



UK Govt. Net Zero Policy News

UK SOCIAL AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

15 - 22 SEPTEMBER 2023

FOREWORD

REPORT OUTLINE AND SUMMARY



Alex Alsworth
Sector Lead,
Govt., NFP, Finance

alex.alsworth@cision.com

This report aims to provide a snapshot of media conversation surrounding the UK Government's latest position on Net Zero policy, following news of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's decision to roll back certain action points. We have collected data from our **Brandwatch** and **Communication Cloud** platforms, allowing for a wide pool of online and social outlets to be tracked. This means we are using some of the most powerful searches in the industry to provide a robust and consistent data stream.

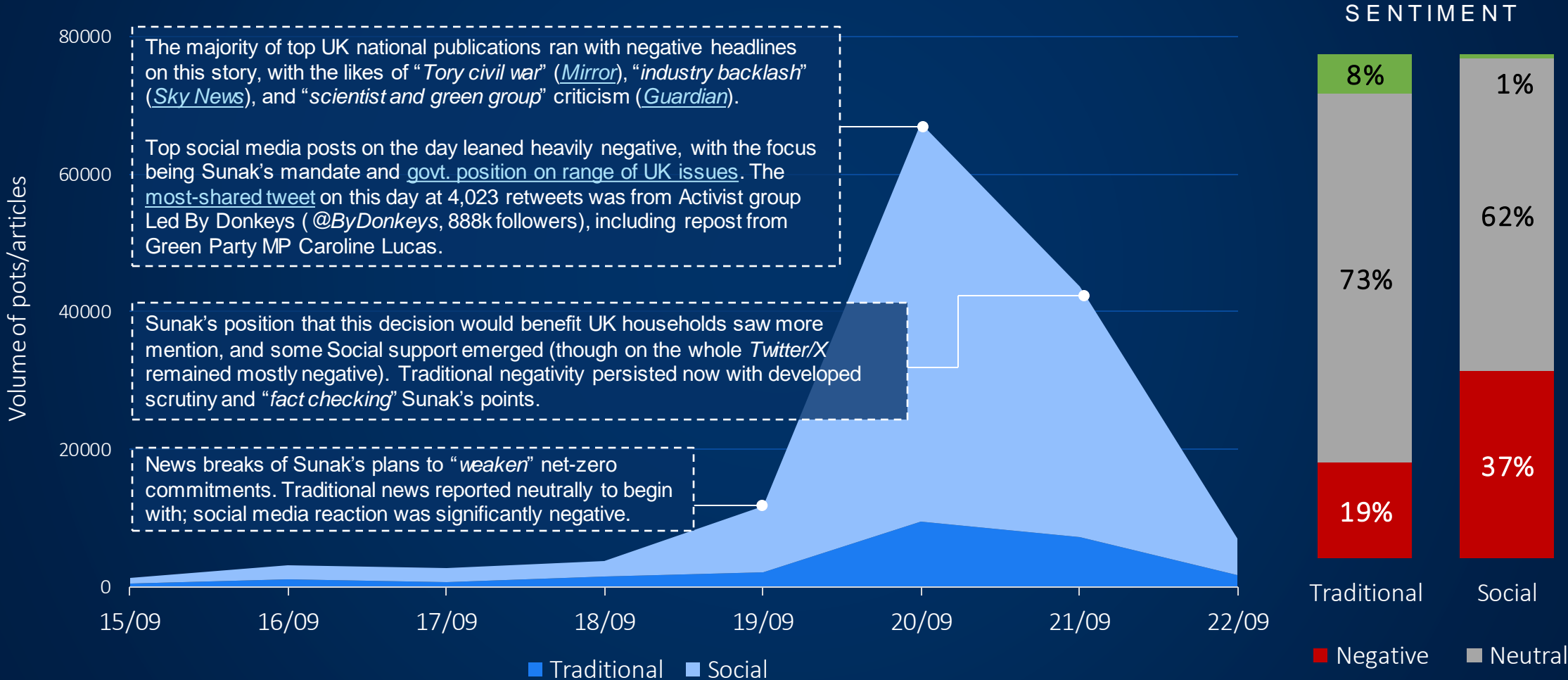
SUMMARY: It is fair to say that coverage leaned negative across all media channels, most clearly on social media. Backlash from a range of voices (politicians, climate groups, business and industry) offered the impression of widespread consensus against Sunak's position. A few outlets are now beginning to analyse the direct effect of this decision on the average UK citizen (the "what does this mean for me?"). Sunak's position of household finances and "pragmatism" are being weighed up – with clear support from some, while others lean into "fact checking". Labour leader Keir Starmer was unsurprisingly the second-most cited voice in coverage after Sunak, though Starmer's reference in media was blurred by concurrent news of his comments on the UK's relationship with the EU. The direct communication of Labour's position was carried out more so by Shadow Environment Secretary Steve Reed, and Shadow Energy Secretary Ed Miliband.

