

## 85 MPs risk losing seats over Off-Payroll (IR35)



Eighty-five MPs are at serious risk of losing their seats in Parliament during the next, and possibly imminent, General Election if they do not lend their backing to contractors over Government's [controversial plans to extend the Off-Payroll rules into the private sector](#).

Research conducted by ContractorCalculator has identified the MPs for whom it will prove most costly to lose the self-employed vote. The results are based on data from the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) and contractor sentiment indicated by a previous ContractorCalculator survey.

In total, 85 MPs hold a majority in Parliament that would feasibly be overturned if the expected turnout of IR35-opposing self-employed voters from their constituency were to vote against them. Hundreds more also have much to lose, or gain, from the self-employed vote.

"Failure to secure the self-employed vote would prove catastrophic for all parties involved, not least the Tories, who make up 39 of the 85 at-risk seats," comments ContractorCalculator CEO, Dave Chaplin. "There is also potentially a lot to gain for some, but those in precarious positions will have to act swiftly and earnestly to win over contractors' trust."

### How we identified the at-risk MPs

ContractorCalculator's study draws on ONS figures detailing the number of self-employed in every constituency in the UK. Each constituency's 2017 General Election voter turnout figure as a percentage has been applied to this sum to determine the likely number of self-employed voters in each area.

A July 2018 ContractorCalculator survey of circa 2,000 contractors had already found that [49% would vote against their local MP](#) at the next election if their MP were to support the Off-Payroll rules.

This 49% figure has been applied to the number of expected self-employed voters to ascertain the number of critical votes; a sum which exceeds the majority margin by which 85 MPs claimed their seats in 2017 – in many cases significantly so.

As a litmus test to help gauge genuine existing support for the contracting sector, the research also noted which MPs have signed the [early day motion \(EDM\) opposing the 2019 Loan Charge](#), which is due to be debated in the House of Commons tomorrow.

"The Loan Charge is a direct result of IR35, which drove thousands of contractors unwittingly into schemes," notes Chaplin. "This retrospective tax is causing financial ruin and destroying lives. Though their seats may be at risk, MPs who have lent their backing to the contract sector by opposing the Loan Charge will stand in far better stead."

### Who are the potential IR35 political casualties?

Of the vulnerable MPs, there are 40 Conservative and 24 Labour politicians. And while nine at-risk Labour MPs have opposed the Loan Charge by signing the EDM, only two Tory MPs have. Given the relatively fine margins, with only 58 seats separating the two, the self-employed vote will prove crucial to either party's fortunes at the next General Election.

"The Conservatives appear to have a lot more to lose than Labour," comments Chaplin. "The recent Off-Payroll announcement, and multiple draconian measures before it, won't have done those vulnerable Tory MPs any favours, as they now face an uphill task if they want to save their seats.

"Although Labour has a lot of vulnerable seats, this is still a massive opportunity to make further ground on the Conservatives, which it often criticises for targeting more vulnerable individuals with its tax collecting measures. For MPs who are prepared to back up Labour's arguments by opposing the draconian Off-Payroll regime, any potential General Election caused from a collapse in Government from Brexit could prove very fruitful."

#### Top 20 Conservative IR35 political casualties

Rank	MP	Constituency	Parliamentary majority	Number of shifting self-employed voters
1	Zac Goldsmith	Richmond Park	45	9,263
2	Royston Smith	Southampton, Itchen	31	2,460
3	Derek Thomas	St Ives	312	5,421
4	Stephen Kerr	Stirling	148	2,330
5	Theresa Villiers	Chipping Barnet	353	5,137
6	Amber Rudd	Hastings and Rye	346	4,007
7	Jackie Doyle-Price	Thurrock	345	3,345
8	Stephen Crabb	Preseli Pembrokeshire	314	3,003
9	Matthew Offord	Hendon	1,072	6,349
10	Stuart Andrew	Pudsey	331	1,820
11	Chloe Smith	Norwich North	507	2,521
12	Craig Whittaker	Calder Valley	609	2,697
13	Justine Greening	Putney	1,554	5,264
14	Mike Freer	Finchley and Golders Green	1,657	5,143
15	Bob Blackman	Harrow East	1,757	5,246
16	Jack Brereton	Stoke-on-Trent South	663	3,912
17	Michael Ellis	Northampton North	807	2,286
18	Guto Bebb	Aberconwy	635	1,705
19	Anna Soubry	Broxtowe	863	2,315
20	Chris Green	Bolton West	936	2,473

#### Top 20 Labour IR35 political casualties

Rank	MP	Constituency	Parliamentary majority	Number of shifting self-employed voters
1	Emma Dent Coad	Kensington	20	4,939
2	Laura Smith	Crewe and Nantwich	48	2,903

3	Ian Austin	Dudley North	22	1,045
4	Paul Farrelly	Newcastle-under-Lyme	30	949
5	Rosie Duffield	Canterbury	187	3,883
6	John Grogan	Keighley	239	3,264
7	David Drew	Stroud	687	4,452
8	Gerard Killen	Rutherglen and Hamilton West	265	1,525
9	John Woodcock	Barrow and Furness	209	1,074
10	Thelma Walker	Colne Valley	915	4,245
11	Gloria de Piero	Ashfield	441	1,882
12	Paul Sweeney	Glasgow North East	242	935
13	Lesley Laird	Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath	259	996
14	Fiona Onasanya	Peterborough	607	2,288
15	Matt Western	Warwick and Leamington	1,206	3,960
16	Sandy Martin	Ipswich	836	2,584
17	Mohammed Yasin	Bedford	789	2,348
18	Helen Goodman	Bishop Auckland	502	1,411
19	Paul Williams	Stockton South	888	2,093
20	Angela Smith	Penistone and Stocksbridge	1,322	4,677

The Scottish National Party (SNP) is also in a precarious position. Having lost a third of its seats in 2017, 14 of the party's 35 remaining seats are at risk, according to ContractorCalculator's research. Its case won't be helped by the fact that just one of its at-risk MPs has signed the Loan Charge EDM. Meanwhile, five of 12 Liberal Democrat seats are at risk, though all vulnerable MPs have signed the EDM.

## Why MPs shouldn't underestimate the self-employed vote

Underestimating the significance of the study's findings could prove fatal for the identified MPS. A [2018 study of US freelancers by Upwork](#) found freelancers to be significantly more politically active than employees, with 19% more freelancers than employees reporting to engage in politics. It also found that 70% of freelancers were willing to cross party lines to support candidates who addressed their interests.

"The numbers don't lie, and they suggest that the self-employed will have a huge bearing on the upcoming local elections," notes Chaplin. "The message to MPs is clear: if you want the backing of the self-employed sector, you have to support our cause."

For Chaplin, there are also obvious lessons to take away for contractors, especially members of constituencies that are vulnerable to shifting self-employed voters:

"This is a real opportunity for the self-employed sector to get politicians onside and working for our cause. The self-employed vote is critical for so many candidates and, given the state of play regarding IR35, we need to make that work to our advantage.

"We urge all of our readership to join our [campaign opposing the Off-Payroll rules](#), circulate our IR35 fact sheet, and reach out to their MPs to remind them how much the self-employed vote is worth and what they have to do to earn it."

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