

Conservative leadership contest candidates

By the Vuelio Political Team

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Introduction

Nominations have closed as part of the leadership contest to select Rishi Sunak's successor, with candidates needing the support of 10 MPs to enter the race. The Vuelio Political team have put together profiles for each candidate.

Campaigning will follow throughout August ahead of a series of votes by Conservative MPs between 4 - 11 September. The final four candidates are set to speak to party members at the Conservative Party conference, which runs September 29 - October 2.

MPs are then due to vote again on October 9 and 10, leaving two candidates. These candidates are then put to an online ballot of Conservative Party members, which closes at 5pm on October 31.

The final result is announced on November 2.

Rishi Sunak will remain as leader until his successor is appointed.



Kemi Badenoch

MP for Saffron Walden and Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Majority: 24,966

Website: <https://renewal2030.org.uk/>

X: <https://x.com/KemiBadenoch>

Publicly endorsed by

- [Alex Burghart](#)
- [Andrew Bowie](#) - 'I've got huge respect for what she achieved in government, and I think she is exactly what the Conservative Party needs if we are to renew and take the fight to the Labour Party.'
- [Andrew Griffith](#)
- [Julia Lopez](#)

Profile

- Badenoch was [born](#) in London and grew up in Lagos, Nigeria. She returned to the UK when she was 16.
- She [graduated](#) with a Computer Systems Engineering degree and a Master of Engineering from the University of Sussex.
- In 2009 she [completed](#) an LLB in Law at the University of London.
- She [stood](#) as the Conservative candidate in Dulwich and West Norwood in 2010, coming third with 22.2% of the vote.
- She [worked](#) as a software engineer from 2007 on major technology change programmes for public sector organisations like the NHS, as well as for transport and financial services companies.
- She has also [worked](#) for Coutts, a private bank, and for the Bank of Scotland.
- She [was](#) digital director at the Spectator between 2015 and 2016.

Previous appointments

- Secretary of State for Business and Trade (February 2023 - July 2024)
- President of the Board of Trade (February 2023 - July 2024)
- Minister for Women and Equalities (October 2022 - July 2024)
- Secretary of State for International Trade (September 2022 - February 2023)

- Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (September 2021 – July 2022)
- Minister for Equalities (February 2020 – July 2022)
- Exchequer Secretary, HM Treasury (February 2020 – September 2021)
- Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Education (July 2019 – February 2020)

Political background

- In 2012, she unsuccessfully [stood](#) for the Conservatives in the London Assembly election. She entered the London Assembly in 2015.
- She was the GLA Conservative's spokesperson for the Economy and sat on the transport committee and the policing and crime committee.
- Upon entering Parliament, she [became](#) a member of the Justice Select Committee.
- She has also [sat](#) on the Public Accounts Committee and the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission.
- In January 2018, she was appointed as the Conservative Party's Vice Chair for Candidates and remained in this position until July 2019.
- Badenoch has attracted media attention for her views on 'critical race theory' and white privilege. She has argued that the term 'white privilege' is stoking divisions and marginalising the most disadvantaged, and has said it should not be taught in schools.
- She [cites](#) Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher as two of her heroes.
- In 2022, she [put](#) herself forward to replace Boris Johnson. She [said](#) 'people are exhausted by platitudes and empty rhetoric' and an intellectual grasp of what is required to run the country' is missing.
- When she [left](#) the leadership race, she backed Rishi Sunak.
- Badenoch was a supporter of Brexit. In her maiden speech, she [described](#) the referendum as 'the greatest ever vote of confidence in the project of the United Kingdom'.
- [Writing](#) in *The Times*, Badenoch blamed the party's general election loss on an 'incoherent' set of policies, and accused past Conservative prime ministers of tolerating 'nasty identity politics'. She said the Conservative party 'talked right yet governed left'.
- Badenoch [argued](#) that Conservatism must become a 'team effort' and that a renewal of the party is essential.
- She [said](#) that real leadership is about setting 'a principles-based vision about where to take the country and then inspires people to join that shared mission'.
- Badenoch has [vowed](#) to start her campaign 'not with pledges but with listening to our MPs and members on how we can create a movement that restores the Conservative Party and, in time, our country'.



James Cleverly

MP for Braintree and Shadow Home Secretary

Majority: 3,670

Website: <https://www.jamescleverlyforleader.com/>

X: <https://x.com/JamesCleverly>

Publicly endorsed by:

- [Peter Fortune](#) - 'A communicator. A unifier. A leader. I wholeheartedly support his bid for the Leadership.'
- [Michael Tomlinson](#) - 'He is a serious leader, ready to put in the hard work and recover our reputation for competence and integrity.'

