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**What Is BREXIT and Why Does It Matter?**  
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The term Brexit has been in the news constantly for the past three years. While most Americans have heard the term tossed around, many are confused by what Brexit actually means and the impact it may have on the U.S. To better understand Brexit, it's important to have some background.

In 1993, several nations, mostly in Europe, joined together to form what is now known as the European Union (EU). The main purpose of the EU was to create cross-border coordination, to allow for the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the region, to enact common laws and to maintain common policies with regard to trade and regional development. Currently, 28 member countries are committed to the EU.

In June 2016, the United Kingdom, through a public referendum, voted to leave the EU. The term "Brexit" became the term used to describe the British exiting the EU. The move has been very controversial and hotly debated, with those who support leaving the EU advocating for more direct control over their own future, including more autonomy regarding immigration and economic policy.

There have been numerous delays and passionate arguments regarding exactly how and when (and even if) Brexit will occur. If it does, it begs the question: "Should this matter to most Americans and, if so – why?" Most believe it does matter for the following reasons:

- ◆ Large multinational companies in the U.S. derive a significant amount of business from both the UK and the EU.
- ◆ Many U.S. companies have a strong presence in London as it is seen as the gateway to European markets. Brexit would force them to shift current or establish new offices/operations in other EU countries, accruing additional costs and impacting earnings.
- ◆ The British pound has seen a significant decline in the value as a result of Brexit. A weaker pound makes travel to the U.S. more expensive, potentially reducing visitors from the UK and hurting companies that rely on tourism.
- ◆ A weaker pound makes U.S. dollar denominated goods more expensive, potentially reducing UK demand for U.S. exports.
- ◆ Free and seamless movement of goods and services throughout the EU could be inhibited by tariffs and/or additional taxes.

Regardless of how Brexit ultimately unfolds, U.S. companies are closely monitoring the impact of the changes to their lines of business. Even negative news would be an improvement from the uncertainty, as speculation always leads to increased volatility in markets, both domestically and abroad. The sooner we see a resolution to the Brexit debate, the better for financial markets.