BREXIT AND PUBLIC OPINION 2019

The **UK** in a **Changing Europe**

Foreword

It's a great pleasure to write a few words at the start of one of the most thorough and, I think, interesting reports that we at the UK in a Changing Europe have produced. It hardly needs saying that public attitudes towards Brexit and the numerous issues related to it have been central to our political debates since at least 2016.

Even after the referendum itself, protagonists on all sides of what seems like the endless debate about EU membership have invoked the notion of 'the will of the people' in support of their claims. What people voted for, and what they wanted from Brexit of course remain crucial issues. As politicians try to address popular concerns, the congruence, or otherwise, of their views with those of both the public at large and their own members will be crucial. Meanwhile, new or continued divisions within the country will continue to have a disruptive impact on our politics going forward.

These and many other themes are addressed in the contributions that follow. I would, as ever, like to express my thanks and appreciation to all those who have contribute to this collection, who have responded with good humour and alacrity to my repeated comments and naggings: Tim Bale, Coree Brown Swan, Noah Carl, Philip Cowley, John Curtice, Bobby Duffy, Geoff Evans, Robert Ford, Jonathan Grant, Anthony Heath, Ailsa Henderson, Sara Hobolt, David Howarth, Charlie Jeffery, Will Jennings, Sunder Katwala, Jac Larner, Hui Lu, Ian Montagu, Monica Poletti, Alexandra Pollitt, Jamie Pow, Lindsay Richards, Charlene Rohr, Florian Schaffner, Gerry Stoker, Paula Surridge, James Tilley, Alan Wager, Stefanie Walter, Ian Warren, Paul Webb, Daniel Wincott and Richard Wyn Jones.

Thanks, too, to the team in the UK in a Changing Europe office, and particularly to Lizzie Parker without whose efforts this whole project would have fallen apart and also to Alan Wager, who, despite the stress, held it together remarkably well and was instrumental to the fact that this report has seen the light of day.

Professor Anand Menon
The UK in a Changing Europe

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Brexit and public opinion 2019

Contents

Introduction

Anand Menon

Public opinion has always been central to democratic politics. All the more so when the most important public policy decision of our time is being taken on the basis of a plebiscite, which returned a verdict different to that desired by a majority of our elected representatives. 'The will of the people' has become a catch-all phrase bandied about by all and sundry, as a means of legitimising whatever claim they care to make.

What, then, is the reality? What do we know – and equally what do we not know – about the state of public opinion when it comes to Brexit and issues related to it? This is what we seek to ascertain in the various contributions that follow.

Our contributors present findings which point to an electorate reshaped by Brexit. Bobby Duffy points to the dysfunctional nature of the debate on Brexit and the fact that it has limited cut through with the public. Similarly, Noah Carl uncovers evidence of 'motivated reasoning,' whereby voters across the Brexit divide select options that are most psychologically comforting for them. He also underlines that there is no evidence to suggest that Remain voters were better informed than their Leave counterparts.

Paula Surridge cautions against premature claims the traditional left-right division in British politics is no longer relevant. She also makes the point that the relationship between values and political behaviour depends on the context of the vote in question.

That being said, as Evans and Schaffner report, there is strong evidence of the enduring power of 'Brexit identities'. Indeed, the social and emotional intensity of these is far higher than those for parties. Moreover, Brexit identities effect how voters see the world. In Hobolt and Tilley's fascinating contribution, they say that those on either side of the Brexit debate interpret new information in ways that reinforce their pre-existing views. This echoes the point, made by Bobby Duffy, about the limits 'new facts' serve in convincing anyone of anything.

Brexit is not the only source of division. Heath and Richards point out that the nations of the UK are themselves divided, with national identity shaping attitudes towards Brexit. Place also matters, as Jennings, Stoker and Warren remind us in their revealing analysis of cities and towns.

Moreover, public attitudes are both more subtle and more fluid than many imagine. Sunder Katwala reports the results of the National Conversation on Immigration, and finds that most people are balancers – acknowledging both the positive and negative impacts of immigration – while being distrustful of both the government and the media when it comes to this issue. Meanwhile, Rob Ford detects a major shift in public sentiment over immigration since the referendum of 2016, measured both in terms of its salience and perceptions of its economic and cultural impact.

So what of the political parties, whose task it is to aggregate and represent this complex public? In a sense, they are representative in that, as Wager and Cowley report, each party mirrors the divisions in society at large. Albeit that – as Bale, Poletti and Webb underline – the positions of the leadership, particularly on Brexit, diverge from those of their own members. Less often discussed, but equally interesting and important, Coree Brown Swan underlines the dilemma that Brexit poses for the SNP: making the case for independence more compelling, whilst potentially making that independence more difficult.

These represent, as I suggested above, merely a taster of the rich analyses that follow. John Curtice underlines claims of widespread support for another referendum must be taken with care. Innovative 'stated choice' experiments set out to understand the trade-offs the public are willing to make in defining a new relationship with the EU. Fascinating insights into the geography of public opinion – in the four nations, and the EU – are sketched out. What follows is both comprehensive and hugely informative. Perhaps the best and easiest thing for this introduction to do is, simply, to commend what follows to you.

This report was published on 22 January 2019

Brexit identities and divisions

The left-right divide

Paula Surridge

Since the vote to leave the EU, there has been a steady stream of publications considering new divides and new identities among the British electorate. It is true that it is barely possible to separate Leave and Remain voters based on their positions on a traditional 'left-right' set of values. However, to suggest that the old 'left-right' divide is no longer relevant in British politics is at best premature.

The language of 'left' and 'right' itself can be misleading when talking about the political values of the electorate, as it has both economic and social connotations. More useful is to think of values as having (at least) two distinctive dimensions, one economic and one social. The economic value dimension closely resembles our 'common sense' understanding of the terms 'left' and 'right'. It is concerned with issues of economic justice, economic inequality and economic organisation. The social dimension is less easily labelled, having variously been referred to as the 'second dimension', 'other dimension' and 'open vs. closed'.

Here we adopt the label used when it was first measured in the British context: the 'liberal-authoritarian' dimension. Using data from the 2017 British Election Study, collected via face-to-face interviews in the weeks immediately following the general election, the economic 'left-right' positions of the electorate are measured using a scale derived from four items:

1) Ordinary people get their fair share of the nation's wealth

2) There is one law for the rich and one for the poor

3) There is no need for strong Trade Unions to protect workers' rights

4) Private enterprise is the best way to solve Britain's economic problems

The liberal-authoritarian scale is measured using five attitudinal items:

1) Young people don't have enough respect for traditional values

2) Censorship is necessary to uphold moral values

3) We should be tolerant of those who lead unconventional lifestyles

4) For some crime the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence

5) People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences

People are asked to express how much they agree or disagree with each statement on a five-point scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The average of the items is taken to form a scale (running from one to five) with low values representing the 'left' and 'liberal' and high scores 'right' and 'authoritarian'.

Previous work has shown that in most general elections between 1992 and 2017 it was the left-right dimension which was most useful for explaining the key voting choice between Labour and the Conservatives. But the EU referendum vote is barely connected to these values at all.

The chart compares the values of Leave and Remain voters within each of the two main parties. It shows that Labour Remain voters are no different to Labour Leave voters on the 'left-right' scale, similarly Conservative Remain voters are not different to Conservative Leave voters on this scale. In contrast, there are large differences between Labour Leave and Remain voters on the liberal-authoritarian scale and between Conservative Leave and Remain voters on this scale. Labour Remain voters are by far the most liberal group, whilst Leave voters are equally illiberal regardless of whether they voted Conservative or Labour in 2017.

Cross party differences are much more closely related to left-right values. Those voting Labour in 2017 are more left wing than those voting Conservative (Labour Remainers are more left wing than Conservative Remainers).

Figure 1: Average positions on values scales by EU referendum vote within party supporters
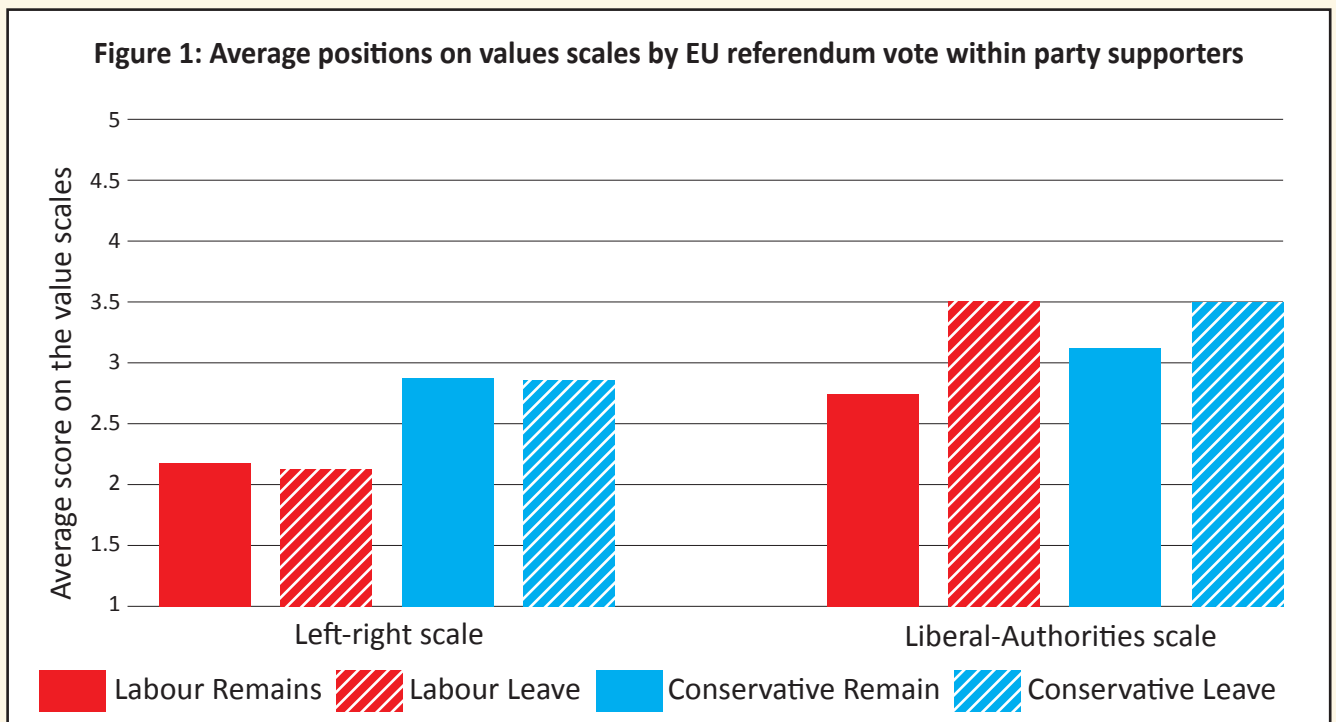
Understanding whether and how this might continue to shape British electoral politics is important. Left-right position relates to income, wealth and social class, and when it structures behaviour these factors remain important for voting decisions and electoral strategies. Liberal-authoritarian values are not related to income but are driven by education and age, when they influence behaviour these 'new' divides are more important.

Voters hold values on both these scales and combine these in ways which make behaviour unpredictable. To address this, it is helpful to think about voters as located within a 'value space' defined by these two dimensions. To aid in thinking about positions within value space, these scales are each divided into three groups (Left/Centre/Right and Liberal/Centre/Authoritarian) and these positions are then combined to generate nine potential locations within each 'value space'. Considering the two dimensions together more clearly demonstrates how they combine or cross-cut in their influences on political behaviour. Figure 2 shows how EU referendum vote choice, Labour vote share and Conservative vote share are related to positions in this value space.

The share of the Leave vote varies substantially by Liberal-Authoritarian position within each category of the left-right scale. However, the patterns for Labour and Conservative vote share is clearly one which primarily

varies from left to right. There are nonetheless important differences within categories of the left right scale according to values on the social dimension. A large majority of those on the left who are also liberal voted Labour. Among those on the left who are in the centre or authoritarian parts of the liberal-authoritarian around one in three voted Conservative.

Figure 2: Share of vote for 'leave', Labour and Conservative in value space
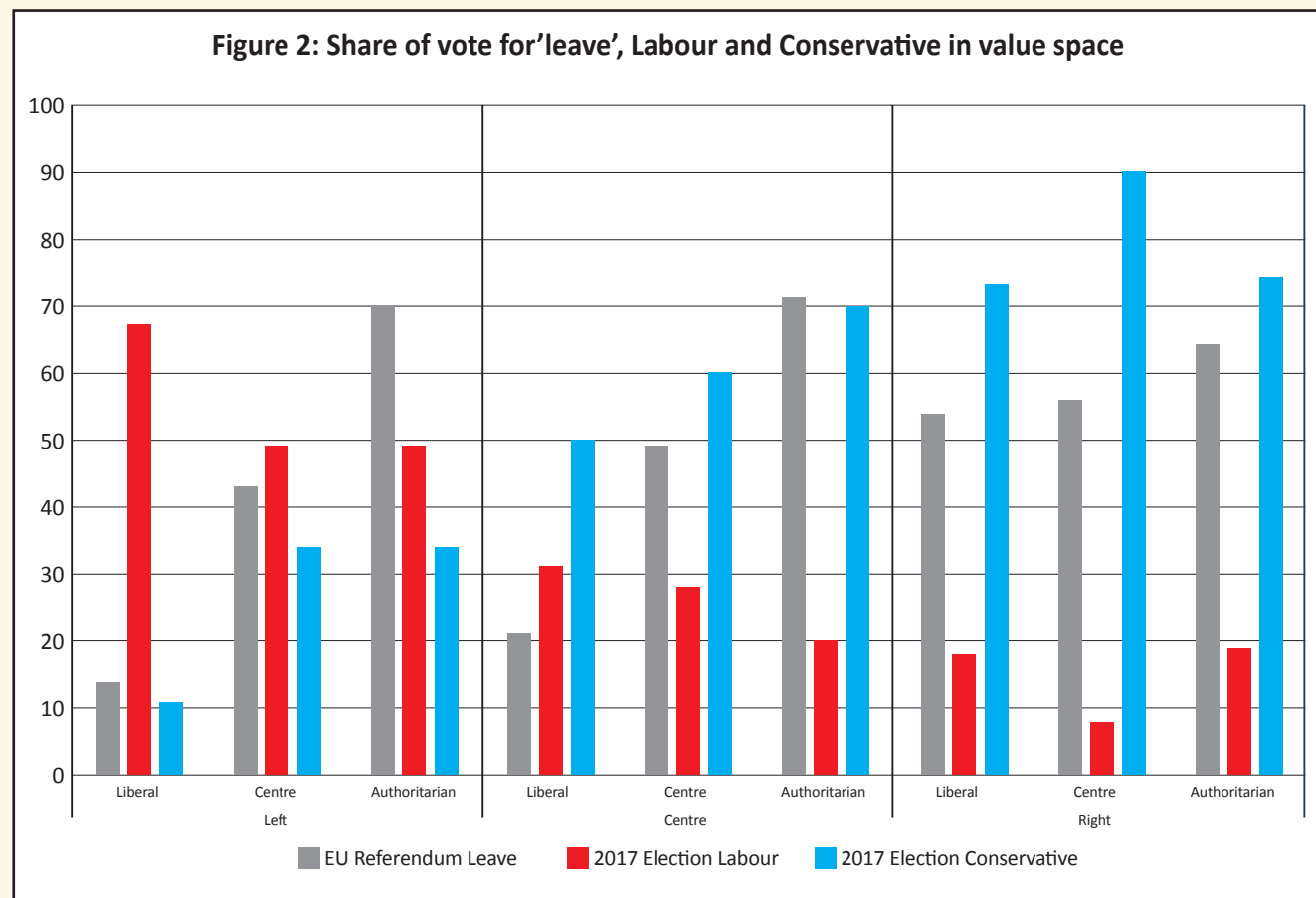
The relationship between values and political behaviour is complex and depends critically on the context of the vote in question. When political emphasis is placed on a traditional left-right divide, as in the 2017 general election, then voters' positions on this divide are much more closely related to their behaviour. However, other divides are not irrelevant. Liberal-authoritarian positions substantially modify party choices within left-right value positions. This pattern has been evident since at least 2010 and is part of a longer-term restructuring of party competition. It is not new, nor driven by the EU referendum. The result of the referendum may be better thought of as a symptom of this divide in the electorate rather than a cause.

Political values can no longer be solely interpreted through a left-right lens as other values cross-cut and modify. This leads to complexity which is not easily captured in a first-past-the-post electoral system, and to parties which are still organised according to the older logic of a simple left-right divide rooted in the economic (class) positions of the voters. It is likely to mean that voting behaviour will be volatile for the foreseeable future, as voters and parties seek to find their places in this multi-dimensional space.

Brexit misperceptions

Bobby Duffy

Misperception, misunderstanding and misdirection run through the heart of Brexit. The Brexit debate has been characterised by widespread misperceptions regarding some of the fundamental facts; misunderstanding of how to engage the public and political misdirection on an epic scale.

While the extraordinary events of the last couple of months have filled the Westminster bubble with heat and noise, the parliamentary calculus that has enthralled insiders will not affect public opinion much. Instead it's how we engage with the public on the realities of Brexit and the choices facing us that will matter most, not only for our relationship with the EU, but the public's view of our democracy.
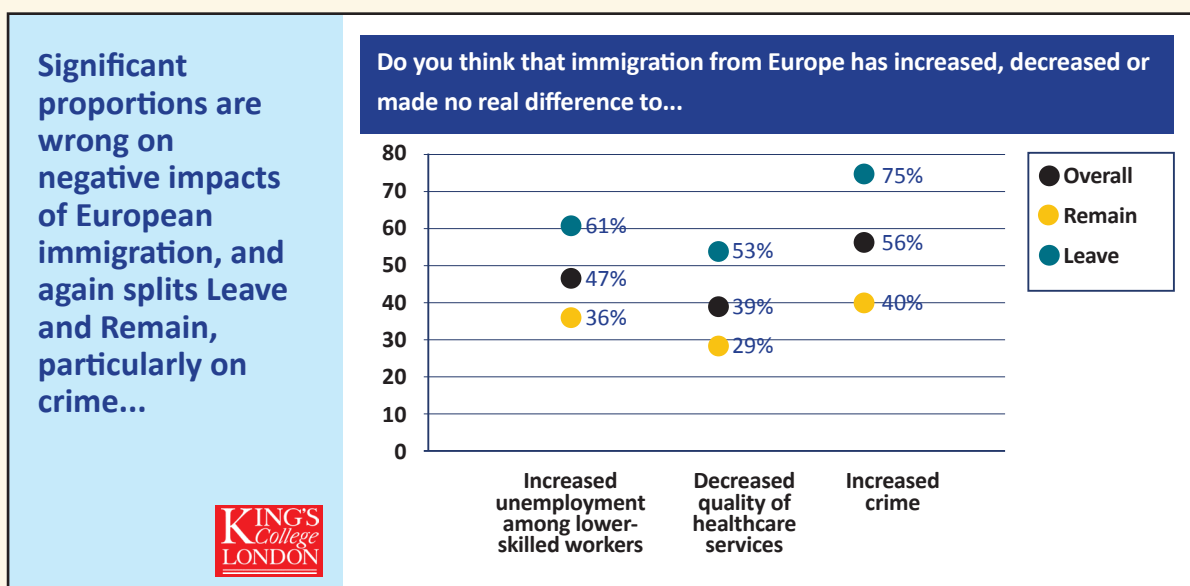
Two recent events suggest we're set to have the same dysfunctional discussion with the public that we've had throughout the Brexit debate.

First, after some time out of the headlines, immigration was the top story over Christmas. Around 100 migrants were found on beaches or rescued from boats in the English Channel, sparking talk of a 'crisis' and 'major incident'. This provides yet another example of the way media coverage and political rhetoric fuel misperceptions about the scale, nature and impact of an issue that is central to Brexit.

For example, we think there are way more migrants in Britain than there really are. Surveys usually show we think around a quarter of the population are immigrants, when the actual number half that - around 13%. We think immigration from EU countries is nearly three times its actual level of 6%.

We're most wrong on the impact of immigration. Large numbers of us think that EU immigration increases crime levels, reduces the quality of the NHS and increases unemployment among skilled workers – when the best available evidence shows none of those are true.

Given our mistaken belief in the link between immigration and crime, it's no surprise we think immigrants make up more of the prison population than they actually do: we guess 34% of prisoners are immigrants, when the reality is 12% – in line with their share of the population.

Significant proportions are wrong on negative impacts of European immigration, and again splits Leave and Remain, particularly on crime...

Do you think that immigration from Europe has increased, decreased or made no real difference to...

Legend:
- Overall (black)
- Remain (yellow)
- Leave (teal)

Increased unemployment among lower-skilled workers: Leave 61%, Overall 47%, Remain 36%
Decreased quality of healthcare services: Leave 53%, Overall 39%, Remain 29%
Increased crime: Leave 75%, Overall 56%, Remain 40%

King's College London

Old, debunked claims also refuse to die. Two-thirds of the public have heard the claim that the UK sends £350m a week to the EU, and 42% of these still believe it is true. This is despite it being labelled a 'misuse of statistics' by the UK Statistics Authority.

You can see why it's tempting for some to believe that if we could just correct such errors in our thinking, other opinions will fall into line. And that's exactly what we see in my second depressing Brexit event of the last couple of months – Stephen Fry's "Brexit: Facts versus Fear" video. It was reported by some as "perfect" – but that's only the case if its aim was to congratulate those who already agreed with it.

The video provides an excellent outline of some of the key facts, for example, how immigrants pay more into public finances than they take out, and how they support the NHS through taxes and as a vital part of its workforce. And being clear about these facts is important. Only 29% of the public think immigrants bring more into public finances than they take out, when their net contribution is actually £4.7bn a year.

But the evidence suggests this simplistic myth-busting approach just doesn't work, because it misses a large part of the point: that our misperceptions are often more emotional and personal than rational and national. It is true that, at a macro level, immigration adds more to the economy than it takes out. But people don't see that national impact, particularly in an age of spending cuts and wage stagnation.

People live in the micro, in their own communities, where they see individual job competition and more people waiting in their doctor's surgery. When living standards for many have been decoupled from national growth, threats to future levels of GDP mean little. More than that, the framing in the video ignores the wider concerns people had about the speed of change in their communities, beyond the economic and fiscal impacts.

The clear implication is "you only voted to leave because you were duped", and therefore your own perceptions of your experience are worth little. This breaks many of the key tenets of communication when attempting to convince others, which generally involve starting from where people are.

When talking to a divided public on Brexit, we need to begin with an understanding that the economy is not working for many people, which has led to understandable anger; to recognise that there are clearly pros and cons to leaving, which helps explain why it was such a close vote.

We need to start by recognising that people are entitled to be concerned about the cultural impacts of immigration and for our national sovereignty more generally – but this does not mean politicians should avoid talking about the evidence of other benefits

It is possible to build a positive fact-based case, as Nicola Sturgeon has increasingly done in the past year, appealing to 'national self-interest' by focusing on the contribution that immigrants make, particularly to an ageing society. Of course, there are limitations to this, as Angela Merkel has found in Germany.

