

Support for EU membership in a referendum context

May 2026

By **Tom Brufatto**

And **James Coldwell, Ayesha Chaudhry, and Joshua Edwicker**

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Voters, impatient for improvements in quality of life, are turning to extreme politicians.

We uncover the frustrations and emotions driving voters to the far-right, and provide evidence-led answers for progressive parties to keep extremists out of No.10.

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Executive Summary

This report presents results of a public opinion survey of 4,368 adults, carried out by YouGov on behalf of Best for Britain in September 2025.

Previous Best for Britain research, published in April 2026, found that around half (53%) of the British public supported the UK becoming a full member of the European Union, compared to around a third (32%) who were opposed. The original survey measured support for EU membership 'in principle', by asking respondents whether they somewhat/strongly supported or opposed EU membership. The results presented in this report sought to answer the questions: does overall support for EU membership reduce when the same question is presented in a referendum context? Are respondents who say they only 'somewhat' support EU membership in principle likely to break against voting for EU membership in a referendum context? How much support, or opposition, is there to revisit the question of EU membership?

The headline result is clear: there is no statistical difference between voters' support for EU membership 'in principle' and when framed in a referendum context. Half of voters (53%) say they support EU membership in principle, and half of voters (51%) say they would vote for EU membership in a referendum. Likewise, three in ten voters (32%) say they oppose EU membership in principle, and three in ten (28%) say they would vote against EU membership in a referendum.

The consistency between voter responses 'in principle' and in a referendum context holds across all party political crossbreaks. The results also suggest that respondents who only 'somewhat support' membership of the EU in principle would support EU membership in a referendum context.

On the question of when a referendum on UK membership of the EU should take place, voters lean towards shorter time frames: around half would support a referendum taking place over the next two to five years. As the posited time frame for a referendum moves out beyond a decade and further into the future, the proportion of 'Don't know' responses increases.

Responses to all questions concerning the UK's relationship with the EU continue to track party political voting intention. Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Supporters are overwhelmingly in favour of all measures to bring about a closer UK-EU relationship. They are joined by around two in five Conservative Supporters and one in five Reform UK Supporters. That includes, as results of this survey show, supporting UK membership of the EU in a referendum.

Headline data

1. Survey results suggest that in September 2025, half (51%) of respondents would have voted in favour of joining the EU in a referendum on EU membership. Only three in ten (28%) would have voted against, with 11% undecided, 7% saying they would not vote, and 3% refusing the question.
2. Adjusting results by removing 'Would not vote' and 'Refused' responses suggests that, if a referendum were held in September 2025, a significant majority (57%) would have voted for membership of the EU. Only three in ten (31%) would vote to stay out, with only one in ten (12%) undecided.
3. Even in the unrealistic scenario of all undecided respondents being persuaded to vote to stay out, joining the EU would have won comfortably with 57% voting in favour of EU membership and 42% voting against.
4. Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Party Supporters would overwhelmingly vote for the UK's membership of the EU, with four in five (82%) saying they would support rejoining the EU.
5. Significant numbers of supporters of traditionally right-leaning, eurosceptic parties would now vote for EU membership in a referendum. One in five Reform UK Supporters (17%) and two in five Conservative Supporters (39%) would vote for the UK becoming a member of the EU.

6. Around half of respondents would support a referendum on UK membership of the EU taking place in the next two to five years.

For longer time frames both support and opposition reduces, as the number of respondents answering "Don't know" increases.

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1. Methodology

This report details the findings of Best for Britain's work evaluating public opinion towards UK-EU relations and contains analysis of a public opinion survey, carried out by YouGov on behalf of Best for Britain.

The survey presented in this report included a total sample size of 4,368 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 10th September 2025. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+)¹.

The survey was conducted using an online interview of members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 400,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. An email was sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample according to the sample definition, inviting them to take part in the survey and providing a link to the survey.

