

Ipsos MORI Social Britain

September 2019

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Briefing note

For the past several months, Ipsos MORI has been monitoring social media conversation about key political and societal topics. We have now decided to release this information. While this does not cover every topic that British social media users discuss, it gives us a good view of how much people are posting about and engaging with posts about key topics. We discovered these by focusing first on what comes up most in political forums and then writing queries about all of those topics to track them amongst more general social media posts by individuals and organisations (including the media).

In September – as in every month for the past year, Brexit and Europe are most discussed – which is consistent to its being mentioned as the top issue facing Britain in Ipsos MORI's Issues Index. However, Brexit has not always been the star. A year ago crime was most posted about. Indeed, crime posts can generate greater engagement (interactions, measured by likes, shares, reactions) at times than Brexit posts. Greta Thunberg's speech in the UN managed more interactions than either topic on the day. The award for most interactions in the month, however, went to Brexit at the beginning of the month, when people were engaging with content about no deal and also sharing pictures of Jacob Rees-Mogg's recumbent position in Parliament.

Interestingly, although Jeremy Corbyn has a higher total reach based on our topics than Boris Johnson does, Boris's posts on these topics generate more interactions (which can be positive or negative) than any other influencer during September.

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3 Influencers & Hashtags

4 Deep Dive: Brexit

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A note on the methodology

An additional lens for understanding Britons' views

Ipsos MORI's new Social Media Britain report offers an additional way to understand the public's views about issues relevant to Britain. Social media are by no means representative, and many social media data are not accessible. (Nor should they be. For our views on the ethics of social media data, see this paper). Nor does our analysis take into everything that people in Britain talk about on social media over the period. Nevertheless, social media gives us an insight into people's interests and concerns when we are not actively prompting them to think about a particular issue or topic.

Our analysis is based on a list of 21 topics tracked over the course of a year. We determined these topics by first analysing data from politically active forums and used text analytics-based analysis of these data to help us write queries in Synthesio. We leveraged the Synthesio platform to gather and analyse the data.

For more information on the methodology, please see the appendix.

Volume

01

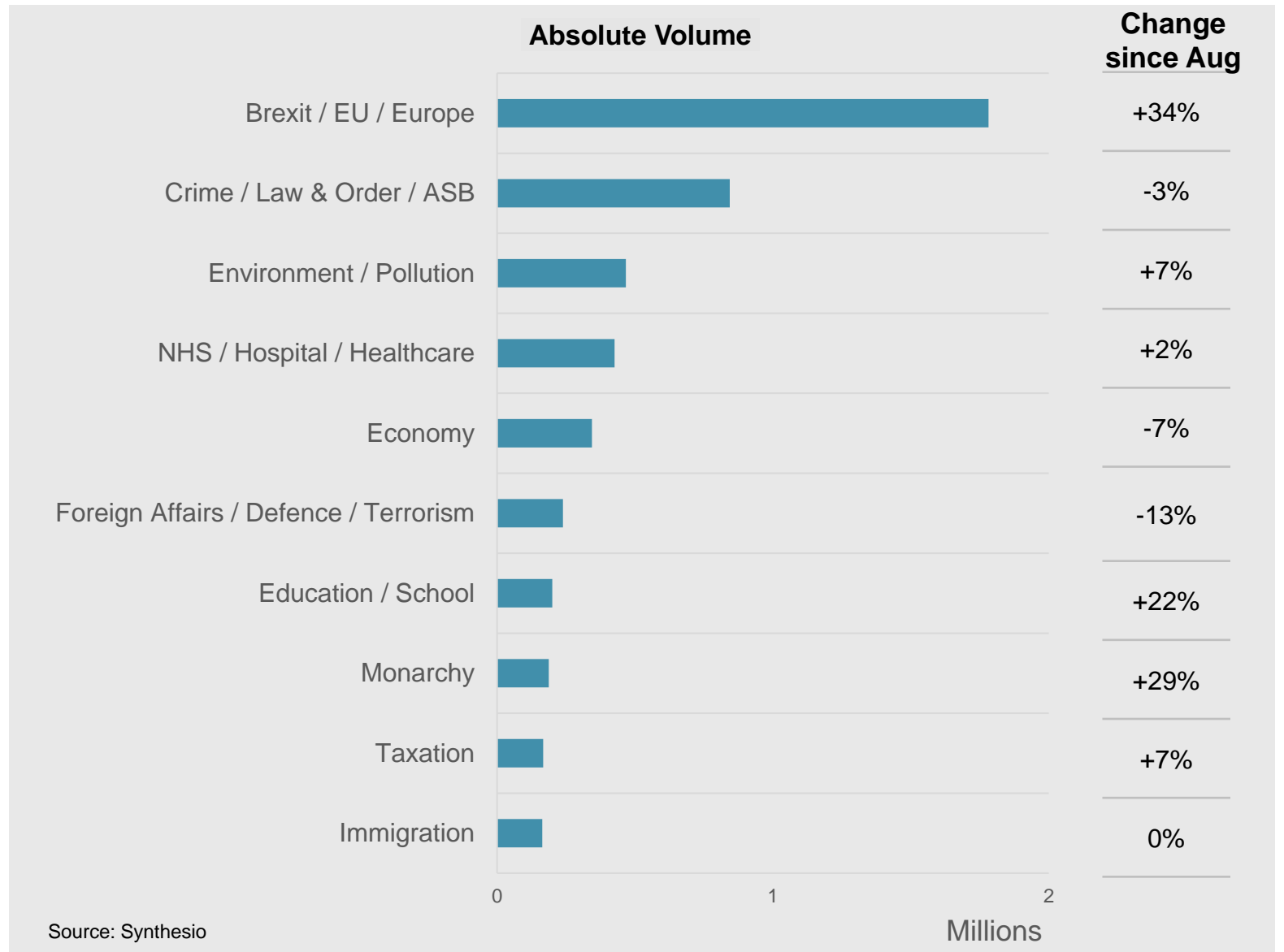
In this section, we look at the volume for each topic. Volume is the number of posts on social media platforms that are related to the topic.

Posts can be published by private users, corporate accounts or influencers.

A comment, share or retweet of the item does not add to the total volume, these are types of interactions (see later).

