

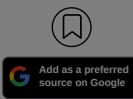
News UK

Green Party wins UK by-election dominated by battle for Muslim vote

Gorton and Denton victory is a major coup for party which campaigned to 'Stop Islamophobia'



Paul Carey
Tom Evans
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The UK's Green Party has won the [Gorton and Denton by-election](#), a contest that descended into accusations of sectarianism. The [Gaza war](#) was a hotbed issue.

Hannah Spencer, the Green candidate, won with 14,980 votes, beating Reform UK's Matt Goodwin (10,578) and Labour's Angeliki Stogia (9,364). It is the party's first Westminster by-election win and deals a serious blow to Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his ruling Labour party.

Muslims make up more than a quarter of the 80,000 voters in Gorton and Denton, and the poll was widely viewed as a referendum on the direction of travel in British politics. Some senior Labour figures had accused the Greens of "whipping up hatred" among Muslim voters during the campaign.

Concerns have been raised about people forcing family members to vote in a certain way in the contest.

Election observer group Democracy Volunteers warned it had witnessed "concerningly high levels" of family voting – an illegal practice where two voters use one polling booth and potentially direct each other on voting.

In her victory speech, Ms Spencer told her new constituents that "our struggles might not be the same, but we stick up for each other". She pledged to "work hard" for those who did not vote for her and criticised "politicians and divisive

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"I can't and won't accept this victory tonight without calling out the politicians and divisive figures who constantly scapegoat and blame our communities for all the problems in society.

"My Muslim friends and neighbours are just like me: human."

She said after: "I am really clear and really proud about my record of standing up for people in Palestine.

"But that's just the same record of standing up for people here in Greater Manchester, because whether it's on our doorsteps or across the world, if somebody is being oppressed or is suffering an injustice, I will always speak up for that."



Three-way fight

Turnout was 47.62 per cent – slightly lower than at the 2024 general election, when it was 47.8 per cent. The vote was triggered by the resignation of former Labour MP Andrew Gwynne on health grounds. Before this by-election, it had been considered a safe Labour seat.

Victory for the Greens is a major coup for the party, which campaigned on a platform of "Stop Islamophobia" and "Stop Reform". Nigel Farage's populists had at one stage looked likely to capitalise on Labour's poor polling performance across the country.

Opinion polls before voting reinforced the fracturing of British politics, with the centre imploding and voters moving to the far left or right. It was thought tactical voting by those anxious to keep Reform out of power would substantially influence the result – and that appears to have been the case.

The pound sterling fell against the euro to a two-month low on Friday, although it was mostly steady against the US dollar after the Greens win. It was trading around 87.60 pence to a euro on Friday, the weakest since December 19. The currency this month has dropped about 1.5 per cent against the US dollar due to expectations of a rate cut by the Bank of England in March.

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Green Party take victory

Labour and reform defeated in Gorton and Denton by-election

Source: 2024 voter turnout = 47.8% 2026 voter turnout = 47.62%



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Ms Spencer, a 34-year-old councillor and plumber, hinged her campaign on an appeal to the constituency's large Pakistani community, distributing leaflets in Urdu showing her in front of a mosque wearing a keffiyeh and urging voters to "make Labour pay". The leaflet also featured newspaper headlines showing the proposal by Reform to ban visas for Pakistani migrants.

Another campaign video accused Reform's candidate, GB News presenter Matt Goodwin, of being someone who would "fuel the flames of Islamophobia" if he became the area's MP.

Ms Spencer, who becomes the Green Party's fifth MP, also apologised to customers who had made appointments for plumbing jobs, joking: "I think I might have to cancel the work that you had booked in, because I'm heading to Parliament."

Celebrating the swing of 27.5 per cent from Labour to Greens, Zach Polanski, who has drummed up a swell of support since being elected party leader in September, said: "If we see a swing like this at the next general election, there will be a tidal wave of new Green MPs."

Reform's Mr Goodwin said he was proud of his campaign which "focused on Gorton, not Gaza". He posted on X: "We are losing our country. A dangerous Muslim sectarianism has emerged.

"We have only one general election left to save Britain."

He said: "I think the progressives were told how to vote, and I think what you saw was a coalition of Islamists and woke progressives that came together to dominate a constituency. And many people in this country will look at Gorton and Denton and be appalled by what they see."

He also said Reform had "embarrassed Labour in one of their strongest seats".

Reform leader Mr Farage claimed "cheating" had led to his candidate's defeat.

Mr Farage posted on X: "This election was a victory for sectarian voting and cheating. Matt Goodwin was a great candidate for us.

"Roll on the elections on May 7. It will be goodbye Starmer and goodbye to the Tory party."

Conservative candidate Charlotte Cadden received just 706 votes, with the Liberal Democrats getting 653.

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other and you start to unravel the culture of tolerance that makes Britain great," she said.

Labour blow

Election expert Sir John Curtice described the Greens' victory as a "remarkable performance" which would "make life for Keir Starmer even worse".

Labour's defeat in the previously rock-solid Greater Manchester constituency will pile pressure on Mr Starmer. The seat was just outside one of Labour's top 50 biggest wins in 2024.

It now ranks as the sixth largest Labour majority to be overturned at a by-election since the Second World War.

The outcome will likely renew speculation about his position, which has come under pressure from the scandal over the arrest of his former US ambassador and Labour veteran Peter Mandelson in the Epstein investigation, a slew of departures from No 10 and Labour's plummeting popularity.

Mr Starmer's decision to block potential leadership rival Andy Burnham, the Greater Manchester Mayor, from running will also come under the spotlight.

Labour Party chairwoman Anna Turley lamented the "clearly disappointing" result, saying: "By-elections are normally difficult for the party of government, and this election was no different."

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She added that "the politics of anger and easy answers offered by the Greens and Reform" would not tackle the cost-of-living crisis, create opportunities for young people or invest in public services.

The Greens' victory will undermine Labour's claim to be the only option for anti-Reform voters in the May local elections, deepening the electoral challenge for the

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Labour's deputy leader, Lucy Powell, earlier admitted the Greens had won the "argument that they were best placed" to keep Reform out of Gorton and Denton.

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