British national identity – part III: Britain in Europe

Britain, the European Union, and Brexit

Britain and the EU: a legacy of strained relations

- **1957: Treaty of Rome is signed**
  France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, six founding members of the <u>European Economic Community</u> (the Common Market), sign the Treaty of Rome, but Britain withdraws from early talks.

- **1963, 1967: the UK's two unsuccessful applications to join the EEC**
  With its economy flagging, Britain makes its first attempt to join the Common Market but is vetoed by France. The French President Charles de Gaulle says that a number of aspects of Britain's economy make Britain "incompatible with Europe", and accuses Britain of a "deep-seated hostility" towards the European project.

- **1973: Britain joins the EEC**
  With de Gaulle out of office, Britain is allowed into the European Economic Community at last, but within a year calls for major reform of Common Agricultural Policy as well as changes in the way the budget is financed.

- **1975: EEC referendum**
  Harold Wilson's Labour government holds a referendum over EEC membership in which two thirds of British voters say they want to stay in.

- **1984: Margaret Thatcher wins a rebate* from Brussels in row over contributions**

  A key victory for Mrs Thatcher. She had threatened to stop contributions because Britain was receiving far less in agricultural subsidies than some other members, notably France.

  *a partial refund to someone who has paid too much for tax, rent, or a utility

- **1997: Single European Currency**

  Britain declares it will not be joining the euro.

- **2007: The Lisbon Treaty signed** (amending the two previous treaties which form the constitutional basis of the EU, and creating the EU in its current form)

  Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown misses a televised ceremony of leaders signing the treaty, leaving Foreign Secretary David Miliband to sign it instead. (Brown signed the document at a lunch for heads of state and government later the same day.)

- **2013: Cameron makes referendum pledge**

  David Cameron promises an "In-Out" referendum if he wins the 2015 general election, which he does. He reiterates his manifesto commitment to hold a referendum before the end of 2017.

- **23 June 2016: Referendum**

  In a close-run vote, the British public decides to exit the European Union (by a margin of 3.8%). An emotional David Cameron resigns as Prime minister the next day.

- **29 March, 2017:** new Conservative Prime minister, Theresa May, triggers Article 50 which starts the clock on the process of the UK leaving the EU.

- **26 June, 2017:** formal negotiations on withdrawal begin between the UK and the EU.

- Over 2.5 years of painful negotiations; Theresa May's Withdrawal Bill repeatedly defeated in the House of Commons. Brexit Day, initially set for 29 March 2019, is later moved to 31 October 2019, and finally to 31 January 2020

  Major issues: payment of the UK's "divorce bill"; the UK's future trade relationships with the EU; the Irish border; EU citizens' rights.

  "soft Brexit" vs. "hard Brexit"
  "cakeism"; "cherry-picking"

- **12 December 2019:** the UK's general election is won convincingly by Boris Johnson's Conservatives, who gain an 80-seat majority. Boris Johnson heads the negotiations, and proposes a new Brexit deal

- **23 January 2020:** The UK's EU Withdrawal bill becomes law, after a relatively smooth passage through parliament compared to the earlier havoc.

- **29 January 2020:** The European Parliament approves the Brexit divorce deal.

- **31 January 2020:** Brexit day: the UK officially leaves the EU at midnight CET (11 p.m. UK time) and enters a transition period

- **February 1:** An 11-month transition phase begins, running to December 31, 2020, after which a new economic and political relationship between the UK and the EU starts.

The Brexit process, according to *The Daily Express*

BREXIT TIMELINE

How Britain freed itself from the clutches of the European Union

JUNE 23, 2016
Britons voted to quit the European Union in an historic referendum.

MAY 29, 2017
Britain triggers the EU's Article 50 clause to formalise our departure.

JUNE 19, 2017
Our formal divorce talks are launched.

OCTOBER 17, 2019
Boris Johnson and Jean-Claude Juncker strike a deal on our EU Withdrawal Agreement.

JANUARY 31, 2020
Britain officially leaves the EU and enters into a one-year transition out of the bloc.

MARCH 2, 2020
The UK and EU officially launches negotiations over the post-Brexit trade and security dea.

DECEMBER 24, 2020
After almost nine months of wrangling, Boris Johnson and Ursula von der Leyen finally agree terms on the UK and EU's future relationship pact.

JANUARY 1, 2021
Britain leaves the EU's single market and customs union to start a new dawn as an independent and free nation.

