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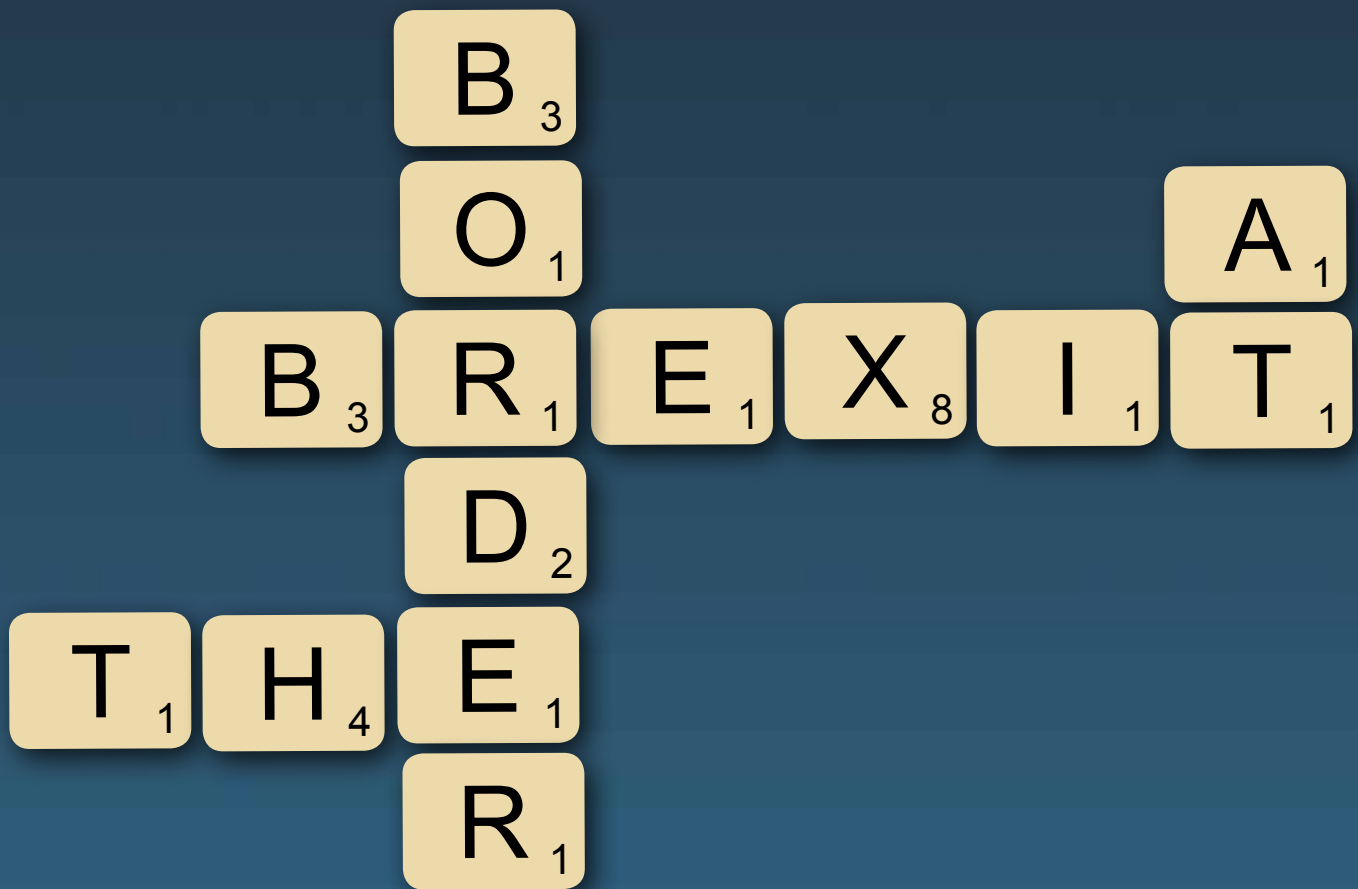
Voices of Local Communities in the Central
Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland

Irish
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BREXIT AT THE BORDER

Voices of Local Communities in the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland

A report prepared for the Irish Central Border Area Network

By

Katy Hayward

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Executive Summary

1.   The study

1.1.   This is a follow-up to the **Bordering on Brexit** report which was completed in November 2017 (https://go.qub.ac.uk/bordering). The research for the previous report was conducted one year on from the UK referendum on EU membership of 23 June 2016. It revealed that people in the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland felt uninformed about Brexit, unrepresented in the process, and had deep fears about the consequences of it, particularly relating to the peace process and the 'frictionless' border.

1.2.   The research for this **Brexit at the Border** study was conducted in March-May 2018 - approximately a year away from the withdrawal date. It is unique in terms of: its focus (as a border region), its scope (covering both sides of the border) and its methods (gathering two types of qualitative data on a substantive scale for what is a largely rural and sparsely populated geographical area).

1.3.   It was conducted jointly between Queen's University Belfast (lead: Dr Katy Hayward; Research Assistant: Mirjam de Jong) and ICBAN (Irish Central Border Area Network of local authorities: Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh and Omagh, Leitrim, Mid Ulster, Monaghan, Sligo).

1.4.   It is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Reconciliation Fund).

1.5.   The study entailed two empirical components: an online survey (receiving almost 600 responses) and a series of focus groups in the Central Border Region (over 40 participants).

1.6.   The responses to the survey were sought from those who live or work in one of these Central Border Region districts; the largest number of responses came from Fermanagh and Omagh (29.4%).

2. Information levels

2.1.   Most respondents feel more informed than they did last summer (**Bordering on Brexit** findings) about the possible consequences of Brexit for the border region. 50% of respondents to the survey said they felt quite well informed or fully informed on these matters, compared to 40% last year. 15% of respondents admitted to feeling 'very uninformed', compared to 21% of the respondents to the 2017 survey.

2.2.   The coverage of the Irish border issue as a consequence of it being to the fore in the negotiations in Brussels surely helped in this. As one survey respondent (R44) commented, 'it is in the news nearly every day'.

3. A hard border

3.1.   When asked to compare their personal views from 12 months ago to their current assessment of the situation, most respondents (59%) reported that they now think that a 'hard' border is more likely than they previously anticipated.

3.2.   This suggests that, although conspicuous efforts have been made by the UK and EU negotiators to reassure of their commitments to 'avoiding a hard border' (ref. the Joint Report of 6 December 2017), public debate on the border and Brexit has almost had the counter effect. People are not reassured. Only a small proportion (13.8%) of the survey respondents think that the progress made makes a hard border less likely than it seemed to be last year.

3.3.   There is a wide scale in people's definition of what a 'hard border' would mean, running from any change in the current situation to the presence of soldiers to secure the border.

3.4.   Most respondents define a 'hard border' with terms like 'checkpoints', 'a physical border' and 'customs checks'. It is seen as an end to the free movement of people and goods that exists at the moment.

3.5.   Such changes concern respondents due to the cross-border nature of their lives (work, family, social, access to services etc.).

3.6. There is a concern among respondents that a hard border will mean a step back in the peace process, that it interferes with the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement and is like going back to the 'old days' (of the Troubles) (also a finding in the **Bordering on Brexit** report).

4. Access to services on the other side of the border

4.1. Examples of services accessed on the other side of the border focus mostly on visiting family/friends, shopping (esp. groceries and fuel), recreational purposes (e.g. holidays, sport), travel (esp. the use of airports) and accessing health facilities.

4.2. Health and emergency is mentioned by more than 20% of the respondents as an example of accessed cross-border services. More than 30% of the respondents cross the border to work or for educational reasons.

4.3. In the category 'other', some people mention that they don't cross the border for any services, or at least don't rely on those services. On the other hand, some other respondents try to show that they don't consider the border at all when accessing services and that they live fully 'cross-border' lives.

4.4. Most respondents cross the border because services there are cheaper/ better and/or are more convenient/closer to home. Many mention that at their side of the border, the services are simply not available or else would entail travelling a much longer distance to access.

4.5. 10% of respondents cross the border out of necessity, e.g. for their job or accessing vital services [e.g. health treatment]. Of those that say they do not rely on services on the others side of the border (7%), this is mainly because they do not live that close to the border or else because they find the services more expensive on the other side.

5. Impact of Brexit already

5.1. ¾ of respondents already see an impact of Brexit in their lives and plans for the future.

5.2. Over a third of respondents refer to their living standards (exchange rate, food prices) and difficult choices (concerning cross-border jobs, business investments, farming land, education etc.) they are having to make as evidence of the impact of Brexit. Such decisions show that life closely lived by/across the Irish border is surely the most directly affected by the UK's withdrawal from the EU and by any change in UK-Ireland cooperation.

5.3. 3 in 10 survey respondents refer to this time with such words as 'worried', 'uncertain', 'stress', 'anxiety' and 'concern'.

5.4. Some respondents and focus group participants highlighted some positive aspects to Brexit. These primarily relate to the change in currency exchange rates. Specifically-identified opportunities seem to be either in competition with the other side of the border or far from it (e.g. global trade partners). Some respondents point to the potential of Northern Ireland's distinctive position and the opportunity to 'have a foot in both camps' after Brexit.

5.5. Some respondents say that they are considering moving to the other side of the border or another country because of Brexit. In both the survey and the focus groups, detailed examples are given about people not being able to sell their house close to the border, not being able to get a mortgage/loan to buy a house or land on the other side of the border, or not being able to expand their business near the border given the uncertainty arising from Brexit. There is a sense (this came through in the focus groups) of decisions about the future being in suspension as a result of Brexit (e.g. businesses are not expanding).

6. Concerns about security of the Central Border Region

6.1. The largest portion of respondents (30%) refer to a situation with a hard border; thus, the priority is open borders, no queues, no tariffs and checkpoints. A 'closed' border is the main concern, including closing roads again. Respondents write about the time it could take to cross the border, the impact on business and tourism and the inconvenience of customs checks. A few respondents want the situation to stay as it is now, since there are no problems with the current border (so not linked to Brexit).

6.2. c.42% respondents mention the peace process, division, return to the Troubles, conflict, protest, soldiers on the border, paramilitary activity etc. as their main concern and focus. Around a third of these refer directly to violence, targets or (terrorist) attacks as their main concern around the security of the border.

6.3. 15% respondents see crime in the border area as a main concern. This includes smuggling (by some specified to human trafficking or drugs trade) and criminals 'jumping' over the border to escape.

7. Technological border controls

7.1. The majority of respondents (48.5%) say that they would not be willing to accept 'technological' means of border control if these were introduced in place of manned border checkpoints and away from the border itself.

7.2. The 'Maybe' responses (30.4%) to this question are accompanied with statements saying that it would be heavily conditional on the details: What kind of technology? What will be done with the data? Is it just number plate checks or mobile data surveillance as well?

7.3. Those saying they might accept technology on the border say that it's better than the alternative of a closed border and checkpoints. Thus, they see it more as a compromise (between how it is now and the 'hard border' they remember from the past). It is better than actual facilities on the border (no delays and restrictions). The response of R196 is typical: "Would prefer technology to soldiers!"

8. Priorities for the Central Border Region in the Brexit process

8.1. By far the most popular priority for the Brexit negotiations coming from the participants in this study was the continuation of the border being as open and seamless as it is now. This is closely followed by (and connected with) the protection of the peace process.

8.2. Priorities for future funding in the region are: Transport and roads (c. 25% respondents); followed by Healthcare (20%) (e.g. hospitals, cancer treatment); Education (11%). Plus, general investment in economic development, businesses and jobs (including broadband).

8.3.   Some people are sceptical of the idea of cross-border funding after Brexit: who would pay or invest in an area outside of their own country without EU- framework?

9.   Representation of the Central Border Region

9.1.   In contrast to their sense of being well informed, the vast majority of people do not believe that the border region is being well represented in the Brexit process (33.8% say not at all, 30.1% say only a little).

9.2.   People feel removed from the whole process and not taken seriously by politicians in negotiations, since the vote to remain seems to be ignored. They feel as if they live in a forgotten area ("London/ Dublin don't care about us").

9.3.   Many say a sign of representation would be consultation and contact with the local border community and visits from (British) politicians involved in negotiations.

9.4.   The lack of a functioning government in Northern Ireland exacerbates the sense among respondents in Northern Ireland that they are not being heard. The confidence and supply arrangement between the DUP and the Conservative government, plus Sinn Féin not taking their seats in the Westminster Parliament, are also seen as signs of there being inadequate formal political representation of the Border Region at this juncture.

9.5.   A fear of the border becoming "collateral damage" in the whole Brexit debate is mentioned a few times, suggesting a correlation between a sense of being dealt with from a distance and fears about the potential outcome.

10.   Comparing Leave and Remain voters in the Central Border Region

10.1.   We note that the proportion of the survey respondents claiming to hold both British and Irish citizenship is high at 13.2%. This is only slightly more than the 12% in the **Bordering on Brexit** study of 2017 (which had around half the sample size). It suggests that the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement's recognition of being both British and Irish has a very real meaning in the Central Border Region.

10.2.   This small but significant integration of British and Irish identities is reflected in the profile of the Leave- and Remain-voting respondents, who show how mistaken it is to assume a simple binary of Leave/British/Unionist and Remain/Irish/Nationalist identities in Northern Ireland.

10.3.   Contrary to expectation, 42% of the Leave-voting respondents claim Irish citizenship (either single or dual). 27% of the Remain-voting respondents claim British citizenship (mainly dual with Irish, but also single).

10.4.   Analysis of responses to the online survey indicates that Leave voters in the Central Border Region are also anxious to see the preservation of the status quo in terms of the experience of the seamless border. Over half of the Leave-voting respondents gave this as their top priority from Brexit.

10.5.   Remain voters are much more likely to greatly rely on services on the other side of the border (45% of them), while Leave voters are much more likely than Remain voters to say that they do not rely on them at all (24% of them). That said, the data shows that Leave voters in the Central Border Region are fairly equally distributed between those who rely little and rely a lot on services on the other side of the border.

10.6.   On the prospects for a hard border, Remain-voting respondents are much more pessimistic than Leave voters. Leave voters are much more likely to be willing to accept technological solutions for border controls in place of manned checkpoints.

Peace seems normal in the Central Border Region, but it does not seem invulnerable. This study has revealed that peace is at the forefront of people's minds in the Central Border Region with regard to the Brexit process. This is not to say that everybody agrees equally about what a 'hard border' would mean or about the potential for a return to violence. But the current openness of the border is widely regarded as a product of the peace process.

The complexity and realities of cross-border life in the Central Border Region exemplify the complexity and realities of the Brexit process. Disentangling the UK from the EU inevitably means drawing greater distinctions between the UK and its closest neighbour. This report explains how this process takes material, tangible form in the everyday experience of people in the Central Border Region.

Brexit at the Border

Voices of Local Communities in the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland

Foreword

On behalf of the Management Board of the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd. I wish to commend to you this *Brexit at the Border* report.

ICBAN is the cross-border network for the area known as the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland. The members of the organisation are the eight local authorities who together make up the Region and ICBAN has been working since 1995 to help address common issues of cross-border cooperation to the area.

Brexit is the latest challenge to cooperation in the area; indeed, the border which runs through our Region is central to the current debates on how Brexit might be implemented. The Management Board of ICBAN, which comprises 25 elected representatives from this border region, believe it is incumbent upon ICBAN to highlight any opportunities or concerns, and to work to help withstand, insofar as is possible, any negative consequences arising from Brexit on the communities and businesses of the area. We respect the differing political opinions within our Board, our member Councils and communities on the subject, and thus have been careful to ensure that this is a non-political and non-partisan initiative.

This is the second such project of this type which ICBAN and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) have completed. As a Board we are mindful that there are many other reports and opinions in the public domain about Brexit and we have been determined to ensure that anything we do only adds value to the public discourse on the subject. We are aware of the important and valuable reports and representations which our member Councils and other Border Region local authorities have led on, and thus we have sought to not duplicate this good work, but to help complement this. Whilst the Board recognise that there is a programme of civic dialogue led by the Irish government, they identified an absence of local community consultation on both sides of the border. The input of ICBAN has been to lead with QUB on these initiatives to listen to and record the opinions of local people, concentrating on the Central Border Region, and to share these with our member Councils and with those involved in the high-level negotiations currently underway. We will endeavour to disseminate and promote this report widely, across these islands, Europe and internationally. Indeed, the previous report continues to receive widespread coverage.

I wish to also record our thanks to all who have contributed to this piece of work and to echo the acknowledgements of our esteemed author, Dr. Katy Hayward.

But firstly, I would wish to record our thanks and appreciation to Dr. Hayward, ably assisted by Mirjam de Jong and to Queen's University Belfast for their diligence, professionalism and commitment to the initiative. Also to our staff, our member Councils and everyone who has helped promote the initiative and to seek contributions. This initiative would not have been realised without the time and effort of everyone who completed the online survey and attended the focus group meetings. Many thanks to you all again. And finally, our sincere thanks to the project's funders, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund, without whose support we would have been unable to undertake this worthwhile initiative.

Councillor Paddy O'Rourke,
ICBAN Chair, June 2018

Acknowledgements

This report was authored by Dr Katy Hayward (Queen's University Belfast), with invaluable research assistance from Mirjam de Jong (Radboud Nijmegen University, the Netherlands). Mirjam was a visiting research associate in 2018 in the Centre for International Borders Research at Queen's University. We would like to thank Professor Hastings Donnan, Director of the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, for his endorsement of her visiting position.

We are grateful to Shane Campbell of the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) for his leadership and facilitation of this project, and to Joanne Breen and Andy Hallewell in ICBAN for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this report, particularly in the organising and transcribing of the focus groups.