YouGov Plc normally achieves a response rate of approximately 20% depending on the subject matter, complexity and length of the questionnaire. The responding samples were weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

¹ YouGov, *Data tables*, 05/09/2025 - 10/09/2025

2. Nomenclature

Throughout this report, when referring to results disaggregated by how respondents voted at the 2024 General Election, these are termed 'Voters' of a given party. For example, respondents who voted for the Conservative Party at the 2024 General Election are referred to as 'Conservative Voters'.

Where results are analysed based on respondents' voting intention at the time the survey was conducted, these are termed 'Supporters' of that party. For example, respondents who said they would vote for the Labour Party if an election were held tomorrow are referred to as 'Labour Supporters'.

Respondents who voted for the Conservative Party at the 2019 General Election and voted Labour at the 2024 General Election are referred to as 'Conservative to Labour Switchers'.

Respondents who said they had voted Labour at the 2024 General Election but intend to vote Reform UK at the next election were not numerous enough (94 unweighted respondents, or 88 weighted) to produce a statistically significant sample. For this reason, the segment of voters who voted Labour in 2024 and say they intend to vote Reform UK were grouped with Labour 2024 voters who, asked if they would consider voting Reform UK on a scale of 0-10 (where 10 is certain to vote Reform UK), answered 6 and above. Throughout the report, this group of voters is termed 'Reform Curious Labour Voters', and the unweighted sample size was 133, or 126 weighted.

3. How people would vote in a new EU referendum

To test how far 'in principle' support for membership of the EU as identified in Best for Britain's April 2026 report² would hold up in a referendum context, the same 4,368 respondents were asked how they would vote in a referendum on whether the UK should join the EU. Possible answers to the question are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: List of possible answers presented to respondents

Possible Responses
Against joining the European Union
In favour of joining the European Union
Would not vote
Don't know
Refused

Results are given in Figure 1 below.

The results in Figure 1 show that in aggregate, only 11% of respondents answered 'Don't know', 7% said they would not vote, and 3% refused the question. These relatively low figures indicate that an unusually high number of respondents have already formed a view on whether the UK should become a member of the EU.

² Best for Britain, [Is it time to talk about EU membership?](#) April 2026

If there was a referendum now on whether the UK should or should not join the European Union, how would you vote?

