REFERENDUM ON MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: FURTHER QUESTION TESTING

Report for the Electoral Commission exploring the intelligibility of the referendum question amended by the House of Lords Committee stage on 24 January 2014

Contact: Polly Hollings
Email: polly.hollings@gfk.com
Tel: 0207 890 9763
Date: March 2014

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA), the Electoral Commission is required to comment on the intelligibility of referendum questions as soon as is reasonably practicable after the introduction of a Bill containing a question. The European Union (Referendum) Bill, which is a Private Members' Bill introduced by James Wharton MP, received its second reading on 5th July 2013. Following this, the Electoral Commission initiated their established question assessment process. Part of the assessment process requires the Commission to gather evidence from the general public on the intelligibility of the proposed referendum question. In 2013, GfK NOP was commissioned to carry out this element of the research.

This research used a qualitative method, which involved 15 focus groups, 26 full in-depth interviews and 103 mini-depth interviews. The qualitative approach enabled the research team to fully explore how participants interpreted and responded to the questions, as well as allowing opportunity to fully investigate participants' understanding of the literal and contextual meaning behind them. The original question put forward in the European Union (Referendum) Bill was tested along with five other versions, in order to test potential changes to the wording and see whether they improved the question, in terms of making it easier to understand and answer.

This research found that the fourth variation (hereafter, **question 4** or **Q4**) of the original question was considered to be clear, neutral and easy to understand. Question 4 is shown below:

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

GfK NOP's original research report, which details the full findings for **Q4** and should be read alongside this report, can be found here:

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/163283/GfK-NOP_EU20Referendum20Question20Testing20Research20Report-WEB.pdf

The Commission's final report[1] on the proposed referendum question, published in October 2013, stated that if:

..Parliament decides not to retain a referendum question which uses 'Yes' and 'No' as response options, we recommend that the referendum question should be amended to reflect the alternative version of the wording included in our research with the public [Q4], which was considered to be the most neutral of the six versions tested.

---

[1] http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/163282/EU-referendum-question-assessment-report.pdf

…While we have tested this version of the question and probed on what refinements might improve it with members of the public, the iterative nature of the research meant that it was not possible in the time available to fully explore and user test the impact of any variations to the wording (such as using alternative answer responses such 'continue' or 'stay' instead of 'remain', or using shorter versions of the response options). If the Bill is amended to include this version of the referendum question, we would therefore undertake a further assessment of the intelligibility of this wording, including research, consultation and further testing in Welsh. We would also seek evidence from potential referendum campaigners about the impact of this approach.

The House of Lords Committee stage of the European Union (Referendum) Bill 2013-14, held on the 24 January 2014, amended the referendum question to the version recommended by the Electoral Commission (question 4). GfK has therefore undertaken further testing on question 4 and this report details the findings from this research.

1.2   Question 4 variations

Question 4, as tested in the GfK NOP 2013 research study is:

Question 4	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
	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig bara i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?
	Para i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd
	Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

This research study tested a further three variations of this question.

Question 4.1	Should the United Kingdom stay a member of the European Union or get out of the European Union?
	Stay in the European Union
	Get out of the European Union
	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu ddod allan o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd?
	Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
	Dod allan o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd
Question 4.2	Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU) or leave the EU?
	Remain a member of the European Union
	Leave the European Union

	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig bara i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd (UE) neu adael yr UE?
	Para i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd
	Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
Question 4.3	Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?
	Remain
	Leave
	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig bara i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?
	Para yn aelod
	Gadael

In addition to the original question 4, and these three variations, different combinations of these were tested to explore:

- Attitudes towards and impact of shorter answers (as per the answer options in question 4.3).
- Attitudes towards and impact of abbreviation of European Union to EU (as per the 4.2 question).
- Attitudes towards and impact of the use of verbs such as 'continue' and 'stay' as alternatives to 'remain'.
- Attitudes towards and impact of reversing the question for example:

> Reverse question 4:
>
> Should the United Kingdom leave the European Union or remain a member of the European Union?
>
> Leave the European Union
>
> Remain a member of the European Union

Question 4 and the three variations were tested in English and in Welsh. All were tested in a ballot paper format (please see appendix).

