

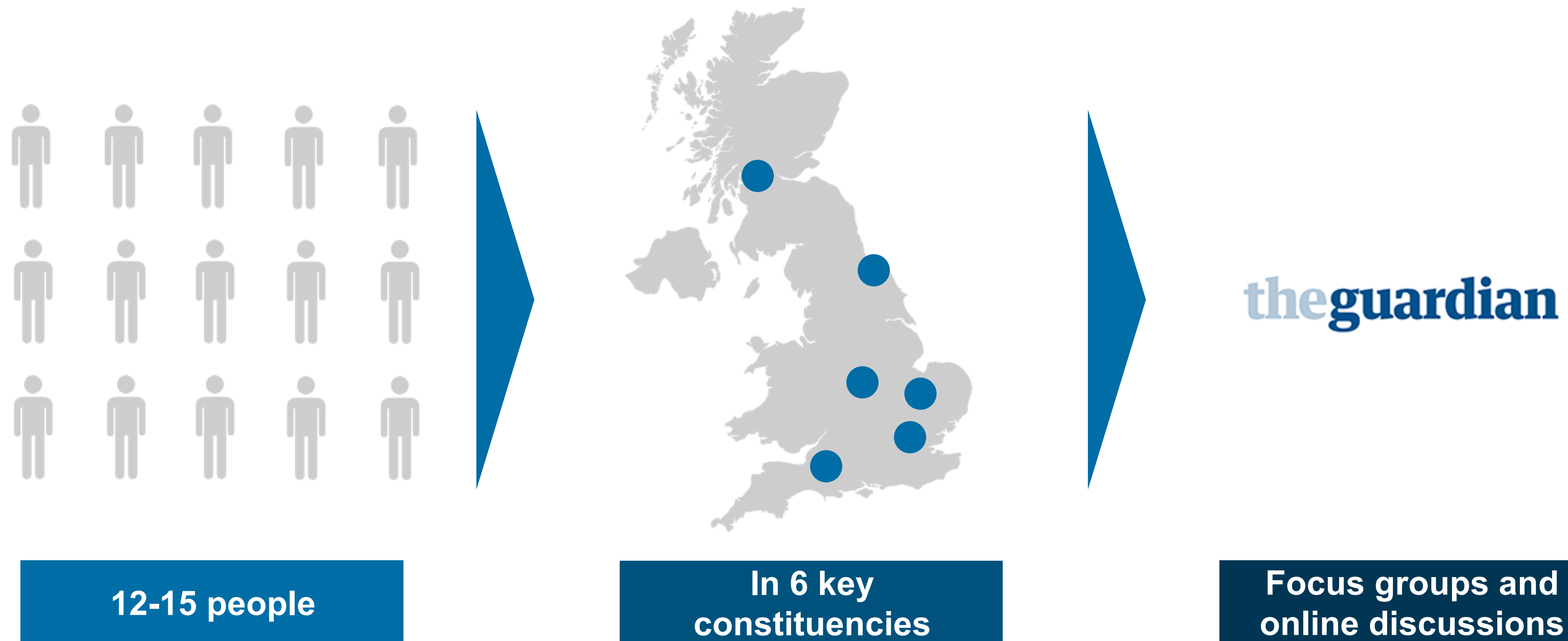
General Election 2017

Swing Seat Spotlight

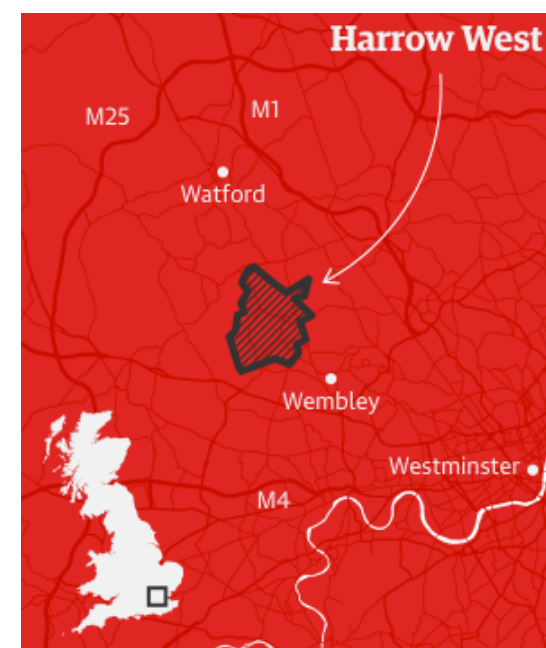
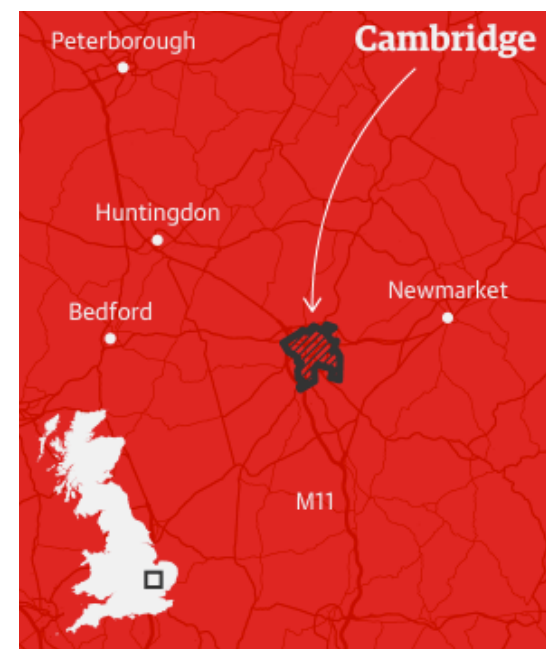
Key insights from the campaign

britainthinks.com

We wanted to see how people experience the General Election



We found swing voters in six key constituencies



Participant profile

- All certain to turn out on June 8th
- All undecided about who to vote for on May 9th, but considering front-runner parties in each constituency
- At least 3 Remain voters and 3 Leave voters in each constituency
- Mix by age, gender, socio-economic grade, ethnicity and 2015 vote, to reflect profile of each constituency

The 6 most important things that we've learned

1.

“Normal” people do not follow politics very closely

2.

But voters have learned about both main leaders

3.

This hasn't been the “Brexit election”

4.

We've returned to two party politics

5.

The Labour party brand has changed; the Conservatives' hasn't

6.

The fundamentals still point to Theresa May

1

**“Normal” people do not follow politics
very closely**

Most voters find politics boring and confusing

- Last year's referendum was the outlier, rather than the norm – elections are boring
- “Normal” people do not follow politics as closely as the Westminster bubble
- Swing voters are not paying close attention to the campaign
- Generally, very little changes in terms of overall voting intention during election campaigns

Totally confused and if I'm brutally honest not as interested as previous elections.

Georgina, Hartlepool

Bored with it all, they all tell lies until they're voted in and then everything changes to suit themselves.

Rena, Glasgow

2010 first debate

9.4m people

2015 debate

7m people

2017 BBC leaders debate

3.5m people

This means that few issues cut through



Diane Abbott – LBC interview

*She didn't know the figures!
It was very funny.*

Gareth, Wells



Social care u-turn

*Theresa May has
overstepped the mark with
her social care plan and the
public have reacted badly so
she has had to back down or
she will lose votes.*

Jilly, Wells



“Strong and stable leadership”

*The Conservatives have not
offered much other than "strong
and stable leadership" and "a
hard Brexit" - whatever that
means!*

Deborah, Harrow West



BBC debate

*If Theresa May wants the
power then she needs to be
present otherwise she will be
seen as a wuss not willing to
face the British public.*