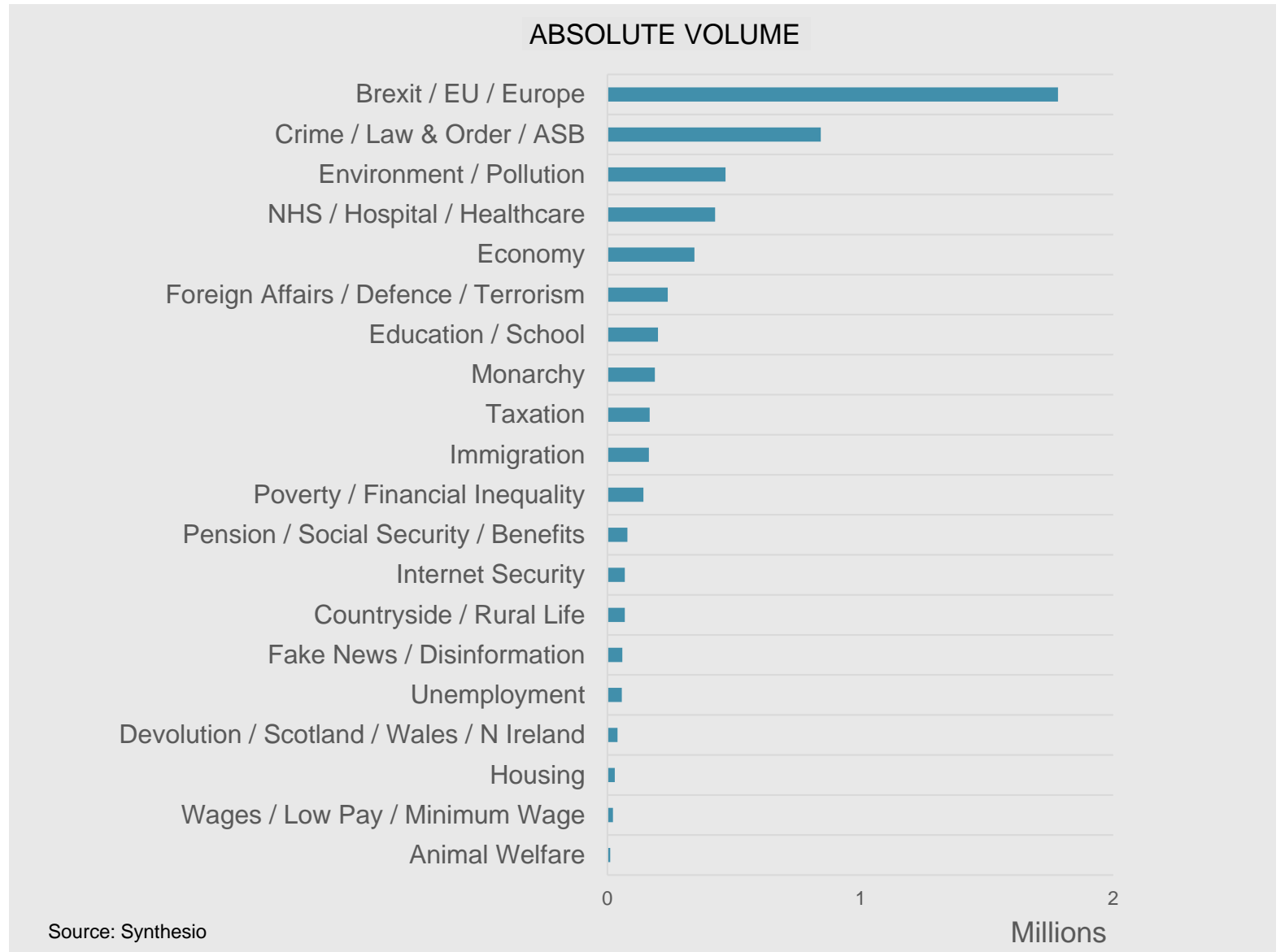
Volume Rank of Top 10 Topics

September 2019



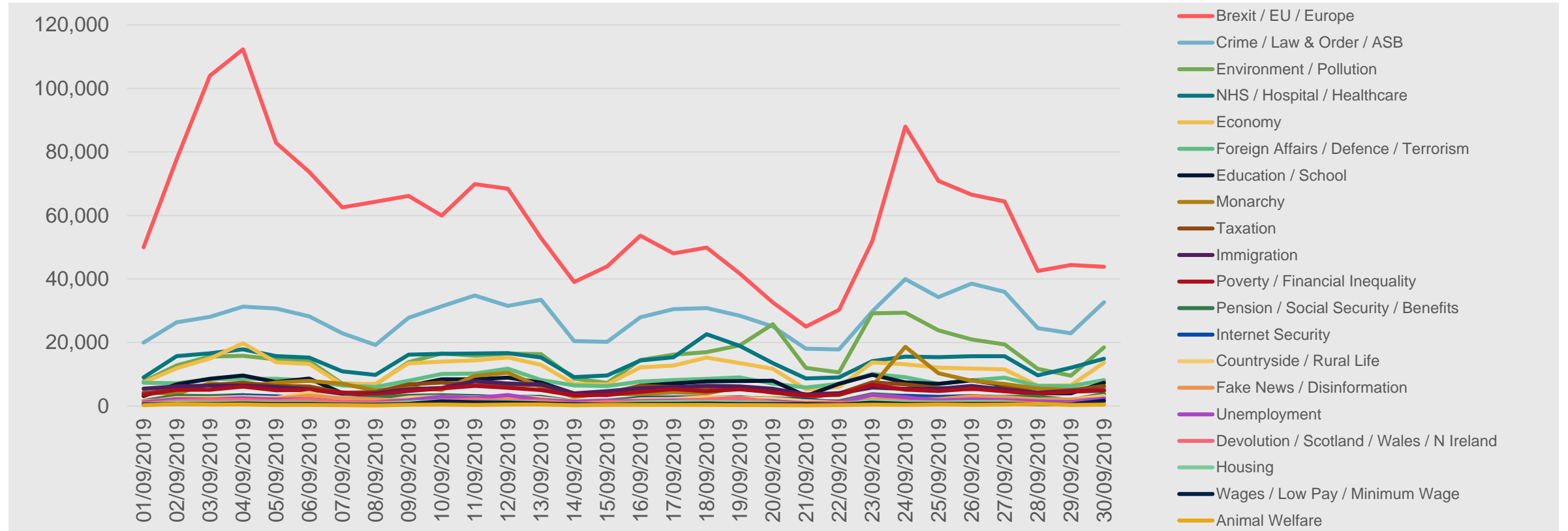
Volume Rank of All Topics Tracked

September 2019



All Topics for September – Volume

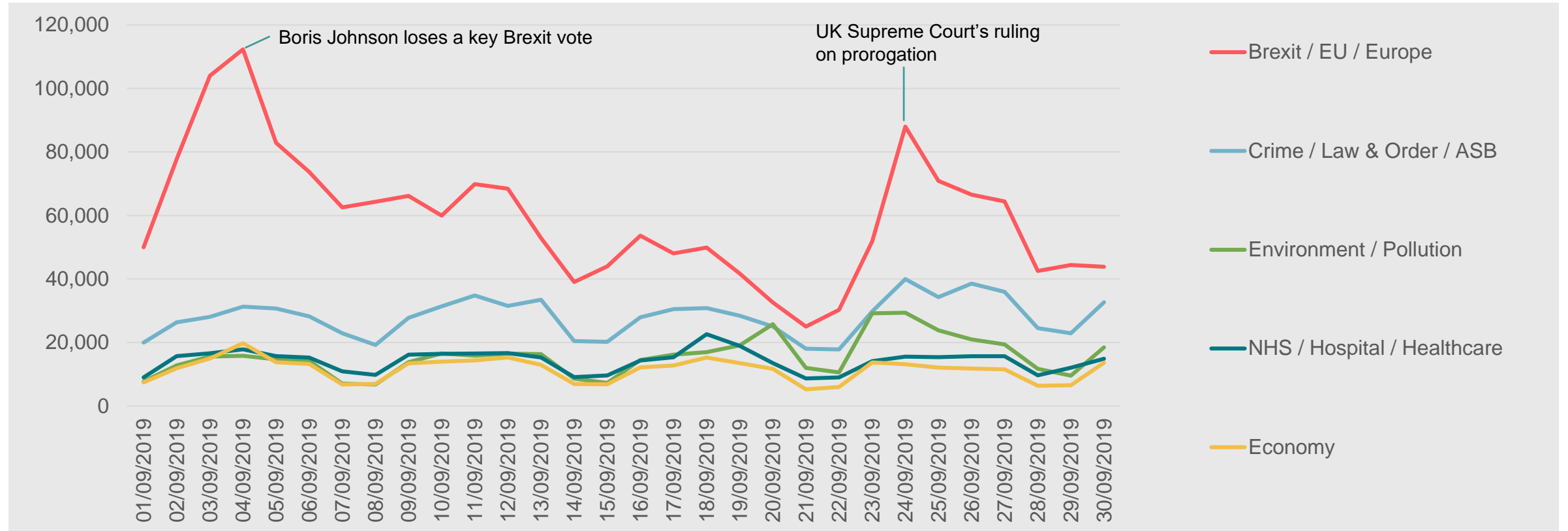
Volume of posts about the topics



Source: Synthesio

Top 5 Topics for September – Volume

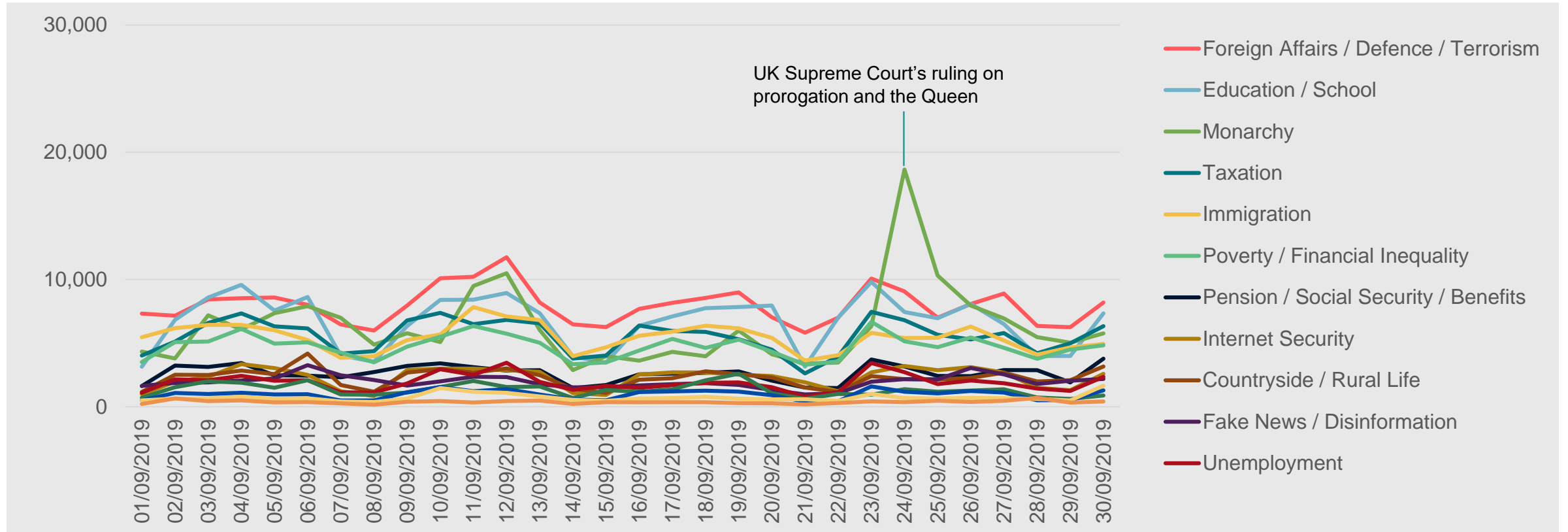
Volume of posts about the topics



Source: Synthesio

Beneath the Headlines – September – Volume

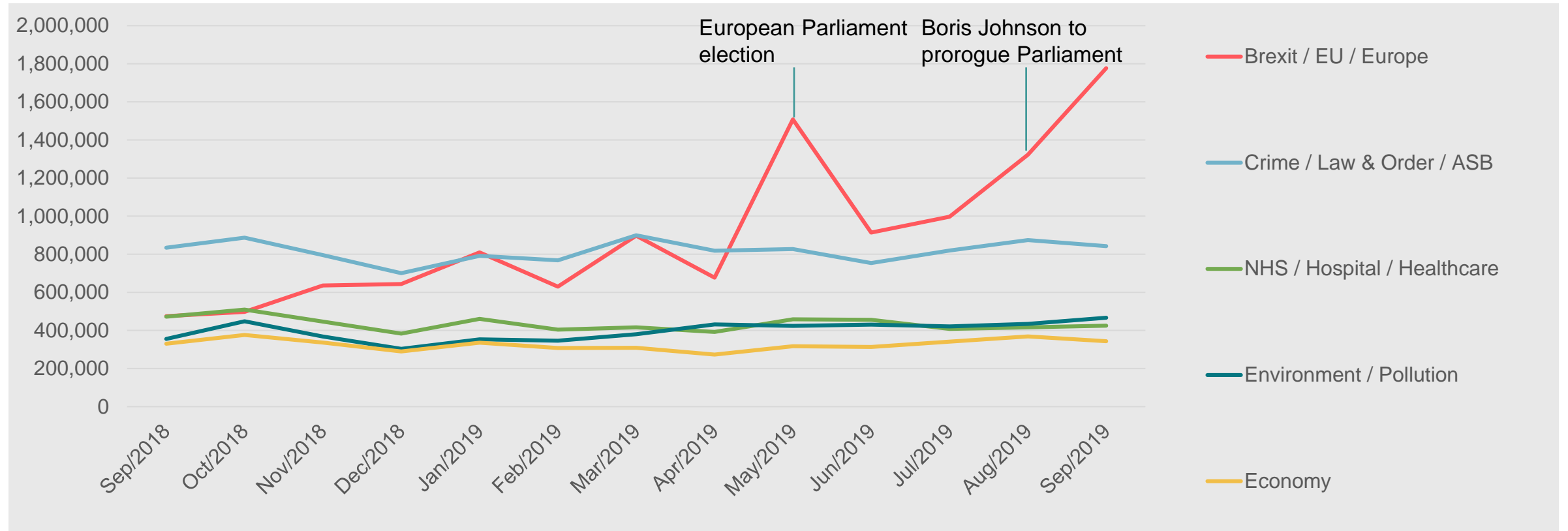
Volume of posts about the topics



Source: Synthesio

Top 5 Topics by month over past year – Volume

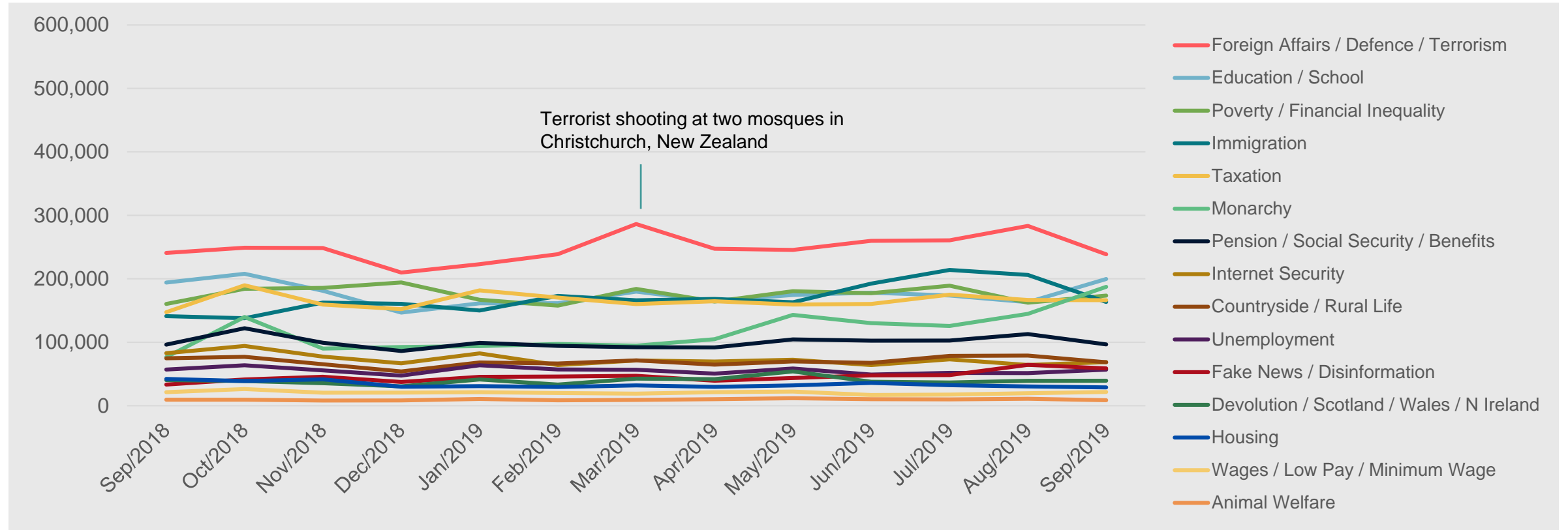
Volume of posts about the topics



Source: Synthesio

Beneath the Headlines by month over past year – Volume

Volume of posts about the topics



Source: Synthesio

Interactions

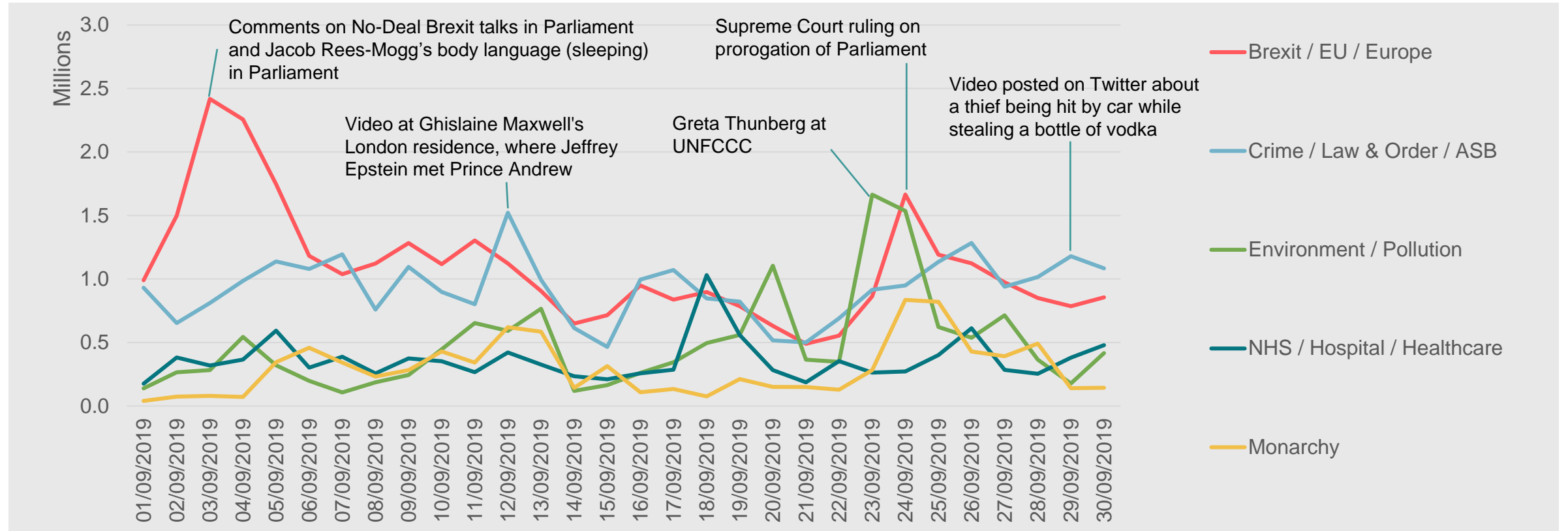
02