1.3   Method and Sample

A mixed methodological approach was used to reflect the target audiences for inclusion in the research. Focus groups were carried out with members of the general public allowing them to discuss and debate their views towards the question. Each focus group lasted 1 hour and included between 5 and 8 participants. Depth interviews were carried out with people with low literacy skills, English as a second language, and Welsh speakers allowing for individual views to be gathered. Each depth interview lasted 1 hour.

Research was carried out in five locations, enabling us to gather a spread of opinion and feedback on the question.

Location	Focus group	Depth interview
Manchester	1 focus group: 18-44 years, BC1, Irregular voters, even mix of male and female participants.	3 depth interviews with people with English as a second language. 2 depth interviews with people with low literacy skills.
Hove	1 focus group: 45+ years, BC1, Regular voters, even mix of male and female participants.	-
London	-	1 depth interview with participant with low literacy skills.
Enniskillen	1 focus group: 18-44 years, C2DE, Regular voters, even mix of male and female participants.	-
Cardiff	-	3 depth interviews with bilingual Welsh and English speakers.

2   Research Findings

Overall, across the focus groups nearly all participants were in favour of **Q4**, rather than any of the alternative variations tested**,** as the one that they would choose to use in a referendum. Overall, Q4 was considered clear, neutral and straightforward.   Participants felt they understood the question and what they were being asked to vote on. This reinforces findings from the previous phase of research that the question clarifies current United Kingdom membership of the European Union and that the question is considered neutral.

All of the individual bilingual Welsh / English depth interviews also opted for Q4 as their preferred version.

Preferences across the individual depth interviews held with those with low literacy levels and English as a second language were more mixed across the question versions. Whilst some felt that Q4 was the better version because it was simple and clear, others liked Q4.2 because it included the 'EU' acronym which reflected how the European Union is referred to in the media and therefore the term with which they would be most familiar.

It should be noted that our previous research found that some low literacy and English as a second language participants felt that Q4 was overly wordy and long-winded compared to the other questions tested. However, this view did not emerge in this research and may relate to the fact that participants were comparing Q4 with different questions to those tested at the previous stage.

2.1 Question 4

> 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

On being shown Q4, there was consensus across the groups that the question is as straightforward and clear as it possibly could be. No one claimed to have difficulty understanding any part of the question (knowledge, or lack of, about the EU notwithstanding).

"[There is] nothing there to trip you up."

(18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

"It doesn't make any U-turns or have any double negatives, it just states everything."

(18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

Participants felt that they had answered the question in the way they meant to, and did not find the question confusing.

"You have two options and there's no grey areas so to speak."

(18-44 years, C2DE, regular voter, Enniskillen)

"It tells you what you are, a member of the Union, and what you are voting on."

(45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

Words used to describe the question across the groups included 'simple', 'straightforward', 'black and white', and 'definitive'.

"It's very clear; don't think it could be any clearer."

(45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

"It's a simple thing they are asking you."

(English as second language, Manchester)

"Isn't that question as simple as it can get?"

(45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

Further to this, participants felt that the question was neutral.

"It's so basic; it's not loaded in anyway."

(45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

One participant noted that Q4 (and Q4.1) was longer than the other question versions but reflected that this was appropriate for the ballot paper.

"This is quite wordy but it's an important subject so you need to make sure everyone understands."

(18-24 years, BC1, irregular voter, Welsh speaker, Cardiff)

Low literacy and English as a second language participants liked Q4 mainly for the fact that they felt it had more explanatory answer options making it clear exactly what you are voting for. They did not endorse the findings from previous research that the question was overly long-winded or wordy. They found it easy to understand.

"This one is looking more decent, more explanation for people like me."