Profile

- James Cleverly was born in Lewisham hospital where his mother [worked as](#) a midwife at the time.
- Cleverly earned a BA in Hospitality Management at Thames Valley University (which is now the University of West London).
- Following this, he [joined](#) the army and served in the British Army Reserve as a part-time officer, he reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Artillery before having to leave prematurely due to injury.
- After his time in the army, Cleverly went back to university where he received his business degree, during this time he [joined](#) the Territorial Army.
- In 2004, he was [called up](#) to support mobilised TA soldiers and ensure their jobs upon return from Iraq.
- He [is](#) President of the fundraising group for the Ulysses Trust which supports cadets and members of the reserve forces.
- Cleverly was elected as the London Assembly Member for Bexley and Bromley in 2008, a role he held until 2016.
- He was elected MP for Braintree during the 2015 General Election.

Previous appointments

- Secretary of State for the Home Department (November 2023 - July 2024)

- Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (September 2022 – November 2023)
- Secretary of State for Education (July 2022 – September 2022)
- Minister of State, Minister for Europe and North America (February 2022 – July 2022)
- Minister of State, Minister for Middle East, North Africa and North America (September 2020 – February 2022)
- Minister of State, Minister for Middle East and North Africa (February 2020 – September 2020)
- Minister without Portfolio, Cabinet Office, (July 2019 – February 2020)
- Co-Chair of the Conservative Party, (July 2019 – February 2020)
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the European Union (April 2019 – July 2019)
- Deputy Chair of the Conservative Party (January 2018 – April 2019)

Political background

- Cleverly [served](#) as Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party from January 2018 to April 2019. During this time, he [attracted some criticism](#) for his view that Labour’s proposed amendments to the abortion laws in Northern Ireland had “little to do with women’s right to choose, and everything to do with opportunistic party political game playing.”
- In late 2018 and early 2019, Cleverly got into an [altercation](#) with the National Education Union calling on them to take down their ‘school cuts’ website. He challenged the claim that 91% of schools face funding cuts and wrote to the UK Statistics Authority, who agreed the statistic was ‘misleading’. But the NEU stood by its figures, saying the funding crisis was ‘very real’.
- Cleverly [served as](#) Chairman of the Conservative Party from 2019 to 2020 under then Prime Minister Boris Johnson. His time as Chairman was marked by his involvement in the general election campaign and efforts to consolidate the party unity post-Brexit.
- He was [appointed](#) Foreign Secretary in September 2022 under Liz Truss, during which time he shaped the UK’s foreign policy through managing the UK’s response to Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, including the [announcement](#) of numerous key sanctions on Russia.
- In November 2023, Cleverly was appointed Home Secretary following Rishi Sunak’s Cabinet reshuffle. His tenure was notably marked by a strong emphasis on stringent immigration controls. He [upheld and promoted](#) the UK’s Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda and [introduced](#) alternative accommodation solutions for asylum seekers.
- Cleverly [was](#) re-elected as MP for Braintree at the 2024 general election, and appointed Shadow Home Secretary under Leader of the Opposition Rishi Sunak.

- Cleverly [was](#) the first Conservative MP to announce his bid for party leadership. He has pitched himself as the unity candidate, [vowing](#) to 'unite the [Conservative] party, hold Labour to account and get [the Conservatives] back to [its] winning ways.'



Robert Jenrick

MP for Newark

Majority: 3,572

Website: <https://joinjenrick.com/>

X: <https://x.com/RobertJenrick>

Publicly endorsed by

- [Danny Kruger](#) - 'He's got the competence and the personality and the temperament, also he has got the right policies.'
- [Caroline Johnson](#) - 'Sound Conservative principles and the temperament and attributes to be a great leader.'
- [Edward Leigh](#) - 'Jenrick's the one.'
- [Mark Pritchard](#)

Profile

- Robert Jenrick [was](#) born in Wolverhampton in 1982 and grew up in Shropshire and Herefordshire.
- He [attended](#) Wolverhampton Grammar School and read History at St. John's College, Cambridge.
- He [earned](#) a Thouron scholarship that allowed him to study Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania for a year.
- Returning to the UK, Jenrick studied law at the College of Law and BPP Law School and went on to [join](#) law firm Skadden Arps and Sullivan and Cromwell firms in London and Moscow.
- He later [held](#) a range of commercial management positions at the art business Christie's, his most recent role before entering Parliament being that of International Managing Director of a global division of the company, managing staff and sales in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Hong Kong, New York and China.
- Jenrick unsuccessfully [stood](#) as the Conservative candidate for Newcastle-under-Lyme in May 2010.
- In 2014, the incumbent Conservative MP for Newark Patrick Mercer resigned, triggering a by-election. Jenrick was [selected](#) to stand as the Conservative candidate and he won the contest.

