

GENERAL ELECTION

2015



ON SOCIAL MEDIA

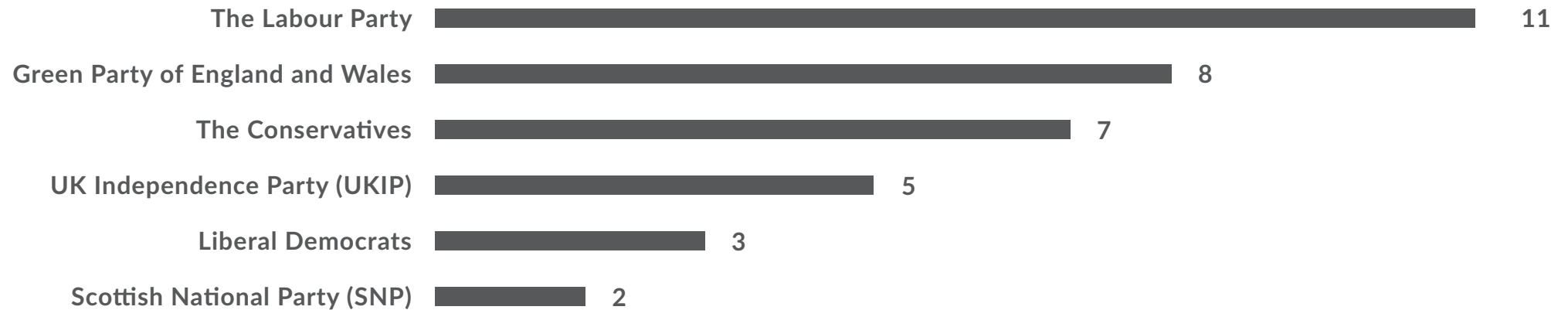
WHICH PARTY WINS ON
FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND YOUTUBE

by  **sotrender**



- FACEBOOK SUPPORT MIRRORS THE REAL WORLD EBB AND FLOW OF SUPPORT**
- THE CONSERVATIVES AND UKIP ARE DOMINANT ON FACEBOOK WITH AROUND 400,000 FOLLOWERS EACH**
- LABOUR ARE THE WINNERS ON TWITTER, ALTHOUGH THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS ARE THE MOST FREQUENT TWEETERS**
- UKIP HAS THE MOST SUBSCRIBERS ON YOUTUBE**
- GREENS HAVE THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF THEIR SUPPORTERS WHO ENGAGE (54%) ON FACEBOOK**
- THE CONSERVATIVES SHARE VISITORS WITH UKIP AND TO A LESSER EXTENT LABOUR**
- LABOUR HAVE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY AND THE GREEN PARTY STRUCK GOLD WITH ONE VIDEO**

JOINT RANKING OF COMMUNICATION INTENSITY



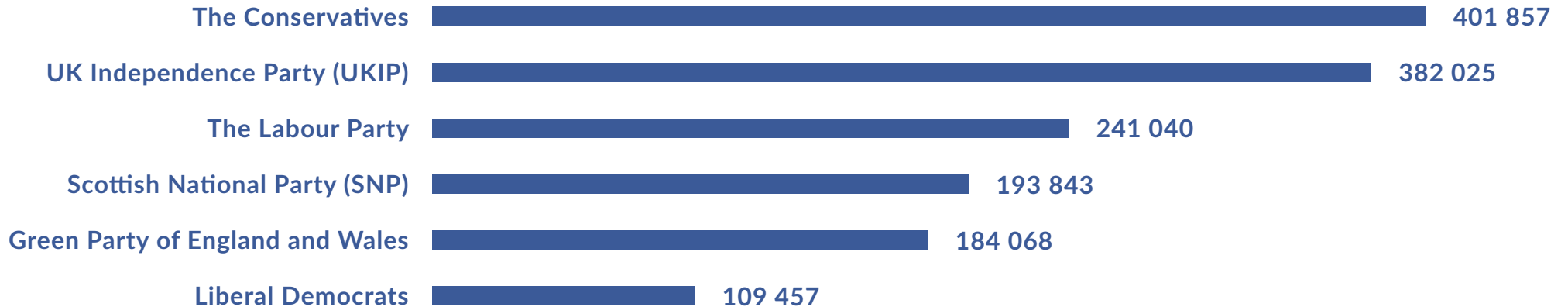
The UK General Election is coming and it's coming quick. Parties are doing their best to gain support of their electorate and as many floating voters as possible. Their campaigns take place among other places also on social media. However, it's not much friendly a space for politics and politicians. Social media is often compared to a big party and politics is not the best topic to talk while having fun. So how are political parties performing on social media at the crucial time of the pre-election campaign?

Sotrender, the social media analytics company, analysed the online activities of the biggest parties on the most important social media channels. Which party runs the most intensive electoral campaign and which one is the most efficient on each of the platforms? Read the report and check how the parties engage users on social media and what language they use to influence their electorate and get more votes. In general, the most intense campaign is conducted by the Labour Party, the main opposition party in the Parliament. They lead in our special joint ranking of communication intensity with 11 points. The ranking is a sum of parties' activities and user engagement on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. For the first position a profile gained 3 points, for second 2 points and for the third - 1.

