

The writing's on the Red Wall

Why keeping the promise
of a trade deal matters in
battleground seats

Economic Impact, Polling And Focus Group Interviews With
Voters In Red Wall Constituencies
April-June 2020

First published by

Best for Britain Limited, July 2020
ISBN 978-1-8382549-3-3

Copyright © Best for Britain Limited, 2020
International House, 24 Holborn Viaduct, London EC1A 2BN
www.bestforbritain.org

The moral right of the author(s) has been asserted. All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the publisher of this book

CHAIR

Lord Mark Malloch-Brown

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Naomi Smith FCMA

About Best for Britain

Best for Britain is a non-partisan advocacy group.

With the passage of the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020, we believe the UK must now focus on securing the comprehensive trade deal with the EU that voters were promised at the last election, one which delivers for businesses and communities across the country.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, we are primarily worried about the impact of leaving the single market and customs union when the transition period ends this year.

Contents

Foreword by Naomi Smith	4
Executive Summary	6
Part 1: Impact of Failing to Secure a Comprehensive Trade Deal	8
Part 2: View from the Red Wall – Polling	13
Part 3: Focus Group Analysis	20
Conclusion	23
Appendix	24

The 2019 Conservative Party manifesto promised to implement a “great new deal” with the European Union, based on commitments the Prime Minister signed into the Political Declaration that sits alongside the Withdrawal Agreement. In the Political Declaration, the Prime Minister committed to developing “an ambitious, broad, deep and flexible partnership”. At its core would be a “comprehensive and balanced Free Trade Agreement” with cooperation outlined in areas such as criminal justice and security.

Coronavirus has sidelined UK-EU talks and reduced the capacity for negotiations among officials in Brussels and London to negotiate a deal. Two rounds of talks were abandoned and, while face-to-face meetings have been replaced by video conferences, there are still significant gaps in negotiators' ability to communicate with one another and follow the usual protocol for striking a trade deal.

The spectre of a No-Deal Brexit has, consequently, loomed large over UK-EU trade negotiations, as talks have repeatedly stalled over a lack of progress in areas of competition policy and fishing quotas.

Despite this, the UK's Joint Committee representative, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, formally rejected the option of an extension to the Brexit transition period in mid-June. In doing so, the UK Government has closed itself off from a possible route to a trade deal by extending the talks beyond 31 December, when European capitals would have more bandwidth.

Proponents of a No-Deal Brexit argue that the threat of leaving without a deal makes an EU trade deal more likely. They also argue that a No-Deal Brexit would enhance the UK's ability to respond to coronavirus and that the so-called Red Wall constituencies, which played a critical role in giving the Conservatives an 80-seat majority in December, are in favour of such an outcome.

Best for Britain does not agree with this analysis. As a data-led organisation, we have examined the evidence for how a No-Deal Brexit would impact the UK economically. We have also looked at whether there is still appetite among the UK population for a trade deal. We have paid particular attention to the Red Wall constituencies, using the latest techniques to create a clear body of research on what failure to secure a comprehensive trade agreement would mean for people in these seats.

Our conclusion is that the UK, and the Red Wall constituencies in particular, would be severely damaged if the Government fails to negotiate a comprehensive new agreement with the EU. In addition to this, there is little evidence to suggest a No-Deal Brexit is the preferred course of action for voters in Red Wall seats. Instead, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to erode the UK population's economic confidence, Red Wall voters consider it an important part of Government policy to secure a comprehensive trade deal, especially those voters who switched from Labour to the Conservatives at the last election. Their message to us is clear: 'Boris, keep your promise'.

Naomi Smith, Chief Executive, Best for Britain

Whether the UK ends its Brexit transition period at the end of 2020 with a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the EU or fails to agree such a deal, changing the trade relationship with Europe will have a negative impact on the UK economy, which will simultaneously be experiencing a coronavirus induced downturn.

In the event of no trade deal being agreed with the EU, or a 'skin-and-bones' trade deal coming into effect at the end of the Brexit transition period, the effect on the UK's gross domestic product (GDP) will be much larger than if the UK were to agree a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.

