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# DEEPENING DIVIDES

HOW TO RESOLVE THE BREXIT DEADLOCK



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Matthew is HOPE not hate's head of campaigns, leading our advocacy, activism and communications work. Matthew has worked for progressive and trade union campaigns for 20 years, in the UK, Europe, the US and Australia.



# METHODOLOGY

## POLLING

This report draws on our polling from the last twelve months of 32,757 people. Polls were conducted by Populus and YouGov, both members of the British Polling Council and both abide by their rules. Some of the polls were commissioned by HOPE not hate alone and some were done in collaboration with Best for Britain.

- YouGov / Hope Not Hate Survey  
Sample Size: 5144 GB Adults  
Fieldwork: 26th – 31st January 2018
- YouGov Survey  
Sample Size: 10383 GB Adults  
Fieldwork: 28th June – 6th July 2018
- YouGov / Hope Not Hate Survey  
Sample Size: 4957 GB Adults  
Fieldwork: 26th – 31st July 2018
- Populus / Hope Not Hate Survey  
Online Fieldwork: 5th – 6th December 2018  
Sample Size: 2066 GB Adults
- YouGov / Hope Not Hate Survey  
Sample Size: 1660 GB Adults  
Fieldwork: 14th – 15th December 2018
- YouGov / Hope not Hate Survey  
Sample Size: 1765 GB Adults  
Fieldwork: 2nd – 3rd January 2019
- YouGov / Hope Not Hate Survey  
Sample Size: 5125 GB Adults  
Fieldwork: 2nd – 7th January 2019
- YouGov / Hope not Hate Survey  
Sample Size: 1657 GB Adults  
Fieldwork: 23rd – 24th January 2019

## FOCUS GROUPS

We held ten focus groups on Brexit over the summer of 2018, to better understand where people were on Brexit two years after the referendum:

Two in Swindon with a mixture of voters separated into men and with women; two in Stoke-on-Trent with a mixture of voters separated into men and with women; three in Bradford with a mixture of Leave and Remain Labour voters separated into men and with women, and one with British Asian Leave voting men; one in Blackpool with Labour Leave voting women; one in Peterborough, and one in Southampton, both with people who did not see themselves clearly defined as either a Leave or Remain voter.

## MRP

Our constituency estimates were compiled by Focaldata from the results of the polls listed above, using a statistical method called Multi-level regression with poststratification (MRP).

MRP has two main elements. The first is to use a survey to build a multi-level regression model that predicts opinion (or any quantity of interest) from certain variables, normally demographics. The second is to weight (post-stratify) your results by the relevant population frequency, to get population level (or constituency level) estimates.

At the end of this process you get more accurate, more granular (thus more actionable) estimates of public opinion than traditional polling. There are however significant technical challenges to implementing it effectively. These include large data requirements, dedicated cloud computing resources, and an understanding of Bayesian statistics.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Brexit referendum result left the country divided but Theresa May's approach to the process of leaving has deepened those divisions and left the country even more polarised.

With divisions as stark as they are, we need to find better ways to engage the public, to start rebuilding trust in the political system and to start to heal our fractured society. The British public see a citizens' assembly as a viable option to get through the Brexit deadlock. Although the idea is not something most people are familiar with, there is less opposition to this solution than any other outcome we have polled. With no consensus in parliament, 39% of people would support citizens' assemblies. It is also a less polarising choice, winning support from Leave and Remain voters of different shades. 42% of people think that it would be sensible to delay leaving the EU by a few months so we can agree a better deal with the EU and/or hold a new referendum.

A new approach is needed to avoid a lasting, damaging split in the country. By holding citizens' assemblies, we can bring people into the conversation, and do what should have been done immediately after the referendum: try to reach a consensus across the country about what kind of country we want.

For this report, we looked at the state of public opinion on Brexit after two years of debate and Government negotiations with the EU27. We found that:

## **While Brexit has always been a divisive issue, the process adopted by the government to leave the EU has made things worse.**

- The EU is now the issue people see as most important to themselves and their families, crossing political and demographic differences. Most people - 58% - consider themselves as a hardline remain voter, or a hardline Leave voter.
- When asked last summer, voters said they had little faith in Theresa May to get a deal with the EU that worked for Britain. 59% said they had very little or little confidence that May would secure a good deal. 3% of people said they had a lot of confidence in May. The lack of confidence has been borne out: our Populus poll carried out in December 2018 found 21% of people overall supported the Government's proposed deal, with 47% opposed.

## **People do not trust the process, do not feel consulted, and think that the Government has failed to even try and reach a consensus.**

- In just six months, our polling shows that the proportion of people who feel that any of the main political parties reflect what they think has fallen, with just 32% of people saying that they feel represented by any of the main political parties.
- Despite a parliamentary consensus that the UK should proceed with Brexit, Leave voters are slightly more likely to feel they are not represented by our political parties.
- Very few people trust this Government to deliver a Brexit that works for them and people like them - a figure which has grown from 60% in July 2018 to 67% in December 2018. Just 20% of people overall said that they could trust this government to deliver a good Brexit for them, with Leave voters (66%) almost as likely as Remain voters (75%) to feel this mistrust.

**Some people feel more optimistic about their economic circumstances because of Brexit, others are more pessimistic, but a collapse in politics unites people of all viewpoints**

- Voters' Brexit expectations show that there is potential for a further deepening of divisions. Remain voters, once among the most optimistic, have become hugely pessimistic about the future. While Leave voting areas saw a surge in optimism, this optimism is gradually fading, as 58% of people in our January 2019 poll felt pessimistic about the future.
- The number of Leave voters who think the economy will do better outside the EU dropped by 11% between January 2018 and January 2019 (from 66% to 55%.) Remain voters continue to be overwhelmingly pessimistic about the impact of leaving the EU.
- Very few people overall feel that Brexit will actually address these frustrations and inequalities that caused the Brexit vote in the first place.

**The country is angry, and there are widespread fears of civil unrest. However, none of the solutions currently under consideration in Parliament are likely to curb any potential backlash. Even the hardest Brexit possible will not appease those who will seek to capitalise on Brexit division.**

- In January 2018, we found a greater proportion of people who would be angry or unhappy than would be delighted or pleased at any potential Brexit outcome.
- The proportion of people who feel that Brexit is feeding prejudice and division and taking our country backwards is rising, having grown from 57% in July 2018 to 62% in December 2018.
- In the months leading up to March 29th, we have seen an increasing number of far-right figures attempting to capitalise on the anger many feel about Brexit for their own gain. It's important to note that this activity is being orchestrated by a tiny, but organised, minority. But with the Brexit clock running down, the risk of disorder and violence from the far right movement, who are capitalising on genuine frustrations, is growing.

**Cobbling together a deal that can scrape through parliament will only solve the politicians' problems, not the country's: we need a pause, a new process and an approach that can start to heal the divisions through consensus building and dialogue.**

- None of the current options in front of Parliament have consensus support in the country. In our latest polling from late January, once those who don't know have been removed, 57% of people think a no deal Brexit would be bad for Britain, with just 18% saying that this would be a good thing and 25% of people thinking it will make no difference. Yet the same poll found only 19% of people want the Labour party to support Theresa May's deal. 43% support a public vote on whether Britain stays in the EU, leaves the EU on the terms set out in the government's deal, or leaves the EU with no deal. But 38% oppose this.
- With divisions as stark as they are, we need to find better ways to engage the public, to start rebuilding trust in the political system and to start to heal our fractured society. The British public see a citizens' assembly as a viable option to get through the Brexit deadlock. Although the idea is not something most people are familiar with, there is less opposition to this solution than any other outcome we have polled. Overall, with no consensus in parliament, 39% of people would support citizens' assemblies. It is also a less polarising choice, winning support from Leave and Remain voters of different shades.
- The British public is less resistant to pausing article 50 than one might think. Our latest polling suggests that 42% of people think that it would be sensible to delay leaving the EU by a few months so we can agree a better deal with the EU and/or hold a new referendum- 38% think this would be a betrayal of the 2016 Referendum result.

Brexit has already been a frustrating process for many, but we're only approaching the end of the very beginning of this process. We still have years of negotiations with the EU to go, and divisions over the type of relationship we have with Europe are set to be just as polarising as the current debate. To add to this, the predicted, damaging, social and economic impacts of Brexit have not yet begun to hit, meaning instability, anger and resentment is likely to grow, not decline. Without a dramatic change of approach to the process, Britain is heading for ever-deepening divisions.

# INTRODUCTION

**It's a long established fact that the question of whether the UK should leave the EU has split the country. This report looks deeper. It sets out in painstaking detail how the process of leaving has in itself made the divisions worse. People, on both sides of the debate, have been left more pessimistic about their lives and less trusting of the political class that has been tasked with managing Brexit.**

It's not breaking news to say that Brexit has divided us as a nation. The referendum itself was contentious and resulted in the murder of a Labour MP on the streets of her constituency. The aftermath of the referendum saw a spike in hate crimes aimed at Europeans and ethnic minorities. Our research also showed astonishing levels of vitriol from Remain voters aimed those who voted Leave. Suddenly, the tolerant became the intolerant.

Since the referendum, polls have emerged, seemingly weekly, showing a chasm between Leave and Remain voters that continue to grow. The streets of Westminster have become more densely lined with EU flags on one side of the street and 'Leave means Leave' placards on the other.

What has been less high profile is the extent to which the mismanagement of the Brexit process itself has damaged trust in politics. The Prime Minister has failed to even try and reach consensus over how the UK would leave the EU. Parliament is in chaos. There are now no options on the table for a solution that will please all sides of June 2016's simplistic referendum question.

HOPE not hate works in communities which are vulnerable to the message of hate and division. From early 2018, based on in-depth polling and focus group work, we have warned that a hard Brexit – leaving the EU, the customs union and the single market – would create the economic conditions in which the far right would thrive. We have opposed a hard Brexit while working to identify ways in which the process can bring people together rather than divide communities further.

To that end, we have been conducting research on attitudes to Brexit throughout the fallout. We have sought to better understand the divisions, how views have been shifting, and

ultimately to find a solution that is going to be the least harmful for our communities and limit a far right backlash. We have polled tens of thousands of people and sat through dozens of hours of focus groups. We have listened as voters on both sides of the divide seek to explain their frustrations with the status quo, how their communities are changing, and their anger at how the Brexit process has unfolded.

We're approaching what is only the end of the beginning of the Brexit process. If the deadlock over the Withdrawal Agreement can be broken, it will merely mark the formal exit from the EU, sparking a divisive and lengthy debate over the future relationship between the UK and the EU, and the rest of the world. Britain faces years of complex and contentious debates and decisions. What happens with Brexit over the next few years will affect generations to come, and the fight over what that looks like has only just started. If we approach these debates in the same way as the Brexit discussions have so far been conducted then we should expect further division and deterioration in trust towards our political establishment.

We have taken a stand against a Brexit that will further upset our social fabric. We know that the far right feed on instability and uncertainty, exploiting fears and offering simple answers to complex problems, placing the blame on migrants and minorities and whipping up mistrust in 'the establishment'. While we have taken a stand against a hard Brexit which would have a detrimental effect on the economy, in turn damaging social relations, we also want to sound the alarm over the damage caused by a narrow, insular process which has sought to shut down debate, not open it up. The Government must move away from an approach that brings the different wings of the Conservative party above bringing a divided country together.

We have backed calls for the British public to have the final say on any Brexit deal, both to support or oppose the current deal, but also to offer the option of Remaining in the EU. We backed a second vote because we thought it was the most democratic thing to do. When people voted in 2016 to leave the EU they were not voting for a particular type of Brexit. In an environment where there is so much distrust and even antipathy towards politicians and

parliament, giving the public the final say not only seemed right but also allowed some buy-in for what will be the most important decision this country will make for a generation or two. A deal cooked in the tea rooms of the Commons will have no legitimacy if the people do not support it. Disillusionment and a deepening sense of betrayal towards the political establishment will only grow if a Brexit few support is imposed.

What has been particularly interesting in our polling is that while the public is split on the merits of a second referendum, when put in the context of the public having the final say and/or breaking the parliamentary log-jam, then support for a second vote consistently goes above 60%. To us, this is as much an indication that the public want to be part of a political decision-making process as it does about the merits of a Referendum itself.

In a year that we celebrate the 20th anniversary since the Good Friday Agreement came into effect, it is worth reflecting that this occurred 18 months after the agreement was actually signed and only after extensive efforts and billions was spent ensuring community buy-in and political consensus. This is not what has happened with Brexit. Since the 2016 referendum there has been no real effort to close our divisions, to involve different points of view and find a consensus that the majority of the country will support. In fact, the very opposite has happened. The Prime Minister has not only refused to reach across the political divide, but she even kept her own Cabinet in the dark about her proposed deal until the very end. With no involvement and buy-in, it is hardly surprising that she suffered the biggest ever parliamentary defeat and her deal has little support in the country.

With so much at stake for the future of our country, it is a scandal that politicians are scrambling around trying to deliver a deal at the eleventh hour. The Government's strategy of taking us to the edge in the hope that opponents of its deal will blink first might

inadvertently, see us fall over the cliff – with all the terrifying predictions that incurs. It is time for a fundamentally different approach.

HOPE not hate is now backing calls for the establishment of Citizens' Assemblies to spark discussions amongst communities and people with divergent opinions and explore the possibility of consensus over Brexit. While some argue that this is a distraction or an attempt to subvert democracy, we say the very opposite. Citizens' Assemblies will actually enhance democracy, allow ordinary people to have their voices heard and develop consensus. Ideally we would support Article 50 to be paused so these Assemblies can be created, but even if it is not and the UK leaves the EU as planned on 29 March, holding these deliberative discussions could be important to develop our long-term relationship with the EU.

And, according to our latest YouGov poll, more people support the idea of holding Citizens' Assemblies than oppose it. Given that hardly anyone would have heard of such assemblies before, it is both encouraging and offers a viable option to get through the Brexit deadlock.

The success of the Good Friday Agreement was as much about winning peace as it was about ending the war. If Britain is going to get through Brexit and heal the wounds it has opened up in society, to say nothing of addressing the issues which gave rise to it, then the British public have to be consulted in a meaningful manner, their opinions need to be heard, and their permission sought. If that does not happen then our divisions will deepen, resentment and grow and anger towards a political establishment will become even more entrenched. It is then that extremism and anti-establishment will flourish.

This report presents our research on Brexit, to better understand the divisions opened up by the 2016 referendum, and the choices we must make if we are to overcome them.

# BREXIT: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

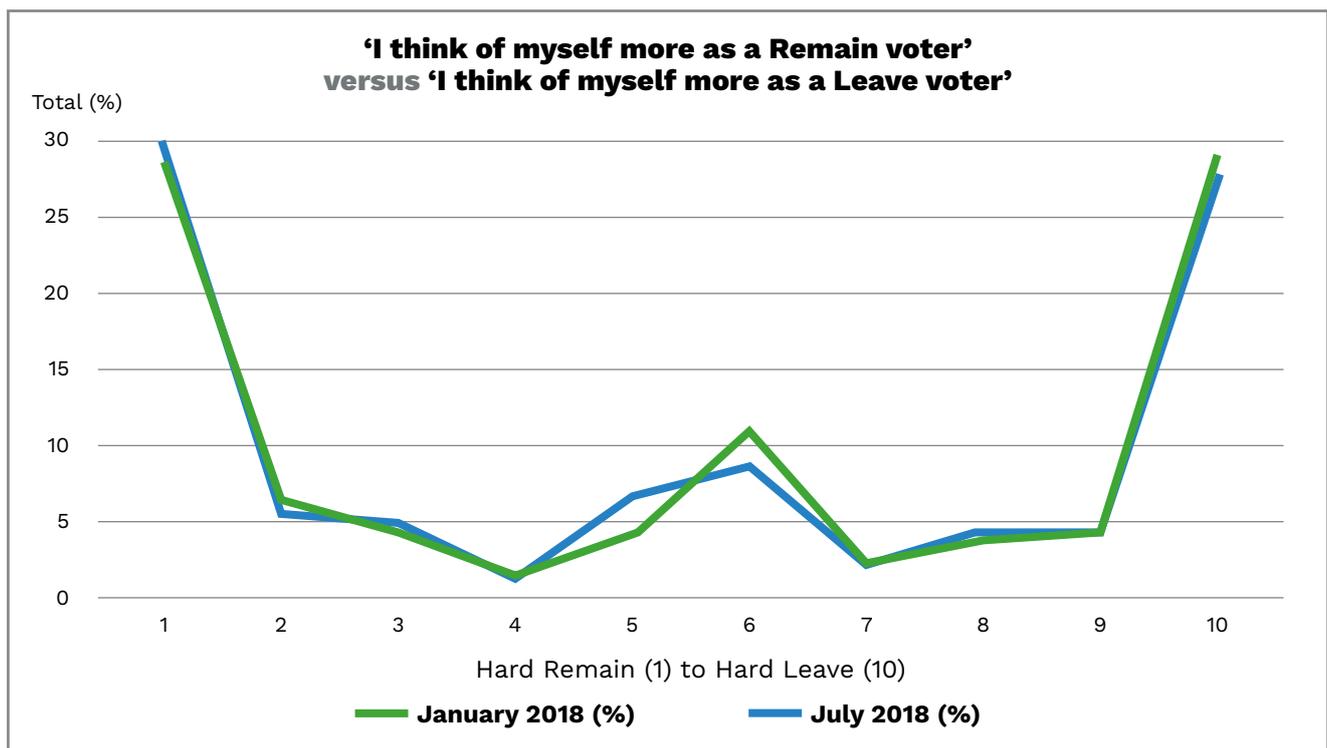
As of January 2019, leaving the EU is now the issue people see as most important to themselves and their families, crossing political and demographic differences. Yet the polarising effect of the Brexit referendum is unique and seems to have moved little over time.