But the UK as a whole is very far from falling into that trap, and is more characterised by the absence of major political voices making a positive case. The tragedy is that this does not reflect the reality and variety of public opinion in Britain, which is more nuanced, balanced and increasingly positive about immigration than the loudest voices would lead you to believe. We need to tell the truth and trust the people.

Immigration: a polarised debate?

Sunder Katwala

Immigration was at the heart of the EU referendum debate, having grown significantly in public salience over the previous decade. The Labour governments failed to anticipate the scale and pace of immigration following the EU's eastward expansion after 2004. The Cameron government, in which Theresa May was Home Secretary, failed to keep their promise to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands.

There was no relationship between attitudes towards immigration and how people voted in the 1975 referendum on the EEC. Indeed, those who had voted out in 1975 were slightly more pro-migration than those who voted in. By 2016, views of immigration had become a significant predictor of choices to vote Remain and Leave. The range of social cleavages underlying the voting patterns – dividing younger and older generations, graduates and non-graduates, cities and towns, and white British and ethnic minority voters – reflected this. Hence the common observation that the referendum had sharpened a cultural polarisation, often described by liberals as a choice between 'open' and 'closed' worldviews, or what writer David Goodhart called the 'anywhere' and 'somewhere' tribes.
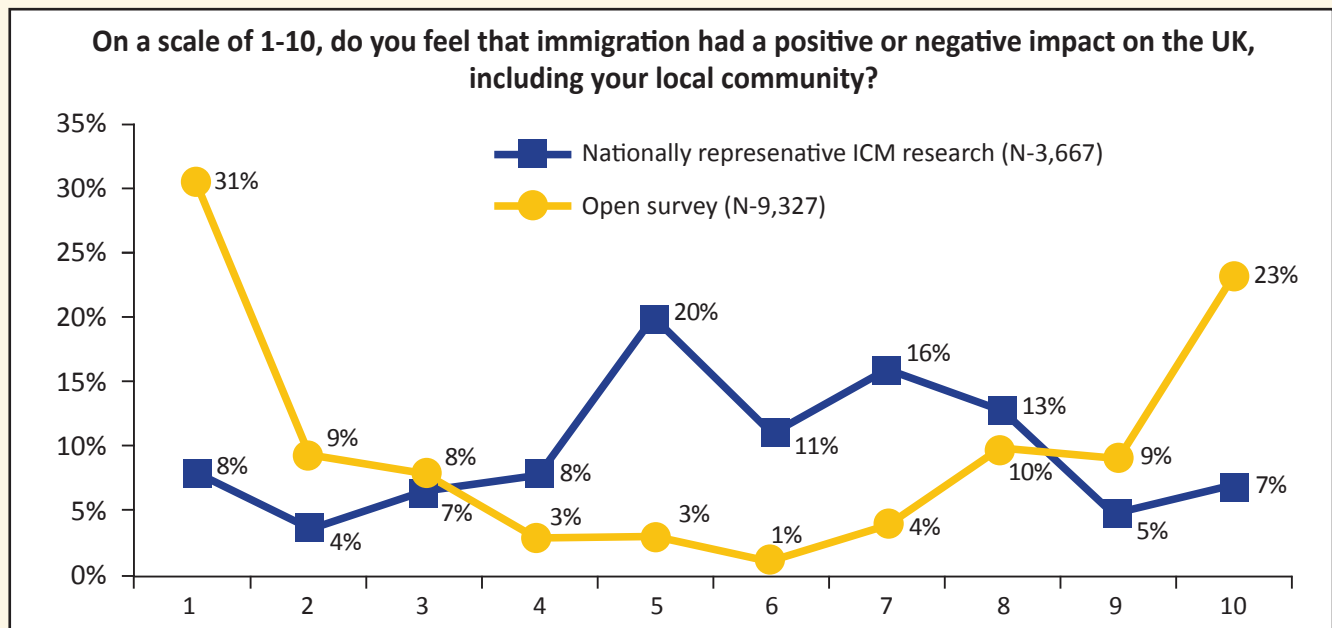
But what did this mean for immigration policy after the referendum? Finding that out was the aim of the biggest-ever public engagement exercise on the subject: The National Conversation on Immigration. This was jointly conducted by British Future and Hope Not Hate, the anti-prejudice civic society group, as an input into a Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into whether it is possible to build consensus on immigration.

The National Conversation travelled over 15,000 miles – everywhere from Southampton to the Shetlands, Bradford to Belfast, Wolverhampton to Wrexham – to bring together panels of citizens in 60 towns and cities, across every nation and region of the UK. We asked them to grapple with the choices government ministers will now face, as well as holding sessions with stakeholders from local government, business and civic society in each location.

Most people are 'balancers' – seeing both the pressures and gains of immigration. We found low trust in government on this issue, and in the national media too. Yet there was a broad sense that it was a positive thing that an immigration debate had opened up. Participants combined frustration with government performance with pragmatic views about future policy. Support for student migration was all but universal, while few wanted a reduction in skilled migration. A broad appetite for more control over low-skilled migration was combined with pragmatic support for migration, where needed to fill jobs in care homes and agriculture, if local impacts could be managed better.

Yet the National Conversation research captured a huge gulf between these constructive citizens' conversations – with participants recruited to be broadly representative of their local areas – and a much more starkly polarised online debate, where the 'balancer' majority rarely get involved.

We found this when we compared our local citizens and a nationally representative survey with an open online survey, which ten thousand people completed during the year-long project. All participants were asked to give a 1-10 score to sum up the pros and cons of immigration for Britain. In our local groups and a representative national poll, the most popular scores tend to be 5 or 6: the national average is 5.77. In the self-selecting online survey, the most popular answers were 1/10 and 10/10, with a majority of participants selecting the lowest or highest score available; only 15% of our nationally-representative survey did the same.

On a scale of 1-10, do you feel that immigration had a positive or negative impact on the UK, including your local community?

Legend:
- Nationally represenative ICM research (N-3,667)
- Open survey (N-9,327)

In most local panels it was often difficult to tell who had voted on which side of the EU referendum, except when people spoke directly about Brexit itself. Only a small handful of local panels were persuaded by a 'trade-off' case to maintain free movement to retain membership of the single market: those that were cited specific local economic impacts, such as the importance of car manufacturing in Knowsley and pharmaceuticals in Macclesfield. Contested arguments about national GDP went over everybody's heads, with decreasing trust in claims from every side in the wake of the 2016 campaign. This matched our nationally representative poll, which found significant potential for a broad consensus on most areas of immigration and integration policy. Yet there was a stark split along referendum lines when asked whether a trade deal or migration control matters most.

If the public saw Brexit as a 'reset moment' for getting immigration right, the government were strikingly slow to engage with the issue. This was perhaps because of fear of tackling the hottest political potato of them all. Yet the public salience of immigration has declined significantly since the referendum took place, reflects both a public expectation of future changes and an increased awareness of positive contributions from migration, as Ipsos-Mori research shows. There were fewer front-page splashes about migration in 2017 and 2018 combined than in 2016 – and the anxieties of 3 million Europeans in Britain, concerned about their status, had a high profile.

But there is no guarantee that the salience of migration might not rise sharply again. Indeed, attitudes have softened on migration, while becoming more polarised on Brexit itself. Those hoping for a future referendum, or to negotiate an EEA-relationship, have focused on the ability to apply existing free movement rules better. There is little evidence from the National Conversation that changes of this kind will ever have broad general public salience. Politicians consistently over-estimate the potential reassurance value of symbolic micro-policy changes that few people ever hear about.

Public engagement cannot in itself resolve political disagreements about contested issues – but the National Conversation demonstrates how it can have an important cathartic and constructive impact. If the aim is to rebuild public confidence in the choices we make about immigration, institutionalising public engagement can play an important role in ensuring that all voices can be heard – rather than the pragmatic majority getting drowned out by those who shout loudest.

Immigration: is public opinion changing?

Rob Ford

The EU's free movement rules have, in recent years, functioned as a major constraint on the ability of British governments to respond to public concerns by reducing migration inflows or making migration more selective. British voters are now well aware of this.

Yet while the desire for control over immigration was a major driver of Leave voting in 2016, there has been a major shift in public sentiment since. The share of voters in IPSOS-MORI's regular 'issues index' poll naming immigration as one of the most important problems facing the country has more than halved, from around 45% in the months leading up to the referendum to under 20% – the lowest level since 2001.

The British Election Study also shows a shift in the public mood. There was a large rise in the share of people saying immigration was economically beneficial and culturally enriching in the first wave of data they collected after the EU referendum, a shift which has been sustained in the three waves published since (see figure 1 below). A panel study from IPSOS-MORI showed a similar positive shift in views about the impact of immigration after the Brexit vote, with positive views outnumbering negative for the first time in the study. Other sources have painted a similar picture. The public mood about immigration is the most positive we have seen for many years.

Figure 1: Share of British Election Study respondents expressing positive views about the economic and cultural impact of immigration 2014-18
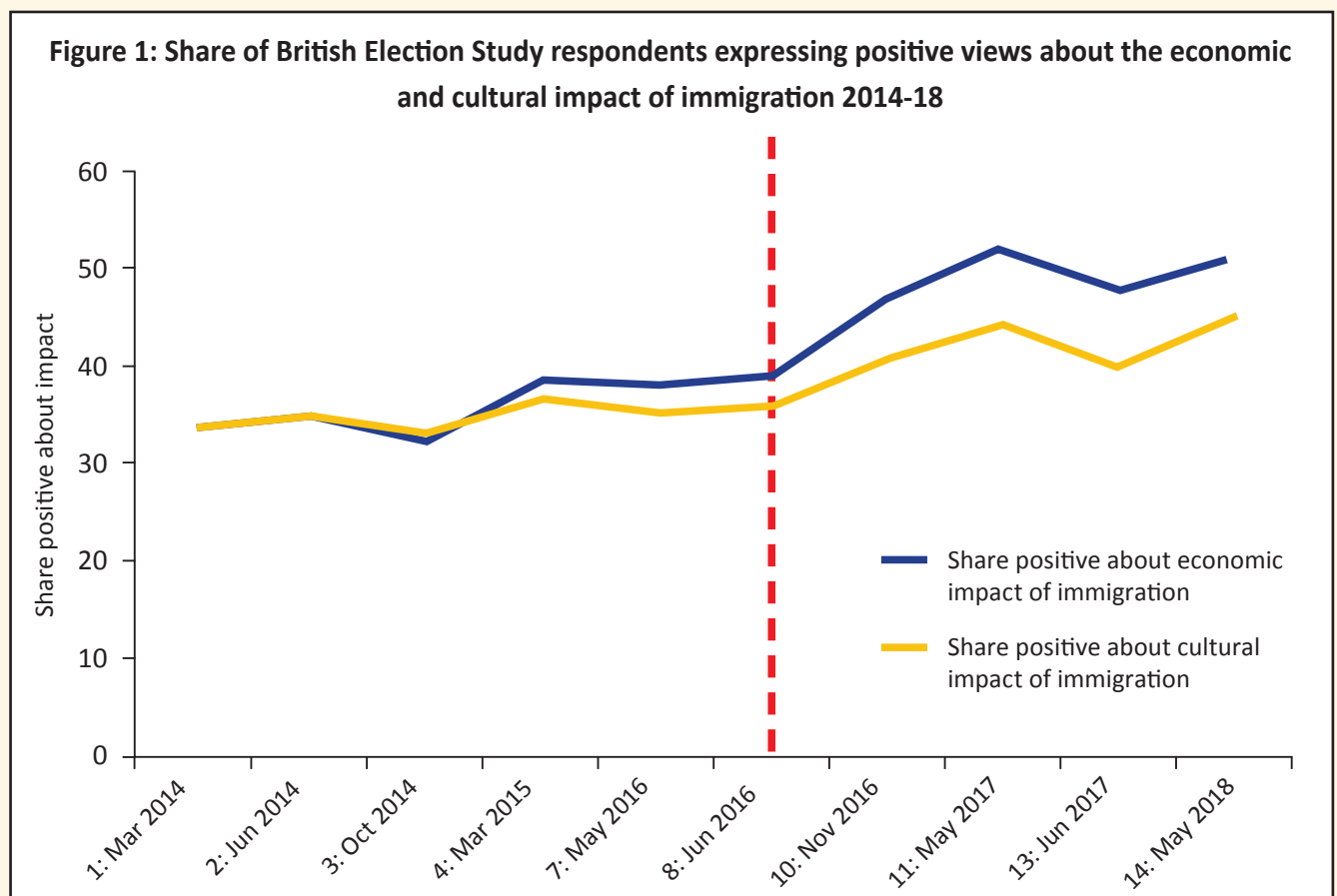
Source: British Election Study internet panel 2014-18

This shift in the public mood has important implications for the Brexit negotiations, where an end to free movement has been the government's most consistent and non-negotiable priority. The British Social Attitudes mixed methods panel showed 74% of those interviewed in September 2016 wanted EU migrants to go through the same control processes as non-EU migrants. This had fallen 15 points to 59% in the last panel results in June 2018. After the referendum 51% thought free movement of EU migrants was not a price worth paying to ensure British firms' access to the single market. In June 2018, this figure had fallen to 39%. The Prime Minister's decision to prioritise immigration control over single market access, a key driver of the choice to opt for a 'hard Brexit' with departure from the EU single market and customs union, thus may no longer enjoy majority public support.

Figure 2: Should EU migrants go through the same control processes as non-EU migrants? (% Yes)
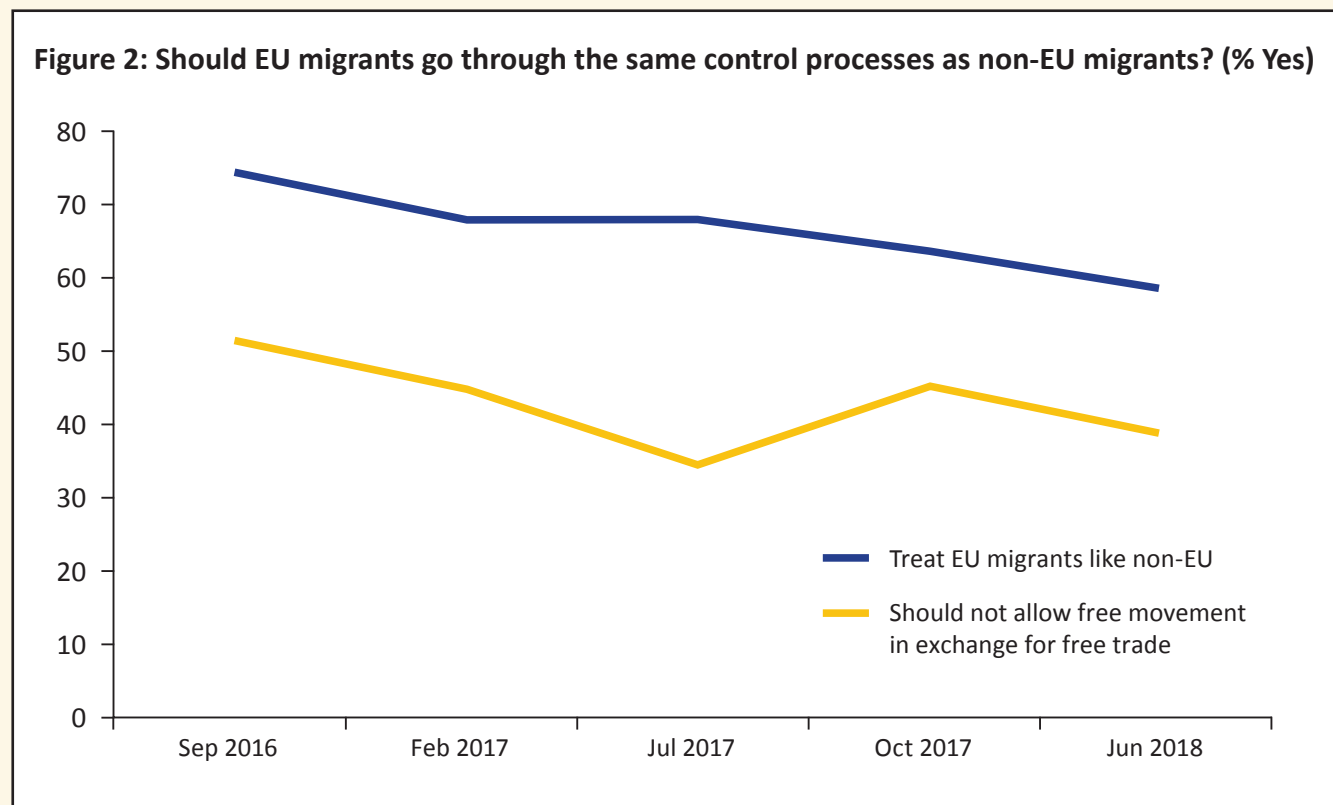
Source: British Social Attitudes mixed mode random probability panel 2016-18

The final terms of Britain's exit from the EU remain unknown, but we do now know rather more about the government's plans for migration reform after Brexit, following the publication in December 2018 of 'The UK's future skills-based immigration system' – the White Paper outlining post-Brexit migration policy plans. As the name suggests, the White Paper envisages a greater focus on skills, with the scrapping of the cap on inflows of skilled migrants and tighter controls on unskilled migrants introduced. A single system of migration control will apply to migrants from within and outside the EU. The White Paper also makes no mention of the government's target to reduce net migration to 'tens of thousands' a year, suggesting this longstanding and contentious policy may be on the way out.

Many of these proposals fit well with public migration preferences. The net migration target has long been regarded as unachievable by most voters – for example a 2017 MORI poll for British Future showed only 14% of respondents, and 12% of Conservative voters, thought the target would be met within five years. Quietly

abandoning a policy so lacking in credibility will do little harm. The same poll showed strong support for a more flexible regime, with large majorities in favour of separate targets for different kinds of migration, and for introducing controls on unskilled but not skilled migration.

The greater emphasis on skills also fits well with public opinion. There is a strong preference for skilled over unskilled migrants, which is shared by British migration sceptics and enthusiasts alike and is also found in many other European countries. Stricter control of unskilled migration is also likely to be popular. Another reform from the White Paper, restoring some post-study work options to foreign students, is also in line with public opinion. Several studies have highlighted very positive public views of this migrant group.

The binary skilled/unskilled distinction is very broad, however, and there is a great deal of granular variation in which occupations and skills the public regard positively. As Sunder Katwala outlines in this report, voters are 'balancers' on migration – able and willing to make nuanced judgements about the relative costs and benefits of different forms of migration. It therefore makes sense to introduce a more flexible and transparent policy that enables priorities and distinctions to evolve in response to changing demands in the economy and the electorate.

A common approach for migrants from all origins also fits with public preferences. British Social Surveys conducted before and after the EU referendum show little or no public preference for European over non-European migrants, in terms of how migrants are viewed, whether their numbers should be reduced, or how quickly they should be able to access political and social rights. Skills matter much more to voters than origins, so a single migration system focussed on skills is a good fit with public opinion.

There are grounds for thinking migration may be a less divisive issue after Brexit, at least initially. Concern about the issue has sharply declined, British voters have become more aware of the benefits migration brings, and the government's proposed post-Brexit approach to the issue is a better fit with the priorities voters express. However, there are also good reasons to think arguments over migration will continue as migration remains a very polarising issue, and has become a [central part of the deeper divides over identity and values that are driving growing political conflicts](#) between graduates and school leavers, and between younger and older generations. Brexit and the reforms which follow it may take the heat out of the issue for now, but new arguments are sure to come.

Are Leave voters less knowledgeable about the EU than Remain voters?

Noah Carl

Since the UK voted to leave the EU, there has been much debate about whether voters were sufficiently well informed prior to casting their ballots. One frequently heard claim is that Leave voters were less well informed than Remain voters. For example, in a short segment for BBC Newsnight, the scientist and commentator Richard Dawkins characterised the Leave vote as "a slender majority of an ignorant and misled public". To test this assertion, my colleagues and I conducted a study comparing levels of knowledge about the EU among Leave and Remain voters. We gave a 15-item EU knowledge quiz to a nationally representative sample of the British population via an online survey.

Assessing whether Leave voters were less well informed than Remain voters is obviously of interest, given that one might view an electoral outcome as less legitimate if those who voted against it were substantially more knowledgeable than those who voted for it. The political scientist Jason Brennan has defended what he calls the 'competence principle', namely that 'political decisions are presumed to be unjust if they are made incompetently or in bad faith, or by a generally incompetent decision-making body'. Our study did not seek to establish whether the electorate overall was sufficiently well informed to satisfy this principle; rather, it sought to establish whether there was a significant disparity in knowledge between Leave and Remain voters, something which might also be considered grounds for questioning the legitimacy of a referendum result.

Percentage of respondents answering each item correctly			
Item	Full sample	Voted Leave	Voted Remain
1. Austria is a member of the EU [T]	61	56	65
2. Switzerland is a member of the EU [F]	69	77	74
3. Malta is a member of the EU [T]	62	63	66
4. This is a photograph of Donald Tusk, president of the European Council [F]	70	71	73
5. This is a photograph of Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission [T]	86	91	89
6. This is a photograph of Mario Draghi, president of the European Central Bank [T]	66	68	70
7. The European Central Bank sets interest rates for the Eurozone [T]	69	71	71
8. The European Commission is the name for the EU's parliament [F]	55	53	59
9. The European Council is the name for the highest court in the EU [F]	61	66	63
10. The UK currently pays more money into the EU than it gets back in the form of subsidies and other funds [T]	71	88	61
11. The EU makes up a larger proportion of the world economy today than it did twenty years ago [F]	29	37	23
12. The British government cannot sign free trade deals while Britain is a member of the EU [T]	67	78	70
13. More than ten per cent of British government spending goes to the EU [F]	38	28	50
14. The EU employs more civil servants than the British government [F]	29	24	29
15. The EU is the world's second largest economy [T]	42	34	43

Our quiz comprised nine 'ideologically neutral' items, as well as six that we deemed more 'ideologically convenient' for one side or the other. Each comprised a positive statement, followed by the question 'True or false?' For example, one read: 'The British government cannot sign free trade deals while Britain is a member of the EU. True or false?' The correct answer is 'true', and since being able to sign free trade deals is generally seen as a good thing, we deemed this item more 'ideologically convenient' for Leave voters. Another item read: 'More than ten per cent of British government spending goes to the EU. True or false?' The correct answer is 'false', and since spending less on something represents value for money, we deemed this item more 'ideologically convenient' for Remain voters. Our study uncovered three key findings:

First, despite the fact that Remain voters scored higher on a short test of probability reasoning (a result that accords with what has been [previously reported](#)), there was – contrary to Dawkins' claim – no average difference in EU knowledge between the two groups. (The short test of probability reasoning comprised three simple questions about coin flips.)

Second, both Leave and Remain voters were more likely to answer correctly on items that were 'ideologically convenient' for them. There are two plausible explanations for this. Respondents may have engaged in '[motivated reasoning](#)': when confronted with an item to which a particular respondent did not know the answer, she may have selected whichever option was most psychologically comforting for her, given her ideological priors. Or, respondents may have engaged in '[motivated information seeking](#)': in the months leading up to the quiz, they may have preferentially consumed sources of information that flattered their ideological priors, leading them to acquire more knowledge about their own side than the opposing one.

