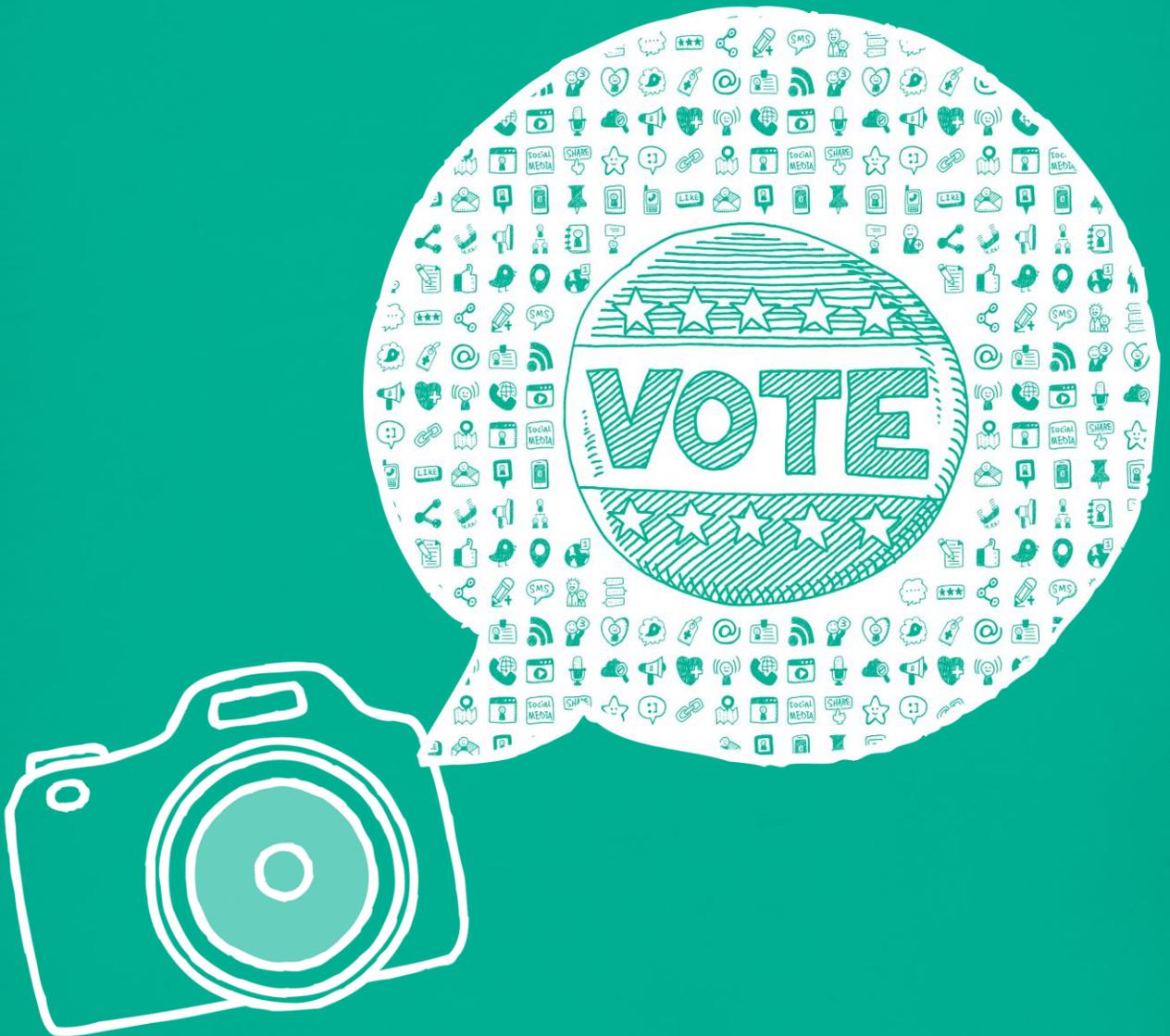


Microsoft Social Engagement

General Election
Snapshot & Final Report





The votes have now been counted

Throughout the 2015 General Election campaigns, the polls suggested that the outcome was too close to call.

With Labour and the Conservatives almost neck and neck right up to election day, the Lib Dems on rocky ground throughout and UKIP and the SNP making significant gains, a hung parliament was always the safe bet in what was perceived to be such a tight race. But then the exit polls arrived and opinion began to change...

7th May 2015

UK Constituencies:	650
Registered Voters:	50M*
Polling Centres:	50K*
Votes:	46,425,386
Turnout:	66.1%

*Approximate Figures

What swayed those late swing voters?

Where did they vote?

And what were the key topics and political flash points that put the Conservatives back in power?

There are questions to ask about the other major parties too. Was the Lib Dem demolition always on the cards? Were UKIP set to be snapping at both Labour and Conservative heels in key constituencies from the start? Could we have foreseen Labour's losses despite the expectation of heavy defeat in Scotland?



