

Headland Guide to EU Referendum Night

Thursday 23rd June



The 'Leave' and 'Remain' now only have a couple of days left to make their cases.

The result of the vote will be key for both the Government and Opposition parties. If we assume that Conservative 'In-ers' and Labour 'Out-ers' cancel each other out then based on the last General Election the split of the vote would roughly be:

- Remain (Labour, Libs, SNP, Green) – 14.2m
- Leave (Conservative, UKIP) – 15.1m

However, this is based on an assumed turnout rate of 66%, the same as the General Election. In reality, it is likely to be much higher than that. It's also possible that more Conservatives will vote 'In' than expected, or more Labour voters will select 'Out', which would completely change the playing field.

In other words, it's all too close to call.

So how will events unfold on the referendum night itself?

THE MECHANICS

Although the way in which ballot papers are verified and counted are the same as at a General Election, the mechanics of a referendum are different.

HOW YOU VOTE: The most visual difference will be that voting doesn't take place on a constituency level. This is a national vote, split into 382 counting areas, one for each local government area in Great Britain, plus one each for Northern Ireland and Gibraltar. Each counting area has a Local Counting Officer responsible for coordinating and declaring the outcome.

HOW THE RESULTS ARE COLLATED: Unlike at normal elections, Regional Counting Officers will be responsible for coordinating the delivery of the referendum in their electoral region, and will collate the local totals into a regional total. In addition to the Northern Ireland counting area, there are 11 electoral regions across Great Britain.

HOW THEY ARE ANNOUNCED: We will see declarations on a local, regional and finally national level. Responsibility for the latter falls to Chief Counting Officer (CCO), Jenny Watson. But rest assured, there will be more than enough in the way of local and regional results, analysis and conjecture to keep BBC/ITV pundits busy throughout the night.

Ultimately, the result will come down to the number of votes cast throughout the United Kingdom – the local and regional counts will provide us with a running total over the course of the night.



WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

23 June

- ⌚ **7am:** Polls open. Election organisers have been told to prepare for record-breaking turnout of around 80% of the UK population.
- ⌚ **11am:** It is expected that leaders of the campaigns will cast their votes in their local authorities around mid-morning.
- ⌚ **3pm:** It might be worth keeping an eye on currency markets. If hedge funds have commissioned private polls, the results of these could be reflected in the markets if there is a clear enough sense of how people have voted. But if the results are too close then the market movement will probably be minimal.
- ⌚ **10pm:** Polls close. Unlike with General Elections, there are currently no plans for an Exit Poll. This is driven by the fact that the margin for error (and potential impact on global financial markets) is deemed too significant.
- ⌚ **11.00pm:** The first verifications from local counting areas should also start coming in, giving an indication of turnout in each area. Once votes have been verified, the counting process will begin. New Zealand stock market opens.
- ⌚ **11.30pm-12.30am:** The first results will start coming in. Sunderland, Foyle in Northern Ireland and Wandsworth in London are all boasting they will declare early results. Keep an eye on Sunderland: despite significant international investment in the region from the likes of Nissan, will residents there vote to leave?

24 June

- ⌚ **1am:** A flurry of local declarations from areas including Hartlepool, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and Oldham. Local authorities in Northern Ireland will also be declaring around this time. Tokyo and Australian stock markets open.
- ⌚ **2am:** Expect the result from the Sun's readership heartland of Basildon. Will the paper's front-page support of Vote Leave have made a difference?
- ⌚ **2.30am:** Hong Kong and Shanghai stock markets open.
- ⌚ **3am:** Watch out for Cambridge: with a large population of young voters who would be expected to vote to remain, a good result for Vote Leave suggests a strong national turnout in favour of Brexit.
- ⌚ **4am:** Over half the results from local authorities will have been counted, making it possible for pundits to begin mapping out regional and indeed national outcomes. Romford, Essex is also scheduled to declare – it is currently listed as the most Eurosceptic area in the UK by analysts.
- ⌚ **5am:** The Scottish Highlands are scheduled to declare now. Campaigners believe that Scotland's vote could be a key factor, with the latest polls showing that 76% of Scots want to stay in the EU.
- ⌚ **7am:** The last local authorities will be declaring, including Cheshire East, Harborough and Waveney.
- ⌚ **8am:** London and European stock markets open.
- ⌚ **The result:** The Electoral Commission is currently estimating the national declaration "around breakfast time" on Friday 24 June – before the London market opens – It will be announced by the CCO at Manchester Town Hall. It has been suggested that a 'Leave' vote could result in the market not opening that morning.