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For further information on IF's work please contact Liz Emerson:

Intergenerational Foundation
19 Half Moon Lane
London SE24 9JS
0044 (0)7971 228823
@inter_gen

www.if.org.uk
liz@if.org.uk

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Foreword

The EU Referendum has highlighted the existence of a range of divisions in our society: geographical divides, class-based divisions, those based on strength of national identity as well as those based on ideas about how best to achieve and maintain economic stability and prosperity, both at a national and personal level. However, one of the most salient divisions that the Referendum result has displayed is the generational divide: younger people in the United Kingdom were far more likely to vote to Remain than older generations. This timely and detailed report published by the Intergenerational Foundation presents a nuanced and insightful analysis which addresses why many Millennials voted to Remain. The key contribution of this report is the multi-faceted analysis, which successfully gives us an insight into young people's voting behaviour, but also the non-essentialising way that the results are presented to highlight the complexity behind the differences in generational voting. The report is the most detailed analysis we have to date of why young people voted as they did, and as such is an instrumental tool in understanding the range of variables that have shaped this outcome.

Brexit itself, and the societal divides it has conveyed, is a rich terrain for researchers. This report in particular makes a valuable contribution to both academic literature and policy through its diligent and thorough analysis of a range of factors that shaped voting in and *within* the Millennial group. This in turn means that we can learn from Brexit and ensure that young people will have a chance to shape the future that they want in a post-Brexit era.

Dr Manmit Bhambra

Generation Brexit
European Institute
London School of Economics and Political Science



Executive Summary

This paper sets out to answer the following questions through a review of existing research into the EU referendum and original quantitative analysis of data from Waves 8 and 9 of the British Election Study (BES), an academic panel survey of voting behaviour which has a nationally representative sample of over 20,000 people:

- How did the different generations vote in the EU referendum?
- Why did Millennials favour Remain?
- How did different types of Millennials vote?
- What kind of post-Brexit deal would Millennials be likely to accept?

How did the different generations vote in the EU referendum?

The findings aligned with previously published research into generational voting: the older someone was, the less likely they were to support Remain. Within the BES Wave 9 sample 66.4% of Millennial voters (also called Generation Y) backed Remain, compared with 49.9% of Generation X voters, 43.2% of Baby Boomers and 40.8% of voters in the pre-1945 Generation.

Why did Millennials favour remain?

Millennials overwhelmingly favoured Remain even though they disproportionately face a number of acute economic challenges such as stagnant wages, high housing costs and insecure work, whereas a majority of Baby Boomers – Britain’s wealthiest generation on average – voted to Leave.

The variables that led to the largest increase in the odds ratio of someone voting Remain were:

- Belonging to an ethnic minority
- Being educated to university level
- Living in Scotland
- Having a household income above £60,000 per year
- Holding a “Very strongly European” national identity

The variables that led to the largest increase in the odds ratio of someone voting Leave were:

- Having no qualifications
- Being White British
- Suffering from a health problem or disability
- Holding a “Very strongly British” national identity



This suggests that Millennials didn't favour Remain because of their youth per se; they did so because their generation disproportionately contains people who are highly-educated and non-white, and also because they report feeling a weaker attachment to traditional notions of British national identity. Furthermore, Millennial support for Remain could be a generational effect rather than an age effect. If this is the case, then the growing share of the British population which is university educated and non-White British could push public opinion in a more pro-European direction over the coming decades.

How did different types of Millennials vote?

This report identified four different “tribes” of Millennial voters:

- **Eurosceptics (31.9%)**
- **Affluent Pro-Europeans (28%)**
- **Celtic Pro-Europeans (8%)**
- **Left-Wing Pro-Europeans (32.1%)**

This analysis suggests that the roughly one-third of Millennial voters who favoured Leave were predominantly motivated by concern over immigration and a strong sense of British national identity.

However, the pro-Remain Millennials were a coalition of three distinct groups: highly-educated young workers who were concerned about the economic risks of Brexit; young adults in Scotland and Wales who disliked the implied increase in Westminster's power over the UK created by Brexit; and less affluent young adults who appear to support the EU because of concerns about social and environmental justice.

What kind of post-Brexit deal would Millennials be likely to accept?

When asked to name their most important issue in determining how they would vote in the EU referendum, almost one in three Millennials chose the economy, a significantly higher share than in any other generation. They were significantly less concerned about either immigration or national sovereignty and EU bureaucracy than any of the older generations. This implies that Millennials would favour a “soft” Brexit which minimises the harm that economic forecasts suggest Britain's economy would suffer from a “hard” Brexit.

The distinct “tribes” will also have their own particular preferences for post-Brexit policies, such as greater devolution to Scotland and Wales for Celtic Pro-Europeans and greater environmental and social protection for Left-Wing Pro-Europeans.



2. What do we mean by “generation”?

A generation has been described as “a group of people who share a time and space in history that lends them a collective persona” (McCrindle, 2009); therefore, generations are distinct from age groups (which mathematically divide a population by maintaining an equal interval of years between each group, e.g. 20–29, 30–39 etc.) or birth cohorts (which simply define people by the years in which they were born, e.g. all of the people born in 1973 comprise the 1973 birth cohort), as they are based on sociological distinctions which assume that the members of a generation are united by sharing a distinctive set of experiences and attitudes.

Dividing a population into generational groups is a somewhat subjective process, as there is no definitive classification of how many different generations are alive at one time or how precisely they should be defined. Although the German sociologist Karl Mannheim is widely credited with pioneering the analysis of different generations as distinct sociological units in his seminal 1923 essay *The Study of Generations*, until relatively recently the differences between generations had received little attention from social scientists compared to gender, racial and class differences between people (Pilcher, 1994).¹ However, the raised profile of intergenerational fairness in recent years has resulted in generational differences receiving more attention; one of the most comprehensive attempts to classify the different generations within the UK has been undertaken by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, which divided the UK’s population into four distinct generations on the basis of social attitudes surveys which suggested that there were significant differences in the majority opinions which members of each generation hold (Ipsos MORI, 2013). These four generations were as follows:

Generation	Years of Birth	Approximate age on EU Referendum day
Millennial (Gen Y)	1980–2000	Under 36
Generation X	1966–1979	36–50
Baby Boomers	1945–65	51–70
Pre-1945	Before 1945	71 and above

Although these classifications are not universally accepted (some analysts draw a distinction between early and late Baby Boomers, for example), the Ipsos MORI model is based on robust evidence, and when we undertook our analysis this model was supported by the appearance of significant differences in both demographic characteristics and attitudes between these four groups which will be discussed in subsequent sections of this report. Fig.1 displays the number of people in the BES Wave 9 sample – the main data source used in the analysis in this report – who belonged to each of these generations:

¹ Although generational differences have for a long time been of interest to the marketing and advertising professions as a means of segmenting their audience: for example, the term “Millennials” first appeared in an article in the trade publication *Advertising Age* in 1993.