(English as second language, Manchester)

However, even those who didn't choose Q4 as their preferred option agreed that the question was not confusing or hard to understand in any way, and uses the appropriate language.

2.1.1   Welsh language comments

When reflecting on the Welsh language version, one participant noted that they preferred the word 'parhau' to 'para' (both meaning 'continue'). This was based on their personal preferences i.e. parhau was the word they would tend to use. The previous research found that some people consider 'parhau' to be a more formal word than 'para'.

2.2   Question 4.1

Should the United Kingdom stay a member of the European Union or get out of the European Union?

Stay in the European Union

Get out of the European Union

Q4.1 elicited a resoundingly negative reaction from most. Participants spontaneously used words such as 'aggressive' and 'shouting' to describe the phrase 'get out'. This was considered to be an emotive phrase with negative connotations.

"Get out not very polite, negative."

(English as second language, Manchester)

"You ask someone if they want to leave, you don't ask someone if they want to Get Out'."

(18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

Overall, participants felt that the question sounded like it might be written by someone who was keen for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. In this respect, participants felt that the phrase felt like a 'directive' and therefore the question was biased.

"It looks biased, that is influencing."

"In that sentence Get Out are the words that jumped straight out at me."

(18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

Two low literacy participants liked this question because they felt that the language overall could be clearer for young people or those who may struggle with English. However, they did comment that the term 'Get Out' is colloquial and 'Remain' is more professional. One suggested a combination of 'Stay' and 'Leave' in the answer options on the basis that 'Stay' is a simple word and easier for some people to understand.

"Stay is better than remain, but Leave is better than Get Out."

(Low Literacy, London)

For most across the board though, 'get out' and to some degree 'stay' were considered too colloquial.

"It's really bad English."

(45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

"This is not good language."

(English as a second language, Manchester)

'Remain' and 'leave' were felt to be more professional, more civilised, and words that would be expected to be used in a referendum question.

"More formal and dignified."

(18-24 years, BC1, irregular voter, Welsh speaker, Cardiff)

This reflects findings from the previous GfK research where overall attitudes towards the use of 'remain' or 'stay' or 'continue' was driven by personal preference but that all these words were interpreted in a highly similar way. The first stage of research found that there was no clear consensus which verb was preferable and their use did not affect how participants understood the questions or the way they voted.   This research probed further on the use of the words 'remain', 'stay' and 'continue'. It found that participants tended to prefer 'remain' as it was considered a more formal word and therefore more suited to a referendum.

2.2.1   Welsh language comments

When commenting on the bilingual version, Welsh speakers had mixed views regarding the use of 'dod allan' (get out) and 'aros' (stay). Whilst one participant felt that 'dod allan' was clear there were mixed views on the neutrality of the phrase. There were some comments that the phrase sounded 'awkward' and 'odd'. Two of the three participants felt that 'dod allan' was a strong and potentially inflammatory phrase and preferred 'gadael' (leave). Conversely, the third participant felt that 'gadael' sounded more negative than 'dod allan'.   Overall, views towards the neutrality of the

question led these participants to conclude that Q4.1 was not appropriate for use in a referendum. This view was strongly echoed across all participants in the research.

A couple noted that 'aros' and 'para' ('stay' and 'remain') were very similar. Two preferred 'para' over 'aros' and one was ambivalent. It should be noted that these views and preferences were not as strong as the views on 'dod allan' and 'gadael'.

Overall, the Welsh speaking participants along with the other participants across the research felt that Q4.1 was biased.

"This one has a clear negative slant. 'Get out' makes you think 'get out of what?' It's like someone's telling you to escape from a trap."

(18-24 years, BC1, irregular voter, Welsh speaker, Cardiff)

2.3 Question 4.2

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU) or leave the EU?

Remain a member of the European Union

Leave the European Union

Q4.2, with the addition of (EU), did not provoke an especially strong reaction either way across focus group participants. However, there was some discussion about the subsequent sole use of the 'EU' acronym instead of having 'European Union' written in full. There were mixed views regarding this.

