

Research Briefing

22 June 2026

By Neil Johnston

Leadership elections: Labour Party



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Summary

2026 leadership election

On 22 June 2026 [Sir Kier Starmer announced his intention to resign](#) as party leader and Prime Minister. This followed a period of speculation about his leadership.

In his resignation speech Sir Kier said the nomination period for a new party leader would be 9 July to 16 July. If there was more than one candidate an election would be held and completed by 1 September. The Labour Party's National Executive Committee (NEC) is responsible for drawing up the detailed timetable.

[Andy Burnham confirmed](#) on the morning of the resignation that he would enter the leadership race.

Labour Party Rule Book

Rules for Labour Party leadership elections are set out in the [Labour Party Rule Book](#) (PDF, 2026 edition), with Labour's ruling National Executive Committee (NEC) responsible for setting exact timings and election procedures. The rules may be varied by the consent of the NEC.

Vacancies

When a vacancy arises, Labour Party leadership or deputy leadership elections consist of two stages:

Stage 1: Nominations

Candidates seeking to enter the ballot must be an MP.

Candidates must be nominated by 20% of fellow Labour MPs.

The current rules were last changed in 2021, when the Labour Party Conference agreed to raise the threshold for nominations from 10% to 20% of MPs.

To progress candidates must also be nominated by:

- 5% of constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), or
- at least three affiliates of the Labour Party (at least two must be trade unions) where the combined membership of nominating affiliates should be at least 5% of affiliated membership

Affiliates are groups or organisations which have interests consistent with those of the Labour Party; they include trade unions and co-operative and socialist societies.

The nomination stage for CLPs and affiliates was added after a review of Labour leadership elections in 2018. In the 2020 leadership election, the candidates had to secure the required level of support from fellow MPs before moving on to the next round of securing the required nominations from CLPs and affiliates.

Stage 2: Ballot

Eligible members of the party and affiliates vote for the leader using a preferential voting system. Each voter has one vote but may rank the candidates in order of preference by marking their ballot 1, 2, 3 and so on. The winner is the first candidate to secure over 50% of the vote, using rounds of transfers of preferences if required. If a candidate wins over 50% of first preference votes, no transfers are required.

The rules for stage one are set out in chapter 4 of the Labour Party Rule Book. The precise rules on eligibility to vote in stage two of a leadership election are set out by the NEC.

Leadership challenges

Labour MPs cannot formally hold a vote of confidence in the party leader. However, MPs may initiate a leadership challenge each year prior to the annual session of party conference.

An MP wishing to challenge an incumbent leader must be supported by 20% of Labour MPs. If enough support is gathered to initiate a stage two membership ballot, the incumbent leader is automatically on the ballot paper, and they do not need to seek nominations from MPs.

Elections for the deputy leader of the party follow the same format.

1

Current rules

The current rules for electing the leader and the deputy leader of the Labour Party are set out in chapter four of the [Labour Party Rule Book](#) (PDF of the 2025 version).

A leadership election can be triggered in two ways:

- a vacancy arises, or
- if no vacancy exists and a challenger gets the support of 20% of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) in advance of the party's annual conference

When the party is in government, and the party leader position becomes vacant and the leader becomes unavailable, the Cabinet - in consultation with the National Executive Committee (NEC) - will appoint one of its members to serve as party leader until a ballot can be organised.

In practice, the outgoing party leader usually remains in place until the winner of the leadership contest is announced. The outgoing leader remains Prime Minister until they have formally resigned in an audience with the King. The new party leader is then invited to an audience with the King, usually shortly after the resignation of the outgoing Prime Minister. The new party leader is then formally appointed Prime Minister by the King.¹

When the party is in opposition and the party leadership becomes vacant, the deputy leader automatically becomes party leader. The NEC will then decide whether to hold an immediate ballot or hold a ballot in the run up to the next annual conference, with the new leader announced at that conference.

If the party is in opposition and both leader and deputy leader positions become vacant, the NEC will make provision for a new leadership election.

The NEC, in consultation with the Shadow Cabinet, may choose to appoint a member of the Shadow Cabinet to serve as party leader until the outcome of that ballot.

¹ Commons Library briefing, [How is the Prime Minister appointed?](#)

1.1

Nominations

Nomination rules when there is a vacancy

A candidate wishing to stand must reach two nomination thresholds.

Firstly, they must be nominated by 20% of MPs in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). The PLP is made up of current Labour MPs, sometimes referred to as those holding the party whip. MPs elected as Labour MPs but who subsequently resign the whip or have it withdrawn are not included.

The current threshold level of 20% was last altered in 2021 following changes agreed by the NEC and approved by the party conference.²

Secondly, a candidate must then be nominated by either:

- 5% of constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), or
- at least three affiliate organisations (two of which must be trade unions) which represent a minimum of 5% of the affiliated membership

The deputy leader election rules follow the same format.

Candidates who reach the nomination threshold move to the membership ballot (see below). In 2020, there were 553,000 full members entitled to vote.

Affiliate organisations may decide for themselves how to select their preferred candidates at the nomination stage. In 2020, some organisations balloted, the Communications Workers Union held a special conference and others used their executive councils to decide.³

At the time of the 2020 election, there were 12 affiliated trade unions and 20 affiliated organisations.⁴ In the 2020 leadership election, there were almost 218,000 individual affiliate members entitled to vote.

Not all affiliates are expected to endorse a candidate. The Fabian Society, for example, states in its constitution that it will not nominate any candidate at a leadership election.⁵

² LabourList, [Labour NEC passes 20% MP nomination threshold for leadership contests](#), 25 September 2021

³ LabourList, [Which Labour leadership candidates have unions and affiliates backed?](#), 30 January 2020

⁴ As above

⁵ Fabian Society, [The Labour leadership election and the Fabians](#), 15 January 2020

Nomination rules for challenging a sitting leader

The rules state that “Where there is no vacancy, nominations may be sought by potential challengers. In this case any nomination must be supported by 20 per cent of the Commons members of the PLP.”⁶

Following some debate, Labour’s ruling NEC ruled that an incumbent leader facing a challenge should automatically be on the ballot (see section 4.2 below).

If a challenger successfully reaches the nomination threshold, then contest moves to the membership ballot (see below).

1.2 Membership ballot

The precise rules for eligibility to vote in the ballot of members are set by the NEC and set out in procedural guidelines and in each annual report to the Labour Party Conference.

The Labour Party Rule Book states that all individuals who are eligible to participate in the election shall have continuous membership of at least six months prior to the approved timetable being announced.⁷

Only party members and affiliate members are able to vote. A rule change in 2021, agreed by Labour’s annual conference, abolished the registered supporter category of voter.⁸ These were not full members or affiliates, but people who paid a supporter fee to vote in leadership elections.

Voting is by preferential ballot, sometimes known as instant run-off. Eligible voters each get a ballot, and ballots are counted on the basis of one member one vote. However, instead of marking their favourite candidate with an ‘X’, electors rank the candidates by marking their ballots with 1,2,3 and so on.

The votes are counted and if a candidate gains more than 50% of first preferences then they are declared the winner.

If no one wins more than 50% of the first preference votes, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. The ballots of the eliminated candidate are then redistributed to whichever candidate has a ‘2’ next to their name. This process is repeated, using voters’ third and fourth preferences, if necessary, until one candidate has over 50% of the valid votes.

⁶ [Labour Party Rule Book 2025](#) (PDF), chapter 4

⁷ [Labour Party Rule Book 2025](#) (PDF), chapter 4, section C iv

⁸ LabourList, [Every rule change at Labour conference 2021: what it means and how it passed](#), 1 October 2021

2

Labour Party leaders since 1906

A list of Labour Party leaders from 1906 to the present day is provided in the table below.

Labour Party leaders 1906 to present	
1906–08	Keir Hardie
1908–10	Arthur Henderson
1910–11	George Barnes
1911–14	James Ramsay MacDonald
1914–17	Arthur Henderson
1917–21	William Adamson
1921–22	John Clynes
1922–31	James Ramsay MacDonald
1931–32	Arthur Henderson
1932–35	George Lansbury
1935–55	Clement Attlee
1955–63	Hugh Gaitskell
1963–76	Harold Wilson
1976–80	James Callaghan
1980–83	Michael Foot
1983–92	Neil Kinnock
1992–94	John Smith
1994–2007	Tony Blair
2007–10	Gordon Brown
2010–15	Ed Miliband
2015–20	Jeremy Corbyn
2020–26	Keir Starmer

Sources: Keith Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, 2000; Harry Harmer, *Longman Companion to the Labour Party 1900-1998*, 1999

Before 1922, the leader of the Labour Party was the chair of the parliamentary party. Between 1922 and 1963, the leader was titled Chairman and Leader of the Parliamentary Party.

The list does not include instances when a deputy leader automatically becomes leader because the leadership becomes vacant while Labour is in opposition. The two most recent examples of this were:

- when Harriet Harman was leader between the resignation of Gordon Brown and the election of Ed Miliband in 2010
- when Margaret Beckett was leader of the party between the death of John Smith and the election of Tony Blair in 1994

In 2020, Jeremy Corbyn remained as leader until the election of Keir Starmer was confirmed.

In 1970, the leader was restyled Leader of the Parliamentary Party, and from 1978 Leader of the Labour Party. Leadership elections while in opposition were annual, although in most cases these were a formality.

The Library briefing [Labour Party leaders and officials since 1975](#) gives lists of PLP and NEC chairs since 1975.

2.1

Deputy leaders

Before 1922, the deputy leader was the vice-chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party. In 1922, when the leader of the party was Chairman and Leader of the Parliamentary Party, the deputy became known as deputy leader.

After 1922, as with leaders, deputy leaders were elected annually; in most years, the elections were a formality and the deputy elected unopposed.

In 1922 and 1931, there were joint deputy leaders. All deputies are shown in the table below.

Labour Party deputy leaders 1906 to present	
1906–08	David Shackleton
1908–10	George Barnes
1910–11	John Clynes
1911–12	William Brace
1912–14	James Parker
1914–15	Arthur Gill
1915–18	John Hodge and George Wardle (joint)
1918–21	John Clynes
1921–22	James Thomas and Stephen Walsh (joint)
1922–23	Stephen Walsh and Josiah Wedgewood (joint)
1923–31	John Clynes
1931–35	Clement Attlee
1935–45	Arthur Greenwood
1945–56	Herbert Morrison
1956–59	James Griffiths
1959–60	Aneurin Bevan
1960–70	George Brown
1970–72	Roy Jenkins
1972–76	Edward Short
1976–80	Michael Foot
1980–83	Dennis Healy
1983–92	Roy Hattersley
1992–94	Margaret Beckett
1994–2007	John Prescott
2007–15	Harriet Harman
2015–19	Tom Watson
2020–2025	Angela Rayner
2025–present	Lucy Powell

Sources: Keith Laybourn, *A Century of Labour*, 2000; Harry Harmer, *Longman Companion to the Labour Party 1900-1998*, 1999

3

2026 leadership election

On 22 June 2026 Sir Kier Starmer announced his intention to resign as party leader and Prime Minister.⁹ This followed a period of speculation about his leadership.