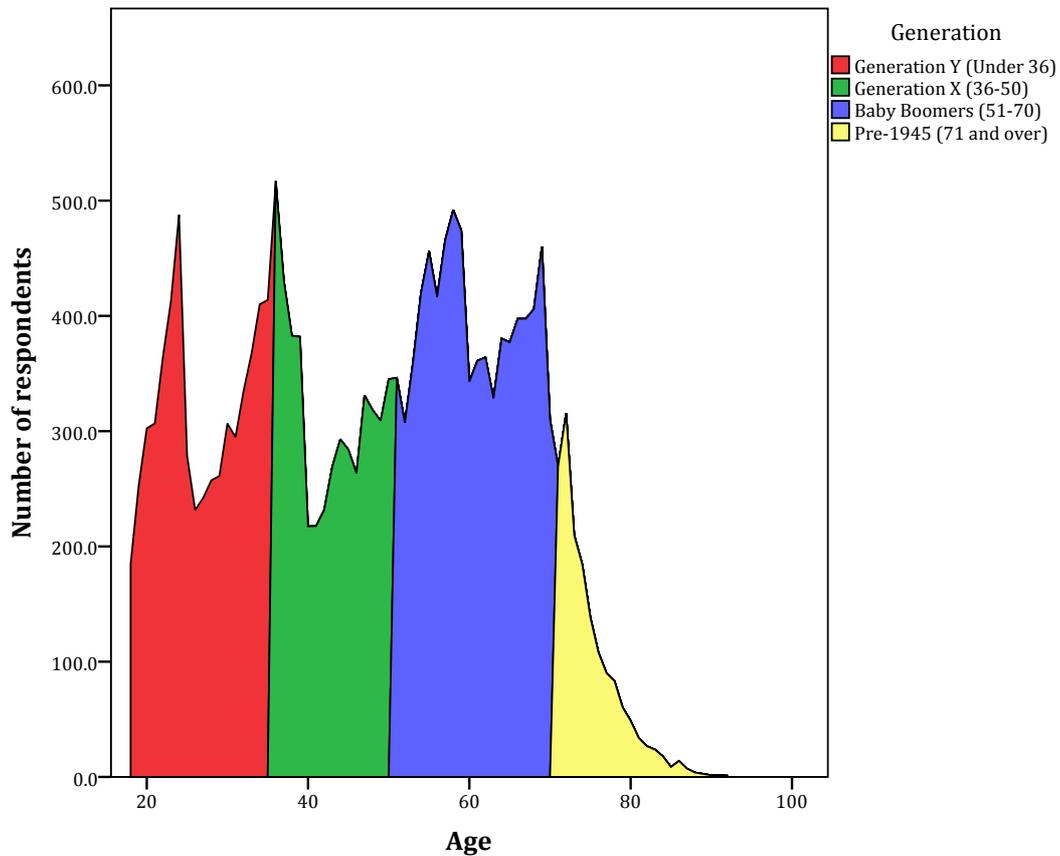


Fig.1 How the BES Wave 9 sample decomposes into the four generations used in this study

The BES sample is designed to be nationally representative, and although, like all social survey samples, it isn't perfect, it broadly reflects the sizes of the different generations within the EU referendum electorate. For example, it clearly illustrates that the Baby Boomers were the largest generation in terms of the number of people who were eligible to vote, while the Pre-1945 generation had far fewer voters than any of the others. It also highlights that within the generation which this report mainly focuses on, the Millennials, the participants in the BES sample were unevenly distributed across different ages, with relatively large numbers in their early twenties and early-to-mid thirties, and relatively fewer participants in their mid-twenties. As the BES was interested in investigating peoples' electoral behaviour, under-18s were omitted for obvious reasons.

The Millennials are the main focus of this report because IF's work is concerned with exploring the socio-economic problems affecting young people in British society. Including everyone under the age of 36 (meaning they have been born since 1980), this definition manages to capture the alternative name that this age group are often given, "Thatcher's children", very effectively. They are a generation who grew up in the wake of the Thatcher government's transformative impact on British society and then had to endure the impact of the post-2008 economic crisis while most of them were relatively near the beginning of their working lives. As subsequent sections of this report will demonstrate, they are a unique generation in a number of ways, particularly as they are both the most racially diverse and the most highly educated generation in British history. However, as this report will also go on



to demonstrate, there is a substantial amount of evidence to show that they are disproportionately affected by a number of structural economic problems that are more severe than they were for previous generations, particularly the stagnation of working-age incomes among younger workers in Britain's labour market and reduced opportunities to buy their own homes or build up pension wealth. There are also differences in their social attitudes, particularly regarding politics, which will be explored as well.

Now that the different generations have been clearly defined, subsequent sections of this report address how and why they voted differently in the EU referendum, the degree of variation that there was among Millennial voters, and what they might want out of Brexit.



3. How did different generations vote in the EU referendum?

The day after the EU referendum the *Huffington Post* published an article whose headline emotively claimed that the young had been “Screwed by Older Generations” (Ridley, 2016). This was written in response to YouGov’s referendum day poll which suggested that 75% of voters aged 18–24 had backed Remain, while 71% of those who were over 65 had chosen to support Brexit.

Although it’s impossible to know the true levels of support for Leave and Remain among different generations for certain, a number of post-referendum polls have since appeared which unanimously agreed that Millennials heavily supported Remain. These were consistent with pre-vote polls which had overwhelmingly suggested that younger people evinced much higher levels of support for the EU (Sloam, 2016). To give some examples:

- The final YouGov EU Referendum poll of 5,455 UK adults; which was undertaken on referendum day; found that 71% of 18–24 year olds had given their votes to Remain and 64% of over-65s had voted for Leave (YouGov, 2016).
- The Lord Ashcroft poll of 12,369 adults that was also undertaken on referendum day showed that 73% of 18–24 year olds and 62% of 25–34 year olds voted Remain, whereas 60% of over-65s voted for Leave (Lord Ashcroft Polls, 2016).
- A Survation poll of 1,033 adults that was undertaken for the *Mail on Sunday* the day after the Referendum suggested that 45.7% of 18–34 year olds had voted for Remain *once you accounted for non-voters* (the issue of turnout is discussed further below) (Survation, 2016).

All of these polls identified an age gradient in terms of the percentage of people within each age group who supported Leave or Remain, with support for Leave increasing as age increased and vice-versa. However, these polls all involved smaller samples than the BES Wave 9 dataset, and they looked at age groups instead of generations.

Fig.2 displays data from the BES Wave 9 sample ($n=18,423$, error bars=95% CI)² which have been arranged by generation and referendum vote. Although these data should be interpreted with a degree of caution because panel surveys have a tendency to collect more politically interested respondents than one-off polling surveys do, the fact that they clearly replicate the same broad pattern of a generational gradient in support for the EU suggests that they are largely accurate. Within the sample, 66.4% of Millennial voters backed Remain, compared with 49.9% of Generation X voters, 43.2% of Baby Boomers and 40.8% of voters in the pre-1945 Generation. It suggests that Millennials were unique for being the only generation in which a majority supported Remain, whereas the Leave side won among both Baby Boomers and the pre-War generation (while among Generation X it was a virtual dead heat).

² It should be pointed out that although the complete BES Wave 9 sample, which is statistically weighted to be representative of the UK population, contains a total of 20,009 respondents, the sample size was slightly reduced for individual questions – including the key one of how people voted – by the removal of non-respondents.



If we extrapolated the results of the BES data to the general population then we would see that there were statistically significant differences between the generations in terms of how they voted (chi square = 720.359 (3), $p = <0.001$). Within the overall population, members of Millennials were:

- 16.5% more likely to vote Remain than members of Generation X, 95% CI [14.5%– 18.5%];
- 23.2% more likely to vote Remain than members of the Baby Boomer generation, 95% CI [21.5%– 24.9%];
- 25.6% more likely to vote Remain than members of the pre-1945 generation, 95% CI [22.9%– 28.4%].