EXPRESS POLITICS

The debate

Arguments for and against Brexit, according to the main campaigns

IN / **OUT**

TRADE

Britain avoids exporter tariffs and red tape, important as 45% of British exports go to the EU. As a member, Britain can obtain better trade terms because of the EU's size.

Britain will negotiate a new EU relationship without being bound by EU law. It can secure trade deals with other important countries such as China, India and America.

EU BUDGET

Britain pays the EU £340 a year per household, compared with an estimated £3,000 yearly benefit of membership. In or out, payment is needed to access the single market.

Britain can stop sending £350m, equivalent to half England's schools budget, to Brussels every week. This money could be spent on scientific research and new industries.

REGULATION

Most EU regulation collapses 28 national standards into one European standard, reducing red tape and benefiting business. In, Britain can fight for better regulation.

Leaving will return control over areas like employment law and health and safety, measures that a recent Business for Britain poll found businesses favoured.

IMMIGRATION

Leaving doesn't mean reduced immigration. Countries that trade with the EU from outside have higher rates of immigration, including from EU countries, than Britain.

Britain can change the "expensive and out-of-control" system that offers an open door to the EU and blocks non-EU immigrants who could contribute to the UK.

INFLUENCE

At international summits, Britain is represented twice – by the foreign secretary and the EU high representative. Co-operation has helped fight Ebola and piracy in Africa.

Britain has little influence within the EU. From outside, it can retake seats on international institutions and be a stronger influence for free trade and co-operation.

Sources: Britain Stronger in Europe; Vote Leave

Britishness and the European Union

Do you agree or disagree that being a member of the EU is undermining Britain's distinctive identity?
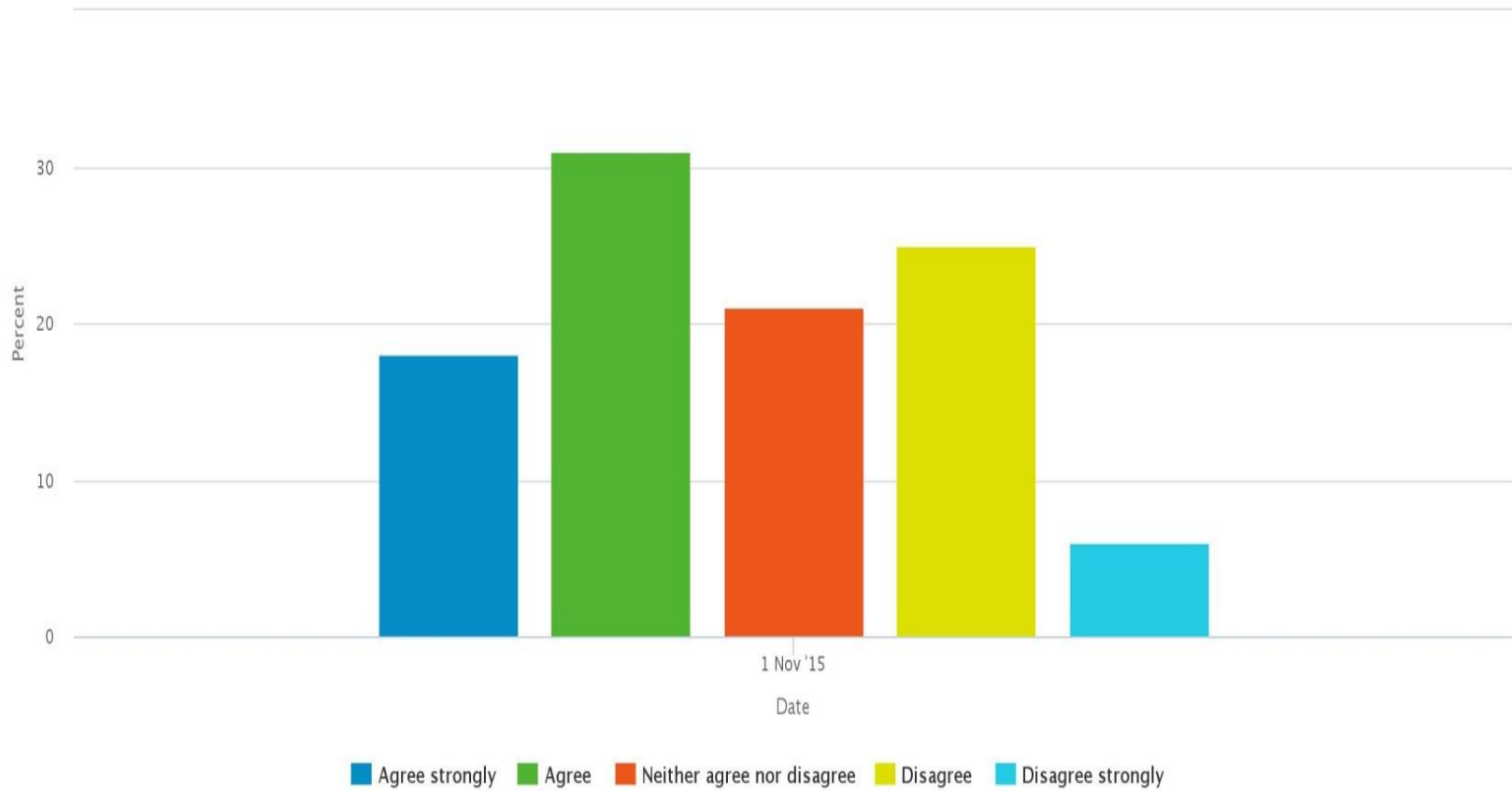
Source data at www.WhatUKThinks.org/EU run by NatCen Social Research

