REFERENDUM ON MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: QUESTION TESTING

Report for the Electoral Commission exploring the intelligibility of the proposed European Union Referendum Bill (2015) question

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1   Executive Summary

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) the Commission is required to comment on the intelligibility of referendum questions. The Commission's approach to assessing questions includes gathering evidence from the general public.

In 2013 GfK Social Research tested the intelligibility of the original question on the European Union (Referendum) Bill (introduced by James Wharton MP in 2013) amongst members of the public. Alternative versions of the question were also tested and the findings of this research resulted in two recommendations from the Commission to Parliament:

1. If Parliament wants to retain 'Yes' and 'No' as the response options, the question should be amended to:

   'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? Yes/ No' (This is the proposed question included in the 2015 European Union Referendum Bill)

2. And if Parliament decides not to retain a 'Yes' and 'No' question:

   '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'

After the question wording included in the Private Members' Bill had been amended in Parliament to option 2 above, GfK Social Research carried out further testing in 2014. Taking into account the findings of this research the Commission concluded that it was satisfied that this question wording (i.e. option 2 shown above) was clear and straightforward for voters, and the most neutral wording from the range of options that were considered and tested.

The objective of this new research was to test the question included in the European Union Referendum Bill 2015 (i.e. option 1 shown above), providing an up-to-date assessment of the proposed question, and evaluating whether the previous assessment still stands. The new research also evaluated the proposed Welsh language version of the question also included in the Bill:

'A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd? Dylai/ Na Ddylai'

The research used a qualitative method involving five mini-group discussions, 24 extended mini-depth interviews and 65 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 of the questions. The 2015 Bill Question (see option 1 above) and a non-Yes/ No Question (see option 2 above) were tested in English and Welsh language alongside variations to explore different aspects of question wording/ phrasing and structure.

It should be noted that whilst this qualitative approach emphasises self-expression and can identify participant reported views regarding the neutrality of the questions, it does not capture any unconscious influence which may affect participants' without them being aware of it.

1.1 Contextual knowledge

As found in the previous 2013[1] and 2014[2] research, contextual knowledge of the European Union varied across research participants. Whilst most were aware that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union, participants noted that they were not entirely clear on what the outcomes of a majority vote either way would mean in practice. With this in mind, some reflected that without greater contextual knowledge about what would actually happen after the vote, the referendum question could be misinterpreted.

1.2 Individual question feedback

Overall, and as shown in the previous research, the majority of participants found the language used across the question versions simple and easy to understand. The main concerns regarding clarity focused on lack of contextual understanding of the European Union and what would happen if there was a majority vote either way.

Participants were encouraged to be analytical in identifying any potential concerns regarding clarity and neutrality of the questions. Whilst some concerns were highlighted it is important to note that all participants felt confident that they would vote as they intended for both the 2015 Bill Question (option 1 detailed on page 3) and the non-Yes/ No answer option question (option 2 detailed on page 3).

1.3 The 2015 Bill Question

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? Yes/ No

As found in the previous 2013 research, participants felt that this question used simple and clear language. The research found that this question was straightforward and easy to understand.

Some preferred this question, when compared to the non-Yes/ No question as they noted that it was shorter, which they felt made it simpler and more concise.

In particular, some participants liked the short 'yes' and 'no' answer options. However, others felt that these were vague when compared to the fuller answer

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[1] Referendum on membership of the European Union: Question testing (October 2013) http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/163283/GfK-NOP_EU20Referendum20Question20Testing20Research20Report-WEB.pdf

[2] Referendum on membership of the European Union: Further question testing (March 2014) http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/166613/Referendum-on-the-membership-of-the-European-Union-Further-question-testing-April-2014.pdf

options provided in the non-Yes/ No question, noting that they provided greater clarity and context regarding each voting option.

Participants further noted that when compared to the non-Yes/ No question the 2015 Bill Question lacked neutrality as it only presented one voting option; the 'remain' option. These participants felt that the non-Yes/ No question was more balanced.

1.4 The non-Yes/ No Question

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

As found in the previous research, this question was also considered clear and simple, and easy to understand.   Also mirroring the previous research findings, participants felt that this question was clear in describing the two voting options, avoiding any potential for confusion. This question was also considered to be well-balanced and neutral, giving equal weighting to each option in both the question and answer options.

Whilst when compared to the 2015 Bill Question, this non-Yes/ No Question was considered long-winded by some, none felt that this would impact their understanding of the question.

Some participants noted the word 'leave' could convey negative connotations. However, again, this was not felt to impact on individual voting behaviour and the previous 2013 research suggests that the impact of this word is mitigated by including both voting options (not only the 'leave' option) in the question structure.

1.5 Both Questions

Across both questions, participants raised concerns regarding the following words and phrases:

'Remain' or 'stay'
Following spontaneous suggestions amongst participants in the first few research sessions that 'stay' could be used as an alternative word to 'remain', participants were prompted with alternative question wording to this effect. Overall participants expressed mixed preferences for these words. There was a slightly stronger preference for the word 'remain' with many noting that this was the more formal word, and therefore felt more fitting to a referendum . Those preferring 'stay' suggested that this word was simpler and 'every day' language. There was no clear preference in this research or previous research for which word should be used amongst low literacy, England as a second language and learning disability participants. Overall participants agreed that either word could be used in the referendum question (also mirroring the previous research findings).

Whilst it was agreed that inclusion of 'remain' or 'stay' was crucial in clarifying the United Kingdoms' current membership status of the European Union, some participants noted that these words conveyed a sense of status quo. Some felt that this could be leading by suggesting maintaining or changing the status quo (which could be interpreted positively or negatively by voters). This was considered

particularly pertinent to the 2015 Bill Question as this question only presented the 'remain' option in the question wording.

'Be a member of the European Union' or 'Remain/ stay a member of the European Union'

The previous 2013 research tested the original 2013 Bill Question: *'Do you think the United Kingdom should be a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'.* This new 2015 research further probed on use of the phrase 'be a member' using the following question wording stimulus[3]: *'Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'.*

Mirroring the previous 2013 research findings, participants felt that the phrase 'be a member' was misleading and confusing as it lacked clarity regarding the United Kingdom's current membership of the European Union. Whilst a few participants in both the previous and the new research felt that this question could be considered more neutral – as it does not provide membership information within the question itself – it was strongly agreed that the question should convey current membership status to avoid misleading voters.

'Member of the European Union' vs. 'in the European Union'
Based on participants' comments from the first few research sessions in the new 2015 research, alternative question wording stimulus was shown to participants to gather their views on inclusion and exclusion of the word 'member'. Participants were shown variations of questions excluding the word 'member' from the question and answer options to explore the impact of this word. They were also shown the following variation of the non-Yes/ No question to explore views regarding more symmetrical answer options (achieved by removing the word 'member' from the 'remain' answer option):

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain in the European Union/ Leave the European Union.

Overall, participants generally agreed that there should be consistency in terms of including or excluding the word 'member' from the first part of the question (i.e. '*Should the United Kingdom remain a <u>member</u> of the European Union or…')* and the associated answer option (i.e. '*Remain a <u>member</u> of the European Union'*).

However, there were mixed views regarding whether the word 'member' should be included in the referendum question in general. Mirroring the previous research, some participants noted that the word 'member' could convey a sense of inclusivity, which was considered to be potentially influencing. In this research, this was of particular relevance to the non-Yes/ No question as this question only assigns the word 'member' to the 'remain' option in the question. However, the majority of participants in the previous research, and many participants in this new research

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[3] Please see Table 1, page 15 for a list of the questions tested. Other question wording was also tested during the fieldwork through use of prompts and stimulus materials. This included stimulus material to test *'Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union?'*

felt that inclusion of the word 'member' was factual and descriptive of the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union. These participants did not consider the word 'member' to be leading. Some further felt that it should be included to clarify the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union noting that the alternative wording 'in the European Union' felt vague in comparison. Some participants in this research suggested the word 'member' could be entirely excluded making the question shorter and therefore simpler. Despite mixed views regarding inclusion of the word 'member' none felt that including or excluding the word would impact on their personal voting behaviour.

Welsh language words and phrases
The feedback for each question was similar for both the English and Welsh language versions. However, there was some discussion regarding the word 'para/ bara' as used in the non-Yes/ No question. Participants did not like this word or the alternative 'parhau/ barhau'. They felt that they sounded too similar to other words such as the Welsh for 'bread'. Participants preferred 'aros' or 'ddal i fod' and preferences for each of these words were based on personal opinion. Overall, participants agreed that either 'aros' or ddal i fod' could be used as synonyms alongside the English words 'remain' or 'stay'.

1.6   Overall fit with assessment guidelines

Be easy to understand
As found in the previous research, participants (including those with English as a second language, low levels of literacy and learning difficulties) found the language used in the questions clear and easy to understand.

Whilst some preferred the word 'stay' to 'remain' as they felt it was simpler, they reflected that either word could be used in the referendum question. Overall, it was considered important to include 'stay' or 'remain' in the question wording as it clarifies the United Kingdom's current membership status and therefore aids ease of understanding the question.

There were mixed views regarding inclusion of the word 'member' in the questions. Whilst some feel that excluding this word creates a shorter and simpler question, others note that its inclusion helps clarify the United Kingdom's current relationship with the European Union.

Overall, lack of clarity arising from the questions is based on lack on contextual knowledge (e.g. lack of knowledge regarding the European Union, terms of membership and what a majority vote either way would mean) which participants expect to be provided around the time of the referendum.

To the point
Both the 2015 Bill Question and the non-Yes/ No Question are considered to be to the point. Whilst some prefer the short and concise nature of the 2015 Bill Question, none felt that the length of the non-Yes/ No question affected the clarity and understanding of the question.

Be unambiguous

Participants did not cite concerns regarding the ambiguity of the questions, particularly as they felt that inclusion of the word 'remain' or 'stay' clarified the United Kingdom's current membership of the European Union.

Some participants however did note that the answer options for the 2015 Bill Question could be considered 'vague' when compared to the non-Yes/ No Question which fully described both voting options. With this in mind, participants felt there was less likelihood of ambiguity in the non-Yes/ No question.

As found in the previous research, there are some concerns regarding the perceived ambiguity of what the outcome of a majority vote either way would mean. This is often expressed as a desire for more contextual information around the time of the referendum to enable an informed decision.

Avoiding encouraging voters to consider one response more favourably than another

As discussed above, participants note that there is potential for the following words to convey connotations and therefore influence voters. Minor concerns were raised regarding the following:

- 'Remain' or 'stay': whilst considered very important to clarify current membership status of the European Union, participants did reflect that this could influence people by suggesting maintaining or changing the 'status quo'. This was considered particularly relevant to the 2015 Bill Question as it only includes the 'remain' option.
- 'Member': some participants noted that 'member' triggered positive feelings of inclusivity or membership which could influence peoples' views. This was considered particularly relevant to the non-Yes/ No question as whilst it provides both voting outcomes, it only assigns the word 'member' to the remain option.
- 'Leave': when commenting on the non-Yes/ No question some participants felt that 'leave' was a strong word which could be perceived in a negative light.

However, none felt that these concerns would influence their own personal vote.

Some felt more strongly regarding the fact that the 2015 Bill Question only includes the 'remain' option in the question wording which participants felt could encourage people to vote for the United Kingdom to remain in the European Union. Again, whilst participants did not feel that this would influence their own vote, they did say that the non-Yes/ No question was more balanced and neutral as it provided both voting options.

Avoid misleading voters

Participants did not feel that the 2015 Bill question and the Non-Yes/ No questions tested were misleading and as found in the previous research, felt that clarifying the United Kingdom's current membership status of the European Union was key in maintaining this.

It should be noted that participants did feel that the question *'Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union'* (as tested through stimulus material

in the new research) was considered misleading as it did not clarify the United Kingdom's current membership status of the European Union.

1.7 Information provision

Whilst not the main focus, the research probed on what sort of information participants would expect to be provided around the time of a referendum, and what they would find helpful. Most participants agreed that greater contextual information regarding the outcomes of a referendum would be needed to help them make an informed voting decision. Participants sought information and answers for the following questions:

- Will a majority 'yes/ remain/ stay' vote mean:
  - Continuation of current terms of membership?
  - Continued membership with different terms of membership?
  - Continued membership and adoption of the Euro? (this was mentioned by a couple of participants)
- Will a majority 'no/ leave' vote mean:
  - Entire separation from the European Union?
  - Renegotiated terms of membership?
  - Partial membership?
  - A relationship with the European Union with trade agreements similar to other European countries that are not part of the European Union?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of remaining in and leaving the European Union?

Overall participants expected opinion-based information to be provided by campaigners and factual information to be provided by an independent organisation. They felt that a broad range of views would be most useful in informing voters and suggested a range of mediums for providing this information including debates, television and radio coverage, pamphlets and online resources.

1.8 Conclusion

The research suggests that the 2015 Bill Question and the non-Yes/ No question are suitable for use in a referendum. However, reflecting previous research findings, most consider the question structure of the non-Yes/ No question, which presents both voting options, more balanced. An overview is provided below:

	Understanding	Neutrality
Bill question *Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? Yes/ No*	✓ Short and concise.	? Only specifying the 'remain' option in the question could influence voters. However, none felt that this would personally impact their own vote.

