



AALBORG UNIVERSITY  
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## BREXIT – WHY DID PEOPLE VOTE for *Leave*

Master thesis



DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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## Abstract

If Schumann's declaration of 9 May 1950 did not receive a negative response by the British government and if Britain had afterwards ratified the Treaty of Paris forming the European Coal and Steel Community, there would undoubtedly be no Brexit. (Westlike, 2017)

The intention of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union has caused disturbance in Europe and a serious concern around the globe. The controversial relationship between the UK and the European Union have been a matter of debates since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1973 when the country became a member of European Economic Community. After forty tree years of membership, on the early morning of June 24, 2016 became explicit that the United Kingdom was going toward to leave the European Union. The majority of the electorate, namely 51,9 %, chose BREXIT.

For many, the British vote was absolutely unexpected though the European Union has been fragmented for some years. The “Brexit” phenomenon and its outcome emphasizes a strong cleavage in the will of the population. Some scholars explain is as a demonstration of social class contrasts. social, others argue that Brexit is an illustration of anti-EU sentiments.

The paper scope is to investigate the motive behind the Leave vote and thus find an explanation of why more than a half of the Britons choose to vote for Brexit.

The paper will observe the Brexit phenomenon through the lens of Rational choice theory, as it is seen adequate to explain motives behind the vote and thus to explain the behaviour. In order to form the analysis, and to provide arguments for outlining an answer to the problem formulation I will apply a hypothesis.

As the paper’s position is that the phenomenon should be observed into its social context it will be applied the interpretation view. In political science, the Interpretive approaches claim that individuals’ behaviour, in regard to political action, is influenced by beliefs and preferences. In other words, when a human makes a certain political choice, it is due to fact that he or she shares the values of the elected party, and therefore he or she thinks that their choice will contribute to their well-being. The interpretive school of political science claims that we can model the way humans think and affect political action based on narratives or on what people or the “others” tell. Therefore, in the analysis I will be address the role of the newspapers in shaping attitudes.

The conclusion was drawn based on the findings from the analysis, namely that the biased information reported in the newspapers is essential in shaping the vote for Leave. The analysis also showed that there is also a substantial lack of knowledge in regard to EU as institution and how

it does work among low-educated people and a better knowledge among well-educated individuals, which may cause the division in the votes. The lack of knowledge how the EU works makes the readers of particular newspapers more exposed to biased news.

The findings in this thesis are valid in relation to the context, the research was conducted.

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## 1. Introduction

The vote for Brexit caused a global shockwave and initiated global disputes about the long-term sustainability of the EU and the financial markets. The retreat will have enormous effects on the politics, culture, and economy of the UK regardless of a trade deal or hard removal. As a result of the vote for Brexit, UK has emerged as one of the most divided societies within Europe. Furthermore, the Brexit election led to the unexpected political division that separated the lines of political parties within British politics. Therefore, the Brexit acted as a potent reminder of the splits between Britain's political elite over its relationship with the European Union. On the other hand, Brexit is a sign of long-term social changes that have been slowly changing public opinion and political behaviour through competition in the UK. This paper addresses the causes of division in Britain as a result of Brexit.

### 1.1 Polarization of Britain through Brexit

The public view has always emerged as the most critical part of any democratic government. While the referendum in the UK may have accelerated the emergence of different attitudes that had been developing for years, the rate at which new supporters of Remain and Leave has enhanced affective polarization in the country. Protagonists in both parties of the never-ending debate on whether to leave or remain have exceeded the extent where it invoked the notion of a second referendum. The second referendum poses questions on the public's final decision which is referred to as the will of the people. Thus, the central critical factor in the cause of Brexit is what the citizens voted for regarding Brexit. However, continued division among the UK citizens will continuously affect the current and future political environment of the country.

Curtice (2019), questions whether the voters were properly informed for the consequences of the vote so they could make decision and argues that this perhaps was the reason for the increased push for a second referendum immediately after the conclusion of the Brexit negotiations (Curtice, et al., 2019). Research and survey reports have further revealed the people's need for a second referendum. However, some of the stories have shown that most of the voters contended with their decisions in the poll (Curtice, 2016). More so, there have been contradicting reports on whether the public needs another referendum. For instance, Curtice (2019), addresses that during the first survey, 36% did not support a second referendum, while 44 % were interested in a second referendum. On



the other hand, a recent study reported that 47 % of the public were in support of the notion while 34 % remained in the opposition. Therefore, comparing with the first survey report, it is clear that the aid of another ballot is declining consistently instead of increasing. Contrary, it can also be argued that the public voice on the issue of another referendum depends on how the question is developed (Evans & Menon, 2017).

Additionally, each of the winning or losing party seems to contradict massively on their interests. Hobolt (2016, 1260) argues that although the Brexit referendum was unique and critical, most of the Leave voters were motivated by the emotions of anti-establishment and immigration. The Leave voters also reveal groups of less educated, less well-off, and stack within demographic divides. Contrary, the voters of Remain included the well-educated and young individuals. There exists a big division between those who welcome national developments and those who feel that they have been neglected and left behind by the forces of globalization.

According to Lord (2019) one of the causes of division in Britain is the existence of an unstable, indeterminate, and arbitrary political system. The UK political system is divided regarding the approaches to alternatives of their membership in the European Union. Lord further contents that the British government lacks stability and critical power to select one of the different strategies of Brexit both through the procedure and effective timing (Lord, 2018). Initially, the British political system utilized a single dimension of political competition, which implies that the country avoided the dangers of a multi-dimension structure and plurality domination. Thus, even the political members that voted for the losing party usually expected the enactment of the same policies from the dominant party. Therefore, before the emergence of Brexit, the one-dimension political party was leading to a breakdown in the British political system (Hearne, 2017). The minority parties and their supporters felt that the winning party did not adequately represent them, and thus, they voted against Brexit.

The majority of the people in the UK were divided according to their economic concerns rather than mere politics. Hearne (2017) argues that the differences in opinions in the Brexit situation are accelerated by the liabilities and merits of the European Union, where Brexit implicates a long-term shift in the class position and economy of Britain (Hearne, 2017). The most significant impact of the Brexit that could be anticipated is that Britain would experience the eminent recession ever. Even with a trade agreement, Brexit would lead to loss of employment and real estate collapse opportunities as investors and companies would stop using London as a financial hub (Iain Begg, 2016).

The analysis of literature shows that indeed Britons are divided. While some indicate that Brexit divided the country, others believe that the division had been there for decades and that even after Brexit is over, no one should think that there will be no division. In some studies, economic inequalities are said to be the reason for the divide. Yet in others, the divide is purely cultural with some citizens being culture liberals while others being culture conservatives. Age, education and regions have been shown to influence the divide. These varying views and revelations make the reasons for the divide complex. It is, thus, imperative to understand why Britons are divided in regard to Brexit. Is it due to economic inequalities? Or is it just a cultural divide?

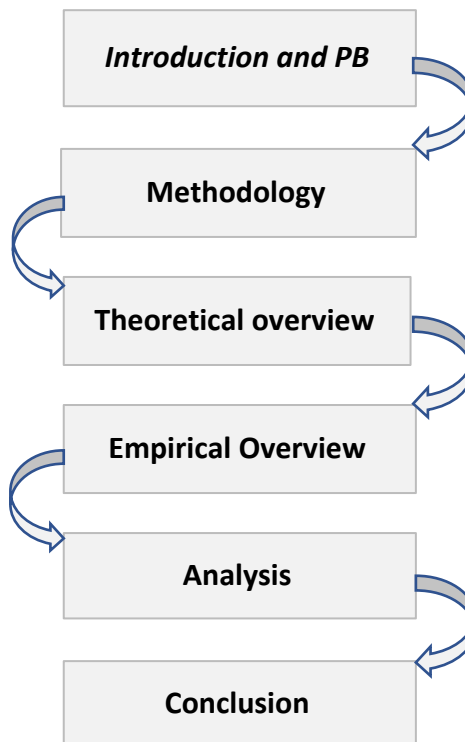
Despite the indication that the division is between the young, urban, university-educated liberal and the old, rural and school-leaver conservative, it has not really been made clear why this division and why people vote. A study is necessary to understand the motives behind those who supported Remain and those who backed Leave. It is not enough to explain that there is a cultural divide and that the Brexit vote deepened it, nor is it enough to just know that Britons are divided as revealed by the Brexit vote. A lack of understanding of this could be the justification behind the difficulties in implementing Brexit. Therefore, understanding why there is a divide in Britain and not in any other European countries is necessary. Consequently, the interest of this paper is to observe why **51,89 %** of the Britain voted for Leave and will work on the following problem formulation:

## 1.2 Problem formulation:

### **Why did the majority of the Britons vote Leave?**

## 1.3 Project structure

This paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of this paper and presents the problem formulation and basic methodology. The second chapter presents the methodology for conducting this study. The third chapter presents the theory through which the analysis seeks answer to the problem formulation. The following chapter illustrates the empirical evidence. Chapter five is analysis, followed by the Conclusion, chapter six, where the main findings will be presented and will be outlined an answer to the problem formulation (figure 1).

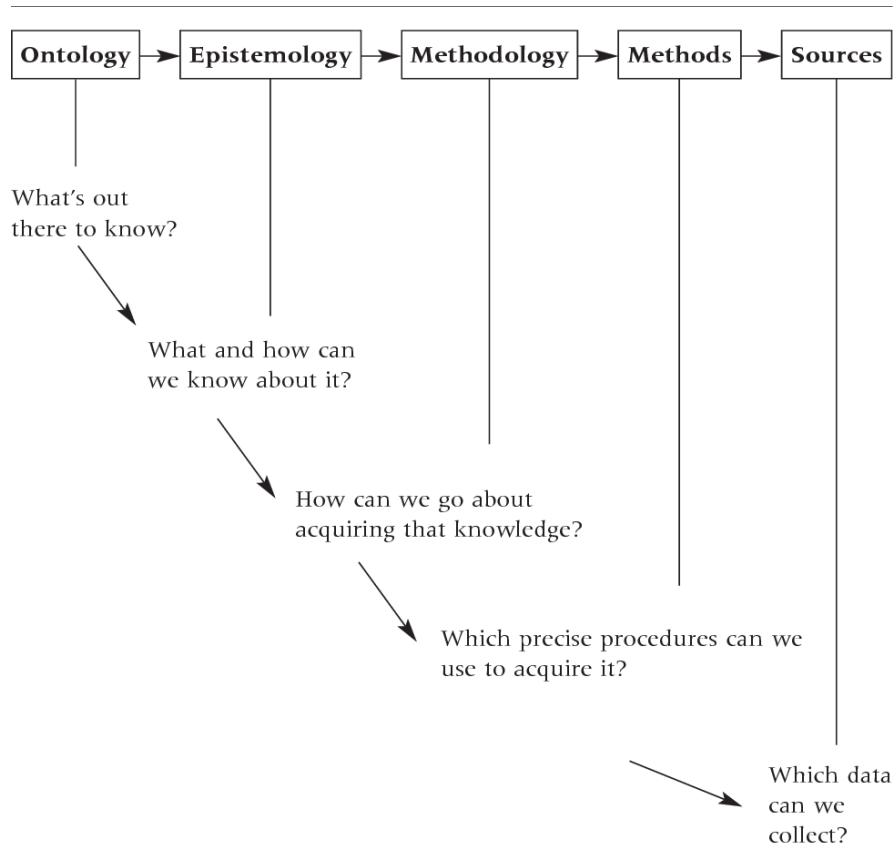


*Figure 1 Project structure self-developed*

## 2. Methodology

Arbnor and Bjerke describe methods as: the guiding principles of the creation of knowledge” (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). In this chapter I will be present the variety of tools applied in developing this thesis (figure 2). It includes:

- Ontological consideration – issues of Ontology
- Epistemological consideration – how knowledge about the research should be understand
- Methodological approach – overall approach to observation
- Research design
- Choice of methods



*Figure 2 Correlation between building blocks of research (Kauda, figure adopted from Hay 2002, p. 64)*

## 2.1 Ontological considerations

The term Ontology applies in social science in order to feature the nature of reality the observer seeks to investigate. In other words, Ontology describes the knowable. In Social Science terms, scholars observe Ontology from two perspectives, namely:

- the social world is external for the individual and consequently "imposes itself in the individual's consciousness"
- the social world is subjectively fabricated or individually constructed by the actor and therefore it is a product of his/her cognition (Kauda, 2012)

Ontology is relative in the sense that reality is portrayed differently and depends on the scholar's view of the relationship between an individual and his/her surrounding. Some scholars distinguish the social environment from the individual. Other scholars (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002,2003; Parsons 2010) claim that human beings and the social environment construct each other. In short, the perception of reality is determined by the assumptions made by the observer about people and the

environment. This perception, in turn, is at the essence of what the scholar considers to be the truth and how knowledge about truth must be obtained (Parsons, 2010). Therefore, the question is whether there is a real world, which is independent of our knowledge of it?

The two perspective, namely the social world is separately of the individual is called *objectivism* by Bryman and Bell (2007). Since objectivism debates and observes the acquired data as it factually is, taking into account facts, consequently without emotional interpretations. Hence, the knowledge acquired is autonomous and not affected by social factors. Consequently, the study is considered unbiased and reliable. The other one, claiming for non-separateness of social world and individual is respectively is called subjectivism (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In respect to this perspective, subjectivism, individual knowledge and praxis, personal perception, influence the collection and interpretation of information.

In regard to this study, under ontology, I will accept that Brexit vote is the fact of the matter, the social world, which cannot be observed from the outside as it is subjectively fabricated by the individuals.

## 2.2 Epistemological considerations

The term Epistemology portrays "*how we know what we know*" or what we assume to be the truth. Some scientists argue that it is possible if observing externally to "*know the truth about a particular social world*". Others claim that the social world can only be understood by observing it intersubjectively by the "*frame of reference of the individual actor*". (Kauda, 2012)

As the ontology illustrates the scholar's view about the nature of the world, the epistemology illustrates his view of what more we can know about the world. Actually, epistemology is a theory of knowledge. Therefore, the epistemological question is "*What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known?*" (Parsons, 2010). Questions of whether it is possible to define a "real" or "objective" relation between social phenomena and how, are epistemological. Defining a real or objective relationship between social phenomena, however, brings us back to ontology and the claim that a really independent world does not exist as individuals' actions are attached to this social world (*anti-foundationalist ontology*) (Parsons, 2010). This position entails interpretivism theory of knowledge: as it would be irrational to claim for independent knowledge of

an outside world, which we do not believe exists (Parsons, 2010). Also, an observer cannot be objective as he lives in social world and as such, he is socially constructed.

In contrast, the other position, namely the Foundationalist, aims to establish, as much as possible, a “real” relation between phenomena of the social world. The matter of concern is whether it can be achieved through direct observation or we should assume that there are some relationships in the real world, that cannot be observed per se. The answer to this matter outlines the researcher’s epistemological position and how he understands the concept of cause-end effect. In other words, ontology and epistemology are tightly related (Parsons, 2010). The foundationalist ontology is related to positivism or realism and adopts quantitative and/ qualitative methodology.

The position of the thesis is that the researcher cannot be objective and cannot conduct his study from the outside, as an external observer, therefore an interpretive approach will be adopted and will be concerned both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### 2.3 Choice of methods

The qualitative data included in this study is collected from scientific studies, scholars’ researches on the Brexit phenomenon, analytical papers and books. The quantitative data is gathered from governmental and international statistical studies.

The challenge in the process of collecting the data was related to the amount of literature related to the topic, and also the evaluation of its validity, which is time consuming and the time given for this thesis is limited. By this reason, it was chosen to prioritize data collection from credible sources such as governmental statistics studies from European Commission and expert’s reports. Furthermore, the collection of qualitative data and analysis are more time- consuming than quantitative methods, therefore developing hypothesis will serve to narrow and shape the focus of the study. For this reason, in this paper will be applied a hypothesis to structure the analysis and to support the arguments in outlining an answer to the problem formulation.

### 2.4 The Interpretive view

From an interpretive position, a social phenomenon should be understood in the context it has been interpreted. The interpretive position, as argued by Furlong and Marsh (2010), presumes that objective reality does not exist, and thus there is no objective truth as the world is constructed

socially by its participants (Parsons, 2010). The description of a relationship between social phenomena is the observer's interpretation of the sense the participants gave to their actions, therefore, the truth is partial, not absolute (Parsons, 2010).

Qualitative research, in form of interviews or observation of particular social groups, will serve the observer to determine the way individuals understand their world.

## 2.5 Theoretical Considerations

As defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998:15) scientific theory is “*a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena*” (Kauda, 2012)

In regard to the problem formulation the theory considered in this thesis is Rational Choice Theory. The theory was chosen as the fundamental concepts of the theory are seemed to be most suitable to support the analysis and provide arguments that will outline an answer to the problem formulation a matter of interest of this thesis. Application of constructivism was also considered at the beginning but have been disregarded as it would make the research too broad and difficult to manage in the time given for this thesis.

## 2.6 Limitations related to the topic

When the choice to work on the division of Britons in regard to Brexit was made, I considered to observe both *why* Leave and *why* Remain and to compare the findings. But the study would become very broad as the collection of related data and also the observation of it would take longer time. Due to time limitation in relation to the time given for his thesis I choose to focus on the vote Leave.

In relation to theories of science, there was consideration of several theories, such as Liberalism, which might explain the vote Remain; and Nationalism and Populism, that might suggest an explanation of Leave vote. Due to time limits related to the due date these were disregarded.

### 3. Theoretical overview

In this chapter will be presented the theory related to the topic of this paper, namely the Rational choice theory, as well as some of its perspectives. The theory was selected as it is considered adequate to provide an explanation of the factors leading to the desire to vote Leave. The theory aims to provide arguments in order to outline an answer to the research question, namely “*Why the majority of the Britons voted Leave?*”

#### 3.1 Rational Choice Theory

Political debates about the welfare state often come with notions that people act according to their own interests and thus support political parties or policies that are beneficial to themselves. Scientists suggest that people can be relied upon to act in such a way as to guarantee the achievement of their personal goals, guided by their own interest. With this argument in mind, the following chapter will introduce the theory of rational choice and its basic characteristics.

“*Choice is a deliberate desire*” (Aristotle, quoted by Elster) and in order to determine how to act, people must be cognizant of the respective factual matters. Also, people must know what they believe in and what they accept as true. In other words, when we determine rationality in decision-making we should also take an account of the rational beliefs. (Jon Elster, 1986).

As described in Encyclopaedia Britannica, Rational choice theory, also called rational action theory or choice theory, is a philosophy, maintaining that humans choose to take action in line with their individual preferences (ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, u.d.)

According to first ideas of rationality in decision making emerged in studies of economics. Concepts of the rational choice theory can be found in writings of philosophers such as Max Weber and Adam Smith (Hedström & Stern, 2018). The concept of the theory was thereafter developed based on the assumptions that people have egoistic preferences; people maximize their own profitability; and people act autonomously based on complete information about the alternatives of their decision as well as the likelihood of their outcome and its effects (Witteck, 2017).

In the political science, the Rational choice approach is greatly applied. Rational choice analysis/explanation often requires an economic approach- analysis of the incentives; the assumption of rationality and self-interest which in a non-market setting outline the link to the political decision making. Schumpeter (1942: 269), a scholar in the realm of economics, claims that “*democracy is an*



*agreement for political decision-making in which the individual acquires the power to make decisions through a competitive struggle for voters".* In addition, Schumpeter argues that the electors are self-interested, and they want specific things. On the other hand, parties are campaigning and adopting certain policies in order to obtain a majority in the elections and to gain power (Hindmoor, 2010).