This was brought to a head after the Labour Party won the Makerfield by-election, held on Thursday 18 June 2026. Andy Burnham, who won for Labour, had made clear his intention to challenge for the party leadership if he won the by-election.¹⁰ He confirmed on the morning of Sir Kier's resignation that he would enter the leadership race.¹¹

Candidates need nominations from 20% of the MPs in the PLP. That figure is currently 81 MPs (from the 403 Labour MPs holding the Labour whip at the time of the contest).

During his resignation speech Sir Kier indicated nominations would be open from 9 to 16 July and any election would be completed by 1 September.¹²

The NEC will announce the full details for nominations and election in due course.

⁹ BBC News, [Prime Minister Keir Starmer's resignation speech in full](#), 22 June 2026

¹⁰ BBC News, [PM under pressure from Labour MPs and ministers to set timetable for exit](#), 19 June 2026

¹¹ Guardian, [Wes Streeting backs Andy Burnham to become Labour leader and PM](#), 22 June 2026

¹² BBC News, [Prime Minister Keir Starmer's resignation speech in full](#), 22 June 2026

4 Previous contests under current rules

This section sets out the leadership and deputy leadership contests under the current format of the rules. These are the contests from 2015 onwards. Note that some of the precise details for the rules have been modified over time.

4.1 2025 deputy leadership

Angela Rayner resigned as Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 5 September 2025. She was found to have breached the ministerial code.¹³

At the same time, Ms Rayner resigned as deputy leader of the Labour Party. Her role as deputy party leader was separate to that of Deputy Prime Minister. The position of Deputy Prime Minister is one that is appointed by the Prime Minister, usually along with another ministerial role.¹⁴ David Lammy was appointed Deputy Prime Minister on the same day that Ms Rayner resigned.

Also on the same day, the Labour Party announced details of an election to fill the deputy leader role.¹⁵

2025 deputy leadership election timetable		
Monday	8 September	Freeze date for elector eligibility
Tuesday	9 September	Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) nominations open
Wednesday	10 September	PLP candidate hustings
Thursday	11 September (5pm)	PLP nominations close
Friday	12 September (1pm)	Deadline for validly nominated candidates to consent to nomination and submit statements for circulation to constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) and affiliates
Saturday	13 September	CLP and affiliate nominations open

¹³ BBC News, [Angela Rayner resigns after underpaying tax on Hove flat](#), 5 September 2025

¹⁴ Commons Library briefing CBP 9880, [The office and functions of the Prime Minister](#), p13-4

¹⁵ Labour Party, [Deputy Leadership Election 2025](#), 5 September 2025

Saturday	27 September	Close of CLP and affiliate nominations Deadline to clear membership arrears to be issued a ballot
Sunday	5 October	Deadline to resolve disputes as to voter eligibility
Wednesday	8 October	Ballot opens
Thursday	23 October	Ballot closes
Saturday	25 October	Announcement of result

Source: Labour Party, [Deputy Leadership Election 2025](#), accessed 9 September 2025

As of 9 September 2025, six candidates had announced their intention to seek nominations from PLP colleagues:¹⁶

- Paula Barker
- Alison McGovern
- Bridget Phillipson
- Lucy Powell
- Bell Ribeiro-Addy
- Dame Emily Thornberry

At the time of the election, there were 399 Labour MPs in receipt of the Labour whip (meaning they had not been suspended from or left the parliamentary party).

To reach the 20% threshold to move to the second stage of the nomination process, candidates needed to be nominated by 80 MPs.

Alison McGovern withdrew from the race on 10 September.¹⁷ Emily Thornberry and Paula Barker withdrew on 11 September.¹⁸

Shortly after nominations closed Bell Ribeiro-Addy revealed she had not reached the required number of nominations.¹⁹ The party later confirmed Bridget Phillipson (175 nominations) and Lucy Powell (117 nominations) had reached the threshold.²⁰

Both remaining candidates secured sufficient backing from CLPs and affiliates. Bridget Phillipson received nominations from 165 CLPs and six of the nine nominating unions (Community, GMB, NUM, Unison, Usdaw, Musicians' Union). Lucy Powell received nominations from 269 CLPs and three unions

¹⁶ BBC News, [Phillipson and Thornberry join Labour deputy leader race](#), 9 September 2025

¹⁷ BBC News, [McGovern exits Labour deputy race and backs Phillipson](#), 10 September 2025

¹⁸ BBC News, [Barker and Thornberry pulls out of deputy Labour leader race](#), 11 September 2025

¹⁹ BBC News, [Phillipson and Powell appear set for Labour deputy showdown](#), 11 September 2025

²⁰ Labour Party, [Deputy Leadership Election 2025 – PLP nominations](#), 11 September 2025

(ASLEF, CWU, FBU).²¹ Two unions did not back either candidate (Unite and TSSA).²² Twelve of the twenty socialist societies made nominations with four choosing Bridget Phillipson and eight nominating Lucy Powell.²³

Result

The result was announced on 25 October 2025 with Lucy Powell winning. She took 54.3% of the valid votes on a turnout of 16.6%.

2025 deputy leadership ballot		
Candidates	Votes	%
Bridget Phillipson	73,536	45.7%
Lucy Powell	87,407	54.3%
Turnout	160,943	16.6%
Eligible voters	970,642	

[Source: Labour Party Deputy Leadership Result Announcement](#)

The Party did not release any detailed breakdown of the votes. The 971,000 voters were made up of party members and registered affiliates but the exact numbers of each were not released. Estimates suggest the electorate was made up of 260,000, along with roughly 700,000 affiliate members.²⁴

A rule change to Labour Party rules increased the potential number of trade union affiliates but at the same time the number of full members of the party has reportedly declined. The Labour Party accounts filed with the Electoral Commission stated the party had 333,000 members as of 1 December 2024, 37,000 fewer than December 2023.²⁵

²¹ Labour Party, [Deputy Leadership Election 2025 – CLP & Affiliate nominations](#), accessed 7 October 2025. At the time of the contest there were 20 [socialist societies](#) and eleven [affiliated unions](#)

²² [Unite refuses to nominate any candidate in Labour deputy leadership election, TSSA statement on Labour Deputy Leadership election](#) accessed 7 October 2025

²³ Labour Party, [Deputy Leadership Election 2025 – CLP & Affiliate nominations](#), accessed 7 October 2025. At the time of the contest there were 20 [socialist societies](#) and eleven [affiliated unions](#)

²⁴ Labour List, [Deputy leadership election: Why did the turnout appear so low?](#), 28 October 2025

²⁵ The Labour Party, [Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024](#), p4

4.2

2020

Following Labour's defeat in the December 2019 general election, Jeremy Corbyn announced that he would not lead the Party into the next election. He said the timing would be for the NEC to decide but that he would lead the party until a new leader had been elected.²⁶

Labour's NEC agreed the timetable for the election on 6 January 2020, saying that a new leader would be announced at a special conference on 4 April.²⁷ In March, in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak the party announced that the special conference would be cancelled and replaced by a smaller event on the same day. The party also cancelled hustings events.²⁸

This was the last leadership election where candidates were required to be nominated by 10% of the combined total of House of Commons members of the PLP and Labour MEPs sitting in the European Parliament.

MEPs were included in the 2020 leadership election as PLP nominations closed on 13 January 2020. Under the terms of UK's exit from the EU, MEPs from the UK ceased to have seats in the European Parliament on 31 January 2020.²⁹

This was also the last leadership election where non-members of the party could register as supporters for payment of a one-off fee to be able to vote in the ballot. These rule changes were approved in 2021 (see section 4).

2020 leadership election timetable		
Monday	6 January	NEC meeting – timetable agreed and published
Tuesday	7 January	MP/MEP nominations open and PLP Leader hustings
Wednesday	8 January	PLP Deputy Leader husting
Monday	13 January	MP/MEP nominations close (2.30pm)
Tuesday	14 January	Deadline for validly nominated candidates to consent to nomination (1pm)

²⁶ Independent, [Jeremy Corbyn will stand down 'early next year' but declines to take blame for election disaster](#), 13 December 2019

²⁷ LabourList, [Labour's ruling body sets rules and timings for leadership elections](#), 6 January 2020

²⁸ LabourList, [Labour cancels leadership results conference due to coronavirus](#), 12 March 2020

²⁹ Library Insight, [Brexit next steps: Replacing the UK's MEPs](#), 30 January 2020

		Registered supporters window opens (5.00pm)
Wednesday	15 January	Supporting CLP/affiliate nominations open
Thursday	16 January	Registered supporters window closes (5.00pm)
Monday	20 January	Freeze date for new members and affiliated supporters (5.00pm)
Monday	3 February	Final date for new and affiliated supporters (5.00pm)
Friday	14 February	CLP/affiliate nominations close
		Last day for membership to be in full compliance (including paying of arrears)
Monday	24 February	Membership ballot opens
Friday	27 March	Last date for postal ballot reissues
Monday	30 March	Last date for email ballot reissues
Thursday	2 April	Ballot closes (12.00 noon)
Saturday	4 April	Results announced at special conference

Source: [Labour Party leadership Elections hub](#) accessed 12 February 2020

Note: Registered supporters had to pay a one-off £25 fee

Eligibility to vote

Full members and affiliated supporters

At its meeting on 6 January, the NEC also agreed the eligibility rules for members to be entitled to vote in the election. The freeze date for new members to join the party and for affiliated supporters, set under the 2018 rule amendments, was 20 January 2020.

Registered supporters

Registered supporters had a 48-hour window to register to be eligible to vote, from 5pm on 14 January to 5pm on 16 January. The fee to register was set at £25. When the results were declared the number of registered supporters was just over 13,600.

Leadership candidates

Six candidates announced their intention to stand:

- Emily Thornberry,³⁰

³⁰ BBC News, [Labour leadership: Emily Thornberry to run for Labour leadership](#), 18 December 2019

- Clive Lewis,³¹
- Jess Phillips,³²
- Lisa Nandy,³³
- Keir Starmer,³⁴
- Rebecca Long-Bailey.³⁵

Clive Lewis had five declared nominations of the required 22 when he withdrew from the contest on 13 January, the day of the deadline for MP/MEP nominations.

The remaining five candidates secured the required 22 nominations from MPs and MEPs (10% of the combined total of MPs and MEPs). At the time of the election there were 202 Labour MPs and 10 Labour Members of the European Parliament.³⁶

The contest then went on to the new second stage. For candidates to appear on the ballot they needed nominations from either 5% of CLPs or from three affiliates (of which two had to be trade unions) who accounted for 5% of affiliated supporters.

The number of required CLP nominations was 33 (5% of the 648 CLPs). The deadline for achieving the threshold was 14 February. There were 32 affiliated unions and organisations at the time of the contest.

Jess Phillips withdrew from the race on 21 January.³⁷

By the 14 February deadline three of the four remaining candidates had achieved the required threshold. Emily Thornberry was eliminated as she only received nominations from 31 CLPs and no affiliates had nominated her.