UK GENERAL ELECTION ON FACEBOOK



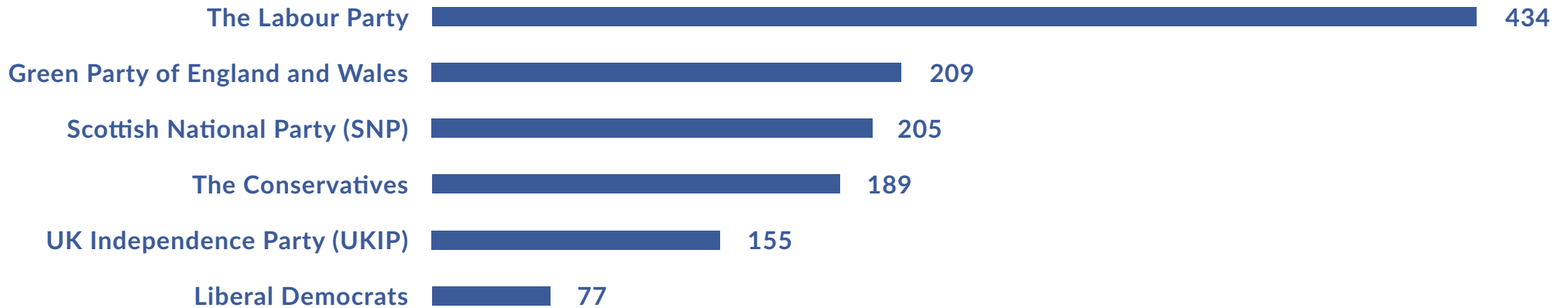
FANS OF PARTIES' FACEBOOK PAGES



Every party running in May election has a Facebook Page. We measured their communication using three metrics: number of fans, number of posts and number of engaged users.

The governing coalition - The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats - also has majority on Facebook, their fanpages are followed by over 500 thousand fans combined. The Conservatives have over 400 thousand fans and their Facebook site is the biggest among all United Kingdom political parties. Liberal Democrats with 109 thousand fans place 6th and have the smallest Facebook Page in our ranking. Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition - Labour Party - ranks 3rd in biggest Facebook Pages with 241 thousand fans, being surpassed by right wing United Kingdom Independence Party, which is liked by 382 thousand Facebook users. Scottish National Party, a probable deciding factor in case of a hung Parliament, has 192 thousand fans and ranks 4th, while Greens rank 5th with 178 thousand fans.

POSTS OF PARTIES FACEBOOK PAGES



Labour is also the most active party on Facebook. Within the analysed period (March 1 - April 20) they posted over 434 times (over twice more than The Conservatives), while Libdems only 77 times.

Scottish National Party (SNP)

Engage yourself in discussions concerning your posts!

At present, you hardly ever engage yourself in conversations regarding your posts. It may happen that by commenting your own post you can increase the engagement of your fans.

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UK Independence Party (UKIP)

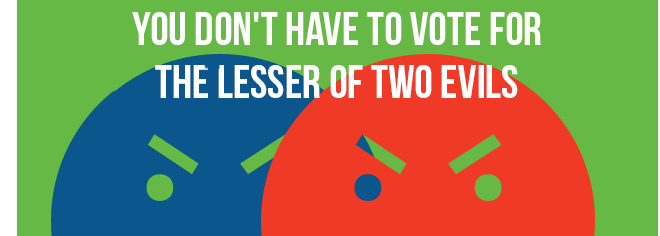
Publish less frequently

At the moment, you're posting much too often, so often that your fans aren't able to comment!

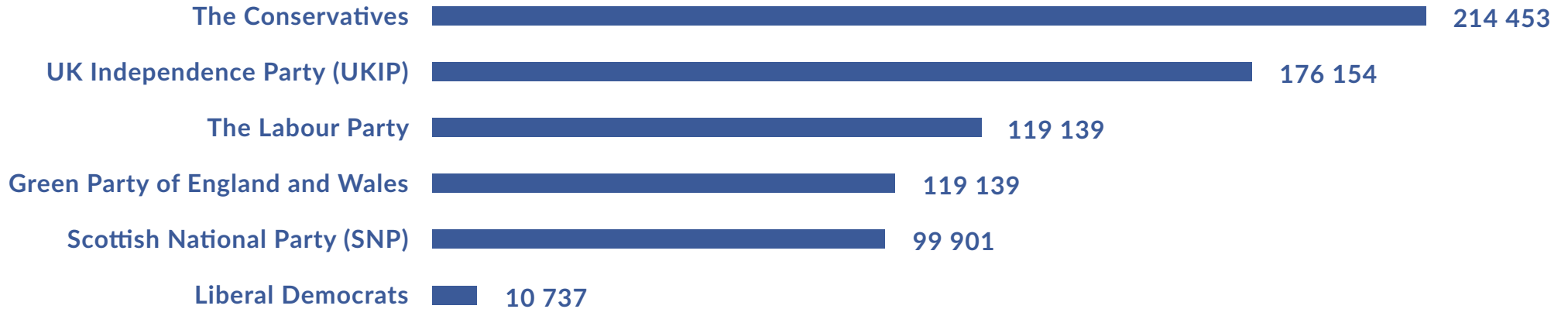
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Green Party of England and Wales