Interactions are the types of user engagement on social media platforms. Interactions can be a like, dislike, comment, share, retweet, video view, any kinds of engagement with the post. The data is based on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and some mainstream media.

Interaction analysis is the most effective way to measure audience engagement and to identify the sources and posts that were the most engaging.

Top 5 Topics for September – Interactions

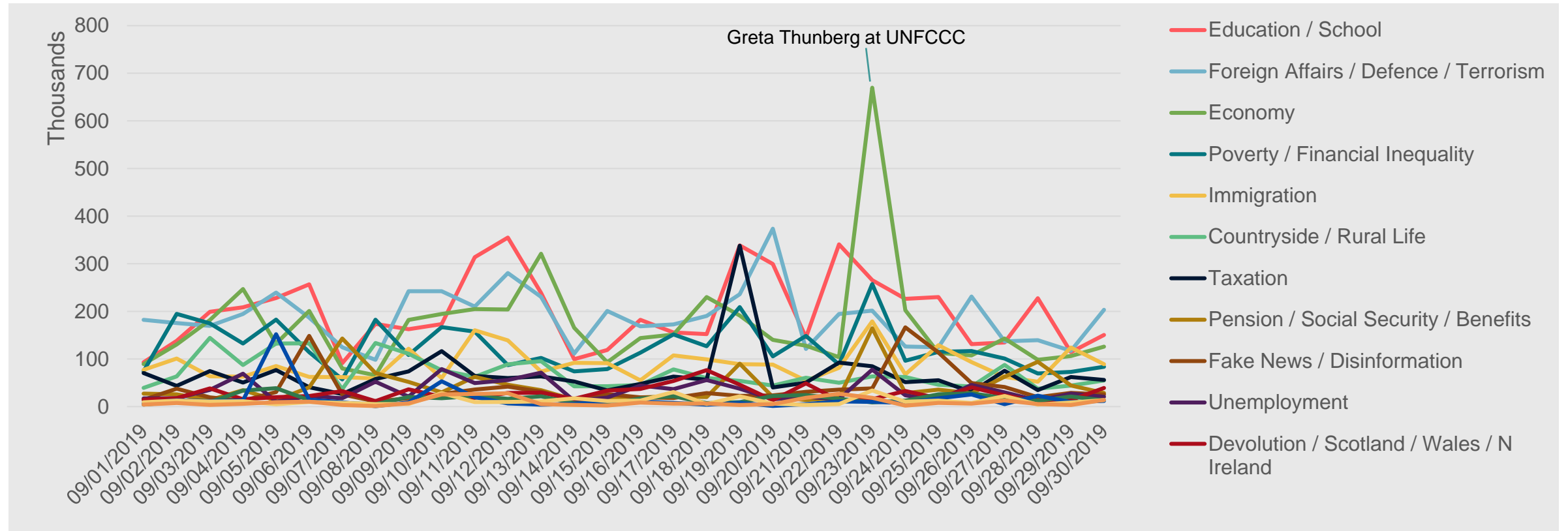
Level of engagement with posts about the topics



Source: Synthesio

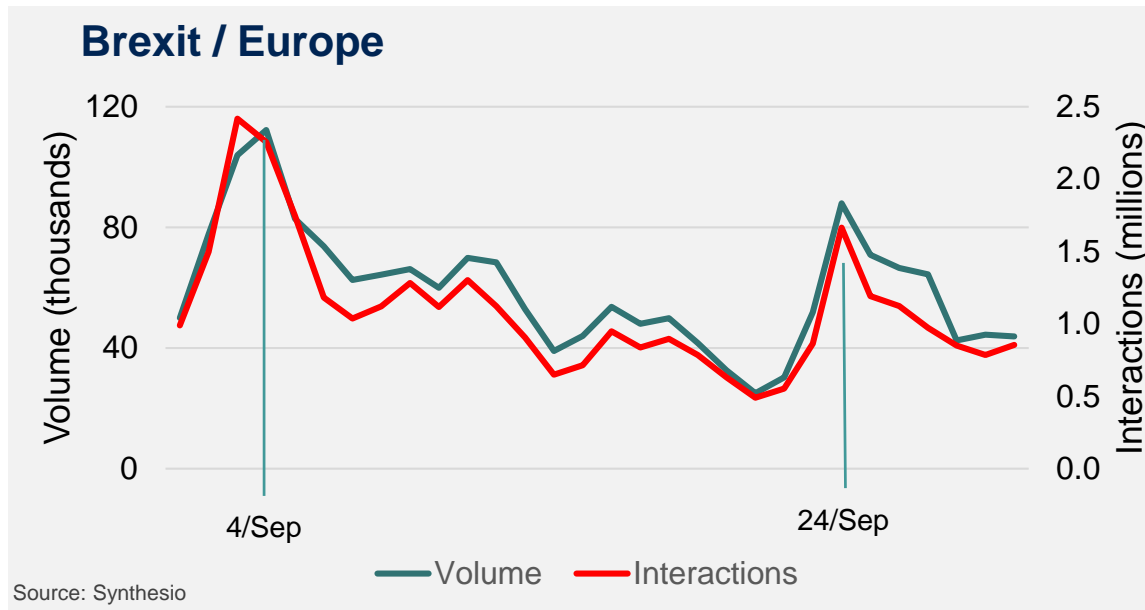
Beneath the Headlines – September – Interactions

Level of engagement with posts about the topics



Source: Synthesio

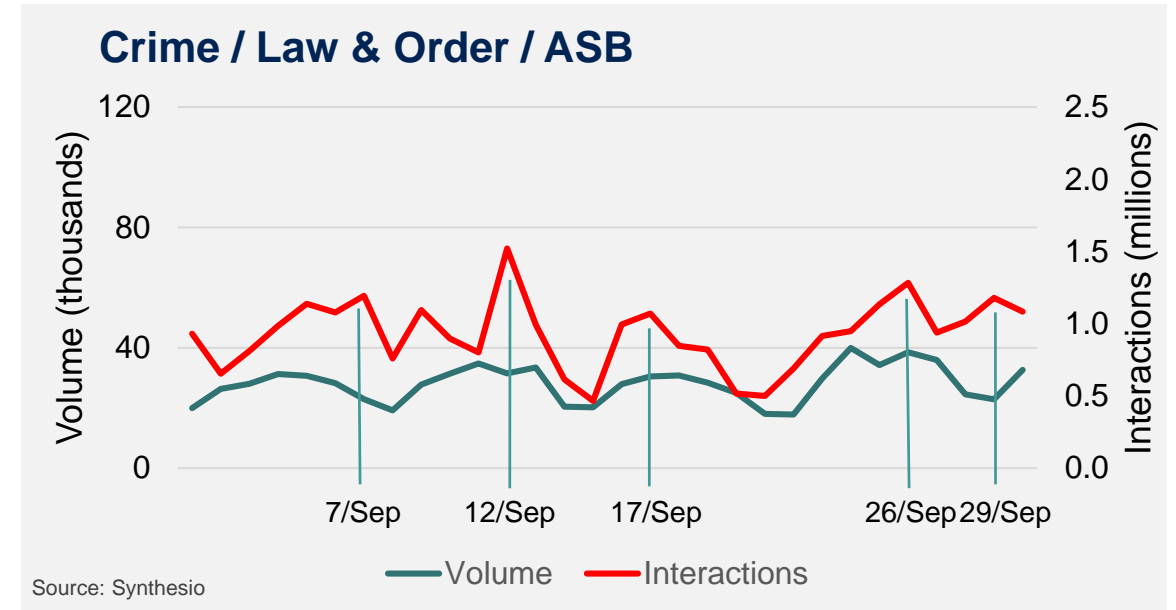
Volume vs. Interactions – September



Brexit related topics led the conversations in September in terms of among of posts and how much people engaged with them (likes, reactions, shares, etc.)

