

UK media coverage of the 2016 EU Referendum campaign

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Centre for the Study of Media,
Communication and Power

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Introduction

Introduction

This is the first study to examine all articles published about the 2016 EU referendum by the leading UK national news outlets online, including national press, digital-only news services, and the online news services of the leading broadcasters for the period of the official referendum campaign.

Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis, this study documents and evaluates the way in which the national media covered the most significant decision made by the UK electorate in the 21st century. It captures the people and the issues that were covered, the language that was used and the themes that characterised the campaign.

It builds on the findings published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ), in conjunction with PRIME Research,¹ by Loughborough University,² and by Cardiff University.³ The RISJ/PRIME research, published in September 2016, sampled national print newspapers and found a ‘dominant pro-Brexit bias’. The Loughborough study sampled television news bulletins as well as print newspapers, and also found evidence of coverage weighted in favour of ‘out’ over ‘in’, with the conduct of the campaign itself attracting the most coverage, ahead of immigration and the economy. The Cardiff analysis of television news bulletins throughout the campaign found that process stories

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- 1 Levy, D.A.L., Aslan, B. and Bironzo, D. (2016) *UK Press Coverage of the EU Referendum*, Oxford: RISJ http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/UK%20Press%20Coverage%20of%20the%20EU%20Referendum_0.pdf
 - 2 Deacon, D., Downey, J., Harmer, E., Stanyer, J. and Wring, D. (2016) ‘The narrow agenda: How the news media covered the Referendum,’ in Daniel Jackson, Einar Thorsen and Dominic Wring (eds.) *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign*, Bournemouth University http://bit.ly/EUReferendumAnalysis2016_Jackson-Thorsen-and-Wring_v1
 - 3 Cushion, S. and Lewis, J. (2016) ‘Scrutinising statistical claims and constructing balance: Television news coverage of the 2016 EU Referendum,’ in Jackson, D., Thorsen, E. and Wring, D. (eds.) *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign*, Bournemouth University http://bit.ly/EUReferendumAnalysis2016_Jackson-Thorsen-and-Wring_v1

about campaigning practices, strategies and polling dominated, with the economy and immigration again the most prevalent policy issues.

This study examines all relevant articles published online over the official 10-week campaign (from 15 April to 23 June) by the following:

Broadcasters (online only)

BBC: bbc.co.uk/news

ITV: itv.com/news

Channel 4: channel4.com/news

Sky News: news.sky.com

Newspapers

The *Daily Mail* (includes *Mail on Sunday*): dailymail.co.uk

The *Daily Express* (includes *Sunday Express*): express.co.uk

The *Daily Mirror* (includes the *Sunday People*): mirror.co.uk

The *Daily Star* and *Daily Star Sunday*: dailystar.co.uk

The *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*: telegraph.co.uk

The *Financial Times*: ft.com

The *Guardian* and *Observer*: theguardian.com/uk

The *Independent*: independent.co.uk

The Times (including *The Sunday Times*): thetimes.co.uk

The *Sun* (including the *Sun on Sunday*): thesun.co.uk

News magazines

The *Economist*: economist.com

The *New Statesman*: newstatesman.com

The *Spectator*: spectator.co.uk (including blogs.spectator.co.uk)

Digital-only

Buzzfeed UK: buzzfeed.com/?country=uk

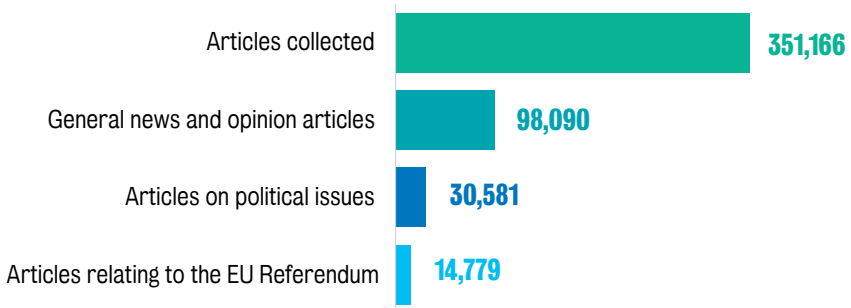
Huffington Post UK: huffingtonpost.co.uk

Vice UK: vice.com/en_uk

Of the national news outlets eight endorsed Leave: the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, *The Sunday Times*, and the *Spectator*. Eight supported Remain: *The Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *FT*, the *Independent*,

the *Mail on Sunday*, the *Mirror*, and the *New Statesman*. BuzzFeed, HuffPo UK, Vice UK, and the *Star* (Daily and Sunday) did not formally endorse either side, though the editorial perspective of the first three lent towards Remain, while the *Star* strongly favoured Leave. The BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Sky were required by law to be neutral.

Figure 1: Number of articles analysed



In total over the 10-week campaign the 20 news outlets published 351,166 articles on all subjects, of which 253,076 had no relevance to this study (dealing with matters including sport and celebrity). Of the remaining 98,090, two-thirds made no reference to any of the political issues identified as significant. This left 30,581 articles, half of which made no reference to the referendum. In all, therefore, 14,779 articles touched on both the political issues and on the referendum, and these were the focus of the study (see Figure 1). They included news, features, leading articles (editorials) and opinion articles. In addition to the online articles, every lead story on every print newspaper front page was analysed. For a full explanation of the methodology see the end of this study.

The study starts with the numbers. How much coverage of the EU Referendum campaign was there over the 10 weeks? How did this compare between different outlets? Which newspapers paid most attention to the referendum and to what extent were front pages dominated by the economy and immigration? What issues were covered each week by which titles? What campaign stories set the agenda? Who did the coverage focus on and what issues were they most associated with?

Having captured the numbers the study examines the issues that defined the campaign: the economy, immigration, sovereignty, dishonesty, fear, and the 'Establishment'. For each issue it breaks the coverage down in terms of quantity – who said what where, and by type of coverage. It looks at the extent to which news outlets followed the leads set by the campaigns themselves and the extent to which they pursued their own agendas.

Summary

Summary

Volume and prominence

- ♦ Almost 15,000 EU Referendum-related articles were published online across 20 national news outlets during the official campaign.
- ♦ 195 national newspaper print front pages led on Brexit over the same period, out of a total of 550.

Economy

- ♦ The economy was the most covered campaign issue (7,028 articles), followed by immigration (4,383 articles), with health a distant third (1,638 articles).
- ♦ Economic claims, though widely covered, were highly contested. Warnings about the repercussions of Brexit were routinely dismissed as deliberate Remain ‘scaremongering’ (a term used 737 times).
- ♦ The Remain claim that Brexit would cost households £4,300 per year by 2030 was discussed in more articles than the Leave campaign’s claim that the EU cost the UK £350 million each week (365 articles vs 147 articles).
- ♦ Towards the latter stages of the campaign, and particularly after purdah began, economic issues related to Brexit were increasingly linked to immigration (47% of referendum-related economy articles also mentioned immigration after 27 May).

Immigration

- ♦ Coverage of immigration more than tripled over the course of the campaign, rising faster than any other political issue.
- ♦ Immigration was the most prominent referendum issue, based on the number of times it led newspaper print front pages (there were 99

front pages about immigration, 82 about the economy).

- ♦ Coverage of the effects of immigration was overwhelmingly negative. Migrants were blamed for many of Britain's economic and social problems – most notably for putting unsustainable pressure on public services.
- ♦ Specific nationalities were singled out for particularly negative coverage – especially Turks and Albanians, but also Romanians and Poles.
- ♦ The majority of negative coverage of specific foreign nationals was published by three news sites: the *Express*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Sun*.

Other political issues

- ♦ Other political issues, such as the future of the devolved nations, the environment, and education, were covered far less than the economy and immigration during the campaign.

Sovereignty

- ♦ Sovereignty was referred to frequently (in almost 2,000 articles), but almost always in the context of other issues – most notably the economy and immigration.
- ♦ Only 6% of articles containing issues of sovereignty also mentioned law-making powers.
- ♦ In contrast, in almost half the articles in which sovereignty was referenced it was associated with 'taking back control'.

Campaign voices

- ♦ Politicians' voices dominated the campaign, most notably David Cameron (5,758 articles) and George Osborne (2,355 articles) for Remain; and Boris Johnson (3,407 articles), Nigel Farage (2,123 articles) and Michael Gove (2,090 articles) for Leave. Cameron was referenced more than 15 times as often as Theresa May (378 articles).

Dishonesty and fear

- ♦ Every week of the campaign saw both sides engage in mutual accusations of lying (552 articles), of misleading (464 articles) and of dishonesty (234 articles).
- ♦ Each side said the other was guilty of trying to scare voters, though the label 'Project Fear' was most successfully attached to the approach of the Remain campaign (referenced 739 times during the campaign).

The Establishment

- ♦ Leave campaigners and Leave-supporting news outlets framed the campaign in populist terms, presenting the 'Establishment' in distinction to – and against the interests of – the people. 547 articles mentioned the 'Establishment' – variously defined – while 636 mentioned 'elites'.

Tone

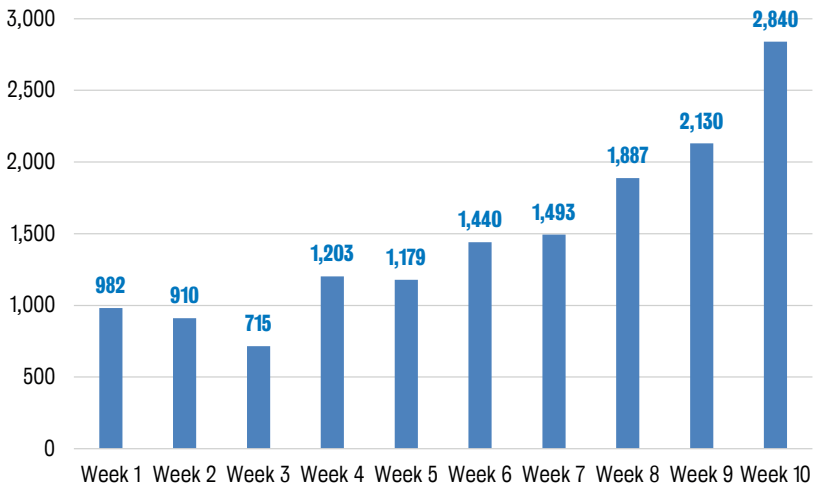
- ♦ Overall, UK media coverage of the EU Referendum campaign can best be described as acrimonious and divisive.
- ♦ Reporting of the campaign was highly partisan across almost all non-broadcast outlets. Many news outlets were heavily invested in the campaign, though to varying degrees.
- ♦ Given the extent to which each side accused the other of dishonesty and scaremongering, and the extent to which these claims were picked up and often amplified in news outlets, it would be surprising if the public's political trust had not diminished, and their fears had not increased, after the vote of 23 June 2016.

Overall numbers

Overall numbers

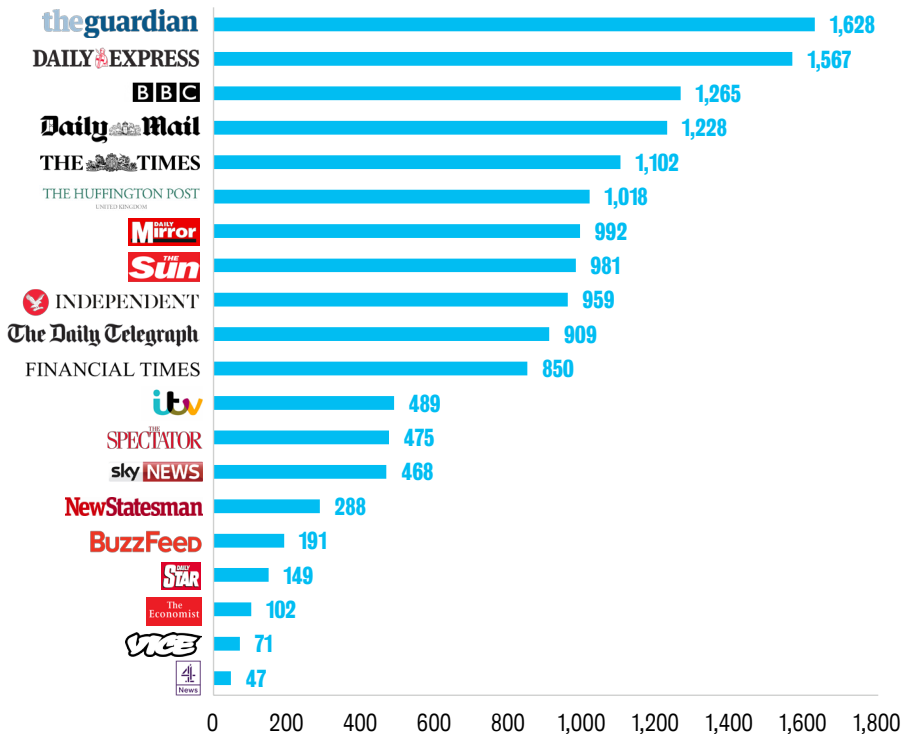
Coverage of the EU Referendum, overall figures

Figure 2: Total articles mentioning the EU Referendum, Weeks 1–10 (15 April–23 June)



In total over the 10-week campaign the 20 news outlets published 351,166 articles on all subjects, of which 253,076, dealing with matters including sport and celebrity, had no relevance of any kind and were excluded. Of the remaining 98,090 two-thirds made no reference to any of the 14 political issues deemed significant for this study. This left 30,581 articles, half of which made no reference to the referendum. In all, 14,779 articles touched on both the 14 public policy issues and the referendum, and these formed the basis of the study (see Figure 2). They included news, features, leading articles (editorials) and opinion articles.

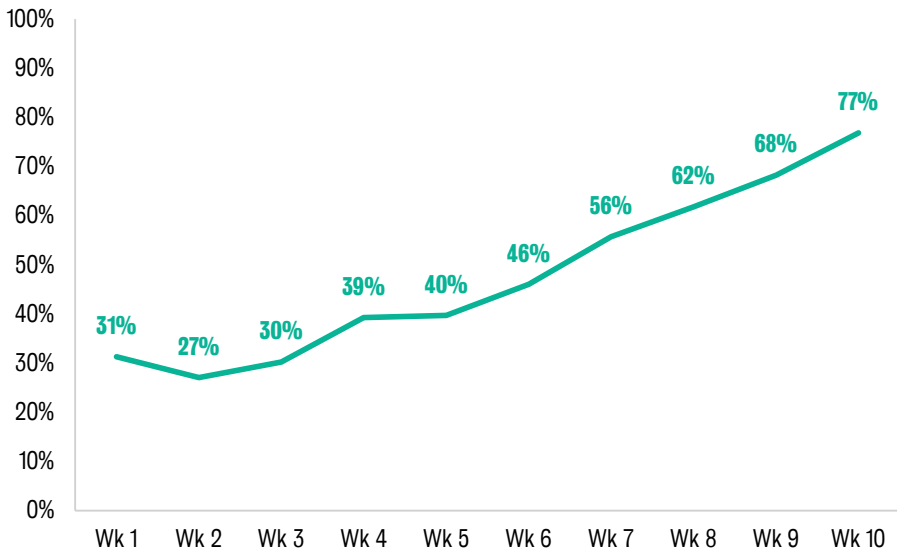
Figure 3: Total articles mentioning the EU Referendum, by publication (15 April–23 June)



As Figure 3 shows, the *Guardian* published the greatest number of referendum-related articles during the campaign, a total of 1,628. The *Express* published the second highest number – 1,567 in total. Then came BBC news online (1,265), the *Daily Mail* online (1,228) and *The Times* (1,102).

The *Telegraph* published fewer EU Referendum articles than the *Sun*, and the *Financial Times* fewer than the *Mirror*. The newer, online-only news sites such as Buzzfeed and Vice UK, published fewer articles still. Channel 4 News tended to publish a high proportion of world news, video clips, and to put content out directly over social media, which accounts for the small number of articles eligible for analysis in this report.

Figure 4: EU Referendum coverage as a proportion of articles on UK political issues



Until Week 7 of the campaign, less than half of all UK news and opinion articles were related to the EU Referendum.

This rose to 56% of articles in Week 7, and continued to rise after that. By the final week of the campaign almost eight of every 10 articles in which political issues were discussed mentioned the referendum (see Figure 4).

On average, just under half – 48.3% – of all UK news and opinion articles referenced the referendum during the campaigning (14,779 of 30,581 articles).

Setting the EU Referendum in news context

Setting the EU Referendum in news context

The EU Referendum dominated news coverage early on and towards the end of the campaign, but it competed with other news throughout. Most notably: the Queen's 90th birthday, the Hillsborough report, Leicester City's unexpected Premiership title, the London Mayoral election, the death of Muhammed Ali, and the Orlando nightclub attack.

Media coverage of the murder of Jo Cox MP, which happened a week before the vote, has not been counted as EU Referendum coverage. This is because both campaigns, and national media outlets, agreed it should not be politicised.

Leading non-EU Referendum stories

Leading EU Referendum stories



Week 1

15-21 April

Queen's 90th Birthday: **679 articles**
 Death of Prince: **247 articles**
 Victoria Wood dies: **214 articles**

Osborne launches Treasury report: **118 articles**
 Osborne migrant 'bombshell': **86 articles**
 Terrorists exploiting borders: **27 articles**



Week 2

22-28 April

Hillsborough report: **583 articles**
 BHS scandal: **334 articles**
 Labour Party anti-semitism: **230 articles**

Obama 'back of the queue' warning: **67 articles**
 Broken borders: **38 articles**
 Brexit 'fightback': **8 articles**



Week 3

29 April-5 May

Leicester City win Premier League: **1,238 articles**
 Labour Party anti-semitism: **485 articles**
 Child refugees allowed into Britain: **123 articles**

EU Turkey 'open door': **52 articles**
 'EU army' planned: **20 articles**



Week 4

6-12 May

Sadiq Khan wins London mayoral election: **672 articles**
 Cameron overheard calling Afghan and Nigerian governments 'fantastically corrupt': **169 articles**
 BBC distinctiveness called for in report: **90 articles**

Cameron 'war' warning: **180 articles**
 Brexit TV debates: **63 articles**
 Migrant pressure on schools: **13 articles**
 Osborne warns of city job losses: **11 articles**



Week 5

13-19 May

Old Trafford dummy bomb: **319 articles**

Term-time holidays dispute: **113 articles**

Mark Carney warning on the economy: **78 articles**
Migrant worker numbers rise: **47 articles**



Week 6

20-26 May

Celebrity privacy injunction: **74 articles**

Raid on Google offices in Paris: **69 articles**

Intruder at Buckingham Palace: **44 articles**

Brexit 'to cause recession': **230 articles**
Migrants and housing: **123 articles**
EU threat to family life: **30 articles**



Week 7

27 May-
2 June

Johnny Depp divorce: **466 articles**

ISIS in Iraq: **315 articles**

Legal high ban: **30 articles**

New migrant numbers released: **303 articles**
Migration fears Brexit poll boost: **206 articles**
'Open borders': **23 articles**



Week 8

3-9 June

Death of Muhammad Ali: **1,044 articles**

BHS to close: **253 articles**

FIFA corruption: **35 articles**

EU criminals in the UK: **110 articles**
Conservative infighting over Brexit: **75 articles**



Week 9

10-16 June

Orlando nightclub attack: **1,520 articles**
Potential MS cure: **17 articles**

Brexit takes poll lead: **380 articles**
Osborne austerity budget: **187 articles**
Panic at No. 10: **57 articles**
Migrant border crisis: **54 articles**



Week 10

17-23 June

Jo Cox MP killed: **1,652 articles**

Appeals to referendum voters: **120 articles**
Britain split: **128 articles**

The EU Referendum on the front pages

1. The EU Referendum on the front pages

2. The EU Referendum on the front pages

3. The EU Referendum on the front pages

4. The EU Referendum on the front pages

5. The EU Referendum on the front pages

6. The EU Referendum on the front pages

7. The EU Referendum on the front pages

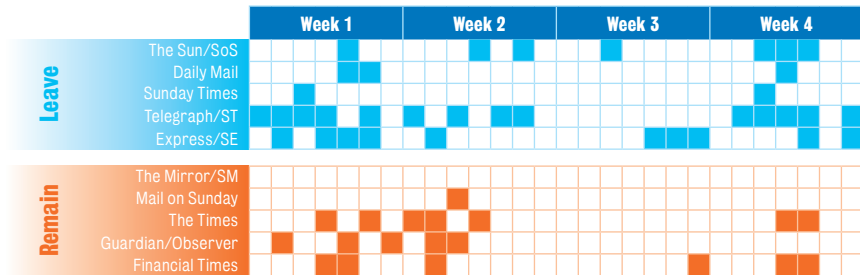
The EU Referendum on the front pages

During the campaign a record was kept of all the front-page lead stories. Each front-page lead story that was about the EU Referendum was noted, as was each front page about immigration or about the economic aspects of the EU Referendum. (See Appendix for a link to all front-page headlines from the sampled newspapers.)

Over 10 weeks of the campaign the 15 national print newspapers in the study published 195 front-page lead stories about the referendum. This was out of a total of 550 front-page leads, so just over a third (35%).⁴ Of these, 63% were published in the second half of the campaign.



EU Referendum front pages



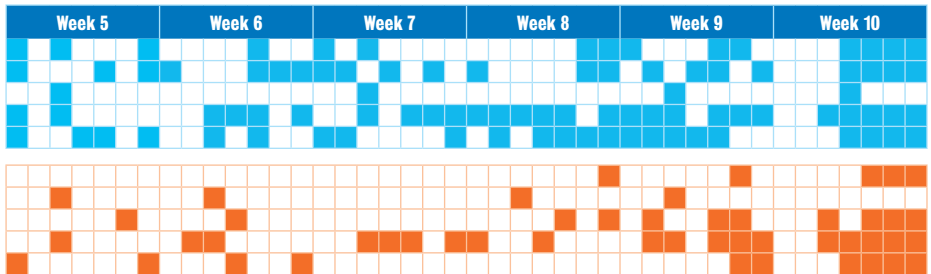
⁴ This includes the *Sun*, *Sun on Sunday*, the *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday*, *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, the *Telegraph*, *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Express*, *Sunday Express*, the *Mirror*, *Sunday Mirror*, the *Guardian*, *Observer*, and *Financial Times*. This does not include the *Independent*, which, though it stopped printing at the end of March 2016, continued to publish a digital “front page” which was held up on television news programmes and published online. Nor does it include the *Daily Star* or *Sunday People*, which between them published only one front-page lead story on the EU Referendum over the whole period (on the day of the vote).

Almost two-thirds of all front-page print leads (65%) were published by newspapers backing Leave. Of these, the *Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* led the field with a combined 41 front-page leads on the referendum. Next were the *Express* and *Sunday Express* with 33, followed by the *Daily Mail* with 25 (the *Mail on Sunday* supported Remain).

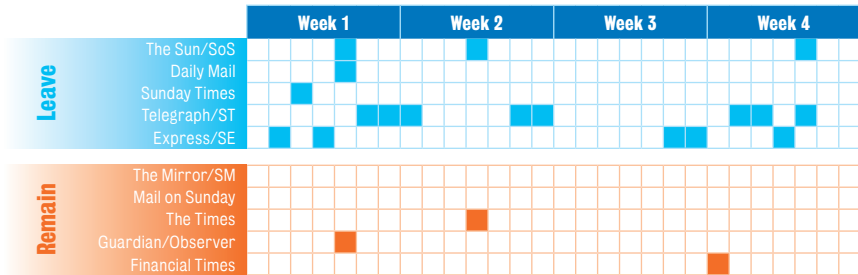


Of the newspapers supporting Remain, the *Guardian* and *Observer* published the most EU Referendum front-page leads – 24. Next came *The Times* (18) and the *Financial Times* (16).

One of the most striking differences was between the *Sun* (and *Sun on Sunday*) and the *Mirror* (and *Sunday Mirror*). The *Sun* published 22 front pages related to the referendum while the *Mirror* published only five.

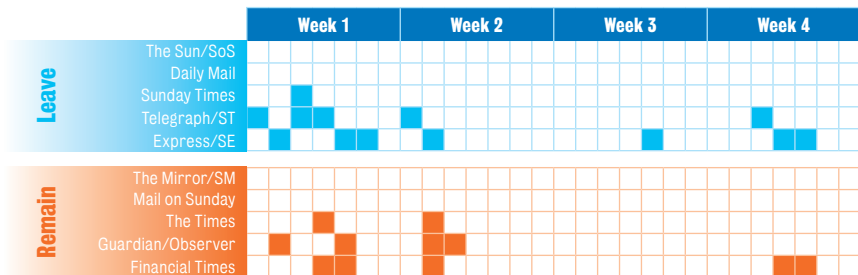


Immigration front pages



99 front-page leads were on the subject of immigration during the campaign. Not all of these were explicitly related to the referendum. ‘UK’s open coastline shambles: 4 missed warnings’ (*Daily Mail*, 31 May), for example, was about immigration but did not refer to the referendum. Similarly, in the *Express*, ‘Migrant Crisis in the Channel’ (*Express*, 30 May) and ‘Migrants pay just £100 to invade Britain’ (*Express*, 1 June). However, most immigration leads made a direct connection to membership of the EU and the referendum.

Economy front pages



There were 82 front pages about the economy and the referendum. In other words, there were 17% (17 front pages) fewer than about immigration.

The most economy front pages were published by the *Express/Sunday Express* (18). These included front pages on pensions (e.g. ‘New EU Threat to Your Pension’ – *Express*, 8 June), on the cost of migrants to the UK (‘Migrants cost Britain £17 billion a year’ – *Express*, 17 May) and positive stories about the economic benefits of leaving (‘We will thrive outside the EU’ – *Express*, 28 May).

The *Express* was followed by the *Guardian/Observer*, which published 15 front-page leads on the economy and Brexit. These included the impact of Brexit on mortgages (‘Brexit will mean rise in mortgage rates’ – *Guardian*, 16 April), on house prices (‘House prices face 18% hit if Britain Leaves EU’ – *Guardian*, 21 May) and on workers’ rights (‘Unions warn of Brexit threat on working rights’ – *Guardian*, 6 June).

Issues covered within EU Referendum debate

Issues covered within EU Referendum debate

Table 1: EU Referendum articles referencing each policy issue (N = 14,779)

Issue Tag	No. Of Articles, Weeks 1-10
Economy	7,028
Immigration	4,383
NHS/Health	1,638
Defence/Foreign Policy	959
Education	938
Welfare	756
Devolution/Const. Reform	743
Environment	596
Crime/Justice/Law & Order	433
Housing	370
Transport	219
Energy	216
Local Government	145

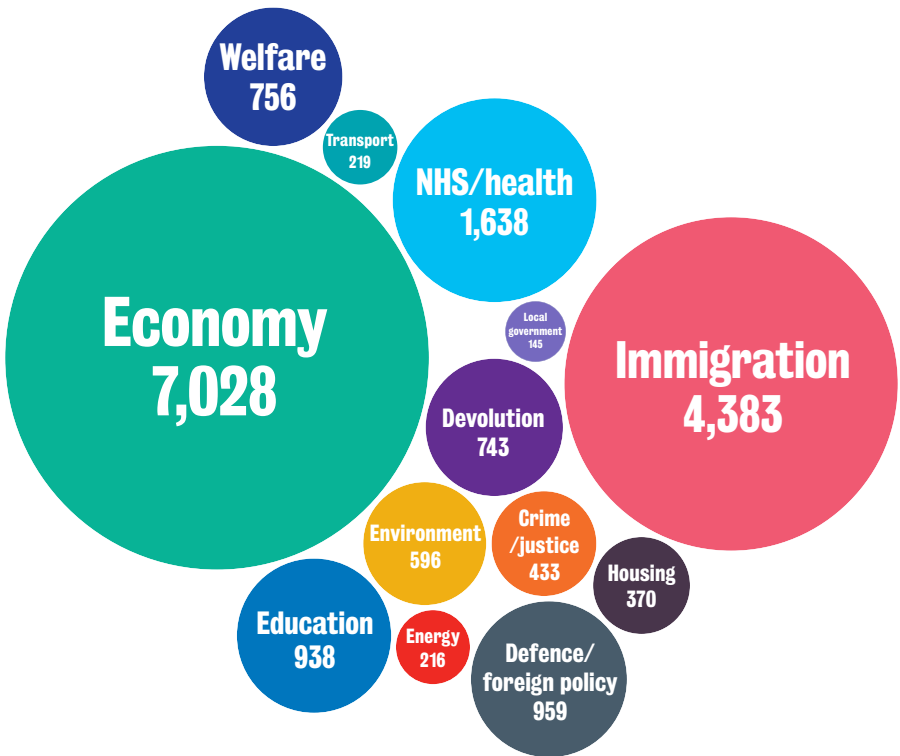
Each referendum-related article was analysed to determine which, if any, political issues it referenced.⁵ These political issues were developed from the Ipsos MORI Issues Index, in conjunction with Ipsos MORI, and have refined over a series of news analysis projects. For each issue the research team developed a ‘political dictionary’ of terms that related to this issue, and used these to determine whether an article referenced one or more of these issues (for more detail see the methodology section).

⁵ Since all referendum articles were necessarily also related to ‘Europe’ coverage, this issue is excluded from the analysis here.

The economy was the most referenced issue: 7,028 articles relating to the referendum referenced the economy. Immigration came second, mentioned in 4,383 articles (Table 1; Figure 5).

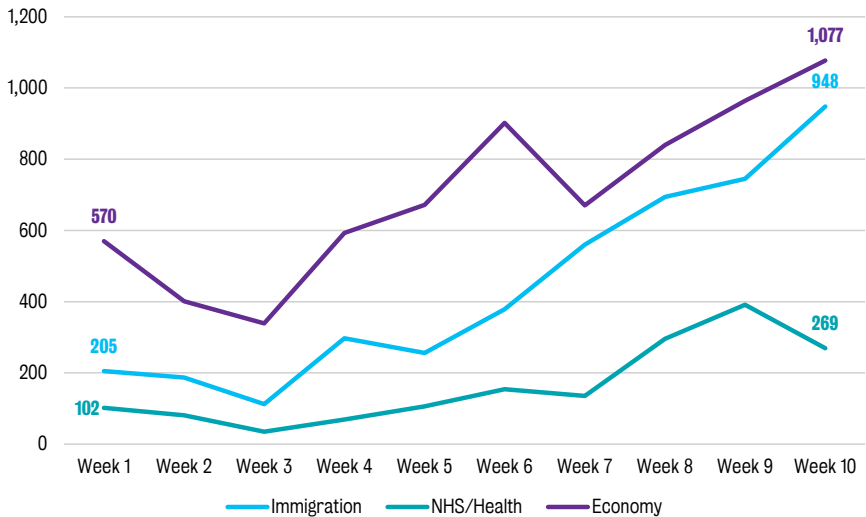
Almost a third of all referendum-related articles referenced immigration, compared to 11% that referenced health, 6% education, and 4% the environment.

Figure 5: EU Referendum articles referencing each policy issue (N = 14,779)



Issue trends, Weeks 1–10 (economy, immigration and NHS/health)

Figure 6: Trends in most prominent policy issue coverage, 15 April–23 June



The number of articles related to the referendum increased throughout the 10-week campaign, though articles on certain issues increased faster than others. Between the start and end of the campaign, coverage of the economic aspects of Brexit almost doubled (Figure 6; Table 2).

Table 2: EU Referendum articles mentioning immigration, NHS/health, and/or economy, 15 April–23 June

Week	Immigration	NHS/Health	Economy
1	205	102	570
2	187	81	401
3	112	35	339
4	297	69	593
5	256	106	672
6	379	154	902
7	560	135	670
8	694	296	840
9	745	391	964
10	948	269	1,077

The number of articles referencing immigration rose steadily from Week 5 onwards, rising almost fourfold from 256 articles at the halfway point of the campaign, to 948 in the final week.

Individuals covered during the campaign

Individuals covered during the campaign

Table 3: Number of EU Referendum articles mentioning key campaign figures

Michael Gove				David Cameron					
2,090				5,758					
Jeremy Corbyn				Boris Johnson					
1,859				3,407					
Iain Duncan Smith				Nigel Farage			George Osborne		
816									
Gordon Brown									
783									
Priti Patel				2,123			2,355		
468									
Alex Salmond				2,123			2,355		
446									
Jacob Rees-Mogg	Amber Rudd	Matthew Elliott	Alan Johnson	Nicola Sturgeon	Liam Fox	Andrea Leadsom	Chris Grayling	Theresa May	Gisela Stuart
194	201	244	253	266	277	281	313	378	387

● Remain ● Leave

Of the 20 most-reported individuals during the referendum campaign, 12 represented Leave and eight Remain (see Table 3).

David Cameron and George Osborne were the dominant voices of the Remain campaign, with Jeremy Corbyn referenced less than a third of the number of times that Cameron was. Alan Johnson, who led Labour’s Remain campaign, was mentioned fewer times than Nicola Sturgeon.

The share of voice was more equally spread across the Leave campaign. Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage and Michael Gove led the coverage, though Iain Duncan Smith, Priti Patel, Gisela Stuart and Chris Grayling were also covered regularly.

Individuals’ share of voice on specific issues⁶

Table 4: Individuals most associated with specific EU Referendum issues

Name	No. of articles	No. Econ	% Econ	No. Imm	% Imm	No. NHS	% NHS	No. Educ	% Educ	No. FGN	% FGN
David Cameron	5758	3131	45%	2299	52%	862	53%	399	43%	598	62%
Boris Johnson	3407	1949	28%	1508	34%	626	38%	274	29%	330	34%
George Osborne	2355	1817	26%	866	20%	416	25%	211	22%	172	18%
Nigel Farage	2123	984	14%	1042	24%	353	22%	144	15%	158	16%
Michael Gove	2090	1219	17%	1100	25%	481	29%	175	19%	146	15%
Jeremy Corbyn	1859	1078	15%	759	17%	365	22%	186	20%	143	15%
Iain Duncan Smith	816	546	8%	399	9%	186	11%	102	11%	91	9%
Gordon Brown	783	471	7%	366	8%	123	8%	68	7%	64	7%
Theresa May	378	209	3%	210	5%	61	4%	39	4%	44	5%
Nicola Sturgeon	266	127	2%	111	3%	83	5%	71	8%	18	2%

The same voices that dominated the EU referendum debate overall, dominated each of the main issues of debate.

Thus David Cameron was mentioned in 45% of referendum-related articles that also referred to the economy, and 52% of articles that

⁶ The measures are the percentage of articles tagged ‘economy,’ ‘immigration’ etc. that also contain mentions of each individual. The chosen issues are: economy, immigration, NHS/health, education, and foreign and defence policy.

mentioned immigration. For Boris Johnson – the most covered Leave leader – the equivalent mentions are 28% for the economy and 34% for immigration (see Table 4).

Almost a quarter of all referendum articles that mentioned immigration referred to Nigel Farage, though only 14% of those mentioning the economy.

Michael Gove was more often associated with health and immigration than he was with the economy, education or defence.