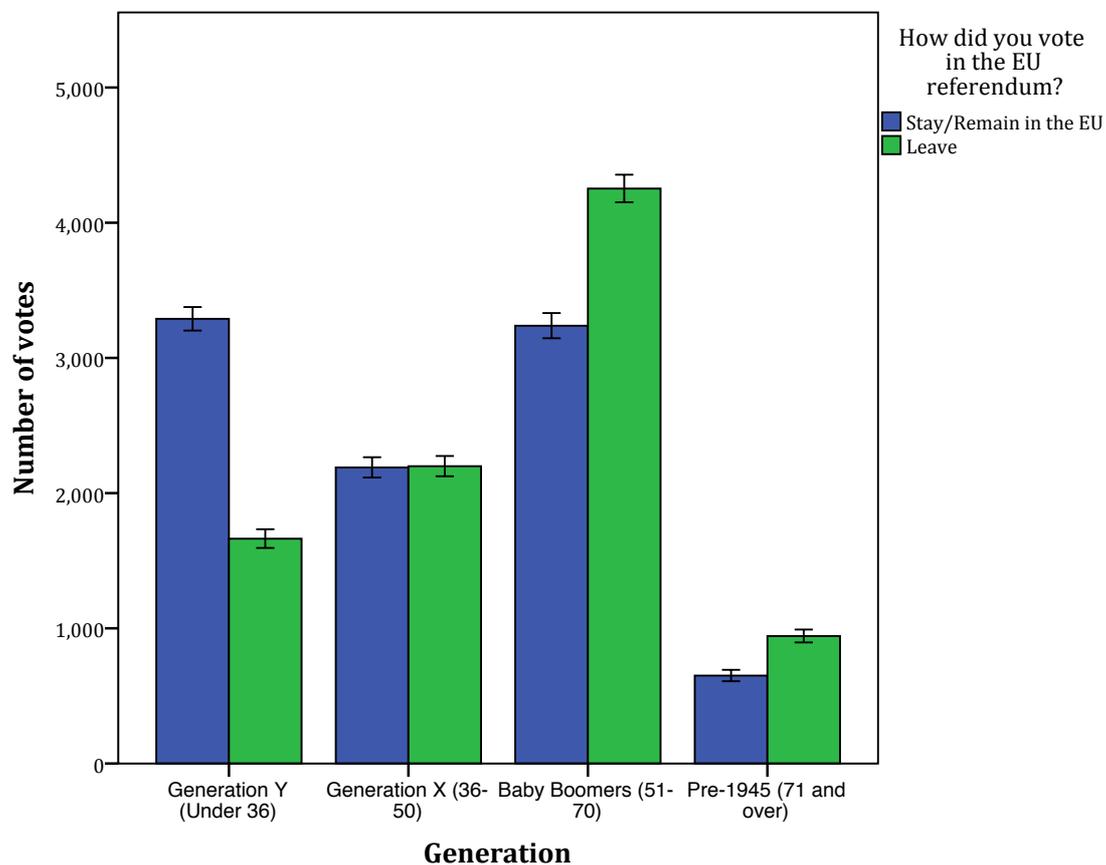


Fig.2 Voter preferences in the EU referendum by generation using the BES Wave 9 data sample

However, it is interesting to note that there are a few nuances within this picture that other analyses don't seem to have picked up on. Fig.2 displays the *number* of voters within the sample who supported Leave or Remain within each generation rather than the *proportion* who did so, which highlights how the result was affected by the numerical imbalances between the different generations. In terms of the number of voters, the data suggest that there were as many voters who voted Remain among the Baby Boomer generation as there were among Millennials (potentially more if, as seems likely, turnout among Millennials was



(2016), who commissioned their own polling data using a sample of 2,008 voters which explicitly took account of non-registration and weighted the results to account for the overall level of turnout in the referendum as a whole. Their results found that “turnout was 64% for 18–24 year olds and 65% for 25–39 year olds. It was almost identical for 40–54 year olds (66%) but then increases to 74% for 55–64, and 90% for 65+ year olds” (interestingly, if that was accurate then it could mean that turnout among these age groups was actually higher in the EU referendum than it was subsequently at the 2017 general election according to YouGov’s estimates (YouGov, 2017a)). Butler and Harrison’s estimate implies that there were significant generational differences in turnout, but that turnout was still only slightly lower than the national average among Millennials, so it would be unfair to criticise them for complaining about the result on the grounds that they should have voted. Unfortunately, this is an aspect of the EU referendum debate which can never have a conclusive answer.



Rosenbaum, 2017; Neville, 2017), or they did not focus specifically upon the question of how different generations voted (Swales, 2017; Goodwin and Heath, 2016b). A finding which was replicated across all of these studies was the powerful impact of both a voter's age and their level of education upon their likelihood of voting Leave, two factors which can explain most of the variation in the preferences which different areas expressed at the aggregate level (Becker et al, 2016). This is unsurprising, given that previous cross-national comparisons have demonstrated that less well-educated voters display lower levels of support for European integration across most EU countries, a trend which has been put down to socio-economic considerations (people in more manual occupations may see fewer benefits from economic integration than white-collar ones) and issues of class identity (Hakhverdian et al, 2013).

Therefore Model 1 included both of these factors, in addition to other demographic variables which previous analyses have suggested could potentially have been relevant: gender, government office region (or place of residence), gross household income, housing tenure and whether the respondent's daily life was affected by disability. The results for each of these variables are presented below:

- Age by itself was statistically significant, but its effect size was very small; each additional year of age increased someone's likelihood of voting Leave by only 1% when you controlled for the other variables within the model. This indicates that Millennials did not favour Remain because they were young *per se*, but because they disproportionately represented other characteristics which were associated with favouring Remain.
- Gender did not have a statistically significant relationship with someone's likelihood of voting Leave.
- Ethnicity had a highly significant effect upon someone's likelihood of voting Leave: compared to people who said they were White British, respondents who belonged to non-White ethnic minorities (including Mixed-Race people who had one White British parent) and respondents who were White Non-British were almost 50% less likely to vote Leave when you control for all the other variables within the model. This seems to partly explain why Millennials were more likely to vote Remain than older generations, as their generation contained far larger numbers of respondents who were non-White British than either the Baby Boomers or the Pre-1945 generations does (Fig.3).