³¹ BBC News, [Clive Lewis joins Labour leadership race](#), 19 December 2019

³² BBC News, [Labour leadership: Jess Phillips joins race to replace Jeremy Corbyn](#), 3 January 2020

³³ BBC News, [Labour leadership: Lisa Nandy joins race to replace Jeremy Corbyn](#), 3 January

³⁴ BBC News, [Labour leadership: Sir Keir Starmer enters race](#), 4 January 2020

³⁵ BBC News, [Labour leadership: Rebecca Long Bailey enters race](#), 6 January 2020

³⁶ [Labour Party leadership Elections hub](#) accessed 12 February 2020

³⁷ BBC News, [Labour leadership: Jess Phillips quits race to succeed Jeremy Corbyn](#), 21 January 2020

2020 Stage 1 - Leadership nominations

Candidates	MP/MEP nominations	CLPs	Affiliates
Emily Thornberry	23	31	0 *
Clive Lewis	5 ‡	-	-
Jess Phillips	23 ‡	-	-
Lisa Nandy	31	72	4
Keir Starmer	88	374	7
Rebecca Long-Bailey	34	163	15

* Eliminated ‡ Withdrew

Source: LabourList, [Rolling list: CLP nominations in Labour's 2020 leadership race](#), first published, 16 January 2020, accessed 14 June 2022

Leadership result

Sir Keir Starmer was elected on the first round of voting. He polled more than 50% of the vote in every category of voter. His final total was 56.2%.

2020 Stage 2 - Leadership ballot

Candidates	Member votes	Affiliate votes	Registered supporters	Total	
Rebecca Long-Bailey	117,598	16,970	650	135,218	27.6%
Lisa Nandy	58,788	18,861	2,128	79,597	16.2%
Keir Starmer	225,135	40,417	10,228	275,780	56.2%
Eligible voters	552,835	217,690	13,626	784,151	
Turnout	72.6%	35.0%	95.4%	62.6%	
Spoilt ballots	43	93	0	136	

Source: Labour Party, [Leadership and Deputy Leadership election 2020 - Results](#)

Deputy leadership candidates

Tom Watson resigned as deputy leader on 6 November 2019. This was the day Parliament dissolved for the general election. Watson also announced he would not seek re-election as an MP. At the time, a deputy leadership contest was expected early in 2020.³⁸ Following the Party's 2020 election defeat, and the resignation of Jeremy Corbyn, the deputy leadership was held at the same time as the leadership election.

³⁸ Guardian, [Tom Watson: anger and regret follow deputy's resignation](#), 7 November 2019

Six candidates announced their intention to stand.

- Dawn Butler,³⁹
- Khalid Mahmood,⁴⁰
- Richard Burgon,⁴¹
- Angela Rayner,⁴²
- Ian Murray,⁴³
- Rosena Allin-Khan.⁴⁴

Khalid Mahmood withdrew from the race on 9 January 2020, saying he was unlikely to win enough support from Labour MPs to make it through to the next stage.⁴⁵

The five remaining candidates all secured enough nominations from MPs/MEPs to make it through to the CLP and affiliate nominations stage. By the end of the nomination period for CLP and affiliates, all five candidates had reached the required number of CLP nominations (33) to be included in the ballot.

2020 Stage 1 - Deputy leadership nominations			
Candidates	MP/MEP nominations	CLPs	Affiliates
Rosena Allin-Khan	23	56	2
Richard Burgon	22	77	4
Dawn Butler	29	82	3
Ian Murray	34	60	3
Angela Rayner	88	364	13

Source: LabourList, [Rolling list: CLP nominations in Labour's 2020 deputy leader race](#), first published, 16 January 2020, accessed 14 June 2022

³⁹ PoliticsHome, [Dawn Butler becomes first candidate to enter Labour deputy leadership race](#), 7 November 2019

⁴⁰ [Birmingham Live](#), [Birmingham MP Khalid Mahmood to stand for Labour Deputy Leader](#), 17 December 2019

⁴¹ LabourList, [Richard Burgon announces deputy leadership bid](#), 31 December 2019

⁴² BBC News, [Angela Rayner to stand in Labour deputy leadership race](#), 6 January 2020

⁴³ BBC News, [Labour deputy leader: Scottish MP Ian Murray to stand](#), 7 January 2020

⁴⁴ Guardian, [Labour must ditch 'ideological purity', says Rosena Allin-Khan](#), 7 January 2020

⁴⁵ [Birmingham Live](#), [Birmingham MP Khalid Mahmood pulls out of contest to be Labour's Deputy Leader](#), 9 January 2020

Deputy leadership result

Angela Rayner was elected the deputy leader. It took three rounds of voting for the winning candidate to reach the required threshold of over 50% of valid votes.

The party only released the total figures for each round and not the breakdown by section. They are shown below. Some voters will not have given preferences to all candidates, which lead to some votes not being transferred to the second and third round.

Turnout in the deputy leader election was slightly lower than the leadership election, at 58.9%.

2020 Stage 2 - Deputy leadership ballot						
Candidates	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3	
Rosena Allin-Khan	77,351	16.8%	88,049	19.5%	113,858	26.1%
Richard Burgon	80,053	17.4%	88,664	19.7%	92,643	21.3%
Dawn Butler	50,255	10.9% *	-	-	-	-
Ian Murray	61,179	13.3%	64,650	14.3% *	-	-
Angela Rayner	192,168	41.7%	209,698	46.5%	228,944	52.6%
	Eligible voters	Valid votes				
Members	552,835	379,887				
Registered supporters	13,626	12,065				
Affiliated members	217,690	69,054				
Votes not transferred	-	-	10,035		15,526	
Total	784,151	461,006	450,971		435,445	

* Eliminated

Source: Labour Party, [Leadership and Deputy Leadership election 2020 - Results](#)

4.3

2016

Motion of no confidence in the Labour leader, June 2016

The leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, faced a vote of no confidence from members of the Parliamentary Labour Party on 28 June 2016. 172 Labour MPs voted in favour of the no-confidence motion; 40 voted against. There were 4 spoilt ballots and 14 did not vote.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ [Guardian](#). Labour MPs prepare for leadership contest after Corbyn loses confidence vote, 28 June 2016

There is no provision for the removal of a Labour leader through a no confidence vote within the Labour Party rules. In the days that followed there was much speculation that Angela Eagle, Labour MP for Wallasey, would launch a challenge under what was then clause 2 B(ii) of the Labour rules (challenge where there is no vacancy).

Leadership challenge July 2016

Angela Eagle formally announced her intention to challenge Jeremy Corbyn for the leadership on Monday 11 July.⁴⁷

On Tuesday 12 July Labour's NEC met to agree the timetable. The meeting also decided on whether Jeremy Corbyn should automatically be included in the party's leadership ballot. There had been debate about whether the Labour Party Rules were clear in the event of a leadership challenge where there was no vacancy.

Some had interpreted the rules to say that the incumbent leader being challenged would automatically gain a place on the ballot. Others argued that in the event of a leadership challenge being triggered by a challenger, the incumbent leader would also be required to secure the required number of nominations, 20% of the combined Commons members of the PLP and the European Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP).⁴⁸

NEC members held a secret ballot on the issue and ruled 18-14 that Corbyn, as an incumbent, did not need to secure nominations from 20% of the PLP and EPLP. He was therefore automatically included in the ballot.

A legal challenge to this decision was heard in the High Court on 26 July 2016. The challenge was brought by Michael Foster, a Labour Party donor and former candidate, but the challenge was rejected.

The court ruled that the phrase in the rule book, "Where there is no vacancy, nominations may be sought by potential challengers each year prior to the annual session of Party conference" was clear. The judge concluded:

...the Leader would not in that situation (where there is no vacancy) be someone who was a "challenger" for the leadership and, accordingly, would require no nominations in order to compete in the ballot to retain his/her position as Leader.⁴⁹

On Wednesday 13 July, Owen Smith announced he was also intending to seek nominations to take part in the election.⁵⁰

Nominations opened following the PLP and EPLP hustings held on Monday 18 July 2016.⁵¹ The following day Angela Eagle announced she was withdrawing

⁴⁷ [BBC News](#), Labour leadership: Angela Eagle says she can unite the party, 11 July 2016

⁴⁸ [BBC News](#), Labour's NEC to decide on Jeremy Corbyn ballot rules, 12 July 2016

⁴⁹ [Foster v McNicol \[2016\] EWHC 1966 \(QB\)](#)

⁵⁰ [BBC News](#), Labour leadership: Owen Smith to enter contest, 13 July 2016

⁵¹ Labour Party, Leadership Election 2016 – [Procedural Guidelines and Timetable](#)

from the contest, leaving Owen Smith as the only challenger to Jeremy Corbyn.⁵²

At the end of the nomination period for the PLP and EPLP, Owen Smith had secured nominations from 162 of Labour's 231 MPs and 10 of the 20 Party's MEPs.⁵³

2016 leadership election timetable		
Tuesday	12 July	Timetable agreed. Freeze date for membership eligibility set at 12 January 2016
Thursday	14 July	Timetable published
Monday	18 July	Briefing for MPs and MEPs followed by hustings MP and MEP nominations open Registered supporter applications open (7pm)
Wednesday	20 July	MP/MEP nominations close and CLP and affiliate nominations open (5PM) Registered supporter applications close (5PM)
Thursday	21 July	Deadline for candidates to consent to nomination (noon)
Friday	22 July	Hustings period opens
Monday	8 August	Deadline to pay membership arrears (noon) Deadline for new and updated affiliated supporter lists to be received (Noon)
Monday	15 August	CLP and affiliate nomination period closes (noon)
Monday	22 August	Ballots despatched (email and postal)
Wednesday	14 September	Last date for electronic ballot reissues
Friday	16 September	Hustings period closes
Wednesday	21 September	Ballot closes (noon)
Saturday	24 September	Results announced at special conference

Source: [Leadership Election 2016 – Procedural Guidelines and Timetable](#)

Note: Registered supporters had to pay a one off £25 fee.

⁵² [BBC News](#), Eagle drops out of Labour leader race, 19 July 2016

⁵³ [LabourList, Owen Smith nominations](#), accessed 12 February 2020. Note: although there were 232 Labour MPs elected at the 2015 General Election, at the time of the leadership election one seat was vacant, following the death of Jo Cox MP.

Eligibility to vote

Full members

At the same NEC meeting that ruled Corbyn did not need nominations, it was reported that the NEC also decided that only those who had been members for more than six months would be allowed to vote. New supporters would be given two days to sign up as registered supporters to vote in the race, but only if they were willing to pay a £25 fee.⁵⁴

Labour Party members on the national membership system who had not lapsed from membership at the date set on the timetable, were eligible to vote. The cut-off date for Labour Party members to have joined to be eligible to vote was 12 January 2016. Any membership fee arrears had to be cleared by noon on Monday 8 August.

Affiliated supporters and registered supporters, as defined by the NEC, who had been registered with the Labour Party at the date set on the timetable were eligible to vote. The Independent reported that Labour Party membership in January 2016 was about 390,000.⁵⁵

This cut-off date was challenged in the High Court by five new members of the Labour Party who had joined after 12 January 2016. The Court ruled in their favour.

