Gen Y bother?

Interim report on our project analysing the views, issues and voices that matter to young people in the context of the 2016 EU referendum.

June 2016
Key questions

• What are the drivers of differing generational attitudes and what do they mean for the future?

• How can political campaigns best harness these attitudes and interests to mobilise young people?

• Who do young people trust to convey key political messages and facts?
Context
All polls find the same story. Under 35s are much more likely to vote to stay in the EU.

% who say the UK should leave the EU

- 18-34 year olds: 25%
- 55+ year olds: 46%

Source: Prof John Curtice analysis of British Social Attitudes survey data
Younger people are more optimistic about the EU and more likely to like it or be neutral than older people...

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the EU?

Source: YouGov

Which of these describes your opinion of the EU?

Source: ComRes
... and younger people are more likely to think Britain would be worse off and less influential outside the EU.

Would Britain be better or worse off outside the EU?

Source: YouGov

Would Britain have more or less influence outside the EU?

- Better off
- Worse off
- Would make no real difference to the British economy
- Don't know

- More influence
- Less influence
- Would make no real difference to British influence
- Don't know
Will Gen Y bother?
There have been concerted efforts by politicians, campaigns and celebrities to ensure voter registration.

Almost 1.2 million applications

700,000 by under 35s
In the context of general disenchantment with party politics and elections among younger people...

57% of 18-24 year olds didn’t vote in the 2015 general election
Source: Ipsos MORI

69% of 16-24 year olds don’t trust government/parliament to address their concerns or needs
Source: Survation

49% of 16-24 year olds know neither the name nor the party of their local MP
Source: Survation
... Gen Y see the EU referendum as important but don’t feel informed enough to vote

92% of 18-24 year olds agree ‘The EU ref is an important moment in the history of the UK’
Source: ComRes

44% of 18-24 year olds feel either poorly or very poorly informed in the referendum
Source: BMG Research

51% of 18-24 year-olds say they are absolutely certain to vote in the referendum
Source: Ipsos MORI
What are the messages?
The top issues in EU referendum are not the same as the top issues for younger people more generally.

Which of the following will be important in how you vote? (top 6 for 18-34s)

- The impact on Britain's economy (60%)
- The impact on British jobs (50%)
- Britain's ability to trade with countries in the European Union (40%)
- The number of immigrants coming to Britain (30%)
- Britain's relationship with other countries (20%)
- The ability to travel in the European Union (10%)

Source: Ipsos MORI

What are the most important issues facing the UK? (top 6 for 18-34s)

- Health / NHS (60%)
- Immigration (50%)
- Housing (40%)
- Low pay (30%)
- Poverty / Inequality (20%)
- Unemployment (10%)

Source: Opinium
Abstract ‘economy’ is by far the most mentioned topic in online news headlines.

Online headlines on ‘EU referendum’ relating to...

Economy: 250
Immigration: 150
Security: 100
Trade: 50
Healthcare: 25
Freedom of movement: 20
Relationship with other countries: 10
Jobs: 5
Sovereignty: 5
Environment: 5
Education: 5
Human rights: 2
International development: 2

Sources: BBC, Huffington Post, Buzzfeed, The Guardian, Mail Online, Telegraph
Articles dated 23 March – 23 May 2016 when searching ‘EU referendum’
Negative words appear much more often than positive words in online news titles.

How many negative words for every positive word in online headlines?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huffington Post</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegraph</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzzfeed</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail Online</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who are the messengers?
Who are the trusted messengers?
Friends and family are most important influencers for 18-24 year olds

Who has influenced your decision in the EU referendum?

Source: YouGov
18-24 year olds’ trust in politicians in the EU referendum

On the remain side, Jeremy Corbyn is trusted more than David Cameron.

On the Leave side, Boris Johnson is trusted (slightly) more than Nigel Farage.

Source: YouGov
One month before the referendum, Cameron was mentioned more than any other political figure.

We analysed 2000 online headlines.

Sources: BBC, Huffington Post, Buzzfeed, The Guardian, Mail Online, Telegraph
Articles dated 23 March – 23 May 2016 when searching ‘EU referendum’
And another thing...

Of the people who got more than 10 mentions in EU referendum article headlines over 2 months...

... all but one were men
... all but one were white
... the youngest was 45
What lessons can we learn?
Short term actions

• The **messages** in the campaign are not relating to the issues that matter to Gen Y. We need to hear less about the abstract ‘economy’ and more about healthcare, the pros and cons of immigration, jobs and housing.

• The **messengers** that young people trust should be at the forefront of the campaigns. ‘Remain’ should promote Jeremy Corbyn more than David Cameron. ‘Leave’ should promote Boris Johnson more than Nigel Farage. Overall though, peers matter more than politicians.
Longer-term implications

• Turnout among Gen Y is chronically low. We need to examine the **mechanics** of voting: does it fit with how people are used to expressing preferences?

• Low-educated young people are the least likely to vote. What are the right **milestones** to introduce voting and politics?

• Gen Y do not feel informed enough to vote. We need to **de-mystify** the political process and issues in order to give them the confidence to make decisions.
Next steps

- Will young people swing the vote?
- Will the rhetoric change between now and the referendum?
- What elements of campaigns are effective and trusted by young people?
- Voting day: who votes, why and why not?
- How should Europe respond?
Final report to be published in July 2016

Contact: katy.owen@covi.org.uk
@covithinktank