4 Sep: The loss of key Brexit vote for Boris Johnson generated huge volume of conversations and user engagement

24 Sep: The ruling of the Supreme Court against prorogation of Parliament delivered significant number of mentions and generated huge buzz



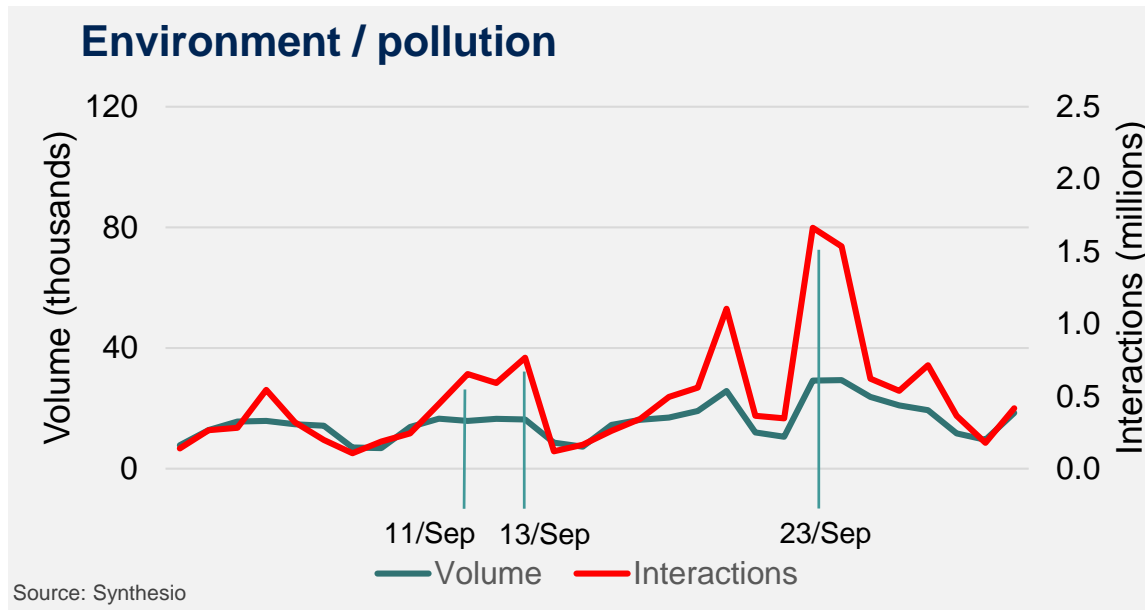
7 Sep & 12 Sep: YouTube influencer, Shaun Attwood shared his investigation on Prince Andrew’s involvement in Jeffrey Epstein’s sex trafficking crimes and orgies

17 Sep: Real Life TV UK’s video about rapper Skrapz being stabbed in jail

26 Sep: Boris Johnson’s promises to “*crack down on violent crime*” after Brexit

29 Sep: A less serious video of a thief who was hit by car while stealing a bottle of vodka had a high number of views and shares

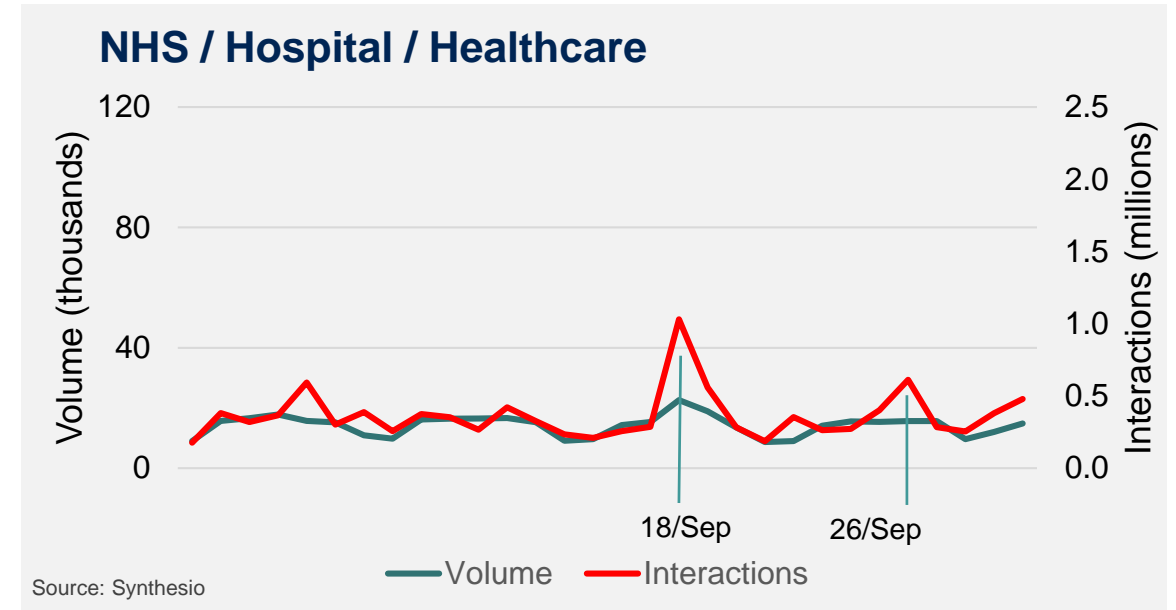
Volume vs. Interactions – September



11 Sep: Various YouTube videos on Frankfurt Motor Show delivered high interaction. These videos focused on electric and hybrid engines to save the environment

13 Sep: Preparation for the Climate Change protest. Angelina Jolie was among the climate change activists and increased the magnitude of the event

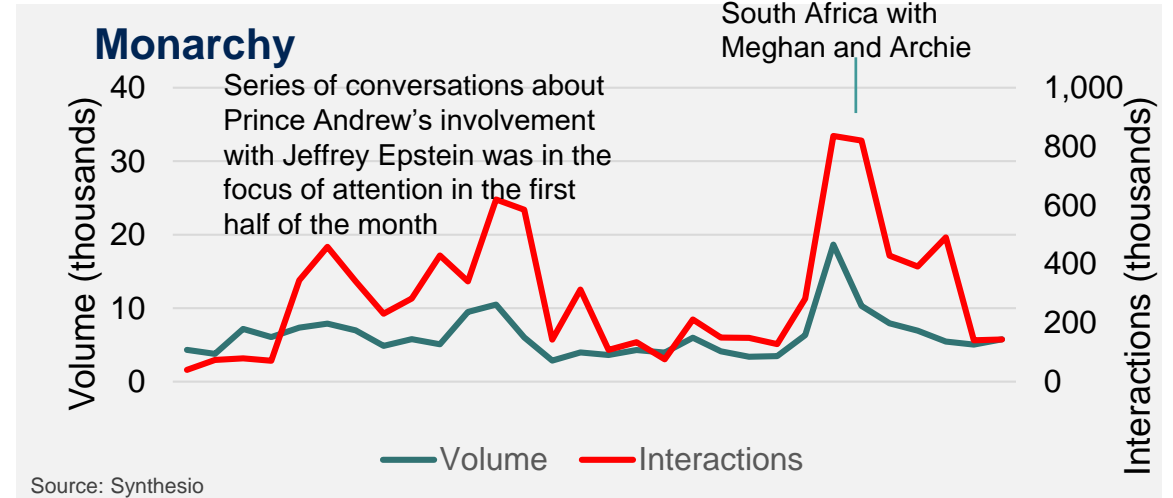
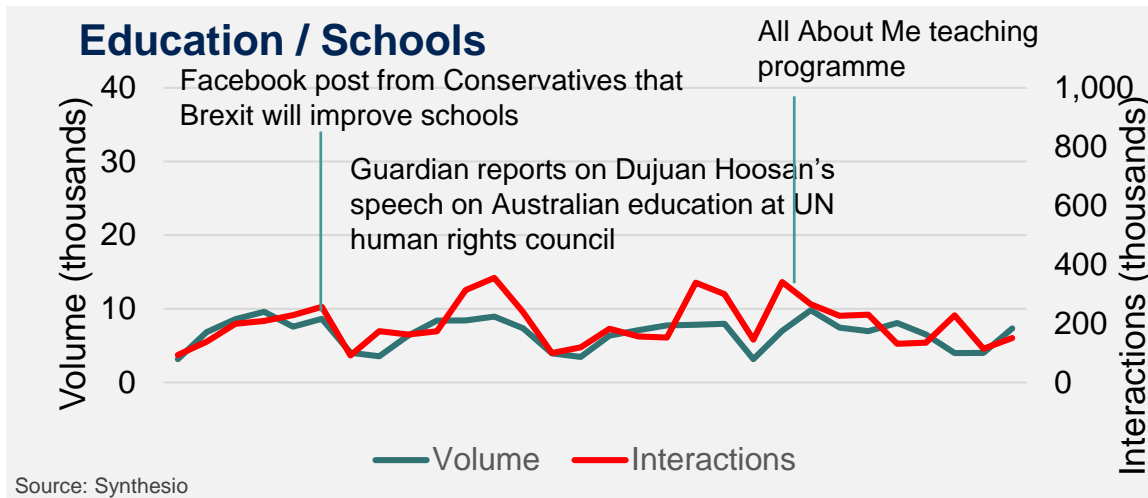
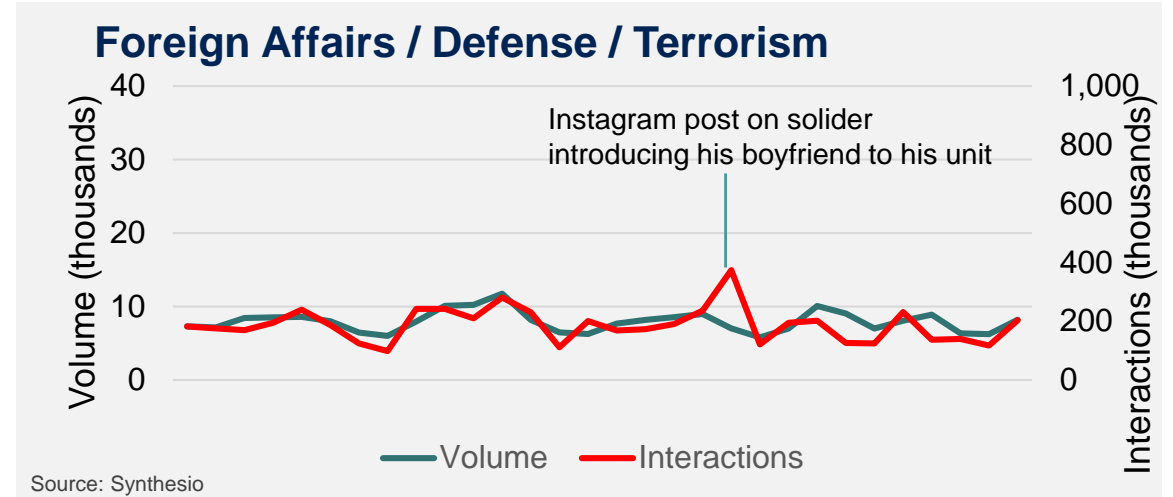
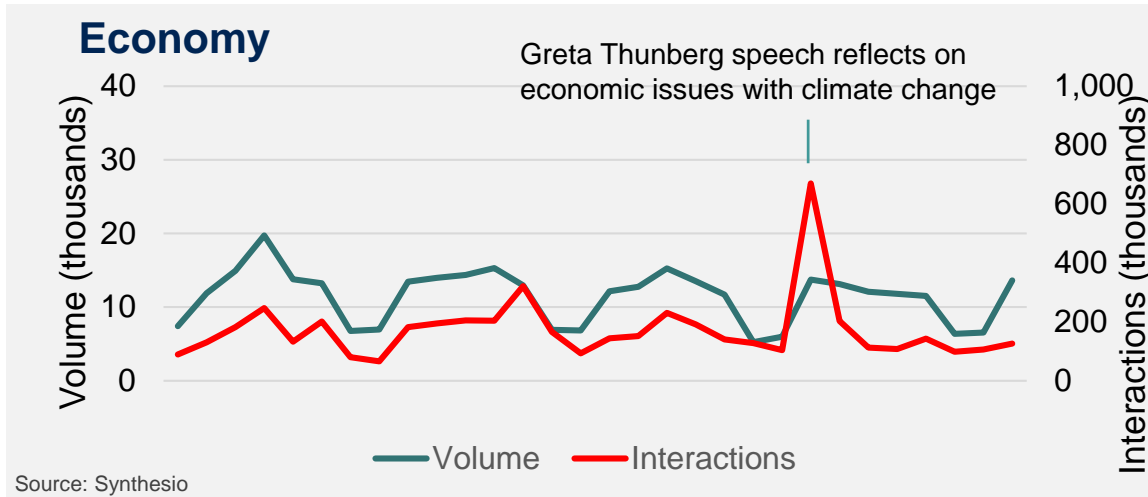
24 Sep: Greta Thunberg’s speech on UNFCCC conference was shared on multiple mainstream, high profile sources that reached huge audiences and generated social media buzz



