



Getting the Best Deal for Britain: The Case and Mechanism for Extending Transition in the Time of Covid-19



New Best for Britain poll on extending transition

Majority support for UK Government to request a transition period extension.

Significant support among small 'c' conservatives

Almost half of Conservative voters and those who voted Leave support an extension.

The path to extension

Clearly mapped, there is a path to getting an extension agreed quickly.

First published by

Best for Britain Limited, July 2020

ISBN 978-1-8382549-4-0

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www.bestforbritain.org

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About the poll

The Focaldata poll of 2,032 adults was commissioned by the cross-party campaign group Best for Britain. Fieldwork was completed between 7-9 April 2020.

The data tables for the poll can be found in the Appendix.

Our key findings

Majority support for UK government to request an extension

- **66% of the public believe the UK government ‘should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with coronavirus for the rest of the year’,** including nearly half of Conservative and Leave voters.

Indefinite extension ‘until crisis resolved’ is acceptable

- Of those who support an extension, **64% want the transition period to be extended ‘indefinitely until the crisis is resolved’,** whereas 36% wanted the transition period to be extended ‘for a maximum of a year.’

How conservatives feel

Small ‘c’ conservatives want UK Government to focus on coronavirus

Our poll data indicates the government has support for extending the transition period among small ‘c’ conservative voters.

- 48% of Conservative voters
- 45% of Brexit Party voters
- 49% of Leave voters

Of those who supported an extension there was strong support for a longer extension:

- 44% of Conservative voters
- 27% of Brexit Party voters
- 43% of Leave voters

Support is growing for extension

Business, trade and devolved governments now call for extension

- The call for an extension to the transition period has been made by numerous bodies and pressure groups, including the [Scottish](#)¹ and [Welsh](#)² Governments.
- The UK logistics sector, including the [Freight Transport Association](#)³ and [Road Haulage Association](#)⁴ and the [British International Freight Association](#)⁵, have urged the Government to request an extension to the transition period so that companies are able focus on the unprecedented challenge which Covid-19 has placed on the industry.
- [The European People's Party \(EPP\)](#)⁶, a centre-right grouping of MEPs and the most powerful political group in the European Parliament, has called on Britain to request an extension to the transition period, saying the threat posed by coronavirus meant that common sense should “prevail over ideology”.
- [EU officials](#)⁷ have warned the Covid-19 outbreak means companies on both sides of the channel will have little capacity to prepare for the disruption to UK-EU trading arrangements that the end of the transition period will bring.
- There is some recent speculation that pressure to extend from the EU side will ramp up once [Germany](#)⁸ takes over the EU presidency in July.
- In an interview with the BBC, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director [Kristalina Georgieva](#)⁹ has said it would be “wise” not to add to the “unprecedented uncertainty” arising from the pandemic.

¹ Brexit negotiations during pandemic are ‘unwelcome and unnecessary distraction’, ITV News, Monday 23 March 2020, <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-03-23/brexit-negotiations-during-pandemic-are-unwelcome-and-unnecessary-distraction>

² Coronavirus: Welsh Government calls for longer Brexit transition, BBC News, 24 March 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-52022855>

³ UK hauliers demand Boris Johnson extends the Brexit transition period so they can cope with the coronavirus pandemic, Business Insider, 25 March 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-hauliers-demand-uk-boris-johnson-extends-brexit-transition-period-2020-3?r=US&IR=T>

⁴ Brexit talks: who is involved and what is being covered?, The Guardian, 24 April 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/apr/24/who-and-what-uk-and-eu-resume-interrupted-brexit-talks-future-relationship>

⁵ Freight association believes extension of brexit transition period still seems likely, British International Freight Association, April 2020, <https://www.bifa.org/news/articles/2020/apr/freight-association-believes-extension-of-brexit-transition-period-still-seems-likely?l=y>

⁶ Brussels parliamentary group calls on UK to seek Brexit extension, Financial Times, 30 March 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/5d61234b-fda7-4373-ba77-7c8bc6af36e8>

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Boris Johnson will take charge of Brexit talks, The Times, 27 April 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/boris-johnson-will-take-charge-of-brexit-talks-pgztrp8sr>

⁹ IMF head warns on Brexit trade deal failure, BBC News, 15 April 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52304821>

Why there should be an extension

No good deal without being at the table

There are only two rounds of talks left before the high level UK-EU meeting in June. With the deadline for requesting an extension due on the 30th June 2020, when the country is still likely to be battling coronavirus, the already tight timetable set by the UK now appears incredibly difficult to meet.

