



# Instamums for Corbyn?

Social media and millennial mothers  
in the 2017 General Election



# Contents

<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 How did millennial mums vote? .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3 Millennial mums and social media .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 What were millennial mums seeing on their social media feeds in the run-up to the election? .....	3
3.2 When the demographic becomes the bubble .....	4
3.3 Millennial voters are much more reliant on political information than older voters - and are much more likely to say social media is 'very important' to their decisions .....	5
3.4 Did social media have a decisive effect on millennial mums' votes? .....	7
3.5 May vs Corbyn: the split-screen election .....	8
3.6 Comedy + organic sharing = votes .....	10
<b>4 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>12</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Young people heavily favoured Labour in 2017 while older people were more likely to vote for the Conservatives .....	1
Figure 2.1: Young women are particularly important to Labour's youth vote, even more than young men .....	2
Figure 2.2: People with a child in their household were also more likely to vote Labour, though more due to their age profile than parental status .....	2
Figure 3.1: Facebook usage is skewed towards the young and is more prevalent in females within the 25-64 age range .....	3
Figure 3.2: Young more likely to use any source – especially social media .....	5
Figure 3.3: Young people much more likely to source news online or from social media, print more important for older groups .....	6
Figure 3.4: Under 35s thought Corbyn would make the most capable PM – but older voters preferred May .....	9
Figure 3.5: Clear gender difference among young people – young women preferred Corbyn, young men May .....	9
Figure 4.1: Turnout amongst 18-24 year olds increased more than any other age group in 2017 .....	13

## List of Tables

Table 3.1: Overall, clear that young people much more likely to rely on online and social media sources than older people .....	6
---	---

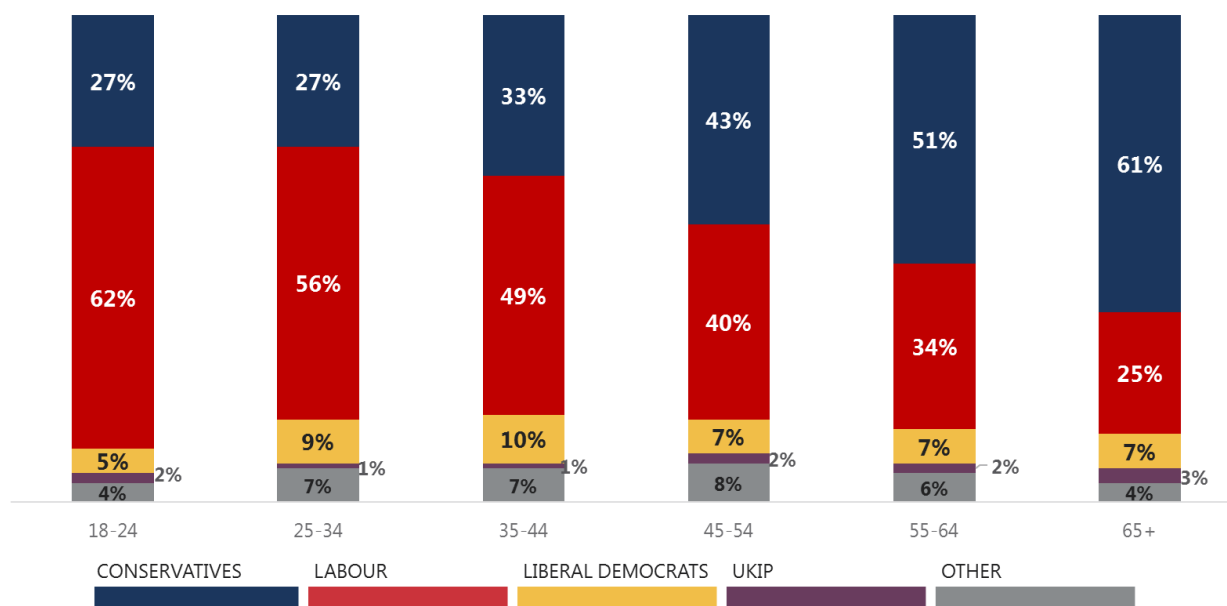
# Instamums for Corbyn?

Social media and millennial mothers in the 2017 General Election

# 1 Introduction

As the dust settled on this year's shock General Election result, it became clear that younger people had turned out in large numbers for Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. Labour achieved an enormous lead among 18-34 year olds, increasing the lead it already had by nearly 20 points compared with 2015.

**Figure 1.1: Young people heavily favoured Labour in 2017 while older people were more likely to vote for the Conservatives**



Source: Ipsos MORI's election aggregates 'How Britain Voted' 2017

Various explanations have been advanced for Labour's comprehensive victory in this demographic: the rising cost of living, tuition fees and student loans, the difficulty of finding affordable housing, young people's opposition to Brexit, welfare cuts and austerity. Over and above individual policy issues, one theory is that Labour's dominance of social media contributed to its command of the 18-34 vote. To quote Bloomberg:

***'The Conservative Party's weaker-than-expected performance, and Labour's gains, could be partly explained by the savvy use of social media among Labour supporters that helped drive young, first-time voters to the polls.'*<sup>1</sup>**

This paper examines the impact of social media on millennial mothers in the June 2017 election. Using weighted data and analysis provided by Ipsos MORI, and qualitative focus groups with millennial mothers on Mumsnet, we try to find out: how did millennial mothers (those aged 37 or under) use social media during the 2017 election? What political messages did they see? And how did it affect their vote?