The Leave campaign groups: Vote Leave; Leave.EU

UKIP's PLEDGE TO BRITAIN:
- ☑ Say NO to the EU
- ☑ Control our borders
- ☑ Extra £3 billion for the NHS
- ☑ Cut foreign aid spending
- ☑ No tax on the minimum wage

ukip.org
BELIEVE in BRITAIN

BREAKING POINT

BRITAIN STRONGER IN EUROPE

...U has failed us all

We must break free of the EU and take back contro...

Leave the European ON 23...
votetoleavethe...

We send the EU £350 million
let's fund our NHS instead
Let's ta... ...ontrol

Nigel Farage backtracks on Leave campaign's '£350m for the NHS' pledge hours after result
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-result-nigel-farage-nhs-pledge-disowns-350-million-pounds-a7099906.html

Michael Gove and Boris Johnson were the leaders of the Vote Leave campaign (Image: Getty)

The Remain campaign groups : Britain Stronger in Europe (nicknamed "Project Fear"); LabourIN

- a vote to leave – a "leap in the dark"
- a shock to the economy and the job market
- impoverishment of households
- savings and pensions losing their value
- mortgage costs going up
- increased risk of terrorist attacks
- destabilisation of Europe
- ....

NB: for some major aspects of the two campaigns, refer again to the articles discussed in the seminar on British newspapers.

How much Brexit could cost UK households

◆ By 2020
£2,200

◆ By 2030
£3,200

◆ Worst case by 2030
£5,000

The Referendum results, 23 June 2016

Question asked: "Should the UK remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"

UK votes to **LEAVE** the EU

Leave
51.9%
17,410,742 VOTES

Remain
48.1%
16,141,241 VOTES

Turnout: 72.2%

England

Leave **53.4%**
15,188,406 VOTES

Remain **46.6%**
13,266,996 VOTES

Northern Ireland

Leave **44.2%**
349,442 VOTES

Remain **55.8%**
440,707 VOTES

Scotland

Leave **38.0%**
1,018,322 VOTES

Remain **62.0%**
1,661,191 VOTES

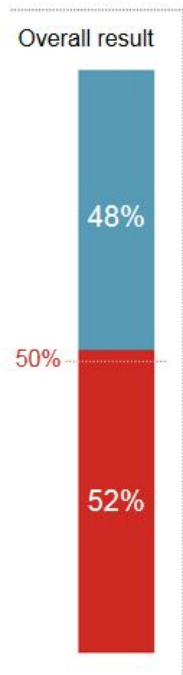## Wales

Leave **52.5%**
854,572 VOTES

Remain **47.5%**
772,347 VOTES

EU referendum result
● Majority remain
● Majority leave

Overall result

48%

50%

52%

Scotland

Shetland Islands (Scotland)

