

Tuesday 5th September 2017

BritainThinks

What does Britain want from its leaders?

A BritainThinks study

britainthinks.com

We conducted a study of leadership in November 2015 – and repeated it last week

November 2015

- **Online survey**
 - 2,014 UK adults (nat. rep)
 - Fieldwork 20th – 22nd November 2015
- **Focus group**
 - Swing voters (mixed GE vote)
 - 24th November in London

August 2017

- **Online survey**
 - 2,061 UK adults (nat. rep)
 - Fieldwork 25th – 28th August 2017
- **Focus group**
 - Swing voters (mixed GE vote)
 - Weds 30th August in Slough

Summary of key findings

1

The three most consistently important leadership attributes are: having integrity, being decisive and being a great communicator.

2

Presentation matters: we want our leaders to be authentic but we want them to authentically look the part.

3

Historical leaders, apolitical leaders and foreign political leaders are considered more effective than contemporary domestic politicians.

4

But political leadership is very important to the public and plays a large role in determining voting intention.

5

When pushed, most think May would make a better PM than Corbyn – but this is an unenthusiastic, reluctant endorsement and there is a desire for new blood.

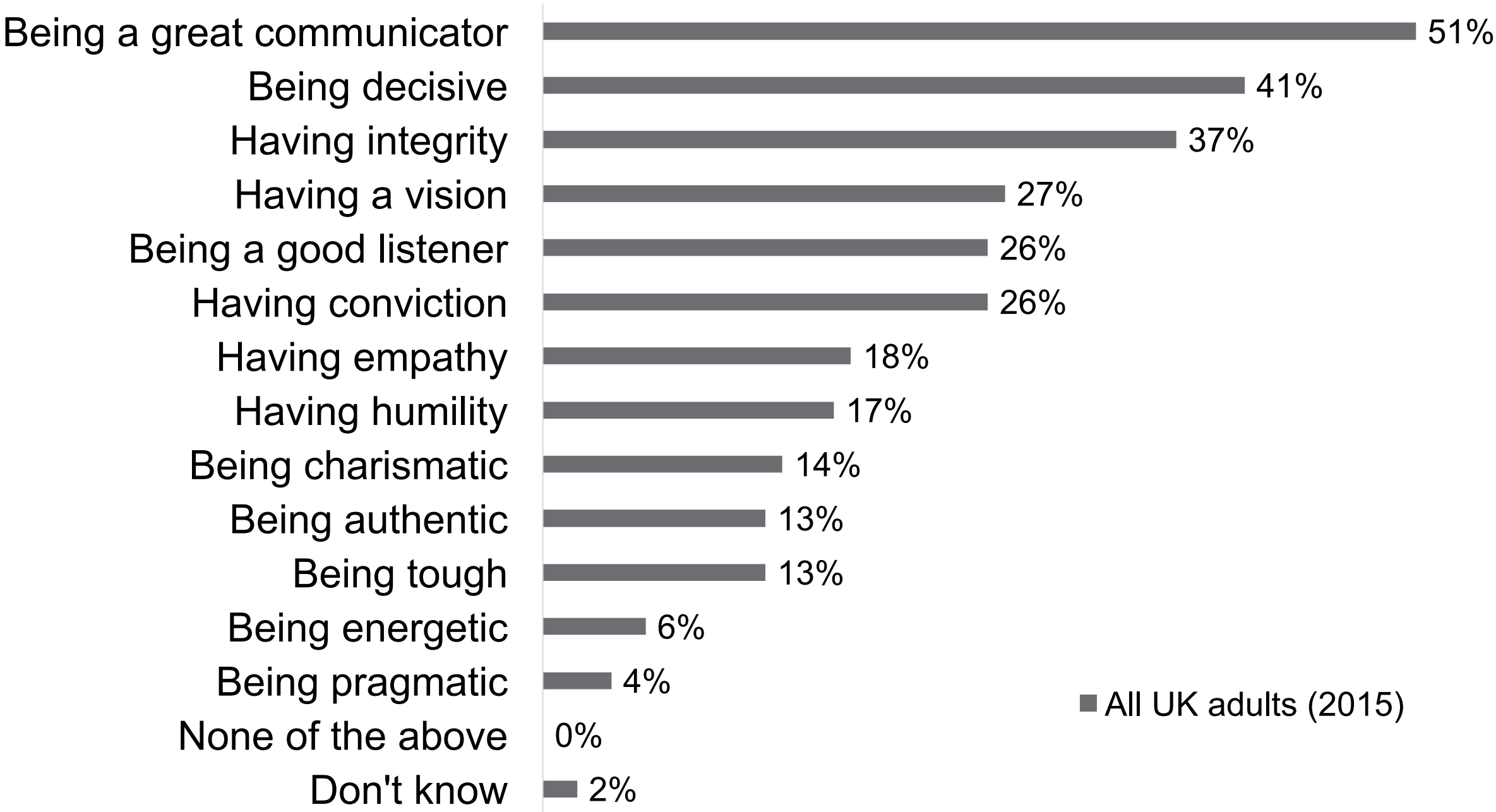
What makes a great leader?

We asked which leadership attributes were considered to be most important for leadership...

Being a great communicator
Being decisive
Having integrity
Having a vision
Being a good listener
Having conviction
Having empathy
Having humility
Being charismatic
Being authentic
Being tough
Being energetic
Being pragmatic
None of the above
Don't know