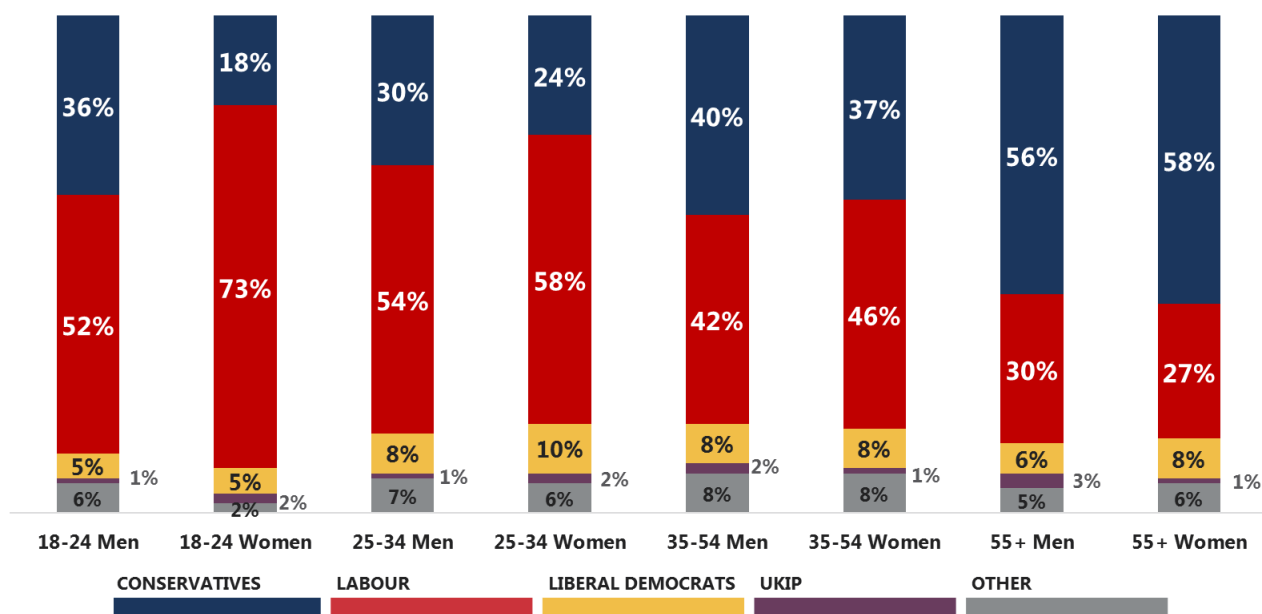
Exclusive new data provided by Ipsos MORI reveals the significance of social media in voting decisions within this age group - and suggests that younger voters are more open to influence from all media sources than older voters.

<sup>1</sup> (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-11/u-k-labour-s-savvy-use-of-social-media-helped-win-young-voters>)

## 2 How did millennial mums vote?

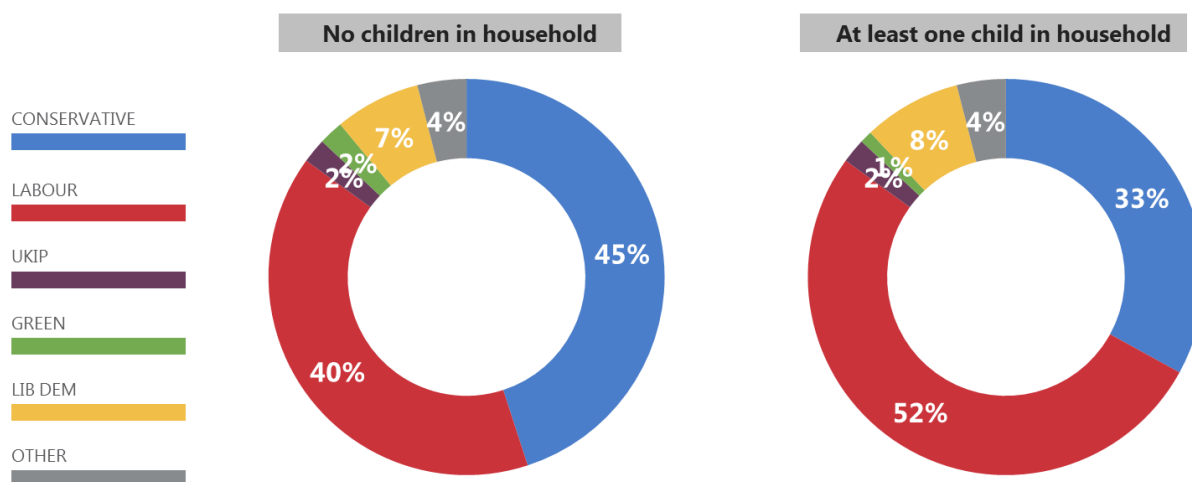
Labour's strong performance among young people is particularly due to young women, who voted for Labour in greater numbers than any other age/sex cohort. People with a child in their household were also more likely to vote Labour than those with no child – but this seems more due to their age profile rather than parental status. Young people living with a child had similar voting patterns to young people without a child, but the former were slightly more likely to turn out.