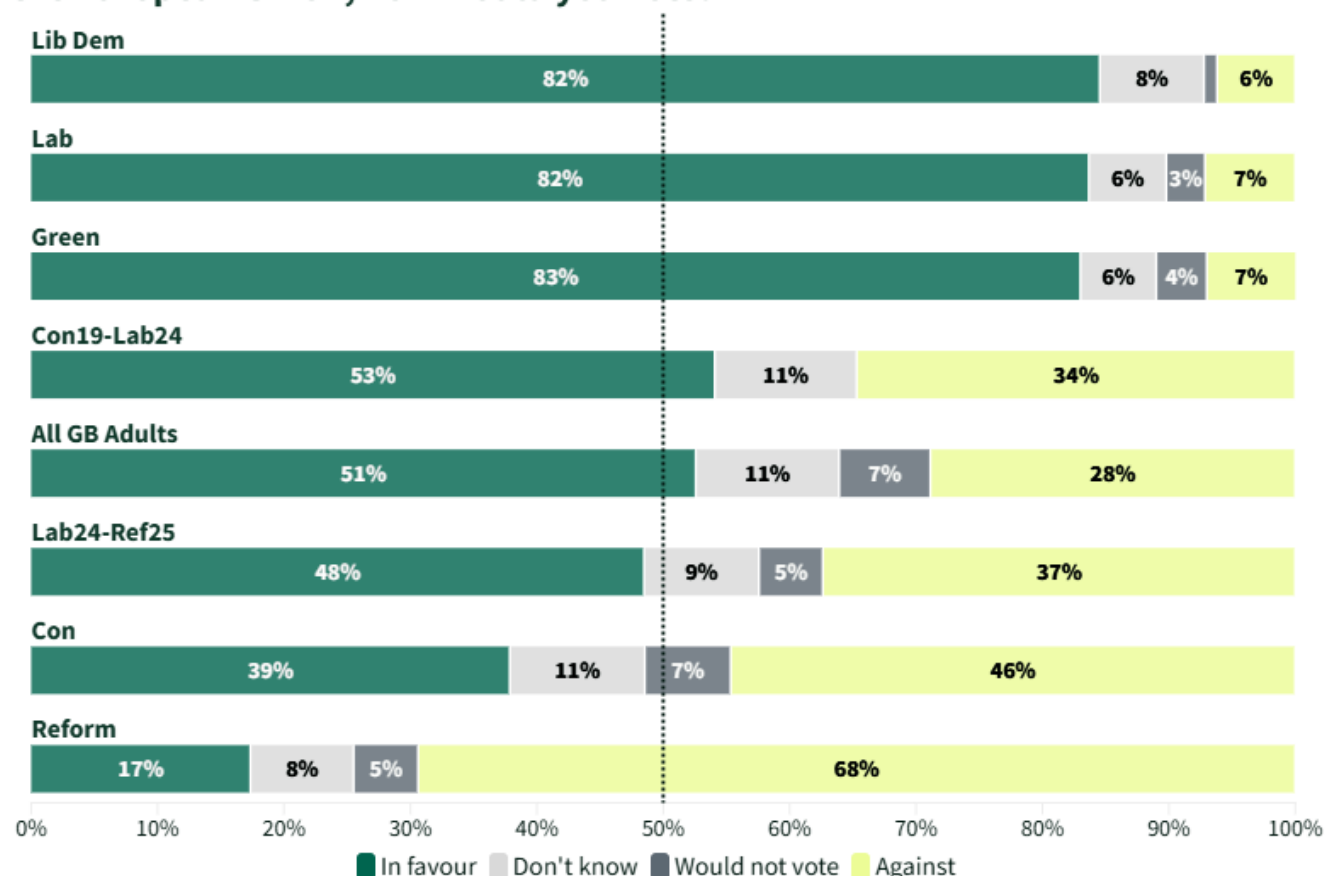


Figure 1: How people would vote in a referendum on whether the UK should join the EU, disaggregated by voting intention, September 2025

Survey results suggest that if a referendum on the UK rejoining the EU were held in September 2025, half (51%) would have voted in favour of joining the EU. Only three in ten (28%) would have voted against.

Adjusting results by removing 'Would not vote' and 'Refused' responses suggests that, if a referendum were held in September 2025, a significant majority (57%) would have voted for membership of the EU. Only three in ten (31%) would vote to stay out, with only one in ten (12%) undecided.

Even in the unrealistic scenario of all undecided respondents being persuaded to vote to stay out, joining the EU would have won comfortably with 57% voting in favour of EU membership and 42% voting against.

Almost a decade on from the 2016 referendum, the results showed that support for membership of the EU had grown significantly, while support for being outside the EU had collapsed.

In line with previous Best for Britain analysis³, results in Figure 1 showed that Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Party Supporters would have overwhelmingly voted for the UK's membership of the EU, with four in five (82%) saying they would have supported rejoining the EU.

Reform UK Supporters would have overwhelmingly voted against rejoining the EU, with seven in ten (68%) voting to keep the UK out of the EU. Still, around one in five (17%) Reform UK Supporters would have voted to join the EU if a referendum were held.

Around half (53%) of Conservative to Labour Switchers, who supported Boris Johnson's Brexit deal at the 2019 General Election, but backed Labour at the 2024 General election, and Reform Curious Labour Voters (48%) would have voted to join the EU. Conversely, only a third of Conservative to Labour Switchers (34%) and two in five (37%) Reform Curious Labour Voters would have supported the UK staying out of the EU.