You don't have to choose between the lesser of two evils #leadersdebate
Say no to politics as usual #votegreen2015 <http://bit.ly/19MF7kk>



ENGAGED USERS ON PARTIES



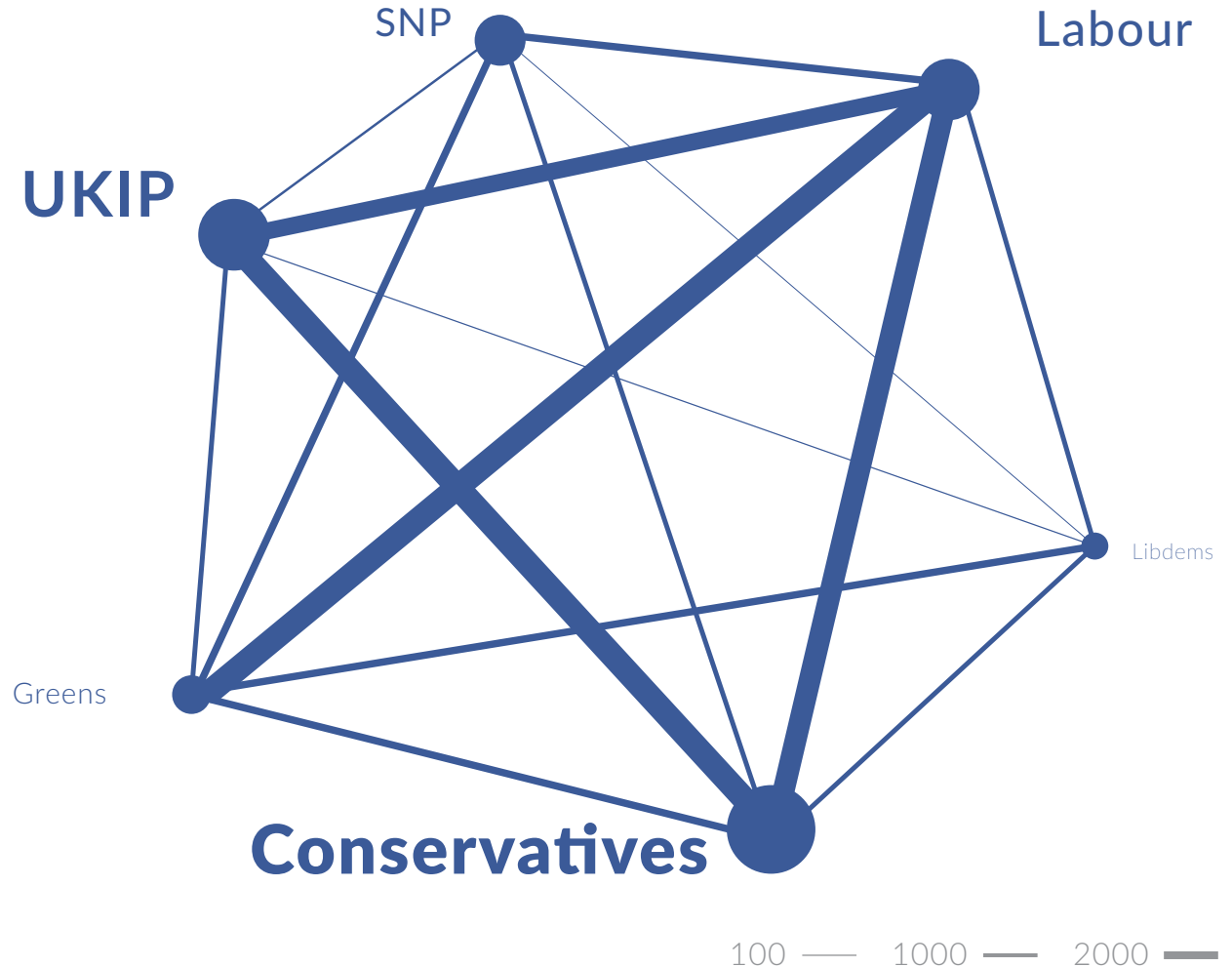
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Social media are changing the way politicians communicate with their electorate. Their monologue turned into a dialogue with potential voters. Each social media platform enables a different way of engaging the audience, which is one of the primary goals of all social media activities. To sum up, the level of users' engagement shows whether a politician succeeds in provoking a reaction from the part of the audience which may constitute a carrier of viral content.