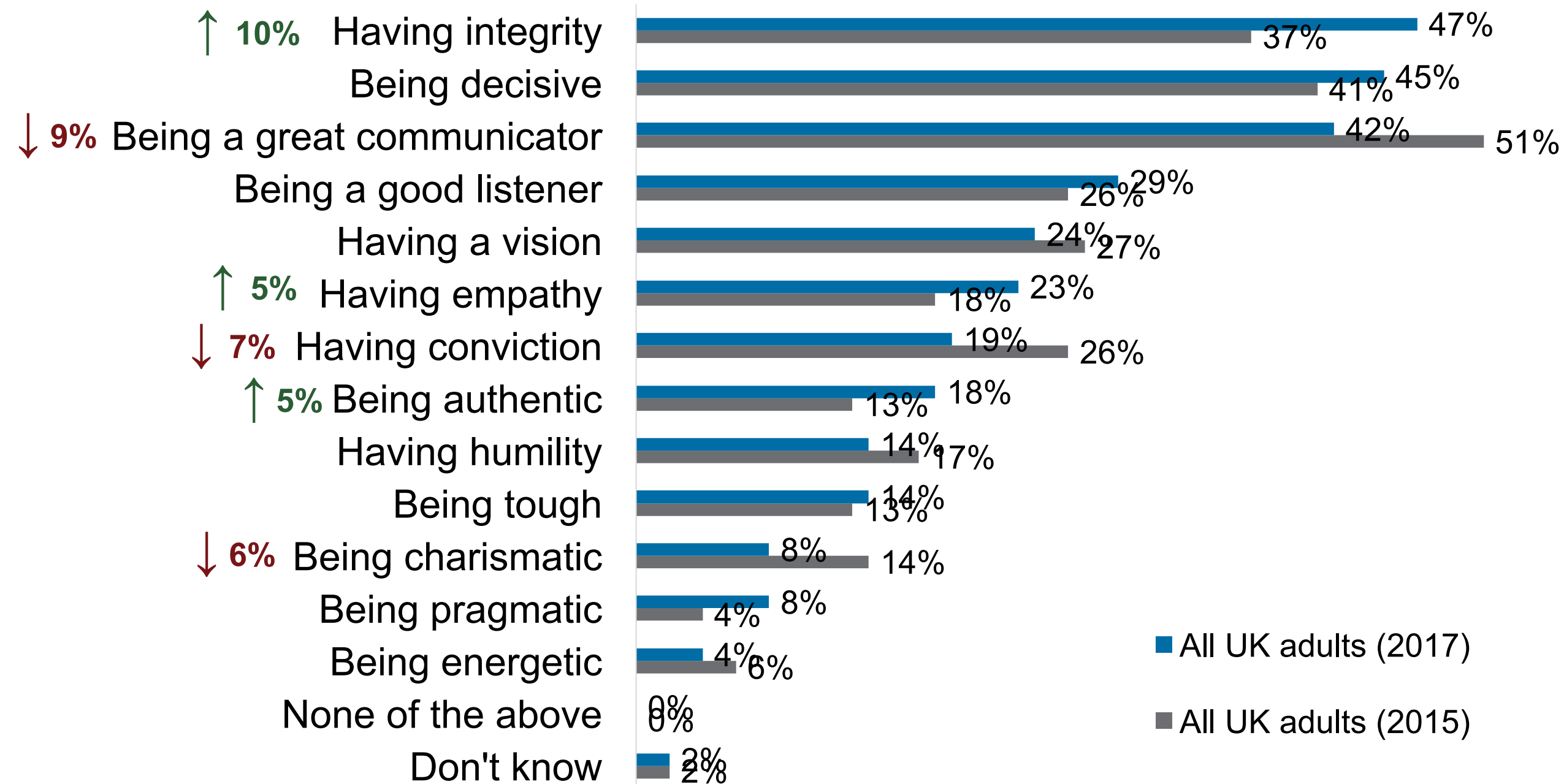
Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.

In 2015, being a great communicator was the most important attribute (followed by being decisive and having integrity)



Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.
[Base (2015): All 2,014 respondents]

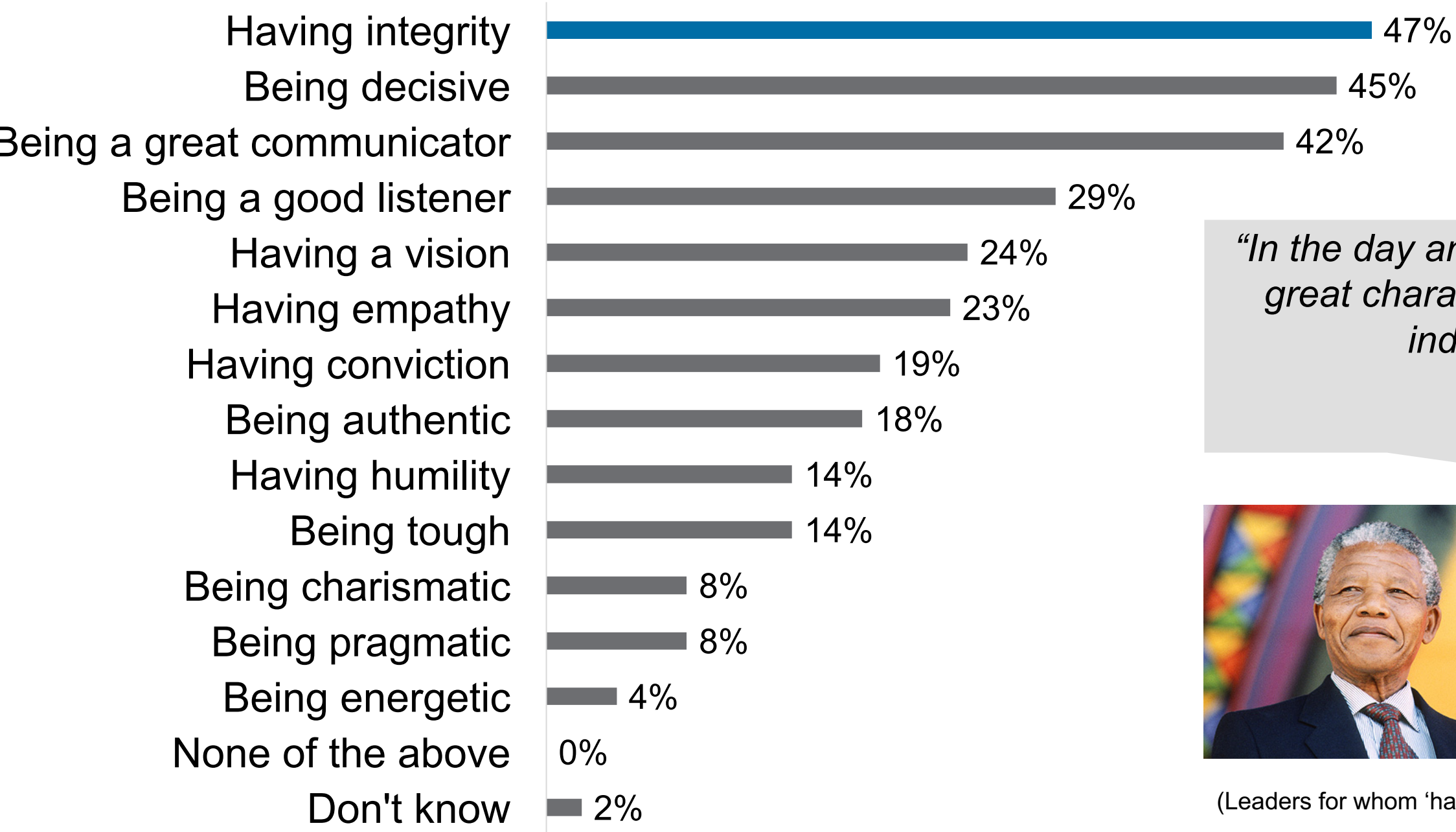
While the three most important attributes are the same as in 2015, there has been change in the relative importance of some attributes



Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.

[Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents; Base (2015): All 2,014 respondents]

A leader with integrity is one who is honest, trustworthy and has good intentions



“In the day and age of social media, I think the Queen has got great character, really reserved. She’s a really high-quality individual and that really shines through.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)



(Leaders for whom ‘having integrity’ was one of the most applicable attributes)

Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.
[Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents]

The public also wanted their leaders to be strong enough to make difficult decisions (and then stick with them)



“Thatcher made things real. She said she was going to do it and then she did it. She was a finisher.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)



(Leaders for whom ‘being decisive’ was one of the most applicable attributes)

Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.

[Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents]

While it drops down our ranking, being a great communicator remains a very important attribute for leaders



"You have to have the ability to inspire those around you."

(Focus group participant, Slough)

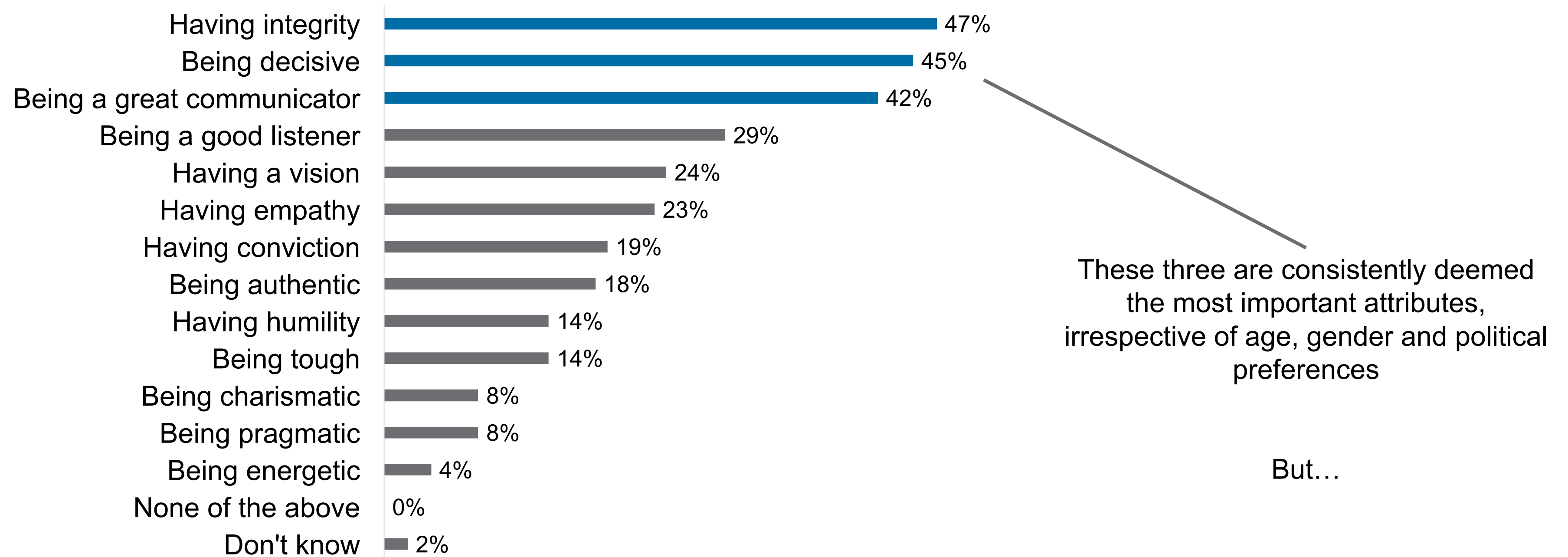


(Leaders for whom 'being a great communicator' was one of the most applicable attributes)

Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.

[Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents]

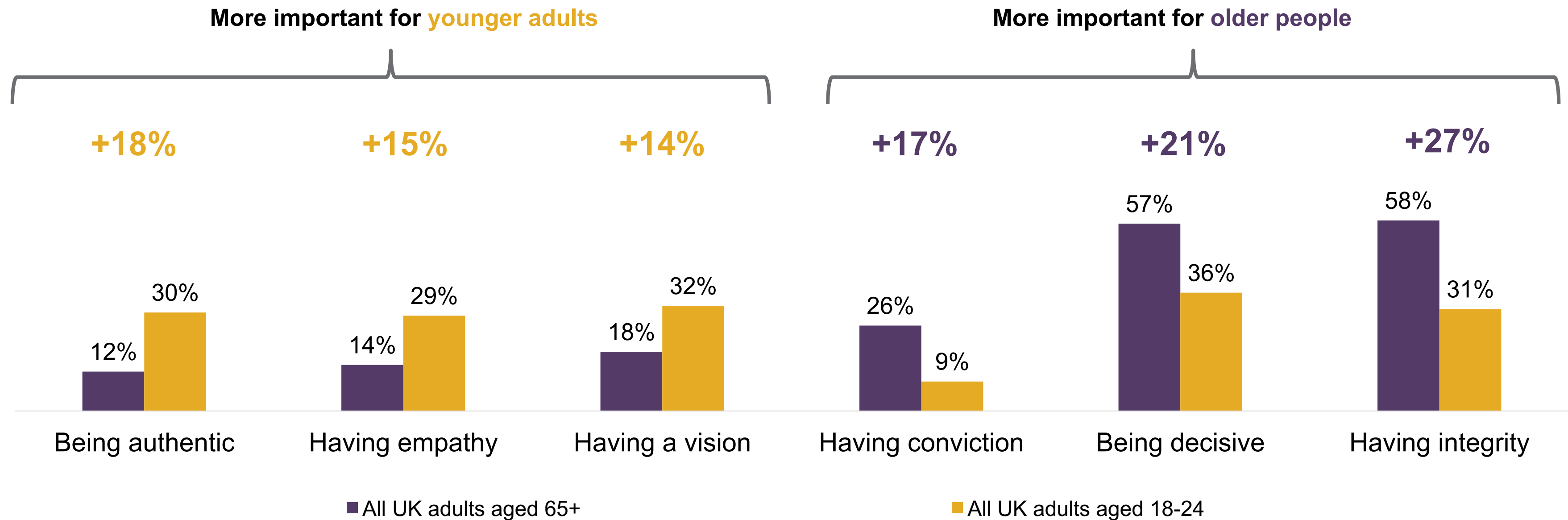
Integrity, decisiveness and communication skills are consistently deemed the most important attributes



Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.

