



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE



European
Institute

1991-2016 25th Anniversary

LSE and Europe

Explaining the Brexit Vote

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#LSEBrexit

WHY DID VOTERS CHOOSE BREXIT?



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..IS BREXIT JUST THE BEGINNING?



**SPØRG
FOLKET**

**Folkeafstemning
om Europagten nu!**

 **Dansk Folkeparti**



THE EU REFERENDUM EXPERIENCE

- 50+ referendums on European integration
- Since 2000, there have been 25 EU referendums, of which 10 were No-votes
 - Denmark (x2), Sweden, Ireland (x2), Greece, France, the Netherlands (x2), and UK
- Political establishment + business normally overwhelmingly pro-EU



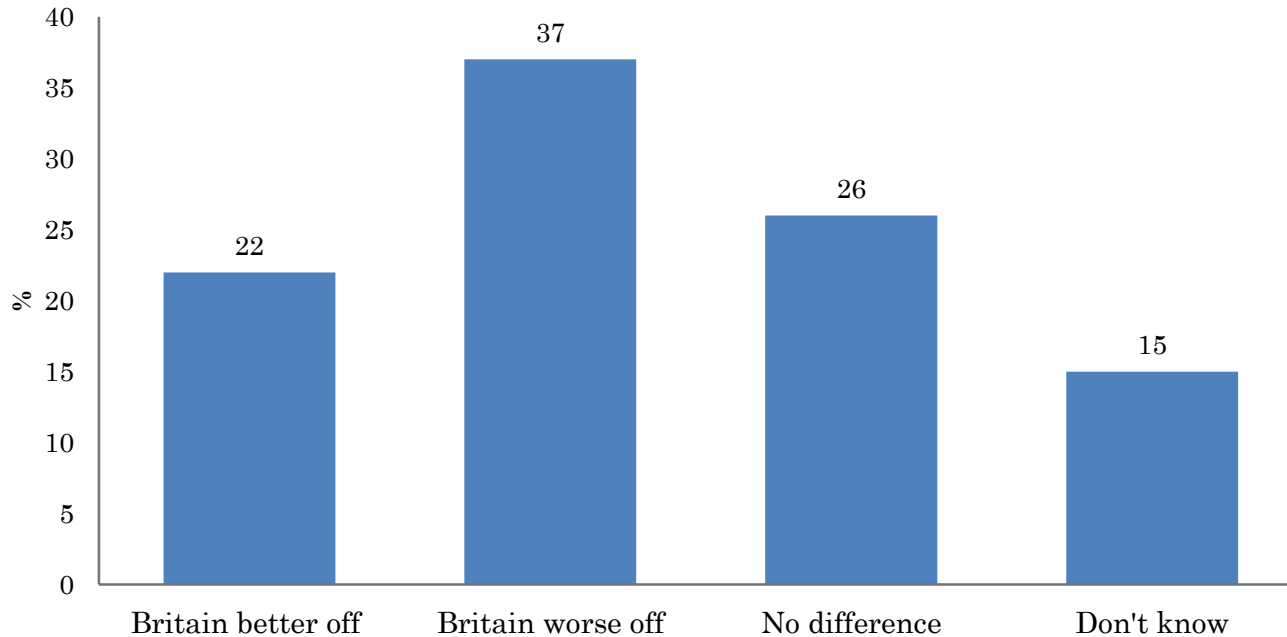
LESSONS FROM PAST EU REFERENDUMS

1. The campaign matters
 - Attitudes are highly malleable
2. Messages from political parties are important
 - But parties often divided
3. The “reversion point” is crucial
 - The consequences of a No-vote are as important as the proposal (Status Quo bias?)
4. EU referendums are not just about the EU
 - Dissatisfaction with the government and anti-establishment protest votes