The Court ruled that if members had joined the party prior to the leadership election process commencing, the common understanding of the rule book was that they would be entitled to vote in any leadership election. For the party to impose the retrospective cut-off date once the leadership process had commenced would be an unlawful breach of contract.⁵⁶ This could have led to up to about 150,000 new members being eligible to vote.

The Labour Party appealed the decision and won. The Appeal Court judged that:

A member's entitlement to vote in a leadership election is not a product of him or her simply being a member, but is the result of him or her being a member who satisfies the precise eligibility criteria defined by the NEC and any freeze date provisions set by the NEC in the timetable for the election.⁵⁷

It meant that the estimated 150,000 new members of the party who joined after the cut-off date were only able to vote if they paid the £25 affiliate fee (see below).

⁵⁴ [Guardian](#), Labour executive rules Jeremy Corbyn must be on leadership ballot, 13 July 2016

⁵⁵ [Independent](#), Labour membership figures show fewer than 14,000 have quit the party since election, 14 January 2016

⁵⁶ The Labour Party is an unincorporated association with rules, currently set out in the Rule Book, which constitute a contract to which each member adheres when he joins the Party. The judgement is available online, [Evangelou v McNicol \[2016\] EWHC 2058 \(QB\)](#)

⁵⁷ [Evangelou v McNicol \[2016\] EWCA Civ 817](#)

Registered and affiliated supporters

Registered supporters were able to apply from Monday 18 July to 5pm on Wednesday 20 July 2016. Supporters had to pay a £25 fee to register. It was reported that over 183,000 supporters registered during this time.⁵⁸ In the end 120,000 voted. It is not clear how many of those registered supporters were party members who joined after the original January cut-off date but paid the extra £25 to become a registered supporter and obtain a vote in the leadership election.

New and updated affiliated supporter lists had to be received by the Labour Party by noon on Monday 8 August 2016. Affiliated supporters eligible to vote were those affiliated supporters already on the party's membership system and who remained a member of an affiliated trade union or socialist society (and paid the political levy where appropriate).

New affiliated supporters could be recruited but the deadline for affiliated supporter lists to be provided to the party by affiliated organisations was 8 August 2016.

Result

Jeremy Corbyn won the ballot, polling over 50% in every category.

2016 Leadership election - Stage 2					
Candidates	Member votes	Affiliate votes	Registered supporters	Total	
Jeremy Corbyn	168,216	60,075	84,918	313,209	61.8%
Owen Smith	116,960	39,670	36,599	193,229	38.2%
Eligible voters				654,006	
Turnout				77.4%	

Source: LabourList, [Corbyn re-elected as Labour leader with bigger landslide than last year](#)

Note: Only overall turnout figures were provided

4.4

2015

Following Labour's defeat at the 2015 General Election, Ed Miliband announced his immediate resignation as leader:

Now it is time for someone else to take forward the leadership of this party. So I am tendering my resignation taking effect after this afternoon's commemoration of VE day at the Cenotaph.

⁵⁸ [Independent](#), Labour Party receives more than 183,000 membership applications in 48 hours

Harriet Harman, as deputy leader, automatically became leader until the leadership election was concluded. On the same day as Ed Miliband made his announcement Harman declared her resignation as deputy leader, to take effect upon the election of the new leader and deputy leader, requiring a deputy leadership election.⁵⁹

This was the first leadership and deputy leadership contests under the new ‘one member one vote’ rules approved in 2014. The National Executive Committee met on 13 May 2015 and determined the timetable for the leadership and deputy leadership elections.

2015 leadership election timetable		
Wednesday	13 May	Timetable agreed
Friday	15 May	Election period formally opens
Monday	8 June	PLP nominations and hustings for leader
Tuesday	9 June	PLP nominations hustings for deputy leader PLP nominations open
Monday	15 June	PLP nominations for leader close (noon)
Wednesday	17 June	PLP nominations for deputy leader close (noon) Hustings period opens
Friday	31 July	Supporting CLP/affiliates nominations close (noon)
Wednesday	12 August	Deadline to join as member, affiliated or registered supporter
Friday	14 August	Ballot mailing despatched
Thursday	10 September	Ballot closes (noon)
Saturday	12 September	Results announced at special conference

Source: LabourList⁶⁰

Note: Registered supporters had to pay a one-off £3 fee

Eligibility to vote

The three categories of eligible voters were full members, affiliated members and the newly created category of registered supporters. Section 4.4 explains

⁵⁹ Press Release: [Statement by Harriet Harman MP, Acting Leader of the Labour Party](#), 8 May 2015

⁶⁰ ‘Timetable announced for Labour Leader and Deputy Leader elections’, Labour Party Website, 13 May 2015, accessed 14 May 2015 (No longer available). Also available on LabourList website: [Timetable for Labour leadership contest confirmed](#)

the types of membership. The new categories of registered supporters had to pay £3.

There was no freeze date for membership or registered supporters to have already joined before the contest. They could continue to join and pay their fees once the contest was underway. The deadline to sign up for membership or registered supporter status was 12 August, three months after the timetable for the election was agreed. This saw a surge in registrations in all types of membership/supporter category.⁶¹

Leadership candidates

Candidates needed 35 MP/MEPs (15% of the combined total) of the to nominate them to qualify for the ballot. There was no secondary stage of nomination requiring CLPs or affiliates to nominate the candidates.

Six candidates announced their intention to stand for the leadership of the Labour Party:

- Liz Kendall 10 May 2015⁶²
- Chuka Umunna 12 May 2015⁶³
- Andy Burnham 13 May 2015⁶⁴
- Yvette Cooper 13 May 2015⁶⁵
- Mary Creagh 14 May 2015⁶⁶
- Jeremy Corbyn 3 June 2015⁶⁷

Chuka Umunna withdrew his candidacy on 15 May and Mary Creagh withdrew hers on 12 June. All four remaining candidates had received the required 35 nominations by 15 June, the day nominations closed.

It was reported that Jeremy Corbyn reached the nominations threshold just two minutes before the deadline.⁶⁸ It was later reported that some of those nominating Corbyn did so not because they supported him but because they wanted him on the ballot to ensure a wider leadership debate.⁶⁹

The number of nominations received was as follows:⁷⁰

⁶¹ BBC News, [Labour leadership: Huge increase in party's electorate](#), 12 August 2015

⁶² [BBC News](#), 'Liz Kendall confirms Labour leadership bid', 10 May 2015

⁶³ [Labour List](#), 'Chuka Umunna confirms he will run in Labour leadership race', 12 May 2015

⁶⁴ [Huffington Post](#), 'Andy Burnham and Yvette Cooper announce Labour leadership bids', 13 May 2015

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ [BBC News](#), 'Labour leadership: Mary Creagh enters race', 14 May 2015

⁶⁷ [BBC News](#), 'Labour leadership: Jeremy Corbyn enters race', 3 June 2015

⁶⁸ Labour leadership: Jeremy Corbyn completes the line-up, [BBC News](#), 15 June 2015

⁶⁹ See for example, [BBC News](#), 22 July 2015, and [BBC News](#) 15 June 2015

⁷⁰ New Statesman, [Who nominated who for the 2015 Labour leadership election?](#), 15 June 2015

- Andy Burnham 68
- Yvette Cooper 59
- Jeremy Corbyn 36
- Liz Kendall 41

Result

Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the Party, securing over 50% of the vote on the first ballot.

2015 Stage 2 - Leadership ballot					
Candidates	Member votes	Affiliate votes	Registered supporters	Total	
Andy Burnham	55,698	18,604	6,160	80,462	19.0%
Yvette Cooper	54,470	9,043	8,415	71,928	17.0%
Jeremy Corbyn	121,751	41,217	88,449	251,417	59.5%
Liz Kendall	13,601	2,682	2,574	18,857	4.5%
Eligible voters	554,272				
Turnout	76.3%				
Spoilt ballots	207				

Source: Guardian, [Labour leadership: Jeremy Corbyn wins convincing victory over Owen Smith](#)

Deputy leadership candidates

Seven candidates announced their intention to stand for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party:

- Tom Watson 10 May 2015⁷¹
- Ben Bradshaw 15 May 2015⁷²
- Stella Creasy 16 May 2015⁷³
- Caroline Flint 16 May 2015⁷⁴

⁷¹ [Channel 4 News](#), 'Tom Watson reveals deputy leadership bid for Labour', 10 May 2015

⁷² [Ben Bradshaw website](#), 'Deputy leadership', 15 May 2015

⁷³ [Mirror](#), 'Stella Creasy confirms she's running for Labour deputy leader: "Party must return to fighting poverty, inequality and injustice"', 16 May 2015

⁷⁴ [New Statesman](#), 'Caroline Flint launches bid for Labour's deputy leadership', 16 May 2015

- Angela Eagle 18 May 2015⁷⁵
- John Healey 25 May 2015⁷⁶
- Rushanara Ali 24 May 2015⁷⁷

John Healey withdrew his candidacy on 11 June and Rushanara Ali withdrew hers on 17 June, the day nominations closed. She had secured 24 nominations before pulling out to guarantee that Creasy, Bradshaw, and Eagle all made the ballot (35 or more).

The number of nominations was as follows:⁷⁸

- Ben Bradshaw 37
- Stella Creasy 35
- Angela Eagle 38
- Caroline Flint 43
- Tom Watson 62

Results

It took three rounds of counting votes for the winning candidate to reach 50%. Ben Bradshaw was eliminated in round 1 and Angela Eagle in round two. Tom Watson passed the 50% threshold on the third round of voting.

⁷⁵ [Labour List](#), 'Angela Eagle launches deputy leadership campaign', 18 May 2015

⁷⁶ [Huffington Post](#), 'John Healey announces deputy Labour leadership bid', 25 May 2015

⁷⁷ [Labour List](#), 'Another new name enters deputy leadership race – Rushanara Ali announces she will run', 24 May 2015

⁷⁸ New Statesman, [Who nominated who in the 2015 Labour deputy leadership election?](#) 17 June 2015

2015 Stage 2 - Deputy leadership ballot					
Round 1					
Candidates	Member votes	Affiliate votes	Registered supporters	Total	
Ben Bradshaw	24,738	7,503	6,839	39,080	9.6%
Stella Creasy	47,372	8,263	22,465	78,100	19.1%
Angela Eagle	41,504	11,639	11,282	64,425	15.8%
Caroline Flint	36,321	14,016	15,676	66,013	16.2%
Tom Watson	90,018	27,105	43,729	160,852	39.4%
Eligible voters	554,272				
Turnout	76.3%				
Spoilt ballots	207				
Round 2					
Candidates	Member votes	Affiliate votes	Registered supporters	Total	
Stella Creasy	52,866	9,730	23,959	86,555	21.4%
Angela Eagle	40,559	15,375	16,583	72,517	17.9%
Caroline Flint	48,208	13,425	12,948	74,581	18.4%
Tom Watson	96,008	29,252	45,329	170,589	42.2%
Round 3					
Candidates	Member votes	Affiliate votes	Registered supporters	Total	
Stella Creasy	62,875	12,997	27,874	103,746	26.4%
Caroline Flint	57,305	16,799	15,434	89,538	22.8%
Tom Watson	111,465	35,682	51,815	198,962	50.7%

Source: [BBC News](#)

5

Development of the rules

Summary

Until 1981 only Labour MPs in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) had a say in who was to be leader of the Party. In the 1970s there was a campaign to widen the electorate for leadership elections.