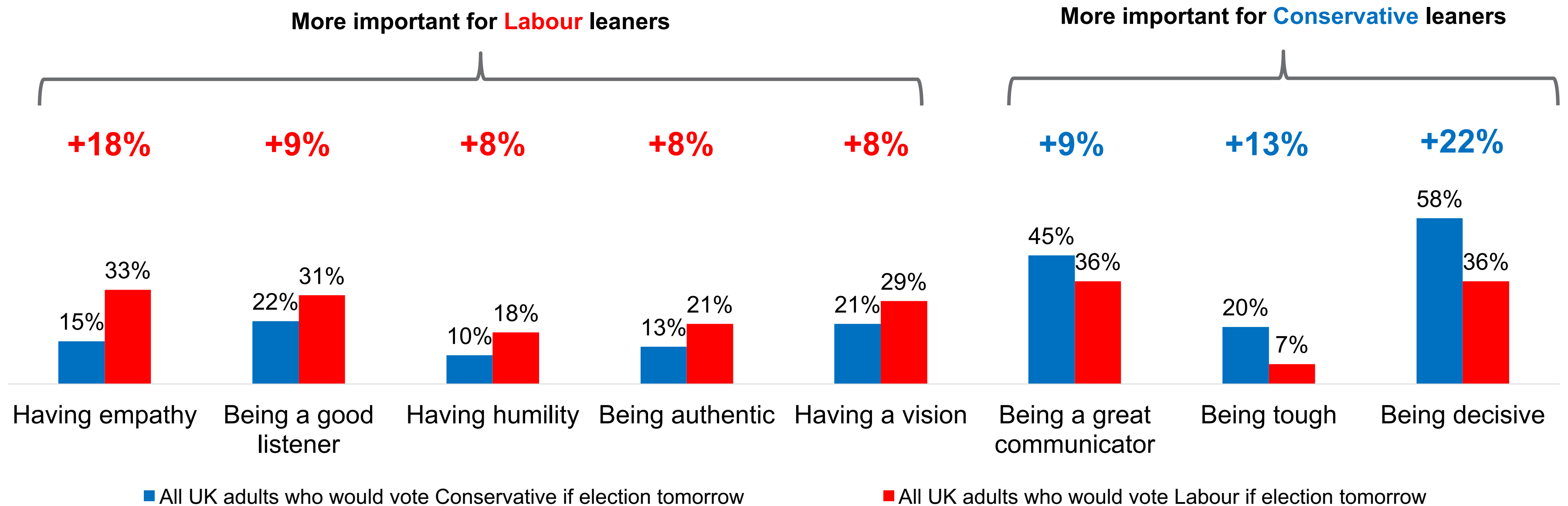
[Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents]

There are some marked differences between young & old in terms of the leadership attributes considered most important



Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.
[Base (2017): 231 respondents aged 18-24 and 475 respondents aged 65+]

There is also some difference between Labour- and Conservative-leaning voters in the attributes deemed most important

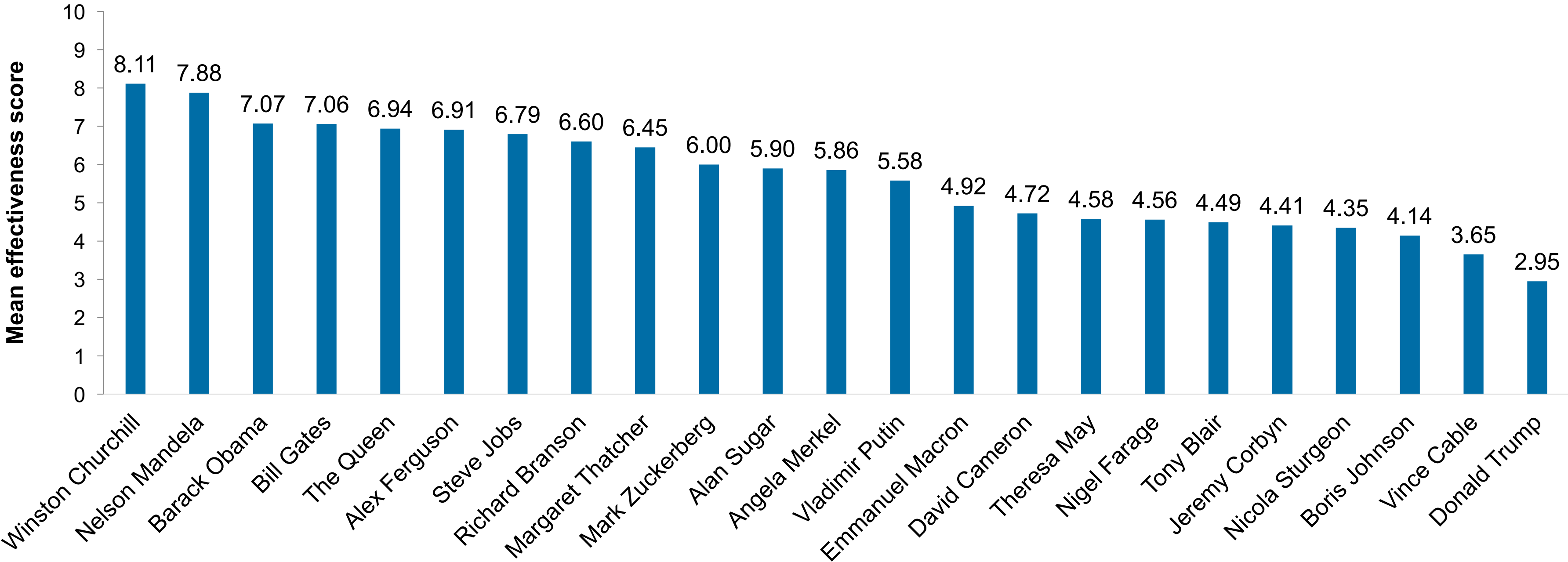


Q.1 Of the qualities below, please select the three that you think are most important for leadership.