Conservative Supporters would have been split, with 39% voting in favour of the UK rejoining the EU, and 46% voting against. They were the most likely to answer "Don't Know", with one in ten (11%) choosing this option.

Support for membership of the EU was led by Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Party Supporters, while opposition was led by Reform UK Supporters.

The comparison of support for membership of the EU in principle, and support for EU membership in a referendum context is given in Table 2.

The data in Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents who said they either 'strongly' or 'somewhat' supported 'Britain rejoining the EU', as reported in Best for Britain's previous report published in April 2026⁴. This was compared to answers to the question in Figure 1,

³ Best for Britain, [Is it time to talk about EU membership?](#), April 2026

⁴ Best for Britain, [Is it time to talk about EU membership?](#), April 2026

for respondents across each crossbreak who indicated they would vote 'In favour of joining the European Union' in a referendum.

Table 2: Comparison of responses to questions on 'support' for rejoining the EU in principle and support for rejoining the EU in a referendum context, according to Westminster Voting Intention, September 2025

	Total	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Reform UK	Green	Con-Lab	Lab-Ref
Support for rejoining the EU (%)	53	39	83	84	18	82	51	48
Voting for rejoining the EU (%)	51	39	82	82	17	83	53	48
Change (percentage points)	-2	0	-1	-2	-1	+1	+2	0

Across the aggregate results and all voter groups, the changes recorded between support for rejoining the EU in principle and support for membership of the EU in a referendum context were within the statistical margin of error of +/-5%.

Results therefore indicated that 'in principle' support for the UK rejoining the EU would likely translate into actual support in a referendum setting.

While overall support for EU membership in a referendum context was driven by very strong backing from supporters of left-leaning parties, at over 80%, there were significant numbers of supporters of other parties also in favour of membership.

Two in five Conservative Supporters, half of Conservative to Labour Switchers and Reform Curious Labour Voters, and one in five Reform UK Supporters say they support membership in principle; the same proportions of these voter groups would also vote for EU membership in a referendum.

The statistically identical proportions of respondents saying they support EU membership in principle (53%) and would vote for membership in a referendum (51%) was also significant in showing that respondents who said they 'somewhat support' EU membership would translate to actual support to rejoin the EU in a referendum setting.

Although the 16% of respondents who said they 'somewhat' supported EU membership in principle may not have been as enthusiastic as the 37% who said 'strongly' supported the UK being an EU member, the results indicated that in a referendum context, they would likely vote for membership of the EU.

This finding was found to hold across party political voting lines, applying to the 18% of Labour Supporters, 21% of Liberal Democrat Supporters, 13% of Green Supporters, 19% of Conservative to Labour Switchers, 16% of Reform Curious Labour Voters, 18% of Conservative Supporters and 9% of Reform UK Supporters who say they somewhat support membership in principle.

4. When people would want a referendum to take place

To further test the strength of support for membership of the EU, Best for Britain asked all 4,368 respondents to indicate when they would support a hypothetical referendum taking place.

Respondents were therefore posed the question *“And would you support or oppose a referendum on whether or not the UK should re-join the EU or not in the...?”*. The full list of options presented to respondents is given in Table 3 below.

Table 3: List of possible options presented to respondents

Possible Options
Next 2 years
Next 5 years
Next 10 years
Next 25 years
Next 50 years

For each option in Table 3, respondents could indicate whether they ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ supported the option, or ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ opposed the option. In all cases, ‘Don’t know’ was an available answer. Results are shown in Figure 2.

Around half of respondents would support a referendum taking place in the next two to five years.

For longer time frames both support and opposition reduced, as the number of respondents answering “Don’t know” increased.

Results in Figure 2 showed that half (49%) of respondents supported a referendum taking place in the next two years, with 36% who strongly supported the idea and 13% who somewhat supported it. A third (35%) of respondents opposed a referendum in the next two years, including 26% who were strongly opposed and 9% who were somewhat opposed.

