

FOR RELEASE JUNE 7, 2016

Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit

Significant opposition in key European countries to an ever closer EU

BY *Bruce Stokes*

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Bruce Stokes, Director, Global Economic Attitudes
Rhonda Stewart, Senior Communications Manager

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

About Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not take policy positions. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research. It studies U.S. politics and policy; journalism and media; internet, science and technology; religion and public life; Hispanic trends; global attitudes and trends; and U.S. social and demographic trends. All of the center's reports are available at www.pewresearch.org. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

© Pew Research Center 2017

Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit

Significant opposition in key European countries to an ever closer EU

On June 23, people in the United Kingdom will vote on a referendum on whether to remain in the European Union or to leave the Brussels-based institution, a decision that has come to be called Brexit. The British go to the polls at a time when a new multi-nation survey from Pew Research Center finds that Euroskepticism is on the rise across Europe and that about two-thirds of both the British and the Greeks, along with significant minorities in other key nations, want some powers returned from Brussels to national governments. Whether favorable or not toward Brussels, most Europeans agree that a British exit would harm the 28-member EU.

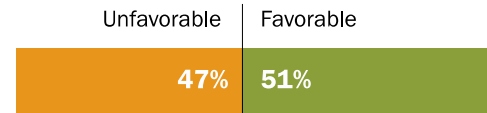
A median of just 51% across 10 EU countries surveyed have a favorable view of the European Union. A median of 42% in these 10 nations want more power returned to their national capitals, while only 19% favor giving Brussels more power and 27% favor the status quo. Nevertheless, a median of 70% in the nine EU nations surveyed that don't get a vote June 23 believe it would be bad for the EU if the UK decided to depart. Only 16% say it would be a good thing.

European publics are sharply divided along partisan lines on many of these issues. Supporters of Euroskeptic parties – especially in France, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK – are much less likely than adherents to other major parties to have a favorable view of the European Union.

These are among the key findings from a new survey by Pew Research Center, conducted in 10 EU nations among 10,491 respondents from April 4 to May 12, 2016. The survey includes countries that account for 80% of the EU-28 population and 82% of the EU's GDP.

European views of the EU and potential Brexit

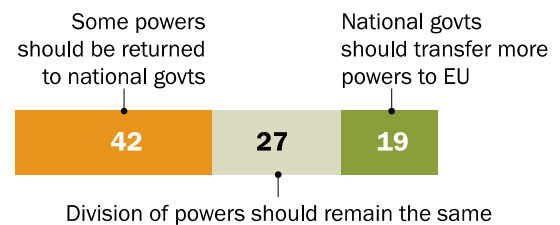
Views of EU



The UK's leaving the European Union would be a __ for the EU*



Views about the future of the EU



*Question not asked in UK.

Note: Percentages are medians based on 10 European countries.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q10c, Q49 & Q50N.

"Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

A double dip in EU favorability

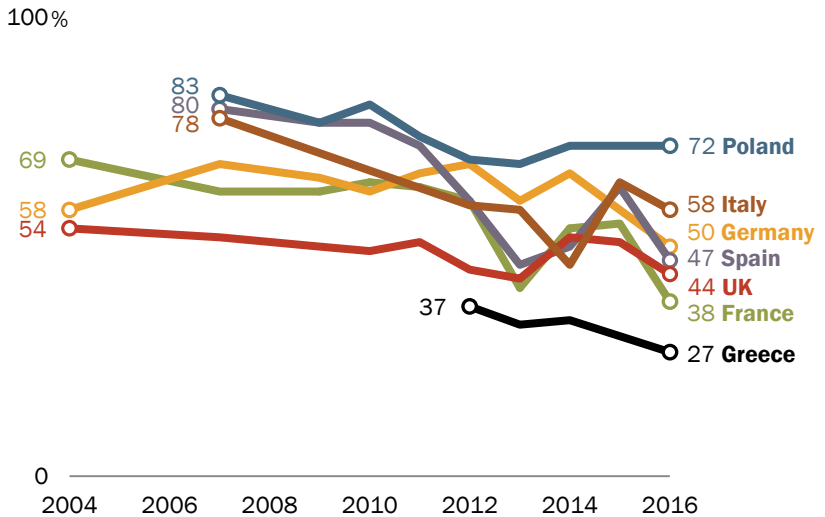
The British are not the only ones with doubts about the European Union. The EU's image and stature have been on a roller coaster ride in recent years throughout Europe. In a number of nations the portion of the public with a favorable view of the Brussels-based institution fell markedly from 2012 to 2013 as the European economy cratered. It subsequently rebounded in 2014 and 2015. But the EU is again experiencing a sharp dip in public support in a number of its largest member states.

