



*Dear Simon,*

*A word about who votes. British expats in Europe (who benefit in principle from membership) seem to be excluded from the referendum. Why? Who exactly is allowed to participate?*

The question of the franchise has been an important one in the run-up to this referendum: choosing who can vote will obviously have an impact on the outcome. That power lies with Parliament, which is effectively controlled by the government majority.

Essentially, this vote will include the same people as can vote in General Elections. This includes UK nationals, including those who have lived overseas for less than 15 years, as well as Irish and Commonwealth citizens living in the UK.

The provision for ex-pats is less than in other countries (my French mother, who has lived in Britain for 50 years, still gets her papers for the Presidential and Legislative elections in France), partly because this has not historically been recognised as a relevant constituency, despite now numbering approximately 1.3 million people.

By contrast, the decision not to include EU nationals living in the UK (apart from the Irish, Maltese and Cypriots who are covered by Commonwealth provisions) was widely seen as an attempt to limit any accusations that any Remain victory was built on those with a vested interest in staying in the EU.

Readers might like to consider the irony of a referendum that does not cover a large proportion of those people most likely to have strong views on the question and to be affected by the result. Sometimes national politics throws up such oddities.

*Best Wishes, Simon.*