We would like to thank each of the local authorities represented in ICBAN for their support for this report and for helping to publicise the survey.

This initiative is part of the wider 'Border Compass' project and has been made possible through assistance from the Reconciliation Fund of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which has been greatly appreciated. The funders have had no influence at all in the design or conduct of this report, which has been performed independently by researchers from Queen's University, with the facilitating role of ICBAN staff in the distribution and promotion of the survey and the organisation of the focus groups.

Finally, sincerest thanks to all 591 respondents to the survey: your detailed and illuminating responses to the questions have revealed in new and memorable ways the implications of Brexit at the border. We regret that there has not been space to do them all justice here, but we will be drawing upon this data in future publications and papers. We also wish to express particular gratitude to each one of the participants of the six focus groups, who gave up hours of their time and travelled some distance to contribute to the discussions. So many volunteered to participate in a focus group that we could have run several times this number had time and resources enabled that. Unfortunately only a small fraction of responses can be included here, but we have read and analysed them all and will continue to draw upon them in other publications and presentations.

The negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the EU entail decisions that will have enormous, long-lasting implications for the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland. The nature of cross-border integration and the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement means the effects of leaving the EU will be felt by residents and workers on both sides of the border (of all ages, backgrounds and identities), across multiple aspects of their daily lives.

In this report, we wanted to give as much space as possible to people in the region who are not often given the opportunity to be listened to on this topic. Our analysis has been confined primarily to categorisation of data, to find the predominant themes and common issues. We have kept interpretation of the data and subsequent recommendations to a minimum in this report. This is, first and foremost, a presentation of views from the Central Border Region: a region in which the memories of violence and a securitised border are still vivid, and in which the experience of a 'seamless' border is a both a symbol and a benefit of hard-won peace.

1. Introduction

1.1. Why listen to the Central Border Region

Phase 1 of the negotiations of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union contained a strand that focused on Ireland/Northern Ireland as a particular priority for agreement. The Joint Report of the EU and UK of December 2017 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/joint_report.pdf) on progress in Phase 1 of the talks set out the commitments of the negotiators regarding Ireland/Northern Ireland. These are to avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland, including physical infrastructure or related checks and controls. Both the UK and EU are also committed to upholding the 1998 Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, enabling continued North-South cooperation on the island of Ireland, and supporting the all-island economy.

These commitments have proven to be enormously significant for the state of progress in the UK's negotiations for withdrawal from the EU. The Irish border has received much attention from media and commentators as an abstract and knotty 'problem' for the whole Brexit project. But for those in the border region of Ireland/Northern Ireland, this is no mere negotiating exercise. The realities of disentangling the UK from the EU have very real and tangible effects for those living and working beside or across the Irish border.

The *Bordering on Brexit* study (https://go.qub.ac.uk/bordering) which we jointly produced in November 2017 reported on the realities of cross-border life in the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland – a region characterised by small, rural populations, economic underdevelopment and historic challenges posed by being at the periphery of two states. The respondents to the online survey and the participants in the focus groups felt deeply anxious about the potential impact of Brexit, considering their region to be most exposed to its effects. A particular concern expressed was that there would be a return to a hard border, which would mark a regressive step in the peace process and in the sense of normality in this region.

The purpose of the *Brexit at the Border* research project was to follow-on from that report by again asking local communities in the region for their views and experiences relating to the process of the UK's withdrawal. The research for this report was conducted in March-May of 2018, timed to mark a period just under two years since the UK's referendum on Brexit and with less than one year to go until the date that the UK is due to leave the EU. It is notable that, although the timeframe for this project was slightly shorter than the Bordering on Brexit study, we managed to receive almost double the number of survey respondents and focus group participants.

This impressive level of engagement possibly reflects a growing sense of urgency and a concern to receive some clarity about the potential impact of Brexit on both sides of the Irish border. It is significant that one consistency in the context of both reports is that the devolved Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly and Executive have not been operational and that, of the six constituencies in Northern Ireland that are (at least partially) included in the area covered by ICBAN, only one has an MP sitting in Westminster (David Simpson, the DUP MP for Upper Bann, which includes Craigavon and part of Banbridge – quite some distance from the border itself). Recognising the importance of representation at this critical time, this report includes comments on that subject from the survey and focus group participants.

2. The Study

2.1. The survey

This research project used two methods for collecting the views of local communities in the Central Border Region: an online survey and focus groups. The objective was to gather fairly detailed responses and comments from people living or working in the Central Border Region, on both sides of the border. The survey is not intended to be a representative poll of views in this region; the only condition for participation was to live or work in the Central Border Region (as defined by the area covered by the ICBAN member councils).

We used Google Forms to produce a 22 question survey that could be easily distributed and completed. The survey was promoted through social media, stakeholders and the local authorities that are members of ICBAN. All the main political parties are represented on the board of ICBAN and members of ICBAN's board undertook to encourage responses to the survey.

The survey received almost 600 responses [n=591] from people who live and/or work in one of the eight local authority regions of the Irish Central Border Area. This includes: Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon [ABC]; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh [F&O]; Leitrim; Mid Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo.

Localities covered
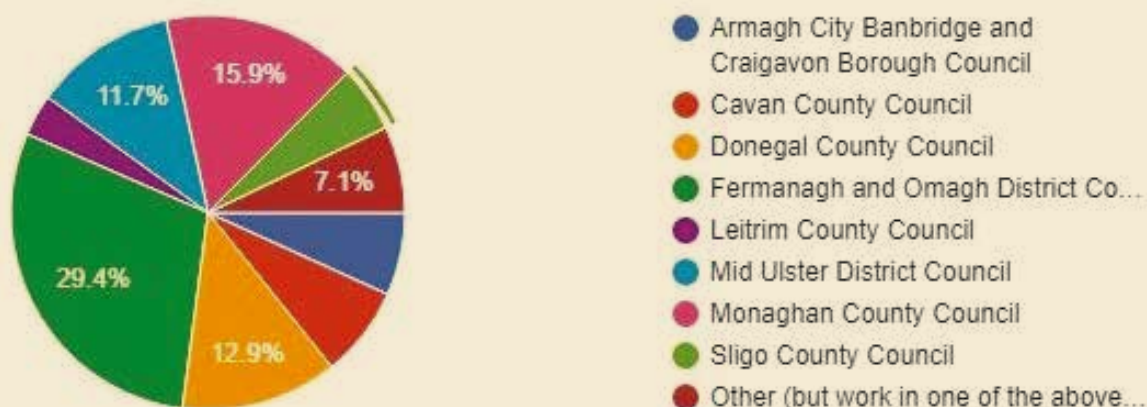
Figure 1: Area of residence of respondents

47.9% of the respondents are resident in council areas in Northern Ireland; 45% reside in council areas of Ireland; 7.1% work in one of these council areas but reside outside the region.

Fermanagh and Omagh district council area is disproportionately over-represented in the sample size (approximately 114,000 residents compared to ABC council residents of nearly 200,000); this was also the case in the Bordering on Brexit report. It is possibly related to the fact that the headquarters of ICBAN are in Enniskillen. Monaghan county council area is over-represented from councils on the other side of the border (a population of around 61,000 compared to Donegal's 159,000).

2.2. Profile of respondents

Because this was primarily intended to generate qualitative data rather than quantitative statistics, we did not ask respondents too many identifying details. However, we are able to confirm that there is a gender balance among the survey respondents (at 50/50 male/female).

Just over 80% of the respondents are in the 31-65 age range. We made a particular effort to hear from younger respondents in two of the focus groups, and this report contains particular comments from these 16-17 year old respondents.
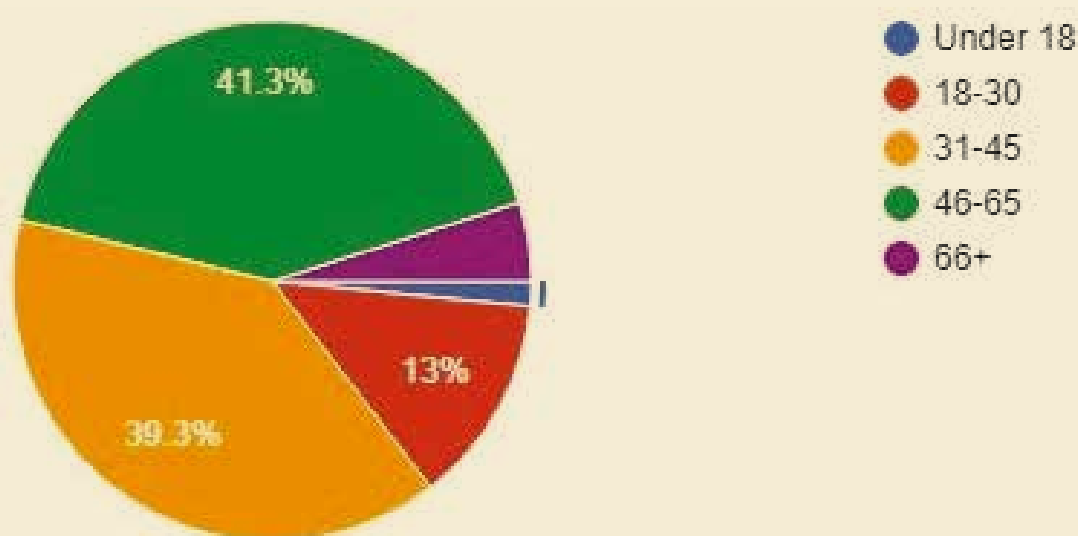
Figure 2: Age of respondents

Given the significance of citizenship in the Brexit debate and process, we asked respondents to self-identify on one category from a list of options. ¾ of the respondents are Irish citizens. However, this is not wholly disproportionate. As noted above, around half of the respondents live in Northern Ireland and at least 23.2% of the respondents have British citizenship (either dual or single). It is important to recognise that not all those respondents with British citizenship live in council areas in Northern Ireland.
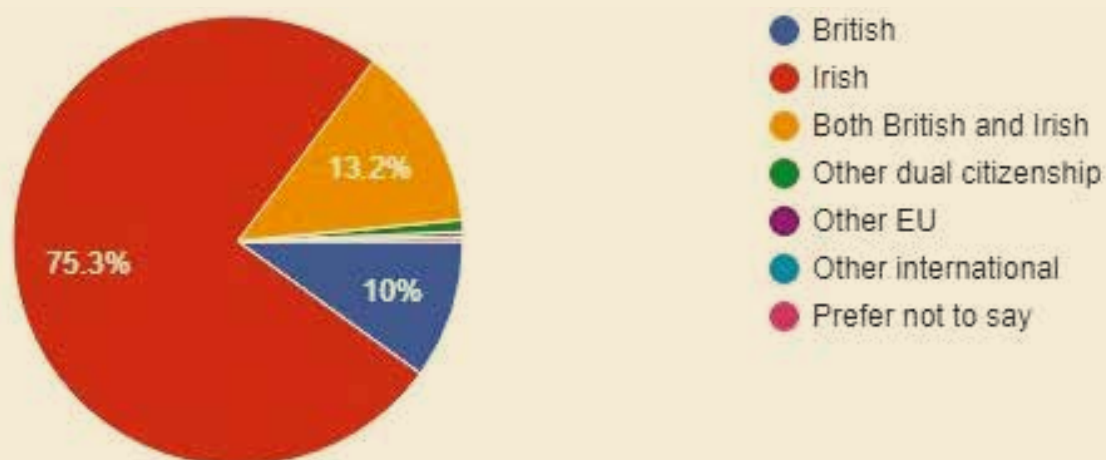
Figure 3: Citizenship of respondents

We also asked respondents how they voted in the referendum. 42% of respondents did not have a vote due primarily to residence outside Northern Ireland. 45.5% of the respondents voted Remain, and 9.8% voted to Leave the EU. We are pleased that the proportion of Leave voters is higher than we managed to gather for our Bordering on Brexit report (which was 8%). This is despite the fact that the proportion of respondents with British citizenship is significantly less than in the last report. It is only possible to speculate on why this might be. Perhaps those with British citizenship only and who voted Remain were less likely to complete the survey this time; we also note that some with Irish citizenship voted Leave for very particular reasons (as discussed later in the report).
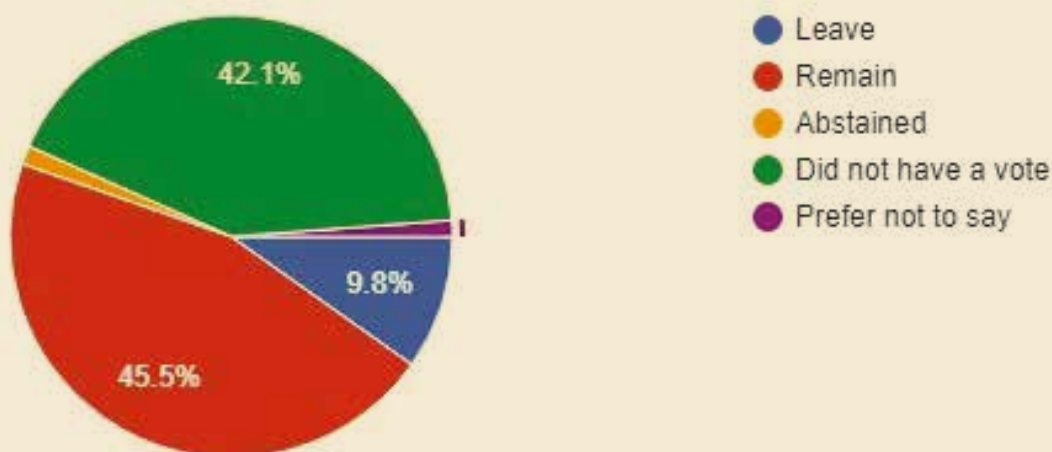
Figure 4: Vote in the Brexit referendum of June 2016

2.3. Focus groups

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they would be interested in participating in a focus group. Just over 330 people expressed their willingness to do so – something that in itself demonstrates the levels of interest and engagement in this subject in this particular region. The logistics of organising focus groups resulted in just under fifty participants across six focus groups. These were held in Ballyshannon, Armagh, Enniskillen and Monaghan, and involved participants from all counties in the Central Border Region, from all age groups, from different employment status (including in school education, self-employed, part-time work, and retired), different political affiliations (including none). Overall there were slightly more male participants in the focus groups than female.

2.4. Conduct and Analysis

The research was conducted in accordance with guidelines and procedures for research ethics of Queen's University Belfast including gaining approval from the relevant committee on research ethics in advance of the research. As part of this, all participants in the focus groups received an information sheet and signed a consent form. Contact details for the researchers were provided for all those looking at the online survey. The data is anonymous and kept securely.

This project generated an enormous amount of qualitative data. All the focus groups were recorded and the data was transcribed. The qualitative survey responses plus the focus group transcripts were analysed with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software (NVivo Pro), through the use of coding (approximately 4-6 nodal points per question). In this report, we present quotations that are representative or typical of each of the main themes for that topic. Survey quotations are referenced by respondent number, residence, age and gender; extracts from focus group transcripts by the location and number of the focus group and the timestamp on the recording. Many of the focus group quotations are put in boxes here to allow a more full presentation of some of the rich data from these discussions. Quotations have been adjusted as minimally as possible, e.g. capitalisation remains as per the original.

3. Anticipating Brexit

3.1. Perceptions of Brexit

Before asking people for their views on Brexit, we asked 'Do you consider yourself to be well informed of the possible consequences of Brexit for the border region' (Question 6)? The responses were on a Likert scale, with 1 being 'not at all' and 5 being 'fully informed'. In the Bordering on Brexit study, 35% reported feeling (very) uninformed on the topic with only 17% considering themselves very informed. In this survey, some 9 months on, 50% feel very or fully informed.
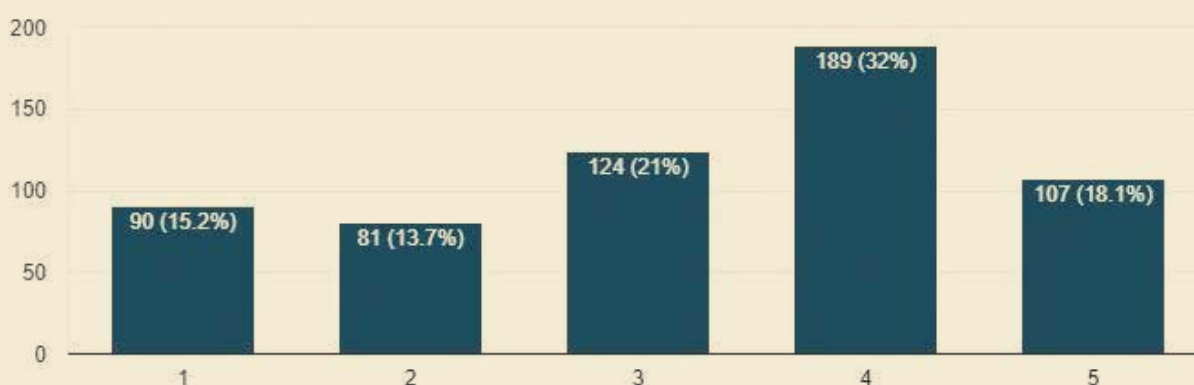
Figure 5: Self-reported information levels on Brexit (1: Not at all; 5: fully informed)

This confidence in information levels surely reflects the fact that, in the intervening time period, the Irish border and Ireland/Northern Ireland more broadly have featured heavily in media coverage of the Brexit negotiations. There have also been a range of activities and reports on the topic released in local areas in an effort to inform people of the potential impact of Brexit.