This will disproportionately affect so-called Red Wall voters who live in seats stretching from the North West to the East Midlands. For example, in our analysis, 50 per cent of local areas in the North West are placed in Category 5 (the highest quintile of impact-risk) and a further 40 per cent in Category 4 for their exposure to a double economic hit based on the Gross Value Added of sectors locally.

While it has been argued that this outcome represents the democratic wish of Red Wall voters, particularly when contrasted with the possibility of extending UK-EU talks beyond December, there is little evidence that this is the case.

Over the past three months, Best for Britain has commissioned a series of opinion polls asking the UK population (and voters in Red Wall seats in particular) about its appetite for an EU trade deal and an extension to talks in light of coronavirus. This work has consistently yielded positive responses to both questions.

In mid-June, Best for Britain published a new poll focused on the Red Wall. Using the MRP method (multilevel regression and post-stratification), the survey indicates there is overwhelming support for a comprehensive trade deal with the EU, and that fears are rising over living costs escalating in the event of a No-Deal Brexit.

Executive Summary (continued)

This matches the responses from our focus groups among Labour-to-Conservative switchers in these seats. Furthermore, 80 per cent of Red Wall voters told us they want the UK to focus on its relationship with Europe not the US.

With the threat of serious economic harm being done to areas that are already likely to be disproportionately impacted by coronavirus in the medium-term, and without support among the voters who played such a critical role at the last election, the UK Government must put all of its energy into agreeing a comprehensive trade deal with the EU before December, abandoning the threat of a No-Deal Brexit in the process.

Part 1 - Impact of Failing to Secure a Comprehensive Trade Deal

In June, Best for Britain commissioned an independent think-tank to produce an assessment of the dual economic impacts of coronavirus and leaving the transition period at the end of 2020.

The report, produced by the Social Market Foundation (SMF) and entitled 'Assessing the economic implications of coronavirus and Brexit', examined the impact of both a new Free Trade Agreement and leaving the European Union without a trade deal, in the context of a 'U-shaped' economic recovery.

To do this, the report brought together existing literature on the long-term sectoral impact of Brexit (in both a new FTA and a No-Deal scenario) and novel research on the medium-term impact of coronavirus caused by lockdown measures. In doing so, SMF was able to identify the sectors that would be most exposed to a dual shock at the end of the year, and then map the importance of these sectors on to the UK by region and local area (using NUTS3 units).

Findings

The SMF report found that areas encompassing the Red Wall seats would be among the most severely exposed to a double economic hit from coronavirus and a failure to secure a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement by the end of 2020. This is because these areas are disproportionately reliant on the most exposed sectors for output and employment.

I. Sectors

As Table A shows, if the UK fails to secure a trade deal with the EU at the end of the transition period (or, indeed, if it manages only to agree a very thin trade deal) this would increase the negative impact of leaving the EU on a number of industries, particularly on manufacturing, and banking, finance and insurance. While industries in the public admin, education and health sector will be relatively unaffected by coronavirus, mainly due to increased health spending, they will be impacted by the end of the transition period and the smaller economy that this will bring.