**Figure 2.1: Young women are particularly important to Labour's youth vote, even more than young men**



Source: Ipsos MORI's election aggregates 'How Britain Voted' 2017

**Figure 2.2: People with a child in their household were also more likely to vote Labour, though more due to their age profile than parental status**



Source: Ipsos MORI's election aggregates 'How Britain Voted' 2017





## 3 Millennial mums and social media

### 3.1 What were millennial mums seeing on their social media feeds in the run-up to the election?

When we asked focus group participants which social media platforms they use frequently, Facebook was a clear winner, with 38 of the 41 mums using it often. 17 cited Instagram, 16 Twitter and 11 Snapchat. Of course, as the participants were Mumsnet users, we would expect them to be more active online than the general public, but data from Ipsos MORI's regular Tech Tracker also suggests that women are more likely to be Facebook users than men, and younger women are the biggest users of Instagram and Snapchat (men, on the other hand, are higher users of Twitter and LinkedIn).

**Figure 3.1: Facebook usage is skewed towards the young and is more prevalent in females within the 25-64 age range**

#### % ACCESSING FACEBOOK IN THE PAST 3 MONTHS, BY GENDER AND SOCIAL GRADE

		All	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
	<b>Males</b>	59%	84%	79%	67%	61%	44%	25%
	Males AB	58%	88%	79%	72%	67%	42%	33%
	Males C1	68%	88%	87%	72%	67%	55%	25%
	Males C2	57%	83%	76%	68%	49%	46%	22%
	Males DE	52%	80%	70%	55%	54%	36%	17%
	<b>Females</b>	64%	85%	86%	80%	67%	59%	25%
	Females AB	66%	80%	93%	83%	72%	62%	32%
	Females C1	68%	90%	88%	80%	68%	61%	33%
	Females C2	64%	88%	87%	85%	66%	57%	15%
	Females DE	57%	79%	79%	72%	60%	57%	17%

0-24% 25-49% 50-100%

Base: circa 4,000 GB adults aged 15+: Q4 2016/ Q1/ Q2/ Q3 2017

15

Source: Ipsos MORI

**'Political messages on Instagram were coming from Instamums or "social influencers" who were all supporting Corbyn.'**

(Mother aged 30-37, voted Plaid Cymru as a tactical anti-Conservative vote)

Whether they were bystanders or self-confessed activists, focus group respondents were unanimous: their social feeds were full of posts about politics.

**'It was pretty hard to avoid seeing political messages - shared by parties themselves and by media providers.'**

(Mother aged 27-29, Labour voter)

**'My Facebook seemed to be nothing but political messages during the run-up to the election.'**

(Mother aged 27-29, Labour voter)

Almost all the respondents recalled seeing lots of positive posts about Labour (and particularly about Jeremy Corbyn) - and negative posts about Theresa May and the Conservatives.

***'Everyone who posted anything was pro-Labour (and often Jeremy Corbyn).'***

*(Mother aged 30-37, voted LibDem after voting Conservative in 2015)*

***'My Facebook feed was "Labour good, Tories bad."***

*(Mother aged 30-37, voted Labour as a tactical anti-Conservative vote)*

***'Jeremy Corbyn was almost akin to Jesus on my social media.'***

*(Mother aged 30-37, voted Plaid Cymru as a tactical anti-Conservative vote)*

### **3.2 When the demographic becomes the bubble**

Significantly, this wasn't only a feature of self-reinforcing feed algorithms or people's social media 'bubbles'. Conservative voters, even those who actively follow official Conservative accounts, also reported seeing pro-Corbyn feeds. In the face of overwhelming support for Labour and Corbyn among this demographic, the bubble effect seems to have broken down - or, more accurately, this demographic *was* a bubble.