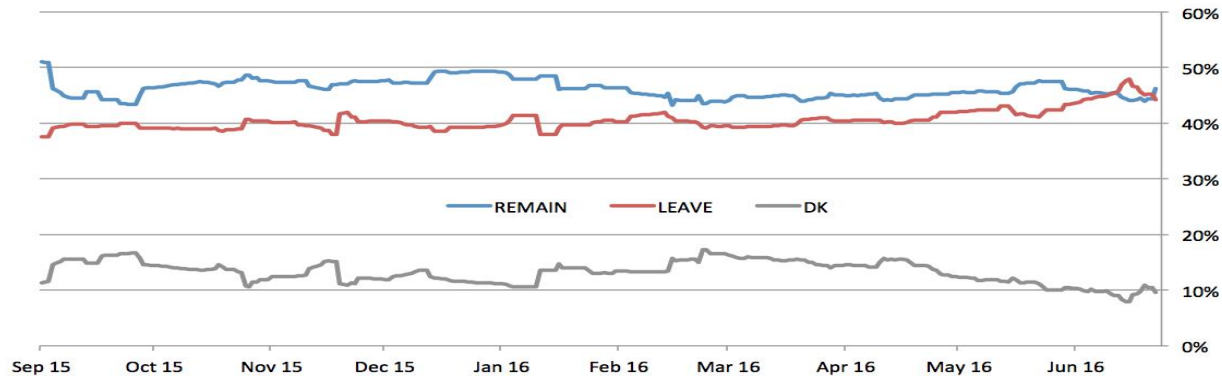
WHY THE REMAIN-SIDE FELT CONFIDENT....

Do you think Britain would be better off or worse off economically if we left the EU?



THE CAMPAIGN

- Close race
- Governing Conservative Party split, leading both camps
- Main issues:
 - REMAIN: Economic dangers of Brexit (*A Leap in the Dark*)
 - LEAVE: Immigration & Sovereignty (*Take Back Control*)
- No discussion about: democratic deficit, EU institutions



BREAKING POINT

The EU has failed us all

We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders.