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ Coverage across both social and Traditional media leaned **negative**, with Sunak being accused by some of angling for personal electoral gain.
- ▶ Sunak's defence with emphasis on "**pragmatism**" appeared in **16%** of coverage, while supporting voice Suella Braverman featured in **5%** of overall coverage.
- ▶ **Auto industry backlash** was the choice focus of many Traditional articles (**27%**). Ford emerged as the top voice in this regard (**12%** of coverage), due to exec input.
- ▶ Prominent **Climate groups** were highlighted in **22%** of coverage, with the Climate Change Committee taking the lead (**8%**) boosted by CEO Chris Stark's quotes.

COVERAGE OVER TIME

COVERAGE WAS ON THE WHOLE MORE NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE, ESPECIALLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA



LEADER VOICES

DIFFERING STANCES EMERGED EARLY ON, THOUGH MOST OF THE FOCUS WAS ON SUNAK RATHER THAN INPUT FROM OTHER VOICES



Rishi Sunak

Volume of articles/posts

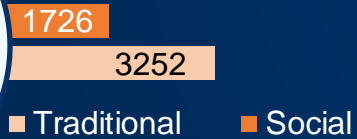


UK PRIME MINISTER, CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Early news shared that Sunak was due to “drop” net zero policies, [citing](#) his 19/09 statement: “We are committed to net zero by 2050 and the agreements we have made internationally – but doing so in a better, more pragmatic and proportionate way.” Sunak’s emphasis on avoiding causing higher costs to UK households was a key message to follow.



Kier Starmer

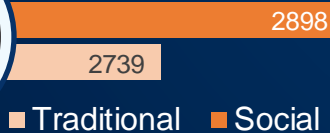


LABOUR PARTY LEADER

The Guardian [reported](#) that Starmer criticised Sunak’s leadership in reference to both net zero and education policies: “At a time when people and businesses are crying out for stability, Rishi Sunak has poured fuel on the Tories’ economic bin-fire.” Outlets go on to question Labour’s own stance on climate policy details, despite Steve Reed’s [broad statement](#).



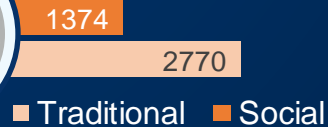
Liz Truss, Former UK PM



“I welcome the delay on banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars... I now urge the Government to abolish the Windfall Tax on oil and gas and lift the fracking ban.”