Issues

The next section examines six aspects of campaign coverage in more depth, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. It looks first at the two issues that dominated the campaign – the economy and immigration – and at the supplementary issue of sovereignty. It then assesses the extent to which the campaign was characterised by fear and dishonesty. Finally, it illustrates how the campaign was framed as a battle between the ‘Establishment’ and the people.

Economy

Economy

The economy – extent of coverage during the campaign

The economy was the most-covered political issue during the campaign. Out of the 30,581 articles containing any reference to one or more of the policy areas analysed in this study, the economy featured in 38% (11,714 articles). Of those articles that explicitly referenced the referendum (14,779 in total), the economy was even more prominent, appearing in 48% of all articles (7,028 articles).

Extensive coverage of the economy should not be a surprise given how much the subject overlaps with other areas of policy. Previous analyses of news content using similar methods have also shown that the economy tends to infuse most aspects of political news coverage.⁷ It was also the issue that the Remain campaign sought to make the central focus of the referendum debate.⁸

As Table 5 shows, other policy areas featured considerably less often within policy coverage as a whole, and – with the exception of immigration and (to a much lesser degree) devolution – were even less prevalent as a proportion of referendum articles.

7 Moore, M. and Ramsay, G. (2015) *UK Election 2015: Setting the Agenda*, CMCP Research Paper, London: King's College London, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/CMCP/MST-Election-2015-FINAL.pdf>

8 Oliver, C. (2016) *Unleashing Demons: The Inside Story of Brexit*, London: Hodder and Stoughton; and Shipman, T. (2016) *All Out War: The Full Story of How Brexit Sank Britain's Political Class*, London: William Collins.

Table 5: Most referenced policies in (1) all policy articles, and (2) all referendum articles⁹

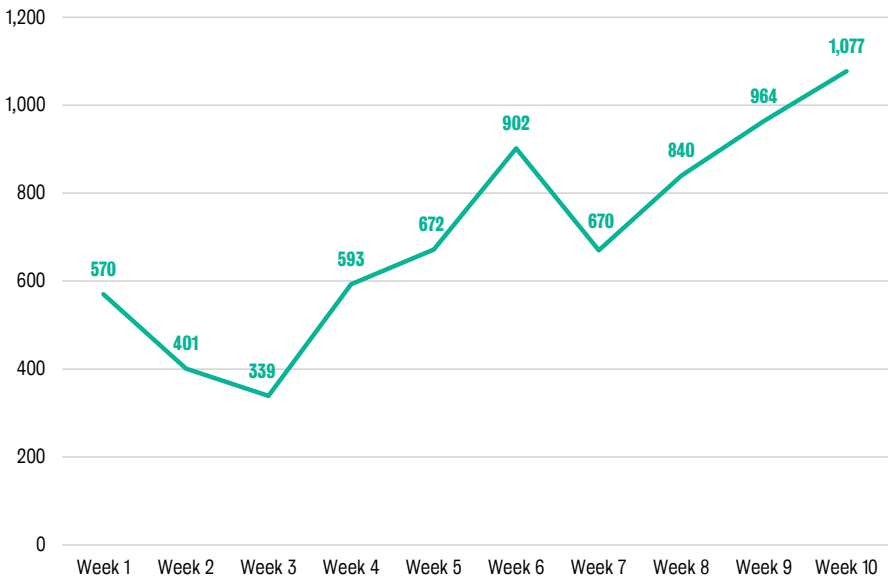
	Proportion of all policy articles	Proportion of all EU referendum articles
Economy	38%	48%
Immigration	18%	30%
Health/NHS	12%	11%
Education	11%	6%
Foreign Policy/Defence	9%	6%
Environment	8%	4%
Crime/Justice/Law & Order	6%	3%
Welfare	6%	5%
Transport	5%	1%
Devolution	4%	5%
Housing	3%	3%
Energy	3%	1%
Local Government	2%	1%

Not only was the economy the dominant issue in referendum coverage; it became more so over the course of the campaign: while the proportion of all issue-tagged articles containing references to the economy fluctuated over the 10-week period of analysis,¹⁰ the number of ‘Economy plus referendum’ articles grew by around 89% over the course of the campaign (see Figure 7). In other words, the number of articles that were about the economic implications of the referendum result almost doubled over the course of the official campaign.

⁹ Not including ‘Europe’ as an issue (appeared in 51% of all tagged articles, and 100% of all Brexit articles).

¹⁰ In the overall sample of 30,581 issue-tagged articles, the volume of Week 10 articles (1,343) was around 17% higher than Week 1 (1,143), but lower than in Week 9 (1,383) and only marginally higher than Weeks 4 and 6 (1,287 and 1,291 respectively)

Figure 7: EU Referendum articles containing economy references, Weeks 1–10



The economy – what voices did we hear?

The Remain campaign’s economic statements and arguments featured in a large number of articles. High-profile individuals and institutions, including the Prime Minister, Chancellor, and a range of national and international research organisations received the greatest amount of coverage in this category. The Leave campaign made fewer specific economic claims – the £350 million statement being a notable exception – and instead focused on criticising the content and tone of Remain claims, including general criticisms of the accuracy of economic forecasting.

The economic conversation was conducted largely by the same individuals who featured most prominently in the overall referendum debate: David Cameron featured in 3,131 articles mentioning both the referendum and the economy, with Boris Johnson a distant second, appearing in 1,949. The Chancellor, George Osborne, featured in 1,817, Michael Gove in 1,219, followed by Nigel Farage (984) and Iain

Duncan Smith (546). This underscores the point made elsewhere that the referendum largely appeared as a debate among senior figures in the Conservative Party.¹¹

It also suggests that media coverage of the economy in the context of the referendum centred around elite voices on both sides. Table 6 lists the ten most-often mentioned individuals on each side of the campaign; of the 20 figures cited, all but two (Labour MP and Vote Leave Chair Gisela Stuart, and Vote Leave Chief Executive Matthew Elliott) were, or had previously been, party leaders, ministers or shadow ministers.

Table 6: 10 most featured campaigning figures on economy, Remain and Leave sides

	'Remain' Figure	Articles	'Leave' Figure	Articles
1	David Cameron	3,131	Boris Johnson	1,949
2	George Osborne	1,817	Michael Gove	1,219
3	Jeremy Corbyn	1,078	Nigel Farage	984
4	Gordon Brown	471	Iain Duncan Smith	546
5	Alex Salmond	233	Priti Patel	280
6	Theresa May	209	Gisela Stuart	213
7	Alan Johnson	138	Matthew Elliott	175
8	Nicola Sturgeon	127	Andrea Leadsom	173
9	Amber Rudd	101	Chris Grayling	171
10	Angela Eagle	97	Liam Fox	154

Officials representing the Remain campaign were not frequently mentioned in economic coverage of the campaign: Will Straw, Executive Director of Britain Stronger in Europe, was mentioned in just 39 articles; campaign Chair Lord Rose featured in 79. Outside campaign and political figures, Bank of England Governor Mark Carney appeared in 380 referendum-related articles mentioning the economy, while IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde was mentioned in 118.

¹¹ <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/eu-referendum/>
<http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news/uk-press-coverage-eu-referendum-campaign-dominated-pro-leave>

Linking the economy and immigration

Although the economy was the most referenced political issue, four in 10 of the referendum articles that referred to the economy also referred to immigration. In the case of some publications – such as the *Sun* – the two issues were even more closely linked. Table 7 shows that, although the economy was the most frequently mentioned policy issue, it was often presented alongside immigration. Out of 7,028 Referendum articles containing mentions of the economy during the ten weeks of the campaign, 38% (2,657) also mentioned immigration. Some publications were more likely than others to associate the economy with immigration. Of those publications with significant output, the *Sun* did this most frequently, with 46% of its 414 referendum articles about the economy also mentioning immigration. The *Express* did this in 44% of its 730 articles, and the *Daily Mail* and Huffington Post associated the two 43% of the time. Broadcasters were significantly less likely to associate the two, as were some, but not all, broadsheets: *The Times*, *Financial Times* and *Telegraph* featured immigration in less than a third of articles mentioning the economy, while the *Guardian* and *Independent* were considerably more likely to do so (42% in both cases). While Channel 4 News featured immigration alongside the economy 50% of the time, it published a very low number of eligible articles – just 24 over the course of the campaign.

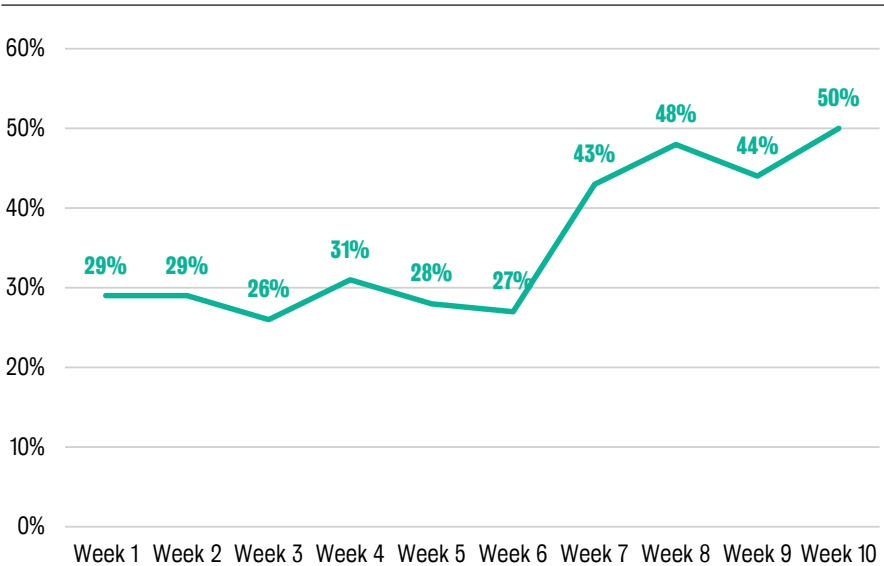
Table 3 also shows that the linkage between economic issues and immigration grew over the course of the campaign. Before the purdah period began (on 27 May, when civil servants were restricted from publishing material related to the referendum, and – in practice – government ministers were no longer able to use the machinery of government to produce information relative to the campaign), 29% of economy articles mentioned immigration. While after 27 May, this rose to 47%.

As Figure 8 shows, as soon as purdah began there was a transformation in the linkage between the economy and immigration – before Week 7, the proportion of economy articles also mentioning immigration was never higher than 31%; from Week 7 onwards, it was never lower than 43%.

Table 7: Correlation of economy and immigration coverage, by publication (N = No. of referendum articles mentioning economic issues; % = Proportion of those articles also mentioning immigration)

Publication	Whole campaign		Pre-purdah (Weeks 1-6)		Post-purdah (Weeks 7-10)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
BBC	507	36%	295	24%	292	39%
Buzzfeed	71	35%	43	42%	28	25%
Channel 4 News	24	50%	14	36%	10	70%
Daily Mail	585	43%	303	35%	282	52%
Daily Star	33	42%	14	36%	19	47%
Economist	63	41%	36	33%	27	52%
Express	730	44%	382	36%	348	52%
FT	560	31%	313	24%	247	40%
Guardian	888	42%	468	32%	420	53%
Huffington Post UK	483	43%	217	33%	266	52%
Independent	503	42%	220	28%	283	54%
ITV	184	32%	85	29%	99	34%
Mirror	439	40%	195	29%	244	49%
New Statesman	158	42%	71	25%	87	56%
Sky News	295	30%	139	25%	156	35%
Spectator	221	29%	100	21%	121	36%
Sun	414	46%	231	38%	183	57%
Telegraph	412	20%	209	17%	203	23%
Times	437	27%	131	12%	306	33%
Vice UK	21	33%	11	9%	10	60%
Total	7,028	38%	3,477	29%	3,551	47%

Figure 8: Proportion of EU Referendum economy articles also containing immigration, 15 April–23 June, all publications



When Figure 8 is combined with the data in Figure 7 above, it is clear that, as the volume of economic coverage grew significantly towards polling day (a 60% increase from 670 articles mentioning the economy in Week 7 to 1,077 in Week 10), economic coverage was also increasingly presented alongside mentions of immigration.

Chronological summary of key economy claims during the campaign

Though coverage of the economy was threaded through the whole referendum campaign, certain claims achieved high volumes of coverage, or shifted the terms of the economic debate either temporarily or for the remainder of the campaign. The list below outlines some of the most influential claims.

Week 1: 15–21 April

Monday 18 April – George Osborne announces Treasury report, emphasising claim that Brexit would cost households £4,300 on average by 2030; pro-Leave statements criticise report and assert that the UK would be prosperous outside the European Union. Pro-Leave response contains criticism of forecasting and modelling.

Week 2: 22–28 April

Friday 22 April – US President Barack Obama claims a UK outside the EU would be at the ‘back of the queue’ for trade deals.

Thursday 28 April – ‘Economists for Brexit’ (EfB) group launch their campaign.

Week 5: 13–19 May

Friday 13 May – International Monetary Fund (IMF) publishes report claiming damaging consequences of a vote to leave.

Monday 16 May – Confederation of British Industry (CBI) downgrades growth forecast for the UK, citing potential vote to leave the EU as a factor.

Week 6: 20–26 May

Sunday 22 May – NHS Chief Executive claims a Brexit vote would be damaging to the NHS in interview with Andrew Marr (increases discussion on veracity of ‘£350 million’ claim for remainder of campaign).

Monday 23 May – Treasury report claims that a vote to leave the EU could cause a ‘year-long recession’; pro-Leave campaigners criticise the report and the forecasting ability of the Treasury.

Wednesday 25 May – Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) publishes report stating (among other things) that a vote to leave would add two years to austerity; Economists for Brexit criticise IFS report over following days.

Week 7: 27 May–2 June

Friday 27 May – Commons Treasury Committee criticises figures issued by both campaigns: the Leave campaign’s ‘£350 million sent to the EU each week,’ and the Treasury’s ‘£4,300 annual cost to households.’ George Osborne claims that a Brexit vote would negatively affect pensions; pro-Leave campaigners issue counter-statements asserting the opposite.

Tuesday 31 May – Michael Gove and Boris Johnson write an article published by the *Sun*, outlining certain economic benefits in the event of a vote to leave, including higher wages.

Wednesday 1 June – The Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development (OECD) publishes report claiming that the UK’s economy would suffer a ‘negative shock’ in the event of a vote to leave the EU.

Week 8: 3–9 June

Monday 6 June – David Cameron gives speech claiming that Brexit would be akin to putting a ‘bomb under the economy’.

Wednesday 8 June – Labour claims that a Brexit vote would lead to a £10 billion threat to the NHS.

Thursday 9 June – Conservative MP and Leave campaigner Sarah Wollaston ‘defects’ to Remain, citing the ‘misleading’ nature of Leave’s £350 million claim; JCB chairman Lord Bamford writes a letter to staff claiming that Britain will prosper outside the EU.

Week 9: 10–16 June

Sunday 12 June – David Cameron gives interview to BBC’s Andrew Marr claiming that a vote to leave would threaten pensions and the NHS, citing IFS report from 25 May.

Wednesday 15 June – George Osborne outlines emergency ‘Brexit budget,’ based on Treasury and IFS reports; pro-Leave campaigners reject budget, claiming that the UK would prosper outside the EU and criticising the forecasting ability of research organisations.

Remain and the economy – volume of coverage

As the above shows, the economic claims raised by the Remain campaign set the agenda for debate about the economy. Five of the six most commonly featured economic arguments were initially made by sources allied to or sympathetic with Remain (not including the combined figures for reports by the IMF, IFS, OECD and CBI). As Table 8 shows, 437 articles included claims made by economic groups that leaving the EU would negatively affect the UK economy (the most frequently featured argument).

The economic claim that was mentioned most frequently in articles over the course of the campaign was the one made by George Osborne on 18 April: that households would be £4,300 worse off in 2030 if the UK left the EU. This featured in 365 articles, around one-third of which appeared in Week 1, after which the claim resurfaced consistently throughout.

The economic issues raised by the Leave campaign were not covered as frequently. The most common argument made by those in favour of leaving was that EU migration was responsible for financial pressures on public services. This claim appeared in 234 articles and was present throughout the 10-week period of analysis, increasing in the last weeks before polling day.

Table 8: Selected economic arguments, Weeks 1–10

Argument Summary	Side	Total
Combined reports (IMF/IFS/CBI/OECD)	Remain	437
Brexit to cost households £4,300	Remain	365
Migration pressure on services	Leave	234
Brexit will reduce house prices	Remain	216
IMF Forecasts or Reports	Remain	214
IFS Forecasts or Reports	Remain	184
Brexit will lead to NHS cuts	Remain	183
Britain will 'prosper'/'thrive' outside EU	Leave	150
Leaving will free up £350m a week	Leave	147
Obama 'Back of the queue' remark	Remain	139

Criticisms of Forecasting	Leave	116
Brexit will raise mortgage rates	Remain	106
OECD Forecasts or Reports	Remain	88
£350m will be used to pay for the NHS	Leave	77
‘Economists for Brexit’ support for leaving	Leave	61
CBI Forecasts or Reports	Remain	53
Leaving better for pensions	Leave	25
Leaving will increase wages	Leave	25
Rising cost of teaching migrant children	Leave	19

Analysis of coverage

Coverage of claims initiated by Remain

Although Remain’s economic claims received high volumes of coverage across most of the publications, the presentation of the Remain message in these articles was substantially different in different publications.

A good example is the announcement by George Osborne of the Treasury report containing the £4,300 figure. This was mentioned in 73 articles on launch day (a few of these were published shortly before midnight on the 17th). These articles were spread – unevenly – across 18 of the 20 publications covered in this analysis (exceptions were the *New Statesman* and Vice UK), contributing to the 365 articles in total that mentioned this during the 10-week campaign.

Broadcasters and some other outlets reported Osborne’s announcement in straightforward fashion:

- **EU exit ‘could leave households £4,300 a year worse off’** – BBC, 17 April¹²
- **George Osborne warns families will be worse off if Britain pulls out of EU** – ITV, 18 April¹³

¹² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36068892>

¹³ <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-04-18/george-osborne-warns-families-will-be-worse-off-if-britain-pulls-out-of-eu/>

- ♦ **Brexit would leave families £4,300 a YEAR worse off, George Osborne's analysis claims** – *Mirror*, 18 April¹⁴
- ♦ **Treasury concludes UK would be worse off under Brexit** – *Financial Times*, 18 April¹⁵

Other reporting presented the Chancellor's claims through fact-checking or investigative analysis:

- ♦ **Treasury's Brexit analysis: what it says — and what it doesn't** – *Financial Times*, 18 April¹⁶
- ♦ **Just how credible is the Treasury's Brexit forecast? The answer in two charts** – *Independent*, 18 April¹⁷
- ♦ **Cocktail Of Assumptions Behind Brexit Analysis** – Sky News, 18 April¹⁸
- ♦ **Reality Check: Would Brexit cost your family £4,300?** – BBC, 18 April¹⁹
- ♦ **Here's Everything You Need To Know About George Osborne's EU Document** – BuzzFeed, 18 April²⁰
- ♦ **FactCheck Q&A: can we trust the Treasury on Brexit?** – Channel Four News, 18 April²¹

Some publications, in an approach that would become a feature of the campaign, covered the announcements in a wholly or largely critical manner. The *Express* published three articles online on the 18th mentioning the launch:

- ♦ **Fury as scaremongering Osborne warns YOU 'will be £4,300 WORSE OFF after Brexit'** – *Express*, 18 April²²

14 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/brexit-would-leave-families-4300-7777826>

15 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f1956eb6-054d-11e6-a70d-4e39ac32c284.html>

16 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/c15cd060-0550-11e6-96e5-f85cb08b0730.html>

17 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/just-how-credible-is-the-treasurys-brexit-forecast-a6989096.html>

18 <http://news.sky.com/story/1680926/cocktail-of-assumptions-behind-brexit-analysis>

19 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36073201>

20 <https://www.buzzfeed.com/albertonardelli/heres-everything-you-need-to-know-about-george-osbornes-eu-d>

21 <http://blogs.channel4.com/factcheck/factcheck-qa-trust-treasury-brexit/22772>

22 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/661916/george-osborne-brexit-families-worse-off-john-redwood>

- ♦ **Project FEAR strikes again: Osborne warns Britain will be POORER if we leave EU** – *Express*, 18 April²³
- ♦ **Osborne blasted over ‘absurd claim’ Britain would be ‘permanently poorer’ after Brexit** – *Express*, 18 April²⁴

In each case the claim was the subject, but it was presented overwhelmingly in terms of negative or sceptical reactions.

The *Sun*, similarly, used a series of critical headlines in its coverage. Its four initial articles, including a comment piece by Trevor Kavanagh, all focused on criticisms of the report:

- ♦ **Trevor Kavanagh: With Project Fear in full flight, the Brexit ‘catastrophe’ is a Hitler-style Big Lie** – *The Sun*, 18 April²⁵
- ♦ **George Osborne causes storm with controversial claim Brexit would mean Brit families being £4,300 poorer** – *The Sun*, 18 April²⁶
- ♦ **George Osborne sets out economic case for Remain with boffins’ baffling equations** – *The Sun*, 18 April²⁷
- ♦ **George’s crystal balls: Five Brexit claims versus the reality** – *The Sun*, 18 April²⁸

Another example is the reporting of the intervention by Barack Obama on 22 April, when he remarked that the UK would be ‘in the back of the queue’ for trade deals. This featured in 22 articles over two days (and would go on to appear in 139 articles over the remainder of the campaign). The reception of this particular intervention was mixed, with some supportive of Remain:

23 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/662006/george-osborne-britain-poorer-brexit-eu-referendum-project-fear>

24 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/662021/EU-referendum-Brexit-George-Osborne-permanently-poorer-Treasury-analysis>

25 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/1132468/trevor-kavanagh-with-project-fear-in-full-flight-the-brexit-catastrophe-is-a-hitler-style-big-lie/>

26 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1132562/george-osborne-causes-storm-with-controversial-claim-brexit-would-mean-brit-families-being-4300-poorer/>

27 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1133184/george-osborne-sets-out-economic-case-for-remain-with-boffins-baffling-equations/>

28 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1134053/georges-crystal-balls-five-brexit-claims-versus-the-reality/>

- ♦ **Barack Obama's decisive intervention in the Brexit campaign** – *Financial Times*, 22 April²⁹
- ♦ **Barack Obama's intervention in EU referendum debate could be a game-changer** – *Independent*, 22 April³⁰

But several articles focused on negative reactions to the claims, for example:

- ♦ **Backlash after Barack Obama EU referendum intervention** – BBC, 23 April³¹
- ♦ **Obama's threat: vote for Brexit and the USA will put you at the 'back of the queue'** – *Spectator*, 22 April³²
- ♦ **Obama accused of 'blackmailing' British people over Brexit: US President issues 'back of the queue' trade deals warning** – *The Sun*, 23 April³³
- ♦ **Euro-sceptics pour scorn on Obama's warning against Brexit** – *Guardian*, 23 April³⁴

This was a pattern in the campaign. Stronger In, or an institution or individual that supported Remain, would make a high-profile statement which would gain plenty of coverage. Some of this would report the claim, but much would present it positively or negatively depending on the perspective of the particular news outlet. References to the claim would then often persist throughout the campaign but as time went on it would be treated with more or less scepticism, depending on the publication.

Besides the £4,300 claim and the Obama statement, the pattern can also be seen in the IFS and IMF interventions in Week 5; the claim by Osborne and Cameron in Week 6 that a vote to leave would cause house prices to fall; a second IFS report in Week 9; and George Osborne's

29 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7b574ad0-0895-11e6-b6d3-746f8e9cdd33.html>

30 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/barack-obamas-intervention-in-eu-referendum-debate-could-be-a-game-changer-a6997221.html>

31 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36117907>

32 <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/04/obamas-eu-threat-britain-will-go-to-the-back-of-the-queue/>

33 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1139674/obama-accused-of-blackmailing-british-people-over-brexit-us-president-issues-back-of-the-queue-trade-deals-warning/>

34 <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/23/euro-sceptics-pour-scorn-on-obamas-warning-against-brexit>

‘Brexit budget’ claim in Week 9 that leaving the EU would lead to NHS cuts.

Importantly, the effect of this negative framing effect was not restricted to pro-Leave publications. George Osborne’s claim on 20 May that Brexit would lead to a lowering of house prices appeared in 97 articles that week, but the coverage swiftly became centred on the Leave response and in particular on Iain Duncan Smith’s likening of Osborne to Pinocchio:

- **Osborne ‘Pinocchio’ over Brexit house price fall: IDS** – BBC, 21 May³⁵
- **EU referendum: Don’t believe ‘Pinocchio’ Osborne’s house price claims, says Duncan Smith** – *Telegraph*, 21 May³⁶
- **George Osborne ‘like Pinocchio’ for house prices claim, says Duncan Smith** – *Guardian*, 21 May
- **IDS Calls Osborne Pinocchio Over Brexit Claim** – Sky News, 21 May³⁷
- **Osborne labelled ‘Pinocchio’ for Brexit house price figures** – *The Times*, 21 May
- **Iain Duncan Smith compares George Osborne to ‘Pinocchio’ over Brexit house price claims** – *Independent*, 21 May³⁸
- **TORIES CLASH OVER EU: Don’t believe Osborne’s Pinocchio lies on housing crash, says IDS** – *Express*, 21 May³⁹

Duncan Smith’s response featured in almost half of all articles about Osborne’s economic claim over the two-day period (eight articles out of 20 in total) and in most cases was the predominant frame of the story.

Thus, while the Remain campaign was successful in stimulating coverage of its claims about the economic consequences of Brexit, the Leave side and its supporting media outlets were adept at re-framing these stories in ways that tended either to neutralise them or to turn them to their advantage.

35 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36351310>

36 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/21/eu-referendum-george-osborne-warns-brexit-could-see-value-of-home/>

37 <http://news.sky.com/story/1699719/ids-calls-osborne-pinocchio-over-brexit-claim>

38 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/iain-duncan-smith-compares-george-osborne-to-pinocchio-over-brexit-house-price-claims-a7041531.html>

39 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672494/EU-referendum-Brexit-George-Osborne-housing-Pinocchio-lies-IDS-Ian-Duncan-Smith>

The Fury Button

A prominent and persistent characteristic of this Leave approach was to focus on the ‘outrage’ or ‘fury’ that greeted a Remain claim, or on the ‘attack’ or ‘backlash’ it was said to have provoked. For example:

- ♦ **Outrage at plot to RAISE our taxes: Osborne ‘is FINISHED’ over EU punishment budget plan** – *Express*, 15 June⁴⁰
‘GEORGE Osborne was declared ‘finished’ as Chancellor last night in an angry backlash at his £30billion ‘tax and axe’ threat ... Furious Tory MPs said his credibility heading the Treasury had been “destroyed” by his plan to impose punishing tax hikes and spending cuts if voters decide to quit the EU next week.’

In total, 51 articles of this type were published, denoted by the presence of conflict in headlines:

- ♦ Fury/Furious: 19 articles
- ♦ Attack/Attacked/Attacks: 16 articles
- ♦ Slam/Slams/Slammed: 8 articles
- ♦ Outrage: 6 articles
- ♦ Ridicule/Ridiculed: 1 article
- ♦ Criticise/Criticised: 1 article

Almost three-quarters of these articles were published in the *Express* (22 in total), *Sun* (9) and *Daily Mail* (6). Other examples:

- ♦ **Fury as IMF plan ANOTHER Brexit report to ‘bully’ voters a WEEK before EU referendum** – *Express*, 13 May⁴¹
- ♦ **Osborne accused of ‘outrageous scaremongering’ over claims Brexit will cost pensioners up to £32k** – *The Sun*, 27 May⁴²

40 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/680227/Tory-MPs-claim-Chancellor-George-Osborne-finished-reaction-emergency-Brexit-budget>

41 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/670020/IMF-boss-Christine-Lagarde-full-Brexit-report-week-before-EU-referendum-George-Osborne>

42 <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1219542/osborne-accused-of-outrageous-scaremongering-over-claims-brexit-will-cost-pensioners-up-to-32k/>

- ♦ **Stop talking Britain down! Bank boss slammed by Boris and Tories for his doom-laden ‘phoney forecasts’** – *Daily Mail*, 17 June⁴³

Desperate measures

In addition to headlines and articles focusing on conflict, 19 articles included headlines describing a statement or action by a Remain figure as ‘desperate’ (13 articles) or ‘hysterical’ (6). Again, the *Express* was the most likely publication to frame articles in this way – ten articles in total used one of these adjectives. The *Sun* (5 articles), *Daily Mail* (3) and *Times* (1) contributed the rest:

- ♦ **Cameron’s Remain campaign is ‘becoming HYSTERICAL’, Prime Minister’s former aide blasts** – *Express*, 16 June⁴⁴
- ♦ **Minister accuses ‘hysterical’ PM of Brexit abuse** – *The Times*, 22 May⁴⁵
- ♦ **DAILY MAIL COMMENT: Osborne will pay dearly for this desperate threat** – *Daily Mail*, 16 June⁴⁶
- ♦ **Down to the wire: David Cameron’s desperate plea to voters to back Remain for a ‘stronger, safer, better off’ Britain** – *The Sun*, 22 June⁴⁷

‘Project Fear’

More frequent were articles about the economy with headlines accusing Remain spokespeople of ‘scaremongering’ or including the phrase ‘Project Fear.’ Overall, 64 articles carried headlines using one of these expressions. Of 38 articles with ‘Project Fear’ in the headline, 22 were published by the *Express*, with a further eight in the *Sun*. Several articles in the *Express* used ‘Project Fear’ as a prefix:

43 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3645840/Stop-talking-Britain-Bank-boss-slammed-Boris-Tories-doom-laden-phoney-forecasts.html>

44 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/680350/David-Cameron-Remain-campaign-hysterical-Brexit-former-aide-Steve-Hilton>

45 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/minister-accuses-hysterical-pm-of-brexit-abuse-zj0wbg0sz>

46 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3643991/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-OSBORNE-PAY-DEARLY-DESPERATE-THREAT.HTML>

47 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/politics/1323288/david-camerons-desperate-plea-to-voters-to-back-remain-for-a-stronger-safer-better-off-britain/>

- ♦ **PROJECT FEAR: Cameron claims Brexit will make you POORER in latest doom-mongering claim** – *Express*, 22 May⁴⁸
- ♦ **PROJECT FEAR: Lord Sugar brands ‘Brexit mob’ ‘mugs’ as he backs Remain campaign** – *Express*, 31 May⁴⁹
- ♦ **PROJECT FEAR: Vote Leave campaign RUBBISHES report claiming NHS will be damaged by Brexit** – *Express*, 7 June⁵⁰

The *Express* was also the most likely to use headlines denouncing Remain figures or statements about the economy as ‘scaremongering.’ Ten out of a total of 26 such articles were published by the *Express*, with the *Daily Mail* publishing a further eight.

- ♦ **Cuts start on Friday if we leave claims scaremonger Osborne: Jobs losses will be ‘very quick’ and cash will flee UK, he says** – *Daily Mail*, 21 June⁵¹
- ♦ **Why George Osborne’s scaremongering claims about leaving the EU are WRONG** – *Express*, 19 April⁵²

Other devices

Finally, the *Express* and *Daily Mail* used other devices in headlines to present Remain statements or events negatively. The *Express* often used block capitals in headlines to denote surprise or disbelief about the intentions of the speaker, and quotation marks to cast doubt on the honesty or accuracy of statements:

- ♦ **Cameron DENIES he’s in a panic over Brexit in hastily-arranged blast at Leave ‘nonsense’** – *Express*, 7 June⁵³

48 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/672616/David-Cameron-Brexit-EU-referendum-Project-Fear-Brussels>

49 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/675291/Lord-Alan-Sugar-Brexit-mugs-Remain-EU-referendum>

50 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/677479/NHS-Project-Fear-Vote-Leave-report-Brexit-Faculty-of-Public-Health-Economist-Intelligence>

51 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3651583/Cuts-start-Friday-leave-claims-scaremonger-Osborne-warns-jobs-losses-quick-cash-flee-UK.html>

52 <http://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/662479/Why-George-Osborne-s-scaremongering-claims-about-leaving-the-EU-are-WRONG>

53 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/677609/EU-referendum-David-Cameron-Leave-lying-not-panicking-Brexit>

Both publications also used the word ‘now’ to discredit Remain claims, indicating that this was only the latest in a string of claims, and implying that it was a symptom of desperation in the Remain camp. These publications employed this device 19 times over the course of the campaign. For example:

- ♦ **Project FEAR: Now George Osborne claims Brexit will send house prices plummeting** – *Express*, 9 May⁵⁴
- ♦ **Stop bullying us over Brexit! Now Osborne wheels out IMF chief to deliver apocalyptic warning of 10% economic slump** – *Daily Mail*, 13 May⁵⁵
- ♦ **Now Canada PM warns Britain will NOT ‘easily’ trade with the country if it ditches the EU** – *Express*, 20 May⁵⁶
- ♦ **Now our HOLIDAYS are at risk from Brexit! PM ramps up Project Fear with warning about £230 increase in bills for foreign breaks if we leave EU** – *Daily Mail*, 24 May⁵⁷

All of the above examples are news reports, as opposed to comment articles. Several publications employed these practices to create negative coverage of Remain claims, but the *Express* and *Daily Mail* relied on them most. Thus, for the readers of these outlets, while Remain may have set the agenda with its economic claims, the claims appeared in a light so negative that any benefit to Remain was diminished if not reversed.

Coverage of the Leave campaign’s economic arguments

As shown above, economic arguments made by the Leave side were, on average, less likely to get large-scale and lasting coverage in the news outlets studied here. As with Remain’s interventions, certain specific claims, such as the assertion that the UK would save £350 million by leaving the EU, met with aggressive denials. For example:

54 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/668277/Project-fear-George-Osborne-Brexit-send-house-prices-plummeting>

55 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3588683/House-prices-slump-stock-markets-tumble-leave-EU-IMF-says-latest-blood-curdling-warning.html>

56 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672079/Canada-Britain-Justin-Trudeau-David-Cameron-Brexit-European-Union-EU-Brussels-Referendum>

57 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3605784/Family-holidays-Europe-cost-230-Brexit-PM-says.html>

- ♦ **Vote Leave £350m-A-Week EU Bill ‘Misleading’** – Sky News, 22 April⁵⁸
- ♦ **UK statistics chief says Vote Leave £350m figure is misleading** – *Guardian*, 27 May⁵⁹
- ♦ **Conservative MP Sarah Wollaston leaves Brexit camp over ‘untrue’ NHS claims** – ITV, 9 June⁶⁰
- ♦ **EU referendum: Sturgeon accuses Johnson of telling £350m ‘whopper’** – *Guardian*, 9 June⁶¹

As with Remain, ‘positive’ claims (in the sense of being actively promoted by the campaign) tended to invite high-profile criticism from the opposing side. The Leave campaign, however, made fewer specific, or costed, claims, and was therefore both less likely to face targeted criticism and fact-checking and less likely to lead articles. Instead, the Leave campaign’s economic arguments were often presented as critiques in articles in which the Remain position led.

