

Greater access to higher education could have reversed EU referendum result

August 7 2017

Greater access to Higher Education could have reversed the result of the 2016 EU referendum, according to new research from the University of Leicester.

The paper, published in the journal *World Development*, suggests that access to Higher Education was the 'predominant factor' dividing those who voted Remain and those who voted Leave.

The research also suggests that greater access to higher and further education can produce different political outcomes - which has been demonstrated in the 2017 General Election, where it can be argued that voting populations with a [higher education](#) had a decisive effect on the result.

The research applied Multivariate Regression Analysis combined with a Logit Model to the real data to identify statistically significant factors that have influenced voting preference simultaneously as well as the odds ratio in favour of Leave.

Among the key findings of the paper are that:

- An increase of about 3% of British adults accessing to higher education in England and Wales could have reversed the referendum result;
- A decrease of about 7% in turnout in England and Wales could have also changed the result of the referendum;

- The factor of elderly voters, although having an effect on the outcome, was generally over reported as a dominant factor;
- Sex is found to be a statistically significant factor while British born proportions and local income levels are insignificant factors.

Dr Aihua Zhang, from the University of Leicester's Department of Mathematics, said: "The EU referendum raised significant debate and speculation of the intention of the electorate and its motivations in voting. Much of this debate was informed by simple data analysis examining individual factors, in isolation, and using opinion polling data.

"This, in the case of the EU referendum where multiple factors influence the decision simultaneously, failed to predict the eventual outcome. On June 23rd 2016, Britain's vote to leave the EU came as a surprise to most observers, with a bigger voter turnout - 72.2% - than that of any UK [general election](#) in the past decade."

The research also suggests that areas in England and Wales with a lower unemployment rate tended to have a higher turnout to support Leave while areas in Scotland and Northern Ireland with a higher proportion of university-educated British people have a higher turnout to support Remain.

More information: New findings on Key Factors Influencing the UK's Referendum on Leaving the EU, *World Development* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.07.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.07.017)

Provided by University of Leicester

Citation: Greater access to higher education could have reversed EU referendum result (2017,

August 7) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-08-greater-access-higher-reversed-eu.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.