Boris Johnson, Former UK PM



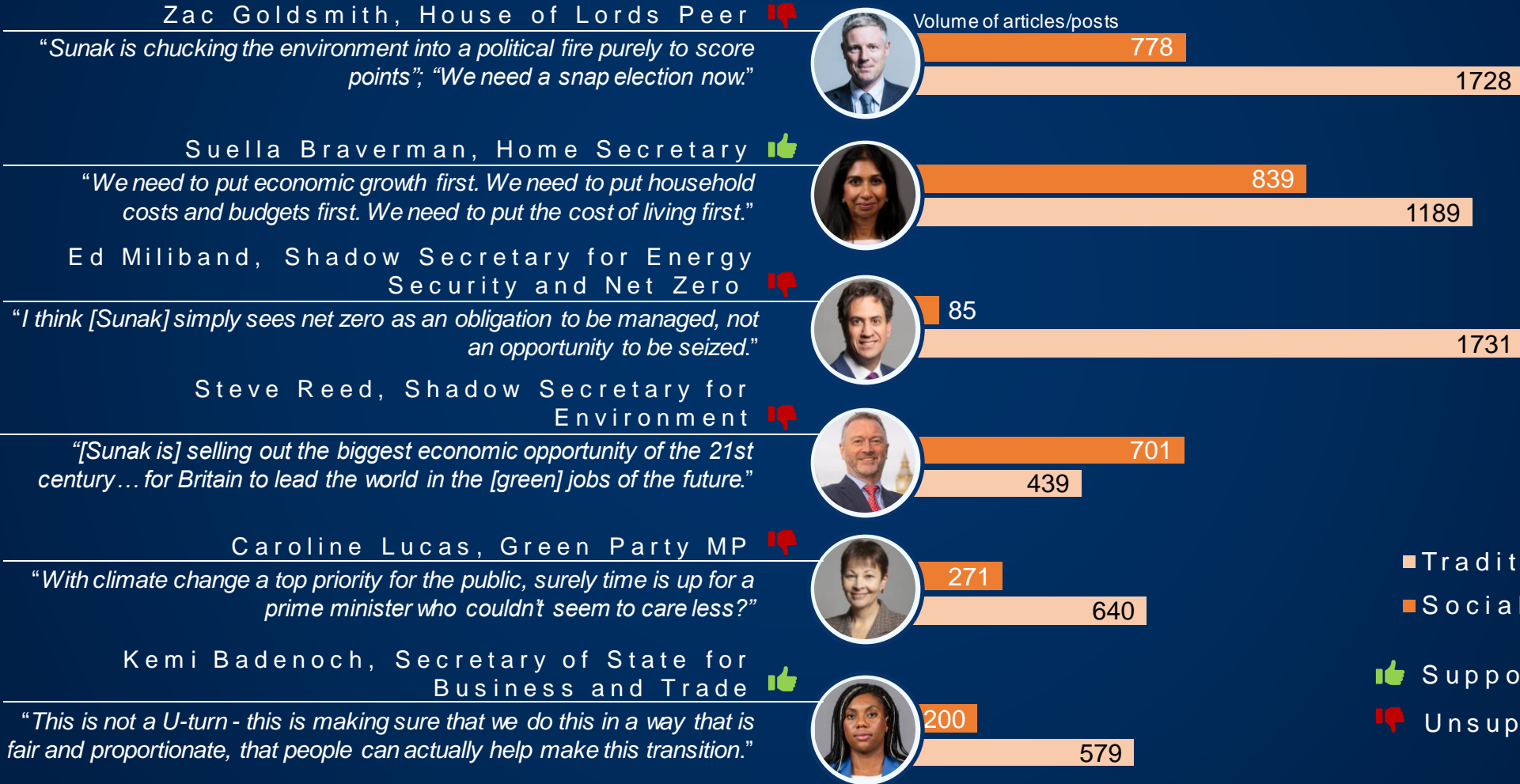
“We [need to] give businesses confidence... we cannot afford to falter now or in any way lose our ambition for this country.”

Supportive

Unsupportive

POLITICAL INFLUENCER VOICES

PROMINENT VOICES WERE QUICK TO COME OUT AGAINST SUNAK'S UPDATE, GAINING MORE VISIBILITY THAN THOSE IN SUPPORT



■ Traditional
■ Social
👍 Supportive
👎 Unsupportive

INFLUENCER FOCUS: AUTO INDUSTRY

DESPITE SOME VOCALISED SUPPORT FROM BRANDS, HEADLINES READ THAT THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY STANDS FIRMLY AGAINST DECISION

Lisa Brankin, Managing Director Ford UK

"Our business needs three things from the UK government: ambition, commitment and consistency. A relaxation of 2030 would undermine all three."