Sonam, Harrow West

The key points in the election for our undecided voters



Election called



Diane Abbott's maths



Lib Dems for cannabis



Manchester terror attack



BBC debate



Conservatives for fox hunting



Social care u-turn



Paxman interviews



London terror attack

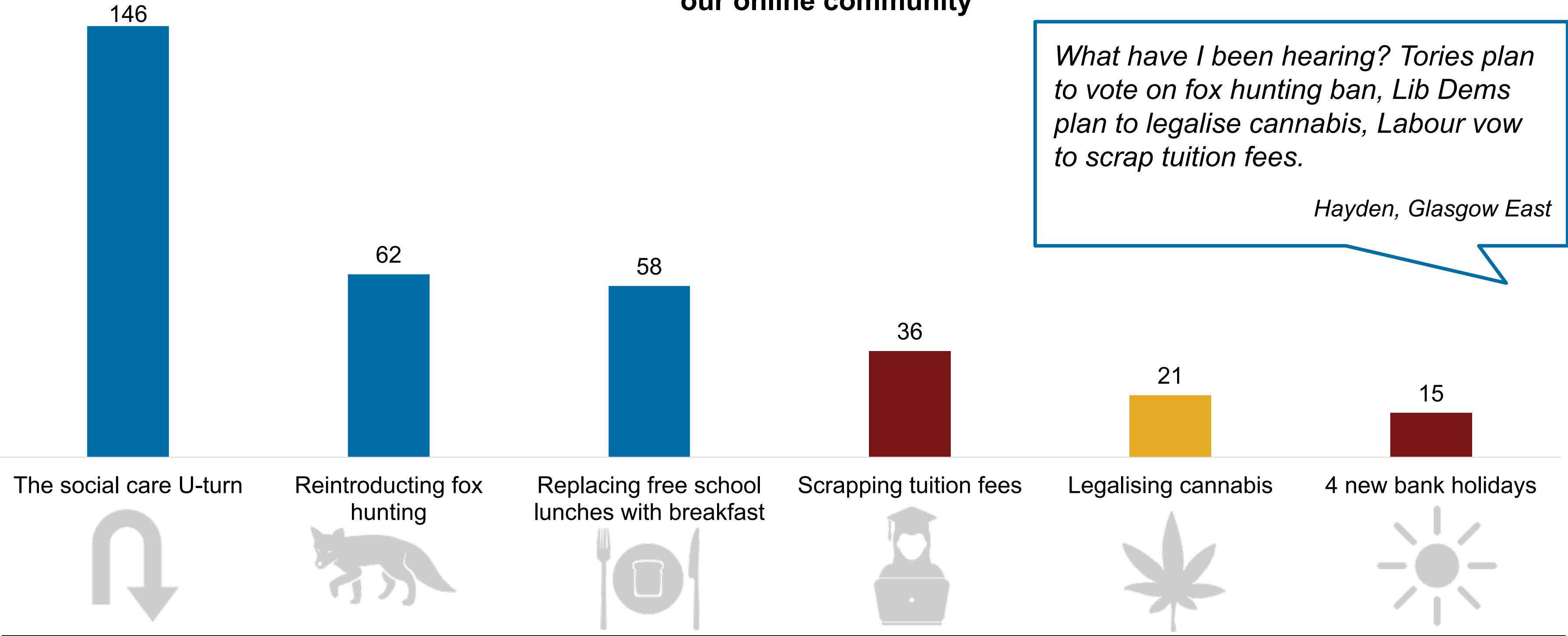
April

May

June

Only a handful of policies have proved memorable

Number of mentions of specific policies on our online community



Issues most likely to cut through when they confirm existing views



Labour = chaotic

People in this position should have the correct answers when interviewed - quite a worry that the shadow Home Secretary can make this error.

Ian, Hartlepool



Conservative = posh

It is absurd and is representative of how completely out of touch they are with the times and whose interests they are interested in serving.

Erol, Cambridge

2

**But voters have learned about both
leaders**

At the start of the campaign, voters knew little about both leaders



- At General Elections, at least one of the candidates is usually familiar to voters:
 - David Cameron in 2015, 2010
 - Tony Blair in 2005, 2001
 - John Major in 1997
- This campaign is unusual in that voters told us they didn't really know much about either Corbyn or May
- Both profiles have therefore been moulded during the campaign

From focus groups conducted the week the election was called:

I don't think Corbyn's had a chance.

I don't know much about May's background.

Voters have identified flaws in Theresa May during the campaign

Up to May 19th

A word cloud of adjectives describing Margaret Thatcher. The word 'strong' is the largest and most prominent, centered at the bottom. Other large words include 'leader', 'safer', and 'Thatcher'. Smaller words scattered around include 'human', 'credible', 'calming', 'hard', 'different', 'reserved', 'passionate', 'independent', 'staged', 'political', and 'out of touch'. The words are in various shades of blue and black, with different font sizes and orientations.

She's a strong leader whereas I hardly know the names of the others let alone what they stand for or promise.

Georgina, Hartlepool

*Strong - she reminds me
very much of the Iron
Lady, Margaret Thatcher*

Joanne, Birmingham

Since May 19th

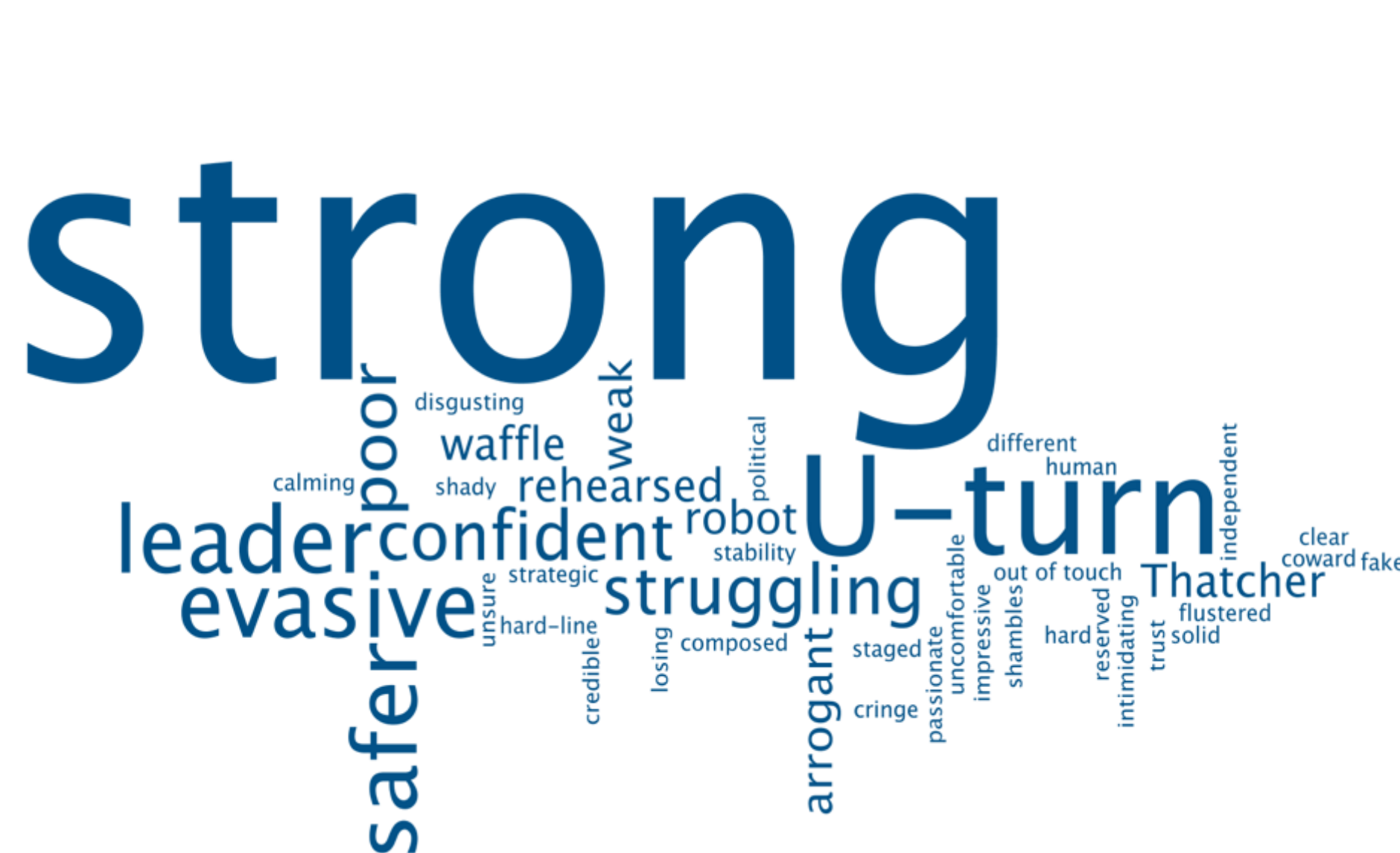
A word cloud of adjectives describing a U-turn. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the largest words being 'strong' and 'U-turn'. Other prominent words include 'evasive', 'confident', 'poor', 'struggling', 'robot', 'waffle', 'rehearsed', 'weak', 'impressive', 'disgusting', 'safer', 'shambles', 'solid', 'intimidating', 'composed', 'stability', 'leader', 'strategic', 'trust', 'losing', 'hard-line', 'fake', 'uncomfortable', 'arrogant', 'clear', 'coward', 'flustered', 'cringe', 'shady', and 'unsure'. The words are in various shades of blue and black, with some words appearing in a lighter, more transparent font.

[Corbyn's] words were in more plain, everyday English whereas Theresa May appeared flustered at times and continued to speak as if she had swallowed her party manifesto!

