

Pulsar / 89up social election index shows Labour edging ahead in the final days of the General Election - after an initial Conservative lead at the start of the campaign

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- Since the start of the election, there have been over 700,000 unique mentions of tactical voting
- After a long period of the election campaign where the Conservatives have had an edge on Labour on Twitter and Facebook, the Labour party has now edged ahead in the final days
- Jeremy Corbyn remains most influential politician on social media with his posts on inequality driving a significant uplift in positive conversation around the Labour leader in the last week
- Racism (anti-Semitism and Islamophobia) as big a general election issue as the economy on social media
- Liberal Democrats failing to dominate any issue including Brexit
- Brexit party social engagement collapses after European elections

The General Election 2019 is increasingly a two horse race on social media with the Conservatives higher paid social media spend going toe-to-toe with the huge personal social media presence of Labour's leader Jeremy Corbyn, according to the Pulsar / 89up social election index (<https://www.pulsarplatform.com/blog/2019/introducing-the-pulsar-uk-election-social-index>).

Analysis of social media followers and content engagement across the main social networks and online sources (blogs, forums, online news) between 8 November and 10 December 2019 reveals significantly higher volumes of engagement with content from Jeremy Corbyn in comparison to that from Boris Johnson. For both leaders, the engagement levels of their social media posts has dropped in the last week.

Similarly, Jeremy Corbyn has been adding new followers at a much more rapid pace than Boris Johnson across social media platforms, with Jeremy Corbyn getting a major uplift in the number of his social media followers after his much-criticised interview with the BBC's Andrew Neil on 26 November.

The Corbyn social media surge has had knock on impact on engagement with the respective political parties with Labour now ahead of the Conservative party in terms of engagement across Twitter and Facebook.

Tactical voting

There have been over 700,000 mentions of tactical voting on Twitter since the beginning of the general election with a significant spike in interest on the 5 December onwards. The level of conversation has consistently risen since the start of the general election.

The major issues of the campaign

Brexit remains the topic driving the most online conversation during the General Election, followed closely by the NHS. Yet, for arguably the first time in British history, the discussion about racism is driving almost as much conversation as the economy. Social media conversation about racism, whether

anti-Semitism or Islamophobia, had 484,360 mentions compared 508,124 of the economy on Twitter in the period monitored until 10 December. Of the 484,360 mentions of racism, 86,108 are specifically mentions of Islamophobia (18%) and 203,224 mentions of anti-Semitism (42% of total mentions).

The public have strong associations with particular issues with particular parties. The Conservatives are especially associated with Brexit and the EU, immigration, crime as well as privatisation and the NHS (where many of the references online have been negative). The Labour party is strongly associated with housing, pensions, education and nationalisation with an association with security and defence (again, with many negative mentions). The Liberal Democrats do not dominate any part of the online conversation, with their largest share of voice being on the EU, but with fewer mentions than either Labour or the Conservative party and in line with the volumes seen for the Brexit party and SNP.

Tory tactics to gain social media coverage have been diverting attention away from the major issues of the campaign, but the most shared content has been in the mainstream media, for instance, The Independent's coverage of the 'fake Labour manifesto website' which was shared over 400,000 times online.

The Brexit party has struggled to maintain its strong organic social media strength from the European elections (where it drove 51% of all the shares on Facebook across all the major political parties). Nigel Farage's Facebook page is driving similar levels of engagement as the pages of Nicola Sturgeon and Jo Swinson.

Notes to Editors

Further results and analysis are available on the Pulsar/89up Social Election Index page (<http://pulsarplatform.com/blog/2019/introducing-the-pulsar-uk-election-social-index>). To produce the index, Pulsar monitored follower and content engagement data of candidate and party accounts, as well as mentions of topics (e.g. NHS, Brexit, Economy), across social networks and other web sources (blogs, forums, online news).

Pulsar (<https://www.pulsarplatform.com/>), an audience intelligence and social listening platform, is part of the Access Intelligence Group, an AIM-listed company which serves more than 3,500 global brands in the marketing, PR, and communications industries. Alongside Pulsar, the Group includes Vuelio, the platform to help organisations make their stories matter, and ResponseSource, a network that connects media and influencers to the resources they need, fast.

89up (<https://www.89up.org/>) is an award-winning social media agency with an expert team looking at the intersection between politics and social media. 89up was chosen by Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport select committee to give expert counsel for their Fake News inquiry. The agency has undertaken a number of prominent reports in the past eighteen months including a report on Russian disinformation during the EU referendum and the social media impact of the Brexit party during the EU elections.

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