[Base (2017): 673 respondents who would vote Labour and 647 respondents who would vote Conservative if there was an election held tomorrow]

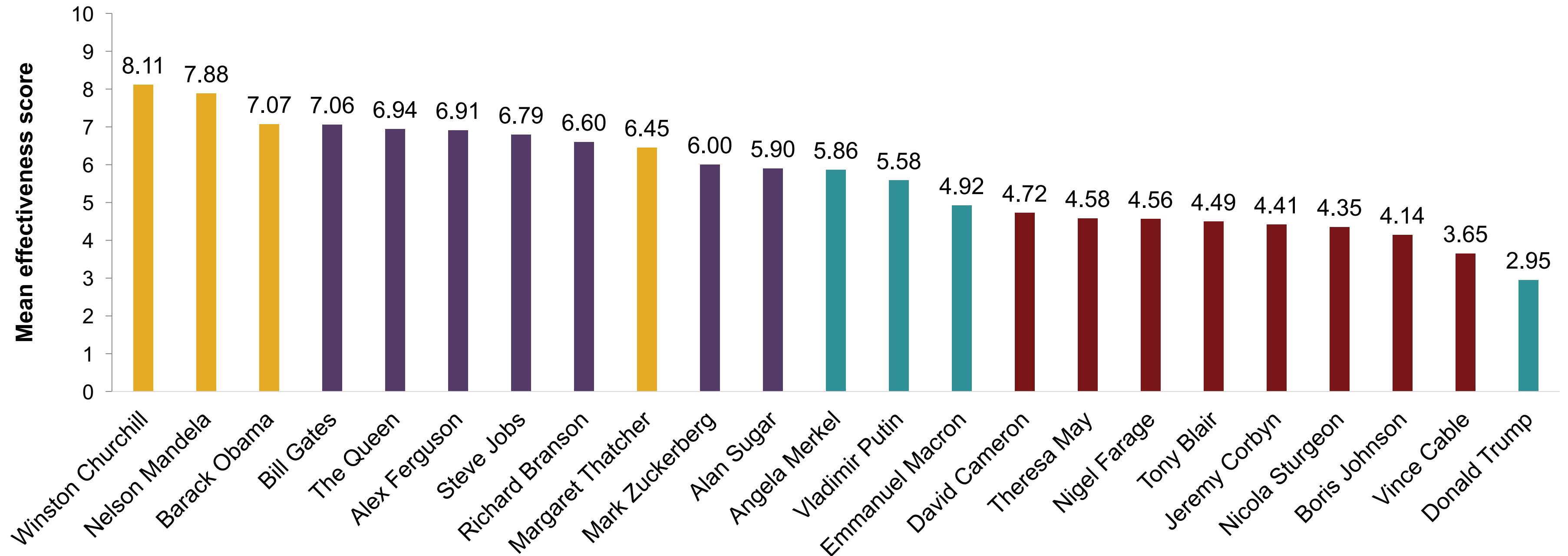
Who are the best leaders?

Winston Churchill was emphatically rated the most effective leader – and Donald Trump the least effective



Q.2 For each of the individuals below, thinking about what you know about them, please say how effective each is/ was as a leader. Please use a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all effective and 10 is very effective indeed. [Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents for May & Corbyn; 765-803 randomly selected respondents for other leaders]

Historical leaders, apolitical leaders and foreign political leaders are considered more effective than contemporary domestic politicians



Q.2 For each of the individuals below, thinking about what you know about them, please say how effective each is/ was as a leader. Please use a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all effective and 10 is very effective indeed. [Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents for May & Corbyn; 765-803 randomly selected respondents for other leaders]

When assessing leaders, focus group participants would often refer to their appearances



Winston Churchill (8.11)

"I picked Winston Churchill because of what he led us through before, the stature of the man. He looks like a tough man."

(Focus group participant, Slough)



Richard Branson (6.60)

"I like his style and the fact he's a brilliant entrepreneur. He's not afraid to try new things in the business world."

(Focus group participant, Slough)



Vladimir Putin (5.58)

"He looks like a strong character, that's for sure... He's definitely the sort of leader the Russian people like, a strong leader."

(Focus group participant, Slough)



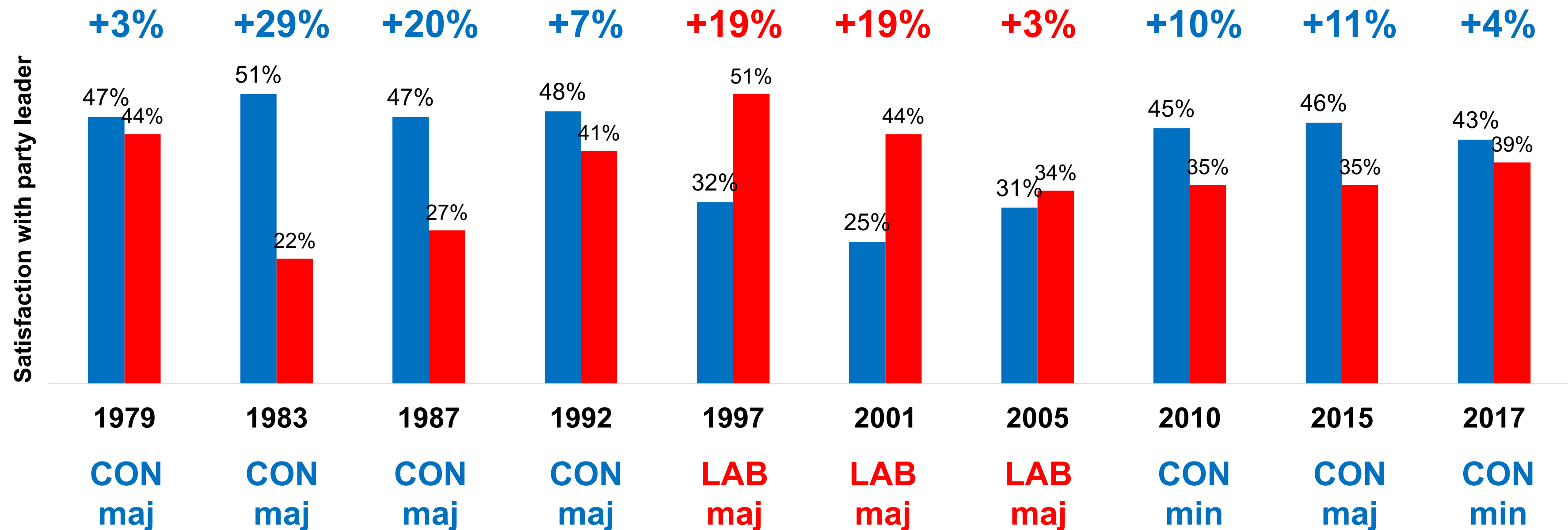
Donald Trump (2.95)