At a special party conference in 1981 the voting procedure for the election of party leader and deputy leader was altered. The PLP still retained the power to nominate candidates in the election. The vote was then decided by an electoral college made up of three elements: MPs, constituency parties (CLPs), and affiliates.

Initially the electoral college did not require CLPs or unions and affiliates to ballot members. CLPs membership ballots were introduced in 1989. In 1993 both CLPs and affiliates were required to ballot their members on who they wanted to vote for leader. The votes were then allocated to candidates in proportion to the local results.

In 2015, following a review of Labour Party reform, commissioned by Ed Miliband, the rules were changed to a system of one member one vote. The PLP retained the right to nominate candidates. Following further changes in 2018 an additional nomination stage was introduced that gave CLPs and affiliates a role in the nomination process. The PLP retained its role as the first stage of nominations but candidates also then had to gain enough support from CLPs and affiliates in order to progress to the membership ballot.

For the ballot stage of the contest, the eligible electorate composed of party members, affiliated supporters and registered supporters. Affiliated supporters were members of affiliate organisations, including unions, who paid a reduced membership rate to the Labour Party. This was because they were a member of an affiliated organisation. Registered supporters were a new category of people who were not members or affiliate members but who could pay a fee to gain a vote in a leadership election. This category was last used in the 2020 leadership election but was scrapped in rule changes agreed by the Party conference in 2021.

The other main change in 2021 was the alteration of the nomination threshold for nominating MPs in the PLP. The threshold has changed several times over the years. The 2021 changes now require a candidate to secure nominations from 20% of MPs to be able to move forward.

5.1 1922-1981 - Parliamentary Labour Party

Between 1922 and 1981, only members of the Parliamentary Labour Party were eligible to vote for the leader and the deputy leader in a secret ballot. Under Labour Party rules, elections took place annually whilst the party was in opposition, but only when vacancies arose if the party was in government.

In the 1970s there was a campaign to widen the electorate for leadership elections, particularly after the PLP chose James Callaghan, seen as on the right of the Party, to succeed Harold Wilson in 1976. Resolutions to change the method of electing the leader were rejected at successive conferences through the 1970s.⁷⁹

A commission of inquiry set up by the NEC in 1976 recommended an electoral college should replace election of the leader solely by MPs. The 1980 annual party conference agreed the principle but could not agree on the division of the college votes. Motions to give trade unions 50% of the college with CLPs and MPs each having 25% were rejected, as were an alternative motion that split the college equally between the three.⁸⁰

5.2 1981-1993 - Electoral college

A special conference in January 1981 eventually approved the proportions allocated to the college. The Commons members of the PLP still retained the right to nominate candidates from their ranks but the electorate was extended for the election stage.

The leadership had wanted 50:25:25 split in favour of the unions, the NEC favoured equal thirds and a proposal supported by Tony Benn recommended 40:30:30 in favour of the unions.⁸¹ It was the Benn proposal that was accepted. The decision of the special conference precipitated the Limehouse Declaration of the so-called Gang of Four, four senior Labour politicians who went on to set up the Social Democratic Party.⁸²

Under the 1981 rules MPs were given 30% of the vote, the constituency parties 30% and the trade unions/affiliates 40%. The first time the electoral college was used was for a deputy leadership challenge in 1981.

Initially the threshold for candidates to stand was set at 5% of the PLP. This was raised to 20% following a challenge by Tony Benn to incumbent leader,

⁷⁹ Thomas Quinn, *Electing and Ejecting Party Leaders in Britain*, 2012, p58

⁸⁰ *Times*, Session ends in confusion as delegates fail to approve method of electing party leader, 2 October 1980, p4

⁸¹ *Times*, Labour faces day of confusion at conference, 24 January 1981, p12

⁸² Thomas Quinn, *Electing and Ejecting Party Leaders in Britain*, 2012, p58

Neil Kinnock, in 1988.⁸³ Benn had easily surpassed the 5% requirement, nominated by 17% of MPs. The change in rules, agreed in June 1988, was designed to prevent leadership contests being triggered by candidates with little support among MPs.⁸⁴ Benn had threatened to run annual leadership challenges.⁸⁵ The change was agreed at conference in October 1988.⁸⁶

The electoral college did not require CLPs or unions and affiliates to ballot members. Individual CLPs and unions chose their preferred members. Compulsory balloting of CLPs was introduced in 1989 but it was on a 'winner takes all' basis. A CLP's vote went to one candidate regardless of the spread of support across the candidates within the CLP vote.

The perceived dominance of the union block vote in leadership elections caused some controversy during the 1992 leadership election. Some unions balloted members but not all. Both main candidates in the 1992 leadership election, John Smith and Brian Gould, had called for changes to the union block vote in leadership elections.⁸⁷

In the end the NEC voted to set up an inquiry into trade union links with the Party.⁸⁸ It led to changes that abolished block voting in the leadership elections.

5.3

1993-2015 - Electoral college changes and 'one member one vote'

At the 1993 party conference the voting procedures were altered to introduce the principle of 'one member one vote' within each section of the electoral college.

The affiliated unions and other affiliates and were required to ballot members. Results would be allocated proportionately within the electoral college. Party members were balloted directly rather than through CLP votes.⁸⁹

The weighting of votes in the electoral college was also changed to give each section (MPs/MEPs, CLP and unions/affiliates) a third of the share of votes.⁹⁰

⁸³ Pemberton and Wickham Jones, Brothers all? The Operation of the Electoral College in the 2010 Labour Leadership Contest, Parliamentary Affairs, Volume 66, Issue 4, October 2013, Pages 708–731,

⁸⁴ Times, Kinnock wins party fight to keep control, 7 June 1988, p1

⁸⁵ Times, Benn threatens an annual challenge, 28 March 1988, p1

⁸⁶ Thomas Quinn, From the Wembley Conference to the 'McDonnell Amendment': Labour's Leadership Nomination Rules, 2018

⁸⁷ Times, Smith calls for an end to union block vote, 24 April 1992

⁸⁸ Times, Labour to curb union block vote, 28 May 1992

⁸⁹ Thomas Quin, [The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, Electing the Leader: The British Labour Party's Electoral College](#), August 2004

⁹⁰ Thomas Quinn, Electing and Ejecting Party Leaders in Britain, 2012, p60

Candidates had to have the support of 12.5% of the PLP if the post of leader or deputy leader were vacant. Although MEPs were part of the electoral college, they did not take part in nominations.

The reduction of the nomination threshold, from 20% to 12.5%, was in response to the recognition that opponents of John Smith struggled to gather enough nominations in the 1992 leadership contest. The 20% threshold was kept for challenging an incumbent and was designed to prevent frivolous challenges.⁹¹

Preferential voting was introduced. If no candidate received 50% of the vote the lowest candidate would be eliminated. Second preferences would then be transferred. Further transfers would be required until the winning candidate secured over 50%.⁹²

Due to an oversight preferential voting was introduced after conference had agreed the principle of one member one vote. Conference had made no change to the provision that if a candidate did not secure 50% of the votes further ballots would be required. The NEC subsequently approved preferential voting to avoid the possibility of needing to re-ballot members in the event of vote where none of the candidates achieved 50%.⁹³

5.4 2015 – Abolishing the electoral college and introducing registered supporters

On 10 July 2013, the then Labour Party leader, Ed Miliband, commissioned a review into Labour Party reform led by Lord Collins. The review included examining how the party leader was elected.

The Collins Review, published in February 2014, made recommendations to reform the rules for the election of the leader. The Review recommended:

- the leader should be elected using ‘one member one vote’;
- the eligible electorate should be comprised of members, affiliated supporters and a new category of registered supporters; and
- the NEC should agree detailed arrangements on registration, fees and freeze dates for eligibility to vote.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Thomas Quinn, *From the Wembley Conference to the ‘McDonnell Amendment’: Labour’s Leadership Nomination Rules*, 2018

⁹² Times, *How party will vote for Leader*, 26 May 1994, p9

⁹³ Keith Alderman and Neil Carter, *Parliamentary Affairs, The Labour Party Leadership and Deputy Leadership Elections of 1994, July 1995*

⁹⁴ Ray Collins, [The Collins Review into Labour Party Reform: Building a One Nation Labour Party](#), February 2014

Affiliated supporters are members of trade unions, or another organisation affiliated to the Labour Party. The affiliated organisation pays an affiliation fee to the party. Affiliated supporters who were not already party members would need to register with the party and also needed to be on a UK electoral register.

Registered supporters were individuals who were not already party members or members of an affiliated organisation but could take part in leadership elections by registering with the party as a supporter. This required them to declare their support for Labour values, provide the party with personal contact details, and pay the party a fee. They also needed to be on the electoral register.

The recommendations of the review were approved by the National Executive Committee on 4 February 2014 and then ratified by a special conference on 1 March 2014.⁹⁵

The Collins review had recommended that the required number of nominations should be raised to 15% of the PLP. The Collins review said that by raising the MPs nomination threshold it would ensure candidates “command a substantial body of support in the PLP”.⁹⁶

Registered supporters were eligible to vote in leadership elections in 2015 (at a cost of £3), 2016 (£25) and 2020 (£25). They were subsequently abolished as a category in rule changes in 2021 (see below).

The new eligibility criteria for leadership elections led to concerns that it could be open to ‘entryism’, where people who were not real supporters of the Labour Party were able to register or join the party just to influence the leadership election.⁹⁷

5.5 2018 – Affiliate and CLP nomination stage

Following controversies relating to the 2016 leadership election, particularly relating to the freeze dates for members to be eligible to vote, the party commissioned a review. The report recommended that a fixed freeze date after the announcement of a leadership election should be explicitly stated in the rules. The review suggested this should be two weeks after the announcement of the timetable and not less than three weeks before the close of the ballot.⁹⁸ This was agreed by the NEC and ratified by the annual conference of 2018. The Rule Book was changed to:

The freeze date for eligibility to vote shall be not less than 2 weeks after the approved timetable is announced and not less than 3 weeks before the

⁹⁵ Labour List, [Final “Collins Review” document released ahead of Special Conference](#), 7 February 2014

⁹⁶ Ray Collins, [The Collins Review into Labour Party Reform: Building a One Nation Labour Party](#), February 2014, p28

⁹⁷ Guardian, [Labour seeks legal advice over leadership election infiltration fears](#), 19 August 2015

⁹⁸ Labour Party, [Democracy Review](#), 2018, p11

deadline for receipt of ballot papers, with no qualifying period of membership prior to the freeze date.⁹⁹

In 2021 this freeze date was altered again (see below).