INTEREST GRAPH - FACEBOOK

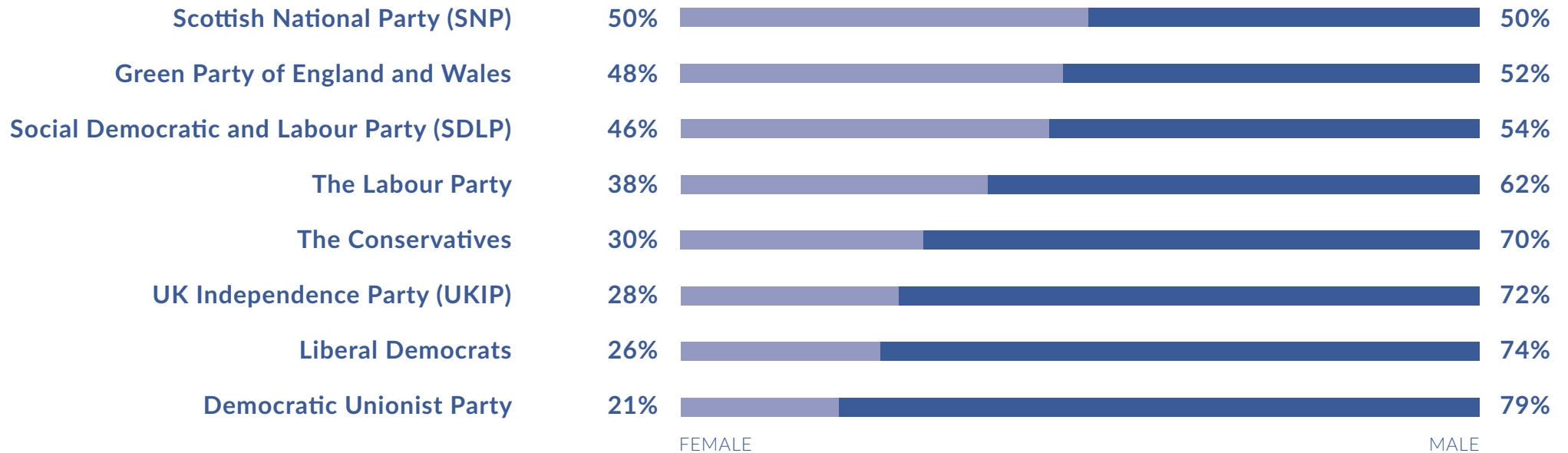
MARCH 1, 2015 - APRIL 20, 2015

The interest graph shows how many users are engaged on two different Facebook Pages which reflect their interests. The thicker the line, the more engaged users these Pages share. As you can see, SNP has strong ties to Greens and the Labour Party - other left wing parties. The most users engage themselves both on Greens' and Labour's Pages, but it is not obvious if it's a matter of a potential swinging vote or the fact that voters of both parties have similar views. We can see a similar situation on the right - the same users are active both on the UKIP's and the The Conservatives' Pages. Surprisingly, there is a quite strong tie between the Labour and UKIP Pages, but probably in this case users are active rather by commenting and discussing the other page's content than liking it.



The thickness of the line indicates the number of users active on both pages

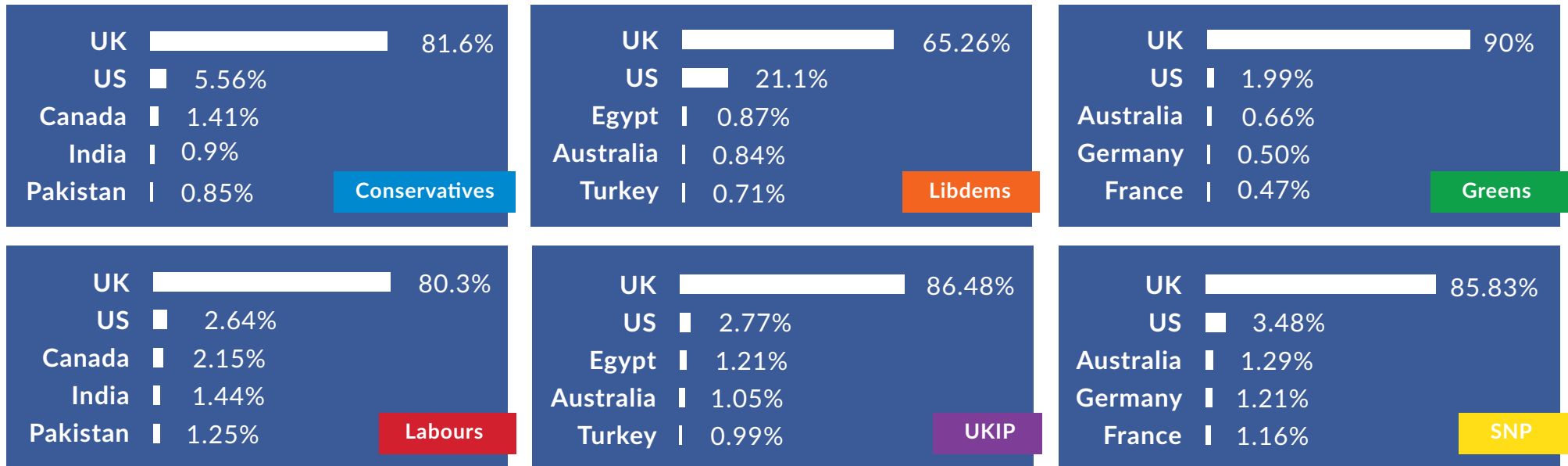
DEMOGRAPHICS - PARTIES' PROFILES GENDER STRUCTURE



The above chart presents gender structure of political party Fanpages.