It is not reasonable to think we can strike a good deal for the UK in this timeframe. The public would clearly support the government requesting an extension so it can focus solely on fighting the virus and [restoring our economy](#)¹⁰, without the risk of a catastrophic no deal.

Economic impact

Government assessments show the economic impact of all forms of Brexit is likely to be negative, especially so in the case of a no-deal Brexit. The tight timetable, together with the distance between UK and EU positions on key subjects such as ‘level playing field’ commitments, means the chances of a no-deal Brexit have risen considerably since the coronavirus outbreak began.

For businesses, especially SMEs, the transition period was supposed to be used to prepare for the UK’s departure, and work through what the new custom procedures and product standards would mean for their specific circumstances. However, Covid-19 has meant the transition period is being wasted as firms are preoccupied with the unprecedented challenges caused by the pandemic.

With the economy almost certain to still be struggling to recover at the beginning of 2021,¹¹ the structural changes forced on business by leaving the EU without a deal could be catastrophic and undermine current attempts to save it.

Protecting our public services

It is unwise to expect that our public services can handle two economic shocks of this scale at the same time. Best for Britain FOIs of local authority risk registers last year suggested they were in a place to deal with one external shock, but could not weather two. A recent example was the need to release all stockpiled Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) to deal

¹⁰ Public wants Boris Johnson to delay trade talks as coronavirus halts work on Brexit, The Times, 29 March 2020, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/public-wants-boris-johnson-to-delay-trade-talks-as-coronavirus-halts-work-on-brex-it-zhwzfx>

¹¹ [A new report](#) in April 2020 predicted it will take 3 years to get back to 2019 levels of GDP as a consequence of coronavirus, with a fall of 13% predicted for the second half of this year as the UK would be leaving the transition period. Economy will not recover until 2023, experts predict, The Times, 27 April 2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/economy-will-not-recover-until-2023-experts-predict-vd33kq2ch?utm_source=POLITICO.EU&utm_campaign=4a467eb57a-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_27_06_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_10959edeb5-4a467eb57a-190380793

with coronavirus, despite it having been earmarked for a no-deal Brexit.¹² Given the strain that will be put on these services over the next year to deal with coronavirus, it would be irresponsible to leave the UK open to an avoidable shock.

The cost of extension?

Current Withdrawal Agreement transition period means we keep paying the same as we did as a member up to 31st December

Under the terms of the current Withdrawal Agreement (WA) transition period until the end of December 2020, the UK continues to contribute to the EU budget as if it was a Member State in line with the previously agreed UK budget contributions for the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020.

However, UK contributions will not continue to be calculated in the same way if the transition period is extended.

In extension discussions, the matter of future budget contributions would be calculated and negotiated separately

Should the transition period be extended beyond the end of December 2020 (and the end of the current EU MFF period), the WA envisages that the UK contribution to the EU budget would be agreed by the UK and EU in the Joint Committee set up to oversee the implementation of the WA, and that it would be calculated separately to the formulation used to calculate the contribution of the remaining Member States.¹³