The report also recommended that there should be additional nomination options for candidates in a leadership or deputy leadership election.¹⁰⁰

The review recommended that a candidate would qualify for the ballot if they secured either 10% of the combined total number of MPs/MEPs or 5% of the combined total number of MPs/MEPs in conjunction with 10% of CLPs or 10% of affiliated membership from at least three trade unions.¹⁰¹

The model agreed by the NEC and ratified by conference was modified. It retained the 10% threshold for MPs/MEPs in the event of a vacancy, but also now required candidates to then secure nominations from 5% of constituency parties or 5% of members of trade unions or affiliated organisations (the current rules).¹⁰² These new requirements were first used in the 2020 leadership election.

5.6

2021 – scrapping registered supporters and raising PLP nomination threshold to 20%

The latest changes in leadership rules were approved by Labour’s annual conference in 2021, under the heading “getting Labour election ready”.¹⁰³

The changes raised the threshold for nominations by Labour MPs. Candidates now require 20% of MPs in the PLP to back them for their nomination to be valid. Some argued raising the threshold to 20% would lead to a less diverse range of candidates.¹⁰⁴

Other changes included scrapping the registered supporter category of voters and altering the freeze date for eligibility to vote in leadership elections. Members must have six months continuous membership prior to the timetable being agreed for the election of national officers of the party.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Labour Party, [Rule Book 2019](#), page 22

¹⁰⁰ Guardian, [Labour NEC braced for row over leadership election proposals](#), 17 September 2018

¹⁰¹ Labour Party, [Rule Book 2019](#), page 22

¹⁰² Guardian, [Labour agrees MP selection rule changes despite party splits](#), 24 September 2018

¹⁰³ LabourList, [Every rule change at Labour conference 2021: what it means and how it passed](#), 1 October 2021

¹⁰⁴ Guardian, [Labour leadership rule changes pass after last-minute Unison backing](#), 26 September 2021

¹⁰⁵ LabourList, [Every rule change at Labour conference 2021: what it means and how it passed](#), 1 October 2021

Keir Starmer had reportedly attempted to return to an electoral college for leadership elections as part of party reforms he wanted to see as leader. After opposition from union affiliates the proposal was dropped.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Guardian, [Keir Starmer still 'in discussions' on Labour leadership rule changes](#), 24 September 2021

6 Previous contests 1981-2015

This section summarises leadership election held under the electoral college in place from 1981 until rule changes in 2014.

6.1 2010

The Labour leadership election process started on 10 May 2010 following the 2010 General Election, where no party gained a majority of the seats in the House of Commons.

Coalition talks between the Liberal Democrats and Conservative Party, and the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party were taking place, when Gordon Brown announced that:

The reason we have a hung parliament is no single party or leader was able to win the full support of the country. As leader of my party, I must accept that is a judgement on me.

I therefore intend to ask the Labour Party to set in train the processes needed for its own leadership election.

I would hope that it would be completed in time for the new leader to be in post by the time of the Labour Party conference. I will play no part in that contest, I will back no individual candidate.¹⁰⁷

At that time, he had intended to continue as Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party until the outcome of the contest was known. However, on 11 May 2010, when it became apparent that the Labour Party would not be able to reach a coalition agreement with the Liberal Democrats, Gordon Brown announced that he would be resigning as Prime Minister and as leader of the party with immediate effect. He was replaced as Prime Minister by David Cameron, who led the new Coalition Government.¹⁰⁸

Under the Labour Party's rules, its deputy leader, Harriet Harman, became acting leader of the Labour Party. She held office until a new leader was elected.¹⁰⁹ At the conclusion of the election she reverted to being deputy leader and no deputy leader election took place.

¹⁰⁷ LabourList, [Smith Brown to resign before conference](#), 10 May 2010

¹⁰⁸ BBC News, [Gordon Brown resigns as UK prime minister](#), 11 May 2010

¹⁰⁹ The Labour Party rules provide that:

At its meeting on 19 May 2010, the National Executive Committee agreed a timetable for the conduct of the leadership election.¹¹⁰ The timetable was subsequently revised to allow more time for candidates to gather the required 33 nominations from MPs (12.5% of the MPs in the PLP) following criticism that there was insufficient time for MPs to consult their local parties.¹¹¹

2010 leadership election timetable		
Wednesday	19 May	Timetable agreed
Monday	24 May	PLP and MEP Nominations open
Friday	28 May	Supporting nominations open - this allows for CLP and affiliates endorsements, but these were not required for a nomination to proceed
Wednesday	09 June	PLP nomination close (originally scheduled to be 27 May)
Thursday	10 June	Deadline for candidates to accept nomination
Monday	26 July	Close of supporting nominations
June-July		Hustings period
Wednesday	01 September	Ballots begin to go out
Wednesday	08 September	Deadline to join the party and to be able to vote
Saturday	25 September	Results announced at annual conference

Source: Guardian, [Ed Balls enters Labour leadership race as party opts for four-month campaign](#)

Leadership candidates

Six candidates declared their intention to stand for the leadership:

- David Miliband 12 May 2010¹¹²
- Ed Miliband 14 May 2010¹¹³

“When the Party is in opposition and the Party leader, for whatever reason becomes permanently unavailable, the deputy leader shall automatically become Party leader on a pro-tem basis”
[Labour Party, Rule Book 2014, Chapter 4, Clause II, E iv]

¹¹⁰ Guardian, [Ed Balls enters Labour leadership race as party opts for four-month campaign](#), 18 May 2010

¹¹¹ Guardian, [Labour party extends deadline for leadership nominations](#), 20 May 2010

¹¹² Jim Pickard, “Miliband throws his hat into ring for leader”, Financial Times, 13 May 2010; Allegra Stratton, “Time to end Blair-Brown battles and repair Labour, says Miliband the elder”, Guardian, 18 May 2010

¹¹³ Jim Pickard, “Ed Miliband to challenge brother”, Financial Times, 15 May 2010; Toby Helm, Anushka Asthana and Andrew Rawnsley, “New Labour is a thing of the past, says Miliband”, Observer, 16 May 2010

- Ed Balls 19 May 2010¹¹⁴
- John McDonnell 18 May 2010¹¹⁵
- Andy Burnham 20 May 2010¹¹⁶
- Diane Abbott 20 May 2010¹¹⁷

John McDonnell withdrew his candidacy on 9 June, the day nominations closed. The day before McDonnell had 16 nominations and Abbott had 11. In the face of criticism that there was a lack of diversity in the candidates Abbott received a final day surge of nominations, including from David Miliband.¹¹⁸

The final number of MP/MEP nominations received by each candidate are shown on the table below.

2010 Leadership election - Stage 1				
Candidates	MPs	MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates
Diane Abbott	33	0	20	3
Ed Balls	33	0	17	1
Andy Burnham	34	1	45	1
David Milliband	81	6	165	3
Ed Milliband	63	6	151	9

Source: Parliamentary Affairs, [Brothers all? The Operation of the Electoral College in the 2010 Labour Leadership Contest](#), September 2012

Note: Only nominations from 33 MPs were required for a candidate to go forward. MEP, CLP and affiliate endorsements were not a condition for progressing

Result

The winning candidate had to win over 50% of the votes of the electoral college, made up of MPs/MEPs, CLPs, and affiliates. Each section of the electoral college had a third of the total vote. This meant the 266 MPs and MEPs had the same share of the college as the 127,000 party members.

¹¹⁴ Michael Savage, “‘Sons of Blair’ do battle with ‘Sons of Brown’ for labour leadership”, Independent, 20 May 2010

¹¹⁵ Allegra Stratton and Patrick Wintour, “Burnham joins leadership race with pledge to act on immigration fears”, Guardian, 20 May 2010; Allegra Stratton, “Ed Balls to join marathon party leadership race”, Guardian, 19 May 2010

¹¹⁶ Andy Burnham, “Why I am the man to rebuild Labour”, Mirror, 20 May 2010

¹¹⁷ [Diane Abbott enters Labour leadership contest](#), BBC News, 20 May 2010

¹¹⁸ Hugh Pemberton and Mark Wickham-Jones, Brothers all? The Operation of the Electoral College in the 2010 Labour Leadership Contest, Parliamentary Affairs, Volume 66, Issue 4, October 2013, Pages 708–731

Voting was preferential. If no candidate won on the first round their votes were transferred to the second choice.

The eventual winner, Ed Miliband, won on the fourth round of voting after three candidates had been eliminated.

2010 Leadership election - electoral college

Round 1	MPs and MEPS			Party members			Affiliates			Electoral college total
Candidates	Electoral college share			Electoral college share			Electoral college share			
Diane Abbott *	7	2.6%	0.9%	9,314	7.3%	2.4%	25,938	12.3%	4.1%	7.4%
Ed Balls	40	15.0%	5.0%	12,831	10.1%	3.4%	21,618	10.2%	3.4%	11.8%
Andy Burnham	24	9.0%	3.0%	10,844	8.5%	2.8%	17,904	8.5%	2.8%	8.7%
David Miliband	111	41.7%	13.9%	55,905	44.1%	14.7%	58,189	27.5%	9.2%	37.8%
Ed Miliband	84	31.6%	10.5%	37,980	29.9%	10.0%	87,585	41.5%	13.8%	34.3%
Total	266		33.3%	126,874		33.3%	211,234		33.3%	100.0%
Round 2										
Candidates	Electoral college share			Electoral college share			Electoral college share			
Ed Balls	41	15.5%	5.2%	14,510	11.5%	3.8%	26,441	12.7%	4.2%	13.2%
Andy Burnham *	24	9.1%	3.0%	12,498	9.9%	3.3%	25,528	12.2%	4.1%	10.4%
David Miliband	111	42.0%	14.0%	57,128	45.2%	15.1%	61,336	29.4%	9.8%	38.9%
Ed Miliband	88	33.3%	11.1%	42,176	33.4%	11.1%	95,335	45.7%	15.2%	37.5%
Total	264		33.3%	126,312		33.3%	208,640		33.3%	100.0%
Round 3										
Candidates	Electoral college share			Electoral college share			Electoral college share			
Ed Balls *	43	16.3%	5.4%	18,114	14.5%	4.8%	35,512	17.3%	5.8%	16.0%
David Miliband	125	47.3%	15.8%	60,375	48.2%	16.1%	66,889	32.6%	10.9%	42.7%
Ed Miliband	96	36.4%	12.1%	46,697	37.3%	12.4%	102,882	50.1%	16.7%	41.3%
Total	264		33.3%	125,186		33.3%	205,283		33.3%	100.0%
Round 4										
Candidates	Electoral college share			Electoral college share			Electoral college share			
David Miliband	140	53.4%	17.8%	66,814	54.4%	18.1%	80,266	40.2%	13.4%	49.3%
Ed Miliband	122	46.6%	15.5%	55,992	45.6%	15.2%	119,405	59.8%	19.9%	50.7%
Total	262		33.3%	122,806		33.3%	199,671		33.3%	100.0%

* Eliminated

Source:

Hugh Pemberton and Mark Wickham-Jones, Brothers all? The Operation of the Electoral College in the 2010 Labour Leadership Contest, Parliamentary Affairs, Volume 66, Issue 4, October 2013, Pages 708731.