Non - Yes / No questions *Should the United Kingdom remain/ stay a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain/ Stay in the European Union/ Leave the European Union.*	?	Long-winded when compared to the 2015 Bill question. However, none felt that this affected their understanding of the question.	✓	Balanced, presenting both voting options with equal treatment.
	✓	Clarifies each voting option.	?	'Member of the European Union' can trigger positive feelings of inclusivity and is only provided alongside the 'remain/ stay a member' option. However, none felt this would personally affect their vote.
Both questions	✓	Simple language that is easy to understand.	?	'Member of the European Union' can trigger positive feelings of inclusivity. However, none felt this would personally affect their vote.
	✓	Clarifies current membership status.	?	'Remain' can suggest maintaining or changing the status quo which could be perceived positively or negatively by voters. However, none felt this would personally affect their vote.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

The Electoral Commission is an independent body established by the UK Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA). Its aim is to maintain the integrity of and public confidence in the democratic process. Under PPERA, the Commission is required to comment on the intelligibility of referendum questions at a UK, national and regional level.

GfK Social Research, on behalf of the Commission has undertaken previous qualitative research into the intelligibility of a question on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU) which was triggered by a Private Member's Bill introduced by James Wharton MP in 2013.

The original question[4] put forward in Wharton's European Union (Referendum) Bill was tested along with five other versions. This tested potential changes to the wording to see whether they improved the question, in terms of making it easier to understand and answer. The research report can be found here.

The research found that there was a risk of misunderstanding with this question as some people were not clear about the UK's current EU membership status. However, amending the question to make the UK's current membership status clear while keeping 'Yes' and 'No' as the response options presented difficulties for some people who thought it could be biased. The Commission therefore set out two recommendations to Parliament in its report. These recommendations[5] were:

If Parliament wants to retain 'Yes' and 'No' as the response options, the question should be amended to:

1) *'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'*
(This is the question included in the 2015 European Union Referendum Bill)

And if Parliament decides not to retain a 'Yes' and 'No' question:
2) *'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain a member of the European Union/ Leave the European Union'*

The Commission concluded that Parliament should carefully consider whether to retain a question with 'yes' and 'no' answer options taking into account perceived biases with this question structure.

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[4] The question included in the 2013 EU (Referendum) Bill was 'Do you think the United Kingdom should be a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'

[5] Full details regarding these recommendations can be found in the following report: http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/163282/EU-referendum-question-assessment-report.pdf

Following Committee Stage consideration of Wharton's EU (Referendum) Bill in the House of Lords in January 2014, the question included in the Bill was amended to the version recommended by the Commission that included the 'leave' or 'remain' options (i.e. option 2 shown above).

The Commission had however highlighted to Parliament that it was not possible to fully test this version of the question in the time available. It was made clear that if Parliament amended the Bill to include this question wording, the Commission would undertake further work on the question to check whether it raises any new issues of intelligibility.

GfK Social Research therefore carried out further testing in early 2014. This involved testing the amended version included in the Bill (i.e. *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),* plus other variations. The Commission concluded that it was satisfied that the question wording contained in the Bill (following its amendment in the House of Lords) was clear and straightforward for voters, and the most neutral wording from the range of options that were considered and tested. The research report further assessing this question was published at the beginning of April 2014[6]. This research tested the question variations amongst voters however, the Commission did not receive any responses from campaigners and detailed that further question testing and consultation would be required for any future Bill.

The objective of this new research was to test the 2015 Bill question (i.e. option 1 shown above), providing an up-to-date assessment of the proposed question, and evaluating whether the previous assessment still stands. The research also evaluated the proposed Welsh language version of the question:
'A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd? Dylai/ Na Ddylai'

The Electoral Commission's question assessment process gathers evidence from a number of sources including:

- the general public;
- experts on accessibility and plain language, and the Welsh Language Commissioner;
- political parties and campaign groups associated with the referendum, and;
- other key groups or individuals who have an interest in the referendum and its outcome.

GfK Social Research was contracted by the Commission to carry out research with the general public to update the previous research findings and identify:

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[6] http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/166613/Referendum-on-the-membership-of-the-European-Union-Further-question-testing-April-2014.pdf

- Any elements of the referendum question which prove problematic for users in the context of our question assessment guidelines.

- Explore the reasons for these problems, and possible ways of addressing these problems.

2.2 Objectives

The aim of this research was to gain insights into how voters in the United Kingdom reacted to and understood the proposed referendum question. In particular, the objectives of this research were to update the previous research findings and:

- Identify any elements of the referendum question which proved problematic for users in the context of the Electoral Commission's assessment guidelines:

  o Explore the extent to which the question is easy to understand.
  o Understand the extent to which the information contained in the question is factual, clear and accurate.
  o Identify any elements of the question, which are ambiguous.
  o Understand if, and where, the question encourages voters to consider one response more favourably than another.
  o Identify whether the question misleads voters in any way.

- Explore the reasons for these problems:

  o Understand which particular words or phrases cause problems.
  o Identify where jargon or technical terms are perceived to have been used.
  o Identify any problems with the tone of the language used.

- Explore possible ways of addressing these problems:

  o Capture participants' suggestions for improvements.
  o Test iterations of the questions.
  o Explore what additional information is required, other than what is on the ballot paper, to help voters understand the contextual meaning of the question and the implications of the referendum outcomes, in order to enable voters to cast an informed vote.

2.3 The question testing process

There were two key versions of the question shown across this new 2015 research:

- The 2015 Bill Question (Question A: *Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? Yes/ No*). This question was previously tested in the 2013 research[7].
- A non-Yes/ No question (Question B: *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*. This question was previously tested in the 2013 and 2014 research[8]). Variations of this question were shown to explore the clarity and neutrality of two key words (Question B.1 explored use of the word 'member' and Question C explored use of the word 'stay' as an alternative to 'remain').

The fieldwork was conducted in three phases to allow for an iterative process whereby feedback from each phase was used to make alterations if needed and develop new questions and stimulus to test in subsequent phases. For example, stimulus was used to test the alternative question wording 'Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union'. Stimulus was also developed during the research based on emerging findings to test views regarding inclusion and exclusion of the word 'member', and use of the word 'stay' instead of 'remain'. Further details regarding the stimulus used can be found in Table 3 on page 17.

Table 1 below highlights which questions were tested.

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[7] When tested in the previous 2013 research this question was referred to as 'question 2'.

[8] When tested in the previous 2013 and 2014 research, this question was referred to as 'question 4'.

Table 1

Question	Question wording	Answer options
A English language	Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?	Yes / No
A Welsh language	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd?	Dylai/ Na Ddylai
B English language	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
B Welsh language	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
C English language	Should the United Kingdom stay a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?	Stay a member of the European Union/ Leave the European Union
C Welsh language	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?	Aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd/ Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
B.1 English language	Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?	Remain in the European Union/ Leave the European Union
B.1 Welsh language	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?	Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd/ Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

Table 2 below shows the questions tested at each stage of the fieldwork. The order in which the questions were shown was rotated across the mini-groups, extended mini-depth interviews and the mini-depth interviews to reduce the likelihood of research bias being introduced.

Table 2

Project Stage	Fieldwork and Location	Questions Tested
Phase 1	London: 1 x mini-group and 3 x extended mini-depth interviews Lisburn: 6 x mini-depths Birmingham: 13 x mini-depth interviews and 3 x extended mini-depth interviews	Question A Question B
Question C developed		
Phase 2	Norwich: 15 x mini-depth interviews and 4 x extended mini-depth interviews Dundee: 1 x mini group, 1 x mini-depth interview and 1 x extended mini-depth interview Cardiff: 1 x mini group, 4 x extended mini-depth interviews	Question A Question B Question C
Question B.1 developed		
Phase 3	Stirling: 15 x mini-depth interviews and 2 x extended mini-depth interviews Sunderland: 1 x mini-group Porthmadog: 15 x mini-depth interviews and 4 x extended mini-depth interviews Derry: 1 x mini-group and 2 x extended mini- London: 1 x extended mini-depth	Question A Question B.1 Question C

Participants in phase 1 of the research all saw question A as the first question, ensuring the research gathered a clean read on views towards the 2015 Bill Question.

In the remaining phases, the questions shown (as detailed in the table above) were shown in full rotation to mitigate against any order bias. Further details regarding the rotation plan for each method is provided in the appendix.

Additional stimulus was used across the research to gather views regarding alternative question versions. Table 3 below shows the alternative question stimulus used in the research:

Table 3

Included to explore views regarding the phrase 'be a member of the European Union'	Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union? Yes No	
Included to explore views regarding the phrase 'in the European Union' as an alternative to 'member of the European Union'	Should the United Kingdom remain in the European Union? Yes No	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Dylai Na ddylai
	Should the United Kingdom remain in the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain in the European Union Leave the European Union	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Dal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
	Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain in the European Union Leave the European Union	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
	Should the United Kingdom stay in the European Union or leave the European Union? Stay in the European Union Leave the European Union	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

This research did not test the layout or structure of the ballot paper itself but focused on the language used in the wording of the question. Unless stated otherwise, where this report refers to the 'questions' we mean the 2015 Bill

Question (question A), the non-Yes/ No Question (question B) and two variations of question B (question B.1 and question C).
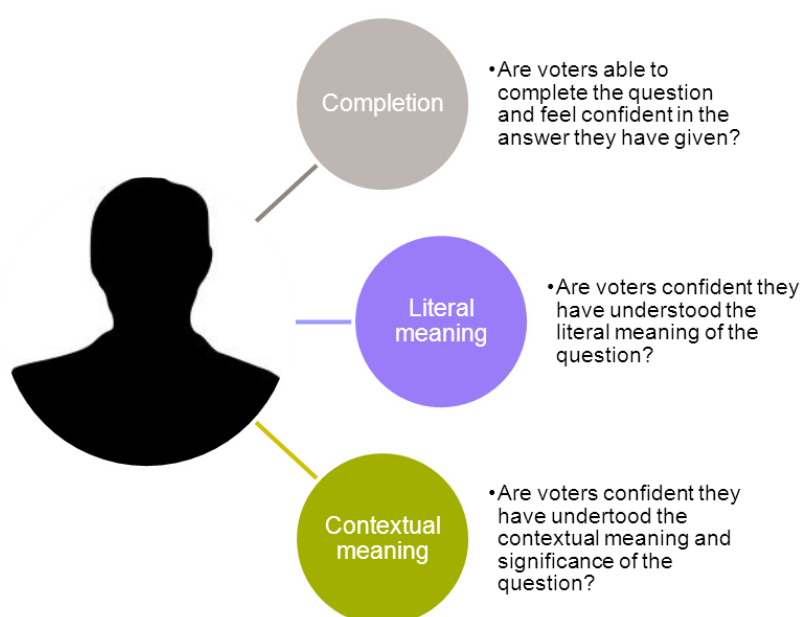
All versions were tested in English and Welsh using a mock ballot paper format to simulate a real life voting setting. The appendix has a full breakdown of the English language and bi-lingual Welsh ballot papers that were shown to the research participants.

2.4 Research approach

2.4.1 Method

The research was designed to update the previous research carried out to test the original proposed referendum question. The previous research employed a qualitative method and was carried out by GfK Social Research in 2013 and a follow-up piece of research in 2014 focussing on the non-Yes/ No question (referred to in this report as question B).

This 2015 research used a qualitative method, which involved 5 mini-groups, 24 extended mini-depth interviews, and 65 mini-depth interviews. The qualitative approach enabled the research team to fully explore how participants interpreted and responded to the questions in light of the previous research findings and any change in context since this was carried out. The approach allowed full exploration of participants' understanding of the literal and contextual meaning behind them. The contextual understanding focused on participants' understanding of the European Union and the perceived implications of voting in a particular way. This enabled the research to fully explore the extent to which participants understood the questions and how this understanding affected the responses they gave. Specifically, the research explored three key factors:

Completion
• Are voters able to complete the question and feel confident in the answer they have given?

Literal meaning
• Are voters confident they have understood the literal meaning of the question?

Contextual meaning
• Are voters confident they have undertood the contextual meaning and significance of the question?
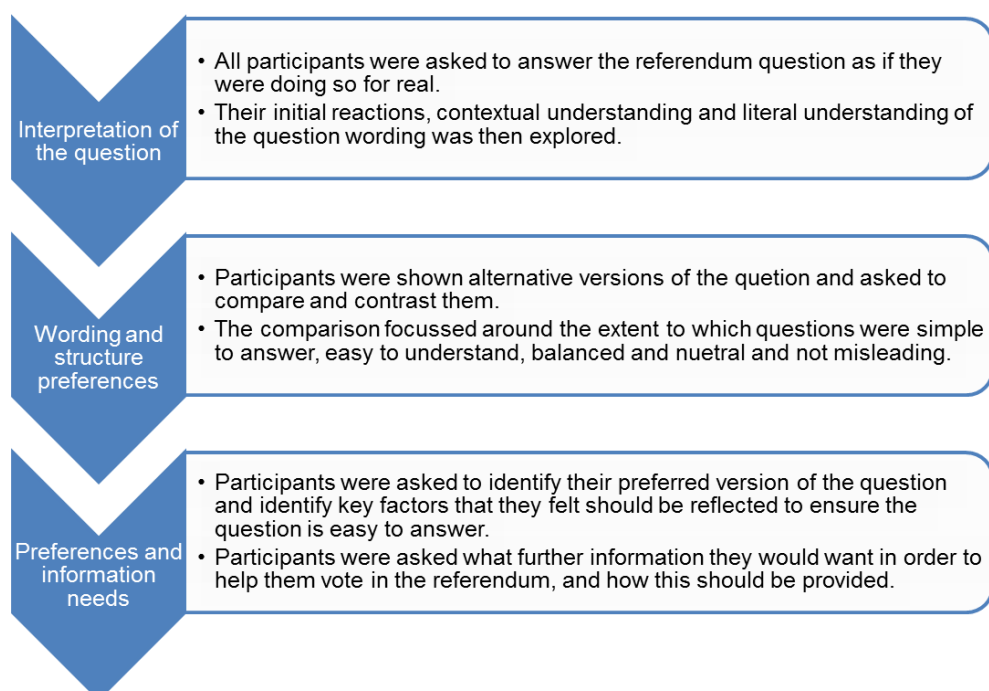
The research used a mix of qualitative methods in order to gather a broad range of feedback:

- Mini-groups provided an open forum where participants shared their ideas with each other. The discursive nature of a group setting was ideal for gathering nuanced feedback about the different versions of the question and generating ideas for improvement as well as identifying preferences for information provision around the time of a referendum.
- Extended mini-depths provided a private forum for discussion where the participant's individual point of view was explored in depth. The private nature of an interview meant participants were comfortable in revealing areas of the questions they found confusing, misleading or difficult to understand. The extended mini-depths included:
  - 4 x Welsh language
  - 5 x learning difficulties
  - 5 x low literacy levels
  - 5 x English as a second language
  - 5 x visual impairments

  The in-depth interviews lasted around 30 minutes.