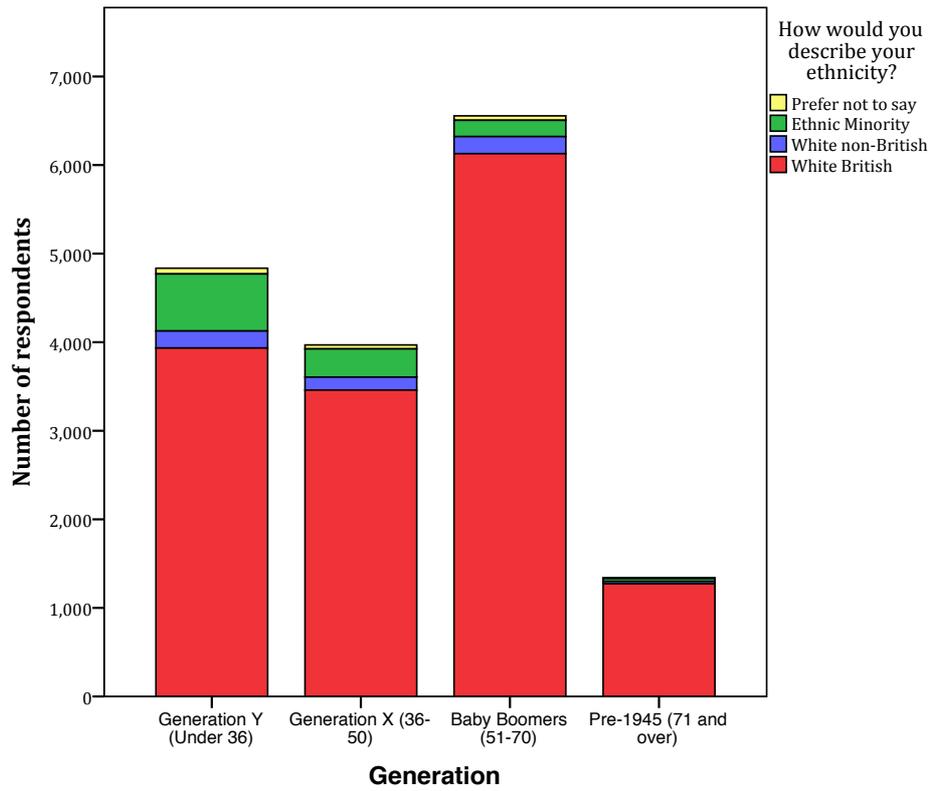


Fig.3 Ethnic composition of different generations within the BES Wave 9 Sample

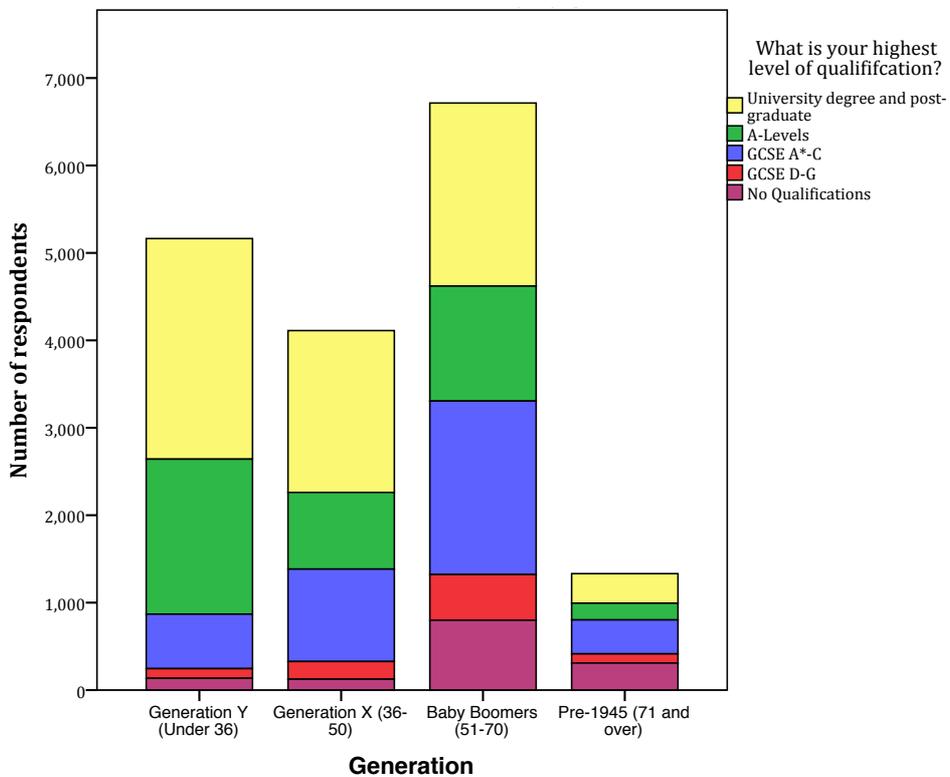


Fig.4 Educational attainment of different generations within the BES Wave 9 Sample



Model 2: Demographic and attitudinal variables

An alternative perspective on the Brexit vote is that the differences *within* demographic groups – which are mainly influenced by subjective attitudes and values – were much more significant than the differences *between* groups (Kaufmann, 2016). Other research has shown that one of the most important attitudinal variables for predicting the Leave vote was national identity, with people who said they felt “very strongly British” being much more likely to vote Leave than those who expressed a weaker sense of national identity (Goodwin and Heath, 2016b). Therefore, in order to examine the impact which subjective personal identities had on the Brexit referendum, the second iteration of the model included two additional variables which asked respondents to measure the strength of their British and European identities on a seven-point Likert scale which ranged from “Not at all British/European” to “Very strongly British/European.” The results of Model 2 showed that:

- Adding these two variables increased the overall predictive accuracy of the model (measured by the number of correctly classified cases) from 65% to 78.6%, which demonstrates that subjective views had an extremely important influence.
- A strong European identity was associated with much lower odds of voting Leave than a weak one: somebody who said they felt “Not at all European” was almost 80 times more likely to vote Leave than someone who said they felt “Very strongly European”, even when you controlled for all the other variables in the model.
- As can be seen from Figures 5 and 6, when you examine the strength of these identities across the different generations, it becomes apparent that Millennials evinced both the most equivocal attitudes towards holding a strong British identity, and had the largest share of respondents who scored above the middle of the scale when asked about their European identity. Among both the Baby Boomers and the pre-1945 generation, a much larger share of respondents expressed very strong British identities and very weak European ones. Therefore, it appears that generational differences in the nature of their national identities are an important factor in explaining the generational divide over the Brexit vote.
- A strong British identity was associated with much stronger odds of voting Leave than a weak one (although the difference between the strongest and weakest levels of British identity was much smaller than the difference between the strongest and weakest levels of European identity): someone who said they felt “Very strongly British” was 3.3 times more likely to vote Leave than someone who felt “Not at all British.”

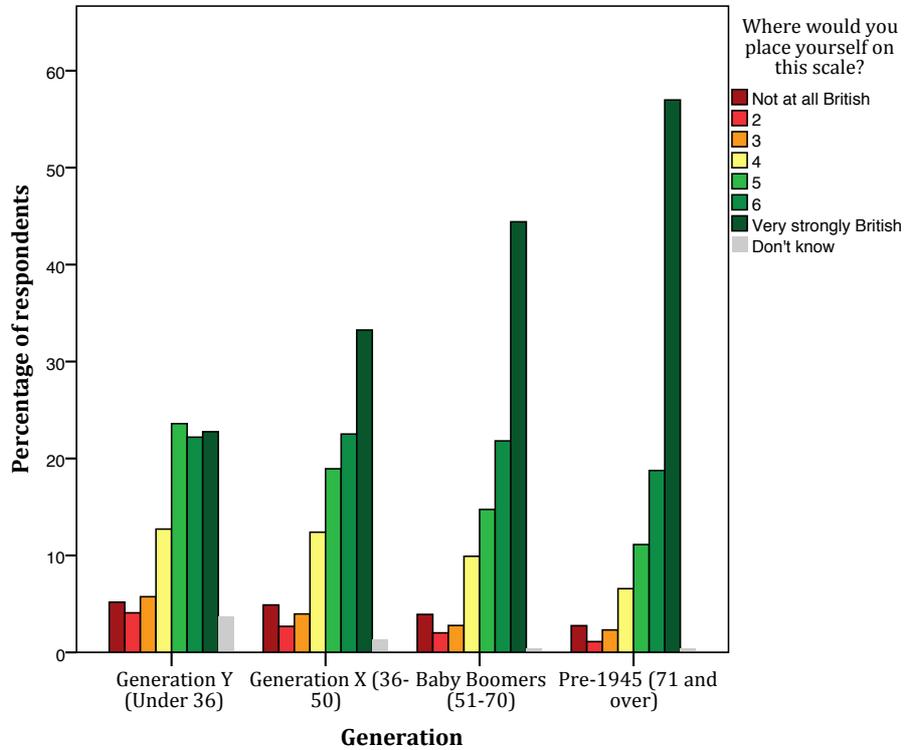


Fig.5 Variations in British national identity between different generations within the BES Wave 9 sample

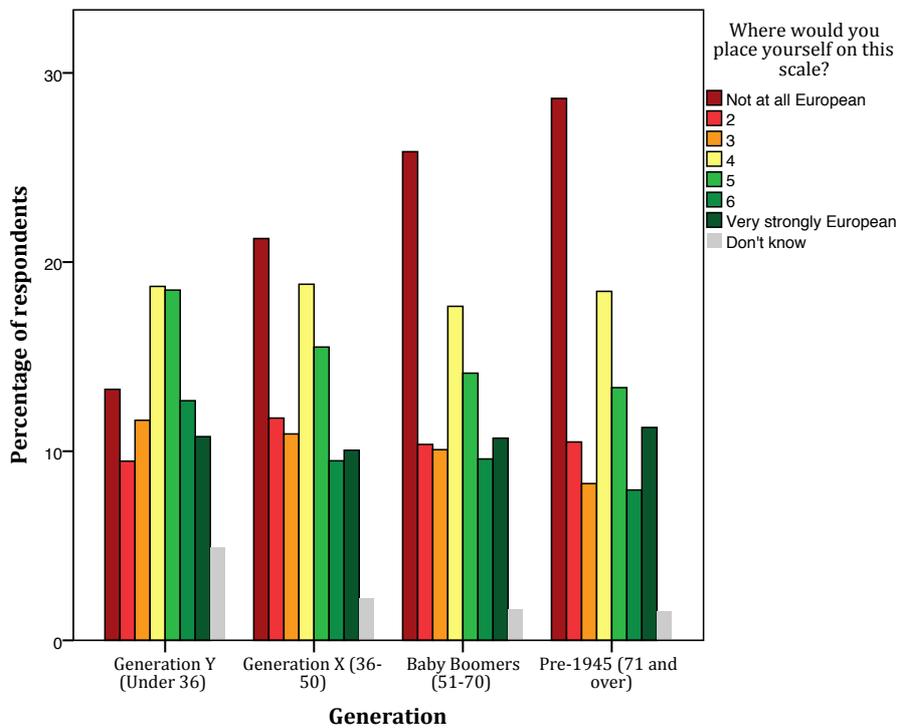


Fig.6 Variations in European identity between different generations within the BES Wave 9 sample



- Interestingly, controlling for the strength of someone's national identity made a significant difference to a number of the other variables within the model:
 - Gender became statistically significant – women were 20% more likely to vote Leave than men.
 - White non-British respondents were actually *more* likely to vote Leave than the White British population (the opposite of the finding from Model 1).
 - Education had a smaller effect – someone with no qualifications was only twice as likely to vote Leave as someone with a university education or higher, compared to over three times in Model 1.
 - Housing tenure ceased to be a statistically significant variable – this indicates that there were no differences between people living in social rented housing and the other tenures once you controlled for national identity.