The institution's strongest backers are the Poles (72%) and the Hungarians (61%). In many other nations, support is tepid. Just 27% of the Greeks, 38% of the French and 47% of the Spanish have a favorable opinion of the EU. Notably, 44% of the British view the EU favorably, including 53% of the Scottish.

EU favorability is down in five of the six nations surveyed in both 2015 and 2016. There has been a double-digit drop in France (down 17 percentage points) and Spain (16 points), and single-digit declines in Germany (8 points), the United Kingdom (7 points) and Italy (6 points).

After short-lived rebound, views of the EU on the decline again in key European countries

Favorable view of EU



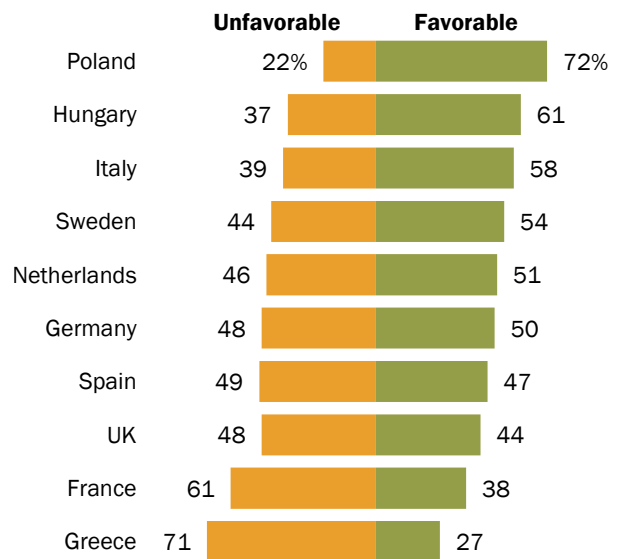
Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey, Q10c.

"Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

EU favorability varies widely in Europe

Views of EU



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey, Q10c.

"Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Young people – those ages 18 to 34 – are more favorable toward the European Union than people 50 and older in six of the 10 nations surveyed. The generation gap is most pronounced in France – 25 percentage points – with 56% of young people but only 31% of older people having a positive opinion of the EU. There are similar generation gaps of 19 points in the UK, 16 points in the Netherlands, 14 points in Poland and Germany, and 13 points in Greece.

The drop-off in overall EU support in key countries in the past year has been driven by a fall in favorability among older people in particular. In France, EU backing among those ages 50 and older fell 19 points. In Spain it declined 16 points and in Germany 11 points. In each case this was larger than the decline in support among those ages 18 to 34.

Younger adults much more likely than older ones to favor the EU

Favorable view of EU

	18-34	35-49	50+	Youngest-oldest gap
	%	%	%	
France	56	33	31	+25
UK	57	46	38	+19
Netherlands	62	50	46	+16
Poland	79	74	65	+14
Germany	60	52	46	+14
Greece	37	25	24	+13
Spain	53	49	44	+9
Sweden	56	60	51	+5
Hungary	63	61	60	+3
Italy	55	63	56	-1

Note: Statistically significant differences in bold.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q10c.

“Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit”

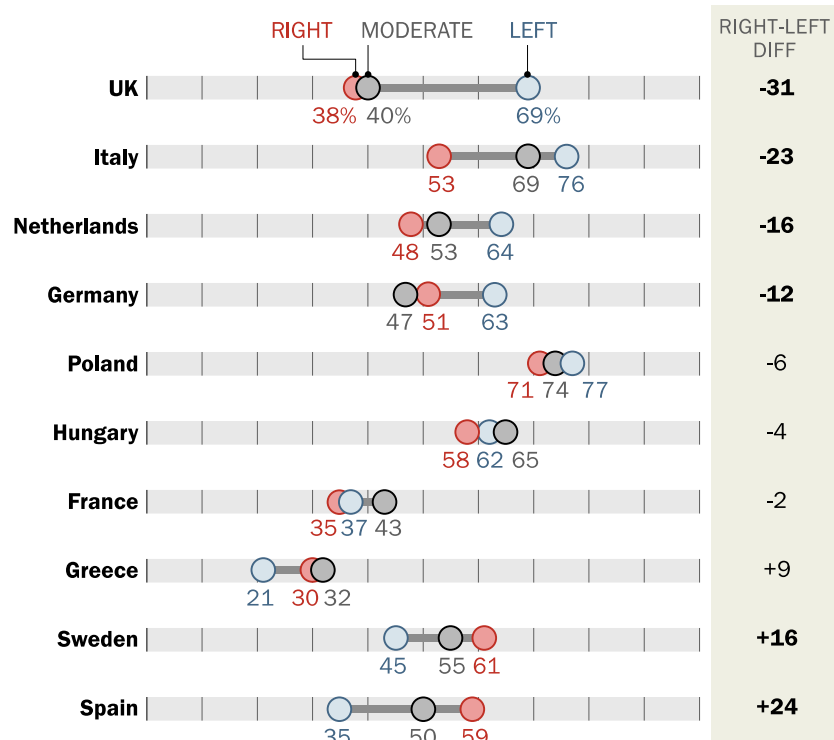
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Europeans are divided along ideological lines in their views of the EU, but this division is not a simple matter of left versus right in each society. In some nations Euroskepticism is a right-wing issue, in others it is a left-wing cause.

In the UK, people who place themselves on the left of the ideological spectrum (69%) are 31 percentage points more likely than those on the right of the spectrum (38%) to have a favorable opinion of the EU. There is a similar 23-point ideological gap in Italy, a 16-point divide in the Netherlands and a 12-point difference in Germany. But in Spain people on the right (59%) are more likely than those on the left (35%) to favor the Brussels-based institution by a margin of 24 percentage points. The EU also enjoys stronger backing on the right in Sweden.

Ideological splits on EU favorability

Favorable view of EU



Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q10c.

"Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

These ideological differences translate into large partisan divides on the issues. Not surprisingly, in the UK just 13% of those who identify with the Euroskeptic United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) hold a favorable opinion of the EU. Such views on the EU set UKIP supporters apart from the opinions of Labour Party backers (60% positive about the EU) and Conservative Party stalwarts (43% favorable toward the EU). In France, three-in-ten adherents of the Euroskeptic National Front (30%) are favorably disposed toward the EU. The country's Republicans supporters (39%) are not much more favorable toward the EU, while about half of France's Socialist party backers (51%) support the institution. In Spain, just 32% of the left-wing populist Podemos party adherents favor the EU. Not enough Germans identify with the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party to analyze their sentiment, but among Germans who view the AfD favorably, only a third support the EU.

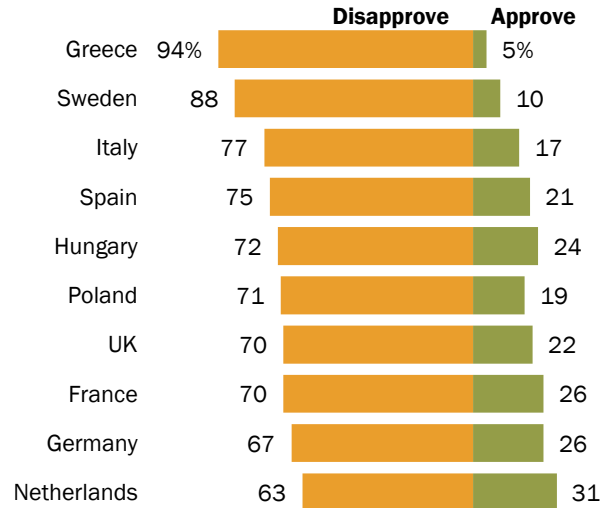
A party's criticism of the European Union does not, however, necessarily translate into disfavor toward Brussels by the party's adherents. In Italy, 58% of those who identify with the Euroskeptic Five Star Movement have a positive view of the EU. In Poland, where the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party is in a feud with the EU on a range of issues, two-thirds (67%) of PiS partisans still have a favorable opinion of the Brussels institution.