***'It all seemed very one-sided towards the Labour Party.'***

*(Mother aged 27-29, Conservative voter)*

***'Facebook was full of anti-Tory posts and posts about how amazing Jeremy Corbyn would be.'***

*(Mother aged 30-37, Conservative voter)*

The visibility of social media support for Corbyn may also have led Conservative voters to be more circumspect in what they shared on social media, or even temporarily abandon their accounts:

***'I tried to avoid social media as much as possible because I was getting fed up with the constant campaigning.'***

*(Mother aged 30-37, Conservative voter)*

In *Betting the House*, Tim Ross and Tom McTague's book about the 2017 election<sup>2</sup>, they write:

***'Clever Tory campaign tactics are no match for sheer numbers of people - not least because the battle for dominance on social media reflects and amplifies the power of these people. To Corbynistas sick of the mainstream press and broadcasters, social media is their socialist media.'***

<sup>2</sup> *Betting the House*, Biteback Publishing, 2017

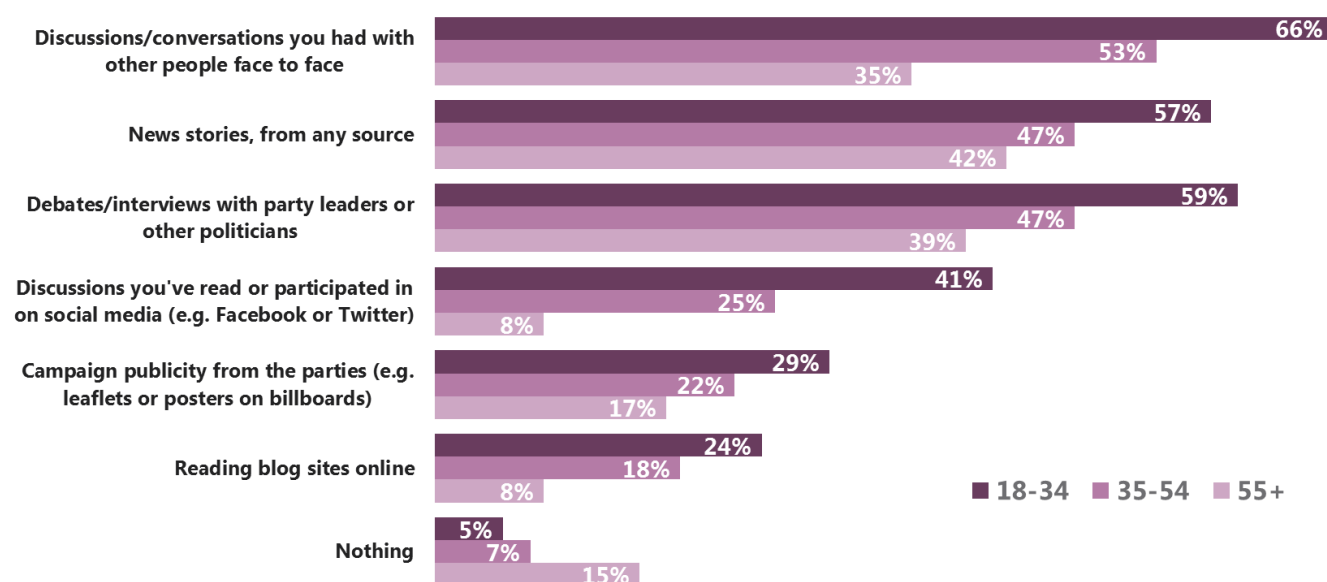


### 3.3 Millennial voters are much more reliant on political information than older voters - and are much more likely to say social media is 'very important' to their decisions

Exclusive Ipsos MORI data for Mumsnet shows that young people are more likely to rely on *any* media sources when it comes to deciding how to vote – perhaps because, as newer voters, they are still actively seeking political information with a view to making up their minds. Several sources - including face-to-face conversations, and televised debates and interviews - are rated by millennials as more important than social media in deciding how to vote. However, they are also much more likely than any other age group to say social media was 'very important' in helping them decide how to vote.

**Figure 3.2: Young more likely to use any source – especially social media**

**Thinking back to the General Election held in June this year, can you tell me which if any of the following were very important to you in helping you decide which way to vote?**



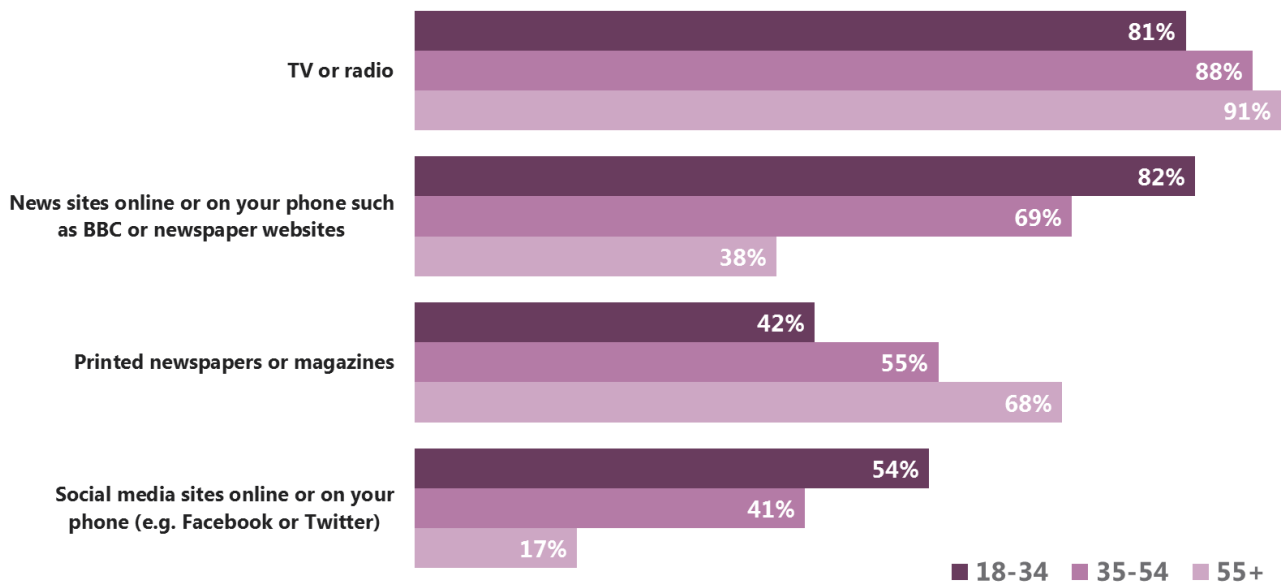
Base: 1,052 British adults 18+, 27<sup>th</sup> October – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017