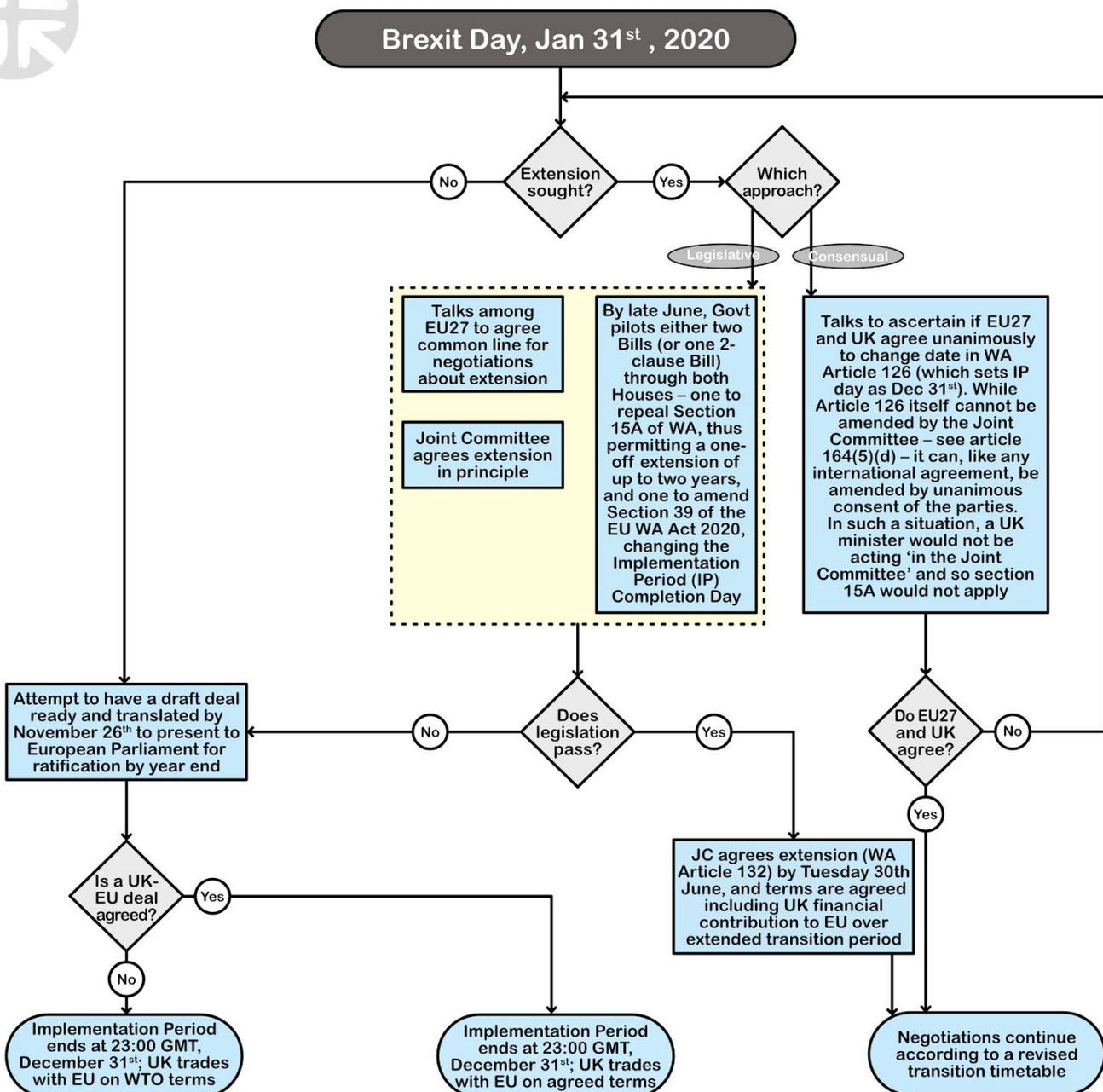
- ❑ [Article 132 \(2\)](#) of the WA states that for the extended transition period the EU law relating to the EU's own resources (i.e. the formulation for deciding Member State financial contributions) will not apply to the UK after 31 December 2020.
- ❑ [Article 132 \(2\)](#) also indicates that the UK will not automatically be part of EU programmes. It provides that in an extended transition period the UK would be considered as a third country for EU programmes and for funding under the next budget plan (the MFF for 2021-27). The UK could potentially participate in such programmes but would do so according to the EU's rules for third countries.
- ❑ [Article 132 \(3\)](#) of the WA states that the Joint Committee would agree the amount of the UK financial contribution during the extended period, taking into account the UK's status during the period. It would also agree the schedule for making payments.

¹²At the Health & Social Care Committee on the 17th March 2020, the COO of NHS England confirmed that PPE supplies earmarked for a no-deal Brexit had been released to provide additional supplies for NHS frontline workers to deal with the coronavirus pandemic; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytnWsp4-gHE>

¹³ According to research seen by Best for Britain, from the House of Commons Library (20th April 2020)

The mechanism for requesting an extension

This diagram shows the route from the date the UK left the EU in January 2020 to the end of this year and the choices the UK government must make regarding the UK's future relationship with the EU. There is a clear path to extending transition easily and quickly, should we choose to take it.



