

Briefing for RCSLT Members: 2026 Scottish Parliament Election Results

14 May 2026

Summary

TOTAL SEATS ⓘ



The Scottish Parliament election results show a mixed picture of winners and losers. The SNP has won (another) landslide victory with all its opponents far behind. The Scottish Liberal Democrats more than doubled their representation, reaching double figures for the first time in 15 years. The Scottish Green Party won constituencies for the first time and now have an MSP in every part of the country. The Scottish Conservatives collapsed, losing more than half of their seats and votes. Scottish Labour did badly but still managed to tie with Reform for the title of second largest party, and conversely Reform UK slightly underperformed on expectations.

Today, MSPs will meet to be officially sworn in and elect a new Presiding Officer. Next week, they'll formally elect John Swinney as First Minister and he will appoint his cabinet and ministers shortly after. We'll expect Scottish Parliament committee membership to be decided in the following weeks.

Analysis

The SNP is now expected to enter their fifth term in power as a minority government, meaning they will need to rely on votes from other parties to pass legislation they want to go through. It's expected that John Swinney as First Minister will be more inclined to work with the Liberal Democrats rather than the Greens, given their recent history of being in an SNP-Green coalition government that went sour. This is encouraging for us, given the strong mentions of embedding SLTs in education in the Liberal Democrats'

manifesto, but equally, there are a number of commitments in the Green manifesto that we would like to see come to pass should the SNP work with them.

Despite the clear opportunities to influence policy in a minority administration, it's important to remember that MSPs entering this parliamentary session will need to make difficult decisions given the very challenging economic environment we all now face. At RCSLT Scotland, we're planning to adapt our influencing to this environment by demonstrating the economic value of your work. Investment in SLT can reduce long-term demand on health, education and social care services by preventing escalation of need and improving long-term outcomes – saving public money.