Third, characteristics such as age, higher education and levels of political interest were quite strongly associated with political knowledge on the nine 'ideologically neutral' items, but were only weakly associated with political knowledge on the six 'ideologically convenient' items. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that ideological bias (the tendency for partisans to give 'ideologically convenient' answers) overwhelmed the advantages that would otherwise have been conferred by older age, higher education *etc*.

It is important to make clear that our finding of no average difference between Leave and Remain voters does not imply that voters overall were well informed prior to making their decisions. Nor does it rule out the possibility that misinformation had a decisive impact on the result of the referendum, as some [commentators](#) have argued. What it does do, however, is provide tentative evidence against the claim that Remain voters were substantially better informed than Leave voters.

Brexit identity vs party identity

Geoff Evans and Florian Schaffner

The post-war era of British politics was defined by strong party loyalties influenced by political socialization and class. Since the 1970s, however, there has been a marked decline in the number of people identifying with a political party. Even if you do identify with a party, the strength of that attachment is likely to be weaker than it was. The result has been voter volatility and falling turnout.

Now, Brexit has been seen by some as creating a new source of political identification capable of reshaping political divisions and reinvigorating political participation.

To the degree that Brexit identity drives political attitudes and choices, we can expect increasing pressure on the old left versus right-wing politics. Paradoxically, Brexit divisions create a potentially stable source of realignment in a political world characterized by volatility. As Sarah Hobolt and James Tilley illustrate in this volume, Remain and Leave are identities – and identities are a stable aspect of political attitudes. But equally, as Paula Surridge sets out, a traditional left-right economic divide continues to be a key driver of voter choices. So this opens up the question: is Leave versus Remain now a more prominent source of identity than party identification? And, if so, has this source of identity changed since the referendum, and how has this impacted on British politics?

We examined this issue by asking respondents in the EU referendum campaign panel surveys and all waves of the British election panel study whether: "In the EU referendum debate, do you think of yourself as closer to either the Remain or Leave side?" This was accompanied by a series of probes into what a self-professed Brexit identity might mean in terms of social, emotional and behavioural responses. For comparison, we then asked the same questions about respondents' thoughts and feelings towards the political parties.

At the start of the Referendum campaign the idea of being Leave versus Remain was, unsurprisingly, less salient – especially for Remainers. Leavers had already developed a sense of their distinctiveness, perhaps because they were clearly outside of mainstream politics. However, the number of both Remainers and Leavers expressing a Brexit identity grew markedly following the referendum result. After then it has been almost neck-and-neck, with just under 50% identifying with each side but with a slight lead for Remain.

Tellingly, even in mid-2018, two years after the referendum, only just over 6% of people did not identify with either Leave or Remain.

Compare this with party attachment. The percentage with no party identity increased from 18% to 21.5% over same period – in part due to the decline of UKIP. Only one in 16 people don't have a Brexit identity whereas more than one in five have no party identity.

What of the strength of these identities? At the beginning of the campaign, Leave supporters tended to identify with the Leave campaign more strongly than Remainers did with the Remain campaign. From the last month of the campaign onwards, however, the strength of Remain identity increased markedly. By the end of the campaign, the two sides were pretty similar in terms of strength of Brexit-related identity. Most striking, however, is how the strength of the Remain identity increased while the strength of Leave dropped slightly. Since then, the average level of identification with Leave or Remain has remained higher than the strength of identification with any political party.

Moreover, the social embeddedness of Leave and Remain becomes even more pronounced when we look at the social and psychological markers of identity. When asked whether "when I speak about the Remain/Leave side, I usually say "we" instead of "they"", the proportion of Leavers agreeing leapt from 44% to 66% after the referendum. More strikingly, however, the proportion of Remainers agreeing rose even more substantially, from 33% to 69%. These figures have remained at these levels, with a small drop only during the general election campaign. The equivalent figure for parties is only 25%.

Similarly, when asked whether "When people criticize the Remain/Leave side, it feels like a personal insult" we saw a large increase in agreement after the referendum from around 20% up to 42%, which has remained stable for much of the time since. For the parties, only around 20% of Conservative and 28% of Labour identifiers tend to respond in this way.

When asked whether "I have a lot in common with other supporters of the Remain/Leave side", agreement among Leavers tends to hover around 78% and Remainers 85%. Immediately after the referendum, agreement with this statement reached a staggering 93% among Remainers. For parties, the comparable figure is 60-70s.

Views on the differences between the two sides beyond the issue of Brexit itself are also informative. We asked Leavers and Remainers "How much do you have in common with people who want to leave/remain in the EU (apart from what they think about Europe)?" There was an increasing sense of similarity with their own side – regardless of Brexit views – (from 56% to 75%) for Remainers after the referendum. Remainers also felt very little connection with Leavers (9%). Leavers increased their sense of similarity with other Leavers though not by as much (66% to 70%) and were also a little more open to a sense of similarity with Remainers (12% up to 21%). These responses had hardly changed six months later.

The EU referendum seems to have resulted in a classic in-group versus out-group response, especially from Remainers. The social and emotional intensity of these Brexit identities – held by almost everybody – is far higher than those for parties. The latter increased a little during the 2017 general election, especially for Labour, but then subsided. A Brexit identity remained prevalent and consequential even two years after the referendum itself. We are a long way removed from the idea that Britain 'has come together' to face the challenge of Brexit. Social polarization is pronounced and shows no sign of diminishing.

The Brexit identity divide

Sara Hobolt and James Tilley

Britain is only weeks away from leaving the European Union. There is limited support for the Prime Minister's negotiated Brexit deal, and the consequences of a no deal Brexit are increasingly apparent. It may come as a surprise, therefore, that the public isn't having second thoughts about Brexit. A majority of the public thinks it was wrong to vote to leave the EU, but this is a very slim majority. Very few Leave voters have changed their minds about Brexit.

One reason for this stability is that the EU referendum has triggered strong identities along Brexit lines. Figure 1 shows the proportions of people who either feel close to one side or the other (British Election Study data) or identify as a 'Leaver' or a 'Remainer' (using our survey-tracker data, collected by YouGov). Most people now have one of these identities (see also the piece by Evans and Schaffner in this report) and the proportion in each camp has changed little since the referendum.

Figure 1: Proportion of people who identify as Leavers or Remainers
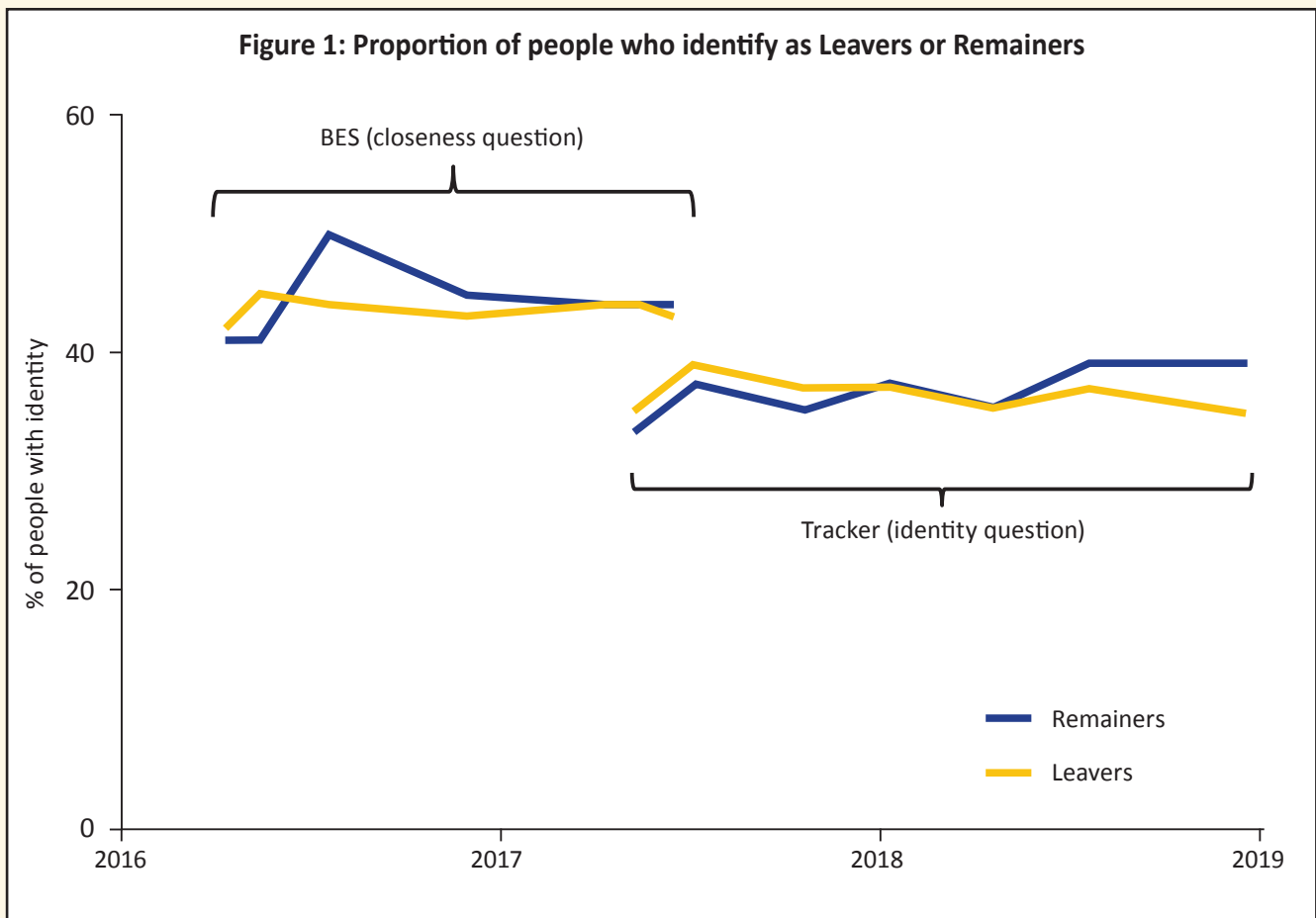
Note: The BES data use a question that asks whether people feel close to the Remain or Leave side. Our Survey Tracker data use a question that asks whether people think of themselves as Leavers or Remainers

These new identities shape how people view the consequences of Brexit. We know that political identities such as party identification affect how people select and interpret new information. For example, supporters of parties in government tend to think that the economy performed well, whereas supporters of the opposition tend to think economic performance was poor. Partisan identities lead people to construct economic 'facts' to fit existing prejudices.

A similar process of motivated reasoning applies to people with Brexit identities. For example, as Rob Ford and Alan Wager set out in this report, this can have an impact on how voters view the implications of no deal. Leavers voted for Brexit in part because they were optimistic about Britain's future outside the EU and were not persuaded by 'Project Fear'. In contrast, most Remainers were worried about the economic consequences of Brexit. Both groups now tend to interpret new information in ways that reinforce those pre-existing views. There is therefore a considerable gap in how Leavers and Remainers see the consequences of Brexit.

To demonstrate this gap in perceptions, we asked respondents in a series of representative surveys conducted by YouGov whether they "think leaving the European Union will have a positive or negative effect on Britain." The figure shows that people who identify as Leavers consistently think that Brexit will have a positive effect on Britain. This has not changed significantly over the last 18 months, even as assessments of the negotiations with the EU have become progressively more negative among both Leavers and Remainers. On the other side, Remainers have remained staunchly pessimistic about the outlook for Britain after Brexit.

Figure 2: Views of Remainers and Leavers on the consequences of Brexit for Britain
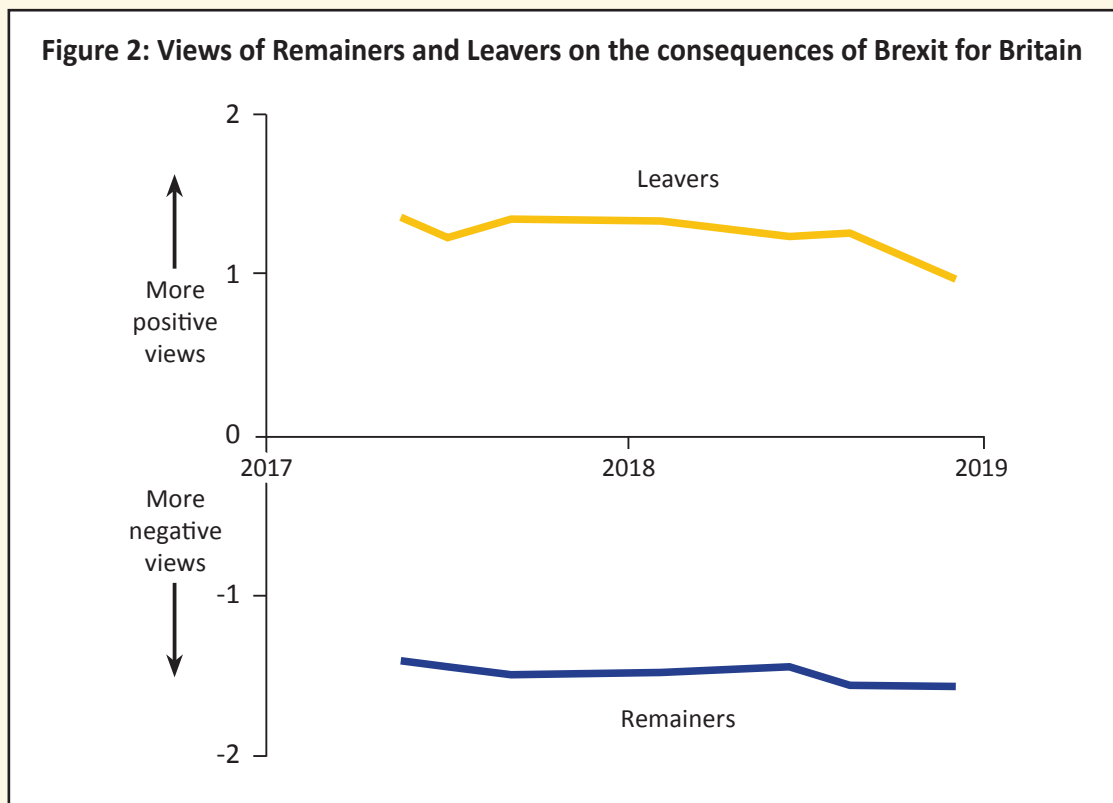
Note: 3 indicates very positive view of Brexit for Britain, -3 indicates very negative view of Brexit for Britain

We also asked people what they thought the effect would be for them personally. Again, we see a clear gap in perceptions. While the differences are smaller, there is still an obvious divide between the optimism of Leavers and the pessimism of Remainers. And again, this divide has remained extremely stable throughout the negotiation period.

Figure 3: Views of Remainers and Leavers on the consequences of Brexit for them personally
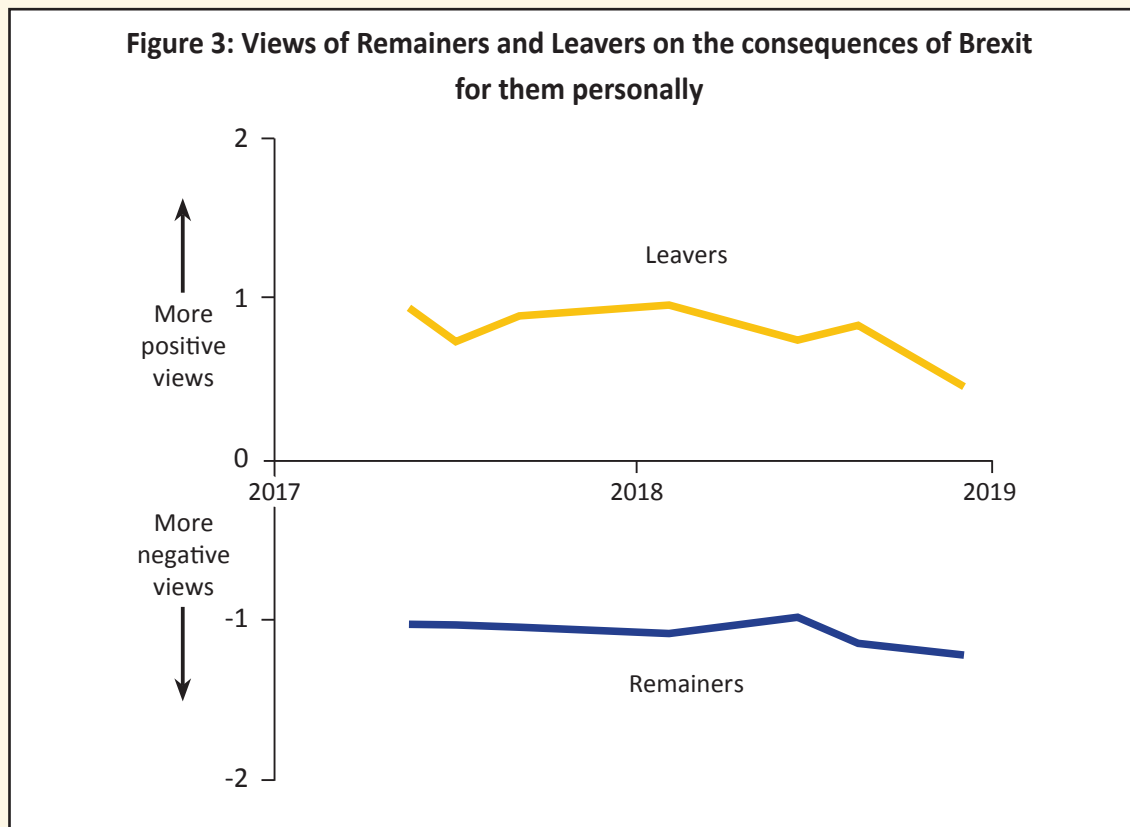
Note: 3 indicates very positive view of Brexit for themselves personally, -3 indicates very negative view of Brexit for themselves personally

Finally, we see the same patterns when we ask people to tell us in their own words what they think will be the implications of Brexit. In July 2018, 87% of Remainers mentioned some kind of negative consequence compared to only 18% of Leavers. Conversely, 61% of Leavers mentioned some kind of positive consequence compared to only 3% of Remainers. These numbers are essentially the same as in April 2017 when we first started asking these questions. Leavers remain upbeat about the prospects of new trade deals, greater sovereignty and more control over immigration. On the other hand, Remainers tend to talk about negative economic consequences.

In short, the prolonged Brexit negotiations that were meant to bring greater clarity to the future have done little to bring people together. Today, (and as several other contributors have noted) Britain remains as divided as ever on the question of what Brexit will mean for the country.

National identity and Brexit preferences

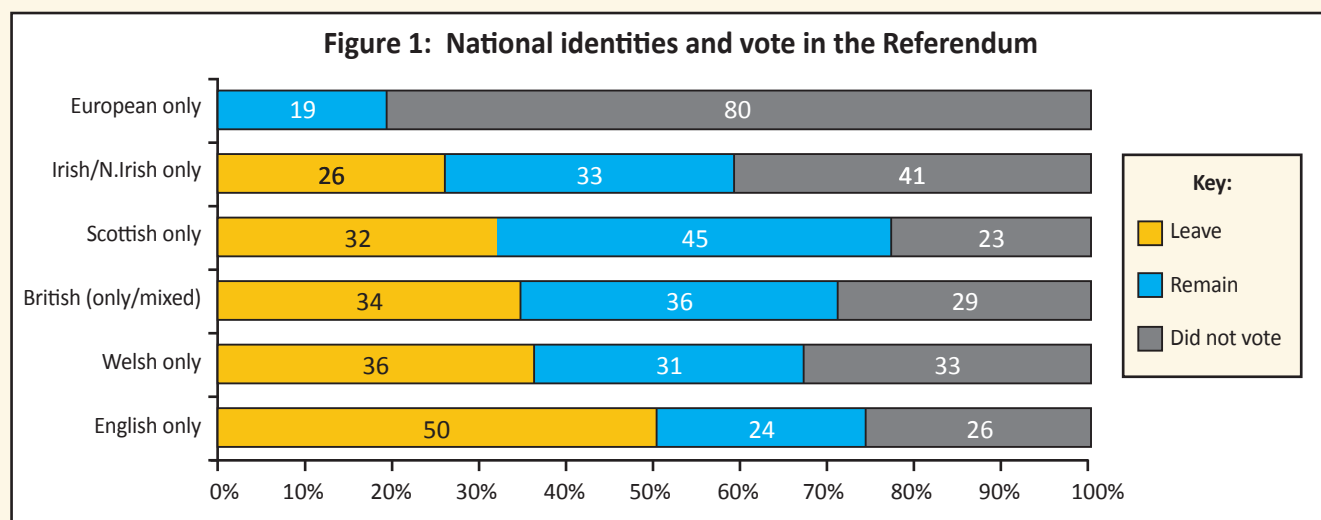## Anthony Heath and Lindsay Richards

Support for Brexit varied across the constituent territories of the United Kingdom. Majorities to Remain in Scotland and Northern Ireland contrasted with majorities to Leave in Wales and England. This suggests that national identities, and the different nations' perceptions of their group interests vis-à-vis the EU, might well have shaped voters' decisions about whether to vote Leave or Remain.

However, UK national identities are complex. Separate British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, and Northern Irish identities – and combinations of dual or multiple identities – create a melting pot. It has been well established that these patterns of single and multiple identities are politically relevant. For example, people with British identities (either alone or in combination with a Welsh, Scottish or Irish identity) are more likely to support membership of the United Kingdom. Those with an exclusively Welsh, Scottish or Irish identity – who do not see themselves as being British – are, naturally, more likely to support Welsh or Scottish independence, or the reunification of Ireland.

People with a British identity (either as a single or dual identity) represent a substantial majority of the population, and can perhaps be regarded as expressing the voice of the 'British people'. They are fairly evenly divided between Leave and Remain. The relatively small minorities who do not subscribe to a British identity but describe themselves only as Irish, Scottish, or European are substantially more inclined to Remain. A substantial minority of people describe themselves as English not British. This is the identity group most likely to favour Brexit, and to favour a hard Brexit.

In short, we can regard British identifiers as representing the mainstream of public opinion in the British Isles, while non-British identifiers deviate from this mainstream to greater or lesser degrees. English identifiers lie on the opposite side of the Brexit divide from Irish and Scottish identifiers. Thus, there seem to be competing exclusive nationalisms – English set against Scottish and Irish – pulling in different directions over Brexit and the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

In our online panel study we asked representative samples of the population how they described their national identity. Respondents were allowed to choose as many options as they wished. Figure 1 shows the overall relationship between the main national identities and Brexit preferences. We arrange them in order of support for Brexit.