For instance, the £350 million claim was often aired by Vote Leave campaigners in response to claims by pro-Remain sources. Leave’s Matthew Elliott, responding to claims made in the IMF report, said: ‘If we vote Leave we can create 300,000 jobs by doing trade deals with fast growing economies across the globe ... We can stop sending the £350 million we pay Brussels every week. That is why it is safer to Vote Leave.’⁶² He gave similar responses in comments on the issue of Turkish membership of the EU, as did Boris Johnson when referring to a potential EU Bill.^{63 64}

The £350m claim, as with many economic statements by both sides, was addressed in a series of fact-checking articles and features comparing the policy statements of the two campaigns:

58 <http://news.sky.com/story/1683059/vote-leave-350m-a-week-eu-bill-misleading>

59 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/27/uk-statistics-chief-vote-leave-350m-figure-misleading>

60 <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-06-09/conservative-mp-sarah-wollaston-leaves-brexit-camp-over-untrue-nhs-claims/>

61 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/09/eu-referendum-sturgeon-accuses-johnson-of-telling-350m-whopper>

62 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/eu-referendum-imf-warns-brexit-could-push-uk-back-into-recession-a7088671.html>

63 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3650533/Is-David-Cameron-lying-Turkey-s-EU-membership-British-Embassy-dedicated-teams-working-plans-FIVE-countries-join-despite-PM-s-denials.html>

64 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/677056/Cameron-PM-blasted-SECRET-2bn-EU-bill-REVEALED>

- ♦ **FactCheck: do we really send £350m a week to Brussels?** – Channel Four News, 19 April⁶⁵
- ♦ **Do we really send the EU £350m a week?** – *New Statesman*, 16 June⁶⁶
- ♦ **Does the EU really cost the UK £350m a week?** – *Guardian*, 23 May⁶⁷

Generally, however, specific claims made by the Leave campaign were more defensive, in that they were put forward in response to official reports by research organisations favouring Remain, or to statements by Remain campaigners. Examples are Leave’s claims that the EU would be good for pensions and good for wages.

The argument that leaving the EU would safeguard or improve pensions, which emerged fully in Week 7, began as a response (led by Iain Duncan Smith) to a Treasury claim that increased inflation as a result of leaving the EU would negatively impact pensions: ‘Iain Duncan Smith said the Treasury report on pensions was ‘an outrageous attempt to do down people’s pensions and claimed the real threat to pensions was staying in the EU’, Sky news reported.⁶⁸

This assertion by Iain Duncan Smith that the EU was a threat to pensions appeared in eight articles. The following day, the argument was restated in response to the Treasury statement by the *Express* columnist Stephen Pollard,⁶⁹ and in the *Daily Mail* by a series of individual investors and fund managers.⁷⁰ Later in the campaign Leave sought to make a positive case that leaving the EU would be good for pensions by limiting immigration.⁷¹

Similarly, the pro-Leave claim that leaving the EU would cause wages to rise was also initially presented in response to Remain assertions to the contrary. The claim was made by the MP John Redwood and summarised in a *Guardian* article comparing Remain and Leave positions on certain

65 <http://blogs.channel4.com/factcheck/factcheck-send-350m-week-brussels/22804>

66 <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/economy/2016/06/do-we-really-send-eu-350m-week>

67 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/reality-check/2016/may/23/does-the-eu-really-cost-the-uk-350m-a-week>

68 <http://news.sky.com/story/1702773/osborne-warns-of-brex-hit-to-pensioners>

69 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/674668/Project-Fear-turns-attention-pensioners-Brexit-Campaign>

70 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3613559/Why-staying-Europe-harm-pension-Experts-contradict-Osborne-s-claim-retirees-lose-Brexit.html>

71 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3620897/Migrant-limits-boost-pensions-Points-reduces-numbers-100-000-year-boost-7-7billion-40-years.html>

policy areas on 16 April,⁷² it featured again in response to the Treasury report announced by George Osborne on 18 April, as MigrationWatch Chair Lord Green claimed that reducing immigration would increase workers' pay.^{73 74 75 76}

The argument was made more explicitly later in the campaign by Leave campaigners Redwood⁷⁷ and David Davis,⁷⁸ and in a joint announcement by Boris Johnson, Michael Gove and Gisela Stuart.⁷⁹ In the final weeks, Nigel Farage⁸⁰ and Iain Duncan Smith returned to the theme.⁸¹

The defensive nature of Leave campaigning on the economy is also illustrated by the frequency with which the argument was presented – by Leave campaigners or by journalists – that specific forecasts by organisations such as the Treasury, IMF, IFS and CBI were untrustworthy due to previous errors, or that economic forecasting in any form is invalid, due to uncertainty. This claim was made in 116 articles, frequently by the 'Economists for Brexit' group, including its most prominent member, Professor Patrick Minford, who figured in 90 articles.

The economic argument most often put forward by pro-Leave individuals was the suggestion that migration resulting from EU membership was putting pressure on, or threatening, public services. This argument was featured in 234 articles over the 10-week period. The argument was often included in articles reporting statements or columns by campaigners:

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- 72 <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/16/will-barack-obamas-eu-charm-offensive-be-enough-to-rescue-david-cameron>
- 73 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/662309/George-Osborne-admits-3-3million-immigrants-UK-stay-EU>
- 74 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1134369/let-three-million-more-into-the-uk-george-osborne-admits-to-migrant-surge-if-we-stay-in-eu/>
- 75 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3546775/Osborne-s-3million-migrant-clanger-Treasury-s-doom-laden-report.html>
- 76 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/662207/George-Osborne-figures-Britain-worse-off-outside-EU-gobbledegook-referendum>
- 77 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/678044/Life-post-Brexit-money-spending-UK-NHS-EU-referendum-regulations-John-Redwood>
- 78 <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/05/david-davis-interview-next-conservative-leader-will-be-someone-nobody-expects>
- 79 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1218703/boris-promises-cheaper-household-gas-bills-if-brits-back-brexit/>
- 80 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/681776/nigel-farage-eu-referendum-brexit-vote-leave-independence-ukip>
- 81 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/678984/EU-referendum-countdown-Iain-Duncan-Smith-David-Cameron-Britain-Brexit>

- ♦ **Priti Patel: Let's take back control of how our taxes are spent and vote OUT of the EU** – *The Sun*, 24 April⁸²
- ♦ **Michael Gove: UK facing migration 'free-for-all' unless it leaves EU** – ITV, 25 April⁸³
- ♦ **Boris Johnson raises stakes on immigration** – BBC, 25 May⁸⁴
- ♦ **Iain Duncan Smith: We need Aussie rules to close British door on mass immigration** – *Daily Mail*, 5 June⁸⁵
- ♦ **NIGEL FARAGE: Why we must vote LEAVE in the EU referendum** – *Express*, 21 June⁸⁶

It was also frequently asserted in leader and comment articles, notably in the *Daily Mail*, the *Express*, and the *Sun*. For example:

Daily Mail

'In 2014, foreign-born mothers gave birth to a record 188,000 babies in Britain – 27 per cent of all live births. With such a migrant baby boom, is it any wonder schools are close to breaking point?' – *Daily Mail*, 18 April⁸⁷

'Voters know from bitter experience that when too many people are allowed to settle in this country, the result is downward pressure on wages and intolerable strain on public services, including health, housing and schools' – *Daily Mail*, 1 June⁸⁸

'What we can surely predict is that mass migration will put increasingly intolerable pressure on jobs, housing, schools, healthcare and other public services' – *Daily Mail*, 2 June⁸⁹

82 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1142365/priti-patel-lets-take-back-control-of-how-our-taxes-are-spent-and-vote-out-of-the-eu/>

83 <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-04-25/michael-gove-uk-facing-migration-free-for-all-unless-it-leaves-eu/>

84 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36389282>

85 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3625666/Iain-Duncan-Smith-need-Aussie-rules-close-British-door-mass-immigration.html>

86 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/681776/nigel-farage-eu-referendum-brexit-vote-leave-independence-ukip>

87 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3544991/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Children-betrayed-migration-boom.html>

88 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3618901/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Border-controls-PM-not-ignore.html>

89 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3620930/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-National-identity-central-EU-vote.html>

‘We needn’t look far for the explanation. For not only is the euro destroying livelihoods, but ‘the madness that is the free movement of peoples has brought waves of migrants sweeping across Europe, depressing wages, putting immense strain on housing and public services, undermining our security against criminals and terrorists — and making communities fear for their traditional ways of life’ – *Daily Mail*, 21 June⁹⁰

The Express

‘[T]he burdens placed on our public services by years of mass migration have been disastrous for the people who need them most’ – *Express*, 11 May⁹¹

‘[S]uch a quantity of migrants places a massive burden on public services no matter how long they happen to be here’ – *Express*, 3 May⁹²

‘It is not bigoted to want a level of immigration that does not threaten our public services and ensures that new arrivals integrate fully into British society’ – *Express*, 21 June⁹³

The Sun

‘To remain means being powerless to cut mass immigration which keeps wages low and puts catastrophic pressure on our schools, hospitals, roads and housing stock.’ – *The Sun*, 13 June⁹⁴

90 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3653385/Lies-greedy-elites-divided-dying-Europe-Britain-great-future-outside-broken-EU.html>

91 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/669068/Brussels-does-not-care-about-weakest-society>

92 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/669829/True-scale-immigration-finally-revealed>

93 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/682079/we-did-not-vote-for-four-million-migrant-enter-UK-past-20-years>

94 <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/1277920/we-urge-our-readers-to-believe-in-britain-and-vote-to-leave-the-eu-in-referendum-on-june-23/>

‘Sadly, while aware of the problem, Corbyn ignores the millions of Labour voters worried about the impact our open borders have on stretched public services.’ – The *Sun*, 20 June⁹⁵

‘Imagine how it might ease the burden on those areas already bearing the brunt of the uncontrolled influx of migrants . . . where pay is stagnant and public services buckling.’ – The *Sun*, 21 June⁹⁶

This argument was advanced not only in these leader articles but also by regular and guest columnists including Priti Patel, Trevor Kavanagh, Suzanne Evans, John Mills, John Redwood, Penny Mordaunt, Nigel Farage, Stephen Pollard, Leo McKinstry, Iain Duncan Smith, Richard Littlejohn and Sarah Vine.

Finally, as Figure 9 shows, certain titles were considerably more likely than others to publish economic articles containing the argument that public service provision was threatened by immigration. The three publications highlighted here – the *Sun*, *Express* and *Daily Mail* – made up three of the top four publications that most frequently included the claim in articles. The *Express* featured the claim in 64 articles, including the leader and comment articles shown above. The *Daily Mail* featured the claim in 37 articles. In third place, the *Guardian*, in contrast with the other three, did not include the claim in any leader articles, and of the 22 articles in which the claim was mentioned, three were comment pieces, one of which was a guest comment piece by Frank Field MP, a pro-Leave campaigner.⁹⁷ The other two were pieces by columnist Andrew Rawnsley⁹⁸ and former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis,⁹⁹ both of whom mentioned the argument in order to critique it.

95 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1310109/the-remain-movement-has-turned-the-murder-of-jo-cox-into-a-moral-crusade-in-run-up-to-refendum/>

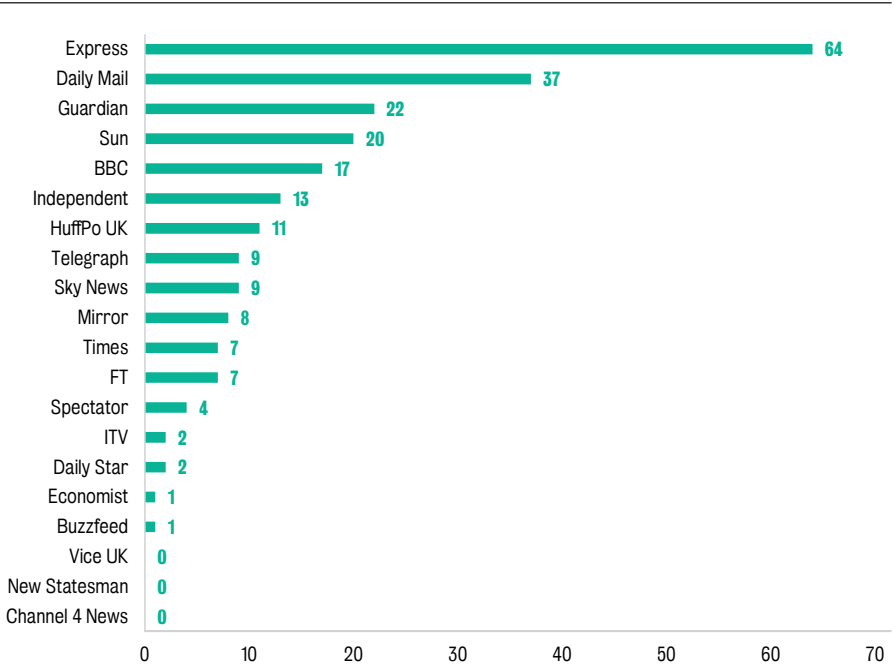
96 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1316009/turkey-fritterers/>

97 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/14/eu-immigration-control-labour-supporters-voters-party>

98 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/15/nigel-farage-remain-leave-eu-referendum-tories>

99 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/commentisfree/2016/may/28/brexit-empire-era-trick-radical-case-for-europe-lucas-mcdonnell-democracy-eu>

Figure 9: Articles mentioning the economy, and containing the explicit argument that EU migration creates pressures on public services (all publications, 15 April–23 June)



Economic coverage – dominant but highly contested

This study thus far reveals a complex news agenda in which the economy was the lead issue, at least in quantitative terms, but in which framing strategies used by several news outlets, and the increasing presence of immigration as an issue in economy stories, limited the agenda-setting advantage that this may have given to the Remain campaign.

The most consistent economic argument made by the Leave campaign – that immigration placed unsustainable pressure on public services – was frequently repeated in the editorials of some news outlets without being subject to the skeptical or forensic analysis applied to Remain’s economic arguments across the whole range of publications.

Immigration

Immigration

Immigration was the second most covered policy issue after the economy. 4,383 articles referred to immigration during the campaign. This coverage reflected high public concern about the issue. In the 18 months leading to the referendum, according to the Ipsos MORI monthly Issues Index, immigration had consistently been regarded as one of the top three issues facing Britain. In 16 of the 18 months it was considered the top issue. Yet widespread media coverage of immigration during the referendum campaign was not inevitable. Although the 2015 general election campaign fell within that 18-month period, immigration was only the fifth most covered topic (after the economy, health, education, and foreign policy/defence).¹⁰⁰ The level of coverage in a campaign does not necessarily reflect the measured level of public concern.

Coverage of immigration and migrants during the EU Referendum campaign was notable in six ways (each of which is examined in more detail in this section):

- The prominence, volume and persistence with which immigration and its effects were covered.
- The degree to which Leave campaign leaders raised the issue of migration and the impact of migrants on the UK during the campaign.
- The extent to which certain news outlets reported the comments of those leaders about immigration.
- The extent to which those same news outlets went further than the claims of campaign leaders in their coverage of immigration, and on the impact of migrants.
- The range of issues for which migrants were blamed and the hostility aimed at migrants by both campaign leaders and news outlets.

100 Moore, M. and Ramsay, G. (2015) *UK Election 2015: Setting the Agenda*, CMCP Research Report, London: King's College London <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/CMCP/MST-Election-2015-FINAL.pdf>

- The degree to which certain nationalities were subject to negative coverage in relation to immigration.

Prominence, volume and persistence

Immigration featured prominently on newspaper front pages. Over the 10 weeks of the campaign (70 days) across 15 national titles, there were 99 front-page leads focused on immigration.¹⁰¹ By contrast, for the 10 weeks leading up to the general election in 2015, across the same print titles, there were 14 front-page leads focused on immigration. In other words, there were just over seven times more front-page leads about immigration during the referendum campaign than during the 2015 general election campaign.

Of these 99 front-page leads, 76% were in four titles: the *Daily Express* (21), *Daily Mail* (20), *Daily Telegraph* (21) and the *Sun* (13), each of which endorsed Leave.

Immigration coverage was not only prominent but voluminous. Across the 20 news outlets over the course of the 10-week campaign more than 5,500 articles referred to immigration in the context of the UK, and just under 80% (4,383) of those were related to the EU Referendum.

From the middle of the campaign onwards, coverage of immigration increased sharply week-on-week: by 44% in Week 6; 47% in Week 7; and then by another 51% over the final three weeks.

As with the front pages, the volume of coverage was not consistent across publications. Three news outlets – the *Express*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Sun* – accounted for just under a third (32%) of all articles published online on immigration in the 10-week period – 1,785 articles in total.

Immigration coverage was also persistent. In no week during the 10-week campaign were there fewer than 250 articles referencing immigration. In each of the last four weeks of the campaign there were over 700 articles. The final week saw more than 1,000 articles published about immigration (this includes all immigration articles, not just those that also referred to the referendum).

¹⁰¹ The *Daily Mail*, the *Mail on Sunday*, the *Daily Express*, the *Sunday Express*, the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *Mirror*, the *Sunday Mirror*, the *Sun*, the *Sun on Sunday*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Financial Times*.

Leave leaders and immigration

The advantage for the Leave campaign of giving prominence to immigration was clearly set out by Sir Lynton Crosby in an article for the *Daily Telegraph* a few days after the official campaign began. ‘Currently 41 per cent of the British population would vote Leave,’ he wrote. ‘But 52 per cent of the British population say that leaving the EU would improve the UK’s immigration system. There is therefore a misalignment.’ To win over the other 11%, Leave would need to make immigration a greater issue than it already was, Crosby suggested.¹⁰² That is what happened, and Leave’s share of the vote rose to 52% on 23 June.

Leave campaign leaders were, by the start of the official campaign, already working hard to make immigration the central issue. In Newcastle on Saturday 16 April Boris Johnson told a rally that, ‘In return [for membership of the EU] we get uncontrolled immigration, which puts unsustainable pressure on our vital public services as well as on jobs, housing and school places’.¹⁰³ The same weekend Iain Duncan Smith spoke to an audience in Ipswich about how immigration added the equivalent of ‘a city the size of Newcastle or Plymouth’ to the UK every year. On the Sunday evening Priti Patel said that, ‘The shortage of primary school places is yet another example of how uncontrolled migration is putting unsustainable pressures on public services.’ The next day Michael Gove warned that immigration would surge if Britain stayed in the EU.¹⁰⁴

The following weekend Gove told newspapers that the UK faced an immigration ‘free-for-all’, and Iain Duncan Smith told the BBC’s Today programme that convicted criminals were free to come to the UK and commit more crimes.¹⁰⁵ The association of European nationals with criminals was made more explicit in a piece written by Michael Gove for the *Daily Mail* on 30 April. Gove emphasised the number of Albanian prisoners in British jails, Albanian gangsters in Manchester, Albanian fraudsters and Albanian organised crime. These were the people, Gove

102 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/18/remain-pulls-ahead-of-leave-in-eu-referendum-poll-as-david-camer/>

103 <http://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2016-04-16/boris-johnson-in-newcastle-on-vote-leave-campaign/>

104 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/662251/European-Union-Brussels-Bloc-Michael-Gove-Terror-British-Intelligence-ECJ-Brexit>

105 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/apr/25/brexit-is-only-way-to-control-immigration-campaigners-claim>

wrote, who were about to be given free access to British homes, schools and welfare.

Throughout May and June leaders of the Leave campaign continued to speak about the impact of migrants on the UK. Michael Gove said immigration was the cause of the crisis in the NHS, Iain Duncan Smith and Liam Fox said migrants were causing a housing shortage, Priti Patel said migrants were taking British children's primary school places, Chris Grayling said that immigration 'will change the face of our country forever', and Penny Mordaunt claimed that thousands of criminals would come to the UK once Turkey and other east European countries joined the EU. Each of these MPs, and Leave campaign leaders such as Matthew Elliott, spoke in dramatic terms about the negative impact of immigration on Britain's schools, jobs, houses, healthcare, crime and culture.

Some of the Leave leaders' criticism of the effects of migrants appeared to be co-ordinated with related news events. On the day parents were due to receive news as to whether their child had gained its first choice primary school place, Priti Patel gave a speech in which she claimed that:

'The shortage of primary school places is yet another example of how uncontrolled migration is putting unsustainable pressures on our public services... Education is one of the most important things the Government delivers, and it's deeply regrettable that so many families with young children are set to be disappointed today.'

On the day that England were due to play a football match against Turkey, Penny Mordaunt and the Vote Leave campaign said that murderers and terrorists from Turkey would come to the UK if people did not vote to leave the EU.

Table 9: Extent to which leading Leave figures were associated with immigration

	Extent to which individual linked with immigration ¹⁰²	Number of articles referencing individual and immigration
Boris Johnson	44%	1,508
Michael Gove	53%	1,100
Nigel Farage	49%	1,042
Iain Duncan Smith	49%	816
Priti Patel	60%	279

Most of the prominent figures in the Leave campaign therefore chose to talk about immigration and migrants regularly, prominently and from early on in the campaign (see Table 9).

Remain leaders and immigration

In the initial fortnight of the campaign, Remain leaders rarely raised the issue of immigration unprompted and instead focused on the negative economic effects of Brexit and on responding to warnings about the economic implications of Brexit by US President Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and others.

Even as debate about immigration intensified after the third week, the Remain campaign leaders responded defensively rather than positively. Rather than arguing for the benefits of immigration, David Cameron and others emphasised the steps they were taking to control it and their new plans to stop Muslim extremism.¹⁰⁷ In front of the Parliamentary Liaison Committee in early May, David Cameron stressed the concessions he had gained from the EU to help reduce migrant numbers.¹⁰⁸

Criticism of the Leave campaign's rhetoric about migration was left mainly to elder statesmen from the Conservative party, including Sir John Major and Lord Heseltine, while it was left to Labour leaders and Liberal

¹⁰⁶ Proportion of referendum articles containing individual that also mentioned immigration.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pm-plans-new-laws-to-stop-muslim-extremists-p8kg7lpfn>

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/liaison/Transcript-040516.pdf>

Democrat personalities to make positive arguments about migration and the UK.

In a speech to the Oxford Union in mid-May, Sir John Major warned Conservative supporters of leaving the EU that they risked turning into UKIP.¹⁰⁹ Major later went further, writing in the *Mail on Sunday* that Leave was engaging in the ‘worst sort of dog whistle politics’ and telling Andrew Marr that the campaign was ‘verging on the squalid’.¹¹⁰ Lord Heseltine called some of Boris Johnson’s comments ‘reckless and irresponsible’.

Jeremy Corbyn, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown each put a positive case for immigration. Tony Blair said that east Europeans ‘contribute far more in taxes than they ever take in benefits’ and that they are ‘hard-working people’ and ‘good members of our community’.¹¹¹ Corbyn told ITV’s Robert Peston that ‘migration actually is a plus to our economy’. Gordon Brown argued that illegal migration was best controlled within the EU not outside it.¹¹²

These limited positive arguments were reported less straightforwardly in the press than equivalent negative statements by leaders of the Leave campaign. In the case of the Blair, Brown and Corbyn comments, each was reported with incredulity by the *Express*.¹¹³ The *Daily Mail* headlined its article referring to Jeremy Corbyn’s comments: ‘Corbyn insists immigration is a GOOD thing and claims it’s the Government’s fault...’.¹¹⁴ By contrast, Iain Duncan Smith’s claim that Germany had a secret veto over Cameron’s EU negotiations regarding immigration was reported straightforwardly across press and broadcast outlets, even those that were pro-Remain (‘Iain Duncan Smith claims Germany used its

109 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/john-major-warns-brexit-tories-not-to-morph-into-ukip-uk_5735843ee4b01359f686af37

110 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3614568/Major-savages-boorish-Brexit-Ex-PM-s-fury-shameless-falsehoods-claims-vote-blow-40billion-black-hole-UK-finances.html>

111 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/666822/Tony-Blair-migrants-Poland-politics-eastern-Europe>

112 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/669200/Gordon-Brown-stuns-claiming-UK-only-control-immigration-by-staying-IN-EU>

113 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/666822/Tony-Blair-migrants-Poland-politics-eastern-Europe-and-Gordon-Brown-stuns-by-claiming-UK-can-only-control-immigration-by-staying-IN-EU>

114 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3591485/Corbyn-insists-immigration-GOOD-thing-claims-s-Government-s-fault-not-funding-councils-schools-doctors-properly-services-overstretched.html>

‘ultimate power’ to block David Cameron’s EU demands’ in the *Mirror*, for example).¹¹⁵

As the campaign wore on the Remain campaign spoke more about immigration, albeit this was chiefly to respond to what they called ‘inaccurate and misleading claims’ by Leave. Two days before the vote Cameron gave an interview to the *Guardian* in which he accused the Leave campaign of ‘stoking intolerance and division’ about migrants, and regretted that the referendum had become so focused on immigration.¹¹⁶

Table 10: Extent to which leading Remain figures were associated with immigration

	Extent to which individual linked with immigration	Number of articles referencing individual and immigration
David Cameron	40%	2,299
George Osborne	37%	866
Jeremy Corbyn	41%	759
Gordon Brown	47%	366
Theresa May	56%	210

Eventually, Remain leaders and Remain-supporting papers found themselves criticising the claims and methods of the Leave campaign on immigration without making a positive case for current immigration policy or its impact on the economy and public services.

News outlets reporting immigration claims

News outlets could, of course, choose whether or not to report on claims about immigration made by campaign leaders, on which claims to report, and on how to report them. Most outlets chose to cover immigration extensively (Table 11). Certain outlets, however, focused almost exclusively on claims by Leave leaders and covered their statements regularly, prominently and supportively.

115 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/iajn-duncan-smith-claims-germany-7935544>

116 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/21/cameron-brexit-camp-stoking-intolerance-with-immigration-obsession>

Table 11: Coverage of immigration by title

Publication	Total Brexit articles mentioning immigration
Guardian	576
Express	568
Daily Mail	416
HuffPo UK	346
Sun	337
Independent	330
BBC	290
Mirror	276
Times	254
FT	232
Telegraph	176
Sky News	118
New Statesman	102
ITV	101
Spectator	100
Buzzfeed	52
Economist	35
Daily Star	33
Vice UK	23
Channel 4 News	18
Total	4,383

The *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, for example, both reported on Priti Patel’s claims that migrants were taking British primary school places and depriving British children of basic school resources. In the *Sun*, following publication of Michael Gove’s piece focusing on Albanians in the *Mail*, Trevor Kavanagh claimed that ‘Albania is a hellhole’ and that, along with Turkey, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, ‘These countries pose a serious threat to British security from organised crime and Islamic terrorism’. The *Telegraph* reported that ‘EU rules expose UK to terror’ and

that ‘European criminals [are] free to live in Britain’. When Iain Duncan Smith claimed that the UK would ‘need to create 240 houses every day for the next 20 years to cope with a huge wave of immigration from eastern Europe’, he was reported directly in the *Express*. As was Liam Fox when he made virtually the same claim three weeks later.

Similarly, these news outlets – the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Sun* and the *Telegraph* – then reported the claims of Leave leaders that only by leaving the EU would the UK be able to resolve these problems and avoid these disasters. ‘Brexit would make UK safer, says Gove as he sets out security and border changes that could be made if Britain leaves the EU’.¹¹⁷ ‘The UK is losing more and more control over its borders and security, with EU judges preventing us from turning away serious criminals and those who may have links to terrorism,’ Iain Duncan Smith told the *Express*. ‘It is much safer to Vote Leave and take back control,’ he said.¹¹⁸ Nigel Farage was reported in the *Daily Star* saying ‘We face a real genuine threat – I don’t want to scare people, I want to do the opposite and make Britain a safer country’.¹¹⁹

In total, the *Daily Mail* published 617 articles about immigration over the 10-week period, of which 416 also covered the referendum. The *Daily Express* published 740 (568 referencing the referendum), the *Sun* 428 (337), and the *Telegraph* 239 (176)

These outlets also gave Leave leaders space to expand on their claims. The *Daily Mail* published Michael Gove’s warning that the UK would soon be open to a further 88 million people, and interviewed Chris Grayling (19 May). The *Sun* interviewed Michael Gove (29 May). The *Express* interviewed Iain Duncan Smith. The *Sunday Telegraph* interviewed Boris Johnson (15 May). These and other news outlets also published interviews with, and articles by, leaders in the Remain campaign.

Many of the immigration articles were sourced from the Leave campaign, such as: ‘Remaining in EU will create a MASSIVE housing

117 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3578036/Brexit-make-UK-safer-says-Gove-sets-security-border-changes-Britain-leaves-EU.html>

118 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/678984/EU-referendum-countdown-Iain-Duncan-Smith-David-Cameron-Britain-Brexit>

119 <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/511898/Nigel-Farage-urges-Brits-back-Brexit-referendum-rape-terrorism-Cologne-Belgium>

crisis, new figures reveal’;¹²⁰ ‘NHS will suffer £600m BLACK HOLE as it struggles with migration if Remain wins, says Leave’;¹²¹ ‘EU WHAT?! UK forced to harbour 50 criminals including killers and rapists under EU law, Brexiteers claim’;¹²² ‘REVEALED: Shock £29bn migrants bill for Britain’s crammed schools’;¹²³ ‘Shocking video shows how “easy” it is for people smugglers to cross Channel illegally’;¹²⁴ ‘Schools “could face an extra 570,000 pupils from the EU by 2030”: Vote Leave warn of huge classroom swell brought on by new member states joining’.¹²⁵

News outlets initiating immigration claims

Certain titles went further than the campaign leaders in their reporting on immigration. Many of the negative news articles in the second half of the campaign were not prompted by the claims of the campaigns but resulted from the initiatives of newspapers.

In a number of cases newspapers sought out information that associated Europeans with criminals. These stories were sourced from Freedom of Information requests or investigations by the newspapers concerned. They included:

- **‘Free to walk our streets, 1,000 European criminals including rapists and drugs dealers we should have deported when they were released from prison’** – *Daily Mail*, 26 April
- **‘More than 30,000 Europeans a year are arrested in London: 80 people a day are held as Brexit campaigners say staying in the EU would put huge pressure on prisons’** – *Daily Mail*, 3 May
- **‘HALF of all rape and murder suspects in some parts of Britain are foreigners’** – *Express*, 23 May

120 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/680593/Remaining-EU-will-create-massive-housing-crisis-new-figures-reveal>

121 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/681871/NHS-600m-deficit-Remain-Brexit-campaign-immigration>

122 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/politics/1239980/uk-forced-to-harbour-50-criminals-including-killers-and-rapists-under-eu-law-brexiteers-claim/>

123 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/681967/Schooling-children-EU-migrants-cost-taxpayers-29-billion-2030>

124 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/682090/Investigation-shows-easy-people-smugglers-cross-Channel-illegally>

125 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3653534/Schools-face-extra-570-000-pupils-EU-2030-Vote-Leave-warn-huge-classroom-swell-brought-new-member-states-joining.html>

- **'Shock revelations British port staff face migrants on a DAILY basis many armed with KNIVES' – *Express*, 14 June**

These stories and others were sourced, quite legitimately, by the newspapers themselves, not from campaign leaders. These same newspapers, however, did not seek out countervailing stories that presented a different or more positive picture of migrants.



De-contextualisation

In a number of cases, however, stories that associated European nationals with crime in Britain were presented in a selective context that made it difficult to judge whether the articles were fair or not. For example, the *Daily Mail* reported that ‘More than 80 EU nationals are arrested in London every day’. The impression that 80 was a high number – ‘Scale of crime linked to European nationals was exposed in police figures’ – but without more data about arrests, and notably without a figure for total arrests, the reader was left without a yardstick.¹²⁶

Similarly, the same paper claimed that 1,000 European criminals ‘including rapists and drugs dealers’ were still in the UK when they should have been deported. The article did not report how many of them were rapists or drug dealers, nor how many criminals there were in the UK from non-European countries, nor how many British people with a criminal record are ‘free to walk our streets’.¹²⁷

126 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3570228/More-30-000-Europeans-year-arrested-London-Brexit-campaigners-say-staying-EU-pressure-prisons.html>

127 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3558603/Freed-walk-streets-1-000-European-criminals-including-rapists-drugs-dealers-deported-released-prison.html>

A *Daily Express* investigation (based on FOI requests) claimed that there had been a surge in migrant murder and rape suspects, such that ‘HALF of all rape and murder suspects in some parts of Britain are foreigners’.¹²⁸ The article did not identify in which parts of the UK half of all rape and murder suspects were foreigners. It referred to ‘foreigners’ generally rather than EU migrants, though claimed the data provided ‘another reason to quit the EU’. None of those referred to in the article had been convicted. The numbers referred to those accused, alleged, or in some cases charged with the crimes.

Feature articles and leader columns then developed this link between EU migrants and crime. The *Daily Mail* featured a longer piece about ‘A rapist protected by police and the neglected mining town in the East Midlands that has turned into Little Poland’¹²⁹ following on from its story the previous week that ‘UK police ‘tried to keep Polish rapist’s identity a secret’.¹³⁰ Each story made reference to the number of Poles that had moved to the area – ‘Thousands of Poles moved to the Shirebrook [sic]’, and to the number of foreigners with convictions for sex offences in Britain – ‘In the past two years almost 400 foreigners either living or visiting Britain have been identified as being convicted sex offenders in their home countries’. The implication being that there were likely to be other Poles locally with similar convictions that had not been made public, though without making clear where the 400 foreigners came from or whether there was any evidence they were living in Shirebrook. The second article reiterated the implication of the first, saying that ‘if a sex offender from an EU country moves to Britain, his or her home country is under no obligation to inform the British authorities’. It also then emphasised the number of East Europeans in Shirebrook (‘Close your eyes and listen to the voices and Shirebrook... might be Podnan or Lodz’).

Individual cases of criminals from Europe living in the UK were used as evidence of a wider problem with European migrants. Saloman Barci, for example, was held up by the *Express* as an illustration of why ‘the reality [of mass immigration] is very different’ from what the ‘cynical, deluded

128 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672735/half-of-British-rape-suspects-are-foreign>

129 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3577855/A-rape-protected-police-neglected-mining-town-turned-Little-Poland.html>

130 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3564871/UK-police-tried-Polish-rape-s-identity-secret-case-attacked-vigilantes-tensions-locals-immigrants.html>

and unpatriotic, pro-EU campaigners' claim.¹³¹ According to reports in the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Sun* (there were no reports about Barci in the *Telegraph*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent* or the *FT*), Barci was a one-legged murderer, robber and drug-dealer who lied to gain entry to the UK, who was living in a council house, claiming benefit, and using legal aid to fight extradition.