The breakdown

Seats required for majority: 326



Conservative: 331



Lib Dem: 8



Labour: 232



SNP: 56



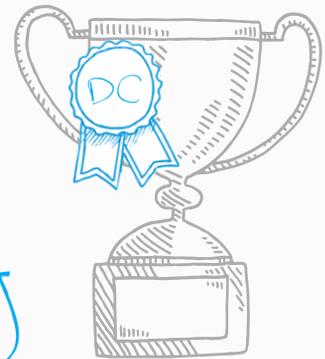
UKIP: 1



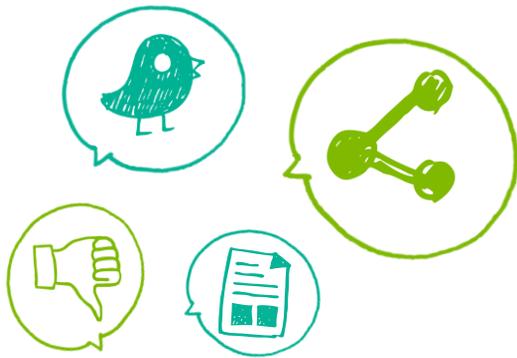
Others: 14

Result:

Conservative
Majority



With one leader crowing and others going, let's take a look back at one of the most fiercely contested elections in recent times through the lens of Microsoft Social Engagement.



The first social media election?

In an election run in too close to call until the ballot boxes were filled and counted, parties were keen to do anything to bring about movement in the polls. Social media activity was no exception.

With more people online than ever before it was no surprise that this election saw more digital discussion than any other in the internet era, but it was the parties themselves harnessing digital platforms to spread their campaign message that was most striking.

Both Labour and the Conservatives hired social media experts, some of whom were key players in Barack Obama's two successful presidential races.

Did You know?

Over **72%** of all internet users are now active on social media

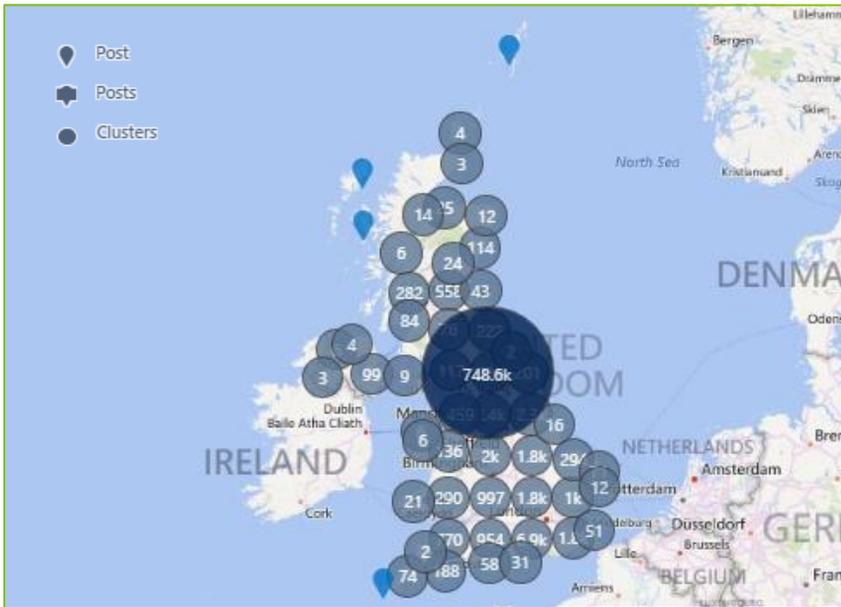
Pew Research Centre



The Conservatives are said to spend more than £1M per year on Facebook alone, with UKIP also boasting a large following on the platform, while Ed Miliband's interview on comedian Russell Brand's YouTube channel generated millions of views in the weeks before the election.