Such efforts appear to have been successful in raising public awareness. However, what they have not done is reassure people as to what these consequences might be. Almost 60% say that, compared to their views a year ago, they now see a hard border as being more likely. Only 14% say it is less likely than they anticipated last year.
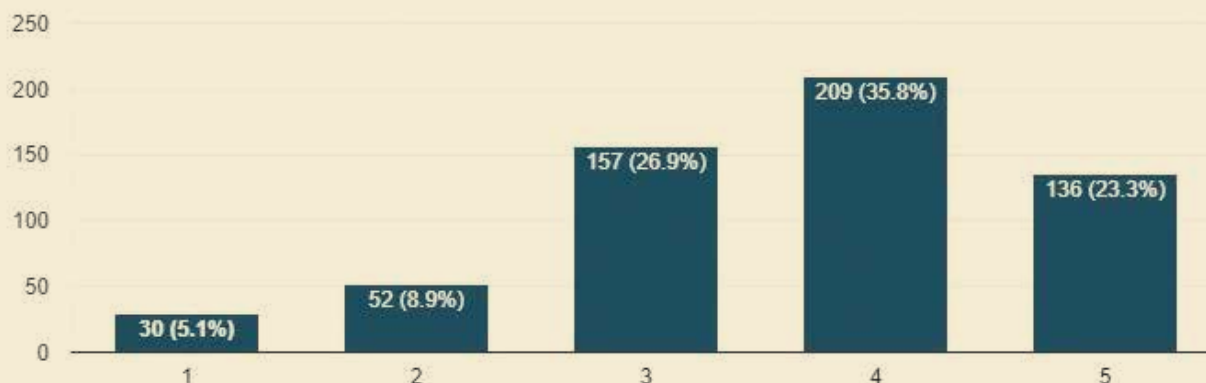
Figure 6: Is a hard border less likely (1) or more likely (5)?

3.2. Impact of Brexit already

¾ of respondents report already seeing an impact of Brexit on their lives and plans for the future. A frequently reiterated theme is that of **uncertainty** and a lack of clarity about what to expect.

Linked to this, there is a strong sense of **anxiety** induced by the situation. 28% of respondents use words such as 'worried', 'uncertain', 'stress', 'anxiety' and 'concern' to describe the impact of Brexit.

Almost a third of respondents refer to the practical impact of Brexit already in evidence in the experience of life near the border. Mostly this is demonstrated through a kind of **paralysis** in decision-making or normal business.

Others report on the effects of the **change** in exchange rates and food prices, and the difficulty of selling/buying land or houses on the other side of the border.

It also affects **choices** people have to make concerning cross-border jobs, business investments, farming land, university applications, passport applications etc.

Illustrations given by respondents and focus group participants show that this uncertainty is actually having a material effect in disrupting planning and delaying decision-making. The overriding impression is that if people are taking action it is not of a cooperative, cross-border nature but towards a decisive move to one side of the border or the other, or to a third country.

Anxiety: Concerns among the respondents arise not only in relation to their own personal lives but about the wider consequences of Brexit. The context of the 1998 Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement and peace process are important here, as is the integrated nature of cross-border life for so many.

I have no idea what is going to happen. Just feeling *generally scared* about potential return to violence if there is to be a hard border. Have no idea what plans to make. (R066 Leitrim, 31-45, F)

Now we're almost afraid to put down roots as this situation is so *precarious*. (R069, F&O, 31-45, M)

It causes me concern as I work in Donegal. I'm unsure of how this will work out in future years. It causes *stress and anxiety.* (R255, F&O, 31-45, M)

I am *frightened of the future* as I strongly feel Brexit will have a very negative impact. Also frightened of impact it will have regarding my family's future relationship with Europe. (R344 F&O, 46-65, F)

As a farmer I am very concerned about EU subsidies and what will replace them. Also impending *Brexit makes me fearful for the future of our farm*, will we have to sell our stock/land? How will we manage without the income from our farm? We don't know whether we should diversify because we have no idea whether or not we will still be in the customs union or the single market. The uncertainty around Brexit makes it very difficult to manage our business or plan for the future. (R017, ABC, 31-45, F)

Uncertainty: Respondents in both the survey and the focus groups discuss two dimensions of the current lack of clarity about the process of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The first is a sense of paralysis and vacuum of decision-making from the micro to the macro level. The second is the effect that such uncertainty is having on business decisions in particular.

I cross the border frequently as we live so close to it. It is difficult to know what the impact will be as we *are getting no information whatsoever on what measures will be put in place*, if any. (R063, F&O, 31-45, F)

There are no real answers as yet, just *'what if's'*. (R124, ABC, 46-65, M)

Uncertainty. Don't want to stay here if things continue to get worse. The economy is already suffering. We are struggling to make ends meet. *The political situation has become more unstable and people are becoming more divided.* (R261, Mid Ulster, 31-45, F):

My family live, work, study, socialise and shop both sides of the border every single day. *We cannot plan ahead re: work or study opportunities due to Brexit uncertainty.* We live in a town severely impacted by the conflict and there is a real sense the return to borders will raise tensions and lead to the GFA being undermined. (R398, Other, 46-65, F)

We're so out of the loop with everything that is happening. *We can't make decisions and we're trying to guess what is happening.* There are some facts, but it's so unpredictable. (Monaghan FG1, 22.14)

I think that from a business and personal point of view you wouldn't spend or invest in anything – not for the last year and a half, because *you don't know where you're going to end up when you live in a border community...* You can't invest in anything because you don't know what way the relationship between the United Kingdom and the rest of EU will end up, which will directly affect us here. (Ballyshannon FG2, 00.48)

Our business wants to know if they can trade freely with Europe. I work in telecommunications and there would be huge implications if the UK leaves the Digital Single Market. They are just stalling; *they're a large multinational, but they're not putting any money in whatsoever at the moment...* (Enniskillen FG, 35.39)

Speaking from a family business on the border: we've just come through ten years of a recession; things are beginning to pick up again. We have businesses starting to flourish in our [border] area, but people are afraid. *They are thinking 'I should expand, I should employ more' but is there any point? Is this all going to backfire in another year's time? So people have stalled, businesses are stagnant at the minute.* We should be grasping this and moving on, but people are afraid. (Enniskillen FG, 34.28)

Nothing seems to be happening at all...*everything has been left in just limbo.* I am a business man, I'm an accountant dealing with businesses every day of the week and a lot of them [the businesses] are putting things off until this [Brexit] is sorted. Anything like that is having a devastating effect in County Fermanagh. (Ballyshannon FG1, 0.33)

Everything is at a standstill, there's absolutely nothing happening...nothing will happen until the decision is made on where we're going. ... There are no decisions being made whatsoever. ...In my business anyhow, there's no way I can seem to move on at all. (Ballyshannon FG1, 0.59)

I live on the border too. *Nobody is buying, buying property or anything.* Nothing is happening. (Ballyshannon FG1, 2.03)

My relative is selling land...and normally her land would be flying, the estate agent put it on at £300k, there was a bid today on it of £150k – one person interested. The rest are not interested because of Brexit. If the subsidies are going, what is the point in farming? (Ballyshannon FG1, 7.00-7.23)

We were thinking of expanding [our business near the border] and thinking of hiring ten extra staff, however, we're going to have to wait and see... If they're going to have to go through a hard border every day, will they want to work there? Is it going to affect their wages? ...The need is out there, but yet, *we're not going to put [our business] at risk until something is sorted out.* (Enniskillen FG, 35.00)

I know of people trying to sell their houses in Donegal and move back to the north as their kids are going to school every day in Derry and they are scared of a hard border, but they can't sell their houses as the demographic who will buy their house [in Donegal] is from the north but they ain't moving across the border [due to drop in value of sterling] – so it is a major economic problem being felt already. (R204, Donegal, 46-65, F)

Even for small businesses along the border, both north and south – it is going it impact them hugely. We don't realise at the minute how lucky we are – the ease that we have at the minute for going shopping or to meet family. It's all going to change. (Monaghan FG1, 2.02)

Choices: The decisions being made about education are particularly interesting as they will have a direct effect on future experience of cross-border lives and contact.

I am a student from Tyrone who studies in Dublin. I would like to study further in Dublin but do not know how this would affect my citizenship or if I would need to cross a customs post to get home each weekend. (R178, F&O, 18-31, M)

You need to be informed and it's hard to be informed when Brexit hasn't happened.../ What about qualifications, would they be recognised? /... *We don't want to base our whole future on something that might fall through when it comes to it.* /Your instinct is to be cautious... / Our friend [at school in Monaghan] living in the north is thinking she'll go to Queen's rather than to cross the border every day to go to college./ She was born in the UK, so she'd have to be an international student if she was coming to Ireland [for college after Brexit] and it's the fees. It could be not €3k a year but €23k per year! (Monaghan FG1, 21:22-22.50)

My sister wanted to go to England or Wales for college, now she won't. (Monaghan FG2, 34:45)

Decisions: Most of the decision-making in relation to Brexit reported by the respondents appears to be cautious and ones which have a negative effect on cross-border contact and development, particularly for Northern Ireland.

I've a company here [in NI], but I've already set up a company in the Republic of Ireland because I'm not taking the risk. (Enniskillen FG, 26.34)

As a self-employed person I *plan to permanently move my business* to Southern Ireland within the year. No matter what the outcome of Brexit is myself my family and my business will be better off moving to Southern Ireland now. (R235, Donegal, 18-30, F)

I'm considering *relocating* to ROI/buying a property there. (R497, ABC, 18-30, M)

[I] Rescinded VAT registration; closed [my] business. (R525, ABC, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

We have *closed a savings account held in the UK* in case transaction charges are introduced... I am worried that 20+ years of pensionable work will not be amalgamated with years worked in Ireland when it comes to claiming a pension. (R201, Donegal, 26-65, F)

Myself and my wife have had serious discussion about simply *upping sticks & moving* back to America, maybe to London or Dublin. (R069, F&O, 31-45, M)

Positive effects: There were few overtly positive reports of the impact of the referendum or of anticipated benefits; this perhaps reflects the fact that Leave voters were in a minority in the sample. Positive comments tend to emphasise the resilience of local business and the potential of Northern Ireland's distinctive position. Specifically-identified opportunities seem to be either in competition with the other side of the border or far from it.

I think that our businesses and SMEs are very resilient and always have been. ...I'm not overly worried... I think they'll find a way. (Armagh FG, 7.27)

Unique capital creation opportunity for a deprived region of underinvestment. (R525, ABC, 46-65, M)

It maybe is a good thing for shops around here [Monaghan town] because people won't be going to the north to shop, they'll be staying in the south...shop local! (Monaghan FG2, 16.26)

A businessman in a focus group in Armagh prefaced his comments by stating he 'was a Remainer' and that he had been unnerved by the Treasury's economic impact assessments:

So we made a strategic decision after the vote to review our business [towards non-EU markets]. Some strategic differences were helped a bit by the exchange rate, of course. Employment is up 33%, turnover is way up, our profits have doubled.

So I'm much more relaxed about it. I don't know what the outcome is going to be, but I think that we'll be fine. That's my opinion. In effect, we'll be better off probably than say a business in England, because *we could end up with a foot in either camp*.

[Our business] used to be importing [across the border]. That's getting less and less because with our product – the capital purchases are becoming more saturated down south. Our strategic decision was: do we focus on 27 countries that speak 24 languages or do we look at the US where there is a bigger market that speaks English? Now, 18 months later, the US, is 40% of our business – that is without a Free Trade Agreement. …

The actual experience indicates that a lot of the 'doomsayers' weren't really accurate. I think we'll be fine. *I actually think we'll be in the best part of the UK to be in*. (Armagh FG, 3.43-5.50)

4.   Cross-Border Life

Over half of the respondents (57.6%) to the survey reported that they (very) much rely on access to services on the other side of the border.
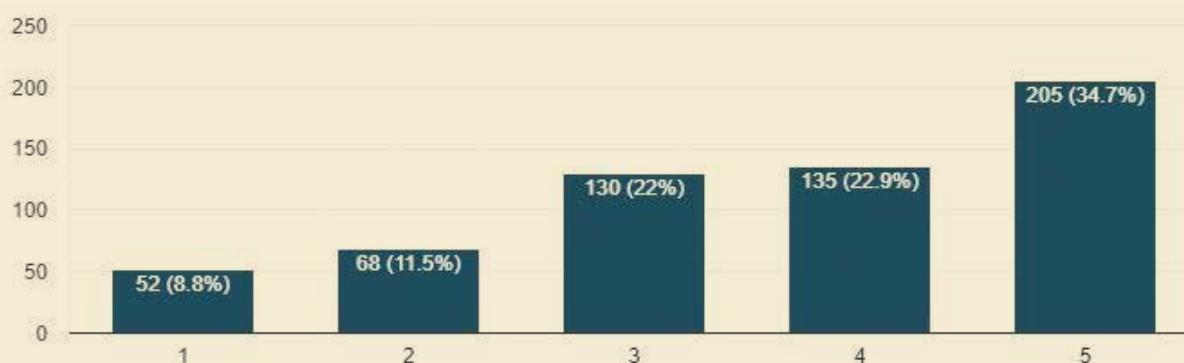
Figure 7: To what extent do you rely on access to services on the other side of the border? (1: Not at all; 5: very much)

Examples given by respondents regarding services they access on the other side of the border tend to illustrate the **cross-border nature of daily, ordinary life.**

Travelling (mainly using the airports, but also use of train and bus services that cross the border) is mentioned most frequently on the topic of cross-border services (345 times): 'All of our family holidays for the last 10 years have either been across the border or involved ports/airports in the Republic' (R552, F&O, 46-65, M).

Health and emergency services (e.g. hospitals, GPs and dentists, also fire and rescue services) are mentioned by approximately ¼ of the survey respondents.

More than 30% of the respondents cross the border to **work** or for educational reasons. Another third mention crossing the border for shopping (mainly groceries and fuel, but also one-off purchases) and recreational purposes (holidays, sport).

Some respondents are keen to make the point that they **don't consider the border at all when accessing services.** Others, on the other hand, state that they do not cross the border for any services, or at least they do not rely on those services.

Cross-border lives: *The prospect of 'Brexit at the border' has such a profound impact because everyday life in the Central Border Region has cross-border dimensions for so many people.*

We use the Bus Éireann service to Dublin and usually fly from either Dublin or Knock - even to England. Our local library is across the border. General grocery and clothes shopping. Even to visit Enniskillen (local county town) we use Bus Éireann - Ulster Bus has all but abandoned us. Cinema, meals out, walking for pleasure and health are all done across the border for reasons of proximity and convenience. (R167, F&O, 31-45, F)

I live one mile north of the border. A trip to the nearest Chinese takeaway involves crossing the border six times by the most direct route. (R552, F&O, 46-65, M)

I live literally 2 minutes' drive to the Cavan border. If I look out the upstairs window at the back of my house I can see Co. Cavan. I have close family living both sides of the border. I'm a joiner and work all over locally and have never considered the border. Now, however, I'm considering my future. (R069, F&O, 31-45, M)

I live within a mile of the border. I'm constantly in and out of the South for various reasons. I live in a village that the border literally splits in two! (R046, F&O, 31-45, F)

We use cancer care services in Derry. The City Airport and Belfast International are our main international transport hubs. Derry City is our main retail centre. We also have family members attending University of Ulster. Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue are the closest and the first port of call for such emergencies in our area. (R251, Donegal, 31-45, F)

I work in Derry. My children are educated in Donegal. When they go to third level, institutions in NI would be my first choice. I access healthcare in ROI for convenience, but if I needed care at a specialist level I would opt to use services in NI due to the distance to access services in Galway or Dublin. Derry is our city and economic hub ... The social links are very strong. *The opening of the roads which were closed to us for years meant so much to our communities.* As family, we shop, travel, engage in leisure in NI. (R502, Donegal, 31-45, F)

Use local doctor and chemist in my local southern town. Do my shopping locally in the south. Go to mass in the south. Go on holidays from Dublin airport. (R014, F&O, 46-65, M)

I cross the border 6 times a day to get to work in N. Ireland (R109, Monaghan, 31-45, M)

I work for a business based in south but cross border twice every day, and sometimes 6 times per day (R525, ABC, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

For me, *I run a small business on the border and all our suppliers are from the island of Ireland*, with the exception of two English ones. Over 60% of our products are coming from over the border.

That's an issue because my business is too small to absorb any VAT or any hassle. Even the paperwork…we just phone up a supplier and give our VAT number and get an invoice with no VAT on it. I don't have to worry about it… [Now with Brexit] that's a big worry for me.

With the negotiations, they don't even understand that we're dual currency; they don't understand the issues we have with our mobile phones [roaming charges].

Brexit has highlighted these [issues], whereas we were just getting on with it before.

At least we have peace. *You don't realise how much of a hindrance the border is on a day-to-day basis.*

…I think also what is not understood in London is the basic cultural issue that I'm an Irish person, I consider this [Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal] to be my home as much as I do Belleek [Fermanagh, Northern Ireland]. (Ballyshannon FG2, 16.29)

I live on the border and had worked in Northern Ireland for over 16 years. I have utilised their educational system, health system and regularly shop in the north and use their airports. 2 of my children have also obtained their 3rd level education in Belfast. (R253, Donegal, 46-65, F)

I am a cross-border worker so I use health services in the north. Children attend primary school in the north as it is undersubscribed. Childcare is in the north. Husband is also a cross-border worker. All shopping done in north as both are paid in sterling. Closer to Derry than Letterkenny so pay privately for children's dentists in north. (R383, Donegal, 46-65, F)

[We] Live in Tyrone. Sons attend school in Derry. Daughters attend school in Donegal. I work in North. My husband works in South. We fly out of Dublin far more frequently than Belfast. We go to Donegal as our closest daytrip/weekend break. We have the cross-border Radiotherapy Unit in Derry which relies on Derry, Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone populations for its patients. (R398, Other, 46-65, F)

Live here for a week and see how many times you cross the border! / ...I don't think they know that people cross it daily. / *You wouldn't even know you were crossing the border.* (Monaghan FG2, 18.18)

Health: Health and emergency services were discussed a lot by survey respondents and in some detail in some focus groups. It is a good example of the economies of scale created through cross-border service provision to the benefit of those across the border region.