Part 1 - Impact of Failing to Secure a Comprehensive Trade Deal

Table A - Magnitude of industry impact under coronavirus + No Deal

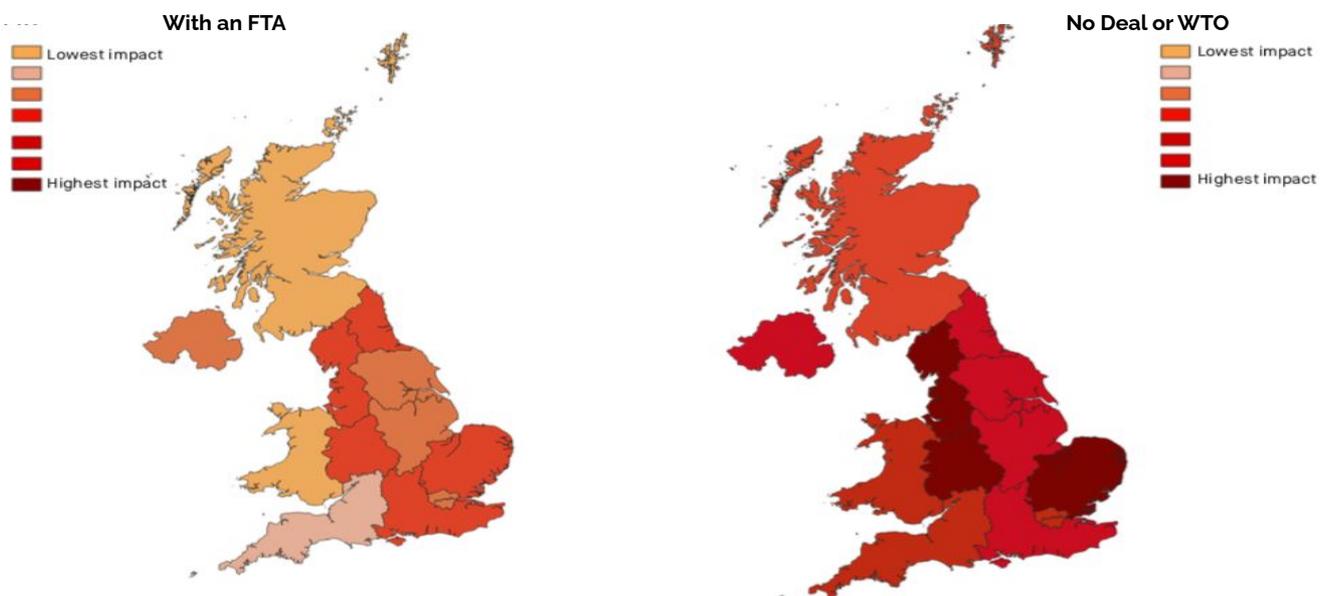
		Coronavirus industry impact (to 2023)		
		Low	Medium	High
Trade policy impact compared to today (WTO)	Low	Agriculture, Energy & Water	Transport & Communication	Construction
	Medium	Public admin, education & health	Distribution, hotels & restaurants, Other services	
	High		Manufacturing	Banking, finance & insurance etc

Source: SMF analysis

II. Regions

In the report's analysis, each region is ranked on a scale depending on the predicted impact from an FTA and a No-Deal scenario. It then compares the regional impact of both scenarios with the regional impact of coronavirus, based on the regional industrial mix of gross value added (GVA), to create an impact scale ranging from 'Mild impact under WTO and coronavirus' to 'Severe impact under FTA and coronavirus'. The two maps below use this impact scale.

Figure A - Regional exposure to impact of coronavirus and Brexit



Source: SMF analysis and HM Government

Part 1 - Impact of Failing to Secure a Comprehensive Trade Deal

In the event that a deal is secured and FTA rules apply, the five English regions most affected by the double impact of coronavirus and an FTA would be the South East, East, West Midlands, North West and North East. They have different economies and different reasons for being most affected under an FTA. The South East and East are not expected to be as severely impacted by Brexit but 40 per cent of their GVA comes from industries the Social Market Foundation assessed as likely to be highly impacted by coronavirus in the medium-term.

However, as Figure B shows, if the UK ends the transition period this year without a deal, or only a very thin deal, then the Red Wall would be severely affected. The most impacted regions would be the North East, West Midlands and the East of England.

The North West of England would also be one of the most negatively impacted regions by the failure to secure a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, and is likely to experience a 'medium' negative impact from changes to its local economy from coronavirus – due to the importance of manufacturing and distribution, hotels and restaurants to its regional GVA.

