

# The Tinman Referendum: the EU debate is lacking heart in Scotland



# A vote to 'Remain' will not be made with much conviction...

## 'Remain' are ahead in the polls

This continues to be the likely outcome despite widespread negativity and criticism of the EU

This is because voters are unconvinced about the impact of Brexit and are likely to stick with 'the devil you know'.

"It is a bit of a gut thing at the moment. I don't know much about it, but my sort of natural inclination is to remain"

"I felt, with the Scottish independence vote, there were that many people the same, sitting on the fence, and when it came they took the 'devil you know,' and they fell that way, rather than take the risk."

# ...and the remaining weeks of campaigning may still change minds

The 'Remain' lead may not be secure and may narrow before June 23<sup>rd</sup>

"I'm on the fence as the arguments for and against are so strong. I need something that's going to tip me in the balance to say yes, or to definitely say no."

"I'm on the fence. I want to stay in. I want to be convinced. It was a bit like the independence referendum."

"I don't think anyone knows how the whole thing operates, but I still think it's a good thing, but I think it needs to be reformed."

# #EUref is lower key and less important than #indyref

## Voters not impassioned

- Voters feel less impassioned about the EU referendum
- Indyref was seen as being more important for Scotland, with energetic and engaging campaigns

## Scaremongering

- Both referendums are seen to have been characterised by significant 'scaremongering'

## Lack of a Scottish dimension

- Issues seen as relating to reserved rather than devolved matters (security, immigration, trade)
- But agriculture and fisheries are seen as policy areas of importance to Scotland and over which the EU holds sway

"[With] the EU referendum... lots of people don't feel British, they don't feel European, it doesn't tap into that nationalism."

# A possible #indyref2 is not a major influence on voting

Most voters' decisions on voting in #EUref will not be influenced by what the result might mean for any #indyref2

'If I thought it would make a difference, if the chess game was set up in that way, that we could get another independence vote, I would vote whichever way it was going to help, but I don't think it's going to do that.'

# Scots don't identify with the EU or see themselves as European

## We have no strong European identity

- People in mainland Europe seen as more European than Scots
- EU 'remote', with no clear, obvious impact on peoples' day to day lives
- The UK lacks influence within Europe

"We had huge influence in the beginning...our influence is dripping away, and that's all I see in the future...until we're one of the smaller voices in Europe"

## We have little knowledge about the EU

- Limited knowledge about the EU, what it does, how it operates, its institutions and key figures
- Little understanding of what UK membership entails and what the UK gets in return for its investment
- Almost no one can name their MEP

"All our European members of parliament... are politically aligned against each other and frankly, I don't know what they are or who they are."

## Both campaigns are seen as scaremongering voters

"There's a lot of scaremongering, as well, that's going on. The same, with the referendum for Scotland. There was talk about security and, you know, MI5 and whatever, and we won't have that if we leave - in Scotland. "

"It's more about the people and the tensions in the Conservative party more than the actual EU referendum itself, I'd say."

"For me, most of what they do is fear. The No campaign is all about fear. Staying in is all about fear. "

# Voters need more (trustworthy) information

Most have not fully engaged with the debate

"If I get more educated on it, then I will, but I'm not going to vote on something I don't have a clue about."

More public information is required

"It shows you how confused it is when top politicians like Boris Johnson take one side and David Cameron takes another"

A perceived lack of *'factual', 'objective'* *'trustworthy'* or *'balanced'* information

"I think trust in the media has gone because... they've got their own agendas, and are becoming polarised in their field."



# Negativity outweighs positivity and is felt with more passion

Voters find it easier to be critical and express those criticisms with feeling and passion



**CONS**

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# 'Leave's' arguments are cutting through more than 'Remain's'

## Motivations


- Voters are engaging with the debate in terms of key policy issues rather than party affiliation or key personalities
- 'Leave' arguments appear to have cut through, while 'Remain' arguments seem more difficult for people to express clearly, comprehend or agree on

## 'Leave' arguments

- 'Control' is the key theme for 'Leave' supporters, particularly over borders/ immigration; laws; trade and investment; and currency
- For some, such control trumped any financial benefits of EU membership

## 'Remain' arguments

- 'Remain' voters feel that the arguments are more difficult to express. They are focussed on the positive impact of EU membership on security/defence, human rights, workers' rights, freedom of movement/economic migration and trade



"Everything for me is about control. If we leave the EU we are in control of our own destiny"

# Immigration is the key issue for people on both sides

"Immigration... is a positive... because [it brings] thousands of foreign doctors, nurses, you know. We have got lots of skilled labour come in that we need."

"I think the EU could possibly make us do more. There's 3,000 unaccounted children sitting in Europe right now, and we won't take any of them."

"I can imagine people who are native would feel quite threatened or would feel all these people coming over [are] getting free hand-outs. What about us?"

# Methodology

- **Three 1.5-hour focus groups of 25 participants**
  - Edinburgh, Elgin and Perth
  - 9th, 10th, and 11th May
- **Representative of:**
  - Age - Groups with participants aged 55 and over, 35 to 54, and 18 to 34.
  - Gender and working status
  - Voting intentions in EU referendum – ‘Remain’, ‘Leave’ and undecided
- **Recruited face-to-face (door-to-door and on-street)**