Leave the European Union 
ON 23RD JUNE

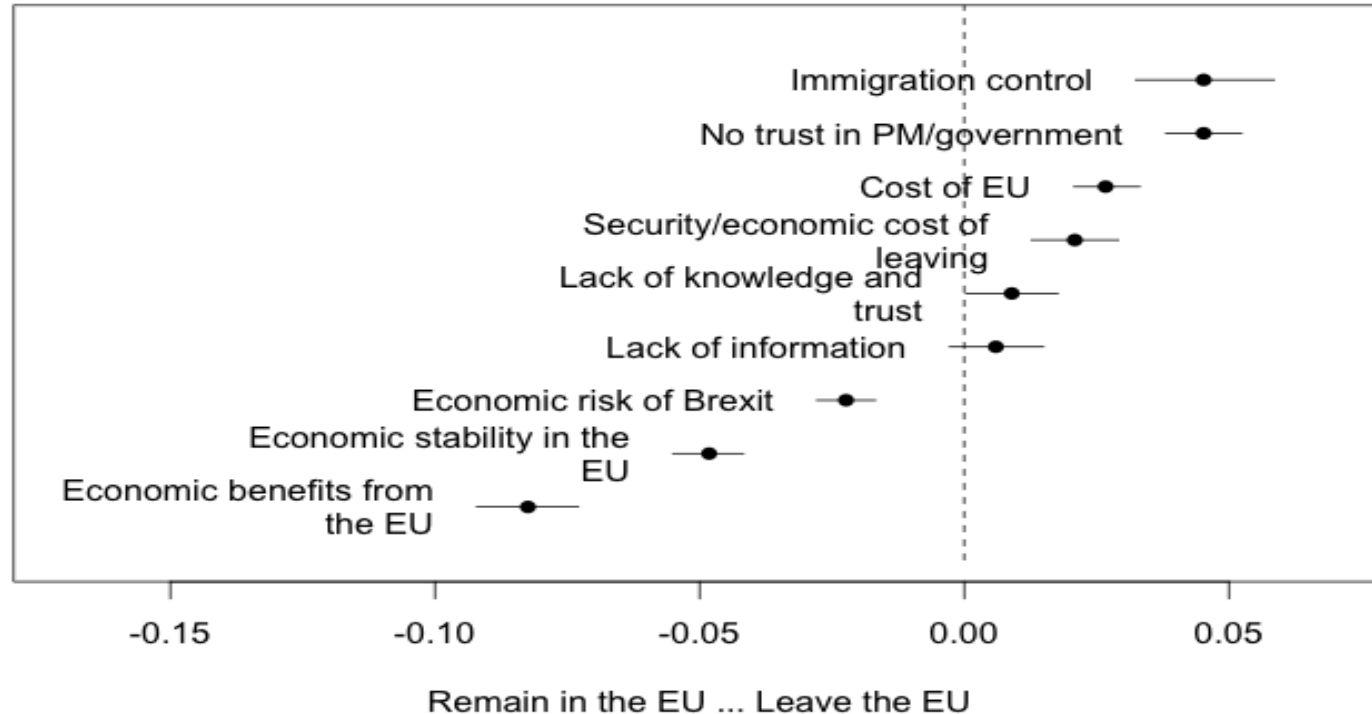
votetoleavetheeu.co.uk

Source: Centre for Economics and Business Research

3 MILLION UK JOBS ARE LINKED TO OUR TRADE WITH THE EU

More jobs and more security – Britain is stronger  Europe

THE CAMPAIGN ISSUES



Note: Pre-referendum survey of 5,000 respondents asking for “main arguments” (structural topic model) (Hobolt & Wratil)



'PROJECT FEAR' DID NOT WORK

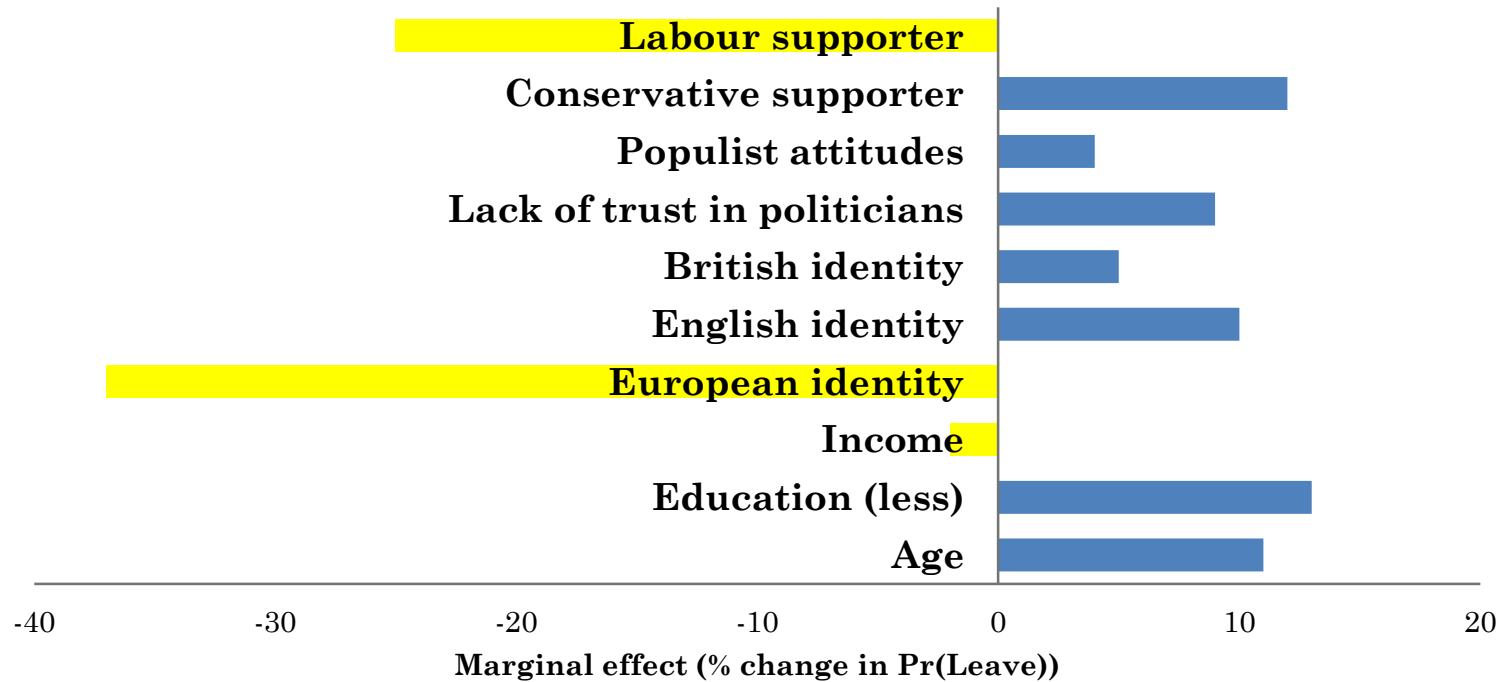
- Fear-mongering 'worked' in Scottish referendum
- Survey experiment (May 2016):