Our December 2018 poll conducted by Populus found that 65% of people think that Britain is now more divided as a result of the referendum. While those who voted Remain (83%), Leave voters who have now changed their minds (81%), Women (68%) and 18-24s (71%) are most likely to fear divisions brought about by Brexit, only 12% of the total population disagree that Brexit has made us more divided.

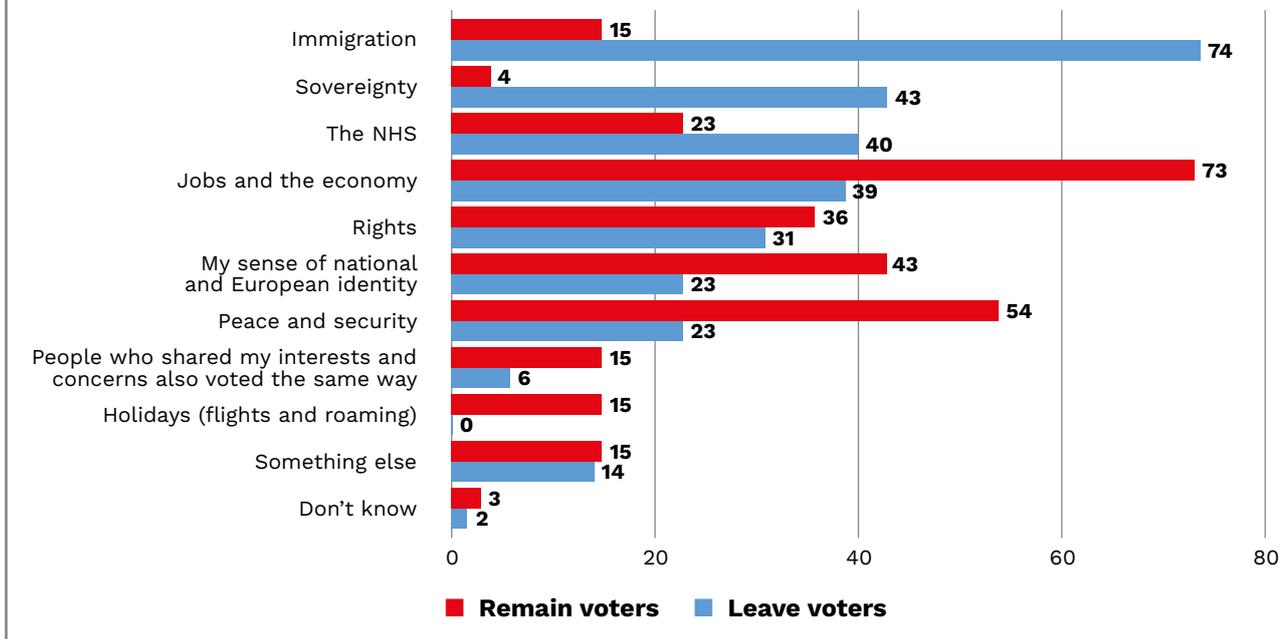
When asked whether people consider themselves more of a remain voter, or more of a Leave voter the majority of people (58%) see themselves at either extreme. This distribution sits at odds with other value-based statements, such as around regulation, taxation and even (as The National Conversation on Immigration showed) politically charged issues like immigration, where the distribution of views is weighted in the centre ground<sup>1</sup>.

Our polling has charted growing polarisation since the vote to leave the EU. Our Fear and HOPE report, which tracks attitudes to identity, found that as England has become an increasingly more tolerant and open society overall, the gap between those who stand in favour of immigration and multiculturalism is widening, with attitudes at both ends hardening<sup>2</sup>.

The strength of opinion shown during and since the referendum over Britain's membership of the EU was clearly about much more than how we feel about being European. Our relationship with Europe has always been complicated. Even before the referendum, fewer people in the UK felt any sense of European identity than in any other country in the European Union<sup>3</sup>. The 2014 British Social Attitudes Survey found that just 15% of people in Britain identified as 'European', a figure that had changed little since 1996, when the question was first asked<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, our Fear and HOPE studies have found that a sense of 'European' belonging has remained a minority view, with little change in the proportion of those identifying as European between 2011 and 2017 – at just 6%.



### The three most important reasons for voting decisions in the 2016 EU Referendum: YouGov poll, January 2018



When asked the most important reasons for voting how they did, Remain voters are most likely to state jobs and the economy, peace and security, or their sense of identity, while Leave voters are more likely to say that it was immigration or sovereignty, though the drivers for both sides of the vote are complex and multidimensional.

What drove the Brexit vote is not just issue based, but also an emotive choice that wove together different anxieties, offering a choice based on core values. Overcoming the divisions exposed in the referendum will take more than just the political outcome of if, and how, Britain leaves the EU.

## WHAT BREXIT MEANS TO PEOPLE IN BRITAIN

Leaving the European Union is an incredibly technical and bureaucratic process, and many now feel that during the referendum campaign there was little indication of what this would actually entail. In particular, the Leave campaign simplified the process into a series of shiny offerings. The promise of ‘control’ over money, borders and laws, and an added £350 million in NHS funding all belied the messy complications of Brexit.

A huge 74% of people across Leave (64%) and Remain (89%) divides, feel that most of us didn’t really know how complicated and difficult Brexit would be. While this highlights the many people who voted to Leave the EU but have now

changed their minds, it is also indicative of growing mistrust in the political system and ‘the establishment’.

In focus groups we held in the summer of 2018, in Stoke-on-Trent, Swindon, Bradford, Peterborough, Blackpool, and Southampton, few participants understood why the process of leaving the EU was taking so long. Many felt betrayed that they were not given enough information during the referendum campaign. However, some felt that the process had been made more complicated by politicians who did not want Britain to leave the EU, while some others felt that it was the EU trying to punish Europe.

As the national debate on the impact of Brexit has moved from immigration to trade, many who want to leave the EU feel that these are issues being used to sway political outcomes rather than posing a genuine threat.

**“Now all these things come up on the news, trade and that... but they’re making it more complicated because they don’t want to leave, ‘cos these big shots in London are gonna lose the most, not the working class”**

Blackpool: Labour Leave voter

For many, this feeling of mistrust in the establishment, particularly where Remain supporters are seen to be self-interested politicians or middle-class, educated city residents who do not share the same concerns,

means that economic projections of a crash following a hard Brexit are dismissed as scaremongering.

***“Saying it will be like this or it will be like that. But I don’t buy any of it, that’s just how politicians speak”***

Swindon: Labour Leave voter

***“The only reason all these affluent people are up in arms now is because it’s the first time their boat’s been rocked a bit and they’re scared”***

Peterborough: Leave voter

In this context, and as the section in this report on expectations shows, it is understandable that polls have shown hardening support for a no-deal Brexit<sup>5</sup>.

Our December 2018 YouGov polling shows that a huge 48% of people – and 78% of Leave voters – think that anything less than a clean break from the EU will be a betrayal of the Referendum vote, while 35% – and just 11% of Leave voters – disagree. Not all Leave voters are the same, of course, and Labour Leave voters are 15% less likely than Conservative Leave voters to feel that a clean break is the Brexit they voted for.

In our January 2019 YouGov poll, just 16% of people felt that the outcome of the referendum would be upheld if the UK continued to follow EU rules and legislation. Sovereignty is clearly important to people’s understandings of Brexit, as 54% , including 50% of remain voters and 66% of Leave voters, thought that this would not uphold the outcome of the referendum.

However, our December 2018 poll found that a ‘clean break’ does not necessarily mean having nothing to do with the EU. Although immigration was a mobilising force for many who voted to Leave the EU, more people disagree (47%) than agree (35%) that Brexit has to mean ending all free movement of people. Even among Leave voters, 36% disagree that Brexit necessitates ending Free Movement, while around half think it does (51%).

The vast majority of people want to avoid leaving the EU without an agreed deal. 48% of people feel that leaving the EU without a deal would be bad for Britain, while just 16% think it would be good and 19% of people feel it would make no difference either way. However there is still support for a no-deal Brexit among Leave voters: 33% think it would be good for Britain compared to 19% who feel it would be bad, and 32% who think it would make no difference.

It is difficult to know what people want as an outcome from leaving the EU, as Brexit, even a

‘clean break’ Brexit, clearly does not mean the same thing to different people. However, the nation is agreed on one thing – they do not trust Theresa May to bring about a solution.

## WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF THERESA MAY’S DEAL?

People clearly want to avoid a Brexit that puts the country at risk. In our Populus poll carried out in December 2018, the most common response to a no deal Brexit was fearful (41% of total) or pessimism (28% of total).

However, in our August 2018 poll of over 10,000 people, it was clear that the nation had little faith in Theresa May to get a deal with the EU that worked for Britain. 59% said they had very little or little confidence in Theresa May and her government securing a good deal for them and people like them – just 3% of people said they had a lot of confidence in May’s Government getting a good deal.

With May’s deal now on the table, our Populus poll carried out in December 2018 found the largest group of people (32%) were strongly opposed to Theresa May’s Brexit deal. 21% of people overall supported the deal, with 47% opposed. Leave and Remain voters were united in shunning the deal – with only 9% more support for the deal among Leave voters.

Those who have changed their minds – who voted Leave in 2016, but would now vote to remain in the EU-oppose May’s deal the most. 56% oppose the deal while just 8% say that would support the deal. Social class DE (who as the most financially precarious stand to lose out most) are least likely to accept the deal – just 17% would support it while 27% of the AB groups would support it.

In our January 2019 poll, 47% of people said they felt that on balance, the current deal would harm the British economy – only 8% (just 5% of remain voters and 13% of Leave voters) thought the current deal would benefit the British economy.

## BREXIT IS AN INTEGRATION ISSUE

If integration is about living together well, and mutual accommodation, we need to see Brexit as an integration issue. At present, there are few issues that divide us more, and as the chapter on civil unrest in this report shows, leaving the EU could trigger further social disruption and unleash hatred.

Integration is not just about migrants and minorities, but about all of us in society making the effort to live well with those around us, whatever their background or beliefs. As such, bridging our Brexit divides is the greatest integration challenge we currently face.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

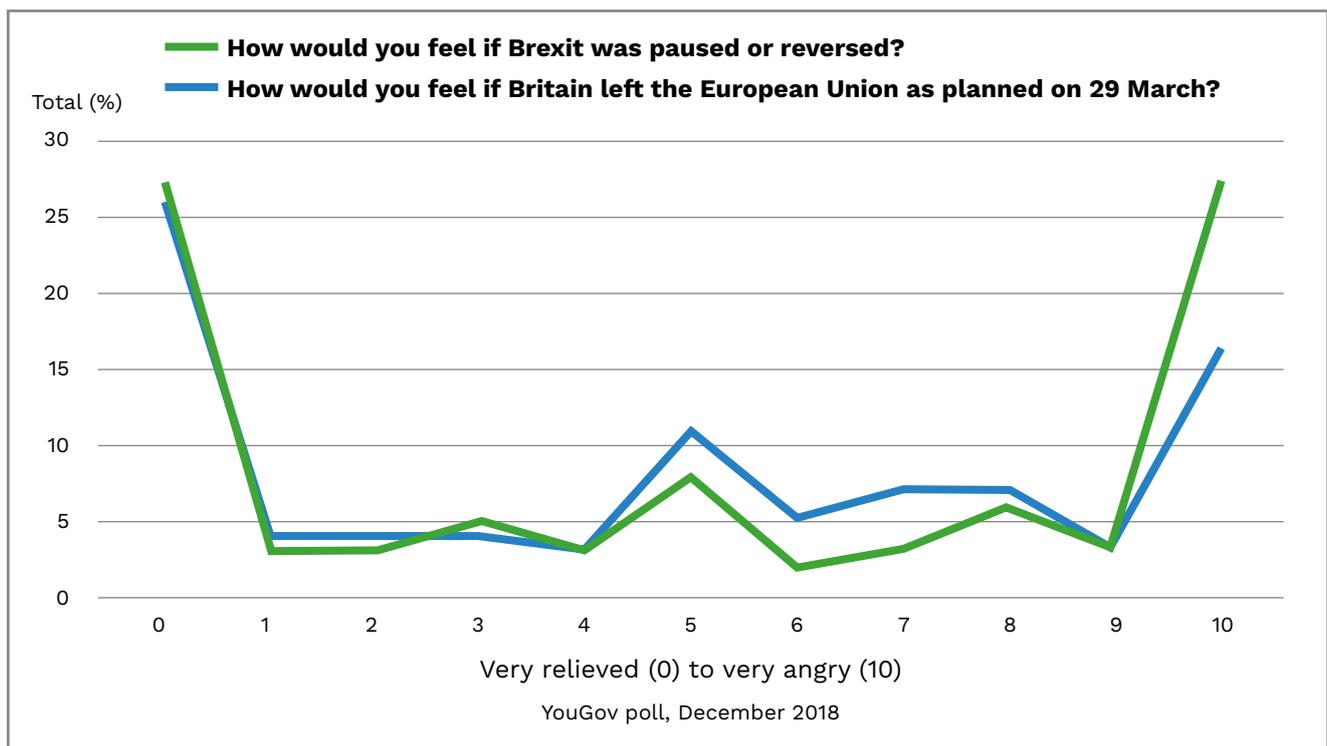
What leaving the EU looks like is not a straight forward answer. We are not just divided by Leave and Remain, but also what we want from leaving or remaining in the EU. The only thing that seems to be clear from all of this is that we're in a big mess.

Getting over this is not going to be easy. In a referendum that made a complicated choice as simple as 'leave' or 'remain', there seem to be red lines crossing every possible way out. We have seen a shift in how people would vote if there was another referendum, with more and more people opting to remain in the EU. Our latest few rounds of polling have shown that if there were a referendum today, remain would win. But we cannot go back in time and wishing we could only drives a wedge between both sides.

In our December Populus poll, we found that if the UK reversed its decision and remained in the EU, slightly more people would feel relieved (34%) than would feel frustrated (32%), angry (31%), or happy (21%). But there is a big divide between leave and remain voters – 67% of 2016 remain voters would feel relieved while 61% of 2016 Leave voters would feel angry.

Similarly, in our December YouGov poll, we found the exact same proportion of people who would feel 'very relieved' as those who would feel 'very angry' if Brexit was paused or reversed. Slightly more people would feel 'very relieved' than 'very angry' if Britain left the European Union as planned on 29 March.

These are exceptional times for British politics. Every single one of the options being considered in Westminster will anger at least as many people as would be pleased, meaning that whatever comes next, we will face a deepening crisis of public distrust - in politics, politicians, and each other. As we get closer to March 29th, it essential that we limit the damage to Britain's economy and our society. To do so, we need to start thinking about politics – and Brexit – differently.



## THE GROWING INTOLERANCE OF LIBERALS

The divisions we see growing across Britain cannot be pinned on one side or another. It would be simplistic, reading this report, to think that the expectations of Leave voters, at odds with economic projections, and growing anger and mistrust in the political system are leading the divide. But this is not the whole story.

Since the referendum we have charted not only the hardening of views and growing pessimism among liberals and remain voters, but also growing intolerance. Our data shows that polarisation is being driven on both sides of the debate.