Figure 1: National identities and vote in the Referendum

Identity	Leave	Remain	Did not vote
European only	19	80	
Irish/N.Irish only	26	33	41
Scottish only	32	45	23
British (only/mixed)	34	36	29
Welsh only	36	31	33
English only	50	24	26

Key:
Leave
Remain
Did not vote

Source: CSI Brexit Panel Wave 4; N = 3000

Here we see that the British are rather evenly split between Remain and Leave. In contrast, the exclusively English voted by 2:1 for Leave. The exclusively Irish and Scottish were the mirror image, voting predominantly for Remain. However, these latter two groups were greatly outnumbered by the exclusively English respondents, who thus tipped the balance in favour of Brexit.

The exclusively European were notable in their unanimous support for Remain, although very few did in fact vote (this group is likely to be overwhelmingly comprised of European citizens ineligible to vote in 2016). In contrast, the exclusively Welsh tended towards Leave, although not nearly as strongly as the exclusively English.

We can also compare how far these different identity groups favour a hard Brexit. We asked our respondents which of the Prime Minister's main negotiating objectives, as laid out in her Lancaster House speech of January 2017, they felt should be 'red lines' on which the government should not be willing to yield.

Of these negotiating objectives four – such as 'control of our own laws' – can be regarded as central to the Leave programme. The other four – such as 'maintaining an open border with the Republic of Ireland '– can be regarded as maintaining key elements of the status quo, and in that sense akin to a Remain programme. We can calculate the 'net' hardness of each identity group by calculating the net difference in support for the two sets of items.

Figure 2: National identities and negotiating objectives/red lines						
	Regain control of laws	Regain freedom to make trade deals	End budget contributions to EU	End Free movement	Maintain reciprocal Citizens' rights	Maintain access to internal Market
English only	60	63	58	39	46	32
Welsh only	64	49	46	28	55	30
British (only/ mixed)	45	46	42	28	44	32
Scottish only	51	43	28	23	47	32
European only	22	21	24	22	43	19
Irish/ N. Irish only	42	39	30	21	50	38

Source: as per Fig 1

Red: higher than British only/mixed Yellow: about the same as British only/mixed Blue: lower than British only/mixed

Figure 2 shows that, among the exclusively English, there are majorities for whom 'control of our own laws', 'freedom to make trade deals', and 'ending budget contributions' were red lines. In contrast less than a third of the exclusive English regard an 'open border' with the Republic, 'maintaining scientific collaboration' and 'access to the internal market' as red lines in the negotiations. Overall, then, they have a high positive net score (+78) indicating support for a relatively hard Brexit.

On the opposite side come the exclusive Irish and Scottish identifiers who both have negative net scores (- 21 and -16 respectively). The Irish are notable for their emphasis on maintaining an open border while the Scots are notable for not sharing English concerns about the four key elements of the Leave programme.

The British identifiers fall in between, and can be thought of as representing the mainstream. Unlike the exclusively English, they do not have a majority in favour of any of the four key elements of the Brexit programme. The modest net positive scores (+18) suggest that it might be fairest to count them as, on average, favouring a soft Brexit. The will of the British people is then quite divided, but tilting towards a soft Brexit. Hard Brexit is much more evident on the part of those who describe themselves as English, not British.
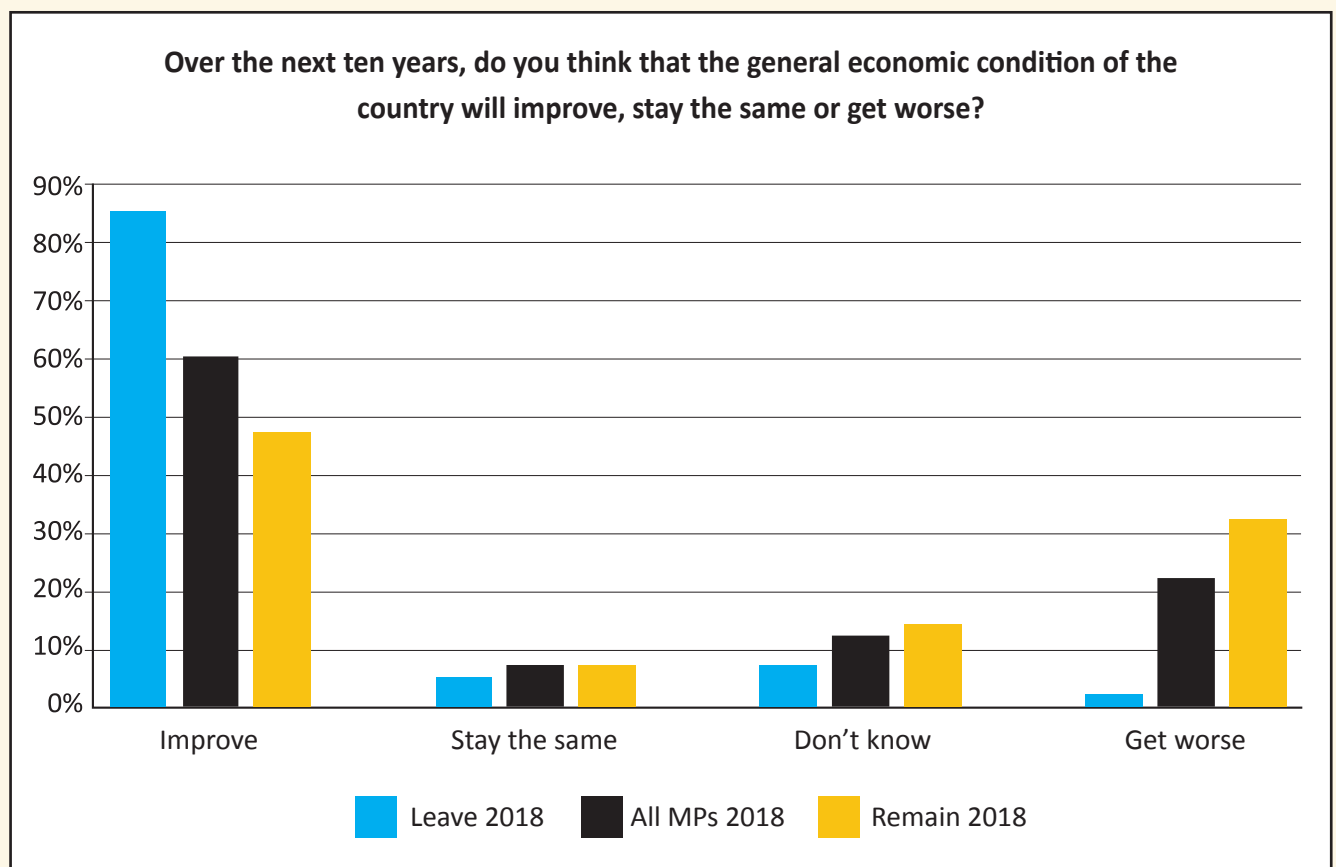
What do the parties want from Brexit?

MPs

Alan Wager and Philip Cowley

Amid all the noise, it is sometimes easy to forget that Brexit is driven by competing long-term visions for the UK.

The annual surveys organised by the UK in a Changing Europe and the Mile End Institute have asked MPs a series of big picture questions, requiring them to peer ahead and look beyond the immediate, to help us understand how they think both the UK and the EU will fare after Brexit. Polled in November and December 2018, MPs' answers reveal very different hopes and fears about what it will mean for the country's future.

In general, MPs expect the economy to improve over the next decade. This is perhaps unsurprising – after all, economic forecasts on the impact of Brexit differ only over the level of overall growth, rather than the existence of it. Some 60% of MPs think that the general economic condition of the country will improve over the next ten years – the view of 83% of Conservative MPs, and a slim plurality (42-36%) of Labour MPs. However, as figure 1 shows, differences between MPs who voted Leave and Remain are almost as important as those between parties. MPs in favour of Brexit have a far sunnier economic disposition than Remainers: 85% of MPs who voted Leave expect an upward trajectory, against just 47% of those who voted Remain.

Over the next ten years, do you think that the general economic condition of the country will improve, stay the same or get worse?

Legend: Leave 2018 (blue), All MPs 2018 (black), Remain 2018 (yellow)

The economic optimism of Conservatives can be largely explained by the fact they overwhelmingly buy into the idea that trade policy will have a net positive, or at least neutral, effect. Some 58% of Conservatives, and 66% of Leavers, expect the benefits of an independent UK trade policy to more than outweigh any costs of Brexit – numbers which rise to 85% and 95% respectively if we include those that anticipate no net trade-off for the economy. And despite the rocky progress that Brexit has made – and the fact that few talk anymore of trade deals being the "easiest in human history" – the optimism of Leavers remains almost identical (indeed, if anything slightly higher) to when the same question was asked in 2017.

As contributions from Sunder Katwala and Rob Ford have set out in this report, immigration was a determining factor in the referendum outcome and has been a driving force behind government policy on Brexit since. Overall MPs expect the downward trend on net migration numbers to continue over the next five years: only 26% of MPs think immigration will increase, while 48% expect immigration to the UK to fall between now and 2024. There was also no discernible difference between Leavers and Remainers on this point – 46% of Leavers expect a fall, as do 49% of those who voted Remain.

Implicit in this data – and the fact pro-Brexit parliamentarians are much more optimistic about the economy and the UK's direction – is the fact that a majority of MPs continue to be convinced, for better or worse, that Brexit will happen. When we asked whether MPs expect the UK to become a member of the EU again in the next 20 years, only 24% of MPs thought that was likely. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no Conservative or Leave MPs expected this; yet by 45% to 37% even Remain MPs felt that a reversal of Brexit was not on the cards.

MPs view what is likely to happen around Brexit through the same partisan lens as voters. Brexit looks very different to MPs who voted Remain than it does to those who voted Leave. There is perhaps some cold comfort in this: Parliament represents the views of a country where interpretations of evidence about Brexit are similarly motivated by identities formed by their Brexit vote (see the piece by Hobolt and Tilley).

So, MPs are largely of the view that Brexit will happen, but they are split on their prognosis for what it is likely to mean. They are also not agreed on the diagnosis of what has caused social and political division in the country. If you are an MP who voted Leave, you are overwhelmingly likely to think the process of Brexit has highlighted divisions that were already present in society: 78% of Leaver MPs subscribe to this view. Those who voted Remain, on the other hand, have a far more mixed perspective: 52% think the principal effect of Brexit was that existing divisions were exposed, but 39% think that the creation of new division has been the more important outcome.

We have a divided Parliament, but perhaps one increasingly aware of the divided country it represents.

Party Members

Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti

If anything beats chalk and cheese in terms of differences, then it's the views of Labour and Conservative Party members on all things Brexit. It may not be entirely surprising that they think very differently about the UK's relationship with the EU. However, some of the differences between them are now so pronounced as to be differences not just of degree but of kind.

We should perhaps start with the one thing they do agree on – sort of. Namely that 'Britain Leaving the EU' is by far the most important issue currently facing the country. Even on this, however, they're not entirely of one mind.

We gave Tory and Labour Party members the same list of twelve issues to choose from and asked each of them to tell us what they thought the three most important were. Some 61% of Labour members (like 60% of all voters, incidentally) put Brexit top – pretty impressive, especially when you consider how far in front that means it is compared to traditionally big issues for Labour supporters like health (ranked number one by just 9%), the economy (3%), housing (6%), the environment (9%), and welfare benefits/Universal Credit (7%).

But for the Tories, Brexit wasn't simply important, it arguably bordered on the obsessional. One in five Labour members didn't name it in their top three at all. That's true of only one in ten Tories, a whopping three-quarters (75%) of whom said Brexit was the most important issue facing the UK today.
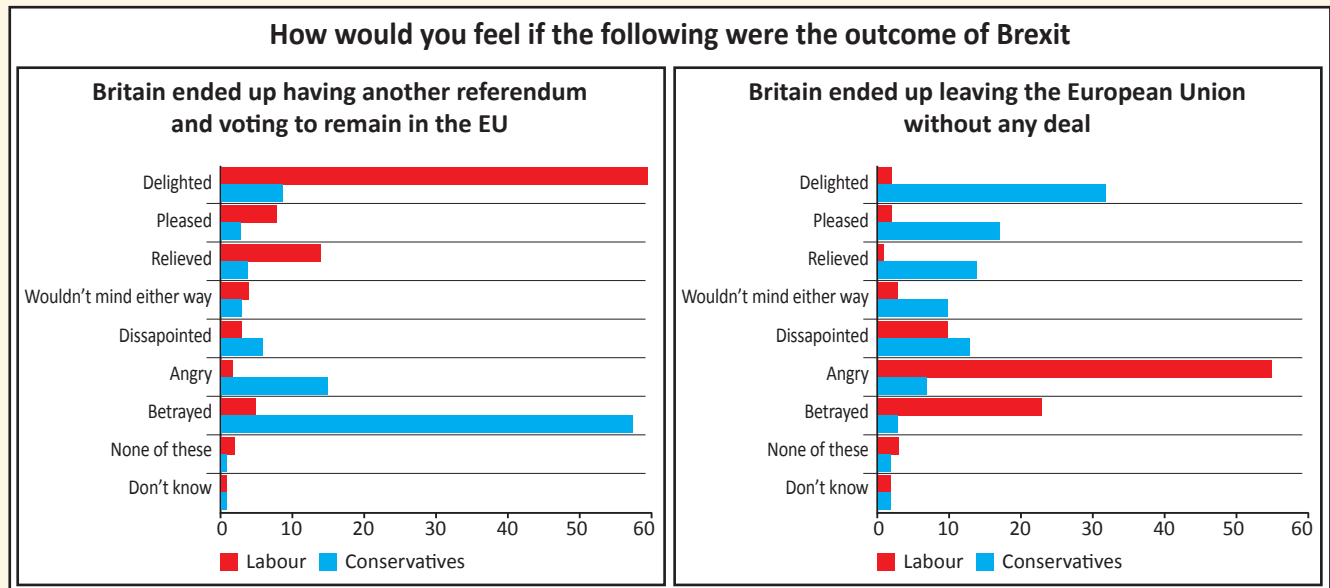
Once we go beyond mere salience, the gap between Labour and Tory members becomes the proverbial chasm. Take what they voted in the EU referendum: 83% of Labour members plumped for Remain; 73% of Tory members went for Leave. In hindsight, 89% of Labour members thought the country was wrong to vote for Brexit, while 79% of Tories were convinced it got the decision right.

Not surprisingly perhaps, some 82% of Conservative Party members were opposed to holding another referendum if Mrs May's deal couldn't get parliamentary approval, while 79% of Labour members wanted to see another vote held.

We also asked members of both parties what their first preference would be in a three-way referendum that offered them the choice between Remain, the government's deal, and Leave without a deal. Some 88% of Labour members said Remain, 3% said the government's deal, and only 5% said No Deal. For their Tory counterparts the figures were 15% and 23%, and 57% respectively.

We asked, too, how people would feel about various outcomes. Were the UK to leave without a deal, for example, 32% of Tory members said they would be delighted, 17% pleased and 14% relieved. Yet that same outcome prompted 10% of Labour members to say they would feel disappointed, 55% of them to say they'd feel angry and 23% of them to say they'd feel betrayed. How about the UK holding a referendum and staying in the EU? In that event, 60% of Labour members said they'd feel delighted, 8% pleased and 14% relieved. Tory members, on the other hand, said they'd feel disappointed (6%), angry (15%) and betrayed (58%).

Moreover, the two sets of members had hugely contrasting views as to the upsides and downsides of leaving with no deal – the ultimate hard Brexit, if you like. Some 64% of Conservative members believed it would have a positive impact on the country's economy in the medium to long term – a belief held by just 6% of their Labour counterparts, 89% of whom believed the impact would be negative.

How would you feel if the following were the outcome of Brexit

Britain ended up having another referendum and voting to remain in the EU

Categories (top to bottom): Delighted, Pleased, Relieved, Wouldn't mind either way, Dissapointed, Angry, Betrayed, None of these, Don't know

Legend: Labour, Conservatives

Britain ended up leaving the European Union without any deal

Categories (top to bottom): Delighted, Pleased, Relieved, Wouldn't mind either way, Dissapointed, Angry, Betrayed, None of these, Don't know

Legend: Labour, Conservatives

And when it came to warnings that 'crashing out' could lead to severe short-term disruption, such as shortages of food and medicine, some 82% of Labour's grassroots thought those warnings were realistic. For the Tories, the figure was just 18%; some 76% believed that such warnings were exaggerated or invented.

Chalk and cheese, then, doesn't really begin to describe quite how polarised the partisans of Britain's two biggest parties are on Brexit. They are more like two tribes, each of which sees the issue from a completely different point of view. How much this will influence those they select as their representatives in parliament – and, if it does, how long past March 2019 the big differences between them will matter – is a moot point. It could be that in time Brexit will cease to be seen as so important. Or, as Sara Hobolt and James Tilley suggest in this report, it could continue to define British party politics for the foreseeable future.

It could also profoundly shake up the existing party system. If Brexit isn't delivered to their satisfaction, then there may soon be a lot of very unhappy Conservative Party members looking for a new home. Yet if it is, and Jeremy Corbyn is seen by his rank and file to have enabled it, then the same might be true for Labour party members too. Watch this space.

Will the Conservative Party split?

Anand Menon and Alan Wager

The Conservative party is in turmoil. Just 32% of Conservative MPs who do not currently hold a government job voted for the government's Brexit deal. Unless the competing factions of the party can be reconciled, this risks not merely making the Prime Minister's life uncomfortable, but also splintering her party.

Yet taking a step back and looking at British politics through the lens of public opinion, it is, on one level, hard to see why Theresa May is in difficulty at all. The Conservative Party, if not in rude health, has certainly seen worse days. Headline voting intention stubbornly puts the Conservative and Labour parties in a near-statistical tie. Public perceptions of Theresa May consistently outrank those of Jeremy Corbyn. The government's approval rating looks more like a case of mid-term blues than a party on the verge of collapse.

This is because the Conservative Party's existential crisis is primarily internal. The likelihood of a split is exacerbated not just by the sheer numbers on each side of the Tory Brexit divide, but its nature. On Brexit, the instincts of the party's 124,000 members and 330 MPs run counter to those who have, for the last fifteen years, run the Conservative Party. The views of members and MPs appear irreconcilable with what will be needed in a deal that could command a majority in parliament.

Take first the members of the Conservative Party. 75% of these say Brexit is the key issue facing British politics. As Tim Bale, Monica Poletti and Paul Webb outline in this report, the overwhelming majority of members are intensely relaxed about the prospect of a no deal Brexit. Two-thirds of them do not think the government's negotiated deal honours the referendum.

As Figure 1 illustrates, more Conservative voters (67%) than Conservative members (51%) think Theresa May is doing a good job as Prime Minister. More Conservative voters (46%) than Conservative members (38%) support Theresa May's draft Brexit deal. And, according to YouGov and the ESRC's Party Members Project, 54% of party members who voted Leave thought that, following the defeat of the government's deal, Theresa May should have resigned. Ipsos Mori found, somewhat remarkably, that 40% of all voters thought the same, and 53% thought the opposite. So, a lower share of the wider public felt the Prime Minister should have immediately resigned after losing the meaningful vote than of members of her party who voted Leave.

There is a widespread assumption that Conservative MPs, with one eye on the wider electorate, might act as a restraining force on these members. Certainly, the Conservative Party's leadership rules give them the opportunity to do so. However, over half of its parliamentarians either do not believe – or have yet to compute – the economic trade-offs that Brexit is likely to involve. It is remarkable that 85% of Conservative MPs – despite the evidence to the contrary – expect any lost trade with the EU following Brexit to be offset by trade with the rest of the world. Only 35% of Conservative MPs accept that there are genuine difficulties to finding a solution to the issue of the Irish border. A denial of the hard choices created by Brexit might well be good internal party politics for prospective leadership candidates. It is not good politics if trying to plot a governing route through Brexit.

If the Conservative Party were universally united behind a hard Brexit, a no deal and a change of leadership, then the party would naturally evolve rather than split. Yet it is worth noting a slim majority of members (51 to 48%) continue to think Theresa May is doing a good job as leader. This is because the Prime Minister has

overwhelming support – by a margin of three-to-one – among the roughly 20% of Tory members who vote Remain and are still party members.

For most of its two-hundred-year history, the Tories have been two parties – one whose instincts are broadly protectionist and nationalist, the other free market and liberal – which are united, above all, by a singular desire for office. If a terminal split is possible Brexit will have been a political event that emanated from the Tory party, but tore it apart.

Do you think that Theresa May is doing well or badly as Prime Minister?
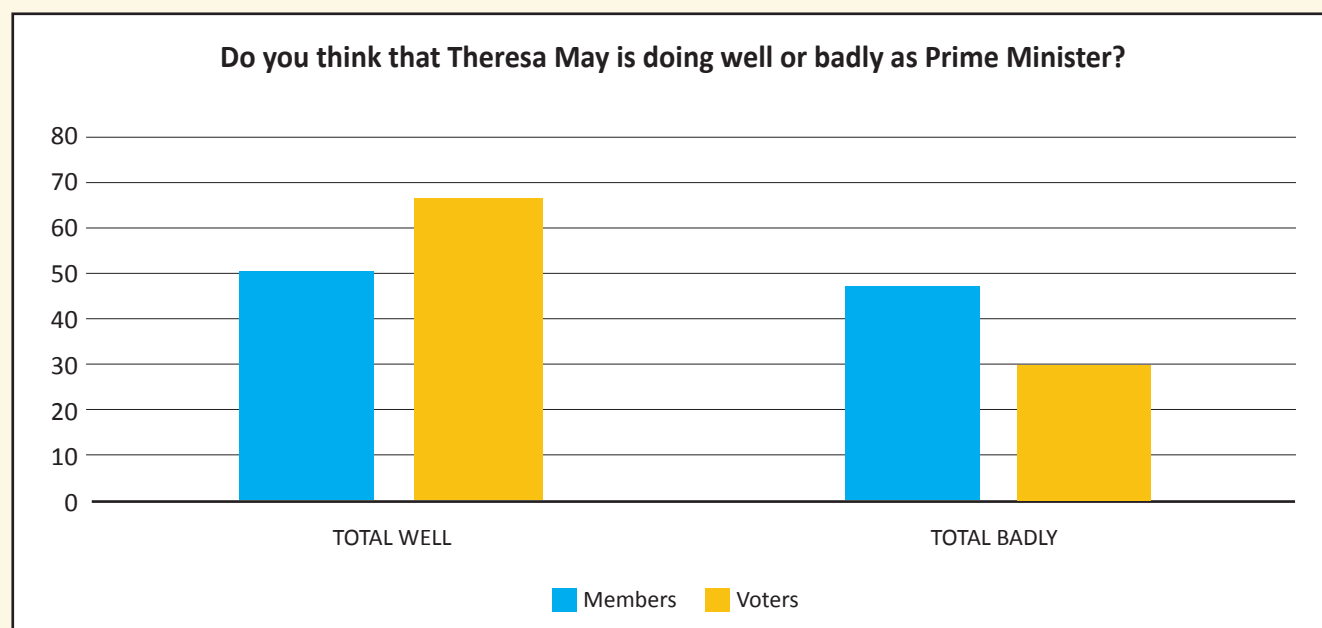
Labour's Brexit dilemma
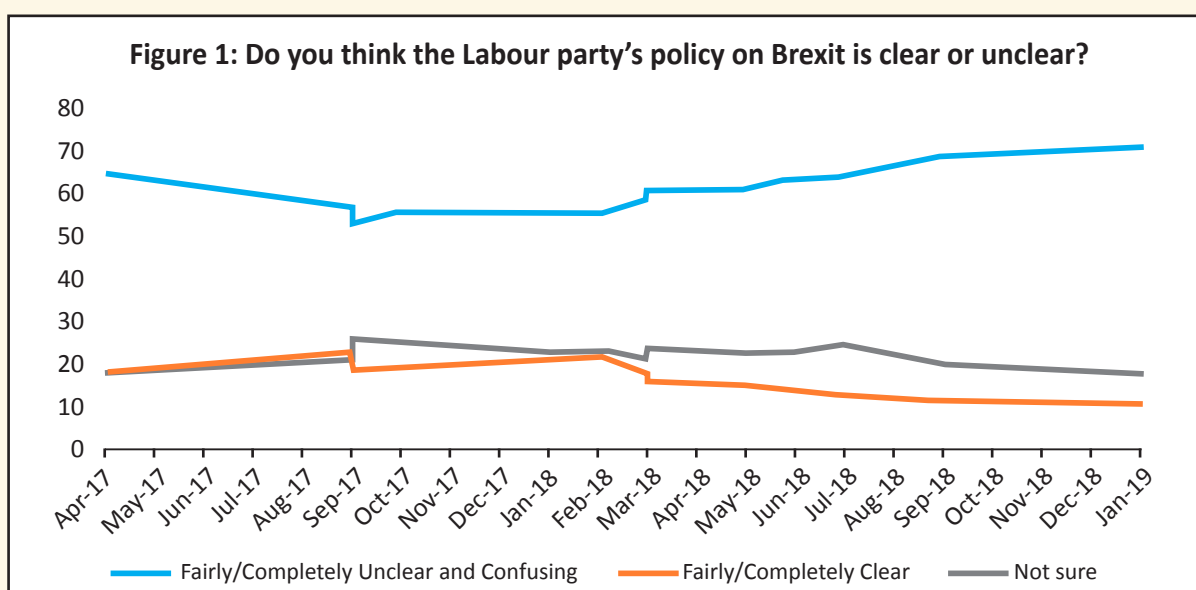
Anand Menon and Alan Wager

The Labour Party's post-conference broadcast 'Our Town' spoke volumes about the party's electoral strategy. Focussing on the need to deliver social and economic regeneration to non metropolitan areas, not once mentioning Brexit, it encapsulated the Corbyn team's electoral priorities.