We can see that on Facebook, in general, men are more interested in politics than women and more likely to engage on political party pages. Three parties have almost the same number of male and female fans. They are Scottish National Party, Green Party of England and Wales and Social Democratic and Labour Party. It is noteworthy that all three of them are left wing parties and none of them is present countrywide. Two of them are supporting partial or full independence of the constituent countries they are active in. The party least followed by women is Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party, followed by Liberal Democrats and UKIP.

DEMOGRAPHICS DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL PARTY FANPAGES



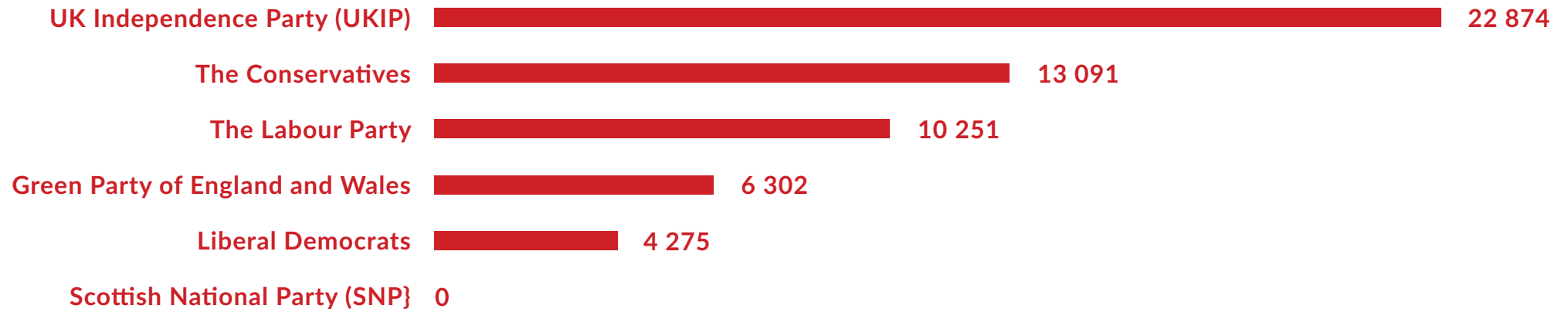
The above charts present the percentage of fans by (declared) country of residence.

There are some interesting demographic features to see among supporters of the parties running in the upcoming election. Only 60% of Libdems' fans are based in the UK. This is the smallest share of all parties. 20% of Liberal Democrats' fans are Americans and it's the biggest share of foreign users on any of the parties sites. The Conservatives also have quite a significant share of American fans - 5%. Another interesting fact is that the fifth biggest nationality on UKIP's fanpage (an openly anti-immigrant party) are Poles. This is probably due to anti-EU UKIP's rhetoric shared with Polish KORWiN party, whose fans and well-wishers are extremely active on social media.

UK GENERAL ELECTION ON YOUTUBE



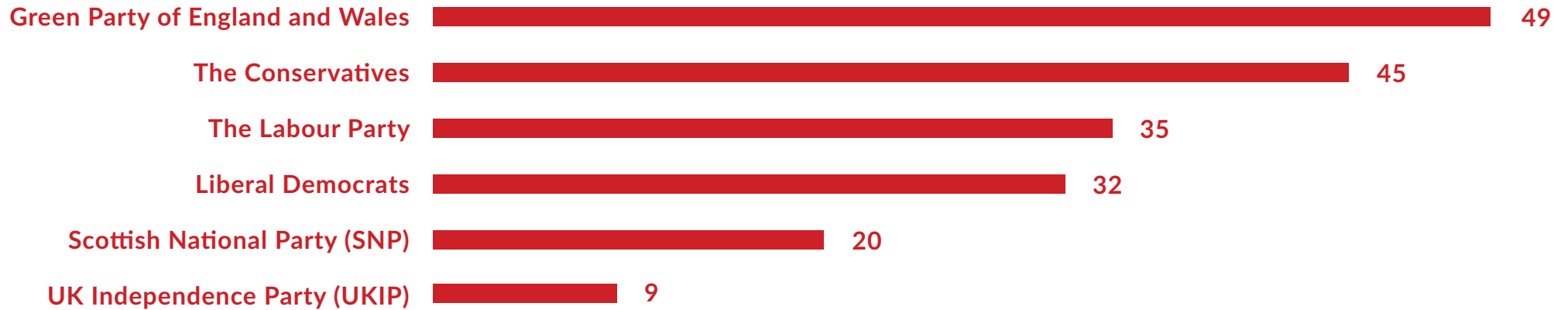
SUBSCRIBERS OF PARTIES' YOUTUBE CHANNELS



Video communication is becoming more and more important on the Internet. It no longer consists mainly of funny viral videos of cats. Political parties and politicians are also using videos to promote themselves and influence their voters.

The most active party on YouTube are Greens, with 49 new videos and 749 thousand total views. UKIP is the most followed party on YouTube with over 22 thousand subscribers, but in the analysed period their videos had the smallest number of views. Scottish National Party decided to hide the number of their subscribers and is second to last in terms of number of views. SNP and UKIP's videos combined were viewed over three times less than videos of the fourth party, Liberal Democrats.

