

How divided is Britain? Symbolic boundaries and social cohesion in Post-Brexit Britain

Online Appendix

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Table A1 Percentage voting Leave (as a proportion of those who voted)

Scotland	38.0
London	40.1
Northern Ireland	44.2
South East	51.8
Wales	52.5
South West	52.6
North West	53.7
East	56.5
Yorkshire and The Humber	57.7
North East	58.0
East Midlands	58.8
West Midlands	59.3
Grand Total	51.9

Additional details on data structure and samples

The data structure

Due to our interest in recording perceptions about a large number of regional and social groups, we took a ‘split thirds’ approach so that no single respondent gave their view on more than six groups. Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of the three groups, which we label Group A, Group B, and Group C. In all three groups – as a point of comparison – we asked for perceptions of White British and of English people. In addition, respondents in Group A were asked for their views on Scottish people, Black Caribbean people, Middle-class and Working-class people. Group B asked about perceptions of Irish people, people with a Pakistani background, Northerners and Southerners. Finally, Group C ascertained perceptions of Welsh people, people with an Indian background, Polish background, and a Roma/ Gypsy background. While the original survey sample size is 3000, we restrict our effective samples on the basis of national and regional identity (including ‘feeling close to area’ in Table 4). We also exclude non-UK citizens. See additional notes below in Table A2 on the samples. We drop missing values for the perceptions, which is around 20% in each case (see further details below).

Our interest lies in boundaries across the four nations of the UK, but our small sample size in Northern Ireland prevents us from analysing in-group and out-group preferences in the same way that we do for England, Scotland, and Wales. In Table 1 we include British attitudes towards the Irish, but acknowledge this is not an ideal proxy for understanding perceptions of Northern Irish people.

Table A2 Additional notes on samples in each of the tables

Table	Sampling
1	Respondents are those who described themselves as British and who did not offer an additional identity such as English. Ns = 335-420; White British and English estimates are averaged over the three split third samples;
2A	Split third group A. Respondents in the left-hand panel are people who identified themselves as English; in this panel the in-group is defined as the English, and the out-group is defined as Scottish. In the right-hand panel respondents are those who identified themselves as Scottish; in this panel the in-group is defined as the Scottish, and the out-group is defined as the English N = 223-264 (English identifiers) and 36-41 (Scottish identifiers);
2B	Split third group C. Respondents in the left-hand panel are people who identified themselves as English (223-264); in this panel the in-group is defined as the English, and the out-group is defined as Welsh. In the right-hand panel respondents are those who identified themselves as Welsh (N=19-21); in this panel the in-group is defined as the Welsh, and the out-group is defined as the English.
3	Split third group B. Respondents resident in England. Middle Class is defined as those who work in traditional professions (accountant, doctor, solicitor), modern professions (e.g. social worker, teacher, physiotherapist), and senior managers. Working Class are defined as those in Routine manual and service occupations (e.g. Postal worker, receptionist, HGV driver, cleaner, bar staff) and technical and craft occupations (e.g. mechanic, plumber, train driver). Ns = 200-230 (Middle Class), 143-153 (Working Class).
4	Split third group B. Southerners are defined as those who are resident in London and the South-East. Northerners are defined as those living in the Northern Regions (excluding residents of Wales, Scotland, NI, and the Midlands) and who feel close to their region. N = 148-193 (Northerners), 121-141 (Southerners).

Missing values

The data are cross-sectional, and we consider our results to be descriptive in the sense that we cannot say whether they are long-standing, nor whether the sentiments we report existed before devolution and Brexit. A further limitation relates to the high degree of missingness in our measures of in-group and out-group sentiments. In each item, we have around 20% of missing values. This is possibly expected given the nature of the questions. Some may not have any experience or knowledge of the out-group in question and simply “don’t know” the answer. Others may consider the question to be too direct or insensitive and prefer to withhold their opinion. We analysed missingness and found (See Table A8 below) that people with lower levels of political interest are more likely to have missing data. There is no strong gradient evident for education. We find, perhaps unsurprisingly given the nature of our argument, that those reporting stronger national identities are less likely to have missing data. Since we also restrict our sample on the basis of national identity, regional attachment and

citizenship, our results should not be understood as representative of the whole population, but rather of subpopulations of the relevant in-groups.