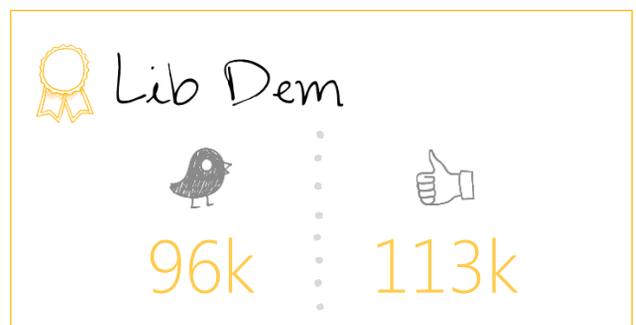
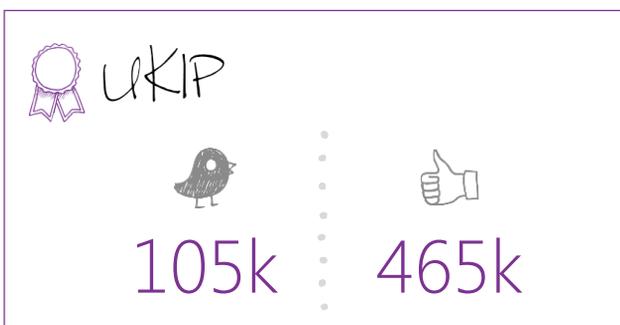
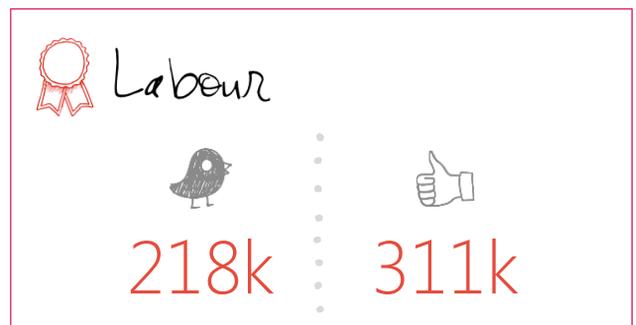
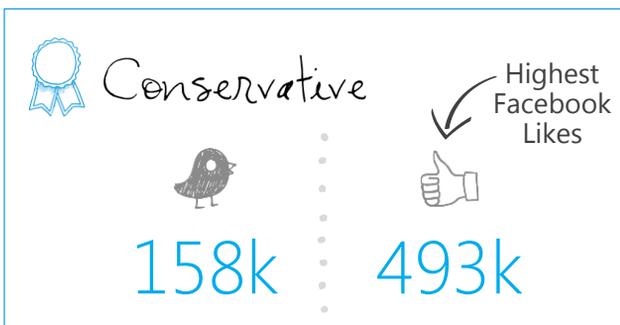
Some claim that social media and celebrity endorsement are a route to tapping historically apathetic young voters, while others see them as necessary campaign strategies in a more connected world.

It's facts like these that lead some to claim 2015 as the first "social media election". Whether that's true or not, one thing is for certain, *it was the first Social Engagement election...*



Social data captured for all four parties, 24th February to 6th May

Social Media Following On Polling Day 2015



Enter Microsoft Social Engagement

Once the hundred day countdown to polling day began, Microsoft Social Engagement began listening to the four largest UK parties at the time and those discussing them on social media. Analysing, across location, source, sentiment and buzz, Social Engagement drew from unfiltered online markers without the political spin or media conjecture voters are traditionally subject to.

Did You know?

Young people who are politically active online are twice as likely to vote as those who are not

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Social Engagement interface. On the left, under 'SEARCH TOPIC SETTINGS', the 'Name' field contains 'Nick Clegg', the 'Category' is 'Contacts', and the 'Owner' is 'MOD Administrator'. Below this is a 'RULES' table with one entry: 'Nick Clegg, @Nick_Clegg'. On the right, under 'ACTIVE RULE', the 'Filter' section shows 'Sources 4/4' and 'Languages 1/2'. The 'Keywords' field contains 'Lib Dems, @Nick_Clegg'. The 'Inclusions' field is empty, with a prompt 'Enter your inclusions in a comma-separated list'. Below the inclusions field, a note states 'Keywords and inclusions must appear in the same:' followed by radio buttons for 'Sentence', 'Paragraph' (which is selected), and 'Post'. At the top right of the active rule section are 'CONTINUE' and 'CANCEL' buttons.

Microsoft Social Engagement enables people and businesses, in fact anyone with an audience, to gain insight into their customers, patrons, followers or fans with detailed, cutting edge sentiment analysis.

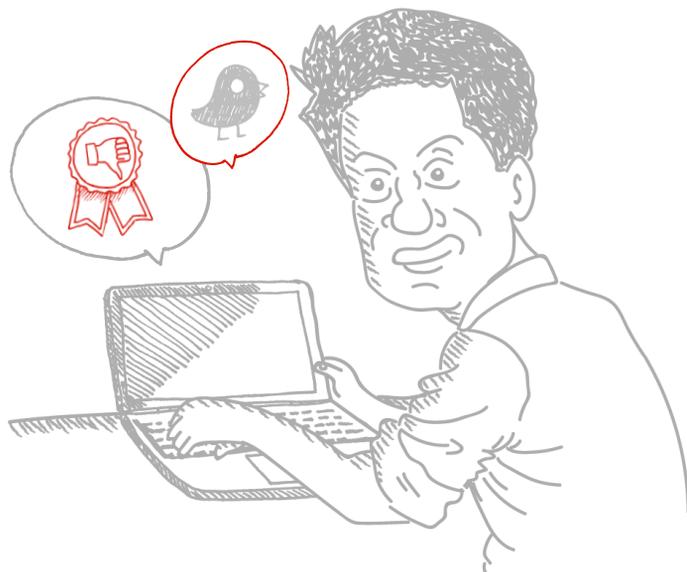
It enables people to see how the world feels about a brand, product or person on social media and other online sources, with quantifiable metrics, allowing for adjustments to build deeper and more profitable relationships with an audience, answering the questions that, until now, were difficult to answer accurately.