6.2

2007

On 10 May 2007, Tony Blair announced his decision to stand down from the leadership of the Labour Party. He also announced that he would resign as Prime Minister on 27 June 2007.¹¹⁹

The National Executive Committee met on 13 May 2007 and agreed the detailed rules of the contest for both leadership and deputy leadership roles and the timetable.

2007 leadership election timetable		
Wednesday	13 May	Timetable agreed
Monday	14 May	PLP nominations open (14:30)
Thursday	17 May	PLP nominations close (12:30)
Friday	18 May	Deadline for candidates to accept nomination
20 May – 16 June		Hustings meetings (to June 16), even if there is only one candidate for leader, that candidate will attend around the country, but will not be subject to an affirmative ballot
Friday	1 June	Close of supporting nominations from affiliates and CLPs (not required for nomination to be valid) Deadline for withdrawal of nomination by declared candidates.
Thursday	21 June	Close of affiliates ballot
Friday	22 June	Close of Labour members, and MPs' and MEPs' ballots
Sunday	24 June	Leadership conference and announcement of results at a special party conference in Manchester. If there is only one candidate for leader that person will be declared elected unopposed

Source: Hélène Mulholland and Lewis Williamson, "[Labour leadership: what happens next](#)", Guardian Unlimited, 14 May 2007

To go forward to the ballot, candidates for leadership had to receive 45 nominations (12.5%) of the combined total of Labour MPs and MEPs.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Matthew Tempest, "Blair to stand down on June 27", Guardian Unlimited, 10 May 2007

¹²⁰ Labour Party Rule Book 2004 Rule 4B.2b Nomination

Leadership contest

Tony Blair's announcement on 10 May 2007 initiated the formal leadership contest, with Gordon Brown declaring his intention to stand as a candidate for Labour leader the following day.¹²¹ Two other members of the PLP had already declared their intention to stand for the leadership when Blair eventually stood down: John McDonnell, in July 2006;¹²² and Michael Meacher, in February 2007.¹²³

After conceding that John McDonnell had secured more nominations than him, Mr Meacher withdrew his candidacy on 14 May 2007.¹²⁴ On 16 May, Gordon Brown secured his 308th nomination, making it mathematically impossible for John McDonnell, who had secured 29 nominations, to reach the required 45 nominations.¹²⁵

Brown finished with 313 MP nominations.¹²⁶ He also gained the backing of 19 MEPs, 407 CLPs and 17 affiliates.¹²⁷

At the close of nominations, Gordon Brown was declared the sole candidate for the leadership. He accepted the nomination in a speech on 17 May 2007.¹²⁸ However, his formal appointment as Leader of the Labour Party was not made until the Special Conference on 24 June 2007.

Deputy leadership contest

At the Labour Party Conference in September 2006, John Prescott said that he would stand down as deputy leader and Deputy Prime Minister when Tony Blair stood down.¹²⁹

On 10 May 2007, Prescott formally announced his decision to step down as deputy leader fulfilling his promise stand down at the same time as Blair.¹³⁰

By the time of his formal announcement, six MPs had already announced their intention to contest the party's deputy leadership:

- Peter Hain 12 September 2006¹³¹
- Harriet Harman 15 September 2006¹³²

¹²¹ Guardian Unlimited, "Brown lays out leadership credentials", Guardian Unlimited, 11 May 2007

¹²² Nick Assinder, "Labour MP launches leadership bid", BBC News, 14 July 2006

¹²³ Guardian, [Meacher enters leadership race](#), Guardian Unlimited, 22 February 2007

¹²⁴ Guardian, Key backing for Johnson in Labour deputy fight, 15 May 2007

¹²⁵ Guardian, Brown secures Labour leadership unopposed, 17 May 2007

¹²⁶ BBC News, [Brown 'humbled' by Labour backing](#), 17 May 2007

¹²⁷ Labour Party website, Labour Party overwhelmingly unites behind Gordon Brown (accessed July 2007)

¹²⁸ Patrick Wintour, "Brown: Britain's two prime ministers", Guardian, 18 May 2007

¹²⁹ Colin Brown, "Tears and cheers as Prescott says he will bow out with Blair", Independent, 29 September 2006

¹³⁰ ['Prescott quits as deputy leader'](#), BBC News, 10 May 2007

¹³¹ BBC News, [Hain runs as deputy leader](#), 12 September 2006

¹³² BBC News, [Harman intends Labour deputy bid](#), 15 September 2006

- John Cruddas 27 September 2006¹³³
- Hilary Benn 27 October 2006¹³⁴
- Alan Johnson 10 November 2006¹³⁵
- Hazel Blears 24 February 2007¹³⁶

All six candidates received sufficient nominations (45) from the Commons members of the PLP to progress to the nationwide ballot.¹³⁷ Hilary Benn 47

- Hazel Blears 49
- Jon Cruddas 49
- Peter Hain 51
- Harriet Harman 65
- Alan Johnson 73

Source: [Archived version](#) of Labour Party website 17 May 2007

Result

The results of the contest were announced at a special party conference on 24 June 2007, in Manchester. The ballot had closed on 22 June.

The table below gives the detailed results of the electoral college vote shares for each round.

It took five rounds of voting to reach a point where the winning candidate, Harriet Harman, achieved over 50% of the vote.

¹³³ BBC News, [Cruddas goes for Prezza job](#), 28 September 2006

¹³⁴ BBC News, [Benn to run for deputy position](#), 27 October 2006

¹³⁵ BBC News, [Johnson starts deputy leader bid](#), 10 November 2006

¹³⁶ BBC News, [Blears launches deputy leader bid](#), 24 February 2007

¹³⁷ [Archived version](#) of Labour Party website 17 May 2007

2010 Leadership election - electoral college shares				
Round 1	MPs and MEPS	Party members	Affiliates	Electoral college total
Hilary Benn	4.3%	7.2%	4.9%	16.4%
Hazel Blears *	5.0%	3.0%	3.8%	11.8%
Jon Cruddas	4.6%	5.7%	9.1%	19.4%
Peter Hain	4.8%	3.9%	6.6%	15.3%
Harriet Harman	6.5%	8.0%	4.4%	18.9%
Alan Johnson	8.1%	5.5%	4.6%	18.2%
Total	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Round 2				
Hilary Benn	4.7%	7.9%	5.6%	18.2%
Jon Cruddas	4.7%	6.0%	9.6%	20.4%
Peter Hain *	5.1%	4.2%	7.1%	16.4%
Harriet Harman	7.3%	8.8%	5.2%	21.2%
Alan Johnson	11.5%	6.4%	5.9%	23.7%
Total	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Round 3				
Hilary Benn *	5.7%	9.3%	7.4%	22.3%
Jon Cruddas	6.3%	6.6%	11.0%	23.9%
Harriet Harman	8.6%	10.2%	7.1%	25.9%
Alan Johnson	12.8%	7.3%	7.8%	27.9%
Total	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Round 4				
Jon Cruddas *	7.7%	8.8%	13.6%	30.1%
Harriet Harman	10.3%	13.8%	9.5%	33.6%
Alan Johnson	15.4%	10.7%	10.3%	36.4%
Total	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Round 4				
Harriet Harman	15.4%	18.8%	16.2%	50.4%
Alan Johnson	17.9%	14.5%	17.2%	49.6%
Total	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%

Source:

Guardian, 25 June 2007

6.3

1994

The 1994 leadership election was held as a result of the unexpected death of John Smith on 12 May 1994. Margaret Beckett, as Smith's deputy leader, automatically became acting leader.

The timetable to elect a new leader was complicated by two factors. Elections for the European Parliament were due to take place on 9 June 1994, and there was a new requirement for affiliated organisations to ballot their members in any leadership election.

The NEC decided that nominations would open on 10 June, after the European Parliament elections, and close on 16 June. The result would then be declared on 21 July. At the same time it was announced that a deputy leadership election would be held concurrently. Under the rules Beckett could not have been challenged for the deputy roll until the annual autumn conference. By holding a concurrent election, it saved having to run two separate elections back-to-back.¹³⁸ It was also interpreted at the time by some as an opportunity for Beckett to challenge for the leadership.¹³⁹

Candidates needed 34 MPs (12.5% of the PLP) to nominate them for the leadership contest. On 10 June Margaret Beckett announced she would stand for both leadership and deputy leadership posts. In doing so she declared the deputy leadership post vacant, meaning that the deputy leadership nominees needed 34 MPs to nominate them as the post was vacant and not 54 MPs (20% of the PLP) if there was a challenge to an incumbent.¹⁴⁰

Leadership contest

Four candidates announced their intention to run for the leadership:

- Margaret Beckett
- Tony Blair
- John Prescott
- Denzil Davies.

Both Beckett and Prescott were contesting both leadership and deputy leadership elections.

¹³⁸ Keith Alderman and Neil Carter, *Parliamentary Affairs, The Labour Party Leadership and Deputy Leadership Elections of 1994*, July 1995, pp439-40

¹³⁹ *Times*, Beckett opts for election of Labour deputy, 26 May 1994, p1

¹⁴⁰ *Times*, Beckett issues new challenge to Blair, 11 June, p9

When nominations for leader closed Davies had secured only seven nominations and was eliminated. Blair secured 154, Beckett had 42 and Prescott had received 46.¹⁴¹

Result

Tony Blair was elected on the first ballot, securing over 50% of the vote in each section of the electoral college. His overall total for the electoral college was 57%.

Turnout among MPs/MEPs and party members was high. 172,346 party members cast a ballot, representing a turnout of 69.1% and 327 MPs and MEPs voted, representing a 98% turnout.

The number of votes from affiliated members was 779,426. This was 19.5% of those eligible to vote. This was partly due to many spoilt ballots from levy-paying affiliate voters from unions forgetting to tick the correct box to indicate they were not members of another party. Two unions said they could not afford to ballot their members and so 150,000 potential voters could not participate, and not all unions had centralised lists of levy-paying members.¹⁴²

1994 Leadership election

Candidates	Electoral		Electoral		Affiliates	Electoral		Electoral college total
	MPs and MEPs	college share	Party members	college share		college share		
Margaret Beckett	19.9%	6.6%	17.4%	5.8%	19.3%	6.4%	18.9%	
Tony Blair	60.5%	20.2%	58.2%	19.4%	52.3%	17.4%	57.0%	
John Prescott	19.6%	6.5%	24.4%	8.1%	28.4%	9.5%	24.1%	
Total		33.3%		33.3%		33.3%	100.0%	

Source: Butler's British Political Facts, 2018

Deputy leadership contest

As noted above, both Margaret Beckett and John Prescott put themselves for the deputy leadership at the same time as the leadership. No other candidates stood for the deputy leadership. Beckett received 106 nominations and Prescott 101.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Times, Labour MPs divided over Blair's No 2, 17 June 1994, p1

¹⁴² Keith Alderman and Neil Carter, Parliamentary Affairs, The Labour Party Leadership and Deputy Leadership Elections of 1994, July 1995, p449

¹⁴³ Times, Labour MPs divided over Blair's No 2, 17 June 1994, p1

Result

John Prescott won the election, securing over 50% in each section of the college.