'Experts point out that the consequences of leaving / remaining in the European Union are very uncertain and difficult to predict...'

- Telling respondents about *uncertainty of Brexit*:
No effect
 - Telling respondents about *uncertainty of Remain*:
Less turnout
- Had people had enough of scare-mongering?

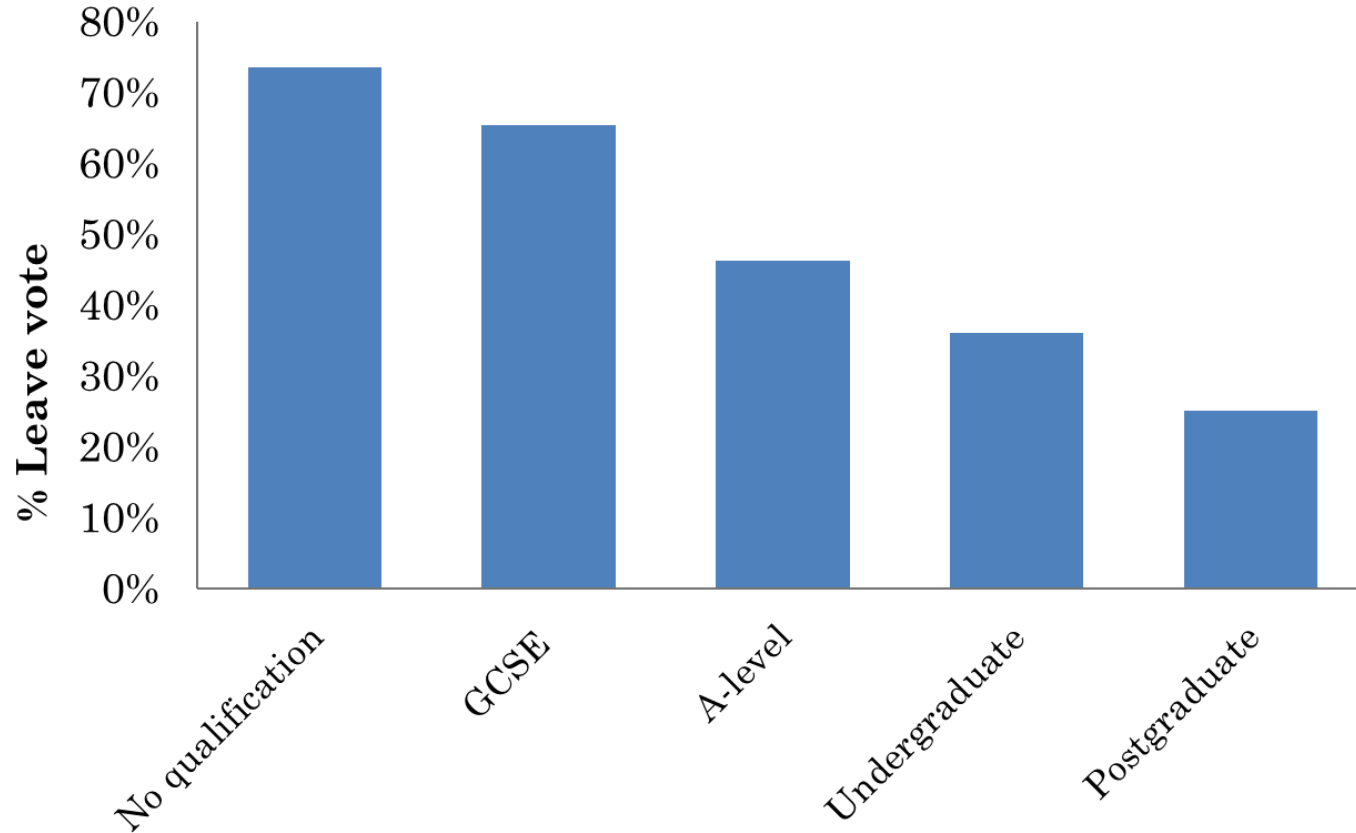


THE LEAVE VOTER: CHARACTERISTICS

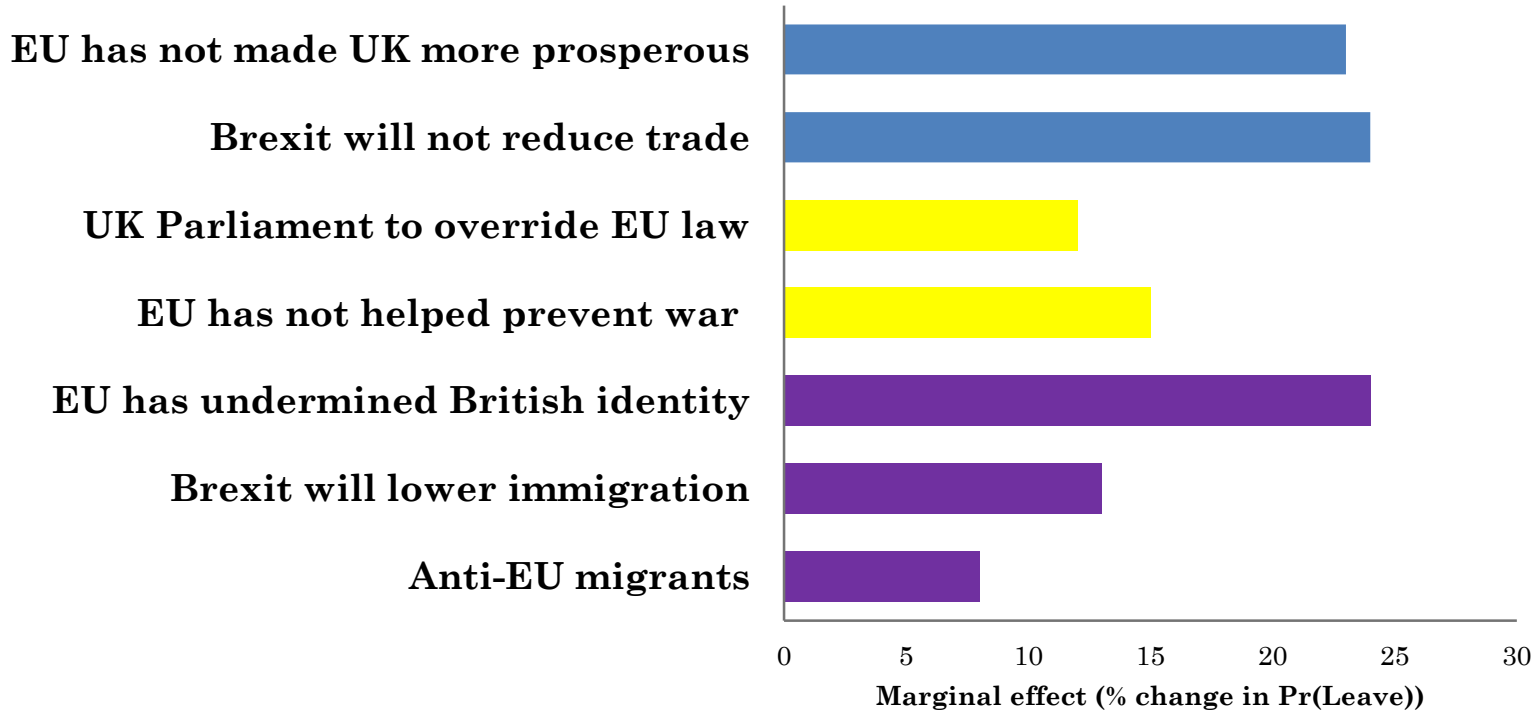


Source: Hobolt, 2016. BES. Marginal effect based on regression model of leave vote