Commentators in the *Express*, *Sun* and *Mail* presented Barci's case as symptomatic of the situation of many migrants in the UK. It was, Leo McKinstry wrote in the *Express*, 'all too typical of our society where the Government neglects the rights of Britons but bends over backwards to support foreigners'. Richard Littlejohn in the *Daily Mail* claimed the case 'highlights the madness of Britain's lax border controls, insane interpretation of the Yuman Rites [sic] Act and cavalier disregard for taxpayers' money'. Like McKinstry he emphasised that 'Barci is by no means alone in playing the system', '...Britain is crawling with foreign criminals. The prisons are full of them'.¹³²

Violence

In the last fortnight of the campaign the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* published more than 20 stories each about Calais, particularly about migrant violence, migrants trying to board lorries and ships to the UK, and migrants trying to swim to Britain. Many used agency photos and pictures posted on social media. The impression given by the articles and photos was that law and order had broken down and hundreds of migrants were fighting their way to Britain. 'CALAIS AT WAR', the *Express* reported, 'Port road SHUT as migrants chanting 'f*** the UK' hurl rocks at Brit cars'.¹³³ 'French riot police with loaded tear gas guns chase a group of masked migrants away from boarding British lorries in a tense two-hour standoff in Calais', the *Daily Mail* read.¹³⁴ 'LET US IN', a *Sun* headline

131 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/672814/Leo-McKinstry-comment-Immigrant-Saliman-Barci-national-decline>

132 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3605844/RICHARD-LITTLEJOHN-One-legged-Albanian-KILLER-benefits-couldn-t-make-up.html>

133 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/681614/Calais-migrants-refugees-Britain-UK-EU-referendum-Brexit-Euro-2016>

134 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3656903/French-riot-police-loaded-tear-gas-guns-chase-group-masked-migrants-away-boarding-British-lorries-tense-two-hour-standoff-Calais.html>

read (the quote was not attributed), ‘Huge mob of 300 migrants storm port in Calais in violent bid to smuggle their way into UK’.¹³⁵

Another *Express* story claimed ‘Shock revelations British port staff face migrants on a DAILY basis many armed with KNIVES’.¹³⁶ The various reports of rape, murder and violence led the *Express* to conclude that ‘Government has failed to protect its citizens from foreign rapists and murderers’ even though the reports themselves do not justify this claim or set it in context.¹³⁷

The BBC and *The Times* published one article each about clashes between migrants and police in Calais. The *Guardian* did not publish any on the clashes or about attempts to storm Britain, though did report on the risk to children in the Calais refugee camps, and the blocking of an aid convoy.

Stealing jobs and taking benefits

When not associated with rape, murder or violence, migrants were often characterised as job stealers or benefit tourists. The *Sun*, for example, published a front page ‘Brits Not Fair’, claiming that four in five jobs in Britain had gone to foreigners in the past year (a claim subsequently found to be inaccurate).¹³⁸ The same paper also published a feature article about migrants coming to the UK to claim benefits: ‘It’s on offer, so why not take it?’, the paper quoted a Bulgarian as saying. ‘And it isn’t a lot. You can spend that in the pub in ten minutes’.¹³⁹

The *Express* claimed that ‘The average family of unskilled migrants costs the UK £30,000 a year – once tax, public service use and benefit payments are taken into account’.¹⁴⁰ It did not balance this with research, by UCL, that migrants economically benefit the UK,¹⁴¹ or with research

135 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1315538/huge-mob-of-300-migrants-storm-port-in-calais-in-violent-bid-to-smuggle-their-way-into-uk/>

136 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/679753/British-port-staff-face-knife-wielding-migrants>

137 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/672813/government-failed-protect-citizens-foreign-rapists-murderers-eu-referendum>

138 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/clarifications/2121650/correction-brits-not-fair/>

139 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1210043/i-work-in-the-uk-but-still-claim-benefits-the-payouts-to-migrants-at-the-very-heart-of-britains-brexite-row/>

140 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/681793/Unskilled-EU-migrants-costing-British-taxpayers-6-6-BILLION-year>

141 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/1114/051114-economic-impact-EU-immigration>

that concluded it was very difficult to establish how immigrants affect public finances.¹⁴²

In these articles the line between legal and illegal migration was often unclear. An *Express* news article headlined ‘Migrants pay just £100 to get into Britain’, made no distinction in the headline or subhead, confusing things further by referring to ‘illegal Channel crossings’. The article itself initially stated that these were refugees, but later said that those paying traffickers ‘are usually economic migrants desperate to slip into the UK where they can take jobs, benefits and health care’.¹⁴³

Vocabulary

The words used by certain news outlets to describe the situation regarding immigration and its effects tended to be those associated with natural disasters, epidemics, or incipient catastrophe. Migration was in ‘crisis’, ‘out of control’, ‘soaring’, ‘spiraling’, ‘rampant’, ‘unsustainable’, ‘intolerable’, ‘imploding’ and ‘relentless’. There was an ‘influx’ of migrants who were ‘flocking’, ‘swarming’, ‘swamping’, ‘storming’, ‘invading’, ‘stampeding’, ‘over-running’, and ‘besieging’ the UK. Britain’s borders were a ‘shambles’, ‘collapsing’, ‘threadbare’, ‘creaking’, and ‘buckling’.

This impression of imminent disaster was increased by the prominence given to this vocabulary. Looking at front page lead stories alone, the words associated with EU migration included: ‘bombshell’, ‘blow’, ‘crisis’, ‘killers and rapists’, ‘plot’, ‘fears’, ‘mauling’, ‘deception’, ‘chaos’, ‘hidden’, ‘soaring’, ‘surge’, ‘invade’, ‘cover-up’, ‘swindle’, ‘Mayday’, ‘floodgates’, ‘terror’, ‘meltdown’, and ‘criminals’.



142 <https://fullfact.org/immigration/how-immigrants-affect-public-finances/>

143 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/675593/Migrants-Britain-gangs-ferry-Channel-boat-trafficking>

Images

The images used to illustrate articles about migrants were similarly emotive, even though many of them were not news photos but stock pictures (from picture libraries like Getty and Alamy). For example, generic images of overcrowded classrooms, doctors' waiting rooms, and transport systems were used within articles about lack of primary school places, NHS problems and congestion.^{144 145}



Photographs of crowds pushing to gain entry – it is not clear what they were trying to enter – were used to illustrate opinion pieces.¹⁴⁶



144 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3653534/Schools-face-extra-570-000-pupils-EU-2030-Vote-Leave-warn-huge-classroom-swell-brought-new-member-states-joining.html>

145 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/673974/Immigration-to-change-the-face-of-England-forever-as-4M-migrants-arrive-in-next-10-years>

146 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/661961/Leo-Mckinstry-column-mass-immigration>

The *Sun*, the *Express* and other papers used photographs of long lines of – what appear to be – foreign people walking, again stock images, similar to the controversial UKIP poster ‘Breaking Point’. The *Express* appears to have used the same image as used by UKIP in its poster, combining it with a photograph of a classroom to give the impression that these people are coming to get places at UK schools.^{147 148}



147 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1321708/eu-has-surrendered-complete-control-of-its-borders-to-people-smugglers/>

148 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/661944/priti-patel-brexit-thousand-children-miss-out-primary-school>

The *Express* predicted chaos in the UK during the summer as a consequence of ‘desperate’ migrants fighting to gain entry. The picture it used showed young men breaking through a security barrier, edited together with pictures of riot police.¹⁴⁹



Thousands of migrants desperate to reach the UK will bring chaos this summer

To illustrate an article about jobless migrants coming to the UK the *Daily Mail* used a photograph – from a picture agency – of four people around a park bench who appear to be homeless.¹⁵⁰ The caption does not indicate who these four are, or whether they are migrants or jobless.



A record number of jobless EU migrants, particularly from Romania and Bulgaria, have come to the UK looking for work

149 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/667586/Britain-migrant-chaos-summer-thousands-storm-border>

150 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3611697/Record-number-jobless-EU-migrants-Britain-Hammer-blow-PM-270-000-EU-nationals-came-year.html>

To support an article linking migrants to crime the *Express* used a photograph – from a photo library – making it appear as though a migrant had just shot someone, below which the caption read: ‘Foreign criminals commit nearly 20 per cent of crime in the UK’.¹⁵¹



Foreign criminals commit nearly 20 per cent of crime in the UK

Another appeared to show a distraught victim of crime with a police officer – again a stock photo that may have had nothing to do with migrants or foreign criminals.¹⁵²

Within an article claiming that EU migrants were more likely to have a job in the UK than British citizens, the *Daily Mail* published a series of police head shots of ‘criminals we can’t get



Is Britain becoming more vulnerable to foreign criminals

151 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/672813/government-failed-protect-citizens-foreign-rapists-murderers-eu-referendum>

152 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672735/half-of-British-rape-suspects-are-foreign>

rid of'.¹⁵³ The *Daily Star* chose to feature 20 photographs of 'The most dangerous prisons in the world' in an article referring to claims by the Leave campaign that the UK would need to build seven more prisons to cope with 'EU lags'.¹⁵⁴

The use of stock photographs, the splicing together of stock images of full classrooms with images of huge lines of migrants, and the use of emotive photographs out of context, illustrate the degree to which these news outlets sought to lead their readers to conclude that a 'tidal wave' of migrants was on its way to Britain, about to overwhelm Britain's already strained public services, amongst whom were numerous violent and aggressive criminals.

Migrant-asylum seeker-refugee elision

There was frequent elision in news coverage of migrants with asylum seekers and refugees, and at times the terms appear to be used interchangeably. For example, within:

- **'Horrors of Calais migrant camp EXPOSED as Brits told way to tackle crisis is to LEAVE EU'** – *Express*, 15 April¹⁵⁵
- **'EU states face €250k fine for every rejected refugee'** – *The Times*, 4 May¹⁵⁶
- **'Corbyn says UK is LUCKY to have mass immigration and hints MORE migrants would be welcome'** – *Express*, 15 May¹⁵⁷

Occasionally articles would muddy the distinction even in the headline:

- **'Inside the only village in Europe where migrants are BANNED: Switzerland's super rich Oberwil-Lieli where millionaires have voted to reject asylum**

153 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3628840/The-true-cost-open-borders-revealed-EU-migrants-likely-job-UK-British-citizens.html>

154 <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/522190/UK-new-jails-prison-lags-prisoners-migrants-EU-Brexit-Vote-Leave-Vote-Remain>

155 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/661417/Calais-migrant-camp-Mike-Hookem-Ukip-EU-referendum-Brexi>

156 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/eu-states-face-250k-fine-for-every-rejected-refugee-hcpsrd7sj>

157 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/670448/Jeremy-Corbyn-mass-migration-Richard-Peston-EU-referendum-Labour-party>

- **seekers... and pay a £200,000 fine instead'** – *Daily Mail*, 27 May¹⁵⁸
- **'330,000 asylum seekers protected by EU last year alone, as scale of migrant crisis is revealed'** – *The Sun*, 20 April¹⁵⁹

In other articles, asylum was simply merged into an overall 'migrant crisis', without distinction between legal migration, illegal migration, refugees or asylum seekers. For example, within:

- **'Asylum claims in the UK jump to highest annual level for more than a DECADE'** – *Express*, 27 May¹⁶⁰

Justifications for extent and nature of immigration coverage

Leave leaders and Leave-supporting papers frequently emphasised that raising the subject of immigration, and the problems associated with immigration, was justified given the level of public concern (as expressed, for example, in the Ipsos MORI Issues Index referred to previously). They were also keen to make clear that their emphasis on the negative aspects of immigration did not make them racist. Some claimed that 'elites' and the 'Establishment' were trying to 'silence' debate about immigration.

On the same weekend that Priti Patel told British parents their childrens' school places were being taken by migrants, she told the *Telegraph* it was not racist to speak about immigration (16 April).¹⁶¹ Patel subsequently 'slammed' the Establishment for trying to close down free speech on immigration (25 May).¹⁶² Twice, on 7 May and on 22 May, the *Telegraph* called for an 'honest debate' about immigration, and celebrated the opportunity 'to have a sensible, open and fact-based national conversation about immigration'.¹⁶³ The paper lamented the way in which 'the establishment tries to silence and ignore voters' reasonable concerns

158 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3610761/Inside-village-Europe-migrants-BANNED-Switzerland-s-super-rich-Oberwil-Lieli-millionaires-won-t-accept-asylum-seekers-voted-pay-200-000-fine-instead.html>

159 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1137753/330000-asylum-seekers-protected-by-eu-last-year-alone-as-scale-of-migrant-crisis-is-revealed/>

160 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/674441/Asylum-claims-UK-jump-highest-annual-level-DECADE-migrant-crisis>

161 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/15/priti-patel-interview-its-not-racist-to-worry-about-immigration/>

162 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/673521/Top-universities-want-students-remain-EU-referendum>

163 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/05/07/time-for-an-honest-debate-about-the-impact-of-migration-on-public/>

about the mass immigration that is an intrinsic part of the European project'.¹⁶⁴ Later in the campaign, Dominic Raab also claimed that elites were trying to silence debate (22 May).¹⁶⁵

If the Establishment or elites were trying to silence debate they were singularly unsuccessful, since more than 4,300 articles about immigration were published across the national press over the duration of the 10-week campaign.

Reporting on the town in the east Midlands 'that has turned into Little Poland', Neil Tweedie wrote that 'It is a condition of modern British life that any discussion about the effects of mass immigration carries with it the risk of an adverse reaction from those determined to be offended by, well, anything'. The article then went on to talk about how the town was 'being diluted by waves of Poles, Romanians, Lithuanians and others', many of them 'young men who can prove intimidating to neighbours', who engage in 'anti-social behaviour' and amongst whom is a 'convicted rapist'.¹⁶⁶

Regular *Express* columnist Leo McKinstry lamented that 'Anyone who complains about the disintegration of our society is labelled a bigot or racist', and railed against the 'smug moral superiority' of 'today's rulers'. He ended his argument by claiming that Brexit would allow Britain to recover its authentic Britishness; 'Brexit is the one hope of regaining our national identity'.¹⁶⁷

Boris Johnson went as far as to sing 'Ode to Joy' in order to prove he and other Brexit leaders were not xenophobes.¹⁶⁸ Priti Patel, speaking to the *Sun* in late May, accused Remain leaders of sneering at ordinary people who worry about immigration.¹⁶⁹

Shortly before the referendum vote itself the *Sun* lambasted those on the Remain side who leveled 'accusations of bigotry and intolerance'

164 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/05/22/we-need-to-talk-about-immigration/>

165 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/22/silencing-immigration-debate-nasty-politics-tory-minister-dominic-raab>

166 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3577855/A-rapist-protected-police-neglected-mining-town-turned-Little-Poland.html>

167 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/674022/Immigration-EU-referendum-debate-Brexit-British-heritage>

168 http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/668524/EU-referendum-Boris-Johnson-Brexit-xenophobic-Little-Englanders-sing-Ode-to-Joy-German?_ga=1.179553060.1643346359.1473321543

169 <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/archives/news/1177032/unwise-monkeys-sneering-david-cameron-gordon-brown-and-john-major-branded-bananas-by-brexit-backing-priti-patel/>

against Leavers concerned about immigration, though it acknowledged that ‘some on the fringes of this debate have unjustly targeted migrants for crude political advantage’. It did not include itself in these fringes.¹⁷⁰

Politicians or others who did explicitly accuse people of racism found themselves attacked for being elitist. Pat Glass, shadow Minister of State for Europe, made a public apology after calling a member of the public a ‘horrible racist’. Yet some of the coverage of this incident, notably an article in the *Daily Mail*, did not try to establish if her accusation was true or false (whether the person actually was a racist).¹⁷¹

Migrant blaming

In addition to reporting on public concern about the level of immigration, on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of migration policy, and on specific consequences of immigration, campaign leaders and certain news outlets explicitly blamed migrants for many of the UK’s political, social and economic ills. As well as violence, rapes and murders – as noted above – migrants were blamed for (not a comprehensive list):

- Creating a housing crisis
- Pushing property prices up, and deepening the homelessness problem
- Taking British jobs
- Taking British benefits
- Not taking British benefits
- Depressing British wages
- Creating a schools crisis
- Depriving Britain’s schools of money and resources
- Taking Primary school places from British children
- Taking Secondary school places from British children
- Gaining council houses ahead of British applicants
- Putting unsustainable pressure on local public services
- Strains on maternity services due to immigrants
- Putting British firms out of business
- Overwhelming the NHS
- Increasing the wait for hospitals and GP surgeries
- Costing a fortune
- Traffic congestion
- Crime
- Violence
- Terror
- Importing organised crime
- Smuggling terror weapons
- Putting unsustainable pressure on prisons/ Costing a fortune to detain/imprison
- Reducing quality of life and social solidarity
- Threatening green-belt land
- Increasing anti-semitism
- Bringing diseases to Britain
- Benefitting from cheaper weddings

170 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1310109/the-remain-movement-has-turned-the-murder-of-jo-cox-into-a-moral-crusade-in-run-up-to-refendum/>

171 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3599051/Shadow-Europe-minister-apologises-VILLAGE-branding-voter-racist-saying-never-come-is.html>

Migrant blaming: Example articles



Creating a housing crisis

'MIGRANT HOUSING CRISIS: Britain needs to build TWO MILLION new homes just for EU arrivals' (*Express*, 10 May)¹⁷²

'England will need to build a new home every SIX MINUTES to keep up with runaway immigration if voters reject Brexit, Liam Fox claims' (*Daily Mail*, 2 June)¹⁷³

'Remaining in EU will create a MASSIVE housing crisis, new figures reveal' (*Express*, 16 June)¹⁷⁴



Pushing property prices up, and deepening the homelessness problem

'Mass immigration is stretching our nation to the limit' (*Express*, 18 April)¹⁷⁵



Taking British jobs

'Brits just not fair: 4 in 5 British jobs went to foreign-born workers last year as number of EU workers doubles' (*The Sun*, 19 May)¹⁷⁶

'Migrant workers taking jobs and hitting wages' (*Express*, 19 May)¹⁷⁷

'Remaining in the EU will DESTROY British jobs, warns Tory MP David Davis' (*Express*, 26 May)¹⁷⁸

The true cost of our open borders revealed: EU migrants are MORE likely to have a job in the UK than British citizens' (*Daily Mail*, 7 June)¹⁷⁹

'EU migrants put me out of business', blasts boss who now ONLY employs English workers' (*Express*, 15 June)¹⁸⁰

'Our employees paid price of EU dream, admits Red Len: Union boss declares enlargement was 'gigantic experiment at the expense' of British workers' (*Daily Mail*, 21 June)¹⁸¹



Taking British benefits

'MIGRANT BENEFITS BOOM: Number of east Europeans claiming handouts DOUBLES in five years' (*Express*, 13 May)¹⁸²

'I work in the UK but still claim benefits': The payouts to migrants at the very heart of Britain's Brexit row' (*The Sun*, 21 May)¹⁸³

Record number of jobless EU migrants in Britain: Hammer blow for PM as 270,000 EU nationals came here last year [Front page] (*Daily Mail*, 27 May)¹⁸⁴

'The true cost of our open borders revealed: EU migrants are MORE likely to have a job in the UK than British citizens' (*Daily Mail*, 7 June)¹⁸⁵



Not taking British benefits

'Cameron's deal with Brussels WON'T stop mass influx of migrants to Britain, IDS claims' (*Express*, 4 May)¹⁸⁶



Depressing British wages

'MIGRANT HOUSING CRISIS: Britain needs to build TWO MILLION new homes just for EU arrivals' (*Express*, 10 May)¹⁸⁷

'Power to the people: EU's open-door migration screwing British workers while the richest benefit, IDS declares' (*The Sun*, 11 May)¹⁸⁸



Creating a schools crisis

'DAILY MAIL COMMENT: Children betrayed by the migration boom' (*Daily Mail*, 18 April)¹⁸⁹

'Britain's schools are in crisis as places are 'swamped' by EU children' (*Express*, 7 May)¹⁹⁰

'Migration Pressure on Schools Revealed' (*Telegraph*, 7 May)¹⁹¹

'Schools 'could face an extra 570,000 pupils from the EU by 2030': Vote Leave warn of huge classroom swell brought on by new member states joining' (*Express*, 22 June)¹⁹²



Depriving Britain's schools of money and resources

'Wrong to let EU migrants place a strain on schools' (*Express*, 16 May)¹⁹³

'This money [the £3bn] had been earmarked for classroom improvements, textbooks and hiring more staff. As a consequence schoolchildren will have to go without'

'REVEALED: Shock £29bn migrants bill for Britain's crammed schools' (*Express*, 22 June)¹⁹⁴

'£3 billion cost of educating immigrants' kids' (*The Sun*, 14 May)¹⁹⁵



Taking primary school places from British children

'School's out... of any places: MP fears that mass migration could deal class blow for tens of thousands of children' (*The Sun*, 17 April)¹⁹⁶

'Migrant influx could cause THOUSANDS of children to MISS OUT on primary school places' (*Express*, 18 April)¹⁹⁷

DAILY MAIL COMMENT: Children Betrayed by Migration Boom (*Daily Mail*, 18 April)¹⁹⁸

'Thousands of children miss out on a place at all their chosen primary schools: Up to a tenth in some areas did not receive a spot' (*Daily Mail*, 19 April)¹⁹⁹

'Migration adds to schools choice crisis' (*Express*, 14 June)²⁰⁰



Taking secondary school places from British children

ADMISSION IMPOSSIBLE One in six pupils in England miss out on first choice secondary places (*The Sun*, 15 June)²⁰¹



Gaining council houses ahead of British applicants

'Furious woman who claims sick mum can't get a council house due to migrants sparks EU row' (*Express*, 28 May)²⁰²



Putting unsustainable pressure on local public services

Immigration to 'change the face of England forever' as 4M migrants arrive in next decade' (*Express*, 26 May)²⁰³

Britain has 'too many migrants' New poll boosts fight to quit EU (*Express*, 18 April)²⁰⁴

'Unsustainable' Angry voter hits out on LBC over mass migration in Britain' (*Express*, 9 June)²⁰⁵

'DAILY MAIL COMMENT: Britain cannot keep taking EU's millions' (*Daily Mail*, 21 May)²⁰⁶

'Stop reducing it to cartoon politics! Furious voter slams Remain campaign for failing to answer questions on how migrants can be housed, schooled and even given WATER' (*Daily Mail*, 14 June)²⁰⁷



Strains on maternity services due to immigrants

'The gap between ONS migrant figures and the truth is as wide as the Grand Canyon. We are owed an apology' (*Telegraph*, 12 May)²⁰⁸

'Half of all UK maternity units have rejected women in labour over the past two years, particularly in migrant hotspots where the birth rate is going through the roof'

'Michael Gove vows to spend £100m-a-week on the NHS if Britain decides to leave the EU' (*The Sun*, 3 June)²⁰⁹

'[EU births in the UK add] £1.3bn to the cost of maternity services alone'

'DR MAX THE MIND DOCTOR: I'm voting OUT to save my beloved NHS' (*Daily Mail*, 18 June)²¹⁰



Putting British firms out of business

'EU migrants put me out of business', blasts boss who now ONLY employs English workers (*Express*, 15 May)²¹¹



Overwhelming the NHS

'Record Strain on the NHS leads to £2.45bn black hole' (*Express*, 20 May)²¹²

'A huge surge in the number of EU migrants is putting a strain on hospitals and GP services, and causing a boom in patient numbers – the highest ever'

'OBSCENE BILL NHS faces an £2.45 BILLION black hole — biggest overspend in its history' (*The Sun*, 21 May)²¹³

'NHS will be £10 BILLION in the red in three years time' (*Express*, 23 May)²¹⁴

'NHS will suffer £600m BLACK HOLE as it struggles with migration if Remain wins, says Leave' (*Express*, 21 June)²¹⁵

'Migrants coming to UK just for NHS 'are stealing' Angry LBC caller backs Farage in row' (*Express*, 13 June)²¹⁶



Increasing the wait for hospitals and GP surgeries

'CAM BUSTER Hero who mauled Cameron in TV debate says he's ready to quit UK if we vote remain' (*The Sun*, 9 June)²¹⁷



Costing a fortune

'EU Migration costs Britain £3m every day, shock report warns' (*The Sun*, 16 May)²¹⁸

'Our employees paid price of EU dream, admits Red Len: Union boss declares enlargement was 'gigantic experiment at the expense' of British workers' (*Daily Mail*, 21 June)²¹⁹

'Unskilled EU migrants cost UK taxpayers £6.6BILLION a year, Brexit economists warn' (*Express*, 21 June)²²⁰



Traffic congestion

'Mass immigration is stretching our nation to the limit' (*Express*, 18 April)²²¹



Crime

'David Cameron blasts his own defence minister Penny Mordaunt over her 'absolutely wrong' claim that Britain is powerless to stop Turkey joining EU' (*Daily Mail*, 22 May)²²²

'Think the EU's bad now? Wait until Albania joins: With piercing logic and passionate eloquence, MICHAEL GOVE warns that EU expansion will open our borders to 88million from Europe's poorest countries' (*Daily Mail*, 30 April)²²³

'Top police chief: EU 'free movement' allows criminals to come to UK and FLOURISH' (*Express*, 15 May)²²⁴



Violence

'WATCH: Terrifying moment British tourists were confronted by rioting Calais migrants' (*Express*, 22 June)²²⁵

Shock revelations British port staff face migrants on a DAILY basis many armed with KNIVES (*Express*, 14 June)²²⁶



Terror

'Staying in the EU will COMPROMISE British safety from TERROR, Michael Gove warns' (*Express*, 18 April)²²⁷

London could be next: Nigel Farage warns Brexit is the only way to stop rampaging jihadis and Cologne sex attackers from coming here (*The Sun*, 28 April)²²⁸

'I want to make Britain safe' Nigel Farage urges Brits to back Brexit' (*Daily Star*, 30 April)²²⁹

'Trevor Kavanagh: The End is Nigh for Cameron's Project Fear as poll shows Brexit camp are winning' (*The Sun*, 2 May)²³⁰

'Vote Leave: 'Murderers and terrorists from Turkey will head to UK' (ITV, 22 May)²³¹

'This man is proof we are a nation in moral decline, blasts LEO MCKINSTRY' (*Express*, 23 May)²³²



Importing organised crime

Turkey, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro – 'These countries pose a serious threat to British security from organized crime and Islamic terrorism' plus 'Albania is a hellhole of ...' (*The Sun*, 2 May)²³³

'BACKDOOR TO BRITAIN Criminal gang exposed for providing false papers that allow THOUSANDS of illegals to work in UK' (*The Sun*, 21 June)²³⁴



Smuggling terror weapons

'UK to ramp up Med warship patrols amid fears migrant traffickers smuggling terror weapons' (*Express*, 27 May)²³⁵



Putting unsustainable pressure on prisons/costing a fortune to detain/imprison

'More than 30,000 Europeans a year are arrested in London: 80 people a day are held as Brexit campaigners say staying in the EU would put huge pressure on prisons' (*Daily Mail*, 3 May)²³⁶

'Britain to build 7 new jails as EU lags 'set to double' (*Daily Star*, 10 June)²³⁷

'Current immigration rates mean UK will need 'SEVEN more prisons to house EU criminals'' (*Express*, 11 June)²³⁸



Reducing quality of life and social solidarity

'DAILY MAIL COMMENT: Mass Migration and our Quality of Life' (*Daily Mail*, 26 May)²³⁹

'Trevor Kavanagh: Uncontrolled mass immigration is a social disaster' (*The Sun*, 29 May)²⁴⁰



Threatening green-belt land

'Population to surge by four million due to mass immigration that will 'change the face of England forever' (*Telegraph*, 26 May)²⁴¹

'Immigration to 'change the face of England forever' as 4M migrants arrive in next decade' (*Express*, 26 May)²⁴²

'DESTROYED: British countryside 'will be ruined by homes for migrants', says top minister' (*Express*, 30 May)²⁴³

'Britain's green fields will have to be built over to provide new homes for migrants, warns Chris Grayling' (*Telegraph*, 29 May)²⁴⁴



Increasing anti-semitism

'Cabinet ignore people's migrant fear at their peril' (*Express*, 2 May)²⁴⁵



Bringing diseases to Britain

'Mass immigration is stretching our nation to the limit' (*Express*, 18 April)²⁴⁶



Benefitting from cheaper weddings

'Polish weddings on the CHEAP but Brit couples have to pay THREE times as much at UK hotel' (*Express*, 5 May)²⁴⁷

172 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/668867/Britain-needs-built-two-million-new-homes-EU-immigrants>

173 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3622039/England-need-build-new-home-SIX-MINUTES-runaway-immigration-voters-reject-Brexit-Liam-Fox-claims.html>

174 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/680593/Remaining-EU-will-create-massive-housing-crisis-new-figures-reveal>

175 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/661961/Leo-Mckinstry-column-mass-immigration>

176 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/politics/1204182/brits-just-not-fair-4-in-5-british-jobs-went-to-foreign-nationals-last-year-as-number-of-eu-workers-doubles/>

177 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/671759/Migrant-Express-Comment-workers-taking-jobs-hitting-wages>

178 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/673834/Remaining-EU-destroy-British-jobs-Tory-MP-David-Davis>

179 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3628840/The-true-cost-open-borders-revealed-EU-migrants-likely-job-UK-British-citizens>

180 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/679924/EU-migrants-immigration-documentary-BBC-businesswoman-claims-EU-migrants-closed-firm>

181 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3651523/Our-employees-paid-price-EU-dream-admits-Red-Len-Union-boss-declares-enlargement-gigantic-experiment-expense-British-workers.html>

182 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/670038/EU-referendum-eastern-European-migrants-benefits-UK-Britain-Brexit-Cameron>

183 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1210043/i-work-in-the-uk-but-still-claim-benefits-the-payouts-to-migrants-at-the-very-heart-of-britains-brexit-row/>

184 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3611697/Record-number-jobless-EU-migrants-Britain-Hammer-blow-PM-270-000-EU-nationals-came-year.html>

185 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3628840/The-true-cost-open-borders-revealed-EU-migrants-likely-job-UK-British-citizens.html>

186 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/666856/David-Cameron-migration-Iain-Duncan-Smith-politics-Vote-Leave-Brexit-EU-referendum>

187 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/671759/Migrant-Express-Comment-workers-taking-jobs-hitting-wages>

188 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1169828/power-to-the-people-eus-open-door-migration-screwing-british-workers-while-the-richest-benefit-ids-declares/>

189 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3544991/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Children-betrayed-migration-boom.html>

190 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/668144/britain-schools-crisis-EU-children>

191 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/07/migration-pressure-on-schools-revealed/>

192 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3653534/Schools-face-extra-570-000-pupils-EU-2030-Vote-Leave-warn-huge-classroom-swell-brought-new-member-states-joining.html>

193 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/670637/Wrong-let-EU-migrants-place-strain-schools>

194 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/681967/Schooling-children-EU-migrants-cost-taxpayers-29-billion-2030>

195 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/1177029/revealed-3billion-cost-of-educating-immigrants-kids-that-is-eating-into-school-improvement-cash/>

196 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1132672/schools-out-of-any-places-mp-fears-that-mass-migration-could-deal-class-blow-for-tens-of-thousands-of-children/>

197 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/661944/priti-patel-brexit-thousand-children-miss-out-primary-school>

198 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3544991/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Children-betrayed-migration-boom.html>

199 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3546800/Thousands-miss-place-chosen-primary-schools-tenth-areas-did-not-receive-spot.html>

200 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/679906/migration-crisis-second-choice-school-children-Patel>

201 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1284725/one-in-six-pupils-in-england-miss-out-on-first-choice-secondary-places/>

202 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/674347/EU-referendum-BBC-Brexit-debate-migration-housing>

203 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/673974/Immigration-to-change-the-face-of-England-forever-as-4M-migrants-arrive-in-next-10-years>

204 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/661872/Poll-migration-EU-referendum-Boris-Cameron-Brexit>

205 <http://www.thesun.co.uk/news/uk/678282/andy-burnham-lbc-immigration-reaction>

206 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3601863/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Britain-taking-EU-s-millions.html>

207 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3641481/Stop-reducing-cartoon-politics-Furious-voter-slams-Remain-campaign-failing-answer-questions-migrants-housed-schooled-given-WATER.html>

208 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/12/the-gap-between-official-migrant-figures-and-the-truth-is-as-wid/>

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210 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3647687/DR-MAX-MIND-DOCTOR-m-voting-save-beloved-NHS.html>

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213 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1198527/nhs-biggest-overspend-in-history/>

214 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672765/NHS-will-be-10-BILLION-in-debt-in-three-years-time-under-weight-of-migrants>

215 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/681871/NHS-600m-deficit-Remain-Brexit-campaign-immigration>

216 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/679267/nigel-farage-nhs-hiv-lbc>

217 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1253582/hero-who-mauled-cameron-in-tv-debate-says-hes-ready-to-quit-uk-if-we-vote-remain/>

218 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1179499/eu-migration-costs-britain-3m-every-day-shock-report-warns/>

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220 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/681793/Unskilled-EU-migrants-costing-British-taxpayers-6-6-BILLION-year>

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222 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3603212/Staying-EU-expose-Britain-terrorists-gangsters-12-7m-guns-Turkey-join-claims-defence-minister-Penny-Mordaunt-campaign-accuses-stoking-prejudice.html>

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224 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/670432/Anthony-Stansfield-European-Union-referendum-EU-Brexit-immigration-criminals>

225 <http://www.express.co.uk/world/681984/Calais-migrants-tourist-video-riots-EU-referendum-Brexit>

226 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/679753/British-port-staff-face-knife-wielding-migrants>

227 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/662251/European-Union-Brussels-Bloc-Michael-Gove-Terror-British-Intelligence-ECJ-Brexit>

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229 <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/518998/Nigel-Farage-urges-Brits-back-Brexit-referendum-rape-terrorism-Cologne-Belgium>

230 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/suncolumnists/trevorkavanagh/7120597/Trevor-Kavanagh-says-the-end-is-night-for-Cams-project-fear.html>

231 <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-05-22/vote-leave-murderers-and-terrorists-from-turkey-will-head-to-uk/>

232 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/672814/Leo-Mckinstry-comment-Immigrant-Saliman-Barci-national-decline>

233 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/suncolumnists/trevorkavanagh/7120597/Trevor-Kavanagh-says-the-end-is-night-for-Cams-project-fear.html>

234 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1314982/criminal-gang-exposed-for-providing-false-papers-that-allow-thousands-of-illegals-to-work-in-uk/>

235 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/674193/Britain-warship-patrols-Mediterranean-migrant-people-refugee-smuggling>

236 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3570228/More-30-000-Europeans-year-arrested-London-Brexit-campaigners-say-staying-EU-pressure-prisons.html>

237 <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/522190/UK-new-jails-prison-lags-prisoners-migrants-EU-Brexit-Vote-Leave-Vote-Remain>

238 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/678805/current-immigration-rates-UK-need-seven-prisons-house-EU-criminals>

239 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3609918/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Mass-migration-quality-life.html>

240 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/trevor-kavanagh/1223423/trevor-kavanagh-uncontrolled-mass-immigration-is-a-social-disaster/>

241 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/25/population-surge-to-change-the-face-of-england-forever/>

242 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/673974/Immigration-to-change-the-face-of-England-forever-as-4M-migrants-arrive-in-next-10-years>

243 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/675034/chris-grayling-green-belt-migrants-countryside-eu-referendum-brexit-david-cameron-uk>

244 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/29/britains-green-fields-will-have-to-be-built-over-to-provide-new/>

245 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/666200/Cabinet-ignore-peoples-migrant-fear-at-peril-Jewish-attack-victims-Princess-Charlotte>

246 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/661961/Leo-Mckinstry-column-mass-immigration>

247 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/667357/Holiday-Inn-Gatwick-Airport-Polish-weddings-Britons-charged>

Treatment of specific nationalities in immigration coverage

Although most media coverage of immigration used the general term ‘migrants’, there were some nationalities that were referenced regularly. This included citizens from some countries within the EU (Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania) and citizens from candidate countries seeking accession (Albania and Turkey).