Previous appointments

- Minister of State for Immigration (October 2022 – December 2023)
- Minister of State at the Department of Health and Social Care (September 2022 – October 2022)
- Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (July 2019 – September 2021)
- Exchequer Secretary at HM Treasury (January 2018 – July 2019)

Political background

- Jenrick has [served](#) as a Parliamentary Private Secretary several times: to former Employment Minister Esther McVey, to Amber Rudd in her role as Energy Minister and later when she became Home Secretary, to Michael Gove when he was Justice Minister and to Liz Truss in her capacity as Secretary of State for Justice.
- Between July 2014 and March 2015, Jenrick [sat](#) on the Health Committee. He was elected to the Board of the Conservative Party after being elected by fellow MPs in 2017.
- Jenrick was Chair of both the APPG on Genocide Prevention and Crimes Against Humanity, and the APPG on Cultural Heritage. Jenrick was also Vice-Chair of the APPG on the following topics: China, Korea, Alternative Learning, and Antisemitism. He was Treasurer of the British Museum APPG and also sat on the Corporate Governance APPG, on the Mayflower Pilgrims APPG, and on the Rural Crime APPG.
- Jenrick was [appointed](#) Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury in January 2018 and was responsible for supporting the Financial Secretary of the Treasury on matters related to UK growth and productivity, such as small business taxation. Other responsibilities included competition and better regulation, environmental issues including taxation of transport and international climate change issues, and indirect taxes (as lead Tax Minister).
- In July 2019, he was [appointed](#) Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. He was removed from this role in September 2021 during a Cabinet reshuffle.
- In September 2022 Jenrick was reappointed to Government, [becoming](#) a Minister of State in the Department for Health and Social Care when Liz Truss was made Prime Minister.
- He was most recently Minister for Immigration at the Home Office until his [resignation](#) in December 2023 over differences with the Government on its Rwanda policy.
- Recently [speaking](#) to Political Thinking, he highlighted that the Conservative Party's failure was due to their inability to tackle issues such as immigration, resulting in people becoming 'angry and frustrated.'

- Jenrick is [expected](#) to launch his campaign in the East Midlands at the start of August.



Priti Patel

MP for Witham

Majority: 5,145

Website: <https://www.pritipatelmp.com/>

X: <https://x.com/pritipatel>

Publicly endorsed by

- [Alec Shelbrooke](#) - 'Priti has had senior roles, she's respected on all wings of the party'.
- [Saqib Bhatti](#) - 'While she was campaigning for her own seat, she was also helping colleagues up and down the country'.
- [Greg Smith](#)
- [Andrew Snowden](#)

Profile

- Priti Patel [was](#) born in London and educated at Watford Grammar School for Girls.
- She [studied](#) economics at Keele University from the University of Essex.
- She then went on to [work](#) in the Conservative Central Office, before leaving to run the press office for the Referendum Party from 1995 to 1997.
- She later returned to the Conservative Party to [work](#) as Deputy Press Secretary to William Hague from 1997 to 2000.
- She was the Conservative candidate for Nottingham North in the 2005 General Election, coming second and receiving 18.7% of the vote.
- From 2000 she [worked](#) at public affairs consultancy Weber Shandwick, and also in corporate relations for the beverage company Diageo, until she was elected MP for Witham in 2010.

Previous appointments

- Home Secretary (July 2019 - September 2022)
- Secretary of State for International Development (July 2016 - November 2017)
- Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (May 2015 - July 2016)
- Exchequer Secretary at HM Treasury (July 2014 - May 2015)

