

Telegraph
GARDEN SHOP



> Opinion

Stubborn old people who want to leave the EU are condemning the rest to a lifetime of uncertainty

ABI WILKINSON

29 MARCH 2016 • 4:14PM



In the EU referendum it's older folk who will be playing fast and loose with the livelihoods of younger generations

When you consider that the risks of leaving the EU fall disproportionately on young people, it's unsurprising that 18-29s are the group least likely to support the move. Almost three quarters of us say we'll vote to remain, compared with just 37 per cent of over 60s. For many under-30s, worrying about employment has been a defining feature of our adult lives. Having come of age at the height of the financial crisis I know I'm certainly not keen to endure another similar economic downturn.

Though it seems logical that immigration would result in additional competition for work, EU membership also creates many new vacancies. Overall, the effect appears to be in our favour. Education Secretary Nicky Morgan has noted a drop in the number of jobs being advertised — indicating that employers are already worried about the economic threat of a Brexit.

The Confederation of British Industry predicts that leaving the EU would cause a “serious economic shock”, potentially costing the country £100 billion and nearly one million jobs. Should this occur, it's inevitable that entry level roles would often be the first to go. A whole generation could be left struggling to get a foothold on the career ladder.

Countdown to the EU Referendum

Voting opens on June 23

49 : **09** : **39** : **34**
Days Hrs Mins Secs

Already, young people are particularly likely to be in low-paid, precarious employment. Many are stuck working jobs well below their qualification level and struggle to secure the full-time hours they need to pay their rent and basic living costs. For anyone in this situation, the TUC's warning that workers' rights enshrined in EU law could come under attack following a Brexit vote is another serious worry.

Less negatively, many people in their teens and 20s also appreciate the broader benefits of belonging to the European community. We're more likely to travel abroad to work or study. Many of us have friends who were born in other countries so we're less inclined to be wary of other cultures. We're also much more likely to date someone who was born outside the UK.

In contrast, supporters of Brexit often seem to be motivated by a fear of the unknown. Older people are more likely to distrust migrants and to feel nostalgic for the comparatively homogenous UK of days gone by. Though there's a sizeable retiree expat community residing in countries such as Spain, over 60s are statistically likely to see the free movement of people as a threat rather than an opportunity.

01:30

Of course, for those who've already exited the labour market – or are planning to retire within the next few years – it's much easier to focus on your gut instinct. If you've not got to worry about your employment prospects, the economic facts of the matter can be treated as a secondary concern. Young people have a reputation for being reckless, but in the EU referendum it's older folk who will be playing fast and loose with the livelihoods of younger generations.

None of which is to say that older people aren't affected at all. For anyone who can remember the period prior to the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, it's understandable that

the free movement of people might have come as something as a culture shock. As more countries have joined the EU, migration to the UK has gradually increased.

01:42

As a 20-something living in London, this isn't something that worries me. I'm used to hearing a whole range of different languages and accents as I go about my daily life. It's a mundane fact that many of my neighbours are relatively recent immigrants, not a cause for concern.

For someone whose lived in the same area for decades, however, I can see that it might be harder to adjust to changes in the local community. Still, it's worth noting that UK-born people who live in relatively diverse neighbourhoods tend to feel more positively about migrants than those who don't — suggesting that fear of immigration might be disproportionate to the reality.

The truth is, the world is changing whether we like it or not. It's good that cosmopolitan values are spreading because the alternative – detaching ourselves from Europe and retreating into a defensive, inward-looking mindset – would be cutting our nose off to spite our face. Older people might feel they can afford to be stubborn. Those of us at the start of our careers know that our future depends on the careful consideration of all relevant variables.

Democracy demands that everyone is given an equal say, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't listen more to those who're affected most. When under-30s say they're

worried that leaving the EU would seriously damage their career prospects, older voters have a duty to consider this when weighing up the pros and cons. Given that many who stand to lose the most from Brexit aren't even old enough to vote yet, an enormous amount of responsibility rests in their hands.