According to Anthony Downs (1987), electors support political parties that are closest to them in the political space. Merrill and Gofman (1999), on the other hand, argue that the electors support the party, which political ideology serves to achieve their personal goals or it is on "*their side of an issue*" (Hindmoor, 2010).

As argued by McGee "*Rational Choice Theory*" is an umbrella term for a variety of models explaining social phenomena as outcomes of individual action that can—in some way—be construed as rational." (Wittek, 2017). In the defined by Wittek "*thin*" version of the rational choice theory, preferences are driven by self-interested people who strive for maximum material profit. He further claims that when people are selfish and they pursue personal goals, they are willing to breach rules and often to violate the law. In the *thin* version (full rationality) presumes that people are completely aware about all their decision options, the possible outcome and the effect of it. Decision making is grounded on the sums of the benefits (of a situation) and the calculated "costs" associated with that particular decision. Put it differently, individuals, choose the option, which generates the greatest predicted advantage.

Considering rationality in decision making, Herbert Simon (1957) proposed a model of bounded rationality in which *selective attention* reduces the quality and quantity of information and knowledge, which further influences the perception and thus the observation of that information. Simon emphasized that "*limited information leads to satisfaction rather than maximization*" and people are likely to accept options with a limited advantage (Wittek, 2017) .

As stated by Wittek *rationality* differ in *type*; *preferences* and the *individualism* presumptions. All rational choice interpretations presume that explanations for social-level outcomes (such as institutions, collective action, etc.) should be based on the social theory of "individualism" in terms of that the persons concern is not only/not always for themselves, but for all individuals. In the "*thin*" version, social structures do not affect behavior. The "*thick*" version highlights that behavior can be affected by social and institutional embeddedness and thus social phenomena can be explained through a three-level social mechanism:

- *situational mechanism*
- *mechanism for generating actions and*

- *mechanism of transformation*

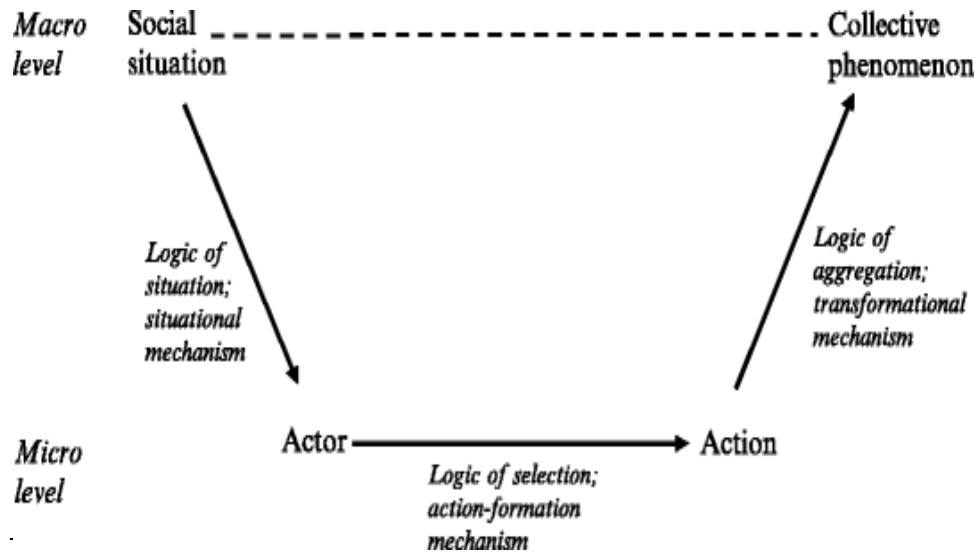
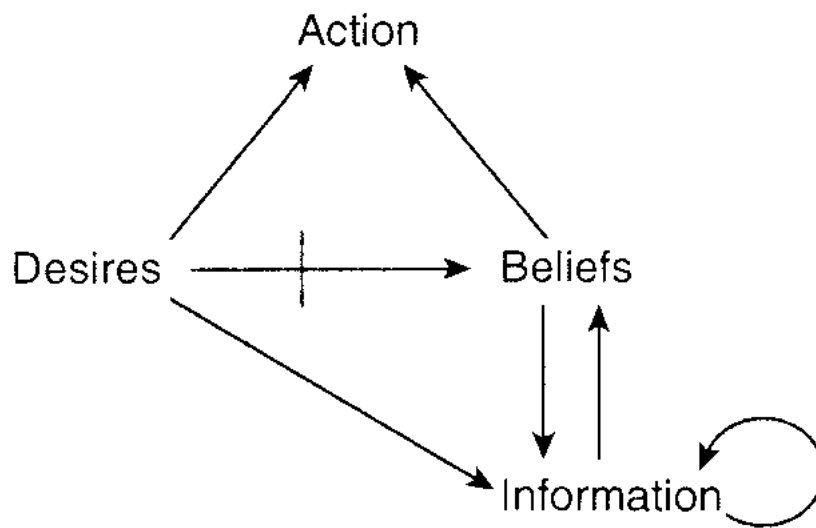


Figure 3 Model of Rational choice theory developed by Hedström and Stern

Rational choice sociologists are macro-oriented (figure 3) and seek to explain interdependencies and the macro-outcome A or the interrelationship between A and D considering the effect of human actions (Hedström & Stern, 2018). According to Coleman model (1986) the explanation includes three cause-and-effect relationships with focus on factors such as the situation and actions of others affect person's beliefs; how it does influence the way a human's acts and how these actions bring about the social outcomes to be explained.

As Elster argues (2009), the purpose of rational choice theory is to define what is reasonable for an actor to do in a given situation and to prescribe the actor's behaviour by assuming that the actor follows the instructions (Elster, 2009).

As shown in the drawing (figure 4), rational choice is determined in terms of the relationships between action, desire, belief, and information. At a minimum, the theory on rational choice should determine how best the actor can materialize his/her will, taking into account their beliefs. In addition, the theory should define what beliefs are reasonable for agents to hold, in the view of their evidence. However, a belief can be rational and still false. By acting rationally means not only to rely on evidence already given but also to collect more information before forming the convictions that lead one to the final decision.



**Figure 1.**

*Figure 4 Elster's model of rational choice*

A rational belief can be outlined by the actors' desires, not by intent, but circumstantially during the collection of information. For example, for an individual who is not much interested in finances or economy, there is no point in reading financial reports about the economic disadvantages of leaving the EU. The amount and the quality of information depend on the information collected at the early phase of the search.

Rational action is also understandable per se. However, it is not always obvious and understandable how the actor can remain rational in the constellation. Irrational actions can also be understandable. The scholar distinguishes three versions of irrational but understandable behavior:

The first version of irrational but understandable decision happens when the mechanism of decision is cut by some reason, such as under specific pressure or urgency. Urgency causes powerful emotion that may hinder the actor from acquiring information before taking action. It means that instead of using time for collecting more evidence, the actor makes actions without taking into account the consequences (Elster, 2009).

The second version is motivated belief. It happens when the actor stops collecting information as the information acquired so far maintain the belief the person would like to be real. This form of collecting information produces a biased belief.

The third version of understandable irrationality happens when the mechanism of decision is as Amos Tversky called it "wire-crossed" (Amos Tversky - a science in cognitive and

mathematical psychology, contributor in researches on systematic cognitive bias and managing risk) (Elster, 2009). Tversky argued that we can without difficulties understand why the mind might engage in cognitive dissonance reduction (desirable thinking, as presented above), but we cannot understand why the mind should also produce dissonance? As it said in a French saying: “*We believe easily what we hope and what we fear.*” In other words, the fear of certain outcome makes people disregard the evidence they have acquired from the collected information and makes them believe that a bad result is more likely to happen. Scholars cannot find an explanation of why we believe in something, which is neither maintained by our desires, nor by the evidence. Still, the irrational behaviour is understandable as it a result of the belief-desire system of the actor: “*The wish is the father of the thought!*” (Elster, 2009)

We can easily state that behaviour should be interpreted based on the beliefs and desires that causing them, but for doing so we also have to determine them, for example by looking at evidence, such as claims, allegations, petitions about the actor's motivation and the incentives imputed to him by the surroundings. It will be difficult to eliminate the likelihood that the incentives were intentionally selected to make the one believes, falsely, that a specific motivation was at work as the "professional" motivation can be motivating per se (Elster, 2009). The scholar distinguishes two extends of true motivations: strength and depth. Strength is evaluated by the sacrifices an actor is ready to make, and depth, measured by the persistence of the motive over time. False motivation is when an individual is ready to declare immediate loyalty to any cause if it is beneficial for him/her but is not prepared to pay any price for it.

To summarize, *rational behaviour* is the way in which people act in order to achieve particular goals in a given situation under certain circumstances. People are rational and self-interested and as such the outcome of their actions can be predicted. When analysing rational choices, scientists take into account people's personal preferences, beliefs, and attitudes toward ideology. When predicting the various possible outcomes of human actions, the effects of culture, personal habits and engagements and the assessment of constraints are also taken into account. In addition, the rational choice theory serves to interpret collective or social phenomena in terms of individual actions. (Rafael Wittek, 2013)

Seen in the light of the theory on Rational choice I will observe whether the theory can explain the vote for Brexit and thus to outline an answer to the problem formulation, namely “*Why the majority of Britons voted Leave?*”

### 3.2 Hypothesis:

The vote for Brexit can be explained by the economic benefits which the voters expected from Brexit.

As the voters were aged 65 and over and those who have low/no education, I will address these two particular social groups in assessing the benefits for both groups of individuals in result of Brexit without considering the age as a factor influencing rationality as the theory does not concern it.

### 3.3 Limitation related to the theory

As presented in the theoretical considerations, the theory on the rational choice includes fear factor, biased beliefs, bounded rationality, feelings, etc. However, it does not include the age factor, which might be significant in defining rationality in terms of short- term emotional bias, interests and priorities characteristic for the different ages. According to age, people's perspectives differ, and therefore priorities. Priorities in different age stages are differ according to age. Gathering information as a prerequisite for making decision is also time-consuming, which may be crucial when relate it to age.

## 4. Empirical overview

In order to understand the “Brexit” phenomenon we first need to glance at its historical setting, that defined the UK’ decision to apply for a membership in EEC, and the following relationship with EU.

### 4.1 UK – EU relationship and the background of Brexit

Established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the European Economic Community (EEC) aimed to unify economically its member states. The United Kingdom was among the countries invited to join. The invitation received a negative response from the British Government and the reason for

that was concern over the British sovereignty. Namely, by joining a supranational coalition, the British will lose their sovereignty.

However, the loss of control of the Suez Canal in 1957 brought Britain into a state of economic decline. Triggered by economic stagnation and incapable to reach a free trade agreement without joining the EEC, the British government applied for EEC membership (Michelle Cini, 2019). Despite the fact that the UK was invited to join the Union in late 50', British membership drafts were vetoed by the French President Charles De Gaulle in two occasions, namely in 1963 and 1967. De Gaulle was concerned as the UK-US relationship could create difficulties for the EU Member States to operate autonomously as a group. After twelve years of waiting, the UK became a member of EEC on 1st January 1973.

In fact, the relationship between the UK and European Community has been tensed long before British membership in EEC. Debate over the advantages of being a member of EEC has continued since the UK accession to the European community (Holmwood, 2017). Additionally, members of the Labour Party and other "anti-marketeers" have argued that the UK was allowing too much: *"Britain's continuing membership of the Community would mean the end of Britain as a completely self-governing nation and the end of our democratically elected parliament as the supreme law-making body in the United Kingdom"*. Common market was perceived as *"disease of capitalism, like high imperialism or fascism"* The concerns over the controversial EU-UK relationship initiated the first referendum, which was held in June 1975. The public vote was to decide whether the country would remain an EEC member (Michelle Cini, 2019). The majority of the electorate supported the EU membership (Arch, 2019)(Figure 5).

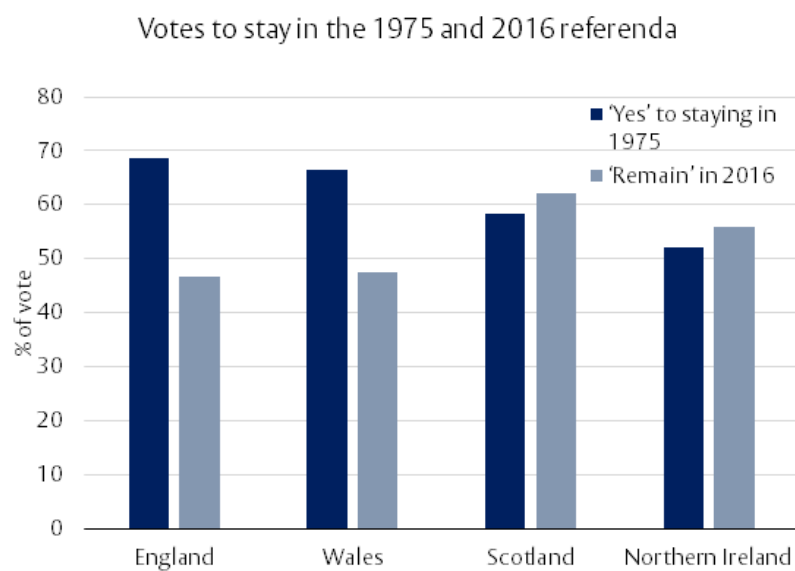


Figure 5 Referendum vote 1975 vs 2016

The Pro-EEC campaign was well subsidized and arranged, supported by nearly all political parties apart from the Communist Party, and undoubtedly promoted and boosted by the national media. Statistic on the vote by education, social status, political participation evidence that those with higher education and social status were voting remain, while those with lower education were more pro-leave (Dunin-Wasowicz, 2017) . In addition, 85 % of the Conservative supporters voted for remain, while the Liberal supporters were less likely to support the membership (figure 6) (Dunin-Wasowicz, 2017)

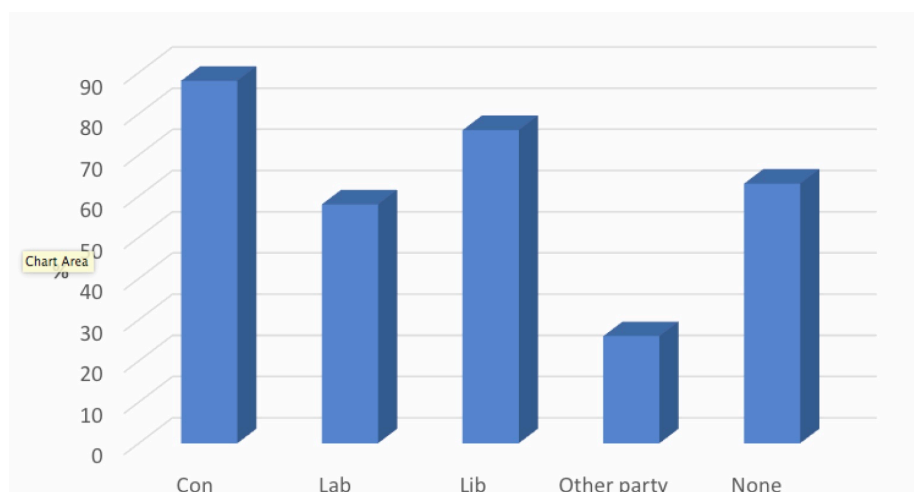
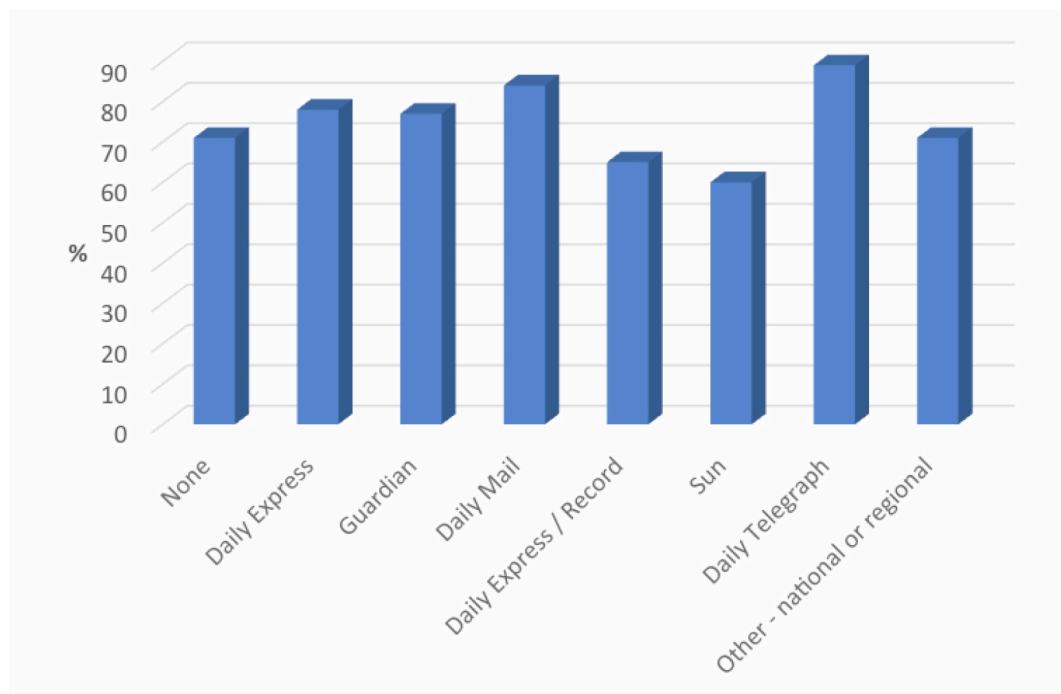


Figure 6 Vote 1975 referendum by Party affiliation

The media was also supportive to the EU membership. A statistic on the vote by newspapers readers evidence that the least pro-EEC were the readers of the Sun- 65%, while the readers of Daily Telegraph were most pro-EEC (figure 7) (Dunin-Wasowicz, 2017)



*Figure 7 Vote 1975 referendum by newspaper' readers*

Yet, the lack of a written constitution made a room for insinuations and justified arguments as that the outcome of the subsequent 1975 referendum could not be lawful as the British population could not vote to remain in something, which, in constitutional settings, was improperly joined. Later, in an attempt to invalidate further ambiguities, the Blair administration (1997–2001) would efficiently strengthen the principle of the public vote in the constitutional life of the UK (Westlike, 2017)

By the first British application for EEC membership emerged a number of phenomena that would become well-known. One of them is the foundation of new groups attempting to mobilize social and parliamentary opinion opposing the entry. The public opinion was no more irrelevant to the political decisions and people became a significant factor in the UK's relationship with the Communities' (Richardson, 2016; Milward, 2012, p. 341).

According to Westlike, the importance of the public vote in 1975 cannot be overstated. First, due to the fact that it was the first national vote in British politics and thus the democracy became real. The Parliament recognized the right to referendum as sovereign, even though it had been



defined in the Law on referendum of 1975. Further, holding public vote aims to avoid the likelihood of the contradiction between what the plurality of Members of Parliament, on the one hand, and the plurality of the population, on the other, support (Westlike, 2017). The important issue of this first public vote in the UK is as it was a referendum on the UK's relationship with the European integration policy. Remaining an EU member was a problem of political and constitutional importance and could be reconsidered and re-exercised by referendum (Westlike, 2017)

As stated by Cini (2019) the reopened negotiations between EEC and UK disregarded matters of national importance. Issues that generated tensions such as the UK's participation in the EU budget were not on Prime Minister Wilson's agenda. On the other hand, when the European elite reached an agreement on this matter at the Fontainebleau summit in 1984, the British media advertised it as a great success (Michelle Cini, 2019).

