

Testing the EU referendum question You are in the EU referendum section Home EU referendum On this page The proposed referendum question How we assessed the proposed referendum question What we found Our reports First published: 25 June 2019 Last updated: 1 August 2019 Overview We commented on the intelligibility of the proposed referendum question. We recommended that the question should be amended to: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" Remain a member of the European Union Leave the European Union The Government and UK Parliament accepted our changes in the House of Commons on 7 September 2015. The proposed referendum question The proposed referendum question included in the European Union Referendum Act was: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?" "A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd?" The response options to this question were 'yes' or 'no'. How we assessed the proposed referendum question We looked at the proposed question from the perspective of voters. We wanted to see if it was written in a way that voters could easily understand and answer. As well as looking at the question ourselves, we gathered evidence to help us with our assessment. This included: carrying out research with voters from different backgrounds and across different areas, through focus groups and one to one interviews asking for advice from experts on accessibility and plain language talking to potential campaign groups, other interested groups and individuals, including political parties who may want to campaign at the referendum What we found We found that the question was written in plain language and was easy for people to understand and answer. However, we had concerns that the question encouraged voters to consider one response more favourably than the other. This could raise concerns about the legitimacy of the result of the referendum. Our research with the public had also indicated that the question needed to make the UK's current EU membership status clear. Our assessment suggested that it was possible to ask a question which would not cause concerns about neutrality, whilst also being easily understood by including both outcomes – remain and leave – in the question and using these as the answer options instead of yes/no. Our reports You can download our reports. Full report of our views on the referendum question (PDF) Report on our research with voters which informed our views on the question (PDF) Previous research Previous research We also carried out research into a question on the UK's membership of the European Union in 2013, after a Private Members' Bill triggered it. The question in this Bill was: "Do you think that the United Kingdom should be a member of the European Union?" The response options to this question were 'yes' or 'no'. We found that this question could lead to misunderstanding, as some people were not clear about the UK's current EU membership status. Amending the question to make the UK's current membership status clear while keeping 'yes' and 'no' as the response options made some people think the question was biased. We set out two recommendations to Parliament in our report. If Parliament wants to retain 'Yes' and 'No' as the response options, we recommended the question should be amended to: a) "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?" If Parliament decides not to retain a 'Yes' and 'No' question, we recommended: b) "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" We also undertook additional research to explore any issues raised by moving away from a 'Yes' and 'No' question. This confirmed that question b) above was clear and straightforward for voters, and was the most neutral wording from the range of options we considered and tested. Our reports You can download our reports. Read the research report from our previous EU referendum

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