

We're all angry. But is that a good reason to leave the EU?

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Why are people so angry?



... and is the EU to blame?

Does the EU “control” the UK? How much control – that is, SOVEREIGNTY – does the UK have? How have our governments used it? If they’ve used it well, perhaps we will do better outside the EU after all. But if they’ve used it badly, what does “taking back control” really mean? And what do we as citizens stand to lose, now and in the future? Is Brexit really in the nation’s interest?

In 2014 – before the EU Referendum was called – there was a major independent survey about what issues most concerned UK citizens. They’re listed below in order of concern.

1. Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free movement of labour (i.e. people) is one of the EU’s four key freedoms, along with <u>goods</u>, <u>capital</u> & <u>services</u>. You must agree to them to be in the EU or to trade in its single market. These freedoms benefit us greatly. However, many people are concerned about <u>free movement of people</u> and fear that other EU nationals may abuse our welfare system. But few know that EU nationals can be sent home if they don’t find work within 3 months. <u>The UK government chooses not to enforce this rule</u>. Is the EU to blame for that? Clearly not. And if you’re worried about terrorists entering the UK from other parts of the world, that’s nothing to do with the EU either: the UK has sovereign control of our borders.
2. The Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imposing “austerity” to tackle the post-2008 economic crisis was our government’s sovereign choice. It wasn’t imposed by the EU. All EU nations make their own economic policies and so did we. Most of them are now emerging from recession; if we still suffer from “austerity”, that’s our government’s decision. The EU has no say over what we do. Again, the UK is sovereign. Still think we pay the EU too much? Our 2016 net payment was about £8.5bn, under 2.5% of overall spending [D.Telegraph]. That’s before calculating the benefits of the Single Market and Customs Union.
3. Employment & industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK unemployment is relatively low. But much work is unskilled, insecure and badly paid. Many in work need state support to get by. Unemployment benefit is lower than in comparable EU nations. [International Business Times, 2016] While other nations kept their manufacturing base, we lost most of ours in the 1980s. Why? It’s down to low investment, low skills and government policy. UK productivity is the lowest among leading nations [ONS, 2017]. This problem pre-dated our EU membership. Low productivity is linked to our education system. Here too we fall behind comparable EU nations. The EU has no control over our education. Again, we are <u>already</u> sovereign. How well have we done?
4. Health & the NHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, the NHS is in crisis. It’s a great UK institution but our funding of it as well as our general levels of health and quality of diet are below those of comparable EU nations. [Source: Daily Telegraph, 2016] During the Referendum, Leavers pledged the NHS £350 million a week if we left the EU. As we all know, that was untrue. Even if it hadn’t been, the NHS and much of the public sector (think schools, prisons and more) have been poorly funded and badly organised even when times were good. Again, this is the result of UK governments’ <u>sovereign</u> decisions and actions, not EU “control”!
5. Poverty & inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK has the biggest social inequalities in the developed world beyond the USA and 9 of the 10 poorest areas in the northern EU – i.e. the nations most comparable to us. [Source: Eurostat, 2017] Our gaps – between rich and poor, well- and poorly-educated, healthy and unhealthy, and now old and young – are higher than in nations that share wealth better and where ordinary people have more of a stake in society. Again, this has occurred under our sovereignty not because of the EU. (Ironically, the EU sends funding to help many of these areas where our own governments haven’t!)
6. Law & public behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We in the UK can freely choose how we live and what we tolerate. Again, we <u>already</u> have control. Yet compared to similar EU countries, we have more alcohol-related violence and anti-social behaviour, and worse behaviour in schools and public spaces. It has nothing to do with the EU.
7. Social care & welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As we know, there’s a crisis in UK care services. Investment, morale and recruitment are low. The UN calls our disability provision “a disgrace”. [UN Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2014] UK pensions and benefits are lower than most comparable countries in the EU. [International Business Times, 2016] Again, these are sovereign UK matters the EU has no control over them.
8. Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK’s literacy and numeracy are below other developed western nations. [OECD, 2016] This affects our ability to produce and to innovate, both of which will be essential if we leave the EU. Yet even Trade Secretary and prominent Leaver Liam Fox admits we’re not ready to go it alone. [Spectator, 2016] Again, the EU has no say in how we run our education system: it’s up to us.
9. Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much UK housing stock is old and both economically and environmentally inefficient compared to similar EU nations. [Eurostat, 2013] Again: we, not the EU, have control over our housing policy.
10. The EU	<p>The EU came HERE in the list of UK citizens’ concerns before the 2016 Referendum was called. Only THEN did the minority in Parliament and elsewhere who had always hated the EU get to work ...</p>