Volume of articles/posts

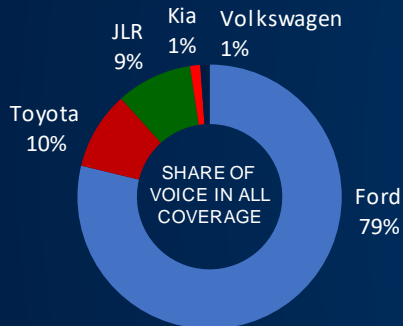
24



■ Traditional ■ Social



Ford was mentioned in **11%** of Traditional coverage (**2%** on social media).



% mention in all media



PETROL & DIESEL **45%** Social **35%** Trad.



ELECTRIC VEHICLES **7%** Social **18%** Trad.

Sunak's net zero U-turn is so toxic that it's united Greens and car manufacturers against him
Caroline Lucas



Caroline Lucas
@CarolineLucas

3 cheers for the Society of Motor Manufacturers - not words I often use, but wonderfully clear on @BBCr4today about economic illiteracy of Sunak proposals to delay shift to greener vehicles - the business case for climate leadership is clear as well as the environmental one

👍 Supportive 🗳️ Unsupportive

“



"[Toyota] recognises that all low emission and affordable technologies can have a role to play in a pragmatic vehicle transition."



"[The] announcement by the Government on the revised end date for the sale of petrol and diesel cars in the UK is pragmatic and brings the UK in line with other nations, which we welcome."



"Today's announcement ... alters complex supply chain negotiations and product planning, whilst potentially contributing to consumer and industry confusion."



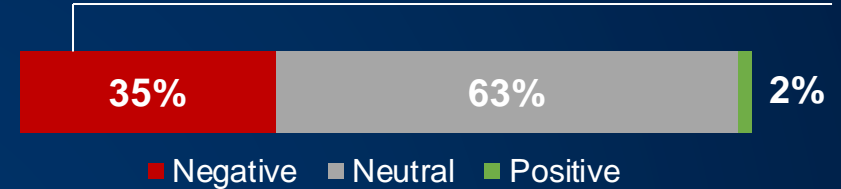
"We urgently need a clear and reliable regulatory framework which creates market certainty and consumer confidence, including binding targets for infrastructure rollout and incentives to ensure the direction of travel."

”

MP STANCE – SOCIAL MEDIA

152 MPS TOOK TO TWITTER/X TO GIVE THEIR REACTION DIRECTLY, POSTING OR RETWEETING **365** TIMES IN TOTAL. OPPOSING VOICES DOMINATED OUTPUT.

Sentiment from MP posts was very much in line with overall social discussion (35% negative vs 37% negative)



OPPOSITION VOICES WERE THE MOST ACTIVE TWEETERS...

TOP AUTHORS (by volume of posts)

MP	Posts	Average Reach (k)
Caroline Lucas	13	210.5
Gareth Thomas	9	7.3
Seema Malhotra	9	8.7
Ed Miliband	8	283.2
Wera Hobhouse	7	23.5



MPs with a green agenda were vocal, with Caroline Lucas lamenting, the “absurd” and “catastrophic” roll back. Net Zero representatives Ed Miliband and Wera Hobhouse drove their respective party reactions.

TOP-BY-FOLLOWER AUTHORS WERE ALL LABOUR MPs...

TOP AUTHORS (by followers)

MP	Followers (m)
Jeremy Corbyn	2.50
Keir Starmer	1.41
Ed Miliband	0.80
David Lammy	0.79
Jess Phillips	0.64



None of the top 10 most followed MP commenters were Conservative, generating a sea of negative reaction across Twitter/X.

On the supporting side, Conservative chairman Greg Hands was the most active, with 4 posts, all of which were reweets...