Political background

- In November 2013, she was [appointed](#) the first ever Prime Minister's UK India Diaspora Champion.
- In 2014, then-PM David Cameron [appointed](#) Patel as Exchequer Secretary. It was from here that Patel became a leading figure in the 2016 EU membership referendum.
- In July 2016, Patel was appointed Secretary of State for International Development under Theresa May. However, she [resigned](#) from the position a year later after a row over her unauthorised meetings with the Israeli Government.
- Patel served as Home Secretary between July 2019 and September 2022 under Boris Johnson. Her tenure saw [reforms to the immigration system](#) with the introduction of the points-based system, EU Settlement Scheme, BNO Hong Kong Scheme, and Ukraine family and sponsorship visa schemes.
- Patel's time as Home Secretary was not without controversy. Her announcement of the [Rwanda deportation scheme](#) in April 2022; the handling of the Windrush scandal compensation scheme; and bullying allegations were among the most controversial moments.
- The Rwanda scheme was subject to legal challenges and [interventions](#) from the European Court of Human Rights during Patel's time as Home Secretary.
- Patel [resigned](#) as Home Secretary in September 2022, ahead of Liz Truss' assumption of UK premiership. Since then, she has continued her service to the Witham constituency from the backbenches.
- Patel [received](#) a DBE in June 2023 as part of Boris Johnson's resignation honours.
- Writing in *The Telegraph* on 27 July, Patel [said](#) she could unite the party, accusing her rivals of waging 'personal vendettas'.



Mel Stride

MP for Central Devon and Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Majority: 61

Website: <http://www.melstridemp.com>

X: <https://x.com/meljstride>

Publicly endorsed by

- [Mark Garnier](#) – ‘We need a serious, competent leader who has the track record and ability to bring our whole party together.’
- [George Freeman](#) – ‘Our next leader needs to be a heavyweight with the experience to unite and set out a coherent program for reform, renewal and economic growth.’
- [Desmond Swayne](#) – ‘He has the credibility and respect to: deliver unity, drive change, secure victory.’
- [Jerome Mayhew](#) – ‘A leader that can unite the coalition of voters needed for victory.’
- [Andrew Murrison](#)

Profile

- Mel Stride [studied](#) at Oxford University, earning a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics. He was [elected](#) as President of the Oxford Union.
- In 1987, Stride [set up](#) his own business specialising in trade exhibitions, conferences and publishing. He later expanded the business into the US.
- He [has](#) a strong interest and is a qualified tour guide of several national sites including Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London and the British Museum, Stonehenge, Windsor Castle and Tate Britain.
- Alongside guided tours, Stride [has](#) given several history talks in aid of local charities and organisations.
- He was elected MP for Central Devon at the 2010 General Election.

Previous appointments

- Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Department for Work and Pensions (October 2022 - July 2024)

- Chair of the Treasury Select Committee (October 2019 – October 2022)
- Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, Office of the Leader of the House of Commons (May 2019 – July 2019)
- Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General, HM Treasury (June 2017 – May 2019)
- Comptroller, HM Household (July 2016 – June 2017)
- Lord Commissioner, HM Treasury (May 2015 – July 2016)
- Assistant Whip, HM Treasury (July 2014 – March 2015)

Political background

- In July 2014, Stride [was](#) promoted to the Government as an Assistant Whip, before being made Lord Commissioner one year later after being re-elected at the 2015 General Election. Prior to this position, he had only served as a PPS.
- Following a cabinet reshuffle after the snap election in June 2017, Stride [was](#) appointed as Financial Secretary to the Treasury, as well as Paymaster General. He was later [accused](#) of breaking the Ministerial Code over comments he made on the loan charge.
- He [became](#) Leader of the House of Commons after the resignation of Andrea Leadsom in May 2019.
- In October 2022, he [was](#) appointed Secretary of State for Work and Pensions by former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.
- He had previously served as the Chair of the Treasury Committee from October 2019 to October 2022.
- Following the Conservative's loss in the 2024 General Election, Stride [was](#) appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.
- During Stride's time as the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, he had questioned the sustainability of the triple lock in September 2023 before he committed the Conservatives to a triple lock plus in the 2024 General Election campaign.
- In March 2024, Stride attracted criticism for [comments](#) he made in *The Times* regarding mental health conditions, which he suggested were the 'the normal ups and downs of human life'.
- After the Conservatives loss in the 2024 General Election, Stride [announced](#) his intention to stand in the Conservative leadership race to succeed Sunak in an appearance on BBC Breakfast .
- When [writing](#) in *The Telegraph* on 27 July, Stride stressed that the party must retain the trust of voters and a perception of competency if they are to succeed at the 2025 Local Elections.