- Mini-depth interviews are a short version of an in-depth interview lasting about 15 minutes each. They were an ideal way of gathering literal interpretations of the question versions from a wide range of the general public. This meant we were able to include a broad sample of people within the research by using this method.

The discussion in the focus groups and the depth interviews followed the flow outlined in the diagram below. The mini-depth interviews were a shorter version of this discussion. The appendix details the full discussion guides.

Interpretation of the question
- All participants were asked to answer the referendum question as if they were doing so for real.
- Their initial reactions, contextual understanding and literal understanding of the question wording was then explored.

Wording and structure preferences
- Participants were shown alternative versions of the quetion and asked to compare and contrast them.
- The comparison focussed around the extent to which questions were simple to answer, easy to understand, balanced and nuetral and not misleading.

Preferences and information needs
- Participants were asked to identify their preferred version of the question and identify key factors that they felt should be reflected to ensure the question is easy to answer.
- Participants were asked what further information they would want in order to help them vote in the referendum, and how this should be provided.

2.4.2 Sample

The sample was made up of:

- 5 mini-groups
- 65 mini-depth interviews
- 24 extended mini-depth interviews

These were split across 8 locations in all four countries of the United Kingdom. The specific locations were:

- England: Birmingham, London, Norwich and Sunderland
- Wales: Cardiff and Porthmadog
- Scotland: Dundee and Stirling
- Northern Ireland: Lisburn and Derry

The locations were chosen to ensure that we included a spread of the public with a broad range of demographic characteristics.

Fieldwork was carried out between the 6th and 15th July 2015.

A) Mini-groups

The mini-groups lasted 1.5 hours and included 5-6 participants in each group. The table below gives an overview of the sample. A full breakdown is included in the appendices.

Phase	Location	Voting behaviour	
		Regular Voters	**Irregular Voters**
One	London	45-59 years BC1 Moderate / high knowledge of EU membership matters 2 x BME participants	
Two	Cardiff	60+ years C1C2 Moderate / high knowledge of EU membership matters Welsh language	
	Dundee	17-24 years C2DE Little / no knowledge of EU membership matters 3 x voted in Scottish Referendum	
Three	Sunderland		25-44 years C2DE Little / no knowledge of EU membership matters
	Derry		25-44 years BC1 Little / no knowledge of EU membership matters

Within each group we sought to include a spread of:

- Individual views regarding personal importance of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union and, individual views regarding how personally informed participants felt regarding issues pertaining to the United

Kingdom's membership of the European Union. These views were gathered during the recruitment screening process.

- A mix of those who felt that they were decided or undecided regarding which way they would vote in the referendum.

Voting behaviour: Groups were stratified according to their voting behaviour. People who 'always' or 'usually' voted were classified as regular voters, while those who 'sometimes' or 'never' voted were classified as 'irregular / non-voters'. Where participants were previously ineligible to vote, they were then classified according to what they felt their behaviour would be in the future.

Religion: In Northern Ireland, we ensured the sample included both Catholics and Protestants to ensure the sample was representative.

Demographic characteristics: Groups were stratified to include people of similar ages and socio-economic backgrounds to create good group dynamics which helps to stimulate discussion and debate.

Ethnicity was representative of the local area in each location.

B) Extended mini-depth interviews

We carried out 24 extended mini-depth interviews across the research locations. The overall sample breakdown was:

- 4 x bilingual (Welsh and English)
- 5 x English as a second language
- 5 x low literacy level
- 5 x learning difficulties
- 5 x visual impairment

Similar to the mini groups, participants in the extended mini-depth interviews reflected a broad spread of perceived importance and knowledge regarding the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, as well as different behaviour related to voting generally. We included a broad spread of demographic characteristics across the 24 interviews.

Extended Mini-depth Quotas		Total
Age	17-24	5
	25-44	9
	45-59	6
	60+	3
Gender	Male	11
	Female	12
Social Grade	BC1	9
	C2DE	14
Ethnicity	BME	6
Voting experience	Regular	9
	Irregular	14
EU membership	Decided	10
	Undecided	13
Importance of EU issue	Higher (6-10)	11
	Lower (1-5)	12
Informed of EU issue	Higher (6-10)	6
	Lower (1-5)	17
Other audiences *	Welsh Speaking	4
	Visually Impaired	5
	English Second Language	5
	Learning difficulties	5
	Low Literacy *	4

A full breakdown of the extended mini-depth sample by individual participant is available in the appendices.

C) Mini depth interviews

We aimed to conduct 62 mini-depth interviews across the research locations and achieved 65.[9] A full breakdown of the quotas achieved is available in the appendix. The overall breakdown was:

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[9] We over recruited by a few interviews to ensure that we had at least 62 interviews

Mini-depth Quotas		Total
Age	17-24	11
	25-44	20
	45-59	20
	60+	14
Gender	Male	32
	Female	33
Social Grade	BC1	37
	C2DE	28
Ethnicity	BME	8
Voting experience	Regular	45
	Irregular	20
EU membership	Decided	33
	Undecided	32
Importance of EU issue	Higher (6-10)	40
	Lower (1-5)	25
Informed of EU issue	Higher (6-10)	32
	Lower (1-5)	33
Other audiences	Welsh Speaking	12
	Visually Impaired	
	English Second Language	2
	Learning difficulties	1
	Low Literacy	

Across all methods the proportion of participants that answered either way (e.g. 'yes'/ 'remain' / 'stay' or 'no'/ 'leave') '- to the referendum questions were monitored via the completed mock ballot papers to ensure a reasonable mix.

2.5   Strengths and limitations of the research

Employing a qualitative approach to the research to explore how people responded to the EU referendum questions allowed researchers to gather rich insights into their understanding and interpretation of the question. These insights were increased by using a blend of mini-groups and individual depth interviews. The extended mini-depth interviews and mini-depth interviews simulated a real voting experience and gathered deep individual views and attitudes towards the question. The group settings provided a discursive forum where the question was debated and evaluated.

The key strength of a qualitative approach is that it enables researchers to gather spontaneous attitudes and insights, as well as highly nuanced feedback about the research questions. Whilst qualitative discussions follow a clear structure, they emphasise the role of the participant in leading and driving the conversation through allowing them to answer in their own words and leading to responses that are full of rich insights. Participants are not limited in the way they answer the questions by being required to choose from multiple-choice answers as they would

in a quantitative study. The requirement for exploratory, discursive and detailed views regarding the questions meant that qualitative research (as opposed to quantitative research) was the best-fit method for this study.

The main limitation to using a qualitative research approach is that it emphasises self-expression and insight over numerical outcomes and so relies on detailed discussion with relatively small sample sizes. Whilst we included people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a variety of demographic characteristics, the overall sample size means it is not statistically representative. The findings in this report focus on participants understanding and interpretation of the questions, whether the questions are perceived to be misleading in any way, and suggestions for making the questions clearer and easier to answer. The findings do not attempt to quantify the number of participants who preferred specific versions of the question or how many of them would benefit from any changes put forward.

The research was carried out prior to any definitive decision being taken regarding negotiated terms of membership for the United Kingdom remaining a member, or leaving the European Union. This may have affected the contextual awareness that participants had about the European Union.

A) Participant reported views

It should be noted that whilst qualitative research can identify participant reported views regarding neutrality of question wording based on participant perceptions, the approach does not capture any unconscious influence of question wording and structure. It is thus possible that questions might influence participants to answer in a particular way without them being aware of it.

3   Contextual understanding of the European Union

3.1   Spontaneous knowledge of the European Union

As found in previous research[10], contextual knowledge of the European Union varied across research participants. The vast majority of participants had heard discussion of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union in the media. The majority understood the term 'European Union' to be a form of political and economic union between the countries in Europe.

Most participants across the research were aware that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union. Only a couple queried this; these participants reported very low levels of engagement in politics and political issues, and noted that they tended not to read newspapers or take an interest in current affairs.

> *"For people like me it needs a bit more understanding…European Union…I just can't get my head around what that means." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)[11]*

Participants were asked to complete a mock ballot paper at the beginning of their research session. Across the research, the proportion of participants voting either way was monitored and a reasonable mix achieved.

Participants were asked at the point of recruitment whether they had decided which way they would vote in a referendum. Across the mini-groups, we ensured a mix of those who were decided and undecided to ensure diversity of views. Across the mini-depths and extended mini-depth interviews no quotas were put in place, and through natural fall-out, an even mix of decided and undecided voters were recruited. Those who were undecided often cited lack of contextual knowledge regarding the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. When faced with a ballot paper at the beginning of their research session they often spent some time considering their view, or tended to verbalise concerns that they were unsure which way they would vote. This was typically based on lack of clarity regarding what a majority vote either way would actually entail.

> *"Membership is a bit loose, nobody really knows what it means to be a member; what are the costs, what are the benefits? I think there should be some information in simple English so that everybody understands what the situation means." (Mini-group, London, 45-59 years, BC1)*

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[10] The previous findings are detailed in the following reports:
Referendum on membership of the European Union: Question testing (October 2013)
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/163283/GfK-NOP_EU20Referendum20Question20Testing20Research20Report-WEB.pdf
Referendum on membership of the European Union: Further question testing (March 2014)
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/166613/Referendum-on-the-membership-of-the-European-Union-Further-question-testing-April-2014.pdf
[11] 'C2DE' refers to the socio-economic grade of the participant.

> *"I think people need to understand the repercussions if they say yes or no."*
> *(Mini-group, London, 45-59 years, BC1)*

Whilst those who were decided on how they would vote in the referendum were often quicker to mark their ballot paper, they also noted that they were not entirely clear on what the outcomes of a majority vote either way would mean in practice.

Overall participants reflected that they would expect to be provided with information around the time of the referendum enabling them to gain greater understanding of the implications of a majority vote either way. Some raised queries regarding what a 'yes/ remain/ stay' vote would means in terms of membership status. For example: whether a 'yes/ remain/ stay' vote would mean continuation of current terms or something different (with a couple of participants querying whether a 'yes/ remain/ stay' vote would result in the United Kingdom joining the Eurozone); and whether a 'no/ leave' vote would mean the United Kingdom completely leaving the European Union or some other form of membership.

> *"It's obviously something you know you're aware of, but you don't actually know what you're ticking yes to." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

> *"If you're not a member of the European Union what would you be then?" (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

With these queries in mind, some reflected that the referendum question (in any format) could be misinterpreted (in terms of voting outcome) without greater contextual knowledge.

In some cases, participants voiced a desire to see a 'don't know' option on the ballot paper as they felt some people would be unable to answer directly one way or the other.

> *"I think there should be another box saying undecided or some word like that because you're not giving people a choice." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 60+ years, BC1)*

> *"There should be an option, like 'negotiate more terms…do you sever all ties or do you stay but lose the membership?" (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)*

4   Individual question feedback

The next section details the feedback related to each individual question. It is useful to note at this stage some key overarching findings to bear in mind when reading this section:

- As found in the previous research, the majority of participants found the language used across the question versions (as detailed in table 1, page 15) simple and easy to understand. The main concerns raised related to their contextual understanding about the European Union and what the voting outcomes would mean in practice.
- Across the research, participants were encouraged to be analytical in identifying any potential concerns regarding clarity and neutrality of the questions. However, it is important to note that all participants felt confident that they would vote as they intended for all of the question versions they were shown.
- Where questions, words or phrases were previously tested, a summary of key previous research findings has been included. This enables us to explore whether this research mirrors previous research findings, therefore strengthening these findings, or shows something different.
- The feedback was very similar for both the Welsh and English language versions especially in relation to the structure of the question. Specific feedback on the Welsh question versions - with a particular focus on Welsh words and phrases - is provided in chapter 5.

4.1   The Bill Question (Question A)

Question A: English language	Question A: Welsh language
Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd?
Yes	Dylai
No	Na Ddylai

Tested:
• Phase 1 (first question shown) • Phase 2 (full rotation) • Phase 3 (full rotation)

A)   Previous research findings

Question A was tested in previous 2013 research[12] (where it was referred to as 'question 2') and was considered to use simple and straightforward language and wording by the majority of participants. It was felt the inclusion of the word 'remain' clarified that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union, which most felt was an important clarification. This clarification meant that participants were confident that they were being asked to vote on whether the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union, or not.

When prompted to evaluate the word 'remain', there were mixed views regarding whether this word was leading in the context of the question.   Some participants noted that the word 'remain' (or 'continue' or 'stay') could suggest the status quo meaning:

- That maintaining the status quo will be interpreted in a positive light; maintaining a 'solid' situation.
- That maintaining the status quo will be interpreted in a negative light; maintaining a 'stagnant' situation.
- That the status quo implies that terms of the United Kingdom membership of the European Union will be the same as they currently are.

However, despite some perceptions of bias, there was no evidence that the question led people to vote in a particular way and participants described 'remain' as being plain and ordinary language that did not affect how they interpreted the question.

