

# Should we stay or should we go?

What students think about the forthcoming referendum on the UK's membership of the EU:  
Wave One of the HEPI / YouthSight Monitor

Nick Hillman



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YouthSight

HEPI Report 80



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## Executive summary

University leaders have adopted a clear stance in favour of the UK remaining a member of the European Union (EU), while also promising that higher education institutions will host free and fair debates and encourage their students to vote.

As part of the first wave of a new HEPI / Youthsight Monitor, we questioned over 1,000 full-time undergraduate students about the forthcoming referendum on the UK's membership of the EU.

Seven out of 10 (70%) students say they would vote for the UK to stay in the EU in a referendum held tomorrow. There is no difference in support for membership by gender, although male students were more likely than female students to back leaving (17% against 11%) and less likely to be undecided (13% against 19%).

Students are not a lost cause for those campaigning for the UK to leave the EU. Around one-third of students say they have given the topic only 'little thought' (21%) or 'no thought at all' (13%) and a similar proportion say they hold their views 'not very strongly' (27%) or 'not strongly at all' (6%). Six out of 10 students say they have followed the debates 'not very closely' (41%) or 'not closely at all' (19%).

One-in-ten (11%) students who would vote to stay in the EU in a referendum held tomorrow admit to giving the issue 'no thought at all', compared to one-in-20 (5%) of those who would vote to leave. While there is evidence that students

who say they would vote to leave are firmer in their views than others, they comprise only a small minority of all full-time undergraduate students.

The overwhelming majority of students from the UK (89%) believe they are registered to vote. Around two-thirds of students (63%) say they are only registered to vote at home and one-in-eight (12%) say they are only registered to vote at their place of study, with 22% registered in both places.

When asked to plot how likely they are to vote on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 meaning 'will definitely not vote' and 10 'will definitely vote', 75% of UK students chose between 6 and 10, including 46% who opted for 10 'will definitely vote'. A majority of those who would vote to leave in a referendum held tomorrow and a majority of those who would vote to stay say they are certain to vote (55% and 51% of UK students, respectively) but only 20% of those who are undecided say the same.

Some support for a lower minimum voting age for the referendum was revealed in the survey, but it lagged behind support for the *status quo*. Asked to respond on a scale of 1 (16 and 17-year olds 'shouldn't be allowed to vote') to 5 ('should be allowed to vote'), 44% opted for 1 or 2 and 34% opted for 4 or 5. Less opposition was found among respondents from Scotland (29% of whom opted for 1 or 2 and 57% of whom opted for 4 or 5). The experience of giving 16 and 17-year olds the vote at the Scottish referendum may have helped to popularise the idea.

A big majority of students think university leaders should encourage students to vote in the referendum: while 77% say they should, only 10% say they should not, with the balance (13%) opting for 'don't know'. There was no real difference in the results for those who intended to vote to stay and those who intended to vote to leave.

There is substantial opposition to university leaders telling their students how to vote, with fewer than one-third of students (29%) believing this is appropriate and nearly two-thirds (63%) thinking it is not. Younger students are a little keener on universities advising their students how to vote, but it still amounts to only around one-in-three (35%) of those aged 18 or under.

When asked whether their university has 'a duty to host debates with speakers for the UK being part of the EU', 44% of students agreed and 30% disagreed. When asked a similar question about 'speakers against the UK being part of the EU', the results were not very different (40% agreed and 34% disagreed). However, the results were strikingly different when students were asked if their university has 'a duty to host debates with speakers for and against the UK being part of the EU', with 60% agreeing and only 21% disagreeing.

Half of students (50%) say Universities UK's strong support for the country's continued membership of the EU will make no difference to how they vote in the referendum, but one-third (32%) say it will make them more likely to vote for the UK to remain in the EU and only 4% say it will make them less likely to do so.

Students from other EU countries are treated the same as local students for the costs of tuition. There was considerably more support than opposition for the current arrangements. However, those who 'strongly support' (21%) or 'support' (27%) the rule still did not quite amount to an overall majority – although in Scotland, the figure was 59%.

Almost half of students (47%) said they would be more likely to vote to stay in the EU if David Cameron proved able to achieve 'meaningful reforms' during the renegotiation on the terms of the UK's membership of the EU, while 29% said it would have no effect.

However, the results also suggest 42% of the 13% of students intending to vote for the UK to leave the EU – which amounts to just 6% of all students – could swing to the 'in' side on the back of a successful renegotiation of the UK's terms of membership.

Meanwhile, an unsuccessful renegotiation could see 12% of the 70% of students who would vote for the UK to stay in an EU referendum held tomorrow change sides – 8% of all students.

Universities UK (UUK) have taken a position that is strongly in favour of the UK's continued membership of the EU. This reflects the clear and settled will of the vice-chancellors that it represents. The organisation does not speak on behalf of other people in the higher education system, such as students. Yet the position they have taken of favouring the UK's continued membership of the EU while also promoting free and fair debate on campus does nonetheless seem to reflect the views of students.