N. Ireland

Republic of Ireland

England

Wales

Greater London

THE GLOBE AND MAIL ⟩ SOURCE: BBC
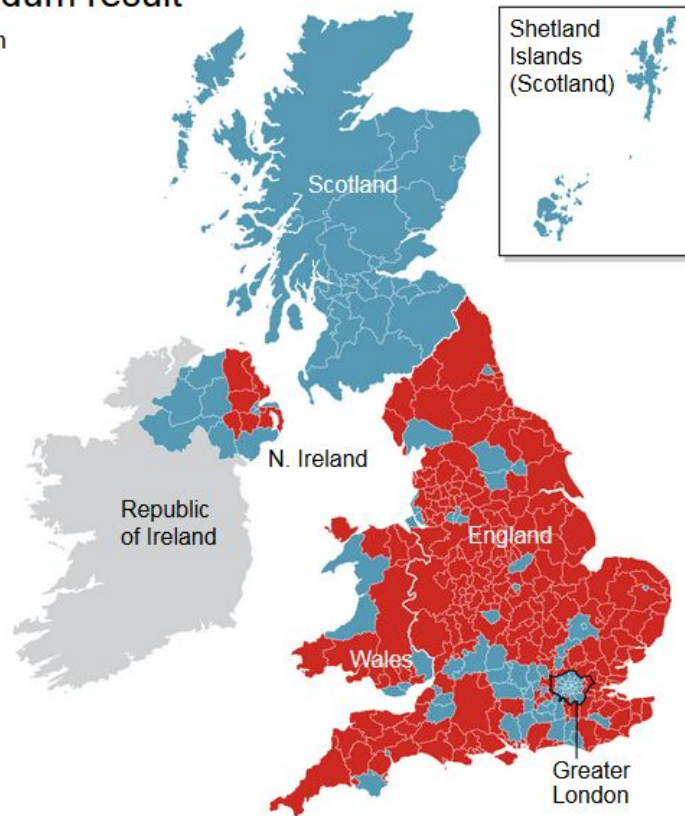
Age, educational attainment and national identity as voting factors

How different age groups voted

	Leave		50%	Remain
18–24	27%			73%
25–34	38%			62%
35–44	48%			52%
45–54	56%			44%
55–64	57%			43%
65+	60%			40%
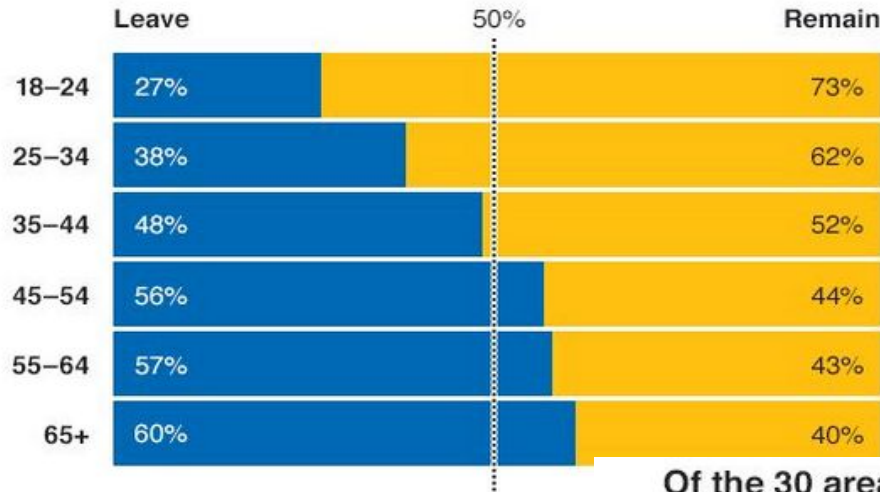
Of the 30 areas with the...

| most elderly people, 27 voted Leave	fewest graduates, 28 voted Leave	most people identifying as English, all 30 voted Leave

Voters by social class

Which way did you vote in the Brexit referendum?