What do these findings tell us?

Why did Millennials favour Remain? As the evidence presented in this section of the report has demonstrated, there is no simple explanation. However, what has been shown is that economic factors do not wholly explain the outcome – if the Brexit vote was mainly a method of protesting against economic marginalisation then you might well have expected Millennials to favour Leave, given the numerous economic disadvantages which they have endured compared to previous generations, but there is no evidence to suggest that was the case.

What this section appears to have found is that, in line with some of the previous evidence on the Brexit vote, age was not a significant factor in explaining how people voted *per se*; instead, the generational divide appears to be more reflective of the fact that different generations contain certain types of people disproportionately. In particular, Millennials are more highly-educated than any previous generation, is far more ethnically diverse, and appears to hold a more pluralistic view of its national identity (which is presumably related to the other two factors), and these were the most decisive factors in explaining someone's likelihood of voting for Remain. Of course, this does not claim to provide a complete explanation, and it invites further questions – particularly surrounding how and why Millennials' views of national identity are different from older generations' – which are beyond the scope of this report.

One of the “million dollar” questions that hangs over this research is whether young people's support for Remain was a generational (or cohort) effect or an age group effect; in other words, are Millennials going to be more pro-EU than previous generations throughout their lives, or will they become more Eurosceptic as they get older? This is extremely important because it affects which type of Brexit deal is likely to best suit Millennials' long-term interests. These findings can't answer this question definitively, but they suggest that they are more likely to be a generational effect which is explained by the fact that Millennials contains a larger share of the types of people who tend to be more likely to support the EU regardless of their age. The implication this would have for Britain's future is that, all things being equal, it seems reasonable to predict that the population as a whole will become increasingly pro-Remain in the decades ahead since, firstly, it remains government policy to have as many people as possible participating in higher education (and the economy is likely to evolve in ways which make higher education a prerequisite for an ever-increasing share



of jobs), and secondly, on current projections the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community will account for over 20% of the UK's population by 2031, a substantial increase over the 12.7% figure which was recorded at the 2011 census (Rees et al, 2015). There is no way of knowing for sure either whether the Millennials will remain pro-EU throughout their lives or if future cohorts will be more hostile, but this analysis does suggest that particular demographic characteristics – which are fixed throughout their lives – will predispose them towards the former.



5. How did different types of Millennials vote?

A fact which has been overlooked by much of the commentary surrounding young people and the Brexit vote is that the Millennial generation did not vote homogenously. As was demonstrated in Fig.1, around a third of Millennials who participated in BES Wave 9 claim to have voted for Leave. There is also the interesting question of whether the remaining two-thirds of Millennials who favoured Remain all did so for similar reasons, or whether youthful Remain voters were actually a heterogeneous coalition of people from different backgrounds who had differing motivations for picking that side.

There is a well-established technique in social science called “latent class analysis” which is used to divide survey respondents into different categories (or “classes”) on the basis of the similarity of their responses to each other (Cooper and Ajoku, 2017). Essentially, this technique assumes that the observed variables – in this case, participants’ responses to the BES survey – are indicative of a characteristic which cannot truly be measured directly (making it “latent”), such as their personality type or their mental health. Using this technique, it is also possible to account for the influence of demographic characteristics (“covariates”) which affect a participant’s likelihood of falling into one class rather than another.

Millennial respondents to BES Wave 9 were segmented into distinct classes or “voter tribes”, following the approach used by Swales (2017). As shown in the diagram below, a range available variables was selected from the BES Wave 9 dataset which the literature suggested could influence how young people voted; factored in alongside these were the following demographic covariates: ethnicity, education, region, household income, housing tenure and disability.

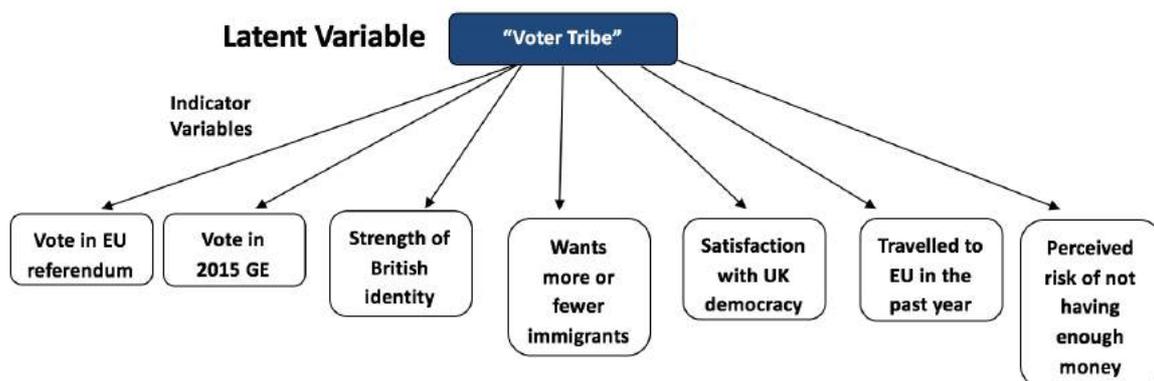


Fig.7 Diagram showing the latent class model used in this study

The technical details of how the latent class analysis was conducted are explained in Appendix 3, but in brief, an algorithm was used to compare different ways of clustering the respondents into different models containing different numbers of latent classes, and a model containing four classes was eventually chosen on the basis of its Bayesian



Information Criterion (BIC) statistic. How the survey respondents were divided between the different latent classes is shown in Fig.8.