In the groups, some initially felt that having the 'EU' acronym made the question look more cluttered and potentially confusing, and that it is unnecessary;

"In a ballot it's better to use European Union - (EU) just makes it more cluttered."

(45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

"I prefer [question 4] because it's spelled out…there's no abbreviations anywhere."

(18-44 years, C2DE, regular voter, Enniskillen)

However, these participants still understood the question and did not feel that it impacted on their ability to vote as they intended. On reflecting on the use of the 'EU' acronym focus group participants agreed that its inclusion could aid those who are more familiar with the acronym from media sources. Further to this, none felt that the inclusion of the 'EU' acronym would impact on neutrality of the question.

It was agreed across the board however, that the full term 'European Union' needs to be contained in both the question and the answer options. Participants preferred use of the full term 'European Union' throughout the question and did not feel that the term needed shortening to the acronym 'EU' for brevity. They agreed that using the term in full at each mention ensured consistency within the question. However, there was agreement that the inclusion of the acronym could increase clarity of

the question for those familiar with the acronym rather than the full term. With this in mind, it was suggested by some that the 'EU' acronym be included alongside the full term 'European Union' on the first mention of the European Union to aid clarity, and that following this, the full term (not the acronym) 'European Union' be used throughout the remainder of the question.

Some low literacy and English as a second language participants noted that they preferred this version of the question. These participants felt that having the acronym 'EU' alongside the full term 'European Union' in the question was helpful as it is more easily recognisable from its use by the media, and it makes it clear that the European Union **is** the EU.

"A lot of people refer to EU rather than European Union."

(English as a second language, Manchester)

"More people know what the EU is, people know it as the EU, you hear EU, you don't hear them say European Union, and they're quite big words - it's just as easy to understand, but I prefer having EU.''

(Low Literacy, Manchester)

Overall, the research suggests that inclusion of the acronym 'EU' does not impact on the neutrality of the question. Whilst a small number of people feel that it may make the question look cluttered, there is a preference for its inclusion for those less familiar with the full term 'European Union' and more familiarity with the 'EU' acronym. It should be noted that for most, the inclusion was considered to 'make no difference either way'. The research therefore suggests that the acronym should only be used once, alongside 'European Union', as an aid to clarify the question (and that the European Union **is** the EU), alongside the full term 'European Union' and should not be used to replace the full term 'European Union'.

2.4   Question 4.3

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?

Remain

Leave

Q4.3, with the shortened answer options, was preferred by three group participants only, and this was merely down to the simplicity of the answer options. One commented that:

"This one reminds me more of what you would see at the ballot box."

(18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

"You can't get much simpler than that. Fewer words, less confusion I guess."

(18-44 years, BC1, regular voter, Welsh speaker, Cardiff)

But for most, it was considered 'too basic', 'oversimplified', 'too informal' and participants mainly felt that the full answer options make it explicitly clear what people are being asked to vote on and help to make the question clearer overall.

> "The longer explanation in the answer is better because it makes it very clear what you are voting for."
>
> (18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

> "I kind of prefer [question 4] because it has the complete phrasing that's in the question so I think you'd be less confused."
>
> (18-44 years, C2DE, regular voter, Enniskillen)

One participant felt that the question was 'too stark' for people who might be nervous about voting. They felt that clarifying the answer options (as with the other question versions) would be easier for those nervous about voting.

2.5   Reverse versions

The broad consensus was that reversed versions were leading in a way that it they are not the other way around. This was mainly because it felt more intuitive to have the status quo option first - 'yes or no; remain or leave; stay or go?'

> "You automatically expect yes to be first."
>
> (45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

A couple of participants noted that it made sense to have the status quo detailed in the first instance.