Across all national news titles, the majority of coverage of each of the nationalities in relation to immigration can be categorised as ‘neutral’. Yet, where evaluations were made about the benefits or drawbacks of immigration, this coverage was overwhelmingly negative. Where evaluative statements were included, all but one of the countries sampled – Hungary – received a high proportion of negative coverage. In one case – Albania – every evaluative statement was negative. Very few articles contained a mixture of positive or negative depictions of the same nationality in terms of immigration.

The most negative depictions of non-UK nationals were of Turks and Albanians. Numerous articles speculated that millions, or tens of millions, of Turks and Albanians would soon be migrating to the UK if people voted to remain in the EU. Should this happen, the articles stressed, then the citizens of these countries would put unsustainable pressure on UK infrastructure and public services. They would also, many articles asserted, bring violence and crime. These frames were also deployed in negative coverage of immigration from EU member states, though to lesser degrees.

Coverage across all publications was not equal. A small number of publications, with the *Express* and *Daily Mail* sites most prominent – published a disproportionately high amount of negative coverage of immigration from most of the countries sampled.

Methods

To analyse how different nationalities were covered in the context of immigration during the EU Referendum campaign, the research identified six countries that were frequently referenced in the coverage. This comprised four current EU member states, and two recognised ‘candidate countries’.

The current member states identified were: Poland and Hungary, who joined the EU as part of the substantial enlargement of the Union in 2004; and Romania and Bulgaria, who joined in 2007 (and whose migration restrictions were lifted in 2014). The candidate countries identified were Turkey and Albania.²⁴⁸

All articles mentioning the EU Referendum and the issue of immigration (i.e. all articles tagged 'Brexit' and 'Immigration') were analysed for references to the sampled countries or nationalities.²⁴⁹ Articles were retained if they contained a reference to the country or nationality in the context of immigration – that is, if the reference was directly linked to, or in close proximity to (within three paragraphs), a statement or mention of immigration. Articles that referenced countries or nationalities in relation to other issues were not retained (for example, articles about Turkey's proposed accession to the EU where the issue of immigration was not mentioned in that context, or articles about Albania's trade model with the EU). Articles were therefore not retained solely on the basis that both immigration and a sampled country were mentioned somewhere in the article.

Once retained, each article was analysed to assess whether positive or negative statements about the countries and/or their citizens were included. 'Positive' statements were those that praised or supported the countries or their citizens, or their value as migrants. 'Negative' statements were those that criticised the countries or citizens either in specific terms – due to perceived characteristics, criminal behaviour or a specific negative impact on UK society – or generally, in terms of the potential damage they may do socially or economically to the UK if immigration were to increase. (See Appendix for a link to all articles mentioning selected nationalities in relation to immigration.)

In total, 242 articles contained one or more evaluative statements (positive or negative) about specific nationalities (see below), of which three published both positive and negative claims about a single

248 Other candidate countries at the time of writing include: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Montenegro; and Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are categorised as 'Potential Candidates' by the EU: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries_en

249 E.g. articles containing ('Albania' OR 'Albanian' OR 'Albanians')

nationality.²⁵⁰ 34 articles did not contain an evaluative statement, but referred to nationalities only in terms of their profession or likely profession – often in a stereotypical sense (Polish ‘plumbers’, Romanian ‘fruit-pickers’). 31 articles contained one or more citizens of the sampled countries speaking in their own voice – through quotes, or authorship of the article. Though these quotes tended to defend their status as migrants or citizens of their countries in positive terms, they were treated as a separate category from overtly critical or positive statements by third parties, whether via sources or in editorial comment. In general, there was very little overlap in terms of categories – only three articles contained both positive and negative statements about one or more nationality, and only one article contained both an evaluative statement in addition to a separate instance of a migrant speaking in their own voice.

Overall results

Tone and style of coverage of sampled nationalities, by publication

Of all EU Referendum articles that mentioned one or more of the sampled nationalities in relation to immigration, the following depictions of immigrants were found:

- Articles containing only negative statements about the sampled nationalities in relation to immigration: **222**
- Articles containing only positive statements: **17**
- Articles containing both positive and negative statements: **3**
- Articles in which migrants from the sampled nationalities speak in their own voice: **31**
- Articles in which migrants feature only as a reference to actual or presumed professions: **34**

242 articles contained evaluative statements about the positive or negative effects – observed or potential – of immigration from the six countries. Just three of these articles contained competing claims about the benefits

²⁵⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36463880>; <http://news.sky.com/story/1715343/why-are-some-people-angry-over-eu-immigration>; <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/plenty-want-no-more-of-brussels-in-a-land-where-bread-is-heaven-p3bxj25mt>

or drawbacks of immigration from these countries – all three concerned Polish migration. The overwhelming majority contained only negative depictions. The nature of this evaluative coverage is discussed below. In addition, a relatively small number of articles (34) depicted immigrants solely in regard to the jobs they do – or, more often, are stereotyped as doing, and 31 articles contained direct quotes from migrants from one or more of the six countries.

As Table 12 shows, certain publications were considerably more likely than others to publish articles that contained only negative depictions of the sampled nationalities. The *Daily Express* published the most ‘negative-only’ articles – 65 in total, though it is notable that the *Daily Mail*, in second place with 51 negative articles, did not publish any articles that depicted the benefits of immigration (or immigrants) from any of the six countries. The *Guardian*, Huffington Post and *Independent* published the greatest number of articles that depicted immigrants only in a positive/supportive manner, though these were generally few in number.

Broadsheets and broadcasters were most likely to give migrants or citizens from the sampled countries the space to voice their own opinions, with the BBC, the *Guardian* and *The Times* doing this most often, while the *Guardian*, *Financial Times* and *Independent* were also most likely to refer to immigrants in relation to the jobs they do – or may do.

Table 12: Articles containing specific references to sampled countries (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Albania), by publication (Weeks 1–10)

	Neg. Only	Pos. Only	Both	Own voice	Profession	Total
Express	65	1	0	1	1	68
Daily Mail	51	0	0	2	3	56
Guardian	17	4	0	9	9	39
Sun	24	1	0	1	1	27
Independent	8	3	0	2	5	18
Times	9	1	1	5	2	18
FT	8	2	0	2	5	17
HuffPo UK	5	3	0	3	4	15
BBC	7	1	1	4	1	14

Mirror	10	0	0	0	1	11
ITV	7	0	0	1	0	8
Sky News	5	0	1	1	0	7
Daily Star	4	0	0	0	0	4
Telegraph	2	1	0	0	0	3
Economist	0	0	0	0	1	1
Spectator	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	222	17	3	31	34	307

Certain publications contained no evaluative statements – positive or negative – in their coverage of immigration concerning the six countries. These tended to include magazines, such as the *New Statesman* (the *Spectator*, and *Economist* fit this profile too, only covering immigrants in terms of profession), as well as digital-only publishers such as BuzzFeed UK and Vice UK. The website of Channel 4 News, which generally publishes very low volumes of content relative to the other sites analysed in this report, also published no articles making evaluative statements about immigration from the six countries analysed here.

Articles mentioning each nationality

Table 13 contains the number of all EU referendum news articles that mention each of the nationalities in the context of immigration. This does not take account of evaluative statements, simply that – for example – over the 10-week period, 461 articles across all publications mentioned Turkey or its citizens in the context of immigration. This data covers articles in which more than one country or nationality is mentioned – so for example an article in Week 1 referencing Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants would count as +1 for each country.

The data shows that there was a substantial disparity across the different nationalities in terms of the coverage they received, with Turkey by far the most frequently referenced – particularly in the latter half of the campaign. Poland and its citizens were featured in 254 articles, while Hungary featured in just 28, almost half of which appeared in Week 6.

Table 13: Number of articles (all publications) in which each nationality is mentioned in relation to immigration (includes references to multiple nationalities within articles)

Nationality	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6	Wk7	Wk8	Wk9	Wk10	Total
Turkey	13	21	16	15	21	68	47	49	86	125	461
Poland	5	10	5	19	22	31	20	45	41	56	254
Albania	9	20	9	4	7	27	32	22	19	22	171
Romania	1	4	5	15	8	31	9	32	22	21	148
Bulgaria	0	4	4	13	7	26	9	6	8	16	93
Hungary	1	0	1	0	1	13	4	2	6	0	28

The spread of negative coverage across the different nationalities – articles containing only negative depictions of immigrants or immigration from those countries – is shown in Table 14. In terms of volume, Turkey was represented negatively in the largest number of articles – 109 in all. However, a higher proportion of all articles mentioning Albania in conjunction with immigration (90 of 171 total articles) are critical of potential immigration from that country.

Table 14: Articles containing only negative depictions of each nationality in relation to immigration (includes references to multiple nationalities within articles)

Nationality	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6	Wk7	Wk8	Wk9	Wk10	Total
Turkey	1	10	8	3	7	21	9	9	20	21	109
Albania	3	11	6	1	0	13	21	13	10	12	90
Poland	0	3	2	2	11	7	2	21	4	5	57²⁵¹
Romania	0	1	2	2	1	2	2	17	2	1	30
Bulgaria	0	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	3	10
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

²⁵¹ Three articles contained both positive and negative depictions of Polish immigration.

As Figure 10 shows, the balance of positive-only and negative-only depictions of each of the countries tended to be heavily weighted towards negativity. Only Hungary – with a relatively small number of four articles – received net-positive coverage in this way. Immigration or immigrants from all remaining countries were more likely to be framed negatively, with all 90 of the articles in which Albanian immigration was described in terms of benefits or drawbacks focusing on the negative.

Figure 10: Balance of negative to positive depictions of nationalities in immigration coverage, all publications (Weeks 1–10)

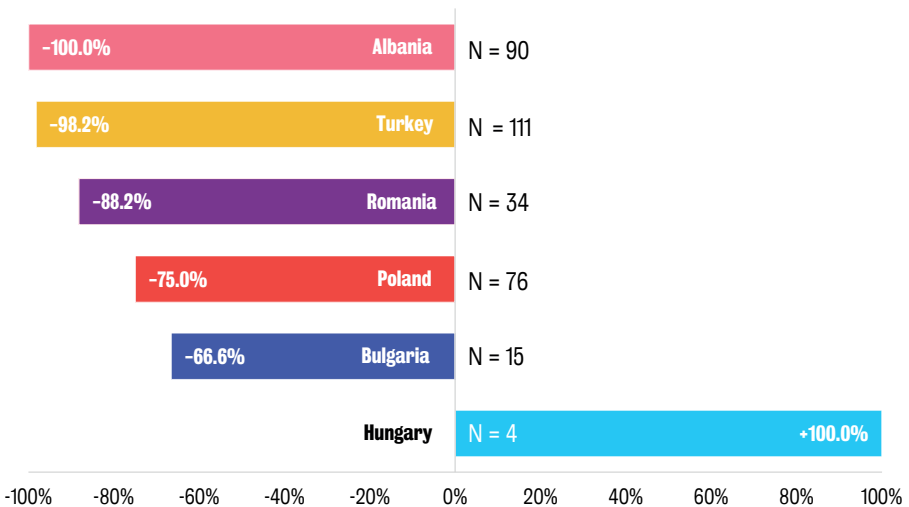


Table 15 shows the proportions of ‘neutral’ coverage – i.e. articles that do not depict countries or their citizens in negative or positive terms, don’t include quotes from migrants, and don’t refer to them in professional terms. It shows that, while the coverage of most of the countries skews towards the negative where evaluative statements are included, for all countries except Albania, these do not represent the majority of articles in which they are mentioned in the context of immigration.

Table 15: Proportion of ‘neutral’ coverage of each nationality, all publications

	Negative	Positive	Both	Own voice	Profession	None/ Neutral	Total
Turkey	109	2	0	4	0	346 (75%)	461
Poland	54	16	0	20	31	131 (52%)	254
Albania	90	0	3	1	0	80 (47%)	171
Romania	30	4	0	7	4	103 (70%)	148
Bulgaria	10	5	0	6	1	71 (76%)	93
Hungary	0	4	0	5	2	15 (54%)	28

Breakdown of negative coverage by publication

Table 16 shows the number of articles containing negative depictions of each nationality, broken down by publication (Hungary is excluded since no negative articles about Hungarian immigration were published across the 10-week campaign). It shows that the *Daily Express* published the largest number of negative articles about each of the countries analysed here, including 35 about Turkish immigration, 29 about Albania and 13 about Polish immigration. The *Daily Mail* also published a comparatively high number of articles about Turkish and Albanian immigration, as well Polish immigration (though considerably fewer than the *Express* regarding the latter). The *Sun* also published a substantial amount of coverage about Turkish and Albanian immigration.

Overall, for three out of the six countries, these news outlets published the majority of articles containing negative coverage regarding immigration. The *Sun*, *Express* and *Daily Mail* sites accounted for 66% of articles with negative depictions of Albanian immigrants, 72% of such articles referencing Turkey or its citizens, and 80% of those referencing Bulgarian immigration. Half of the articles containing critical references

to Romanian immigration were published by these three titles, as were 42% of negative articles about Polish immigration.

Table 16: Articles containing negative depictions of each nationality regarding immigration, by publication

Negative Portrayals	Poland	Romania	Bulgaria	Turkey	Albania
Express	13	7	4	35	29
Daily Mail	7	5	1	31	20
Sun	4	3	2	14	10
Guardian	3	5	0	5	6
Times	7	3	1	2	2
Mirror	5	2	0	3	4
BBC	5	1	0	2	3
FT	2	1	0	3	4
Independent	2	1	1	3	3
Sky News	2	0	0	4	3
ITV	3	1	0	2	2
Daily Star	1	1	0	2	2
HuffPo UK	3	0	1	1	1
Telegraph	0	0	0	2	1
Buzzfeed	0	0	0	0	0
Channel 4 News	0	0	0	0	0
Economist	0	0	0	0	0
New Statesman	0	0	0	0	0
Spectator	0	0	0	0	0
Vice UK	0	0	0	0	0

Representing nationalities

Current EU members

Poland

Polish citizens, more than other nationalities sampled here, tended to be covered in terms of their professions – actual or imagined – and were relatively often given the opportunity to speak in their own voice, either as sources within stories, or as authors of comment articles. 18 articles contained direct quotes from Polish citizens. Off-hand references to ‘Polish plumbers’ or ‘Polish builders’ were fairly frequent, making up the majority of the 29 articles in which Polish citizens were solely referred to by their profession.²⁵²

Positive references to Poles – 16 in total across all publications vs 54 negative (and three articles containing both positive and negative statements) – tended again to focus on profession, whether individual instances of high achievement,²⁵³ or general statements about ‘hardworking Poles’²⁵⁴ or their employment rates.²⁵⁵ A smaller proportion made positive statements about the Polish community within the UK, for example: ‘Surveys of British social attitudes show that the Polish community ... is highly respected, and seen for their extensive contribution to our economy’.²⁵⁶

Negative coverage of Polish citizens either clustered around two high-profile stories that broke during the campaign, or were isolated critical statements, often included in vox pops (‘everywhere, dosing and drinking’²⁵⁷); or relating to positive discrimination ‘the needs of families coming from Poland... were deemed more urgent’.²⁵⁸ One *Daily Mail*

252 For example: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-brexit-forever-what-will-happen-to-eu-citizens-interest-rates-lexit-a7096131.html>

253 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/26/leaving-eu-autistic-son-brexit-britain-european-union>

254 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-david-cameron-witney-constituency-brexit-remain-a7089806.html>

255 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d6b9610a-0c95-11e6-ad80-67655613c2d6.html>

256 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/lord-billimoria-cbe/eu-referendum-brexit_b_10614938.html

257 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/663776/EU-referendum-Bognor-Regis-Brighton>

258 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/governments-lies-immigration-push-more-7967955>

article from 6 May²⁵⁹, however, went into significant depth to describe the effects of Polish migration on the Derbyshire town of Shirebrook, included a combination of statements by the journalist and of local citizens about poor integration of Polish nationals within the community:

‘Close your eyes and listen to the voices and Shirebrook – a former colliery town on the eastern fringe of Derbyshire – might be Poznan or Lodz’.

‘I ask a woman at the market what she thinks of the Polish invasion’.

It also included statements from members of the public that were critical of Polish integration:

‘You’ll find the Polish use language as a barrier to stay separate’.

‘You try to get an appointment at the health centre and it is booked solid, and when you go all the names being called out are Polish. They love the health service’.

The article also makes multiple references to Polish criminality, an issue that came to the fore following the release in early June of a Home Affairs Committee report containing information on the number of foreign prisoners in British jails.²⁶⁰ In total, 19 articles made reference to Poles as ‘foreign criminals’, ‘killers and rapists’, or ‘foreign offenders’ in conjunction with this story²⁶¹ – the most prominent single story during the campaign in which Polish citizens were frequently mentioned.

A story concerning a Labour MP (Pat Glass) calling a voter a ‘horrible racist’ broke on 19 May. The insult was allegedly in response to the voter

259 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3577855/A-rapist-protected-police-neglected-mining-town-turned-Little-Poland.html>

260 <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaff/22/2202.htm>

261 For example: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/politics/1239980/uk-forced-to-harbour-50-criminals-including-killers-and-rapists-under-eu-law-brexiters-claim/>; <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/676458/13-000-foreign-criminals-living-UK-jails-expense-warn-MPs>; <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-06-03/mps-concern-over-failure-to-deport-small-town-of-foreign-criminals/>

in question calling a Polish family in the area ‘spongers’. This reference to the Polish family as ‘spongers’ was repeated across 13 articles.²⁶²

Hungary

In comparison with the other nationalities here, Hungary and Hungarian citizens were rarely covered in the context of immigration. Of the 28 articles that mentioned Hungary, just four contained an evaluative statement about Hungarian citizens. In contrast to the other countries covered in this analysis, all four were positive, focusing on employment rates, or personal anecdotes about the quality of work of Hungarian workers. Two articles referred to Hungarians generally by likely profession (farm workers or fruit pickers). Hungarians also occasionally spoke in their own voice – five articles contained either quotes or profiles of Hungarian citizens in relation to immigration.²⁶³

Romania

Within the 148 articles within which Romania or its citizens were mentioned in relation to immigration, there were considerably more negative than positive references. In total, 30 articles contained only negative portrayals of Romanians regarding immigration, compared with just four that contained positive descriptions. These four positive statements included statements about the benefits of immigrants generally – but citing Romanians as an example²⁶⁴ – and claims that Romanian immigrants have laudable employment rates²⁶⁵ and valuable skills.²⁶⁶

The negative coverage was again largely from 3 June onwards, after the Home Affairs Committee report, and focused heavily on criminality among Romanian immigrants. Thereafter, when Romanians were covered in the context of immigration they were most often described as ‘foreign

262 For example: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-36334488>

263 For example: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/plenty-want-no-more-of-brussels-in-a-land-where-bread-is-heaven-p3bxj25mt>

264 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/boris-and-this-gove-fellow-they-ve-never-been-in-business-in-their-life-ntgrr8n3x>

265 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/dcb9610a-0c95-11e6-ad80-67655613c2d6.html>

266 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/680751/EU-undemocratic-not-close-borders-PETER-EGAN-Brussels-referendum>

criminals’,²⁶⁷ ‘unwanted crooks’,²⁶⁸ ‘Romanian offenders’,²⁶⁹ ‘law-breakers roaming our streets’,²⁷⁰ and similar. When covered individually, this tended to be in the context of an individual criminal.²⁷¹ In total, 22 of the 30 articles in which Romanians were negatively portrayed focused on criminality.

Though a significant number of negative articles about Romanians focused on individual convicted criminals, Romanians themselves were not entirely without a voice. In total, six articles across all publications contained quotes by Romanian citizens.²⁷²

Bulgaria

Bulgaria and its citizens were less often described in negative terms in the context of immigration. Just 11% of the 93 articles mentioning Bulgarians portrayed them in negative terms. While the issue of criminality was not absent – individual accounts of a Bulgarian illegally claiming benefits in the UK²⁷³ and of a 12-year-old sold into prostitution by her parents²⁷⁴ were included – negative coverage focused more on the lack of skills of Bulgarian immigrants – ‘low-skilled people from Bulgaria’²⁷⁵; ‘goatherds’²⁷⁶; ‘Bulgarian economic migrants’²⁷⁷ – and the country was

267 For example: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36441188>

268 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/676458/13-000-foreign-criminals-living-UK-jails-expense-warn-MPs>

269 <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/politics/7190393/Revealed-The-TOWN-of-foreign-lags-that-Theresa-May-let-stay-in-Britain-at-taxpayers-expense.html>

270 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/676462/Foreign-criminals-EU-town-MPs-Theresa-May>

271 For example: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/politics/1239980/uk-forced-to-harbour-50-criminals-including-killers-and-rapists-under-eu-law-brexiters-claim/>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3628840/The-true-cost-open-borders-revealed-EU-migrants-likely-job-UK-British-citizens.html>; <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/07/vote-leave-lists-50-criminals-it-says-eu-has-stopped-uk-deporting>

272 For example: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/03/meet-britains-eu-workers-it-would-be-difficult-to-replace-us>

273 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1210043/i-work-in-the-uk-but-still-claim-benefits-the-payouts-to-migrants-at-the-very-heart-of-britains-brexit-row/>

274 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/673381/EU-referendum-suzanne-evans-terrible-for-women>

275 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/jacob-rees-mogg-brexit_uk_574dc7a5e4b0089281b4d95d

276 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1302001/10-reasons-why-you-must-vote-brexit-in-thursdays-crucial-once-in-a-lifetime-referendum/>

277 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/how-euro-2016-can-help-us-understand-eu-control-over-our-economy-a7093546.html>

described as a ‘sponger nation’ by the author George MacDonald Fraser, guest-writing in the *Daily Mail*.²⁷⁸

There were five articles describing Bulgarian immigrants in positive terms,²⁷⁹ and six articles in which Bulgarian citizens were a quoted source.²⁸⁰ In comparison to Romanian and to a lesser extent Polish immigrants, Bulgarians were relatively more likely to receive favourable coverage or to express their own opinions regarding immigration.

EU candidate countries

Turkey

Turkey was the country most often associated with immigration over the course of the campaign, with Turkey or its citizens mentioned in direct relation to immigration in 461 articles about the EU Referendum. Of these articles, 109 contained a negative portrayal of Turkey or its citizens – often in terms of criminality or subsequent pressures on public services in the event of Turkey joining a European Union that still contained the UK. Just two articles contained positive descriptions of Turks – both reporting on statements by Boris Johnson expressing pride in his Turkish heritage.²⁸¹ Despite the very high volume of coverage of Turkey and its citizens, only four articles, across three publications, contained quotes from Turks.²⁸²

The high volume of coverage of Turkey in the immigration debate reflects, at least in part, the fact that the Leave campaign focused heavily on the possible accession of Turkey to the EU as a core message in their campaign. Many of the articles that criticise the possible effects

278 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3655560/Betrayal-Britain-years-ago-GEORGE-MacDONALD-FRASER-penned-savage-attack-EU-pygm-politicians-Unashamedly-patriotic-blisteringly-provocative-prescient-Just-prescient-decide.html>

279 For example: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/05/21/lack-of-migration-controls-puts-a-liberal-tradition-at-risk/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/21/remain-reform-disabled-people-european-rights-services-eu>

280 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/immigration-is-working-8w6pn7qh2>

281 <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/1305487/boris-gives-his-vision-of-post-brex-it-britain-in-independence-rallying-cry/>; <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-brex-it-illegal-immigrants-immigration-amnesty-eu-referendum-vote-leave-a7090246.html>

282 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/21/turkish-uk-anger-vote-leave-immigration-crime-accusations>; <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/why-is-turkey-in-the-firing-line-from-both-sides-in-the-eu-referendum-debate-a7085781.html>; <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/turkish-cousin-ticks-off-johnson-sx2n9bsfx>; <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/in-bakewell-the-people-are-mostly-bewildered-rbs6lsftt8>

of Turkish immigration on British public services are reporting direct quotes from key members of the Leave campaign, including Michael Gove,²⁸³ Boris Johnson,²⁸⁴ Priti Patel²⁸⁵ and Matthew Elliott.²⁸⁶ The sentiment that Turkish immigrants would threaten both the social fabric and infrastructure of the UK was not, however, limited to Vote Leave campaigners. It was also often repeated in comment pieces and leader articles in certain publications, notably the *Express* and *Daily Mail*.²⁸⁷

The *Express* and *Mail* also highlight the disparity in coverage of Turkish immigration in different publications. The *Express* published 34 articles highlighting negative aspects of Turkish immigration, while the *Daily Mail* published 31. Together, these publications accounted for 60% of the 107 articles published during the 10-week EU Referendum campaign in which Turkish immigration (or its potential) was criticised.

In addition to the focus on pressures on the UK's public services potentially caused by Turkish immigration, there was also a lesser focus on criminality, with the potential for 'millions of criminals from Turkey flooding to the UK',²⁸⁸ Turkish accession likely to increase the number of 'EU criminals' in UK jails,²⁸⁹ and 'gangsters, murderers and terrorists from countries like Turkey' coming to the UK.²⁹⁰ Again, these stories often – but not always – originated in quotes from Vote Leave campaigners.

Albania

Coverage of Albania – another candidate country looking to join the EU – was largely similar to coverage of Turkey. No articles published during

283 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3589365/John-Major-slams-Michael-Gove-warns-embarrassed-ashamed-scaremongering-claim-88million-people-rights-live-Britain-without-Brexit.html>

284 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/682050/Boris-Johnson-vote-Leave-for-brighter-future-Brexit-EU-referendum>

285 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1321519/brexit-teen-priti-patel-predicts-influx-of-570000-migrant-children-to-uk-schools-if-brits-vote-remain/>

286 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/europe-gives-900-000-people-new-citizenship-every-year-m25dcmq9>

287 For example: <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/patrick-o-flynn/682158/UK-referendum-Vote-Leave-Brexit-David-Cameron-Brussels-take-control>; <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/674022/Immigration-EU-referendum-debate-Brexit-British-heritage>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3640073/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Cameron-puts-aid-pensioners.html>

288 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3603409/Brexit-jeopardise-lives-30-000-cancer-patients-mental-health-services-drugs-day-day-healthcare-warns-impartial-NHS-boss.html>

289 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/678805/current-immigration-rates-UK-need-seven-prisons-house-EU-criminals>

290 <http://news.sky.com/story/foreign-crooks-warning-triggers-eu-veto-row-10290869>

the campaign contained positive descriptions of Albania or Albanians in conjunction with immigration. 90 articles contained negative portrayals of Albanians or the potential effects of Albanian migrants if the country were to join the EU. Statements about the country were often extremely critical:

‘Albania is a hell-hole of violent corruption, exporting child prostitution, drugs, extortion, murder and money laundering. Of the 10,000 foreign criminals in our jails, one in 20 is Albanian’ (Trevor Kavanagh, ‘The end is nigh for Cam’s Project Fear as poll shows Brexit camp are winning’ – *The Sun*, 2 May 2016)²⁹¹

A large number of articles – 24 in total – focused on Albanian illegal immigrants, notably surrounding the discovery of 18 Albanians in a ship in the North Sea²⁹², while criminality was often cited: ‘10,000 foreign criminals in UK jails – with one in 20 from Albania’²⁹³; ‘Albanian criminals’²⁹⁴; ‘rape and murder suspects.’²⁹⁵ Albania’s potential accession to the EU was also described in terms of resulting pressures on UK public services.²⁹⁶

Only one article contained a quote from any Albanian – the current Prime Minister Edi Rama.²⁹⁷ Meanwhile, seven articles focused on Saliman Barci, an Albanian national accused of murder.²⁹⁸

As with the coverage of Turkey, critical statements about Albania and Albanians were often put forward by the Leave campaign, though these

291 <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/suncolumnists/trevorkavanagh/7120597/Trevor-Kavanagh-says-the-end-is-night-for-Cams-project-fear.html> (The article has been removed from the *Sun* website, but is still available via Factiva and reproduced elsewhere online.)

292 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3616970/French-fishermen-paid-1-000-person-migrants-half-way-Channel-forcing-complete-journey-flimsy-boats.html>; <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/675729/No-excuse-failure-guard-coast-properly>

293 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3570228/More-30-000-Europeans-year-arrested-London-Brexit-campaigners-say-staying-EU-pressure-prisons.html>

294 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/676004/Migrants-tents-French-cliffs-boats-smuggle-UK>

295 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672735/half-of-British-rape-suspects-are-foreign>

296 For example: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/20/vote-leave-claims-remain-vote-could-cost-scottish-nhs-600-millio/>; <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/681871/NHS-600m-deficit-Remain-Brexit-campaign-immigration>

297 <http://news.sky.com/story/uk-skies-wont-be-blackened-by-albanian-eagles-10259402>

298 For example: <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/672814/Leo-McKinstry-comment-Immigrant-Saliman-Barci-national-decline>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3601863/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-Britain-taking-EU-s-millions.html>

quotes were often repeated throughout the campaign as part of articles, rather than just being covered as the news of the day. As a result it is apparent that certain publications made use of previous critical quotes about Albania and Albanian citizens to illustrate subsequent issues of immigration. As with Turkish negative coverage, the *Express* and *Daily Mail* accounted for over half of all articles containing only critical statements about Albania and its citizens – 29 and 20 articles respectively.

Nationalities – overall

Where evaluative statements were made about immigration or immigrants from specific countries, they were overwhelmingly negative. Of 242 articles in which evaluative statements were made, 222 (92%) included only negative depictions. 17 included only positive statements. Articles very rarely included a mix of both positive statements and negative statements about immigration in relation to the six countries analysed. Only three articles – all about Polish immigration – contained both.

For each nationality (Hungary excluded) a significant proportion of criticisms centred on employment, employability or unemployment – normally framed in terms of taking jobs, driving down wages for unskilled workers, or claiming benefits. This was – perhaps not surprisingly – associated with current member states, though it was also deployed regarding the potential impact on employment from the potential future accession of Turkey and Albania. The related theme of stresses on public services (actual or potential) was also levelled at all nationalities in the sample, though tended more often to be associated with future immigration and therefore the potential effect of EU enlargement encompassing Turkey and Albania. The issue of criminality was endemic throughout coverage of all nations who received negative coverage. Although articles containing negative coverage of Turkey and Albania were considerably more likely to focus on the criminality – actual or potential – of immigrants from those countries.

Previous studies of UK media coverage of immigration have highlighted many of the themes that were apparent in the coverage

of the EU referendum campaign.²⁹⁹ The marginalisation of individual immigrants in the campaign, the focus on criminality and illegality, and the foregrounding of elite sources making critical statements about immigration are all common features of UK immigration coverage. However, the level of negativity in references to certain nationalities in the context of immigration is striking, even if concentrated disproportionately in certain publications, and the pervasive focus on the actual or perceived criminality of certain groups meant that, where the public relied on media coverage of the referendum campaign to inform their decisions, they were more often than not faced with representations of immigration from certain countries – current and potential future members of the EU – that depicted criminal behaviour, consumption of welfare, effects on wages, and stresses on the UK’s public services.

299 See for example: Threadgold, T. (2009) *The Media and Migration in the United Kingdom, 1999 to 2009*, Migration Policy Institute: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/TCM-UKMedia.pdf>

Leave leaders, press coverage and the spike in racist violence

Following the EU Referendum on 23 June (and therefore outside the period of analysis of this study), recorded hate crimes spiked, increasing by 41% compared with the previous year.³⁰⁰ In the ‘38 days after the referendum’, the *Guardian* reported, ‘there were more than 2,300 recorded race-hate offences in London, compared with 1,400 in the 38 days before the vote’.³⁰¹

A report published by the Council of Europe in in October 2016 stated that: ‘hate speech in some traditional media continues to be a serious problem, notably as concerns tabloid newspapers’. It found this ‘particularly worrying not only because it is often a first step in the process towards actual violence but also because of the pernicious effects it has on those who are targeted emotionally and psychologically’.³⁰²

It is not, nor will it ever be, possible to show that inflammatory rhetoric was ever the cause of racist violence. Moreover, it can justifiably be argued that, since immigration was the leading concern of the British public prior to the referendum (according to Ipsos MORI’s monthly Issues Index), it was appropriate to give the issue significant prominence on political platforms and in the press.

However, there is a significant difference between reporting on levels of immigration, on immigration policy, and on public concerns about immigration, as against explicitly blaming migrants for economic and social problems, in such a way that is almost certain to stoke resentment.

Leave leaders regularly and explicitly blamed migrants. Priti Patel said that migrants were to blame for British parents not gaining their preferred primary school places. Michael Gove said that migrants were to blame for putting public services – particularly the NHS – under unsustainable pressure.³⁰³

The *Express*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Sun* also blamed migrants – as detailed above. The *Daily Express* accused migrants of being responsible for a surge in rapes and murders (‘EXCLUSIVE: Alarm over surge

300 <https://fullfact.org/crime/hate-crime-and-eu-referendum/>

301 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/sep/28/hate-crime-horrible-spike-brexit-vote-metropolitan-police>

302 http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/United_Kingdom/GBR-CbC-V-2016-038-ENG.pdf

303 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/20/eu-immigrant-influx-michael-gove-nhs-unsustainable>

in migrant murder and rape suspects in Britain³⁰⁴), depriving British children of school places, British citizens of healthcare and houses, and putting unsustainable pressure on public services. The *Daily Mail* blamed migrants for the pressure on school places, on prisons and on the NHS. The *Sun* likewise blamed migrants for 'pricing Brits out of jobs and filling our schools, housing queues and hospital beds'.³⁰⁵ 'Enclaves of non-integrating migrants, mostly Muslim, are colonizing our towns and cities' Trevor Kavanagh wrote in the *Sun*.³⁰⁶

If Leave leaders and these news outlets blamed migrants for a vast range of Britain's social and economic problems – even when migration was demonstrably only one of a number of potential causes – then it should not be a surprise if some of their readers accepted their claims that migrants were to blame. Such acceptance would have necessarily increased resentment, intolerance and discrimination against migrants, whether those migrants be NHS doctors, Primary school teachers, international students, football players, refugee children, criminals, welfare recipients or political asylum seekers.

304 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672735/half-of-British-rape-suspects-are-foreign>

305 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/trevor-kavanagh/1223423/trevor-kavanagh-uncontrolled-mass-immigration-is-a-social-disaster/>

306 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/suncolumnists/trevorkavanagh/7195390/Trevor-Kavanagh-Blame-Angela-Merkel-if-the-EU-fails.html>

Sovereignty

Sovereignty

Sovereignty, while covered often, was not a primary issue in referendum campaign coverage but a secondary one. In other words, it was referred to frequently, but almost always in the context of other issues – most notably the economy or immigration – rather than being an issue on its own. Rarely was sovereignty, for example – or the terms related to sovereignty – referenced in a headline. Over the course of the campaign sovereignty became increasingly linked to immigration, and when it was referred to, it was regularly associated with the Leave campaign’s framing of sovereignty as ‘taking back control’.