Some participants further noted that the question structure could impact on the neutrality of the question. Some noted that the question was structured to ask voters whether they thought the United Kingdom should remain/ continue to be a member of the European Union rather than ask whether the United Kingdom should leave the European Union. Whilst participants did not feel that this had an impact on their vote, they felt that it was not an entirely neutral way to ask the question. With this in mind, some participants spontaneously suggested a question structure that included both voting options (as per the structure of question B which was referred to as question 4 in the previous research).

Finally, a few participants in the previous research felt that the word 'member' could convey positive feelings. For example, being part of a group or team. However, the majority of participants felt that the word 'member' in the context of the question was a neutral and factual description of the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union.

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[12] Referendum on membership of the European Union: Question testing (October 2013) http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/163283/GfK-NOP_EU20Referendum20Question20Testing20Research20Report-WEB.pdf

B)   Understanding of the question

When tested in this research, again participants found the language used in question A easy to understand, clear and straightforward.

It was strongly agreed across participants that the word 'remain' provided contextual information clarifying that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union.

> *"It tells you that you are a member of the European Union" (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

Participants felt that it was important that the question conveyed this information and considered it to be factual and therefore not leading.

Some participants felt that there was a lack of clarity arising from question A based on a lack of contextual knowledge. This was also cited in relation to the other questions tested in this research (questions B, B.1 and C). Queries regarding the clarity of these questions were raised particularly with regards to the phrase 'European Union'. Many participants questioned what the European Union actually is, what UK membership means, and what leaving it would mean. Lack of contextual awareness was also noted when participants commented on the word 'member', with some questioning what the current terms of membership are, and what the terms of membership would be if there was a majority vote either way.

> *"The question is very straightforward and to the point and yes it does make sense...but it's hard to create an answer based on the facts cos there isn't that many facts as to what being out of the EU is going to entail and what being in the EU is going to entail." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, 17-24 years, BC1)*

Lack of clarity regarding what a majority vote either way would mean in practice, was cited as a concern by participants across the research, and raised as a query when commenting on all question versions (questions A, B, B.1 and C).

Participants were shown a variation of question A that did not include the word 'member' and instead used the following phrasing: '*Should the United Kingdom remain in the European Union*? *Yes/ No'.* Findings regarding inclusion and exclusion of the word 'member' are detailed in section 4.2.

Some participants noted that the question was short and concise (especially when compared to questions B, B.1 and C), which they felt made question A simpler.

> *"It's got to be kept short and concise and the more words you start adding the more unclear or more uncertainty starts creeping in...the shorter the sentence the better." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, 60+ years, BC1)*

Some participants particularly liked the 'yes' and 'no' answer options, noting that these were succinct and easy to read.

> *"That one [question A] is giving you the question and a simple yes or no…it's more simple." (Mini-depth, Stirling, 45-59 years, C2DE)*

In particular, a couple of visually impaired participants noted that the 'yes/no' answer options were easier and clearer to read when compared to questions B, B.1 and C. A couple of participants noted that this was how they expected a ballot paper to look and therefore liked the answer options because they looked familiar.

However, some participants commented that they felt the 'yes/no' answer options could be considered too vague when compared against the answer options for questions B, B.1 and C. These participants felt that questions B, B.1 and C provided more information regarding each voting option (remain/ stay a member of the European Union or leave the European Union), which they felt clarified each voting option. With this in mind, when participants compared question A with these other question versions (questions B, B.1 and C), some suggested that the question A answer options were less clear. This mirrors the previous 2013 research which found that some participants preferred the 'yes/ no' answer options as they were considered simpler, whilst others preferred 'remain/ leave' answer options as they clarified the two voting choices.

> *"On the yes/no for someone who doesn't really know what the European Union is you wouldn't really know what you're saying yes to or no to. However leave the European Union - a box for that and then stay in the European Union, you know exactly what you're voting for and you'll be confident filling it [ballot paper] out." (Mini-depth, Norwich, 17-24 years, BC1)*

A couple of participants raised comments regarding the word 'should' and noted that phrases such as 'do you think' or 'in your opinion' could be used instead. They felt that these alternatives sounded more personal and encouraged the voter to carefully consider their view and response. These benefits were also cited for the phrase 'do you think' in the previous 2013 research. However, this previous research also found that 'should' was considered more to the point and definite, suggesting that the voting outcome was being taken more seriously by government with 'do you think' sounding less concrete and determining public opinion rather than government policy and action. Overall, across the research participants did not cite any issues regarding clarity of the question or interpretation of the question with the word 'should'.

Alternative wording 'be a member of the European Union'

The previous 2013 research tested the question *'Do you think the United Kingdom should be a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'*. This is referred to as question 1 in the previous 2013 research and was the question included in the 2013 EU Referendum Bill. The research found that the phrase 'be a member of the European Union' implied that the United Kingdom is currently not a member of the European Union. Participants agreed that this was misleading and confusing and suggested that the question wording should make clear the United Kingdom's current membership status.

In this new 2015 research, participants were shown stimulus to test the alternative wording 'Should *the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'*. Participants again disliked this wording, noting that it lacked clarity that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union. Those who were aware of current membership felt that the question was confusing, whilst the few

who were unaware simply felt that the question was asking whether the United Kingdom should become a member.

> *"This is asking if it can be a member or not, it's not asking if it can remain a member." (Extended mini-depth, Birmingham, English as a second language, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

Overall, as found in the previous research, participants agreed that the question should convey the fact that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union.

C) Views regarding neutrality

Although it was strongly agreed across participants that the word 'remain' provided contextual information that clarifies that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union, some felt by only providing this option in the question wording, question A lacked neutrality. In particular when compared to questions B, B.1 and C, these participants felt that the question did not fairly represent both answer options. Although a couple of participants spontaneously noted this, others did not cite concerns regarding the neutrality of question A until they were comparing this question to questions B, B.1 or C.

> *"That one [question A] doesn't seem to give the (leave) option, though there is an option; it doesn't explicitly say, but that one [question B] says we could leave the European Union so it is more neutral." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)*

As found in the previous research, some participants felt that the word 'remain' could introduce some bias to the question. These participants noted that 'remain' suggested 'maintaining the status quo', which could be perceived in a negative or positive light depending on existing views toward UK membership of the European Union. Whilst these comments regarding the word 'remain' were cited across all questions that include the word 'remain' (questions A, B and B.1), views were strengthened for question A as it only included the 'remain' option and did not also include the 'leave' option (which would provide greater balance to the question).

> *"But then again it's not making you think about either side it's only making you think about remaining 'cos it doesn't say anything about leaving." (Mini-depth, Norwich, 17-24 years, BC1)*

Some participants further noted that only including the remain option in the question could influence people to vote yes due to the fear of change or going against the status quo (this is known as loss aversion in behavioural economics.) However, based on their own reflections on the likely impact of the different question wordings, no participants felt that this would impact on their own personal voting behaviour.

Participants were prompted with stimulus to show alternative questions wording using the word 'stay' (rather than 'remain') and views regarding this word are detailed in section 4.2.

When comparing question A to questions B, B.1 and C, some participants responded positively to question A on the basis that it did not include the word 'leave'. These participants particularly felt that 'leave' was a strong word with potentially negative connotations that could influence voters to vote for the United Kingdom to remain in the European Union (although none felt that this would personally impact their own vote).

Alternative wording 'be a member of the European Union'

As noted earlier in this section, the 2013 research tested the question *'Do you think the United Kingdom should be a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'*. Some felt that this question was neutral as it relied on participants' own knowledge of current United Kingdom membership status rather than informing voters in the question itself. However, as noted earlier, this question was also perceived to be misleading and confusing.

In this 2015 research participants were asked to reflect on stimulus showing the alternative wording *'Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union? Yes/ No'*. Reaction to this wording strongly reflected the previous research findings. Participants felt that the lack of clarity regarding the United Kingdom's current membership of the European Union made this question potentially misleading. However, a few participants did reflect that this alternative wording could be considered more neutral as it does not state the United Kingdom's current membership status of the European Union.

Overall, as found in the previous research participants felt that the question should convey the fact that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union.

Summary box: the Bill Question (Question A)

Positive elements:
- Clear and simple language.
- Straightforward and easy to understand.
- Some preferred this question as they felt it was short and concise.

Negative elements:
- Some felt that the question lacked neutrality as it only states the 'remain' option. However, none felt that this would impact their own personal vote.
- Some felt that the question lacks contextual information as it does not state both remain and leave options.
- Although some liked the 'yes' and 'no' answer options as they were short, others felt they were vague, providing less clarity regarding the two voting options when compared to the answer options in questions B, B.1 and C.

Over-arching comments:

'Be a member' vs. 'remain / stay a member'
- As found in previous research, participants felt that wording 'be a member of the European Union' lacked clarity that the United Kingdom is currently a member of

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the European Union and therefore is potentially misleading and confusing.

'Member of the European Union' vs. 'in the European Union'
- For some, inclusion of the word 'member' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) further clarifies the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union. (Detail regarding this finding is provided in section 4.2).
- For some, the phrase 'member of the European Union' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) conveys positive feelings of membership and inclusivity, which is felt to potentially impact on the neutrality of the question. However, none felt that this would affect their own personal vote. (Detail regarding this finding is provided in section 4.2).

'Remain' vs. 'stay'
- 'Remain' and 'stay' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) are both felt to be clear and simple. Some prefer the simplicity of the word 'stay' whilst others prefer the formality of 'remain'.
- Inclusion of the word 'remain' or 'stay' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) was considered important as it clarifies that the UK is currently a member of the European Union.

4.2 Non-Yes/ No Question (Question B, B.1 and C)

Question B was the initial Non-Yes/ No question shown to participants in the research.

Question B: English language	Question B: Welsh language
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
Tested: • Phase 1: shown after question A • Phase 2: full rotation	

Variations of question B were introduced to explore the impact of specific words and question structure. Question C was introduced in phase 2 of the research to explore the impact of the word 'stay' as an alternative to 'remain'. Question B.1 was introduced in phase 3 of the research to explore the impact of having similar answer options, with a more symmetrical structure as well as the impact of the word 'member'.

Question C: English language	Question C: Welsh language
Should the United Kingdom stay a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Stay a member of the European Union Leave the European Union	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
Tested: • Phase 2: full rotation • Phase 3: full rotation	

Question B.1: English language	Question B.1: Welsh language
Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?

Remain in the European Union	Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
Leave the European Union	Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

Tested:

- Phase 3: full rotation

A)   Previous research findings

Previous 2013 and 2014 research found that the structure and wording of question B (previously referred to as question 4) was considered straightforward and easy to understand. This version was also considered to be neutral and balanced by presenting both voting options.   Some participants – including some with low literacy and English as a second language - suggested that the question was long-winded and wordy when compared to other questions tested. However, this view did not emerge in the further research (conducted in 2014) which focused on variations of question B suggesting that this question was only considered long-winded and wordy when compared to shorter question structures.

Previous research tested both the words 'remain' and 'stay' as used in various question versions[13]. Both words were considered easy to understand, and participants noted that they meant the same thing and therefore either could be used in a referendum question. As discussed in section 4.1, some participants felt that the word 'remain' could convey the status quo which could be interpreted positively or negatively by voters. These issues whilst raised by some in relation to question B[14] in the previous research were diminished for this question (when compared to the other questions tested) as participants felt it was clear that two equal and opposite concepts were being given the same weight, balancing each other out and alleviating any concerns regarding neutrality.

A few participants in the previous research noted that the word **'**member' triggered positive feelings associated with being part of a 'team or a 'group'. However, the majority of participants felt that the word 'member' in the context of the question was a neutral and factual description of the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union.

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[13] The word 'remain' was tested in the 2013 research in questions 2 *(Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? Yes/ No)* and 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)* and in the 2014 research in questions 4 (as before), 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)* and 4.3 *(Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European or leave the European Union? Remain/ Leave).* The word 'stay' was tested in the 2014 research in 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).*
[14] Referred to as question 4 in the 2013 and 2014 research

Finally, some participants felt that the word 'leave' had negative connotations and was considered 'harsh'. However, reaction to this word was strongest when included in a yes/ no question variation[15] previously tested and only a minor comment for question B.

B) Understanding of the question

As found in the previous research, participants felt that question B (and similarly, B.1 and C) was simple and easy to understand.

In particular, participants felt that the question was clear as it provided the two voting options written in full, avoiding any potential confusion in the answer options. This was particularly noted by some English as a second language, low literacy and learning disability participants who felt that this made the question simple and easier to understand when compared with question A.

"It gives you the effect of what you're doing rather than just saying yes or no. If you cross this box you are leaving, if you cross this box you would like to stay, so I think that's a really good point." (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)

"It just makes it more clear about what people are voting for...it is extremely clear…no one can really get confused with their votes 'cos you've got the actual two options there." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, female, 17-24 years, BC1)

"You've got more information…a yes or a no – you might get confused…they've repeated themselves, they've not just put 'yes or a no'…because that could be yes I want them to leave or yes I want them to stay." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)

Whilst positive towards inclusion of the two options some participants reflected that this made the question long-winded, especially when compared to question A.

"It's got more information…it's overdoing it…it's telling you what exactly you're voting for but again, you'd probably know before you come [to vote]." (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)

"It's saying the same thing…it's just complicating it for people…I always think easy and simple is better…I think it's too long winded." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, female, 45-59,C2DE)

For this reason, some participants preferred question A as they felt it was simply shorter and more concise when compared to question B (and questions B.1 and C).

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[15] The word 'leave' was perceived as a negative word by some when included in the question (referred to as question 6) '*Should the United Kingdom leave the European Union? Yes/ No*'.