Much of the disaffection with the EU among Europeans can be attributed to Brussels' handling of the refugee issue. In every country surveyed, overwhelming majorities disapprove of how Brussels has dealt with the problem. This includes 94% of Greeks, 88% of Swedes and 77% of Italians. The strongest approval of EU management of the refugee crisis is in the Netherlands, but that backing is a tepid 31%.

The EU's handling of economic issues is another huge source of disaffection with the institution. About nine-in-ten Greeks (92%) disapprove of how the EU has dealt with the ongoing economic crisis. Roughly two-thirds of the Italians (68%), French (66%) and Spanish (65%) similarly disapprove. (France and Spain are the two nations where the favorability of the EU has recently experienced the largest decline.) Majorities in Sweden (59%) and the UK (55%), including 84% of UKIP supporters, also disapprove of the EU's job in dealing with economic challenges. The strongest approval of Brussels' economic efforts is in Poland and Germany (both 47%).

Overwhelming majorities unhappy with EU's handling of refugees

Do you ___ of the way the European Union is dealing with the refugee issue?



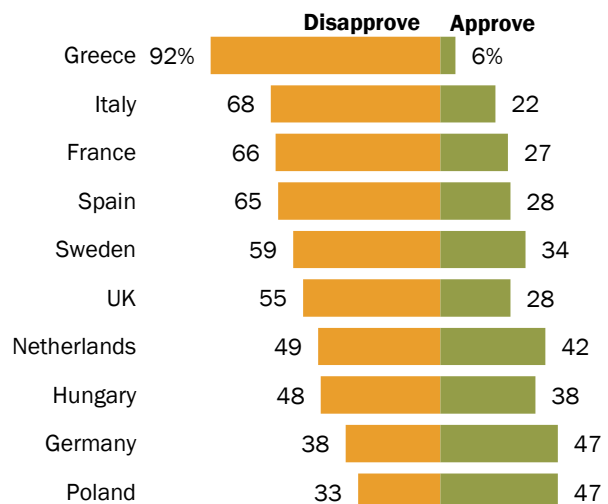
Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q50b.

"Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Europeans generally disapprove of EU's handling of economy

Do you ___ of the way the European Union is dealing with European economic issues?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q50a.

"Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

An ‘ever closer’ Europe – or not

The 1957 Treaty of Rome, the founding document of what eventually became the European Union, pledges its signatories, and all the nations that later acceded to it, “...to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe.” In early 2016, British Prime Minister David Cameron negotiated an agreement with other EU governments that the founding treaty’s “references to ever closer union do not apply to the United Kingdom.” Nevertheless, disagreement over whether governance in Europe should be more or less centralized is at the center of the UK referendum debate on whether or not to exit the EU. The Pew Research Center survey finds that in six of 10 countries more people want devolution of EU power than support the status quo or favor giving more power to the Brussels-based institution.