And would you support or oppose a referendum on whether or not the UK should re-join the EU or not in the...?

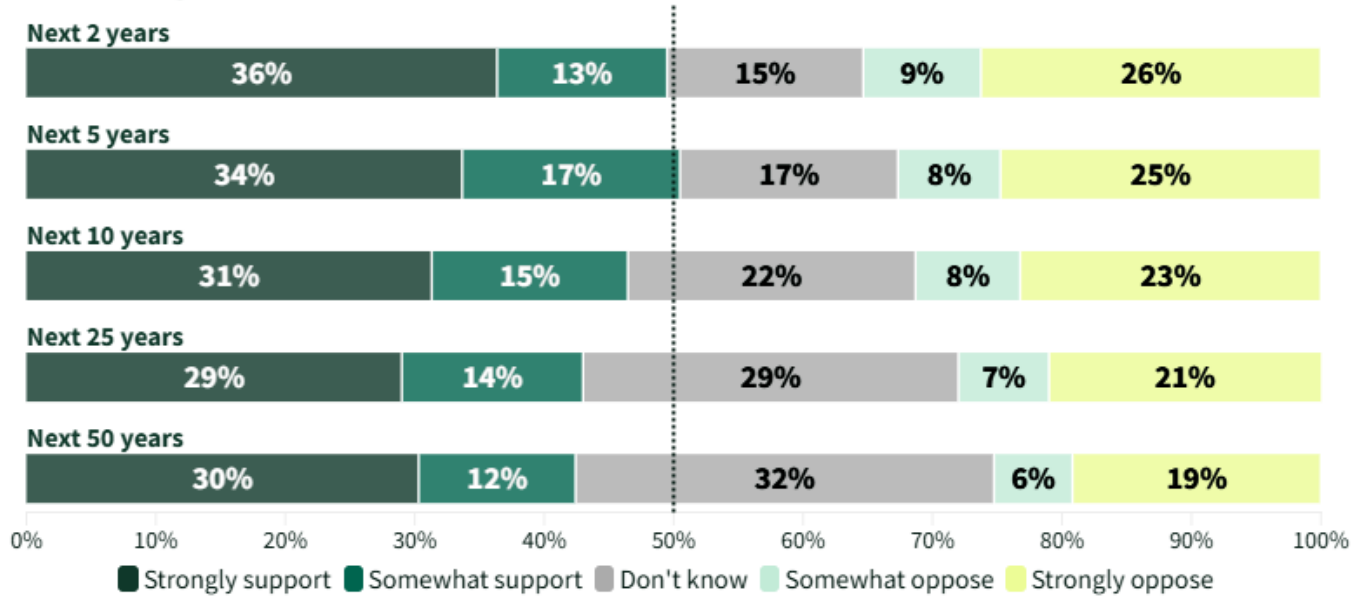


Figure 2: Support for and opposition to a referendum on the UK rejoining the EU, over different time frames, September 2025

Half (51%) of respondents supported a referendum taking place in the next five years, with 34% who strongly supported the idea and 17% who somewhat supported it. A third (33%) of respondents were opposed to a referendum in the next five years. This gap - of 18 percentage points - was the largest of the five time frames respondents were asked to consider.

As the time frame for holding a hypothetical referendum moved further into the future, the proportion of respondents answering "Don't Know" increased. For a referendum in the next two years, only 15% of respondents said they 'don't know', increasing to three in ten (29%) when a referendum was posited as taking place in the next 25 years. This increased to almost a third (32%) when it was suggested a referendum should take place in the next 50 years. Support for holding a referendum varied greatly according to Westminster voting intention, as shown in Figure 3.

And would you support or oppose a referendum on whether or not the UK should re-join the EU or not in the...?