> "Remain is on top because that's the situation as it is now. The order is fine."
>
> (18-44 years, BC1, regular voter, Welsh speaker, Cardiff)

While there was one suggestion that the answer options could be level on the ballot paper rather than one above the other, no participants preferred the reverse answer options, and the view was expressed by a number of people that these questions contained bias and were likely to have been written by someone who wants the UK to leave the EU, as they are counter-intuitive and potentially misleading.

> "You need the positive before the negative, so yes comes before no."
>
> (45+ years, BC1, regular voter, Hove)

2.6   Understanding the question in context

As with previous research carried out on the referendum question options, there were some questions about the context for the question.

The previous GfK research found that clarifying that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union was important for any question. The previous research found that Q4 clarified the UK's current membership status, and this finding was reinforced in this further research. Only one participant in the Manchester group suggested adding a statement before the question – 'The UK is currently a member of the European Union (EU).' – to simplify it beyond any doubt, but other than this no more information was required in either the question itself or on the ballot paper overall.

However, there was general agreement across participants that people are not generally informed enough about what the European Union actually is, what it does, what the pros and cons are for both individuals and the United Kingdom as a whole, etc., to be able to make a properly informed opinion. There were a number of comments along the lines of:

"For a lot of people even understanding what the EU is, is quite complicated."

(18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

"(It's clear) as long as you know what the European Union is."

(18-44 years, BC1, irregular voter, Manchester)

Most participants agreed though, that they would expect any build up to a referendum would include lots of information from, for example, televised debates, poster and information campaigns and political parties, so that they would have a better foundation for making up their mind. They would not expect extra information to appear on the ballot paper itself.

3   Conclusions

Question 4 emerged as the preferred question version across the research as it was considered to be clear, straightforward and neutral.

The table below compares the different question versions.

	Understanding	**Neutrality**
Question 4	✓ Clarifies current membership status. ✓ Clarifies each voting option.	✓ Balanced, presenting both voting options with equal treatment.
Question 4.1	✓ Clarifies current membership status. ✓ Clarifies each voting option.	× Emotive and directive language
Question 4.2	✓ Clarifies current membership status. ✓ Clarifies each voting option. ✓ EU acronym clarifies that the European Union is the EU ? Preference for use of the full term European Union rather than use of 'EU' acronym ? EU acronym can add clutter	✓ Balanced, presenting both voting options with equal treatment.
Question 4.3	✓ Clarifies current membership status. ✓ Clarifies each voting option.	✓ Balanced, presenting both voting

	? Too informal/ lacks detail in answer options of other questions	options with equal treatment.

As shown above, the research clearly finds that question **4.1** lacks neutrality. This is based on the emotive phrase 'get out' used in this question.

Question **4.2** is considered neutral and clear. As with Q4, this version makes the UK's current membership status clear and provides neutral voting options. However, the use of the EU acronym generates mixed feedback. A small number do feel that the use of the EU acronym can 'clutter' the ballot paper unnecessarily.   However overall participants agree that inclusion of the acronym is beneficial as a way to clarify that the European Union **is** the EU, and will reflect anticipated media discussion and coverage prior to any referendum. Overall, most participants agree that the inclusion of the abbreviation 'EU' is 'neither here nor there' but do agree that if used, it should be alongside the full term 'European Union' on the first mention of the European Union to aid clarity, and that following this, the full term (not the acronym) 'European Union' be used throughout the remainder of the question.

Given the potential for aiding clarity with the inclusion of 'EU', the research suggests that this is something that should be considered by the Electoral Commission.

Question **4.3** again is considered clear and balanced. However, the shorter answer options are considered informal and lacking the full detail afforded by writing the answer options in full. For this reason, it does not emerge as a popular choice for use in a referendum.

Overall, the research suggests that **question 4** with the potential inclusion of the 'EU' acronym just once – as shown below – is the preferred version of the question.

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU) or leave the European Union?