Definitions

Sovereignty is an amorphous concept. It is not an issue raised spontaneously or explicitly by the public in opinion surveys – as shown by its absence from Ipsos MORI’s monthly Issues Index. It is also open to multiple interpretations, even in the specific context of the EU referendum. The RISJ-PRIME Research analysis of EU referendum coverage, for example, included EU enlargement, the Greek sovereign debt crisis, and the ‘North South divide’ in its definition of sovereignty. By contrast a Britain Thinks analysis of voters’ conceptions of sovereignty saw governmental autonomy, law-making and legislation as the key components.³⁰⁷

307 Levy, D.A.L. et al. (2016) *UK Press Coverage of the EU Referendum*, Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism: http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/UK%20Press%20Coverage%20of%20the%20EU%20Referendum_0.pdf), p38. The Britain Thinks analysis of voters’ conceptions of ‘coverignty’ saw governmental autonomy, law-making and legislation as the key components of sovereignty: Livermore, S. and Clarkson, T. (2017) *Britain Thinks Breakfast Briefing – Brexit Diaries: Key Insights*: (http://britainthinks.com/pdfs/BritainThinks_Brexit-Diaries-Breakfast-Briefing_FINAL.pdf), p31.

This analysis has focused on three aspects of sovereignty: specific uses and invocations of the concept of sovereignty; the issue of legislative sovereignty (which maps relatively closely to the conception of sovereignty as articulated by voters in subsequent research³⁰⁸); and general statements about ‘take/taking control’ or ‘taking back control,’ as used by campaigners. For a full description of the methodology and definitions used, see the methodology section at the end of this study.

Overall coverage

In total, 1,924 articles across all publications mentioned sovereignty (see Table 17). 1,092 of these explicitly used the phrase ‘sovereignty’ or ‘sovereign’ in the context of the status or powers of the UK. A much smaller number specifically referred to the UK’s capacity to make laws (for example, 70 articles used the phrase ‘make our own laws’). Claims about ‘take(ing) control’ featured in 190 articles, while the slogan adopted by the Vote Leave campaign, ‘take back control,’ appeared in 736 articles.

Table 17: Number of articles containing selected ‘sovereignty’ phrases, all publications

Category	Phrase	Number of articles
General issues of sovereignty	‘Sovereign’ or ‘Sovereignty’	1,092
UK power to make laws/legislation	‘Make our own laws’	70
	‘Make our own legislation’	2
	‘Make... own... laws’	39
	‘Write... own... laws’	4
General issues of obtaining control (all eligible articles tagged ‘control’)	‘Take control’	190
	‘Take back control’	736
Total (contains one or more phrases)	1,924	

308 http://britainthinks.com/pdfs/BritainThinks_Brexit-Diaries-Breakfast-Briefing_FINAL.pdf

Though not a substantive policy issue (and rarely described in detail in coverage), and not included in the Ipsos MORI Issues Index that forms the basis of the range of policies explored in this report, ‘sovereignty’ as a concept was raised more often during the campaign than most areas of substantive public policy, such as health, defence and education.

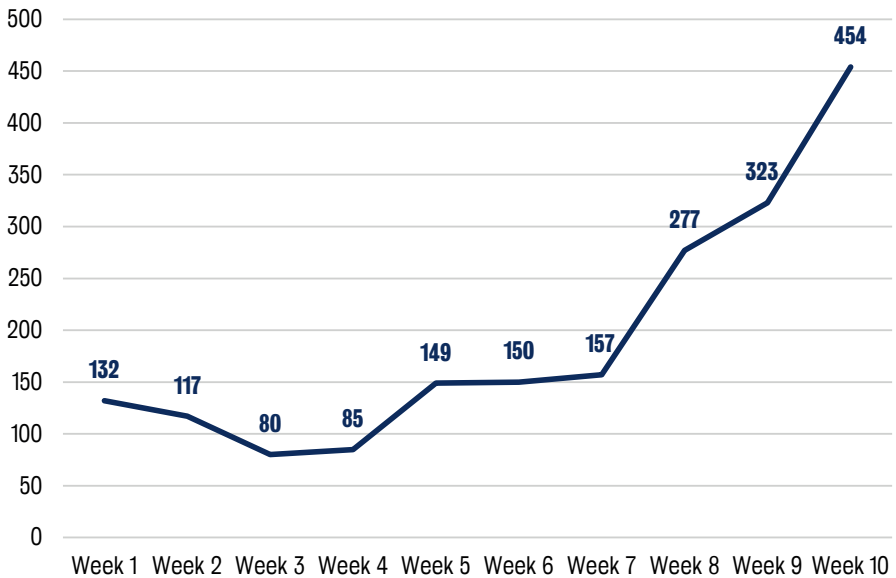
Table 18: Selected (most common) issue tags, Weeks 1–10, with sovereignty mentions added

Issue	No. of Articles
Economy	7,028
Immigration	4,383
Sovereignty	1,924
NHS/Health	1,638
Defence/Foreign Policy	959
Education	938
Welfare	756
Devolution/Const. Reform	743
Environment	596
Crime/Justice/Law & Order	433
Housing	370

Coverage over time

Sovereignty was covered more as the campaign progressed, with the number of articles mentioning the issue increasing by more than three times over the course of the campaign, rising from 132 articles in Week 1 to 454 articles in the final week before polling day (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Articles mentioning sovereignty, all publications (Weeks 1–10)



Yet, although sovereignty was featured in a large number of articles during the Referendum campaign, it was rarely the main focus. As Table 19 shows, just 33 articles during the campaign mentioned sovereignty in their headline, while only 38 mentioned laws or legislation in relation to the UK’s relationship with Europe. EU regulations themselves were mentioned in the headlines of just 13 articles.

Table 19: Headlines mentioning sovereignty, all publications (Weeks 1–10)

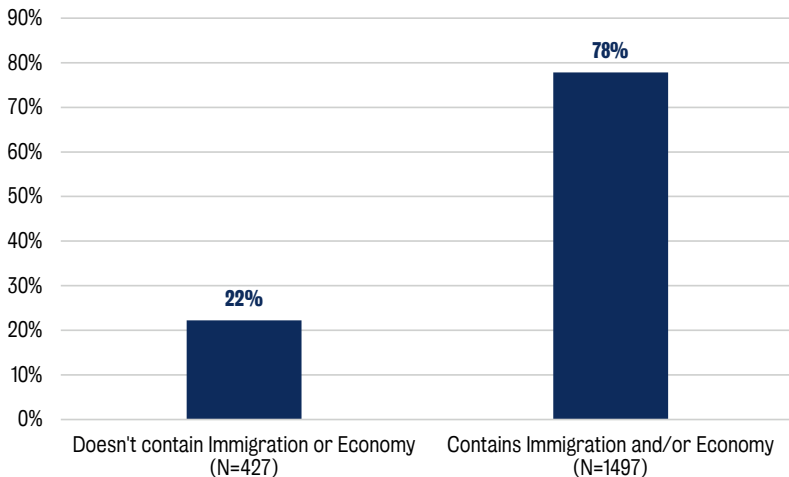
Headline Containing	No. of Articles
‘Sovereignty’/‘Sovereign’	33
‘Law’/‘Laws’/‘Legislation’	38
‘Regulation’/‘Regulations’	13

While sovereignty was a common issue in news coverage then, only a small number of articles specifically mentioned the UK's power to make its own laws as at stake in the referendum. General claims about sovereignty or sovereign status were more frequent, but consequently rarely expressed in relation to actual legislative powers. Instead, statements about 'taking control', or the slogan 'take back control' were considerably more likely to be mentioned than specific powers to make laws, and became more prevalent as the campaign progressed. Finally, the relative lack of headlines about any issues relating to sovereignty demonstrates that it was rarely the main focus of referendum coverage.

Sovereignty as a secondary issue

Sovereignty, though covered often, was almost always featured alongside other campaign issues, most notably the economy and immigration. In four out of five articles in which sovereignty featured it was mentioned alongside the economy, immigration, or both. 1,497 articles contained sovereignty alongside immigration or the economy, compared to 427 articles that did not mention these issues (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Proportion of sovereignty articles with no mention of immigration or economy, vs those mentioning immigration and/or economy



Sovereignty featured alongside the economy in over 60% of the articles in which it was mentioned (Table 20). In total, 1,182 articles that mentioned sovereignty also mentioned the economy, marginally more than those featuring immigration. This association of sovereignty with the economy was relatively consistent throughout the campaign. The proportion of sovereignty stories also mentioning the economy fell from around 63% of articles in Week 1 to just over 57% in Week 10 (though it peaked in Week 6 at 80%).

Table 20: Articles mentioning both sovereignty and immigration, all publications

Week	Sovereignty	Sovereignty + Economy	Proportion Sovereignty + Economy
1	132	83	62.9%
2	117	61	52.1%
3	80	48	60.0%
4	85	45	52.9%
5	149	104	69.8%
6	150	120	80.0%
7	157	101	64.3%
8	277	177	63.9%
9	323	183	56.7%
10	454	260	57.3%
Total	1924	1182	61.4%

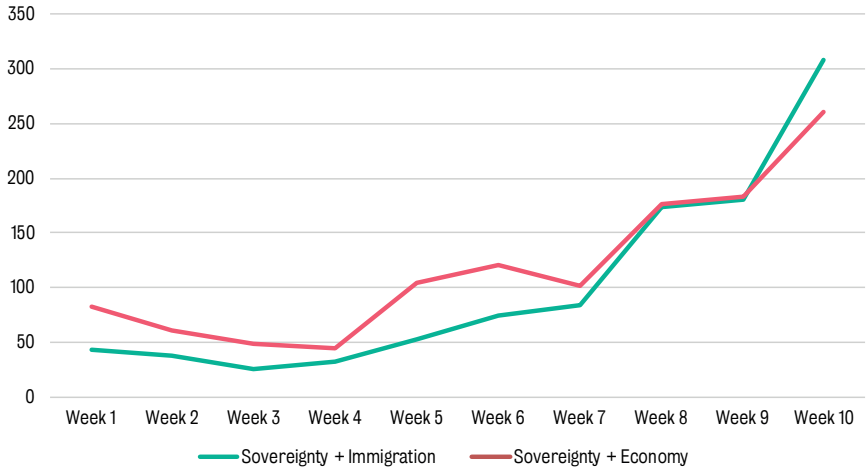
By contrast, the proportion of sovereignty articles that also mentioned immigration started lower than economy but grew steadily over the course of the campaign (Table 21). In total, 1,013 articles featured both issues, rising from 43 in the first week, to 308 by the final week of the campaign. There was also a rise in the proportion of sovereignty articles that mentioned immigration. In Weeks 1-3 of the campaign, around one-third of sovereignty articles also contained mentions of immigration; by the final week of the campaign, this had grown steadily to over two-thirds.

Table 21: Articles mentioning both sovereignty and immigration, all publications

Week	Sovereignty	Sovereignty + immigration	Proportion sovereignty + immigration
1	132	43	32.6%
2	117	38	32.4%
3	80	26	32.5%
4	85	33	38.8%
5	149	53	35.6%
6	150	75	50.0%
7	157	84	53.5%
8	277	173	62.4%
9	323	180	55.7%
10	454	308	67.4%
Total	1,924	1,013	52.7%

By the final week of the campaign, the number of articles mentioning sovereignty and immigration rose to overtake those mentioning both sovereignty and the economy (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: 'Sovereignty + immigration' vs 'sovereignty + economy', all publications



'Take back control' framing

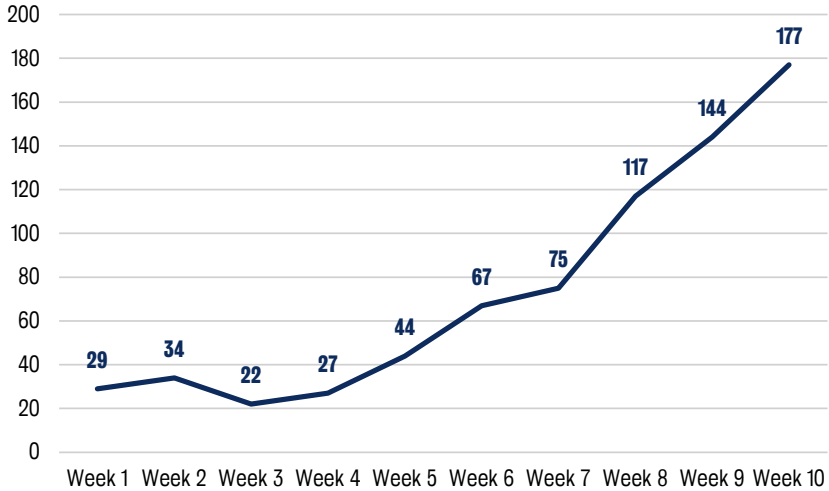
Vote Leave's campaign slogan 'Take back control' proved to be a powerful way of framing the issue of sovereignty in the media. Of the 1,924 articles that referred to some aspect of sovereignty, almost half – 46% – contained one or both of two control phrases: 'Take control' or 'Take back control' (see Table 22).

Table 22: Number of articles containing selected ‘sovereignty’ phrases, all publications

Category	Phrase	Number of Articles
References to control phrases	‘Take control’ ‘Take back control’	190 736
Total references to control phrases	892	
Total references to sovereignty	1,924	
Proportion of sovereignty referencing phrases	46%	

References to the phrases ‘take back control’ or ‘take control’ also increased substantially over the course of the campaign, reaffirming the success of Vote Leave in framing the issue of sovereignty in this way (see Figure 14). Mentions of the Vote Leave slogan (i.e. not including general references to “taking control”) also increased substantially over the course of the campaign, reaffirming the success of Vote Leave in framing the issue in this way (see Figure 14). While in Week 1 just 29 articles contained the phrase ‘take back control’ (22% of all 132 sovereignty articles published in that week), this increased by more than six times to 177 articles in the final week of the campaign, almost doubling as a proportion of sovereignty articles (39% of 454)

Figure 14: Articles including the phrase ‘take back control’, all publications (Weeks 1–10)



Sovereignty coverage by publication

There were significant differences in the extent to which certain publications covered sovereignty during the campaign (see Table 4). Seven publications published more than one hundred articles mentioning sovereignty, with the *Express* far out in front with 313 articles. The *Guardian* published 245 articles mentioning sovereignty, with the *Daily Mail* in third place with 185 articles. Broadcasters, with the partial exception of the BBC (117 articles) were generally less likely to broach the issue of sovereignty, as were news magazines, and centre-right broadsheets (the *FT*, *Telegraph* and *Times*).

Some publications were considerably more likely to feature the phrases ‘take control’ or ‘take back control’ (see Table 23). The *Express* published 170 articles containing the phrase (54% of all sovereignty articles published by the title), while the *Guardian* published 93 (37%). The *Daily Mail* featured the phrase in 113 articles (61%).

Table 23: Articles mentioning sovereignty by publication, including all articles mentioning 'taking control'

Publication	Sovereignty	Control Tag	No Control Tag
Express	313	170	143
Guardian	245	93	152
Daily Mail	185	113	72
HuffPo UK	161	67	94
Independent	149	46	103
Sun	133	79	54
BBC	117	55	62
Mirror	97	51	46
FT	93	34	59
Times	85	29	56
Sky News	76	47	29
Telegraph	66	19	47
ITV	50	38	12
New Statesman	47	11	36
Spectator	47	15	32
Buzzfeed	17	9	8
Daily Star	16	11	5
Economist	13	2	11
Vice UK	10	1	9
Channel 4 News	4	2	2
Total	1,924	892	1,032

Dishonesty

Dishonesty

‘People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war or before an election.’ – Otto von Bismarck³⁰⁹

It did not take long for the Leave and Remain campaigns to accuse one another of lying. On the first day of the official campaign – Friday 15 April, the Chief Executive of NHS England, David Nicholson, said Vote Leave’s claims about the NHS were untrue.³¹⁰ Vote Leave was accused of running a ‘campaign of deception’. The *Express* was quick to respond in an editorial that called the claim false, urging readers to ‘ignore the establishment’s falsehoods’.³¹¹ By Sunday Boris Johnson had accused the Prime Minister of talking ‘bollocks’ about Europe,³¹² and the following day Trevor Kavanagh went further in the *Sun* and claimed the ‘Establishment in-crowd’ were adopting the tactic of Hitler and Goebbels in trying to convince the public of a ‘Big Lie’.³¹³ George Osborne responded by accusing Boris Johnson of ‘dishonesty’,³¹⁴ while Norman Tebbit said Jeremy Corbyn was guilty of ‘either deception or delusion on a grand scale’.³¹⁵

309 Callander, S. and Wilkie, S. (2007) ‘Lies, Damned Lies, and Political Campaigns,’ *Games and Economic Behavior*, 60:2, 262-286.

310 <http://news.sky.com/story/fantasy-and-fear-claims-as-eu-battle-begins-10243254>

311 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/661571/eu-referendum-brexit-10-weeks-boris-farage>

312 <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/508809/Brexit-EU-referendum-Leave-Remain-David-Cameron-Boris-Johnson-Sir-Ian-Botham>

313 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/opinion/trevor-kavanagh/1197502/with-project-fear-in-full-flight-the-brexit-catastrophe-is-a-hitler-style-big-lie/>

314 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3545348/Osborne-rails-dishonest-Brexit-supporters-warns-quitting-cost-family-4-300.html>

315 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/18/the-government-is-doing-everything-in-its-power-to-rig-the-eu-re>

The 2016 EU Referendum campaign was littered with claims and counter-claims of dishonesty (Table 24). Individuals accused other individuals of lying. Individuals accused campaigns of lying. Publications accused individuals and campaigns of lying. Organisations accused campaigns of lying. Not a week went by without a string of accusations of dishonesty (see Table 25, over page).

Table 24: Allegations of dishonesty during the campaign (number of articles)

Bullshit	26	Untrue	Dishonesty	Misleading
Bollocks	29			
Fib/s	30			
Post-truth	39			
Falsehood	56			
Deceit/ deception	169	176	234	464
Lie/Lies/ Lying/Liar/ Liars		552		

'Lying' was only one of a range of terms used. Others used included: dishonesty, deceit, falsehood, untrue, misleading, fib, post-truth, absurd, nonsense, and so on.

Though the accusations flew both ways, in the first half of the campaign Leave supporters and the pro-Leave press were more likely than Remain supporters to level charges of dishonesty. In the first few weeks the Leavers made allegations of dishonesty against David Cameron, George Osborne, the Treasury, Barack Obama, the IMF, the Bank of England, the CBI, and Alistair Darling.

The Remain supporters' accusations of dishonesty were, particularly in the early part of the campaign, directed more at specific Leave claims rather than the campaign itself or individuals within it. Leave's claims, for example, about threats to the NHS, about Cameron giving up the UK's EU veto, about the views of UK businesses, about the dangers of TTIP, and about potential threats to UK security within the EU.

Within a fortnight of the campaign starting, The UK in a Changing Europe and fact-checking organisation Full Fact published a report stating that both sides of the campaign were making 'misleading and inaccurate' claims. 'Many of these', the report said, 'are at best unsupported by evidence, and at worse simply untrue'.³¹⁶ The report did not prevent campaigners or news outlets continuing to make these claims, or to characterise the claims they disagreed with as false.

In the final weeks considerable coverage was given to Sir John Major's critical comments about the ethics of the Leave campaign, and then to David Cameron's indictment of the Leave campaign's claims at an impromptu press conference on a roof next to the Savoy Hotel. The Prime Minister accused some of his colleagues of telling 'total untruths to con people' and of talking 'nonsense'.³¹⁷

Although it is far from rare for political campaigners to insult one another and accuse one another of not telling the truth, the extent to which the EU referendum campaign was marked by charges of dishonesty was unusual. Debate during the 2015 referendum campaign on Scottish independence, though similarly heated, was more focused on the use of fear than on dishonesty. During the 2011 alternative vote

³¹⁶ <http://ukandeu.ac.uk/leading-academics-and-full-fact-check-claims-made-by-referendum-campaigns/>

³¹⁷ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tory-brexiteers-are-telling-untruths-says-cameron-k37bjvp28>

(AV) referendum on reforms to the UK’s electoral system discussion of campaign funding and the costs of an alternative system dominated debate (though claims of the high cost of an AV system were accused of being false).³¹⁸ A closer comparison to a political campaign dominated by accusations of dishonesty is the US Presidential election 2016. Donald Trump repeatedly accused his opponent of lying. While Hillary Clinton said that Trump started his political activity on the basis of a ‘racist birther lie’. Many US news outlets also published reports documenting untrue statements made by Trump.³¹⁹

Table 25: Allegations of dishonesty – week-by-week

Phrase	Wk1	Wk2	Wk3	Wk4	Wk5	Wk6	Wk7	Wk8	Wk9	Wk10	Total
Lie/Lying/ Liar	7	6	1	30	15	37	67	132	82	175	552
Misleading	20	16	7	31	29	62	68	105	58	68	464
Dishonest/y	17	1	5	23	17	17	17	58	48	31	234
Untrue	2	5	3	6	7	20	7	67	26	33	176
Deceit/ deception	6	5	4	6	9	5	11	56	32	35	169
Falsehood	1	1	2	0	10	1	6	14	10	11	56
Post-truth	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	19	3	12	39
Fib/s	2	0	0	0	2	3	3	4	11	5	30
Bollocks	2	0	0	1	2	5	3	5	4	7	29
Bullshit	0	0	0	3	0	2	5	7	4	5	26
Total	57	34	22	100	92	153	190	467	278	382	

318 Renwick, A. (2011) *The Alternative Vote: A Briefing Paper*, London: Political Studies Association <https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/TheAlternativeVoteBriefingPaper.pdf>

319 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/opinion/campaign-stops/all-politicians-lie-some-lie-more-than-others.html>

Dishonesty timeline

An illustration of the accusations of dishonesty levelled by each side.

Leave accuses Remain of lying

<p>Boris Johnson says economic concerns raised by PM, IMF, Bank of England, NATO and White House 'fundamentally wrong'</p> <p>Express calls on readers to ignore the establishment's falsehoods</p> <p>Spectator editor claims Osborne's dishonesty 'simply breathtaking'</p>	<p>Jacob Rees-Mogg says government EU leaflet contains 'untrue' information</p> <p>Spectator calls Treasury analysis 'perhaps the most dishonest document ever produced by HM Treasury'</p> <p>The Sun's Trevor Kavanagh accuses Remain Establishment of 'Big Lie'</p>	<p>Vote Leave's Matthew Elliott says Alistair Darling's claim that UK would suffer £250bn in lost trade per year if left EU 'dishonest'</p>	<p>Alison Pearson accuses government of dishonesty over migrant figures</p> <p>Penny Mordaunt claims Remain campaign dishonest to say that the EU was not planning to create a European army</p> <p>Boris Johnson accuses government of 'increasingly fraudulent' claims</p> <p>The Daily Mail's Richard Littlejohn accuses Cameron of deceit</p>	<p>Express accuses Remain Establishment of dishonest strategies</p> <p>Farage brands Cameron 'dishonest Dave'</p> <p>The Express' Stephen Pollard says political elites have 'consistently and deliberately lied to us'</p>
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w/c 15 April	w/c 22 April	w/c 29 April	w/c 6 May	w/c 13 May
<p>NHS England Chief Executive David Nicholson says Vote Leave's claims about NHS 'untrue'</p> <p>Wales Stronger in Europe say Vote Leave running a 'campaign of deception'</p> <p>George Osborne accuses Johnson of dishonesty on economic consequences of Brexit</p>	<p>The Guardian's Will Hutton says 'there is a new carelessness about truth'</p>	<p>FT editorial accuses Leave campaign and Economists for Brexit of making misleading claims</p>	<p>Remain says the Vote Leave campaign's claim that Cameron had given up the UK's EU veto was 'completely untrue'</p>	<p>John Major says Leave voters have been misled by falsehoods</p> <p>The Guardian's Jonathan Freedland writes that Boris Johnson has a long history of dishonesty</p> <p>Nicholas Soames accuses Boris Johnson of 'fundamentally dishonest gymnastics'</p> <p>CBI's Carolyn Fairbairn accuses John Longworth of 'wilful misrepresentation'</p>

Remain accuses Leave of lying

Leave accuses Remain of lying

<p>The Telegraph's Simon Heffer accuses Cameron of 'dreadful dishonesty'</p> <p>Iain Duncan Smith compares George Osborne to 'Pinocchio' regarding Brexit house price fall</p> <p>Peter Osborne in the Spectator on 'the return of political lying'</p>	<p>Michael Gove writes to Cameron asking that voters not be misled</p> <p>Steve Hilton suggests Remain's figures were made up</p> <p>Nadine Dorris accuses Cameron of repeated lies/outright lies</p> <p>TV audience member accuses PM of being 'dishonest, untruthful'</p>	<p>Frederick Forsyth accuses Cameron and Remain of 'the most ruthless and dishonest arguments'</p> <p>Nigel Farage accuses Cameron of being an 'effing liar'</p> <p>Michael Gove says claims that UK would not have to prop up failing EU nations 'dishonest'</p>	<p>Labour Leave's Brendan Chilton says Remain 'being disingenuous' about Turkey and EU</p> <p>Lord (Digby) Jones accuses Tristram Hunt MP of lying in EU debate</p>	<p>Leading Tory donors criticise Cameron for bullying and misleading campaign</p> <p>Nigel Farage says Cameron commitment to EU reform 'another frankly dishonest pitch to the public'</p> <p>Iain Duncan Smith accuses David Cameron of 'lying to the British people' regarding Turkish membership of the EU</p>
w/c 20 May	w/c 27 May	w/c 3 June	w/c 10 June	w/c 17 June
<p>Remain says Penny Mordaunt terrorist claims 'absurd and untrue'</p> <p>James McGrory says Mordaunt's claims 'Plain and simple lying'</p>	<p>Lord Patten tells Newsnight Boris Johnson did not understand the difference between fact and fiction</p> <p>Mirror's Kevin Maguire calls on voters not to believe 'the Leave campaign's lies'</p> <p>Hugo Dixon in The Guardian on Six More Brexit Myths from Eurosceptic Press</p>	<p>George Osborne calls for an end to Leave 'deception' about economic effects of Brexit</p> <p>Greg Hands says Leave campaign's NHS spending claims were 'totally dishonest'</p> <p>David Cameron accuses Leave campaign of telling 'total untruths to con the people'</p> <p>John Major says Leave campaign giving 'fundamentally dishonest' information to British people</p>	<p>Yvette Cooper says Leave.eu poster exploits refugee crisis 'in the most dishonest and immoral way'</p> <p>Nicola Sturgeon says Michael Gove telling 'a fib and a half' about Scottish immigration quotas</p> <p>Unilever, Airbus and GE allege Leave campaign seeking to 'deliberately mislead' voters with use of logos</p> <p>Department of Health warns of legal action versus 'misleading' use of logo by Leave</p> <p>Angela Eagle says Leave campaign's £350m slogan 'fundamentally dishonest'</p>	<p>Baroness Warsi says Michael Gove's Turkey comments 'a lie'</p> <p>Ruth Davidson accuses Andrea Leadsom of 'blatant untruth'</p>

Remain accuses Leave of lying

In the initial fortnight of the referendum campaign, Leave and the Leave-supporting news outlets focused their charges of dishonesty on Remain supporters' predictions of economic damage to the UK as a consequence of Brexit. The editor of the *Spectator*, Fraser Nelson, accused George Osborne of 'simply breathtaking' dishonesty and listed three 'deceptions' regarding the Treasury's claim that Brexit would cost each household £4,300.³²⁰ Matthew Elliott, chief executive of Vote Leave, told the *Daily Mail* that ex-Chancellor Alistair Darling's claim that the UK would suffer £250bn in lost trade if it left the EU was 'dishonest'.³²¹

In early May Conservative Armed Forces Minister Penny Mordaunt claimed it was dishonest of the Remain campaign to say the EU was not planning a European army.³²² Boris Johnson extended this by accusing the government of 'increasingly fraudulent' claims, and a 'systematic campaign of subterfuge by Cameron'.³²³ Richard Littlejohn supported Johnson, accusing Cameron of deceit and dismissing Remain's 'ludicrous horror stories' as 'patronising drivel'.³²⁴ Peter Osborne went so far as to say that 'lying and cheating are once again commonplace in the heart of government'.³²⁵

Boris Johnson was, of the Leave leaders, prone to making the most reported accusations of dishonesty (at least the most reported making accusations). The newspapers themselves, in leader columns and editorials, reiterated these accusations.

The Remain campaign, while initially more reserved in its accusations of dishonesty, became more accusatory and animated in the final weeks. Sir John Major told Andrew Marr that Vote Leave's campaign had been 'squalid' and 'deceitful'.³²⁶ David Cameron said they had told 'total untruths to con the people'. Sarah Wollaston left the Leave campaign over 'untrue' claims about money going to the NHS.³²⁷

Those making charges of deception often claimed they were deliberate.

320 <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/04/the-deceptions-behind-george-osbornes-brexite-report/>

321 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3570282/Quitting-EU-cost-Britain-250bn-says-Darling.html>

322 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3580199/We-create-EU-army-says-senior-MEP.html>

323 <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-05-09/boris-johnson-brexite-would-not-cause-ww3-in-europe/>

324 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3582107/RICHARD-LITTLEJOHN-Beware-invasion-toxic-caterpillars.html>

325 <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/05/why-osbornes-dodgy-dossiers-are-even-worse-than-blairs/>

326 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9a75e7e2-2afe-11e6-9398-152a09ac4c4d.html>

327 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/department-health-warns-could-launch-8157589>

Stephen Pollard, writing in the *Express* talked about the ‘political elites who have consistently and deliberately lied to us’.³²⁸ Rachel Reeves said that Leave’s claims that TTIP poses a threat to the NHS were knowingly untrue.³²⁹ Robin Lustig wrote on Huffington Post that when Michael Gove said he wanted to take back control from distant, unaccountable and elitist organisations, ‘he is deliberately perpetuating a lie’.³³⁰

The charges were also often directly personal. Iain Duncan Smith compared George Osborne to Pinnocchio³³¹ and Sajid Javid of being two-faced.³³² Lord Patten told Newsnight Boris Johnson did not understand the difference between fact and fiction.³³³ David Cameron was subject to repeated direct accusations of untruthfulness, distilled by Nigel Farage into the pejorative description ‘dishonest Dave’ – a precursor of Donald Trump’s ‘Crooked Hillary’.³³⁴

The news outlets themselves were similarly willing to level charges of dishonesty and mythmaking. The *Daily Mail* said David Cameron was guilty of ‘peddling’ eight myths about the consequences of leaving (‘Brexit would make ISIS happy and the eight other myths that David Cameron’s peddling about what would happen if the UK decides to leave the EU’).³³⁵ The *Daily Star* told its readers to ‘Never mind the Brexit b****cks: SIX infamous ‘half-truths’ told by politicians’.³³⁶ Philip Stephens in the *Financial Times* sought to explode the ‘Brexit myth of Brussels (mis)rule’.³³⁷ In the *Guardian*, Hugo Dixon pointed to myths propagated by the Press themselves – ‘Six More Brexit Myths from Eurosceptic Press’.³³⁸

Regardless of the truth of any campaign claims, it is worth noting the potential effects such regular, explicit, and vituperative claims of dishonesty are likely to have had on the public.

328 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/670231/Government-still-not-honest-migration-EU-UK>

329 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36332415>

330 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/robin-lustig/eu-referendum-brussels-bureaucrats_b_10391770.html

331 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36351310>

332 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3604552/Tories-war-Iain-Duncan-Smith-accuses-former-Cabinet-colleague-two-faced-EU-tensions-escalate-month-before.html>

333 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36401104>

334 <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/politics/7193963/Nigel-Farage-says-EU-Referendum-battle-was-turning-into-a-modern-day-peasants-revolt.html>

335 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3596002/Brexit-make-ISIS-happy-eight-myths-David-Cameron-s-peddling-happen-UK-decides-leave-EU.html>

336 <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/517163/Eu-Referendum-brexit-EU-vote-politicians-tell-lies-tradition>

337 <https://www.ft.com/content/3a102dfc-2281-11e6-9d4d-c11776a5124d>

338 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/02/six-brexit-myths-eurosceptic-press-vote-23-june>

Research on the effects of negative campaigning suggests that while it may mobilise partisans, it is likely to promote cynicism and alienation in non-partisans, particularly toward political institutions. This is what Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar found when they studied the effects of negative television on voters.³³⁹ Negative TV tended to reinforce non-partisans' 'disillusionment and convinces them not to participate in a tainted process'. More recent research supports these findings.³⁴⁰ At a minimum, one must assume these continual claims undermined public trust. As the Full Fact/UK in a Changing Europe report said; 'Unsurprisingly, many people do not know what to believe or who to trust'.³⁴¹

Drew Westen, in his influential 2007 book *The Political Brain*, wrote that when voters do not feel they have enough credible information to decide how to vote, they tend to be guided by information they already know, and by emotional factors.³⁴² If applied to the EU Referendum, this would suggest that people voted on the basis of information they had acquired about the EU over the previous four decades (depending on their age), and on 'gut instinct'. The long history of Euroscepticism prevalent in much of the UK press therefore provides critical context for the campaign,³⁴³ as do some of the emotional appeals made by campaigners and by news outlets ('BeLeave in Britain' for example, on the cover of the *Sun*, 14 June).

Prior to the vote on 23 June, a number of commentators reflected on the tone of debate, partly in the hope of elevating it, and partly to explain why this campaign was so dominated by mutual allegations of dishonesty. The *Mirror* published a plea that both campaigns promise to 'stick to the facts' and stop engaging in 'calculated deception'.³⁴⁴ Jon Snow said 'this was

339 Ansolabehere, S. and Iyengar, S. (1995) *Going Negative: How political advertisements shrink and polarize the electorate*, New York: Free Press, p3.

340 Lau, R.R., Lee, S. and Brown Rovner, I. (2007) 'The Effects of Negative Political Campaigns: A Meta-Analytic Reassessment,' *The Journal of Politics*, 69:4, 1176-1209.

341 Full Fact and UK in a Changing Europe (2016) *Leave/Remain: the facts behind the claims* <https://fullfact.org/media/uploads/leave-remain-the-facts-behind-the-claims.pdf>

342 Westen, D. (2007) *The Political Brain: The role of emotion in deciding the fate of the nation*, Philadelphia, PA: PublicAffairs.

343 See for example: Hawkins, B. (2012) 'Nation, Separation and Threat: An Analysis of British Media Discourses on the European Union Treaty Reform Process,' *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50:4, 561-577.

344 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/both-sides-eu-referendum-should-8068240>

no way to run a chip shop’ let alone a campaign.³⁴⁵ The Treasury Select Committee criticised the level of rhetoric and claims of both campaigns:

‘The public debate is being poorly served by inconsistent, unqualified and, in some cases, misleading claims and counter-claims. Members of both the ‘leave’ and ‘remain’ camps are making such claims’.³⁴⁶

The Committee explained – though did not excuse – misleading claims from each side by noting that, since most of the consequences of leaving or staying were unknowable, ‘there are few facts to help the electorate make their decision, and mainly judgements’.