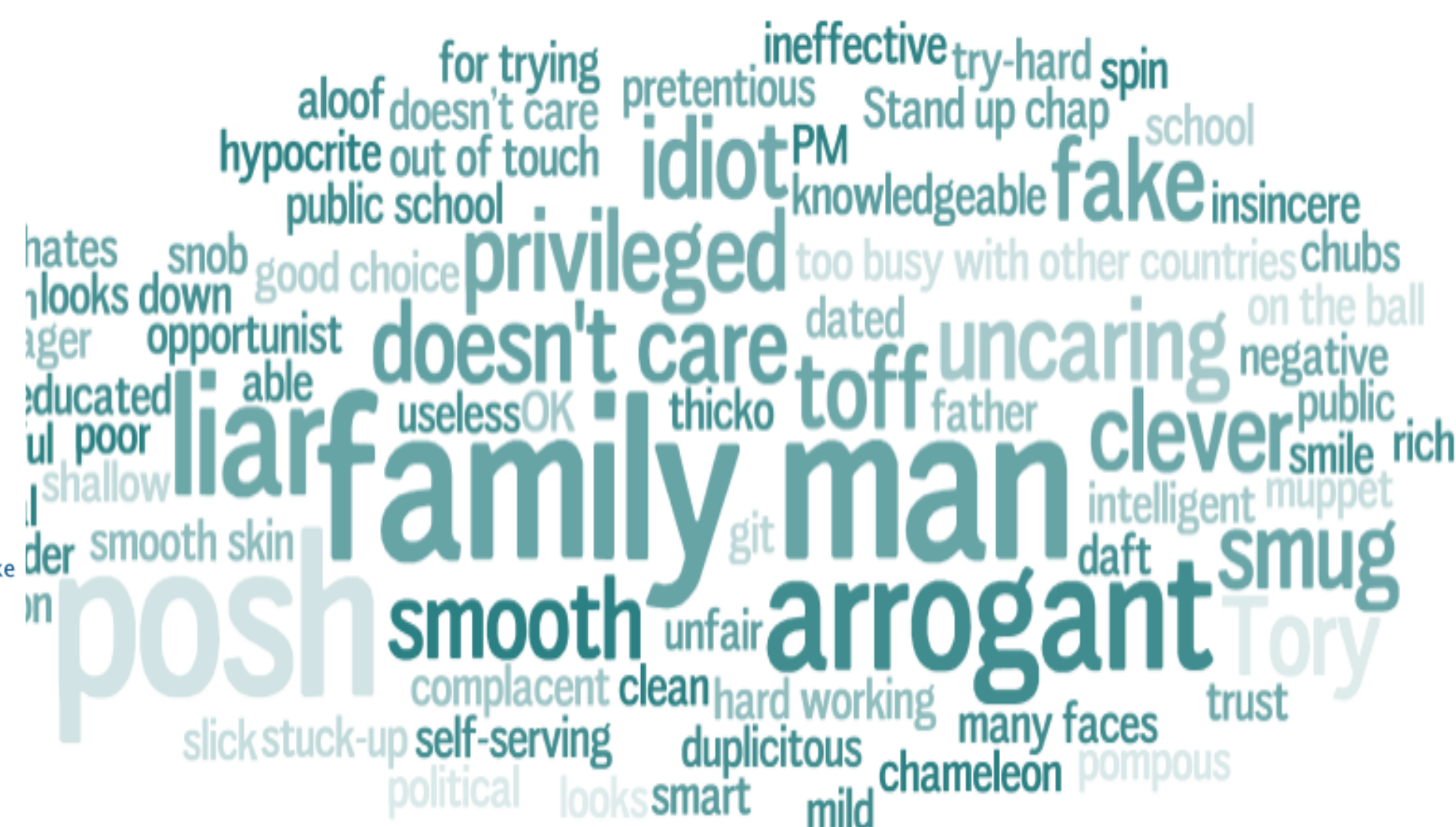
Jilly, Wells

Overall, Theresa May appears to have made a more favourable impression than David Cameron in 2015

Theresa May

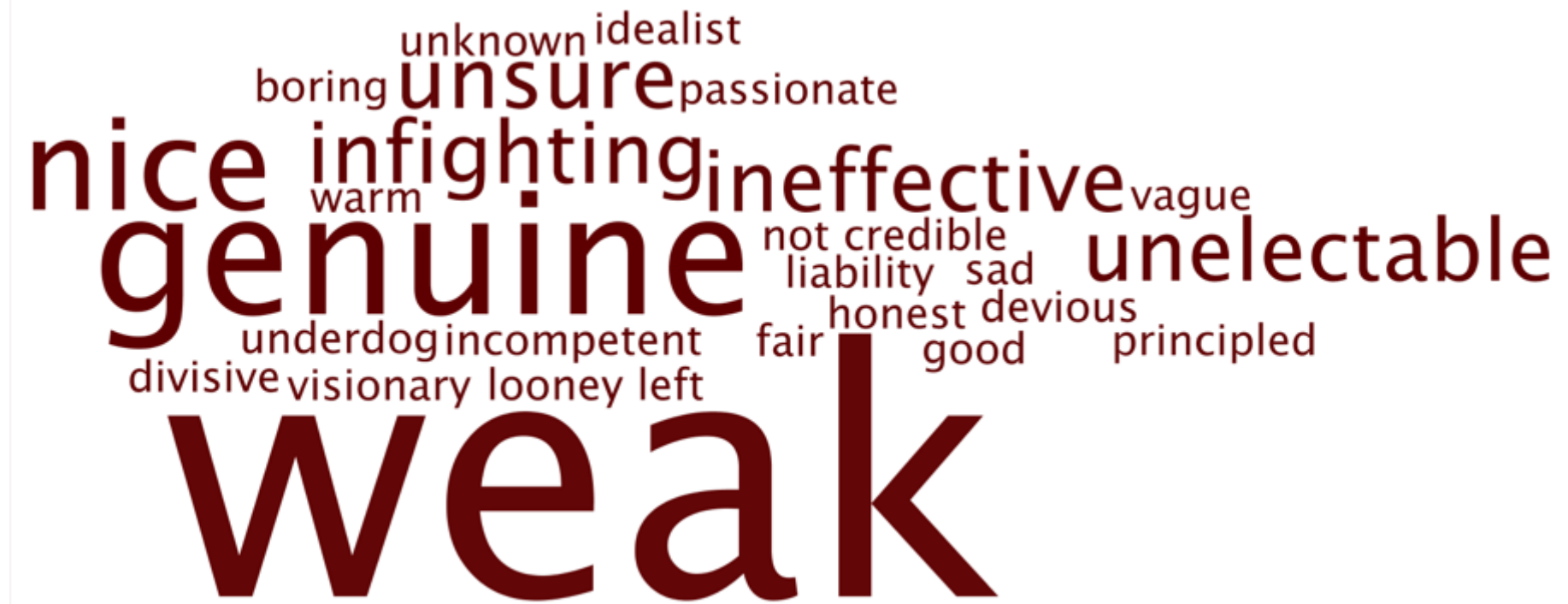


David Cameron



Jeremy Corbyn has outperformed very low expectations

Up to May 19th



*Well meaning but weak.
A Geography teacher.*

Simon, Harrow West

Since May 19th



*Corbyn performed really well despite
being asked some frankly stupid
questions by an unprepared Paxman,
like when asked about the monarchy –
'because it's not in our manifesto'.*

Mary, Wells

We saw a similar theme of ‘nice but ineffective’ in 2015

Jeremy Corbyn

Ed Miliband



Corbyn has done well against very low expectations – but will this be reflected at the ballot box?

3

This hasn't been the “Brexit election”

Theresa May initially framed the election around Brexit



Speech on April 19th

If we do not hold a general election now their political game-playing will continue, and the negotiations with the European Union will reach their most difficult stage in the run-up to the next scheduled election.

Division in Westminster will risk our ability to make a success of Brexit and it will cause damaging uncertainty and instability to the country.