Tom Tugendhat

MP for Tonbridge and Shadow Minister for Security

Majority: 11,166

Website: <https://www.tomforleader.uk/>

X: <https://x.com/TomTugendhat>

Publicly endorsed by:

- [Patrick Spencer](#)
- [Nick Timothy](#)
- [Karen Bradley](#)
- [Alicia Kearns](#)

Profile

- Tom Tugendhat [was](#) raised in London, and attended St Paul's School before studying theology at Bristol University. He later completed a master's degree in Islamic studies at Cambridge, during which time he temporarily lived in Yemen to learn Arabic. He also speaks French and Italian.
- After university, Tugendhat briefly lived in Beirut working as a journalist for the Lebanese newspaper *The Daily Star*.
- He then [established](#) a PR agency in Lebanon, one of the first in the country.
- Upon returning to the UK, he [worked](#) as a management consultant and then, in July 2003, he was commissioned into the territorial army.
- Tugendhat [served](#) in the Iraq War, working as an Arabic intelligence officer. After the war, he also participated in the reconstruction effort in Iraq.
- In 2005, Tugendhat [went](#) to Afghanistan during the war on behalf of the FCO to expand the National Security Council and to help set up a new office providing strategic advice to the President of Afghanistan. Tugendhat spent almost four years there, returning from his last deployment in July 2009. He was awarded an MBE for his services.
- Upon his return to the UK, Tugendhat [assisted](#) the Army Strategy Team to prepare for the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Previous appointments

- Minister for Security (September 2022 – May 2024)
- Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee (July 2017 – November 2019; January 2020 – September 2022)

Political background

- Tom Tugendhat was elected as the MP for Tonbridge and Malling in May 2015, when he won the seat with a majority of 23,734.
- Since his arrival in Parliament, Tugendhat has made an impression on fellow MPs, with many having [spoken](#) of his 'leadership potential'.
- Among these was Dominic Grieve; himself and Tugendhat were part of a group of 15 MPs who were [called](#) 'Brexit mutineers' by *The Telegraph* – referring to those who could bring formerly Remain and Brexit MPs together.
- Tugendhat was in favour of remaining in the EU prior to the 2016 referendum; he reportedly [said](#) that Britain 'lacks the foreign policy tools to make leaving the European Union a success'. He also [urged](#) Theresa May to keep borders 'more open' in order to attract the brightest immigrants.
- His service in the armed forces led Tugendhat to be viewed as a leader on international affairs, with Labour MP Mike Gapes (and fellow Foreign Affairs Committee member) [describing](#) him as 'one of the most influential political figures on foreign affairs'.
- One of Tugendhat's [ideas](#) has been to establish a 'super ministry', bringing together all the foreign activities of the UK under the authority of the Foreign Secretary. Another future project Tugendhat wants for Britain is to work on achieving 'close to free movement' with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.
- In the aftermath of the Salisbury attack in March 2018, Tugendhat [wrote](#) in *The Times* about the threat of Russian corruption comprising democracy and warned against the threat of Russia's 'dirty money' entering the City of London. He also wrote an article for the *Financial Times*, in which he [criticised](#) those who have supported the Nord Stream II pipeline.
- In November 2018, Tugendhat delivered a [speech](#) to the Social Market Foundation, in which he said he got into politics following his experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan; it became clear to him that it was his duty 'to serve the people of the United Kingdom'. In the speech, he also criticised Labour's approach of nationalising everything, saying: 'This Labour Party doesn't understand cooperation. Only control.'
- During his time as Chair of the Foreign Affairs committee (2017 to 2022), Tugendhat was known for his critical stance on issues such as China's influence, as well as the UK's withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- Additionally, in 2020, Tugendhat [co-founded](#) the China Research Group. Pressure from this group led to a government reversal on its plans to allow Huawei to enter the UK's 5G network. Tugendhat was later sanctioned by China for spreading misinformation and banned from entering the country.
- Tugendhat previously competed for Conservative leadership in summer 2022, in which he won more votes than expected. Of the 22 Conservative MPs who supported

Tugendhat in July 2022, only three are still in the House of Commons after the election: Paul Holmes, Dr Ben Spencer and Dame Karen Bradley.

- In the 2024 General Election, Tugendhat was [re-elected](#) as MP for his seat in Tonbridge (previously Tonbridge and Malling) and was subsequently appointed Shadow Minister for Security.
- On his website, Tugendhat [reiterated](#) that the reason the Conservatives lost the election was because of a lack of trust, stating that the party failed to do what they said they would. He added: 'I am not just running to be the next leader of the Conservative party. I am running to be the next Conservative prime minister. That is what this leadership election is all about: winning.' One thing that sets Tugendhat apart is his willingness to leave the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).