VIDEOS OF PARTIES' YOUTUBE CHANNELS



The Conservatives uploaded 45 videos during the analysed period, and their content was viewed 479 thousand times. The governing party surpassed Labour and their 422 thousand views. The Conservatives ranked higher than opposition also in terms of the number of subscribers, with over 13 thousand users following their channel, while the Labour's channel is subscribed by 10 thousand users.

Liberal Democrats

Try publishing on Thursdays

You rarely publish on this day of the week, while it is the day when you get most views.

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Conservatives

You should publish more regularly

During the last 3 months there was a period when you didn't publish anything for 10 consecutive weeks. YouTube works best if you publish at least one video per week on average.

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Scottish National Party (SNP)

Try publishing on Wednesdays, Saturdays

On these days you publish less, nevertheless users view your videos the most often.

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VIEWS OF PARTIES' YOUTUBE CHANNELS



UK Independence Party (UKIP)

Publish longer videos

Currently your videos are on average 501 seconds long. Longer videos used to have 2.269 more views.

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Green Party of England and Wales

Try to publish more often

Try to publish at least one video per week. During those weeks when you published more often than once a week the number of your views increased by 134.958 views more.

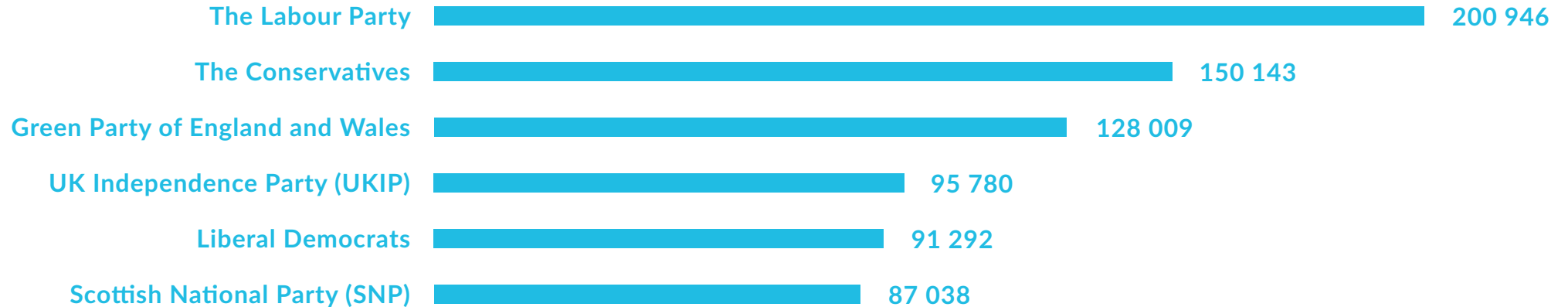
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UK GENERAL ELECTION ON TWITTER



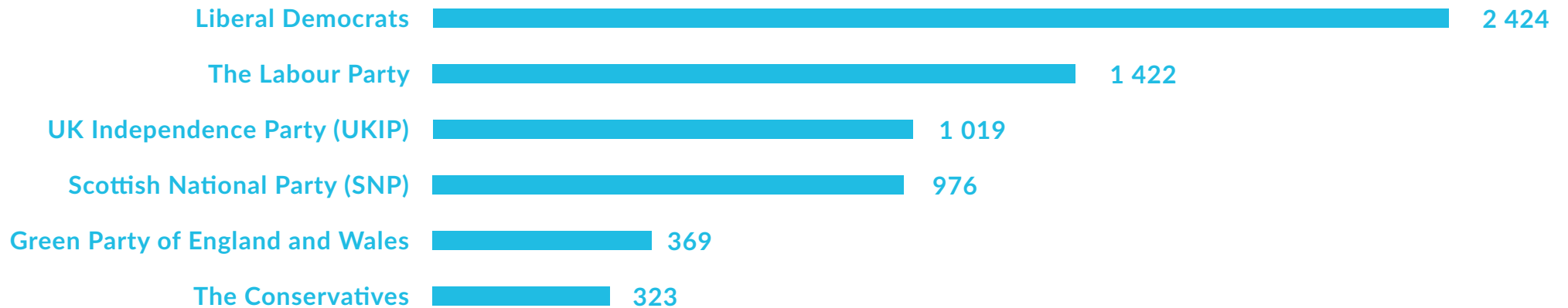
FOLLOWERS OF PARTIES' TWITTER ACCOUNTS



Twitter is a much faster medium than Facebook. It instantly reacts to politicians' speeches, gaffes, conferences. It is also becoming one of the basic means of political communication. We analysed the number of followers, number of tweets published by a party profile (including replies and retweets) and all the activities of other Twitter users (mentions, retweets of party tweets, adding to favourites, replies to tweets).

Three parties have more than 100 thousand followers - besides The Labour Party, these include the Conservatives and The Greens. Labour has over 50 thousand more followers than the Conservatives. The least followed profile of the six biggest parties is the Scottish National Party, the only party not running in the whole of United Kingdom.