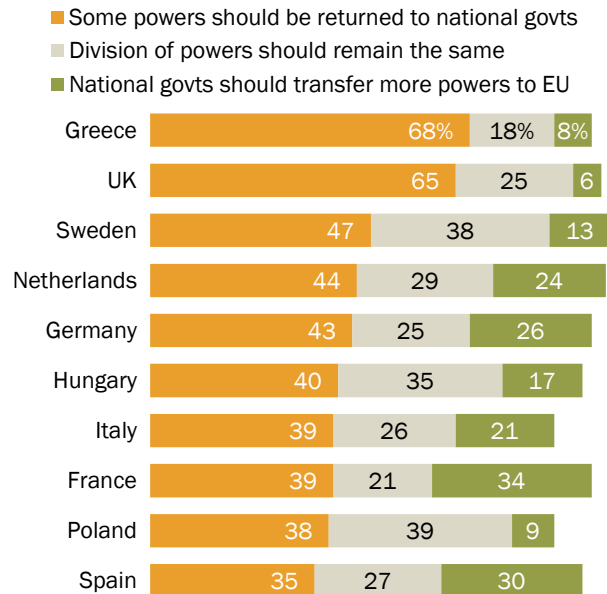
Roughly two-thirds of Greeks (68%) and British (65%) want some EU power returned to Athens and London. This is particularly the view of British ages 50 and older (73%); only 51% of those ages 18-34 agree. Pluralities in Sweden (47%), the Netherlands (44%), Germany (43%) and Italy (39%) also want to curtail EU power.

Conversely, there is little enthusiasm for transferring more power to Brussels. As the British head to the polls, just 6% of the public in the UK wants such an outcome. And only 8% of Greeks favor more power for the EU. The strongest backing for an ever closer Europe is only 34%, in France. In most countries a quarter or more of the public prefers to keep the current division of power.

In a number of nations men express stronger opposition than women to an ever closer union. This gender gap is most prominent in the Netherlands (12 percentage points), with 50% of men, but only 38% of women favoring some powers being returned to The Hague. There is also a 10-point divide in the UK (70% of men compared with 60% of women want some powers returned to their country) and Sweden (52% of men vs. 42% of women).

Disagreement on ‘ever closer’ union

Which statement best describes your views about the future of the European Union?



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey, Q49.

“Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit”

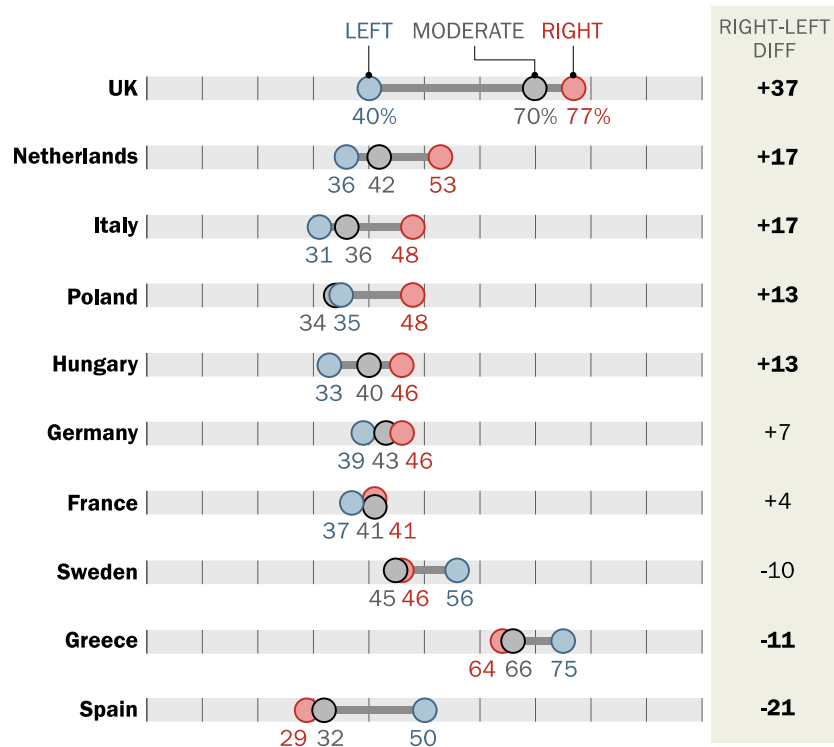
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The largest ideological gap on European division of powers is in the United Kingdom.

Roughly three-quarters (77%) of people who place themselves on the right of the political spectrum favor returning some EU powers to London. Just 40% of people on the left agree. In the Netherlands, a little over half (53%) of people on the right, but only about a third (36%) of Dutch on the left support a less centralized EU. Notably, this right-left divide is reversed in Spain, and is especially large. Half of Spanish leftists, but only about three-in-ten (29%) Spanish rightists want more power brought back to Madrid.