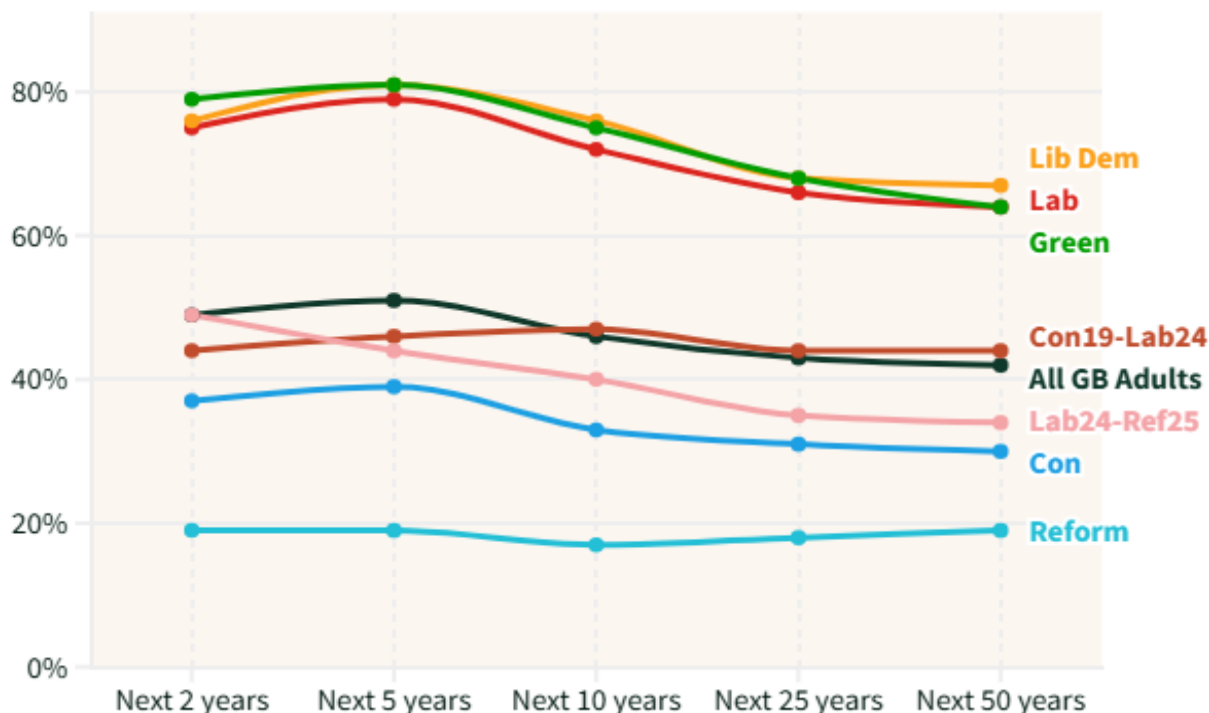


Figure 3: Support for and opposition to a referendum on the UK rejoining the EU over different time frames, according to Westminster voting intention, September 2025

Results in Figure 3 showed the same party-political divides observed in previous Best for Britain research. Those intending to back the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party were strongly supportive of a referendum taking place over any time frame, but especially in the next two to five years.

Three quarters of Labour (75%) and Liberal Democrat (76%) Supporters would support a referendum in the next two years, as would nearly four out of five (79%) Green Party Supporters.

Support for a referendum in the next five years was similar across Labour, Liberal Democrats and Green Party Supporters, with around four in five (80%) in favour.

When a referendum was posited as taking place in the next 50 years, support levels among supporters of the three progressive parties remained very similar: this option was backed by two thirds of Labour (64%), Liberal Democrats (67%) and Green Party (64%) Supporters.