Symbolic Boundaries between the White British and other national or ethnic groups

As a data validation exercise, but also producing interesting results in their own right, we explore Symbolic boundaries between the White British and other national or ethnic groups. We begin by looking at the findings for the classic external boundary between citizens and non-citizen outsiders or ‘foreigners’. English and Scots, and so on. Bail (2008) used attitudes towards different groups of potential migrants as their measure of symbolic boundaries against out-groups. As described above, our measure is rather different and can be thought of as a measure of symbolic distance between groups, focussing on perceptions of how similar members of the out-group are to oneself. However, the two types of measure seem to tally quite well. Thus in table A2 we compare the results found by Heath and Richards (2020) on attitudes towards different types of immigrant with those using our new measure of symbolic distance from various ethnic minority groups.

Table A2: White British respondents’ perceptions of their in-group (White British people) and of different groups of ethnic minority people

Percentages agreeing

Perceptions of members of the in-group and of various out-groups	‘Share my values’	‘Could get on with’	‘Straight-forward and honest’	Attitudes to immigration of members of the in-group and of various out-groups	‘many’ or ‘some’ should be allowed to enter Britain
White British	76	87	69	Same race or ethnic group	61
Polish background	50 (-26)*	78 (-9)*	63 (-6)*	Poorer countries in Europe	49 (-12)*
Black Caribbean	46 (-30)*	76 (-11)*	65 (-4)*	Different race or ethnic group	54 (-7)*
Indian background	37 (-39)*	76 (-11)*	60 (-9)*	Poorer countries outside Europe	40 (-21)*
Pakistani background	22 (-54)*	59 (-28)*	44 (-25)*	Muslims	53 (-8)*
Roma or Gypsy	13 (-63)*	25 (-62)*	18 (-51)*	Gypsies	39 (-22)*

Notes - Samples: Brexit data – White British respondents and British citizens, Ns= 500-650; European Social Survey data – Not an ethnic minority and born in the UK, N = 1850; Figures in brackets show the percentage point differences between the proportions agreeing with respect to the specific minority and the proportion agreeing with respect to the white British. White British estimates are averaged over the split thirds samples.

** Differences are statistically significant at the 95% level (based on t-tests). All t-tests compare perceptions of the in-group and out-group from the same set of individuals, i.e. within the relevant split third sample.*

Table A2 shows the pattern of responses to our three questions on perceptions of the in-group (White British) and of various minority out-groups in our Brexit panel study, together with the pattern of responses on attitudes to immigration found in the UK sample of the 2014 (wave 7) European Social Survey. The target out-groups identified in the Brexit panel and the ESS cover a broadly similar range of migrant groups although differing in the detailed specifications.

Beginning with our three items measuring symbolic distance, we see that our in-group members (respondents with British citizenship who described themselves as having a white British ethnic background) rated their fellow white British the most positively on all three items, indicating a high degree of in-group preference (in line with social identity theory). Thus 87% agree that White British were people ‘I could get on with’, 76% agree that they ‘share my values’ and a rather lower 69% agree that they were ‘straightforward and honest’. The proportions giving positive evaluations then fall as we move down each column. Polish are rated relatively positively on all three items, but less so than the White British, while Black Caribbeans have similar ratings to the Polish. Indians have less favourable evaluations on the ‘share my values’ item while people with a Pakistani background are rated markedly less highly on all three items. Roma are by far the least likely to receive positive evaluations.

The percentage point differences between the positive evaluations of the white British in-group and of the ethnic minority out-groups reach a maximum of 50 to 60 points in the case of Roma, for whom a quarter or fewer of White British respondents offer positive evaluations. These data thus suggest that there is a sharp and distinct symbolic boundary between the White British in-group and the Roma group, and to a somewhat lesser extent between White British and the Pakistani group, with more blurred boundaries between White British and the Polish, Caribbean and Indian groups. Moreover, in the cases of the Pakistani and especially the Roma groups, the differences are consistently large across all three indicators, whereas for the other three groups they are much smaller on the ‘straightforward and honest’ indicator than on the ‘shares my values’ indicator – reinforcing the picture of a more blurred boundary.