In 1980, disregarding the 67 % of the votes in favour of EU membership, the Labour Party included a commitment to withdraw from the European Community in its policy platform for election. Yet, after became defeated twice, namely in 1983 and 1987 elections, the Party became more Pro-EEC oriented. Furthermore, from 1997, with the new Prime Minister Tony Blair, the atmosphere in the relationship between the UK and the EU seemed to become fine. The UK-France military pact signed between Tony Blair, and Jacque Chirac in December 1998, contributed in refining the tone of the relations with the EU and contributed toward more Pro-European attitude. Nevertheless, the scepticism toward the European Union prevented the adoption of the European currency when it was launched in 1999.

Indeed, appeals for a referendum on the particular European issues had been frequent during the Major and Blair administration. Fundamentally, the British perception of the European Union, namely as an economic project of trade, while abstaining for broader political or social incorporation, has been supported and encouraged since the State became a member of EEC. Therefore, the UK abstained from the Maastricht Treaty's social chapter, which came into force in 1993 (Westlike, 2017). In fact, tensions over the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which intensified the partnership and established the EU, almost caused the fall of Prime Minister John Major and his government in 1993. Some scholars argue that the intolerance to these events is still affecting the British European politics (Michelle Cini, 2019).

In 2007 the leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron, gave an "*iron-clad guarantee*" that the government would hold a public vote on the Treaty of Lisbon. Although Prime Minister Cameron was a "*soft Eurosceptic*", reform of EU-UK relations has become a central concern

of his administration, acknowledging the growing gap between politicians and society. As a public vote on an agreement that has already entered into force, was out of discussion, he supported the passage of a law (the European Union Act of 2011) that entitles the public to participate in the decision on issues of national importance, namely by holding a referendum (Michelle Cini, 2019). Two years later in 2013, Prime Minister Cameron identified the United Kingdom's proposal for EU reform on four issues. He admitted the gap between the EU and its nationals and acknowledged the need to overcome the absence of democratic liability.

Preparation for the public vote was arranged in two campaigns, namely, the remain campaign "*Britain stronger in EU*" advocating for remain, and the Leave campaign "*Taking back control*" advocating for leaving the EU.

#### 4.2 "*Britain stronger in EU*"

The campaign supporting the EU membership emphasized the importance of factors such as: the free single market, which facilitate the trade, support the business and provides jobs, which leads to better economic security for the participants. According to the campaign Leaving the EU will affect negatively the 3 million jobs associated with the membership in the Union, which is 1 % of the jobs in UK. In addition, remaining in the Union will further secure 790.000 jobs by 2030. Remain supporters also alert that leaving the free trade union will harm businesses and economic development as it will increase the cost for goods and services. Leaving EU will also reduce the investments from other countries (estimated to 66 million pounds per day) and will cause unemployment of hundreds of people. Supporters of remaining in EU argue that being in a member of the EU benefits as the price people pay for food, gas, energy, roaming and similar services are lower than if the UK was not a member of the European market. In addition, under EU labor law, the labor rights are secured. Those rights are regarding to paid leave to rest, control of working time, gender equality in the workplace, the rights of part-time workers, anti-discrimination against gender, race, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation are secured (Anon., u.d.).

#### 4.3 "*Taking back control*"

On the other hand, the supporters of Brexit declare that Brexit is in the national interest and advocate for taking back control over UK's borders, as the "EU immigration crisis is out of control"

(Anon., u.d.); Taking back control over our money and laws. Shortly, Brexit aims to protect the national economy, security and the country as a whole. In a report presented to the Parliament, by the Prime Minister, by Command of Her Majesty, is presented the path Britain will pursue in order to deliver Brexit to the nation. It includes a presentation of a “new” immigration policy which will be defined in order to put end to the free movement of people and will benefit the national economy. According to the document developed by the Prime Minister, the new system will facilitate the entry of skilled immigrants and will reduce casual immigration: *"The brightest and best will continue to be welcomed, serving the interests of the whole of the UK and reflecting the needs of businesses and communities"* (Minister, 2018). The document also suggests that the new immigration system will be tolerant in regard to short-term visitors in relation to study exchange, research, training or similar, and will allow them to enter the country visa-free.

In addition. Brexit pleaders emphasize that leaving the EU will provide more money for well-being and health care needs as the expenditure on the EU budget will come to an end. In addition, Boris Johnson promised to increase the Health Service budget by £ 394 million a week by 2023/24 as a result of Brexit and stressed that leaving EU is economically beneficial to the United Kingdom as a whole, incl. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (Minister, 2018). Among other arguments supporting Brexit are a greater control over UK’s foreign policy and the “freedom” to come into mutual trade agreements with countries out of the EU, it is seen as *"new flexibility to open up trading and growth opportunities with the rest of the world"*, which will (Minister, 2018)

Putting it shortly:

#### 4.4 Pros of Brexit:

The main arguments of the Brexit campaign ware as follows:

- 4.4.1 EU membership is extremely expensive: Payments to EU budget are accountant to 11 % of the UK’s GDP (figure 8). According to Congdon (2013) the UK is “*worse- off*” by 11 % due to its payments to EU (Congdon, 2013).

The UK spends an estimated 11% of annual GDP on EU-related costs		
Nature of costs	% of GDP	Rationale
Direct fiscal costs	1.25	Gross payments to EU institutions.
Costs of regulation	5.2	Cost of employment, financial, dangerous substances and procedure regulations.
Costs of resource misallocation	3.25	Relating to CAP and EU Protectionism.
Costs of lost jobs	0.375	Job losses of UK born population, due to immigration from EU states.
Costs of waste, fraud and corruption	0.375	Fish discard due to fish quotas, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and corrupt officials.
Unforeseen commitments	0.25	Health and benefit tourism.
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	

Figure 8 “How Much Does the European Union Cost Britain?” (Congdon, 2013)

- 4.4.2 The EU has grown too much- high level of immigration. According to Tim Congdon, the cost of job losses due to immigrants from other EU member states are counted at 0.375 % of the country’s GDP (figure 6).
- 4.4.3 Intervein into domestic policies and violates national sovereignty.
- 4.4.4 Suppresses businesses by overregulation

Supporters of Brexit believe that after voting for Brexit, the United Kingdom can come into a new free trade agreement, enjoying the status enjoyed by Norway and Switzerland (Greenwood, 2018). They also believe that restriction on the immigration will increase the job opportunities for UK-born individuals. In 2011, immigrants from A8 countries represent about 1.7 % of UK employment. They mainly doing low-skilled jobs. The wave of East European immigrants has suppressed the growth of wages in these branches and have increased the level of unemployment among UK-born people.

#### 4.5 Cons of Brexit:

Supporters of EU membership highlighted the benefits that EU membership has brought to the UK economy:

- 4.5.1 Empowering London to provide business and financial operations unrestrained across the continent and thus become Europe's top financial hub. In particular, business managers and leaders seem to be to support remain in the EU:

- 4.5.2 85% of business leaders in the industrial branch and 84% in the investment branch claimed it is beneficial to remain a member of EU.
- 4.5.3 In addition, in 2013, the Confederation of British Industry found out that 80 % of its members think that remaining in the EU was in the advantage for the UK economy (Greenwood, 2018).
- 4.5.4 The EU market represents 25% of global GDP.
- 4.5.5 The EU is the UK's largest trading partner
- 4.5.6 45 % of UK export is to the EU member states and,
- 4.5.7 50 % of the UK's import is from other EU member states.
- 4.5.8 The UK is an attractive destination for foreign investments due to its membership in the EU and access to the EU markets. About 50 % of external investments in the UK are EU related.
- 4.5.9 Immigration – benefits from the free movement of people:
  - Immigrants from other EU countries are better educated than UK born individuals
  - The average age of working-age immigrants is 32.3 years, as opposed to 40.8 years for individuals born in the UK, a benefit in relation to the aging population in the UK.
  - Immigrants from other EU Member States provide 34 % more in fiscal terms than they receive, as they are likely to receive less benefits (Greenwood, 2018).

#### 4.6 The UK poverty beyond Brexit

The United Kingdom is still a member of the European Union, but the consequences of the withdrawal process are already present. After the Brexit vote, the pound fell by 10 %, which, according to Breinlich (et al. 2017), caused 1.6 % inflation as the price of imported goods and services rose, while the pound fall. Inflation is affecting most lower-income households as inflation effectively increases the annual cost of living for the average UK household by over 400 pounds. (Breinlich, et al., 2017).

Poverty study (figure 9) shows that poverty among working families dominates. Increasing employment is beneficial, but fragile financial security keeps many working families in poverty.

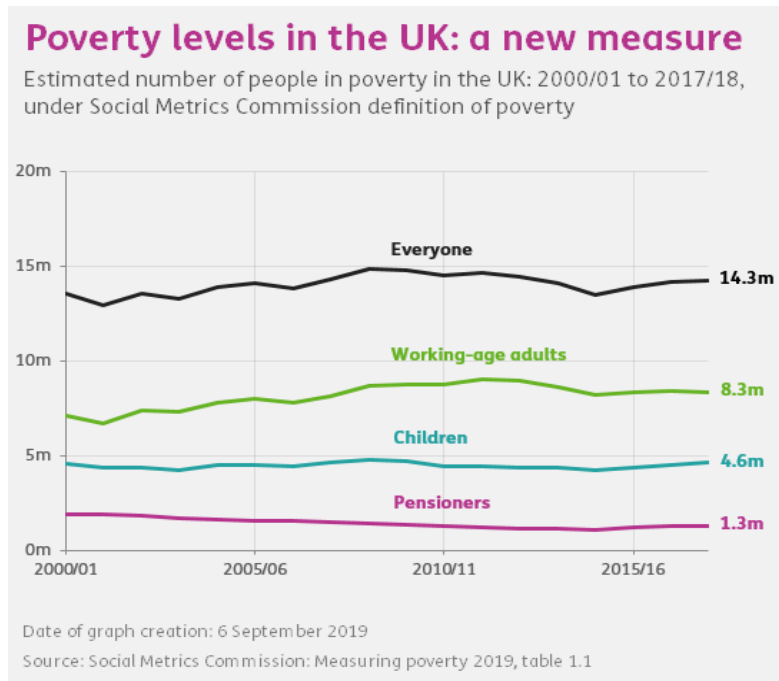


Figure 9 Poverty in UK (available on: <https://fullfact.org>)

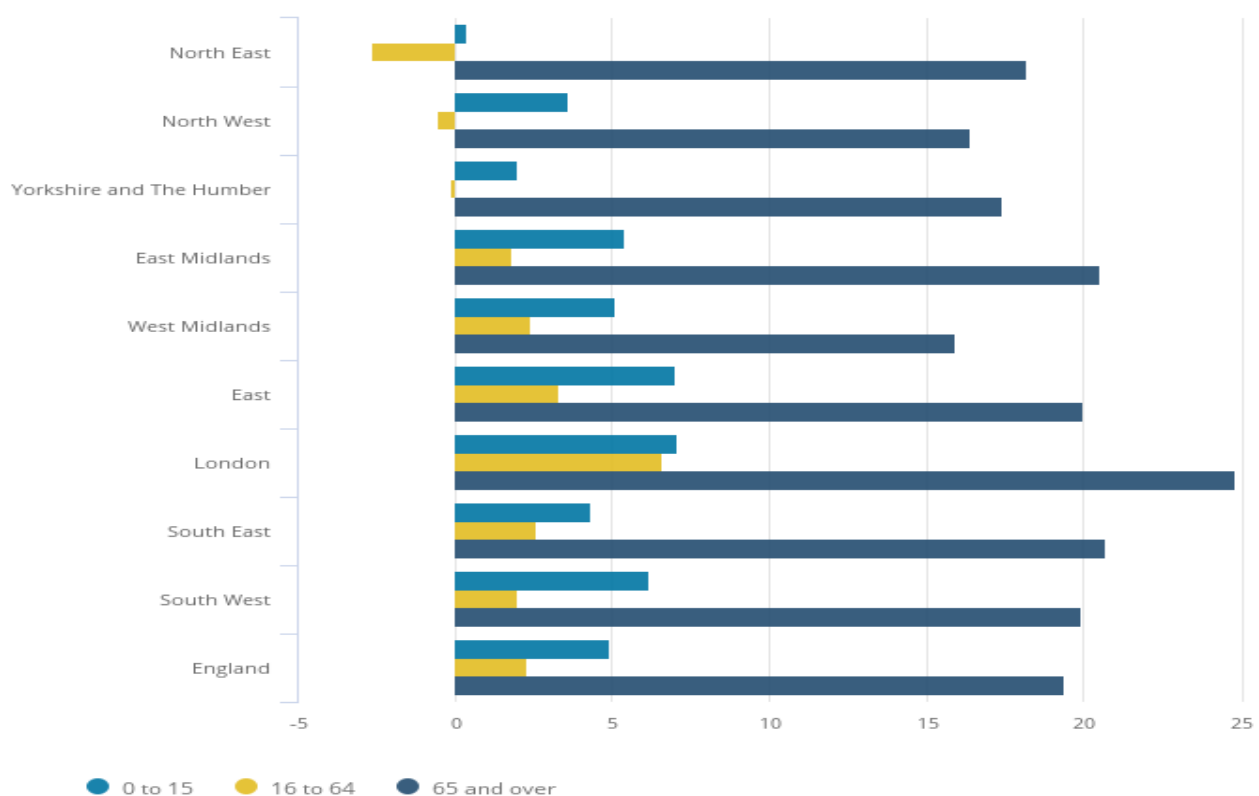
As claimed in the study, the employment rate among people with disabilities is significantly low. Despite their desire to work, people with disabilities are much more likely to live in poverty than those who are not disabled due to low wages and insecurity in the workplace. The UK government's agenda by 2027 is to increase the number of people with disabilities in work by one million, which is estimated to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 200,000 (Barnard, et al., 2018).

An analysis by Cambridge University, states that in "No free trade agreement" scenario, when the UK leaves the EU, the higher tariff in form of duties and other taxes could lead to a 3% increase in the prices of the goods and services (Cambridge Econometrics, 2018). In a "Free Trade" scenario, the final prices of goods and services would continue to grow to a lesser extent- estimated 2% increase in consumer prices due to the devaluation of the pound following the referendum result. In relation to living costs the increase, if "NO deal", is estimated at 480 pounds annually. Leaving the EU will reduce the net migration into the UK by 80.000 per year. As stated by the experts it will decrease the size of the population with 1.3%.

Poverty is also a concern related to the ageing of the population. As claimed by research on the need for social care (2011), the demographic ageing in the UK reached its highest levels and according to the prognoses, it will continue to grow. In addition, the experts claim, that the UK

population aged 65 and over will reach 13.4 million in 2032 from the 8.2 million in 2011. Experts expect the number of individuals aged 65 to increase by 65 % between 2007-2032 and the number of individuals aged 85 to increase by 136 % for the same period (Ingham, et al., 2009). At the same time, the birth rate fell to its lowest level - 11 births per 1000 individuals in 2018, which is the second lowest in the UK history. A report by UK office for national statistics (Figure 10) estimated by 2026 the population in the north part of England to grow at the slowest rate, while London is estimated to be the fastest-growing region in the UK. At the same time, the percentage of aged 65 and over is estimated to grow in all regions (Nash, 2018)

Figure 3: Percentage population change in English regions by age groups, mid-2016 to mid-2026



Source: Office for National Statistics

Figure 10 Office for national statistic (available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk>)

The population structure helps in understanding the distribution of the population across all ages. The changing population structure is important in analysing the economic security of those over the age of 65. As argued by Ingham (et. Al. 2009) a high number of those above the age of 65 compared to the working population show a dependency burden (Ingham, et al., 2009). Also, regions with high level of older population register decalin in development (Goodwin & Heath, 2016)

#### 4.7 Public opinion in regard to immigration:

Based on data provided by the UK Migration observatory, in 2017, the immigration flow from non-EU countries is higher than from the other EU Member States in all regions (except Northern Ireland). Putting it in numbers, for example, in London, immigrants from non-EU countries represent 26 % of the population compared to immigrants from EU countries, who are 12 % (Figure 11). Unlike in Scotland, Wales and the South West where the population of EU states and non-EU states, are distributed equally (Kone, 2018).

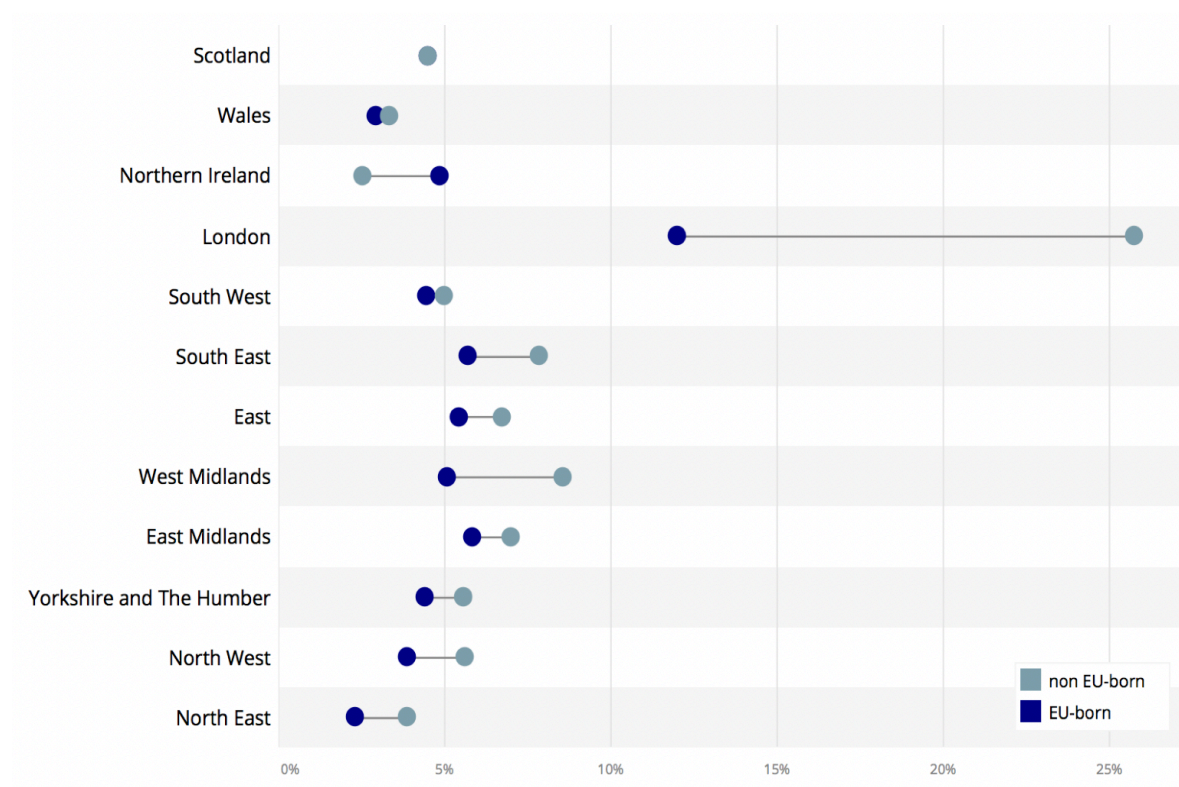


Figure 11 Where do migrants live in the UK, available at [www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk)



Most of the immigrants coming from non-EU states for employment reasons are residing in London, South East and East and constitute about 20 % of the non-EU immigration in those particular regions. Only 6 % of non-EU individuals entering the UK seek asylum. Nevertheless, density varies across regions, from 2 % in the South East to 10 % in the North. The employment rate among EU immigrants is highest in London and the East. The percentage of immigration due to family reason is 26. In other districts, it varies between 30-45 % (Figure 12) (Kone, 2018).