Source: Ipsos MORI Political Monitor

When asked where they sourced their news stories, again traditional sources of TV and radio came out top overall. But for younger people, online news sites were just as important, while social media was used more as a news source than print. Only for the oldest group, those aged 55+, were printed newspapers more important than online sites.

**Figure 3.3: Young people much more likely to source news online or from social media, print more important for older groups**

And thinking about the news stories that helped you decide, which, if any, of the following ways did you obtain those stories?



Base: 552 British adults 18+, 27<sup>th</sup> October – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 who were influenced by news stories

Source: Ipsos MORI Political Monitor

And looking overall, younger voters were more likely to rely on online sources of any kind (traditional news outlets and social platforms) when making decisions about how to vote.

**Table 3.1: Overall, clear that young people much more likely to rely on online and social media sources than older people**

Combinations	All	18-34	35-54	55+
Online news websites/blogs	39%	59%	42%	20%
Discussions on social media/news from social media	30%	51%	32%	11%
Any online or social media	47%	70%	53%	23%
No online or social media	53%	30%	47%	77%

### 3.4 Did social media have a decisive effect on millennial mums' votes?

Some Mumsnet focus group respondents were clear that their voting choice was at least partly swayed – or perhaps more accurately in most cases, affirmed – by what they saw on social media before the election. Younger millennial mums were readier than older ones to agree they'd been influenced. The short formats and informal tone of social posts feel more friendly than 'explainers' in traditional media, and are particularly useful for people newly coming to grips with complex political issues.

***'I think social media played a big role in helping me decide what party I was going to vote for, because it made everything more understandable.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, voted Labour in 2017 having not voted in the referendum or in 2015)*

***'I saw a lot of memes, which I actually think made politics and voting more relevant to a lot of young people who hadn't been interested much previously.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

***"I find it a lot easier to discover more facts about what the different parties want and agree with when using social media."***

*(Mother aged 27-29, Labour voter)*

Older millennial mums in our focus groups were more reluctant to say that they had personally been influenced by political messages on their social feeds – but they are convinced that it was influential overall.

***'I think social media has had a huge role to play this time round. Labour clearly understood that and used it to their advantage.'***

*(Mother aged 30-37, Labour voter)*

***'I do not use social media as a basis for information; I prefer to do my research and form my own opinions.'***

*(Mother aged 30-37, Labour voter)*

The youngest millennials, who were the readiest to admit being influenced, were also the savviest social consumers. They spontaneously discussed its pitfalls: fake news, unchecked stories, algorithms, dishonest editing of videos, and the 'bubble' effect.

***'The amount of exaggerated and untrue information I have seen on [social media] is worrying.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

***'I think people can become trapped in their own little social media "bubbles" and aren't exposed to a wider range of thoughts, opinions and points of view.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

***'I think social media is really biased. The algorithms used ensure you only see what you want to see, videos can be altered, things are shared rapidly without facts being checked.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

Born into a Web 2.0 world, this younger group is more confident in its ability to navigate the social media landscape, and unembarrassed by its influence; for them, in this context, it's just another news source.

### **3.5 May vs Corbyn: the split-screen election**

Social media appears to have been particularly effective for Labour when it presented the election as a binary choice between May and Corbyn.