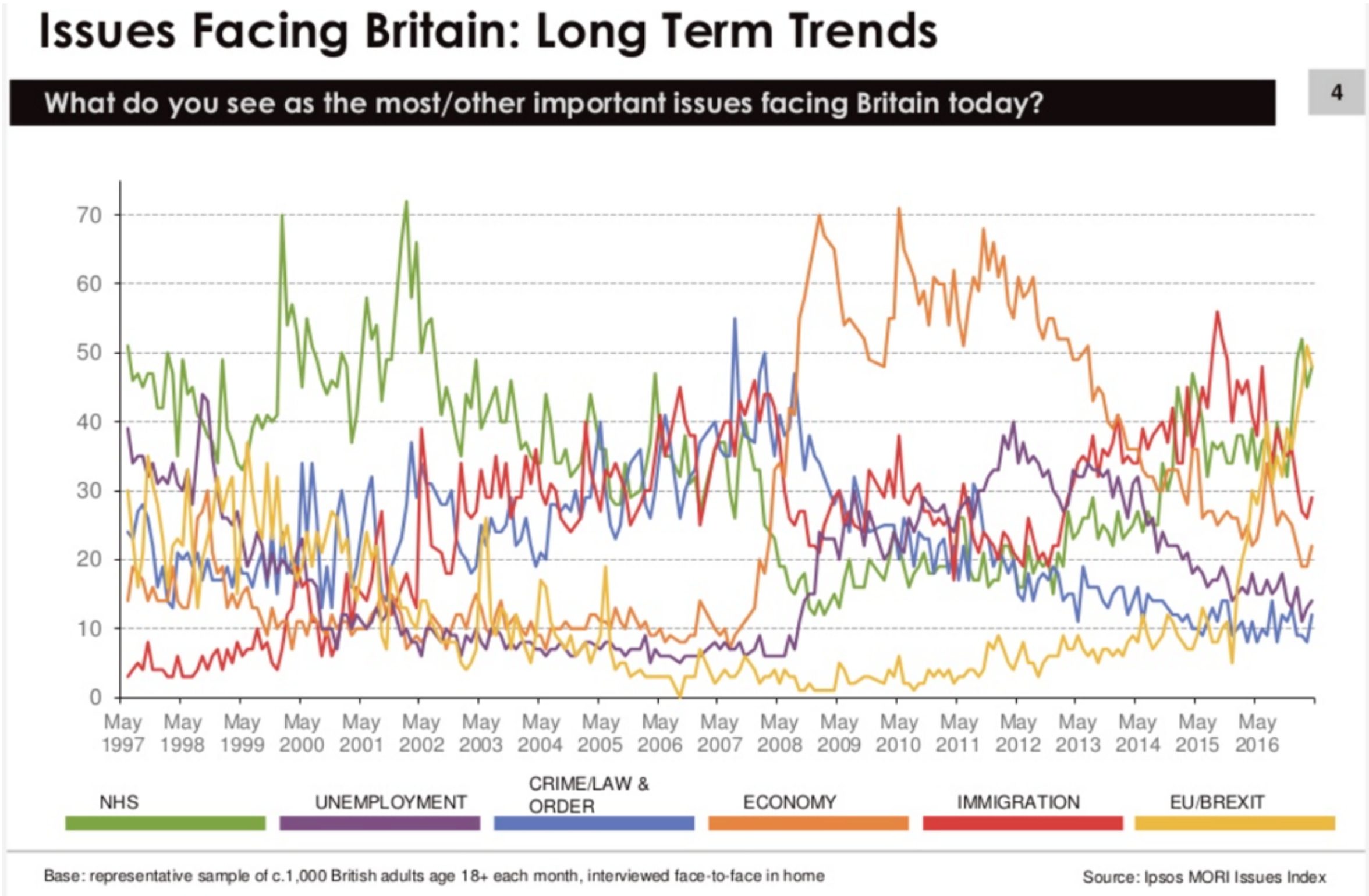
Focus groups in the week the election was called showed that the public agreed with the Prime Minister's framing.

You see for me it's the only reason for having an election, so it has to be important, because otherwise there is no justification to have an election now, except for Brexit.

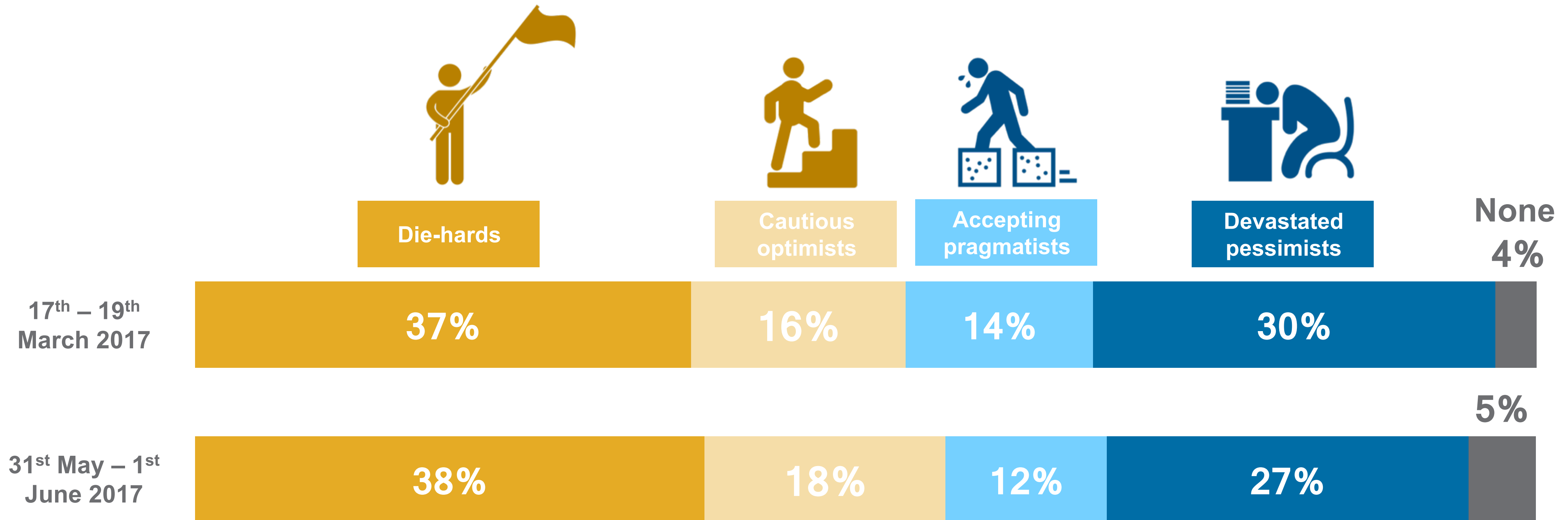
This is the negotiation phase, you want your strongest players on the table. You want someone that is going to represent you and [...] we need one now, she is right, this is a chance while this is going on right now.

But the Conservatives then turned to other issues – before returning to Brexit in the last week.