However, none felt that the length of question B (and questions B.1 and C) affected their ability to mark their ballot paper as they intended.

Clarity of the word 'remain' (as tested in Question C)

During phase 1 of the research, some participants queried whether the word 'stay' could be used instead of 'remain'. These participants suggested that 'stay' was more everyday language and therefore would be easier to understand by voters in general. Reflecting this, question C was introduced to the research to explore views towards the word 'stay'.

Overall, views regarding inclusion of the word 'remain' or 'stay' were mixed, with a slight preference for the word 'remain'. Those who preferred the word 'remain' felt that it sounded more professional and formal and therefore in keeping with the type of language they expected to be used in a referendum.

"I think the word remain sounds more professional without being complicated." (Extended mini-depth, Visual impairment, London, male, 45-59 years, BC1)

"It's a more formal word than stay." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)

"Remain sounds much more professional that stay" (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 60+ years, BC1)

"It sounds better English to say remain." (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)

"A child would probably say that [stay], but remain is more…grown up." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)

A couple of participants noted that they preferred the word 'remain' as 'stay' felt strong and directive, like a 'command'.

Those who preferred the word 'stay' felt that it was simpler language and therefore potentially made the question easier to understand. A couple noted that 'remain' felt like a "harsh" word, and therefore preferred 'stay'.

"It's probably a simpler word." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, female, 45-59 years, C2DE)

"Stay in a softer word than remain – it's a more normal word". (Mini-group, Derry, 25-44 years, BC1)

"Stay is more simplifying." (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)

"'Cos I'm just a normal person, that [stay] is easy for me." (Extended mini-depth, English as a second language, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)

"It's more…simple. If someone's got trouble reading words then it's just 'should they stay there' rather than 'should they remain there'." (Mini-depth, Stirling, male, 17-24 years, C2DE)

These mixed views were expressed across the research and within different sampling groups. Mirroring the previous 2013 and 2014 research, there was no clear preference for which word was used amongst low literacy, English as a second language, and learning disability participants.

Across the research participants, whilst expressing their own preference, equally noted that both words could be used in the referendum question, and that using the words 'remain' or 'stay' would not affect their personal understanding of the question.

> *"You could have 'stay' instead [of remain]. It wouldn't make any difference to the question." (Mini-group, London, 45-59 years, BC1)*

Clarity of the word 'member'

During phase 1 and 2 of the research, participants reflected that inclusion of the word 'member' could impact on the neutrality of question (as discussed below). Reflecting these comments, question B.1 was tested in phase 3 of the research to explore the impact of having similar answer options with a more symmetrical structure (with the phrase 'in the European Union' used in the answer option), as well as the impact of including the word 'member'.

Question B.1: English language	Question B.1: Welsh language
Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?
Remain in the European Union	Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
Leave the European Union	Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

Participants were further prompted to explore their views regarding removing the word 'member' from the other question versions. Examples are shown below:

Question A English language	Should the United Kingdom remain in the European Union? Yes No
Question A Welsh language	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Dylai Na ddylai
Question B English language	Should the United Kingdom remain in the European Union or leave the European Union?

	Remain in the European Union
	Leave the European Union
Question B Welsh language	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?
	Dal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
	Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

Overall, participants generally agreed that there should be consistency in terms of including or excluding the word 'member' from the first part of the question (i.e. '*Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or…*') and the associated answer option (i.e.. '*Remain a member of the European Union*').

> *"Why is 'member' in the question and not in the answer? There needs to be balance." (Mini-depth, Porthmadog, 60+ years, BC1)*

There were mixed views regarding whether the word member should be included in the question at all or whether alternative wording 'in the European Union' would be preferable.

Those who preferred inclusion of the word 'member' felt that it added clarity to the question, factually describing that the United Kingdom is a member of the European Union.

> *"It's more descriptive…it's not just saying 'should they be in the European Union, it's saying should they be a member or should they leave it." (Mini-depth, Stirling, male, 17-24 years, C2DE)*

> *"Without the word member in it, it's less definitive." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)*

> *"There's just a bit more substance to it with the word member in it rather than just 'in'." (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

> *"I think member would probably be better 'cos you are a member." (Mini-depth, Stirling, male, 45-59 years, C2DE)*

Some participants felt that inclusion of the word 'member' was particularly important within question A, as without the word 'member' this question felt stark, and lacking in contextual information.

Those who preferred to not include the word member felt that its' inclusion was not necessary and felt that the question was shorter, more concise and therefore easier to read without the addition of the word 'member'.

> *"It sounds nicer [without member]…I don't know why…it's just easier…quicker and straight to the point." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

"The member bit, I didn't see that as needed…I think that people who would be voting would know." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)

C)   Views regarding neutrality

Participants felt that question B (and similarly, questions B.1 and C) was balanced and neutral as it provided both voting options within the question, and detailed in the answer options. Participants felt that the question clearly detailed the voter choice and therefore was not biased to any specific voting option.

"It gives you the option. You're getting the option there; would you like to remain a member or would you like to leave it, so you're being the two choices." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 60+ years, BC1)

"I don' think there's any ambiguity about it, you can make up your mind. Either you can remain a member of the European Union or you can leave the European Union." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 60+ years, BC1)

"It's not like it's biased towards any side, it's just saying stay a member or leave." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)

"It just feels more balanced…just feels like you have a choice really." (Mini-depth, Stirling, male, 17-24 years, C2DE)

With this in mind, many felt that question B was more balanced than question A.

"That one [question A] doesn't seem to give the option, though there is an option; it doesn't explicitly say. But that one [question B] says we could leave the European Union so it is more neutral." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)

Neutrality of the word 'leave'

Whilst participants were positive towards the inclusion of both voting options within question B (and questions B.1 and C), a few noted that the word 'leave' was strong with potentially negative connotations.

"It's got 'leave'…that seems like a more negative statement." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)

This was cited as a particular concern amongst those who felt that the word 'leave' could exasperate or generate fearing the unknown or changing the status quo. On this basis, these participants felt that including the word 'leave' could encourage people to vote for the United Kingdom to remain a member of the European Union.

A couple of participants noted that the 'leave' option was the final part of the question which could result in people having greater recall for the last thing they had read and favouring this option (this is known as a recency effect). These participants suggested that this could encourage people to vote for the last option displayed in the question.

However, it should be noted that despite raising these concerns, no participants across the research felt that their own personal vote would be influenced by either

of these factors. The previous 2013 research further suggests that these minor concerns are mitigated by the non-Yes/ No question structure, as the word is balanced by including both voting options (not just a 'leave' option).

Neutrality of the word 'stay'

Participants did not raise concerns regarding any difference in neutrality between using the word 'remain' or 'stay' across any of the question variations tested in this research (questions A, B, B.1 or C). This mirrors previous findings regarding the use of 'remain' or 'stay'. Participants reflected that inclusion of the word 'remain' or 'stay' was key in clarifying the United Kingdom's current membership status of the European Union. However, some felt that the word 'remain' or 'stay' suggested maintaining the status quo which could be perceived positively or negatively, therefore influencing voters. This view was strengthened for question A as it only provided the 'remain' option and did not also include the 'leave' option (which would provide greater balance). Participant views did not change when prompted to consider 'stay' as an alternative word to 'remain'.

Neutrality of the word 'member'

Across all of the question variations tested in this research participants noted that the word 'member' was a factual description of the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union.

> *"We are a member. It's factual, it's not biased, exaggerated or a lie." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)*

However, as found in the previous research, participants also felt that the phrase 'member of the European Union' could convey positive feelings of inclusivity and therefore felt that the phrase was not neutral.

With this in mind, participants were prompted with stimulus showing alternative versions of the questions that did not include the phrase 'member of the European Union' and instead used the phrase 'in the European Union' (as shown in the table on page 38). When compared to the phrase 'in the European Union' some felt that the word 'member' strengthened feelings of 'being part of something'.

> *"If you're a member then you're involved in it. But if you're in it…you can just be coasting along with it. But if you're a member it means you're involved, that you contribute." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)*

> *"If you're a member you belong…we could be taken out of that [the EU] but there'll still be other members…it's not like if we came out there's be no European Union." (Mini-depth, Stirling, female, 45-59 years, BC1)*

> *"I don't think the word member makes that much of a difference…I suppose the only think with the word member, it makes you think of a unit, something that's part of the whole, we're a section of the European Union. Whereas without member in the question, it's just something that you're included in." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, BC1)*

"When you say member you feel like you're part of the European Union but when you say in the European Union it seems like it doesn't really matter maybe." (Mini-depth, Stirling, female, 45-59 years, BC1)

Some participants particularly noted feelings of inclusivity for question B, where 'member' was attributed only to the 'remain' aspect of the question.

"Remain a member is slightly weighted. They're still putting the emphasis on remain as the leave bit doesn't say member." (Mini-group, London, 45-59 years, BC1)

However, none felt that including or not including the word member would affect their own personal voting behaviour.

When further considering the alternative phrase 'in the European Union', a few participants noted that this phrase, when used in questions B and C provided more symmetrical answer options which some felt was a more balanced way of presenting the answer options. Based on these views, question B.1 was introduced to further explore this.

Question B.1: English language	Question B.1: Welsh language
Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd?
Remain in the European Union	Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd
Leave the European Union	Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

When reviewing this phrasing as discussed above (concerning clarity of the word 'member'), overall, participants generally agreed that there should be consistency in terms of including or excluding the word 'member' from the first part of the question (i.e. '*Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or…*') and the associated answer option (i.e.. '*Remain a member of the European Union*').

Overall testing of inclusion and exclusion of the word 'member' across the question variations revealed that views regarding inclusion of the word 'member' were mixed. Some felt that its inclusion made little difference.

"It's fine with or without the word member, it's just as clear either way." (Mini-depth, Porthmadog, male, 60+ years, BC1)

Others felt that the word 'member' was more descriptive, and added context by clarifying the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union. Some participants further felt that inclusion of the word 'member' was simply factual and therefore it was not considered influencing or biased.

"The word member is correct, it's what we are, so it should be kept in." (Mini-depth, Porthmadog, female, 45-59 years, C2DE)

Importantly, none felt that including or not including the word member would affect their own personal voting behaviour.

Summary box: non-Yes/ No question (Questions B, B.1 and C)

Positive elements:
- Simple and easy to understand.
- Clearly describes the two voting options avoiding any potential for confusion.
- Balanced and neutral giving both options in the question and answer options.

Negative elements:
- For some, the word 'leave' has potentially negative connotations, which is felt to potentially impact on the neutrality of the question. However, none felt that this would affect their own personal vote. This reflects minor comments raised in the previous research which found that 'leave' was considered by some to be a harsh word with negative connotations. Participants in the previous research suggested that the effect of the word 'leave' (when compared to other questions tested in the 2013 research) was reduced through balancing this word with the alternative option in the question wording (including both 'remain' and 'leave' rather than only 'leave').
- When compared to question A this question can be considered long-winded. However, none felt that this would affect their understanding of the question.

Over-arching comments:

'Member of the European Union' vs. 'in the European Union'
- For some, inclusion of the word 'member' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) further clarifies the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union.
- For some, the phrase 'member of the European Union' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) conveys positive feelings of membership and inclusivity, which is felt to potentially impact on the neutrality of the question. However, none felt that this would affect their own personal vote.

'Remain' vs. 'stay'
- 'Remain' and 'stay' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) are both felt to be clear and simple. Some prefer the simplicity of the word 'stay' whilst others prefer the formality of 'remain'.
- Inclusion of the word 'remain' or 'stay' (when used in questions A, B, B.1 and C) was considered important as it clarifies that the UK is currently a member of the European Union.

4.3   Views on including the abbreviation 'EU'

Participants in the previous research were prompted to consider the use of the abbreviation 'EU'. Overall participants did not feel strongly about the inclusion of this abbreviation. However, some felt that it could add clarity to the question, with some low literacy and English as a second language participants noting that the abbreviation would be useful as it was more easily recognised and clarified that the EU is the European Union.

During phases 1 and 2 of the new research, views were gathered regarding inclusion of the abbreviation 'EU' across the different question variations shown in these research phases (questions A, B and C). Despite previous research finding that the abbreviation could be useful, most participants in this research suggested that it could be confusing. This was noted across participants, including those with low literacy, learning disability and English as a second language.

> *"I think it's best to have European Union [rather than EU] because there's so many abbreviations going around and I think…things can get lost in translation." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, female, 25-44 years, BC1)*

> *"When you say EU some people might not understand it…by saying European Union, you know straight away." (Mini-depth, Birmingham, male, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

> *"I would definitely put European Union 'cos everyone is going to know that it's the EU anyway…best to put the full title on it instead of abbreviating it." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 17-24 years, BC1)*

This could suggest that there is greater familiarity with and recognition of the term 'European Union' meaning that many feel that the abbreviation 'EU' is not necessary. It was agreed that if the abbreviation were to be included, it should be shown in brackets following the full written version. For example:

Question A with EU abbreviation:

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

Yes

No

> *"You can put it in brackets but I think most people would understand what that [European Union] is." (Mini-depth, Norwich, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

Those who reviewed the Welsh language questions agreed that the EU abbreviation (UE) was unnecessary and did not add to the clarity of the question.

5 Welsh language questions

The findings for the Welsh language tend to reflect the English language versions as discussed above, but we have highlighted below where issues specific to the Welsh versions arise.

5.1 Welsh language: the Bill Question (Question A)

Question A: Welsh language
A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd? Dylai Na Ddylai
Tested: • Phase 2 (full rotation) • Phase 3 (full rotation)

As noted for the English language version of this question, participants felt that the question was simple and easy to understand with some citing a preference for this question based on it being concise and short in length.