In UK, deep ideological rifts on EU division of power

Some powers should be returned to national governments



Question wording: "Which statement best describes your views about the future of the European Union, even if none is exactly right — national governments should transfer more powers to the European Union, the current division of powers between national governments and the EU should remain the same, OR some powers should be returned to national governments?"

Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q49.

"Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

This ideological split also manifests itself in the views of political party adherents. In the United Kingdom, 93% of UKIP supporters think that some powers now held by the EU should be returned to national governments. Conservatives (77%) agree with them more than Labour Party (49%) adherents. In Italy, 51% of Five Star supporters want some power to revert to Rome; 37% of Forza Italia partisans and 28% of Democratic Party supporters agree. In Poland, 45% of PiS backers, but only 20% of PO adherents want some power returned to Warsaw. In Spain, 44% of Podemos partisans want some EU power back in Madrid, 37% of supporters of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) want this, and 34% of the Ciudadanos and 26% of those identifying with the People's Party (PP) concur. In France, a plurality of National Front supporters (39%) want Paris to regain some of its power from Brussels. A larger share of Republican backers (43%) want to bring powers home from Brussels, but only 28% of Socialists agree.

Party divides on future of EU

Which statement best describes your views about the future of the European Union?

Party Affiliation	National govts should transfer more powers to EU	Division of power should remain the same	Some powers should be returned to national govts
	%	%	%
France			
Socialist Party (PS)	38	31	28
Republicans (LR)	34	17	43
National Front (FN)	31	24	39
Germany			
CDU/CSU	29	29	35
Social Democratic Party (SPD)	27	38	34
Greens	36	29	33
Greece			
SYRIZA	8	17	68
New Democracy (ND)	12	25	56
Italy			
Forza Italia (FI)	24	36	37
Democratic Party (PD)	23	42	28
Five Star Movement (M5S)	22	24	51
Netherlands			
VVD	16	33	50
Democrats 66	26	32	41
Poland			
Civic Platform (PO)	22	52	19
Law and Justice (PiS)	6	35	48
Spain			
People's Party (PP)	27	40	26
PSOE	28	29	37
Ciudadanos	33	30	34
Podemos	28	21	44
Sweden			
Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP)	16	43	40
Moderate Party	10	42	45
UK			
Labour	11	37	49
Conservative	4	16	77
UKIP	1	5	93

Note: **Bolded** figures indicate the top view in each party.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q49.

"Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Is Brexit bad for the EU?

There is overwhelming sentiment across Europe that Brexit would be a bad thing for the European institution: 89% in Sweden, 75% in the Netherlands and 74% in Germany say the British leaving would not be good for the EU.

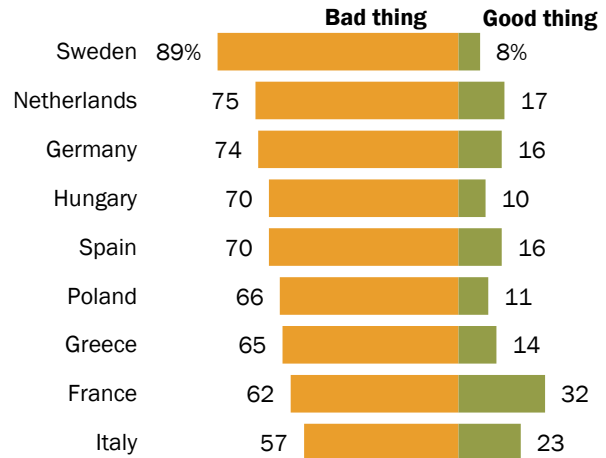
France is the only country where more than a quarter (32%) of the public says it would be positive for the EU if the UK departed.