Voters agree that Brexit is a key challenge facing the country

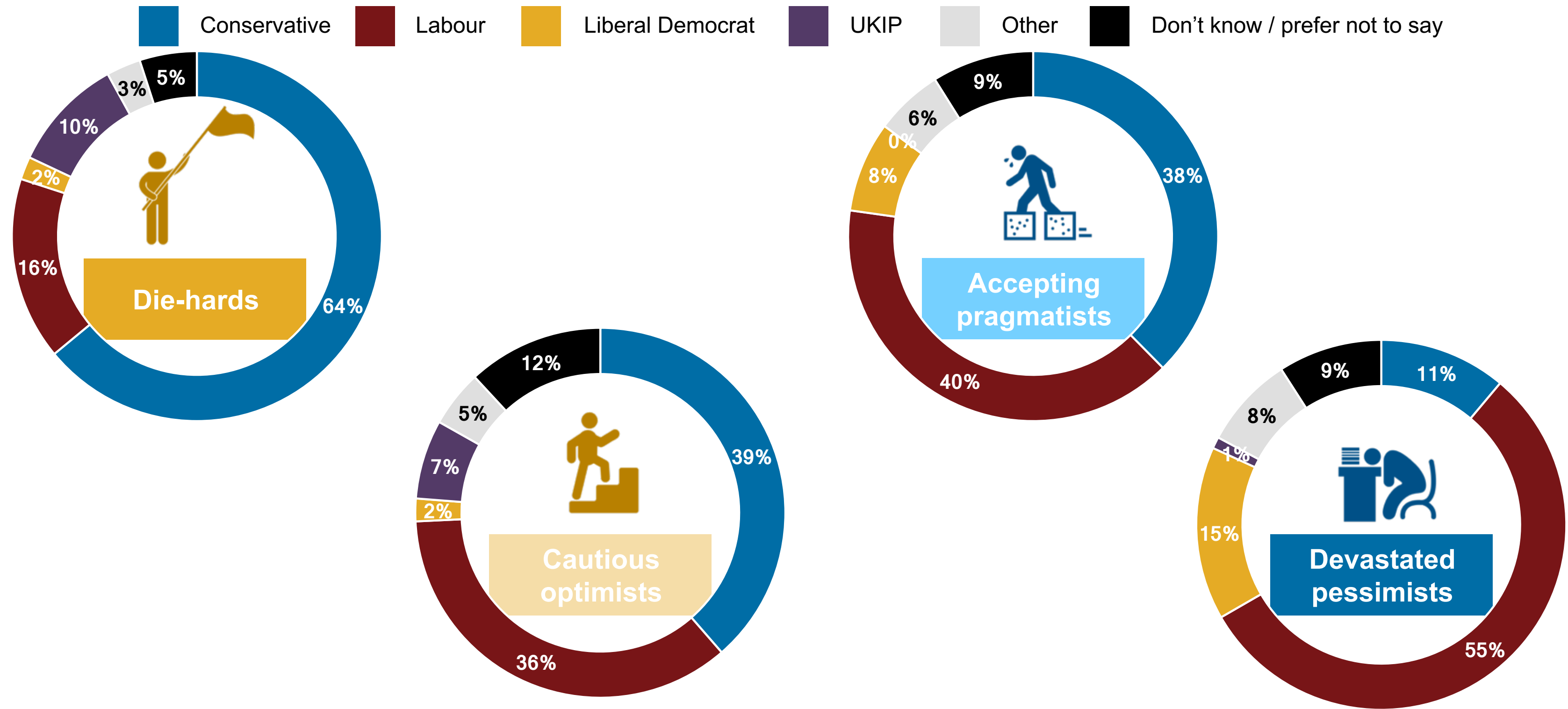


The public is still polarised on Brexit



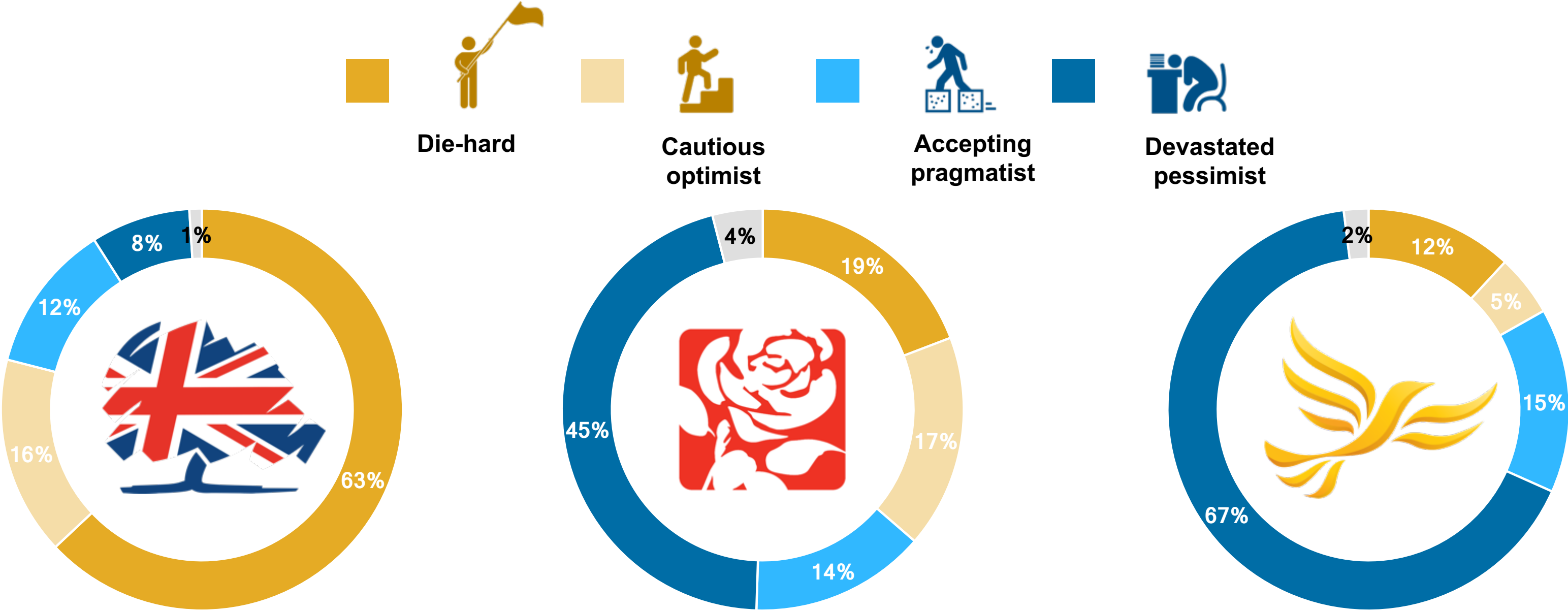
Base: all GB adults (n=2038)

But the Remain vote has splintered across the parties



Base: all who say that they are 8-10 likely to vote, on 0-10 scale (n=1736)

And helps to explain parties' current performance in the polls



Base: all who say that they are 8-10 likely to vote, on 0-10 scale (n=1736)

Reasons for the low prominence of Brexit

Many accepting pragmatists now see Brexit as having been settled by referendum – and believe result should be upheld. They believe in strong Government to handle negotiations.

I am a Remainer but a second referendum is not the answer. It's a bit like the SNP who just want referendums until they get the answer they want!

Martin, Wells

Devastated pessimists for whom Brexit is still major issue have often given up hope – and are see no appealing political options on Brexit.

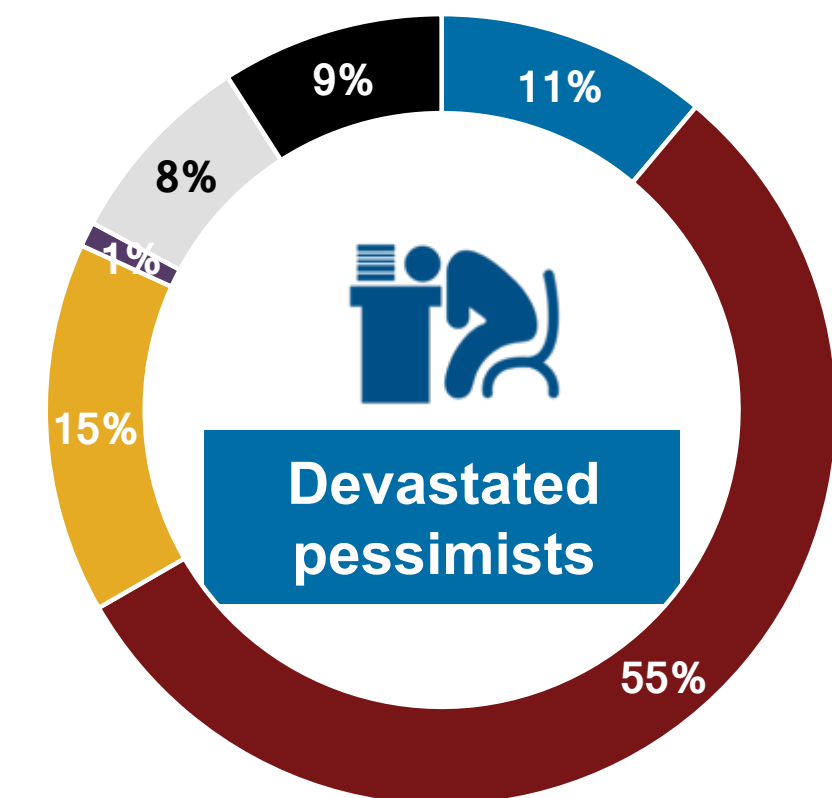
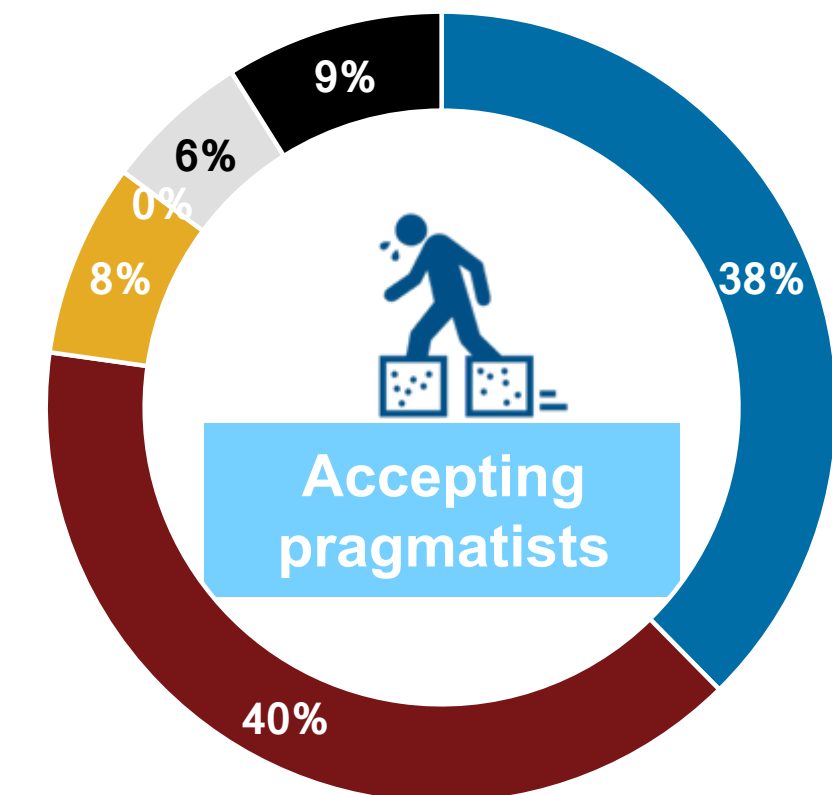
Whichever party I vote for, it's going to take place whether we like it or not.