1994 Deputy leadership election							
Candidates	MPs and MEPs	Electoral college share	Party members	Electoral college share	Affiliates	Electoral college share	Electoral college total
Margaret Beckett	46.3%	15.4%	40.6%	13.5%	44.4%	14.8%	43.5%
John Prescott	53.7%	17.9%	59.4%	19.8%	55.6%	18.5%	56.5%
Total		33.3%		33.3%		33.3%	100.0%

Source: Butler's British Political Facts, 2018

6.4

1992

The 1992 leadership and deputy leadership elections were prompted by Labour's defeat at the 1992 General Election. Neil Kinnock announced his resignation on Monday 13 April and his deputy, Roy Hattersley, confirmed he too would stand down. Kinnock indicated he wanted the new leader in place in June.¹⁴⁴

The NEC agreed the new leader would be announced on 18 July and candidates would have until 29 April to secure the required number of nominations from fellow MPs. With 271 Labour MPs elected, the nominees needed the backing of 55.¹⁴⁵

Two candidates for leader stood, John Smith and Bryan Gould. Gould also stood for the deputy leadership role and two other candidates stood against him, Margaret Beckett and John Prescott.

John Smith and Margaret Beckett were elected. The table below shows the proportions of the electoral college for each candidate.

¹⁴⁴ Times, Kinnock quits with assault on Tory press, 14 April 1992, p1

¹⁴⁵ Times, Rules of the contest, 15 April 1992,

1992 electoral college shares				
Leader				
Candidates	MPs and MEPs	Party members	Affiliates	Electoral college total
Bryan Gould	6.8%	0.7%	1.5%	9.0%
John Smith	23.2%	29.3%	38.5%	91.0%
Electoral college total	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Deputy leader				
Candidates	MPs and MEPs	Party members	Affiliates	Electoral college total
Margaret Beckett	12.9%	19.0%	25.4%	57.3%
Bryan Gould	7.7%	3.9%	3.0%	14.6%
John Prescott	9.4%	7.1%	11.6%	28.1%
Electoral college total	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%	100.0%

Source: British Political Facts, 10th edition, 2011

6.5

1988

The 1988 leadership and deputy leadership contest came after Labour had lost its third general election in a row, in 1987. A group of Labour MPs on the left of the party, the Campaign Group, agreed to launch a challenge to Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley in March 1988.

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer challenged for the leadership and deputy leadership respectively.¹⁴⁶ John Prescott also joined the deputy leadership race.¹⁴⁷

The result was announced at the party's conference in Blackpool on 2 August 1988. Both Kinnock and Hattersley were confirmed as leader and deputy leader.

¹⁴⁶ Times, Labour chaos as Benn runs for leadership, 24 March 1988, p1

¹⁴⁷ Times, Kinnock risks his future on Hattersley, 31 March 1988, p1

1988 electoral college shares				
Leader				
Candidates	MPs and MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates	Electoral college total
Tony Benn	5.2%	5.9%	0.3%	11.4%
Neil Kinnock	24.8%	24.1%	39.7%	88.6%
Electoral college total	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Deputy leader				
Candidates	MPs and MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates	Electoral college total
Roy Hattersley	17.4%	18.1%	31.3%	66.8%
Eric Heffer	5.4%	4.0%	0.0%	9.5%
John Prescott	7.2%	7.8%	8.7%	23.7%
Electoral college total	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%	100.0%

Source: British Political Facts, 10th edition, 2011

6.6

1983

Following defeat at the 1983 General Election, Michael Foot announced he would not seek renomination as leader. The deputy, Denis Healey, also stood down.¹⁴⁸

Four MPs secured sufficient nominations to enter the ballot for leader and four for the deputy leadership. Roy Hattersley was the only candidate to stand for both positions.

The results are summarised in the table below.

¹⁴⁸ Times, Kinnock heads the field in Labour leadership battle, 13 June 1983, p1

1983 electoral college shares

Leader				
Candidates	MPs and MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates	Electoral college total
Roy Hattersley	7.8%	0.6%	10.9%	19.3%
Eric Heffer	4.3%	2.0%	0.0%	6.3%
Neil Kinnock	14.8%	27.5%	29.0%	71.3%
Peter Shore	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%
Electoral college total	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Deputy leader				
Candidates	MPs and MEPs	CLPs	Affiliates	Electoral college total
David Davies	3.3%	0.2%	0.0%	3.5%
Gwyneth Dunwoody	1.2%	0.1%	0.0%	1.3%
Roy Hattersley	16.7%	15.3%	35.2%	67.3%
Michael Meacher	8.8%	14.4%	4.7%	27.9%
Electoral college total	30.0%	30.0%	40.0%	100.0%

Source: British Political Facts, 10th edition, 2011

7

Previous contests 1922-1981

Between 1922 and 1981, only members of the parliamentary party were eligible to vote for the leader and the deputy leader. Under Labour Party rules, elections took place annually whilst the party was in opposition. These were normally a formality. If the party was in government contests only occurred when a vacancy arose.

Contested elections for the leadership were held in 1922, 1935, 1955, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1976 and 1980.

In 1922, Ramsey MacDonald became leader for the second time following a challenge to John Clynes.

Arthur Henderson became leader unopposed in August 1931 following MacDonald's expulsion from the Labour Party. Henderson lost his seat at the October 1931 election but remained party leader until resigning the following year. In October 1932, George Lansbury was elected leader unopposed. He had been acting leader of the parliamentary party since Henderson lost his seat.¹⁴⁹

In 1935, Clement Attlee succeeded Henderson. Henderson resigned the leadership after the 1935 annual conference.¹⁵⁰ Attlee beat Herbert Morrison in the election and remained leader until 1955.¹⁵¹

Hugh Gaitskell was elected leader in December 1955 but was challenged twice for the leadership while in Opposition, in 1960 following defeat at the 1959 election, and again in 1961.¹⁵² Both years also saw the deputy leader, George Brown, challenged.

The next contested election was in 1963, following Gaitskell's death. Harold Wilson won on the second ballot and remained leader until his resignation in 1976.

James Callaghan won the 1976 leadership election, defeating Michael Foot on the third ballot. Foot succeeded Callaghan in 1980, following Callaghan's resignation, in the last leadership election to be decided by MPs alone.

The table below summarises the leadership votes 1922 to 1981.

¹⁴⁹ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Arthur Henderson, September 2004

¹⁵⁰ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, George Lansbury, September 2004

¹⁵¹ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Clement Attlee, September 2004

¹⁵² Harry Harmer, Longman Companion to the Labour Party 1900-1998, 1999

Leadership elections 1922-1981			
Year	Rounds of balloting		
1922	21 November		
Ramsey MacDonald	61		
John Clynes	56		
Eligible MPs	142		
1935	26 November		3 December
Clement Attlee	58	Clement Attlee	88
Herbert Morrison	44	Herbert Morrison	48
Arthur Greenwood	33 *		
Eligible MPs	154		
1955	14 December		
Hugh Gaitskell	157		
Aneurin Bevan	70		
Herbert Morrison	40		
Eligible MPs	277		
1960	3 November		
Hugh Gaitskell	148		
Harold Wilson	81		
Eligible MPs	254		
1961	2 November		
Hugh Gaitskell	171		
Arthur Greenwood	58		
Eligible MPs	248		
1963	7 February		14 February
Harold Wilson	171	Harold Wilson	144
George Brown	58	George Brown	103
James Callaghan	41 *		
Eligible MPs	249		
1976	25 March		30 March
Michael Foot	90	James Callaghan	141
James Callaghan	84	Michael Foot	133
Roy Jenkins	56	Dennis Healey	38 *
Tony Benn	37 ‡		
Dennis Healey	30 ‡		5 April
Anthony Crosland	17 *	James Callaghan	176
		Michael Foot	137
Eligible MPs	317		
1980	4 November		10 November
Dennis Healey	112	Michael Foot	139
Michael Foot	83	Dennis Healey	129
John Silkin	38 *		
Peter Shore	32 *		
Eligible MPs	268		

* Eliminated
‡ Withdrew

Sources:

Harry Harmer, Longman Companion to the Labour Party 1900-1998, 1999

Butler's British Political Facts, 2011

Times Digital Archive:

- Mr. Gaitskell Wins By 85 Votes, 4 November 1960
- Labour Leader's Easy win, 3 November 1961
- Mr Wilson Tops Leadership Poll, 8 February 1963
- Mr Callaghan wins second ballot by eight votes but Mr Foot will fight on, 31 March 1976

Deputy leadership contests

The table below shows contested deputy leadership contests from 1922 to 1981.

Deputy leadership elections 1922-1981			
Year	Rounds of balloting		
1952	11 November		
Herbert Morrison			194
Aneurin Bevan			82
Eligible MPs			295
1953	29 October		
Herbert Morrison			181
Aneurin Bevan			76
Eligible MPs			293
1956	2 February		
Jim Griffiths			141
Aneurin Bevan			111
Eligible MPs			277
1960	3 November		10 November
George Brown	118	George Brown	146
Frederick Lee	73	James Callaghan	83
James Callaghan	55 *		
Eligible MPs			254

1961	2 November		
George Brown	169		
Barbara Castle	56		
Eligible MPs	248		
1962	8 November		
George Brown	133		
Harold Wilson	103		
Eligible MPs	249		
1970	8 July		
Roy Jenkins	133		
Michael Foot	67		
Fred Peart	48		
Eligible MPs	287		
1971	10 November		17 November
Roy Jenkins	140	Roy Jenkins	140
Michael Foot	96	Michael Foot	126
Tony Benn	46 *		
Eligible MPs	289		
1972	20 April		25 April
Edward Short	111	Edward Short	146
Michael Foot	110	Michael Foot	116
Anthony Crosland	61 *		
Eligible MPs	288		
1976	21 October		
Micheal Foot	166		
Shirley Williams	128		
Eligible MPs	317		

Sources:

Harry Harmer, Longman Companion to the Labour Party 1900-1998, 1999

Butler's British Political Facts, 2011

Times Digital Archive:

Mr. Morrison's 112 Majority, 12 November 1952

Deputy Leader Of Opposition, 29 October 1953

Mr. J. Griffiths's Majority Of 30, 3 February 1956

Mr. Gaitskell Wins By 85 Votes, 4 November 1960

Mr. G. Brown IS Labour's No. 2, 11 November 1960

Labour Leaders' Easy Win, 3 November 1961

Mr. G. Brown's 30 Majority, 9 November 1962

Jenkins elected Wilson's deputy, 9 July 1970

Three votes rob Mr Jenkins of outright win in party ballot, 11 November 1971

Mr Jenkins wins but the moral victory goes to Mr Foot, 18 November 1971

Leadership elections: Labour Party

Single vote lead for Mr Short in poll, 21 April 1972

Mr Short beats Mr Foot for deputy leadership, 26 April 1972

Mr Foot wins poll for deputy leader by 38, 22 October 1976

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