## Introduction

The higher education sector has been at the forefront of the campaign to ensure the United Kingdom (UK) remains part of the European Union (EU). Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow, President of Universities UK, has said: 'In the referendum debate, universities must stand up and be counted. We should be a powerful and positive voice on the benefits of EU membership.'<sup>1</sup>

This stance is clearer than that taken during the 2014 referendum on independence for Scotland, when the higher education sector tended to remain above the affray. Anton Muscatelli, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow, said: 'During the independence debate, the University of Glasgow, like the other universities in Scotland, has adopted a strictly neutral stance. There are good reasons for that. First and foremost, this important decision belongs to the people of Scotland. Second, as a charitable body we should remain neutral.'<sup>2</sup>

The greater clarity shown by university leaders over the European question has been attacked for pushing the debate in one direction. At the launch of Universities for Europe in July 2015, one journalist asked: 'Isn't there something rather bogus about this event, rather unhealthy; even, dare I say it, un-academic?'<sup>3</sup> Such concerns may reflect a misunderstanding encouraged by nomenclature: Universities UK does not directly represent all who work or study in universities. It is the representative body for institutional leaders (as its

previous name the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals made clear). It would not be doing its job properly if it did not convey in some way the positive views held by the overwhelming majority of vice-chancellors towards the European project.

The Universities for Europe group established by Universities UK is now campaigning on five themes, as shown in the box below.

### **Universities for Europe's five themes**

1. The European Union supports British universities to pursue cutting-edge research leading to discoveries and inventions which improve people's lives
2. The European Union supports British universities to grow businesses and create jobs
3. The EU makes it easier for UK universities to attract talented students and staff who contribute significantly to university teaching and research and benefit the UK economy
4. The European Union helps universities to provide more life-changing opportunities for British students and staff
5. The EU provides vital funding to the UK's most talented researchers, supporting their work in areas from disaster prevention to curing cancer.<sup>4</sup>

While Universities UK have chosen to take a strong position in favour of the UK's continued membership of the EU, they have said universities will be a place for robust debate on this as on other issues: 'We want university campuses to be places for debate and our academics to provide academic expertise to all sides [as the referendum approaches]. University students will be encouraged to debate, to register to vote, and to exercise their right to have a say on the day.'<sup>5</sup>

The Prime Minister has described the European referendum as ‘perhaps the most important decision the British people will have to take at the ballot box in our lifetimes.’<sup>6</sup> Yet, while we know a great deal about what vice-chancellors think about it, we know much less about what students think.

The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) exists to encourage a healthy higher education policy debate rooted in evidence. Rather than taking one side or the other on the European question, we hope to encourage well-informed debate as the referendum approaches. To this end, we have worked with a market research company that specialises in questioning students, YouthSight, to uncover:

- students’ views and depth of feeling on the EU;
- their likelihood of voting in the referendum;
- whether 16 and 17-year olds should be allowed to vote;
- students’ preferences on how universities should act in the referendum campaign;
- their views on the current student finance rules for students from the EU; and
- their opinions on the Prime Minister’s renegotiation on the terms of UK membership.

## **The HEPI / YouthSight Monitor, Wave 1**

YouthSight questioned 1,005 full-time students in higher education in the first half of October 2015. Further information about the research methodology is provided in the Appendix and the full results are available from HEPI.<sup>7</sup>

The headline results below generally include all respondents, which means they include a small number of international students who will not be entitled to vote in the referendum. However, this makes little difference to the results and the data are also available from HEPI for UK students only.

Where a student's place of residence makes a material difference to the results, as on whether or not they are registered to vote, the results are shown for UK students only.

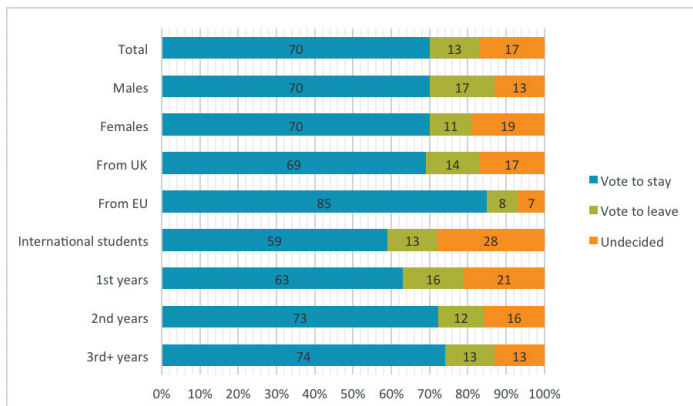
The results are weighted by gender, year of study and institution type – unweighted results are also available from HEPI. The margin of error on the poll is +/-3%. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

The poll was undertaken as the first wave of a new HEPI/YouthSight Monitor, which will poll students three times a year on topical issues.

## What do students think of the UK remaining within the EU?

Students were asked whether they would vote for the UK to remain a member of the EU if a vote 'were being held tomorrow'. The overwhelming majority (70%) said they would vote to stay. A greater proportion (17%) said they were undecided than said they would vote to leave (13%).

*If the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU) were being held tomorrow, how would you vote?*



Base: All respondents (1,005)

This result confirms other evidence about students' views on European issues, such as the limited support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) among students. According to a British Election Study survey, UKIP came fifth among students at the 2014 elections to the European

Parliament despite coming first across the country as a whole.<sup>8</sup> A YouGov survey undertaken in August 2015 found: 'younger, middle class, graduates tend to be pro-EU, older, working class, less well educated people tend to be anti-EU.'<sup>9</sup>

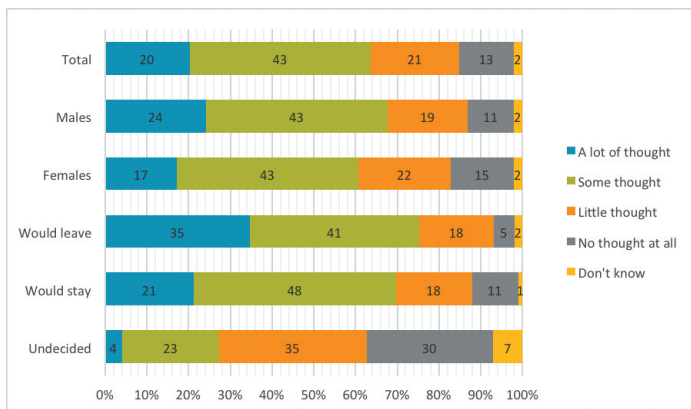
Although 70% of both men and women backed the option of remaining within the EU, male students were somewhat more likely than female students to back leaving (17% versus 11%) and somewhat less likely to be undecided (13% against 19%). Students from other EU nations, who will not generally have a vote at the referendum, were keener than others on the UK remaining within the EU: 85% of students from other EU nations backed the UK remaining a member, compared to 69% of those from the UK and 59% of those from elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> So students who travel to the UK from another EU country for undergraduate study seem to particularly favour the formal ties that bind EU nations together.