Notably, in all nine countries where the question was asked, large pluralities of people on the left, in the middle and on the right of the political spectrum say a UK exit from the EU would be a bad thing for the EU. But the breakdown in sentiment by political party is more complex. In France, nearly seven-in-ten (71%) supporters of the Socialist and Republican parties believe it would not be good for the EU if the UK left. However, National Front backers are nearly divided on the topic. And even though the German AfD shares many of the criticisms of the EU with the UK Independence Party, two-thirds of Germans who have a favorable opinion of the AfD think it would be a bad thing for the EU if the UK left.

CORRECTION (April 2017): The topline accompanying this report has been updated to reflect a revised weight for the Netherlands data, which corrects the percentages for two regions. The changes due to this adjustment are very minor and do not materially change the analysis of the report. For a summary of changes, see [here](#). For updated demographic figures for the Netherlands, please contact info@pewresearch.org.

Europeans overwhelmingly agree that UK departure would hurt the EU

If the UK were to leave the European Union, this would be a ___ for the EU



Note: Question not asked in the UK.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. Q50N.

"Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Acknowledgments

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals.

Bruce Stokes, *Director, Global Economic Attitudes*

James Bell, *Vice President, Global Strategy*

Danielle Cuddington, *Research Assistant*

Claudia Deane, *Vice President, Research*

Gijs van Houten, *Research Methodologist*

Michael Keegan, *Information Graphics Designer*

David Kent, *Copy Editor*

Dorothy Manevich, *Research Assistant*

Travis Mitchell, *Digital Producer*

Bridget Parker, *Research Assistant*

Jacob Poushter, *Senior Researcher*

Audrey Powers, *Administrative Coordinator*

Steve Schwarzer, *Research Methodologist*

Katie Simmons, *Associate Director, Research*

Margaret Vice, *Senior Researcher*

Richard Wike, *Director, Global Attitudes Research*

Ben Wormald, *Associate Web Developer*

Hani Zainulbhai, *Research Analyst*

Methodology

About the Pew Research Center's Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey

Results for the survey are based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of TNS BMRB. The results are based on national samples, unless otherwise noted. More details about our international survey methodology and country-specific sample designs are available on our [website](#).

For more detailed information on survey methods for this report, see here:

http://www.pewglobal.org/international-survey-methodology/?year_select=2016

For more general information on international survey research, see here:

<http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/international-survey-research/>

Topline Questionnaire

**Pew Research Center
Spring 2016 Survey
June 7, 2016 Release**

Methodological notes:

- Survey results are based on national samples. For further details on sample designs, see Methodology section and our [international survey methods database](#).
- Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. The topline “total” columns show 100%, because they are based on unrounded numbers.
- Since 2007, the Pew Research Center has used an automated process to generate topline for its Global Attitudes Surveys. As a result, numbers may differ slightly from those published prior to 2007.
- Throughout this topline, data from the Netherlands in 2016 have been updated to reflect a revised weight, which corrects the percentages for two regions.