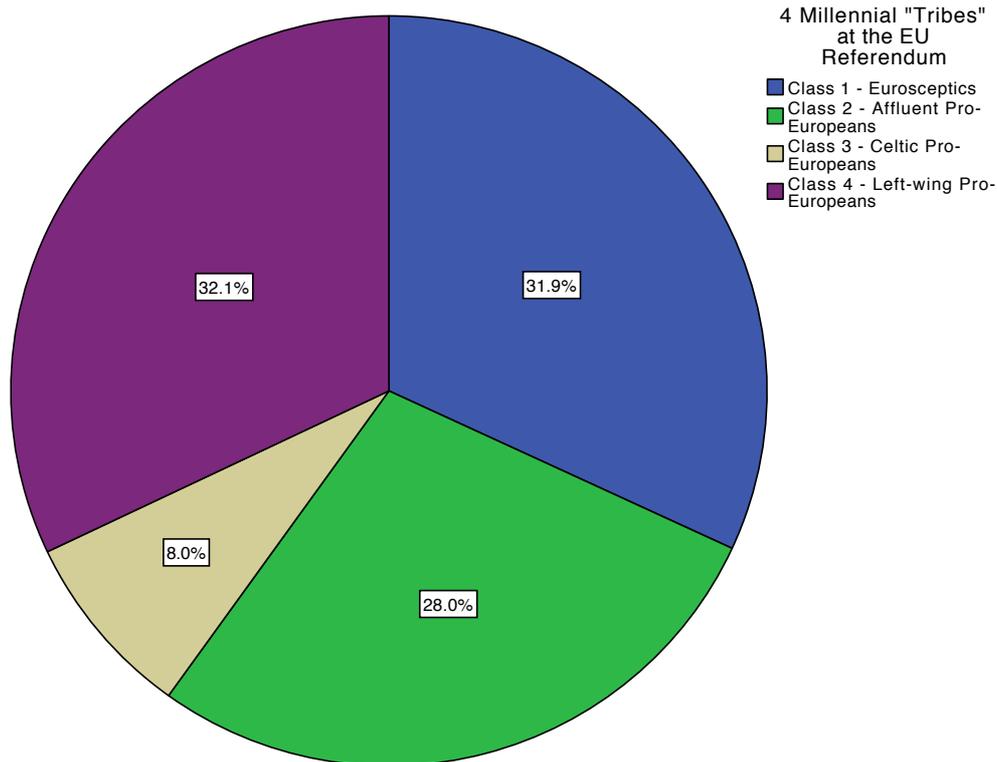


Fig.8 The four latent classes in the chosen model

It's important to emphasise several limitations of this analysis: firstly, it only included data on Millennials who claim to have voted in the EU referendum; as stated in the first section, estimates of turnout among younger people vary but it is likely that at least a third of eligible Millennial voters didn't vote, so the classes may have broken down differently if non-voters were included. Secondly, because it was necessary to remove all the respondents who were missing data for any of the variables, the sample size fell from over 5,000 people initially to a significantly smaller total of 1,878, which may have introduced a sampling bias because it's unlikely that non-respondents were evenly distributed within the population; for example, among those who were included the proportion who said they voted Remain rose from 66% to 70%, which suggests that Leave voters were more likely to have missing values. Thirdly, the data were unweighted, so these results cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the general Millennial population.

However, despite these caveats the latent class analysis does suggest that – at least among BES Wave 9 respondents - the minority of young people who supported Leave were relatively homogenous, while the Remain side was actually a coalition comprised of three distinct groups who had different motivations for preferring Remain. The distinctive characteristics of the four classes have been summarised below, while the full results of the model – showing the percentage of the membership within each class who had a particular



characteristic – are given in Appendix 2 (these have been colour-coded red, green and amber to indicate values which are particularly high, moderate or low in relation to the other three classes). These are the four classes in the final model:

Class 1 – Eurosceptics (31.9% of the sample)

- 85% voted for Leave
- Almost one in three either voted for UKIP or didn't vote at the 2015 general election
- Almost 87% want lower immigration
- Very strong British identity
- Report highest levels of satisfaction with UK democracy
- Much lower share has visited the EU than in other classes
- Over 90% are White British
- Lowest level of educational attainment of the four classes (under 40% attended university)
- Not markedly poorer than other classes and evenly distributed across UK regions
- Largest share of any class who are living with parents or social renting
- Over one in five report some degree of disability

Class 2 – Affluent Pro-Europeans (28% of the sample)

- 96% voted for Remain
- Almost evenly split between Conservatives and Labour (20% supported Lib Dems) at the 2015 general election
- Almost evenly divided between wanting more, the same or less immigration
- British identity almost as strong as among Eurosceptics
- Nearly 60% say they are satisfied with UK democracy
- 75% have visited another EU country
- Very low perceived risk of poverty
- Over 90% are White British
- Best-educated of 4 classes (over 77% attended university)
- Almost 50% live in just 3 regions: London, South East and East of England (22% in London)
- Wealthiest class – one in three have household incomes above £60,000 per year
- 75% are either mortgagors or private renters
- Report very low levels of disability

Class 3 – Celtic Pro-Europeans (8% of the sample)

- 88% voted for Remain
- Around 70% voted for SNP or Plaid Cymru at the 2015 general election
- Over 62% say they want *higher* immigration
- Almost 80% report feeling very weak British identity
- Nearly 90% are very dissatisfied with UK democracy
- Almost 70% have visited another EU country
- Virtually all live in Scotland and Wales
- A large share describe themselves as “White non-British”
- Very well-educated (over 72% attended university)
- Most are either mortgagors or private renters
- Low levels of disability



Class 4 – Left-wing Pro-Europeans (32.1% of the sample)

- Nearly 100% voted for Remain
- Almost 50% voted for Labour and 28% for the Greens at the 2015 general election (and over one in ten didn't vote)
- Two-thirds say they want higher immigration
- Only 55% say they have a strong British identity
- Extreme dissatisfaction with UK democracy – almost 90% report feeling dissatisfied
- Highest proportion of any class saying they are at a high perceived risk of poverty (over 50%)
- Over 15% belong to ethnic minorities
- Lower educational attainment than other pro-European classes (only 60% attended university)
- Over one in three live in London and the South East
- Significantly poorer than other classes – 35% have household income below £20,000 per year
- Largest share of private renters (44%) and almost a quarter live with parents
- 25% report some degree of disability

What do these findings tell us?

The latent class analysis suggests that firstly, it appears that the roughly one-third of Millennials who we believe supported Brexit represent a relatively homogenous group whose characteristics are broadly in line with the “left behind” analysis of the Brexit vote; in other words, they are predominantly people who are White British and of relatively low educational attainment, who feel a strong sense of national identity and are greatly concerned about immigration. However, as a group this class does not seem to be significantly worse-off in terms of living standards than the other classes, and they appear to be fairly evenly distributed across the UK's regions rather than being concentrated in more economically disadvantaged ones. Additionally, a larger share of this group reported having a disability than any of the others. Taking these observations together, it seems plausible to argue that this class comprises the most disaffected subset of Millennials, those who feel that modern British society and its economy has relatively little to offer them, for whom Brexit was an opportunity to rebel against the status quo.

Secondly, Millennials who supported Remain were a coalition of three different interest groups: Class 2 (highly-educated and affluent young workers, mainly living in London and the South East, who are broadly satisfied with the economic and political status quo); Class 3 (young adults living in Scotland and Wales, whose primary motivation for supporting Remain may have been because they view the EU as a way of counterbalancing England's dominant role in relation to the rest of the UK, as suggested by their weak sense of British national identity and dissatisfaction with UK democracy (although this was probably affected to some extent by the referendum result itself); and Class 4 (a large group of economically disadvantaged young people who lean to the Left politically, whose support for Remain – it can plausibly be argued – appears to be rooted in a concern for the environment and social justice, and a hostility to the nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric surrounding the Leave campaign). Thirdly, in terms of both household income and perceived risk of poverty, the Eurosceptics actually appear to be more affluent than the Left-Wing Pro-Europeans, which is another indication that Brexit was motivated by more than just the socio-economic disadvantages facing a particular section of the population



Although the previous section demonstrated that Millennials hold a range of different views regarding Brexit, it is clear that the biggest concern for the majority of Millennials is minimising the harm that Brexit does to the UK economy. Fig.9 depicts the most common answers among each generation when the BES survey asked them to name what the single most important issue to them was in deciding whether to vote Leave or Remain. Their responses were subsequently coded into a set of 15 groups (e.g. “Immigration”, “Economy”) by the BES survey team.⁴

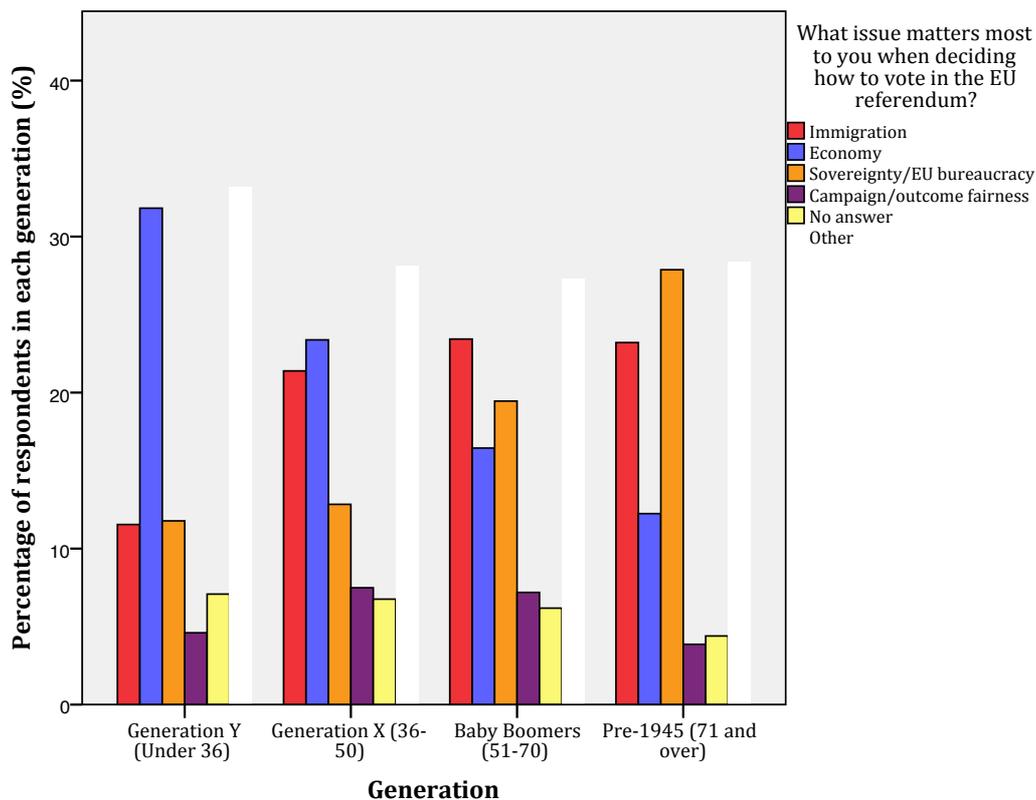


Fig.9 The most important issue for voters in deciding whether to vote Leave or Remain among different generations