Remain a member of the European Union

Leave the European Union

4 Appendix

4.1 Discussion Guide

Electoral Commission: EU Referendum Q4 Test

Focus Group Discussion Guide FINAL

> **Interview Objective:**
> Explore how voters react to and understand the proposed EU referendum question(s). Specifically:
> - Identify any areas of the question that are problematic and the reasons for any problems
> - Investigate the extent to which the question meets the Commissions' question assessment guidelines: being easy to understand; to the point; unambiguous; ensuring that voters don't consider one response more favourably than another; avoid misleading voters.
> - Explore potential ways of redressing any problems through changes to the question and other channels of information; identify problematic words and phrases, identify any jargon or technical language, and identify any issues with the tone used.

Please note: this discussion guide is intended to guide the discussion however; the exact flow and question wording will be tailored by the focus group participants. Resultantly, not all questions may be asked in the order below, or in the wording below.

Moderator please note: throughout the interview people will make suggestions for improvements. Please get a feel for whether these are essential or nice to have.

MODERATOR PLEASE NOTE: AS WE HAVE ALREADY CARRIED OUT RESEARCH ON Q4 PLEASE LIMIT TIME SPENT ON SECTIONS 3 AND 4 AND FOCUS ON SECTIONS 5 AND 6.

1. Moderator introduction and initial question test   10 mins

(Aim: introduce research to participants and ask participants to complete the referendum question)

- Thank you for agreeing to take part in this group discussion.
- Introduce self, GfK NOP and explain research is being carried out for the Electoral Commission.
- Explain purpose of the group discussion: you have been invited along this evening to discuss your thoughts on a European Union referendum question.
- Reassure participants that the discussion is confidential, and the MRS Code of Conduct.
- Our discussion will last around 1 hour.
- Explain: I'd like to start our discussion by asking you to complete an exercise.

Please look at the sheet on your chair. Without talking, please answer the referendum question on the first page as if you were doing so for real. Please do not move on to the worksheet until everyone has finished.

- There are no right or wrong answers to the question. If you would be happy to tell people how you answered the referendum question, please feel free to do so during the discussion. If you do not want to tell people how you answered, you do not have to. The discussion will focus on your understanding of the question.

ALL TO ANSWER QUESTION 4

- Now you have all answered the referendum question, please answer the three questions on the worksheet:

- On the first page, please summarise what you think the referendum question was asking in your own words.
- On the second page, please underline anything you found clear in blue and anything you found unclear in red and explain why you have identified these.
- On the third page, please write down what changes, if any, you would like to see made to the referendum question to make it clearer.
- Please complete your worksheets without talking. If you have any questions, raise your hand and I will come to you.

2. Participant introduction   5 mins
(Aim: meet the participants and gather initial views regarding the referendum question)

- Thank you for completing the exercise. Moderator - explain purpose of research:
    - During the discussion we will be looking at your views towards the European Union Referendum question you have just completed. GfK NOP is carrying out research for the Electoral Commission to test the referendum question with voters.
    - Does everyone know what a referendum is? Just to clarify, referendums are held to ask the people in a country or area to vote on a proposal. The outcome of a referendum vote will guide the government on what to do.
- This research is not about your views about the European Union. It is about the referendum question itself and how well you understand it. I do want everyone to be respectful of each other's views but I do want us to focus on the question and not individual political views so please do not be offended if I stop the discussion if it starts drifting off topic – it's not because I'm not interested in what you have to say!
- The questions that we are looking at are questions that people could be asked in any area across the UK in the future. However, I should stress that we're only in [group location] because it's a good place to talk to people.
- Some MPs want the law changed so that the Government has to hold a referendum before the end of 2017 that lets the people of the UK decide on the topic of EU membership. However, this has not yet been agreed and so we are unable to say whether there will or will not be a referendum about EU membership.
- The Electoral Commission is legally required to test any referendum question included in a Bill introduced to the UK Parliament and the versions of the question we will be looking at today form part of this testing process.
- Respondent introductions:
    - Please tell me your first name, what you do with your time and a couple of things that you wrote in your exercise.