© Statista 2020
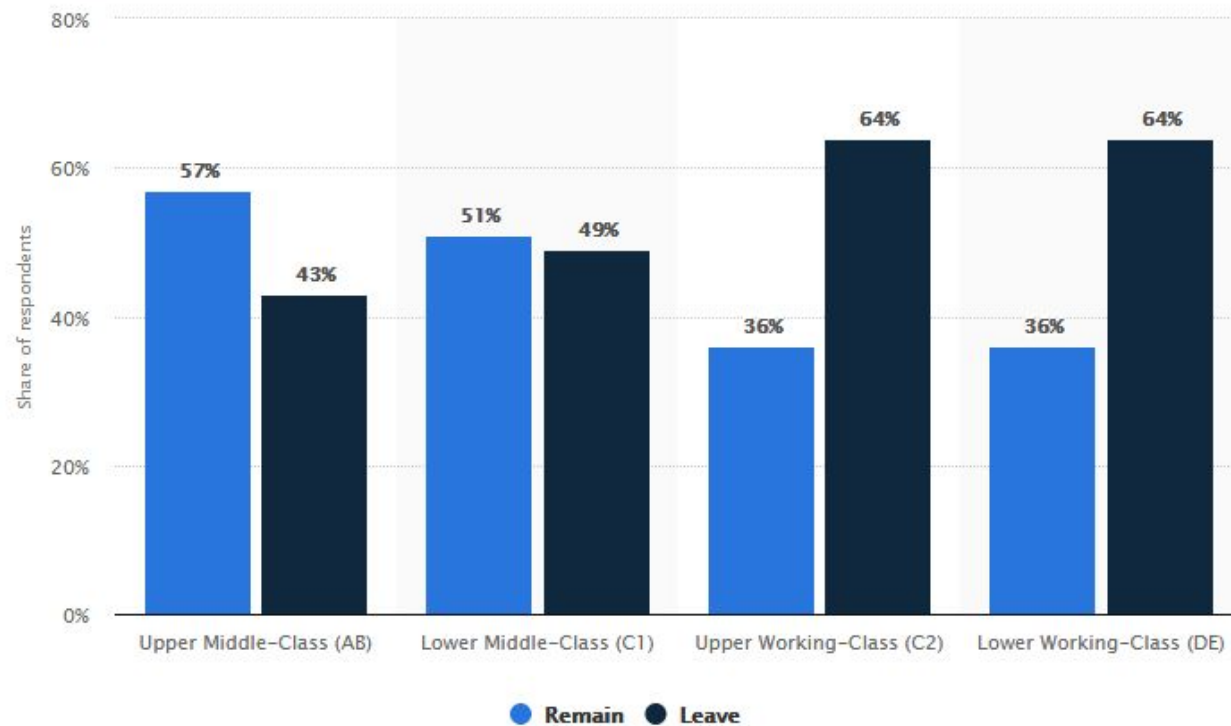
How did the vote differ by party?

Tories were more supportive of staying than expected, but the Labour vote was far weaker for Remain than they had hoped.
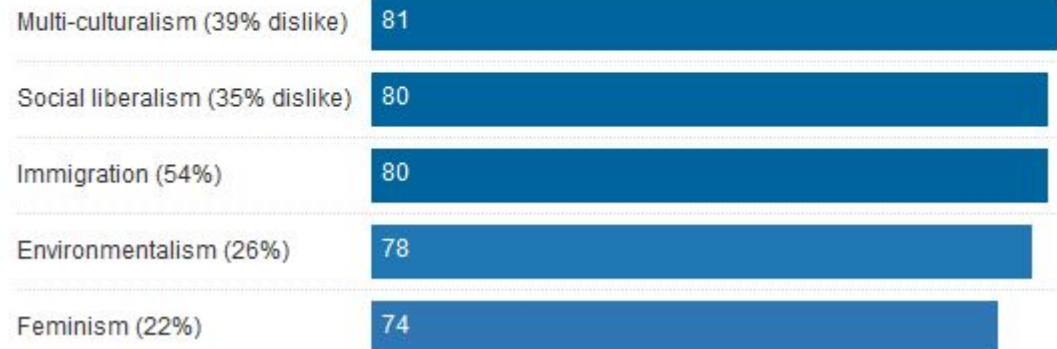
Remain ■ Leave