First-year students were less likely to vote to remain within the EU (63%) than those in later years (74% for those in their third year or beyond). However, this disparity reflects a higher proportion of 'don't knows' (21% versus 13%) more than it does greater support for leaving (16% versus 13%).

The big majorities among students for wishing to remain within the EU do not mean students are a lost cause for those campaigning for the UK to leave. Many students have not yet given the topic much attention or followed the debates closely, and many have yet to develop strong views on the issue.

For example, only one-in-five students have given the question of the UK's place in the EU 'a lot of thought'. Although 43% have

*How much thought have you given the question whether the UK should stay or leave the EU?*



Base: All respondents (1,005)

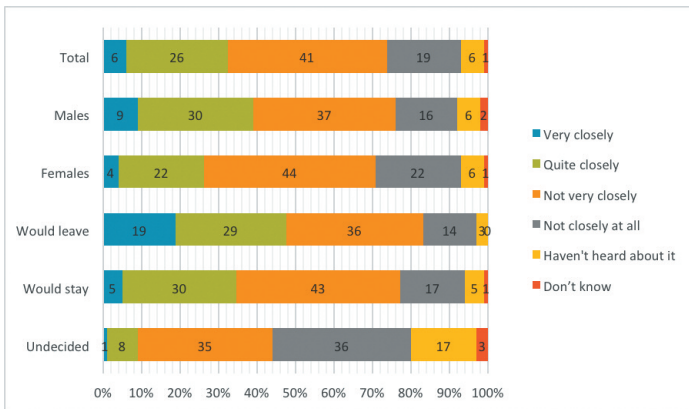
given it ‘some thought’, around one-in-three say they have either given it ‘little thought’ (21%) or ‘no thought at all’ (13%).

The proportion of those who have given the topic ‘a lot of thought’ is notably higher among those who say they would vote to leave the EU (35%) than for those who would vote to remain inside it (21%). One-in-nine (11%) of those who would vote to stay in the EU in a referendum held tomorrow admit to giving the issue ‘no thought at all’, compared to one-in-20 (5%) of those who would vote to leave.

A mere 6% of students say they have been following the debates around the UK’s membership of the EU ‘very closely’,

while a further 26% say they have been following the debates 'quite closely'. A higher proportion of students (41%) say they have been following the debates 'not very closely' with a further 19% opting for 'not closely at all'. Only 6% of students 'haven't heard about it', with just 1% opting for 'don't know'.

*How closely have you been following the debates around the UK's membership of the EU?*



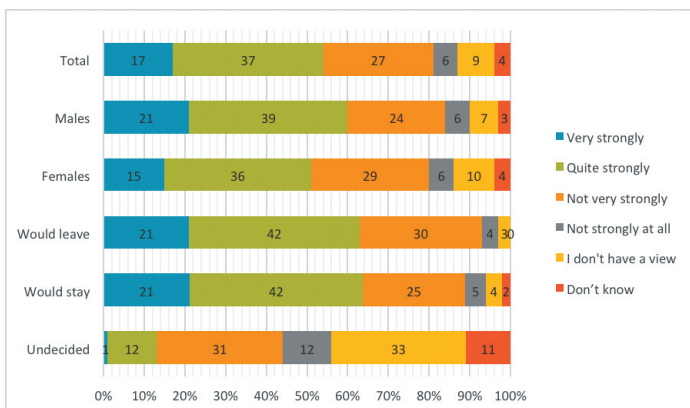
Base: All respondents (1,005)

The results on how closely students have been following the debates differ by gender. While 39% of male students say they are closely following the debates (9% 'very closely' and 30% 'quite closely'), only 26% of female students say the same (4% 'very closely' and 22% 'quite closely'). Again, the results also differ for those who say they would vote to leave, 47% of whom say they are following the debates 'very closely' (19%) or 'quite closely' (29%), compared to 35% of those who would vote to stay (5% and 30% respectively).



Students were also quizzed on the strength of their views on the UK's membership of the EU. Those who say they hold their views 'very strongly' (17%) or 'quite strongly' (37%) outnumber those who say 'not very strongly' (27%) or 'not strongly at all' (6%). There was, once more, a gender difference – for example, 21% of male students opted for 'very strongly' compared to only 15% of female students. Unlike many of the other questions, the results for this question were very similar for those who say they would vote for the UK to stay in the EU and those who say they would vote for the country to leave the EU.