References

The diagram on the previous page contains references to specific articles contained in the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and EU and in UK domestic law which deal in some way with extending the transition period.

Links to the specific articles and clauses mentioned can be found below.

You may also wish to review the recent House of Commons Library Briefing:
[Coronavirus: Is it possible to extend the Brexit transition period?](#)¹⁴

- ❑ [Section 15A, European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2018](#) (as amended by [Section 34, European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2020](#))
- ❑ [Section 39, European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2020](#)
- ❑ [Article 126, Withdrawal Agreement](#)
- ❑ [Article 164\(5\)\(d\), Withdrawal Agreement](#)
- ❑ [EU process for ratification of international treaties](#)
- ❑ [Article 132, Withdrawal Agreement](#)

¹⁴ Coronavirus: Is it possible to extend the Brexit transition period?, House of Commons Library, 20 April 2020, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/coronavirus-is-it-possible-to-extend-the-brexit-transition-period/>

About Best for Britain

Best for Britain is a cross-party internationalist campaign group.

Now that we have left the EU, we seek to maintain a close relationship with Europe, ensuring long-term economic prosperity and preventing hard-won rights and protections being watered down.

Best for Britain is known for its data driven, constituency-level analysis. We frequently commission polling on a range of issues - from attitudes towards free movement to trade-offs in the UK-EU trade negotiations - to give legislators an in-depth, granular understanding of specific voting behaviours both at a national and seat level.

We work with MPs from all parties and people across politics who share our belief that British jobs, investment and businesses all benefit from the UK having strong internationalist links and cooperation, and the ability for free trade and goods, services, people and ideas to move in a frictionless way across borders.

Base: 2,032

Total

S1. Gender

	Total		Male				Female				Sig
	N	%V	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V		
Total	2032	100%	996	49%	100%		1036	51%	100%		

Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents	2032 (2032)		996 (999)				1036 (1033)			
	A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year		1350	66%	624	46%	63%	---	726	54%	70%
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year		682	34%	372	55%	37%	+++	310	45%	30%	---

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	1350 (1350)		624 (626)				726 (724)			
	A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.		485	36%	228	47%	37%		257	53%	35%
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved		865	64%	396	46%	63%		469	54%	65%	

Base: 2,032

	N	16-24			25-34			35-		
		%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
Total	279	14%	100%		340	17%	100%		319	16%
Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	279 (274)				340 (345)				319 (323)	
A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	205	15%	73%	+++	248	18%	73%	+++	227	17%
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	75	11%	27%	---	93	14%	27%	---	92	13%

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	205 (201)			248 (251)				227 (230)	
A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	67	14%	33%		87	18%	35%		84	17%
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	138	16%	67%		161	19%	65%		143	17%

Base: 2,032

S2. Age

	44			45-54			55-64			
	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig
Total	100%		353	17%	100%		290	14%	100%	

Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents	353 (351)			290 (294)					
	A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	71%	++	235	17%	66%	180	13%	62%	-
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	29%	--	118	17%	34%	110	16%	38%	+	

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	235 (233)			180 (182)					
	A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	37%		83	17%	36%	59	12%	33%	
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	63%		151	17%	64%	121	14%	67%		

Base: 2,032

	65+				East Anglia				East Mi	
	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
Total	451	22%	100%		189	9%	100%		147	7%

Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents	65+				East Anglia				East Mi	
	451 (445)	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	256	19%	57%	---	121	9%	64%		97	7%	
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	194	29%	43%	+++	68	10%	36%		50	7%	

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	65+				East Anglia				East Mi	
	256 (253)	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	105	22%	41%	+	48	10%	39%		46	9%	
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	151	17%	59%	-	73	8%	61%		52	6%	

Base: 2,032

	idlands			London			North East			
	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig
Total	100%		267	13%	100%		83	4%	100%	
Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents			267 (259)			83 (83)			
A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	66%		185	14%	70%		53	4%	64%	
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	34%		81	12%	30%		30	4%	36%	

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12			185 (180)			53 (53)			
A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	47%	++	57	12%	31%	-	19	4%	36%	
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	53%	--	129	15%	69%	+	34	4%	64%	