The BBC’s Political Editor, Laura Kuenssberg, said the debate was ‘not exactly edifying to watch’. One reason for the extensive accusations of dishonesty, Kuenssberg wrote, could be that the campaigns deliberately exaggerated claims in order to create a row. Kuenssberg cited the Leave campaign’s claim that Britain sent £350 million a week to Brussels. From the public perspective whether it was £350 million or £161 million (given the rebate and UK spending) was less material than that it was a lot of money.³⁴⁷ It should be noted that the Leave campaign did not accept that the claim was a lie, though did accept it was controversial: Vote Leave Campaign Director Dominic Cummings ‘did not mind a bit about the controversy the figure generated,’ Tim Shipman wrote, ‘... it simply reinforced in voters minds that there was a high cost’.³⁴⁸

Writing in the aftermath of the murder of Jo Cox MP, Jonathan Freedland wondered about whether the tone of debate, and particularly the portrayal of the ‘political class’ as venal and dishonest, had damaged the fabric of British democracy:

‘And throughout this campaign, there has been a drumbeat denouncing “the Westminster elite”, castigating all politicians, along

345 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/31/jon-snow-channel-4-condemns-abusive-and-boring-eu-referendum-campaign>

346 <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmtreasy/122/122.pdf>

347 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36458590>

348 Shipman, T. (2016) *All Out War: The Full Story of How Brexit Sank Britain's Political Class*, London: William Collins, p255.

with anyone in authority or in a public position of expertise, as either a liar or the corrupt dupe of a wicked Brussels conspiracy'.³⁴⁹

Post-truth, the Oxford Dictionaries announced in November 2016, was the word of the year.³⁵⁰ This choice was influenced in part, they said, by the EU Referendum campaign, as well as by the US presidential debate. In respect of the EU Referendum campaign, the constant accusations of dishonesty by both sides support the description of the campaign as 'post-truth', whether or not the claims made during it were true or not.

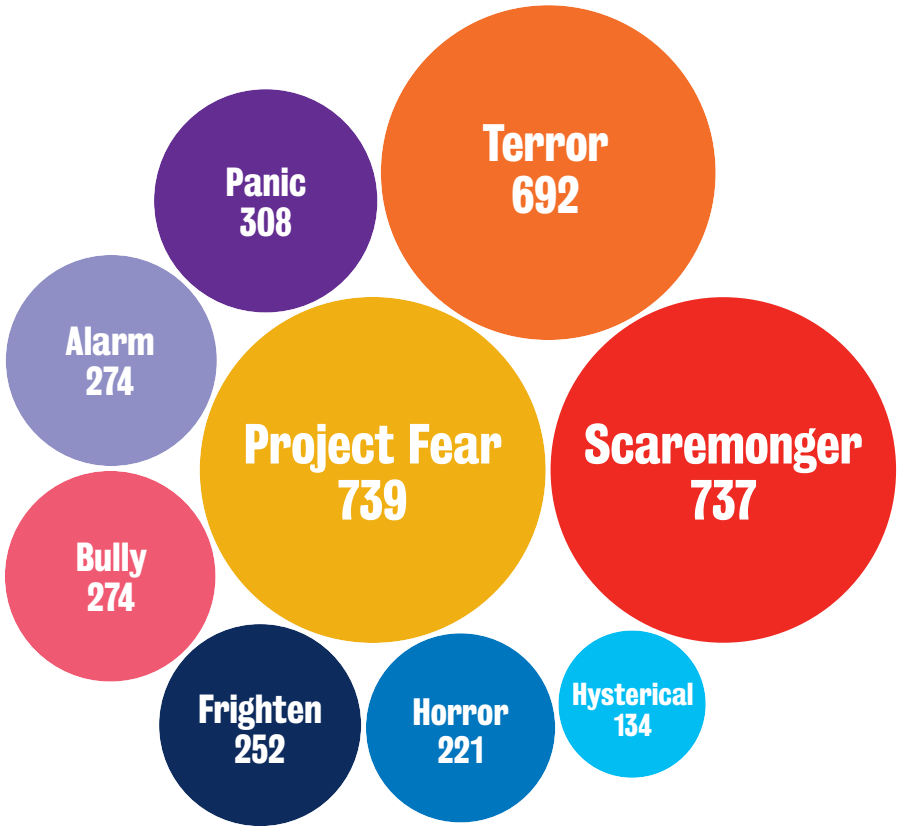
349 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/17/political-contempt-politicians-eu-referendum>

350 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>

Fear

Fear

Figure 15: Prevalence of fear-related words used throughout the campaign

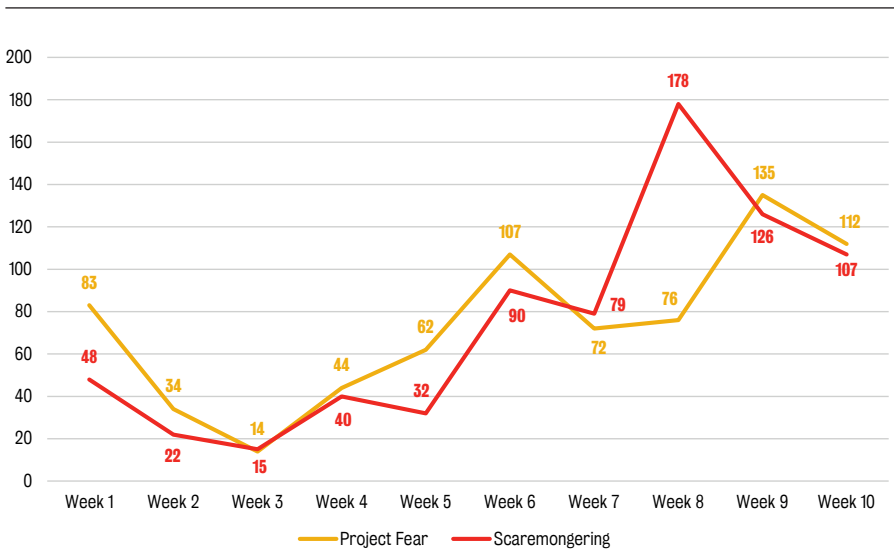


The language of fear permeated the EU referendum debate. Each campaign predicted frightening outcomes should voters decide to opt for the other side. The Remain campaign forecast dire economic consequences should Britons decide to leave. The Leave campaign foretold disastrous effects of mass immigration. Yet it was the Remain side that was most closely associated with using fear as a means of persuasion.

This was partly because, from the start of the campaign, Leave supporters described Remain’s campaign as ‘Project Fear’. It was a label that stuck, and that came to be used across almost all media, and even by the Remain campaign itself. From 15 April until the vote on 23 June, ‘Project Fear’ was referred to in 739 articles. In the final two weeks alone it was referenced in almost 250. ‘Scaremongering’ was just about as common an accusation, mentioned in 737 Brexit-related articles (Figure 16).

Project Fear & scaremongering frames

Figure 16: Prevalence of phrases ‘Project Fear’ and ‘scaremonger(ing)’ throughout the campaign



Some papers were more likely to use the phrase ‘Project Fear’ or to talk about ‘scaremongering’ than others (see Table 26). The *Daily Express*, for example, published an average of over two articles every day that referred to ‘Project Fear’ (159 articles in total). The *Daily Mail* published 87 articles using the phrase and 86 mentioned ‘scaremongering’. The *Sun*, which publishes many fewer articles online than the *Daily Mail*, published 101 articles that talked about Project Fear, and 71 about scaremongering. It therefore used the term more, proportionately, in its coverage of Brexit.

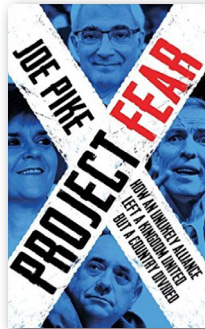
By contrast, the *Daily Telegraph* published a total of 34 articles mentioning Project Fear.

Table 26: Mentions of ‘Project Fear’ or ‘scaremonger(ing)’, by publication

	Project Fear	Scaremongering	Combined
Express	159	147	306
Daily Mail	87	86	173
Sun	101	71	172
Guardian	69	79	148
HuffPo UK	65	51	116
Independent	34	50	84
Mirror	35	48	83
Telegraph	34	28	62
Times	29	31	60
BBC	23	33	56
Sky News	21	32	53
Spectator	34	12	46
FT	19	22	41
ITV	8	12	20
New Statesman	5	15	20
Buzzfeed	8	10	18
Daily Star	6	5	11
Economist	0	3	3
Channel 4 News	2	0	2
Vice UK	0	2	2

The phrase ‘Project Fear’ did not originate in the EU referendum. Indeed, it was widely used during the Scottish Referendum of 2015 prior to being used in the Brexit campaign. It began – according to the BBC’s Sarah Smith – as a joke between Better Together staffers that was then used against them. It even became the title of a book documenting the Scottish Referendum campaign by Joe Pike, published in 2015. The strategy of

scaring people into voting for the status quo was consciously revived by the Remain campaign, the *Spectator* wrote, in April 2016 – in light of its effectiveness in Scotland.³⁵¹



By the time the official referendum campaign began, Remain claims about the economic damage of leaving had already been described as Project Fear. The use of the term took off, however, after economic warnings made by the Treasury and others in late April. In particular, it was the Treasury report published on Monday 18 April, claiming that every British household would be £4,300 worse off if Britain left the EU, which triggered multiple accusations of scaremongering.³⁵² Parts of the press reacted angrily, and even Remain supporting papers said it was clear that the Chancellor, George Osborne, who launched the report, intended to frighten people. ‘There is nothing subtle about the Remain campaign’ Jason Beattie wrote in the *Mirror*. Though Osborne’s warning was ‘closer to Project Armageddon than to Project Fear’ (‘Be afraid of Project Fear’).³⁵³ ‘Osborne’s new scare’, the Mail reported, ‘Brexit will ruin the UK for decades, cost every family £4,300 and mean Britain has billions less to spend on public services’.³⁵⁴ The *Express* chose to present responses

351 <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/04/a-victory-for-fear-is-a-loss-for-decent-politics/>

352 HM Treasury (2016) *HM Treasury analysis: the long-term economic impact of EU membership and the alternatives*. http://www.agefi.fr/sites/agefi.fr/files/fichiers/2016/04/treasury_analysis_economic_impact_of_eu_membership_web.pdf

353 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/afraid-project-fear-mirror-politics-7778272>

354 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3544987/Osborne-s-new-scare-Brexit-ruin-UK-decades-cost-family-4-300-mean-Britain-billions-spend-public-services.html>

to the report rather than the report itself: ‘Fury as scaremongering Osborne warns YOU ‘will be £4,300 worse off YEARLY after Brexit’.³⁵⁵

By mid-May ‘Project Fear’ had almost become an official campaign slogan that Leave supporters applied to Remainers. The *Express* referred simply to ‘Project Fear campaigners’ rather than Remain campaigners.³⁵⁶ The *Sun* described the Prime Minister as ‘Project Fear David Cameron’.³⁵⁷ The *Spectator* talked about the ‘Project Fear brand’.³⁵⁸ Even the BBC was using the phrase in its reporting: ‘For those who support Brexit,’ Kamal Ahmed wrote, ‘Project Fear, as they describe it, is in full voice’.³⁵⁹

Each new Remain intervention, particularly by David Cameron or George Osborne, was then framed as another attempt to scare people. When Cameron gave a speech praising the EU as a force for peace in Europe, and warning that leaving could lead to future conflict, Sebastian Payne wrote in the *FT* that “‘Project Fear’ is turning into ‘Project Terror’”.³⁶⁰ When Sir John Sawers and Lord Evans, ex-heads of MI5 and MI6, said that Britain’s security would be at greater risk if the country left, it was alleged that they were ‘manipulated’ into making their claims by Cameron.³⁶¹

Still, at this stage – mid-campaign – some papers believed that using fear as a key motivating factor was working for Remain. ‘Yes, David Cameron is scaremongering about war after Brexit’, Oliver Wright wrote in the *Independent*, ‘– but that doesn’t mean he’s wrong’.³⁶² Regarding the warnings by ex-heads of MI5 and MIS, Matthew D’Ancona wrote; ‘Naturally, this intervention has been dismissed by leavers as just another chapter of Project Fear. And so it may be. But this project is also working’.³⁶³

355 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/661916/george-osborne-brexit-families-worse-off-john-redwood>

356 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/667983/Gove-Project-Fear-Brexit-Britain-safer-David-Cameron>

357 <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/politics/1198135/david-cameron-says-isis-would-support-brexit-as-he-ramps-up-the-rhetoric-for-remain/>

358 <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/05/why-winding-up-euro-sceptics-could-be-worth-it-for-the-pm/>

359 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-36253410>

360 <https://www.ft.com/content/b21a39fc-15d2-11e6-b197-a4af20d5575e>

361 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/668370/David-Cameron-manipulated-spy-chiefs-EU-European-Union-Brexit-national-security>

362 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/david-cameron-scaremongering-war-brexit-project-fear-a7019951.html>

363 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/09/eu-vote-tory-battle-europe-23-june>

Perhaps that is why the Remain campaign also found itself talking explicitly about fear, although it did so mainly as a defensive response. ‘There is a lot to be scared about,’ George Osborne told Andrew Neil on 8 June, ‘it is vital that people know what is at stake here’.³⁶⁴ Labour leaders Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell criticised ‘project fear from both sides of the Conservative party’.³⁶⁵ Nicola Sturgeon was similarly critical of what she called a ‘fear-based campaign’.³⁶⁶

Voters also adopted this framing of Remain as a campaign based on fear, as seen by questions directed by members of the public to David Cameron in his televised interview on Thursday 2 June. ‘I’ve strongly been wanting to vote to stay in the EU but to be honest the entire campaign has been a complete shambles for it; I’ve seen nothing but scaremongering,’ Soraya Bouazzaoui said to the Prime Minister.³⁶⁷

Fear had also become a way of dismissing any argument put forward by Remain. When Cameron said on 5 June that leaving the EU could raise the cost of mortgages, the story was cast as simply another pitch from Project Fear: ‘The Prime Minister was accused of a new Project Fear today as he claimed leaving the EU would create “clear and present danger of higher mortgage rates,”’ the *Mirror* reported.³⁶⁸

By early June there was a growing belief in the press that the Remain camp’s use of fear had lost its persuasive power. ‘Put bluntly,’ Laurence Janta-Lipinski wrote in the *New Statesman*, ‘it seems as though some of the tactics from the so-called “project fear” playbook that was deemed to have done so well in the closing days of the Scottish Independence referendum are not cutting through as they did in the final weeks of the 2014 vote’.³⁶⁹

Even if Remain’s economic warnings had been blunted, however, the term Project Fear continued to be used regularly in the final fortnight of the campaign. Indeed in the last two weeks Project Fear was referred to

364 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/08/voting-to-leave-the-eu-means-embracing-farages-mean-and-divisive-vision-of-uk>

365 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3597940/Heseltine-s-old-humbug-say-Brexiteers-lain-Duncan-Smith-dismisses-prominent-Europhile-voice-past-attack-Boris-Johnson.html>

366 https://www.buzzfeed.com/jamieross/nicola-sturgeon-accuses-david-cameron-of-overstating-his-pro?utm_term=.madbOvXAO#.bmyx1evn1

367 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3622490/David-Cameron-admits-immigration-EU-challenging-kicks-big-televised-event-referendum-battle.html>

368 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/david-cameron-says-brexit-could-8117410>

369 <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2016/06/remain-campaigns-project-fear-losing-its-mojo>

in more articles than in any previous weeks of the campaign. In this sense the Leave campaign had succeeded in framing the strategy of the Remain campaign as an attempt to frighten the electorate into voting to stay. As Sir John Tusa wrote to *The Times* on 9 June: ‘The Brexit campaign has successfully tarred the Remain campaign with the title ‘Project Fear’. Even the BBC and other broadcasters use it as if it were an official title rather than a clever smear’. This despite the equally extensive use of frightening rhetoric by Leave-supporters, except about immigration and migrants rather than the economy.

Why should people be afraid to leave?

The Remain campaign gave people plenty of warnings about the likely economic consequences of Brexit. If they voted to leave the EU, Remain told them that it would:

- Cost each household the equivalent of £4,300 by 2030³⁷⁰
- Provoke a recession
- Extend austerity
- Damage trade
- Hurt pensions³⁷¹
- Lead to a fall in the value of sterling
- Lead to a drop of up to 18% in house prices³⁷²

Remain’s claims about the dangers of leaving also extended beyond the economy to include:

- The threat to peace on the continent
- Undermining the nation’s security

International leaders and institutions reiterated some of these warnings, particularly the economic, telling people that: Britain would be ‘at the back of the queue’ when arranging trade deals with the US (Barack Obama); and that the UK would be ‘killed’ economically if it chose to leave (French Finance Minister Emmanuel Macron)³⁷³. Similar warnings were made by the IMF, the World Bank and the OECD.

370 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-vote-to-leave-europe-would-make-british-households-4300-worse-off-according-to-a6988786.html>

371 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/26/brexit-could-cost-pensioners-32000-chancellor-says>

372 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/21/eu-referendum-george-osborne-warns-brexit-could-see-value-of-hom/>

373 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1132008/britain-will-be-killed-economically-if-it-leaves-eu-says-french-minister/>

Why should people be afraid to stay?

Although the approach of the Remain campaign was labelled 'Project Fear', the Leave campaign also gave people many reasons to be frightened if they voted to stay. These were less focused on the threat of economic damage (though such claims were also made) than on predictions about the scale and effects of migration. If people voted to remain, Leave campaigners and pro-Leave papers said they could expect:

- Mass immigration to continue and to rise ('4m in next decade')³⁷⁴
- The door to open to immigrants from Albania³⁷⁵
- The door to open to immigrants from Turkey (see '12m Turks say they'll come to UK' – *Express* front page, 22 May)
- Pressure to increase on public services*
- Crime to increase*
- A 'massive' housing crisis³⁷⁶
- The countryside to be 'destroyed'^{377 378}
- British jobs to be 'destroyed'³⁷⁹
- Half a million more EU nationals to be in British schools by 2030³⁸⁰
- NHS to be £10bn in debt by 2019³⁸¹
- Britain to be less secure from terror³⁸²
- Murderers and terrorists to come to the UK³⁸³
- A greater demand for prison places – and for more prisons³⁸⁴

(*For further warnings about migrants see the earlier section of this study on immigration).

It would be surprising if warnings about economic damage caused by Brexit scared people but predictions that schools, hospitals, prisons and housing would be overwhelmed by the arrival of millions of people, destroying jobs and the countryside, increasing crime and raising the threat from terror, if Britain chose to remain in the EU, did not.

374 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/673974/Immigration-to-change-the-face-of-England-forever-as-4M-migrants-arrive-in-next-10-years>

375 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3566620/Michael-Gove-warns-EU-expansion-open-borders-88-million-Europe-s-poorest-countries.html>

376 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/680593/Remaining-EU-will-create-massive-housing-crisis-new-figures-reveal>

377 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/25/population-surge-to-change-the-face-of-england-forever/>

378 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/675034/chris-grayling-green-belt-migrants-countryside-eu-referendum-brex-it-david-cameron-uk>

379 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/673834/Remaining-EU-destroy-British-jobs-Tory-MP-David-Davis>

380 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3653534/Schools-face-extra-570-000-pupils-EU-2030-Vote-Leave-warn-huge-classroom-swell-brought-new-member-states-joining.html>

381 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/672765/NHS-will-be-10-BILLION-in-debt-in-three-years-time-under-weight-of-migrants>

382 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/662251/European-Union-Brussels-Bloc-Michael-Gove-Terror-British-Intelligence-ECJ-Brexit>

383 <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-05-22/vote-leave-murderers-and-terrorists-from-turkey-will-head-to-uk/>

384 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/678805/current-immigration-rates-UK-need-seven-prisons-house-EU-criminals>

Given that both the Remain and the Leave campaigns emphasised how frightening remaining or leaving would be, many members of the public are likely to have been decidedly fearful of the consequences, whichever way the vote went.

The Establishment

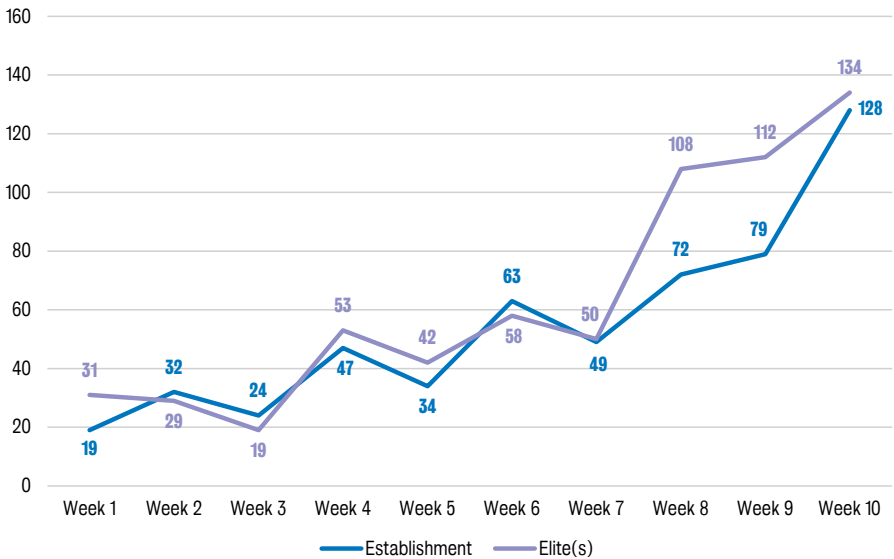
The Establishment

From the start of the official campaign, the *Telegraph* was already writing that ‘The EU referendum is becoming a contest between the Establishment and the people’.³⁸⁵ In ‘an age when people across the world are voting against elites,’ the paper said, ‘it gives the impression that a vote for Leave is a vote against politics-as-usual’.

As the campaign wore on this framing of the campaign as the Establishment or elite against the people increased. In the first fortnight 111 articles about the EU referendum referred to the ‘Establishment’ or one ‘elite’ or another. These references rose over the next eight weeks until, in the final fortnight of the campaign, there were 397 EU-referendum articles that mentioned ‘Establishment’ or ‘elite’ (Figure 17).

³⁸⁵ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/15/the-eu-referendum-is-becoming-a-contest-between-the-establishmen/>

Figure 17: References to the Establishment or elites, 15 April–23 June



Overall, 547 articles mentioned the Establishment during the 10-week campaign, while 636 mentioned elites.³⁸⁶

Of the Leave-supporting newspapers, *The Express* referenced the ‘Establishment’ or ‘elite’ most over the official campaign, citing the Establishment in 68 articles and elites in 74 (see Table 27). *The Daily Mail* referenced elites in 70 referendum articles. *The Sun* preferred the term Establishment to elites, using it in 33 articles compared to 23 for elites. Yet it was the *Guardian*, which supported Remain (if less vociferously partisan than other titles) that referenced the terms more than any other outlet. 96 articles mentioned the Establishment, and 116 referred to elites in the context of the EU referendum in the 10-week campaign.

³⁸⁶ Mentions of ‘Establishment’ were filtered to exclude uses of ‘Establish/es/ed’, while mentions of ‘elites’ also includes descriptions of people as ‘elite’, or references to ‘the’ or ‘an’ elite.

Table 27: References to the Establishment and elites, by publication

Publication	Establishment	Elite(s)
BBC	25	22
Buzzfeed	9	2
Channel 4 News	2	0
Daily Mail	48	70
Daily Star	2	0
Economist	4	7
Express	68	74
FT	46	58
Guardian	96	116
HuffPo UK	53	50
Independent	40	35
ITV	17	7
Mirror	8	27
New Statesman	15	33
Sky News	5	15
Spectator	16	27
Sun	33	23
Telegraph	24	30
Times	30	33
Vice UK	6	7
Total	547	636

The *Guardian* articles reflected conflicting perspectives on whether elites would be pro-Remain, pro-Leave, both or neither. Yanis Varoufakis argued that ‘voting to leave the EU would only benefit a wealthy elite ... keen to liberate itself from Brussels’.³⁸⁷ By contrast, Simon Jenkins was confident that Remainers represented the confident ‘British Establishment’.³⁸⁸ Irvine Welsh, on the other hand, presented the referendum as simply one elite against another.³⁸⁹

Another reason why the *Guardian* referenced the Establishment or elites most often was because, of all the outlets, it was the most liable to report or comment on campaign strategy and tactics. Articles questioned, for example, whether it was ‘a good idea to parade foreign elites in support of an institution that is synonymous with elites’. Others commented on the framing of the Leave campaign as elites vs people. Opinion pieces set this framing in a global context – comparing it to the Trump campaign in the US, and to Narendra Modi in India – and in a historical context, contrasting the public response to the ‘wall of establishment opinion’ supporting Remain in 1975, with the response of more anti-elitist public in 2015.³⁹⁰

The *Express*, by contrast, consistently used the terms to couple Remain with self-interested elites attempting to deceive the people. The *Sun* framed warnings about Brexit as ‘doomsday “establishment” propaganda known as Project Fear’³⁹¹ and talked about the ‘bloody-minded arrogance of our ruling EU elite’.³⁹² The *Daily Mail* was explicit in its conviction that the EU worked for the Establishment not the people, and that the Establishment was supporting Remain out of self-interest. ‘The EU suits the elites and the Establishment,’ Sarah Vine wrote. ‘The EU suits fat cat bosses’ she continued ‘who make millions as workers’ wages stagnate

387 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/commentisfree/2016/may/28/brexit-empire-era-trick-radical-case-for-europe-lucas-mcdonnell-democracy-eu>

388 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/03/leave-remain-britain-fortunes-europe-repair>

389 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/30/eu-referendum-neoliberal-irvine-welsh>

390 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/21/europe-asia-law-rule-of-mob-rule-institutions-defuse-tensions-populism>

391 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1150489/average-wages-will-rise-by-1000-by-2020-if-britain-quits-eu-leading-economists-claim/>

392 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/trevor-kavanagh/1211228/trevor-kavanagh-three-key-reasons-why-we-must-all-vote-out-on-june-23/>

because of immigration'.³⁹³ This characterisation of an Establishment getting rich out of the EU while ordinary people suffered was a theme that the Mail emphasised in numerous articles.

Newspaper columnists who supported Leave regularly associated the Remain campaign with the Establishment whose wellbeing, they asserted, ran counter to those of the people. Trevor Kavanagh in the *Sun* accused the 'Establishment in-crowd' of lying to the British public by telling them 'that the sky will fall in if they vote to leave'. Leo McKinstry talked about 'a mood of revolt against the unpatriotic ruling elite' who are trying to 'terrify the electorate'.³⁹⁴ Peter Osborne argued that the Chancellor George Osborne 'hijacked the whole Establishment machine' to pursue 'devious and manipulative tactics' to convince the British public to remain.³⁹⁵

Leave leaders likewise accused the 'Establishment' of intimidating the public to vote remain. Nigel Farage repeatedly referred to the 'political establishment' or the 'political class', and said 'we're not going to be bullied by anyone' into staying in the EU.³⁹⁶ Boris Johnson talked about Remain having 'the full power of the Establishment behind it'. Iain Duncan Smith described it as 'outrageous' that the Treasury should 'come out and really try and scare pensioners'³⁹⁷ and warned against giving power to 'an unelected group of bureaucrats in Brussels'.³⁹⁸ Penny Mordaunt told Andrew Marr that 'At moments in our history – 1939, 1982 – we have gone against the orthodoxy of the establishment'.³⁹⁹ Priti Patel wrote in the *Telegraph* that "'Their [Remainers] narrow self-interest fails to pay due regard to the interests of the wider public',⁴⁰⁰ and Michael Gove talked about the 'EU establishment' in the Mail.⁴⁰¹

Other supporters of leaving the EU used similar anti-elitist language to promote their cause. Arron Banks talked about 'politically motivated

393 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3653588/SARAH-VINE-d-voted-Remain-d-burn-ballot-paper-bullies-scaremongers.html>

394 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/679204/Just-one-leap-finally-free-EU>

395 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3590045/PETER-OBORNE-man-shamefully-rigging-referendum.html>

396 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/677777/EU-Referendum-Cameron-Farage-Leave-remain-ITV-debate>

397 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/674486/EU-referendum-Iain-Duncan-Smith-Brussels-pensions-directives-costs-pensioners-Brexit>

398 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/676350/Iain-Duncan-Smith-Alex-Salmond-LBC-Brexit>

399 <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/29/cameron-tories-eu-referendum-war>

400 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/28/the-wealthy-leaders-of-remain-will-never-know-the-devastating-ef/>

401 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3566620/Michael-Gove-warns-EU-expansion-open-borders-88-million-Europe-s-poorest-countries.html>

Establishment scaremongering'.⁴⁰² Steve Hilton referred to 'Establishment stooges'.⁴⁰³ John Redwood told the Today Programme that the IFS were part of a 'cosy establishment'.⁴⁰⁴ The Vote Leave campaign itself, in response to ITV's decision to pair David Cameron with Nigel Farage in a televised debate, said in a statement: 'The Establishment has tried everything from spending taxpayers' money on pro-EU propaganda to funding the IN campaign via Goldman Sachs ... They're now fixing the debates to shut out the official campaign'.⁴⁰⁵

The Establishment was not simply separate from the people but was, in the view of certain newspapers and commentators, distant, malign, corrupt and only interested in 'lining their own pockets'. 'Luxury hotels, private jets, limos and even EU-branded chocolate' a headline in the *Daily Mail* reported, 'Vote Leave dossier reveals how eurocrats spend £28m of your money on lavish expenses and perks'.⁴⁰⁶ This Vote Leave dossier was also reported in the *Express* and the *Guardian*.^{407 408} Robert Hardman wrote that the working class had been 'betrayed' and 'Abandoned by the metropolitan political elite'. The *Mail* also published a long feature claiming that the Kinnock family, who supported Remain, had benefitted from 'the extraordinary largesse' of the taxpayer via the EU, and linked this to their support for Remain.

Some coverage went even further and accused parts of the Establishment of 'rigging' the referendum. 'The Government is doing everything in its power to rig the EU Referendum,' Norman Tebbit wrote in the *Telegraph*.⁴⁰⁹ Peter Osborne accused George Osborne of 'shamefully rigging the referendum' in the *Mail*.⁴¹⁰ The *Daily Mail* reported Brexit campaigners accusations that David Cameron was trying rig the result of

402 <http://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/669623/Anger-as-Bank-of-England-says-Brexit-could-hit-UK-growth>

403 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3603793/Why-quit-EU-Cameron-s-guru-Friend-strategist-Steve-Hilton-breaks-ranks-Brexit-say-Britain-literally-ungovernable-unless-power-self-serving-elite.html>

404 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36371700>

405 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1172209/its-a-disgrace-vote-leave-furious-after-itv-announce-debate-showdown-between-cameron-and-farage/>

406 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3640047/Luxury-hotels-private-jets-limos-EU-branded-chocolate-Vote-Leave-dossier-reveals-eurocrats-spend-28m-money-lavish-expenses-perks.html>

407 <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/679460/EU-officials-spending-cash-Leave-campaigners-expose-bureaucrats-expenses>

408 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/13/vote-leave-attacks-european-commission-spending-on-jets-and-hotels>

409 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/18/the-government-is-doing-everything-in-its-power-to-rig-the-eu-re/>

410 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3590045/PETER-OBORNE-man-shamefully-rigging-referendum.html>

the referendum by extending the deadline for people to register to vote.⁴¹¹ ‘This isn’t some democratic initiative,’ the paper reported Arron Banks as saying, ‘it’s a desperate attempt by the Establishment to register as many likely Remain voters as possible before polling day’. These claims appear to have had an impact. A YouGov poll conducted a fortnight before the referendum itself found that 46% of Leave supporters believed that the referendum would be rigged, as compared to 11% of Remain supporters.⁴¹²

Who is the Establishment?

It was often unclear who exactly qualified for membership of the Establishment. There were some regular obvious candidates, such as the government and international institutions. This included the Treasury, the Bank of England, the IMF, the WTO, the OECD, and the World Bank. A list of names in the *Telegraph* covering one week included David Cameron, David Miliband, Gordon Brown, Mark Carney, Sir John Major, Christine Lagarde.⁴¹³ Yet, government ministers who were pro-Leave appeared to be exempt.

Ambassadors, such as Sir Peter Westmacott, and foreign politicians, such as Barack Obama and Angela Merkel, were sometimes included. Leo McKinstry referred to Britain’s Ambassador to the US as an ‘Establishment Remainiac’.⁴¹⁴ Quentin Letts described a Remain event he attended as peopled by ‘All manner of Establishment worthies’ – though he only referred to ambassadors and politicians. ‘All of big business’ was part of this Establishment, according to Brendan O’Neill.⁴¹⁵ Although other news outlets made an exception of those who supported Brexit – ‘Blow for George Osborne: 300 top business leaders SUPPORT Brexit’.⁴¹⁶

411 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3635678/More-436-000-extra-voters-signed-vote-EU-referendum-David-Cameron-reopened-registration.html>

412 http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/463g4e5e0e/LBCResults_160614_EUReferendum_W.pdf

413 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2016/05/14/the-establishments-anti-brexite-hysterics-may-alienate-voters/>

414 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/664024/leave-Brussels-take-revenge-UK-Cameron-Obama-Brexit>

415 <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/06/brexit-debate-exposed-establishment/>

416 <http://www.express.co.uk/finance/city/670698/George-Obama-business-leaders-SUPPORT-Brexit>

The ‘EU is just a “trade union for feather-bedded limo passengers” says Patisserie Valerie boss’.⁴¹⁷ Broadcasters were also sometimes included.⁴¹⁸

Those who were, for the most part, excluded from these definitions of the Establishment included certain old Etonians (such as Boris Johnson), some Oxbridge graduates (Boris Johnson, Daniel Hannan, Michael Gove, Steve Hilton), and certain big businesses (JCB, Dyson).

However, in most cases membership of the Establishment was assumed rather than defined. It was the haves as opposed to the have-nots; Londoners compared to the rest of the country; foreign institutions or politicians as opposed to British ones. The descriptors that were appended to ‘Establishment’ or ‘elite’ help indicate who it referred to. It was the ‘political Establishment’ or the ‘economic establishment’; the ‘metropolitan elite’, ‘EU elite’, ‘ivory towered elite’, or ‘political elite’. This elite was described as ‘unelected’ and ‘self-serving’ (despite including elected politicians). Farage and others often chose to link it more directly to class distinction by talking about the ‘political class’ and the political establishment.