*How strongly do you hold your views on the UK's membership of the EU?*



Base: All respondents (1,005)



## Likelihood to vote

The new individual electoral registration system, which has replaced the old household registration system, has prompted the Leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, and others to express concern about the impact on students, who typically live nomadic lifestyles.<sup>11</sup> The shift has caused headaches for Electoral Registration Officers, who have a legal obligation to register people to vote, and means new challenges for higher education institutions. But the impact on students in the run up to the 2015 general election is thought to have been less profound than was initially feared.<sup>12</sup>

The survey asked students if they are registered to vote. The vast majority of students from the UK believe they are registered to vote (89%). Most of the rest (7%) think they are not but 4% are unsure. There is a somewhat greater likelihood of being registered among:

- female students (92% compared to 86% for male students);
- slightly older students (93% for those aged 22 and over but 83% for those aged 18 and under);
- those out of their first year of study (92% for those who are in at least their third year versus 85% for freshers); and
- those who say they are likely to vote in the referendum (94% versus 75% for those who are unlikely to do so).

Among students who are registered to vote, nearly two-thirds (63%) say they are registered to vote at home and only one-in-eight (12%) say they are registered to vote at their place of study, with a further 22% registered at both places and 3% saying they 'don't know'.

The greater likelihood of being registered at home than at a term-time address confirms evidence from the 2015 general election.<sup>13</sup> But, in one important respect, it is of less importance for the referendum as tactical voting is less of an option in a national plebiscite with only two options compared to a constituency-based election using First Past the Post. However, many students on the electoral roll at their home address when our survey was undertaken may be removed when the transitional procedures for the new electoral registration systems come to an end in December 2015.

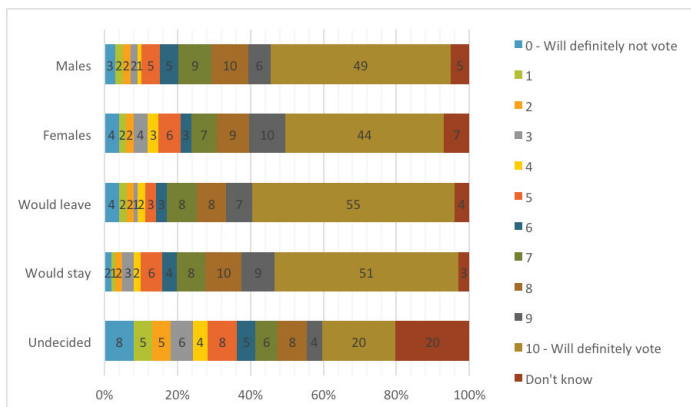
If students are more likely to be registered to vote at their home address than their university address (or *vice versa*), then this could affect how many students vote in the referendum, depending on whether it is held in term-time or holidays. Either way, the use of postal votes and encouragement for students to use the online registration system could reduce the risk of a lower turnout among students in the referendum.

When asked how likely they are to vote in the referendum on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 representing 'will definitely not vote' and 10 'will definitely vote', the vast majority of students say

they will exercise their democratic right. Among UK students, only 19% chose from 0 to 5 while 75% chose from 6 to 10, with 46% choosing 10.

UK female students were marginally less likely to think that they will vote than UK male students: 72% of female and 79% of male students from the UK opted for 6 to 10; 21% of female students and 16% of male students from the UK opted for 0 to 5. A majority of both those who would vote to leave in a referendum held tomorrow and those who would vote to stay say they are certain to vote (55% and 51% of UK students, respectively). However, only 20% of those who are undecided plumped for 10.

*How likely do you think it is that you will vote in the EU referendum?*

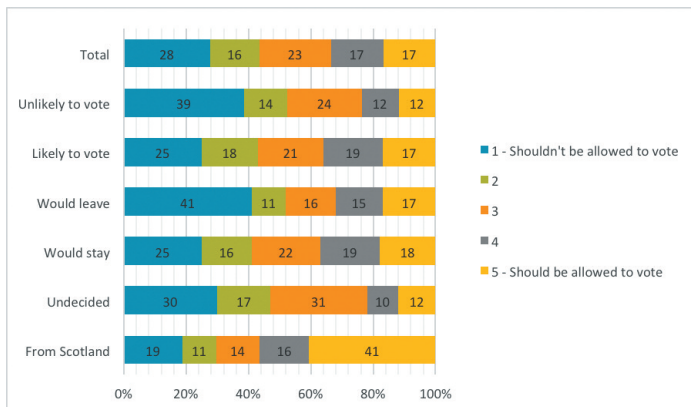


Base: UK students (839)

The survey included a question on whether people aged 16 and 17 should be allowed to vote in the referendum. Although the usual minimum voting age is 18, it was 16 for the referendum on Scottish independence and there have been demands for a lower voting age for the EU referendum too. The House of Lords voted in favour of the idea in November 2015.<sup>14</sup>

Some support for a lower minimum voting age was found in the survey, but it lagged behind support for the status quo. Asked to respond on a scale of 1 (16 and 17-year olds ‘shouldn’t be allowed to vote’) to 5 (‘should be allowed to vote’), 44% opted for 1 or 2 and 34% opted for 4 or 5 – with a mean response of 2.8.

*Some people have argued that 16 and 17-year-olds should be able to vote in the referendum. On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you agree that they should be allowed to vote?*



Base: All respondents (1,005)

Greater opposition for extending the franchise to younger voters was seen among those who were unlikely to vote (53% opted for 1 or 2 and 24% of 4 or 5) and those who planned to vote to leave if a referendum were held tomorrow (52% of whom opted for 1 or 2 and 32% for 4 or 5). Lower opposition was found among respondents from Scotland (29% opted for 1 or 2 and 57% opted for 4 or 5, with a mean of 3.5). The experience of giving 16 and 17-year olds the vote at the Scottish referendum may have helped to popularise the idea.