Unfortunately, fewer than half of the participants provided a valid response which could be coded into one of these 15 categories, hence the greatly-reduced sample size compared to the full (weighted) Wave 8 sample of 21,736 respondents (n=9,766). All of the categories which received less than 3% of the total responses have been combined to form the “other” category.

⁴ These data come from Wave 8 of the BES EU referendum panel survey rather than Wave 9 because the Wave 9 data were uncoded at the time when the analysis was undertaken. Wave 8 was undertaken pre-referendum (between 6 May and 22 June) rather than post-referendum and had a slightly larger raw sample size than Wave 9 (33,502 vs 30,036), although both waves were analysed using the “core sample” weights which made them more nationally representative; 82.2% of the respondents who participated in Wave 9 had also taken part in Wave 8.



What was striking about the response to this question was that they were dominated by just the three most popular categories – “Immigration”, “Economy” and “Sovereignty/EU Bureaucracy” – which were referenced by 58% of the respondents in the sample. There were clearly very significant generational gradients to all three of the most popular categories; people became less likely to say the Economy was the most important issue and more likely to say that Immigration and Sovereignty were as you moved up the generations. This corresponds with the finding illustrated in the previous section that young people are less concerned about the need to “protect” a British national identity which they see as being under threat from high immigration and encroachment upon parliamentary sovereignty by the EU. However, they were much more concerned about the potential impact of Brexit on the economy than older generations. The chi-squared test confirmed that there were statistically significant differences between the generations in terms of the issues which were most important to them among the general population (chi square = 631.519 (42), $p < 0.001$). The chi-squared test also found that Millennials were: 8.5% more likely to say that the economy was their most important issue than were members of Generation X, 95% CI [5.9% – 11.1%]; 15.4% more likely to say that the economy was their most important issue than members of the Baby Boomer generation, 95% CI [13.2% – 17.6], and 19.6% more likely to say that the economy was their most important issue than members of the pre-1945 generation, 95% CI [16.8% – 22.4%].

Of course, we can't be certain exactly what respondents meant when they said “the economy” in answer to this question; although the Remain campaign devoted most of its airtime to warning about the economic dangers of Brexit, some respondents may have been echoing the Leave message that Brexit would help Britain's economy by setting it free to develop new trading relationships with the world outside the EU. Therefore, “the economy” could have been given as a justification for voting either Leave or Remain. However, given the near-unanimity among economic experts that Brexit would do harm to Britain's economy (and the fact that the majority of Millennials obviously supported Remain), it seems plausible to argue that the majority of people who said they were motivated by the economy would have voted Remain. The potential dangers of a “hard” Brexit were best articulated by Begg and Mushövel's (2016) comprehensive review of all the different economic forecasts which various experts produced during the run-up to the Brexit vote. Despite the very large uncertainties involved – particularly surrounding what kind of trading relationship the UK would have with the EU in the future – they concluded that *“the scenarios least damaging to the UK interest are those that involve the fewest restrictions on the UK's access to the EU, including being closest to the status quo of EU membership, whereas those that result in new barriers to UK trade or inward investment are the most damaging”* (p.2).

Now that we are over a year on from the referendum, have young peoples' views changed following the various events which have transpired subsequently? According YouGov polling data that were gathered shortly after the general election, 61% of Britons aged 18–24 now either support Brexit wholeheartedly or believe that the referendum result deserved to be respected even if they don't personally support Brexit (only one in five said they wanted a second referendum, which was actually a smaller proportion than in older age groups), but only 27% believed the government should continue negotiating towards Brexit with its current negotiating terms (the 12 objectives), compared with 47% of 50–64 year olds and 58% of over-65s (YouGov, 2017b). In other words, young people as a group do not conform to the supposedly undemocratic “remoaner” stereotype which has been perpetuated in the media since the referendum, but while they respect the referendum result they still favour a softer form of Brexit than the one the government currently seems to be pursuing. There is



7. Conclusion

This report set out to investigate four things:

- How Millennials voted in the EU referendum compared to other generations
- What factors explain why they voted the way they did
- How different “tribes” within Millennials voted
- And what they want from the UK’s post-Brexit settlement

It contributes to what we know about Brexit in several important ways. Firstly, it confirms that there were highly significant differences between the four different generations that made up the referendum electorate in terms of how they voted; just over two-thirds of Millennials favoured Remain.

Secondly, it shows that Millennial preference for Remain calls into question accounts of the Brexit vote which privilege socio-economic explanations for Britain voting to Leave; the fact that this generation overwhelmingly favoured Remain despite its members disproportionately being affected by stagnant wages and high housing costs compared to other generations indicates that other factors were more important in determining how people voted. The analysis suggests that Millennials did not predominantly favour Remain because they were young *per se*, but because they were disproportionately affected by broader social trends which were associated with support for Remain – especially being highly-educated, belonging to a non-White ethnic group and having a pluralistic, rather than nationalistic, view of their national identity.

Thirdly, it makes a strong argument that Millennials did not vote homogenously; the available data from BES Wave 9 suggests that there were four distinct “tribes” of Millennial voters at the EU referendum: Eurosceptics, Affluent Pro-Europeans, Celtic Pro-Europeans and Left Wing Pro-Europeans. It suggests that the Remain vote among Millennials was a coalition of three distinct voting groups who supported the status quo for different reasons, a point which has been overlooked in many previous analyses of the vote.

Finally, it has shown that if Millennials have to accept Brexit then they would prefer a “soft” post-Brexit deal which minimises the harm which economists think would be done to Britain’s economy by a “hard” Brexit. However, it is also likely that the different “tribes” want different things from Brexit which respond to their specific motivations for voting the way they did.

The most interesting implication of these results is that, if Millennial support for the EU is a generational effect – which seems likely if they didn’t vote for Remain because they are young, but instead because their other aspects of their demographic profile predisposed them towards doing so – then that suggests that public opinion could move in a more pro-European direction over the coming decades as Britain’s population is expected to become more highly educated and ethnically diverse, the characteristics which were most closely associated with support for Remain. Although the future is always uncertain, the trend towards Britain having a more highly educated, ethnically diverse population and the closeness of the result on this occasion suggests that a re-run of the vote in 10 years’ time could produce the opposite outcome.



However, leaving speculation to one side, what is absolutely certain is that the youngest members of the referendum electorate are the ones who will have to live with its consequences for the longest, so their voices need to be heard as Britain determines its future relationship with the rest of the world.