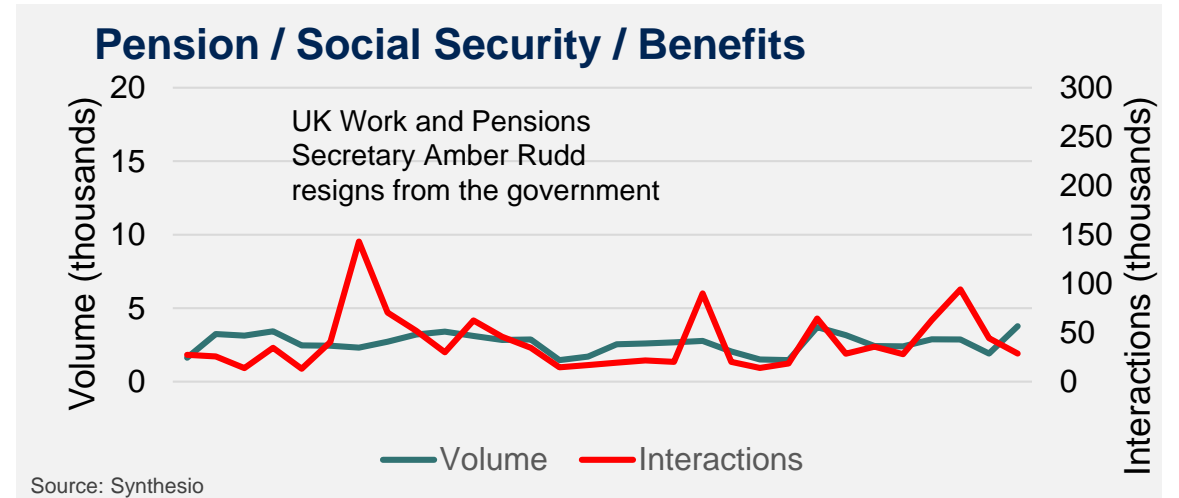
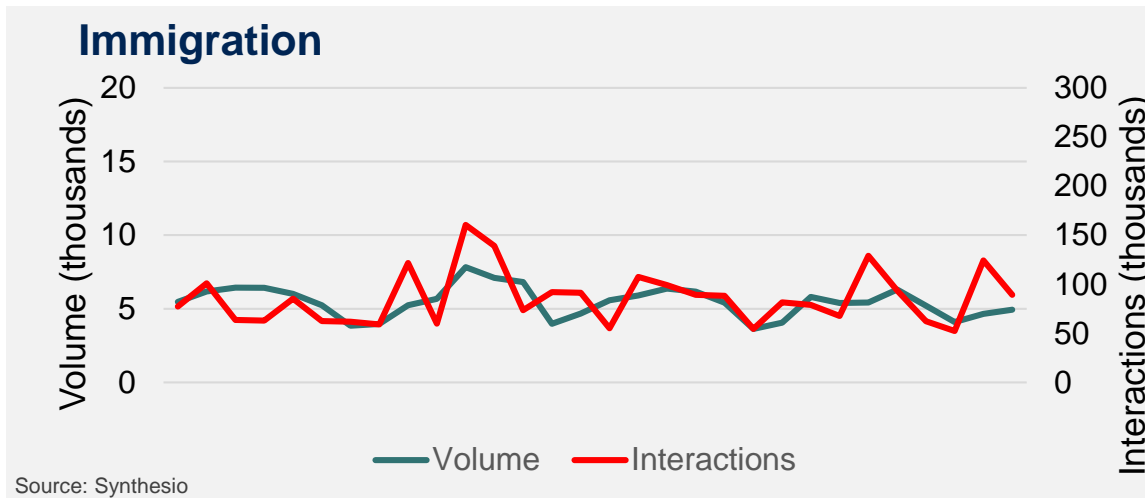
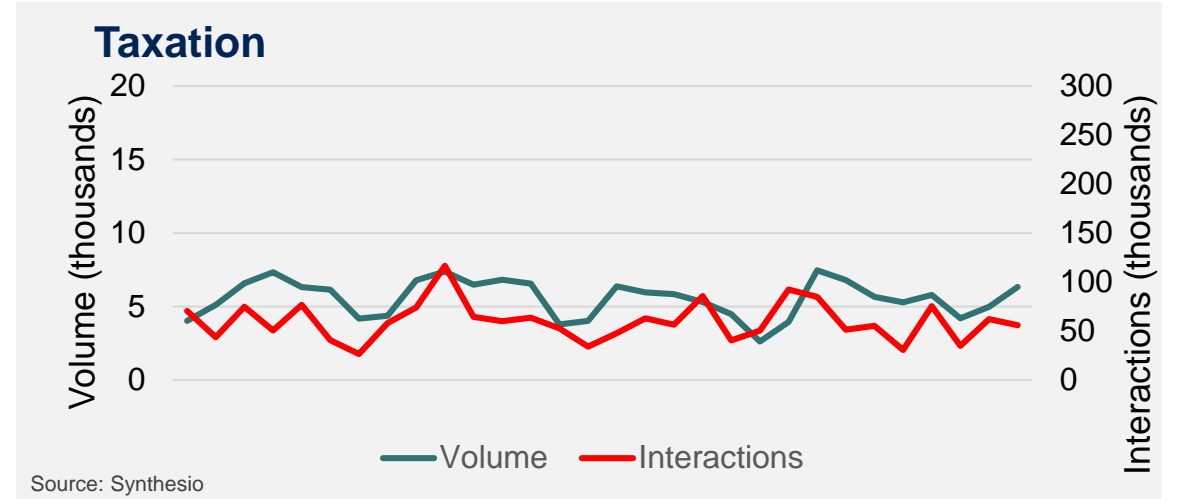
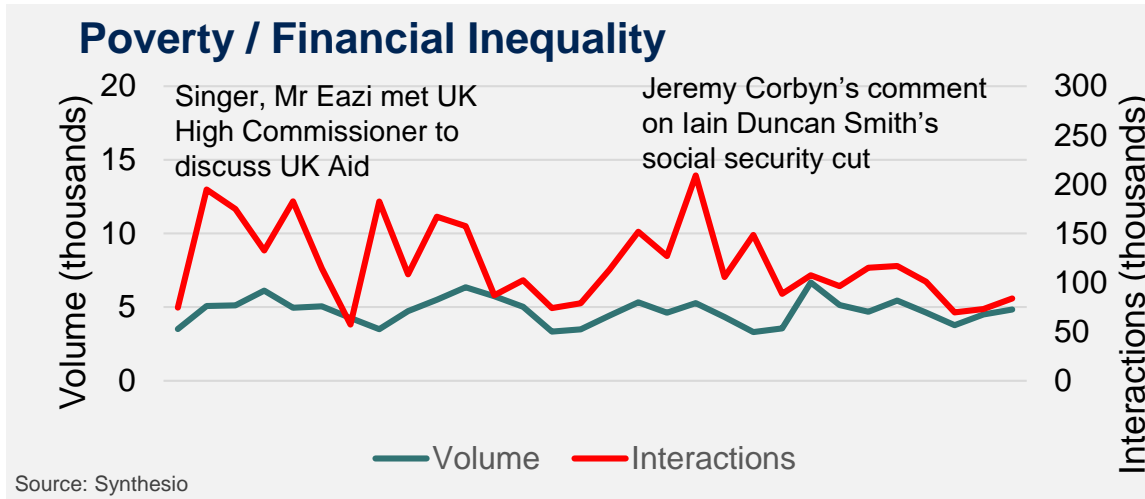
18 Sep: Boris Johnson was criticised by patients and their relatives for bringing the press and about his visit to Leytonstone hospital, while “the NHS has been destroyed”

26 Sep: Boris Johnson’s social media campaign on Brexit was the leading force for both conversations and user interaction. Many of his posts mentions the opportunity to improve the health care system after Brexit.