Participants felt that the phrase 'ddal i fod' was clear, although a couple noted that it could suggest 'continuing' which could be considered to be an influencing word. However, neither of the participants who cited this felt that it would influence their own voting behaviour.

5.2 Welsh language: Non-Yes/ No Question (Questions B, B.1 and C)

Question B: Welsh language	Tested:
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	Phase 2 (full rotation)
Question C: Welsh language	**Tested:**
A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd	• Phase 2 (full rotation) • Phase 3 (full rotation)

Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd	
Question B.1: Welsh language	**Tested:**
A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Aros yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd	• Phase 3 (full rotation)

Overall, as described for the English language versions of these questions, participants reviewing the Welsh language versions felt that this question structure was neutral and balanced as it provided both voting options.

Similarly to the English language findings, there were mixed views on inclusion of the word 'member' based on the perceived clarity and neutrality of including this word.

However, there were comments regarding the use of 'para' and 'bara' in Question B. Overall, participants disliked these words, noting that they sounded like other words such as parachute and the Welsh for bread.

> *"When you read 'para' you think of parachute.*
> *Or paramilitary.*
> *And 'bara' is 'bread isn't it." (Mini-group, Cardiff, 60+ years, C1C2)*

Participants were prompted with the alternative word 'parhau' or 'barhau' the latter of which was suggested as an alternative word in the previous research. However, participants similarly disliked these alternatives, with a couple of participants noting that 'parhau' in particular sounded 'biblical'.

Participants preferred the word 'aros' (as used in questions B.1 and C) or 'ddal i fod' (as used in question A). Preferences were mixed depending on personal preference. As noted in the commentary for question A, a couple of participants felt that 'ddal i fod' suggested 'continuing' which could be considered influencing, and these participants therefore preferred 'aros'.

> *"Aros is better. Ddal i fod is less neutral, it sounds like 'oh dear', we're still in it." (Mini-depth, Porthmadog, male, 45-59 years, C2DE)*

> *"Aros sounds more definite while ddal i fod sounds more negative." (Mini-group, Cardiff, 60+ years, C1C2)*

A couple of participants noted that 'aros' suggested 'waiting' or 'staying' which again, they felt could be an influencing word. These participants preferred 'ddal i fod'.

> *"Ddal i fod is better, it doesn't' make the question sound so pressured, it just means carrying on with the same situation." (Mini-depth, Porthmadog, male, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

It should be noted that despite these minor concerns regarding these words, none of the participants who mentioned these, felt that their own personal voting behaviour would be influenced.

Overall, participants agreed that either 'ddal i fod' or 'aros' could be used as synonyms alongside the English words 'remain' and 'stay'.

6 Overall fit with assessment guidelines

The Electoral Commission question assessment guidelines are as follows.

The question should:

- Be easy to understand

- Be to the point

- Be unambiguous

- Avoid encouraging voters to consider one response more favourably than another

- Avoid misleading voters

A) Easy to understand

Participants found the language used in all of the questions tested easy to understand. They felt that the language used was simple and plain English. The wording and phrasing of the questions – as found in the previous research – presented very little difficulty for participants. This included those for who English is a second language, and people with low levels of literacy or learning difficulties.

Some participants preferred the word 'stay' when compared to 'remain' suggesting that the word 'stay' was everyday language and simpler. However, no participants felt that they would misinterpret 'stay' or 'remain' and agreed that both could be used in the referendum question.

Again, similarly to the previous research findings, there was lack of clarity regarding the implications of a majority vote either way. Participants agreed that they would need, and expected, greater contextual information and knowledge before the actual referendum. They envisaged that this would help them feel more confident about how to cast their vote. This was particularly highlighted in this study, with half of the qualitative sample citing that they were undecided regarding their voting decision.

It was agreed across the research that inclusion of 'remain' or 'stay' was important in ensuring clarity of the question, and ensuring that people understood that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union. The research alongside previous research findings clearly suggests that regardless of the question used, clarifying this fact within the question is important and aids ease of understanding. The benefit of clarifying current membership overrides minor concerns regarding the neutrality of how to include this fact within the question.

There were mixed preferences regarding use of the phrases 'member of the European Union' or 'in the European Union'. However, those that preferred the phrase 'member of the European Union' often felt that it further clarified the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union and the topic of the referendum. Whilst it is clear that, for some, this phrase makes the question easier to understand it should be noted that some minor issues regarding the neutrality of the

phrase 'member of the European Union' are cited. However, no participants felt that either of these phrases would influence their personal voting behaviour.

B)   To the point

All versions of the question tested in the research were felt to be straightforward and to the point.

Some participants noted that question A was shorter, more concise and therefore more to the point. Whilst a couple felt that question B (and similarly, questions B.1 and C) were long-winded when compared to question A, they agreed that this did not personally impact on clarity and understanding of the question.

C)   Be unambiguous

Participants did not cite any concerns regarding the ambiguity of the questions tested. This was particularly because the questions clarified current membership of the United Kingdom.

Some participants noted that the answer options were clearer in questions B, B.1 and C as both voting options were written in full. With this in mind, when comparing questions B, B.1 and C to question A, participants felt that there was less likelihood for ambiguity in questions B, B.1 and C.

Overall, as found in the previous research, there were some concerns regarding the perceived ambiguity of what the outcome of a majority vote in either direction would mean. Participants agreed that contextual information and knowledge would be needed close to the referendum to ensure they felt they were making an informed voting decision.

D)   Avoid encouraging voters to consider one response more favourably than another

Many participants discussed the potential for certain words and phrasing in the questions to be leading but, overall, none felt that these concerns would impact their own personal voting behaviour.

Minor concerns were raised regarding inclusion of the following words and phrases:

- 'Remain' or 'stay': whilst considered very important to clarify current membership status of the European Union, participants did reflect that this could influence people by suggesting maintaining or changing the 'status quo'. This was considered particularly relevant to question A, as question A only includes the 'remain' option.
- 'Member': some participants noted that 'member' triggered positive feelings of inclusivity or membership which could influence peoples' views. This was considered particularly relevant to questions B, B.1 and C as these questions whilst providing both voting outcomes, only assign the word 'member' to the remain option.
- 'Leave': when commented on questions B, B.1 and C some participants felt that 'leave' was a strong word which could be perceived in a negative light therefore influence peoples' views.

Whilst these minor concerns were raised, none felt that these would influence their own personal vote.

Some felt more strongly regarding the fact that question A only includes the 'remain' option in the question wording which participants felt could encourage people to vote for the United Kingdom to remain in the European Union. Again, whilst participants did not feel that this would influence their own vote, they did say that question B (and similarly B.1 and C) was more balanced and neutral by providing both voting options.

As found in the previous research, the times when participants were drawn to one answer response over another was when they lacked any contextual knowledge or understanding of the European Union. Where participants lacked any knowledge at all, they were more likely to vote to maintain what they interpreted from the question wording to be the status quo because they had no understanding of what the potential changes associated with voting for the alternative would mean.   This 'fear of change' was cited by a number of participants and was a potential concern focusing on perceived lack of contextual knowledge and information rather than the wording and structure of the questions tested.

E)   Avoid misleading voters

Participants did not feel that the questions tested were misleading. As found in the previous research, clarifying that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union was considered key to ensuring clarity. It was agreed that not having this clarification would result in a potentially misleading question. With this in mind, participants felt that the phrase 'be a member of the European Union' was potentially misleading.

7 Information provision

Across the research, participants cited mixed levels of understanding and awareness of issues regarding the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. The majority agreed that greater contextual information regarding the outcomes of a referendum would be needed to help them make an informed voting decision. Participants raised a range of questions that they had regarding the impact of a referendum and expected that these types of questions would be answered in information provision to the general public around the time of the referendum. Key questions included:

A) What will the outcome of a majority vote either way be?

Participants were unclear what the terms of membership would be for the United Kingdom if there was a majority vote either way. Specifically they wanted the following questions answered in advance of the referendum to help inform their voting decision:

- Will a majority 'yes/ remain/ stay' vote mean:
    - Continuation of current terms of membership?
    - Continued membership with different terms of membership?
    - Continued membership and adoption of the Euro? (this was mentioned by a couple of participants)
- Will a majority 'no/ leave' vote mean:
    - Entire separation from the European Union?
    - Renegotiated terms of membership?
    - Partial membership?
    - *"What's the consequences of saying no? What's the next option if you say no? Is it partial membership?" (Mini-group, London, 45-59 years, BC1)*
    - A relationship with the European Union with trade agreements similar to other European countries that are not part of the European Union?

B) What are the benefits of remaining in and leaving the European Union?

Across the research participants sought information regarding the benefits and drawbacks of the United Kingdom remaining in the European Union and the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. Many sought detail regarding the benefits and drawbacks in relation to financial cost and gain of membership and economic impacts such as trade agreements and the job market. However, lack of contextual knowledge meant that participants were keen on information pertaining to a range of topics with some noting that it was difficult to determine what information would be most useful, when they were unsure which issues were affected by membership of the European Union. They felt that contextual information would be essential in helping them build greater knowledge and contextual awareness of the impact of their voting decision.

"Whether it's going to be a positive effect by staying or a negative effect by leaving or vice versa." (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)

Participants sought this information at a UK-wide level as well as at a local level to enable them to gauge impact of voting decisions locally. In Wales, participants sought information regarding the impact for Wales, Welsh business and agriculture. In Northern Ireland – particularly in Derry - participants sought information regarding the impact for cultural and trade relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Participants also were keen to understand the impact of voting decisions on individuals and what a majority vote either way would mean for the typical person or family.

C)   Key issues/ questions raised

A range of issues were mentioned across the research with participants keen to know how they would be affected by a majority vote either way. These issues tended to be those that participants personally felt were important to them or their local area, or key issues that they had heard were impacted by European Union decisions in the media. Key questions mentioned were similar to those cited in the previous research:

- Finances:
  - What does being a member of the European Union cost the United Kingdom?
  - What is the financial saving for the United Kingdom if it leaves the European Union?
  - What is the funding received and what projects are financially supported by the European Union?
- Trade and economy:
  - What impact will leaving the EU have on trade agreements and how does this compare to current trade agreements?
  - What impact will leaving the EU have on any 'bail out' role for supporting struggling economies in the European Union and how does this compare to the UK's current/ likely role in any 'bail out' for struggling economies in the EU? (this was specifically mentioned as the research happened around the time of the Greek referendum);
  - What is the likelihood of the United Kingdom adopting the Euro if staying in the EU? (this was only cited by a few participants).
  - *"Will they want us to join the Euro eventually? That's a big question for me." (Mini-group, Derry, 25-44 years, BC1)*
- Immigration, travel and border control:
  - What impact will leaving the EU have on immigration numbers and how does this compare to current numbers?
  - What impact will leaving the EU have on the ability to work/ travel in countries in the European Union?

- What impact will leaving the EU have on British people living in European countries?
  - *"Status of British people living in Spain for example, and what would happen to their pensions and stuff." (Mini-group, London, 45-59 years, BC1).*
- Laws:
  - How does law making within the European Union currently work?
  - Which laws will be impacted by remaining in or leaving the European Union?
- What is the impact on jobs, working directives and housing of staying or leaving the EU?
- What impact will leaving the EU have on public services? (e.g. NHS, police and education)
  - *"I'd want to know what would happen to the police, NHS, education, public services in general. For me, these are more important than money." (Mini-depth, Porthmadog, female, 25-44 years, C2DE)*
- Impact on the European Union:
  - Which other countries are members?
  What will the impact on the remaining members/ the European Union be if the United Kingdom leaves?

7.1 Information delivery

Participants tended to think about two types of information. Some expected that the majority of information would come from campaigners in a similar format to the information provided during a general election. These participants reflected that this was likely to be opinion-based information and whilst they felt that some factual information should be provided, they recognised that full details regarding terms of membership may not be decided prior to the referendum itself. Whilst they hoped that as much fact as possible would be provided, they anticipated that much of the information they used to make their decision would be based on campaigner opinion.

Other participants often struggled with the idea that there would be limited factual information and found it difficult to envisage making a voting decision without a clear understanding of what a majority vote either way would mean in practice (as noted earlier, participants sought clear information regarding the questions detailed in section A).

> *"Everything should be fact and the person voting should be able to make up his/ her opinion on it." (Mini-group, Sunderland, 25-44 years, C2DE)*

These participants, whilst equally expecting information from campaigners, also sought information and facts from an independent organisation. Whilst often unable to describe who this independent organisation would be (although some suggested that this would be the Government), they felt that this independence would help them feel more confident in interpreting what a majority vote either way would mean, and therefore in making their voting decision.

"It's got to be honest, and it's got to show both sides of the coin, however it's done." (Mini-depth, Norwich, male, 45-59 years, BC1)

Overall, participants agreed that it would be useful to gather a broad spectrum of views ensuring they understood 'the whole picture' before making their own voting decision. They envisaged that this would comprise views from:

- Government
- Campaigners
- An independent organisation
- Independent experts e.g. economists and academics
- Members of the general public without strong affiliation to a campaigning party (participants felt that it would be useful to hear other peoples' views).

With this range of views in mind, televised and local debates were often cited as an appropriate and engaging method for providing information. Participants in Scotland (especially those in Stirling) felt that debates during the run-up to the Scottish Independence referendum had been informative and provided a good template for information provision. Debates were seen as a good way to combine the range of viewpoints described above, and participants particularly valued the idea that members of the general public could ask direct questions.

Participants expected that news coverage would comprise a key source of information.

Pamphlets and leaflets were also cited as a good way to provide information. However, views were mixed with some noting that they would welcome the opportunity to sit down and review information in their own time whilst others noting that it would be likely to go straight in the bin.