The beneficiaries of my services [in a specialised area of health provision] are almost 100% from the UK side of the border (R170, Sligo, 46-65, F)

When we go to Dundalk we have to cross the border and I get my braces tightened in Dundalk. Imagine having to cross the border just to get your braces tightened! / My dentist is in Keady as well and my orthodontist is going to be in Newry. (Monaghan FG2, 21.22)

Both health services have become more intertwined in the last few years, to the point that if I have an accident in Ballyconnell [Cavan] I might go to Enniskillen [Fermanagh] hospital. Or *if I'm in an accident in Monaghan my ambulance has to cross the border 8 times on a return journey to Cavan General Hospital.* (R379, Cavan, 18-30, M)

My spouse is a GP in one of the biggest rural practices in Northern Ireland and it's totally skirted along the border... They would have a lot of patients who... use the European Directive to get operations in other European countries, not just necessarily the south... At the minute in the NHS in the north, there are huge waiting lists for elective surgery, which was being a bit relieved by those that could maybe privately finance their operation [in the Republic] and reclaim it. But when you take that out of the mix, it's going to add further pressures to an already hard pressed health care system. (Ballyshannon, FG2, 8.08)

We have been working since 2009 to secure a second breast surgeon for Letterkenny Hospital ... part of his remit is to work in Altnagelvin as well... if there's a hard border again we'll lose our second breast surgeon because it'll be perceived that we don't have the necessary numbers or critical mass to sustain his services. (Ballyshannon, FG2, 29.14)

Figure 8: Why do you use services on the other side of the border? [Most frequent 200 words given in answer to Q12]

5.   Avoiding a Hard Border

There are **different gradients** in what respondents perceive as a 'hard border', going from any change in the current situation to the presence of the army/soldiers to secure the border. Memories of the securitised border feature strongly in responses to this question.

The majority of respondents define a 'hard border' with terms like **'checkpoints'**, 'a physical border' and 'customs checks'. It is seen by many to mean an end to the free movement of people and goods that exists at the moment.

The idea of having to show a passport/ID is often mentioned. These changes concern some respondents, since they work on the other side of the border or have family there etc.

There is a concern among respondents that a hard border will mean a **step back in the peace process** and that it impinges on the spirit and operation of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement. Many describe it as being like going back to the 'old days' of the past, relating both to the Troubles and to the inconvenience of customs controls.

Several describe a resurgence of a feeling of insecurity associated with being Irish on the UK side of the border. In another echo from past times, a few say that a harder border will increase their sense of security.

5.1. The meaning of a 'hard border'

Low levels of tolerance for hard border: The responses to the question about the meaning of a hard border illustrate the realities of cross-border integration. For Irish people living on both sides of the border, any restriction on free movement across it is not just a symbolic affront but a material 'nightmare' (R049).

[A hard border means] *Any strengthening of the border as it presently* is, be that digitally or otherwise. The border at present, although invisible in terms of infrastructure, already presents issues to the whole island. In my opinion the border at present is hard enough without making it worse. ...

Any hardening of the border will restrict my movement and will be enough to put many off even attempting [to cross the border]. In an area where we rely so heavily on cross-border trade and all-Ireland tourism, it is worrying that barriers to this could be put in place. (R063, Fermanagh, 31-45, F)

Difficulties as a regular commuter across the border. *Restrictions, delays, customs, alienation, step back in time* in respect of integration of communities that live each side of the border. Uncertainty is the issue now. Freedom of movement is a basic right which is instrumental within EU participation as residents of Ireland. (R104, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

Nightmare, I live on the border, there will be checks and it will be very bad for local economy. (R049, Other, 18-30, F)

Preventing the peoples of the island of Ireland their basic right of free movement of people goods and services within their own country. *A recipe for the opening of old wounds.* Destabilising the peace process. (R208, F&O, 46-65, F)

Peace process: *Many respondents make the connection between the prospect of a hard border and the conditions needed for stability/peace in Northern Ireland. Memories of the past border are as present here as appreciation for the current openness of the border.*

A complete disaster for all concerned after the freedom we have enjoyed since the Good Friday agreement. (R257, Donegal, 66+, F)

Closed into a sectarian statelet not able to recognise my heritage or belonging. (R028, ABC, 46-65, M)

Full segregation again: like Trump's wall but worse (R105, Leitrim, 18-30, Gender not divulged)

Return to the armed checkpoints of my youth. But with the additional potential to have my personal ease of travel curtailed because I would now be crossing in and out of the EU too. (R395, Donegal, 46-65, F)

Going back to 1970s border! Horrible! (R580, Donegal, 66+, M)

Like the 80s - having to bribe the soldiers every time we went to Enniskillen. (R342, Cavan, 31-45, F)

Means I can't get to work without being hassled and a possible return to violence. (R511, F&O, 31-45, M)

I think we're going backwards, the ways things are shaping up. It appears to me that the British Government is backsliding on the backstop or is at least preparing to backslide on it. .../

I would be inclined to agree. I think that whether we like it or not, the negotiators – both the EU and the negotiators on behalf of the British Government are both, or at least seem to be becoming more accepting of the fact that we're not going to end up with a negotiated settlement. I doubt if we are. /

It looks as if...there is a movement backwards and an acceptance of a hard border. This is something that is very dangerous for us here in this border area and for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Economically, going forward, I think it'll be very detrimental to the economies of both sides of the border. (Enniskillen FG, 0.31)

The survey received several responses on this question mentioning a perceived increase in the prospects for a united Ireland.

Border checks, inflation, ultimately leading to a United Ireland. (R172, ABC, 18-30, M, Irish, Leave voter)

Not entirely sure; but I hope it brings us closer to a united Ireland. That is why I voted to leave. (R433, Mid-Ulster, 18-30, F, Leave voter)

Making me consider my future, where will I live? ... Also changed my political views from being agnostic over a united Ireland to more for it. (R510, F&O, 31-45, M)

A small portion of respondents are unconcerned about the prospect of a hard border. These responses fall into two categories: those who do not believe that there will be a hard border (that it is unnecessary, or that the idea of it is an EU negotiating tactic) and those who are not fazed by the prospect of it, indeed would welcome it. All of these respondents are Leave voters.

It will mean nothing to me because it cannot happen. (R237, F&O, 46-65, F, Leave voter)

Hopefully return of Army checkpoints. (R266, F&O, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

A more secure situation than we have now. (R369, F&O, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

Figure 9: What do you understand the term 'a hard border' to mean? [Most frequent 200 words given in answer to Q7]

5.2. Technological solutions

Almost half the respondents say they would **not accept technological solutions** for border control. Over ¼ of the respondents state, in answer to the question linked to this, that they do not want any change of the current border.

Of those willing to accept it, just under half say that this is because it would be **preferable to the alternative** of a closed border and checkpoints. Thus, they see it more as a compromise (between how it is now and the 'hard border' they remember from the past).

For the other half, their answer of 'maybe' **depends on the details**. 60 respondents pose a list of questions on this matter: what kind of technology? Is it just number plate checks or mobile data surveillance as well? In focus groups, the (im)practicalities of technological solutions were elaborated in some detail.

Just a small portion of respondents seem to be genuinely comfortable with a technological solution on the border. Some refer to the kind of **technology already used** along routes crossing the border, examples given include toll booths on the M50 between Dublin and Newry and speed cameras. As one respondent elaborated: 'Already in use. ANPR [Automatic Number Plate Recognition], mobile officers, customs units, veterinary overview and stations, DVLA and road safety authorities, marine customs, fisheries officers, forestry officers...All in place now. Workload not going to get any busier unless disproportionate tariffs and duties build a case for 'enterprise' [i.e. smuggling].' (R525, ABC, 46-65, M)

1 in 6 respondents mention their rights and have concerns about their **privacy**. What will happen with the data, who 'owns' it and is it safe? The term 'Big Brother' is used by 18 different respondents to describe the idea of technological solutions being used at the border; 2 other respondents refer to the work of George Orwell (specifically '1984').

1 in 8 respondents **question the capacity of technological solutions**: is it enough or are check points still needed? They mention all the roads that cross the border and do not see how they all could be monitored. Some say it's a waste of money and better to invest in health care etc. Who will pay for all the technology and maintenance?
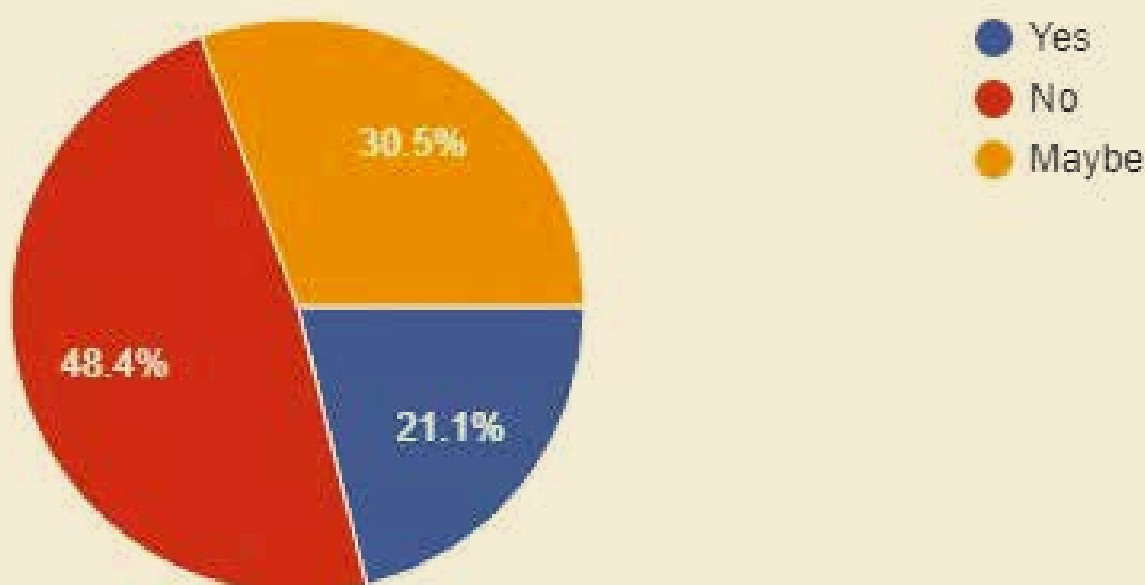
Figure 10: Would you be willing to accept 'technological' means of border control if these were introduced in place of manned border checkpoints and away from the border itself?

Complex issue: *The meaning of a 'hard border' is difficult to articulate or contemplate for many in a Border Region with such an open border – all the more so given its complex history and its recent past. Respondents were keen to emphasise the complexity of the subject.*

MPs in Westminster and many others involved in "solving the border problem" seem to only realise the physical implications. ... *The actual local physical infrastructure is only a small part of the implications of a Hard Border. Just as important are the implications for Health, Education, Agriculture, Communications and many other fields of life* which have benefited Ireland both North and South over recent years. ...and actually also the psychological perception to the local population is also a very relevant consideration. (R166, Other, 66+, F)

The people of the border areas have suffered years of hardship, disruption, violence and neglect because of the hard border of the past. I do not want to see any return to a border that divides our land. ... A hard border or even a soft border is an impediment...and one that cannot be accepted. (R17, ABC, 31-45, F)

I grew up with British Army checkpoints. I have vivid memories of emptying bags of Easter eggs from Woolworths out of the boot on the side of the road at the behest of a British Soldier, just doing his job. In a relatively few years, it's hard to describe to other people how [such controls] ever existed. (R173, Donegal, 31-45, F)

I would massively decrease my travel to the North as I don't believe there should be limitations for citizens travelling back and forth in any manner. I expect it's the most likely result from the negotiations though any physical infrastructure would probably be pulled down by locals, and I don't think they'd want to call the army in to man it as that didn't go great the last time. (R518, Donegal, 31-45, M)

Just on that point, as good as the technology might be there will still be a cost on the other side of it, because…if something goes wrong, that means that it has to have manpower behind it and even to acknowledge a number plate, there has to be something there.

There has to be paperwork at the end…you can use all the technology in the world, but there still has to be a paper trail. So, *the reality is that even if there is a soft border, there has to be some form of a border…* if they leave the Customs Union.

The scenario would be that if something goes wrong you need a person to get the system…figure out what tariff even a business might have. There will always be extra costs at the other side of it.

There are ANPR cameras in Belleek at the moment anyway…someone ran into one with a tractor shortly after they were put up…now I don't know if that was by accident or design! But you could have a similar scenario…any sort of technological solution like that is going to have to have a presence.

I do think…that [technology] gives a feeling of there being a border. So at the end of the day, *it may be non-intrusive in certain respects, but it's a symbol of a border nonetheless.* Furthermore, there will have to be some sort of physical checks.

There has to be a paper trail somewhere, someone has to stop the man with the wheelbarrow who is smuggling wheelbarrows! (Ballyshannon FG1, 53.55)

For the majority of the respondents, no hardening of the border is acceptable. Many claim that the use of technology to manage border controls would change the current experience of crossing the border and could thus undermine the 1998 Agreement and create more tension.

I am Irish, born and bred in the north. I voted for peace in 1998. The GFA [Good Friday Agreement] recognises that I am Irish. *In my heart, in my mind and in reality, Brexit and a hard border or any new border equipment or physical presence takes that away from me again.* All I hear in relation to the border is trade. Well for many people along the border, it [the border] is family, social, cultural; our heritage, our way of life that come before this. (R111, ABC, 31-45, F)

Any control amounts to a hard border. This is the most overlooked impact of the current Brexit negotiations and I find it incredulous that all sides seem to be burying their head in the sand until the point where they will be able to do this no longer. *The moderate people in these regions, of all religions, are not being represented as they should* and that is a very dangerous scenario. (R347, F&O, 46-65, M)

To put controls in place costs money that would be better used in health, particularly mental health, supporting older people, education, the arts, tourism. (R346, F&O, 31-45, F)

As a cross-border worker I do not want to have to register (and pay for) a technological system. I resent the fact that there is no money to pay for decent roads, yet the government seem willing to add technology. (R286, Other, 46-65, F)

Privacy, data protection and rights: The idea of being watched or tracked has particularly negative connotations in this part of the world. Some state their explicit lack of trust in the (UK) government with such information on – and capacity to track – cross-border movement.

I can freely cross this 'border' without any form of restrictions now. *I will never consent to any form of checks between two parts of Ireland.* Surveillance is already highly intrusive and we don't consent to it. Who in their right mind would consent to further intrusive surveillance? (R87, Other, 31-45, F)

I think it is an *infringement of civil rights* to be under surveillance in this way. (R18, Monaghan, 46-65, F)

There are probably loads of cameras along the border already, but movement is seamless. And for the first time in my life, I am willing to physically participate in any protests that deny me my right. The British imposed this on our communities and *we will not accept a removal of rights that were won after 30+ years of horrible conflict.* (R111, ABC, 31-45, F)

The people of this country suffered long enough from 'surveillance' etc. *We waited a long, long time to be able to travel the length and breadth of our country unrestricted* and without being tagged. (R101, Monaghan, 46-65, F)

I am a big advocate of technological solutions. It's my job to build technological solutions to things. But the proper investment is required to implement one that works and doesn't do more harm than good. Privacy is also a massive concern and it would be a very bad decision to implement 'surveillance' which makes anyone feel uncomfortable. (R339, Donegal, 18-30, M)

This would be completely unacceptable - monitoring and recording my movements is an invasion of my privacy. I am a fully law abiding person. I go about completely lawful business north of the border on a regular basis. Monitoring smacks of a police state. What will be done with this information? Who will get to see it? With data analysis and other forms of data management and mismanagement plus the errors and leaks - *I don't want my information gathered as I go about my normal business that just so happens to include crossing a particular line on the ground.* (R170, Sligo, 46-65, F)

My personal concern is that I should be able to travel unimpeded to and from Co.Tyrone and Belfast [to Sligo] as I have done for the past several years. I don't want that to change - and *being "electronically monitored" at the border while doing normal everyday things is an intrusive invasion of privacy.* (R170, Sligo, 46-65, F)

Absolutely not. I have an inherent right to enter my country and this shouldn't be restricted in any form. *I don't and won't consent to a GB government collecting data on me when all I'm doing is continuing on my daily routine.* (R379, Cavan, 18-30, M)

Such surveillance techniques were used in the past and these were linked to increased incidences of cancer in border communities. I would worry about the potential health risks. If my fears on this could be allayed (and notwithstanding reservations about 'big brother' surveillance) I might reply 'maybe'. (R412, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

I would have some concerns with data protection in respect of mobile data surveillance etc. *Automatic number plate recognition would be preferable to queues but I think there would need to be some registration/consent facility built in for use by regular exporters* etc. (R159, Mid Ulster, 46-65, F)

Doubting technology: *The effectiveness of the solutions are also questioned; if the system is flawed, it could lead to more smuggling and crime in the border region.*

The main reason is if internet access is required to avail of these 'technologies', the part of rural Fermanagh that I am from has no broadband infrastructure!! (R46, F&O, 31-45, F)

I don't see how this is possible-unless you tag people. Analogies to toll bridges are silly as obviously there is a difference between tolling a car and preventing illegal immigration/smuggling. ...Also what about secondary roads, lanes, fields and hills? *How would it be possible to render such a porous border as we have now into a controlled one without massive inconvenience to those of us who live here?* (R18, Monaghan, 46-65, F)

I do not see how it would be possible to put technological controls on every border crossing. There are more crossings than roads alone and there are over 250 of them. What about the people living right on the border whose property might be on both sides of it. Are they to be monitored 24/7? Are we all to be? *Even with technology, checks will take place somewhere. Moving them from border roads to border villages and towns is not acceptable either.* (R63, F&O, 31-45, F)

As an ex Customs Officer, even with technological controls I know *there will have to be a percentage of trucks pulled over for manual checks* and this will cause delays. Back roads may need to be blocked as there are too many to install technology at. This again will cause great inconvenience at peak hour traffic times. (R201, Donegal, 46-65, F)

How will such surveillance determine if I have an illegal immigrant, goods imported into the UK from outside of the EU, or a stash of drugs in the boot of my car?! Not convinced that from several perspectives, including data exchange, privacy, etc., [such technological measures] will be legal. (R225, Sligo, 46-65, M)

The people can't even describe it. They talk about it in this generic term: technology. But no one has said what the technology might be. /

I'm actually going to come to an element of that...to my mind, even if there was technology that said there is x, y and z in the back of a lorry. In some shape or form, a certain amount of lorries are going to have to be followed or pursued to the premises or whatever by Customs and searched there and that is delays.