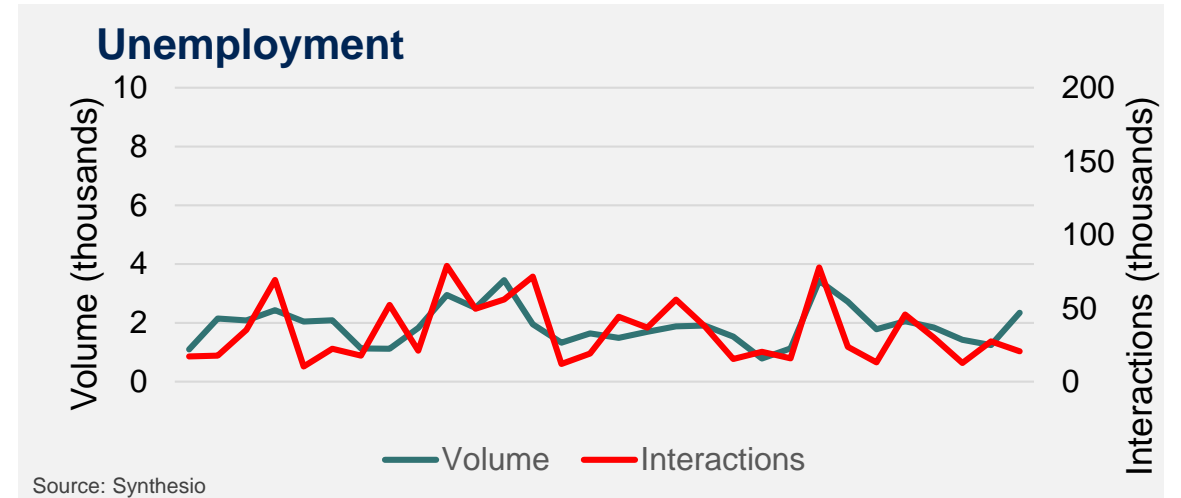
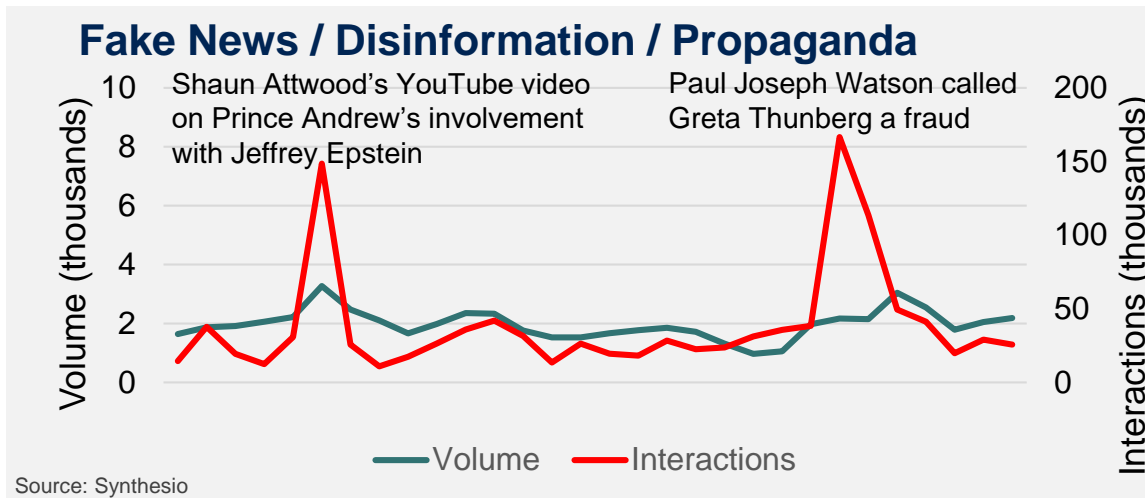
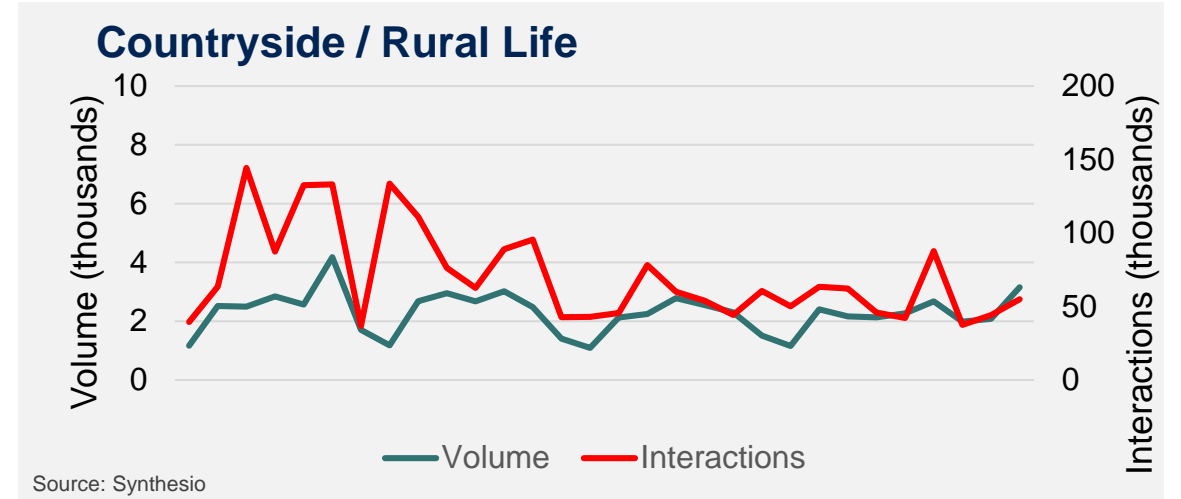
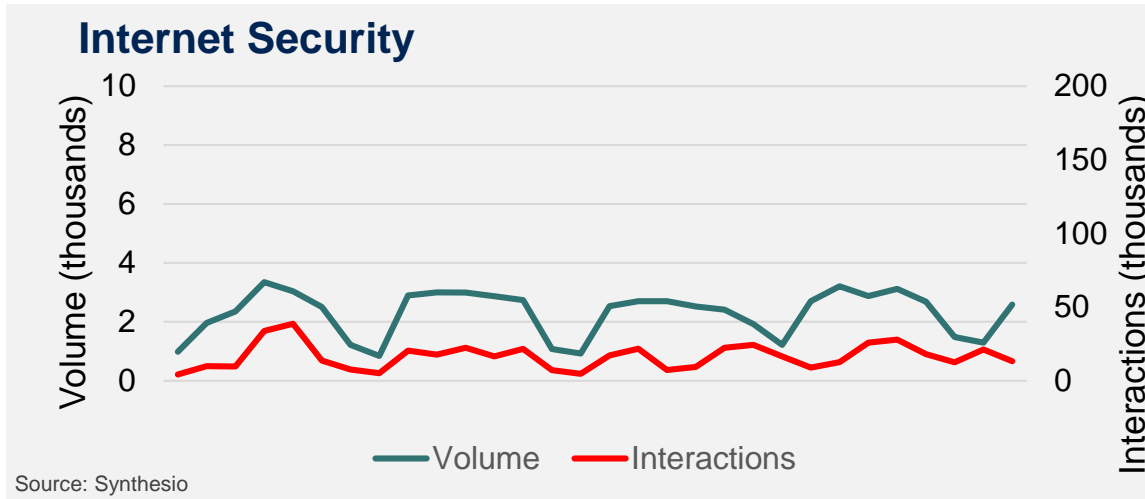
Volume vs. Interactions – September



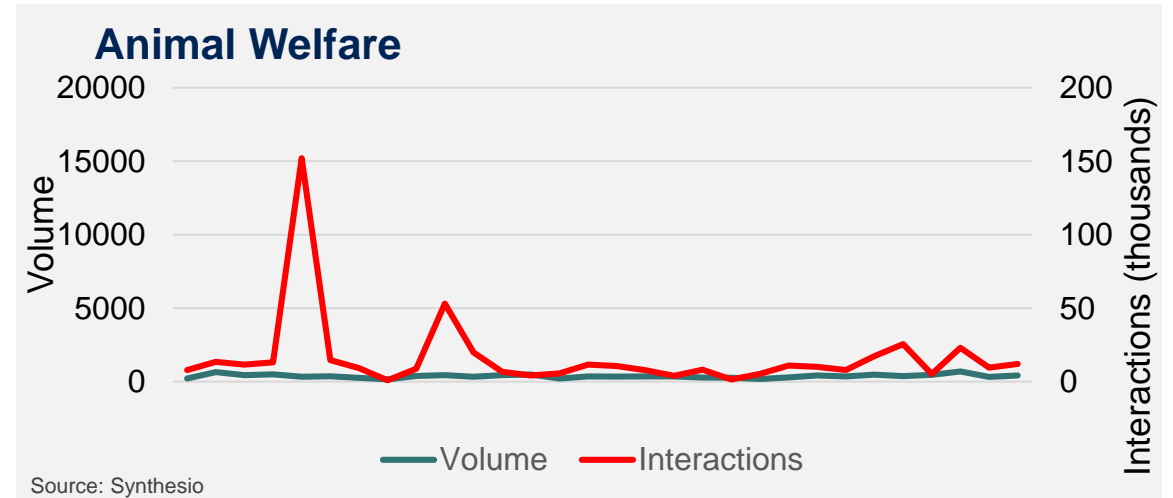
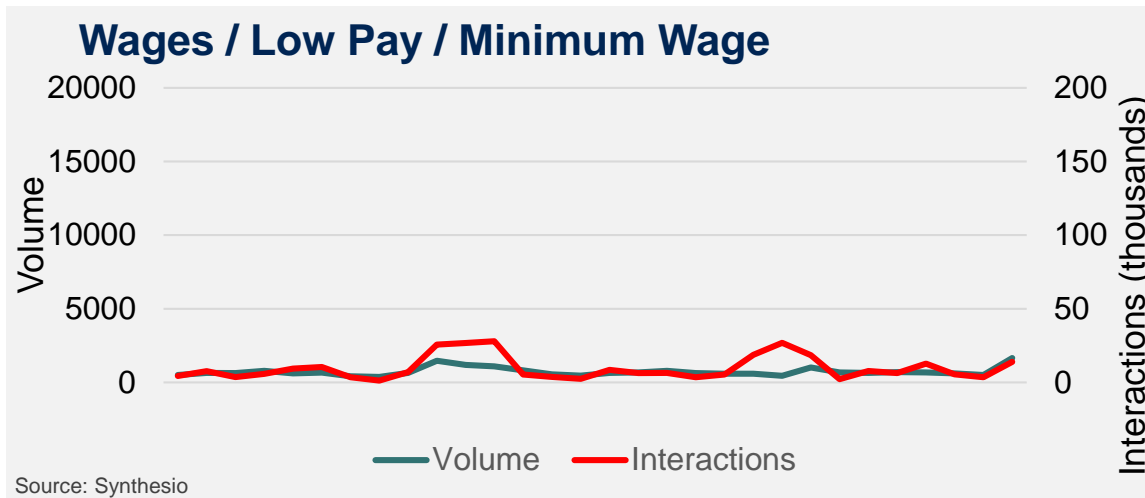
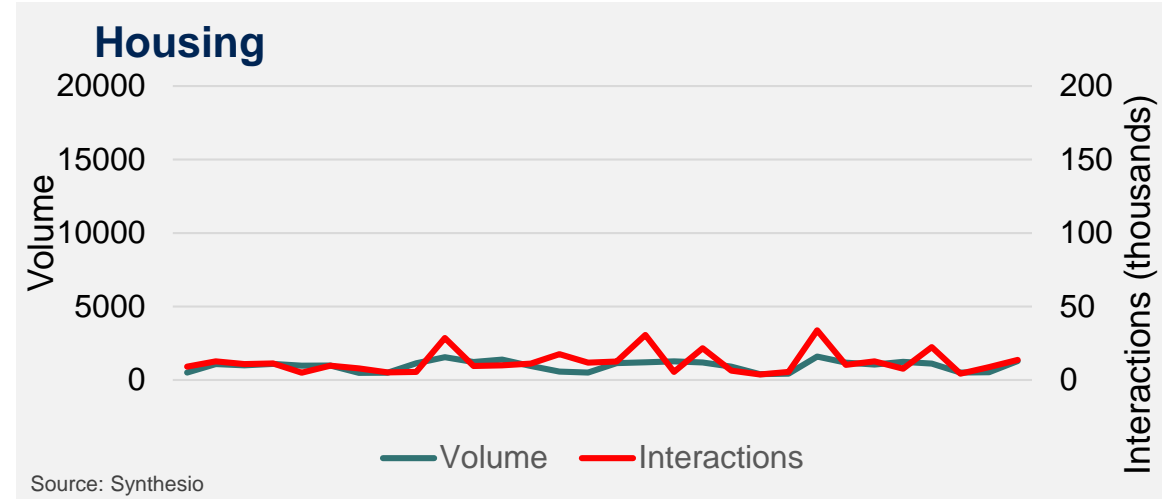
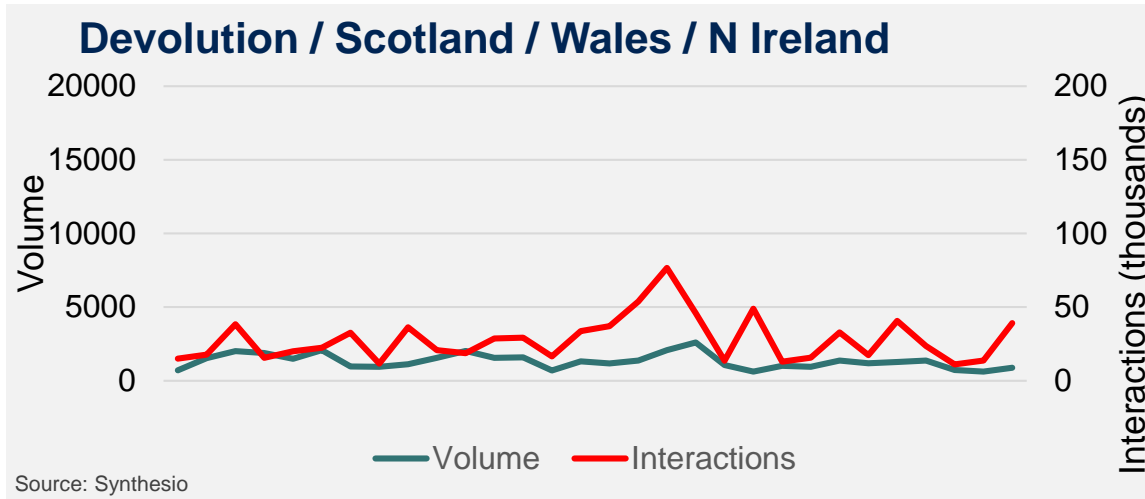
Volume vs. Interactions – September