TWEETS OF PARTIES' TWITTER PROFILES



It looks like Liberal Democrats decided to use Twitter in favour of Facebook. During the analysed period (March 1 - April 20) Libdems sent 2424 tweets, that is a thousand more than the second most active party - Labour. The third most active party on Twitter was UKIP with 1019 tweets. The Conservatives in the same period published only 323 tweets.

Liberal Democrats

Keep on mentioning the following profiles: @yougov

The tweets in which you mentioned the following profiles @yougov provoked 31.56 more actions on average.

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The Labour Party

Start adding hashtgs to your tweets

At present you hardly ever do it while it's possible that using hashtags in your tweets may increase engagement on your profile.

Data-driven tips generated automatically in Sotrender platform

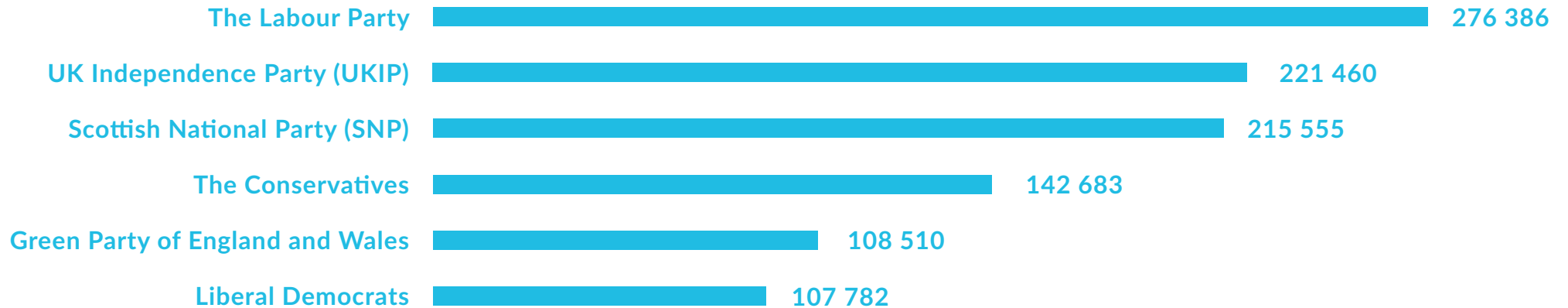
Scottish National Party (SNP)

Try to keep adding to your tweets: #votesnp

Tweets with hashtag #votesnp provoked about 79.17 activities more.

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ACTIVITES OR PARTIES' TWITTER ACCOUNTS



However, The Conservatives' tweets were more engaging than the ones of the Greens and Libdems and governing party places 4th in the engagement ranking. Scottish National Party is almost as engaging as UKIP and these two parties achieved a much higher rate of engagement than the Coalition on Twitter. It's noteworthy that combined engagement of Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives is smaller than that of the Labour Party.

Conservatives

Add mentions of other profiles to your tweets

At present you hardly ever do it while in fact it's possible that it may increase the engagement on your profile. Simply add the "@" character before a name of the profile you'd like to mention.

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Green Party of England and Wales

Think about adding mentions of other profiles than those mentioned until now

Tweeting containing mentions provoked about 164.94 activities less. Think, maybe it is worth mentioning other profiles in your tweets?

Data-driven tips generated automatically in Sotrender platform



RETWEET if you're voting UKIP on May 7th.
[#LeadersDebate](#) [#TeamNigel](#)

Retweeted: 1 519

THE MOST POPULAR PARTIES' HASHTAGS

Liberal Democrats

#GE2015	855
#ldconf	311
#leadersdebte	287
#libdems	70
#Budget2015	67

The Conservatives

#GE2015	7947
#leadersdebate	3416
#Budget2015	2908
#VoteConservative	2892
#NHS	2706

Scottish National Party (SNP)

#GE15	57722
#VoteSNP	47006
#voteSNP	23194
#GE2015	9600
#ge15	6326

The Labour Party

#GE2015	8951
#VoteLabour	4568
#budget2015	2514
#runningscared	2459
#NHS	2401

Green Party of Englnd and Whales

#VoteGreen2015	11635
#ledersdebate	4868
#GE2015	4223
#ChangeTheTune	3417
#gpconf	2775

UK Independence Party (UKIP)

#UKIP	12628
#VoteUKIP	7185
#leadersdebate	4721
#UKIPManifesto	2728
#GE2015	2540



DR DARREN G. LILLEKER (Bournemouth University)

Darren G. Lilleker is Associate Professor of Political Communication, has published widely on party campaigning and electioneering and their impacts. His most recent work focuses on communication psychology, *Political Communication and Cognition* (Palgrave, 2014)

Social media may not have an impact upon the outcome of an election but, to some extent, the activities that parties and citizens engage in on platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube may be a reflection of broader political attitudes and behaviours which have resonance at this or subsequent elections.

