

Divided Britain stuns world with Brexit revolt



Us and them: Leave won by 51.9% to 48.1%. Voter turnout was 72%.

The UK has voted to leave the European Union. Voters have shocked the political and financial ruling class by ignoring their advice and warnings. Britain has emerged as deeply divided.

The final **polls** said Remain would win. **Bookmakers** seemed to have made their mind up. The first editions of the newspapers hinted they were right.

As the polls closed in the UK's EU referendum last night, a vote to Remain looked **inevitable**. But almost on the stroke of midnight, a result from Newcastle defied **assumptions**. Remain had done worse than expected. And shortly after Leave won Sunderland.

There were shocked faces at Remain headquarters. As the night progressed, Leave **nudged** into the lead. UKIP leader Nigel Farage was the first to claim victory, declaring 'independence day'.

By 5am, the BBC had declared there was 'absolutely no doubt' how the vote would end. And at 6:04am, Leave won its 16,835,512th vote — guaranteeing victory.

The results have revealed deep splits within the UK. **Wales** and most of England supported Leave, but London was heavily pro-Remain. In Scotland, 62% of

voters — and all 32 geographical areas — backed Remain. Northern Ireland voted for Remain.

‘We have a divided country,’ said former minister Vince Cable. ‘London and Scotland versus the rest.’

While **working class** voters rejected the EU, middle class ones embraced it. A substantial majority of **young** people backed Remain, but older people went for Leave.

Remain campaigners stressed the closeness of the result. Justine Greening, the international development secretary, said that nearly one in two people had not voted Leave.

What does a Leave vote mean? Even among those who voted Leave, there are significant tensions. The official campaign, Vote Leave, initially aimed to promote a libertarian message about Britain’s relationship with the world beyond Europe. But as the campaign progressed it increasingly focused on the concerns of its more nationalist rival, **Leave.EU**.

There were also some more **disparate** Leave groups, and a group of **trade unions** made a socialist case against the EU, calling the EU an ‘employers’ union’.

British voters have delivered a **seismic** shock to the established order. But have they given a clear verdict?

Big break

Yes, say some. The UK has spent four months debating this crucial question. The British people have rejected Brussels, despite the warnings of economic meltdown and political chaos — showing the strength of their feeling. They are determined to govern themselves and have more control over their lives.

No, reply others. Britain has angrily rejected the EU — but it has not made clear what it wants instead. Voters are heavily divided by age, class and region. And the Leave campaign’s different factions will now fight over whether Britain should turn inwards or open out to the world. This result creates more questions than it answers.

You decide

1. Are you happy with the referendum result?
2. Has this referendum result settled anything?