Volume vs. Interactions – September



Volume vs. Interactions – September



Influencers & Hashtags

03

In social media data, influencers are the users who established credibility, leadership and reputation in a specific topic. Influencers can engage large audience and have an impact on their mindset.

Hashtags are inserted in social media posts to help users to find posts and articles they might be interested in. Hashtags are often associated with campaigns and movements.

Top Hashtags– all topics



Position	Top Hashtags	Volume
1	#brexit	173,251
2	#nhs	19,670
3	#cybersecurity	17,372
4	#sustainability	13,383
5	#eu	11,171
6	#climatechange	11,132
7	#borisjohnson	10,565
8	#brexitshambles	10,208
9	#uk	10,093
10	#stopthecoup	9,588
11	#stopbrexit	8,685
12	#remain	7,553
13	#healthcare	7,199
14	#peoplesvote	7,108
15	#diversity	5,996
16	#sustainable	5,547
17	#environment	5,518
18	#parliament	5,316
19	#labour	5,140
20	#brexitchaos	5,137

Piers Morgan @piersmorgan Follow

I've never known a worse Parliament than this.
 A ludicrous, howling, self-absorbed bunch of shockingly mediocre charlatans - most of whom doing whatever they can to stop democracy happening. Shameful. **#brexit**

11:52 am - 25 Sep 2019

6,109 Retweets 34,853 Likes



thetimes • Follow

thetimes • "I get sent letters saying my children are mongrels." The anti-Brexit campaigner Gina Miller's most recent Supreme Court victory has only increased the abuse hurled at her, but she won't stop. "There are times when I've gone back and cried, and I do think at times, 'is it worth it? But I have to carry on fighting because it can't become a normalised thought pattern in our society that a woman of colour is not bright enough, can't make her own money, can't be successful, or is told she has made it on her back. I will stand up as long as I can.'" #Times #Timesvideo #brexit

For the full interview, click the link in our bio.

The Telegraph @telegraph 418,648 followers 09/19/2019 6:29 AM

child during a hospital visit at Whipps Cross on Wednesday. The parent has since been revealed to be a Labour activist. **#nhs** **#broisjohnson** **#britain** **#uk** [show more](#)



Stewarts Comm Lit @StewartsCommLit Follow

#Bitcoin worth more than £1m stolen by fraudsters from a **#cryptocurrency** trader retrieved via an Asset Preservation Order (APO) obtained by Stewarts, a first in the English courts... [stewartslaw.com/news/cryptocur ...](https://stewartslaw.com/news/cryptocur...) **#cybersecurity** **#cybercrime**













Source: Synthesio

Top Influencers on Twitter – all topics



September

Influencer	Posts*	Interactions	Reach
 Boris Johnson	47	950,392	1,115,334
 Piers Morgan	26	285,232	6,808,873
 Jeremy Corbyn	52	544,834	2,084,591
 Led By Donkeys	16	307,296	287,039
 James O'Brien	27	286,464	530,088
 Paul Joseph Watson	70	545,724	1,026,121
 Deborah Meaden	7	95,178	324,327
 Travon Free	2	56,132	121,741
 Sky Sports News	7	40,297	6,821,778
 Kensington Palace	25	125,389	1,816,654

Boris Johnson was mainly involved with Brexit topics, but some of his tweets related to other topics as well, as he laid out post-Brexit plans. Although many Twitter accounts have larger follower bases, he created the highest level of interaction with his audience. However, many comments criticised his moves and ideas.

Piers Morgan covered all key topics in his 26 tweets. His most influential tweet about UK parliament was retweeted more than 6,000 times and started a conversation with almost 2,000 comments. Piers Morgan is one of the most influential public figures, with the largest follower base, not counting corporate news sites.

Paul Joseph Watson, the right-wing activist and social media influencer, was the most active by posting 70 tweets in September. He covered topics related to immigration, crime, economy and Brexit. He encouraged people to stand by Boris Johnson and let him to deliver Brexit according to the referendum.

*Includes posts only if related to any topic

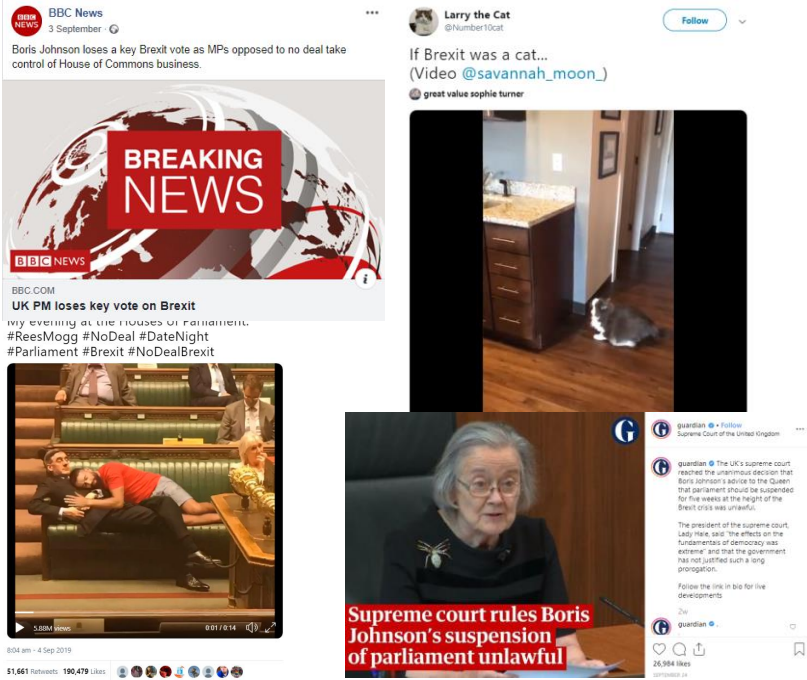
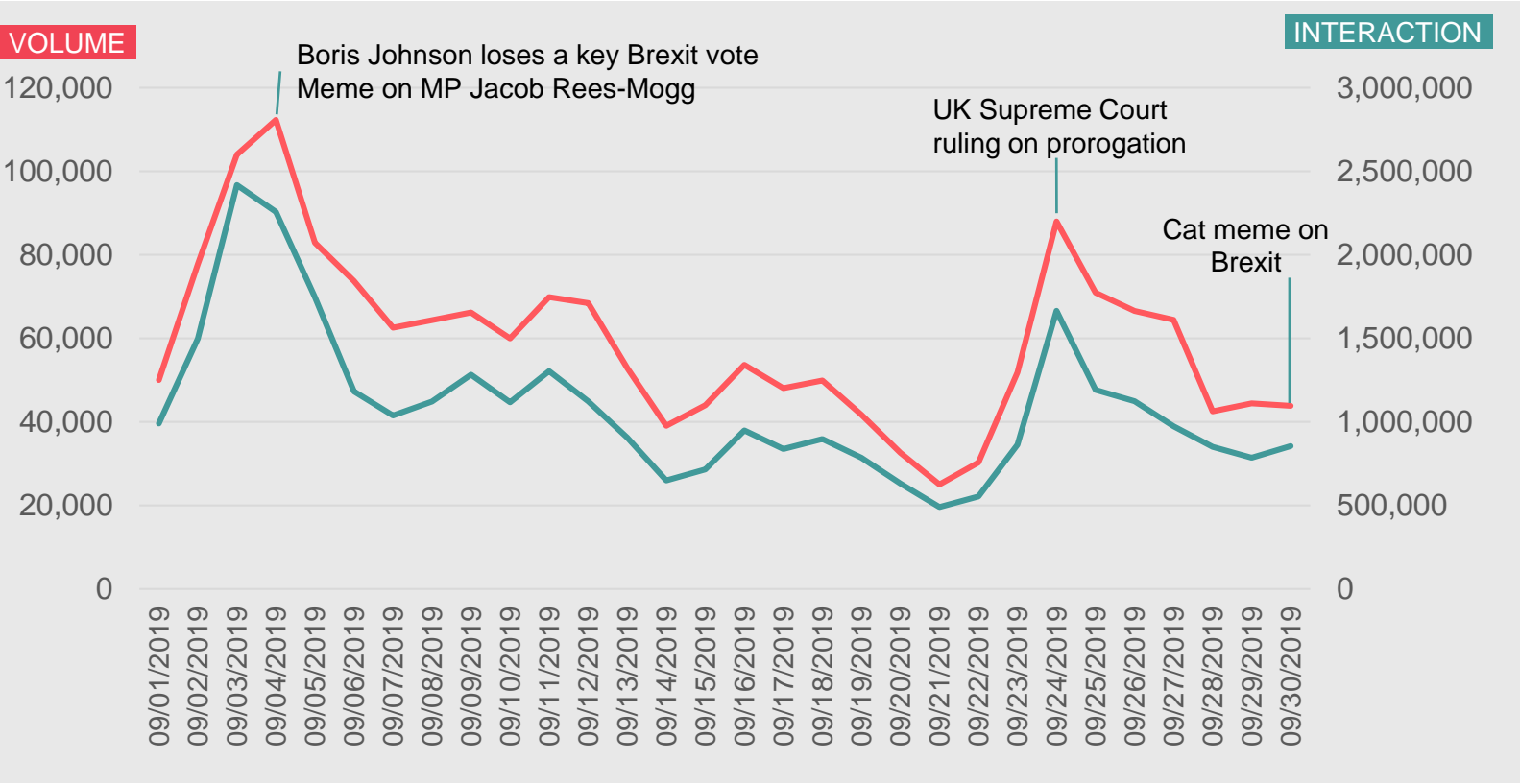
Deep Dive

04

Each month, we deep dive into a particular topic or an emerging theme. This month, we have chosen to focus on Brexit, which was the leading topic in UK.