EDUCATION GAP

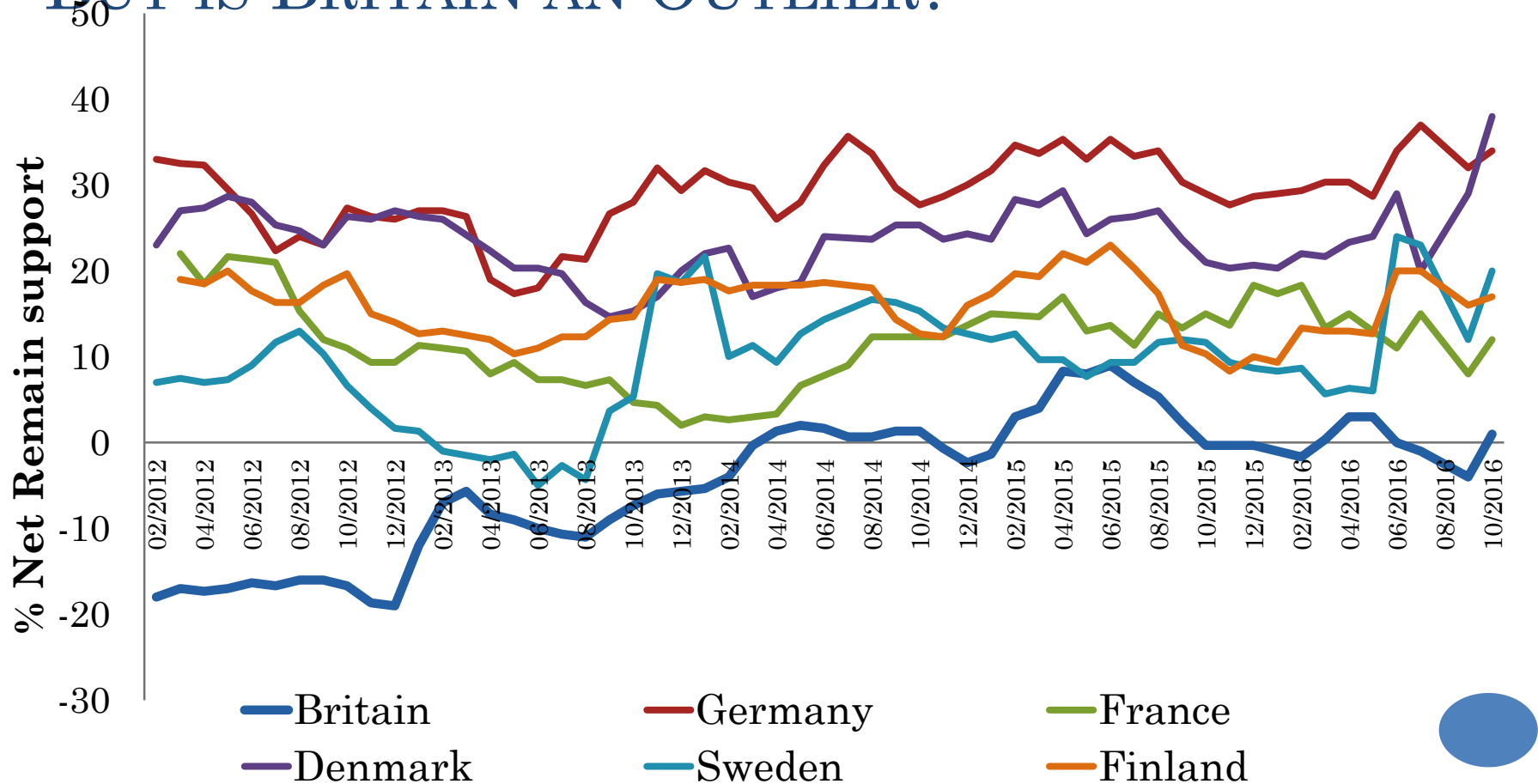


THE LEAVE VOTER: ARGUMENTS



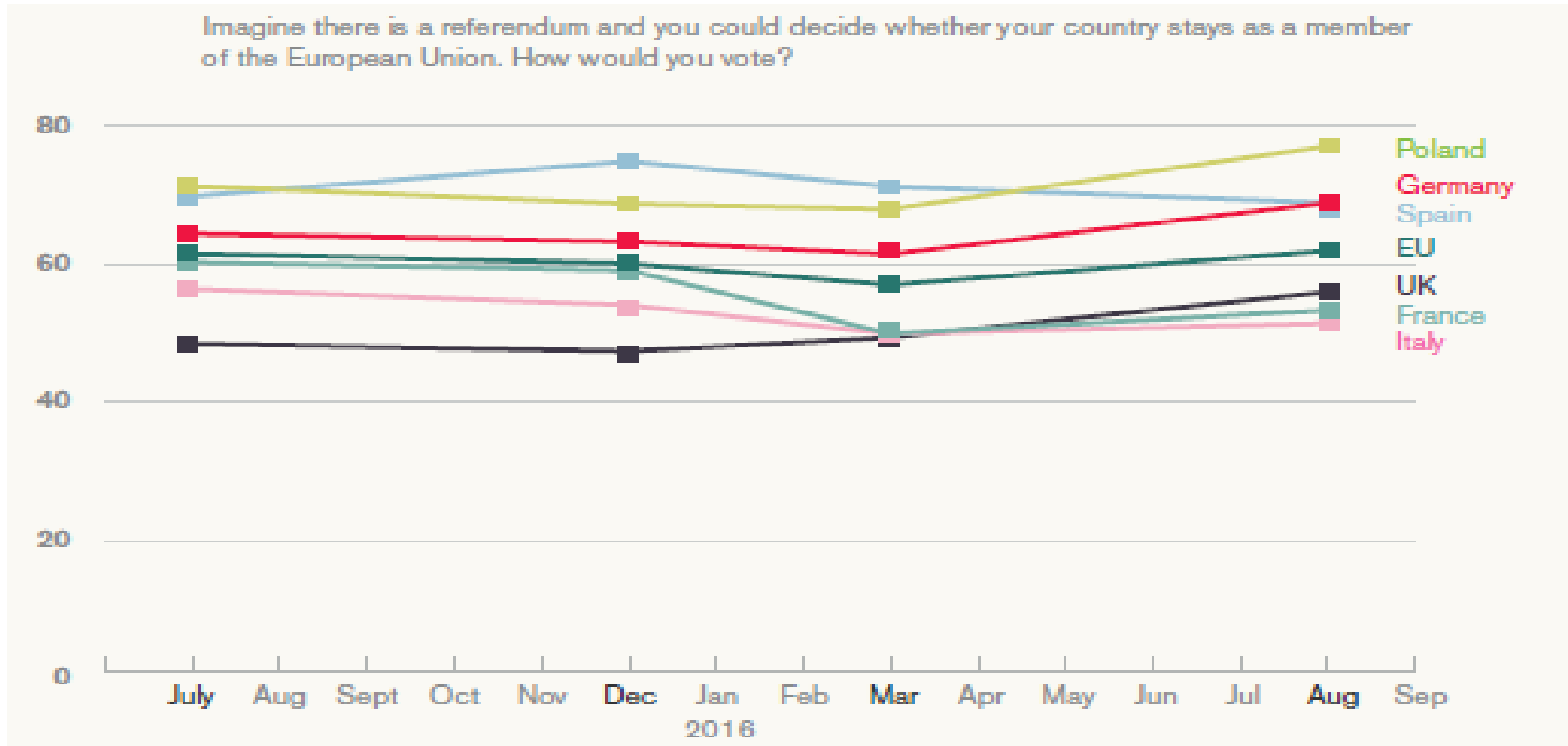
Source: Hobolt, 2016. BES. Marginal effect based on regression model of leave vote

BUT IS BRITAIN AN OUTLIER?