## **How universities should interact with students over the referendum**

A big majority of students think university leaders should encourage students to vote in the referendum: while 77% say they should, only 10% say they should not, with the balance (13%) opting for 'don't know'. There was no real difference in the results for those who had decided to vote to stay and those who had decided to vote to leave.

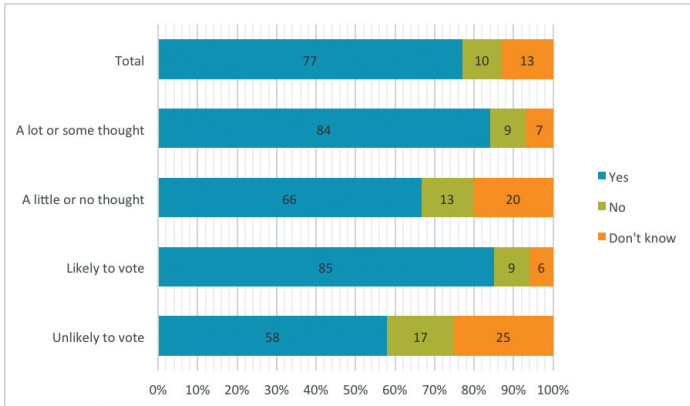
Students who are engaged with the European question are more likely to think university leaders should encourage students to vote:

- among students who have given the EU issue 'a lot' or 'some' thought, 84% say university leaders should encourage students to vote, compared to 66% of those who have given it 'little' or 'no' thought; and
- similarly, 85% of those who say they are likely to vote agree university leaders should encourage students to vote, compared to 58% of those who say they are unlikely to vote.

There is much less support for university leaders telling their students how to vote, with fewer than one-third of students (29%) believing this is appropriate and nearly two-thirds (63%) thinking it is not. Younger students are a little keener on universities advising their students how to vote, but it still amounts to only around one-in-three of the age group:

- among those aged 18 or under, 35% think universities

*Do you think university leaders should encourage their students to vote in the referendum?*



Base: All respondents (1,005)

should advise their students how to vote while 55% disagree (10% don't knows); and

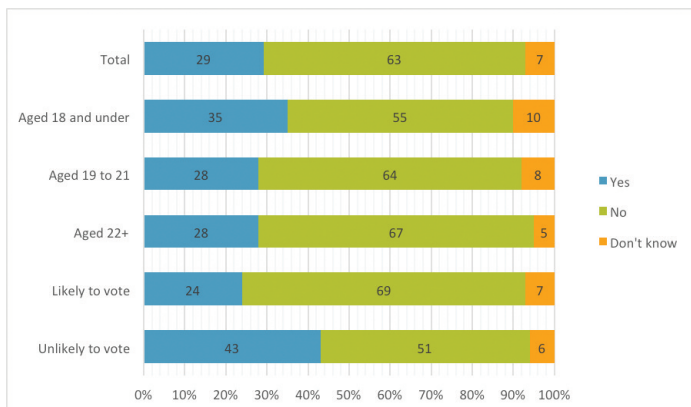
- among those aged 22 or over, 28% think universities should advise their students how to vote while 67% disagree (5% don't knows).

There is a notable difference in the results on this question between those who are likely to vote in the referendum and those who are unlikely to do so:

- 24% of those who expect to vote think universities should advise their students on how to vote but 69% disagree; and

- among those who are not expecting to vote, 43% think universities should tell their students how to vote while around half (51%) disagree.

*Do you think university leaders should advise their students how to vote in the referendum?*



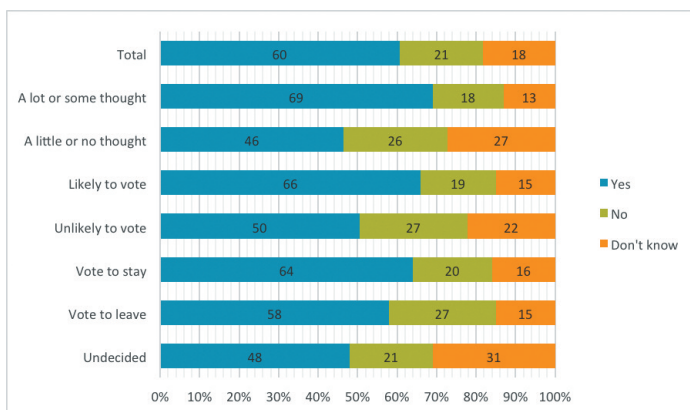
Base: All respondents (1,005)

It is unlikely that any university would wish to instruct their students how to vote, even if it were legal for them to do so. But it could nonetheless help motivate the substantial minority of students who are not expecting to vote in the referendum – though it could also prove counterproductive by annoying others.

When asked whether their university has 'a duty to host debates with speakers for the UK being part of the EU', 44% agree and 30% disagree with 26% saying they 'don't know'. When asked a similar question about 'speakers against the UK being part of the EU', the results are comparable, with 40% agreeing and 34% disagreeing (26% 'don't know').

The results are strikingly different, however, when students were asked whether their university has 'a duty to host debates with speakers for and against the UK being part of the EU'. This time, 60% of students agreed and only 21% disagreed. So the university sector's commitment to hosting debates with speakers from both sides clearly matches the desire of a majority of their full-time undergraduate students.