In our third *Fear and HOPE* study, conducted immediately after the 2016 referendum, we found the two most liberal tribes were overwhelmingly furious with the tone of the Referendum campaign and the result. These factors had reinforced and hardened their own support for immigration and multiculturalism, reflected in even stronger views on these issues in our poll.

Suddenly, the most relaxed and optimistic groups in society were the most angry and pessimistic.

On the other side, we saw a softening of views among Leave voters, who were pleased by the referendum result. They were arguably less angry than they had been just a few months ago, in our second *Fear and HOPE* study, commissioned in February 2016, and certainly less angry than they would have been if the vote had been to remain in the EU. This group, who had previously been the most pessimistic in society, were now the most optimistic.

Horrified at the result and the increase in racist incidents, the liberal 48% appeared to have become the angry outsiders. Furious at Leavers

for the mess they believe they have inflicted on the country, they have little time for them and even less interest in interacting.

The polarisation in society saw our two liberal tribes make up 39% of society, (up from 22% in 2011) as the centre-ground emptied out as people took sides. Confident multiculturals, the most liberal identity 'tribe', was the smallest group in 2011. It is now the largest, taking in 22% of the population. The proportion of people identifying with the two hostile 'tribes' has remained stable since 2011.

Our more recent polling showed that these hardened attitudes had remained unchanged over time, with leave voters showing greater movement across key issues than Remain voters. Our fourth *Fear and HOPE* report, commissioned in June 2017, shortly after the snap General Election and the terrorist attacks, found this polarisation has continued and if anything deepened. An increasing number of people were more tolerant and open to immigration and multiculturalism, but a quarter of society remained firmly opposed and their views hardening.

In our focus groups, most people were measured and respectful of those who felt differently about Brexit to themselves, but we frequently heard Remain voters dismiss those who had voted to leave the EU as racist, inward-looking and uninformed. While, yes some people who voted leave were motivated by prejudice, and many were not fully informed about our membership of the EU, assuming that all 52% of voters think in the same way is short sighted and patronising.

Overcoming our Brexit division means challenging intolerance on both sides of the referendum vote.



# A CRISIS OF MISTRUST

In many ways, the vote to leave the European Union has been seen as an anti-politics vote, a protest vote against ‘the establishment’ and the status quo. Indeed, Nigel Farage joined Donald Trump’s campaign, riding on his Brexit victory in 2016 stating, “*anything is possible if enough decent people are prepared to stand up against the establishment*”<sup>6</sup>. While analyses have since shown that the profile of Brexit voters was in fact more heterogeneous than initial interpretations about a working class backlash suggested, the Leave campaign tapped into frustration with the political system, with ‘Brussels bureaucrats’ and anger and mistrust in political processes.

However Brexit was not just a manifestation of disconnect from politics and the Leave victory certainly did not soak up the frustrations people were feeling. As the negotiations have gone on, this disconnection is swelling.

In just six months, our polling shows that the proportion of people who feel that any of the main political parties reflect what they think has fallen, with just 32% of people saying that they feel represented by any of the main political parties. A staggering 68% of people now feel that none of the main political parties speak for them.

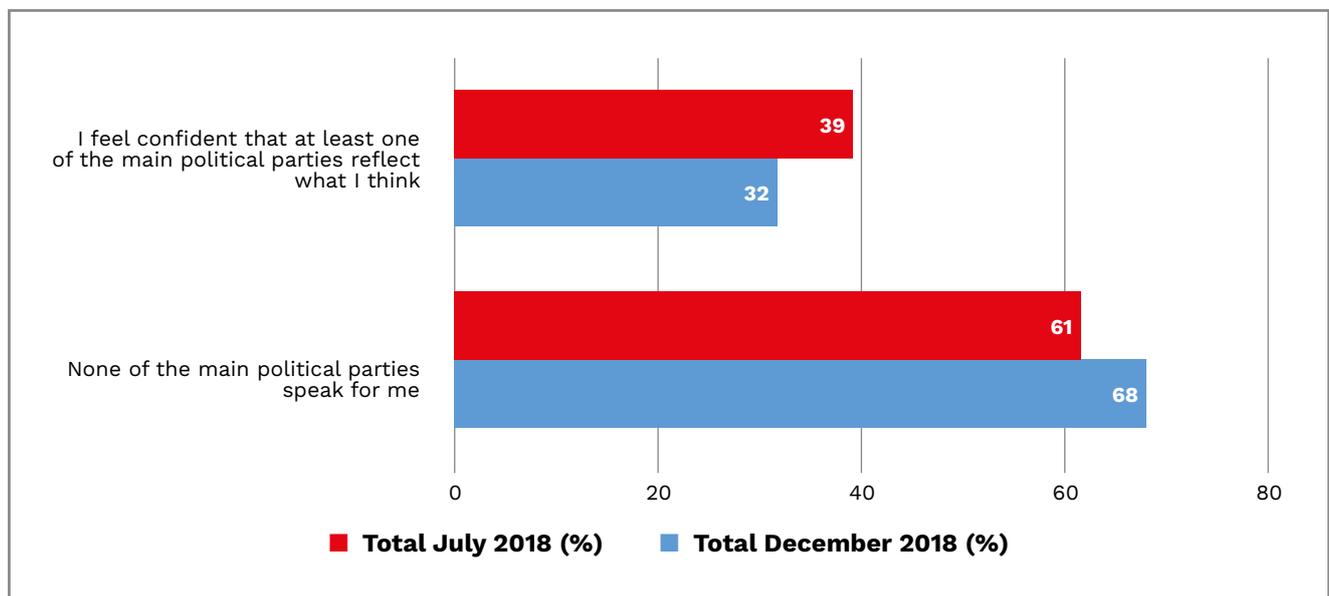
Leave voters are slightly more likely to feel they are not represented by our political parties than remain voters, though the margins are smaller

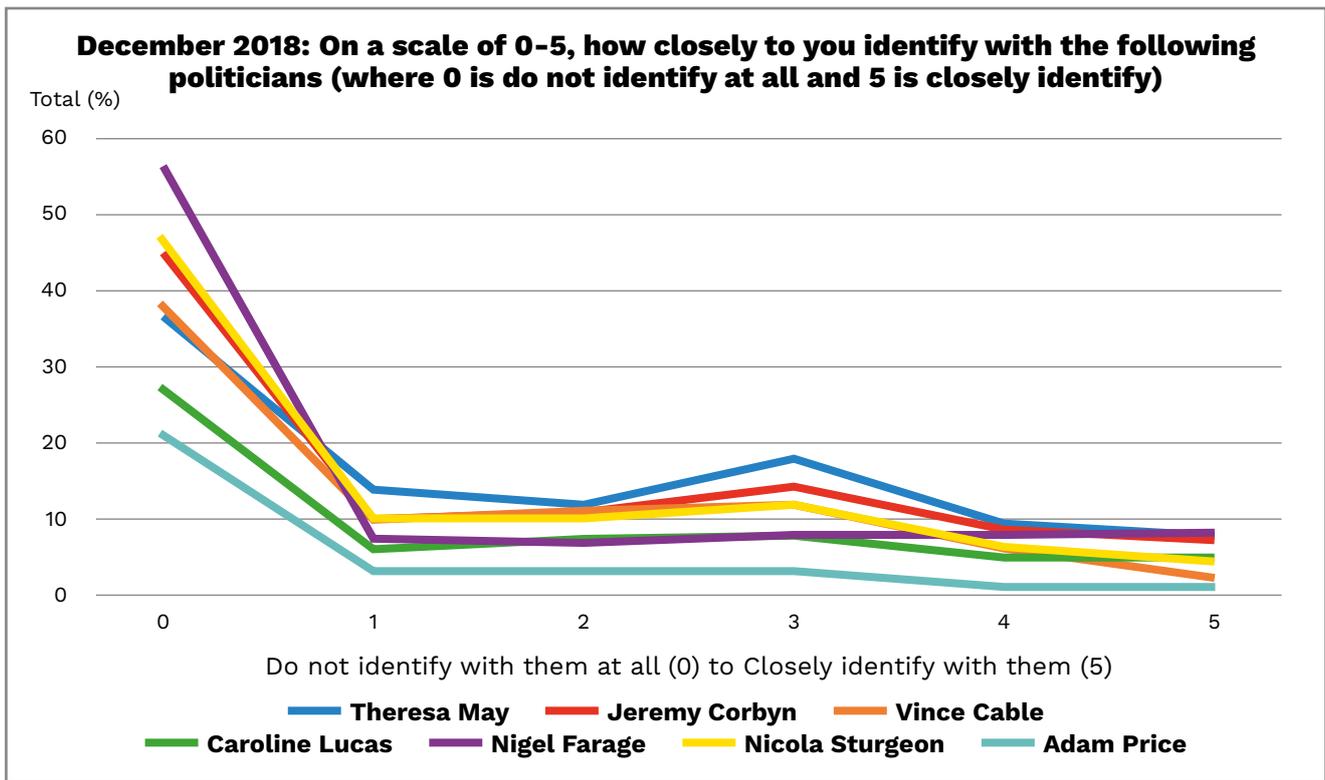
than one might expect – 71% of Leave voters say they do not feel that any of the main parties speak for them, but 62% of Remain voters feel the same way.

Demographic and political breaks show little difference in this disconnect, with only 1% more Conservative voters than Labour voters saying they do not feel represented, and a greater proportion of people in London saying they do not feel any of the main parties speak for them than in the Midlands and Wales. 18-24 year olds are only 1% more likely to say they feel represented by the main political parties than those over 65.

When asked about leading political figures, this disconnect is clear across the political spectrum, with less than 10% of people who have heard of each person saying they closely identify with any leading political figure.

Though people’s voting patterns, to some extent, predict the extent to which they identify with each political leader, there is still a high degree of disconnect. For example, among Conservative voters, 14% of people say they identify closely with Theresa May – but the exact same proportion say they do not identify with her at all. Among Labour voters, 15% say that they closely identify with Jeremy Corbyn. However, 16% say that they do not identify with him at all.





We are facing a crisis of growing political mistrust across all sections of the population, with no figure able to galvanise the support they need to overcome this disconnect.

## LEFT IN THE DARK

The conversations we have had across the country in our Brexit focus groups have reaffirmed the growing distance people feel from Westminster. Not only do people feel alienated by the language and process of Brexit, but also feel that politicians are keeping them in the dark over the process, instead acting in their own interests to further their careers.

***“I don’t feel like we’re getting enough information and we’re the ones who are going to have to live with it. We are all victims of not having the information we need”***

Non-voter: Stoke-on-Trent

People are overwhelmingly bored of Brexit. Terminologies like ‘customs union’, ‘regulatory alignment’ or ‘Norway plus’, with no clear explanation of what these mean, are enough for most of us to tune out. But people are not choosing to switch off from the process. They know this is important. People feel bombarded with information which does not make sense, but also frustrated that had things have not been explained to them in a way that was accessible or that resonates. Instead, most people tend to think that Brexit is being contained within

Westminster and Brussels as a political move that does not care to listen to what they really think or to act in their interests.

Nobody we spoke to in our ten focus groups told us that any politician had engaged with them outside of the referendum campaign itself, re-affirming their belief that politicians only ever spoke to people when they wanted their votes and have little interest in representing them.

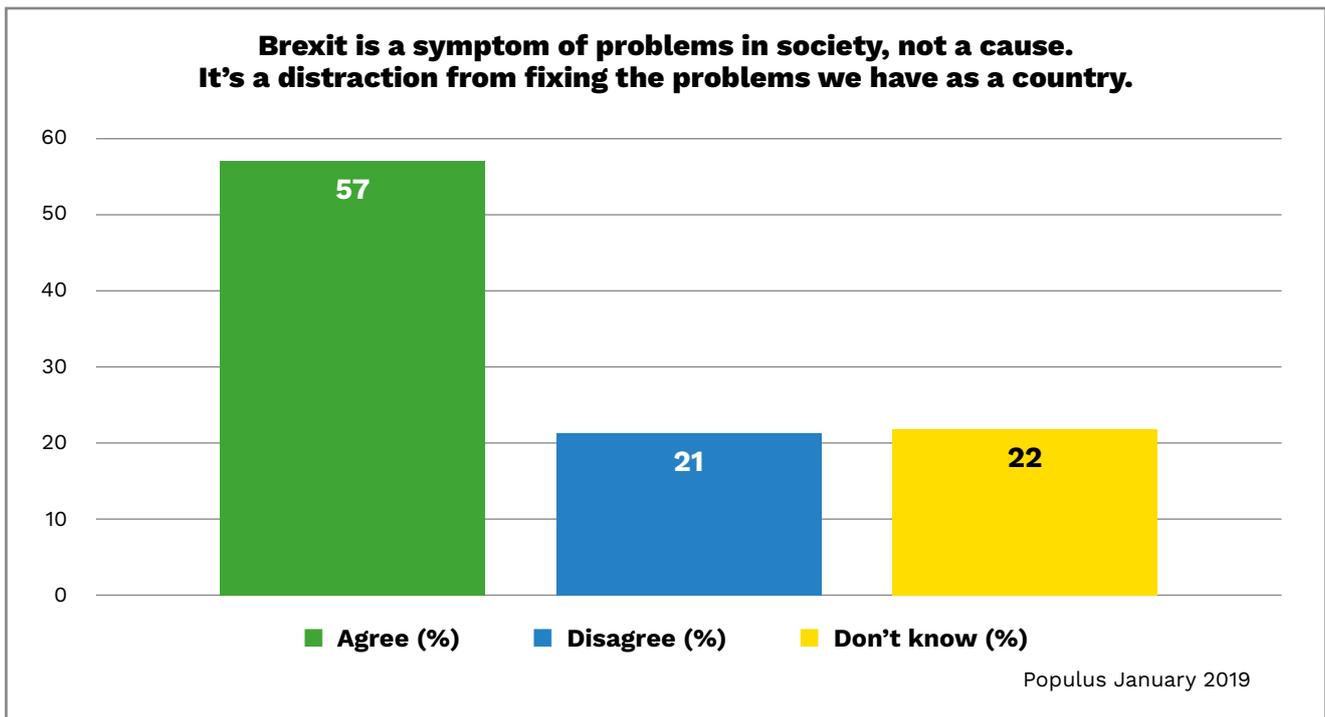
***“It’ll just happen, but they won’t listen. No matter what we say it’s just the big people and London, everything is about London”***

Labour Leave voter: Blackpool

In our January 2019 YouGov poll, a massive 57% of people agreed that Brexit is a symptom of problems in society, not a cause. It’s a distraction from fixing the problems we have as a country. Just 21% disagreed.

A failure to engage with voters through the Brexit process is driving an anti-politics sentiment even further. Engagement will require more than leafletting but real conversations, and for politicians to reach out and to deliver information in a clear, accessible way.

People do care about what happens with Brexit, but it is not enough to assume what they want without properly listening. Pushing for a hard Brexit will not be seen as a success, even among the hardest Brexit voter, if they feel alienated from the process and, inevitably, end up with a result that does not meet their expectations.



The growing view that there is a democratic deficit, that the political system is not working and that elected representatives have no interest in serving the public, will all be shouldered by those who fail to listen.

## ANTI-POLITICS AND THE POPULIST FAR-RIGHT THREAT

A lack of trust in politicians, institutions and the political system is increasingly seen to be the driving force behind the global rise of populist movements<sup>7</sup>. A broken relationship between elected representatives and their voters, especially among the large parts of society who feel they have been shafted by globalisation, results in support for political extremes.

We have already seen outbursts of violence from organised street-movement groups on the far-right, capitalising on Brexit anger. With no solution for Brexit that will address the demands of all of its voters, the British electorate, especially those who voted Leave in 2016 are showing increasing hunger for the political far right.

In our December 2018 YouGov poll, a staggering 40% of those who voted to leave the EU in 2016 said that they would now be likely to vote for a party founded by former members of UKIP, on the political far-right, committed to opposing Islamism and immigration and supporting Brexit.

Support for such a party has grown over just 6 months when we first asked the question in July 2018, from 17% to 20% among the general population. A third of Conservative voters say that they would be likely to support this party.

Fewer people are interested in supporting an even more extreme political party, but support is growing. 7% of our December 2018 YouGov poll say they would be likely to vote for a party founded by people with a history of football hooliganism, on the political far-right, committed to opposing Islamism and immigration and supporting Brexit. Among Conservative Leave voters this support rises to 13%.