Base: 2,032

S3. Region

	North West				Northern Ireland				Scot	
	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
Total	223	11%	100%		56	3%	100%		171	8%

Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents	North West				Northern Ireland				Scot	
	223 (225)					56 (54)					171 (169)
A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	155	11%	69%		41	3%	72%		121	9%	
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	68	10%	31%		16	2%	28%		50	7%	

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	North West				Northern Ireland				Scot	
	155 (156)					41 (39)					121 (120)
A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	54	11%	35%		15	3%	36%		30	6%	
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	101	12%	65%		26	3%	64%		91	11%	

Base: 2,032

	land	South East				South West					
		%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig
Total		100%		279	14%	100%		174	9%	100%	
Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents			279 (284)				174 (175)			
	A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	71%		177	13%	63%		117	9%	67%	
	B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	29%		102	15%	37%		57	8%	33%	
Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12			177 (180)				117 (118)			
	A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	25%	---	79	16%	44%	++	36	7%	30%	
	B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	75%	+++	98	11%	56%	--	81	9%	70%	

Base: 2,032

	Wales				West Midlands				Yorkshire	
	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
Total	98	5%	100%		178	9%	100%		168	8%

Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents	Wales				West Midlands				Yorkshire	
	98 (101)	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	
A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	67	5%	68%		112	8%	63%		105	8%	
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	31	5%	32%		66	10%	37%		63	9%	

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	Wales				West Midlands				Yorkshire	
	67 (69)	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	
A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	25	5%	38%		44	9%	39%		35	7%	
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	41	5%	62%		68	8%	61%		70	8%	

Base: 2,032

	shire	Conservative						Labour			
		%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig
Total		100%		732	36%	100%		585	29%	100%	
Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents			732 (733)				585 (585)			
A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year		63%		349	26%	48%	---	483	36%	83%	+++
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year		37%		383	56%	52%	+++	102	15%	17%	---
Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12			349 (350)				483 (483)			
A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.		33%		196	40%	56%	+++	128	26%	27%	---
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved		67%		153	18%	44%	---	355	41%	73%	+++

Base: 2,032

		Liberal Democrat			SNP			Plaid C			
		N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
Total		204	10%	100%		81	4%	100%		6	0%
Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents	204 (205)				81 (80)				6 (6)	
	A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	168	12%	82%	+++	69	5%	85%	+++	4	0%
	B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	36	5%	18%	---	12	2%	15%	---	2	0%

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	168 (169)				69 (68)				4 (4)	
	A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	36	7%	21%	---	12	3%	18%	---	3	1%
	B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	132	15%	79%	+++	57	7%	82%	+++	1	0%

Base: 2,032

	Other				Did not vote				Not register	
	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
Total	49	2%	100%		218	11%	100%		47	2%

Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents	Other				Did not vote				Not register	
		N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
	49 (48)					218 (219)				47 (47)	
A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year		29	2%	58%		148	11%	68%		33	2%
B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year		20	3%	42%		71	10%	32%		14	2%

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12	Other				Did not vote				Not register	
		N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>
	29 (28)					148 (148)				33 (33)	
A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.		13	3%	46%		54	11%	37%		9	2%
B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved		16	2%	54%		93	11%	63%		24	3%

Base: 2,032

S5. EU referendum

		red to vote			Leave			Remain			Sig
		%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	Sig	N	%>	%V	
Total		100%		805	40%	100%		903	44%	100%	
Q1. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?	Base: All respondents			805 (805)				903 (903)			
	A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year	70%		397	29%	49%	---	728	54%	81%	+++
	B - The UK Government can balance dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak whilst also giving the necessary time to negotiate a full trade deal with the EU before the end of the year	30%		407	60%	51%	+++	175	26%	19%	---

Q1(b). Which of these options would you prefer:	Base: Selected 'A - The UK Government should focus 100% of its energy on dealing with Coronavirus for the rest of the year' at Q12			397 (398)				728 (728)			
	A - Extend the Brexit transition period for a maximum of a year.	27%		228	47%	57%	+++	180	37%	25%	---
	B - Extend the Brexit transition period indefinitely until the crisis is resolved	73%		169	20%	43%	---	548	63%	75%	+++