Opposition to a referendum was concentrated among Reform UK and, to a lesser extent, Conservative Supporters. Seven in ten (71%) Reform UK Supporters opposed a referendum on the UK rejoining the EU taking place in the next two years, with one in five (19%) in favour. Even as the proportion of respondents saying “Don’t Know” increased as the posited time frame for a referendum taking place moved further into the future, Reform UK Supporters remained opposed: seven in ten (70%) opposed a referendum in the next five years, two thirds (67%) opposed a referendum in the next ten years, and half (50%) opposed a referendum taking place in the next fifty years.

Across the different time frames respondents were asked to consider, support for a referendum among Reform UK Supporters remained at roughly one in five (between 17% and 19% for all five time frames). This was the same proportion as the number of Reform UK Supporters who said they would vote for the UK to join the EU in a referendum, and would support the UK joining a UK-EU customs union and the EU Single Market (EEA/EFTA).

Roughly one in five Reform UK Supporters would support any change that would result in closer UK-EU ties, would support a referendum taking place over any time frame, and would vote in favour of the UK rejoining the EU in that referendum.

Conservative Supporters were the most divided on the question of a future referendum. When a referendum was posited as taking place in the next two years, the 37% in favour were outweighed by the 52% who were opposed. Over a five year time frame, the proportion of this voter group in favour of a referendum remained at roughly two in five (39%) with one in two (49%) opposed. Conservative Supporters were split when considering their support for a referendum taking place in the next 50 years, with 30% in support, 31% opposed and 38% saying they don’t know.

Conservative to Labour Switchers were divided about a future referendum. Support for a referendum among this group remained roughly unchanged regardless of time frame: 44% said they would support a referendum in the next two years, 46% in the next five years, 47% in the next 10 years and 44% in the next 50 years. *Opposition* to a referendum among this group declined as the proposed time frame increased, from 46% in the next two years, to just 30% in the next fifty years. As opposition declined, the proportion saying they don’t know increased.

Reform Curious Labour Voters tended to support an earlier referendum. A referendum taking place in the next two years was backed by 49% of Reform Curious Labour Voters, and opposed by 38%. As the time frame for a referendum taking place moved into the future support and opposition reduced, as the proportion saying they don’t know increased.

5. Conclusions

The results presented in this report suggest that support for EU membership is maintained even when voters are asked to consider UK membership of the EU in a referendum context. The consistency between voter responses 'in principle' and in a referendum context holds across all party political crossbreaks. Brits do not lose any of their enthusiasm for joining the EU when confronted with the prospect of a referendum to bring it about.

Significantly, the results also suggested that respondents who only 'somewhat support' membership of the EU in principle would support EU membership in a referendum context.

A significant portion of voters who support eurosceptic parties would vote for EU membership in a referendum. This is consistent with previous Best for Britain research which has found that two in five Conservative Supporters, and one in five Reform UK Supporters, would support any option for closer UK-EU relations⁵. Results in this survey suggest that a similar proportion of Reform UK and Conservative Supporters would vote for membership of the EU in a referendum.

The survey results stand as further evidence of the existence of two large voting blocs in British politics. Overall majority support for EU membership in principle, for voting for EU membership in a referendum and for a referendum to be held in the next two to five years are all driven by supporters of left-leaning, pro-European parties: Labour, the Liberal Democrats and Green Party. At the same time, significant numbers of supporters of the traditionally right-leaning, eurosceptic parties - around one in five Reform UK Supporters and two in five Conservative Supporters - are also now in favour of these positions.

During spring 2026, conversations about Britain's relationship with the EU, including the prospect of the UK rejoining the EU as a full member, have returned to the top of the political agenda. Some observers have reacted to this with scepticism, often citing fears that voters would recoil from the idea of going through another referendum. The results of this survey suggest the contrary.

The survey results suggest there is more support for a referendum taking place over the next two to five years, than over longer time frames. Although democratic legitimacy for the UK's membership of the EU can be achieved through a variety of democratic means, the results in this report suggest that aversion to a referendum is overstated in UK political discourse.

⁵ Best for Britain, [Is it time to talk about EU membership?](#), April 2026

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