***'Most of what I saw was about the leaders rather than the parties - really it was all about Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn as individuals.'***

*(Mother aged 27-29, Labour voter)*

***'When it came to the leaders - yes, in all honesty I probably was influenced by social media.'***

*(Mother aged 27-29, Labour voter)*

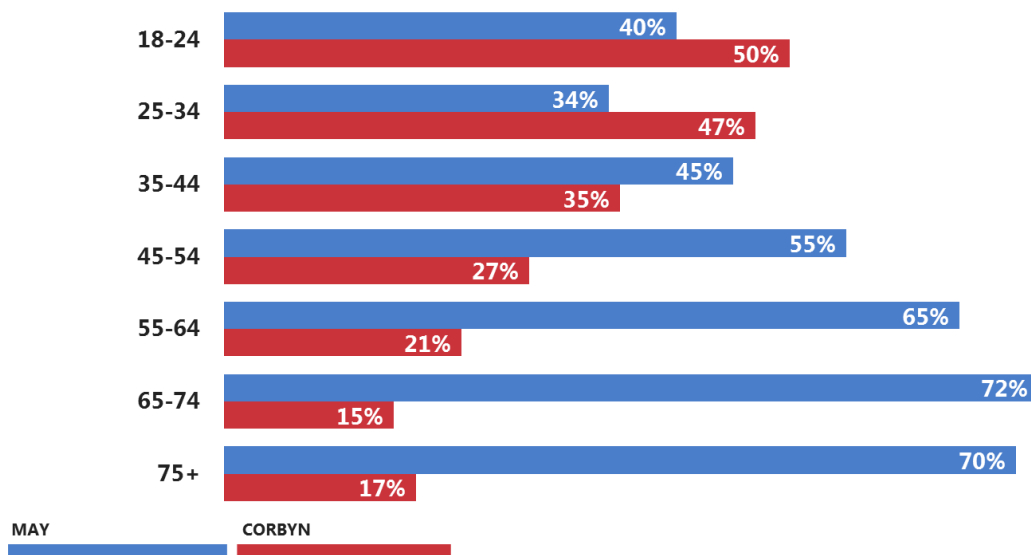
***'My opinion has been influenced by social media to a small extent. More so in regards to the party leaders.'***

*(Mother aged 27-29, Labour voter)*

Ipsos MORI's data shows that during the election, young people were the only age group to think that Jeremy Corbyn would make a more capable Prime Minister than Theresa May. And again, there was a stark gender gap among young people that isn't there among older age groups. Closer analysis shows that Jeremy Corbyn's lead among young people was in fact down to his support among young women – young men had a slight preference for Theresa May.

**Figure 3.4: Under 35s thought Corbyn would make the most capable PM – but older voters preferred May**

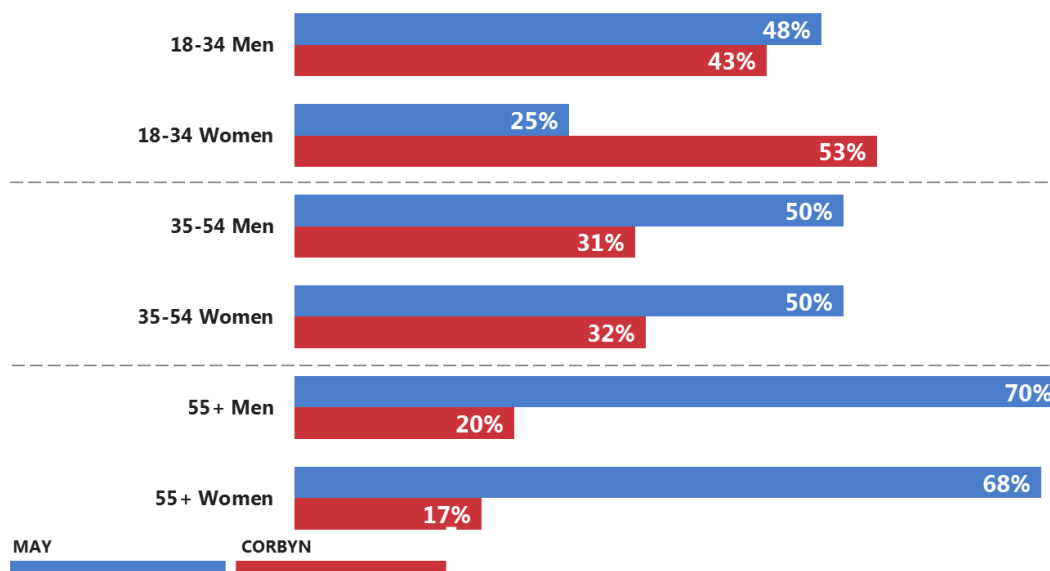
**Who do you think would make the most capable Prime Minister, the Conservative's Theresa May or Labour's Jeremy Corbyn?**



Source Ipsos MORI Political Monitor April-June 2017

**Figure 3.5: Clear gender difference among young people – young women preferred Corbyn, young men May**

**Who do you think would make the most capable Prime Minister, the Conservative's Theresa May or Labour's Jeremy Corbyn?**



Source Ipsos MORI Political Monitor April-June 2017

Since the election, satisfaction with Corbyn has increased, and decreased for May, among all age groups, but the same overall age patterns apply. However, some of the gender differences between young people have reduced. Young men are still more satisfied with Theresa May than young women, but they have become much more satisfied with Jeremy Corbyn, closing the gap to young women.

In the Mumsnet focus groups, it became clear that some millennial mums felt 2017 represented a much clearer binary choice than the 2015 election between parties led by Cameron and Miliband.