The Labour leadership clearly believe not only that the most vulnerable element of their electoral coalition are the non-urban constituencies in England and Wales, but also these areas also represent a potential electoral opportunity. Little surprise that the first two stops on John McDonnell's post-conference country-wide tour were the constituencies of Browtowe and Hastings and Rye, where a majority voted Leave and the Conservatives sit on majorities of under 1,000. The calculation is that opposition to Brexit would negate any attempt to woo voters in places like this.

And it has some merit. That being said, it is also something of an oversimplification. Even if a constituency strongly backed Leave, it does not follow that most Labour voters there did so. YouGov's Brexit tracker has shown the number of Labour voters who think Brexit is a bad idea has remained consistent at between 67-72% – the last poll showing 68% of Labour voters holding this view.

Moreover, it does not even necessarily even follow that those swing voters who might hold the key to majorities in such constituencies are Brexit supporters. Analysis by Ian Warren and Kevin Cunningham of the 100 closest-fought constituencies found near-identical numbers of Labour Leavers and Conservative Remainers. And, as Geoffrey Evans and Florian Schaffner set out in this report, Remain has strengthened as a political identity at a faster rate than the Leave identity since 2016.

This is the Labour party's onrunning Brexit bind: ambiguity might be the best available strategy, but it may not be an effective one when it comes to maintaining Labour's 2017 electoral coalition. This ambiguity comes at a price. Rather than being all things to all people, the Labour Party's Brexit position could end up pleasing no one. As Figure 1 shows, a record 71% of voters – 18% higher than following the general election in September 2017 – describe Labour party policy on Brexit as 'unclear and confusing'.

Figure 1: Do you think the Labour party's policy on Brexit is clear or unclear?

Legend: Fairly/Completely Unclear and Confusing — Fairly/Completely Clear — Not sure

Data: YouGov/What UK Thinks

Remainers demanding a further referendum often argue that this constructive ambiguity is not just undesirable, but unviable. Perhaps the biggest message of Jeremy Corbyn's surge in the general election of 2017 was that historical precedents can be overturned. No two elections are the same and there would be a certain irony if the Labour leadership, in the expectation that their fudge in 2017 will reap similar reward next time, were blind to the threat.

It is also worth noting the effect of a small but perceptible increase in support for Remain that has become apparent in opinion polling. This shift, mainly driven by demographic churn in the electorate, translates into a potentially significant shift in terms of constituencies. Chris Hanretty's constituency-level MRP data estimates 403 out of the 632 constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales had majority Leave support in 2016. Now, the situation is reversed: 392 have Remain majorities, 240 would still back Leave. Hastings and Rye was 56% Leave in 2016, but is now 50:50; Broxtowe was 52-48 in support of Leave, but polls suggest it would now be 54-46 Remain.

Figure 2
Labour Constituency Brexit Vote, 2016

Labour Constituency Brexit opinion, today
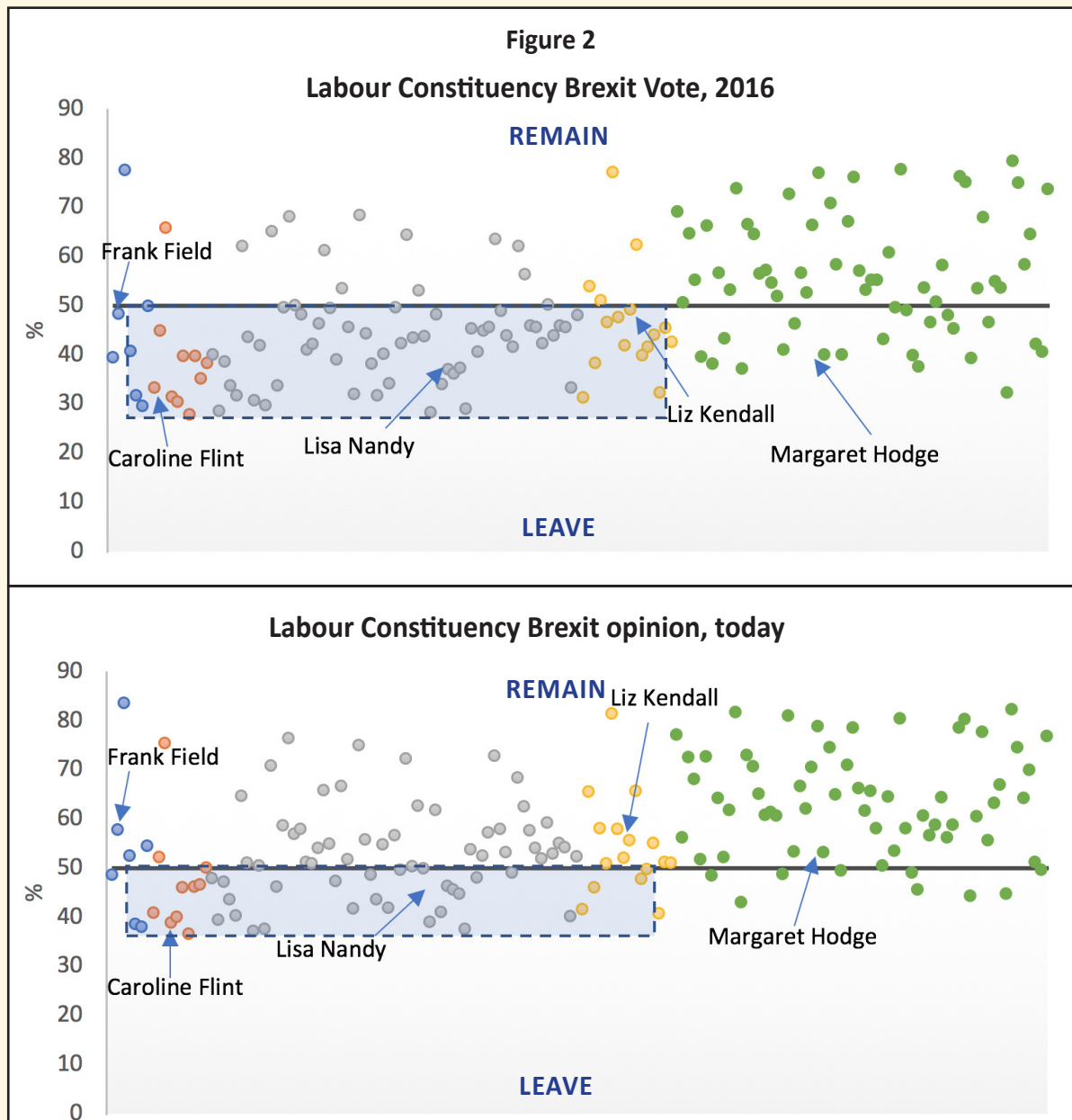
Data: Survation/Chris Hanretty

These constituency level analyses feed into the fast-evolving internal politics of Labour's position in the House of Commons. Significantly, Labour MPs have moved away support for a soft Brexit from single market membership. When we polled Labour MPs in December 2017, 8% said single market membership would not represent a Brexit that honoured the referendum. The figure today is 36%.

These MPs might be emboldened by the fact that, on the polling evidence, their constituencies have moved towards Remain. Figure 2 maps the Parliamentary Labour Party into five tribes: Brexiters such as Frank Field; Re-Leavers like Caroline Flint; those who have so far supported the Labour whip, such as Lisa Nandy; and People's Vote campaigners, such as Margaret Hodge.

In the boxes are the middle groups, on neither extreme of the Brexit debate. The polling evidence suggests the number in those middle three groups – those in Parliament who either Jeremy Corbyn or Theresa May would be focusing on to back a Brexit compromise – represent constituencies increasingly with leave majorities.

The notion of 'Brexit Blairism' underlines the paradox that perhaps the most remarkable similarity between Corbyn and Blair is tolerance for a disjuncture between leadership and membership. More surprising, perhaps, it is a disjuncture that the membership appears willing to tolerate. When asked just before Christmas, 79% of Labour members supported a referendum if Mrs May's deal was rejected in the Commons. Some 61% of Labour members, and 56% of those who voted for Jeremy Corbyn as leader, see Brexit as the most important issue facing the country. 80% would rank it in their top three most-important issues, as would 74% of those who voted for Corbyn. Yet, by a two-to-one margin, these members continue to back Jeremy Corbyn's approach to Brexit.

This may be because the sequencing and logic of the Labour party's conference motion has yet to fully play out, and a referendum has not yet been ruled out by the leadership. It may be because the electoral logic of the Labour Party's ambiguous policy makes strategic sense to Labour members. It is most likely, however, that loyalty and support for Jeremy Corbyn's project currently counters any misgivings about his approach to Brexit. As Brexit choices crystallise this may continue. The salience and importance of Brexit could yet fade before any general election. However, this is a political gamble.

The SNP, Brexit and the politics of independence

Coree Brown Swan

Membership of the EU forms one of the core pillars of the SNP's vision of independence. The Scottish government's white paper, published before the independence referendum in 2014, warned a No vote could lead to Scotland leaving the EU against its will. Following the failed referendum on independence in September 2014, the party maintained its position that independence would occur within a European framework.

As the possibility of an in/out referendum on European Union membership appeared more likely, the SNP warned that this would constitute a 'material change of circumstance' which would provide a mandate for second referendum on independence. The party positioned Scotland as more pro-European than its English counterparts, a position which was borne out in polling prior to the referendum and in the referendum result. Turnout in the 2016 vote was lower in Scotland: 67%, in contrast to 72% for the UK as a whole. This was perhaps an indication that the issue of EU membership was less salient north of the border.

Speaking the day after the vote, Nicola Sturgeon argued that a second referendum on independence was 'back on the table', with another referendum 'highly likely'. The SNP-led government has focused on making a case for a differentiated settlement for Scotland. Its December 2016 report 'Scotland's Place in Europe' set out its proposals for a very soft Brexit, including maintaining Scotland's position within the European single market. In March 2017, Nicola Sturgeon requested the competences to hold a referendum be transferred and was informed by the PM that 'now is not the time'.

In light of ongoing uncertainty about the form Brexit may take, the party has urged its supporters to be patient. Speaking at the October 2018 party conference, Sturgeon was both cautious and encouraging, arguing that: 'as we wait – impatiently, at times, I know – for this phase of negotiations to conclude and for the fog of Brexit to clear, be in no doubt about this. The last two years have shown why Scotland needs to be independent.' Sturgeon's caution is motivated by two factors – the need to see what form Brexit will take and the desire to ensure a second referendum is winnable. The party faces pressure from within – new and mobilised members who wish to capitalise on Brexit to secure independence – and outwith, as a party in its third term of government with competition from both Labour and unexpectedly the Conservatives, who moved into second place following the 2016 Holyrood election. Despite high-profile rallies in favour of independence, public opinion does not yet support such a move.

As Ian Montagu has outlined in this report, while several polls conducted immediately after the 2016 referendum suggested a narrow majority in favour of independence, this 'Brexit bounce' has not been maintained in subsequent polling. The British Social Attitudes survey has found that support for independence has remained largely stable in light of Brexit, with around 48% of respondents saying they would vote in favour of independence. While the 2014 campaign was able to capture undecided voters, narrowing the gap in the polls, there is unlikely to be an untapped well of undecided voters in a future referendum. They also find a significant number of Scots can be classed as eurosceptic, proposing exit from the EU (19%) or a reduction in its powers (39%) which makes campaigning on a pro-European platform more challenging.

Even within the SNP, issues of independence and EU membership are more complex than we might assume, given the position of MPs and MSPs and the prominence of EU flags at independence rallies and marches.

In 2015, the party's voters were split between europhiles and eurosceptics. In 2017, the party lost support amongst those sceptical of the EU, defined as those in favour of exiting or reducing its powers. However, a survey of party members conducted after the 2017 elections found that SNP members preferred far reaching ties with the European Union, with 95% endorsing Britain's continued membership of the single market and 91% endorsing the customs union. This bolsters the SNP's demands for a unique solution for Scotland if it remains within the UK.

For the SNP, Brexit presents a dilemma. In many ways, it makes the case for independence more compelling. The SNP can argue that there is a clear divergence between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, which has resulted in Scotland being dragged out of the EU against its will. However, on a practical level, the model of Scottish independence presented in 2014 will need substantial revisions. This case for independence was contingent on continued membership of the EU for both Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. A scenario in which Scotland remained within the EU and the UK exited would be very different from the independence envisaged in 2014. The 2014 proposals stressed close integration, the maintenance of the currency union, close economic and social ties, and open borders, a model facilitated by the membership of both countries in the European Union. As the SNP looks to the future, they may have to return to the drawing board.
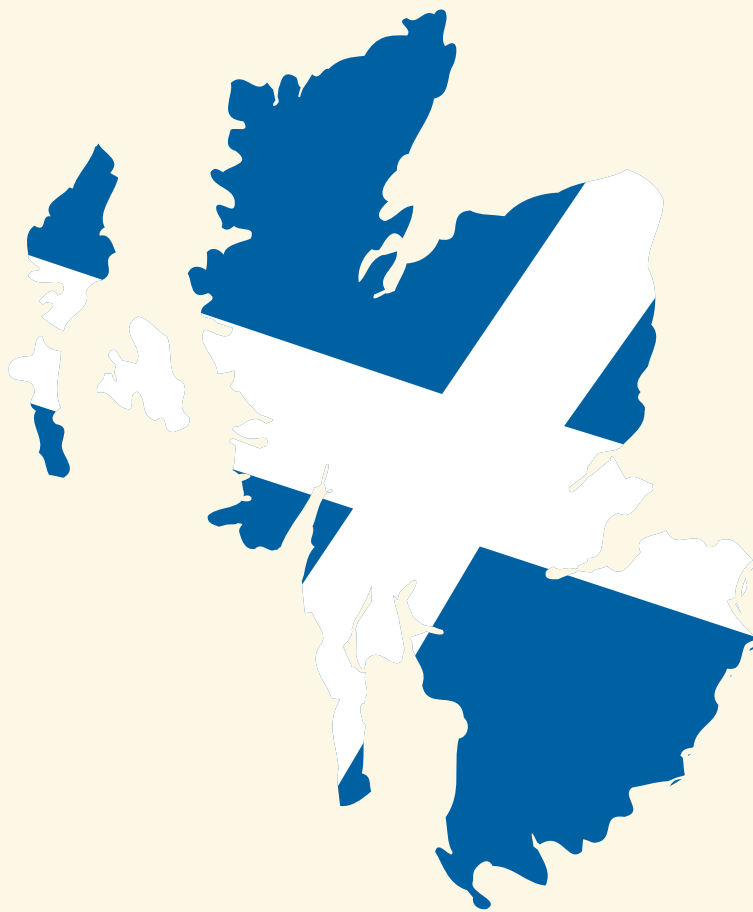
What do voters want from Brexit?

A further referendum?

John Curtice

Should there be another referendum on Brexit? Some argue that one reason why there should is that, when the country voted in 2016, no one knew the terms and conditions on which the UK would exit the EU. Meanwhile, others have suggested that the risk of the House of Commons failing to make a decision about the future of Brexit means that another ballot is the only way of resolving the issue. However, critics point out that voters were told in advance of the original referendum that its outcome would be dutifully followed, and that to revisit the issue would be a betrayal of that promise.

What do voters think? The issue has been addressed by numerous polls, including some conducted on behalf of those campaigning for another ballot. The picture they have painted has proven to be far more nuanced than those on either side of the argument would probably like to admit.

Since the draft EU Withdrawal Treaty was first unveiled in the middle of November, no less than ten differently worded questions designed to discover what the public thinks have been included in published polls. Table 1 gives some details. It shows the wording for each question, as well as the balance of support and opposition it uncovered. In a few instances, the same question was asked more than once, but in each case the results were similar and so we simply show the most recent result. As well as showing the balance of support and opposition among all voters, we also show the position separately among those who in 2016 voted Remain and those who supported Leave.

The nine readings are listed in rank order of the level of support for holding a second ballot (among all respondents) less the level of opposition. Thus, at the top end of the table a poll from BMG Research suggests that supporters of another ballot outnumber opponents by 22 points, whereas at the bottom there is a reading from YouGov in which opponents are 13 points more numerous than supporters.

How can we possibly make sense of this sharp divergence? The answer lies in looking systematically at the difference in the wording of the questions. In the table, we classify this according to two criteria. The first is whether it refers to holding a 'People's' or a 'public' vote or, instead, asks only about holding another referendum. The second is whether or not the question specifies that remaining in the EU would be one of the questions on the ballot paper.

Both criteria make a difference. All five polls at the top of the table, where the balance of support proved most favourable to the idea, asked respondents about holding a 'People's' or 'public' vote. These polls also did not indicate what the options would be on the ballot paper. In contrast, the five at the bottom, where the idea proved less popular, all spoke only of another referendum. One of these did not specify that remaining in the EU would be an option, and this is the one instance where there was a small plurality in favour of a referendum, albeit a smaller one than in any of the questions that asked about a 'People's' or a 'public' vote. In contrast, all four polls that both referred to holding a 'second' or 'new' referendum' and indicated that remaining would be an option uncovered more opponents than supporters.

Question Blue: refers to People's Vote/Public Vote Orange: refers only to (Second) Referendum	Question Specifies Remain Option on ballot	% support - % oppose among		
		All voters	Voted Remain 2016	Voted Leave 2016
Would you support the British **public** having the **final vote** on Brexit, whatever the outcome of negotiations – whether a deal is reached or not? *BMG Research 8-11 January 19*	No	44-28 **+22**	67-15 **+52**	28-45 **-17**
From what you know of the Government's draft Brexit deal, do you support or oppose the public having a final say on the deal through a **'People's Vote'?** *Populus, 15-16 November 18*	No	44-30 **+14**	65-16 **+49**	29-47 **-18**
When the UK Government's negotiations over the terms of Britain's exit from the EU are complete, would you support or oppose holding a **People's Vote** - a referendum - asking the public their view? *Survation, 10-11 January 19*	No	46-34 **+12**	71-18 **+53**	26-58 **-32**
Would you support or oppose a **public vote** on whether to accept the deal? *YouGov, 28-29 November 18*	No	45-36 **+9**	63-25 **+38**	31-55 **-24**
In the event that the Government is unable to get its Brexit deal with the EU through Parliament, do you think there should be some form of **public vote** on what to do next? *Opinium, 18-20 December 18*	No	46-41 **+5**	69-18 **+51**	24-65 **-41**
Imagine that Parliament votes to reject the proposed Brexit deal... Would you support or oppose holding a **referendum** on the deal if Parliament voted to reject the proposed Brexit deal? *YouGov, 18-19 December 18*	No	41-38 **+3**	69-18 **+51**	19-65 **-46**
Would you support or oppose a **second referendum** on British membership of the European Union once negotiations with the EU are concluded? *Deltapoll 13-14 December 18*	Yes	43-46 **-3**	70-20 **+50**	18-76 **-58**
Should there be a **second referendum**, to decide between leaving the EU on the terms agreed in the draft Brexit agreement, or remaining in the EU? *Ashcroft, 20-22 November 18*	Yes	38-47 **-11**	66-21 **+45**	11-79 **-68**
Thinking about scenarios for how the UK might leave the EU, and taking account of where we are in the Brexit process, would you support or oppose each of the following? Holding a **second referendum** on whether to Remain or Leave *ComRes, 30 November-2 December 18*	Yes	40-50 **-10**	71-17 **+54**	11-80 **-69**
In principle, do you think there should or should not be a **new referendum** held on whether Britain should leave the European Union or remain a member? *YouGov, 7-8 January 2019*	Yes	36-49 **-13**	66-24 **+42**	10-80 **-70**

Why do these differences arise? A clue can be obtained from looking separately at the pattern of responses among those who voted Remain and those who supported Leave. All eight polls find that there is a substantial majority of Remain supporters in favour of another ballot. Moreover, for the most part, the size of that majority does not vary a great deal from one poll to another. Irrespective of how the question is asked, most find that around two-thirds of Remain voters back a second ballot, while only around a fifth are opposed.

In contrast, every single poll finds that more Leave voters are opposed to another ballot than are in favour. But the scale of that opposition tends to vary according to the question asked. In the four polls that asked about the possibility of a 'People's' or a 'public' vote, on average 28% of Leave voters said that they were in favour while 54% are opposed. But in the four polls that ascertained whether there should be a 'second' or 'new' referendum in which remaining in the EU would be one of the options, on average only 13% say that they are in favour, while as many as 79% are opposed.

It seems that some Leave voters, at least, begin to warm to the idea of another ballot when it is implied that its purpose would be to enable voters (like themselves) to decide the fate of the Brexit deal that the government has negotiated. However, this support largely disappears when it is made clear it might result in a reversal of the decision to leave the EU.

