

'Remainers' and 'Leavers' more united than divided, study finds

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The new study suggests across fundamental human values, those who voted to leave the EU and those who voted to remain share much in common. Credit: SDI Productions.

Talk of deep-rooted division in society following the fall-out of the Brexit referendum in the UK may be overblown, according to a new study. Contrary to popular belief, 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' agree on much more than they disagree on, say researchers from the universities

of Bath and Essex.

The study led by Dr. Paul Hanel and Dr. Lukas Wolf shows that 90% of the time the two groups agree on important topics including poverty, [climate change](#), housing, life satisfaction and the importance of communities.

Even on subjects viewed as the most divisive, such as attitudes to immigration and [national identity](#), the two groups showed more than 50% similarity. With responses from over 1,700 people who completed online questionnaires, their findings point to high similarities across fundamental values such as security, tradition, helpfulness, and freedom.

The team behind the study hopes that the results can help recast the long-standing debate that has played out between the two camps by offering a more nuanced and realistic picture for most people in society.

Lead researcher Dr. Paul Hanel from the Department of Psychology at the University of Essex explained: "It has been claimed the EU referendum of June 2016 revealed a divided, rather than a United Kingdom, with growing tensions among those who voted 'leave' and those who voted 'remain'.

"Previous research has concentrated on the differences between the two sides, but our study shows that in fact there is more to unite them than divide them."

The research, carried out with Dr. Lukas Wolf from the University of Bath, also assessed whether presenting a more balanced picture that highlights similarities instead could improve social cohesion. The team found support for the idea that accentuating such similarities can encourage Leavers and Remainers to get along better.

Co-author, Dr. Lukas Wolf from the University of Bath's Department of Psychology added: "Many people seem to be worried about an increasingly fractious society and therefore it is encouraging to see that people are actually quite similar. Realising that fact seems to have a positive effect on bringing people together again."

The paper, "Leavers and Remainers after the Brexit referendum: more united than divided after all?" is published in *The British Journal of Social Psychology*.

More information: Paul H. P. Hanel et al, Leavers and Remainers after the Brexit referendum: More united than divided after all?, *British Journal of Social Psychology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/bjso.12359](https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12359)

Provided by University of Bath

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