

# Brexit as much due to resistance to supranationalism as immigration

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The UK referendum vote to leave the European Union (EU) may have had as much to do with people's distrust of international organisations as it did fear of immigration.

Researchers from the University of Kent's schools of Psychology and

Politics and International Relations found that Euroscepticism is not only shaped by attitudes towards immigration and feelings of national identity but also by opposition towards UK involvement in transnational organisations such as the EU.

Supranationalism is defined as the transfer of power from the national to the supranational level, leading to increased dependence on foreign political partners and increased social and [cultural exchange](#).

Led by Dr. Kristof Dhont, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, the team considered study respondents' ideological predispositions, particularly preferences for cultural traditions and loyalty to national authority (termed right-wing authoritarianism) and a desire for group-based dominance and hierarchy in society (social dominance orientation) to see whether these predicted [negative attitudes](#) towards international institutions.

They found that people with higher levels of both these characteristics in their ideological outlook were less supportive of supranationalism, were more Eurosceptic, and found it more important that the UK 'takes back control'.

This manifested itself in a preference for 'prioritizing control' in any post-Brexit scenario among those with a negative attitude towards the concept of supranationalism. This included 'bringing back control of our laws to Parliament' and 'bringing back control of decisions over immigration to the UK'.

Another indicator was age, with older respondents also more likely to have a negative [attitude](#) towards the concept of supranationalism.

**More information:** Linus Peitz et al, The Psychology of Supranationalism: Its Ideological Correlates and Implications for EU

Attitudes and post-Brexit Preferences, *Political Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/pops.12542](https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12542)

Provided by University of Kent

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