	31.6%	34.6%	Conservatives, Independent
North Ayrshire	SNP (same number of seats as Labour)	SNP: 35.2%, Labour: 26.1%	33.3% each	Labour minority
North Lanarkshire	SNP	38.4%	42.9%	Labour minority
South Ayrshire	Conservatives	43.4%	42.9%	SNP, Labour, Independent
Stirling	Conservatives (same number of seats as SNP)	Conservative: 37.2% SNP: 34.8%	39.1% each	SNP, Labour
West Lothian	SNP	37.3%	39.4%	Labour minority

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