Even if you take a scenario and there won't be any tariffs, say we have a Brexit, but there's a completely free trade agreement negotiated with the UK...my expectation is even in that context, you're talking about the completion of documentation for, at a minimum statistical purposes, throw in standards if you will to be really good.

God help us, if you start thinking about certificates of origin, inward processing. I worked in Customs and Excise at one stage...from what I can see, it has modernised. But the fundamentals of it are still the same, even if it was a long time back.

There's a lot of stuff there. And [bear in mind] the family businesses right on the border. (Enniskillen FG, 44.09-45.51)

Reasonable and pragmatic: *It is not only Leave voters who claimed that technological solutions could be useful after Brexit, especially given the existence of some use of technology already on border routes (albeit for different purposes than customs controls).*

There is already a border in economic, taxation, law, exchange rate and other such terms. Whilst I voted remain I do agree with the Brexiteer views that much of the future cross-border trade issues can be addressed by an extension of existing mechanisms. (R374, F&O, 46-65, M)

This would be helpful for a number of reasons for both states. Security and monitoring but also movement of goods. There is no reason why companies cannot register a licence number and type of goods being moved at source and as that registers on a system as a unit crosses the border all the details are captured as it passes. There are some sealed units which cannot be opened like medical units or others, so a linked system helps both jurisdictions and no reason why this cannot be a shared service. (R389, ABC, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

6.   Protecting the Peace

When asked about the security of a border, ¼ respondents interpreted this to mean a situation with a hard border. In response, they urged open borders, no queues, no tariffs and checkpoints. **A 'harder' or 'closed' border is the main concern**, including closing roads again. People write about the time it could take to cross the border, the impact on business and tourism and the inconvenience of custom checks.

1 in 6 respondents refer directly to **violence**, targets or (terrorist) attacks as their main concern around the security of the border.

30% respondents mention the **peace process**, division, return to the Troubles, conflict, protest, soldiers on the border, paramilitary activity etc. as their main concern and focus.

Notably quite a few people refer to **immigration** in answer to this question.15 respondents want to make sure the border is secure enough to 'keep immigrants out' or to avoid Calais-like situations. A further 67 respondents see crime in the border area as a main concern. This includes smuggling (by some specified as human trafficking or drugs trade) and criminals 'jumping' over the border to escape.

6.1. Security, insecurity and border controls

Violence: Some describe a harder border – or the need to enforce it – as being a catalyst for insecurity. Rather than becoming 'the new norm', the introduction of controls could steadily escalate as a source of friction and cause of violence.

Any hard border is a border to peace. (R416, F&O, 46-65, M)

There should be no border in our country. Anyone trying to enforce a hard border deserves all they get. (R271, Mid Ulster, 46-65, M)

No hard border on the island of Ireland is the only way to protect security of peace in the area... (R123, Monaghan, 31-45, F)

I won't be stopping. (R232, F&O, 18-30, M)

I would fear for Brexit (and British installations) to be a rallying call for those who would like to see a return to violence in the region. (R255, F&O, 31-45, M)

For the first time since the Referendum decision, *I actually fear for peace in the region.* Any tangible, overt, physical security being introduced at the border, could become a target for opportunists, and the repercussions of any such violence returning could potentially have disastrous consequences. Avoiding such should be a no-brainer for the powers that be. (R569, Mid Ulster, 46-65, M)

I firmly believe there should not be any border. I feel that *any physical or electronic border will become a target for mischief.* NI has come a long way in the last 20 years. I think that any border would be a step backwards. I am concerned that this could be the catalyst for more 'troubles'. (R53, F&O, 46-65, M)

There cannot be a border without guards which in turn will invite stress or even violence against both structures and personnel. (R144, Mid- Ulster, 66+, M)

There already is an issue with security in these border areas with burglary/aggravated burglary being committed by gangs in isolated rural areas with a quick exit over the border. (R159, Mid- Ulster, 46-65, F)

We live in a town severely impacted by the conflict and there is a real sense the return to borders will raise tensions and lead to the Good Friday Agreement being undermined. (R398, Other, 46-65, F)

It will definitely increase criminality through smuggling and other fraudulent behaviour. There is a short-term danger the lunatic extreme republicans will use the border infrastructure to score 'easy' propaganda boosting actions, necessarily leading to an increased security presence on the border. (R236, Sligo, 66+, M)

Customs checks and queues with the re-closure of minor crossing points which will eventually attract violent reaction which in turn will see a remilitarized frontier. (R419, Mid-Ulster, 31-45, M)

Reminiscent of a different era

Re-militarisation of it. We were terrorised the last time by the British Army, UDR and RUC. We lived in what could only be described as an open prison. We were always being watched and often harassed. We felt under threat all of the time. I could not go through that ever again. (R63, F&O, 31-45, F)

Naturally it would be that that border becomes a target again. I lived the first 20 years of my life through the Troubles and thought I'd never see that again. Brexit makes that more than a threat- it makes it a certainty. Fact is, there are people out there who would target any border checkpoints if they were to return; a child could tell you that. (R111, ABC, 31-45, F)

Security? Those days are long gone we do not want or need security at the Border. (R49, Other, 18-30, F)

This so called border is to divide our country and not to promote the excellent work that has been done in the past 25 years. The strong fear that this will push elements in our society to be drawn back to guerrilla warfare again. (R131, Mid- Ulster, 46-65, M)

Having grown up with a 'hard border' the idea of going back to this is horrific. I work two minutes' drive from Strabane and the idea of having to go through customs/security checks to go to buy a few groceries etc. never mind all the other implications will have such an impact on the quality of the lives of people who live in the area. (R247, Donegal, 46-65, F)

For 20 years I've grown accustomed to a 'no border' concept. This has now changed and I'm concerned that this will change. *I've concerns that Brexit will have a negative impact on society's view of the hard fought peace process.* (R508, Fermanagh, 31-45, F)

More importantly, driving a wedge between North and South is likely to reverse the small, but important, gains which are continuing to be achieved through the implementation of the Good Friday agreements and EU initiatives. The non-political and non-territorial drawing together of people and organisations in both jurisdictions through practical mutual co-operation is a gradual and effective means of building understanding of differences, which leads to acceptance of differing viewpoints. Hardening of the border will reverse this very positive progress. (R236, Sligo, 66+, M)

My biggest priority would be to see no physical border 'on the ground' in the area where I live, to maintain the way that I live and the freedom that the community currently enjoys that has been brought about by recent peace, free movement and harmonisation as a result of the Peace process, augmented by membership of the EU. (R518, Donegal, 31-45, M)

May's red lines draw big red lines through society here. I grew up in Leitrim, emigrated and ended back in Fermanagh 6 miles away from my home place. *When I grew up where I live now - Belcoo in Fermanagh was almost a foreign place. When the border roads reopened in 94/95 suddenly we got to know each other again.* Indeed the Belfast Agreement would not have happened without the border being seamless as it allowed nationalists north of the border to feel connected to Dublin, and allowed them to concede that NI was British because they had that security of knowing Dublin was a seamless connection away. (R496, F&O, 46-65, M)

Experience of customs border controls in the past: There were a lot comments in the survey and focus groups on smuggling, the impact on local business and on organised crime.

Anytime you create a price differential across border, the local entrepreneur – because that's what they are – they'll see the opportunities and they'll make off like bandits. We've had people doing it for years. (Ballyshannon FG1, 54.49)

I used to work for a company that used to sell into Donegal from Dundalk. One of my jobs at that time, when I was a young boy was to go out to the Customs in Dundalk, get the lorry sealed so it would be ready to travel to Donegal in the morning [within the same country but the lorry would be crossing Northern Ireland to take the most direct route]. … *if anyone remembers Newry when the Customs were everywhere: you'd go out, you'd pick up your ticket, you'd have your paper, you'd go to your Customs Clearance and pick it up and then you'd go the Customs which was across the road. You'd go in pick up another ticket and then they'd take the paperwork away – and this was only for [travel] inside the same jurisdiction.* That was six hours for them to come out, have a look and seal the lorry. There was an old-fashioned seal, a lead seal, so that was the process. Then the lorry went through the Concession Road, into Monaghan, into Aughnacloy and onto Omagh. It's crazy, if we go back to that. (Armagh FG, 9.05)

I live 400 yards inside the UK. The fields go from north to south,… I live in Armagh and there's a small river… that was a smugglers' paradise during the 1940s. You could just lift your goods and throw them over the river and you were in the south. If the southern customs came, you threw them back. How do I know this? My father-in-law told me saying *"this is the river, one side is the Republic, the other side is the UK and it is a smugglers' paradise".* But the jurisdiction and cattle, cattle have been moving freely across the border…it will go back to when pigs were smuggled: where you had a subsidy. There were pigs going up and back and across…I don't know how they're going to police the border. (Armagh FG, 12.42)

6.2. The value and vulnerability of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement

We live on the border and we also own a business on the border. There is a feeling now of uncertainty, instability.

Where I come from would have had a lot of difficulties during The Troubles. People have made a lot of progress, it is fluid – people can travel back and forward to work. We are gaining a lot from the trust and positivity of the Good Friday Agreement and now 20 years later, we could be completely set back.

My children have been reared in peace times. I remember crossing the border where I live and the difficulties that brought.

The connotations for very rural, isolated paranoid areas, you could say is something that we really don't want to see coming back. We want the breaking down of borders; we want fluidity, regardless of what way it happens.

We want a peaceful future. I think Brexit will rear its ugly head, for paramilitaries and people abusing the border situation. (Enniskillen FG, 7.00)

[We need] the recognition that this is such a tiny country with people living and working on both sides of the border every single day. *We simply can't go back* and will not accept it. (R261, Mid Ulster, 31-45, F)

So much work was done previously with cross-border programmes to promote peace and reconciliation. Finally the hard border was withdrawn and then Brexit dreadfully destroyed all that. (R310, Sligo, 46-65, F)

While there has been some focus on the implications for the Good Friday Agreement, this has been scant compared to wider economic considerations. I would like to see more thought being given to how Brexit will enhance or diminish the intent of the Agreement. (R412, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

The extreme Brexit enthusiasts want Brexit at any cost, and they represent a clear and present danger to the delicate balances brought about by the Agreement. *They cannot and must not be allowed to succeed by playing fast and loose with our future peace and prosperity.* (R464, F&O, 46-65, M)

It is distressing that genuine reconciliation in mid border regions is not nearly so prevalent or apparent as might have been the case by this time within the new millennium. At all costs, we must all ensure that we do not allow negotiations over Brexit to deteriorate and alienate further the hard earned peace and small steps that have been achieved thus far. (R543, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

Despite occasional referencing of the Good Friday Agreement I fear there is not a sufficient appreciation on the part of the British Government of the importance and vulnerability of this critical international agreement of which they are co-guarantors. (R576, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

Concerned that the UK will abandon the Good Friday Agreement and *backslide on their commitments* given during Phase 1 talks in December 2017. (R006, Donegal, 46-65, M)

Representation of the Central Border Region

7. Representation of the Central Border Region

7.1. How best to represent the Central Border Region?
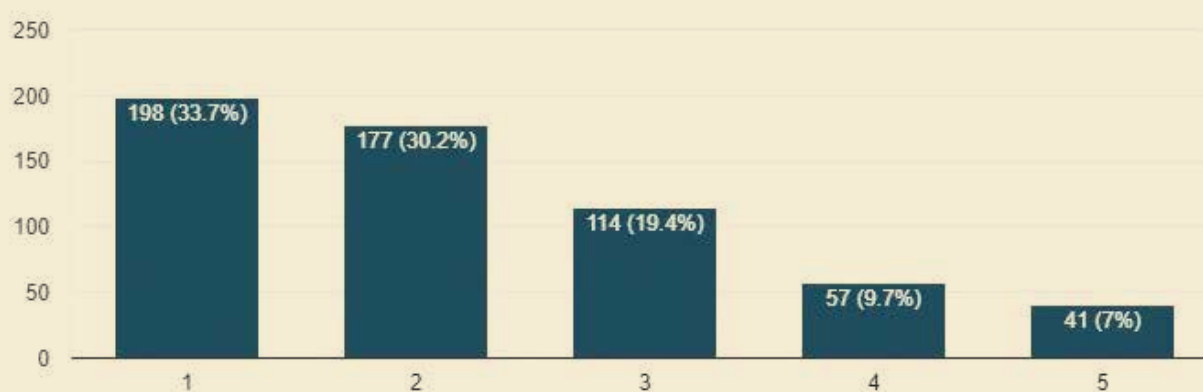
Figure 11: How well do you feel the border region is represented and 'heard' in the ongoing Brexit negotiations? (1: Not at all; 5: Very much)

2/3 of respondents in the Central Border Region say that their region is not represented at all, or represented very little in the ongoing Brexit negotiations.

Most respondents express a feeling of being 'removed' from the whole process and not taken seriously by politicians in negotiations. A particular comment on this is the 'ignoring' of the majority Remain vote in Northern Ireland.

Related to this sense of neglect is the fear expressed that the border, or border region more broadly, could become **collateral damage** in the whole Brexit process.

Residents on both sides of the border feel as though they live in a **neglected** area. There are many references to the idea that London or Dublin 'don't care about us' or 'don't know what it is like here'. Counter to this, several people speak highly of representation by their local MEPs.

Voices of Local Communities in the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland

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Quite straightforwardly, many say that a sign of better representation would be for more politicians involved in the negotiations **to consult and make contact** with local communities in the Central Border Region. Most frequent mention is made of Prime Minister Theresa May in this regard.

The **current lack of sitting Assembly and Executive** exacerbates the sense in Northern Ireland that there is no proper representation of the Central Border Region. References are also made to the DUP's confidence and supply arrangement with the Conservative government and Sinn Féin's policy of abstention in the House of Commons as examples of further lack of representation.

Just under 1 in 10 respondents say that a second Brexit referendum, a border poll on a united Ireland or special status for Northern Ireland would be a sign that the Region's views are being better represented.

Others call for the complexity of the 'border' to be acknowledged in political discourse, especially from Great Britain.

Political representation

Northern Ireland is well represented by UK negotiators, we don't need extra attention nor representation. (R526, F&O, 18-30, M, Leave voter)

I think the MEPs are doing a good job in Brussels to stand up for border communities and that is showing in the negotiations. (R063, F&O, 31-45, F)

Our local [council] representatives are incompetent in being the voice of the community. *With no Stormont I feel I have no voice.* (R100, F&O, 18-30, F)

[We need] Stormont fully operational again and seeing the MLAs back at work - currently there is a layer of politicians missing - we are relying on civil servants to represent us in this crucial time. (R231, F&O, 46-65, F)

This is the biggest and most challenging issue of our times and those in elected office are conveniently absent. These are supposed to be our local leaders, and they put their names on ballot papers, knocked on our doors, took over the tv and radio airwaves to help get elected by us, and now they sit idly by, conveniently doing nothing of value to lead on Brexit. *We do not have pragmatic leaders in public office, we have ideologists and opportunists, at best.* (R569, Mid Ulster, 46-65, M)

We are not well represented, due to the general NI representation in Westminster. The most popular party in the region refuse to take their seats, whilst the other party is using the deal they struck with the Tories to ensure the 'union' isn't compromised, even if that leads to what looks like a bleak future for NI due to the effects of Brexit. (R381, Other, 31-45, M)

It's just spoken about a lot but [politicians] haven't a clue what they're doing or talking about, so no one is well represented in this situation. (R235, Donegal, 18-30, F)

Sinn Féin and the DUP being the two largest parties are just facing off on [the Assembly] too. There is absolutely no agreement there at all. I feel a sense of desperation almost…

There was a by-election in West Tyrone last week; yet again a Sinn Féin MP has been elected, yet again no representation in Westminster. No voice against Brexit in Westminster.