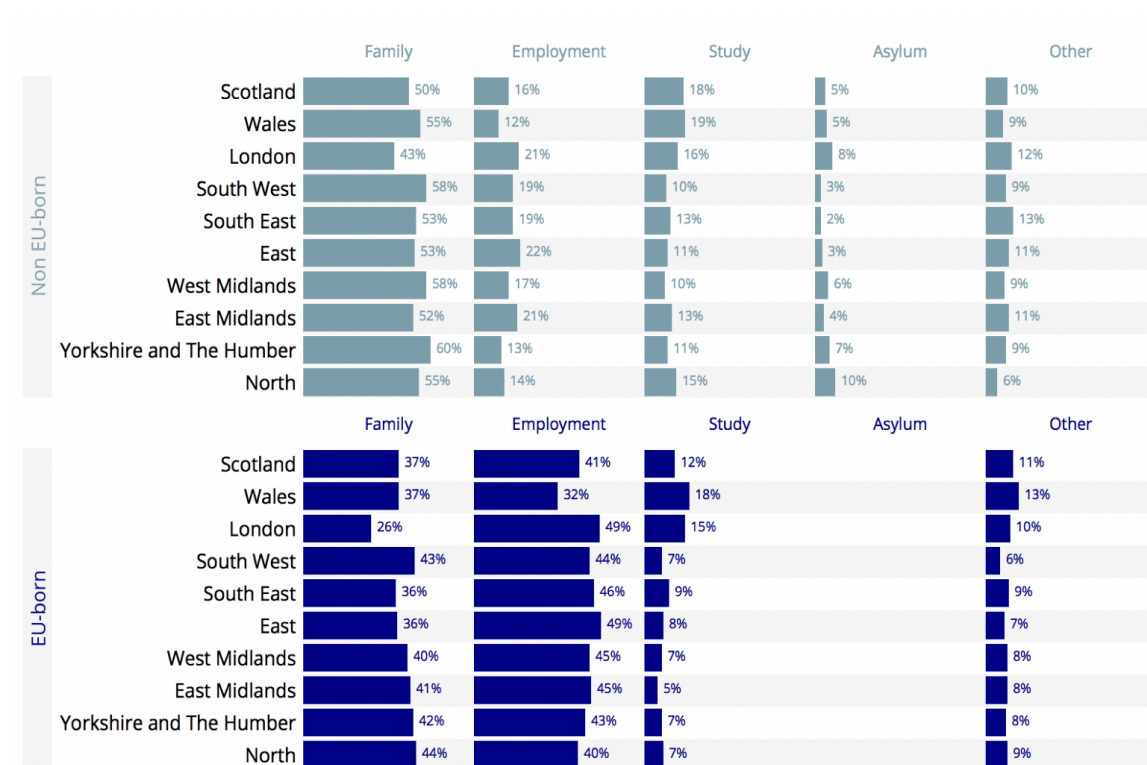


Figure 12 Where do migrants live in the UK, available at [www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk](http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk)

A public opinion poll on key issues such as immigration, the EU membership and economic issues illustrates negative public opinion on immigration as people view immigration as a detriment to the well-being of the UK, British culture and economic prosperity (figure 13)

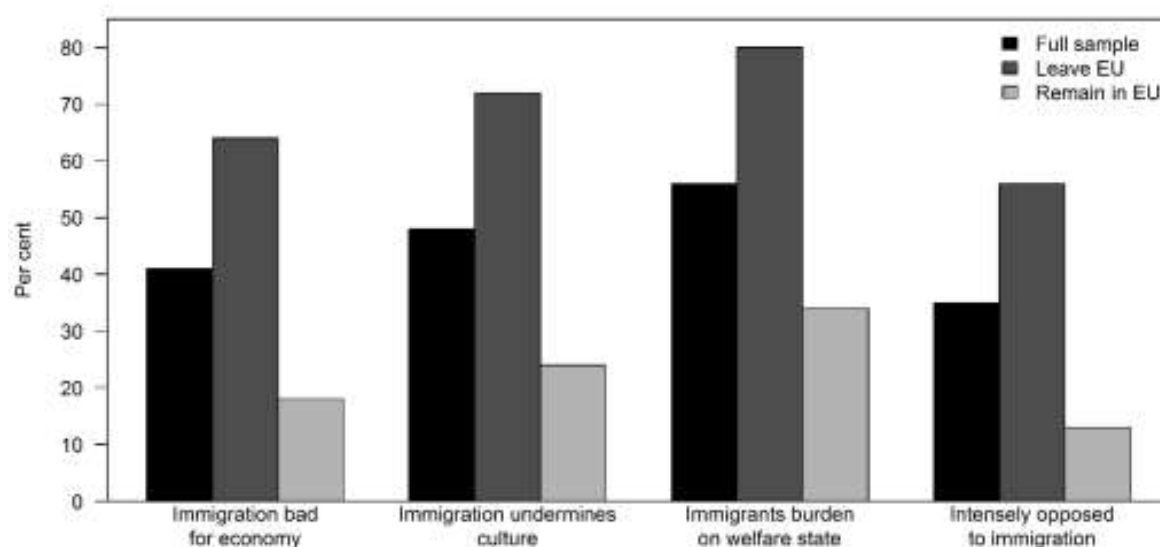


Figure 13 (2014–2017) British Election Study Internet panel

Brexit related poll on defining European identity among the UK individuals asked individuals to define themselves from 1 to 7 how strongly "European" they feel (figure 14). The table evidence that, among the supporters of Brexit, those who define themselves as "not at all European", increased by 18 % between 2015 and 2017, while among those with a strong European identity and supporter to EU membership increased by only 1 % (British Social Attitudes, 2017).

Table 8 Support for leaving the EU, by strength of European identity, 2015 and 2017			
% favouring leaving the EU	2015	2017	Change 2015-2017
<b>Strength of European identity</b>			
1 – not at all European	36	54	+18
2	29	53	+24
3	19	44	+25
4	14	30	+17
5	9	18	+8
6 or 7 – very strongly European	10	11	+1

Figure 14 British Social attitudes 35 – Europe, 2017

It is also interesting to note that the percentage of individuals supporting Brexit increased with 10% between 2015-17 from 22% to 36%, while stay but reduce EU's power decreased 10%: (figure 15)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2008	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Leave the EU	15	18	16	15	20	30	26	24	22	41	36
Stay but reduce EU's powers	32	38	36	36	35	37	39	38	43	35	33
Leave things as are	27	23	24	27	24	16	19	18	19	16	19
Stay and increase EU's powers	11	7	10	9	9	9	6	10	8	4	4
Work for single European government	6	5	4	4	3	2	3	4	3	2	3
<i>Unweighted base</i>	2293	3199	4268	1077	1128	1103	2147	971	1105	1965	2009

Figure 15 British Social attitudes 35 – Europe, 2017

According to Henderson (2017), Brexit succeeded in England due to England's natives' attitude toward the United Kingdom and was encouraged by those who put English national identity above all else. Scholars claim that behind the English national identity is hidden hostility toward EU integration policy, issues in regard to newcomers and support for the right-wing parties. (Henderson, 2017). Up to date, the Englishness frequently has been associated with a '*exceptional*' imagery around English national identity. This depiction has been concerned of academic observations. Henderson and Jones have found some evidence of concern related to the underestimating of English culture and, possibly connected, will to prevent immigration and thus concerns about its effect on British culture (Henderson, 2017).

Various surveys evidence that the concern about immigration was among the major reasons for Brexit and the vote Leave (figure 16).

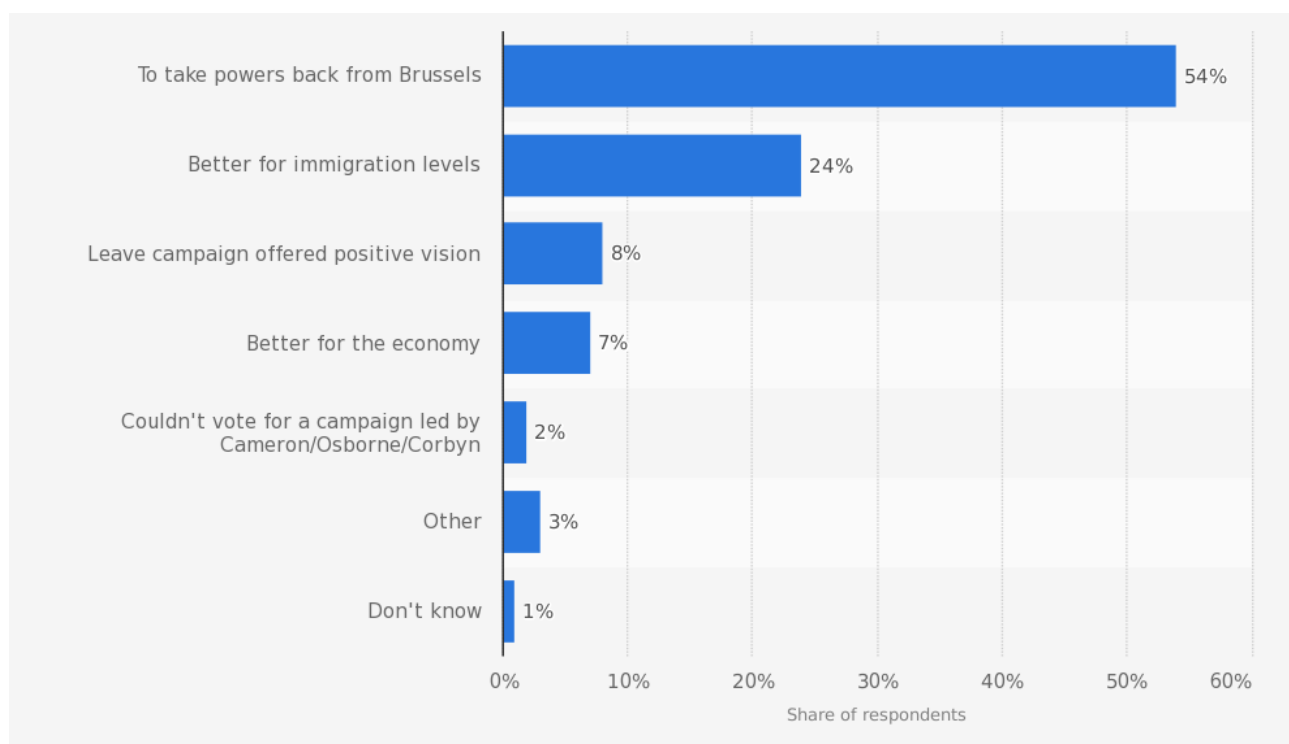


Figure 16 Reasons for voting Leave (Statista: available at [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com))

A study conducted by Essex Continuous Monitoring Surveys (ECMS) on the Brexit referendum also demonstrates a high degree of common immigration concern. Moreover, the result evidenced the long-term contradictory attitudes towards the EU. Likewise, a research by Swales (2016) argues that issues of national identity and perception were also central for voting Leave (73 % argued that Britain "had gotten a lot worse" vs 40 % "had gotten a lot better") (Goodwin & Milazzo, u.d.) However, there is absence of clear evidence on whether the support for Brexit was stronger in districts with primarily "white" inhabitants as the natives had limited experience with foreigners, or supporting Brexit was stronger in districts with higher levels of demographic and ethnic diversity.

Goodwin and Milazzo in a research on the role of immigration on Brexit, claim that the sense of demographic reordering and Brexit as a solution for change - influence significantly the choice of the vote. British Election Study's findings sustain the idea that the population was cognizant of the transforming nature of Britain's society. In a survey made by BES in the weeks prior to the 2016 public vote, 75 % of the respondents pointed out that they thought that the immigration was in raise- near 6 in 10 Remain electors vs more than 9 in 10 Leave electors thought the immigration was

in increase. Even more, the respondents expected that Brexit would "take back control" over the issue (Goodwin & Milazzo, u.d.).

As stated by Henderson (et.al, 2017) essential for Brexit defenders in identity groups is their perception of being ignored by their representative institutions. Their vote for "*take back control*", in this sense, could be a punishment for the UK Parliament considering areas in England, where the state fails to provide adequate institutions with a higher political engagement (figure 17) (Carl, 2018). The paradox here is giving "back control" to a parliament, which is considered as not caring.

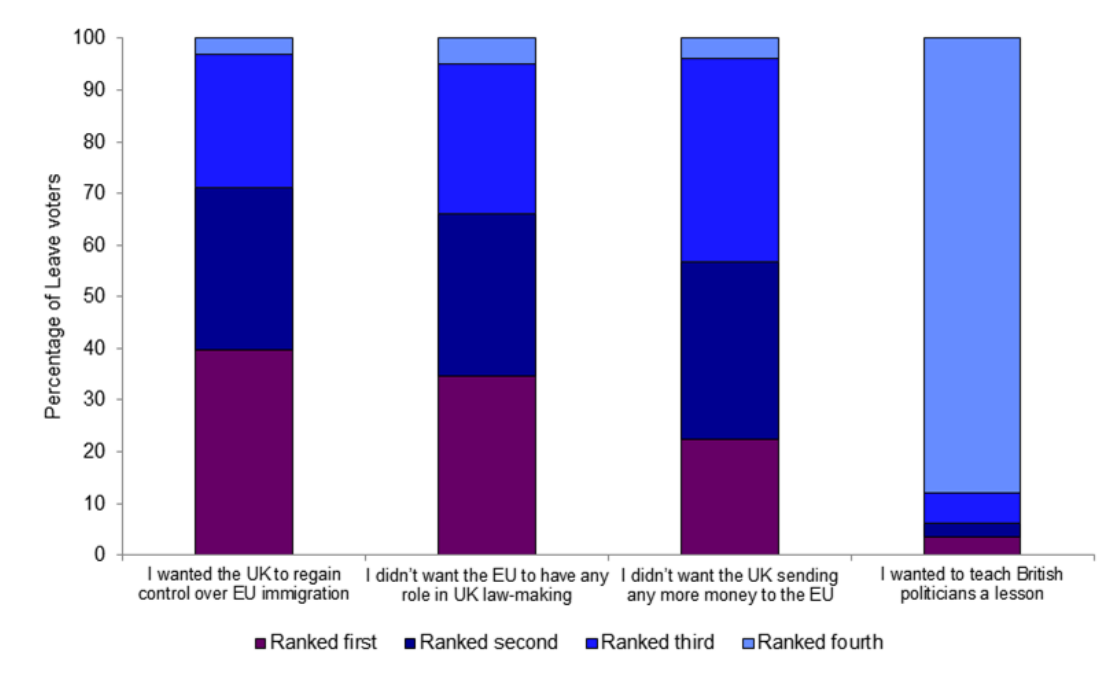


Figure 17 Centre for Social Investigation, Nuffield College

Common political standpoint also impacts the choice of voting. Goodwin and Heath (2016) claim that those who perceive themselves as right-wing; those who are more willing to risk and those without a sense of potency, are more defined in supporting the Leave. Even more, the fusion of Right-wing ideology and risk attitudes obtain higher massive effect than any single measure of attitudes to foreigners. In other words, the Right-wing effect may reflect the power and the influence of the UKIP and Conservative Party in the Brexit campaign. Studies by other scholars evidence the same results, in particular about immigration, and the preferences of "*left behinds*." However, their interpretation differs as they evidence insufficient effects from the social structural variables and

much higher impact from values and attitudes. They also stress that the different aspects affect immigration attitudes. (Henderson, 2017).

A 2015 poll on the impact of immigration on cultural life in the UK evidence that 37 % of those who would support Brexit believe that immigrants erode British culture life, vs 9 % who believe that immigration contributes the British cultural life. Even more, the percentage of people who think the immigrants have an negative effect on the British' cultural life increased between 2015-17 with 25% (figure 18) (British Social Attitudes, 2017).

**Table 10 Support for leaving the EU, by attitudes towards the cultural and economic consequences of immigration, 2015 and 2017**

<b>% saying Britain should leave the EU</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Change 2015-2017</b>
<b>Perceived impact of migrants on Britain's cultural life</b>			
Undermined (0-3)	37	62	+25
Neither (4-6)	19	40	+21
Enriched (7-10)	9	18	+9
<b>Perceived impact of migrants on Britain's economy</b>			
Bad (0-3)	43	57	+14
Neither (4-6)	17	46	+28
Good (7-10)	10	20	+10

*Figure 18 British Social attitudes 35 – Europe, 2017*

Research on how Brexit was formed in Britain (2017) evidence that the vote for leave in the UK wide referendum was 51.9%- 48.1% whereas in England the margin was much higher at 53.4%-46.6%. The observation identifies distinct Eurosceptic views in England based majorly on Pro- British attitudes amongst British natives on age above 50. The scholars further argue that the real reason for the majority votes in favour of leaving was in response to European immigration policy, which concepts were in a contradiction with their English "national sentiment". Therefore, immigration was the main factor defining the vote in favour of leaving the European Union ( (Henderson, 2017)The biggest concern was related to fear in regard to the labour market. However, the concerns were greatly unfounded as the observation demonstrates that the jobs immigrants

participate are usually unskilled or with lower prestige, which Britons do not desire to occupy. Henderson and Wincott argue in addition, that British voters had a higher affinity for taking risks and felt the need to demonstrate their independence from the EU. An ageing population and strong right-wing views ensured the Leaver voters had their way.

A recent research on the effect of the immobility on the British vote, evidence that the majority of Leave voters were UK residents and British citizens since birth. In that same study Lee, Morris and Kemeny compare cosmopolitan internationalists who majorly voted in favour of remaining and geographically rooted voters who had minimal interactions with the rest of Europe. The variable was the immobility as a factor influencing the Leave vote. The outcome evidence that the citizens who were living in their country of birth were 7% more likely to vote in favour of Brexit (Lee, Morris, Kemeny, 2018) Despite findings showing a tendency to vote in favour of nationalistic ideals, other concerns also affected the degree to which a person is likely to vote in favour of leaving or staying in the EU. Declining economic standards and the high influx of immigrants were major concerns that influenced the vote (Lee, 2018).

#### 4.8 Individual Financial Position and Feelings

Various of scientific researches explaining the Leave vote has focused on the evident cleavage between economically and culturally segregated groups: The Leave voters - geographically rooted natives from the rural areas, with limited interactions with immigrants, according to Inglehart and Norris (2016) affected by irrational fears and propaganda; and the Remain voters - open-minded multicultural cosmopolitans (e.g. citizens of Manchester and London) , who had close interactions either socially or professionally with people from diverse nationalities. This cleavage reproduces the vast academic dispute about the tensions underlying populist politics. (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

Additionally, each of the winning or losing party seems to contradict massively on their interests. Hobolt (2016, 1260) argues that although the Brexit referendum was unique and critical, most of the Leave voters were motivated by the emotions of anti-establishment and immigration. The Leave voters also reveal groups of less educated, less well-off, and stuck within demographic divides. Contrary, the voters of Stay included the literate citizens in the urban areas. There exists a big division between those who welcome national developments such as Brexit and those who feel that they have been neglected and left behind by the forces of globalization.