"He's a very successful businessman. But he comes across as a bit of a chump. The way he talks, his hair, how he stands."

(Focus group participant, Slough)

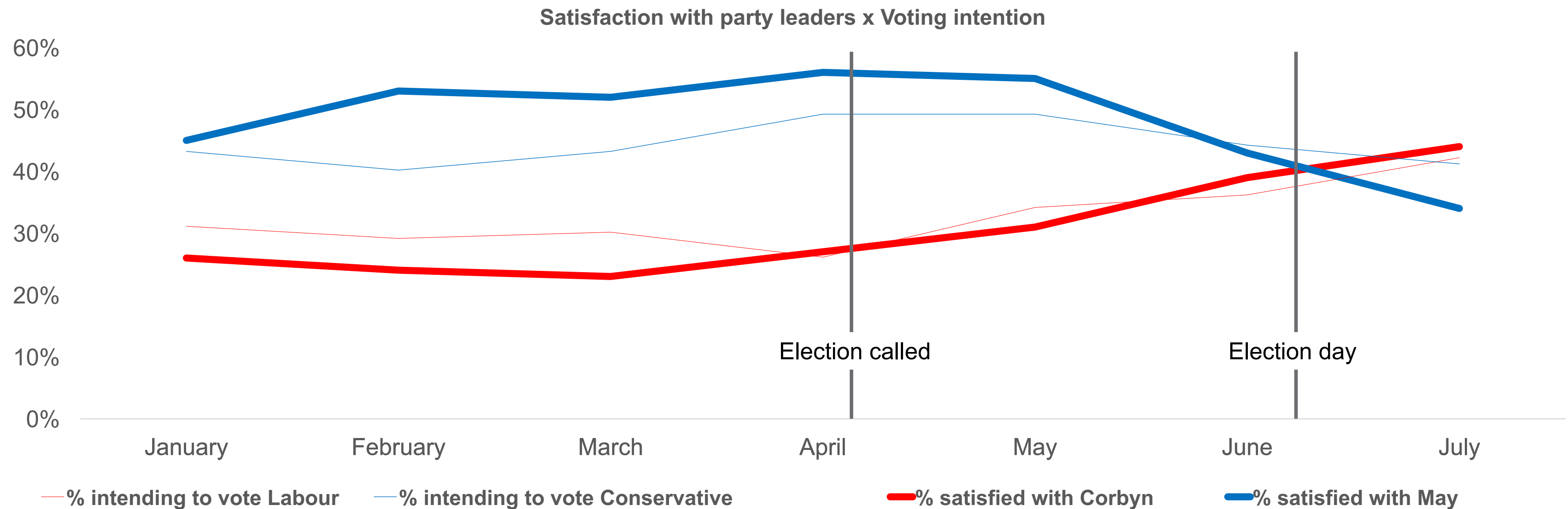
How do May & Corbyn compare?

Historically, perceptions of party leaders have been one of the most reliable predictors of election outcomes



Ipsos MORI | Political Monitor: Satisfaction Ratings (last available survey data prior to election day)

This year, too, leaders' personalities were crucial in determining the outcome of the General Election



Ipsos MORI | Political Monitor: Satisfaction Ratings 1997-Present; Ipsos MORI | Voting Intention in Great Britain: Recent Trends

This year, too, leaders' personalities were crucial in determining the outcome of the General Election

"While I feel Brexit is a very important issue, I'm starting to feel the integrity of the leaders is becoming more of a significant issue."

(Swing voter, Birmingham Erdington)



"My vote was about national rather than local politics. Jeremy Corbyn has run an excellent campaign."

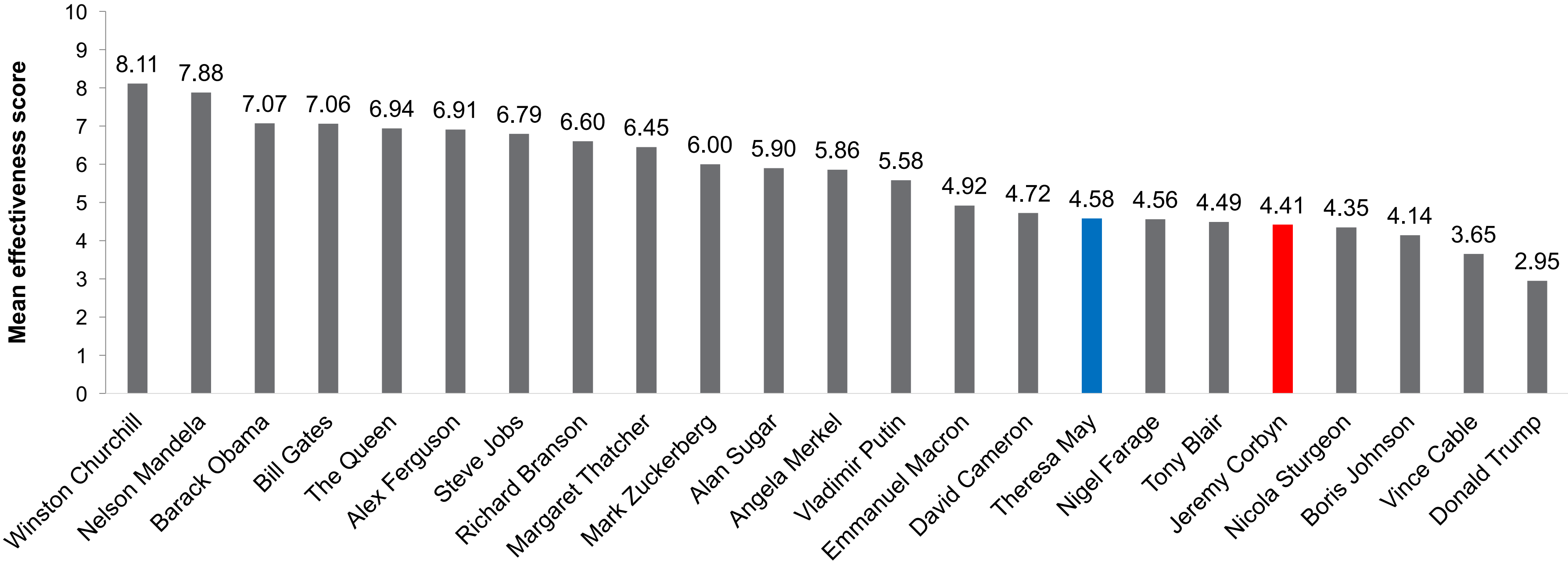
(Swing voter, Cambridge)