I feel very frustrated and I personally don't think that the return of Stormont and MLAs would have any influence whatsoever on the negotiations that are taking place now between Barnier and the British. I really feel completely frustrated. (Enniskillen FG, 15.10)

More direct engagement

More engagement with the UK authorities as to the detrimental effects of Brexit on the lives of those living in border areas as they don't appear to have grasped this at all, or have no interest in how people in border areas are impacted as long as they exit the EU. (R101, Monaghan, 46-65, F)

If politicians and journalists talked to us instead of about us / stopped treating us like we are pawns in a silly game (trivialising our daily challenges with comparisons to, for example, the 'border' between Camden and Westminster!) There are no signs whatsoever that we are being represented … The English politicians don't want to know about us. *English Brexiteers want to 'take control' of 'their' borders at our expense.* … I feel there is nothing anyone can do to rectify this. Even those politicians on the Remain side are only using us, 'the border', as a means to justify their own arguments - we have been rendered irrelevant. Or at least we always were irrelevant in the UK, and Brexit has helped us to recognise it. (R167, F&O, 31-45, F)

[We need] More politicians that are set on [having] a hard border to come to Northern Ireland and see how it would impact day to day life. (R457, F&O, 31-45, F)

Consultation

I would see more surveys like this one. More news reports on the two main channels north of the border and RTÉ, where people would be giving their opinions to reporters about their concerns. Televised debates perhaps would help. (R170, Sligo, 46-65, F)

[It would make a difference] Seeing lots more national politicians getting involved in activities, discussions, debates in all the regions of the border and not just Newry/Dundalk. The media is suddenly realising that it can create positive momentum. (R422, Monaghan, 46-65, M):

Proper consultation with communities in border towns both sides of the border, not just the bigger towns. Talking to the little people is essential. (R507, Monaghan, 31-45, F)

Collateral damage in political games

I think we're the poor relative. *I think we're going to be very easily forgotten about*, without any protection from Europe. I think Northern Ireland is the poor relative of the UK and the border areas are definitely the poor relatives of Northern Ireland. So we are going to be completely forgotten. (Enniskillen FG, 20.16)

The EU are saying the right things, but I would worry that they might sacrifice us at a later stage in the discussions to get a deal through. The UK government don't care about the border region, in particular outside Belfast. (R502, Donegal, 31-45, F)

At the end of the day the vote has been passed by referendum therefore creating a mandate for the government to implement a hard border. The fact of the matter is that during the lead up to the referendum the people of Northern Ireland were ignored and not represented. *Now the United Kingdom has to sleep in the bed it's made and we have to suffer for it.* (R467, F&O, 18-30, M)

For a start there needs to be a structured consultation process funded by the British government to hear from every single person living in the north and the border counties. … [It] doesn't look like there is any mechanism to hear my voice, bar this survey. I feel like a pawn in a Tory party struggle for supremacy when it has absolutely nothing to do with me. (R111, ABC, 31-45, F)

European countries have heard the need to keep Ireland hard border free. The UK government appear to be too afraid to deal with the fact N.Ireland voted to stay in the EU and gave the DUP power by depending on them to stay in government. The UK government do not represent this region of Ireland. (R123, Monaghan, 31-45, F)

7.2. What can be done at local level?

When asked about the potential for **cross-border collaboration between local authorities** in representing the Central Border Region, especially after Brexit, there were three main responses.

Around ¼ of respondents saw local authorities' cross-border cooperation as being positive, largely as a means of **improving representation and wider understanding** of the unique challenges of the border region.

Around 1/6 of respondents offered suggestions as to how this might happen, including cross-border forums and public meetings, cooperation/shared resources on tourism, agriculture, education, transport, tourism, security and health.

Only around 7% said it would make **no difference** at all – choosing instead to emphasise the importance of the national level of government. Another 12% admitted they did not know whether it would make a difference or not, which indicates a need for greater publicity of such cross-border collaborative ventures that do exist at this level.

Rationale for cross-border collaboration between local authorities in the Central Border Region of Ireland/Northern Ireland.

Those high up in Brexit talks from the British government or EU seem to have listened very little to those on the ground. (R178, F&O, 31-45, M)

Formal, joint cooperation between councils north and south on all relevant issues such as agriculture (I am aware of farmers whose land is partitioned by the border for example), continued cooperation on health services. Each council should now look towards having a department that deals directly with common issues. (R111, ABC, 31-45, F)

Local authorities should meet regularly to agree how policy can help and enhance decision-making on both sides leading to agreed - shared practical solutions to the challenges we all face. Also the British - Irish Council should sit with more involvement by the Irish Government. (R157, ABC, 46-65, M)

I would like to see [local authorities in my county] meeting with their counterparts on each side of the border in a conspicuous public and transparent way. (R170, Sligo, 46-65, F)

I think that *current trans-boundary initiatives, working groups, regional forums work well* and give some representation ... in the event of Brexit I would hope that these groups would be given more decision-making powers and voices at the table when it comes to making cross-border decisions and representing the Border region as a whole. (R255, F&O, 31-45, M)

There is a long history of local authorities working together on EU programmes, there are common problems on both sides of the border. Cross-border working is very important in terms of making central government aware of the issues affecting border areas. (R285, F&O, 46-65, F)

You know we need to start to work on Strand 3 in the Belfast Agreement. It's never been totally implemented. (R496, F&O, 46-65, M)

The intergovernmental conference needs reconvened between the British and Irish governments. We need a specialist cross-border partnership totally separate to Stormont and Dáil Éireann. This could be made up of local representatives and lay people, and could make decisions on a cross-border basis. (R497, ABC, 18-30, M)

Councils are the only democratic institutions that are still working. Therefore their roles should be enhanced for continuing the delivery of public services at this time. (R569, Mid Ulster, 46-65, M):

It would portray a strong sense of local border area representation and provide a reputable voice for the border region. (R376, F&O, 31-45, M)

Doubt about the value of cross-border collaboration between local authorities; emphasis upon voluntary organisations and civil society.

Local authorities are powerless. *This mess is between London and Brussels and only they can fix it.* (R552, F&O, 46-65, M)

Not sure if our local authorities are equipped to manage cross-border cooperation. Also the bureaucratic process is doubled by two systems in two separate jurisdictions and nothing gets done. I would like to see greater participation from NGOs, community and voluntary sector. (R104, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

Locals living in the region have collaborated for decades. The discussion does not need to focus on more new initiatives but rather *allow the communities on both sides to continue what they have been doing and not put obstacles in their way.* There is an over emphasis on assuming politicians and government agencies can enhance collaboration when in actual fact there is local collaboration naturally through communities. (R246, Sligo, 46-65, F)

I would welcome an increase in such collaboration, but find it difficult to imagine what role such 'collaborative structures' might have, given that local authorities have very few powers and given the discrepancy North and South in the powers that they do have. I would not be interested in collaborative structures, without powers to effect change for the improvement of life in the border region. (R412, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

I am not sure if there was a way that anyone would feel represented as I did not vote to remain and yet the majority of those in NI did and are seeking to have 'special status' and be treated differently to the rest of the UK. (R365, F&O, 46-65, M)

*When asked specifically about **priorities for future funding** in the Central Border Region of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the most popular responses are: roads and transport (c. 25% respondents); followed by Healthcare (20%) (e.g. hospitals, cancer treatment); Education (11%). Plus, general investment in economic development, businesses and jobs (including broadband). That said, some are sceptical of the idea of cross-border funding after Brexit: who would pay or invest in an area outside of their own country without the common EU frameworks for facilitating and supporting this?*

8.   The Brexit Negotiations

8.1. Views of the main protagonists

The general view of the two main negotiating parties is that of cautious positivity towards the EU Commission Taskforce (specifically the visits to the border region have been welcomed) and of harsh criticism of the UK government (the lack of visits to the border region is a source of common criticism). That these are the majority views of the respondents is unsurprising given the constituency base. We also note criticisms of 'Brussels' here, plus of the Irish government (which mainly relate to Irish border counties' sense of alienation from 'Dublin').

Views of the EU's role

The EU [needs] to listen to the north and the south equally, not using NI as a bargaining tool to get what they want alone. (R373, ABC, 31-45, M, Leave voter)

When Brussels decides and values that Britain has made its decision and works accordingly in that direction with a degree of integrity and graciousness we might make progress. Their bitterness to a democratic decision is simply breath-taking and [they] are busy using a political battering ram to bully and intimidate a nation into submission to teach Britain a lesson.... Europe will have to stop playing bloody games with their own hard balling. ... A halfwit will know that they are playing hard as other countries are looking on with interest, as there is European unease with where Europe is and its plans. If Brussels (Germany) [sic] makes this an easy transition, others will follow suit and leave. *What Britain has done has rocked Europe. ... It seems the hardest thing for Brussels to swallow is a democracy.* What Europe is practicing is a disgraceful display of arrogance and control. Bottom line is, nothing much will change and they know that. (R389, ABC, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

If the border is the only obstacle to a no deal we will be forced into accepting whatever is put in front of us. Even with the EU 'standing behind Ireland' we are ultimately powerless to shape the outcome. (R379, Cavan, 18-30, M)

I live close to the border. My community and that in the Republic will be the roadkill in the Brexit car crash. Brussels are at least taking some interest in us, although only because it suits them as we are seen as a way of slowing the whole Brexit process down. No one in power in London, (or in the opposition parties either), could care less. (R552, F&O, 46-65, M)

Views of the British government's role

The British do not care about NI or the south and the politicians in NI are totally useless. Pressuring the British to accept that if there is a hard border it will be because they have failed to provide the solution. They must not be allowed to blame the Irish government or the rest of Europe for their failure. (R157, ABC, 46-65, M)

The UK government have no interest in the region why should they impact it? No Tory or UK political parties have visited the regions or understand Irish history. It's a classic, uninformed decision-making process to keep a small minority happy. Frankly it's embarrassing - the lack of knowledge, experience and understanding. This is a major concern and problem. (R123, Monaghan, 31-45, F)

The EU and Ireland has been great in realising the issues relating to the border lately which is surprising. But the UK is sticking its head in the sand and completely ignoring all practicalities. … the fact that the EU has actually travelled and seen the border and the UK hasn't says a lot. (R518, Donegal, 31-45, M)

The Irish government is trying very hard and the EU members to a certain extent are listening. Feel that the British representatives are showing an arrogant lack of foresight which makes me not trust [that] the effect on border counties will be considered long term. (R322, Cavan, 46-65, F)

It's a little bit hurtful that this whole thing happened. I accept that it happened and we're not rehashing all of that. But I would hate for the British Government to really 'not care' what happens to us. …

It's this feeling that we don't matter and that the whole Irish border issue really caught the Tories unaware. There's a lot of hurt that goes with that. *There's a lot of bad feeling of having a bad neighbour, or a neighbour who doesn't care.*

Regardless of what happens after this time next year, we are still going to be neighbours. (Armagh FG 10.49)

Views of the Irish government's role

Brussels and the Irish Government keep ratcheting up tensions and causing unnecessary problems, with creating obstacles and instead of a steady as she goes, the boat has hit the iceberg before it even left the dock. (R389, ABC, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

If we had a participating NI government which actually represented the views and needs of the border area [we'd be better represented]. We currently have no voice. The Irish government is doing more for us right now than anyone. (R474, F&O, 31-45, F, Remain voter)

Representatives from my area who live and work here and will bear the brunt of the decisions taken [should be] invited to give their opinions. Irish politicians have never represented the border counties well and Donegal is already the forgotten county. So I don't feel that my voice or the voices of people living in this area are being heard or listened to. (R247, Donegal, 46-65, F)

Dublin/government doesn't care already about Co. Sligo and have shown this already in their recent announcements made concerning roads and spending etc. It is unsettling and uncertain to feel so under-represented and unheard. (R170, Sligo, 46-65, F)

Less kow-towing to Brussels by the Irish Government and Sinn Fein, too much emphasis on macro not enough on micro matters. (R278, Sligo, 66+, M)

8.2. Priorities for the Central Border Region

Almost 70% of the respondents state that the priority outcome from the Brexit negotiations for the area they live in should be **'no hard border'** and 'no change' for cross-border movement. Leave voters as well as Remain voters argue that this should be the case, e.g. 'A solution that is based on everyone working together - putting political position aside - NI and ROI having a seamless border solution allowing goods and people to pass with minimal disruption.' (R345, F&O, 31-45, F).

There are exceptions on all sides. One **Leave voter** wants a priority outcome to be 'Remain in the EU' (R190) and two others want to see Irish unification (R429, R455). Four others want to see more secure borders, including 'Security checkpoints reintroduced' (R266, R526, R074, R364). Only five Leave voters mention the unity of the UK and no NI/GB barriers (R001, R126, R127, R526, R588) as being a priority outcome at this point. Six Leave voters mention leaving the EU (ECJ jurisdiction or EU regulations) as a priority (R157, R363, R369, R453, R526, R590). Notably, continuity/a seamless border/no change to the Irish border is the most popular response from Leave voters (1 in 6) to this question.

The **peace process** and maintaining the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement are mentioned as priority by 6% of respondents, including Leave voters. This includes safety and security, as well as more cross-community interaction between people.

A small proportion of respondents refer to **specific issues** such as healthcare, employment, economic investment or education (4%). Leave voters were disproportionately represented in this group. Other priorities include agriculture and protecting rights and equality. Even fewer respondents (3%) refer to a united Ireland or the end of partition as a priority outcome.

Figure 12: What should the priorities from the Central Border Region be in the Brexit process? [Most frequent 200 words given in answer to Q21]

8.3. What is in danger of being missed in the Brexit negotiations?

A wide diversity of answers was given to this, the final question in the survey. Respondents are worried about investment/economic development, cross-border movement, the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement and security.

Some use this opportunity to urge that the Stormont Assembly and Executive is put back up and running again. Respondents on both sides of the border report a sense of the Border Region being misunderstood and ignored.

Other topics mentioned by at least several respondents: agriculture, gender equality, human rights, arts and culture.

Others emphasise their Irish identity or the diversity of their identities and explain how this seems completely at odds with the process of Brexit and its impact in the Central Border Region.

There is a general sense of being ill-prepared

Do you know of any issue which is being adequately considered and planned for? I certainly don't, so I'd say every issue is not being adequately addressed. (R371, Other, 46-65, F)

Nothing is being addressed. Employment, Consumer protection, Health, access to free movement - all need to be addressed. (R344, F&O, 46-65, F)

Nothing important is being addressed. Mobile phone roaming, currency differentials, laws, speed limits, access to healthcare, stigma of the troubles, stigma of smuggling, being irrelevant to UK government and media. And the danger that leaving the single market could cause untold social and economic damage in border villages and towns - on both sides. (R167, F&O, 31-45, F)

Anticipating friction

Everything has already increased in price but wages haven't increased and the only future job growth looks to be in smuggling. I'm concerned about *roaming charges* being reintroduced as they were a nightmare before. I cross the border regularly. I'm worried about future delays and hindrances doing this. *I'm concerned about driving in my own area on roads that cross the border several times* and whether we are going to go back to the blocking of border roads and separation of communities again. I'm concerned that any infrastructure on the border will be dragging our communities back to the past ... *This is stirring up bad feelings and scaring people.* (R400, Fermanagh, 31-45, F)

As the UK will be a third country in the event of Brexit, I expect that documentation will - even in a context of a customs union and single market on the island of Ireland - remain a requirement for statistical purposes and trade capture - ... I never hear this topic aired. (R225, Sligo, 46-65, M)

I'm a sheep farmer, so I quite like that the EU has good food standards legislation that applies across the board, across all EU Member States. What concerns me is that say beef manufactured in Brazil doesn't live up to the same high standards that we have within the EU and that means that we're not competing on a level playing field. That means that Brazilian beef can undercut British beef and that destroys our market because we'll have tariffs hit by the EU. We'll probably still keep the standards the same, so that we could export as we do now. But I do fear that economies of scale and lower standards outside of the EU will hit farmers very, very hard. (Enniskillen FG, 27.12)

Over-emphasis on trade risks overlooking other aspects of border experience

More focus should be given on the social impact of a border. This would have a massive negative impact on my current town in northern Ireland and my home town in southern Ireland. (R11, F&O, 31-45, F)

The likely disruption to family life appears to have been ignored. ...the border not only divided land and physical features but also families. (R572, F&O, 46-65, M)

I [would like to see] consideration of disruption to daily life of the community. Acknowledgement of risk of returning to the past, that this is still a contested border unlike other borders in Europe. (R010, Monaghan, 46-65, M)

Acknowledgement from those who are in charge of delivering Brexit that they have considered the issues. Perhaps reassurance that there will not be closure of border crossings or restrictions on movement of people. (R034, ABC, 31-45, M)

Implications for identity

I consider myself Irish, N. Irish and also very importantly European. Brexit is forcibly taking away two of those identities - Irish and European. (R344, Fermanagh, 46-65, F)

This will impede on my rights as an Irish citizen to travel within my own country. The fact that the majority of citizens in the six counties voted to remain within the European Union and our desires were totally ignored has already impacted our rights as citizens. (R131, Mid Ulster, 46-64, M)

My over-arching European identity is being taken away from me which is driving me back into the old sectarian and nationalist identities - I am considering moving to the Republic of Ireland if a hard border is imposed. (R372, Fermanagh, 46-65, M)

It's ironic. The arguments by Unionists used to be about economics and nationalists about identity, but now the arguments are reversed with Unionists using identity as their argument because, economically, if NI was a special case in EU it could really become a powerhouse. (R496, F&O, 46-65, M)

[In answer to Q.22 on 'particular issues relating to the impact of Brexit that you feel are not currently being addressed and which you would consider important for your area'?] Cultural identity. (R124, ABC, 46-65, M, Leave voter)

Movement of workers

Immigration comes up quite frequently in the survey data and in the focus groups as an issue. This happens under two main themes. Many respondents raise concerns that there will be ID checks and immigration controls at the border, and a few (including Remain voters and respondents in the southern border counties) anticipate a rise in illegal immigration into the area after Brexit.