Those who were particularly positive towards written information included one participant with a learning disability who suggested Easy Read format. One participant with a lower level of literacy also noted that written information would be most useful as they typically struggled to follow debates and noted that the language used was not always accessible. A couple of visually impaired participants further noted that any pamphlet/ leaflet based information should be provided online in a Word format (not PDF) that was compatible with assistive computer software.

Some suggested that any pamphlet/ leaflet should be short and concise, detailing key facts, with links for where to find more information. A couple of participants suggested a comparison structure similar to the comparison provided by the BBC for the party manifestos during the 2015 general election.

Other participants expected that they would come across this, and other information when searching online for information via a generic search engine.

Radio coverage was further suggested by some participants, with one visually impaired participant noting that this would be their preferred format.

Most suggested that information be provided to the general public 4-6 weeks prior to the referendum giving people time to consider their vote. Whilst not all felt that they would personally want this much time to reach a decision, they felt that it was an appropriate amount of time to ensure people have time to engage in the issues.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Suitability of the Bill question (Question A)

Understanding

Participants feel that this question uses simple language that is plain English, making it easy to understand.

Overall, many note that this question is short and concise, and therefore easy to understand when compared to questions B, B.1 and C. Some feel that the Yes/ No answer options are more succinct and therefore clearer than those used in questions B, B.1 and C. However, many note that the Yes/ No answer options are vague when compared to those used in questions B, B.1 and C; some feel that these alternative answer options provide greater clarity regarding each voting option.

Overall, participants feel that this question was easy to understand.

Neutrality

Participants question the neutrality of only including the 'remain' option in question A, rather than also including the word 'leave' or an equivalent. This is particularly cited when compared to questions B, B.1 and C which include a 'leave' option. When making this comparison most participants feel that question A does not fairly represent both options. Some feel that only including the 'remain' option could appear to encourage a 'yes' vote amongst those who may fear change or who prefer the status quo. However, based on their own reflections upon the likely impact of the different question wordings, no participants feel that this would impact their own personal voting behaviour.

Comments are also raised regarding the perceived neutrality of the word 'remain'. Some note that this word could suggest the status quo, which could be perceived in a positive or negative light by voters. Whilst cited as a concern across all question versions, some feel that this is a greater concern for question A, as question A only presents the 'remain' option. Views do not change when prompted to consider 'stay' as an alternative to 'remain'.

Overall, participants note some concerns regarding the neutrality of the wording and structure of this question. The key concern relates to only including the 'remain' option, which participants feel lacks a balanced approach when compared to questions B, B.1 and C.

8.2 Suitability of a non-Yes/ No answer question (Questions B, B.1 & C)

Understanding

Whilst some participants note that questions B, B.1 and C are longer than question A and therefore feel that question A is simpler and easier to understand, overall participants agree that questions B, B.1 and C use simple and clear language.

Participants agree that questions B, B.1 and C clearly present both voting options therefore mitigating against any potential confusion in this regard.

Overall, questions B, B.1 and C are considered clear and easy to understand.

Neutrality

When compared to question A, many participants feel that questions B, B.1 and C are more neutral and balanced as they provided both voting options. This mirrors previous research findings.

A few participants feel that the word 'leave' is a strong word with potentially negative connotations, but this is a mild concern and not perceived to affect personal voting behaviour. Previous 2013 research suggests that connotations of this word are mitigated by presenting both voting options in the question (not just providing a 'leave' option).

Some participants feel that the word 'member' has positive connotations of being a part of a team or group. Whilst this is noted across all question versions, some feel that this positivity is strengthened in questions B, B.1 and C as the word 'member' is only assigned to the 'remain' part of the question and answer option. However, participants do not strongly feel that this affects the neutrality of the question as they feel that the word 'member' is factual and descriptive of the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union.

Overall questions B, B.1 and C are considered more balanced when compared to question A.

8.3 Across all question variations

Understanding

Concerns regarding lack of clarity of the questions tested stem from lack of contextual knowledge regarding the European Union, terms of membership and what a majority vote either way would entail. Participants expect that this contextual information will be provided to the general public around the time of the referendum.

Inclusion of the words 'remain' or 'stay' is considered important for all question variations in clarifying that the United Kingdom is currently a member of the European Union. This is felt to be factual and therefore not leading.

Across all question variations there are mixed views from across participants (including those with low literacy, English as a second language and learning disabilities) regarding preferences for 'stay' or 'remain' as both words are considered easy to understand. There is a slight overall preference for the formality of the word 'remain' although some feel that 'stay' is simpler. Welsh language participants similarly noted that both 'aros' and 'ddal i fod' are clear and easy to understand and both could be used alongside English language questions using 'stay' or 'remain'.

Participants feel that there should be consistency in terms of including or excluding the word 'member' from the first part of the question (i.e. '*Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or…*') and the associated answer option (i.e. '*Remain a member of the European Union*').

Overall, there are mixed preferences for whether 'member' should be included. Some feel that it is unnecessary and makes the question less concise, whilst others feel that its' inclusion helps clarify the United Kingdom's current relationship with the European Union.

Participants do not feel that inclusion of the abbreviation 'EU' would be a useful addition for any of the question variations tested.

Neutrality

Overall there are mixed views on inclusion of the word 'member'. Many participants suggest that inclusion of the word 'member' is factual and descriptive of the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union, and therefore do not consider it leading. Some suggest that including the word 'member' adds context to the question by clarifying the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union. Whilst some participants note that the word 'member' conveys a sense of inclusivity and being part of a team, which could influence peoples' views none feel that including or not including the word 'member' would affect their own person voting behaviour.

The word 'remain' or 'stay' is considered by some to convey a sense of the status quo. Some feel that this could be leading by suggesting either maintaining or changing the status quo, which could be perceived positively or negatively by voters. This is considered particularly pertinent to question A, as it only provides the 'remain' option in the question structure. However, participants agree that it is important to clarify the United Kingdom's current membership of the European Union and feel that this overrides any minor issues regarding neutrality that use of this word may present.

8.4 In Summary

The research suggests that the Bill question (question A) and the non-Yes/ No answer question (questions B, B.1 and C) are suitable for use in a referendum. However, reflecting previous research findings, most consider questions that present both voting options (questions B, B.1 and C) more balanced.

A summary is provided below:

	Understanding	Neutrality
Bill Question (Question A) *Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? Yes/ No*	✓ Short and concise.	? Only specifying the 'remain' option in the question could influence voters. However, none felt that this would personally impact their own vote.
Non - Yes / No questions **(Question B and**	? Long-winded when compared to question A. However, none felt that this affected their	✓ Balanced, presenting both voting options with equal treatment. ? 'Member of the

Question C) *Should the United Kingdom remain/ stay a member of the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain/ Stay in the European Union/ Leave the European Union*	understanding of the question. ✓ Clarifies each voting option.	European Union' can trigger positive feelings of inclusivity and is only provided alongside the 'remain/ stay a member' option. However, none felt this would personally affect their vote.
Both questions	✓ Simple language that is easy to understand. ✓ Clarifies current membership status.	? 'Member of the European Union' can trigger positive feelings of inclusivity. However, none felt this would personally affect their vote. ? 'Remain' can suggest maintaining or changing the status quo which could be perceived positively or negatively by voters. However, none felt this would personally affect their vote.

9   Appendix

9.1   Discussion guides

Various iterations of discussion guides were used across the research tailored to each phase. Below we have provided the initial versions used.

A)   Focus group discussion guide

1. Moderator introduction and initial question test

- Introduction to the research.
- Participants to answer 2015 Bill Question (Question A) as if doing so for real.
- Participants asked to complete short worksheet (to capture individual views prior to full discussion).

2. Participant introduction

- Full introduction to the research.
- Further clarification of:
  - Purpose of referendum.
  - Focus on referendum question not political views.
  - Government due to hold referendum before the end of 2017.
- Participant introductions: first name etc.

3. Completing the question: accuracy

- Who feels confident that they gave the response they wanted to?
- Who does not feel confident that they gave the response they wanted to?
- What do you think the question was asking you?
- Overall, how clear is it what the question is asking you? Why/ why not?
- What do you think you have voted for?
- How did you decide whether to vote yes or no?
- 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: ease of understanding

- Overall, how easy was the question to understand?
- Which words and phrases did you identify as difficult to understand?
  - Why were these difficult to understand?
  - 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', 'member of European Union', 'remain a member', 'remain'.
- Views on including the abbreviation EU?
- **STIMULUS Alternative wording 1: 'be a member'**
  - What do you think of this alternative wording?
  - What impact would this have on the question?
- Overall, how could the question be made clearer?
- Does 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?
- Do you agree or disagree that the referendum question:
  - Uses plain language?
  - Is clear in what it is asking?
  - Is to the point?

5. Completing the question: 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?
  - 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?
- **NEUTRALITY BAROMETER**: complete individually
  - On a scale of 1-6, how neutral do you think the question is?
    - 1 is not neutral at all and 6 is entirely neutral
  - Discuss answers
  - Overall, how would you improve this question to make it more neutral?
- Do you agree or disagree that the referendum question:
  - Is fair or biased towards one option?
  - Is misleading to voters?

6. Question design/ alternatives
- **PAIRS EXERCISE**: working in pairs create preferred question
  - Discuss ideas and suggested changes to the 2015 Bill Question
  - Overall, which changes do you think are most important to make? Why?
- **STIMULUS: Alternative wording 2 (Question B): non-Yes/ No question – question text only**
  - What do you think about this idea?

- o Would you answer the same way as you did with the question we looked at earlier? Why/ why not?
- o Preferences?
- o Expected answer options?
  - **STIMULUS: Alternative wording 2 (Question B): non-Yes/ No question – answer options**
- o Overall impact on clarity?
- o Overall impact on neutrality?
- Comparing the 2015 Bill Question (Question A) and the Non-Yes/ No question (Question B):
  - o Which is clearest? Why?
  - o Which is the most to the point? Why?
  - o Which is most neutral/ fair? Why?

7. Understanding the question in context and information needs
- Before this discussion, had you heard that there would be a referendum in the UK about the European Union?
- Is it clear from the wording of the question what you would be voting for?
- What would happen if the majority of voters vote no?
- What would happen if the majority of voters vote yes?
- What information would help you better understand the question?
- Where would you expect to find this information?
- What information would you like to know in order to enable you to vote? Why?
- Who do you think should be responsible for giving people this information?
- What would be the best way to provide this information?
- When would be the best time to provide this information?

8. Summary and Close
- Overall, how confident do you feel that you have been able to answer the referendum question in the way you intend to?
- What question would you ask if you were in charge of running the referendum?
- Thinking about everything we have looked at this evening, is there anything you would suggest we do to ensure that people understand the European Union referendum question?

Thank and Close

B)   Extended mini-depth and Mini-depth interview discussion guide

1. Moderator introduction and initial question test

- Introduction to the research.
- Clarification of:
  - Purpose of referendum.
  - Focus on referendum question not political views.
  - Government due to hold referendum before the end of 2017.
- Participant introduction.
- Participants to answer 2015 Bill Question (Question A) as if doing so for real.
  - Can you tell me in your own words what you think the question was asking you?
  - How confident do you feel that you have given the response you wanted to? Why?
  - How did you decide whether to vote yes or no?

2. Completing the question:
Ease of understanding:
- Overall, how easy was the question to understand? Why?
- Which words and phrases did you find difficult to understand?
  - PROMPT: What do you think is meant by:
  - 'European Union', 'member of European Union', 'remain a member', 'remain'.
  - Views on including the abbreviation EU?
  - **STIMULUS Alternative wording 1: 'be a member'**
    - Impact on clarity of the question?

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?
  - Does the person who wrote the question want you to vote one way or the other?
- **NEUTRALITY BAROMETER**: complete individually
    - On a scale of 1-6, how neutral do you think the question is?
      - 1 is not neutral at all and 6 is entirely neutral
- Overall, how would you improve this question to make it more neutral?
- To what extent do you think that people will feel that this question is fair or biased?

- **STIMULUS: Alternative question wording 2**

- o What do you think about this idea?
  - ▪ Would you answer the same way as you did with the question we looked at earlier?
- Comparing the different questions (Question A and Question B), overall…
  - o Which is clearest?
  - o Which is the most to the point?
  - o Which is most neutral/ fair?

3. Improvements, information needs and close

- Overall, what would you change to improve this question (2015 Bill Question/ Question A)?
- What information would you expect to be told about the European Union Referendum before it took place?
- What information would you like to know in order to enable you to vote? Why?
- Which pieces of information would be most useful?
- What would be the best way to provide this information?
- And finally, overall, how confident do you feel that you have been able to answer the referendum question in the way you intend to? Why/ why not?

Thank and Close

9.2   Sample breakdown and question rotation

This section gives a full breakdown of the focus group, depth interview and mini-depth interview sample and quotas, and includes the question rotation across each stage of the fieldwork.