EU referendum: sixty years of strained relations



BRITAIN HAS HAD A STORMY RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE DATING BACK MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY. ALAMY

From resistance to its entry and rows over contributions to monetary policy disputes and threats to leave, Britain has had a bumpy ride within the European Union

1957

Treaty of Rome signed

France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, six founding members of the European Economic Community, sign the Treaty of Rome, but Britain withdraws from early talks.

1973

1963

French veto UK joining Common Market



share 

READ MORE ABOUT:

DAVID CAMERON

BREXIT

EUROPEAN UNION

Promoted stories



Rebuilding Greece and Europe

TheFinancialist by Credit Suisse



What A Million Dollars Can Buy You Around the World

Mansion Global by Dow Jones

Recommended by



‘Qatari Quarter’ Emerges in London’s Posh Mayfair...

Mansion Global



Daesh - Deserters and their Testimonies

ARTE



Crash Alert: 80% Plunge Imminent

The Sovereign Investor



The most addictive game of the year! Build your city!

Forge Of Empires



THE HAC, LONDON

Wine Experience Ticket - £55
Masterclass Experience - £70


BOOK NOW

Telegraph
TRAVEL

**Buy one get one free
on selected cruises**

Prices start from £269*
*Prices subject to change

[Book now >](#)

A large white cruise ship with a blue stripe is sailing on a deep blue ocean under a clear sky. The ship has multiple decks with balconies and is moving towards the right of the frame.

Opinion latest

Stop turning sitcoms into films – they're almost always rubbish

RALPH JONES

| 04 May 2016, 1:57pm

America deserves a better superhero than Donald Trump

KATE ANDREWS

| 04 May 2016, 1:40pm



Live | Does Labour's anti-Semitism crisis weaken Sadiq Khan? Have your say on the London mayoral election

04 May 2016, 1:18pm

The brutal rape and murder of Jisha shows that life for India's women is as savage as ever

SHAHLA KHAN

04 May 2016, 12:36pm

Bernie Sanders should pull out so that the Democrats can focus on beating Donald Trump

JOHN MCTERNAN

04 May 2016, 12:10pm



How Donald Trump could suppress his critics using political prosecutions

SIMON JOHNSON

04 May 2016, 11:47am

Apathy is Zac Goldsmith's only hope of getting into City Hall

ASA BENNETT

04 May 2016, 11:14am



Barclays' no-deposit mortgage lets you borrow 5.5 times your income. A good idea?

04 May 2016, 10:41am

New tax break could, perversely, see your income fall – this is how to stop the taxman taking too much

RICHARD EVANS

04 May 2016, 10:38am



The Turkey deal is proof that Europe can hold its nose and adapt to reality – populists must follow suit

PETER FOSTER

04 May 2016, 9:06am

Schools should be testing, for children and teachers

TELEGRAPH VIEW

04 May 2016, 6:27am



Stand firm on refugee children, Prime Minister

TELEGRAPH VIEW

04 May 2016, 6:20am



Letters: Labour's anti-Semitic element attracts support from some voters

03 May 2016, 10:00pm

Ken Livingstone and the hard Left are spreading the insidious virus of anti-Semitism

EPHRAIM MIRVIS

03 May 2016, 10:00pm



Telegraph cartoons, May 2016

03 May 2016, 9:42pm

We need to stop obsessing over fashionable pugs and celebrate real dogs again

DEBORA ROBERTSON

03 May 2016, 7:48pm

Will the grip of the two-party system ever be broken?

PHILIP JOHNSTON

03 May 2016, 7:19pm



Turkey doesn't deserve this huge visa reward

CON COUGHLIN

03 May 2016, 7:04pm



Sats are not about testing children but teachers - and that's a good thing

HARRY DE QUETTEVILLE



Sorry, Nicky Morgan, but calling out sexism has gone too far

CELIA WALDEN

| 03 May 2016, 5:12pm



'Politicians have ignored teachers' views on testing and pupils are paying the price'

KEVIN COURTNEY

| 03 May 2016, 4:00pm

[Contact us](#)

[Subscribers](#)

[Archive](#)

[Reader Prints](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Syndication](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Terms and Conditions](#)

© Telegraph Media Group Limited 2016