**A simple guide to the UK election result**

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The vote is in, and it's ... well, the British don't really know what to make of it yet. The United Kingdom general election, to choose all 650 members of Parliament and in the process form a new government, has produced a bit of a surprise result in which no-one is the clear winner. Confused? Here's what you need to know.

The ruling Conservative Party (nicknamed the Tories) thought it was going to increase its numbers in Parliament, but has instead lost seats - and its slim majority; it held 330 seats before the election (326 is the magic number for a majority). Instead, the opposition Labour Party has won back many seats. To cap it all off, Prime Minister Theresa May didn't need to call this election - she did so because she thought she'd win a landslide. The result is being seen as a major defeat for her.

Remember that the UK is still a monarchy of sorts. There's lots of tradition involved. This scenario is what Brits call a "hung parliament" - which just means that no party has a clear majority by itself. Coalition or minority governments are fairly common in European countries like France, Germany, or close neighbour Ireland - but some in Britain tend to see them as unstable.

What happens next is that the largest party asks permission from the Queen to form a government. The monarch will never refuse this request - it's just a tradition in the constitutional monarchy that is the United Kingdom. So Theresa May has visited the Queen and the Conservatives are going to attempt to form a government relying on the backing of the Democratic Unionist Party from Northern Ireland. If they can't, then Labour, the opposition, might try to put together a minority government. Or - always a possibility - there could be another election.

Okay, so does this affect Brexit? Will Britain still leave the European Union? In the short term, this is a bit of a problem. At the time of writing, negotiations for the UK leaving the EU are due to start on 20 June, just 11 days after the election. It's still possible the UK won't even have a government in place by then. Even if there is one, Theresa May's whole reason for calling the election was to stop "political game-playing" from other parties and give her the political clout to push through Brexit issues. Instead, she has less power, and will need other parties to back her to even form a government at all. The two largest parties both back Brexit in general, but both sides have MPs that disagree as to how Brexit is achieved. So it's just a question of detail. The entire process is less stable now. But, even if there is a delay in getting started, Brexit negotiations will happen - sooner or later.

So, is this bad for the prime minister? By the morning rush hour, Theresa May was "holed up inside" her official residence, her political gamble having gone so badly wrong. Even before the last few results came in, chatter had already started about resignation - which is not uncommon in the UK. Her main opponent, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, declared she had "lost votes, lost support and lost confidence", and: "I would have thought that's enough to go, actually." Theresa May reportedly says she'll stay on, regardless. But talk of her future prospects is everywhere.

Now what about Jeremy Corbyn? Jeremy is sometimes compared to US politician Bernie Sanders. He's an unusual party leader who has pulled off a personal victory here. The lifelong socialist only put his name down for the Labour leadership because no other left-winger wanted to. Bookies gave him odds of 200/1 - but he won anyway, thanks to ordinary members' votes. But the bicycle-riding, gardening, socialist leader didn't have the support of other Labour MPs - who almost immediately tried to push him out. He survived. And while Labour technically lost this election, they made big gains over the 2015 vote. Anecdotal evidence suggests the youth vote turned out for Labour in a big way. Owen Smith, who ran against Mr Corbyn for the leadership, said: "I was clearly wrong in feeling Jeremy wouldn't be able to do this. He proved me wrong and lots of people wrong, and I take my hat off to him."

So, another election? How often do the British vote? Well, another election could take place in a matter of weeks, but only if the negotiations break down and no-one can form any kind of government. It might seem like there's a lot of politics right now, but that's because:

* There was a 2014 vote on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom
* There was a 2015 general election, as scheduled
* The winning party had promised an EU Brexit vote
* When the "leave" campaign won Brexit, the prime minister resigned, so we got a new one
* The new prime minister called a snap election - this one
* In theory, a government has a set five-year term, so the next election is due in 2022.

But - as we've seen - an unexpected election can be called at any time if enough MPs agree to it, or if the government collapses.

Now what about Scottish independence? The Scottish National Party (SNP) had suggested the possibility of another referendum on Scottish independence, in the wake of the Brexit vote (Scotland mostly wanted to stay in the EU). They entered the election campaign in a very dominant position, holding 56 of the 59 seats in Scotland - and were expected to lose some seats, which they did, to a Conservatives surge. Deputy First Minister John Swinney admitted that the possibility of a second referendum on independence had played a "significant" role in the result. Having lost 21 seats as a result, it's very unclear what happens next with the SNP's campaign for independence.

So at the end of the day – nobody really, truly knows what’s going to happen next.