A NEW WAY TO REACH NET ZERO

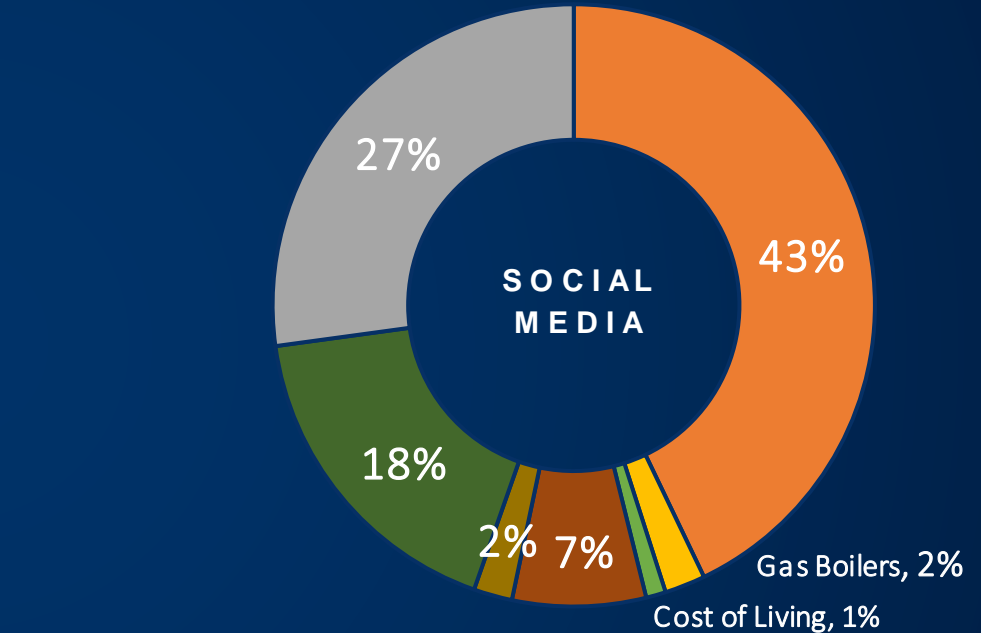
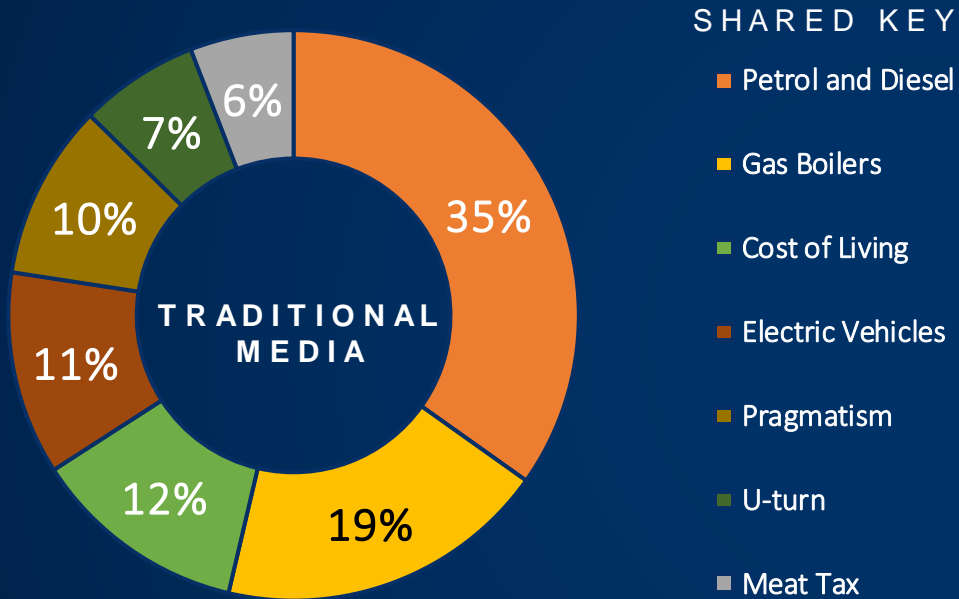
CONSERVATIVES ARE STOPPING:

- 🏠
€
EXPENSIVE INSULATION UPGRADES
- 🍖
TAXES ON EATING MEAT
- ♻️
SORTING RUBBISH INTO 7 BINS
- 🚗
COMPULSORY CAR SHARING
- ✈️
NEW TAXES TO DISCOURAGE FLYING

Conservatives

DISCUSSION ANALYSIS

EVs, GAS BOILERS, COST OF LIVING AND ENERGY SECURITY WERE MUCH MORE PROMINENT TALKING POINTS ON TRADITIONAL THAN SOCIAL MEDIA



SHARED KEY

- Petrol and Diesel
- Gas Boilers
- Cost of Living
- Electric Vehicles
- Pragmatism
- U-turn
- Meat Tax



'Petrol and Diesel' was particularly central to traditional media reporting, as many outlets focussed on the decision's impact, for better or worse, on businesses ([Financial Times](#) – "Car industry reels from Sunak's retreat on net zero plans"), as well as the financial impact on UK households (Sunak [said](#) he aims to "protect hard-pressed British families from unacceptable costs").