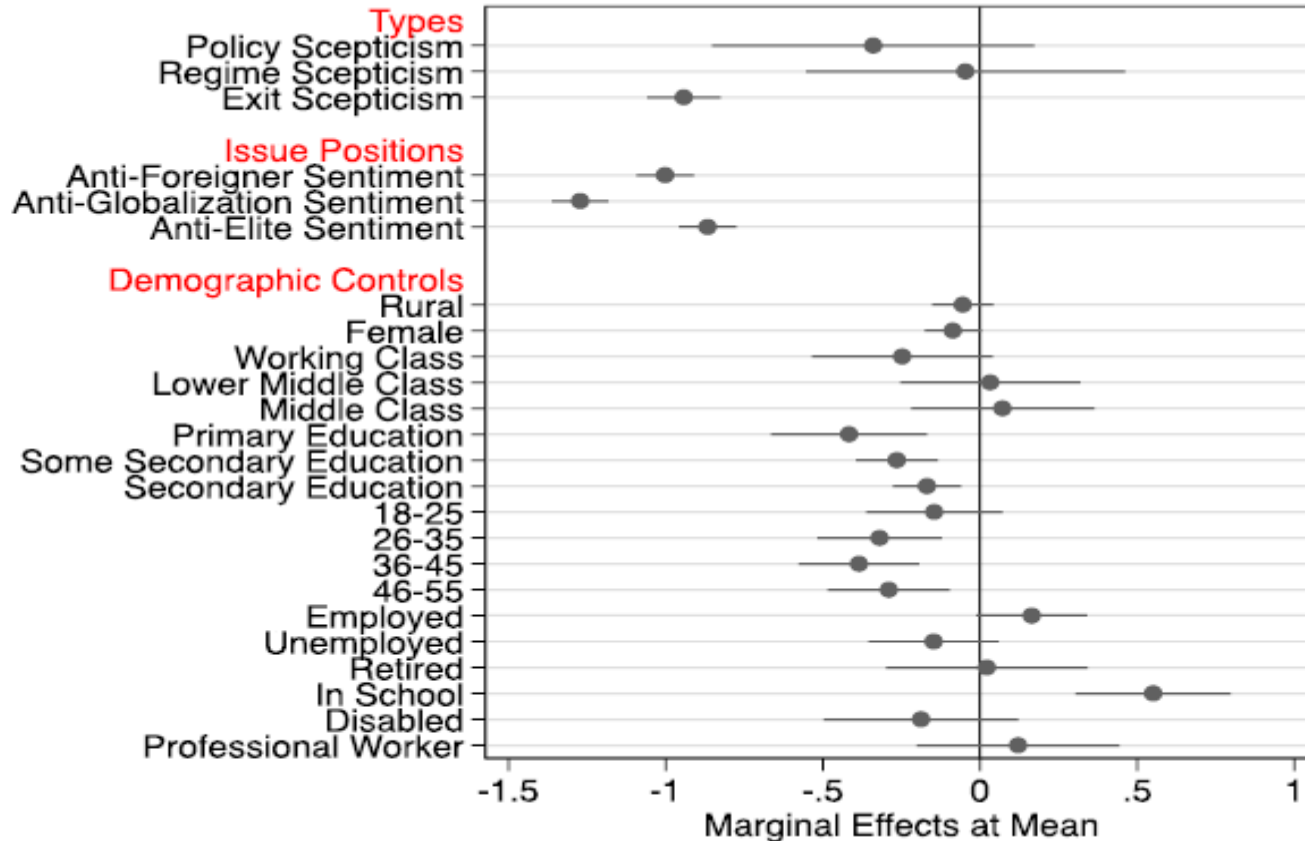
Source: YouGov Euro Tracker. Question on referendum on EU membership – net Remain support.

ITALY AND FRANCE?



Source: Bertelsmann Foundation

EXPLAINING SUPPORT FOR EU MEMBERSHIP



Source: Bertelsmann Foundation, study of 8 EU countries. Marginal effects on support for remaining in the EU.

CONCLUSION

- Referendum provided a mandate for Brexit, but not what *kind of* Brexit
 - Government appears focused on limiting Freedom of Movement
- It is unlikely, but not impossible, that the Brexit vote will trigger other EU exits
- Yet, populist right-wing forces are on the rise across Europe
 - Fuelled by anti-immigration, Eurosceptic and anti-elite sentiments
 - Similar socio-economic divides as in Brexit vote





*'Let's never ask the public
for their views ever again'*