Anjalee, Harrow West

However, other issues are also important, and often more immediate – such as the NHS.

I think [Brexit] will make a huge impact but I would be more concerned about our NHS and education and social care.

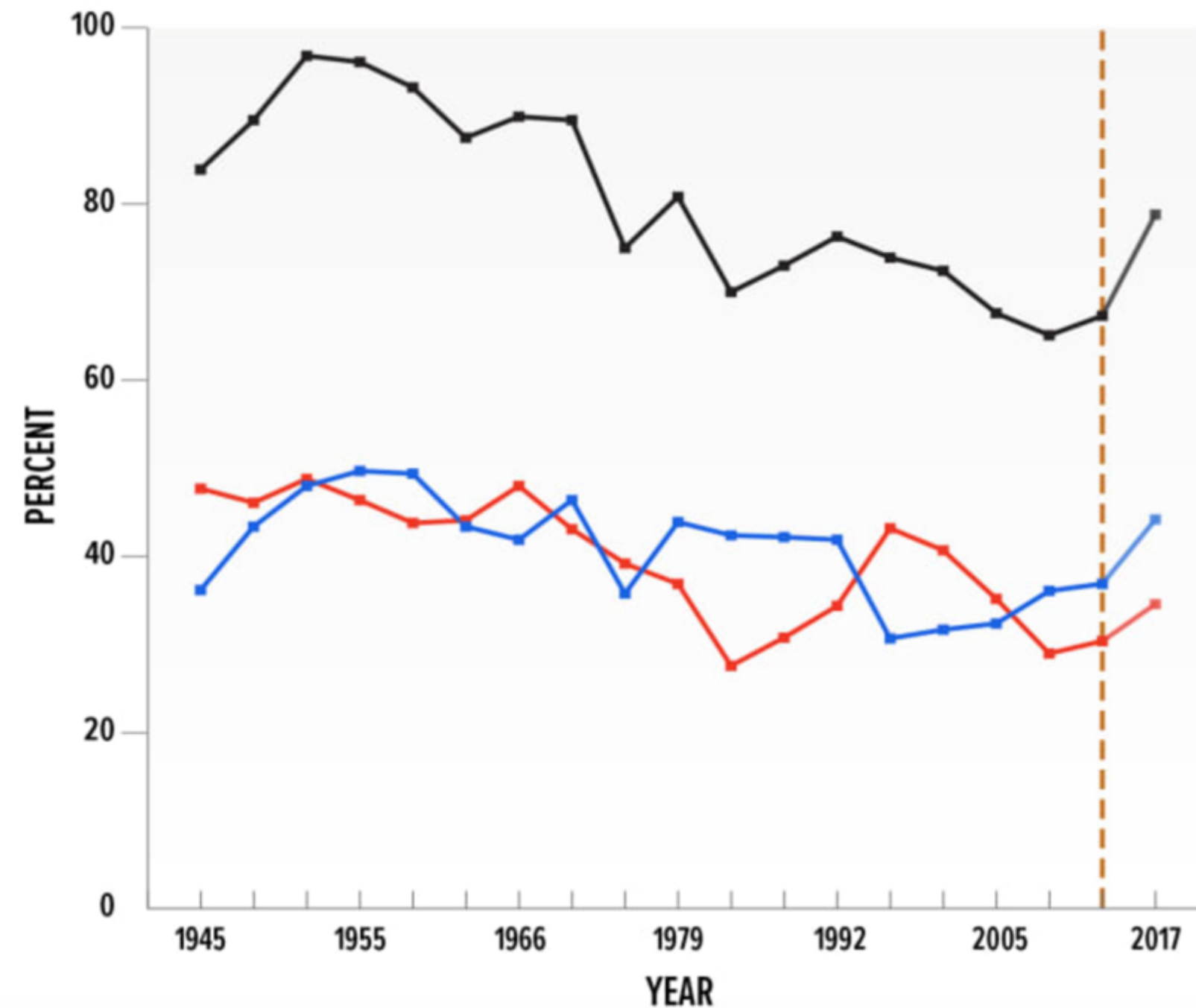
Sharon, Hartlepool



4

We've returned to two party politics

Combined Con-Lab vote share is highest in decades



Source: BuzzFeed

Current projected vote share is around 80% according to some polls – highest since 1970s



This has been driven by steady declines in support for UKIP and Liberal Democrats



And accentuated by fear of a Coalition

The Liberal Democrat campaign has foundered on three key flaws



1. Brexit

- 67% of Britons accept result
- There is confusion about policy – interpreted as a re-run of 2016
- This is met by a widespread sense of fair play – the referendum should not be rerun

Whilst I disagreed with the vote, I believe that the country, rightly or wrongly, made a decision and it should be followed through. The Lib Dems are unpicking this very democratic principle and they have gone down in my estimations as a result.

Gareth, Wells



2. Legalisation of cannabis

- This has been huge distraction from stance on Brexit
- It has put off Tory waverers in key target seats

3. And Tim Farron is not drawing voters to the party

Tim Farron comes across as a people person but he lacks experience. This is reflected in his pro Europe stance and his need for a 2nd referendum. Big mistake.

Martin, Wells

UKIP's territory has been taken by the Conservatives



**UKIP's *raison d'être* was Brexit
– other policies do not appeal
to voters**

In 2015 I voted UKIP based on wanting Britain to look after Britain. Now after Brexit I am leaning towards Labour as UKIP is not really in the running so I am unsure if they are a wasted vote.

Ian, Hartlepool

Paul Nuttall is poorly known

Who? I don't even know who he [Paul Nuttall] is, I've hardly seen him on the news and definitely don't know what he stands for or proposes to do.

Georgina, Hartlepool

And unimpressive

Paul Nuttall came out rather badly for calling Leanne 'Natalie'.

Deryck, Cambridge

“Coalition Government” is a toxic term

We tested reactions to a number of different election outcomes among our undecided voters – the prospect of a coalition was consistently rated worst.

- This is partly driven by perceived need for strength – voters want a Government with a healthy majority for upcoming Brexit negotiations
- And by negative views of the 2010-15 Coalition – seen as symbolic of ineffective government and broken promises



A convincing Conservative majority would mean more stability.

Mary, Birmingham Erdington

[The worst possible outcome would be] a third party taking a load of seats leading to a coalition government who can't decide between themselves what they want from Brexit negotiations.

Nathan, Birmingham Erdington

A coalition would be the worst thing that could happen. All that happened last time is that the Liberal Democrats sold out all their beliefs for a sniff of power.

Graham, Harrow West

5

**The Labour party brand has changed;
the Conservatives' hasn't**

The “poshness” tag has stuck for the Conservatives

- Theresa May targeted “JAMs” when moving into 10 Downing Street – but this doesn’t appear to be changing the Cameron-era Tory brand
- This appears almost entirely driven by announcements about fox hunting

2015



If the party was an animal, it would be...

Hyena, believe it is top of the food chain but isn't and goes after what they consider to be the weak and the lame.

Carl, Hartlepool

[They] live in mansions in the Home Counties with big security gates.

Jack, Cambridge

They don't understand the concerns of lower earners like us.

Naomi, Wells

Labour appear to have returned to a more working class image

- Voters are clear that Labour is the party of working people – even if, as leaders, Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn are equally trusted to represent ordinary working people in the UK
- The “North London” Labour tag appears to have worn off – despite many of the senior leadership representing constituencies in the area!

2015



Now all they care about is people in London. They've totally forgotten us and their working class roots.

If the party was an animal, it would be...

A sloth which just needs waking up, and some energy and momentum to keep going.

Graham, Harrow West



It's what they were founded on really, so they want to try and keep that tradition going and it's what they mention over and over again, workers' rights.