Brexit has been seen by many commentators as the greatest explosion of populist support in the history of British politics. However, our research would suggest that Brexit itself will not be a means to an end, but in furthering mistrust of the political class and increasing the distance voters already feel from Westminster, is a gateway to increased populist support.

A mistrust in political representatives adds potency to a mix of unmet expectations, broken promises, further decline and anger that will accompany an economic downfall, if economic predictions come to fruition. The ground for a far right surge is fertile.

## THE NEED FOR ENGAGEMENT

If there is one lesson we should be taking away from the Brexit vote and its fallout, it is that we need to start doing politics differently. Instead of just ploughing through the chaos of Brexit in the chambers of Westminster, we need to reach out to ordinary people on all sides of the debate – not just those standing with banners on Parliament square. We need to listen to people who have for years felt ignored

and alienated by the political system, and by jargon-heavy negotiations.

Very few people trust this Government to deliver a Brexit that works for them and people like them – a figure which has grown from 60% in July 2018 to 67% in December 2018. Just 20% of people overall said that they could trust this government to deliver a good Brexit for them, with Leave voters (66%) almost as likely as Remain voters (75%) to feel mistrust.

**“The mechanisms of Brexit are set up to benefit people at the top. They don’t rely on public services like we do... it’s us lot that are collateral damage”**

Leave voter: Bradford

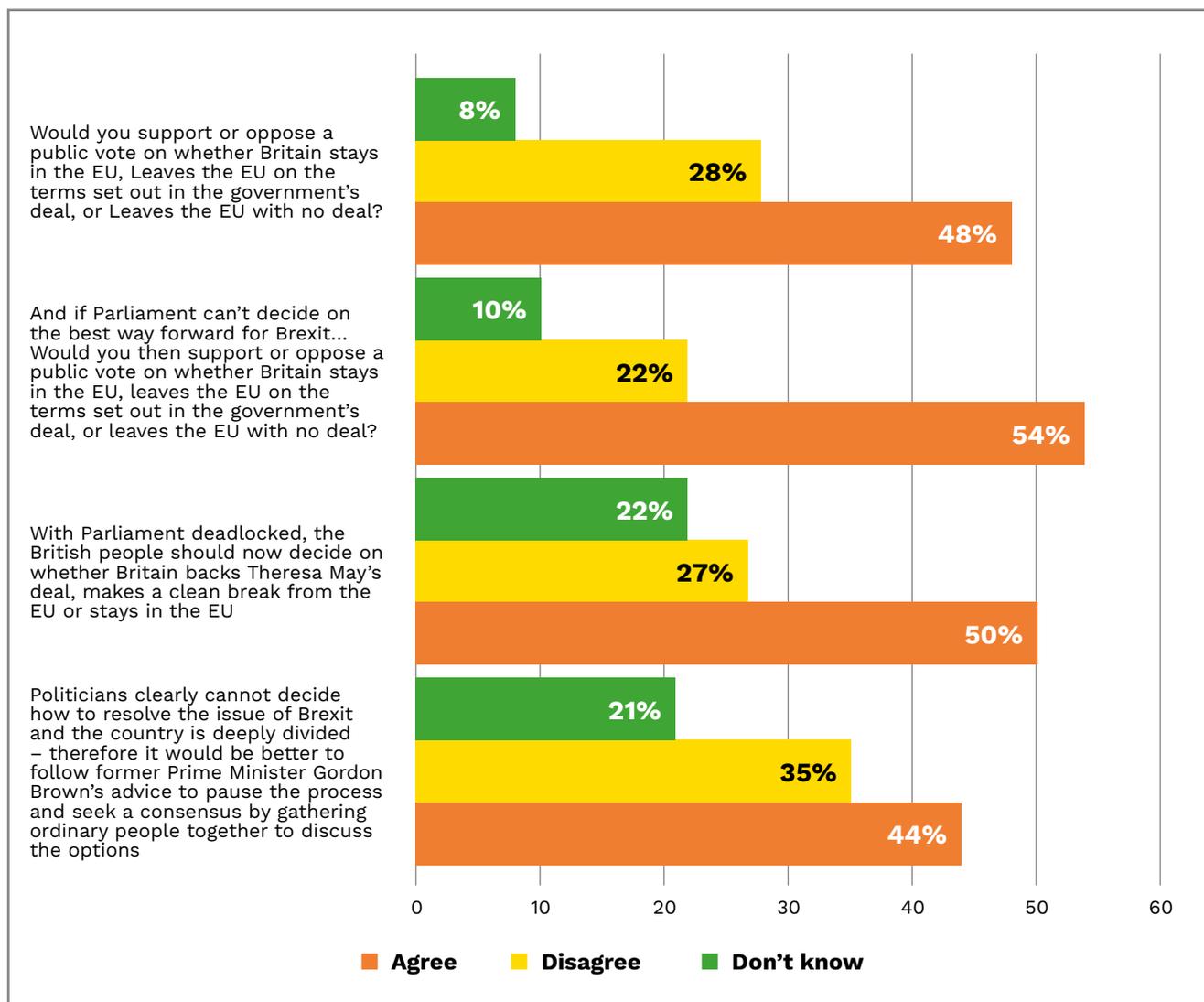
With the unpopularity of May’s deal and widespread anxiety over the likelihood of a no deal Brexit, many are looking for other options. In our January 2019 poll, 47% of people agreed that a Brexit that involves a total break from all EU rules and an end to free movement comes at

a severe economic cost to Britain, so it is time to pause and reassess. 34% disagreed with this.

People clearly want consultation on Brexit. With parliament deadlocked, support for alternatives that work for the best interest of the UK is growing.

A people’s vote remains a contentious option, though there is now more support than opposition for a public vote on whether Britain stays in the EU, leaves the EU on the terms set out in the government’s deal, or leaves the EU with no deal. In our December 2018 poll carried out by YouGov, 44% of people said that they would support this, while 35% would oppose it, and 21% remained undecided. In the same poll, the levels of support rose to 50% overall and opposition fell to 27% when given a situation where parliament cannot make a decision.

Our December 2018 poll carried out by Populus found 54% of people agreed that with Parliament deadlocked, the British people should now decide on whether Britain backs Theresa May’s deal, makes a clean break from



the EU or stays in the EU. Only 22% disagreed. There was little demographic difference between those wanting the British people to make the final call: 52% of 65+s agreed while 58% of 18-25s agreed. And although Remain voters were more likely to want a public vote (73%), 41% of Leave voters also want the public to be given a say (36% disagreed).

In the same poll, we found less polarising support for other alternatives. 48% of people agreed that because politicians clearly cannot decide how to resolve the issue of Brexit and the country is deeply divided, it would be better to follow former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's advice to pause the process and seek a consensus by gathering ordinary people together to discuss the options. This solution was most popular among Leave voters who have changed their minds. 74% of Leave voters who would now vote remain agree with this approach.

None of these solutions are able to galvanise total support across demographic and political divides. We can't poll our way to the specific solutions,

but the polls are clear about what the problem is. Given the context of our divided country, with such little support for Theresa May's deal, the potentially catastrophic impact a no deal Brexit would have on the UK, and mixed understandings of what leaving the EU should look like, it is clear that the public is increasingly open to alternatives which can involve them to find a consensus. Leadership will be required to drive through political reform that changes our way of doing politics, and to do so in a way that gives voters more control.

Our work in the National Conversation on Immigration<sup>8</sup>, the largest ever public engagement on immigration which we ran in conjunction with British Future, showed the power of public engagement on 'difficult', polarising issues. It also showed that meeting a consensus is possible. It is critical that whatever steps are taken next on Brexit hold public engagement at their core – to rebuild trust in the political system, to ensure people feel they are listened to and are spoken to openly and with honesty.



the National Conversation on Immigration was the largest ever public engagement on immigration

## IMMIGRATION



Immigration was a driving force behind the vote to leave the European Union. In our January 2018 YouGov poll, a massive 74% of Leave voters said that immigration was one of the three most important reasons for their decision, the most popular choice of all Leave voters.

However, since the referendum, we saw concerns about immigration fall. Fewer people were naming immigration among the 'most important issues' facing the country, and our own polling saw the proportion of people seeing immigration as good for the country increase. Our July 2018 poll found 60% of people think that immigration has been good for Britain, up from 40% when people were asked the same question in 2011, and 50% when people were asked in January 2016.

The reasons for this more positive view of immigration are complicated, but much can be attributed to a broader liberal shift in public attitudes, increased diversity, an improvement in economic conditions. For those with more hostile attitudes, a sense that Brexit might solve the 'immigration problem' had reduced concern.

For a while, it seemed as if this political football might be slowly deflating. However, our recent polling shows that immigration never went away, but became a dormant issue that is of increasing public concern as we edge closer to Brexit.

Our December 2018 poll shows that the rate of people saying immigration has been a good thing for the country has fallen to 57%. While 18% of people and 32% of Leave voters, said that immigration and asylum were among the most important issues facing the country in July 2018, this has increased to 20% of the total population and 38% of Leave voters by January 2019.

Moreover, for Leave voters who wanted to bring about a dramatic reduction in immigration, their expectations are unlikely to be met, indicating further anger down the line.

With rising anger, frustration and growing anti-politics and anti-establishment sentiments, it seems immigration could once again rear its head, ripe for exploitation in public and political debate, whatever the Brexit outcome.

# EXPECTATIONS

What people expect from Brexit shows the potential for further division, drawing further political and demographic fault lines.

## REJECTING ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS

Economic projections<sup>9</sup> suggest that the cost of a hard Brexit could be as high as an 18% drop in long-term output, but that the impacts of a hard Brexit will affect those living our poorest regions most. Predictions suggest that it is manufacturing and areas most dependent on EU trade, from Cumbria through Blackburn and Burnley, Hull and Grimsby, Leicester and Northants to Swindon, which will feel the greatest impacts.

According to the government's own forecasts, the impact of Brexit will fall most heavily on the North East. This region is predicted to shrink four times as much as London in the event of a hard Brexit, and three times as much as London for a softer scenario. The North West and West Midlands are also set to see the greatest impacts, forecast to shrink three times as much as London in a hard Brexit scenario.

But we have found that messages about the potentially detrimental economic impacts of Brexit just do not resonate with many who would bear the brunt of this decline, who are instead feeling a newfound optimism as a result of the referendum result.

In focus groups we held in areas predicted to be worst hit by an economic downturn, few believed these predictions. Instead they believed it was wealthier people in the core cities and London who had more to lose. Many felt that there would be economic downturn immediately after Brexit, but that these impacts would not last, and that in the long run they would be better off. As a Labour voter in Bradford put it in response to economic projections, *"I've not got anything to lose. It'll affect all the people with money"*. And a Leave voter in Grimsby:

***"It can't get any worse, so... Putting the Great back in Great Britain, they're changing the passports to blue, aren't they? How they used to be before we went into the EU. So if that's happening then, we can go back to Great Britain surely."***

This division in expectations for leaving the EU sets the scene for what is to come if these projections are realized.

## THE BREXIT OPTIMISM SHIFT

Our Fear and HOPE reports, which measure attitudes to race, faith and belonging, have traced optimism and pessimism since 2011, identified as a key driver behind attitudes. People who are more optimistic about their own lives tend to hold more liberal views than those who feel pessimistic. People who are more optimistic tend to feel more in control of their own lives and are less likely to hold negative views toward immigration and multiculturalism.

Using the sophisticated data analytics technique MRP (multilevel regression with post-stratification), we are able to map attitudes, to paint a much more detailed picture with our data including portraits of attitudes in each constituency in Britain. It shows that before the referendum, in February 2016, the most optimistic constituencies were mostly areas within core cities and prosperous university towns. Eighteen of the most optimistic constituencies in February 2016 were London boroughs, with Bath and Edinburgh North and Leith also among the most hopeful for the future.

Conversely, we found pessimism in places where unemployment was more prevalent, where there were fewer opportunities and the standard of living was declining. Among the least optimistic in our pre-referendum poll were Grimsby, Rotherham, Hartlepool, Blaenau Gwent and Boston & Skegness. In all these areas less than 40% of people felt optimistic for the future- just 36% in Clacton, the least optimistic constituency in the UK.

The most pessimistic constituencies were also among those with the strongest Leave vote in the 2016 EU referendum, while the areas with the highest levels of optimism were among the strongest Remain voting constituencies. Brexit, however, reversed this trend in hopefulness.

Two years on, our July 2018 YouGov poll found that this trend had become more engrained as the Brexit negotiations went on. Remain voters were far more pessimistic about the future than Leave voters. Seventy-one percent (71%)

of Remain voters said they felt pessimistic for the future, more than twice the proportion of Leave voters (35%). Eighteen percent (18%) of Remain voters felt that the next generation would have more opportunities than us, compared to 53% of Leave voters. Forty-six percent (46%) of Leave voters felt that Brexit would increase the economic opportunities for people like themselves, compared to just seven percent (7%) of Remain voters.

Our MRP constituency data found that areas with the greatest fall in optimism for the future between February 2016 and July 2018 were among the areas with the greatest Remain vote in the referendum. Hornsey and Wood Green became 23% more pessimistic over two years, Bristol West 22.3% more pessimistic, and Islington North 21.8% more pessimistic than in the months before the referendum.

Conversely, Leave voting areas saw a surge in optimism. Boston and Skegness, the constituency with the strongest Leave vote in the referendum was 15% more optimistic in our July 2018 poll, with other Brexit strongholds such as Clacton (14.6%), Castle Point (12.4%) and Louth and Horncastle (12.4%) all more optimistic for the future than in February 2016.

This crossing line in optimism and pessimism between Leave and Remain matters, because many of the places experiencing newfound optimism are among those most likely to feel the impacts of predicted economic downturn after the UK leaves the EU.

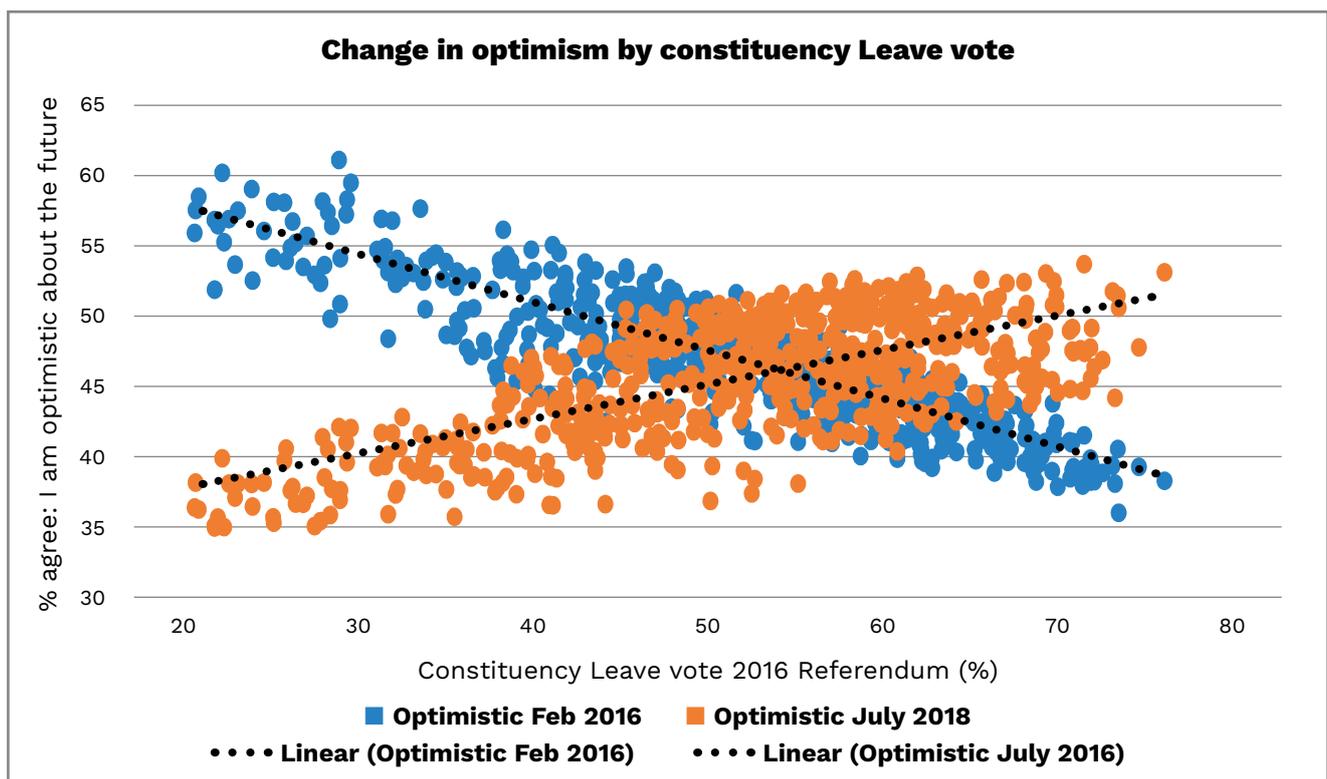
For example, in Dudley North, economic projections suggest that the West Midlands economy could shrink by up to 13% after Britain leaves the EU<sup>1</sup> which would have a direct negative impact on people living in Dudley, where there are already pockets of acute deprivation. However, just 3.6% of leave voters in Dudley North feel their economic situation would improve if the UK remained in the EU. An area where under 40% of people felt optimistic for the future in February 2016, by July 2018 optimism in the constituency has surged by 8%.