The groups identified in the ESS questions are not as comparable as one would wish to those identified in our symbolic distance items, but they show a broadly similar ordering. In particular, we see that Roma are the most negatively evaluated group, while people of the same racial or ethnic group as the majority, whom we can broadly equate in this context with the White British, are the most positively evaluated with respect to willingness to allow migrants to come and live in Britain. People from ‘poorer countries in Europe’, whom we can roughly equate with Polish, are less positively evaluated than those ‘of the same racial or ethnic group’. And people from ‘poorer countries outside Europe’, whom we can roughly equate with Caribbeans, Indians or Pakistanis, are more negatively evaluated, although not as negatively as Roma. However, while broadly concurring with the results using our new measure of symbolic distance, the ESS measure of willingness to allow migrants from different types of origin does not appear to be as discriminating as the new measure of symbolic distance that we use.

Reassuringly, the new measure of symbolic distance also parallels findings on social distance, as exemplified by the classic indicator of inter-ethnic friendship patterns. For example Muttarak (2014) found that around 70% of second-generation respondents of mixed ethnicity had close white British friends, as did 58% of Black Caribbeans, 50% of Indian Hindus but only 38% of Pakistani and 30% of Bangladeshi. (Muttarak and Heath (2010) show a similar gradient in the case of intermarriage.)

Table A3: Respondents' (white British identifiers) perceptions of the White British, English, Irish, Scots and Welsh

	% agreeing Share my values	% agreeing Could get on with	% agreeing Straightforwar d and honest
White British	74	86	70
English	73 (-1)	85 (-1)	67 (-3)
Welsh	66 (-8)*	78 (-8)*	81 (+11)*
Irish	54 (-20)*	77 (-9)*	72 (+2)
Scottish	57 (-17)*	72 (-14)*	69 (-1)

*Notes: Figures in brackets show the differences from the ratings of the White British. N = 400-550; White British and English estimates are averaged over the three split third samples; * Differences are statistically significant at the 95% level (based on t-tests). All t-tests compare perceptions of the in-group and out-group from the same set of individuals, i.e. within the relevant split third sample.*

Table A4: Southerners' and Northerners' (broad definitions) perceptions of their in-groups and out-groups

Percentages agreeing

Southerners' perceptions of in-group and out-group				Northerners' perceptions of in-group and out-group			
	Share my values	Could get on with	Honest and straightf'rd		Share my values	Could get on with	Honest and straightf'rd
Southerners' perceptions of their in-group	74	88	57	Northerners' perceptions of their in-group	79	91	89
Southerners' perceptions of the out-group	53 (-21)*	73 (-15)*	80 (+23)*	Northerners' perceptions of the out-group	32 (-47)*	60 (-31)*	34 (-55)*

*Southerners are defined as those who are resident in London, South-East, South-West and East Anglia and who feel close to their region. Northerners are defined as those living in the Midlands or Northern Regions (excluding residents of Wales, Scotland, NI) and who feel close to their region. N = 220-262 (Northerners), 241-292 (Southerners). * Differences are statistically significant at the 95% level (t-tests, split third group B).*

Table A5: Perceptions of Southerners: multivariate analysis of "Share my values"

	Share my values: model 1		Share my values: model 2		Share my values: model 3		Share my values: model 4	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Northerner	-0.919	0.176	-0.906	0.177	-1.041	0.186	-1.092	0.194
Age			0.001	0.005	0.006	0.005	0.000	0.006
Qualifications (ref = degree)								
Other higher ed			-0.282	0.242	-0.109	0.263	-0.046	0.272
A level etc			-0.104	0.222	0.021	0.241	0.163	0.255
GCSE etc			-0.010	0.198	0.072	0.210	0.253	0.226
Other/ none			-0.399	0.349	-0.283	0.366	-0.057	0.385
Identity (ref = English only)								
British only					0.379	0.206	0.437	0.213
British dual/ mixed					0.213	0.254	0.192	0.267
Authoritarianism							-0.155	0.107
Right-wing							0.269	0.102
Constant	0.281	0.087	0.291	0.267	-0.180	0.357	0.037	0.372

Notes - only Northerners and Southerners included in the analysis, N = 700

Logistic regression models; coefficients are log odds.