Appendix 1: Full regression model results

Model 1			
Variable	Reference Category	Exp(B)	S.E.
Age*		1.01	0.00
Gender	Male	1.08	0.04
Ethnicity*	White British		
	White non-British*	0.55	0.12
	Ethnic minority (including mixed-race)*	0.57	0.08
	Prefer not to say	0.81	0.21
Highest level of qualifications*	University degree and postgraduate		
	No qualifications*	3.36	0.08
	GCSE D-G*	2.58	0.09
	GCSE A Star -C*	2.64	0.05
	A-Levels*	1.59	0.05
Government office region (place of residence)*	London		
	North West	0.86	0.08
	Yorkshire and the Humber	1.05	0.08
	East Midlands	1.02	0.09
	West Midlands	1.27	0.09
	East of England	1.10	0.08
	North East	1.03	0.10
	South East*	0.95	0.08
	South West	0.88	0.09
	Wales	0.85	0.10
	Scotland*	0.55	0.08
Gross Household Income*	Under £20,000 per year		
	£20,000 to £39,000 per year*	1.15	0.05
	£40,000 to £59,000 per year	1.00	0.07
	£60,000 per year and above*	0.75	0.08
	Prefer not to say	1.14	0.06
	No answer*	0.88	0.08

N.B. * denotes p<0.05

Model 2			
Variable	Reference Category	Exp(B)	S.E.
Age*		1.01	0.00
Gender*	Male	1.21	0.05
Ethnicity*	White British		
	White non-British*	1.73	0.15
	Ethnic minority (including mixed-race)*	0.54	0.10
	Prefer not to say	0.86	0.26
Highest level of qualifications*	University degree and postgraduate		
	No qualifications*	2.04	0.10
	GCSE D-G*	1.58	0.11
	GCSE A Star -C*	1.88	0.06
	A-Levels*	1.23	0.06
Government office region (place of residence)*	London		
	North West	0.91	0.10
	Yorkshire and the Humber	0.98	0.10
	East Midlands	1.06	0.11
	West Midlands	1.22	0.10
	East of England	1.02	0.10
	North East	0.85	0.12
	South East	1.06	0.09
	South West	1.00	0.11
	Wales*	0.75	0.12
	Scotland*	0.64	0.11
Gross Household Income*	Under £20,000 per year		
	£20,000 to £39,000 per year	1.17	0.06
	£40,000 to £59,000 per year	1.01	0.08
	£60,000 per year and above*	0.80	0.10
	Prefer not to say	1.08	0.08
	No answer*	0.79	0.11



Housing Tenure*	Own outright			Housing Tenure	Own outright		
Own with a mortgage*		1.12	0.05	Own with a mortgage		0.98	0.07
Shared ownership scheme		1.00	0.20	Shared ownership scheme		1.10	0.24
Rent from a private landlord		0.91	0.07	Rent from a private landlord		0.88	0.09
Rent from my local authority*		1.48	0.09	Rent from my local authority		1.20	0.11
Rent from a housing association*		1.42	0.09	Rent from a housing association		1.19	0.11
Living with parents, family or friends and paying rent		0.98	0.10	Living with parents, family or friends and paying rent		0.85	0.12
Living rent-free with parents, family or friends		0.94	0.10	Living rent-free with parents, family or friends		0.93	0.13
Other		0.76	0.17	Other		0.72	0.21
Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability?*	Not limited			Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability?*	Not limited		
Yes, limited a little*		1.32	0.06	Yes, limited a little*		1.28	0.08
Yes limited a lot*		1.14	0.05	Yes limited a lot*		1.17	0.06
Constant		0.28	0.13				
				European identity scale*	Very strongly European		
				Not at all European*		79.88	0.12
				2*		36.27	0.12
				3*		18.42	0.12
				4*		8.78	0.11
				5*		3.57	0.11
				6*		1.72	0.13
				British Identity Scale*	Not at all British		
				2		0.92	0.20
				3		0.97	0.18
				4		1.02	0.15
				5*		1.55	0.15
				6*		2.04	0.15
				Very strongly British*		3.32	0.14
				Constant		0.02	0.23
Sample	13,158			Sample	12,897		
Nagelkerke R-Squared	0.149			Nagelkerke R-Squared	0.489		
Cases correctly classified	64.9%			Cases correctly classified	78.6%		



Appendix 2: “Millennial Tribes” in the EU referendum

Observed Variables		Class 1 - Eurosceptics	Class 2 - Affluent Pro-Europeans	Class 3 - Celtic Pro-Europeans	Class 4 - Left-wing Pro-Europeans
EU referendum vote	Leave the EU	85.0%	4.0%	11.9%	0.5%
	Stay/Remain in the EU	15.0%	96.0%	88.1%	99.5%
2015 general election vote	Conservative	39.2%	33.8%	0.7%	2.2%
	Labour	20.5%	37.6%	6.6%	48.8%
	Lib Dem	4.0%	19.2%	1.3%	8.1%
	SNP	0.8%	0.0%	58.9%	0.0%
	Plaid Cymru	0.3%	0.0%	9.9%	0.0%
	UKIP	19.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
	Green Party	2.2%	2.9%	2.6%	28.4%
	Other	0.8%	0.8%	12.6%	1.2%
	I did not vote	12.5%	5.7%	7.3%	11.0%
British identity	Weak British Identity	5.5%	6.3%	78.8%	23.6%
	Medium British Identity	9.0%	9.9%	7.3%	21.4%
	Strong British Identity	85.5%	83.8%	13.9%	55.0%
Attitudes towards immigration	Fewer immigrants	86.8%	28.5%	17.9%	9.8%
	Stay the same	6.5%	38.0%	19.9%	23.3%
	More immigrants	6.7%	33.5%	62.3%	66.9%
Satisfaction with UK democracy	Very dissatisfied or A little dissatisfied	31.9%	42.8%	88.7%	89.9%
	Fairly satisfied or Very satisfied	68.1%	57.2%	11.3%	10.1%
Travelled to EU in the past year	Yes	39.4%	74.1%	68.2%	54.3%
	No	60.6%	25.9%	31.8%	45.7%
Perceived risk of poverty	Very unlikely or Fairly unlikely	55.8%	74.7%	55.6%	35.5%
	Neither likely nor unlikely	15.0%	16.9%	16.6%	10.6%
	Fairly likely or Very likely	29.2%	8.4%	27.8%	53.8%



Appendix 3: Data sources and methodology

This research was based upon original quantitative analysis of data from the British Election Study (BES) (cited as Fieldhouse et al. (2015)), the longest-running social science survey in the UK and one of the longest-running worldwide. BES is run via a consortium of the University of Manchester, the University of Oxford, and the University of Nottingham. The Scientific Leadership Team is comprised of Professors Ed Fieldhouse, Jane Green, Hermann Schmitt, Geoff Evans and Cees van der Eijk, who are supported by researchers Dr Jon Mellon and Dr Chris Prosser.

BES is an address-based random probability sample survey which asks respondents a range of questions about their political views and how they voted in previous elections, in addition to collecting demographic data. For the EU referendum, BES ran a longitudinal internet panel survey over nine waves which were gathered between March 2014 and July 2016. This report mainly analysed data from Wave 9, with the exception of section 3 which also used some data from Wave 8 (for reasons that were explained in the main text). More information is given about both Waves below:

Wave 9

- Collected by YouGov between 4 June 2016 and 4 July 2016.
- Wave 9 had a total sample size of 30,036, of whom 27,555 had been retained from Wave 8 (82.2%).
- Of these participants, 10,170 (33.6%) had participated in all nine waves.

Wave 8

- Collected by YouGov between 6 May 2016 and 22 June 2016.
- Wave 8 had a total sample size of 33,500, of whom 24,432 had been retained from Wave 7 (79.1%).
- Of these participants, 11,408 (37.7%) had participated in all eight waves that had been conducted to that point.

Both of these datasets were weighted prior to being analysed using the “core weight” variable which was included in the datasets. This is described by BES as “a smaller core sample of around 21,000 respondents in each wave that constitute a cross-sectional group which is more representative than the full sample (i.e. the range of weights is smaller than in the full sample). For cross-sectional work, where you wish to say something about the proportion of the population giving a certain response, we recommend using this core sample.”

More detailed information about the original BES data is available from the BES website: <http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/>

The BES data were analysed for this project using SPSS software. Although the data had already been cleaned and prepared by the BES survey team, some of the variables were recoded to suit the purposes of this analysis (e.g. the “age” variable was recoded into a new variable called “generation”). In-built features of SPSS were then used to generate descriptive statistics and to undertake Pearson chi-squared tests and binary logistic regression modelling.