Did You know?

Unlike the two largest parties, who receive most interaction from 18-25s, UKIP's engagement on Facebook comes from older demographics, 25-34s and 45-54s

This report provides an unflinching portrait of the weeks leading up to the General Election, displaying the path each party took to the final and, in light of the polls, somewhat surprising verdict. It also highlights the flexibility and insight offered by Microsoft Social Engagement and will hopefully open your eyes to just what's possible in terms of your business goals.

Perhaps Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg would have benefitted from access to Microsoft Social Engagement's reports in order to further engage their audience during the campaigns!



Did You know?

Barack Obama garnered 2x Facebook Likes and 20x more retweets than Mitt Romney during the 2012 presidential election

Obama spent \$47M on digital compared to Romney's \$4.7M

Who did we listen to?

Once campaigns were in full swing within the hundred day countdown to Election Day, we flicked the switch and set Microsoft Social Engagement scouring the web for each and every mention of the keywords, social media accounts and hashtags we had selected. As you may have seen from our Social Engagement Snapshots, the platform captured information regarding Buzz, Sentiment, Location, Sources and the key influencers online.

This provided an unbiased, organic view of the political landscape, helping to develop a picture of how the four parties followed stacked up against one another and the opinion of the public and media.

Popular election hashtags

#IVoted



#Cameronettes

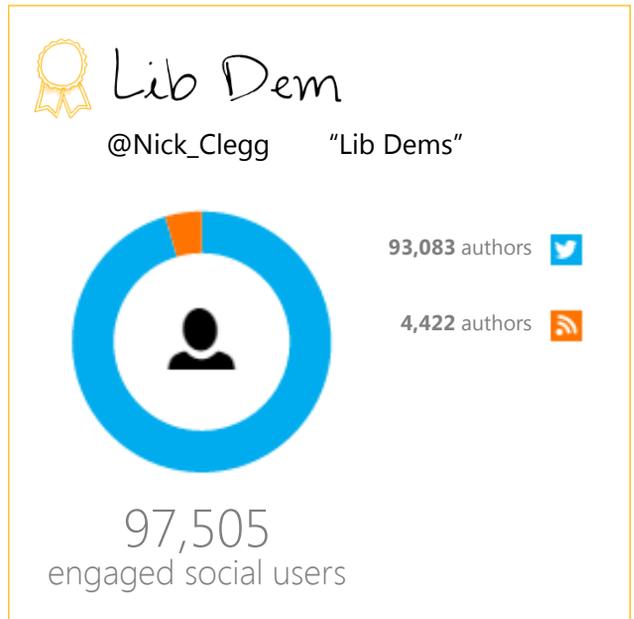
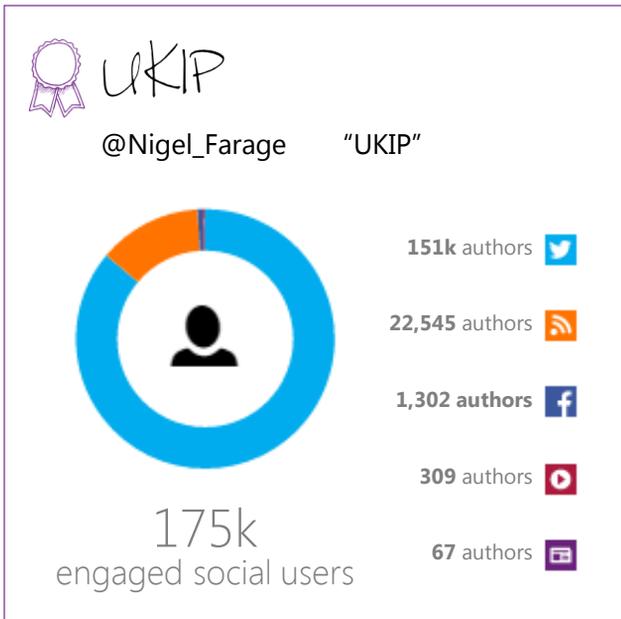
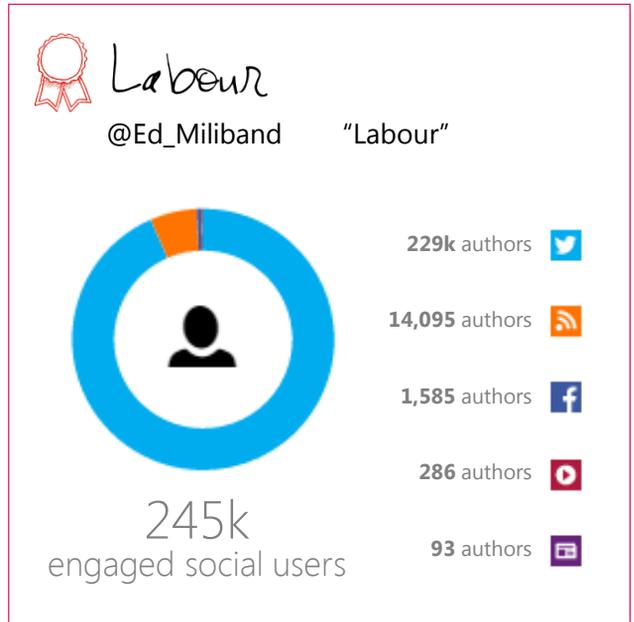
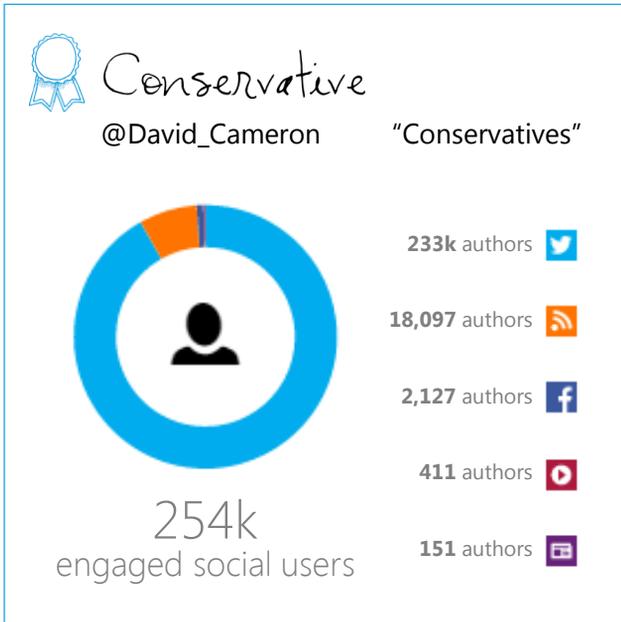