"I really believe the country would be stronger and united if the Conservatives got a majority vote and Theresa would be a stronger leader."

(Swing voter, Harrow West)

BritainThinks: Voices and Votes (2017) [britainthinks.com/news/election-reflection]

Neither May nor Corbyn are considered particularly effective



Q.2 For each of the individuals below, thinking about what you know about them, please say how effective each is/ was as a leader. Please use a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all effective and 10 is very effective indeed. [Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents for May & Corbyn; 765-803 randomly selected respondents for other leaders]

May is considered awkward, unable to connect with the public and lacking judgement (though respected for her resilience)



Most applicable attributes

- ✓ Having conviction
- ✓ Being tough
- ✓ Having integrity

"She seems determined to get on with the job and see it through."

"She's not afraid to get up in Parliament and face the press. At least she does face everything, she gives it a good go in Parliament."

Least applicable attributes

- ✗ Being charismatic
- ✗ Being a good listener
- ✗ Being a great communicator

"You do have to look good to be a leader. She just doesn't look confident."

"She doesn't seem to make a convincing argument on decisions one way or the other."

Q.3 For each of the individuals below, please select the three attributes that you think most apply.
[Base (2017): 878-908 randomly selected respondents per leader]

Our swing voters felt that May was ‘finished’, a proven failure who was just waiting to be replaced



What would Theresa May be if she were a...?



Drink: *Eggnog*

“You’re offered it because somebody’s made it and you have to accept it – but you’d probably rather tip it into a plant pot.”



Animal: *Rabbit*

“I just feel that she’s frozen in the spotlight. She looks tired and not particularly effective, like a rabbit in the headlights.”



Car: *Robin Reliant*

“The fascination is that it doesn’t tip over – it keeps going against the odds.”

Corbyn is admired for his integrity and authenticity – but doesn't look like a leader and wasn't considered strong enough



Most applicable attributes

- ✓ Having integrity
- ✓ Having empathy
- ✓ Having a vision

"He looks like he truly believes in it. He's not putting it on."

"Jeremy, he does reach out to the people and understands them. He's got the persona of being down with the kids. Theresa just doesn't appeal to me."

Least applicable attributes

- ✗ Being tough
- ✗ Being decisive
- ✗ Being charismatic

"You've got to be stern. You've got to have a backbone to talk to world leaders... I don't think he has clout."

"He doesn't look like a leader, his presence. I just think it'd be embarrassing for him to meet the other leaders."

Q.3 For each of the individuals below, please select the three attributes that you think most apply.
[Base (2017): 878-908 randomly selected respondents per leader]

While our swing voters had warmed to Corbyn's passion and empathy, he still wasn't considered ideal leadership material



What would Jeremy Corbyn be if he were a...?



Food: *Marmite*

"It's simple really: you either love him or you hate him."



Animal: *Dog*

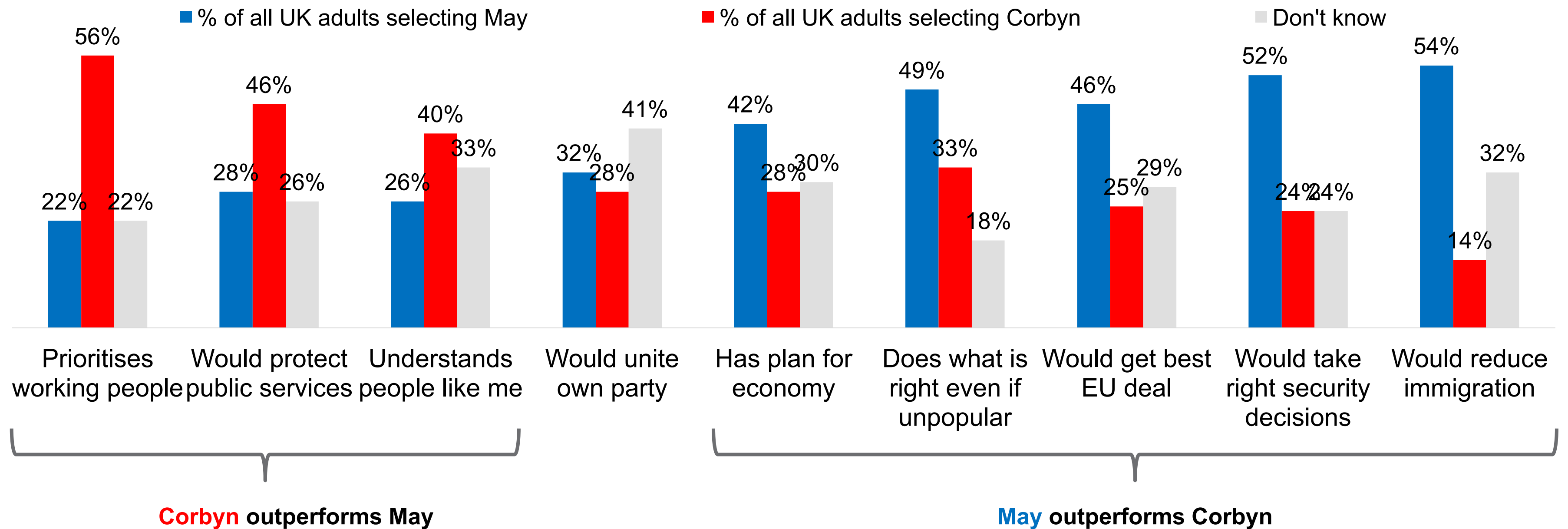
"He's a bit like a stray dog with no owner. Just scruffy."



