Referendum question research   You are in the Our research section Home Our research On this page Our role in referendum questions Guidelines for assessing referendum questions Checklist Our approach to referendum questions Questions or feedback First published: 28 June 2019 Last updated: 4 September 2020 Overview of our role in referendum questions For referendums in the UK, we look at the way the proposed referendum question is worded to make sure it is easy for voters to understand. As part of our assessment, we carry out research with the public. Our role in referendum questions By law, we must comment on the intelligibility of UK, national and regional referendum questions, and some local government referendum questions. This is a requirement of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. In this context, we mean referendums where voters are asked to vote on a proposal that government has put forward. At this type of referendum, voters are given a ballot paper that contains the question or questions and at least two possible responses to choose from. How many responses voters can vote for depends on the voting system used at that referendum. We have developed these guidelines to: help us assess how intelligible a proposed question is help people draft intelligible referendum questions In this context, 'question' includes the question, the responses, and any statement that comes immediately before the question. Guidelines for assessing referendum questions A referendum question should present the options clearly, simply and neutrally. It should be: easy to understand to the point unambiguous It should avoid: encouraging voters to consider one response more favourably than another misleading voters Checklist We will use the following checklist to help us assess how intelligible a question is. Is the question written in plain language? That is, language that: uses short sentences (around 15 to 20 words) is simple, direct and concise uses familiar words, and avoid jargon or technical terms that would not be easily understood by most people Is the question written in neutral language, avoiding words that suggest a judgement or opinion, either explicitly or implicitly? Is the information contained in the question factual, describing the question and the options clearly and accurately? Does the question avoid assuming anything about voters' views? Our approach to referendum questions Assessing the intelligibility of referendum questions Questions or feedback If you have any questions or feedback about these guidelines, you can contact us.