### 3.6 Comedy + organic sharing = votes

The stark differences between the leaders - their personalities, appearance and campaigning style - were fertile ground for memes, split-screen images and short, punchy, direct comparisons. More often than not these were hyperbolic or satirical.

*'I remember one with Jeremy Corbyn saying "free school meals for children" while Theresa May says "feeding children to whom?"'*



Comic posts are intensely shareable. People who aren't usually particularly political feel more comfortable breaking into other people's feeds with a joke, rather than a serious political message that might lead to a dispute.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.facebook.com/politicalbible/>



***'If I was going to share any [political content], it would be a meme or a funny post.'***

*(Mother aged 27-29, Labour voter)*

***'I would be more like to share a funny post than a serious one.'***

*(Mother aged 27-29, voted Labour in 2017 after voting for the LibDems in 2015)*

Professional analyses of the Labour and Conservative social media strategies in the run-up to the election reveal that official Labour content focused on shareable video to a much greater extent. Labour-supporting organisations such as Momentum and the trades unions also produced short-form social content that spread far and wide through individual shares, rather than through paid-for promoted posts.

***There was a sharp distinction between Tory and Labour styles when it came to social media. The Conservative focus seemed to be sharp, paid-for attack ads. Labour's presence was much more organic, and perhaps more effective with it.<sup>4</sup>***

Analysis by BuzzFeed of political sentiment on Facebook during the election<sup>5</sup> reveals that of the 20 most viral topics during the election campaign, not a single one was actively positive about Theresa May or the Conservatives. Just one of the 20 most viral topics - Diane Abbott's media appearances - was one in which Labour was playing defence.

Tim Ross and Tom McTague quote an unnamed 'senior Tory figure'<sup>6</sup>:

***'I'm pretty confident we still outgunned Labour on paid social media but Labour killed us on organic this time.'***

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-40209711>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.buzzfeed.com/tomphillips/social-barometer-final-week?utm\\_term=.tybP6EVQyE#.atpEONr6oN](https://www.buzzfeed.com/tomphillips/social-barometer-final-week?utm_term=.tybP6EVQyE#.atpEONr6oN)

<sup>6</sup> *Betting the House*, Biteback Publishing, 2017

## 4 Conclusion

There's no evidence that social media was the most important factor in deciding how this group of women voted. In the Mumsnet focus groups, they talked about their concerns about the NHS, about education, about Brexit, about welfare cuts (often structured to fall particularly heavily on the under-25s), about tuition fees, and about the future for their children and for the sectors in which they work. Many of them spoke about their own tight household budgets, or their worry for friends and family members who are struggling.

***'I see so many people struggling financially to make ends meet.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, voted Labour in 2017 after voting Conservative in 2015)*

***'I increasingly feel as a working lone parent I'm going to be hit very hard.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

There's no doubt among our millennial mums that policy factors, coupled with their enthusiasm for Labour's method and approach, and for Corbyn himself, were instrumental.

What seems clear, though, is that social media played important roles in **giving permission** for them to vote Labour, and in **reinforcing** a choice that they were already in the process of making.

***'Seeing others feeling passionate about things I have always agreed with has made me want to get more involved too.'***

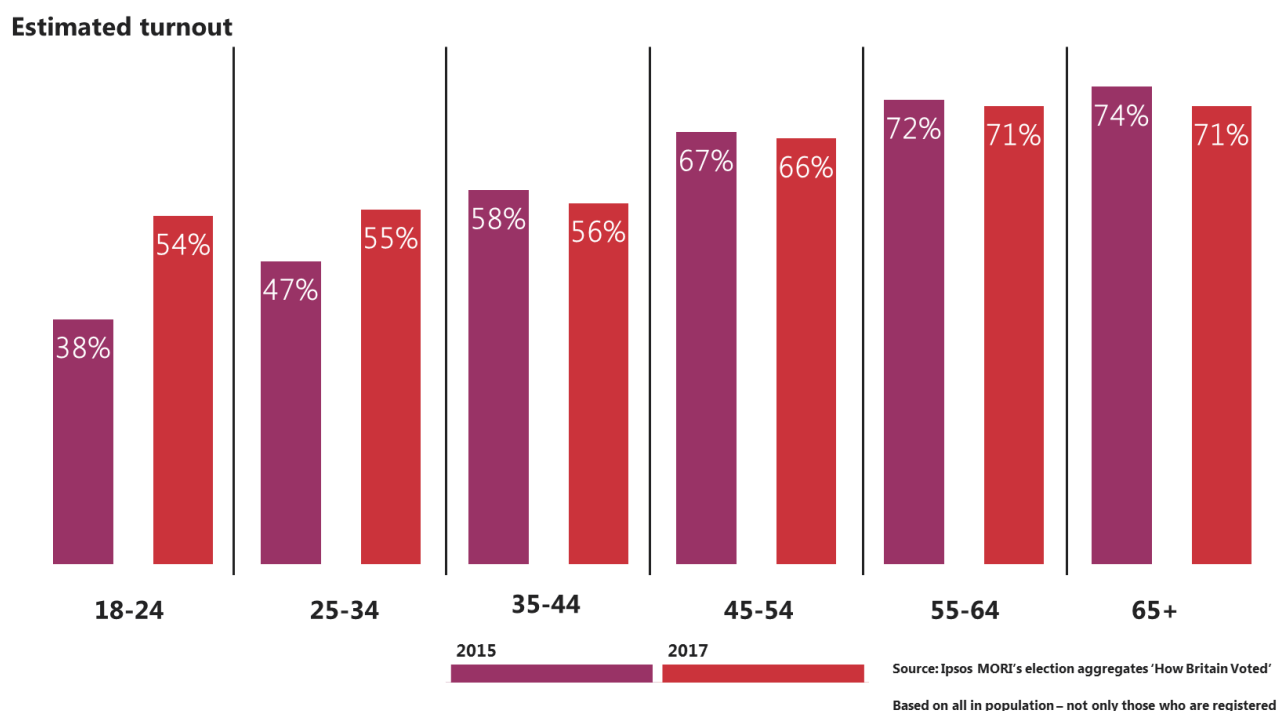
*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