3. Completing the question: accuracy   5 mins
(Aim: explore how confident participants feel in answering the question)

- Who feels confident that they gave the response they wanted to?
    - What makes you feel confident about this?
    - Do you have any doubts that you have given the response you wanted to?
- Who does not feel confident that they gave the response they wanted to?
    - Why do you not feel confident about this?
    - What could make you feel more confident about your response?

- What do you think the question was asking you?
- What do you think you have voted for?
- How did you decide whether to vote yes or no?
  - Moderator please note: this question is included to give insight into any potential misconceptions when answering the question but we are keen not to enter a discussion on general views of the European Union.

- Based on the discussion so far:
  - Who feels they have given the response they wanted to? Why?
  - Who feels they have not given the response they wanted to? Why not?

4. Completing the question: literal meaning   10 mins
(Aim: understand how far participants understand the literal meaning of the question; the words on the page)

- What words would you use to describe the referendum question?

  Prompt if needed:
  - Positive words: easy, clear, to the point, straightforward.
  - Negative words: difficult, unclear, longwinded, confusing.

Ease of understanding

- Overall, how easy was the question to understand?
  - What were the main things that made it easy to understand?
  - What were the main things that made it difficult to understand?

- Which words and phrases did you identify as difficult to understand? Please refer back to any words that you underlined in red on your worksheet.
  - Why were these difficult to understand?
  - What do you think they mean?
  - How far did these affect your understanding of the question?
  - How could they be changed and improved?
  - What words or phrases do you think other people might difficult to understand?
    PROMPT: what do you think is meant by 'European Union' or 'member of the European Union'?

- Did the question give you the right amount of information? Why / Why not?
  - What more does it need to tell you?
  - Is that information that needs to be on the ballot paper or could it be somewhere else?
  - IF BALLOT PAPER: Do you think there might be any issues with adding additional information on to the ballot paper?
  - Moderator please note: this is a chance to get some topline views around information provision but do not probe in depth (this was covered at the previous phase of research).

Neutrality

- Does the question make one answer option sound better than the other?
  - To what extent does it encourage people to vote one way or another?
  - Do you think the question suggests there is a correct answer?

- Who do you think wrote this question?

- Does the person who wrote the question want you to vote one way or the other?

- Are there parts of the question that sounds particularly positive or negative?
    - Which parts are these?

Summary and improvements

- Do you agree or disagree that the referendum question:
    - Uses plain language?
    - Is clear in what it is asking?
    - Is biased towards one option?
    - Is to the point?
    - Is misleading to voters?

- What question would you ask if you were in charge of the referendum? Why?

5. Testing alternative wording   15 mins
(Aim: test comprehension of other papers including alternative wording)

ALL TO ANSWER QUESTION 4.1, 4.2 or 4.3. See rotation schedule.

Show only either 4.1, 4.2 or 4.3 on paper first – see rotation schedule - and then probe whether they prefer the wording in the alternative version.

There is another example question paper that I would like to show you.
- What do you think about this question?
- Would you answer it the same as the first one we looked at?
- Is it asking the same thing?
    - How is it different to the question we looked at earlier?
    - Is there anything you do not understand?
    - What improvements could be made to this question?

- What's different between this question and the first/second/third one you looked at?
    - If not raised: This question uses the word 'x' rather than 'y' – how do you feel about this?

- Is it asking the same thing?
- Moderator clarify: these are two different ways of asking the same question.
- What works well about this wording? Why?
- What works badly about this wording? Why?

Stimulus: here we will directly **compare** both questions. Moderator to show the questions side by side.
- Moderator: if problems were identified with the first question please explore this issue across the different versions.

- Looking at the different options:
    - How do these questions compare?

- o Which parts of the questions are clear / less clear?
- o Which are easy / more difficult to understand? Why?
- o Is one of the questions clearer? Is this the whole question, or just parts of it?
- o Is one of the questions more to the point? All, or parts of it?
- o Is one of the questions more balanced than the other? All or parts of it?
- o Is one question easier to answer? Why?