#Milifandom

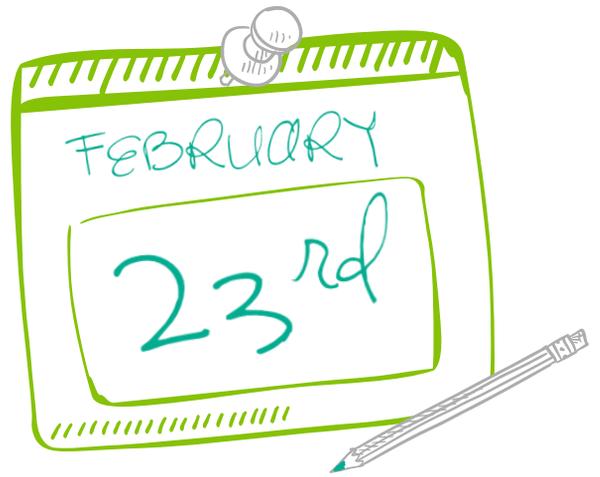
Who did we listen to?

Parties, social media accounts and keywords covered between 24th February to 6th May.

Sources  Twitter  Blogs  Facebook  Videos  News



Key events that shaped the election



Just under 100 days to go

With the campaign wheels fully in motion the key election topics for each party came to the fore.

The two leading parties were closely matched, however UKIP appeared to be growing in stature, especially by comparison to the lesser buzz generated by the Lib Dems.

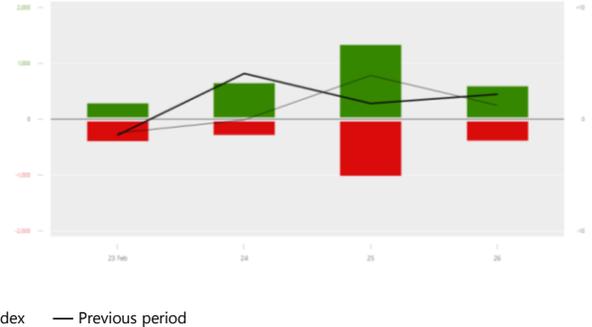
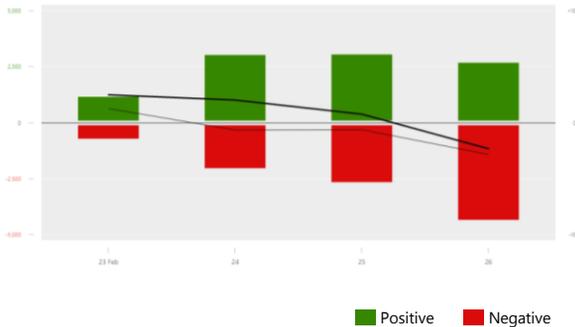
The hangover from Nick Clegg's time as Deputy Prime Minister in coalition government and much-discussed broken tuition fee promises began to show.

FEBRUARY
23rd

While Labour and the Conservatives generated the most discussion, they also shared a balanced level of positive and negative sentiment.