Goodhart (2016) in his polemical book define those divisions as "*Anywheres*" and "*Somewheres*". Goodhart's *Anywheres* are educated upper class whose identities are cosmopolitan and not deeply connected even with Britain. This upper class have voted to remain. The *Somewheres* are local-bound identities and attitudes, voted for Brexit, influenced by the perception of unequal economic growth, responding to the sense of that upper class in London are in contrast with their values (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

The study of economics mainly focuses on objective data. The confluence of microeconomic factors and emotions is an area that receives very little attention. In the article "*Was Brexit triggered by the old and unhappy? Or by financial feelings?*" (Liberini, Oswald, Proto and Redoano), the issue of how someone feels about their financial position comes into focus. The scholars claim that though there is evidence to suggest that people voted in favour of leaving the European Union due to poverty, a better indicator of these reasons is their emotions. How persons feel regarding their financial status demonstrate more than what their financial status statistically is. Liberoni (et.al) consider a feelings variable to measure what is the influence of it on how individual perceive their financial status. A typical British citizen who votes Leave does not necessarily earn less than a similar citizen of Scotland who votes Remain (Liberini, Oswald, Proto & Redoano, 2019) Liberoni "et. al. 2019) test variables such as "*living comfortably; doing all right; just about getting by; finding it quite difficult; finding it very difficult*". The individuals responding with *finding it quite difficult*, and *finding it very difficult*, were consistently much more likely to vote for Brexit in contrast to those 'living comfortably', which were about 3%. In addition, the scholars argue that if persons feel they deserve more than they obtain and for that, they put the blame on the EU policies, then they will most likely be against the EU.

A debate on EU and "has Brexit polarized Britain" demonstrates different expectations among the supporters and opposers of Brexit, which affects the decision making: 85 % of 'very strong Remainers' mean that the UK's economy will decline as a result of Brexit and are very likely to support remain in EU, vs. 71% of 'very strong Leavers' mean the UK's economy will be better off and are very likely to support Brexit (figure 19) (British Social Attitudes, 2017).



<i>As a result of leaving the EU Britain's economy will be...</i>		<b>Better off</b>	<b>Worse off</b>	<i>Unweighted Base</i>
<b>Remainers</b>				
Very strong	%	4	85	245
Fairly strong	%	13	60	170
Not very strong	%	13	48	59
<b>Leavers</b>				
Very strong	%	71	7	154
Fairly strong	%	48	16	142
Not very strong	%	34	21	76
<b>No Brexit identity</b>	%	17	18	111

*Figure 19 British Social Attitudes 36*

In addition, as stated by Curtice and Montagu, most of the citizens who expected Britain to have a more influence in the global relations voted for Brexit while the ones that think Britain's global impact will be diminished voted to stay (Curtice & Montagu, 2018). However, the attitude of the Britain's global power has been changed since the referendum towards the opinions of multiculturalism and immigration. However, support for leaving the EU has increased regardless of the peoples stand on immigration. Additionally, the ones that possess a strong of European identity support to remain in the European Union while the ones who are sensitive to their public identity support to prevail. Therefore, British citizens have also been divided according to their expectations of leaving or staying in the EU.

Yet, Hearne (2017) argues that the majority of the people in the UK were divided according to their economic concerns rather than mere politics. The scholar further argues that the differences in opinions in the Brexit situation are accelerated by the liabilities and merits of the European Union, where Brexit implicates a long-term shift in the class position and economy of Britain (Hearne, 2017). The most significant impact of the Brexit that could be anticipated is that Britain would experience the eminent recession ever. Even with a trade agreement, Brexit would lead to loss of employment and real estate collapse opportunities as investors and companies would stop using London as a financial hub (Iain Begg, 2016).

Several financial and communal policies are established efficiently at EU level. Leaving the Union will lead to significant policy changes in those areas, which is not of interest for the Remainders. These include environmental, financial, manufacturing, labour market, and state aid programs. Policy decisions are transferred at the national level, but with the lack of cooperation benefits, British initiatives can be stronger or worse than current policies based upon political perspective (Collins, 2017).

The UK was a net contributor to the Union's spending, although arguments on its size on the left side were exaggerated during the referendum campaign. The UK is likely to make large payments worth up to 44.2 billion dollars as part of the withdrawal process (Collins, 2017). However, total allocations for local spending could be redirected by UK government. Furthermore, the supporters of the alternative of reform had nothing to tell about the choice to exit, especially concerning future relationships between the United Kingdom and the EU (Collins, 2017). There was an apparent lack of information regarding future relationships, which enabled the Leave campaigners to make various claims. (Collins, 2017). Furthermore, the supporters of the alternative of reform had nothing to tell about the choice to exit, especially concerning future relationships between the United Kingdom and the EU. There was an apparent lack of information regarding future relationships, which enabled the Leave campaigners to make various claims.

Argued by Hearne (2017), the British citizens were forced to either vote for a soft or hard Brexit. The scholar also claims that the dominant parties are not only out of unison with a significant part of the electorate but also the process of exit, and the increased political-economic perspective reveals clear division internally (Hearne, 2017). A hard Brexit with no deal will lead to the elimination of Britain's tariff trade agreements with other EU members hence increasing the barriers of trade through high costs of exports. Some the people fear that the deal will discourage exportation and importation of goods between Britain and European Union members because of the implementation of high duty taxes. More so, Britain will experience food shortages since most of its food supply comes from the European members; hence will lead to high prices, and as a result, the country will suffer inflation due to the high cost of imports. Lastly, Brexit will lead to restricted movement of factors of labour, capital and people which would reduce the availability of workforce, services and education opportunities.

A recent poll showed that 46 % of the British voted for EU, while 39% voted to leave, and that the remainder either didn't understand the need for voting or refused to answer the issue. The EU agreed to a 585-page divorce agreement with the British government, outlining the terms for

the United Kingdom's separation from the Union. The document also covers the further financial relationship between UK the EU, authoritative information, and the rights of citizens (Clarke, et al., 2017). In January 2019 though, the UK House of Commons defeated the Brexit agreement by passing 432–202, the greatest derailment for a sat government in British history. The United Kingdom would split by late March, from the European Union. The UK would immediately leave the Union overnight if that happened and would cut its links with the largest commercial bloc in the world.

The EU has facilitated economic and social cooperation between the nations of Europe. It is demonstrated by the fundamental significance of its rights. Such innovations have been significant and mostly positive, but the economic benefits of the free movement of goods and resources have continued to be over-emphasized. The benefits of free movement of labour could improve by changes in work and labour law and the introduction of EU-wide unemployment insurance. Much of the reversals in economic and social integration result from the setbacks in the withdrawal.

Besides, both the citizens and the government have not considered at any time the economic side Brexit. The graduates who seem to be on the commercial side marks a few parts of the population, and their primary concern is that leaving the Union will lead to a tremendous decrease in employment opportunities. The economic effects of leaving the European Union are visible, but Britain citizens seem to have assumed the fact. Therefore, it might be perceived that the public could have lacked knowledge on the impacts of Brexit before they placed their decisions on the ballot. There was no evidence of division between those who believe that leaving the Union will be economically crucial and the ones that thought it would lead to adverse consequences (Curtice & Montagu, 2018). Instead, the Brexit debate reflects on conflicts and contradictions about the kind of a country that Britain should be where each of the parties articulated districts attitudes in which they feel attached and committed.

In conclusion, Brexit has led to substantial polarization of the United Kingdom (figure 18). The citizens who vote for reaming are mostly young and graduates found on the multicultural cities. The groups is motivated by the fact that staying in the EU enhances their chances of stabilizing and improving their leaving standards. Also, the ones that vote to leave are the old, low-educated, and less well citizens that feel that the Union has not solved their issues (figure 20).

How Britain voted			
Older people with fewer formal qualifications most likely to have voted Leave			
		Remain	Leave
2015 vote	Conservatives	39	61
	Labour	65	35
	Liberal Democrat	68	32
	UKIP	5	95
	Green	80	20
Age	18-24	71	29
	25-49	54	46
	50-64	40	60
	65+	36	64
Education	GCSE or lower	30	70
	A level	50	50
	Higher below degree	48	52
	Degree	68	32

YouGov | yougov.com June 23-24, 2016

Figure 20 How Britain voted available at: [www.yougov.co.uk](http://www.yougov.co.uk)

Contrary, the British citizens are not divided on their views concerning the economic consequences of Brexit. Instead, they are more concerned on their expectations as the ones who want to remain to believe that Britain will be weaker when it leaves while others believe that Britain will emerge stronger and thus want to leave the European Union.

## 5. Analysis

In this chapter, I will observe the hypothesis, namely whether the theory on Rational choice can explain the vote for Brexit by the economic benefits the voters expected from the outcome.

### 5.1 Vote Leave by age

As suggested by Elster's model on the Rational choice, individuals' behaviour is shaped by his/her beliefs and preferences. The theory further says that when humans make a particular political choice, they demonstrate that their values are in harmony with the values of the supported party, or they believe that their choice will contribute to their own or their community welfare and sustainability. Yet, people's preferences, or namely the beliefs that cause those preferences, can be

explained by education, ethnic group, income status, and more. By interpreting, people can reconstruct their thinking and be influenced by actions based on the narratives people tell in debates.

The Social situation, the macro level as the model by Hedström and Stern present, defines by the decision of holding a referendum on issues of national importance, namely, to leave or remain in European Union. This is also the situation from which the actor, on micro level, through the situational mechanism will determine the type of information he/she needs to acquire in order to make a decision (Hedström & Stern, 2018). The social situation described by Tim Congdon, a spokesman of the United Kingdom Independence Party, is namely that an economic decline will be unavoidable if the country remains in the EU. In three editions named "*How Much Does the European Union Cost Britain?*" (2012, 2013 and 2014) he points out that Britain's membership in the EU costs the nation about 10 % of the UK's national output and emphasized that the cost will continue to rise progressively each year. In other words, it will continue to drain the British economy and will lead to economic decline. (Congdon, 2015) In fact, the economic decline in 1961 pushed the country to apply for EEC membership and its opponents initiated the first referendum held in 1975.

Among the arguments in support to Brexit was an economic growth after leaving the EU. Campaigners advised that leaving the EU will secure more money for well-being and health care as the payments to the EU budget will come to an end. Even more, Boris Johnson promised to increase the Health Service budget by £ 394 million a week by 2023/24 as a result of Brexit and stressed that leaving EU is economically beneficial to the entire United Kingdom (Minister, 2018). Highlight was also put on a *greater control* over UK's foreign policy and the "freedom" to come into mutual trade agreements with countries out of the EU, it is seen as "*new flexibility to open up trading and growth opportunities with the rest of the world*", which will (Minister, 2018)

On the other side the Remain campaign emphasizes that the decline is inevitable if Britain leave the EU, arguing that leaving EU will affect the job market, also will affect businesses and development as the EU market is the largest trading partner to the UK. Stress was also put on the growth of price for goods and services by leaving the trade union, while remaining in EU will secure 790.000 jobs by 2030. In addition, the UK is an attractive destination for foreign investments due to its membership in the EU and access to the EU markets. About 50 % of foreign investments in the UK are EU related.

As evidenced by the statistic (figure 16) (YouGov, 2016) the majority of voting Leave are supporting the United Kingdom Independence Party. Also, the highest percentage of Leave supporters are retirees and individuals with low/no education (figure 21-22).

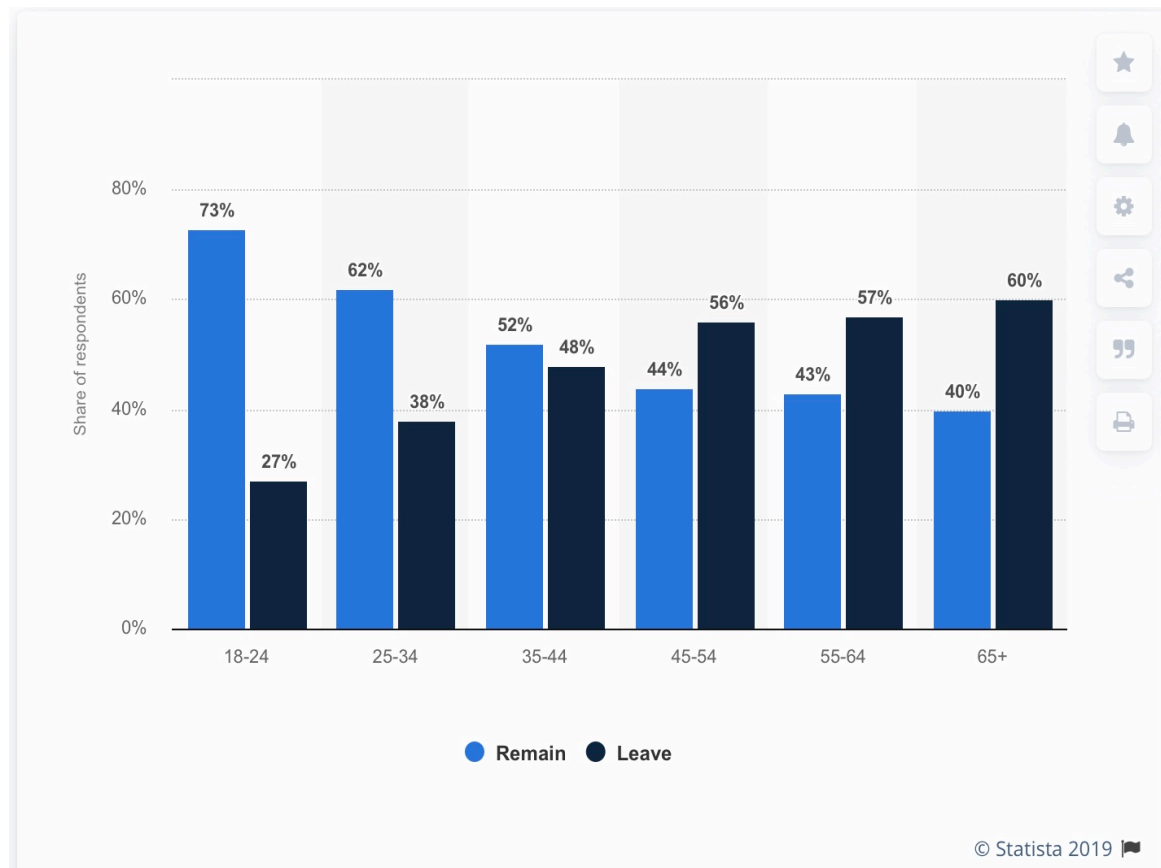


Figure 21 Brexit vote by age, available at: [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)

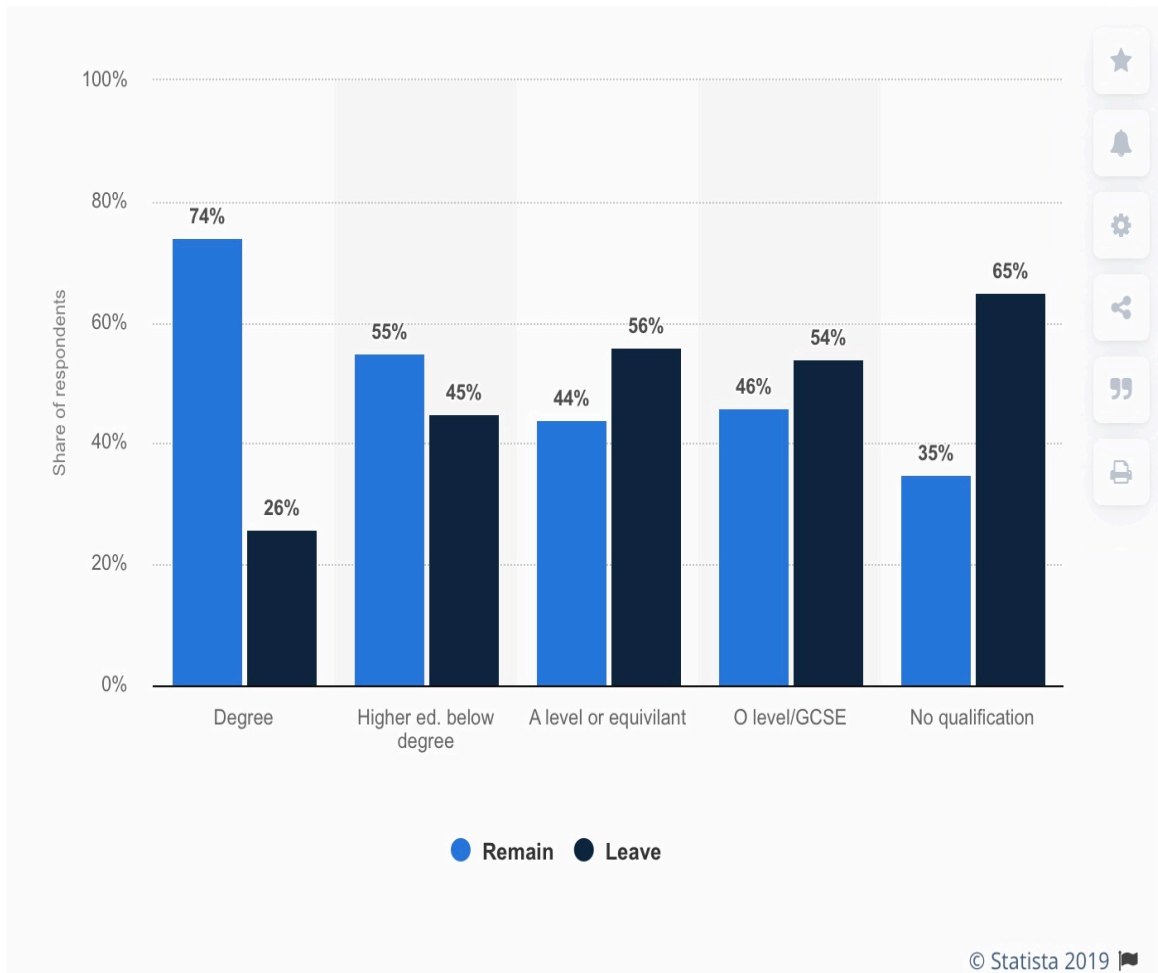


Figure 22 Brexit vote by education, available at: [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)

As argued by the rational choice theory, when evaluating possible outcomes, participants also evaluate alternatives based on the evidence collected. When ranking preferences may include risk calculation, a sense of fairness, attitudes towards core issues, etc. In other words, the economic downturn of the United Kingdom if the country remains an EU member, as demonstrated in the Tim Congdon report, entails a risk of a further rise in the poverty rate. It thus outlines a negative attitude toward an issue, namely the European Union, to which the vote on leave is the visible alternative.