*In your opinion, does your university have a duty to host debates with speakers for and against the UK being part of the EU?*

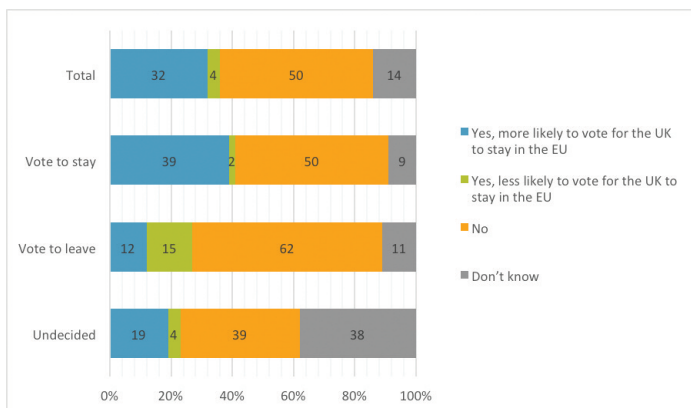


Base: All respondents (1,005)

Given the strong commitment of Universities UK to the country's continued membership of the EU, the survey asked students whether this might influence the way they vote in the referendum.

One-third of students (32%) say it will make them more likely to vote for the UK to remain within the EU, while just 42 people out of the total 1,005 respondents (4%) said it would make them less likely to do so. Exactly half (50%) said it would make no difference, while the remaining 14% did not know.

*The body that represents university vice-chancellors, Universities UK, is currently urging people to vote for the UK to stay inside the EU. Is this likely to influence how you would vote?*



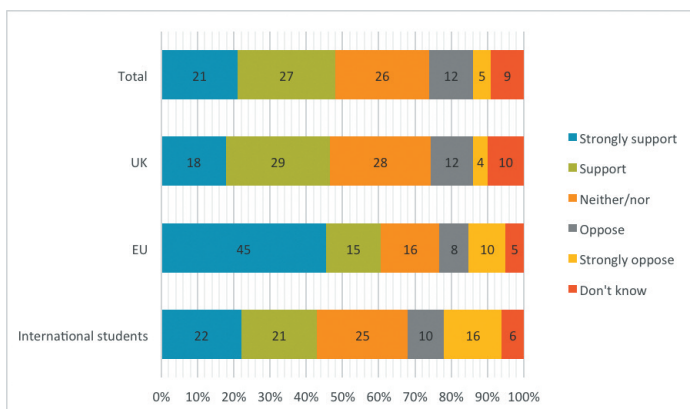
Base: All respondents (1,005)

Undergraduates from other EU countries studying in England have their tuition fees capped at £9,000 and are entitled to tuition fee loans on the same basis as English students. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, students from other EU countries

also face the same tuition arrangements as local students. As these arrangements would be reconsidered if the UK left the EU, the survey asked respondents whether they support or oppose the fee cap for students from other EU nations.

There was considerably more support than opposition for the fee cap for EU students. However, those who ‘strongly support’ (21%) or ‘support’ (27%) the rule did not quite amount to an overall majority (although in Scotland it reached 59%). Moreover, on this question there were some notable differences depending on a student’s background. While 18% of students from the UK ‘strongly support’ EU students having the same fee cap as home students, 45% of EU students do. Those least keen on the rule were international students from outside the EU, who generally pay higher fees and are not entitled to a tuition fee loan.

*Do you support or oppose the fee cap for students from other EU countries?*



Base: All respondents (1,005)

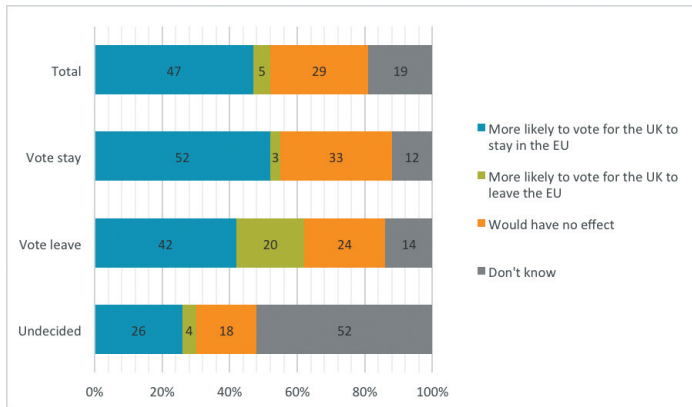
## **The Prime Minister's renegotiation**

The referendum will take place after the Government has concluded its attempt to renegotiate the terms of EU membership for the UK. The survey asked about this process, but it is important to note that the responses were given before the publication of the letter from the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, to the President of the European Commission, Donald Tusk, outlining what the UK's reform proposals are.<sup>15</sup> There are differences of opinion about the letter. On the one hand, Donald Tusk says it will be 'very, very tough' to reach a deal.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Eurosceptic Conservative MPs have asked 'Is that it?' and described it as 'pretty thin gruel'.<sup>17</sup>

The survey sought students' views on whether the renegotiation process could affect how they will vote. Almost half (47%) said they would be more likely to vote to stay in the EU if David Cameron was able to achieve 'meaningful reforms', but 29% said it would have no effect. One-in-twenty students (5%) said meaningful reforms would make them less likely to vote to remain within the EU. This may reflect a fear that was expressed by some people before David Cameron sent his letter that renegotiation might mean the UK Government seeking to exempt the UK from EU employment rules.

The results for this question differ depending on how the respondents answered the earlier question on how they intended to vote if a referendum on EU membership were held tomorrow.

