

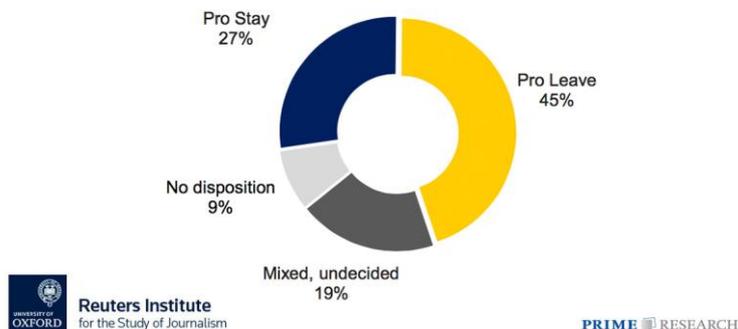
Press release

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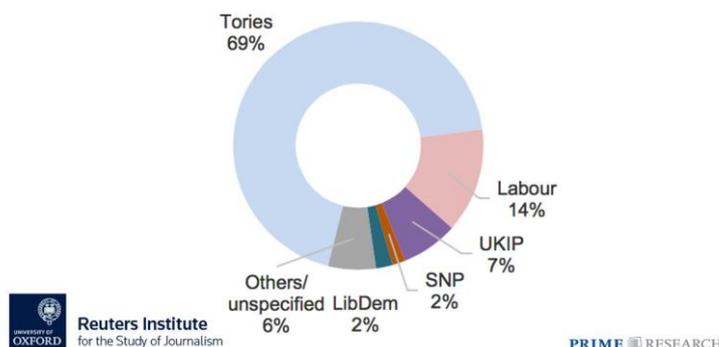
Study shows that majority of press coverage in EU referendum campaign was heavily skewed in favour of Brexit in first two months of campaign

One month before the EU referendum vote, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism has released interim findings from a study it is undertaking with PRIME Research, media insight specialists, into press coverage of the referendum campaign.

The findings, which cover two sample days of coverage a week during the first two months of the referendum campaign immediately after David Cameron's post-summit Cabinet meeting on February 20, find that of the 928 articles focused on the referendum 45% were in favour of leaving, with only 27% in favour of staying in the EU (19% of articles focused on the referendum were categorised as 'mixed or undecided' and 9% as adopting no position.)



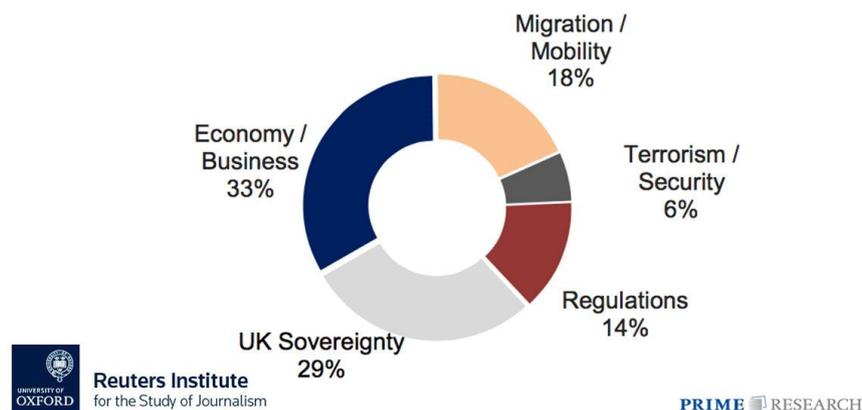
The findings also reveal that newspapers have been more likely to quote Conservatives in the first two months of the campaign. Of the total number of spokespeople quoted in the articles 36% were UK politicians, of whom 69% were Conservatives and just 14% Labour.



Positions vary greatly between newspapers. *The Daily Mail* included the most pro-leave articles followed by *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Star*, *The Sun* and *The Daily Telegraph*, while the newspapers including the most pro-remain articles were, in order, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*. The articles examined in *The Times* were relatively evenly balanced between the two positions, with a slight preponderance of pro-leave articles. All newspapers, whatever their main position, included some articles from the other point of view, but the proportion of these was smallest in *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Mirror*.

The preliminary findings show that on an average day in this period there were 42 articles focused on the referendum across the 9 newspapers with *The Daily Mail*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times* having the highest number of such articles, followed by *The Financial Times*, *The Daily Express* and *The Guardian* and *The Sun*, with *The Daily Mirror* and *The Daily Star* having the fewest.

Researchers also tracked what arguments were made for either pro-leave or pro-remain news stories. After removing articles purely focused on personalities, the campaigns or Brexit in general, the most cited arguments in the remaining 765 articles were, in descending order: the economy/business (33%), sovereignty (29%), migration (18%), regulations (14%) and terrorism/security (6%).



In terms of the arguments used by different publications, even though *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror* had divergent positions they both relied heavily on arguments around sovereignty while the four broadsheet publications, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*, all focused more on arguments around the economy and less on sovereignty. As they made the case to leave, *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Star* and *The Daily Mail* were all more focused on the issue of migration.

The study also examines how the arguments used by newspapers changed and developed over the first two months of the campaign. The share of messages focusing on economy were high throughout this period but increased sharply to 60% immediately after March 21, when the CBI warned about the economic consequences of Brexit. Arguments focused on terrorism and security issues, although relatively rare, increased their frequency after the Brussels attacks of March 22.

The full report bringing in research for the entire period from February to June will be published in September.

[ENDS]

Notes

Methodology:

The analysis is based on examination of 9 national newspapers for the period from February 20 to April 26, 2016. The articles analysed were those published on a Tuesday or Saturday in this period. The full report will cover the period February 20 to June 21. The analysis was based on the London editions of each newspaper.

A total of 1408 articles discussing the EU referendum were identified in the days sampled in this first two month period, but the figures reported here refer to a smaller group of 928 articles that were focused on the EU referendum.

About the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The Thomson Reuters Foundation is the core funder of the Reuters Institute, based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. The Institute was launched in November 2006 and developed from the Reuters Fellowship Programme, established at Oxford 33 years ago. The Reuters Institute, an international research centre in the comparative study of journalism, aims to be global in its perspective and provides a leading forum for scholars from a wide range of disciplines to engage with journalists from around the world.

See <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

About PRIME Research

Established as an academic research institute in Germany in 1987, PRIME Research has expanded internationally to become one of the world's largest public relations research consultancies. PRIME applies robust metrics, innovative tools and a focused approach to provide, via a complete portfolio of services, meaningful and actionable insights from the analysis of all forms of media (print, broadcast, digital; traditional, social).

For more information on this report, upcoming reports or the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, contact **Hannah Marsh**, Marketing and Communications Officer:

hannah.marsh@politics.ox.ac.uk / + 44 (0)1865 611301