Secondly, there are concerns about maintaining the diversity and levels of the workforce in the border region after Brexit. Most particularly, people raise the need for protection and information for frontier workers and, secondly, the challenge of sustaining businesses that rely on non-Irish and non-British labour.

My husband is a frontier worker, he has concerns. There are almost 3,000 people where he works in Armagh and a lot of them are foreign nationals including French and Germans – they are starting to look for jobs back in Europe or in the US because there is no security here. There's even a concern with women who are having children. ...There needs to be some sort of voice for the frontier workers. How many tens of thousands are there and there is no forum for them. They will be the people who will be directly affected and the schoolkids as well. (Armagh FG, 26.17)

The outcomes for cross-border workers [hasn't been properly addressed yet]. What their tax/pension situation will be. What their entitlements regarding welfare, etc. will be. In my local area, I'd estimate 40% - 50% are cross-border workers and none of them seem to know exactly how they are going to be financially affected. (R240, Donegal, 31-45, F)

We would certainly be concerned for the agri-food, hospitality and engineering/construction sectors – which are heavily dependent on the migrant worker.

...If you take [names food production company] with 240 employees – half of those are foreign nationals. Before, there would be a certain amount would go home and then they could fill it, no problem. [But] They're not filling it at the minute. [names another large company] isn't filling it at the minute.
Our engineering industry is crying looking [at the prospects for labour]...
It's on its knees from the point of view that they can't fill the books with people.
It's the foreign nationals that we rely on. That's where we're worried. (Armagh FG, 7.27]

[I'm] Worried that workers from across the EU will not have leave to remain and work in NI, e.g. health workers, seasonal workers. Services rely on these workers to a large degree. (R260, Mid-Ulster, 66+, F)

9. A Closer Look at Leave and Remain Voters

There is a tendency to assume a deep polarisation in Northern Ireland between Leave and Remain voters. More particularly, there is an assumption that Leave voters have British identities and unionist political preferences, and that Remain voters have Irish identities and nationalist political views. This is not borne out by evidence.

Our survey finds an interesting diversity even within its small sample of Leave and Remain voters. Furthermore, it offers an opportunity to identify some points of commonality between these groups.

The graphs presented here are based on percentage proportions of the samples of Leave, Remain and 'Did not have a vote' respondents.

First, we asked the question about citizenship. We deliberately chose this question instead of asking about 'identity', although we presume that it was interpreted through that lens by some. We find that 1 in 4 of the respondents who voted Leave holds Irish citizenship alone, and that 42% of them hold Irish citizenship of some sort.

We note that just around 1 in 4 of the Remain-voting respondents hold British citizenship (either single or dual). These results perhaps reflect the Irish identity of many in the northern counties of the Central Border Region.

Citizenship
% of Leave and Remain voters
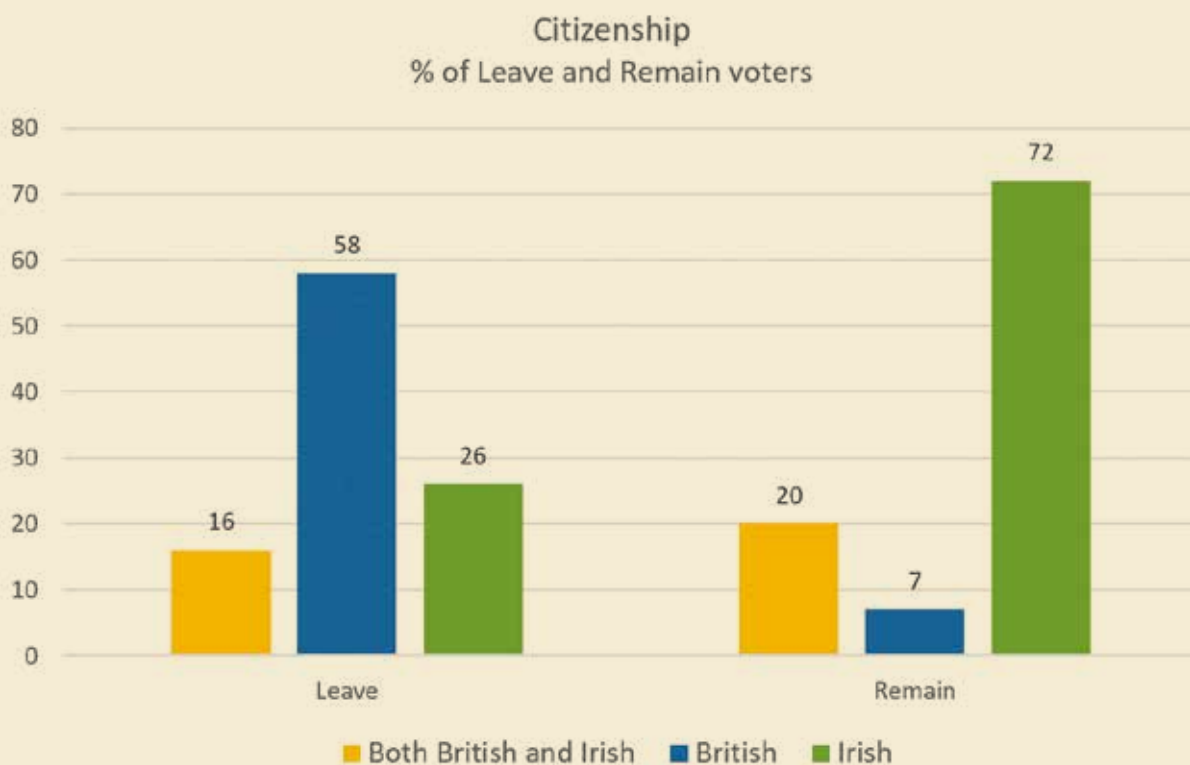
Figure 13: The percentage of Leave-voting and Remain-voting respondents with British, Irish and dual British-Irish citizenship.

Only 27.5% of the Leave-voting respondents are female, compared to almost exactly 50% of the Remain-voting respondents.

How much do you rely on access to services on the other side of the border? % of Leave and Remain voters
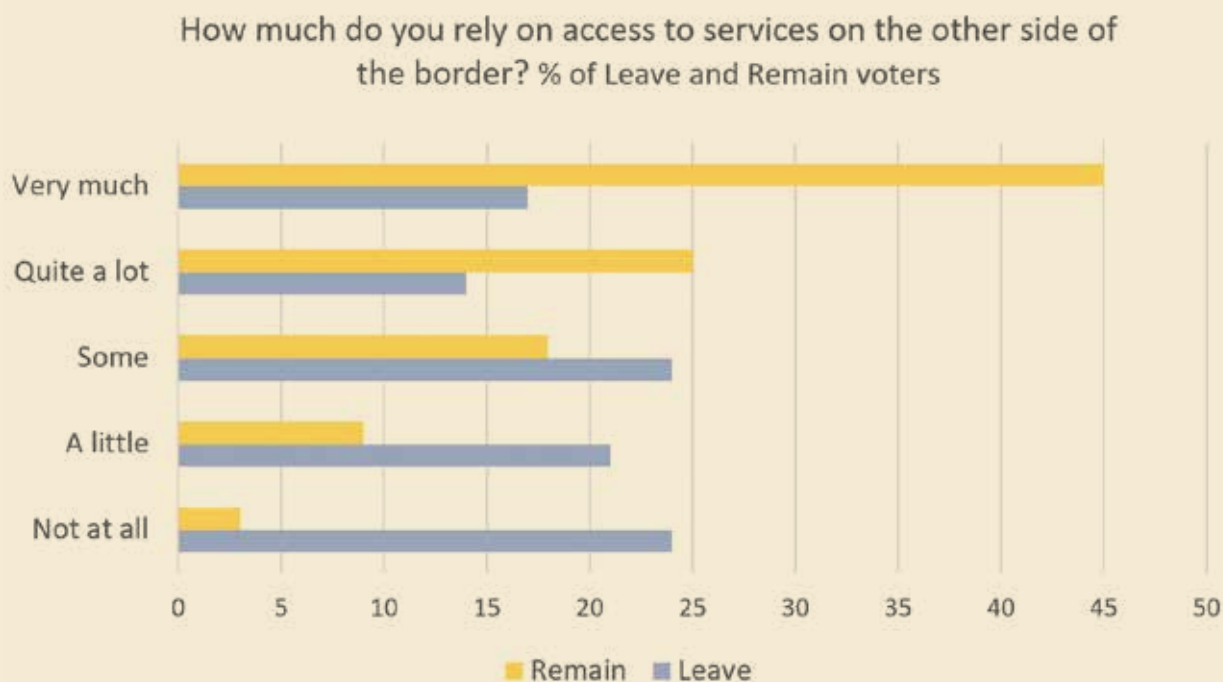
Figure 14: Reliance on access to services on the southern side of the border, by percentage proportion of Leave-voting and Remain-voting respondents.

When it comes to the importance of cross-border services, the difference between the two groups is more a reflection of the fact that Remain voters are more likely to rely on services, and not that Leave voters are unlikely to use them. Leave voters are fairly evenly distributed across the range of the Likert scale, with c.30% saying they significantly use services on the other side of the border. Remain voters are much more likely to *greatly* rely on services on the other side of the border (45% of them), while Leave voters are much more likely than Remain voters to say that they do not rely on them at all (24% of them). This suggests that levels of dependence on cross-border access is linked to vote preference in the referendum.

Is a hard border more or less likely than this time last year?
% of Leave and Remain voting respondents
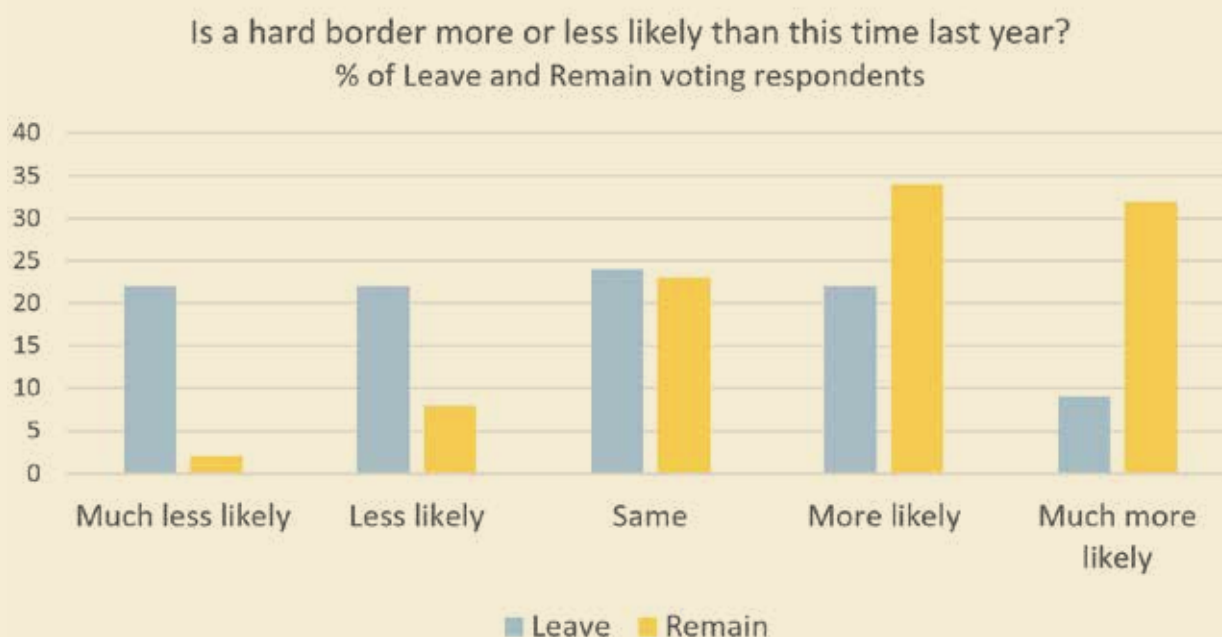
Figure 15: Perception of whether a 'hard border' is more or less likely than they perceived it to be 12 months ago, by percentage of Leave-voting and Remain-voting respondents.

On the prospects for a hard border, Remain-voting respondents are much more pessimistic about the likelihood of a hard border than Leave voters. It is possible that this is to some degree because, given their reliance on access to services across the border, they have a more sensitive level of judgement as to what would constitute a 'hard border'. This is possibly borne out by the similarity in the distribution of Leave-voting respondents across this Likert scale compared to the one in Figure 14 above. There is an even distribution among Leave voters as to whether they think a hard border is more or less likely (with the exception of the most pessimistic outlook).

Willing to see technological solutions in place of manned checkpoints? % of Leave and Remain voters, plus those without a vote
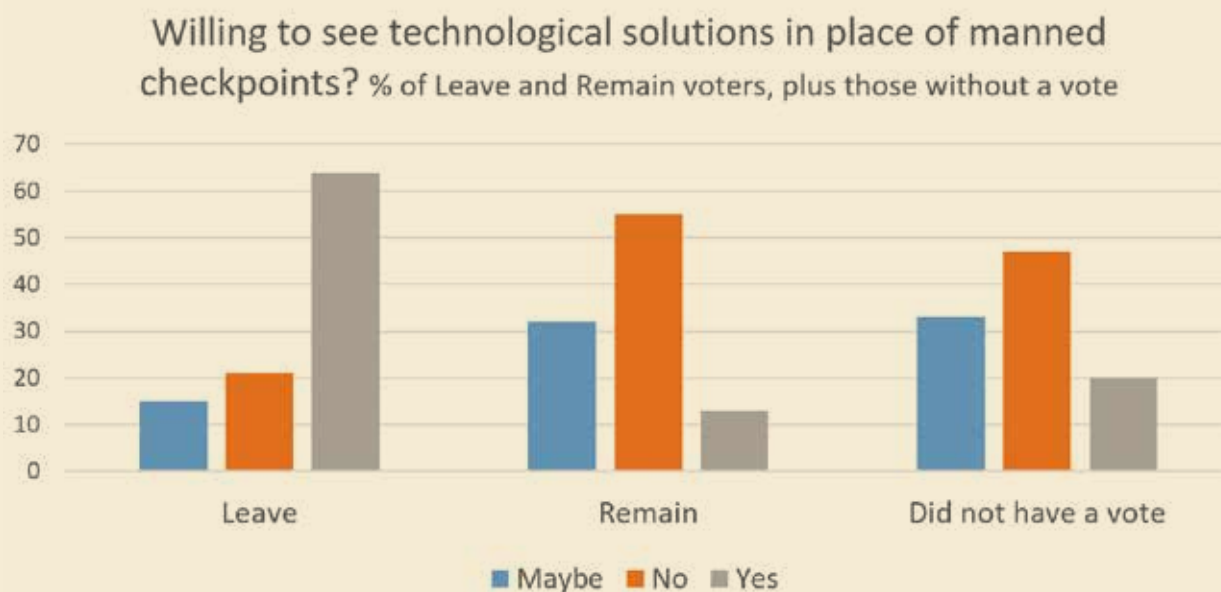
Figure 16: Willingness to accept technological border controls away from the border, by percentage of Leave-voting and Remain-voting respondents and those with no vote (largely resident in southern border counties).

Leave voters are by far the most comfortable of the three groups with technological solutions for border controls in place of manned checkpoints. From what we can gather from the data produced by this survey, this reflects the fact that they are less likely to rely on access to cross-border services and that they are less likely to anticipate a hard border. 1 in 5 of respondents from the southern side of the border express a willingness to see technological solutions as an alternative to manned checkpoints. Remain voters in Northern Ireland are most likely to be against technological solutions for border controls.

Finally, in terms of representation, Leave voters are generally more positive than Remain voters in terms of thinking that the Border Region is represented and heard in the Brexit negotiations. That said, 44% of Leave-voting respondents have a negative answer in response to this question. This is compared to 70% of Remain-voting respondents, the vast majority of whom say that the region is not being represented at all.

Of those respondents in the southern counties, only 0.4% feel very well represented in the border negotiations. This perhaps reflects the unique position of these respondents, as being so directly affected by the UK's withdrawal from the EU – with so many of the concomitant changes and uncertainties – but without having had a vote in the referendum.

An almost equal proportion of Leave voters feel completely unrepresented and fully represented. This is quite different to the other two groups. One point of similarity is that just under 1/3 of Leave, Remain and non-voters perceive the border to have only 'a little' (2 out of 5 on Likert scale) representation in the Brexit negotiations.

