

Keywords: International, English, UK, EU, Referendum, Brexit, immigration, migrants, refugees, diversity in general, journalism, media, all media formats, resources for media

A study by King's College London's Centre for the Study of Media, Communication and Power, shows that immigration was 'the most prominent referendum issue' in the UK media during the EU Referendum campaign in 2016. Most print front pages during the pre-Referendum or Brexit campaign focused on immigration. For example, out of the 195 EU Referendum-related front pages in the UK print media, 99 focused on immigration, followed by the economy with 82 front pages. The study's authors also highlight a clear and important shift towards a stronger emphasis on immigration during the 10-week campaign.

The study is the first to analyse all articles referencing political issues within the context of the EU Referendum that were published by the 20 main UK news outlets online during the official 10-week campaign, 15,000 articles in total. These outlets include the online platforms of national press and broadcasters as well as online only news outlets. All front-page lead stories on every print newspaper were also incorporated in the analysis.

Overall, the study concludes that the EU Referendum or Brexit campaign was 'the UK's most divisive, hostile, negative and fear-provoking of the 21st century' and the national media's inflammatory rhetoric was at least partly responsible for this. On the subject of anti-immigration sentiments, the researchers at the King's College argue that although it is impossible to prove a direct link between hate speech and the recorded increase in hate crimes following the referendum, 'explicitly blaming migrants for economic and social problems [...] is almost certain to stoke resentment'.

 [UK Media Coverage of the 2016 EU Referendum Campaign.pdf](#)