A)   Mini group sample

Phase	Location	Key quotas	Question rotation
Phase 1	London	Age: 45-59 years SEG: BC1 Moderate / high knowledge of EU membership matters*** 2 x BME participants Voting: Regular*	1. Question A 2. Question B
Phase 2	Cardiff	Age: 60+ years SEG: C1C2 Moderate / high knowledge of EU membership matters*** Welsh language Voting: Regular*	1. Question A 2. Question B 3. Question C
	Dundee	Age: 17-24 years SEG: C2DE Little / no knowledge of EU membership matters*** 3 x voted in Scottish Referendum Voting: Regular*	1. Question B 2. Question C 3. Question A
Phase 3	Sunderland	Age: 25-44 years SEG: C2DE Little / no knowledge of EU membership matters*** Voting: Irregular*	1. Question A 2. Question C 3. Question B.1
	Derry	Age: 25-44 years SEG: C2DE Little / no knowledge of EU membership matters*** Voting: Irregular *	1. Question B.1 2. Question C 3. Question A

B)   Mini-depth interview sample

Quota target	Phase 1: Questions A & B		Phase 2: Questions A, B & C	Phase 3: Questions A, B.1 & C		TOTAL
	Birmingham	Lisburn	Norwich	Porthmadog	Stirling	
Gender						
Male	8	3	9	5	7	32
Female	6	3	6	10	8	33
Age						
17-24 years	3	1	4	0	3	11
25-34 years	4	1	2	3	3	13
35-44 years	3	0	1	1	2	7
45-59 years	3	2	5	4	6	20
60-69 years	1	2	3	4	1	11
70+ years	0	0	0	3	0	3
Social grade						
B	3	2	3	6	3	17
C1	5	2	7	2	4	20
C2	3	1	2	3	2	11
D	2	0	1	3	3	9
E	1	1	2	1	3	8
Voting experience*						
Regular	10	4	8	14	9	45
Irregular	4	2	7	1	6	20
EU membership**						
Decided	10	3	9	9	6	37
Undecided	4	3	6	6	9	28
Importance of EU issue***						
Higher (6-10)	11	2	9	11	9	42
Lower (1-5)	3	4	6	4	6	23
Informed of EU issue*****						
Higher (6-10)	5	2	8	10	5	30
Lower (1-5)	9	4	7	5	10	35
Ethnicity						
BME	5	0	2	0	1	8
Other audiences			1 x learning difficulties	12 x Welsh language	2 x English as a second language	
TOTAL per location	**14**	**6**	**15**	**15**	**15**	**65**

C) Extended mini-depth interview sample

Quota target	Phase 1: Questions A & B		Phase 2: Questions A, B & C			Phase 3: Questions A, B.1 & C				TOTAL
	Birmingham	London	Norwich	Cardiff	Dundee	Derry	Porthmadog	Stirling	London	
Gender										
Male	2	2	1	2	0	1	2	1	1	12
Female	1	0	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	12
Age										
17-24 years	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	5
25-44 years	2	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	2	10
45-59 years	1	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	6
60+ years	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
Social grade										
BC1	1	1	1	2	1	0	2	1	1	10
C2DE	2	1	3	2	0	2	2	1	1	14
Voting experience*										
Regular	1	2	1	3	0	0	2	0	1	10
Irregular	2	0	3	1	1	2	2	2	1	14
EU membership**										
Decided	1	1	2	3	0	0	2	1	0	10
Undecided	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	14
Importance of EU issue***										
Higher (6-10)	1	2	1	3	0	0	3	1	1	12
Lower (1-5)	2	0	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	12
Informed of EU issue****										
Higher (6-10)	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	6
Lower (1-5)	2	0	4	3	1	2	3	1	2	18
Ethnicity										
BME	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	7
Other audiences										
Welsh speaking	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	4
Visually impaired	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	5
English as second language	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Learning difficulties	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	5
Low literacy	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	5
TOTAL per location	**3**	**2**	**4**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**2**	**24**

Sample footnotes:

*At screening, participants were asked which of the following statements best described their attitudes towards voting at General Elections:

- I always vote at General Elections
- I usually vote at General Elections
- I sometimes vote at General Elections
- I never vote at General Elections

Those who coded 'always' or 'usually' were categorised as 'regular voters'. Those who coded 'usually' and 'never' were categorised as 'irregular' voters. Those had not been previously eligible to vote were asked for their intended behaviour at the next General Election and categorised in the same way.

**At screening, participants were asked whether they had decided which way they would vote in the EU referendum. This who were certain about how they would vote and be very unlikely/ fairly unlikely to change their mind were categorised as 'decided' voters. Those who felt that they may possibly change their mind/ likely changed their mind or had not yet decided were categorised as 'undecided' voters.

***At screening, participants were asked on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is not at all important and 10 is very important), how important they personally felt UK membership of the European Union was. Those who rated 1-5 on the 10-point scale were catergorised as 'lower' personal importance and those who rated 6-10 on the 10-point scale were categorised as 'higher' personal importance.

****At screening, participants were asked on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is not at all well informed and 10 is very well informed), how well informed the personally felt on the issue of UK membership of the European Union.   Those who rated 1-5 on the 10-point scale were categorised as 'lower' feelings of being well informed and those who rated 6-10 on the 10-point scale were categorised as 'higher' feelings of being well informed.

9.3 Factsheet

The factsheet below was used by moderators to answer any questions raised by participants, and as a prompt around the type of information they might find useful to know to help them to vote.

What is a referendum?

Referendums are held to ask people to vote on a proposal.

Has there been a referendum in the UK before?

Since 1973 there have been twelve referendums held by the Government of the United Kingdom, the majority of them have been related to the issue of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales whilst to date only two UK-wide referendums have be held, the first held in 1975 on the United Kingdom's continued membership of the European Community and most recently in 2011 on the alternative vote system.
United Kingdom

- United Kingdom European Communities membership referendum, 1975, on whether the UK should remain part of the European Economic Community (yes)
- United Kingdom Alternative Vote referendum, 2011, 5 May 2011. (no)
- Proposed referendum on United Kingdom membership of the European Union to be held by the end of 2017.

England

- Greater London Authority referendum, 1998, on whether there should be a Mayor of London and Greater London Authority (yes)
- North East England devolution referendum, 2004, on an elected regional assembly (no)

Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland sovereignty referendum, 1973, on whether Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom or join the Republic of Ireland (UK)
- Northern Ireland Belfast Agreement referendum, 1998, on the Good Friday Agreement (yes)

Scotland

- Scottish devolution referendum, 1979, on whether there should be a Scottish Assembly (small majority voted yes, but fell short of the 40% threshold required to enact devolution)
- Scottish devolution referendum, 1997, Two questions: On whether there should be a Scottish Parliament (yes); On whether a Scottish Parliament should have tax varying powers (yes)
- Scottish independence referendum, 2014 on the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?", 18 September 2014. (no)

Wales

- Welsh devolution referendum, 1979, on whether there should be a Welsh Assembly (no)
- Welsh devolution referendum, 1997, on whether there should be a National Assembly for Wales (yes)
- Welsh devolution referendum, 2011 (yes)

There have also been local referendums including:
- Local referendums on directly elected mayors
- Neighbourhood planning referendums

The 1975 EU referendum

The question asked at the 1975 EU referendum was:

Do you think the UK should stay in the European Community (Common Market)?

Turnout was 65%, with 67% of voters voting yes.

When will the referendum happen?

This has not yet been confirmed but the Conservatives pledged in their general election manifesto to legislate for an EU referendum to be held by the end of 2017. A law is currently passing through Parliament that would guarantee this.

What is the European Union?

The European Union is currently made up of 28 individual countries (including the UK) that have formed a political and economic union. The European Union is made up of a range of political, economic and judicial institutions which include the European Parliament, European Commission and European Central Bank.

The EU countries are:
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

The European Economic Area (EEA):
The EEA includes all EU countries and also Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. It allows them to be part of the EU's single market.
Switzerland is neither an EU or EEA member but is part of the single market.

Institutions of the European Union:
Executive
- o European Commission

Legislatures
- o European Parliament
- o Council of the European Union

Other institutions
- o European Council
- o Court of Justice of the European Union
- o European Central Bank
- o European Court of Auditors

- EU Parliamentary elections (including next date):

- The EU parliament is elected every 5 years and is made up of 751 MEPs who are chosen from the 28 member states. The UK is represented by 73 MEPs. In the UK, there are 12 European electoral regions and each region is represented by between three and ten MEPs. Elections take place every five years and he next EU Parliamentary elections are scheduled for2019 .

- Date that UK joined
  - The UK joined what was then called the European Communities in 1973 (made up of the European Economic Community, European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community).
  - The European Union came into being in 1993 and incorporated other existing European institutions such as the European Economic Community.

- Number of EU members: 28

- Overview of how EU law gets made:
  - In principle, the European Commission proposes new laws, and the European Parliament and Council adopt them. The Commission and the member countries then implement them, and the Commission ensures that the laws are properly applied and implemented.

What will happen after the referendum?

- We do not know at this point what the outcome of a majority vote to remain a member of or leave the European Union would be. This would be likely to become clearer closer to a referendum as the campaigners set out their intent.

What's the role of the Electoral Commission?

The Electoral Commission has specific responsibilities and functions in relation to the delivery and regulation of referendums held under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) which would apply to any referendum Bill brought before the UK Parliament unless specifically stated otherwise.

The Commission's responsibilities include:
- Commenting on the intelligibility of the referendum question.
- Registering organisations or individuals who want to campaign in the referendum.
- Monitoring spending on referendum campaigning, in line with the referendum spending limits imposed by PPERA.
- Considering applications for designation as lead campaign groups for each referendum outcome.
- Ensuring that designated organisations (if appointed) have access to certain assistance.
- Reporting on the administration of the referendum and referendum campaign spending.

 The Chair of the Commission, or someone they appoint, must act as Chief Counting Officer for the referendum and is responsible for certifying the outcome of the

referendum.

Additional questions that may arise:

- **Will the outcome of the referendum really make a difference?**
- **Can the Government still do what it wants in relation to the EU, even if this contradicts the outcome of the Referendum?**

The legislation does not state what would happen after the referendum but the Government has made clear that the UK would leave the EU if a majority voted in favour of that option.

- **What will be the outcome of a Yes vote?**
- **Does voting Yes mean voting for a common currency i.e. joining the Euro?**

No, this is a referendum for staying within the European Union, not for joining the Euro.

- **Does voting Yes mean the UK will need to spend money to bail out failing economies?**

The exact implications of a yes vote and the terms by which the UK is a member of the EU will be dependent on any renegotiations between the UK and the EU.

- **Does voting Yes mean we can rely on EU support if the UK economy fails?**

The exact implications of a yes vote and the terms by which the UK is a member of the EU will be dependent on any renegotiations between the UK and the EU.

- **What will be the outcome of a No vote?**

In the Scottish Referendum, the campaigning highlighted the possibility of a Devo Max option. What are the other options with EU membership?

The referendum is an advisory referendum to leave the UK. The government intends for the referendum to be based on a renegotiated package with the EU.

- **Can we still have Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreements?**

Countries outside of the EU can still have economic cooperation and trade agreements with the EU. Were the UK to withdraw from the EU, its subsequent relationship with the organisation could take several forms. These include remaining in the European Economic Area (EEA) as a European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member or a bilateral model along Swiss lines with a series of interdependent sectoral agreements.

- **What economic power does the EU currently have over the UK?**
- **How would a Yes or No vote change this?**
- **What is the role of the EU vs the IMF?**

The IMF (International Monetary Fund) was conceived in 1944. Its primary purpose is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system—the system of exchange rates and international payments that enables countries (and their citizens) to transact with each other. The Fund's mandate was updated in 2012 to include all macroeconomic and financial sector issues that bear on global stability. The IMF has 188 member countries.

- **What's the difference between the EU, the EEC and the Common Market?**

The European Economic Community (EEC) was set up in 1957 to bring about economic integration. The EEC was also known as the Common Market. In 1993 the European Union was formed. The EEC was incorporated into the EU and renamed the European Community (EC). Then in 2009 the EC's institutions were absorbed into the EU's wider framework and the community ceased to exist.

The EEC was renamed the European Community to reflect that it covered a wider range of areas than economic policy.

- **Does each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have to vote no before we can leave**

No. The referendum result is based on the count of all UK votes together. There does not need to be a majority 'no' vote in all of the UK nations for the no vote to have 'won' there referendum.

- **If we did leave how long would it take?**

This information is not available yet.

- **Has anyone left the EU before?**
- **What happened then?**

No, this has not happened before.

- **Would people from Europe living here have to go home if we left the EU?**

This is not in the legislation and there is no confirmation about whether or not EU citizens currently resident in the UK will be able to remain.

9.4 Ballot papers

Please note, the ballot papers were designed to simulate a real life voting situation. However, the focus of the research was on the wording of the questions and not the layout of the ballot paper.

A) Question A (the 2015 Bill Question)

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English
BALLOT PAPER **Vote (X) ONLY ONCE** Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? YES ☐ NO ☐	**PAPUR PLEIDLEISIO** **BALLOT PAPER** **Vote (X) ONLY ONCE** **Pleidleisiwch (X) UNWAITH YN UNIG** A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd? / Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union? DYLAI YES ☐ NA DDYLAI NO ☐

B) Question B (the non-Yes/ No Question)

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English
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 aros 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? **Aros yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd** **Remain a member of the European Union** ☐ **Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd** **Leave the European Union** ☐

C) Question C (the non-Yes/ No Question with 'stay' instead of 'remain')

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English

D) Question B.1 (the non-Yes/ No Question with 'member' removed from the 'remain' answer option)

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English

9.5 Stimulus materials

Stimulus materials were used to prompt participants on alternative structures and words.

A) Question A alternative wording ('be a member')

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English
Should the United Kingdom be a member of the European Union? Yes No	This question was not tested in Welsh language.

B) Question B alternative wording ('in the European Union')

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English
Should the United Kingdom remain in the European Union or leave the European Union? Remain in the European Union Leave the European Union	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig ddal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd neu adael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd? Dal i fod yn yr Undeb Ewropeaidd Gadael yr Undeb Ewropeaidd

C) 'EU' abbreviation

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English
Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union (EU)? • Yes • No	A ddylai'r Deyrnas Unedig aros i fod yn aelod o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd (UE)? • Dylai • Na Ddylai

D) Alternative wording ('stay')

English language	Bilingual Welsh and English
Should the United Kingdom stay a member of the European Union? Yes No	This question was not tested in Welsh language.