Figure B - Red Wall exposure to impact of coronavirus and a No-Deal Brexit



Source: SMF analysis and HM Government

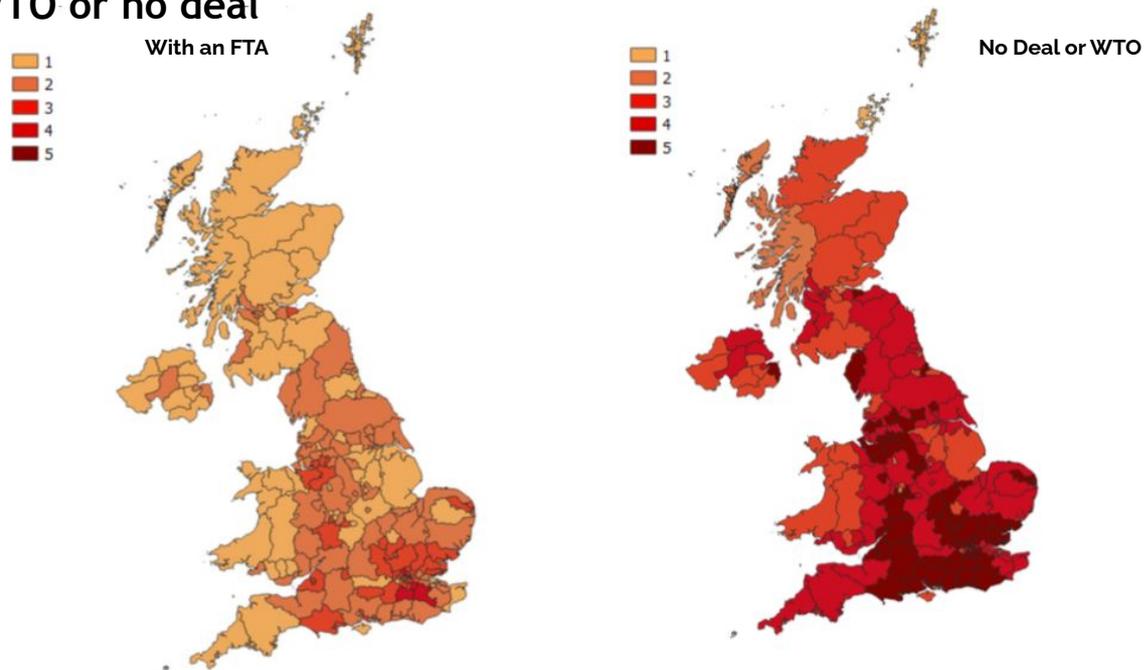
III. Local Areas

The SMF report also demonstrated how different areas of the country rely on industries which will experience different magnitudes of impact from both coronavirus and Brexit, based firstly on GVA and then jobs.

Double impact on GVA

The maps below represent the combined impact on each NUTS3 area of Brexit and the coronavirus on local GVA. The impacts under coronavirus and either Brexit scenario have been categorised into five quintiles of severity, with 1 representing the mildest harm and 5 the most severe.

Figure C - Magnitude of local area impact to GVA under an FTA and WTO or no deal



Source: SMF analysis

In the event that the UK fails to secure a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, there are only two areas that rank in the lowest impact quintile (Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands). In contrast, there are 70 areas ranking in the top quintile for the magnitude of impact. In the North West of England, for example, 50 per cent of local areas are in quintile 5 and 40 per cent are in quintile 4.