***'Knowing my friends, family and associates have similar opinions to me encourages me to stick with my chosen party and possibly influenced my change from Lib Dem to Labour.'***

*(Mother aged 30-37, voted Labour in 2017 after voting LibDem in 2015)*

British Election Study data<sup>7</sup> shows that the more confident someone was that Labour had a chance of winning, the more likely they were to vote Labour. So the dominance of confident pro-Labour social messages within the millennial demographic may well have had a significant affirmative effect, particularly on the increase in turnout among these voters found by the Ipsos MORI election estimates.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-findings/did-people-vote-for-jeremy-corbyn-because-they-thought-he-would-lose/#WgmRPmi0OUk>

**Figure 4.1: Turnout amongst 18-24 year olds increased more than any other age group in 2017**

Some people, particularly younger mums, within the Mumsnet focus groups said that social media actively helped them decide how to vote. But the wider significance of social media seems to lie in making people feel comfortable about their emerging choice, strengthening their resolve, motivating them to actually vote, and making them – in turn – feel comfortable about sharing political content. For Labour, this became a virtuous circle.

***'It would take a lot more than social media to change my views. But it cemented why I vote for Labour.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

***'I felt more comfortable talking politics [in 2017] because so many people were sharing positive messages about voting Labour.'***

*(Mother aged 20-26, Labour voter)*

In this respect, it seems clear that social media was a big factor in Labour's success among this newly engaged demographic. Even his most implacable political opponents concede that Corbyn himself – frequently in conflict with his own party, obsessive about allotments and jam, and demonstrably ideologically consistent – has the magical political quality of authenticity. For many young mothers, social media cemented their perception that he's the real deal.

***'Corbyn seems different from previous leaders and it seems possible that there could actually be a change.'***

*(Mother aged 27-29, voted Labour in 2017 after voting LibDem in 2015)*

## Notes

- Data on the 2017 General Election have been aggregated over the course of the campaign to allow for more robust measurement of sub-populations. Data on voting turnout include 7,505 adults aged 18+ within Great Britain (of whom we have classified 5,255 as likely voters). Respondents were interviewed by telephone and online between 21 April – 7 June 2017. The proportions of voters for each party and non-voters are weighted to the actual results by region. The data were also weighted to the population profile of Great Britain.
- Figures on sources of information to help decide how to vote are taken from a representative sample of 1,052 adults aged 18 and over across Great Britain. Interviews were conducted by telephone between 27th October and 1st November 2017, and data are weighted to the profile of the population
- Focus groups on Mumsnet were composed of 42 mothers aged 20-37, and were split into three age groups: Group 1 (aged 20-26), Group 2 (aged 27-29), and Group 3 (aged 30-37). Groups were conducted online and ran from October 16 to November 1 2017.

**Rowan Davies**

Head of Policy and Campaigns  
rowan@mumsnet.com

**Gideon Skinner**

Research Director  
gideon.skinner@ipsos.com

## For more information

3 Thomas More Square  
London  
E1W 1YW

t: +44 (0)20 3059 5000

**[www.ipsos-mori.com](http://www.ipsos-mori.com)**

**<http://twitter.com/IpsosMORI>**

**About Mumsnet**

Mumsnet is the UK's largest network for parents, with over 12 million unique visitors per month clocking up over 128 million page views. It has 170 local sites and a network of over 9,000 bloggers and vloggers. It regularly campaigns on issues including support for families of children with special educational needs, improvements in postnatal and miscarriage care, and freedom of speech on the internet.

**About Ipsos MORI's Social Research Institute**

The Social Research Institute works closely with national governments, local public services and the not-for-profit sector. Its c.200 research staff focus on public service and policy issues. Each has expertise in a particular part of the public sector, ensuring we have a detailed understanding of specific sectors and policy challenges. This, combined with our methods and communications expertise, helps ensure that our research makes a difference for decision makers and communities.