Party	Remain	Leave
Tory	42	58
Lab	63	37
Lib Dem	70	30
Ukip	4	96
Green	75	25
SNP	64	36
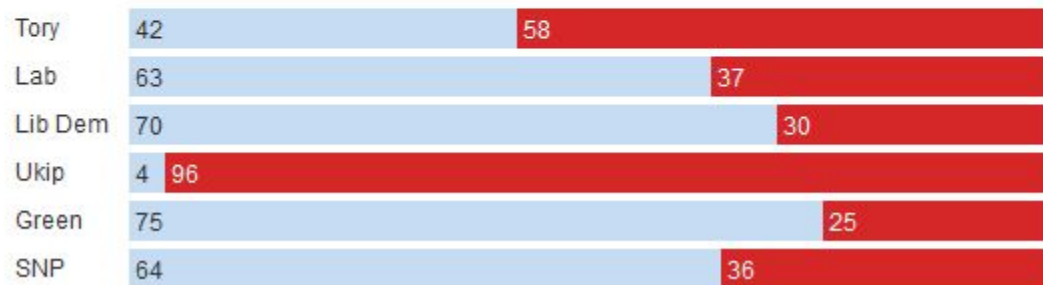
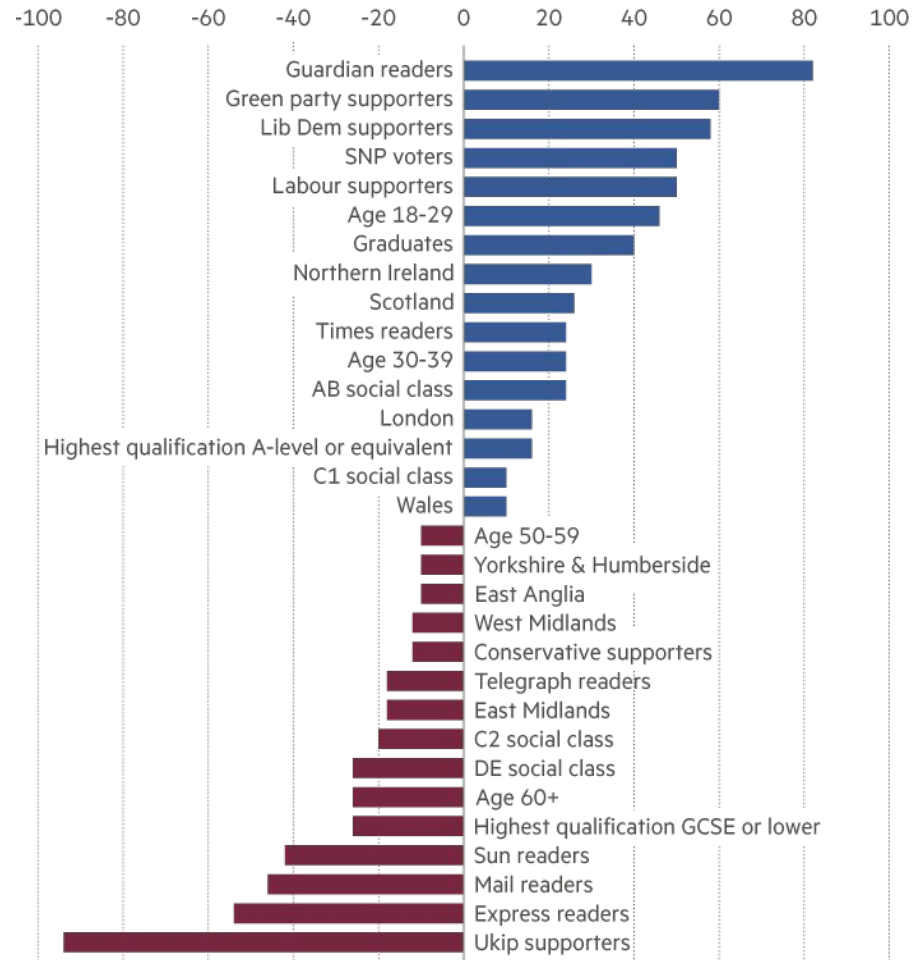**Voters by political party support and sociocultural values**

If you dislike one of the following terms, this is how likely you were to vote Brexit

The UK was voted out of the EU by those who reject the tenets of modern liberal democracies.

Term	Likelihood
Multi-culturalism (39% dislike)	81
Social liberalism (35% dislike)	80
Immigration (54%)	80
Environmentalism (26%)	78
Feminism (22%)	74

Key Remain and Leave supporters

By remain lead (%)

Reasons for the Referendum results – an amalgam of economic, political, demographic, cultural factors, with an element of chance

- Britain's traditional, deep-seated Euroscepticism; decades of increasing hostility to the European project in the United Kingdom, reinforced in recent years by a rise in nationalist sentiment, particularly in England.

- Deteriorating economic conditions after 2008: rise in unemployment, widening poverty gap, economic deprivation in former manufacturing areas; the Conservative government's austerity policies (shrinking social spending and government support for economically vulnerable individuals and communities).

  → the protest vote of **the "left-behind** voters"

- Chronic problems of the Welfare State.

- Growing anxieties about EU immigration and anger against the EU's perceived failure to deal adequately with the waves of refugees from the Middle East crossing its borders.

- Growing fears of terrorist attacks facilitated by the EU's open borders policies.

- Frustration with Brussels' red-tape and the spreading web of regulations, constricting Britain's economic and social freedom.

- Perceptions of the EU as a threat to authentic British identity.