The Lib Dems are seen as comfortably off and international

- Attitudes towards the Liberal Democrats are rarely strong – generally they are considered quite inoffensive
- But voters' comments also belie a perception that they are out-of-touch with many in the country – and little suggests that this is going to drive voters to polling stations in great numbers

2015



2017



6

The fundamentals still point to Theresa May

Jeremy Corbyn has had notable successes

He has come across as natural

He's also respected as principled

And he's possibly an asset to the Labour Party where he was once a hindrance



I really feel now I could vote for Labour. I was definitely impressed by Jeremy and I liked his policies on his manifesto. I feel the Conservatives are more likely to U-turn just to get the votes.

Rae, Glasgow East

But Theresa May is still trusted most as Prime Minister

Voters consistently tell us that Theresa May is strong, experienced and capable, and that this is what they want in a leader

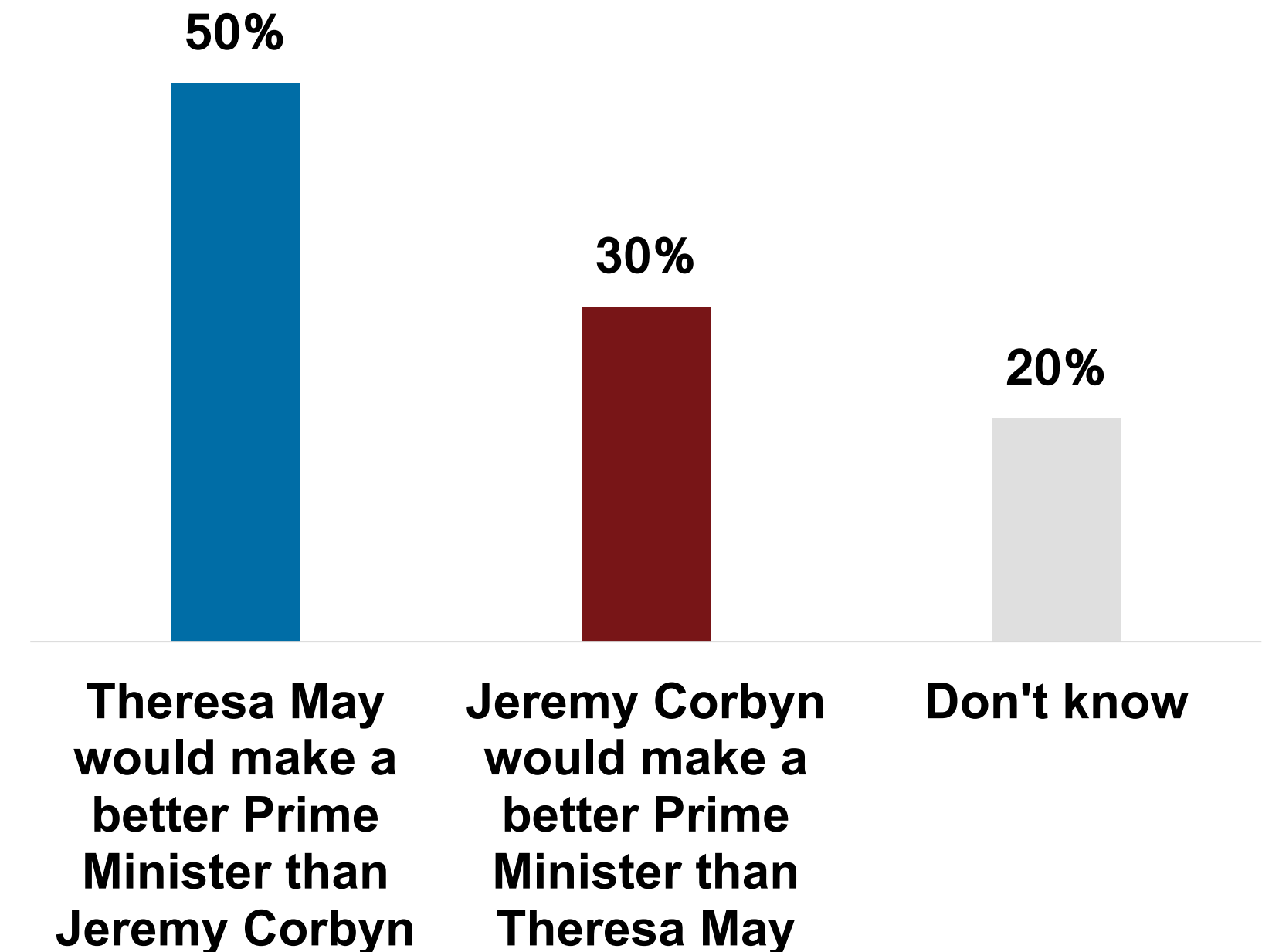
Measured and correct. [Theresa May] is showing, to me anyway, that she is a good statesperson for the country.

Nick, Wells

Theresa May has handled this emergency situation very well. So she has made me have more confidence in her party.

*Claire, Birmingham
Erdington*

Better Prime Minister



Source: ComRes survey of 2,024 GB adults, conducted 24th – 26th May 2017

And also trusted for upcoming negotiations

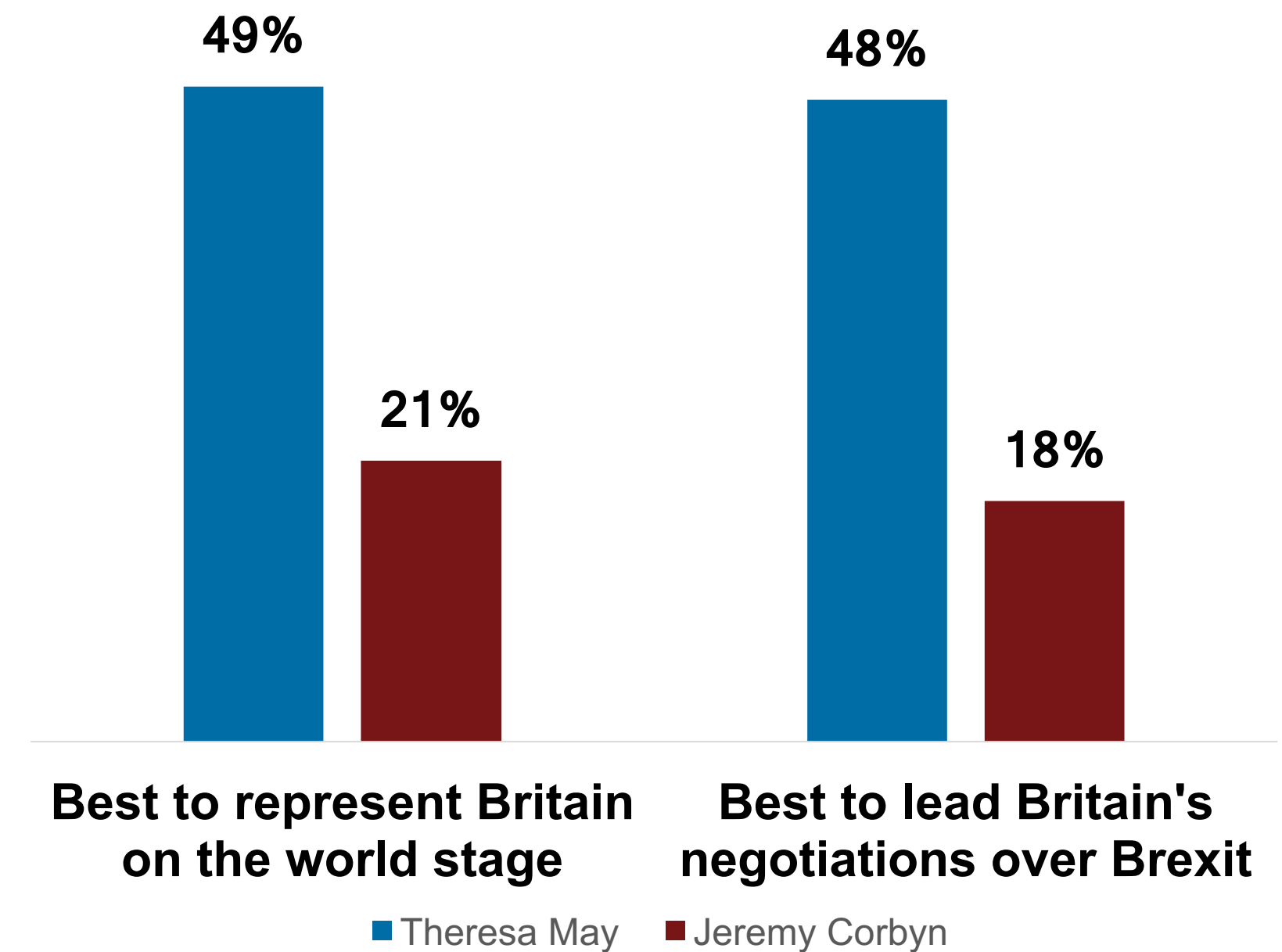


Voters tell us that May is better placed to deal with the EU – both on account of her personality and her experience.