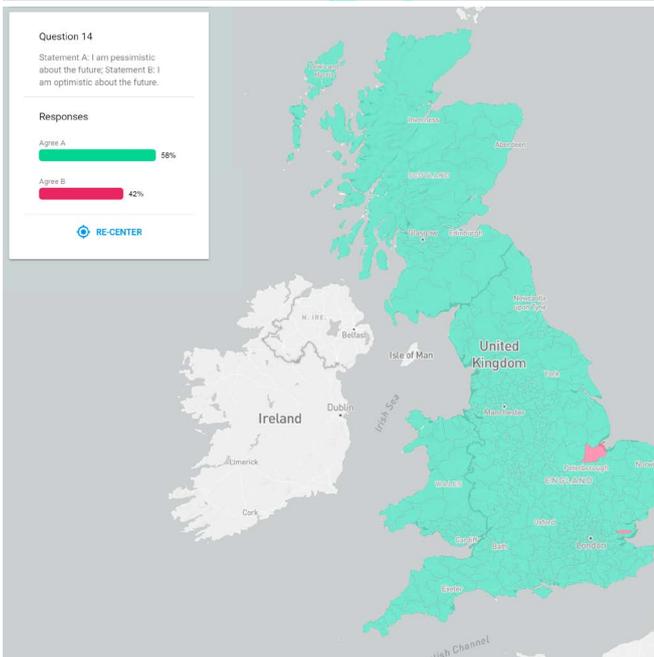
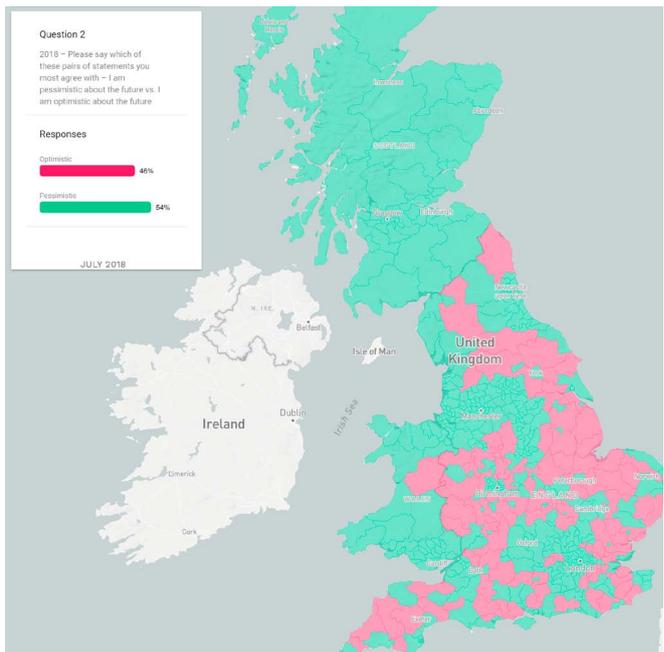
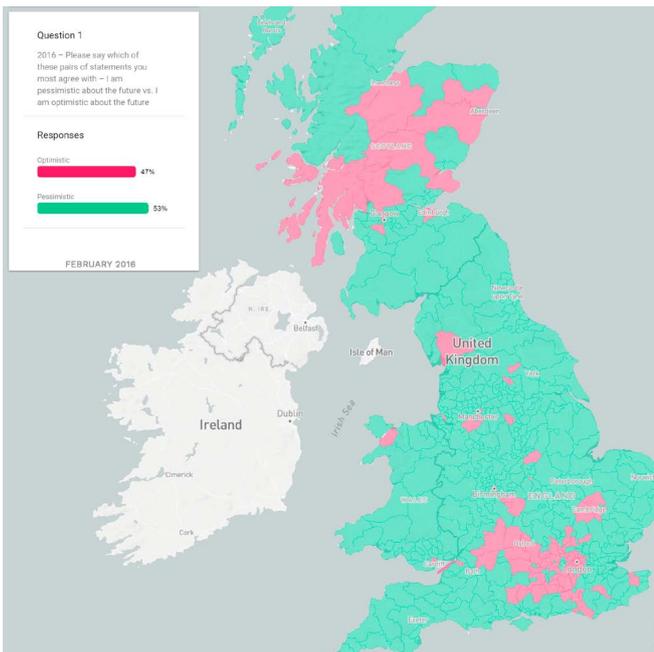
If these economic predictions come to fruition, the bubble of newfound optimism in the poorest areas will burst. Moreover, an economic crash will most likely add to inequality, rather than reverse it. This opens a window of opportunity for populist exploitation.

However, as we edge closer to March 29<sup>th</sup>, this optimism is gradually fading, as 58% of people in our January 2019 poll felt pessimistic about the future.

## WHAT PEOPLE THINK IS GOING TO HAPPEN

Leave voters tend to be more optimistic about the outcomes of leaving the EU for themselves than for the country as a whole, where this enthusiasm is dwindling. In our July 2018 poll, nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of Remain voters felt that the economic prospects for themselves and their family would be better if the UK remained in





Between February 2016 and July 2018, we saw a shift in patterns of optimism and pessimism as areas like Clacton and Lincolnshire, which had been pessimistic about the future displayed a surge in optimism that accompanied the Brexit vote, while areas such as in London and Scotland went from the most optimistic about the future to the most pessimistic.

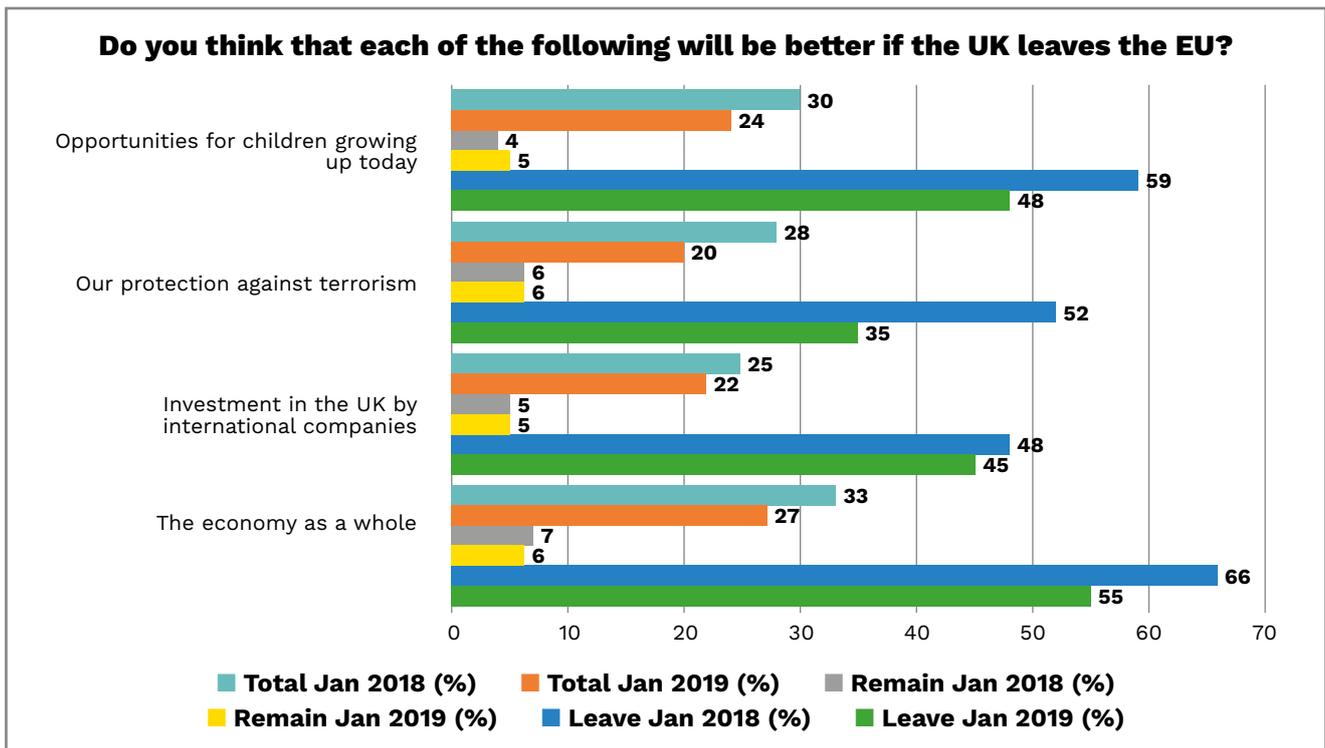
By January 2019, it seems that this optimism is waning, with the majority of people now more pessimistic than optimistic about the future – with exception of just two constituencies – South Holland and the Deepings where 73.6% of voters endorsed Britain’s withdrawal from the EU, second only to neighbouring Boston – and Rayleigh and Wickford in Essex, where an estimated 68% of people voted to Leave the EU.

the EU, compared to a tiny 5.1% of Leave voters. Instead, 42.7% of Leave voters felt optimistic that their personal economic situation would improve if the UK left the EU, while 32.2% felt it wouldn’t make much difference either way.

On a national scale, the country is just as divided, though optimism among Leave voters is falling. In January 2019, 55% of Leave voters thought that the economy as a whole will better if the UK leave the EU, thought this was down from 66% just a year before. However, the proportion of Leave voters who feel the UK’s economy would be better off if we remain in the EU only increased by 2% over the same time period, to 7%, indicating a greater degree of uncertainty, rather than a complete change of mind. Leave

voters are also feeling less optimistic about our protection against terrorism if the UK leaves the EU- a dramatic fall from 52% in January 2018 who felt thing as would be better if we left, to 35% in January 2019- and about opportunities for future generations. The proportion of Leave voters who thought opportunities for children growing up today would be better if the UK leaves the EU is sizeable, though fell from 59% in January 2018 to 48% in January 2019.

However, there has been little shift in Leave voters’ optimism for ‘trading with the rest of the world’. Just 10% of Leave voters think that investment in the UK by international companies will be better if the UK remains in the EU, up by only 2% since January 2018.



These expectations sit in stark contrast to those of remain voters who have shown overwhelming pessimism for any impacts of the UK leaving the EU.

The optimism about what Brexit will bring chimes with what we have heard in focus groups across the country, where many expressed their support for leaving the EU as a vote for a change in the status quo, a vote against a system that worked for centres of power at the expense of ordinary working people.

However, very few people overall feel that Brexit will actually address these frustrations and inequalities. 45% of people in our January 2019 poll told us that Brexit won't help the poorest or those communities already struggling. It will only be used by right wing politicians to damage workers' rights and public services. At the same time, this was a view more strongly held by those who voted remain (73%) than leave (22%).

Our expectations of Brexit continue to divide us, and with little being done to better understand these expectations, to offer neutral, accessible information on what each option on the table will mean for the country, we are speaking different languages. Building bridges across Brexit divides necessitates a better way of discussing realities, instead of pandering to one side or another for political gain.



# CASE STUDY: THE VIEW FROM BLACKPOOL



Blackpool is a seaside town that has seen large scale decline. The fall of the tourist industry has taken away work from the town, while former tourist guesthouses now offer cheap accommodation which attracts hard-up people from surrounding areas. The area has significant problems with poor health, mental health and drug and alcohol dependency. The town voted 67.5% to Leave the EU in the June 2016 referendum.

Our MRP constituency estimates show that over time, enthusiasm for leaving the EU is waning in Blackpool, as the economic realities hit. Although there is less concern about a no deal Brexit than in other parts of the country, a considerable amount of people think that a no deal Brexit would be a bad choice for Britain. There is also a considerable amount of concern that Brexit is whipping up prejudice.

Optimism about Brexit soared in Blackpool after the referendum, with many feeling that Brexit would increase opportunities for them. But by January 2019 this had fallen back to similar levels

as in 2016, with 60% of people now pessimistic about the future.

In September 2018, we held a focus group in Blackpool with white British women who voted to Leave the EU in 2016 and voted for the Labour party in the 2017 general election.

Labour Leave voting women have shown a greater degree of ambivalence towards Brexit, and are among the demographic group most likely to swing from Leave to Remain. According to our MRP data from August 2018, 10% don't know how they'd vote in a second referendum, compared to a UK average of 5.2%.

In many ways those we spoke to group mimicked the polling data on Labour leave women. They had shifted towards remaining in the EU since the vote, and felt confused and frustrated by the Brexit negotiations, which they did not feel were working for people like them.

However, this was also a group who felt an external sense of control, that impacts would not directly affect them, who struggled to make links

Focal Data MRP: Blackpool Constituency Estimates			
	UK Total	Blackpool North & Cleveleys	Blackpool South
Leave vote 2016 (%) <sup>10</sup>	51.9%	66.9%	67.8%
Would vote Leave if another European Union referendum was held today (of total including those who don't know and non-voters) January 2019	36.9%	44%	44.2%
Leaving the EU without an agreed deal would be bad for Britain, January 2019	46.0%	35.7%	37.7%
Brexit will increase the economic opportunities for people like me, January 2019	23.6%	28.7%	26.8%
I am concerned that Brexit is feeding prejudice and division and taking our country backwards, January 2019	60.5%	55.4%	54.8%
I am optimistic about the future, February 2016	46.9%	40.5%	39.5%
I am optimistic about the future, July 2018	45.8%	45.6%	45.1%
I am optimistic about the future, January 2019	41.6%	39.9%	40%

between the abstract, such as potential economic decline, and the everyday. The group were hard to motivate through the discussion, not because they were not informed or interested, but many had switched off from political processes they felt alienated from. The majority of the group felt they had little control over their own lives and that nobody in a position of power would listen to them. A sense of giving up more broadly came through, and participants told us that they felt “scared” for their children’s future.

The group spoke a lot about Blackpool’s decline, about the rise in homelessness, about their security concerns, crime and prevalence of the drug Spice. Some said they were scared to walk as far as their cars after the focus group concluded. Austerity cuts were a huge concern of the group, but they struggled to see connections between public service cuts and the potential for economic decline following Brexit to take money from public services.

It was because of this decline that many in the group had voted to Leave the EU. A successful Brexit was seen as one where, “it’s all stopped, it’s all happened. Without a say, all these funding cuts”; as one where the UK did not have to pay a divorce bill, where industry returned and the UK could support itself financially. The group felt betrayed by the £350M bus promise. At the same time, almost all of the group were still hopeful that there would be more money available after Britain leaves the EU.

Immigration was hugely salient and a reason many voted leave, “I didn’t think about anything else”. Although in the discussion, anxieties were tied in with fear about being labelled racist, and many felt they were not listened to. At the same time, everyone wanted to prioritise trade and the economy over controlling migration. Everyone

wanted EU migrants who were currently in the UK to remain, and there were some concerns about NHS staff and care worker shortages after Brexit.

The group all felt that a Brexit failure was one where the UK has to pay a lot of money to the EU. Some felt that the economy would take a hit when Britain first leaves the EU, but that in the long term Britain would be more prosperous. The group wanted to prioritise trade and British jobs, but when discussing the economic impacts of Brexit, they tied individual businesses to Europe, and applied a household economics analogy to understand economic decline.

**“The cost of everything’s going up, but I’ll just go somewhere else, I’ll just go to Aldi or Lidl.... But will there still be Aldi and Lidl after we leave? Because they’re German?”...**

What was overwhelming among those we spoke to in Blackpool is that they wanted Brexit to be over, because there were more pressing issues at hand. They felt that the system was not working for them. But they did not want the Government to bulldoze through a Brexit that would ultimately exacerbate these problems.