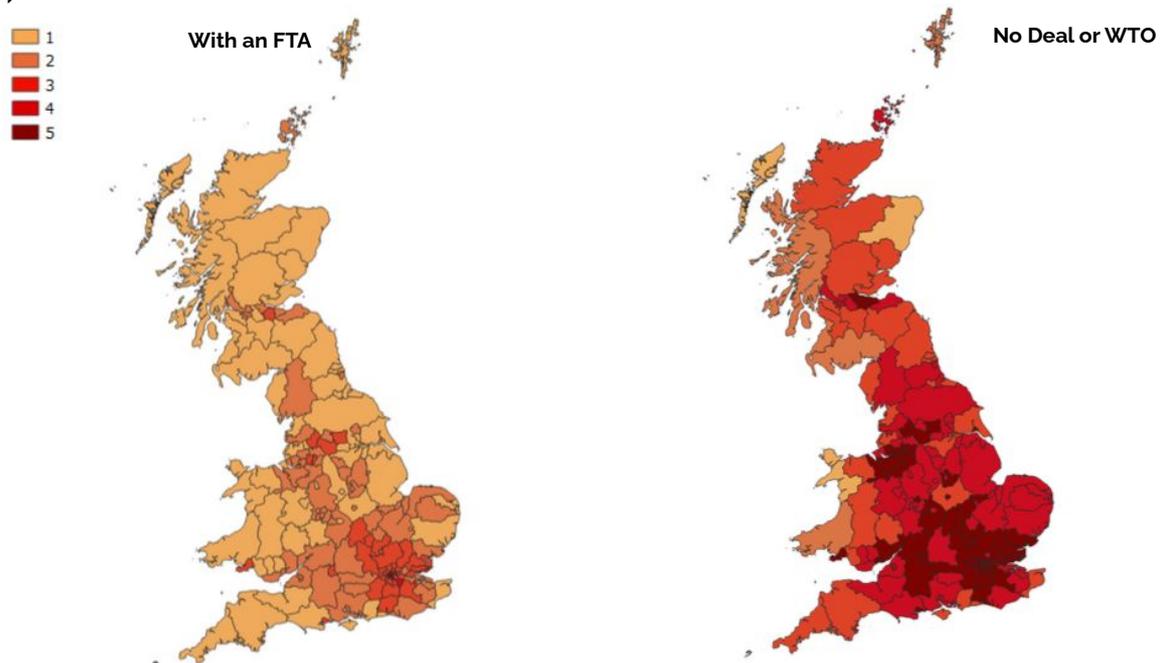
Part 1 - Impact of Failing to Secure a Comprehensive Trade Deal

It is also important to consider the variation in recovery speed across local economies. The UK took five years to recover from the 2008 financial crisis in terms of GVA. While output from services bounced back to pre-recession levels in 2012, manufacturing and production have still not returned to their 2008 levels.

Double impact on jobs

There is a difference between the industrial components of GVA and jobs in a local area and therefore it is important to consider both economic indicators. As Figure D shows, a similar picture emerges to that presented above. If the UK fails to secure a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, it would leave jobs in Red Wall constituencies disproportionately exposed.

Figure D - Local area exposure to coronavirus and Brexit (based on jobs)



Source: SMF analysis

Part 2 - View from the Red Wall: Polling and Focus Group Analysis

Best for Britain has commissioned a number of opinion polls since the beginning of 2020, all of which show that the Red Wall, and indeed the public at large, wants the Government to keep its promise to secure a comprehensive trade deal. In the following analysis, this quantitative work will be combined with qualitative research compiled in focus group sessions.

To ensure robust analysis, we use only the highest-quality, independent data providers. Our primary polling company is focaldata. Focaldata provided polling services to the Conservative Party at the 2019 General Election.

National Polling

Focaldata poll, surveying 2,003 UK adults on 1st -4th May 2020

Question:

'Which of the following statements about how the UK should end the transition period with the EU do you most agree with?'

Options:

- (a) A UK-EU trade deal comes into force after the transition period
- (b) The UK exits with no EU trade deal

Response:

75% in favour of a deal, 25% in favour of ending transition without a trade deal

64% of Conservative voters and 57% of Leave voters favour a deal

All age groups and UK regions favour a deal

Part 2 - View from the Red Wall: Polling and Focus Group Analysis

We conducted a poll in Workington, a seat which became the totemic Red Wall battleground in the 2019 General Election. The seat fell to the Conservatives on a swing of 9.7 per cent – and our poll shows Workington voters want the Government to secure an EU trade deal, as promised in the 2019 Conservative manifesto.