How well do you feel the Border Region is represented and heard in the Brexit negotiations? (% of voter type)

Legend: ■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Some ■ Quite well ■ Very well
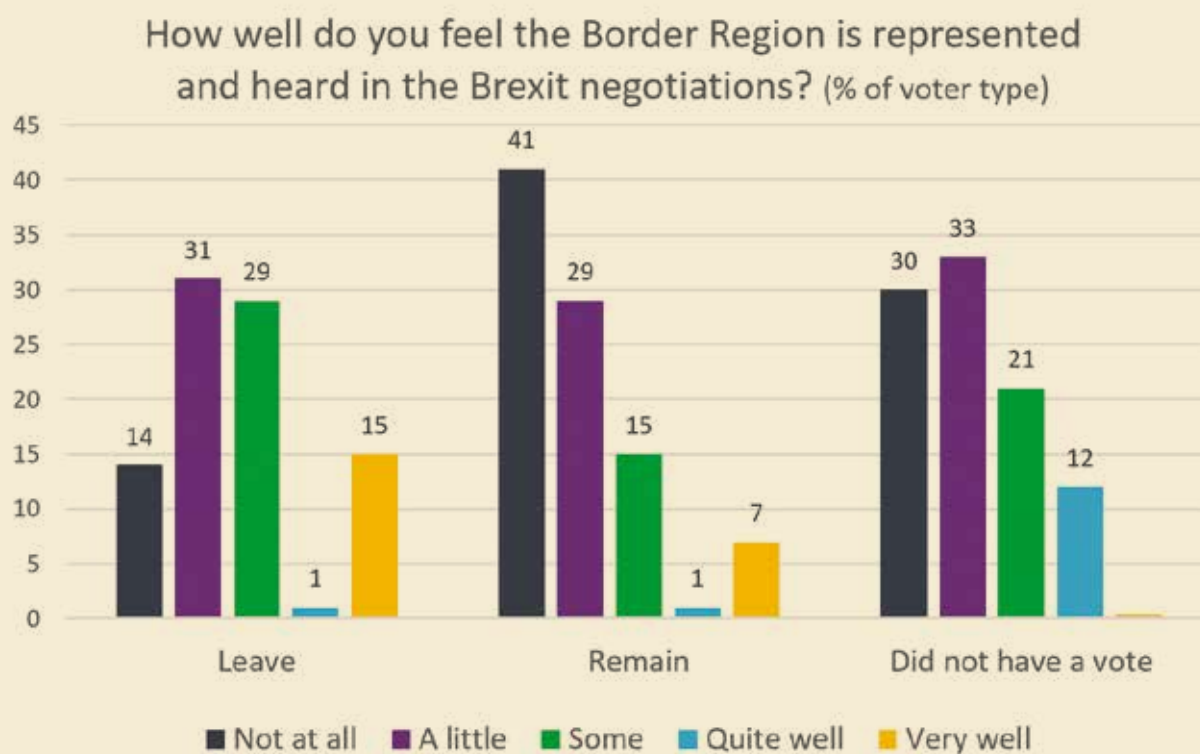
Figure 17: Perception of the quality of representation of the Border Region in the Brexit negotiations, by percentage of Leave-voting and Remain-voting respondents and those with no vote in the 2016 referendum.

10. Last Word to the Next Generation

Given that the young generation are the ones who are most benefiting from the changes associated with the peace process and steady economic development in the border region, they are also going to be the generation most affected by the changes to be brought about through the UK's withdrawal from the EU. With this in mind, we conducted two focus groups with 16-17 year olds; the groups were held in Co. Monaghan. We include here key extracts from the transcripts from the focus groups which give a fair indication of some of the key points discussed.

Q.   How does the border differ from the way it was in the past?

It has changed so much in the last number of years. The peace process and everything now, it's good. I don't know why they need to go and change everything again. It's doesn't seem right./

Our friend's mother used to live up in the north...she was saying she remembers going through the customs to go south and not understanding why people weren't immediately checking what was in her bag. That's just not a way for a country to function at all!/

A lot of tension. /

Q. Is that tension something you're worried could emerge again? How is that connected to the border?

I think the fact that you may have a physical border there would be a big thing for people mentally and that could infuriate the situation./

The older people would be like 'oh the border's here again'./

We don't think of the border, we're just going to school or whatever. But if there was a border there, an actual physical separation or cameras or anything – there's a separation there and you have to think that that [would have] a toll on some people./ (Monaghan FG1, 13.39-15.29)

Q.   Tell me how you experience the border at the moment.

There's peace./

Our friend lives across the border and we can just literally walk across the border... /

Even people going to school as well. There's a boy I know in the year below me and he goes over the border twice to get to school. .../

That's the same with us; we're right on the border. About a third of our parish goes to school in the north – to Ballygawley in Tyrone. .../

My grandparents live in Donegal and we have to travel through loads of [northern] counties to get there... (Monaghan FG1, 3.22-4.26)

Q.   Are you more aware of the border now because of the Brexit talks?

We knew it was there, but we never really thought anything of it. /

I never thought that they'd actually leave./

My friend only realised that the border went through her back garden as well. /

Q. Do you think it impacts on your lives?

Nearly on a weekly basis, we'd cross the border without even realising it. Especially if you've family up north or crossing the border to Clones or Cavan.

(Monaghan FG2, 1.17)

Q.   If you could give a message to the negotiators in the UK or in Brussels, what would that be?

… Ultimately, 10 or 20 years down the line, it's us that are going to be facing the consequences of it. It's all well and good putting in these 'it'll sort us out for a few years' solutions…but there's no point in doing that if it's not going to last and it's going to have to be changed.

We should be at least consulted and [our views] taken on board properly and seriously./

Education is definitely the big one, especially courses, qualifications./

I think trade. If we collapse, the great crash could happen again. We won't be able to survive. We'll have to go through what our parents went through. Currently, we're doing really well…building our economy up again, getting out of debt. It is a cycle, but we just want to prevent that from happening all over again./

I think the main thing would be trying to keep as soft a border as physically possible. Everything we have built up over the past 40 years since The Troubles, we can't just let that fade away again because of a hard border./

Get more European countries supporting us and start listening more to the young people. /

I think it's a mix of trade and education…the north is going to need people from the south.

If there is a hard border, it will be really difficult for everyone — both up north and here. /

I [would say] think of education and work life. That would be hugely affected./

I don't think they understand just how close people actually are to the border. /

You wouldn't even know you were crossing the border.

(Monaghan FG2, 17.47-18.35)

11. Conclusions

We are being used as a bargaining chip in the corridors of power – by those who do not even live or work here and who are not trying to raise families in the area, as we are. And yet we have no voice... (R255, F&O, 31-45, M)

The Irish border is currently centre stage of the negotiations of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. Much of the concern to 'avoid a hard border' has been pivoted on avoiding the provocation of paramilitary violence. This *Brexit at the Border* research serves to illuminate a different aspect on the same concern: the need to protect peace.

It is very difficult to define what 'peace' means. Unlike violence, peace cannot be easily identified when it 'happens'. Peace comes slowly; it involves ordinary choices and small decisions. It comes to feel normal and unremarkable. And the fact that it feels so 'normal' is both its strength and its susceptibility: we begin to take it for granted. The further away people are from the time and the place of the worst violence, the easier it is for them to forget the devastation, the costs and the consequences of it.

Peace seems normal in the Central Border Region, but it does not seem invulnerable. As with our *Bordering on Brexit* report of November 2017, this study has revealed that peace is at the forefront of people's minds in the Central Border Region with regard to the Brexit process. This is not to say that everybody agrees equally about what a 'hard border' would mean or about the potential for a return to violence. But the current openness of the border is widely regarded as a product of the peace process.

Appreciation of the benefits of a 'seamless' border is most certainly not confined to Remain voters, nor to people with Irish identities or Irish nationalist aspirations. Similarly, a desire – or demand, even – to maintain these benefits is shared across all communities. This research has revealed that it is not the case that there is a stark line of difference between British and Irish, Leave and Remain, north and south in the Central Border Region. Indeed, we are struck by the extent of commonality in the views and experiences across people living in this area, on both sides of the border.

Brexit is already affecting decisions being made here: being refused bank loans, moving business location to the other side of the border, holding off on employing more people, not taking a job across the border, not applying to university in the UK. Indeed, the most direct opportunities arising from Brexit run counter to cross-border cooperation, i.e. encouraging decisions to stay on one side of the border or go further abroad.

This is of concern to a region in which economies of scale and cross-border connectivity have been so vital to enhancing the provision of services and widening the possibilities for development.

The complexity and realities of cross-border life in the Central Border Region exemplify the complexity and realities of the Brexit process. Disentangling the UK from the EU inevitably means drawing greater distinctions between the UK and its closest neighbour. This report explains how this process takes material, tangible form in the everyday experience of people in the Central Border Region. One young woman, who has grown up in the post-1998 'Agreement generation', expressed this point succinctly and poignantly:

Whenever they're putting the border in place, just think of everyone going about their daily lives, trying to get across it. (Monaghan FG1, 17.47)

Appendix 1: Information Flyer for Online Survey

BREXIT AT THE BORDER – Survey 2018

Another chance to have your say

10 minute survey on the impact of Brexit on the Central Border Region.

We welcome responses from anyone living or working in the areas of Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo.

Survey opens 08 March 2018 and can be found at www.tinyurl.com/ICBAN-Brexit

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

This ICBAN initiative is part of the Border Compass Project, working with Queen's University Belfast and enabled through funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund.

We invite you to complete this 10 minute survey on the impact of Brexit on the Central Border Region.

We welcome responses from anyone living or working in areas of Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon; Cavan; Donegal; Fermanagh and Omagh; Leitrim; Mid Ulster; Monaghan; and Sligo.

The Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Ltd. – the cross-border group of local authorities for the Central Border Region – together with a small team from Queen's University Belfast are conducting a second research project on the impacts of Brexit for people living and working in this Region. This initiative follows on from the 'Bordering on Brexit' report which was completed in late 2017 and can be found at https://go.qub.ac.uk/bordering

The Bordering on Brexit report revealed the views of local communities one year on from the referendum result. This follow-on study, 'Brexit at the Border', aims to take account of recent developments and discussions on the issue of the Irish border a year away from the date the UK is due to leave the EU.

Brexit at the Border is a non-political and non-partisan study. We are keen to gather responses from the widest possible group of people from the Central Border Region. The purpose of the study is to create an opportunity for the voices of local people on both sides of the border and of all political views to be heard.

All data from the survey and focus groups will be gathered in accordance with strict research ethics and will remain anonymous.

The results of this project will be compiled in a final project report and disseminated to the media and to the governments of both the UK and Ireland, the European Commission and Parliament and other key stakeholders involved in the process of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

This ICBAN initiative is part of the Border Compass Project, working with Queen's University Belfast and enabled through funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Online Survey

1. Area of residence *

Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Cavan County Council

Donegal County Council

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council

Leitrim County Council

Mid Ulster District Council

Monaghan County Council

Sligo County Council

Other (But work in one of the above areas)

2. Please tell us what age group you are in *

Under 18

18-30

31-45

46-65

66+

3.   Gender *

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

4.   Citizenship *

British

Irish

Both British and Irish

Other dual citizenship

Other EU

Other international

Prefer not to say

5.   How did you vote in the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU in June 2016?*

Leave

Remain

Abstained

Did not have a vote

Prefer not to say

6.   Do you consider yourself to be well informed of the possible consequences of Brexit for the border region? *Likert scale 1-5 1: not at all, 5: very well*

    ....

7.   What do you understand the term 'a hard border' to mean?

    ....

8.   Do you think a harder border (between Ireland and Northern Ireland) is more or less likely than you thought last year? *Likert scale 1-5 1: less likely, 5: more likely*

    ....

9.   What impact (if any) is Brexit already having on you and on your plans for the future?

    ....

10.   To what extent do you rely on access to services on the other side of the border (e.g. health, education, use of ports/airports)? *Likert scale 1-5 1: not at all, 5: very much*

    ....

11.   Please give an example (even briefly)

    ....

12.   Please could you briefly explain why you use (or do not use) services provided on the other side of the border?

    ....

13. **What would you like to see prioritised for future cross-border funding and investment after Brexit?**

....

14. **Why do you think this is particularly important for the border region?**

....

15. **What would be your biggest priority/concern when it comes to the security of the border?**

....

16. **Would you be willing to accept 'technological' means of border control if these were introduced in place of manned border checkpoints and away from the border itself, e.g. mobile data surveillance, automatic number plate recognition? *Yes- maybe- no***

....

17. **Please elaborate on your answer to the above question (even briefly)**

....

18. **How well do you feel the border region is represented and 'heard' in the ongoing Brexit negotiations? *Likert scale 1-5 1: not at all, 5: very much***

....

19. **What would be a sign for you that your region is being well represented**

....

20. **In what ways, if any, could cross-border collaboration by local authorities make you feel better represented, especially after Brexit?**

....

21. **What do you believe should be the priority outcomes from the Brexit negotiations for the area you live in?**

....

22. **Finally, are there any particular issues relating to the impact of Brexit that you feel are not currently being addressed and which you would consider important for your area?**

....

Appendix 3: Focus Group Questions and Prompts

We conducted the focus groups in such a way as to allow the conversations to develop along which ever themes emerged naturally. This way we covered a lot more ground through these focus groups and also discovered some differences between priorities/concerns in different localities. These questions/prompts served as starting points for discussion.

1. **Current situation: What is your sense of where things are at right now in the Brexit negotiations?**

   - More or less optimistic about negotiations?

   - Influence on your life at the moment?

2. **Representation: Do you feel represented in the Brexit negotiations?**

   - How and by whom?

   - What about the Irish border region?

   - What could be changed or done to make you feel better represented? (local/ national levels)

   - What about representation after Brexit?

3. Priorities: What should be a priority in the Brexit negotiations and why?

- Anything particular to the Central Border Region?

- Topics forgotten/ not mentioned in the current public debate?

4. Hard border: What do you understand a hard border to mean?

- Influence on daily life

- Cross-border relationships

- Views on the prospect of a bespoke deal for Northern Ireland

5. Message: If you could give a message to the Brexit negotiations team (on both sides), what would it be?

Appendix 4:
Map of the Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland

COUNCIL AREAS IN THE CENTRAL BORDER REGION OF IRELAND / NORTHERN IRELAND
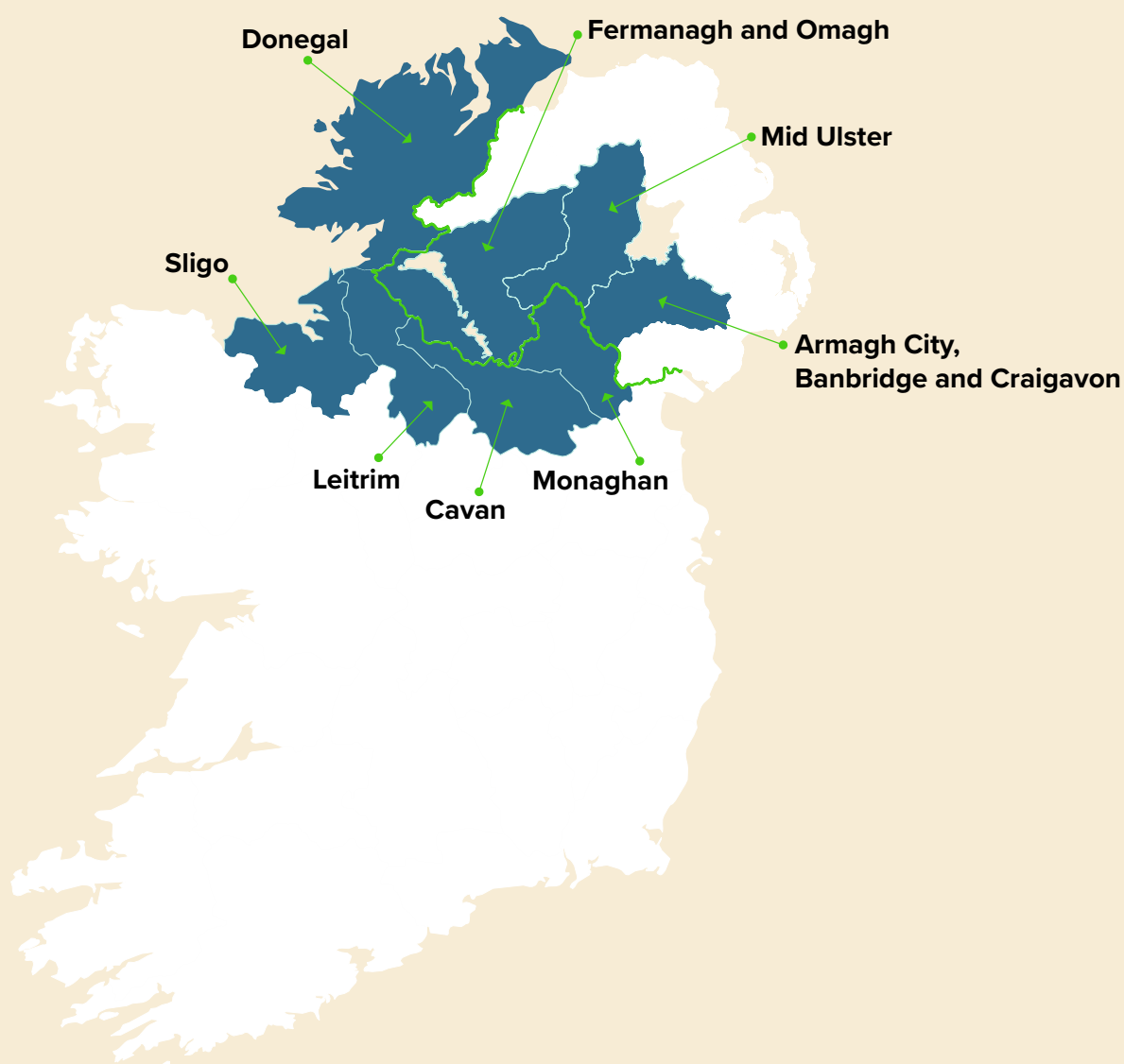
Donegal

Fermanagh and Omagh

Mid Ulster

Sligo

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon

Leitrim

Cavan

Monaghan

BREXIT AT THE BORDER:

Voices of Local Communities
in the Central Border Region
of Ireland / Northern Ireland

The eight Member Councils areas of the
Central Border Region include Armagh City,
Banbridge and Craigavon; Fermanagh and
Omagh; Mid Ulster and the counties of Cavan,
Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo.

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