Move to next question. See rotation schedule.

Stimulus: when all versions of the question shown: here we will directly compare all four questions. Moderator to show the questions side by side.

Moderator: please explore these prompts as and when specific question versions are discussed.   Question specific prompts:

- Questions 4.2 and 4.3: views on the combining of elements (TO BE DISCUSSED ONCE BOTH 4.2 AND 4.3 HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED) of these questions looking at combination of shorter questions and answers e.g.
    - o Shorter answer options:

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU) or leave the EU? Remain Leave

- o Abbreviation:

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU) or leave the EU? Remain a member of the EU Leave the EU
Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain a member of the EU Leave the EU

- All questions: views on reverse order of the question so that leave is first.

4	Should the United Kingdom leave the European Union or remain a member of the European Union? Leave the European Union Remain a member of the European Union

4.1	Should the United Kingdom get out of the European Union or stay a member of the European Union?
	Get out of the European Union
	Stay in the European Union
4.2	Should the United Kingdom leave the European Union (EU) or remain a member of the EU?
	Leave the European Union
	Remain a member of the European Union
4.3	Should the United Kingdom leave the European Union or remain a member of the European Union?
	Leave
	Remain

Moderator: please explore these prompts as and when specific question versions are discussed.   Language specific prompts:

- Remain
- Stay
- Leave
- Get out (new addition for this stage of the research)
- Stay in (new addition for this stage of the research)
- Continue (not in included on these questions but identified as a possible word in the last stage – instead of 'remain' or 'stay'.)
- Overall, which question works best and why?
    - Would you change this question in any way? Why?

6. Reflecting on and refining the question   10 mins
(Aim: explore how the question could be improved)

Moderator: whilst exploring changes/ improvements to the questions ensure you discuss any changes to the way would answer the question. Start with the first question shown and then bring in second / third question shown to check whether there are any further comments.

- Looking at the questions we have looked at:
    - Do you think the wording of the question needs to be changed to make it easier to answer? How?

- Overall, which elements of these questions would you keep?

Moderator: identify which changes are essential and which would be 'nice to have'.

- Which would you change/ why?
    - Which changes do you think are essential? Why?

o Which changes would be just nice to have?

7. Summary and Close   5 mins

(Aim: wrap up the discussion)

- What question version would you ask if you were in charge of running the referendum?

- Moderator: go around the group and get an answer from each participant.

Thank and Close

4.2 Ballot Papers

Question 4:

BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE

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

PAPUR PLEIDLEISIO
BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE
Pleidleisiwch (X) UNWAITH YN UNIG

| A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig bara i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? | Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? |

Para i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd — Remain a member of the European Union

Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd — Leave the European Union

Question 4.1:

BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE

Should the United Kingdom stay a member of the European Union or get out of the European Union?

Stay in the European Union

Get out of the European Union

PAPUR PLEIDLEISIO
BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE
Pleidleisiwch (X) UNWAITH YN UNIG

| A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu ddod allan o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd? | Should the United Kingdom stay a member of the European Union or get out of the European Union? |

Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd — Stay in the European Union

Dod allan o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd — Get out of the European Union

Question 4.2:

BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU) or leave the EU?

Remain a member of the European Union	
Leave the European Union	

PAPUR PLEIDLEISIO
BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE
Pleidleisiwch (X) UNWAITH YN UNIG

A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig bara i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd (UE) neu adael yr UE?	Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU) or leave the EU?	
Para i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd	Stay in the European Union	
Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd	Get out of the European Union	

Question 4.3:

BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?

Remain	
Leave	

PAPUR PLEIDLEISIO
BALLOT PAPER

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE
Pleidleisiwch (X) UNWAITH YN UNIG

A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig bara i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?	Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?	
Para yn aelod	Remain	
Gadael	Leave	