

Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself? - UK Case Study Summary

- New research into Brexit undertaken as part of a major cross-European study from Demos (UK) finds that the breadth of an individual's social networks, their travel patterns and mobility, and their acceptance or resistance to social liberalism all played significant roles in voting behaviour in the EU Referendum.
- Even when controlling for all other personal and geographical factors (including education and income), the study found that those who voted Leave were much less likely to have interacted with people outside of their own city, to travel overseas, or to have moved away from where they were born.
- Voters with negative attitudes towards same-sex relationships, women in the workforce and increasing ethnic diversity were also more likely to have voted Brexit.

The Brexit vote cannot be viewed solely in terms of the rising-up of economic "left behinds", according to new research conducted for a cross-European project led by the think tank Demos, finding that social networks and attitudes also played a significant role in the desire for change.

The new analysis for *Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself* finds that, aside from educational attainment, attitudes towards increasing diversity and globalisation were also clear indicators of voting behaviour – with citizens that think increased ethnic and religious diversity has benefited British society 29 percentage points less likely to vote Leave. Those who feel that globalisation has had a negative impact on Europe and Britain were 43 and 31 percentage points more likely to favour Brexit.

Views on social liberalism also played a role, with those who believe acceptance of same-sex relationships has had a positive impact on society 15 percentage points less likely to vote Leave, while the minority of voters who remain sceptical about women entering the workforce were 18 percentage points more likely to vote for Brexit – even when controlling for other personal factors, such as age and religion.

Leave voters also tend to favour a more authoritarian style of government and prioritise social order over openness, with those favouring "strong" political leaders (over those with a more conciliatory leadership style) 10 percentage points more likely to have voted to leave the EU. They would also prefer Britain to also take an uncompromising stance in its global affairs, as those who value international cooperation highly were 52 percentage points more likely to vote to Remain than those who favoured putting Britain first, without worrying what other countries think.

In a pioneering new piece of regression analysis, Demos also explored the role that closed social networks and attitudes have played in citizens' views towards the EU. Controlling for all other factors, including education and income, Demos found that Britons who had socialised with someone from a different part of Britain were 10 percentage points less likely to vote Leave; those socialising with people overseas were still 15 percentage points more likely to want to vote Leave.

Despite broad geographic trends in areas voting to Leave or Remain, local indicators such as neighbourhood deprivation or a recent sharp increase of the number of migrants in the area had less of a clear impact on attitudes towards the EU than individual factors, particularly education, higher levels of which had a clear correlation with more positive open attitudes towards Europe across other demographics.

Cross-country surveys undertaken as part of the project showed Britain as the most Eurosceptic of all countries studied (Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Poland and Sweden), with a significant majority in favour of either leaving the EU or reducing its powers. Britons also hold the lowest level of trust in EU institutions: 60% of Britons report very low levels of trust in the European Commission and 62% report low levels of trust in the European Parliament.

Media contact:

Alex Porter, Demos (UK)

alex.porter@demos.co.uk

Ph. +44 7969 326 069

Mob. +44 7969 326 069

Notes to Editors

Demos is Britain's leading cross-party think tank: an independent, educational charity, which produces original and innovative research. Visit: demos.co.uk

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The full research, methodology and an executive summary are available to download [here](#).

This study was part of a major pan-European research project from the UK-based think tank, Demos, which sought to capture how an emerging culture and politics of fear is gripping the European Union as a whole, and its unique manifestations within member states. The project addressed five levels of impacts: party politics, public policy, social cohesion and integration, media rhetoric, citizens and identity.

Demos undertook extensive pan-European research, as well as conducting specific analysis on the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union, and commissioned exclusive new academic research within five other member states to provide a snapshot of the 'flash-points of fear' on the ground in Germany, France, Spain, Poland and Sweden. The project was supported by two high-level workshops in Brussels, bringing together thought leaders from across the European Union, to map local level impacts and devise solutions at EU, national and grassroots levels.