Brexit / Europe

Volume vs. Interaction Trend for September













Brexit is one of the biggest political manoeuvres in UK's recent history, hence it leads conversations on both mainstream and social media. Users show great interest and engagement with this topic on social media.

Source: Synthesio

Brexit Top Influencers & Hashtags



Twitter: September

Influencer	Posts	Interactions	Reach
 Boris Johnson	27	754,372	1,115,334
 Piers Morgan	13	241,791	6,808,653
 Led By Donkeys	12	261,991	286,775
 James O'Brien	23	257,957	530,088
 Jeremy Corbyn	9	77,660	2,071,978
 Deborah Meaden	7	95,178	324,327
 BBC Breaking News	16	48,794	40,710,773
 David Lammy	29	197,058	568,191
 Jenny Eclair	2	21,925	159,587
 Paul Joseph Watson	5	45,055	1,024,711

Source: Synthesio

Position	Top Hashtags	Volume
1	#brexit	172,957
2	#brexitshambles	10,201
3	#eu	10,112
4	#borisjohnson	9,436
5	#stopthecoup	8,529
6	#stopbrexit	8,072
7	#remain	7,129
8	#uk	7,058
9	#peoplesvote	6,921
10	#brexitchaos	5,134
11	#parliament	4,949
12	#revokea50	4,669
13	#nodealbrexit	4,662
14	#yellowhammer	4,270
15	#nodeal	4,191
16	#labour	4,139
17	#leave	3,995
18	#boris	3,920
19	#brexitvote	3,822
20	#bbcqt	3,531

Top Mentions by Interactions – Brexit

September

Alejandro Negueruela
@Alex_Negueruela

Follow

My evening at the Houses of Parliament.
#ReesMogg #NoDeal #DateNight
#Parliament #Brexit #NoDealBrexit



5.88M views 0:01 / 0:14

8:04 am · 4 Sep 2019

51,661 Retweets 190,479 Likes

Boris Johnson
5 September

Corbyn and his friends in Parliament don't trust you to make this decision - but I do. Let's put it to the people: more delay with Corbyn's #SurrenderBill, or Brexit delivered on October 31st



So if you want Brexit sorted out before 31 October,

32K comments 89K shares

Conservatives
2 September

We will not accept any attempt to further delay Brexit
MPs should vote with the government against Corbyn's pointless delay, and show our friends in Brussels that we are united in our purpose.
Back Boris to deliver Brexit.
conservatives.com/brexitpledge



WE WILL LEAVE THE EU ON OCT 31
NO IFS. NO BUTS.
SHARE TO BACK BORIS

9.1K comments 126K shares

Piers Morgan
@piersmorgan

Follow

The only unarguable fact about this Brexit fiasco is that there's now a concerted campaign driven by Parliament to stop it happening. And as someone who voted Remain, I think it's an absolute disgrace. If Britain doesn't deliver Brexit, none of us should ever bother voting again.

3:13 am · 8 Sep 2019

13,454 Retweets 61,327 Likes

5.3K 13K 61K

Source: Synthesio

Methodology

05

Leveraging Ipsos MORI's and Synthesio's expertise, we have created our Social Britain tracker, which enables us to keep track of key issues in Britain

Methodology

DETERMINING IMPORTANT ISSUES AND TRACKING THEM

In order to complement our Issues Index, which has been reported over the course of many years, we have created the Social Britain report. We have taken a number of steps to arrive at the list of topics that we track. This is not intended to represent every social conversation that occurs in Britain.

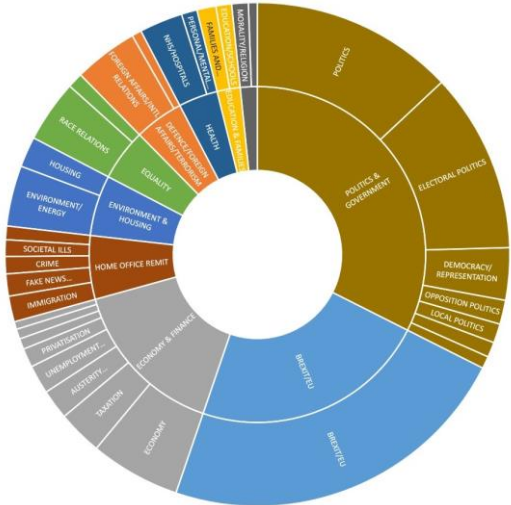
1 Gather data

In 2018, we used a generic query (words like 'the', 'just', 'only', etc.) designed to get as much data as possible, to scrape key political blogs and forums in the UK, including Left Foot Forward, Conservative Home Blog, Liberal Democrat Voice, Labourlist, Student Rooms Forum, etc. We collected a year's worth of data.

For this stage we were most interested in getting the key themes, rather than to try to create a representative sample of posts.

2 Identify topics

Employ bottom up topic modelling to determine key topics mentioned.



3 Compare vs. issues

We compared the topics vs. our Issues Index. Were there any that were new? Was there anything missing? We found some topics that were new, like information security, and some smaller topics that did not come up or came up as a part of another discussion, for example petrol prices. We used this to create a final list of topics to be monitored, based on volume/size.

4 Create topic queries

Using the content from each topic, we used Synthesio to create queries, including appropriate exclusions, for each topic.

See the next page for more on what is included in each query. For details on full queries, please contact us (details on last page).

We examine this on a monthly basis and update the queries with latest information to include and exclude, depending on what has happened during the month.

About the topics

What is included in the queries

Animal welfare: Posts about animal welfare, protection, homelessness and testing.

Brexit / Europe: Posts to do with Brexit, the EU, leaving or remaining in Europe.

Countryside / Rural life: Posts related to rural life, agriculture and farming across the country in the UK.

Crime / Law & Order / ASB: Posts about illegal behaviour, violence, crime, justice system and anti-social behaviour.

Devolution / Scotland / Wales / N Ireland: Posts related to Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish independence, referendum or legal system.

Economy: Posts about the Bank of England, UK's GDP and the interest rate of the British Pound.

Education / School: Posts related to schools, universities, tuition fees.

Environment / Pollution: Posts about air quality, global warming, climate change, carbon footprint, reusable energy and recycling.

Fake news / Disinformation: Posts related to fake

news, disinformation or propaganda in the media and news platforms.

Foreign affairs / Defence / Terrorism: Posts about foreign policy, military defence, national security and terrorism.

Housing: Posts about housing solutions, council flats and also about the Grenfell catastrophe.

Immigration / Immigrants: Posts about immigration both legal and illegal, deportation, asylum seekers and refugees.

Internet security / Personal data: Posts about personal data protection, privacy, cyber security, GDPR (General data protection regulation).

Monarchy: Mentions about the UK Royal family.

NHS / Hospitals / Healthcare: Posts about the National Health Service, social and primary care.

Pensions / Social security / Benefits: Posts related to types of benefits, pension, universal credit or tax credit.

Poverty / Financial Inequality: Posts to do with

poverty, poor and homeless people, food banks and financial inequality.

Privatisation / Nationalisation / Government control of institutions: Posts related to privatisation, nationalisation, and institutions and organisations owned by the government.

Taxation: Posts about taxation and tax payers' money.

Unemployment: Posts related to unemployment, job security, employment protection and job seeker allowance.

Wages / Low pay / Minimum wage: Posts about minimum or low wage, fair pay and zero hours.

For more information on the queries used, please contact Tara Beard-Knowland (tara.beard-knowland@ipsos.com).

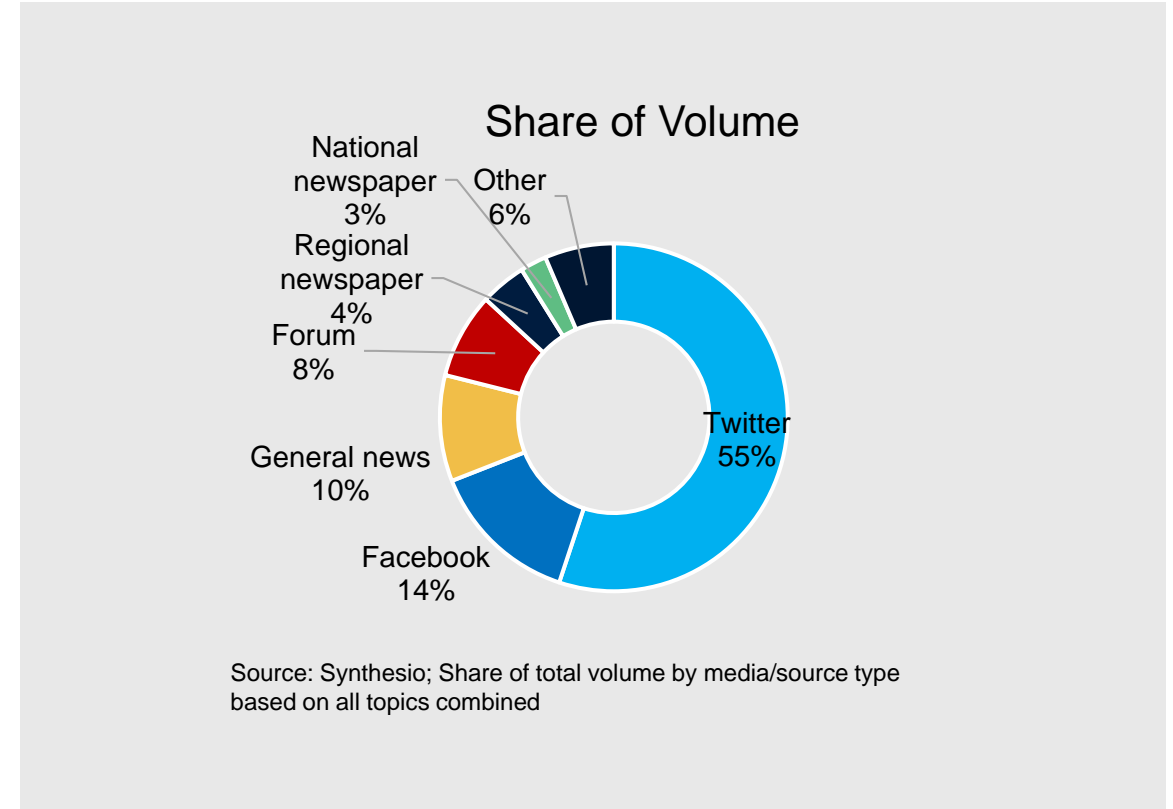
About the data

Using Synthesio, we have focussed our analyses on publicly available data from social media and other sources. For the latest month, the distribution of sources for all topics combined is as shown to the right. As Twitter has the greatest volume of data available to us, it represents the lion's share of the overall data.

While our searches have been limited to UK as a geography, in social data it is impossible to completely exclude data from non-UK sources, as identifiers are not always available. We identify the geography based on both what is explicitly said and what can be imputed from other factors.

We have included posts in English or where the language cannot be identified.

Our data starts from September 2018 for best comparability of data, due to changes in regulations about what can be captured after the Cambridge Analytica scandal.



Ipsos MORI Social Britain

September 2019

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