		Q10c. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of _____. c. the European Union					
		Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	DK/Refused	Total
France	Spring, 2016	6	32	37	24	2	100
	Spring, 2015	8	47	32	13	0	100
	Spring, 2014	6	48	28	18	0	100
	Spring, 2013	5	36	38	20	0	100
	Spring, 2012	10	50	28	12	0	100
	Spring, 2011	14	49	26	11	0	100
	Spring, 2010	13	51	28	9	0	100
	Spring, 2009	12	50	28	9	0	100
	Spring, 2007	9	53	27	11	0	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	12	57	22	9	1	100
	Spring, 2015	8	42	38	10	2	100
	Spring, 2014	7	51	34	6	2	100
	Spring, 2013	7	59	27	4	2	100
	Spring, 2012	7	53	29	6	4	100
	Spring, 2011	12	56	27	4	1	100
	Spring, 2010	8	58	27	5	1	100
	Spring, 2009	11	51	28	7	3	100
	Spring, 2007	8	57	26	6	3	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	12	56	24	6	2	100
	Spring, 2014	13	45	33	6	3	100
	Spring, 2016	2	25	39	32	2	100
	Spring, 2014	3	31	35	30	2	100
Hungary	Spring, 2013	4	29	37	28	2	100
	Spring, 2012	5	32	33	29	2	100
	Spring, 2016	8	53	27	10	2	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	9	49	25	14	4	100
	Spring, 2015	10	54	24	8	3	100
	Spring, 2014	5	41	34	16	4	100
	Spring, 2013	10	48	26	10	6	100
	Spring, 2012	10	49	25	10	6	100
	Spring, 2007	18	60	10	3	8	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	11	40	30	16	2	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	11	61	18	4	6	100
	Spring, 2015	9	63	19	3	6	100
	Spring, 2014	13	59	18	4	7	100
	Spring, 2013	8	60	24	4	5	100
	Spring, 2012	10	59	20	5	6	100
	Spring, 2011	14	60	16	3	7	100
	Spring, 2010	21	60	12	2	5	100
	Spring, 2009	15	62	12	3	7	100
Spain	Spring, 2007	23	60	10	1	7	100
	Spring, 2016	13	34	30	19	4	100
	Spring, 2015	15	48	22	12	4	100
	Spring, 2014	8	42	34	14	3	100
	Spring, 2013	14	32	35	17	2	100
	Spring, 2012	18	42	24	14	2	100
	Spring, 2011	23	49	17	7	3	100
	Spring, 2010	15	62	15	3	4	100
Sweden	Spring, 2009	15	62	14	2	6	100
	Spring, 2007	16	64	12	3	5	100
	Spring, 2016	14	40	32	12	2	100
	Spring, 2007	16	43	26	11	4	100

		Q10c. Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of _____. c. the European Union					
		Very favorable	Somewhat favorable	Somewhat unfavorable	Very unfavorable	DK/Refused	Total
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	15	29	23	25	7	100
	Spring, 2015	13	38	24	17	8	100
	Spring, 2014	12	40	22	19	7	100
	Spring, 2013	7	36	26	22	9	100
	Spring, 2012	9	36	26	20	8	100
	Spring, 2011	13	38	22	19	8	100
	Spring, 2010	9	40	21	21	10	100
	Spring, 2009	8	42	21	18	10	100
	Spring, 2007	10	42	21	16	10	100
Spring, 2004	13	41	21	15	9	100	

		Q49. Which statement best describes your views about the future of the European Union, even if none is exactly right?				
		National governments should transfer more powers to the European Union	The current division of powers between national governments and the EU should remain the same	Some powers should be returned to national governments	DK/Refused	Total
France	Spring, 2016	34	21	39	6	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	26	25	43	6	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	8	18	68	7	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	17	35	40	8	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	21	26	39	13	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	23	28	45	4	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	9	39	38	14	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	30	27	35	8	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	13	38	47	2	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	6	25	65	4	100

		Q50a. Thinking about some issues, do you approve or disapprove of the way the European Union is dealing with ____? a. European economic issues			
		Approve	Disapprove	DK/Refused	Total
France	Spring, 2016	27	66	7	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	47	38	15	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	6	92	2	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	39	48	13	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	22	68	10	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	42	49	9	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	47	33	19	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	28	65	7	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	34	59	7	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	28	55	17	100

		Q50b. Thinking about some issues, do you approve or disapprove of the way the European Union is dealing with ____? b. the refugee issue			
		Approve	Disapprove	DK/Refused	Total
France	Spring, 2016	26	70	4	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	26	67	7	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	5	94	1	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	24	72	4	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	17	77	6	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	30	62	7	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	19	71	10	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	21	75	4	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	10	88	2	100
United Kingdom	Spring, 2016	22	70	9	100

		Q50N. If the UK were to leave the European Union, do you think this would be a good thing or a bad thing for the EU?			
		Good thing	Bad thing	DK/Refused	Total
France	Spring, 2016	32	62	7	100
Germany	Spring, 2016	16	74	10	100
Greece	Spring, 2016	14	65	21	100
Hungary	Spring, 2016	10	70	20	100
Italy	Spring, 2016	23	57	20	100
Netherlands	Spring, 2016	16	75	9	100
Poland	Spring, 2016	11	66	23	100
Spain	Spring, 2016	16	70	14	100
Sweden	Spring, 2016	8	89	3	100