Workington Poll		
NumberCruncherPolitics poll, surveying 503 adults living in Workington, on 22nd-28th May 2020		
Question:	Options:	Response:
<i>'Which of the following statements about how the UK should end the transition period with the EU do you most agree with?'</i>	(a) A UK-EU trade deal comes into force after the transition period (b) The UK exits with no EU trade deal	75% in favour of a deal, 25% in favour of ending transition without a trade deal 61% of Conservative voters and 57% of Leave voters favour a deal

100 Conservative Seats		
Panelbase poll conducted on 29th May-5th June 2020, surveying 5,317 adults living in 100 seats that are Conservative gains or marginal in the 2019 General Election.		
Question:	Options:	Response:
<i>'Who should we work most closely with on issues like Coronavirus and trade?'</i>	(a) China (b) Russia (c) Europe (d) United States	70% say they want to prioritise cooperation with the EU on issues such as coronavirus and trade Only 20% express a wish to prioritise working with the US

Red Wall Deep Dive

In order to test the views of Red Wall voters in June 2020 at a constituency level, Best for Britain commissioned focaldata to conduct a multilevel regression and post-stratification (MRP) analysis of public opinion in 44 Red Wall seats (7 seats in the North East; 12 in the North West; 7 in the East Midlands; 9 in West Midlands; 9 in Yorkshire and the Humber).

What is MRP?

MRP is a statistical technique used to estimate opinions at constituency level. It has three steps: first, identify what predicts opinion using survey data and regression analysis (eg those who voted Remain are more likely to support the Government securing a trade deal). Second, build a detailed model of the population at constituency level, using statistics on demographics and past votes, so we can say eg how many women aged 65+ who voted to Leave are in each constituency. Third, combine the two previous steps, to compute what proportion of those women aged 65+ who voted Leave hold an opinion (from step 1) multiplied by the number of them (from step 2) to get the population holding an opinion. This provides a detailed breakdown of opinions by demographics and past voting behaviour, aggregated to a constituency level.

Red Wall MRP, Q1: Brexit Promise Focaldata analysis based on Panelbase fieldwork carried out on 29th May-5th June	
Question: <i>'The Conservative campaign manifesto said that the Government would pursue "...a new Free Trade Agreement with the EU [and that]... this will be a new relationship based on free trade and friendly cooperation..." – how important is it that the Government keeps this promise?'</i>	Options: (a) Very important (b) Important (c) Somewhat important (d) Not important

The Best for Britain/focaldata study in June 2020 found that 9 in 10 'Red Wall' voters thought securing an EU trade deal was either 'important' (34%) or 'very important' (55%).

The expectation that the Government should keep its election promise and secure a new free trade deal with the EU was reflected across all voter groups in the totemic pro-Leave seats we polled. In Bolsover, the seat previously occupied by former Labour MP Dennis Skinner and which was taken by the Conservatives on a 11.5 per cent swing at the last election, 88 per cent said they thought securing a trade deal was 'important' or 'very important' (Table B). In Dudley North, taken by the Conservatives on a 16 per cent swing, 88 per cent said they share that opinion, just under the Red Wall average, whereas the figure for Workington is 90 per cent (Table B).

Table B - How important is it that the Government secures a trade deal? Views among all voters.

		<i>How important to keep Govt's manifesto promise to deliver a deal with the EU?</i>				
		Very imp + Imp	Very imp	Imp	Somewhat	Not imp
All voters	Sedgefield	89%	54%	35%	9%	3%
	Workington	90%	59%	31%	8%	2%
	Bolsover	89%	54%	35%	9%	2%
	Dudley North	87%	48%	39%	10%	3%
	Don Valley	89%	57%	32%	9%	3%

Figures are rounded to the nearest whole percentage

Among those who voted Conservative at the last election, 55 per cent said they thought it was 'very important' that the Government secured an EU trade deal, rising to 57 per cent for those who switched from Labour to the Conservatives in December. This second group of voters is thought to have a critical part to play at the next election, with each vote that returns to Labour essentially counting twice against the Conservatives

Table C – How important is it that the Government secures a trade deal? Views among all voters, Con 2019 voters and Lab-to-Con voters in key Leave-leaning Red Wall seats