Any claims that the polls show a widespread clamour for a second referendum have to be treated with care. The proposal is one that, so far at least, appeals much more strongly to the half of the country that would like to see Brexit reversed than it does to those who support Brexit. True, there are signs that perhaps some Leave supporters could be persuaded to support another ballot - if it were to be portrayed as a chance for voters to decide the fate of the government's Brexit deal. But unless that were to happen, it would seem unlikely that holding any such ballot would succeed in healing the division and polarisation that has come to characterise the Brexit debate.

No deal

Rob Ford and Alan Wager

If the UK leaves the EU without a deal, it is widely (though far from universally) accepted within government, Parliament and the world of Brexit academic research that there will be some significant short-term social and economic disruption. However, the likelihood of such an outcome may well depend on how costly it is perceived to be by both MPs, and the voters to whom they are accountable.

There are three questions that will play a part in determining the political implications of a no deal Brexit. First, do the public understand what no deal is likely to involve? Second, what do MPs think about the likely effects of no deal, and how does this compare to public opinion? Third, if some sections of the public and some MPs remain sceptical of the 'real world' effects forecasted, who are they?

It is worth starting with what the public very clearly knows to be true. Despite claims to the contary, there is no polling evidence to suggest that any significant section of the population think a no deal Brexit would mean that the UK would remain in the EU. Just 4% think that no deal means a reversion to the status quo ante. Only 8% think that 'nothing important would really change' if the UK left the EU without a deal. While Leave voters are three times more likely to think this – 12% versus 4% – the idea that no deal would not be an event with consequences, for good or bad, is not widely held.

Towards the end of 2018, the concept of a 'managed no deal' became the newest entry in the Brexit lexicon. Leaving aside the slim chance the UK and the EU continue negotiations in good faith without legal guarantees and obligations on citizen's rights, the Irish border and financial payments, a key question is whether voters believe something like a 'managed no deal' is plausible. The answer here is a lot more mixed: a plurality, but not a majority, of 44% believe that the UK would become a non-member of the EU and negotiations would end; 27% believe that the UK would no longer be an EU member, but negotiations would continue.
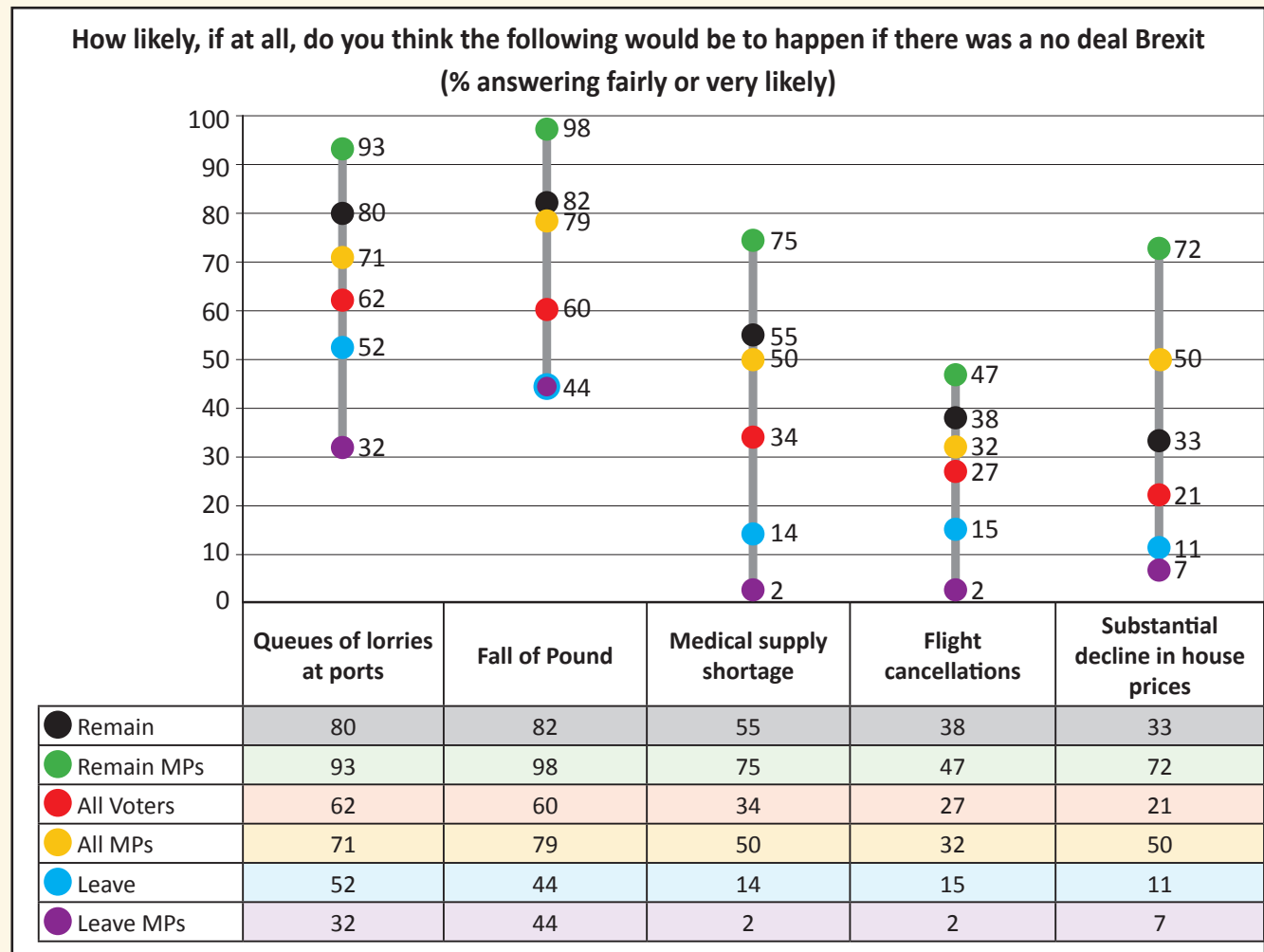
It is commonly asserted in Westminster that a significant majority of MPs oppose no deal, and that therefore such an outcome is unlikely. However, the procedural and constitutional hurdles involved in preventing it – if the government was intent on pursuing the policy – are significant. So how concerned are MPs?.

The views of MPs and voters are laid out in figure 1. As well as showing overall opinion, we also divide MPs between those who voted Leave and Remain in 2016. MPs and voters share roughly the same hierarchy of concerns about Brexit – worrying most about lorry queues and a fall in sterling, and least about flight cancellations and house price declines. However, in every case MPs express greater overall concern than voters. It seems the public is more complacent about no deal than the policymakers whose choices will determine whether it happens.

This overall story is, however, rather misleading because it masks deep polarisation in the Commons. Although MPs broadly split the same way as the voters (and indeed, as pointed out in this report, the party members) the divisions between parliamentarians are much deeper. Concerns about most forms of no deal disruption are very widespread among Remain MPs, while only a minority of Leave MPs express any, while virtually none worry about the impact on medical supplies, flights or house prices.

These stark differences have a major impact on the overall mood of the Commons. Despite Leave MPs being outnumbered in our survey of 100 MPs by roughly two to one, their lack of concern about medical supplies and house prices mean that only 50% of the Commons anticipates medical supply shortages or a substantial

decline in house prices. On the other hand, on the issues where a significant minority of Leave MPs join an overwhelming number of Remain MPs there is a large majority in the Commons expressing concern – 79% on falls in sterling and 71% on lorry queues.

How likely, if at all, do you think the following would be to happen if there was a no deal Brexit (% answering fairly or very likely)

	Queues of lorries at ports	Fall of Pound	Medical supply shortage	Flight cancellations	Substantial decline in house prices
Remain	80	82	55	38	33
Remain MPs	93	98	75	47	72
All Voters	62	60	34	27	21
All MPs	71	79	50	32	50
Leave	52	44	14	15	11
Leave MPs	32	44	2	2	7

These divides are explained, in part, by party difference. Only 10% of Conservative MPs felt there would be a shortage of key medical supplies, and 28% a fall in house prices, under their government's watch. A Conservative government looking to alleviate such risks ahead of time therefore first has to convince many of its own backbenchers that they exist.

Britain's relationship with the EU after Brexit

Charlene Rohr, Jonathan Grant, David Howarth, Hui Lu and Alexandra Pollitt

The Brexit referendum told us very little about what people actually want from Britain's relationship with the EU. Did those who voted to leave want to see an end to freedom of movement? Or were they more interested in trade deals with emerging economies? And what trade-offs were they willing to make? Politicians and policymakers have been struggling to answer these questions since the referendum result.

The 'stated choice' experiment

To try to understand what people really want, we conducted a series of 'stated choice' experiments with a nationally representative sample (in terms of socio-economic background and declared 2016 referendum voting) of nearly 1,000 respondents over two years. The aim was to ascertain voters' priorities and how these have changed over time.

The idea of stated choice experiments is simple: it is better to ascertain people's preferences by examining the choices they make, rather than asking them to try to estimate the value that they attach to things directly. For example, in the real world, we can quantify how much people value journey time savings by observing how much they are willing to pay for high-speed rail services. This is better than asking them to estimate directly how much they would value such savings. However, in some cases real-world markets do not exist to allow us to observe people's choices and in these cases we ask people to make choices between hypothetical alternatives in surveys – to indicate whether they would choose to use a high-speed rail service, depending on how much extra it may cost and how much time they may save. This is because people are much better at making choices – something they do every day – than they are at providing abstract valuations. By forcing people to make choices they have to compromise, thereby avoiding the 'cakeism' often evident in standard polls.
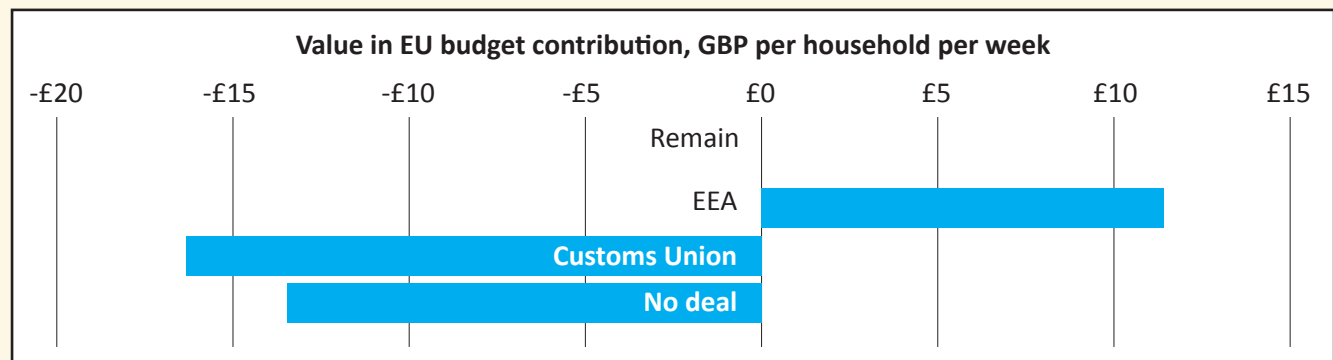
In our study, we ask respondents to make choices between hypothetical options describing the UK's relationship with the EU. A key aspect of the choices is that they are not described by labels, such as 'Norway', 'Canada+', 'Remain' or 'no deal'. Rather, different levels of attributes describe different options: different degrees of freedom of movement; different levels of access to the single market, for both services and goods; the ability or otherwise to make free trade deals; different levels of contribution to the EU; and different degrees of sovereignty. Another important aspect in the description of options is the idea of reciprocity: we get what they get, so that, for example, constraints on freedom of movement imposed on EU nationals also apply to UK nationals in the EU.

What we learnt

We found little change in preferences between 2017 and 2018. People place a high value on cost-free trade with the single market in goods and services. They also value the UK being free to make its own trade deals outside the EU. The public value options where the UK can make its own laws, but not as much as cost-free access to the single market or freedom to make trade deals. They worry about freedom of movement, but mostly because of concerns about demand for public services. The idea of needing a visa to travel for their holidays is strongly disliked.

We can quantify the average value that people place on each level of each attribute, in monetary terms, specifically in terms of EU budget contribution in GBP per household per week. So we are able to put a financial value on how much people value access to the single market, the ability to make free trade deals,

freedom of movement, increased sovereignty etc. The values of these different attributes can then be added up to quantify the value of different 'packages' – or negotiating positions (see figure below).

Value in EU budget contribution, GBP per household per week

| -£20 | -£15 | -£10 | -£5 | £0 | £5 | £10 | £15 |

Remain

EEA

Customs Union

No deal

Netting out positives and negatives, we find that Britons place the highest value on a 'Norway-like' deal – membership of the European Economic Area (EEA). In fact, people valued it more than the current relationship with the EU. This is largely as a result of the freedom to make trade deals with countries outside of the EU. Of course, such a deal would not solve the Irish border problem, and so might only work with membership of the customs union, which would severely reduce its perceived value.

Remaining in the EU was the second most popular option: further evidence that people valued cost-free access to the single market and were willing to trade restraints on freedom of movement and sovereignty for this access.

The third most preferred outcome was a 'no deal' Brexit, relying on World Trade Organization trading rules. That this outcome is valued less positively than remaining in the EU is because of the need for visas for holiday travel and costly access to the single market for trade in goods and services. But there are some perceived positives: the freedom to sign trade deals with countries outside the EU, increased sovereignty and the savings made by avoiding EU contributions. Finally, of all the relationships we examined, participating purely in the customs union was valued the least.

As part of the survey, respondents were also asked to choose between four unlabelled options: remaining in the EU, joining the EEA, remaining in the customs union (but not the rest of the single market), and no deal. As illustrated in the diagram opposite, we see that the most popular option is joining the EEA, with 42% of people choosing this option in the 2018 survey (up from 37% of the sample in 2017). This is the preferred option for nearly half of those who voted Remain and nearly a third of those who voted Leave. Half of our respondents changed their preference

2017 **2018**

Remain (22%) → Remain (24%)

EEA (eg Norway) (37%) → EEA (eg Norway) (42%)

Customs Union (14%) → Customs Union (11%)

No deal (27%) → No deal (22%)

for the four unlabelled options between 2017 and 2018, with 30% opting for a softer Brexit and 20% for a harder Brexit. In short, we have seen some 'softening' of the type of relationship Britons want with the EU.
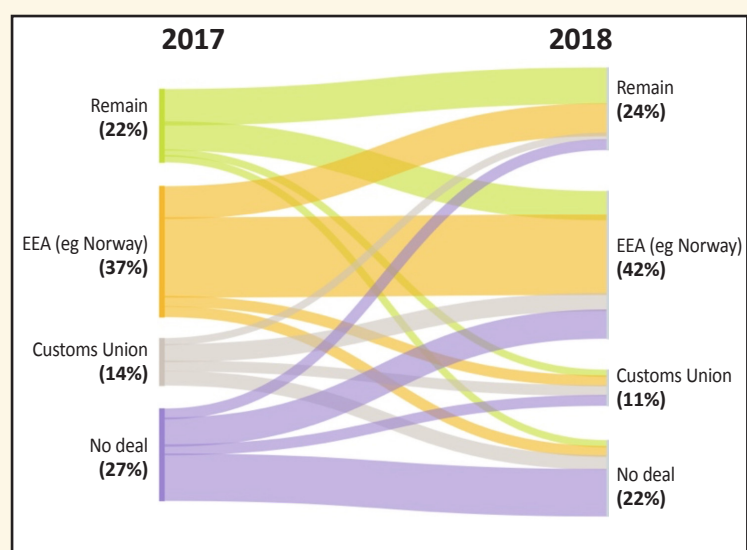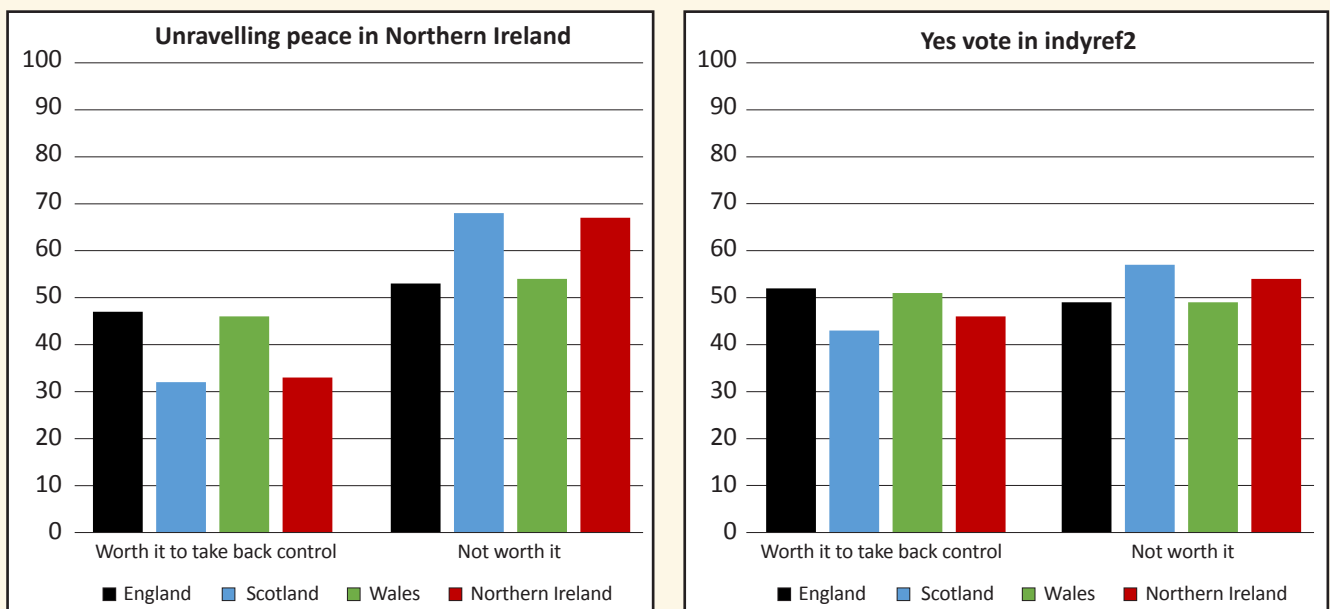
England

Ailsa Henderson, Charlie Jeffery, Daniel Wincott and Richard Wyn Jones

In 2018 we conducted surveys in each of the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom (with fieldwork by YouGov in England, Scotland and Wales, and by Lucid Talk in Northern Ireland) to provide a 360-degree evaluation of the union. Brexit provides us with an opportunity to evaluate how individuals feel about both the EU and the UK union. Three findings are obvious.

We asked people whether they felt the unravelling of the peace process in Northern Ireland, or a second independence referendum in which Scots voted 'yes', would be worth it in order to take back control. A majority in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland said 'no' when it came to peace in Northern Ireland (with majorities in the low 50s for England and Wales and high 60s for Scotland and NI). The results for Scotland were mixed. Just over 50% in England and Wales said Scottish independence is worth 'risking' to achieve Brexit, while just under 50% said the same in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Leave voters are far more likely to say that peace in Northern Ireland or an independent Scotland are a price worth paying to achieve Brexit. The same is true of Conservative voters in England, Scotland and Wales. The territorial integrity of the UK appears less important than Brexit for some. This is true for supporters of the Conservative and Unionist party, as well as those who describe themselves as unionists in Northern Ireland.

We also ask respondents whether they believe policy should vary across different parts of the UK. We offer a range of policy areas (unemployment, tuition fees, prescription charges etc. including some where there is variation across the UK and some where there is not. Support for policy uniformity is higher in England and Wales and lower in Scotland and NI – though even here majorities often support policy conformity across the UK.

We compared this to a similar question on policy uniformity between the EU and the UK once it leaves. Here we see similar – and in some cases higher – support for policy uniformity between the EU and the UK than we do for policy uniformity within the UK. This holds not just for the electorate as a whole but for Leave

voters as well. A majority of Leave voters in England, Scotland and Wales want the UK to have the same policies as the EU on mobile phone roaming charges, food hygiene, litter control and health insurance. The exceptions are on migration, and in particular the migration of unskilled workers. So, Leave voters are willing to radically alter the union – to see an unravelling of the peace process and an independent Scotland – to achieve an outcome that is primarily aimed at restricting immigration and in most other respects is similar to what we have at the moment.

Of course reaching the same decisions is not the same as having the power to make those decisions. We asked individuals whether it was important to have different policies or whether it was important to have control, even if those policies ended up being the same. We also allowed individuals to say that they felt that things were fine the way they were. Among those saying it wasn't fine, majorities in each of England, Scotland and Wales say it's control rather than different policies as such that matter.

Finally, around the time of the 2014 Scottish referendum we asked respondents in England how the rest of the UK should treat a departing independent Scotland. The battery of questions was modelled on a series of questions asked around the time of the 1995 referendum in Quebec. We found a clear majority (69%) felt that people should be able to travel between an independent Scotland and the rest of the UK without passport checks, but only minorities (35%, 39%) believed that the rest of the UK should help Scotland apply to international organisations such as NATO, or that it should be able to keep the pound. We asked similar questions about how the EU should treat a departing UK. We find that almost half (46%) believe that the EU should help the UK reach trade deals and a third believe there should be travel without passport checks.

When we disaggregate among Leave and Remain voters, however, we find that Leave voters are significantly less likely than the sample as a whole to say that Scotland should get help applying to organisations or should keep the pound (20%, 30%), but significantly more likely to believe that the EU should help the UK get trade deals (55%). So Leave voters want the EU to facilitate its exit, but believe the UK should not facilitate the exit of an independent Scotland.

In general the 2018 findings not only confirm the relationship between attitudes to the domestic and European unions, but suggest that Brexit is helping us to understand the type of union voters in different parts of the UK want. The challenge for any government is that the answers vary across territory and across Brexit 'camps'. The Brexit faultline affects not just attitudes to our international union, but to our domestic one as well.

Scotland

Ian Montagu

The outcome of the EU referendum seemed to represent a political opportunity for the nationalist movement in Scotland. A majority in the country voted to remain in the EU (62% to 38%), which was sharply at odds with the result across the UK as a whole. There seemed to be no better illustration of the nationalist argument that, for as long as it remains part of the UK, Scotland's 'democratic' wishes are at risk of being drowned out by the different political outlook of voters living south of the border.

Yet, so far at least, Brexit has not proven to be the constitutional game-changer that many had anticipated. Aside from a number of polls in the immediate aftermath of the June 2016 referendum, which found a small majority in favour of independence, attitudes towards Scotland's constitutional future have proven to be remarkably stable. Indeed, an average of the 13 polls of how people would vote in a second referendum on Scottish independence conducted in 2018 suggests that, after excluding 'don't knows', 45% now back independence while 55% would prefer Scotland to stay part of the UK. These figures replicate exactly the outcome of the independence referendum held in September 2014.

However, the character of support for independence has undergone an important change as a result of the Brexit process. One feature of the September 2014 referendum was that, despite the SNP's vision of independence occurring within a European framework (as Coree Brown Swan discusses in this report) and an intense argument during the campaign about whether an independent Scotland could automatically sign up as a member of the EU, people's views on Europe made little difference to whether they voted 'yes or no' to independence. According to the Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) survey, 49% of those who could be classified as eurosceptics voted 'yes' in 2014, while 44% of those who could be considered europhiles did so.