- Campaigns based on <u>scaremongering</u>, appealing to emotions, exaggerations and outright lies, rather than rational, informed debate. (See again *The Guardian* and *The Independent* articles discussed at the seminar on the British press.)
- Lack of unity and coordination among different groups of "Remainers"; Jeremy Corbyn's inadequate campaigning, unclear message and display of lukewarm support for remaining in the EU.
- Disillusionment with the political elite among white working-class voters –
  "the left behind", again.
- Growing value divides over national identity, multiculturalism, liberalism, immigration.
- Rise of the UKIP, mobilizing "the left behind".
- The long-term populist, nationalist, Europhobe, anti-immigrant propaganda of the tabloid press.

  Populism: in political science, the idea that society is separated into two groups at odds with one another – "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite", and the political approach of supporting the rights and power of the people in their struggle against a privileged elite. Focus on the strong, charismatic leader who can solve the problems of "the people".

  (Read "Brexit: Causes and Consequences" by Prof. Matthew J. Goodwin)
- Misinformed / ignorant voters

Common voters' comments on the referendum results

Reasons to leave? ... Being bled dry by the EU and the fact that we are sick to death of MPs allowing unfettered immigration and walking round our own towns and supermarkets listening to *jabba jabba do* of foreign tongue in both ears. And production is down because of the use of unskilled cheap foreign labour.

Many people didn't like it that foreigners were coming here, harvesting our fruit and veg for us, healing our sick and caring for our elderly. They wanted these jobs to be done by British people (but not themselves, of course). They said the foreigners put a strain on public services, although some public services would hardly survive without them. Even so, these voters won the argument.
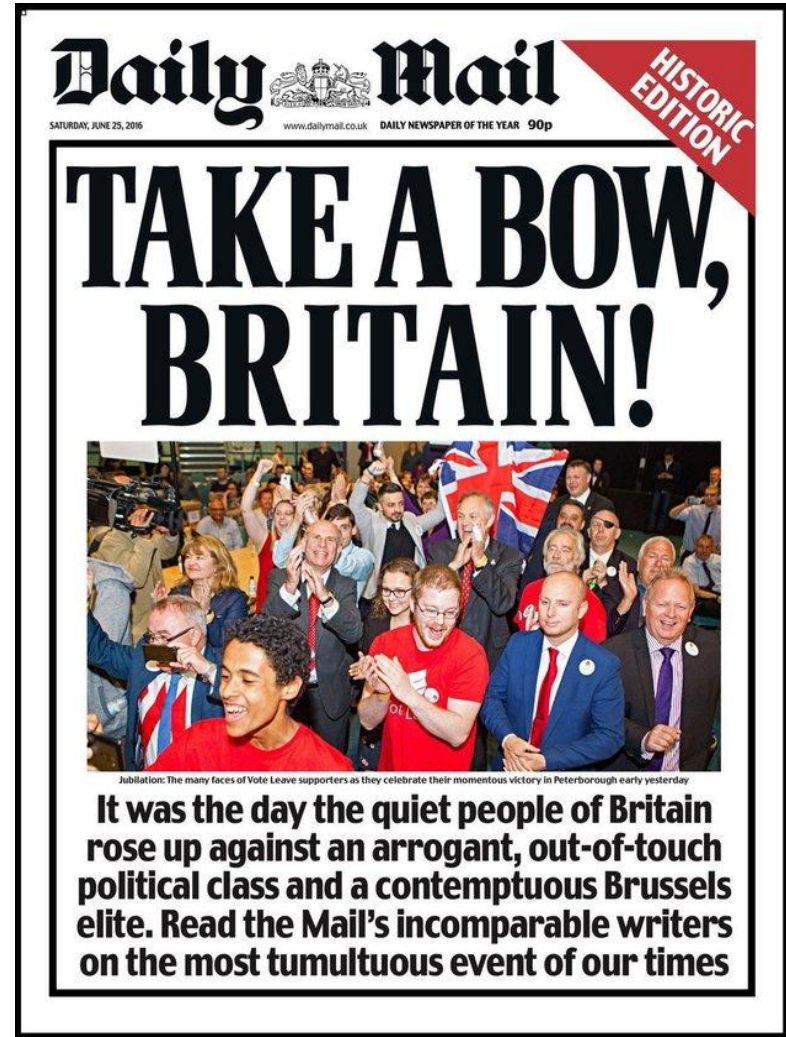
The UK is massively misinformed on the EU
From Ipsos MORI survey of UK perceptions of the EU
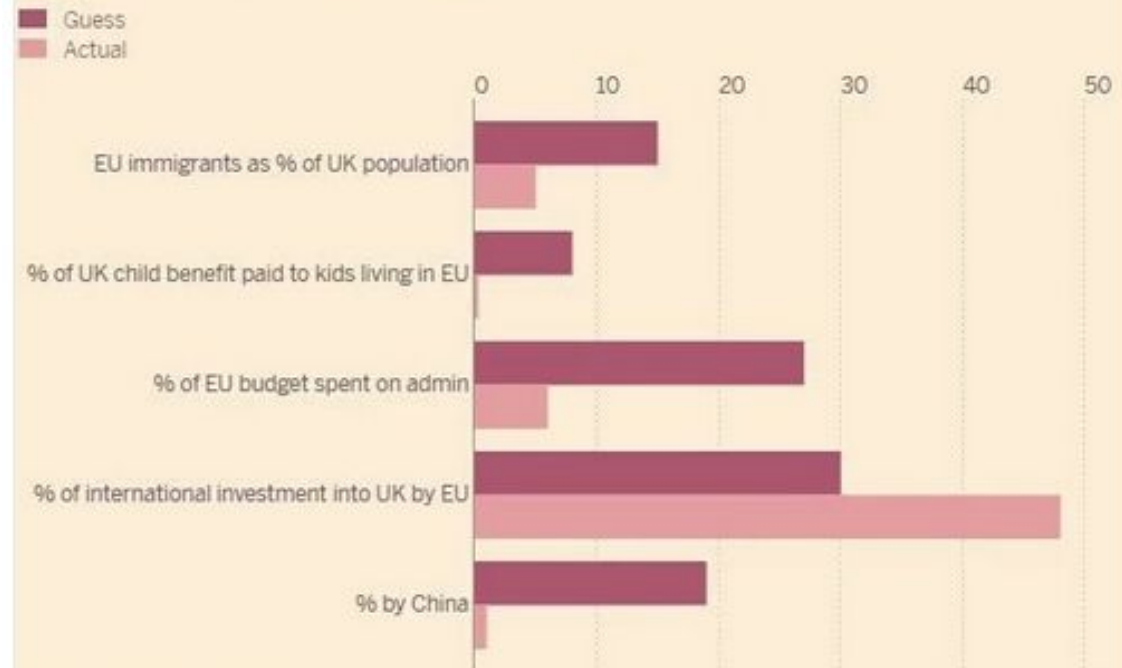
The response of the tabloid press