		<i>How important to keep Gov't manifesto promise to deliver a deal with the EU?</i>				
		Very imp + Imp	Very imp	Imp	Somewhat	Not imp
Con 2019 Voters	Sedgefield	91%	54%	37%	7%	2%
	Workington	91%	58%	33%	7%	2%
	Bolsover	91%	54%	37%	8%	1%
	Dudley North	90%	49%	41%	9%	1%
	Don Valley	92%	58%	34%	7%	1%
Lab-to-Con 2019	Sedgefield	91%	56%	35%	7%	2%
	Workington	92%	60%	32%	6%	2%
	Bolsover	91%	56%	35%	7%	2%
	Dudley North	91%	52%	39%	8%	1%
	Don Valley	92%	60%	32%	7%	1%

Figures are rounded to the nearest whole percentage

The Best for Britain/focaldata MRP analysis found that Red Wall voters were very concerned about the impact of a No-Deal Brexit on the cost of living, with 68 per cent of Red Wall voters saying they thought daily essentials would be more expensive if the UK left the transition period without a deal. In Sedgefield, 70 per cent of all voters and 61 per cent of Labour-to-Conservative switch voters thought the cost of daily essentials would rise in a No-Deal scenario (Table D). A majority of Leave voters (51 per cent) and 2019 Conservative voters (53 per cent) believed the cost of these items would increase.

Female respondents in Red Wall constituencies were slightly more concerned than the average for these seats, with 71 per cent fearing the cost of daily essentials would get worse. Most significantly, close to 60 per cent of voters in these seats who switched from Labour to Conservative at the last election also said they thought the cost of living would rise (58 per cent).

Red Wall MRP, Q2: Cost of Daily Essentials

Focaldata analysis based on Panelbase fieldwork carried out on 29th May-5th June

Question:

'Do you think the cost of daily essentials will get better or worse if the UK leaves the transition period without a trade deal?'

Options:

- (a) Better
- (b) Worse

Our polling analysis found that voters in totemic, pro-Leave Red Wall seats thought the cost of living would get more expensive if the UK leaves the transition period without a EU trade deal in place.

Table D – Do you think the cost of daily essentials will get better or worse if the UK leaves the transition period without a trade deal? Views among all voters, Con 2019 voters and Lab-to-Con voters in key Leave-leaning Red Wall seats

		Better	Worse
All voters	Sedgefield	30%	70%
	Workington	30%	70%
	Bolsover	33%	67%
	Dudley North	38%	61%
	Don Valley	30%	70%
Con 2019 Voters	Sedgefield	43%	57%
	Workington	45%	55%
	Bolsover	44%	56%
	Dudley North	54%	46%
	Don Valley	45%	55%
Lab-to-Con 2019	Sedgefield	39%	61%
	Workington	39%	61%
	Bolsover	44%	56%
	Dudley North	49%	51%
	Don Valley	40%	60%

Figures are rounded to the nearest whole percentage

Best for Britain commissioned the independent market research group Humankind to interview a representative cross section of new or relatively new Conservative voters in 12 Red Wall seats that switched from Labour to the Conservatives at the 2019 General Election (Table E). These interviews were conducted over Zoom in two rounds between mid-April and mid-May.

This qualitative research project tested attitudes towards a range of issues regarding Britain's future relationship with Europe.

Red Wall Switchers: Focus Group Question Sets

Topic	Question sets
Working with Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would / do you feel about the UK cooperating with the EU to tackle the coronavirus?• The Government has already announced it wants to take part in the EU's early warning system for medical emergencies. How do you feel about that?
One crisis at a time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you think there might be any benefits to businesses in extending the transition period?
Support for the Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well do you feel the Government has handled the Covid-19 crisis?• Hypothetically, if there was an election later this year, how do you think you would vote? Why?• What would have to change so that you didn't vote Conservative again?

Results – Working with Europe

In both rounds of interviews, there was strong and widespread support among this voter group for international cooperation and, in particular, working with the EU to tackle coronavirus through information sharing, vaccine research and development.