**“They should get on with it, it’s the EU dragging it out, they’re making out like as a country it’ll all go to shit, it’s all portrayed as crap, but they’re gonna have to do it. But I’d rather they take the time to get it right than rush through it”**

# POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

Supporters of the main political parties are as divided on Brexit as society at large, with YouGov estimating that 61% of 2015 Conservative voters backed Leave in the Referendum, and 39% voting to Remain. There was a reverse situation for Labour, with 65% voting Remain and 35% backing Leave. The 2017 Liberal Democrat voter was much more supportive of the EU, with 79% backing Remain in a new vote, and UKIP totally solid behind Leave.

While there appears to be have been very little shift in the overall Brexit opinion since the Referendum until the last few months, when Remain has opened up a 6-10% lead, beneath the surface there is more significant movement. Our polling has shown Labour voters becoming more solidly Remain, while Conservative voters are increasingly backing Leave.

Our December 2018 poll, found only 66% of voters who voted Leave in the Referendum and Labour in 2017 would do so again in a new vote. Of the remainder, 13% would now vote Remain and a further 10% are undecided. Almost one in five of Labour Leave voters in our December 2018 poll said that they would be relieved if Brexit was halted or reversed, with 11% stating they would be very relieved.

The switch amongst Labour voters is matched with an almost identical reverse shift amongst Conservative voters, with only 76% of those Tories who voted Remain in 2016 saying they would do so again in any new vote. Of the remainder, 17% would switch their vote to Leave, with a further 7% now undecided. Over a quarter of Conservative voters (28%) in our December 2018 poll said that they would be relieved when Britain left the EU.

This move can be explained by voters beginning to follow their traditional party loyalties, with some Labour Leave voters viewing Brexit

## THE 2017 LABOUR LEAVE VOTER

- 66% are above 45 years old
- 51% are men, 49% are women
- 85% have no, low or medium educational qualifications
- 43% are in rented accommodation, (29% nationally are in rented accommodation)
- 57% are in social class C2DE, compared to 34% of Labour Remain
- 36% are in the North, 18% Midlands, 11% London, 24% in South and 5% Wales.
- Only 5% of Labour Leave voters are Scottish
- 68% say that they have less disposable income after housing, food and fuel than a year ago.

through the prism of a Conservative Government (ie a Tory Brexit), while Conservative Remain voters increasingly switching to Leave because of a desire to be loyal to their party leader, honour the referendum result and, more importantly, out of a fear of getting a Corbyn-led Government if Brexit is reversed and the Government falls.

The bulk of Labour Leave voters would be considered 'old Labour'. They are predominantly older working class voters, uneasy about immigration, strongly in favour of state intervention and public services and very loyal to Labour.

Given the loyal and partisan nature of old Labour voters, and their distinctive hatred of Tories and the rich, it is perhaps unsurprising that some are viewing Brexit through the prism of

How would you vote if another European Union referendum was held today?				
	Jun-16	Jan '18	July '18	Dec '18
I would vote to REMAIN in the EU	0%	11%	16%	16%
I would vote to LEAVE the EU	100%	77%	71%	66%
I would not vote	0%	2%	4%	4%
Don't know	0%	10%	9%	13%

Brexit will increase the economic opportunities for people like me							
	General population	2017 Labour voters	2017 Conservative voters	2017 Labour Remain	2017 Labour Leave	2017 Conservative Remain	2017 Conservative Leave
Strongly agree	7.3%	3.9%	12.7%	1.2%	9.8%	2.8%	17.1%
Partially agree	16.3%	10.8%	28.3%	3.8%	28.0%	11.4%	35.9%
Partially disagree	18.3%	19.3%	17.2%	19.9%	18.1%	29.0%	12.3%
Strongly disagree	27.9%	42.6%	12.0%	60.6%	8.9%	31.9%	4.0%
Don't know	30.3%	23.4%	29.8%	14.5%	35.2%	24.9%	30.7%

a Conservative Government. Few Labour Leave voters, even those who would still vote Leave in any new referendum, have any faith in the conservative Government delivering a Brexit that would be good for people like them. In our July YouGov poll, only 8% of Labour Leave voters had confidence in Theresa May getting a good Brexit deal for people like them. Over three-quarters of Labour Leave voters (78%) agreed with the statement that “I don’t trust this Government to deliver a good Brexit for people like me”, with just 9% disagreeing and even then only 2% strongly disagreeing.

Brexit expectations amongst Labour voters is quite different to those of Conservative voters and especially Conservative MPs. Whereas most Conservatives see leaving the EU as an opportunity to rid the country of rules and regulations, for Labour voters, including Labour Leave voters, this is an anathema. Our polling also shows strong opposition to free trade agreements from Labour Leave voters. According to our July 2018 poll, two thirds of Labour Leave voters would oppose a free trade deal which would have a negative impact on Britain’s manufacturing; 60% would oppose a free trade deal which would have a negative impact on Britain’s environmental protection; 72% of Labour Leave voters would oppose a free trade deal which would have a negative impact on Britain’s food safety standards; and three quarters would oppose a free trade deal which would have a negative impact on the rights of British workers.

The prospect of free trade deals with the likes of Donald Trump or opening up British manufacturing to the Chinese strikes fear into the heart of Labour voters, including Labour Leave voters, whereas the opportunities of free trade deals are welcomed by Conservative voters.

Both main political parties are trying to navigate a Brexit position without alienating their respective memberships. It is perhaps understandable that there is so much opposition to May’s Brexit deal amongst her MPs as they are reflecting the views of the overwhelming proportion of party members

and Conservative voters. Sixty-nine per cent of Tory voters, rising to 85% when don’t knows are excluded, do not believe that any deal that keeps Britain aligned to EU rules and regulations honours the Referendum result. This rises to almost 90% of Conservative Leave voters.

It is perhaps no wonder that Conservative Remain voters, less hardline on Brexit, worried about Corbyn and believing that this is the softest Brexit deal possible, support Theresa May’s Brexit deal than Conservative Leave voters.

The Labour leadership, meanwhile, have been embroiled in an on-going battle between their own Euroscepticism, the views of the membership and party supporters more generally, and the concern of Labour MPs in Leave-voting constituencies. For over two years the Labour Party muddled through with a deliberately ambiguous position of promising to honour the referendum but always holding out the option to change course down the line. With Brexit fast approaching, this position has become increasingly untenable, though even more they much prefer to say what they are against as opposed to what they are for.

The concern of opposing Brexit and backing a new vote comes mainly from MPs in Leave-voting constituencies who fear a political backlash if the party changes course. While some of these views are not unfounded, and there will certainly be considerable anger amongst some Labour Leave voters if Labour opposes Brexit, this pales into insignificance compared to the potential political backlash from Remain voters, both in size and intensity, who now make up almost 80% of Labour voters.

Labour Leave voters are less concerned about Brexit than Leave voters generally and Labour Remain voters specifically. Labour Leave voters are more concerned with bread and butter economic issues, austerity and cuts to welfare benefits. Only 36% of Labour Leave voters list the UK leaving the EU as one of the top three issues facing themselves and their families, compared to 58% for Conservative Leave voters and 60% for Labour Remain voters.

## DEEPENING DIVIDES: HOW TO RESOLVE THE BREXIT DEADLOCK

This plays out locally as well. As the table from Dagenham and Rainham shows, Britain leaving the EU is less of an important issue for Labour Leave voters than Labour Remain voters and even Tory Leave voters.

Many of Labour's new voters in 2017 were working class people who hadn't voted in the previous election but were drawn to Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message and young working class people voting in their first election. Both link

MRP Constituency estimates Dagenham & Rainham					
	Constituency total	Lab Remain voter	Lab leave voter	Leave voter	Con voter
Health	41.50%	43.30%	43.10%	38.20%	36.40%
Economy	29.00%	33.30%	25.00%	23.30%	26.50%
Crime	16.50%	15.30%	25.70%	28.10%	26.00%
Immigration & asylum	17.80%	7.70%	23.90%	32.00%	31.00%
Britain leaving the EU	38.20%	46.00%	22.60%	26.20%	33.90%
Housing	14.70%	15.80%	18.00%	15.30%	11.40%
Welfare benefits	10.80%	11.10%	19.50%	14.90%	9.70%

	Total	Vote in 2017			Remain Voters				Leave voters			
		Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	UKIP	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	UKIP
<b>Weighted Sample</b>	<b>5125</b>	<b>1691</b>	<b>1583</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Unweighted Sample</b>	<b>5125</b>	<b>1784</b>	<b>1644</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1160</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>84</b>

	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Would each of the following make you view the Labour party more positively or more negatively, or would it make no difference?</b>												
<b>The Labour party agreeing to support the implementation of Brexit under the current deal</b>												
Would make me view Labour more positively	12	18	9	12	22	6	10	45	17	15	19	8
Would make me view Labour more negatively	24	7	43	35	7	52	39	0	7	26	24	17
Make no difference – I viewed Labour positively and still would	10	4	22	5	5	22	5	55	3	22	3	4
Make no difference – I viewed Labour negatively and still would	31	60	6	34	54	5	32	0	63	10	44	55
Don't know	23	11	20	14	12	16	14	0	10	26	11	16
<b>The Labour party agreeing to support the implementation of Brexit under a revised deal</b>												
Would make me view Labour more positively	18	18	20	16	15	14	13	45	18	32	31	18
Would make me view Labour more negatively	13	5	22	29	5	31	34	0	5	7	13	6
Make no difference – I viewed Labour positively and still would	12	3	28	6	5	29	6	55	3	24	7	5
Make no difference – I viewed Labour negatively and still would	31	60	6	33	59	4	32	0	61	9	36	54
Don't know	26	14	25	15	16	22	16	0	13	29	13	17
<b>The Labour party agreeing to pause or stop Brexit</b>												
Would make me view Labour more positively	28	8	46	59	20	64	71	0	3	11	13	2
Would make me view Labour more negatively	17	24	15	10	15	5	4	0	28	36	30	35
Make no difference – I viewed Labour positively and still would	8	2	20	4	3	20	3	55	2	19	6	3
Make no difference – I viewed Labour negatively and still would	28	58	4	16	51	1	11	45	61	11	39	46
Don't know	19	8	15	11	11	10	10	0	7	23	12	14

Brexit with Tory austerity and both would be alienated from Labour if it failed to oppose Brexit.

While future electoral assessments are very difficult, it is possible to say with some degree of confidence that Labour would lose votes and seats if it was seen to support Brexit or implement Brexit in any future Labour Government. This will especially be the case in London and Scotland, where opposition to Brexit amongst Labour voters is at its strongest. In our December 2018 YouGov poll, almost half of Labour voters in London (44%) say they would consider voting for another party in a snap election if the party went into it promising to implement Brexit or opposing a second referendum.

But it is not just in London where feelings amongst Labour supporters run high. In virtually every seat in the country, Labour's share of the vote would be significantly higher if it opposed Brexit. This is because there is now not a single constituency in the UK where the majority of Labour voters would not support Remain in a new vote.

Brexit energises Labour Remain voters far more than Labour Leave voters and this explains why Labour failing to oppose Brexit will have a far more significant impact on the Labour vote than if it actually opposes Brexit. When asked "would you be more or less likely to back Labour again in a snap General Election if it promised to reverse Brexit or support a second Referendum or would it make no difference?", only 12% of Labour voters said that they would be less likely to back Labour. 60% say that they would be more likely to support Labour, while 20% said it would make no difference.

Another way of illustrating Labour's problem was when we asked people whether they would view the Labour Party more positively or negatively if it backed Theresa May's deal, called for a renegotiated deal or opposed Brexit altogether. The results clearly show the anti-Brexit views and potential political backlash Labour might face if it chooses an alternative path.

The Conservative Party have their own Brexit problems which could potentially explode into open warfare after Britain leaves the EU and the Government negotiates a lasting trade deal with the EU. The moderates within the party, backed heavily by the city and business, will want the closest possible relationship with the EU – Britain's largest trading partner. Party members, its voters and a significant proportion of its MPs, will want a complete break with the EU so the UK can form free trade deals with countries across the world.

If the party opts to make a clean break from the EU and uncouple itself from EU rules and regulations, then it is hard to see the moderate wing of the party staying. A fifth of 2017 Conservative Party voters, according to our December poll, would be attracted by a new centrist party that promised to overturn Brexit. However, a third of Tory voters would be attracted to a new right wing, anti-Brexit and anti-immigration party, like that proposed by Nigel Farage).

Even if Britain leaves the EU as planned on 29 March, the problems for the political parties might only just be beginning.

## RISING HATE

Data from the Home Office shows that recorded hate crime in England and Wales increased by 17% in 2017/18 from the previous year, with 76% recorded as race hate crimes, 9% recorded as religiously motivated, and Muslims disproportionately targeted.

This spike in hate crime following the EU referendum was no coincidence. The Leave campaign had played on pre-existing prejudice, conflating anxiety about Islam with EU free movement, and rather than the result to Leave the EU calming immigration concerns, the result left racists feeling empowered and jubilant; Britain's Muslims, EU migrants and ethnic minorities felt the impact.

The divisive and xenophobic rhetoric of the Leave campaign during the EU referendum set a tone for anti-immigration hate, which

legitimised and galvanised prejudice beliefs, but the rise in hate crime following the vote was also indicative of people's expectations. Many who voted to leave the EU on the basis that it would offer greater control over British borders also expected numbers of migrants, not just those from the EU, to return to their countries of origin once the decision had been made to leave the EU – with BAME people often confused with migrants.

A backlash is not just about the outcome of the referendum, and suggests that even if this angry section of the population got what they wanted – the hardest Brexit possible – this would not ease their heightened and re-affirmed hatred of others. A backlash is not only about the outcome of Brexit, but about the process.

# CIVIL UNREST

With social and political divisions engrained by the referendum and trust in the political system and institutions at such a low, predictions of civil unrest in response to any outcome of Brexit – and any outcome which fails to meet people’s expectations – are understandable.

## BREXIT ANGER

Over the course of a year, we have asked people how they would feel about a series of different Brexit outcomes.

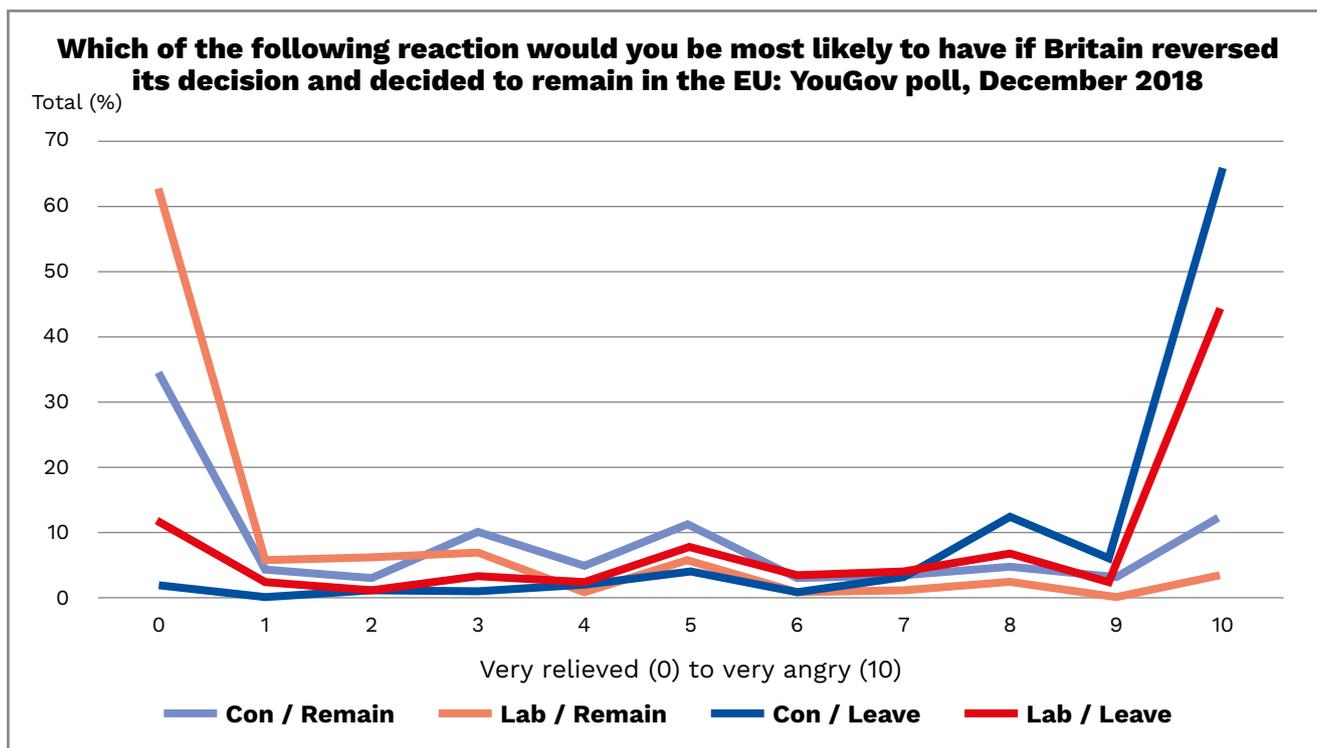
In January 2018, we found a greater proportion of people who would be angry or unhappy than would be delighted or pleased at any potential Brexit outcome. It would seem there is no way out of Brexit that would generate support from all sections of the British public:

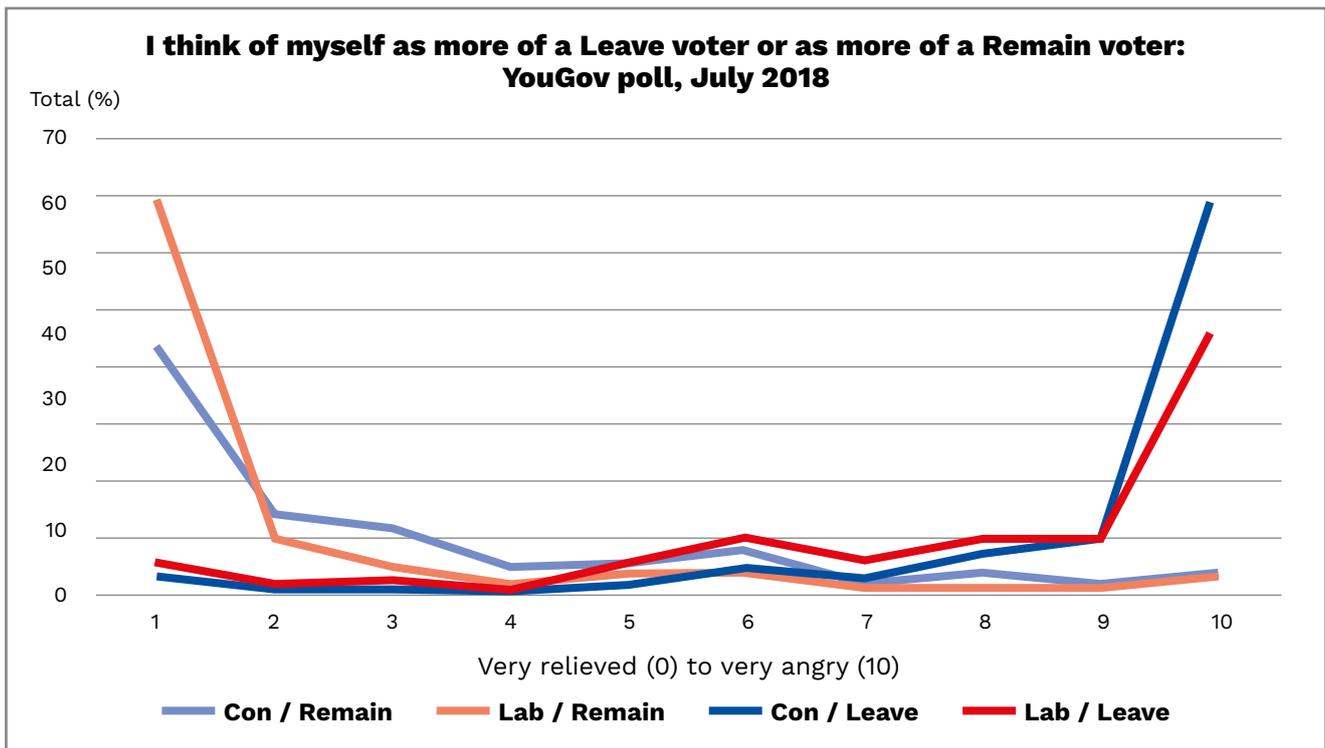
- If Britain withdrew from the Single Market and Customs Union in order to end the free movement of EU citizens to and from the UK, 34% of people said they would be angry, while 27% said they would be pleased or delighted.

- If Britain compromised on ending free movement of EU citizens to and from the UK in return for staying in the Customs Union and having some access to the Single Market, 34% of people said they would be angry, while 24% said they would be pleased or delighted.
- If Britain reversed its decision and decided to remain in the EU, 43% of people said they would be angry, while 38% said they would be pleased or delighted.
- If Britain left the European Union without a deal with the EU, 48% of people said they would be angry, while just 14% said they would be pleased or delighted.

Leave voters were more likely to voice anger than Remain voters, as were older people- with over 65s the most angry- and men.

However, contrary to much political commentary, our polls indicate that this anger has subsided over time. By December 2018, our Populus poll found a greater proportion of people expressed positive emotions – of relief, confidence happiness or optimism – than negative emotions





– of frustration, anger, pessimism or fear- at the possibility of the UK reversing its decision and choosing to remain a member of the European Union.

Yet this decrease in outrage does not suggest that we have nothing to worry about. On all of these emotive questions, the gulf between Leave and Remain voters is stark. Conservative Leave voters and Labour Remain voters are at opposite ends of the spectrum, when asked how they would react to Britain staying in the EU, with Labour Remain voters overwhelmingly very relieved at this prospect, and Conservative Leave voters overwhelmingly very angry.

We also found widespread concern at the prospect of a no-deal Brexit, with fearful (41% of total) or pessimism (28% of total) the most common responses to a no deal Brexit in our December 2018 Populus poll. However these responses were also split. Women feel far more cautious about the impacts of a no deal Brexit than men. 45% of women say they are fearful compared to 36% of men. 13% of men say they would be excited at a no deal outcome compared to just 4% of women. Older people remain the most supportive of cutting all ties with Europe- 22% of over 65s said they would feel relieved in a no deal scenario.

## CIVIL UNREST

It is not only in Parliament that Brexit is tearing people apart. Across the country, families, friends and colleagues have all been pitted against each

other. How we feel about Brexit is increasingly defining our identities, placing us in boxes, on one side of the wall or another. Indeed, the majority of us see ourselves at the extreme ends- clearly as more of a Leave or Remain voter. With Brexit divisions feeling as intimately personal as arguments at the dinner table and on the school run, it is no surprise that the nation is so concerned about the potential for these divisions to become manifest through violent civil unrest.

The proportion of people who feel that Brexit is feeding prejudice and division and taking our country backwards is rising, having grown from 57% in July 2018 to 62% in December 2018, with Leave voters showing the greatest increase in concern about division and prejudice. Indeed, the rise in hate crime following the referendum, and Police warnings that hate crime could once again spike in the run up to the UK's planned departure from the EU in March, would suggest that Brexit is fuelling prejudice and violence.

In our December 2018 Populus poll, 46% of people said that they were concerned that there would be public disorder if the decision to leave the EU was reversed, with just 28% refuting this. Leave voters are more likely to predict public disorder (59%) than remainers (38%), and older people are much more likely (50% of 65+s) to think there would be public disorder than younger people (38% of 18-24s). This prediction of public disorder is closely aligned to the anger these people feel, as this would offset the confidence and optimism that many of these groups feel for leaving the EU.

## THE CHANGING BME VOTE

Our polling suggests that BME Leave voters are among the most likely to have changed their minds on Brexit, especially Muslims.

In our July 2018 poll of 10,383 people, only 72% of those BME voters who backed Leave in the Referendum thought that Britain should still leave the EU compared to 87% of white Leave voters. Amongst Bangladeshis the figure was 59%, whilst only 27% of those of Pakistani heritage who voted leave still thought leaving was a good idea.

This is quite a shift from the Referendum, when an estimated 52% of Britain's Sikhs and 30% of British Muslim and Hindus voters backed Leave.

This astonishing shift in the British Muslim vote was mirrored in door-to-door canvassing HOPE not hate carried out in Bradford East during August and September. A total of 739 Muslims completed a questionnaire and the results were clear. Over 85% now considered themselves Remainers, 87% viewed Theresa May's deal as bad and 84% felt that "the decision to leave the EU had been accompanied by an increase in division and racism in society."

We also held a focus group in Manningham, Bradford comprised of a mixed aged group of men of Kashmiri origin. While 65% of the district's residents identify as White British, Bradford has the largest population of people of Pakistani ethnicity (20% of the population) of any local authority in the UK. Many of them are from the Mirpur region of Pakistani Kashmir, a migration which began in the 1950s and continues to this day. Bradford voted 54% to Leave the EU in the 2016 referendum, including a high proportion of British Asians.

The Bradford group showed how Asian Leave voters have moved far more than those we spoke to anywhere else, because they felt the reasons they voted for Brexit were betrayed almost immediately, and that the referendum had unleashed prejudice. All of those who had voted Leave in 2016 now felt that this was the wrong decision, and that Britain should remain in the EU.

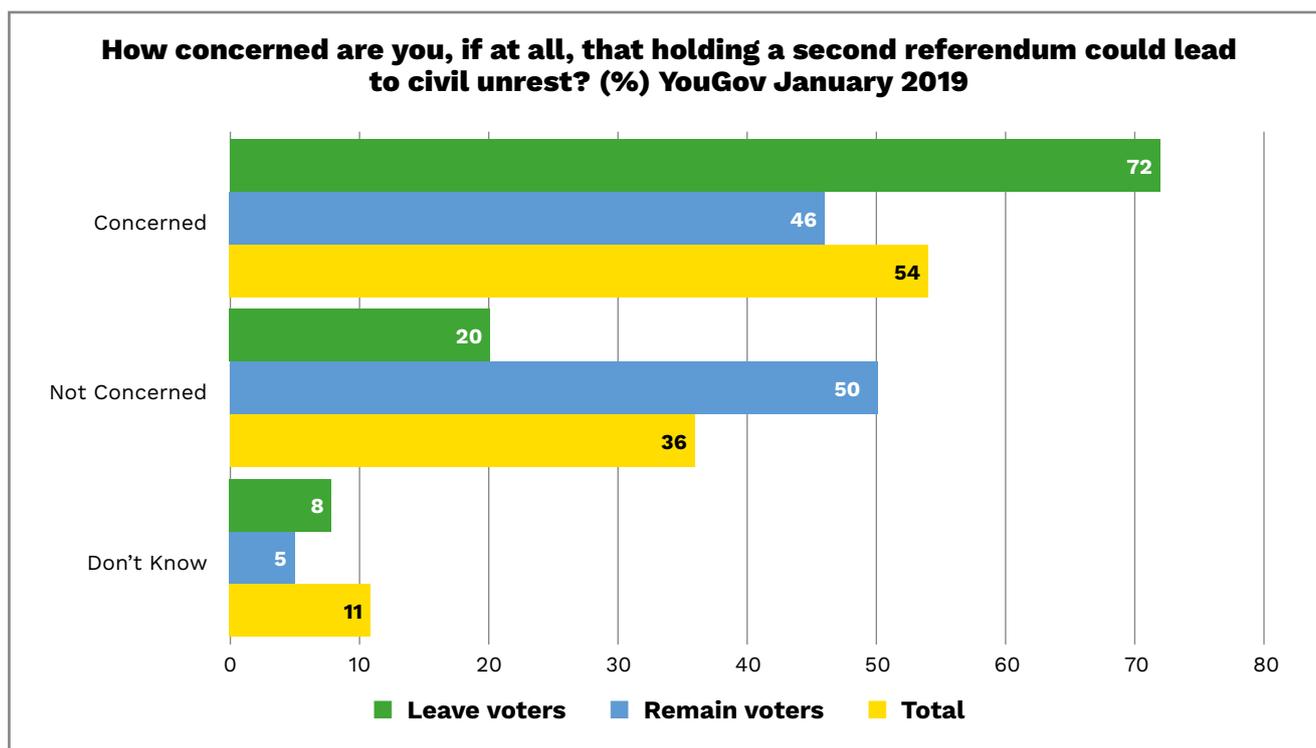
Those who had voted Leave said they had made the decision based on proposals for more money available for the NHS, but also because of immigration. They wanted better control over immigration from the EU seen to put pressures on public services. Some felt that controls on EU immigration would also make it easier to obtain non-EU spousal visas. However, they felt that their expectations would not be met: "immigration is still a big problem, but Brexit isn't going to solve it".



Moreover, the group felt that the divisive immigration debate around the EU referendum had now gotten out of hand. The group spoke about a racist upsurge, with many saying they had experienced greater racial prejudice since the vote. A taxi driver spoke about young people coming back from nights out in the back of his taxi saying that they voted Leave as they thought this would mean all the Eastern European and Asians would 'go home', but that these people were even angrier now they realised this wasn't a reality.

The feeling that the Brexit vote was feeding racism was experienced first-hand by HOPE not hate activists when they canvassed a white working class estate on the other side of the city. In what many of our activists, some with 15 years history with HOPE not hate, claimed was their worst experiences of anti-fascist lives, many residents vocalised their racist anger at Muslims. In two instances on the same street, residents singled out their Muslim neighbours

"We voted Leave, but why are they still here?" shouted one woman, literally pointing at the Muslim family across the street.



Over recent months, we have witnessed angry scenes growing, with more taking to the streets, clashes between Remain and Leave protesters, between protesters and police, and the far-right capitalising on Brexit anger, with both Tommy Robinson's Brexit betrayal march and pro-Brexit 'Yellow Vest' protests turning violent<sup>11</sup>.

Our YouGov poll from late January 2019 showed that concerns about civil unrest have also swelled over this period, with 54% now saying they are concerned that holding a second referendum could lead to civil unrest, a narrative which has been spun by those lobbying for a hard Brexit, including national media.

The Sun, which has been a vocal supporter of leaving the EU recently published a leader column, referencing the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox who was stabbed by a far-right extremist in the run up the 2016 referendum, to threaten a violent outcome if MPs 'betrayed' the British public by allowing another vote. Under the headline "Crush this plot to steal Brexit," it added: "What a tsunami of rage politicians would unleash by ignoring the democratic rights of millions on the winning side of the biggest vote in British history. Is it a risk the second vote camp are ready to take? Because they will have to live with its consequences"<sup>12</sup>.

The article was heavily criticised for whipping up fear and condoning violence and disorder in order to influence the outcome of Brexit. However, this view is widespread. A huge 72% of Leave voters now say they are concerned, while Remain voters are split over their predictions of civil unrest.

Of course, it is not just the possibility of reversing the decision to leave the EU that has people across the country angry. In our December 2018 Populus poll, the most common response to a no deal Brexit were fearful (41% of total) or pessimism (28% of total). With predictions of travel break downs, food shortages and the rationing of some medicines, frustrations are likely to spill over as companies scramble to cancel or rearrange services. Even with a soft Brexit scenario where there is a shock to the economy, this could trigger anger from all sides.

## WHO IS MOST ANGRY ABOUT BREXIT?

With concern about civil unrest so great, we need to better understand who is most angry about potential Brexit outcomes if the UK does not leave the EU as planned on March 29th.

In our December 2018 Populus poll, 67% of Remain voters said they would feel relieved if Britain stayed in the EU, while 61% of 2016 Leave voters would feel angry. Older people were significantly more likely (46% of all those aged over 55) to feel angry about the UK reversing the decision to leave the EU than younger people—just 16% of 18-24 year olds said they would feel angry about this, and would instead be more likely to feel relief (42%) or happiness (33%). Men were also far more likely (37%) than women (25%) to feel angry if the UK remained in the EU.

Our polling suggests that those who feel angriest about softer outcomes of Brexit, or a reversal of the decision to leave the EU all together, are not

just angry about this, but also a range of other issues.

Our analysis, looking at all of our polling over the 2018-2019 period, shows that those who are angriest about immigration, multiculturalism and hold overwhelmingly negative perceptions of Muslims in Britain. They tend to be older, male, less educated, to have voted UKIP or Conservative, and to have voted to Leave the EU. They have low political trust, and are less likely to feel they have control over their own successes in life. These are also people who, once among the most pessimistic about their own futures, have seen the greatest surge in optimism since Britain voted to Leave the EU. However, these people do not necessarily fit the profile of those most likely to act violently, riot, or trigger civil unrest, who tend to be younger, usually with criminal pasts.

Of course, there is a risk that the football hooligan gangs, and the sort of men attracted to this orbit, could cause trouble. But there is no indication the football mobs are that motivated by Brexit in the same way they are by Islamist terrorism or grooming gangs. Very few football hooligans took up the call from the Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) to back the ‘Brexit Betrayal’ march.