However, the most recent SSA, conducted after the 2017 general election, uncovered a very different picture. Just 40% of eurosceptics said they would vote 'yes' in a second independence referendum, compared with no less than 60% of europhiles. Brexit seems to have created a new fissure in the nationalist movement. More recent polling confirms that support for independence is now markedly higher among Remain than Leave voters; across the six polls of independence referendum vote intentions undertaken since August 2018, on average half (51%) of Remain supporters say they would vote 'yes' in a hypothetical second independence referendum compared with just one third (33%) of Leave voters.

This Brexit divide has also had an impact on the pattern of party support in Scotland. According to SSA, around half of both eurosceptics and europhiles voted for the SNP in the 2015 UK election. However, whereas the party's support largely held firm among Europhiles in the 2017 contest, it fell by as much as 15 points (to 36%) among eurosceptics. This gap is also to be found in recent polls; on average, the eight polls of vote intentions in a UK general election conducted since August 2018 have found that 41% of Remain supporters currently say they would back the SNP, compared with just 30% of Leave voters. At the same time, although the Conservatives registered an increase in support among both groups in Scotland, SSA suggests that this was much more marked among eurosceptic voters (14 points) than europhiles (4 points). Support for the Scottish Labour Party, meanwhile, advanced evenly among both groups (4 points), with the level of support for the party remaining a little higher among europhile voters than eurosceptics.

The relatively pro-Remain character of SNP support has been reflected in (and may well have been occasioned by) the party's stance on Brexit. Following the EU referendum, the party initially argued for a soft Brexit that

would see the UK remain in the single market and the customs union – or at least for a deal that would allow Scotland to do so (see the contribution in this report by Coree Brown Swan). But the UK government has never shown any interest in such a step, and, after some hesitation, in October the party came out in favour of holding a second referendum on Britain's EU membership in the hope that this would result in a reversal of the Brexit decision, with the Scottish Parliament also voting in favour of such a ballot.

Not surprisingly, the polls suggest that this idea seems to be relatively popular with SNP supporters. In late October 2018, for example, Survation found that 64% of those who voted for the party in 2017 supported the idea of 'holding a People's Vote – a referendum – asking the public their view', while in December, Panelbase found that 71% of 2017 SNP voters would support 'having a second referendum on whether the UK should remain in the EU'.

It might be thought that backing a second EU referendum in the hope of securing a different result would be an easy decision for a party that has called for another independence referendum in the hope that the result might be different second time around. However, any referendum on the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU might be thought to create a precedent for what should happen should Scotland ever vote to become independent. In such circumstances, it might be argued that, before they are put into effect, the terms of Scotland's withdrawal from the UK should similarly be put to a second vote – a suggestion the SNP has always opposed.

Brexit has not made it any easier for Scotland's nationalist movement to win any future referendum on independence. The more the SNP finds itself in the vanguard of the campaign to halt Brexit via a second referendum, the greater the risk that the party loses ground among the minority of its supporters who back Leave. Yet if a second independence referendum is ever to be won, it could well be crucial that the party keeps its more eurosceptic supporters on board. Brexit looks like more of a balancing act than a springboard so far as Scotland's nationalist movement is concerned.
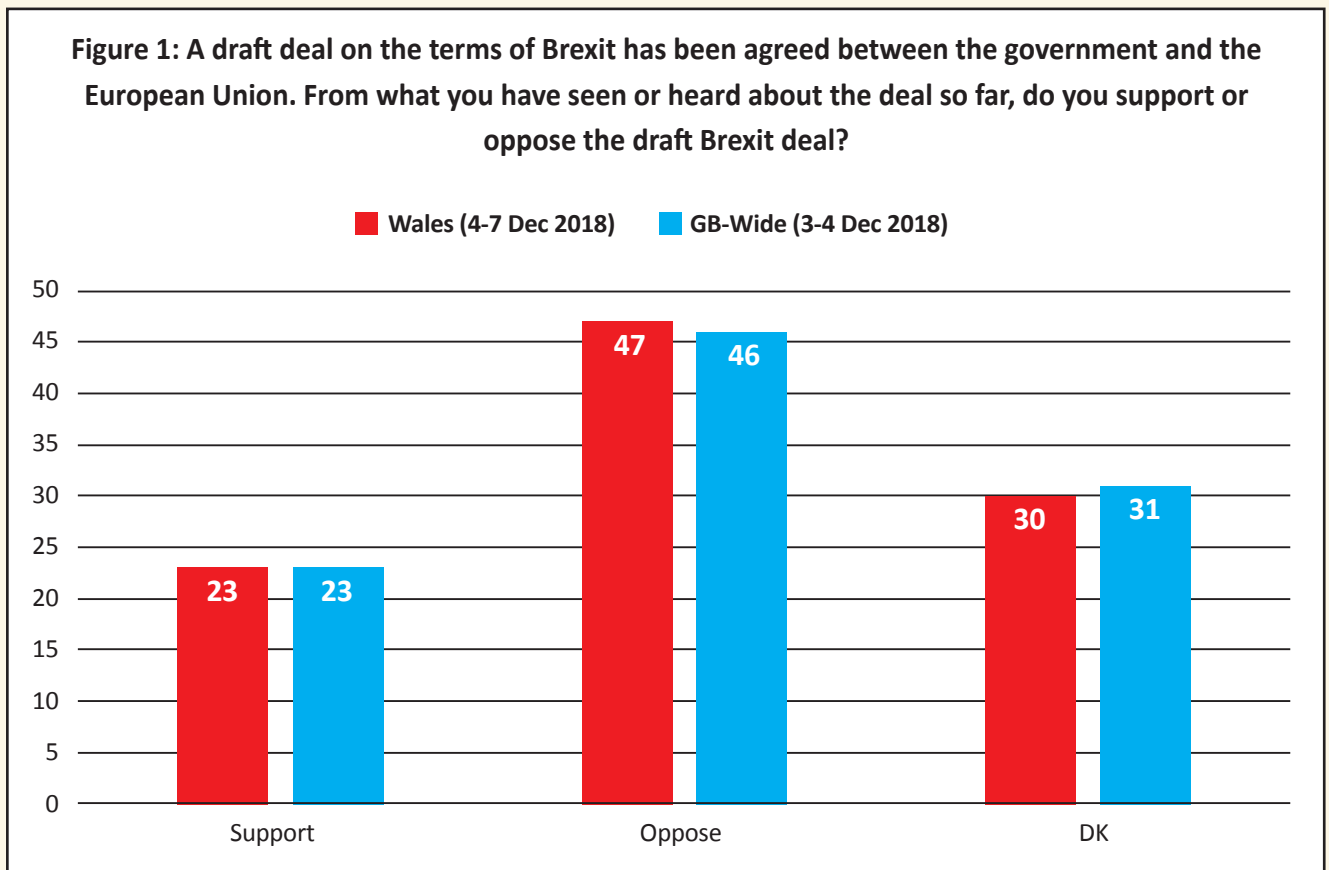
Wales

Jac Larner

Wales continues to represent a bellwether for UK public attitudes on Brexit. Wales voted Leave by a margin that almost exactly mirrored the result across the UK. In the 31 months since the referendum, public attitudes in Wales have remained extremely close to those of the UK as a whole.

Since the referendum, Political Barometer polls conducted jointly by the Wales Government Centre at Cardiff University Wales with YouGov and ITV Wales have tracked public opinion on a range of issues relating to Brexit. The Welsh public show little enthusiasm for the draft Brexit deal, and are largely divided over the next steps the UK government should take.

The most recent Welsh Barometer polling, carried out in the first week of December 2018, provides little evidence that Welsh voters have changed their mind. Support for a second referendum is lukewarm, and supporters of Wales' three major parties are divided (albeit to differing degrees) over whether they would support Leave or Remain in a hypothetical vote.

The poll also asked respondents in Wales a set of Brexit-specific questions, originally asked by YouGov in a series of GB-wide polls, as a useful base for comparison. Respondents were first asked whether they supported or opposed the draft Brexit deal. The results are shown in Figure 1. Close to half of Welsh respondents opposed the deal, with 23% supporting, and a substantial 30% indicating that they didn't know. Figure 1 also plots results to the same question asked by YouGov in a GB-wide poll a few days earlier. The results indicate a remarkable consistency between Welsh and GB-wide samples.

Figure 1: A draft deal on the terms of Brexit has been agreed between the government and the European Union. From what you have seen or heard about the deal so far, do you support or oppose the draft Brexit deal?

Respondents were also asked what they would like to see happen next. A plurality of respondents opted to stop Brexit altogether and remain in the EU, although the vast majority of these were Remain voters. Leave voters were split among three options: to accept the deal and leave, to reject the deal and seek a new one, or to reject the deal and leave the EU without any deal. A substantial number of respondents again opted for 'Don't know', with little support for a referendum on the deal. Again, however, the results in Wales show remarkable consistency with GB-wide results.

While on this issue at least, there is a small divergence between the Wales-only and the GB pictures, overall there is a striking similarity between the Welsh and wider electorate. These results illustrate two key points with regard to public attitudes in Wales towards the EU. The first is that the draft Brexit deal is unpopular, but there is no consensus on what the UK government's next steps should be. Second, there are no distinct trends in public attitudes in Wales that distinguish it from the rest of the UK. This is notable, as Wales has displayed an electoral 'distinctiveness' from the rest of the UK at both general and devolved elections for over a century.

Figure 2: "Generally speaking, what would you like to see happen now?"
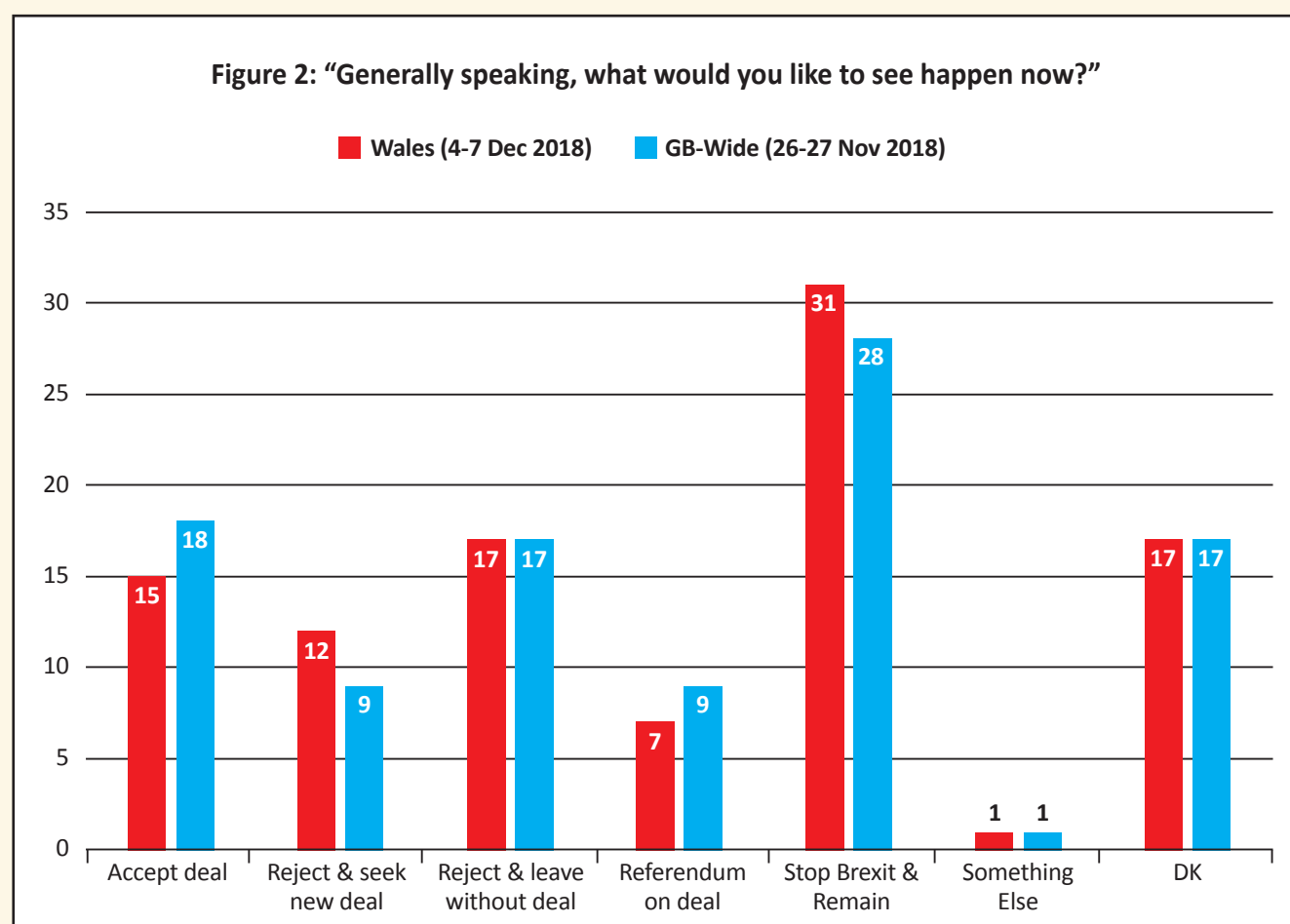
The Welsh Barometer polling also includes regular questions that have been asked consistently since the EU referendum. These regular polls have shown little sign of any significant shift in public attitudes.

Figure 3 shows support for Remain if a second referendum takes place, with respondents broken down by 2017 general election vote. Support for a second referendum in Wales has yet to hit 50%.

Figure 3: Support for Remain if second Referendum were held, by 2017 GE Vote
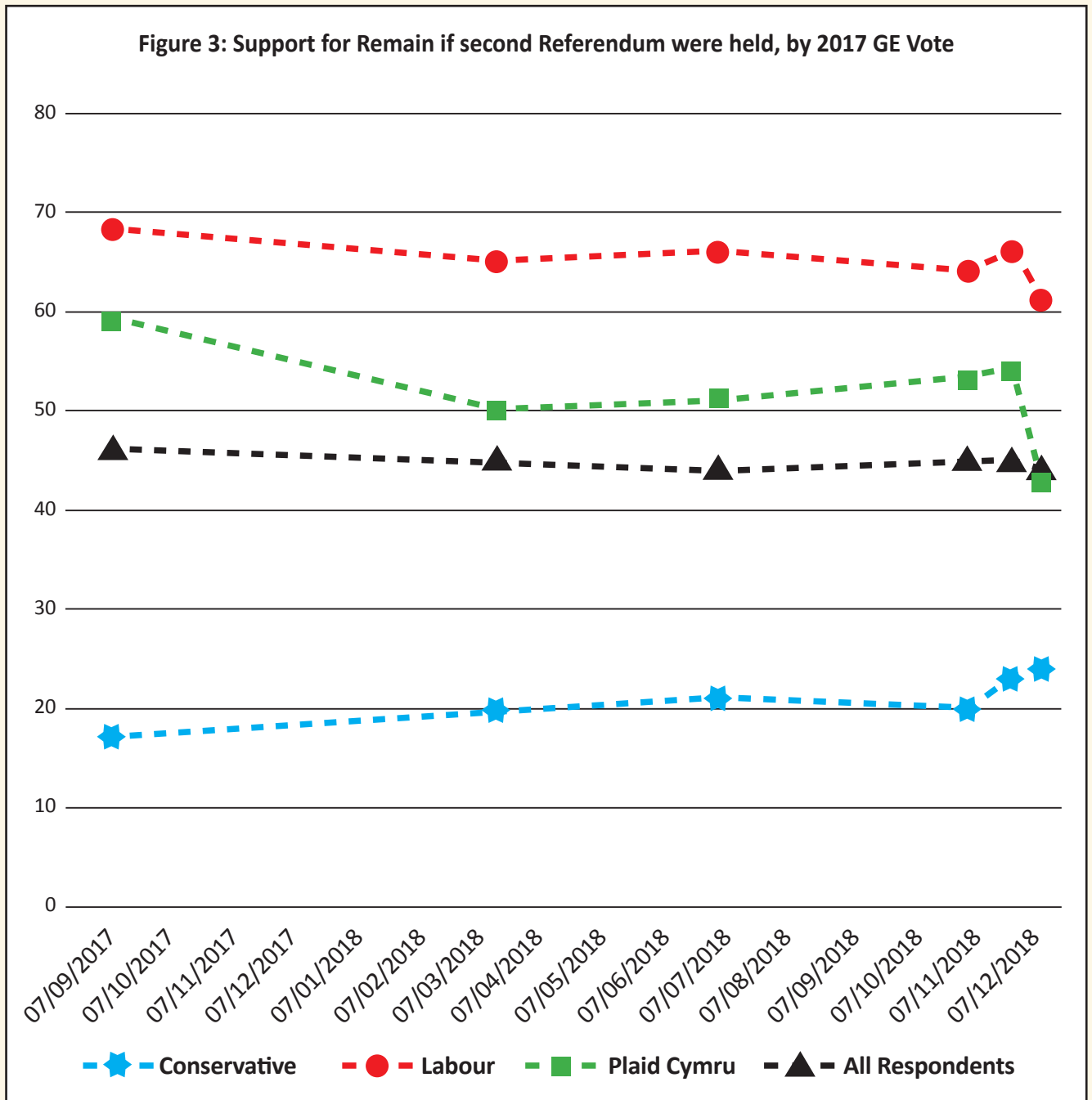
Remain support amongst Labour and Conservative supporters has stayed relatively steady since the 2017 general election. Labour support has declined somewhat, with Conservative support increasing more recently, yet both sets of voters remain clearly divided by the issue. Perhaps somewhat surprising for followers of Welsh politics, support for Remain among Plaid Cymru voters has decreased to somewhere around the 50% mark, with the most recent poll putting support at 43%. This poses a potential problem for newly-elected Plaid Cymru leader Adam Price, who has been one of the most vocal and visible opponents of Brexit in Wales. Much like the UK-wide parties, none of the main parties in Wales face a straightforward choice in the months ahead.

Northern Ireland

Jamie Pow

A majority of voters in Northern Ireland chose to Remain in the EU in the 2016 referendum. Moreover, like many issues in post-conflict Northern Ireland, the issue of Brexit maps onto the underlying ethno-national divide: most unionist voters supported Leave; by a larger margin, most nationalists supported Remain.

Two-and-a-half years later, it is worth recalling the referendum failed to engage people in Northern Ireland in the same way it mobilised voters in other parts of the UK. Turnout was just 63% – nine points lower than the UK average, and the lowest of any region. It was also lower than turnout levels in the subsequent 'normal' elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly (65% in March 2017) and Westminster (66% in June 2017). This relative disengagement was almost certainly linked to the marginal attention given to Northern Ireland or Irish issues during the campaign.

Since the referendum, the significance of these issues has become clearer. Within Northern Ireland, there has been growing anxiety at the prospect of physical infrastructure returning to the Irish border. Qualitative evidence from a deliberative forum suggests popular concerns are both practical and political:

"Say I want to walk the dog. I'm literally 10 minutes across the border. It would be a nightmare," said a Catholic woman. Memories of a hard border during the Troubles are never far away. "There's a lot of people living in Northern Ireland that could use that as another reason to start fighting and gather support as well I suppose ... back to The Troubles again," warned a Protestant woman.

Unionists, meanwhile, have become much more conscious of the potential consequences of Brexit for Northern Ireland's relationship with Great Britain – particularly as the backstop now appears to be an inescapable feature of the withdrawal equation. Even if the backstop results in limited regulatory divergence between the two sides of the Irish Sea, some see it as a looming threat to Northern Ireland's constitutional position:

"I don't want Northern Ireland separated from the rest of the UK," affirmed a Protestant Leave supporter, when asked about the prospect of greater East-West regulatory checks. People who take a different view nonetheless understand the psychological basis of such concerns. "I can see where they're coming from," empathised a Catholic Remainer.

Taking all of this together, we can observe four broad features in terms of public opinion in Northern Ireland since June 2016.

Firstly, there is growing support for the UK remaining in the EU. Excluding 'don't know' responses, a cross-sectional survey we conducted in early 2018 found 69% would now support Remain. A majority of Protestants (56%) would still vote Leave, but this margin has narrowed from the 60-40% split in 2016. All available polling data confirms this trend: at least 60% of voters in Northern Ireland consistently say they would choose to stay in the EU.

Secondly, assuming that the UK does leave the EU, there is considerable backing for the softest possible exit on a UK-wide basis. A majority of supporters of all five of Northern Ireland's main parties – unionist, nationalist and neither – would prefer to see the whole of the UK stay in the customs union and single market, compared to either the UK leaving both or Northern Ireland leaving on a different basis to the rest of the UK.

As Table 1 shows, this includes 58% of DUP supporters and 70% of Sinn Féin voters. It is rare to find such a broad popular consensus in Northern Ireland on such a salient issue. The limited polling evidence available does not suggest that the DUP is being punished for not throwing its weight behind a UK-wide soft exit; the broadly similar Brexit stances adopted by rival unionist parties have helped to insulate its position.

Table 1: Preferred type of exit from the EU (% in NI supporting each option, by party vote)			
	Hard exit for all of the UK	Soft exit for all of the UK	Hard exit for GB, soft exit for NI
DUP voters	32.2	57.9	9.9
UUP voters	13.4	70.1	16.4
Alliance voters	7.3	70.7	22.0
SDLP voters	6.3	51.9	41.8
Sinn Féin voters	2.2	69.9	27.9
All respondents	15.2	61.3	23.5

It should also be noted that these preferences for a soft exit are distinct from people's reported voting behaviour in the 2016 referendum. For example, as Table 2 illustrates, the vast majority of DUP supporters voted to leave the EU. Yet most support remaining in the customs union and single market. There seems to be widespread recognition that a soft exit for the whole of the UK is currently the only way of leaving the EU without the need for new types of border arrangement, either on the island of Ireland or down the Irish Sea.

Table 2: Referendum vote (% reporting Leave/Remain vote in 2016, by party vote)		
	Leave	Remain
DUP voters	78.0	22.0
UUP voters	42.6	57.4
Alliance voters	17.7	82.3
SDLP voters	14.1	85.9
Sinn Féin voters	8.0	92.0
All respondents	37.4	62.6

Thirdly, while recent polling finds that there is not necessarily much enthusiasm about the Withdrawal Agreement itself, many people support its key features. In a LucidTalk poll from December 2018, 54% of respondents agreed that business and farming organisations were correct to back the Agreement. Some 65% think that it would be a net benefit for Northern Ireland to remain closely aligned to the EU, even if the rest of the UK diverged. Respondents cited perceived economic advantage and the avoidance of a hard border with the Republic of Ireland as reasons for this. Unionists are much less convinced. A sizeable minority (44%) would rather leave the EU with no deal, compared to the options of either remaining in the EU or accepting the Withdrawal Agreement.

Paradoxically, and finally, this is the scenario that would apparently pose the greatest risk to Northern Ireland's constitutional status. 55% of respondents say they would 'probably' or 'certainly' support a united Ireland in the event that the UK left without a deal, falling to 48% if the UK leaves on the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, and to just 29% if the UK remains in the EU.