 Conservative

 Labour

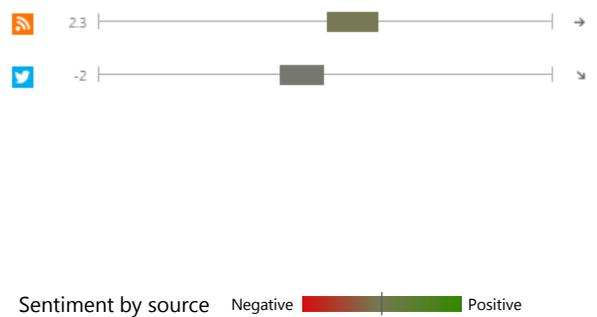
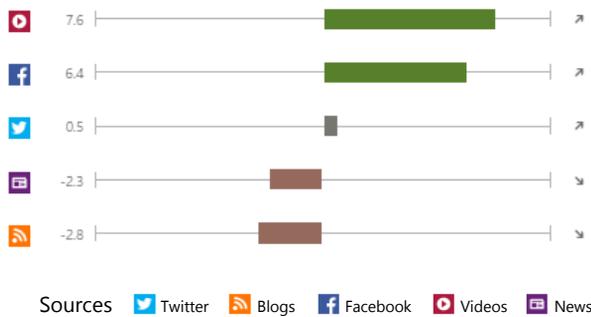


■ Positive ■ Negative — Index — Previous period

UKIP was talked about more than the Lib Dems and saw much more positive sentiment in videos and Facebook than any other parties.

 UKIP

 Lib Dem



Sources  Twitter  Blogs  Facebook  Videos  News

Sentiment by source Negative  Positive 

Key talking points included the NHS, immigration and the economy.

-  **United Kingdom**  @NiqeI_Farage Take note @David_Cameron, this is how you run the NHS
-  **United Kingdom**  Ed Miliband and Labour in charge of Britain's £1.7 trillion economy? Don't risk it in... <http://t.co/1ezcFVQtcl> <http://t.co/6YqYm0z6Se>
-  **United Kingdom**  @LibDems @nick_clegg That's mostly due to EU open door immigration allowing foreign criminals to enter unvetted. Bring back the visa system.

Key events that shaped the election



The ITV leaders debate

The first and only debate featuring the leaders of all the main political parties appeared on ITV in April.

While Labour and Conservative sentiment barely shifted as a result, UKIP saw a largely negative response overall after a very bright start to the campaign.

Were voters beginning to lean back toward a perceived "safe" Conservative vote over UKIP?



Labour buzz in its traditional Northern hunting grounds was strong but also saw more chatter in London than the Conservatives.

Conservative

Labour

London	7,803	↗
Manchester	989	↗
Glasgow	781	↗
Liverpool	576	↗
Edinburgh	529	↗

London	11,056	↗
Manchester	2,186	↗
Glasgow	1,220	↗
Birmingham	1,061	↗
Liverpool	975	↗

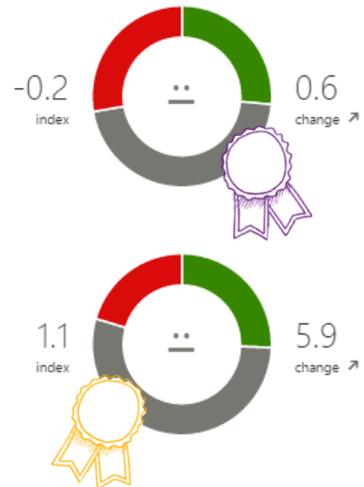
UKIP saw high levels of buzz across the country with the Lib Dems trailing across the board.

UKIP

Lib Dem



Nick Clegg's performance at the ITV debate saw improved positive sentiment while UKIP saw an increase in negative commentary online.



UKIP debate focussed on Nigel Farage's views on immigration.

- Have to say, Nigel Farage is spot on about immigration. Certainly has my vote in May.
- UKIP (UKIP) RT @UKIP: According to ComRes, 70% agree with @Nigel_Farage and UKIP on immigration. #leadersdebate <http://t.co/Ccoo0Cltc8>
- RT @a_voter: When not talking about immigration tonight is @Nigel_Farage just going to stand in silence whilst the grown ups speak? ...

Key events that shaped the election



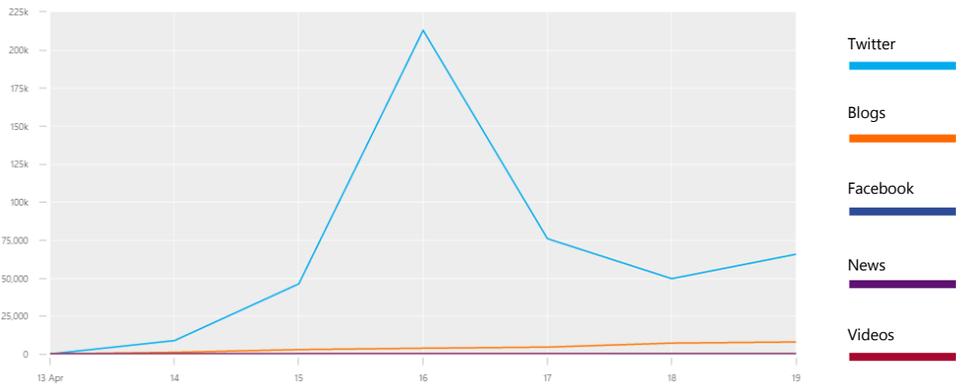
The BBC Challengers debate

With David Cameron and Nick Clegg not present, the BBC challengers debate was an interesting stage in the election campaign for other leaders to find their voice. Twitter posts surged and sentiment shifted.