*Imagine the EU referendum was being held tomorrow, and the Prime Minister, David Cameron, managed to achieve meaningful reforms when renegotiating the terms of the UK's membership of the EU. How would this affect your vote?*

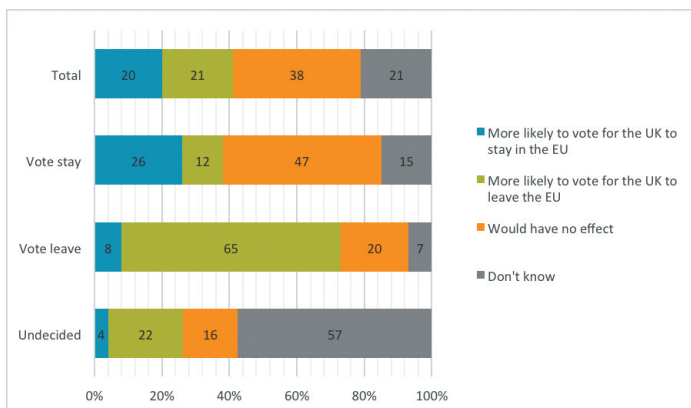


Base: All respondents (1,005)

As only 13% of all full-time undergraduate students would vote in favour of the UK leaving the EU in a referendum held tomorrow and under half (42%) of this group expect to change their vote from leave to stay on the basis of a successful renegotiation by the Prime Minister, this suggests only 6% of students could swing to the 'in' side.



*And now imagine the referendum was being held tomorrow, and David Cameron hadn't managed to achieve meaningful results when renegotiating the terms of the UK's membership of the EU. How would this affect your vote?*



Base: All respondents (1,005)

On the other hand, an unsuccessful renegotiation could see 12% of the 70% of students who would vote for the UK to stay in an EU referendum held tomorrow change sides – or 8% of all students.

If the opinion polls for the whole country are right in signalling a rough balance between those who could vote for the UK to remain in the EU and those who could vote for the country to leave and if other voters resemble students, then the outcome of the renegotiation could clearly have an impact on the outcome.



## Conclusion

On the UK's membership of the EU, students lean more towards staying than leaving when asked how they would vote in a referendum held tomorrow. However, many students:

- have given the subject 'little thought' (21%) or 'no thought at all' (13%);
- have followed the debate 'not very closely' (41%) or 'not closely at all' (19%); and
- hold their views 'not very strongly' (27%) or 'not strongly at all' (6%).

While 70% of male and 70% of female students would vote for the UK to remain in the EU in a vote tomorrow, there are some notable gender differences in the results. Overall, female students are somewhat less certain in their views than men. So, arguably, they could be more responsive to the campaigning.

There is some evidence that those students who say they would vote to leave are firmer in their views than others. They say they have given the issue more thought, are following the debate more closely and are more likely to vote. They are clearly an important subset but they make up only a small minority of students.

Students think universities should encourage students to vote and encourage debate on campus but the vast majority of them do not think their institution should tell them how to

vote. On balance, they do not support the extension of the franchise to 16 and 17-year olds for the referendum. There was also support for the *status quo* on the fee cap for EU students.

Universities UK have taken a position that is strongly in favour of the UK's continued membership of the EU. This reflects the clear and settled will of the vice-chancellors that it represents. The organisation does not speak on behalf of other people in the higher education system, such as students. Yet the position they have taken of favouring the UK's continued membership of the EU while also promoting free and fair debate on campus does still reflect the views of students.

# Appendix: Methodology

## Sample definition

The sample comprised students defined as follows:

- Full-time
- Undergraduates
- All years (1, 2 and 3+)
- Studying at UK HEIs

## Sample size

Total = 1,005

## Quotas

Quotas were set on gender, university type and year of study, based on HESA data. Weights were applied post-fieldwork to ensure the sample was balanced and reflective of the population at an overall level (please see Analysis section for further details).

## Screening questions

No screening questions were included.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by HEPI with suggestions from YouthSight. On average, the questionnaire took 8 minutes to complete.

## Incentives

All completers received a £1 incentive in the form of an Amazon gift voucher.

## Schedule

The fieldwork took place between the 5th and 14th October 2015.

## Outputs

Outputs were provided in both weighted and unweighted form.

## Weighting

We have weighted the data to ensure the full-time sample was representative by gender, year of study, and institution type (Russell Group, Pre 92, Post 92/specialist).

Targets for the weights were acquired using data for the 2012/13 academic year (the most recent available) supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

To prevent the results of groups that are under-represented being overly inflated, a cap of 2.0 has been applied to weighting factors. Any excess targets from the weighting (i.e. those that would naturally have a weighting factor above 2.0) are proportionally distributed amongst the remaining cells, and this process is repeated until the overall target is reached.

## Panel data/Breaks available

Results from the survey are presented in a tabulated format using the following breaks:

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Nationality I (broad level)
4. Nationality II (world regions)
5. Home region
6. Social grade I (split out)
7. Social grade II (combined)
8. Year of study
9. University type
10. Subject group
11. Subject area
12. Looked at teaching (where applicable)

13. Engagement with the EU (where applicable)

14. Likelihood to vote (where applicable)

15. Vote (where applicable)

## EU referendum

TEXT:

We now want to move on to a slightly different topic. As you might have read, there will be a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU) before the end of 2017.