Leaving the EU inevitably involves trade-offs. While it will be impossible to please everybody, there are clearly some paths that are more acceptable than others for the people of Northern Ireland. Aside from remaining in the EU altogether, the most preferred option is for an exit that avoids any new friction across these islands. Leaving without a deal or leaving with separate arrangements for Northern Ireland are likely to have more polarising effects on public opinion.

The EU27

Stefanie Walter

The Brexit process is shaped not only by decisions in Downing Street, but also by the other 27 member states of the EU. Other governments also have voters, and have to take their opinions into account when negotiating Brexit. British hopes that the remaining EU countries would be willing to offer the UK better withdrawal terms than the EU Commission have been repeatedly frustrated. Instead, the EU27 countries have been equally unwilling to allow British 'cherry-picking' and this position seems to have the support of their electorates.

Systematic surveys of EU27 public opinion are rare, I have been running regular surveys of about 9,000 EU27 working-age respondents in 6-month intervals since the start of the negotiations in the summer of 2017. The main insight contradicts the assertion made by Daniel Hannan that "lots of Europeans are uneasy at the line the [EU] Commission is taking on Brexit". Rather, the European public seems to support the EU's approach to the Brexit negotiations.

In December 2018, 42% of EU27 voters stated that the EU should take a hard or very hard line in the Brexit negotiations, meaning that it insists on a large 'Brexit bill,' secures special rights for EU citizens living in the UK, and denies the UK privileged access to its single market. In contrast, only about 12% supported an approach that would accommodate many of the UK's demands. When asked about how they evaluated their own governments' stance, 41% of respondents said that it was just right, whereas about one third thought that their government's approach was somewhat or significantly too hard. Support for a non-accommodating EU negotiating line is particularly strong (59%) among those EU27 Europeans who follow the Brexit process a lot.

EU-27 preferred Brexit negotiation stance by the EU, 2017-2018
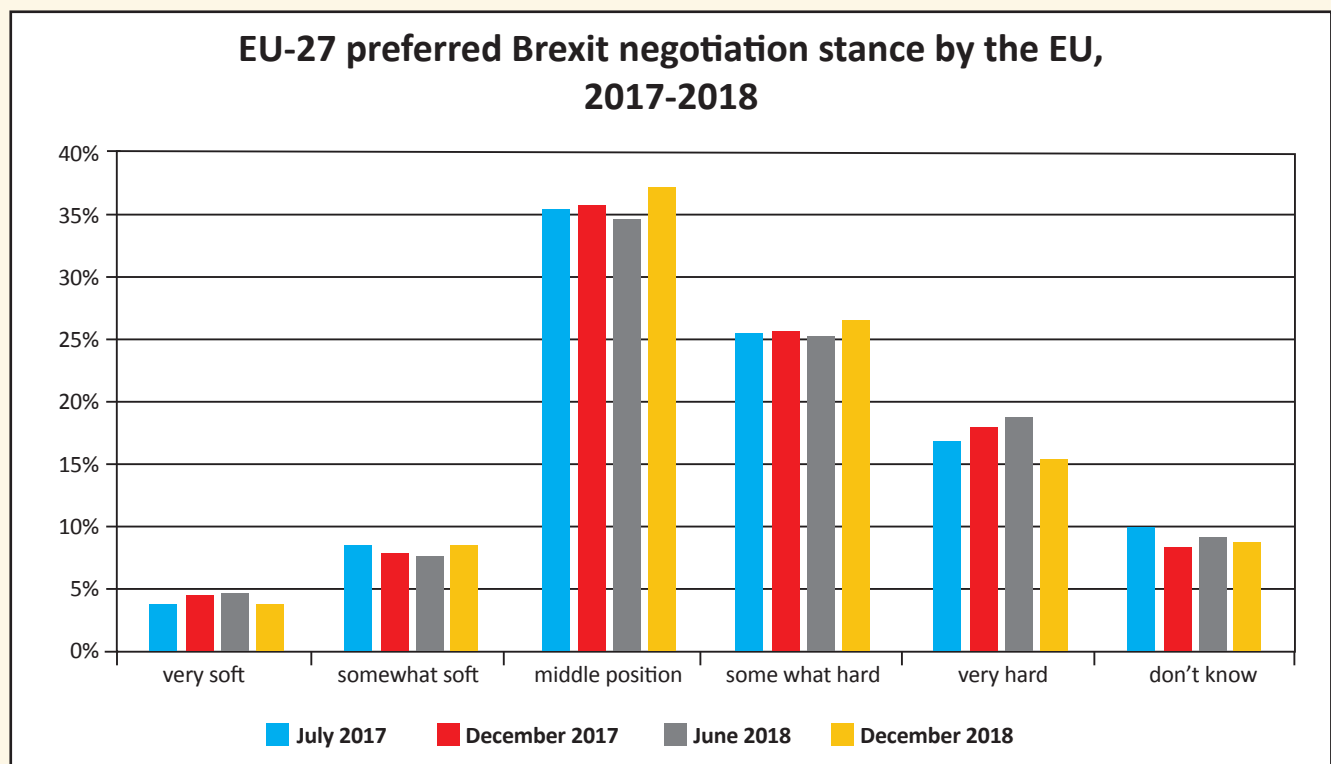
These preferences have been remarkably stable throughout the negotiations. The graph illustrates voter preferences from the start of the negotiations in July 2017 to December 2018. It shows that these have not changed much, even after the political reaction in the UK to the Withdrawal Agreement seemingly made no deal a more conceivable outcome.

This may seem surprising. After all, the EU27's trade exposure to Brexit is estimated to amount to approximately 2.6% of EU27 GDP, and the overall fallout is likely to be much larger. For example, a no deal Brexit is forecast to reduce regional labour income by 6.5% in Baden-Württemberg in southwest Germany and by 7.4% in Kilkennyin south-east Ireland. Little surprise, then, that maintaining their countries' trade relations with the UK is the most important goal in the Brexit negotiations for 35% of respondents.

However, this concern does not translate into a more accommodating stance towards the UK. People who live in regions more heavily exposed to Brexit are not more likely to support a softer negotiating line. In fact, my data show that respondents who have business and personal ties tend to favour a harder, rather than a softer approach. This echoes statements from business associations on the continent that they worry more about the stability of the single market than about a good trade deal with UK.

One reason for this is fear of contagion: if Brexit is seen to go well for the UK, this might create the risk of a domino effect. EU27 voters who think that Brexit will be good for the UK are in fact more likely to support the exit of their own country from the EU. Eurosceptics therefore see establishing a standard procedure that makes it easier for countries to leave the EU in the future as the most important goal in the Brexit negotiations. For those worrying about the stability of the EU, this creates incentives for a tough negotiation stance.

Against this backdrop it is not surprising that, when asked what they see as the most important goal for the Brexit negotiations, those with a positive opinion of the EU mention avoiding other countries leaving the EU most frequently. Voters with a more positive view of the EU therefore take a more uncompromising negotiation stance towards the UK.

Overall, both EU27 voters and governments face an accommodation dilemma: on the one hand, a hard line – or even a no deal scenario – will be costly not just for the UK, but also for the remaining member states. But, at the same time, making the UK better off outside the EU threatens the long-term stability of the EU. This concern seems a more powerful motivation for an uncompromising negotiation strategy than any wish to punish the UK for leaving. Only 7% state that they see such punishment as the most important goal of the Brexit negotiations. Punishment is by far the least frequently mentioned goal.

The accommodation dilemma is likely to become more pronounced once the EU and the UK enter the negotiations about the future relationship. As long as euroscepticism remains a threat to the long-term stability of the EU, it will serve as a check on its appetite to accommodate the UK.

Cities and towns: the geography of discontent

**Will Jennings, Gerry Stoker and Ian Warren**

The road to Brexit was a product of economic disillusionment, political alienation and social changes that have created conditions ripe for the emergence of a politics of resentment that is shaping our politics and putting extreme pressures on our institutions.

Stark geographical disparities in the experience of different communities provide a foothold for the politics of resentment, because groups who lack direct contact and knowledge of one another can be exploited to see 'the other' as a focus for blame and antipathy. These forces helped drive the Brexit vote and are reshaping post-Brexit politics. Citizens are coming to terms with their changed standing through the prism of place, and political parties of all persuasions are weaponizing this divide.

The 2016 Brexit vote revealed a stark difference not only between people, but also between places. Smaller towns and rural areas tended to vote to leave, while major cities tended to vote to remain. A similar pattern was observed in the 2017 general election and 2018 local elections. The Conservatives made inroads in smaller towns like Mansfield, whereas Labour racked up gains in cities. In order for Labour to secure a parliamentary majority it must win seats in England's towns.

One of the key features of the politics of resentment is that in small towns and rural places in particular, people express feelings of not getting their "fair share", of being excluded from political decision making and of feeling that interests are being side-lined as other groups (often minorities) are given priority by political elites. In many regards, this politics of grievance found expression in the Brexit votes' rejection of the political establishment, its attachment to English national identity, and scepticism of experts' warnings of the economic costs of leaving the EU. Today's divided politics thus not only reflects differences in identity and cultural outlook, but also the long-term social and economic changes that have led many people to live worlds apart in terms of their attitudes and everyday experiences.

People in more densely populated areas – major cities – are less likely to agree with the statement that 'things were better in the past'. In contrast, the residents of sparsely populated rural areas and small towns are more prone to expressions of nostalgia.

Figure 1. 'Things were better in the past', British Election Study Internet Panel, Wave 11
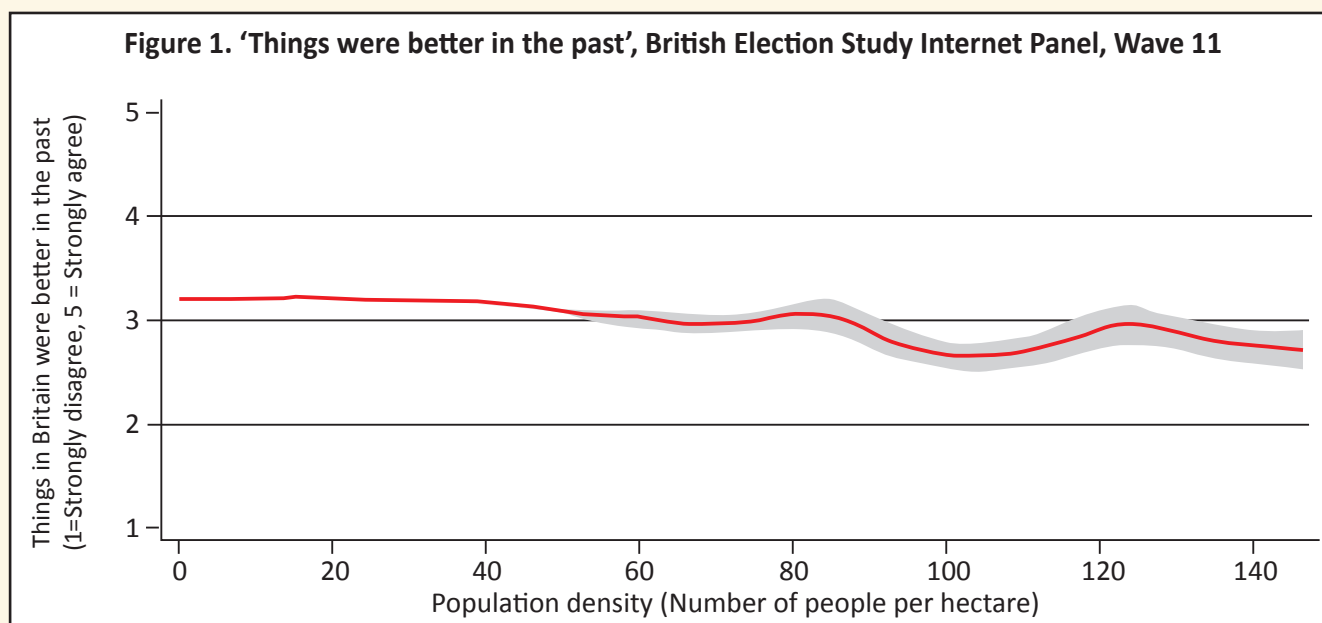
People in cities feel that they used to be more central or important to society than people in towns – with 48% saying they or people like them were less central to British society thirty years ago, compared to 61% in towns. When asked how central they felt presently, in 2017, this number was 12% higher – and the gap with towns had almost completely disappeared (60% vs. 63%). The new politics of resentment after Brexit is that a majority of the residents of both towns and cities now perceive themselves to be less central to British society than they were in the past.

**Figure 2, Social centrality: 'Me or people like me are less important/central to British society'**
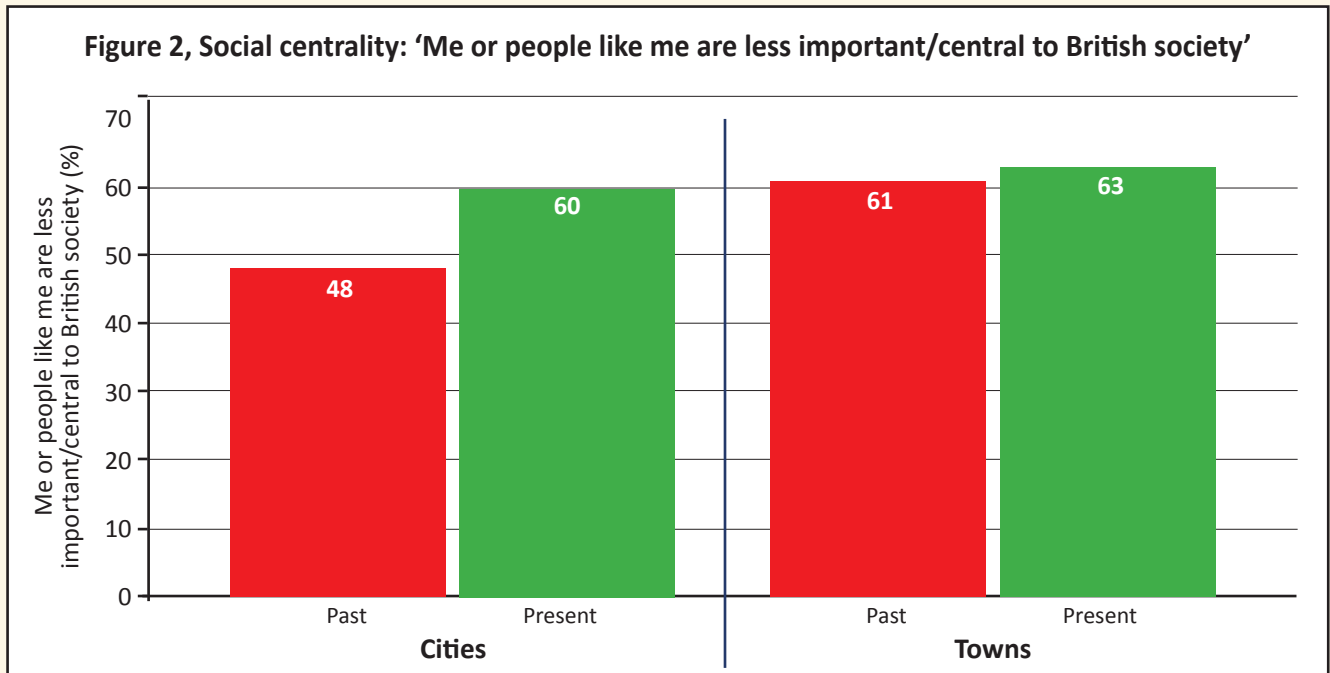
Similarly, the residents of towns were more likely to agree with the statement that in the past 'politicians didn't care about me or people like me' thirty years ago (59% agreeing compared to 49% for people in cities). Asked in 2017, there was little difference in the high level of negativity towards politicians (with 68% of people in cities agreeing and 70% in towns that politicians didn't care about people like them now).

Figure 3, Political centrality: 'Politicians don't care about me or people like me'
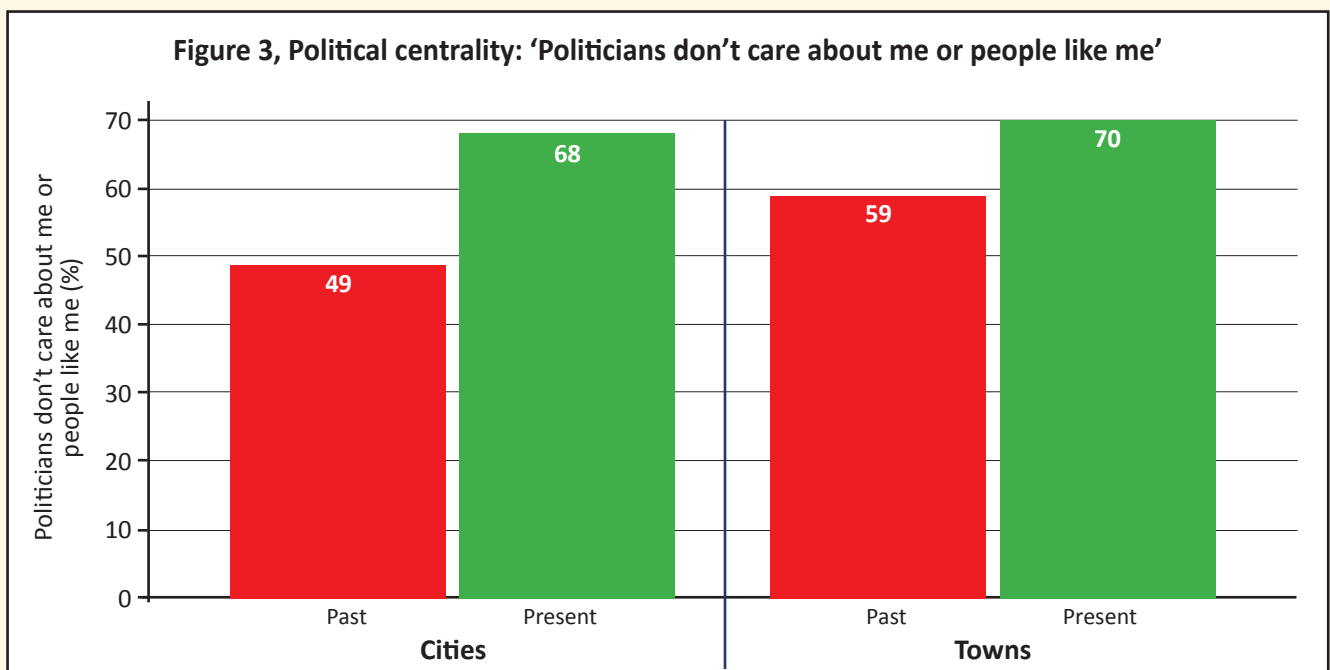
The residents of different places have, in some senses, been brought together by their resentment of their relative social status and political representation. However, there still remain distinct expressions of resentment and identity dependent on geography and place.

In the aftermath of the referendum, researchers have noted the crystallisation of political identities of 'Remainers' and 'Leavers'. There is a distinct geographical pattern to the formation of Brexit-based identities (using a survey item from the British Election Study Internet Panel from December 2016), with the residents of less densely populated rural areas and towns more likely to feel they have more in common with people who want to leave the EU, whereas the residents of major cities feel substantially less in common.

Figure 4: How much in common with people who want to leave (0=Nothing in common, 10 = A great deal in common)
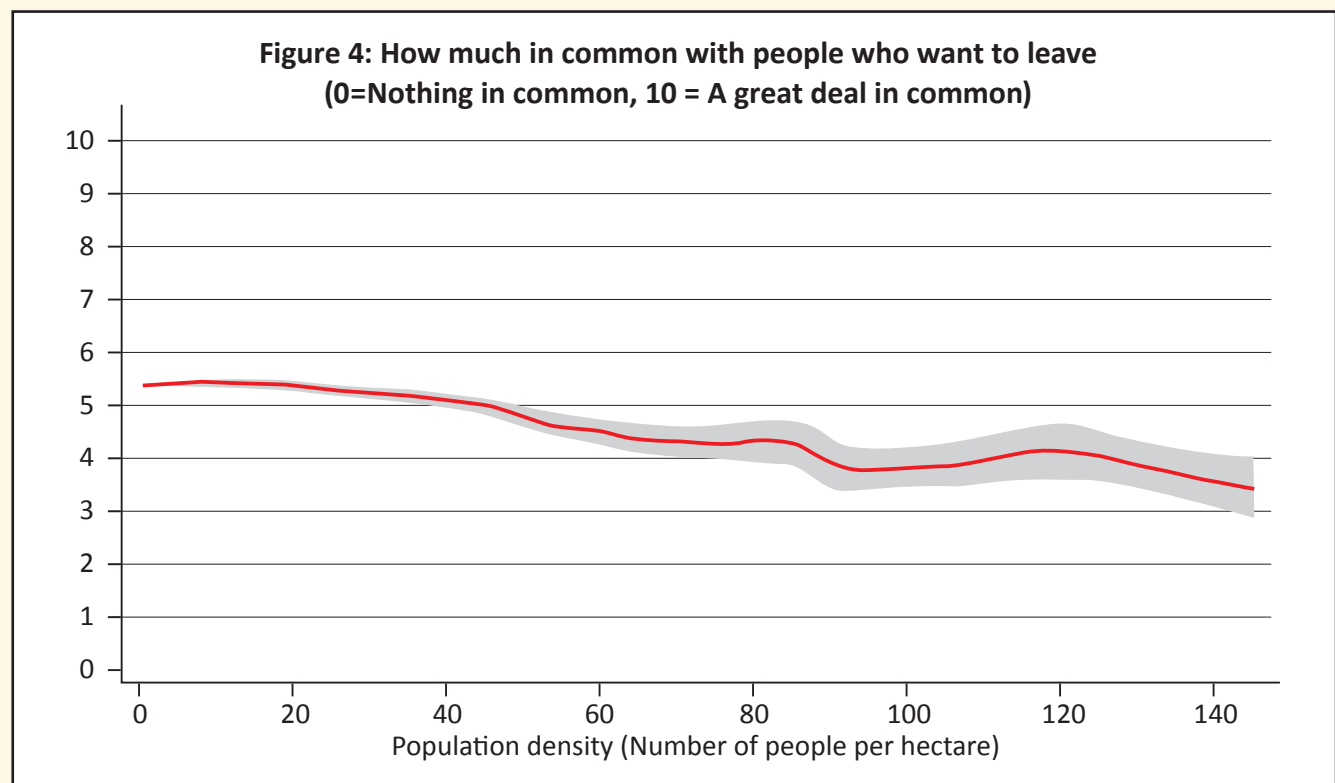
Together, these dynamics point to divisions in social attitudes and identities that vary by place. These align closely with the distinct demographic trajectories of towns and cities. The emergence of a politics of resentment that has different expressions in different places is a concern for how Britain's politics and democracy might restore some consensus in the aftermath of whatever shape Brexit takes.

Politicians continue to face cities and towns that see the dynamics of economic and social change differently. However, they share an increasing sense they lack the social standing or political influence to do much about it.

The UK in a Changing Europe