Car: *Prius*

"Toyota Prius. Kind of ugly-looking car but they do good for the world."

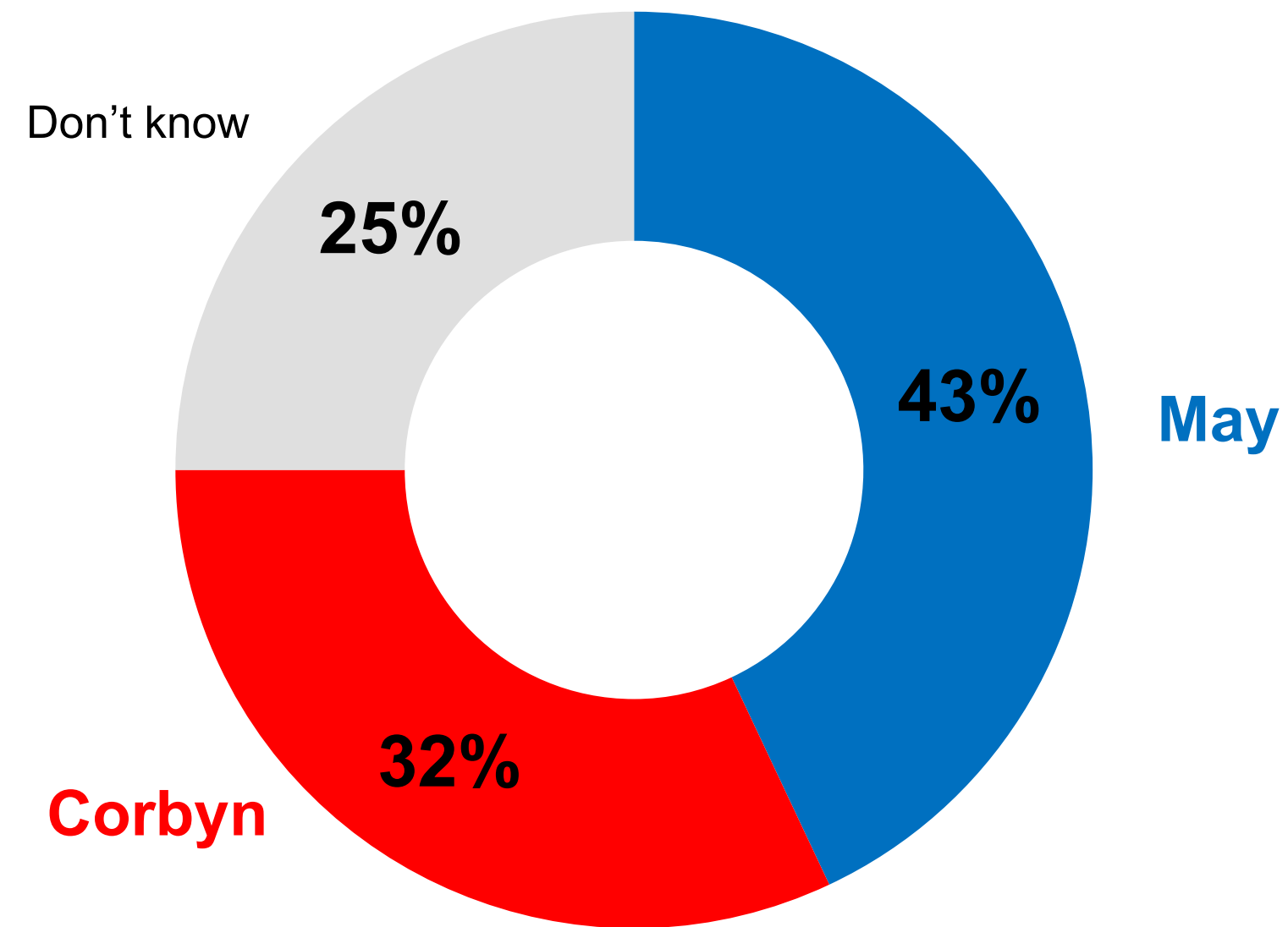
May outperforms Corbyn on most policy areas – but not on prioritising working people and protecting public services



Q.4 For each of the statements below, please say which of the two main party leaders you think it most applies to.
[Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents]

Overall, a plurality of UK adults believe that May would make the better Prime Minister

Who would make the best Prime Minister?



Q.4 For each of the statements below, please say which of the two main party leaders you think it most applies to.
[Base (2017): All 2,061 respondents]

But ultimately there was a sense that May & Corbyn were only in post because of the absence of convincing alternatives

*“I think Corbyn seems a bit stronger and more passionate than Theresa May does. But I just don’t trust him. **I don’t trust either of them.**”*

(Focus group participant, Slough)

*“Theresa May’s leadership has been really overshadowed by Brexit so we won’t know who the better leader is until the dust has settled. **At the moment, we need stability so I would vote for Theresa.**”*

(Focus group participant, Slough)

*“I do think **people are looking for something different** - but they’re being indecisive at the moment.”*

(Focus group participant, Slough)

Asked to give May & Corbyn one piece of advice, most participants focused on personal presentation and appearance



“Wear a proper suit and look strong! Also don’t go back on your policies.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)

“Change your look and look more professional.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)

“Show you can be the ‘serious’ guy, even if it is only once.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)



“Try to look and act more like a leader of this great country.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)

“Be more confident.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)

“Appear more open and in touch with people.”

(Focus group participant, Slough)

Thank you

For more information:

Spencer Livermore (slivermore@britainthinks.com)

Raphael Malek (rmalek@britainthinks.com)

Jalal Pour (jpour@britainthinks.com)

+44 (0)207 8455880

BritainThinks

Somerset House

Strand

London

WC2R 1LA

britainthinks.com