A negative attitude towards the EU is particularly highly generated in the rural areas as evidences the statistics below (Figure 23) (Bounds, 2019):

## People in some of Britain's most deprived towns and cities are calling for major improvements to their lives

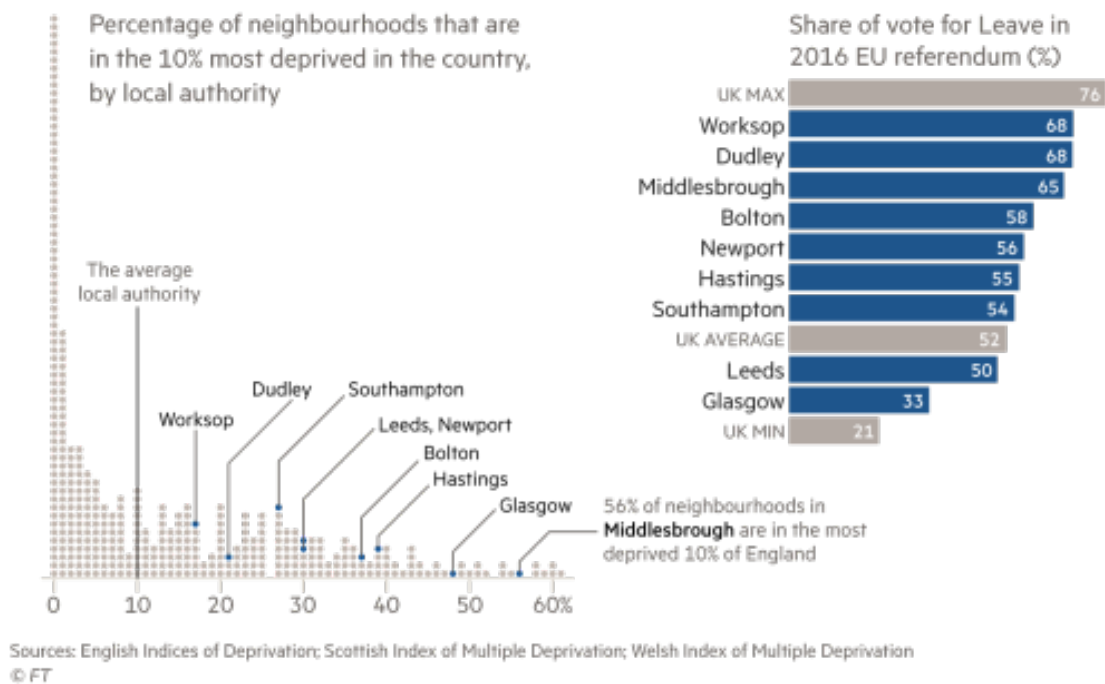


Figure 23 Deprived cities in the UK, Financial Times, available at [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

In order to assess the economic benefits, the Leave supporter expect from the vote, we need to assess their economic situation.

The economic situation (the micro level, Hedström and Stern) of rural areas in the UK is in a gradual and continuous decline. In a report on declining cities, ten of the absolute twelve poorest cities in the UK are located in the north and are at risk of falling behind in attempts to stimulate economic growth and create welfare in the north. One of the main reasons for the economic weakness of these regions is the depopulation from those regions. Goodwin and Heath (2017) argue that in 2011-14, about 30 % of the UK population was in relative income poverty. Those who have experienced relative poverty were, namely, older people without formal education and single mothers. Admittedly, the risk of experiencing poverty differ geographically and according to the largeness of the area. While some regions are flourishing, such as London, which demonstrates economic and population growth, others, like North West are in regression. A study on the uneven growth demonstrates that regression is caused by depopulation (Lindell, 2019) (figure 24). Scholars claim the well-educated individuals move out to other cities (Goodwin & Heath, 2016).



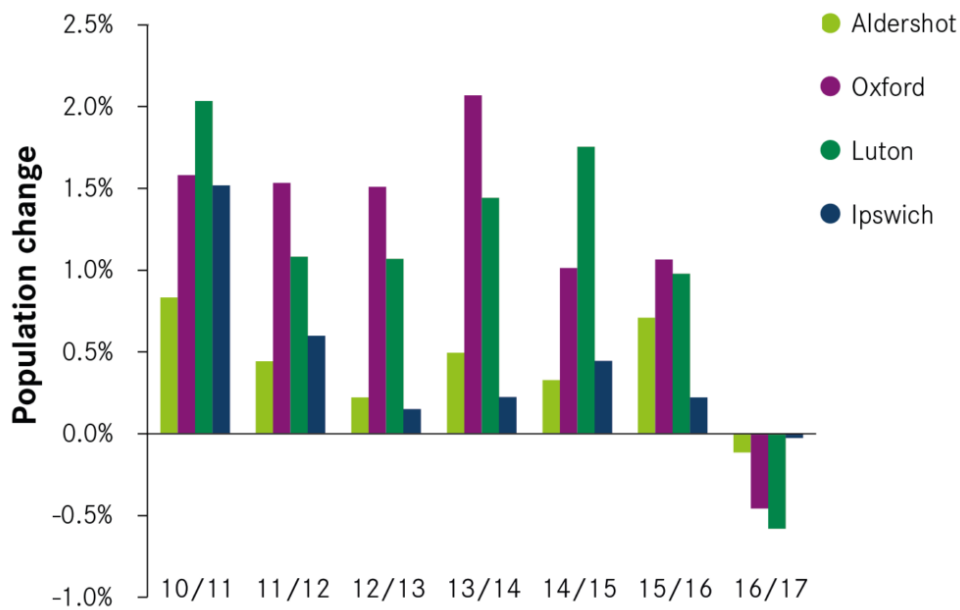


Figure 24 Depopulation of cities available at [www.citymetrix.com](http://www.citymetrix.com)

The uneven growth is also caused by unfavourable economic reorganizations and de-industrialization, which leads to limited job market and unemployment (Goodwin & Heath, 2016). As Elster would argue, belief in the positive economic consequences as a result of leaving the EU is intelligible, and thus the action rational. I can argue here that changes in the living standards have influenced the importance to vote.

A report on financial status (macro level) of population for 2015-16 highlights that the estimated number of individuals living in poverty is about 14 million (figure 25), which represents 20 % of the UK nation:

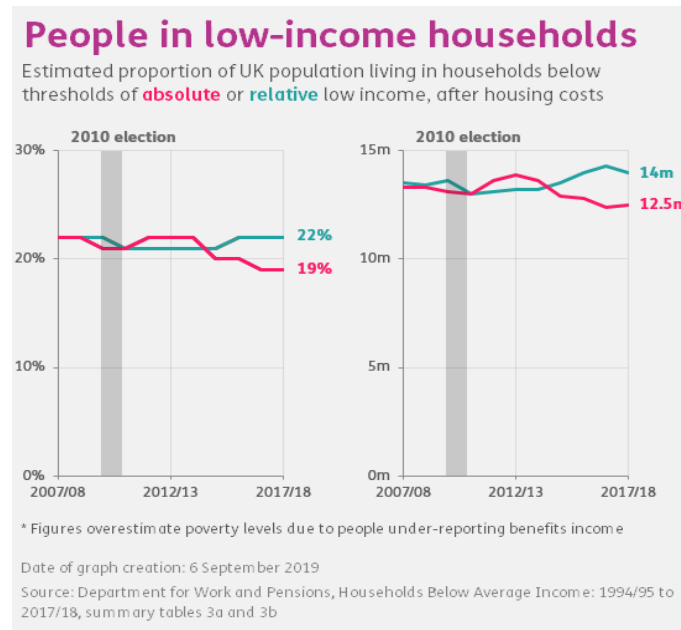


Figure 25 Poverty in UK (available on: <https://fullfact.org>)

As estimated in the official report for below-average income households, the average net household income in the UK increased to 0.8% in 2013-2014 compared to 0.4% in 2012-2013 (HBAI, u.d.). This weak two-year growth evidenced that median income slightly differs from the pre-recession levels in 2007-2008. At the same time, it is interesting to note that there is a stark contrast in the income between retirees and non-retirees. Namely, the average retirement income in 2013-14 is with 7.0 % higher than the pre-recession level of 2007-2008, while the average non-retirement income is with 2.7% lower than the pre-recession level of 2007-2008 (Belfield, et al., 2015).

On the other hand, still considering the social situation on macro level, the European Union has been a categorical instance, in dealing with the aging population. The “aging report” written by the European Commission has indicated that increasing the restriction to early access to retirement schemes could be used to keep older people to work for longer (European Commission, 2018). The report provides an analysis of the effect of the changes in the population structure of age-related expenditure, healthcare, education, unemployment benefits, and long-term care (European Commission). It also includes measures that the European Union has taken to curb the challenges that come with having an older generation. This provides the government's with projections of future policy changes that they will need to effect at the country level because of the demographic changes. The rationale of changes in the retirement schemes is based on the argument that having people exit

their work early will make them become a burden to the working population (Government Office of Science, 2016).

However, considering the current financial situation of the retirees (micro-level), the level of poverty among retirees is the lowest for the country (figure 26)

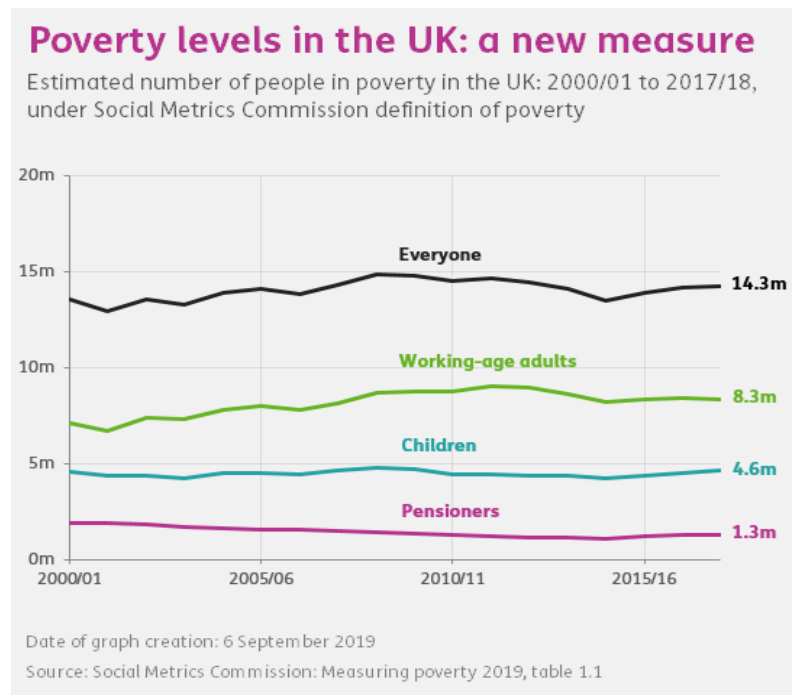


Figure 26 Poverty levels in UK (available on: <https://fullfact.org>)

In support to the latter, a recent research on pensioners income evidences a significant growth of the average income of pensioners for the last 11 years. The research, indeed, documents a significant difference between the average income of retiree and non-retiree. While the average income of retirees has grown by 21,2 % from 2002–2003 until 2013–2014, the average income of non-retirees increased by only 1.2% for the same period. A significant factor in defining the difference is due to the lower housing costs for the retirees in comparison with the working people as the majority of pensioners owning houses, namely about 75 % of retirees in the UK live in their own homes, while the number of people living in their own house among the working population is closer to 20 % (HBAI, u.d.). According to the research conducted between 2002-2014, an essential factor for the higher financial performance of retirees in comparison to the working individuals are as the retirees' earnings are less dependent on the labour market.

Even more, the strong growth in retirement income is due to the fact that more and more pensioners are full or half time working, (Table 1). A report on the level of employment among retirees conducted by the *Rest Less*, employment service provider, targeting the fast-growing over 50' job market, indicates that 323.000 men over the age of 70 work either part-time or full-time today. In other words, almost 1 of 9 aged 70 are still working, which is 11 % of those aged 70, while the number of a man aged over 70 has risen by 137% in a period of 10 years, achieving the number of 323, 000 men as shown in table 1 (Less, 2019).

Seniors over 70	2009	2019	Rate
Male and Female Combined	212,276	497,946	135%
Male	136,379	322,953	137%
Female	75,897	174,993	131%
Male Full Time	36,302	113,513	213%
Male Part Time	100,077	209,44	109%
Female Full Time	9,495	31,962	237%
Female Part Time	66,402	143,031	115%

*Table 1 Employees aged 70 and over; self- developed, data used from Rest Less, available at <https://restless.co.uk>*

In addition, the pensioners financial status is secured by the so-called "*Triple lock*" established in 2010 as part of the EU agreement.

*Triple-lock* is an economic tool that aims to keep the State pensions in unison with inflation and the living costs and thus to prevent poverty. It means that *Triple lock* provides an annual expansion of state pensions calculated by comparing the highest price inflation, the revenue growth or 2.5%. In other words, the State pension of an individual increases each year by minimum 2,5 % (Curry, u.d.). In 2017 the "new" retirees received additionally £ 405 as the pension was estimated at £ 122.30 a week, while those who retired before 2016 received £ 114.40 a week. This is 6.8% more than the national profit index (Figure 27) (Curry, u.d.).

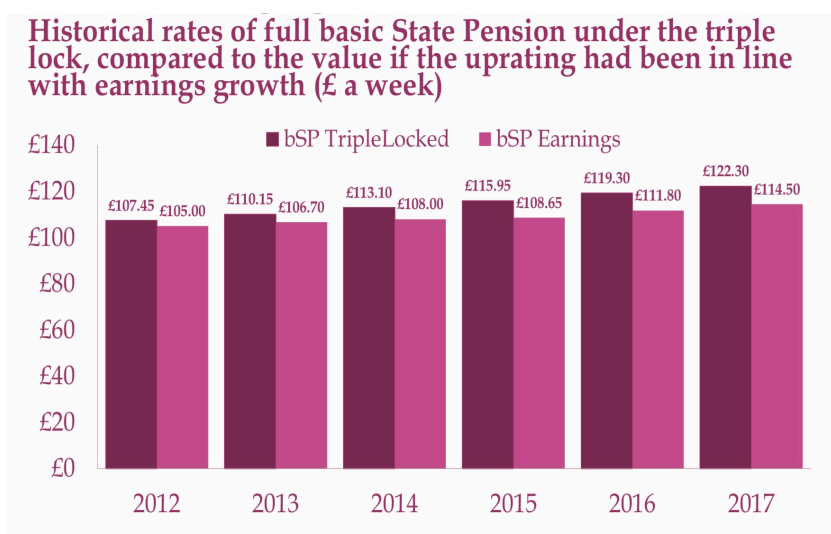


Figure 27 Pension Policy Institute statistic, available at: <https://www.pensionspolicyinstitute.org.uk>

Yet, the fact that those who benefit from the new state pension are the individuals who have reached the retirement age after April 2016. In other words, the majority of pensioners are not privileged to receive the new state pensions. For instance, the recipients of the triple lock pensions in 2006/17 have been 410.000, while the recipients of the old state pension were 11.500 mil. Still, looking at the retirees as a group, their incomes have increased compared to the rest of the population. According to an analysis of the income of the population by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), it is estimated that for the period 2007/8 - 2014/15 the average income for persons of age 60 and over increased by 11%; over the same period the average income for working individuals between 31-59 years became relatively the same, while for those aged 22-30 it decreased by 7%.

## 5.2 Vote Leave by education

Among people living in poverty, those of working age have the highest poverty rates (as shown in the graph below). Among causes of poverty are:

- Inequality in Wage - low-skilled workers occupy low-wage jobs
- Unemployment and long-term economic inactivity - due to low skills and incompatibility with the needs of the job market, also increased job competition due to increased immigration
- Individuals with no wage income, who rely on social benefits
- High Rental Cost

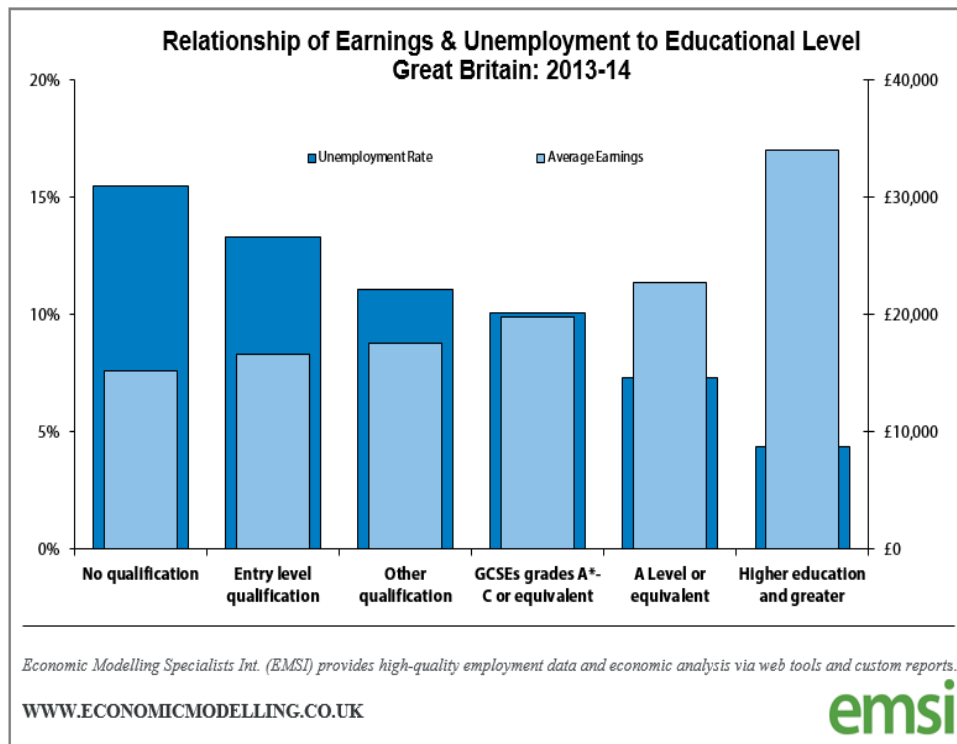
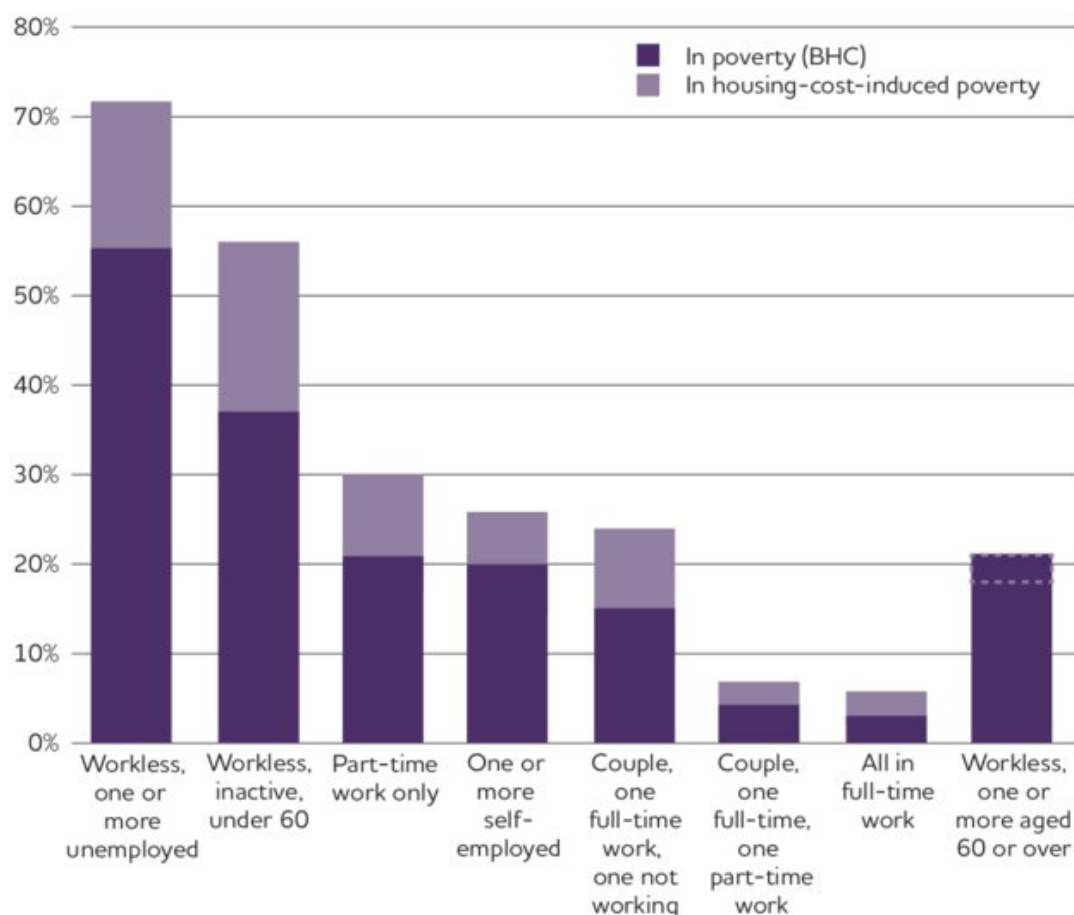


Figure 28 Employment/unemployment rate by education UK

The percentage of low educated and unemployed in working age is notable (figure 28). Low level of education is associated with poverty and unemployment rate. According to experts, the absence of qualifications is one of the arguments for unemployment among young individuals not only in the UK but also globally. Individuals without any qualifications are highly unlikely to be employed. Even though the service sector, (e.g. bars, shops, etc.) provides jobs for unskilled persons, the nature of jobs today is in line with technological developments and requires a highly skilled workforce.