THE CONSERVATIVES AND UKIP DOMINATE ON FACEBOOK

The Sotrender data shows a mixture of winners and losers. The Conservatives and UKIP are fairly dominant on Facebook with around 400,000 followers each. Labour, the SNP and Greens lag behind with the Liberal Democrats with the fewest supporters and much less than their fan base on the eve of the 2010 election. The Liberal Democrats' position shows, if nothing else, that Facebook support mirrors the real world ebb and flow of support. There is also an indication that effort does not equate to success. Despite Labour posting twice the content as every other party they do not earn followers in return for their efforts. Labour, however are the winners in overall numbers on Twitter, although the Liberal Democrats are the most frequent tweeters they languish towards the bottom. UKIP have the most subscribers on YouTube.

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS' EFFORT HAS ALMOST NO EFFECT

Labour similarly do not gain a more engaged audience in return for their frequency of posting. In terms of percentages, rather than raw numbers, we find that the Greens have the highest percentage of supporters who engage (54%) but this is only one percent above the Conservatives and three percent above the SNP. Labour lag slightly on 49%, with UKIP on 46%; perhaps reflecting the fact that support for the party has waned during their time in the coalition, the Liberal Democrats only have 9% of their audience who engage.

The picture for the Liberal Democrats is equally bad in terms of supporters gained on Facebook over the course of the campaign. While 9,308 is not disastrous, it is when compared to the other parties. Here we find an interesting finding that Labour, perhaps due to leader Ed Miliband's 'good' campaign, to date gained the greatest overall number of new supporters. The Greens are second, again interesting to see that despite gaffes by leader Natalie Bennett when explaining the fine detail of party policy they are gaining an interested following. Similar strong performances in the debates appear to have bolstered support for the Scottish and Welsh nationalists, the Conservatives had a large community to start with but this has grown least suggesting the party may have a critical mass of support among Facebook users interested in politics at this time and with this leader and political platform.



ONE VIDEO TO RULE THEM ALL

While the messages follow unsurprising patterns with evidence of negative campaigning alongside self-promotion; more interesting is the reach earned for messages. The link to the Green Party's main campaign video 'Change the Tune' was shared by 95% of their supporters, the closest rival for one single post is the sharing of UKIP's Pledge Card by 70% of their supporters though in actual numbers UKIP outstrip the Greens by nearly 100,000. But in terms of virality, the Green video (featuring a parody of the male party leaders as a boy band singing together) has the widest reach showing how a small party can punch way above their weight if they have the right formula. Interaction with that video is partially responsible for the Green Party's high score for engagement intensity. Despite the Conservatives' high performance on Facebook they are third with Labour appearing to have the most engaged audience across all social media platforms.



Frame from Youtube movie: Change The Tune - Green Party 2015 Election Broadcast, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPgS7p40ERg>

WHO ENGAGES WHERE IN SOCIAL MEDIA?

While the data says a great deal about the behaviour of supporters in extending the reach of parties there is also evidence that some Facebook users are active on more than one party profile. Either these people show support on one profile while trolling the other, or they travel between profiles to seek information. Whatever the case there are interesting patterns among the visitors to the profiles of the two main parties. Conservatives share visitors with UKIP and to a lesser extent Labour, should we infer these are seeking help make a decision or trolling? Similarly Labour share visitors with the Green Party, then UKIP and the SNP, one might suggest again these visitors could be playing either role.

The data should not be used to infer a winner, but it might suggest that overall Labour have the most successful strategy and the Green Party struck gold with one video. The Conservatives are performing well on some platforms and not on others, perhaps it reflects the uncertainty that the polls indicate persists among public opinion. The Liberal Democrats' parlous position in the polls is reflected in their low support across platforms where a party of the whole of the UK struggle to compete against Scottish or Welsh Nationalists who only stand in one of the nations. If the data is reflective of the vote it remains too close to call between the major parties, the smaller parties might do well if attention equates to votes; the Liberal Democrats, however, would appear to have few who wish to publicly endorse the party independent of the effort they put in to social forms of communication.





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ALEKSANDRA PREJS Marketing and Communications Manager

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MICHAL WIECZOREK Content Marketing Specialist

Graduate of language studies. Passionate about languages and their structure. Previously associated with music industry. Author of dozens articles about ethnic and popular music from around the world as well as politics in new media. Interested in global and local politics.

ABOUT sotrender

Sotrender is a social media analytics tool, which enables optimization of marketing activities carried out on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as well as fast reporting on their results. Providing automatic data-driven tips, Sotrender helps to quickly improve the effects of social media marketing campaigns. The tool is now used by over 800 marketers in 14 countries on 3 continents.

METHOD

Sotrender analyzed the data collected from official Facebook Pages, Twitter profiles and YouTube channels of the parties participating in the UK General Election 2015. For the purpose of this analysis we gathered the data concerning 5 biggest UK political parties (The Labour Party, Green Party of England and Wales, The Conservatives, UK Independence Party, Liberal Democrats) as well as the Scottish National Party.

We investigated all communication events occurring on Facebook Pages, Twitter profiles and YouTube Channels. i.e. number of posts, tweets, videos; number of likes, shares and comments; favourited tweets, replies and retweets, as well as number of views of videos. The data was collected from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube through API with the use of our proprietary technology used in the Sotrender tool. The analysis covers the period between March 1, 2015 and April 20, 2015.





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