On the latter, the UK's 'Cost of Living' crisis was brought up in 8% of coverage, in articles or statements supporting Sunak's view on the need for "pragmatism."



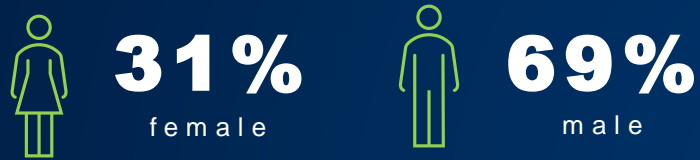
One of the top posts for 'Petrol and Diesel' covered both public and Tory party pushback against Sunak's decision. On the supporting side, some users positioned that this move brought the UK in line with EU's own regulation. Labour's Steve Reed is cited as "sticking with" the 2030 sale end target.

'Meat tax' was more popular a discussion on Social than Traditional, driven by the view that the tax "[doesn't exist](#)" (implying Sunak was simply attempting to distract).

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

EX-LABOUR LEADER JEREMY CORBYN'S POST CRITICISING SUNAK'S DECISION ACHIEVED THE HIGHEST REACH

SOCIAL DEMOGRAPHICS



INTERESTS



PROFESSIONS



TOP AUTHORS (by impressions*)

Handle	Followers (m)	Posts	Impressions* (m)
jeremycorbyn	2.50	1	3,092
Keir_Starmar	1.41	1	2,780
MPlainDS	0.07	1	2,705
Anna_Soubry	0.28	1	2,547
ByDonkeys	0.89	1	2,248
PrifWeinidog	0.15	1	1,302
Amanpour	3.18	1	1,110
10DowningStreet	5.99	1	1,051
BBCBreaking	51.65	3	835
BBCWorld	40.22	1	178

Anthony Costello (@globalhitthit) · Follow
BREAKING: Sunak is reneging on many of the UK's net zero commitments. The worst decision of any Prime Minister in my lifetime. A betrayal of our children, of our international responsibilities, and scientifically illiterate.

Led By Donkeys (@ByDonkeys) · Follow
How many people have actually voted for Rishi Sunak? Net zero.

Jeremy Corbyn (@jeremycorbyn) · Follow
Climate delay is climate denial.
Rishi Sunak's negligence will cost thousands of lives around the world and cause irreparable harm to our planet.
We need a real alternative that takes on the fossil fuel industry, transforms our economy and secures a Green New Deal.
6:12 PM · Sep 20, 2023

*Impressions represents the potential reach of the social media posts, via the sum of the poster's followers and sum of the followers for those who share the post.

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If you are interested in more detailed benchmarking, or in exploring further detailed breakdowns within this report please contact UK Sector Leads, at UKSectorLeads@Cision.com Other Cision Insight products that will help you set social and mainstream strategies and stay ahead of the competition include:


Social media audits – in-depth research to answer questions about the relevant social media space. Helps clients define social media strategies, set objectives and agree plans, saving time in the short term and minimising wastage of effort in the long term.

Competitor & peer group benchmarking – cost effective benchmarking allows the right strategic decisions to be made. Cision offers a range of solutions from industry KPI benchmarking through to in-depth competitive analysis against aspirational competitors.

Reputation management – insight into how mainstream and social media is affecting your organisation's reputation. Cision tracks opinion and social conversations around risk factors, identifies emerging issues, and shows how business decisions are received.

Audience Insights – Using Global Web Index survey data, Cision can help you understand a range of attitudes and behaviours of your target audiences. We can tell you where your audience is, who they are and what they read, to help you better target campaigns for maximum impact.

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