Major consequences of Brexit

- Destabilization of the pound, fluctuating prices
- Big international companies relocating their operations
- Britain's economy: lagging behind that of the eurozone
- Erecting trade barriers which will affect negatively the UK's commercial relations with its neighbours and the rest of the world
- Uncertainty about the status of EU citizens living and working in Britain
- Uncertainty about the status of students from the EU and the fees they pay; also – impact on the universities themselves
- Uncertainty about the rights of expatriate Britons living on the Continent
- Threat to the Union: a second referendum on Scottish independence?
- The Irish border: a major problem
- Division in the Cabinet and the Shadow Cabinet; split within the Labour and the Conservative parties

- Accelerated polarization of society:
    - university-educated cosmopolitans vs. poorly qualified nationalists
    - socially liberal youth vs. socially conservative pensioners
    - diverse, multicultural, outward-looking cities vs. introspective small towns and declining industrial regions
- Strengthening anti-immigration parties across Europe and opening for the rise of radical right-wing populist movements and parties
- Ripple effects throughout Europe: other EU countries might demand their own referenda on leaving the EU
- European institutions – able to function more smoothly and efficiently without Britain? A wake-up call for the EU to reform and improve?

Long-term lessons for politicians and society as a whole

- The dangers of systematically ignoring the needs and interests of large parts of the population; the need for governments to focus their attention on supporting those who feel disenfranchised

- The traps of populism

- The social and moral responsibility of the media to stimulate meaningful, balanced debate, and not to stir up hostility through acting upon people's anxieties

- The need for civic education in order to create well-informed, responsible voters

- The risk of resorting to referendums (direct democracy) in cases of such immense complexity, requiring specialist expertise

- The need for the political system to address more adequately the voters' concerns with immigration, and to decide how the benefits from immigration are shared with the wider electorate in the form of investment in public goods and infrastructure.

THANK YOU!