Nicola Sturgeon performed strongly for the SNP, Nigel Farage was argumentative and The Lib Dems continued to miss out in terms of audience share despite not shifting from a balanced positive/negative position.



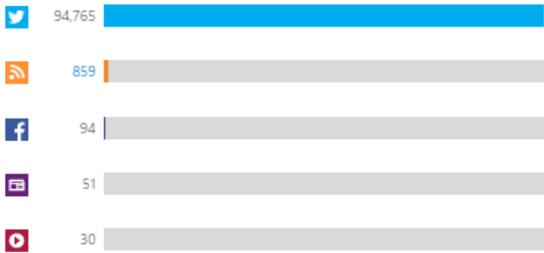
Twitter use saw a huge peak in discussion on the day of the debate.



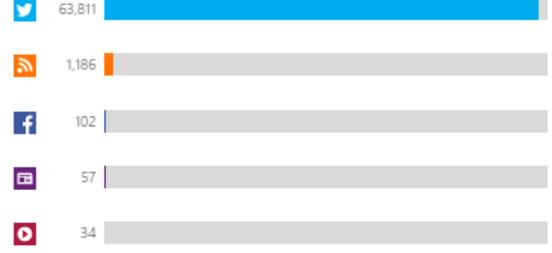
Labour won in terms of volume on Twitter, the Conservatives lagged behind with a third fewer tweets.

Sources: Twitter, Blogs, Facebook, Videos, News

Labour



Conservative



UKIP more than doubled the coverage of the Lib Dems on Twitter.

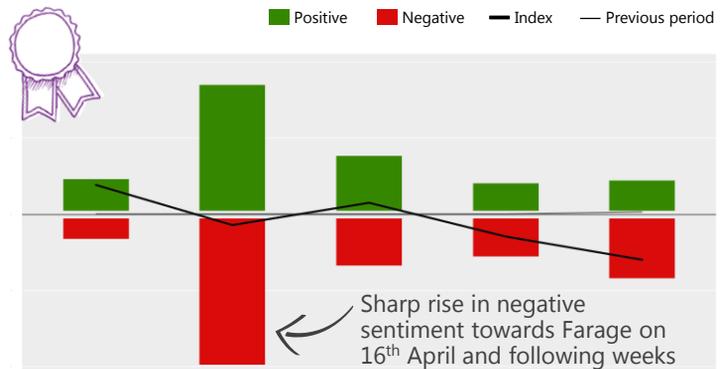
UKIP



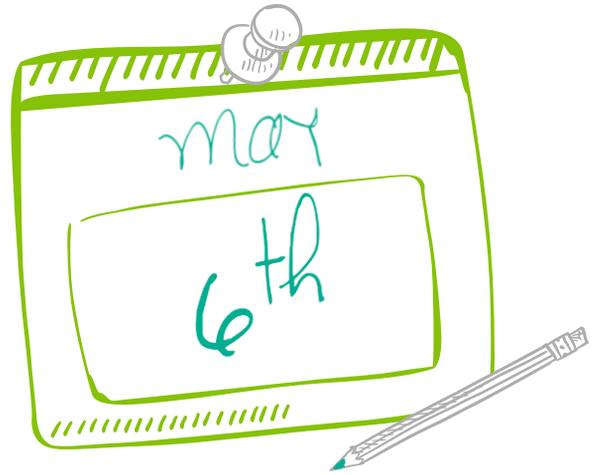
Lib Dem



Nick Clegg and David Cameron didn't see a dent in sentiment from not attending the debate while Nigel Farage's argument with the studio audience further increased negative sentiment toward him.



Key events that shaped the election



Day before election day

The polls were still too close to call as election day loomed but Social Engagement provided some hints as to what was to come.

As people prepared to vote the next day it appeared the traditional "Shy Tory" voters had, once again, kept their cards close to their chests, skewing the predicted outcome.

A huge positive sentiment spike for David Cameron suggested that this may not be as close a race as first thought.

David Cameron saw a huge spike in positive sentiment by comparison to all other party leaders who saw more negative comments. It's surprising to see that Nick Clegg also ended his campaign with high positive sentiment.