A research highlights that 65 % of those living in poverty are not in work (figure 29) (Tunstall, et al., 2013):



*Figure 29 Links between housing and poverty*

According to a study (2010) on young people's activity in the UK after the recession, the number of unemployed aged 16-24 increased from 709,000 in 2007 to 929,000 in 2010, representing 13 % of the entire age group. As indicated in the report, even though the percentage of the employee has increased, young individuals still represent 38 % of the entire unemployed group (Potton, 2010). In the years 2013/14 the unemployment rate among those with low/no education is 16 %, while among well-educated individuals the percentage is close to 6 (analysis, 2016). There is a connection between the level of education, and employment/unemployment (Figure 7). Study evidence that the likelihood of being employed increases when the job seeker possesses a higher level of education. The degree also is essential in regard to the level of wages.

Various areas, such as Boston, which have registered some of the highest levels of support for Brexit, are struggling financially. These areas have low middle income, low skills and education and limited opportunities for change. Other areas, economically weak, such as Castle Point,

Trent Stoke, Mansfield, Doncaster, Great Yarmouth and Ashfield are also strongly supporting Brexit. Typical of these regions is that they are in stark contrast to cities such as Oxford, Edinburgh, London, Manchester (Goodwin & Heath, 2016)

Based on the presented above and concerning the theory on rational choice, expecting a better welfare, better opportunities on the job market, is intelligible, but is voting Leave rational?

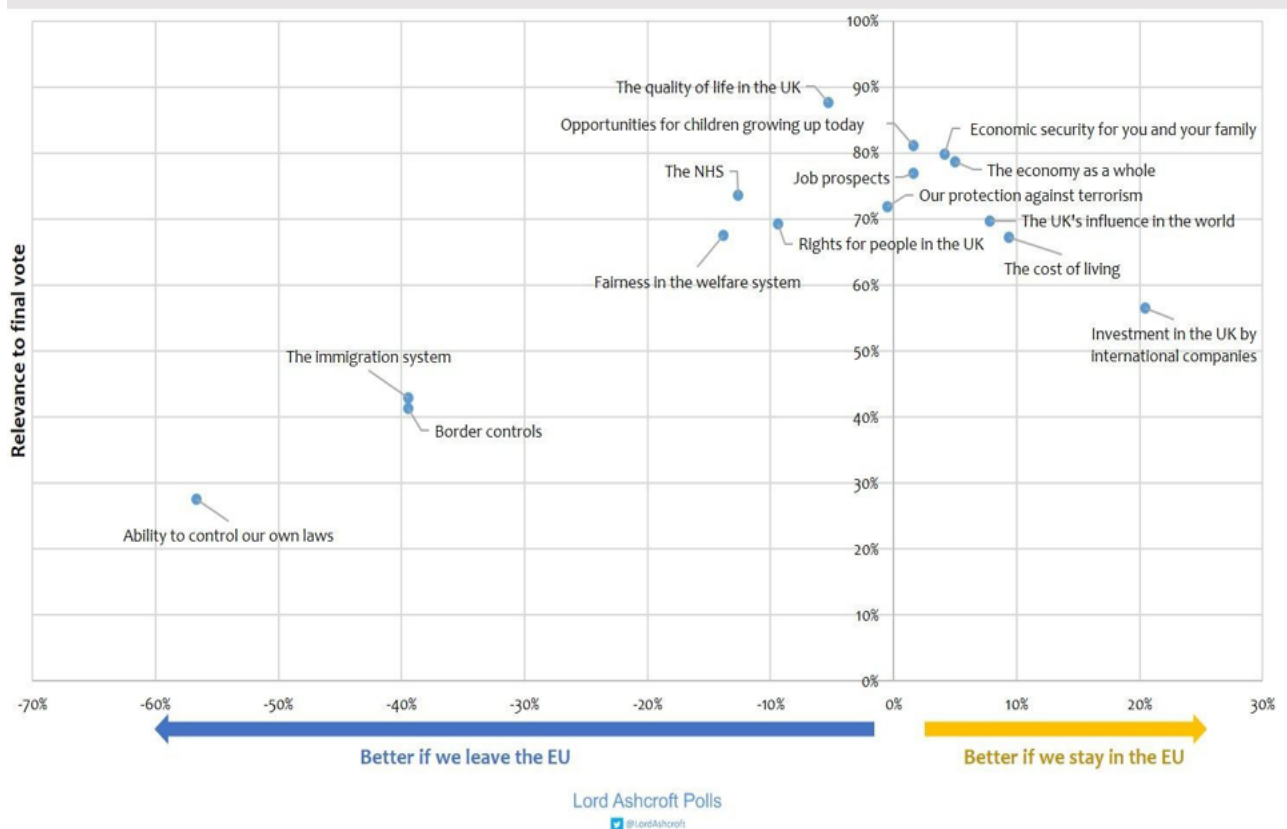
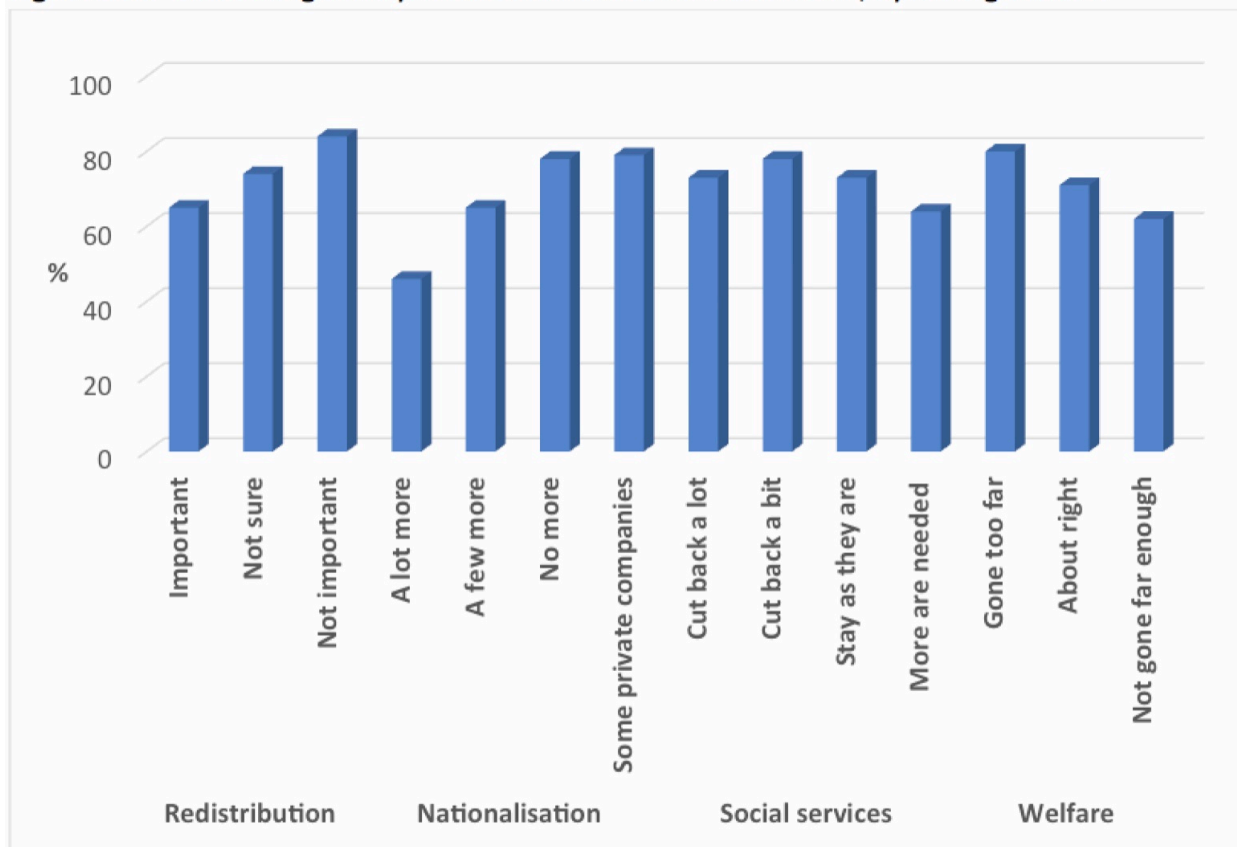


Figure 30 How the UK voted on Brexit referendum and why, available at: <https://lordashcroftpolls.com/2016>

In relation to the 1975 referendum, the vote remain was based on the desire for better welfare (figure 31):



**Figure 5** Per cent voting to stay in the EEC in the 1975 referendum, by left-right issues



*Figure 31 1975 referendum outcome by issues*

While on the 2016 referendum a better welfare was among the reason for voting Leave (figure 30).

In addition, comparing further the two referendums, as illustrated earlier (figure 20) the majority of the Leave supporters in 2016 are retirees (YouGov, 2016). The referendum in 1975 by age demonstrated in contrast, namely that the most pro EU were those aged 65 and over. However, in both referendums are those with lower education and social class less supportive for EU (figure 32).

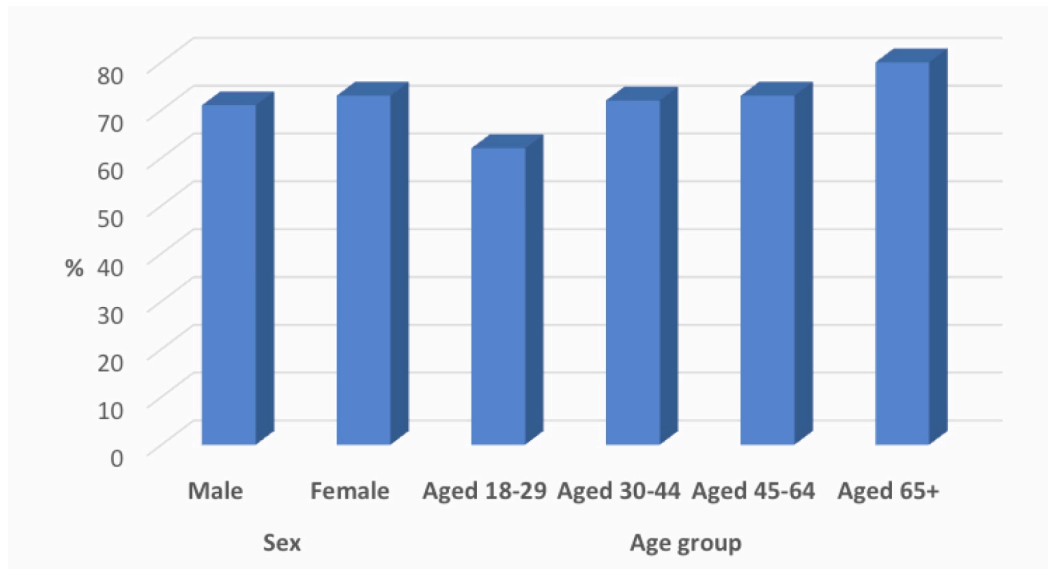


Figure 32 Referendum 1975 by age

Another fact that stands out from 1975 referendum, in comparison with the Brexit vote, is that the readers of the Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail were most EU supportive, while the readers of *The Guardian* are less pro-EU.

These similarities in both referendums testify to a link between education and vote - preferences on the one hand and, and vote- preference and newspapers preference on the other.

### 5.3 Media as source of knowledge

For many people in the UK, the press is the only way, (excl. radio and television), where people learn about the news (Moore, 2010). As the report points out, the press is concerned with commerce and advertising, and in contrast to the broadcast, unregulated. It is not mandatory to cover any foreign news - as opposed to public service such as the BBC, Channel 4 and ITV. In other words, the newspapers are a good barometer in the foreign news market or, sooner, the news editors' perceptions of the market (Moore, 2010). Newspapers also cover the news differently from television or radio. The newspapers are privileged to provide a deeper analysis of the international news, which is harder to be presented on TV. (for instance, *The Guardian's* coverage about the hostages in Iraq, in 2009). Newspapers are for many individuals, one of the main sources of news about the world outside the United Kingdom.

As noted earlier, the process of gathering information for decision making is significant for defining an action as rational. Therefore, I will put focus on newspapers as sources of information through which individuals develop perceptions, beliefs and desires to vote for Leave.

A survey by Statista (Statista.com) on the media support for Brexit evidence that the role of the media in shaping public opinion is crucial (figure 33)

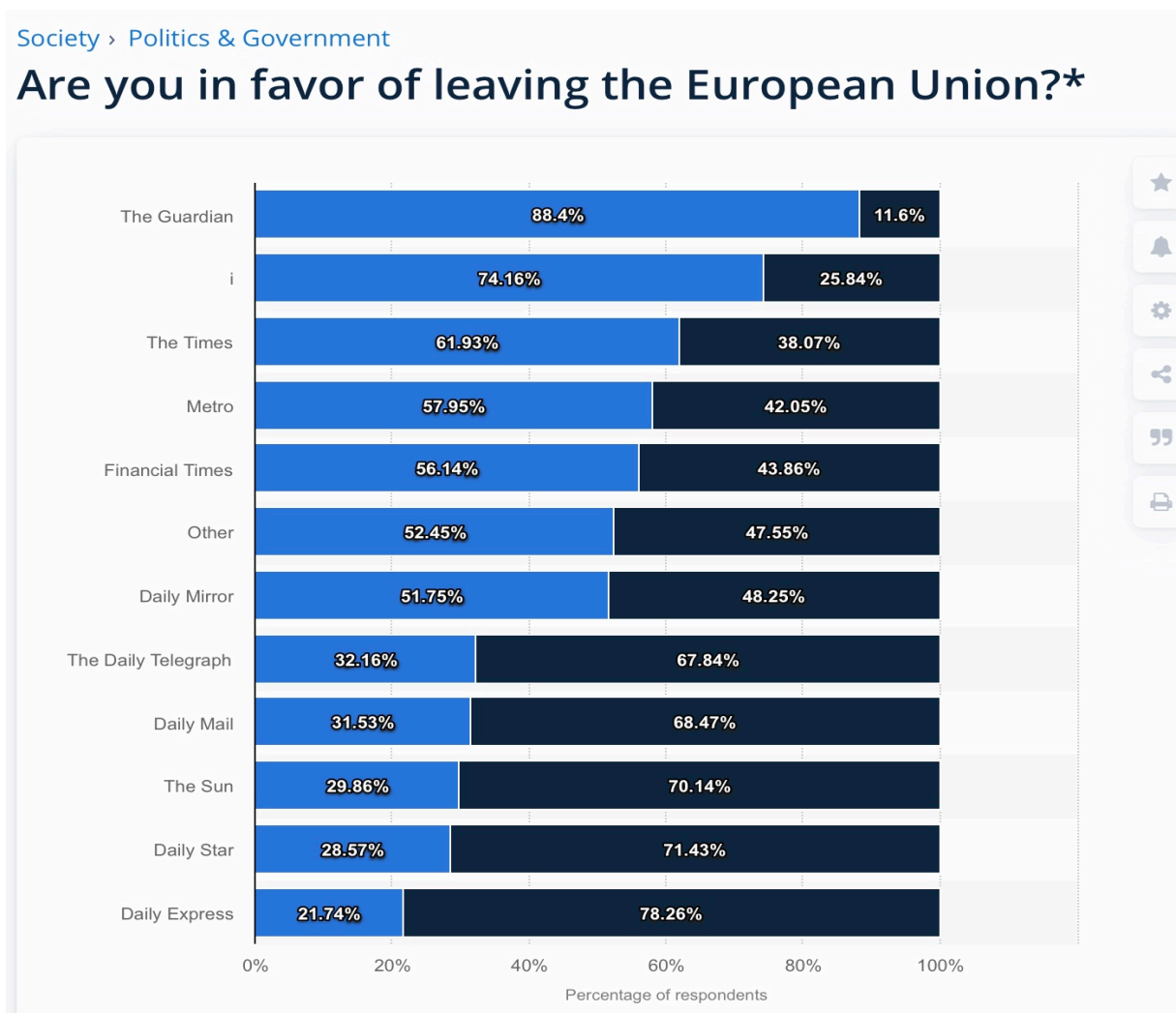


Figure 33 Media support for Brexit available at: [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)

The absence of knowledge in regard to the purposes and goals of the EU and its institutions, complemented by culturally integrated motives play an essential role in developing anti EU attitude. opinions. A biased information and fake news are among the reasons for the increased level of Euroscepticism in many European countries. Some scholars (Hoeven 2013; Stroud 2017) emphasize the role of the media in developing a public association with a particular political party

and creating a political opinion, others emphasize the correlation between education and the image of the general public in relation to the EU policy.

A report by the European Commission evidences that: “*There continues to be a strong correlation between education levels and understanding how the EU works.*” (European commission, 2010). In other words, a higher level of education increases the likelihood of better knowledge and greater awareness of the benefits of EU membership as opposed to those who have lower degree. In addition, the report shows a lack of understanding of how the EU does function, which also affects the image of the EU. At the same time, according to Hoeven (2013), the British media (e.g. the Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph) often misinterpret information and are also discriminative against foreign news. It can be seen as holding the audience in an information capsule. It also means that while the public is exposed to a big amount of information, it could be difficult to select what is true.

A study on the link between the media anti-EU attitudes in the UK distinguishes two categories of newspapers in, namely: the “*broadsheet press*”- press reviewing important issues and providing good quality writings, and the “*tabloid press*” which is concentrated on providing celebrity news and variety stories of the readers' interest. According to the author, the "tabloid press" occasionally illustrate considerable political issues or international news (Hoeven, 2013). One of the United Kingdoms' most-read newspaper is *The Sun*. The newspaper is a daily tabloid newspaper with an average of daily readers about 7.3 million (in 2012) (Bartlett, u.d.) and according to Press Gazette, 26.2 million readers per month in 2017. The newspaper is well-known for producing frequently controversial articles. In the '80s, the newspaper strongly patronized Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives. During the '80s the newspaper was also famous for its malicious articles regarding the Labor Party, aiming to undermine them (Hoeven, 2013).

Bearing in mind that the collection of knowledge is significant for the process of decision making, gathering information in regard to the European Union and its functioning, in line with the required by the theory on Rational choice, appears to be a difficult task. As observed by a study on international reporting in the British media, the amount of European news in the British newspapers in general has declined in the last decade. The research carried out by Media Standards Trust monitored the amount of foreign news over the period between 1979 and 2009, showed that there was a decline of almost 10% in the coverage of international news in 2009 compared to 1979 (figure 34).