**Ask all**

**Q9. How much thought have you given the question whether the UK should stay or leave the EU?**

Please select one answer only

A lot of thought

Some thought

Little thought

No thought at all

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q10. How closely have you been following the debates around the UK's membership of the EU?**

Please select one answer only

Very closely

Quite closely

Not very closely

Not closely at all

Haven't heard about it

Don't know

**Q10a. How strongly do you hold your views on the UK's membership of the EU?**

Please select one answer only

Very strongly

Quite strongly

Not very strongly

Not strongly at all

I don't have a view

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q11. Are you registered to vote?**

Please select one answer only

Yes

No

Don't know

**Ask all that answered 'Yes'/code 1 at Q11**

**Q11a. And are you registered to vote...**

At home

At university

Both

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q12. How likely do you think it is that you will vote in the EU referendum?**

Please select one answer only

10 PT SCALE FROM 0 = Will definitely not vote  
to 10 = Will definitely vote + Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q13. If the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU) were being held tomorrow, how would you vote?**

Please select one answer only

Stay in the EU

Leave the EU

Undecided

**Ask all**

**Q14. Do you think university leaders should encourage their students to vote in the referendum?**

Please select one answer only

Yes

No

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q15. Do you think university leaders should advise their students how to vote in the referendum?**

Please select one answer only

Yes

No

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q16. In your opinion, does your university have a duty to host debates with speakers for the UK being part of the EU?**

Please select one answer only

Yes

No

Don't know



**Ask all**

**Q16a. In your opinion, does your university have a duty to host debates with speakers against the UK being part of the EU?**

Please select one answer only

Yes

No

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q16b. In your opinion, does your university have a duty to host debates with speakers for and against the UK being part of the EU?**

Please select one answer only

Yes

No

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q17. The body that represents university vice-chancellors, UniversitiesUK, is currently urging people to vote for the UK to stay inside the EU. Is this likely to influence how you would vote?**

Please select one answer only

Yes, more likely to vote for the UK to stay in the EU

Yes, less likely to vote for the UK to stay in the EU

No

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q18. Currently, undergraduates from other EU countries studying in England have their tuition fees capped at £9,000 and are entitled to tuition fee loans on the same basis as English students. International students from outside the EU pay higher fees and are not entitled to loans.**

**Do you support or oppose the fee cap for students from other EU countries?**

Please select one answer only

Strongly support

Support

Neither/nor

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q19. Imagine the EU referendum was being held tomorrow, and the Prime Minister, David Cameron, managed to achieve meaningful reforms when renegotiating the terms of the UK's membership of the EU.**

**How would this affect your vote?**

Please select one answer only

More likely to vote for the UK to stay in the EU

More likely to vote for the UK to leave the EU

Would have no effect

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q20. And now imagine the referendum was being held tomorrow, and David Cameron hadn't managed to achieve meaningful results when renegotiating the terms of the UK's membership of the EU.**

**How would this affect your vote?**

Please select one answer only

More likely to vote for the UK to stay in the EU

More likely to vote for the UK to leave the EU

Would have no effect

Don't know

**Ask all**

**Q21. Some people have argued that 16 and 17-year-olds should be able to vote in the referendum. On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do you agree that they should be allowed to vote?**

Please select one answer only

5 PT SCALE WITH 1 = Shouldn't be allowed to vote AND 5 = Should be allowed to vote

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup><http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/UniversitiesbackstayinginEurope.aspx#.VkhC2GDVvFK>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.scotsman.com/news/anton-muscatelli-no-sign-of-debate-intimidation-1-3468544#ixzz3rUf9izUF>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/news-blog-universities-europe-launch-sees-michael-crick-and-chuka-umunna-clash>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.universitiesforeurope.com/about-us/Pages/home.aspx>

<sup>5</sup><http://blog.universitiesuk.ac.uk/2015/10/12/europe-universities-and-the-british-people-5-reasons-why-eu-membership-matters/>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.politicshome.com/home-affairs/articles/news/read-david-camerons-speech-outlining-his-four-key-eu-reform-demands>

<sup>7</sup> The poll was in two parts. The first section questioned students on university teaching, and these results will be issued by HEPI elsewhere. The second section focussed on the EU.

<sup>8</sup> British Election Study Post-Election Internet survey May-June 2014.

<sup>9</sup><https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/09/22/eu-referendum-state-public-opinion/>

<sup>10</sup> 'British, Irish and Commonwealth citizens over 18 who are resident in the UK, along with UK nationals who have lived overseas for less than 15 years. Members of the House of Lords and Commonwealth citizens in Gibraltar will also be eligible, unlike in a general election. Citizens from EU countries - apart from Ireland, Malta and Cyprus - will not get a vote.'  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887>

<sup>11</sup><http://press.labour.org.uk/post/130135691169/speech-by-jeremy-corbyn-to-labour-party-annual>

<sup>12</sup><http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Do-students-swing-elections.pdf>;  
<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2015/10/15/students-2015-general-election-make-difference/>;  
<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2015/03/11/get-students-registered-vote-matters-paul-blomfield-mp/>

<sup>13</sup><http://www.youthsight.com/student-vote-series-labour-dominated-the-student-vote-ukip-and-lib-dems-soundly-rejected/>

<sup>14</sup><http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34860150>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/475679/Donald\\_Tusk\\_letter.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/475679/Donald_Tusk_letter.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34803222>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/eureferendum/11985483/EU-referendum-David-Cameron-sets-out-his-demands-to-Europe-live.html>





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### **President**

Bahram Bekhradnia

The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) exists to encourage a healthy higher education policy debate rooted in evidence. Rather than taking one side or the other on the European question, we hope to encourage well-informed debate as the referendum approaches. To this end, we have worked with a market research company that specialises in questioning students, YouthSight, to uncover:

- students' views and depth of feeling on the EU;
- their likelihood of voting in the referendum;
- whether 16 and 17-year olds should be allowed to vote;
- students' preferences on how universities should act in the referendum campaign;
- their views on the current student finance rules for students from the EU; and
- their opinions on the Prime Minister's renegotiation on the terms of UK membership.

HEPI was established in 2002 to influence the higher education debate with evidence.

We are UK-wide, independent and non-partisan.

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