### THE FAR-RIGHT’S ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT BREXIT

In the months leading up to March 29<sup>th</sup>, we have seen an increasing number of far-right figures attempting to capitalise on the anger many feel about Brexit for their own gain. It’s important to know that these are being orchestrated by a tiny, but organised, minority who don’t represent most Leave voters.

Activists from across the UK far right held a ‘Brexit Betrayal’ demonstration in December, with a view to forcing the government to adopt a unilateral withdrawal from the European Union ahead of the Government’s vote. Billed as a ‘cross party’ demonstration the event was organised by Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson) and UKIP’s increasingly isolated leader Gerard Batten.

While many feared, and the organisers had hoped, that this event would attract a mass of new supporters under the respectable guise of concern over the Brexit negotiations, the appeal of this demonstration was marginal. The turnout, at 5,000, was far smaller than had been anticipated, and the crowd was very much the same old faces who had been holding pro-Tommy demonstrations all summer. In addition to UKIP and For Britain flags was the usual small contingent of Generation Identity flags and even alt-right Kekistani flags. The speeches pertained

less to the political process of Brexit and its potential outcomes than to the ‘threat’ of Islam and Muslims ‘taking over Britain’.

The appalling abuse faced by Anna Soubry MP, Sky News presenter Kay Burley and campaigning journalist Owen Jones are among a set of incidents in a growing list of far-right actions across the UK, and part of an attempt to hijack Brexit to spread hate and division.

This new wave of far-right activity is being coordinated by ‘the Liberty Defenders’, a group led by former mercenary Timothy Scott and his associate ex-UKIP member Jack Sen. They are being supported by James Goddard- a far-right activist, who has been involved in several of the high profile protests and incidents outside Parliament- and former British National Party (BNP) leader Nick Griffin, who is publicly encouraging further protests against the Government in the hope that these can help resurrect his failed political career.

With the Brexit clock running down, the risk of disorder and violence from the far right movement is growing. While everyone should be allowed to protest peacefully, it is time for the authorities to clamp down on the bullying and threatening tactics of these far right activists, who are acting more for their own ends than actually caring about the outcome, before someone is seriously injured.

### THE EXPECTATION- REALITY GAP

With politicians grappling to push through a solution to Brexit, some are attempting to capitalise on this Brexit anger to push their own agenda.

May’s deal, despite its widespread unpopularity, has been framed by some as the only way that Brexit can be achieved while avoiding a no deal scenario. However, rather than channelling Brexit anger into a feasible option, May’s deal looks set to trigger further anger and potential disruption. The realities of the deal will not meet the expectations of prosperity held by those who feel most strongly that the UK should leave the EU.

Those who are most likely to be angry about the UK potentially staying in the EU are also those most likely to expect greater investment in the UK by international companies, economic growth, more opportunities for children of future generations, and even greater protection against terrorism if the UK leaves the EU (as set out in the expectations section of this report). But the reality is that Theresa May’s deal will not deliver on any of these things.

The National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR)<sup>13</sup> suggest that the agreement could hit the UK’s economy by £100bn a year by 2030, equating to an average of £1,090 per

person- equivalent to a loss of 3 per cent in GDP per head.

Predictions of the impact of a no-deal Brexit are even more detrimental to the UK's economy. The LSE's Centre for Economic Performance<sup>14</sup> suggest that a reduction in UK GDP per capita, compared to the 'baseline' of remaining an EU member, of 3.5% to 8.7%, crushing any optimism that a complete break with Europe would bring about prosperity.

This vast gap between perceptions of what will happen next with Brexit and what experts are predicting sets the stage for an even more turbulent period after Britain leaves the EU on March 29<sup>th</sup>. There is no route on the table that will meet leavers' wildly optimistic expectations, and even in finding the least bad option, anger on all sides of Brexit is set to rise.

## THE GREAT BREXIT BETRAYAL

In our deeply polarised society, very few people are likely to support the compromise that gets through Parliament and given that we have another two or three years of deeply divisive negotiations with the EU still to go, resentment and a feeling of betrayal is likely to consume both Leave and Remain voters.

The toxicity of the Brexit issue – whatever the political outcome – will be felt in communities around the country and create a huge amount of work to curb tensions. If the 2016 Referendum is a guide, racist attacks will rise so there needs to be solidarity and support for communities under attack. A feeling of Brexit betrayal – whether from a delayed, or a “soft” Brexit – will energise the far right. This will pose a political and physical threat. If Brexit happens it is also abundantly clear that the expectations of its most fervent supporters are unlikely to be met. Without direction, explanation and alternative remedies, this resentment is likely to feed further hostility and division.

## AN OFFER BEYOND A RETURN TO 2016

Brexit has caused a political earthquake and with it the social ruptures are very real. But we cannot act as if there wouldn't be anger, frustration and civil unrest if the 2016 referendum had never happened.

Our research has shown that some of the greatest divides between Leave and Remain voters are their expectations.

But those who want a hard Brexit will not be won over to softer options by stressing the impact of a no-deal Brexit or May's deal on

our GDP. The pessimism around Brexit felt by remainers just does not resonate with people who desperately want change, and feel that Brexit will bring this.

Whatever happens with Brexit, those in power will take the blame for not delivering, fuelling further anger, mistrust in 'the establishment' and opening the door for populist exploitation. We need to understand the newfound hope among those who most strongly want to leave the EU before the bubble of optimism bursts and anti-establishment resentment grows even more.

## BREXIT: JUST THE BEGINNING

March 29<sup>th</sup> is a critical date for British politics, but it is just the beginning for Brexit. The debate around Brexit so far has developed from whether we leave the EU or not, to whether we accept May's Brexit deal, leave the EU with no deal, or hold a public vote that gives the public the final say on the outcome of Brexit. We have not yet gotten into the weeds of the debate, over what type of Brexit we will have.

As our research shows, what people expect from Brexit varies dramatically. Moreover, the political discussion over what type of Brexit we will have will develop even further. One side will be pushing to make Britain the Singapore of Europe, for a free trade Brexit with a flexible, deregulated economy. The other will be pushing for closer alignment to the EU, the protection of workers rights and the regulation of trade.

We might be bored of Brexit, but this is the tip of the iceberg. We still have years of negotiations with the EU to go, and divisions over the type of relationship we have with Europe are set to be just as polarising as the current debate- but with even greater consequences. To add to this, the damaging social and economic impacts of Brexit will be have begun to hit, meaning even greater instability, anger and resentment across the population.

Whatever the outcome of Brexit, it needs to offer more to people who most want change than a return to the status quo before the June 2016 vote. We need to find a way to not only bridge our Brexit divisions, but to address the wider social divisions that led to the Brexit vote in the first place. Any way out of Brexit must make every effort to make things better, fairer, and more hopeful for everyone in society than they currently are.

# IT'S TIME TO TALK

This report lays out some alarming trends in society that must be urgently addressed. Not only does it reveal the extent of the divisions exposed by the EU referendum, but it also shows how these divisions have grown as Britain edges closer to leaving the EU. A failure of politicians to engage with voters has fuelled mistrust in politicians and further disengagement from the political system. The unwillingness of each side of the Brexit debate to fully understand one another has added to the polarisation of Leave and Remain, to the point that each side has little or no interest in the other.

Public alienation from the Brexit process, growing anger and frustration, and a lack of transparency from political leaders are all creating fertile ground for populist exploitation.

And it would be far too simplistic to think that we are divided across this simplified 48/52 line. Within both the Remain and Leave camps are further fault lines, in what we expect from Brexit, whether we see controlling immigration or keeping global trade links as the most important issue, the nature of our future relationship with the European Union and the rest of the world.

We are also a country divided by towns and cities, by education and opportunity, by whether austerity affects you personally or if you hear about it on the news. Divisions in Britain are about much more than the EU referendum. We need to find solutions that go beyond Leave and Remain.

## WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS?

While three times as many people think No Deal will be bad for Britain than believe it would be good and widespread disapproval of Theresa May's deal, there is little agreement on what people actually want. A majority would now vote Remain in a new referendum, but then many people are also sick and tired of Brexit and want the UK to leave on 29 March. But even if there was a new referendum, there is no consensus for what the questions will be. Some of Theresa May's supporters would like to see her deal posed against a no deal option. For Remainers, their favoured option would be May's deal against Remain. There is very little appetite for a three question option – May's deal, No Deal or Remain – which is both more democratic

and supported by the majority of British public. Labour MP Hilary Benn is proposing a series of indicative votes in Parliament to register support for the various possible positions. While he might hope this could break the political deadlock, he is more likely to find that no-one option can garner the support of the majority of MPs.

It is time for a radically new approach.

HOPE not hate is now backing calls for Citizens' Assemblies, because we believe it offers the best way to break the parliamentary log-jam, find a way to consult and involve ordinary, restore some faith in our political system, and – most importantly – could find a consensus that is backed by the majority of people.

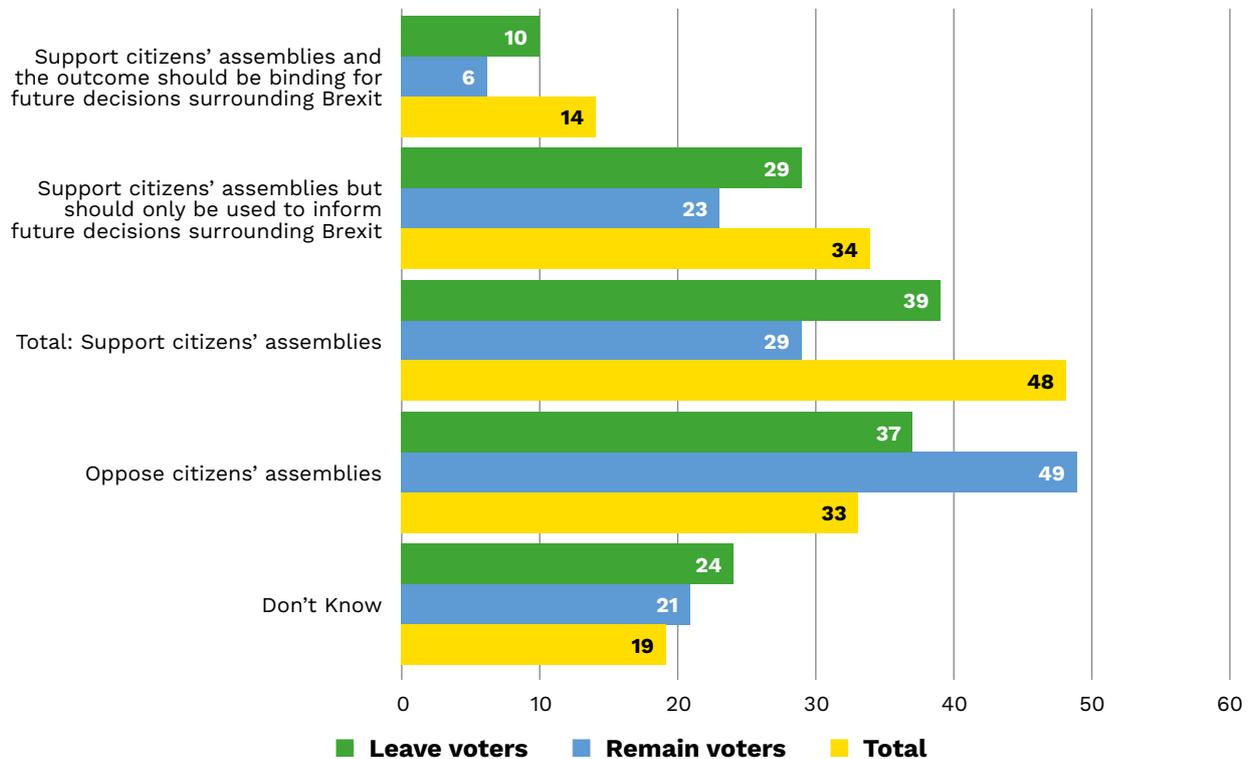
## CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

Citizens' assemblies have been successfully used in Ireland, Iceland, British Columbia and many areas of national and local government, to allow debate over contentious issues, prior to having another public vote. In Ireland, they have been used to address a number of deeply contentious issues in Irish society, most recently abortion, in Iceland they were used to consult on a new constitution in the aftermath of the financial crash, and in British Columbia, Canada, they were used to explore changes to the voting system.

They are constructed of a randomly chosen representative group of up to 1,500 members of the public (though most are considerably smaller). They hear a broad range of evidence and arguments on a subject, which they discuss and weigh up before making considered recommendations to their political representatives.

In the context of Brexit, one idea would be to hold day long citizens' assemblies in every region of the country and then, perhaps, representatives of each coming together in a single national assembly. Evidence could be presented to them, discussions held and recommendations made. The debate does not need to be restricted to just these forums either, with the media and social media possibly offering a way for even greater numbers to get involved and have their say. Parliament can then reflect on the views of the assemblies and then choose a way forward based on the wishes of the people.

**With no consensus in Parliament over the approach to Brexit, some people have suggested that the government should hold citizens' assemblies in towns and cities across the country, where a cross-section of the public are selected to discuss Brexit and decide the way forward. Would you support or oppose such citizens' assemblies of this kind?**



There will be some that say that the people have already spoken through the Referendum, whilst others will argue that in Parliament we already have our elected assembly – but as we have seen over the last 32 months, our current system has proved unable to find a resolution. The referendum offered voters a simple binary choice, which of course gave no indication as to what type of Brexit people wanted or the type of relationship we wanted with the EU and the rest of the world. Parliament, meanwhile, has proved unable to resolve the Brexit debate and with growing disillusionment and anger at them from amongst the public they cannot complain when the public want to insert themselves back into the decision-making.

The establishment of citizens' assemblies will require a short extension of Article 50, so putting back the date we leave the European Union. Some have proposed three months while others, like Gordon Brown, have suggested nine months. Many people will argue that any delay is a betrayal of the Brexit vote, but in truth getting Brexit right has to be our priority.

The British public is less resistant to pausing article 50 than one might think. Our latest polling

suggests that 42% of people think that it would be sensible to delay leaving the EU by a few months so we can agree a better deal with the EU and/or hold a new referendum- 38% think this would be a betrayal of the 2016 Referendum result. A further 11% say 'neither' and 10% say they do not know.

With trust in our political system at such a low, citizens' assemblies are a good way to re-engage the British public in the Brexit discussion and find consensus on a decision that will shape the future direction of our country for the next 20 years. Public buy-in is essential and something we should not be afraid of. As we found in the National Conversation on Immigration, consensus on difficult and divisive issues is possible when people are given the opportunity to come together for deliberative discussion with people of different views.

The British public see a citizens' assemblies as a viable option to get through the Brexit deadlock, with more people supporting the formation of assemblies as a way of deciding a way forward on Brexit than oppose it. It is also a less polarising choice, winning support from Leave and Remain voters of different shades.

Even if May's deal does pass and we leave the European Union on 29 March as planned, there is still a very strong case for citizens' assemblies to be established to help inform our politicians about the preferred long-term economic relationship the public want with the EU. A repeat of the last two years will only further widen the gulf within British society and alienate the public from the parliamentary process.

Our democracy will not be well served by a grubby backroom deal done by our political leaders that few people support. As time passes and people's expectations are not met, disillusionment and anger at the decision and those who made it will grow. Our politicians will not be forgiven for making the decision on the type of Brexit the British public is going to get – if it goes badly.

The reality is that the 2016 referendum opened up a can of worms that cannot be easily closed. There is no Brexit outcome that will please everyone in Britain so it is essential that we find a solution that can begin the process of healing our divided nation, rebuild public trust and that can tackle some of the root causes of the Brexit vote.

It would perhaps be appropriate to learn the lessons of Northern Ireland if we are going to understand and overcome the divisions Brexit has caused. Peace did not happen overnight but rather was the result of years of negotiations, dialogue and planning. It was a process that brought in both communities, addressed their political and economic concerns, and ensured that ordinary people felt some ownership of the process. A similar national exercise is required to deal with Brexit, not only to find consensus on our relationship with the EU, but also to address some of the underlying issues and concerns which gave rise to the Brexit vote.

Citizens' Assemblies will allow the public to be involved in an informed debate, encourage Remainers and Leavers to talk together, seek consensus and ensure buy-in to a process that they currently feel excluded from. A failure to adopt such a consultative solution will only lead to further division and alienation.

# FOOTNOTES

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