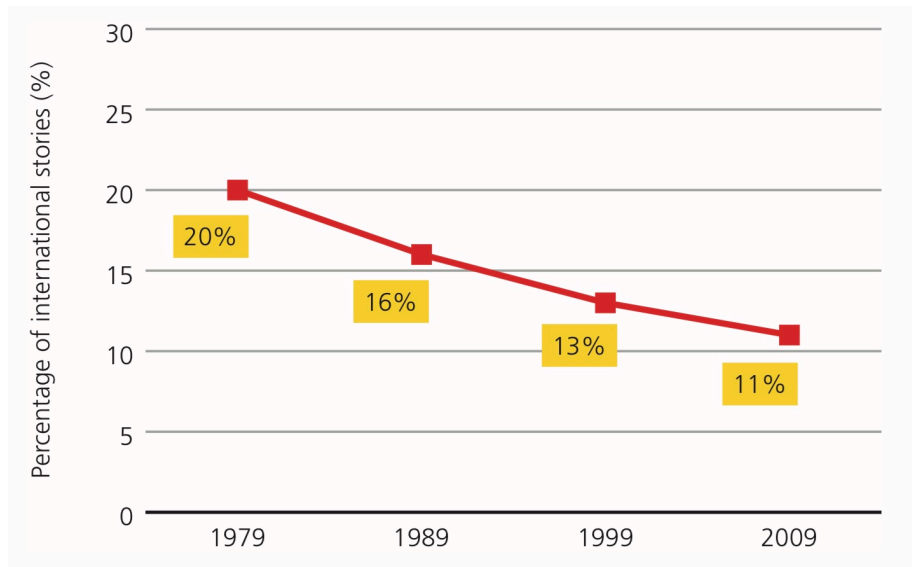


Figure 34 Percentage of foreign news

The research evidenced that in 2009, 20% of the presented news in the British “*broadsheet press*” was dedicated to international news (shown below), which means 80% of the illustrated news were domestic, while the illustration of the international/ European news in the “*tabloid press*” was about 5 % (figure 35) (Media Standards Plus, 2010)

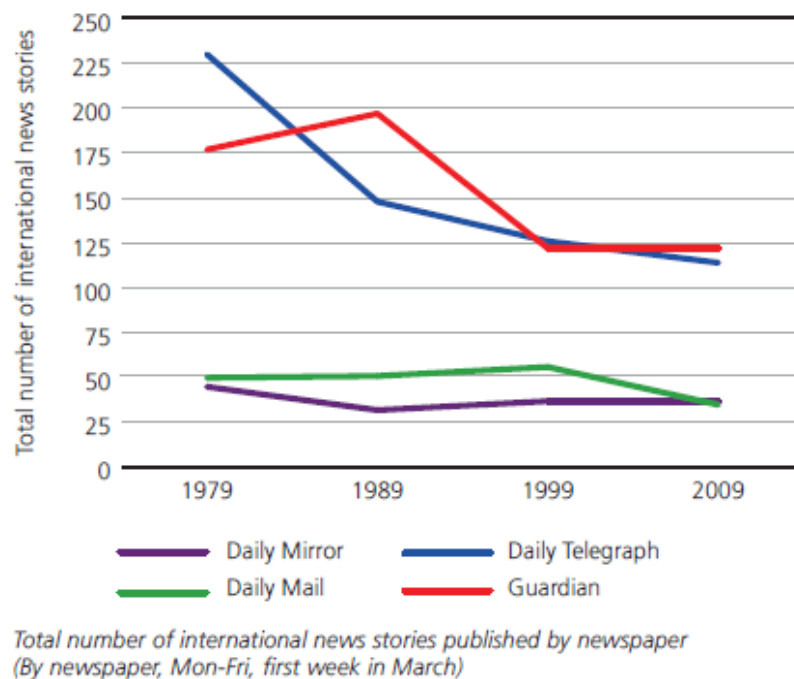


Figure 35 Media Standards Plus: The number of international news by newspaper

In order to evaluate the impact on the public opinion, Hoeven concerned the following newspapers and the percentage of international/European news they cover:

- The tabloid newspaper *The Daily Mail* (right wing/populist)
- The broadsheet press, *The Guardian* (centre-left-wing/liberal)
- The broadsheet press, *The Daily Telegraph* (centre- right -wing/conservative)

The scholar discovered that the newspaper with least international news is *The Daily Mail*, with namely 1,5% (figure 36)

Foreign news in British newspapers	
Newspaper	Percentage of foreign news (daily)
The Guardian	10%
The Daily Mail	1,5%
The Daily Telegraph	7%

Figure 36 Foreign news on British newspapers

The observation of the British media also showed that the newspapers frequently ussies "Euro myths" reviewing senseless events such as the regulation regarding the fruits and vegetables on the European market: where the defined as "free from malformation or abnormal curvature" was presented as "Brussels bureaucrats ban bananas" (Hoeven, 2013). In the study further stresses that the only country that paid attention to the regulation and highlighted it in the media was the United Kingdom. As pointed out by Mr. Van den Horst (Former UK correspondent for NOS) "*These Euro myths, such as the straight banana, are absolute nonsense of course, which most sensible British people wouldn't believe anyway, but there are more subtle myths on Europe that a lot of British people DO believe*" (Hoeven, 2013). The observation also discovered that different newspapers ranked the foreign top news differently. While *The Guardian* covers top European news on the front page, the *Daily Mail* illustrates them in small articles paged in the foreign- news section, page 20 of *Daily Telegraph* or *Daily Mail*. In other words, getting information about the European Union or other international events requires the reader to look through the domestic news before reaching the international news section. Reporting the news also differ from newspaper to newspaper.

The news covered in *The Guardian* (left-wing newspaper) in comparison with *The Daily Telegraph* (right-wing newspaper) are also apparent on a daily basis. While *The Guardian* reported a news about a Tory MP who intended to force an early EU in/out the public vote as “*Rebel Tory MP calls for EU referendum before 2015 elections*”, *The Daily Telegraph* headline was “*Fury Tory at the move to force early EU vote*”. Not only the covers, but also the factual content demonstrates considerable divergence. *The Daily Telegraph* focuses on the struggles within the Tory party and concern particular persons who talk about those issues and pointed out that even “Euro sceptic Tory MPs” are careful in regard to an early public vote. *The Guardian*, on the other hand, presents the story from a Labour perspective, claiming that the Labour party has refrained from making statements regarding an EU referendum. The newspaper also presents a number of quotations to clarify and illustrate the different views circulating in British politics.

Another news that obsessed the British media, emphasized by Hoeven, which also was among the reasons for Leave on the 2016 referendum, was in relation to the immigration from other EU member states, travelling to the UK to claim social benefits.

As presented in the empirical chapter, immigrants are among the issues causing anti-EU attitudes and desire to leave the EU. An intense discussion between the British Ministers and the European Commission related to a report by the Euro Commission, addressing the issue with the beneficial tourism in the UK, was reported by the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*. *Daily Telegraph* presented it as “*112,000 EU migrants seeking British jobs*”, while the headline of the *Daily Mail* was “*Slash benefits for EU migrants*” (Hoeven, 2013). In addition, the *Daily Mail* illustrated the cost for the UK due to the immigrants from other EU member states: “ - 42% 'non-active' EU migrants in Britain, in six years- £1.5bn: Estimated annual cost to National Health Service of treating 'non-active' migrants, and 73% increase in the number of 'job-seeking' EU migrants in Britain between 2009 and 2011” (Hoeven, 2013). In contrast, *The Guardian* presents the report by the European Commission as “not as black and white” as it looks. The article includes quotations like “*The UK can't come up with figures regarding the benefits tourism thing, only with anecdotal evidence*”. In addition, the authors of the article present a well-structured evidence which demonstrates a different approach as opposed to the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph*, that illustrate opinions about consequences for the UK, instead of presenting factual findings from the European Commission's report.

When assessing newspapers as a source for gathering knowledge, that is expected to provide a certain level of rationality in the decision-making, we must take into account the fear in evaluating the rationalism, which this type of sources, such as newspapers may generate. The so-called version of irrational, but intelligible action “wire-crossing in the machinery of decision” presented earlier, might be explained by fear: when a human’s mind is “*engaged in a cognitive dissonance reduction, it also pursues dissonance production*” (Elster, 2009).

On the other hand, a decision due to the effect of the media can be explained as an action as a result of motivated belief, the other version of understandable irrationality. The individuals stop collecting evidence as the information acquired so far is in accordance with the belief the individual would like to be true. In other words, voters may stop acquiring additional evidence as the perception of their uncertain economic situation makes them believe that, for example, the immigrants are causing the level of unemployment and voting for Leave will limit the immigration, which will provide them better opportunities on the job market. Namely, the reported in the newspaper easily explains their economic situation and the actor does not need to look for further evidence. It is also called a biased belief.

The observation on the influence of the media on the public opinion (Hoeven, 2013) included features intending to determine the level of anti-EU attitudes in the articles. The observation of the Euroscepticism in the media was focused on: Fake news and stories about the European Union (*Euro-myths*); Refrain from providing evidence to the readers; Presenting false facts to the readers; Utilize highly negative emotions in the writing style; Expressions of unfriendliness and opposition towards the EU or its institutions (the findings are illustrated in figure 37) (Hoeven, 2013).

Level of euroscepticism in British newspapers	
Newspaper	Percentage of EU news that contains elements of euroscepticism
The Guardian	0%
The Daily Mail	83%
The Daily Telegraph	62%

Figure 37 Research on Euroscepticism in the British newspapers



Referring the latter to the theory on rational choice, the level of Euroscepticism in the articles is essential when gathering knowledge as it affects the objectivity in the presented news. It provides biased illustration of events and thus biased beliefs, as argued by Elster. In addition, the bounded rationality proposed by Wittek (2017) points out that a *selective attention* reduces the quality and quantity of information and knowledge, which further influences the perception and thus the observation of that information. Simon emphasized that “*limited information leads to satisfaction rather than maximization*” and people are likely to accept options with a limited advantage (Wittek, 2017) In support to the latter, according to Eurobarometer (2010), in a survey looking at people's knowledge of how the EU does work, 56% of UK citizens answer that they do not understand how the Union does work. Further, 58% of unemployed and 65% of manual working individuals, as well as 57% of the retiree, respond that they do not understand how the EU is working (figure 38).

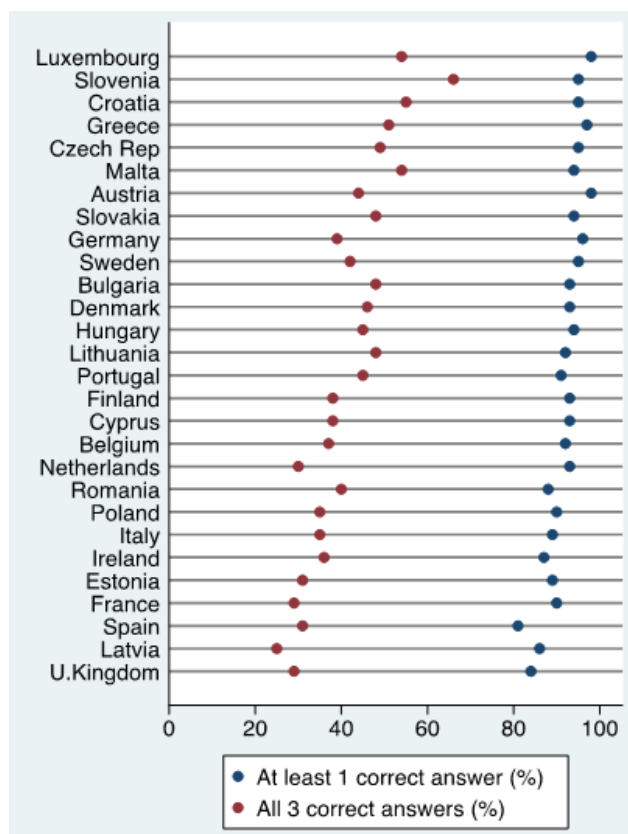


Figure 38 Knowledge of EU by Member State

In addition, the observation by EUROBAROMETER shows that the individuals being distrustful towards the EU, Eurosceptical, are individuals aged 55 and over, those aged 65 and over are more Eurosceptical ( EUROBAROMETER 74, 2010). Also, those who have not acquired a high

education and those who have always been opponents of European cooperation. As argued by Hoeven (2013), these individuals are among the 4.3 million readers of one of the most popular newspapers in Britain, namely The Daily Mail and this is the only newspaper these individuals have been reading for years.

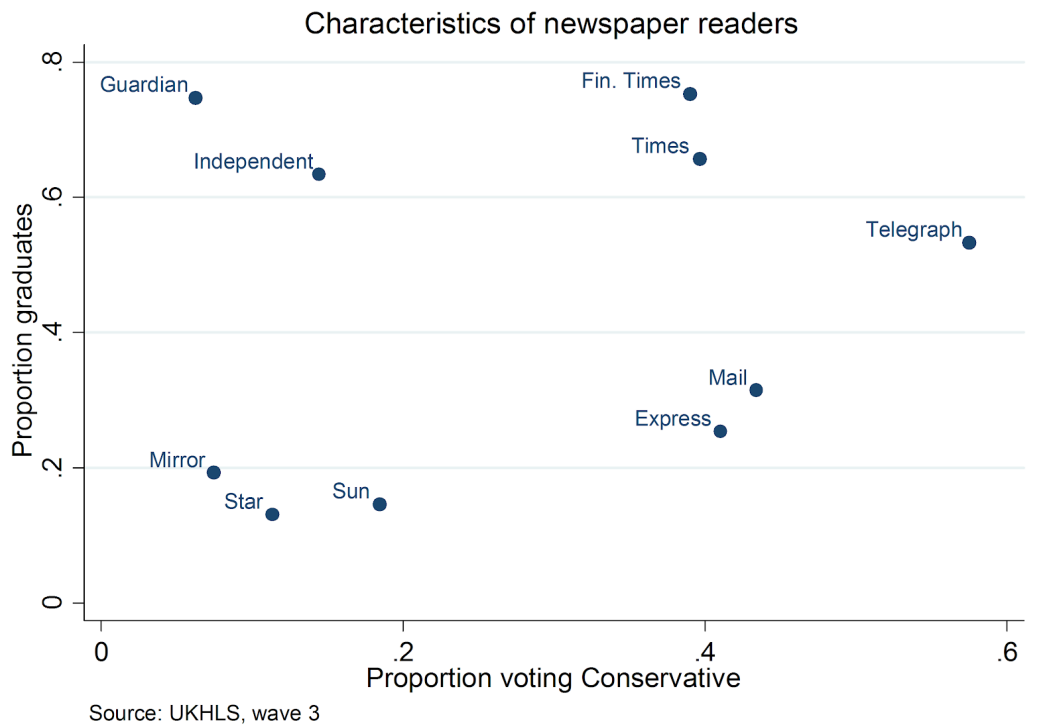


Figure 39 Within-household newspaper consumption (Griffiths, 2014)

As presented by Eurobarometer, this person is a reader of a completely different type of news compared to someone at the same age who has acquired a high degree of education and who is broadly interested in the EU and international news. In other words, the readers of tabloids like the Daily Mail are exposed to the news that this specific newspaper covers. Being exposed to negative articles related to the EU, it is not that impossible to be of the opinion that a small part of those negative attitudes is chosen by the reader, intentionally or by accident, as also is shown in the graph above (figure 39, above illustrates the proportion of readers -well-educated- vertically on the scale; horizontally on the scale- shows the proportion of voters for Conservative) . Moreover, as the domestic news is always highly prioritized in *Daily Mail*, the readers of tabloid have highly limited access to international news which might explain an (unwilling) lack of interest to European news.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to observe the reason *why* people voted for Leave in order to understand the division among the Britons. The assumption was that the supporters of Leave is self-driven by personal interest of the outcome, such as less competition on the job market, better welfare, etc. To observe whether there was a personal economic interest behind the vote, I applied the following hypothesis: The vote for Brexit can be explained by the economic benefits which the voters expect from Brexit.

The analysis of the empirical evidence showed similarities between the 1975 referendum and the 2016 referendum. In both highly supporter of EU membership were well-educated. In contrast the votes of the both referendums demonstrate difference in relation to age—namely the aged 65 and over were the greatest supporter of the membership in the Union, while in the 2016 referendum they opposed the membership and voted Leave. The result of analysis shows that the readers of *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* in support of the EU on the 1975 referendum, while on the 2016 referendum they voted Leave. In contrast the readers of the Guardian voted on both referendum in support of the membership in the EU. In a nutshell, the majority of the 1975 referendum voters were pro-EU, also the majority of the newspaper demonstrated high level of support. In contrast the support of EU on the 2016 referendum was a minority. There was also lack of support from those newspapers that were pro EU on the previous referendum.

The analysis further shows that the majority of the UK citizens do not know how the EU works and what its purposes and goals are, which makes possible fake news to reach them and develop a biased belief. Anti-EU attitudes are shaped by the press by reporting biased information. Some newspapers are highly Eurosceptic. Further, studies claim correlation between level of education, age and anti-EU attitudes. Analysis found out that those over 55 and with low degree are more Eurosceptic, in contrast those with higher degree of education demonstrate better knowledge of how EU works and thus they are less likely to vote Leave.

In accordance with the rationality in decision making determined by the theory on rational choice, a rational action is intelligible per definition. As presented in the media could cause fear, the analysis considered fear as factor in decision making. As argued by Elster, fear makes us follow our feelings disregarding the evidence we already have acquired. As some would argue it is rather a reflex triggered decision. However, it is still evaluated as rational as scholars stress the

importance of feelings and perception of situation in making decision. The scholars, however, do not find an explanation of why our fear of a bad effect or consequence would, makes us perceive them as more likely than it is justified by our evidence. The reason why we do choose or adopt a belief which is neither maintained by evidence nor by our desire is yet unrevealed.

I have also examined how motivated belief (biased beliefs) correspond with the empirical data. As the theory on rational choice indicates, if the subjective reality of a person corresponds well with the presented in the news, the need to keep looking for further evidence diminishes. Taking into account the data presented and the analysis of the factors that I presume have influenced the vote, such as fear, selective attention and motivated believe, voting for Leave could be explained as irrational as it is taken based on a biased belief but yet intelligible as the voters believed that Britain will be better-off out of EU, namely lower level of unemployment among low/no educated individuals, as well as to improve the welfare for them self and the nation as a whole.

While it is impossible to determine the extent to which readers of these newspapers have been influenced by the news coverage and to what extent the person has been influenced by his or her own strategic considerations for improving his or her own economic situation, a reasonable suggestion is that his / her strategic needs made him/her open to the arguments in the articles reviewing EU related news. As the Leave is a subjective decision, subjectively, an individual may believe that the information obtained through the media has provided him/her the amount and quality of knowledge needed to make a decision in hers/his own economic interest, that makes the vote Leave a rational choice, which is in a support of the hypothesis, namely: the vote for Brexit can be explained by the economic – direct and indirect - benefits which the voters expect from Brexit.

With respect to the research question, namely “*Why the majority (51,2%) of Britons voted Leave?*”, the analysis indicates that the level of education, as well as knowledge and understanding of how the European Union and its institutions are functioning, are essential in shaping attitudes in support or opposition of the Union. A higher level of education enhances the probability of better knowledge and thus a greater awareness of the benefits of EU membership, as opposed to those who have lower education. Namely, the absence of knowledge in regard to the objectives and purposes of the European Union and its institutions is one of the major reasons causing reservations towards the EU and sustaining anti- EU sentiments causing also a division of the nation.

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