This elite was described as ‘sneering’ or ‘chattering’, as ‘grandees’, ‘luvvies’, ‘trust fund toffs’, ‘muppets’, ‘bien pensant’, ‘Hampstead liberals’ and ‘international panjandrums’. A single piece in the *Daily Mail* by Robert Hardman managed to include four separate pejorative references to the Establishment: metropolitan political elite, ivory-towered elite, Hampstead liberals, and ‘chattering’ metropolitan grandees.⁴¹⁹

Organisations and institutions that made claims or released research that supported arguments made by Remain, could be accused of doing so for self-interested reasons. The Institute for Fiscal Studies, for example, was accused of being a ‘paid-up propaganda arm’ of the EU by Vote Leave, after the IFS said that Brexit would damage government finances and lengthen austerity by two years. The organisation’s director responded by stating that only 10% of its income came from the grant-making European Research Council and that, ‘There is no sum of money from anywhere in the world which would influence what we said, because if it did then the

417 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/politics/1178356/the-eu-is-just-a-trade-union-for-feather-bedded-limo-passengers-says-patisserie-valerie-boss/>

418 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/frederick-forsyth/678619/Northerners-to-vote-Remain-campaign-Leave-Brexit>

419 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3636164/Revenge-betrayed-Abandoned-metropolitan-political-elite-lives-utterly-changed-mass-migration-Labour-s-northern-heartlands-swing-Brexit.html>

point of the IFS, and the reasons that we are listened to after budgets and so on, would simply be lost'.⁴²⁰

The 'Eurocrat', a portmanteau term melding 'European Union' with 'bureaucrat', was a frequent target of abuse. 157 articles used the term 'Eurocrat'. Eurocrats appeared to be anyone connected to Brussels or the European Commission – most notably linked to Donald Tusk or Jean-Claude Juncker. Remainers' were occasionally found guilty by association with Eurocrats or 'Eurocratic' institutions. The Labour MP Stephen Kinnock, for example, who - according to the *Daily Mail* - 'attended the College of Europe in Bruges, described as a 'training ground for the Eurocratic elite'' (there is no source given for this quote).⁴²¹

Experts and the Establishment

All the national news outlets regularly used 'experts' to support arguments both for and against Brexit. Over 1,200 Brexit articles referred to 'experts' during the official campaign. Up to 3 June only a small proportion of the 486 referendum articles published that referenced 'experts', associated these experts with either Remain or Leave. Yet, at the beginning of June the *Spectator* published a blog by Brendan O'Neill, the first to denigrate generalised 'faraway experts' and link them with the overall Leave narrative of a disdainful Establishment not trusting the people. Every Remain argument boils down to wanting to 'stymie the plebs', O'Neill wrote. 'This is a profoundly undemocratic argument. It says the stupid little people voted for a bad party, and therefore we need faraway experts to limit the remit of those stupid little people and their preferred party'.⁴²²

Two days later, on 3 June, Michael Gove said in an interview on Sky News that 'people in this country have had enough of experts', after Faisal Islam had listed the number of individuals and institutions that backed Remain.

After Gove's interview, the association of experts with the Establishment became more frequent. 'Far better to trust the experts

420 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/25/vote-leave-attacks-ifs-thinktank-brexit-austerity-paid-up-propaganda-arm>

421 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3636143/Greediest-snouts-EU-trough-Not-sure-vote-Read-stinking-wealth-hypocrisy-Brussels-fat-cats-Kinnocks-help-decide.html>

422 <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2016/06/every-pro-eu-argument-boils-down-to-you-cant-trust-the-plebs/>

and the political establishment, they [Remain] declare, than the ignorant masses who foolishly want back their own country,' Leo McKinstry wrote sarcastically in the *Express*.⁴²³ Allister Heath in the *Telegraph* talked about 'so-called financial experts'.⁴²⁴ Luke Johnson advised against the 'The tyranny of the status quo' in *The Times*, 'together with the massed ranks of the posh establishment shoving their version of the truth down our throats', and advised that 'Winners go against the grain, in Brexit or in business'.⁴²⁵ Trevor Kavanagh added inverted commas to 'experts' in the *Sun* on 6 June, when referring to Britain's decision to stay out of the Euro, 'against the advice of the "experts"'.⁴²⁶

The merging of experts and the Establishment also played a part in the newspapers' own view on how to vote. The *Express* told its readers to ignore the warnings of experts, who it grouped with politicians and presidents, when telling them to vote Leave: 'politicians, experts and presidents can shriek as loudly as they wish. They won't be at your side in the polling booth'.⁴²⁷ The *Sun*, on the day before the vote, accused David Cameron of selling a fantasy and falling 'back on his economic "experts" and their grim warnings'.⁴²⁸ Similar to Trevor Kavanagh, the *Sun* chose to add quote marks to 'experts'.

Commentators set expert against expert in a sort of expert one-upmanship. 'David Cameron and George Osborne claim every world expert supports Remain', Trevor Kavanagh wrote in the *Sun*, 'But listen to some real hands-on experts — such as JCB digger giant Lord Bamford and vacuum cleaner tycoon James Dyson, who have put their factories and their fortunes on the line by backing Brexit'.⁴²⁹

Yet, for many Leave supporters in the press, Gove's comments about experts were simply subsumed within the broader narrative of an Establishment conspiracy to pursue Project Fear. It was in the Remain

423 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/leo-mckinstry/678185/Brexit-not-complicated-EU-referendum-vote-leave>

424 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2016/06/03/why-banks-wont-leave-if-we-vote-for-brexit/>

425 <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/winners-go-against-the-grain-on-brexit-or-business-582x3207j>

426 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/suncolumnists/trevorkavanagh/7195390/Trevor-Kavanagh-Blame-Angela-Merkel-if-the-EU-fails.html>

427 <http://www.express.co.uk/comment/expresscomment/681115/Brexit-UK-referendum-vote-leave-EU>

428 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1321791/dont-trust-david-cameron-to-curb-immigration-and-reform-the-eu-vote-leave-tomorrow/>

429 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/opinion/1272543/brexit-is-a-once-in-a-lifetime-chance-to-escape-a-burning-building-we-should-take-it/>

supporting broadsheets that Gove's comments elicited a particularly strong reaction. In the *Guardian/Observer*, Marina Hyde, Andrew Rawnsley, Nick Cohen, Will Hutton, Stewart Lee, Polly Toynbee, Jonathan Freedland, and Michael White all railed against what they interpreted as Gove's anti-rationalism. In the *Financial Times*, Philip Stephens wrote about the former Education Secretary's 'celebration of ignorance' and asked how long it would be before Gove was 'piling books onto bonfires'.⁴³⁰ 'I don't know about you Michael,' Phil Wilson MP wrote in the *Independent*, 'but if I had an ailment I'd rather speak to a doctor than a quack'.⁴³¹

When the MP Jo Cox was murdered, just over a fortnight later, some commentators returned to Gove's comments and linked them to the emotions stirred up by the campaign. These were, Dan Hodges wrote in the *Mail on Sunday*, 'spiraling violently out of control', and were indicative of the 'bonfire of reason that now underpins the Leave campaign'.⁴³²

Yet, parallel to the debate about the value of experts, all news outlets – Remain, Leave and neutral – continued to reference experts to support one case or the other, or in connection to the polling predictions. Many 'experts' the *Daily Mail* reported on 13 June, 'have pointed out that making such predictions [as the Treasury did] so far into the future is almost impossible'.⁴³³ 'Brexit Bombshell', the *Express* reported on 14 June, 'Experts Say It Is More Than Likely Britain Will Leave The EU'. 'Experts believe his [David Cameron's] position would be untenable' if Britain votes out, the *Sun* reported on 19 June.⁴³⁴

Previous studies have found that denigrating elites and 'the Establishment' is a familiar populist approach.⁴³⁵ It creates a binary us versus them narrative. In the case of the referendum campaign it also enabled many Leave supporters to categorise those who warned about the

430 <https://www.ft.com/content/bfb5f3d4-379d-11e6-a780-b48ed7b6126f>

431 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/leave-campaign-leaders-presenting-themselves-as-champions-of-the-people-now-that-really-is-scary-a7068926.html>

432 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3648708/DAN-HODGES-Brexit-opened-Pandora-s-box-destroy-Britain.html>

433 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3639242/Brexit-nightmare-brave-new-world-MailOnline-looks-future-hold-UK-vote-June-23.html>

434 <https://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/1309179/michael-gove-and-boris-johnson-pledge-loyalty-to-david-cameron-even-if-britain-votes-for-brexit/>

435 Engesser, S., Ernst, N., Esser, F. and Büchel, F. (2016) 'Populism and social media: how politicians spread a fragmented ideology,' *Information, Communication and Society*, 20:8, 1109-1126.

potentially damaging consequences of Brexit as part of a self-interested elite. This elite self-interest was distinguished from the self-interest of the people (the 'people' being assumed to be synonymous with Britain). Indeed, the interests of the elite were presented not only as distinct from, but as contrary – even hostile – to the interests of Britain. In this way elites were not really British. This is perhaps best typified by Peter Hitchens' assessment in the *Daily Mail*: 'I can think of no other country where the elite are so hostile to their own nation, and so contemptuous of it'.⁴³⁶

436 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3648666/PETER-HITCHENS-s-faint-chance-nation-one-day.html>

An acrimonious and divisive campaign

An acrimonious and divisive campaign

The campaign leading up to the vote to remain or leave the EU on 23 June 2016 was the UK's most divisive, hostile, negative and fear-provoking of the 21st century. This was partly due to the rhetoric and approaches of the campaigns themselves, but was encouraged and enflamed by a highly partisan national media.

Remain set the campaign agenda early on – focusing on the potential damaging economic consequences of Brexit, seeking and publicising endorsements of staying in the EU from domestic and international politicians and institutions. Leave, however, successfully undermined the economic warnings of Remain by questioning the campaign leaders' honesty, their expertise, their motivation, and by presenting the whole economic narrative as a cynical strategy to frighten people into voting for the status quo.

As a consequence, Remain lost many of the benefits normally associated with agenda setting. Indeed, by the latter part of the referendum campaign Leave had managed to turn Remain's ability to set the agenda into a liability, by characterising the authoritative figures and institutions that supported Remain as self-interested, dishonest and unpatriotic.

As the campaign wore on, Leave campaign leaders and Leave-supporting news outlets began to wrest the agenda away from economic issues towards immigration. Coverage of immigration tripled over the course of the 10-week campaign and, after purdah ended, was increasingly linked to economic issues (for example: 'Soaring cost of teaching migrant children'; 'Migrants cost Britain £17bn a year'). During the final four weeks almost half of all referendum-related articles that referred to the economy also referred to immigration, as compared to just over a quarter during the first six weeks.

Immigration was sometimes discussed in the context of sovereignty, but more often coverage was direct – in other words referring to foreign people coming to, or living in, the UK. It was framed, primarily by

Leave campaign leaders and the Leave-supporting press, in almost entirely negative terms. Iain Duncan Smith, Priti Patel, Michael Gove, Boris Johnson, and Nigel Farage all made frequent negative claims about immigration and about the damaging effect of migrants on the UK. These comments, and other negative references to migrants, were covered copiously and prominently in the press. There were more leading front pages about immigration during the campaign than about the economy. Six in 10 of these immigration front pages were published by three newspapers, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Daily Telegraph*. According to Leave campaigners and these Leave-supporting news outlets, immigration and immigrants were to blame for many of the UK's political, economic and social problems.

Remain, rather than seeking to argue for the benefits of immigration to the UK or the positive case for free movement of people within Europe, chose first to play down the issue, then to emphasise their proposals to reduce migrant numbers. Eventually campaign leaders turned to criticism of Leave's anti-migrant rhetoric.

Leave campaigners and partisan news outlets strongly protested against accusations that their focus on immigration was prejudiced or intolerant. Yet, based on most definitions, it is hard not to find their claims and coverage discriminatory. Out of 111 articles that expressed a view about Turks, for example, 98% (109) were negative. Out of 90 articles that expressed a view about Albanians, 100% were negative. Three metaphors were dominant in the coverage of migrants: migrants as water ('floodgates', 'waves'), as animals or insects ('flocking', 'swarming') or as an invading force.

Sovereignty was not, as has been claimed, a more important issue during the campaign than immigration. Sovereignty was a secondary issue, discussed in the context of primary issues like the economy, immigration and healthcare. It was a way for people to talk about the political issues they cared about, and about gaining greater power over those issues, however they were defined. Hence why almost half the references to sovereignty also included references to the ambiguous Vote Leave slogan 'Taking back control'.

Other political issues were dwarfed by coverage of the economy and immigration. The implications of Brexit for each of the UK's devolved nations, for the environment, for foreign policy and defence, or for

education were all reported and editorialised far less than these two primary political issues.

Of course, national media coverage represents only one factor influencing people's decision to vote in the 2016 EU Referendum. Many people would have made up their mind before the campaign began. Others were undoubtedly guided by the views of their family, friends and colleagues. Others were swayed by digital communications sent directly to their email inbox or to their social media feed.

Direct digital communication was, according to Vote Leave's director Dominic Cummings, where the Leave campaign devoted most of its resources. Vote Leave sent, Cummings wrote, 'nearly a billion targeted digital adverts' and spent approximately 98% of their money on digital campaigning.⁴³⁷ The Vote Leave director believed that data and digital were so important to the Leave campaign that he advised future campaigners to 'hire physicists, not communications people from normal companies'.⁴³⁸ Digital communication was similarly important to Stronger In, who employed Tom Edmonds, joint director of the Conservatives' 2015 digital election campaign, and Jim Messina, who was campaign manager for Barack Obama in 2012.

Yet mainstream media, including broadcast outlets, still played at least three critical roles: directly influencing the public, indirectly influencing the public, and influencing the campaigns themselves. In terms of direct influence, mainstream media still reached almost the entire UK population on a regular basis. During the campaign itself, most national print circulations and online readership rose.⁴³⁹ As previous research in this area has shown, it is likely that mainstream media generated much of the news that was liked and shared on social networks – indirectly influencing people through sharing and via online discussion.⁴⁴⁰ Moreover, mainstream media strongly influenced politicians and campaigners

437 <https://dominicummings.wordpress.com/2017/01/09/on-the-referendum-21-branching-histories-of-the-2016-referendum-and-the-frogs-before-the-storm-2/>

438 Op.cit. <https://dominicummings.wordpress.com/2016/10/29/on-the-referendum-20-the-campaign-physics-and-data-science-vote-leaves-voter-intention-collection-system-vics-now-available-for-all/>

439 <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/abc-gures-national-press-sees-june-brexite-vote-boost-in-print-and-online/>

440 Moore, M. et al. (2015) *Election Unspun: Political Parties, the press, and Twitter during the 2015 election campaign*, London: Media Standards Trust; Moore, M. and Ramsay, G. (2015) *UK Election 2015 – Setting the Agenda*, King's College London; Krasodonski-Jones, A. (2017) *Talking to Ourselves: Political Debate Online and the Echo Chamber Effect*, Demos.

themselves, who devoted considerable time and energy to trying to shape the press agenda, or to attack opponents and defend their previous statements.

The importance of national media to politicians and campaigners comes across clearly in the various accounts of the campaign written in the months following the vote. Dominic Cummings writes about politicians' obsession with appearing on television.⁴⁴¹ Craig Oliver's published diary focuses on his daily battles to win primacy in the press and on screen.⁴⁴² *All Out War*, Tim Shipman's detailed account of the campaign, records the constant efforts of both the Remain and Leave camps to set the television and press agenda.⁴⁴³

The rancorous, bitter way in which the referendum campaign was fought was both reflected in, and enhanced by, the media coverage. The majority of media organisations that could take sides – excluding public service broadcasters bound by regulations ensuring impartiality – did so, often uncompromisingly. Their partisanship was then played out in much of their coverage – both in their selection and framing of news and in their editorials, leader columns and their choice of front-page stories. Those voices urging calm or seeking to find some consensus between the sides were rare, except in the aftermath of the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox a week before the referendum vote.

Eventually the campaign became framed as us-versus-them, pro-Establishment versus anti-Establishment, pro-immigration versus anti-immigration, nationalist versus internationalist. Rather than seek to provide a public space in which each side could fairly challenge the other, many news outlets encouraged and stoked the partisanship.

Almost a year after the referendum vote, few of the more dire economic predictions of the Remain camp had come to pass. House prices had not dropped by 18% as George Osborne predicted; Britain had not fallen into a year-long recession; there was not an emergency Brexit budget. The Bank of England, the OECD, the IMF, and the European Commission all revised their economic forecasts for the UK upwards, and said they

441 <https://dominiccumings.wordpress.com/2016/10/29/on-the-referendum-20-the-campaign-physics-and-data-science-vote-leaves-voter-intention-collection-system-vics-now-available-for-all/>

442 Oliver, C. (2016) *Unleashing Demons: The Inside Story of Brexit*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.

443 Shipman, T. (2016) *All Out War: The Full Story of How Brexit Sank Britain's Political Class*, London: William Collins.

were mistaken about the short-term impact of Brexit.⁴⁴⁴ At the same time, prominent spokespeople in favour of leaving distanced themselves from some of the campaign's most striking promises, such as spending £350 million on the NHS, and from its claims about the falling rate of immigration to the UK after Brexit.^{445 446}

Yet much of the acrimony, partiality and suspicions of dishonesty that characterised the campaign has remained. The consequences of the EU Referendum campaign are still being played out, and will continue to be throughout the period that Britain negotiates its departure from the EU and beyond. The implications of a divisive, antagonistic and hyper-partisan campaign – by the campaigners themselves as much as by many national media outlets – is likely to shape British politics for the foreseeable future.

444 <https://www.ft.com/content/ee90b7e4-f1-11e6-8758-6876151821a6>

445 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/eu-referendum-tory-campaigner-admits-brex-it-immigration-some-control-a7102626.html>

446 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/sep/10/brexit-camp-abandons-350-million-pound-nhs-pledge>

Methodology

Methodology

This report is based on a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of online news articles about the EU Referendum campaign, over a 10-week period from the start of the ‘official’ campaign on 15 April 2016, until polling day on 23 June. The research was – except where otherwise stated – conducted using the digital news analysis tool Steno, which was used to gather over 350,000 articles, of which 98,090 were identified as relevant for this study (see below). A system of tagging was then used to designate articles for further analysis, and tags based on an adapted version of the Ipsos MORI Issues Index were used to establish coverage of selected areas of public policy.

Sampling

All text articles published on 20 national news outlets were collected from 15 April 2016 until 23 June. The 10-week period was selected by counting back from polling day, so each week ran from Friday to Thursday (therefore Week 10 covered Friday 17 June to Thursday 23 June). The beginning of the period (Friday 15 April) also marked the beginning of the official campaign period and the point at which both designated campaigns – Britain Stronger In Europe and Vote Leave – became subject to campaign spending rules.

Selected publications and outlets were chosen on the basis of two criteria: that they were national and UK-oriented in their scope; and that they publish articles based on news reporting on a daily basis (as such, it also includes the digital output of some weekly print magazines). Two eligible publications were not included in the sample: the *i* and the *Metro*. The *i* was not included due to the fact that, although ownership of the title has passed from Independent News and Media to Johnston Press, it still replicates some content generated by the *Independent*. The *Metro* was not included due to the fact that, while it is widely distributed across

the country, its availability is not universal. There is, however, scope for inclusion of these titles in future research of this type.

The list of outlets comprises four groups as defined by their initial platform:

Broadcasters*

BBC: bbc.co.uk/news

ITV: itv.com/news

Channel 4: channel4.com/news

Sky News: news.sky.com

* The analysis is of text articles published on broadcasters' websites, not video or audio content

Newspapers

The *Daily Mail*: dailymail.co.uk

The *Daily Express*: express.co.uk

The *Daily Mirror* (also includes the *Sunday People*): mirror.co.uk

The *Daily Star* and *Daily Star Sunday*: dailystar.co.uk

The *Daily Telegraph*: telegraph.co.uk

The *Financial Times*: ft.com

The *Guardian*: theguardian.com/uk

The *Independent*: independent.co.uk

The Times (including *The Sunday Times*): thetimes.co.uk

The *Sun*: thesun.co.uk

News magazines

The *Economist*: economist.com

The *New Statesman*: newstatesman.com

The *Spectator*: spectator.co.uk (including blogs.spectator.co.uk)

Digital-only

Buzzfeed UK: buzzfeed.com/?country=uk

Huffington Post UK: huffingtonpost.co.uk

Vice UK: vice.com/en_uk

The Steno system is configured to gather content and metadata (headline, byline, date/time, etc) from news sites and to store them in a structured

way. URLs published on these sites within the sample time period were collected by purpose-built scrapers and stored for retrieval by researchers for analysis. Each article is stored as a single, unique case, and so commands, tags and scripts (see below) are applied individually to each eligible article in a file. Articles are extracted by date range using a graphical user interface (GUI) and added to database files. For the purposes of this study, the 10-week sample was split across five data files, each spanning a fortnight.

Pre-written and tested scripts are then applied to the database files. The scripts consist of a small number of commands including simple Boolean operators (such as 'AND', 'OR' and 'NOT') applied to strings of text in each article. For example, a single line from the script used to tag all articles that make specific recommendation to the EU Referendum reads as follows:

```
content: (referendum AND (eu OR europe OR european)) => TAG Brexit
```

This command applies the tag 'brexit' to any article that fulfils the conditions of containing, within the main text (metadata = 'content'), the text string 'referendum' as well as any of the phrases 'eu', 'Europe' or 'European'. This specific line sits as part of a full script that applies a series of similar commands to apply the 'brexit' tag to any article that is eligible or potentially eligible. In practice, the scripts are designed to be inclusive, and any articles that are incorrectly tagged are later corrected by researchers. The Steno GUI allows researchers to tag and untag articles manually, as well as using automated scripts.

Preparing datasets for analysis – workflow

The process of gathering and analysing digital news content using Steno consists of a series of chronological steps: collecting the raw data (outlined above); deleting irrelevant content and duplicate articles; applying tags; and cleaning and verifying datasets.

Deleting irrelevant content

Since Steno gathers every URL published on sampled news sites, a large proportion of the data is ineligible for analysis, either in general – because it does not qualify as news content, or is duplicate – or in the context of the specific study. The latter depends on the focus of the analysis; for example, sport, travel or food articles are not included in an analysis of public policy. Apart from a small number of duplicate articles, which are detected by ordering headlines or URLs in alphabetical order and deleted manually, the step of bulk-deleting ineligible articles is done automatically using a specially configured script. In the current project, the script was amended to ensure that all articles that may be relevant through some reference to the referendum were retained, as the following truncated script fragment shows:

```
pub: dailymail section: books => DELETE
pub: dailymail urls: /sport/ => DELETE
pub: dailymail urls: /money/ -content: brexit OR (eu AND referendum) OR (european AND
referendum) => DELETE
pub: dailymail urls: /event/ => DELETE
pub: dailymail urls: /travel/ => DELETE
```

[...]

```
pub: dailymail section: 'world news' -content: brexit OR (eu AND referendum) OR (european
AND referendum) => DELETE
```

NB: the command ‘-content’ acts as a ‘NOT’ operator, therefore the final line specifies that all *Daily Mail* articles in the section ‘world news’ will be deleted unless the main text of the article contains any of the conditions following.

Once this process is complete, the dataset is reduced to a more manageable size, consisting of all eligible news articles. In practice, in the current project this reduced the amount of articles for analysis by approximately 72%, from 351,166 individual URLs in total, to 98,090 news articles.

Applying tags

The central component of the research process using Steno is the application of tags to articles, so that through isolating those articles that contain tags, frequencies and trends can be identified, and deeper content analyses can be applied to subsets of articles. As the fragments displayed above show, tags are applied either on the basis of strings of text (for example, any article containing the phrase ‘illegal immigrants’ can be allocated an ‘immigration’ tag) or on the basis of metadata, usually headline content, URL content, or ‘section’ content which is collected according to the structure of the website concerned (some sites had a bespoke ‘eu referendum’ section, all of which could be reliably tagged as ‘brexit’).⁴⁴⁷

This means that, where quantitative analyses are based on tagging, they describe the number of articles where a specific tag was identified, not necessarily the core focus of the article. For instance, an article listing different campaign positions on a series of policy areas may include text that activates the ‘economy’ tag, as would an article that was specifically about an announcement of a new policy by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Tagging in this instance is an effective way of measuring how many articles mention an issue, without accounting for the specific focus of each article (if there is one).

The main tagging exercises in this study cover two areas: policy issues, and individual campaign figures. The campaign figures simply denote which names or titles appear (e.g. ‘boris johnson’ or ‘boris’; ‘david cameron’ or ‘cameron’ AND ‘prime minister’, etc). Identifying which policy issues appear in articles requires a more sophisticated script, one which has been developed out of the Ipsos MORI Issues Index,⁴⁴⁸ in

447 It must also be noted that the Steno software takes into account ‘stemming’ of words, so a search for ‘school’ will also generate results for ‘schools’ and ‘schooling’. This also works for possessives. In some instances this could result in erroneous results – for example, searches for the term ‘establishment’ also produces results for ‘establish’ and ‘established’. Researchers were careful to be aware of potential issues in this area and to eliminate incorrect search results or amend scripts to reduce the instances of errors.

448 <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2420/Issues-Index-Archive.aspx>

conjunction with Ipsos MORI, and refined over a series of news analysis projects.⁴⁴⁹

The list of policy issues selected for analysis were:

- ♦ Immigration/immigrants
- ♦ NHS/health
- ♦ Economy/finance (including taxation and public spending)
- ♦ Defence/foreign affairs
- ♦ Crime/law and order (not including single instances of crime)
- ♦ Education/schools
- ♦ Welfare
- ♦ EU/Europe
- ♦ Environment
- ♦ Transport
- ♦ Local government
- ♦ Devolution/constitutional reform
- ♦ Fuel and energy
- ♦ Housing

Tags were not mutually exclusive; an article about public spending on education would hypothetically be likely to include both the ‘economy’ and ‘education’ tags. In practice, there is a degree of overlap in ‘energy’ and ‘environment’ tagging.

Above all of these in the present study was the ‘brexit’ tag described above, which sought to isolate those articles in which some reference to the referendum was made. Many of the analyses in this study relate to the subset of articles containing the ‘brexit’ tag. The breakdown of data is as follows:

449 Moore, M. et al. (2015) *Election Unspun: Political Parties, the press, and Twitter during the 2015 election campaign*, London: Media Standards Trust http://mediastandardstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Election_Unspun_July_2015.pdf; Moore, M. and Ramsay, G. (2015) *UK Election 2015: Setting the Agenda*, CMCP Research Report, London: King’s College London <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/CMCP/MST-Election-2015-FINAL.pdf>; *Climate Unspun* (with openDemocracy): <https://www.opendemocracy.net/climateunspun>; Anaya, L. and Ramsay G. (2016) *Uganda: Online News and Twitter Coverage of the 2016 Election* (with Article 19) <https://www.article19.org/data/files/medialibrary/38455/Uganda---News-and-Twitter-Coverage-of-the-Election.pdf>

- ♦ Total articles (all URLs gathered by scrapers): 351,166
- ♦ All eligible news articles: 98,090
- ♦ All articles containing one or more issue tag(s): 30,581⁴⁵⁰
- ♦ Eligible articles with 'brexit' tag: 14,779

Manual cleaning and verification of datasets

While the majority of the tagging applied via Steno is accurate and produces reliable results, some tags are simpler and more precise in their application than others. For example, while immigration is easy to identify through a relatively small number of recurring words and phrases ('migrants', 'asylum seekers', etc.) some tags are more difficult to apply on the basis of text strings alone. Education and crime/law and order are difficult in this regard. In recognition of the need for precision in tagging, researchers manually scan through the list of articles to which each tag has been applied, removing tags where they have been erroneously applied. This is the most time-consuming part of the analysis, and requires experienced content analysts familiar with the tagging scripts, but is necessary to ensure that the end result is a series of reliable datasets.

Additional analyses

Economy and immigration

Other, more in-depth analyses of aspects of news content are included in this study. In particular the project looks specifically at the coverage of two policy areas that emerged as central during the referendum campaign: the economy and immigration. The analyses in each of these sections is partly based on the automated tagging that is the core of the Steno process, and partly through additional measurements.

Economy

The section on the economy uses a number of additional analyses, including searching article content and headlines for specific words

⁴⁵⁰ Not including 'sovereignty' – see below.

or phrases, such as ‘desperate’ or ‘project fear’. Articles fulfilling these conditions are found using the manual command function in Steno (for example, the command ‘headline: ‘project fear’’ would identify all such articles).

In addition, a series of ‘arguments’ either advanced specifically by each of the designated campaigns or their affiliates, or made within the text of an article were identified. The lists of selected arguments were created through an iterative process of identifying claims that were repeated throughout the campaign, or which were associated with specific high-profile news events related to the campaign. Commands were created in order to identify articles in which each argument was made. Once identified, researchers manually checked whether the argument was included in each article and, if so, applied an indicator tag (r1, r2, r3, ... etc. for ‘Remain’ arguments; l1, l2, l3... for ‘Leave’ arguments), which allowed the frequencies of these arguments to be retrieved easily. The arguments, and the commands used to identify them, are listed in two tables below:

‘Remain’ arguments

Osborne/Treasury: Brexit to cost households £4,300	[DATE RANGE] + (4300 OR 4,300) tags: brexit tags: econ
Brexit will lead to cuts to NHS	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: nhs tags: econ (threat OR cuts)
Brexit will cause mortgage rates to rise	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: econ mortgage
Brexit will cause house prices to fall	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: econ ‘house prices’
Obama ‘Back of the queue’ remark	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: econ obama AND queue
IFS forecasts or reports	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: econ content: IFS AND (forecast OR study OR report OR model)
CBI forecasts or reports	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: econ content: (cbi OR ‘confederation of british industry’) AND (forecast OR study OR model OR report)

IMF forecasts or reports	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: econ content: (imf OR 'international monetary fund') AND (forecast OR study OR model OR report)
OECD forecasts or reports	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit tags: econ content: oecd AND (forecast OR study OR model OR report)
Combined reports from above	[DATE RANGE] + tags: (r6 OR r7 OR r8 OR r9) [NB: r6-r9 denotes the tags applied to the preceding four arguments for the purpose of collaction]

'Leave' arguments

Leaving will free up £350m a week	[DATE RANGE] + tags: brexit, tags: econ content: 350
The £350m will be used to pay for the NHS	[DATE RANGE] tags: l1 tags: nhs
Rising cost of teaching migrant children	[DATE RANGE] tags: brexit tags: econ migrant children
Britain will prosper economically outside the EU	[DATE RANGE] tags: econ tags: brexit content: (prosper outside)
'Economists for Brexit' statements in support	[DATE RANGE] tags: econ tags: brexit 'economists for brexit'
Criticism of past or present modelling by Treasury/IMF/BoE/IFS	[DATE RANGE] tags: econ tags: brexit ('bank of england' OR treasury OR imf OR ifs) (model OR forecast OR predict) (wrong OR minford)
Leaving will improve/save pensions	[DATE RANGE] tags: brexit tags: econ content: (pension OR pensions OR pensioners)
Leaving will increase wages/salaries	[DATE RANGE] tags: brexit tags: econ ('pay rise' OR 'higher wages' OR 'raise wages' OR 'wage increase' OR 'wages will rise' OR 'increase in wages' OR 'wages will be higher')
Economic strain on public services from EU membership/immigration	[DATE RANGE] tags: econ tags: brexit tags: imm 'public services'

Britain will thrive economically outside the EU	[DATE RANGE] tags: econ tags: brexit thrive AND (outside OR leave) -content: prosper [NB: designed not to duplicate articles from the 'prosper economically' argument above]
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Immigration

The additional analysis in the Immigration section is largely done in the same way as tagging scripts are used in automated analysis – by manually directing Steno to find specific strings of text. This was used in the analysis of vocabulary used by different news outlets when speaking about immigration – where a reiterative process of scanning articles tagged ‘immigration’ identified a dictionary of adjectives used when migrants were mentioned. These phrases and words were then run through Steno’s manual command line, for example:

Tags: imm content: ‘swamped’

Which gave the number of articles which had been allocated the ‘Immigration’ tag (‘imm’ in the tagging script). These articles could then be checked manually to ascertain that the phrase was indeed used in conjunction with a description of migrants. This process was conducted for each of the vocabulary terms covered in the Immigration section above. A similar process was also used to identify things for which migrants were blamed (e.g. housing shortages, strains on public services, etc.).

Sovereignty

To establish the extent to which sovereignty featured in EU Referendum coverage, all articles containing references to one or more of these legal aspects of sovereignty were recorded. This was done by compiling all articles in which certain phrases were used.

Table 28: Phrases used to locate articles mentioning sovereignty

Category of Sovereignty	Phrase(s)
General issues of sovereignty	Sovereign Sovereignty
UK power to make laws/legislation	'make our own laws' 'make our own legislation' 'make... own... laws' ⁴⁵¹ 'write... own... laws'
General issues of obtaining control	'take control' ⁴⁵² 'take back control'

Once articles containing these phrases were located, they were scanned to determine whether the phrases were being used in the correct context. In almost all instances, incorrectly selected articles were those using the word 'sovereign' to denote sovereign debt/bonds/wealth, or references to the Queen's legal status. These articles were not considered for analysis.

As well as article content, headlines were also analysed to determine the extent to which sovereignty was a leading issue deemed worthy of making headlines. All headlines in EU Referendum articles containing the following words were gathered:

- ♦ Sovereignty/sovereign
- ♦ Law/laws/legislation
- ♦ Autonomous/autonomy
- ♦ Regulation/regulations

Headlines were then recorded as being valid if these words were used in the context of Britain's relationship with the EU. For example, headlines about potential breaches of electoral law by campaigners were not included, nor were headlines about financial regulation, where no reference to Europe was made.

451 The Steno software has capacity to fill in blanks if certain possessives ('its', 'their,' etc.) separate target words.

452 Due to Steno's word-stemming function, searches for 'take' also include instances of 'taking'.

Newspaper front pages

This report also contains an analysis of print newspaper front pages during the campaign. Newspaper front pages were collected from the following sources:

- ♦ Factiva
- ♦ Scoopnest
- ♦ The BBC's daily 'The Papers' blog
- ♦ The British Library's newspaper microfilm collection
- ♦ The 'Tomorrow's Newspapers Today' Tumblr (<http://suttonnick.tumblr.com/>)

Once collected, the main front-page story was selected (where multiple front page stories appear, the story presented most prominently – via position or headline font size – was chosen), and the corresponding full story retrieved in digital form from the Steno database.

Front-page stories were then categorised on the basis of whether or not they referenced the EU Referendum. Of those stories, it was recorded whether they mentioned economic issues, or immigration. A small number of front-page stories mentioned both.

Data availability

All the data collected and used for this study has been kept for the purposes of review. Certain articles, which have since been removed from the corresponding news sites, have been kept by the researchers for reference.

Appendix:

Links to selected data

Newspaper front pages

All newspaper front-page headlines over the 10-week campaign published in the main national editions of the sampled newspapers are collated here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qIWp5QXnzmIrJWHPQwrFsUDNdAOzazLbVE2IjkE08GE/edit#gid=0>

References to selected nationalities

All articles referring to selected nationalities in the context of immigration are compiled in the following document, which also identifies which articles contained negative or positive framing (or both), and where migrants are quoted directly. Articles which contain references to more than one nationality are included in multiple relevant worksheets:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/115YyAJh3Jb49Jpd8Xdw6EvWdYTOhwNL43PR85ifwZrc/edit#gid=0>

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