Bold = statistically significant at p < .05

Table A6: Perceptions of Southerners: multivariate analysis of “Get on with”

	Get on with: model 1		Get on with: model 2		Get on with: model 3		Get on with: model 4	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Northerner	-0.977	0.163	-0.957	0.165	-1.125	0.175	-1.145	0.182
Age			0.016	0.005	0.021	0.005	0.015	0.006
Qualifications (ref = degree)								
Other higher ed			-0.253	0.247	0.103	0.279	0.208	0.289
A level etc			-0.027	0.225	0.186	0.250	0.208	0.263
GCSE etc			-0.144	0.198	-0.050	0.212	0.130	0.225
Other/ none			-0.212	0.339	-0.286	0.350	-0.137	0.365
Identity (ref = English only)								
British only					0.199	0.210	0.181	0.217
British dual/ mixed					0.459	0.264	0.537	0.278
Authoritarianism							-0.186	0.110
Right-wing							0.248	0.106
Constant	1.013	0.091	0.271	0.264	-0.129	0.358	0.070	0.372

Notes - only Northerners and Southerners included in the analysis, N = 700

Logistic regression models; coefficients are log odds.

Bold = statistically significant at $p < .05$

Table A7: Perceptions of Southerners: multivariate analysis of “Straightforward and honest”

	Straightforward: model		Straightforward: model 2		Straightforward: model 3		Straightforward: model 4	
	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.	Coef.	Std. Err.
Northerner	-0.404	0.164	-0.388	0.165	-0.419	0.172	-0.484	0.181
Age			0.008	0.005	0.008	0.005	0.004	0.005
Qualifications (ref = degree)								
Other higher ed			-0.066	0.232	0.255	0.251	0.327	0.260
A level etc			0.305	0.207	0.437	0.222	0.499	0.237
GCSE etc			-0.214	0.189	-0.147	0.198	-0.015	0.211
Other/ none			-0.151	0.338	-0.120	0.350	0.034	0.372
Identity (ref = English only)								
British only					0.348	0.198	0.356	0.208
British dual/ mixed					0.537	0.244	0.601	0.258
Authoritarianism							-0.180	0.100
Right-wing							0.210	0.096
Constant	-0.021	0.084	-0.401	0.257	-0.736	0.342	-0.609	0.357

Notes - only Northerners and Southerners included in the analysis, N = 700

Logistic regression models; coefficients are log odds.

Bold = statistically significant at $p < .05$

Table A8: Analysis of missingness

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coef.	Std. Err	Coef.	Std. Err
Female	0.133	0.084	0.174	0.159
Age	0.002	0.003	0.012	0.006
Qualifications (ref = degree)				
Other higher ed	-0.052	0.130	-0.035	0.273
A level etc	0.056	0.116	-0.058	0.242
GCSE etc	-0.275	0.112	-0.199	0.221
Other/ none	0.212	0.168	0.603	0.323
Political interest (ref = very interested)				
Fairly interested	0.678	0.111	0.663	0.225
Not very interested	1.035	0.131	1.100	0.262
Not at all interested	1.305	0.168	1.045	0.330
North West England	-0.024	0.237	-0.528	0.476
Yorkshire & Humber	-0.208	0.245	-0.209	0.492
East Midlands	-0.157	0.252	-0.248	0.504
West Midlands	-0.066	0.245	0.170	0.478
East of England	-0.116	0.242	-0.099	0.475
London	-0.172	0.240	-0.273	0.501
South East England	0.167	0.234	0.033	0.472
South west England	-0.226	0.244	-0.304	0.481
Wales	-0.011	0.282	0.009	0.759
Scotland	-0.232	0.256	-0.985	0.926
Northern Ireland	0.283	0.354	1.019	1.568
Strength of English identity			-0.145	0.041
Constant	-1.519	0.262	-0.772	0.645
N	3070		825	

Outcome = missing response on “White British people share my values” (1 = missing, 0 = not missing)

Logistic regression models; coefficients are log odds.

Bold = statistically significant at $p < .05$

Model 1 is based on the full sample, and model 2 is a subsample of those identifying as English.

References cited in the Appendix

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