I quite like [Theresa May's] presence. Imagine in those big meetings, I feel like she'd hold it, compared to these other people.

Steve, Birmingham Erdington

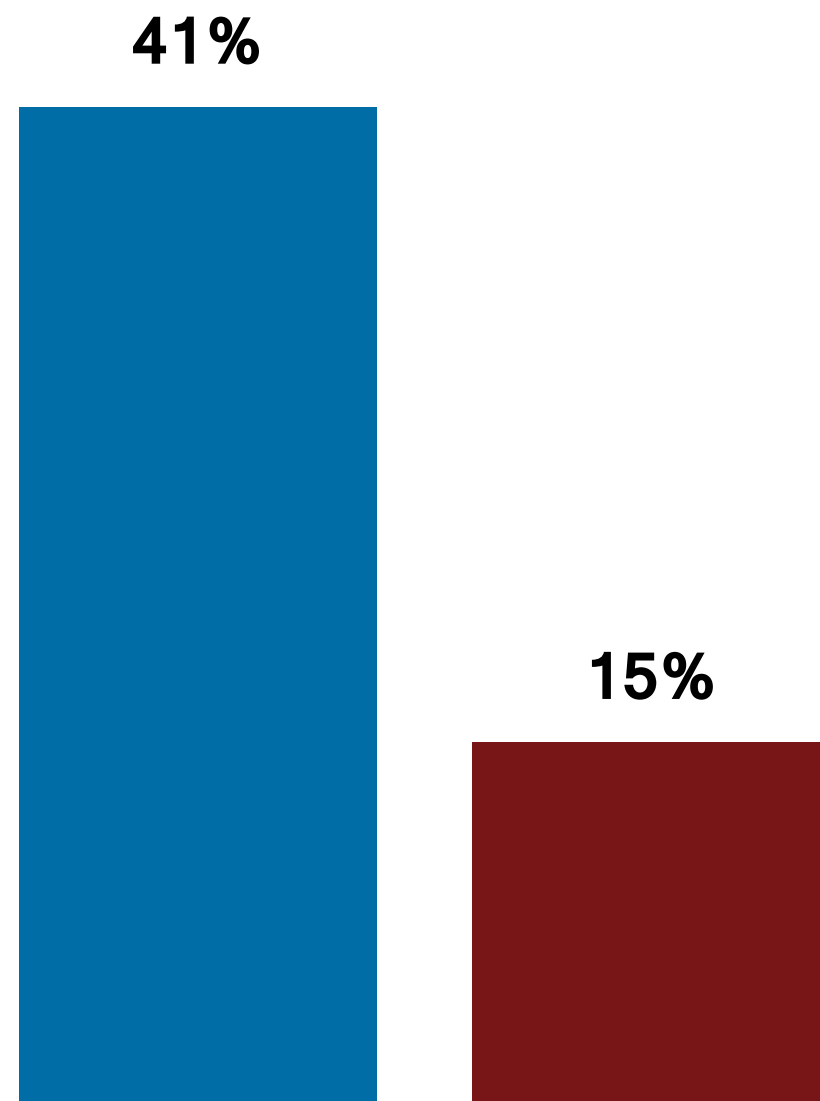
Perceptions of May vs Corbyn



Source: ComRes survey of 2,024 GB adults, conducted 24th – 26th May 2017

And also most trusted to counter terrorism

Perceptions of May vs Corbyn



Most likely to keep Britain safe from terrorism

■ Theresa May ■ Jeremy Corbyn

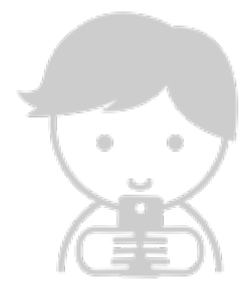
Source: ComRes survey of 2,024 GB adults, conducted 24th – 26th May 2017

- There appears to have been a change since Saturday's attack – with swing voters now seeing this as a political issue to a greater extent than after the Manchester attack
- Some have blamed Theresa May and the Conservatives for this – but long-term impact on election not yet clear

The unfortunate terror attacks over the past few weeks make it all the more important to elect a strong leader who is willing to fight for our country and way of life.

Paul, Hartlepool

Labour's numbers also look softer



Younger people



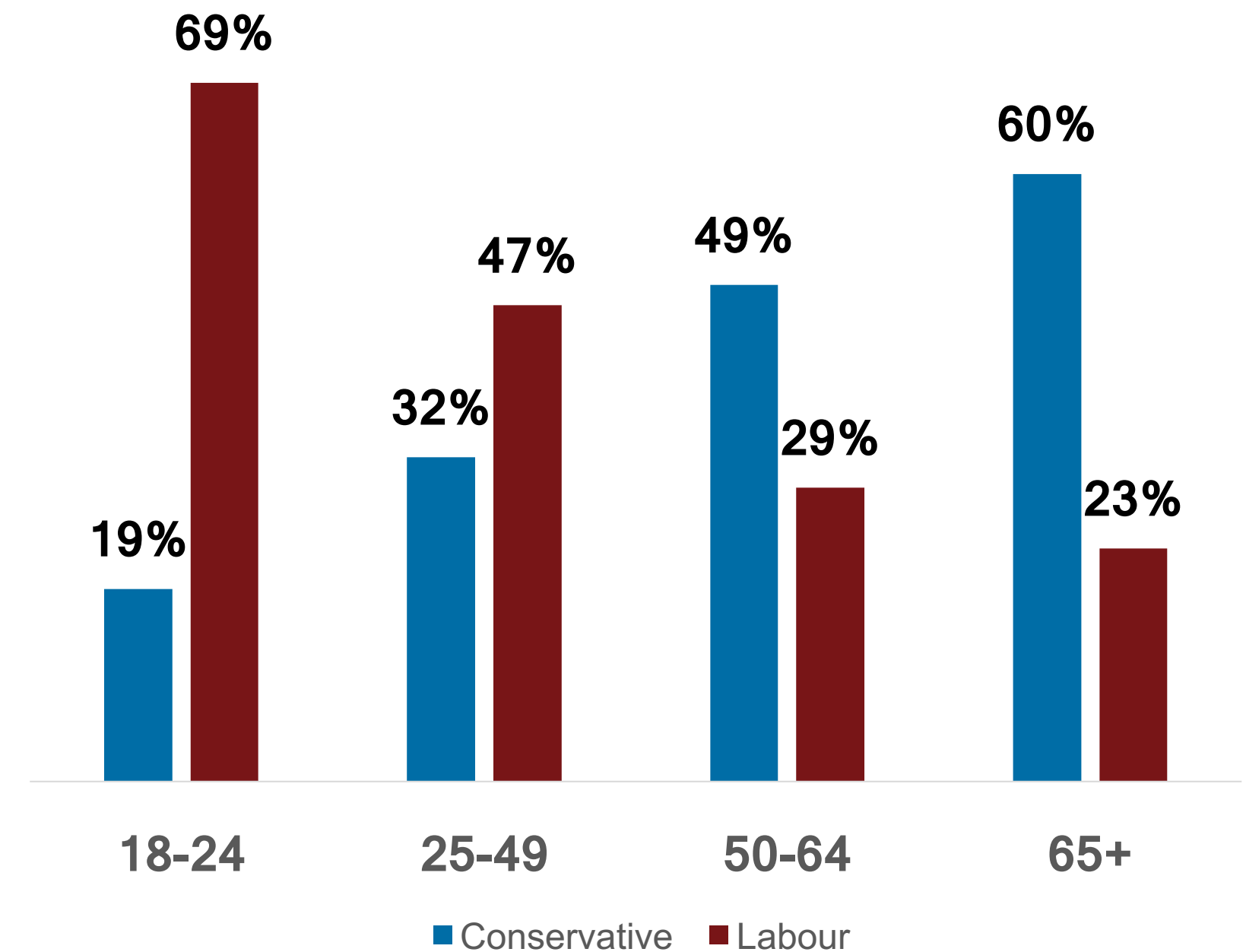
Former non-voters



"Squeezed don't knows"

Historically, all are far less likely to vote than the demographics generally backing the Conservatives

Age profile of voting intention



Source: YouGov survey of 1875 GB adults, 30-31 May 2017

The 6 most important things that we've learned

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