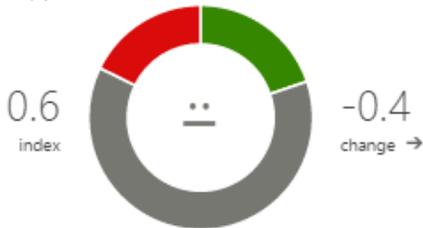
 Conservative



 Lib Dem



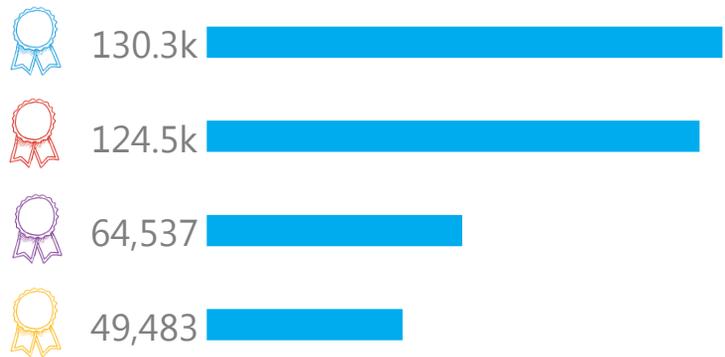
 Labour



 UKIP

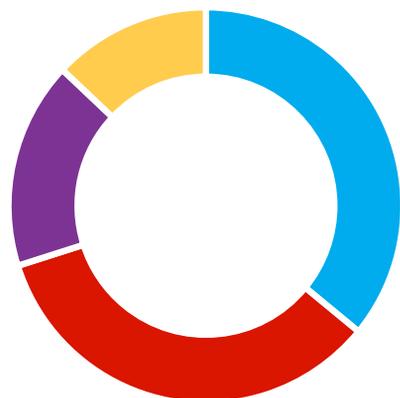


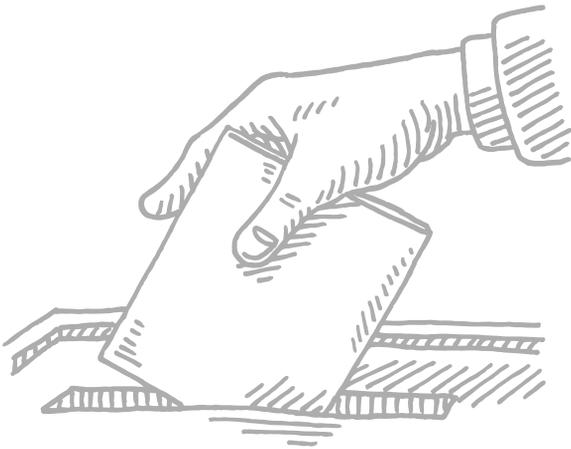
David Cameron edged ahead of all other leaders in terms of Twitter discussion in the final week of the campaign.



Share of social media voice in the week before the election was ordered the same as the voting outcomes for each party:

	David Cameron	140.9k	11,334,520 votes
	Ed Miliband	133.9k	9,347,326 votes
	Nigel Farage	66,366	3,881,129 votes
	Nick Clegg	50,832	2,415,888 votes





What was the actual outcome?



Labour kept its traditional Northern seats, lost catastrophically in Scotland and gave way to the Conservatives across the UK with UKIP coming second in many seats



Strong support for UKIP enabled the party to win votes from both Labour and the Conservatives rather than just the latter as expected, increasing its share of the vote by 9.6% and damaging Labour



Nigel Farage failed to win his Thanet South seat, losing to the Conservatives



The Lib Dems lost a significant 15.2% of vote share with its Conservative coalition partners taking the majority of its seats



Increased voter turnout at 66.1% compared with 2010 election



In summary

Even the pollsters couldn't predict the outcome of this election accurately, even on the day of voting. Social Engagement, however, provided useful insights as to the final result and crucial analysis data that painted a picture as to how voting would play out.

From pegging Nick Clegg's party as a weak force from the outset to highlighting UKIP's continued exposure and presence in the minds of voters, the tool's unbiased reporting displayed the online side of the election in a simple, effective manner. With location-based analytics and the monitoring of sentiment and posts from voters, the platform provided a quick and effective way to drill into specifics and uncover important suggestions as to where the election was headed, such as David Cameron's late positive sentiment boost and increased social discussion.

All parties could have benefited from the crucial information Social Engagement provided, be it spotting where their voice was being lost online and putting more resources into a particular platform, identifying geographical locations where discussion was rife and targeting those specific seats or simply analysing keywords and sentiment from voters in order to strengthen their message.



Join the conversation and share your thoughts
[#SocialEngagementGeneralElection](#)



Think of the possibilities that could come from knowing how your audience feels, where they are based and what they are saying.

Like the politicians and parties we've been looking at here, how much crucial information could you discover about your business using Microsoft Social Engagement?



So what are your customers saying about you?

Discover the power of consumer sentiment analysis for your business with Microsoft Social Engagement

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[**Take a guided tour**](#) of Microsoft Social Engagement

Contact your account manager to request your own personal Social Engagement Snapshot

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[#SocialEngagementGeneralElection](#)