When asked “how would / do you feel about the UK cooperating with the EU to tackle the coronavirus?”, a majority of respondents in April and all respondents interviewed in May favoured a close relationship between the UK and the EU to tackle Covid-19. *One-third of respondents in May 2020 expressed a sense of regret at voting Leave.*

On access to EU institutions, there was also strong support among this voter group for the UK’s participation in the EU’s institutions for tackling pandemics, including the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) and European Medicines Agency. This high level of support for the UK’s access to the EWRS was also reflected in a national Best for Britain poll in March 2020, which showed that 65 per cent of the UK public, including 55 per cent of those who voted Conservative in the 2019 General Election, support the UK’s participation in the EWRS.

Q: How did you vote in the 2016 referendum?

A: To leave... it was immigration. We were all blindsided by that; it was in the media a lot that we were getting a lot of immigration, that it was impacting our houses, our benefit system. I didn't realise what the impact would be. If I'd had more information at the time and understood it better I would have voted to remain. It was a lack of information and a lot of spiel. If I'd known better, I would have voted to stay.

Q: How do you feel about the UK working with the EU on Covid-19?

A: The whole world is trying to pull together to sort something. This is where we could possibly become a bit alienated when it comes to the joining of nations... our little country on our own. We stand alone but we obviously need that help at times. That's where we are probably going to lose something – we were part of something bigger. That's where you wonder what will happen with leaving the EU...

Female, 47, Don Valley, May 2020

Results - One crisis at a time

Our focus group findings from May 2020 found that new Conservative voters in the Red Wall were particularly concerned about the Brexit transition period ending as the UK economy recovers from coronavirus. When asked, "do you think there might be any benefits to businesses in extending the transition period?", a majority of respondents stated that maintaining the status quo for businesses as the UK economy recovers from the coronavirus pandemic should be a priority for the government.

"At the moment they're getting so much wrong. It's a mammoth task to get the economy back to what it was. Last thing we want is issues trading with EU. We've got enough change with what is going on now. We need borders to be open and simple. Last thing we need now is more complication, hurdles to jump over. It's going to be hard enough getting tourists in and out of the country."

Male, 53, Warrington South (May 2020)

Results – Support for the Government

We observed a sharp drop in support for the Government between the two rounds of interviews. In April, respondents expressed high and widespread levels of support for the Government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, although some respondents expressed concern that the lockdown measures should have been imposed sooner. In April, 5 out of 6 respondents stated that they would consider voting Conservative again.

In May, this audience of voters displayed lower levels of support for the Government, citing PPE shortages, the care homes crisis and concerns with 'vague and confusing Stay Alert messaging' as reasons for diminished support. In this round, 3 out of 6 voters said they would consider voting Conservative again, with some voters expressing renewed shoots of support for voting Labour again under Keir Starmer.

Conclusion

Taken together, our quantitative and qualitative research shows quite clearly that there is a significant set of challenges facing Red Wall constituencies.

Their economic make-up leaves them particularly exposed to the double impact of Covid-19 and Brexit, and voters are emphatic in their desire for the Government to deliver a good deal with the EU, as was promised.

Working closely with Europe is viewed as being far more important than with the US or China, and there are well-founded fears that, away from the politics of the situation, the basic cost of living will leap if Britain and the EU are not able to agree a robust trade deal.

From the Government's perspective, this presents an obvious threat to those Red Wall seats which Conservatives took from Labour in the General Election.

In short, Red Wall voters, attracted to the Conservative Party by a combination of Brexit promises and pledges to level-up regional economies, now want Boris Johnson to deliver on his commitments, starting with a sensible trade deal with our neighbours in Europe.

APPENDIX 1: MRP polling specifications and methodology

- 5,317 adults aged 18+ comprised of two groups:
 - 2,019 respondents who were nationally representative of the GB population
 - 3,298 respondents in 100 constituencies of interest for the modelling purposes of MRP
 - 1,768 were in the 44 constituencies which were won by the Conservatives in 2019 but were previously held by Labour in 2017 in the North and Midlands ('Red Wall' seats), an average of 40 respondents per constituency
 - 1,580 were in an additional 56 constituencies of interest, predominantly other seats that were marginal in 2019 plus other Conservative gains from Labour, an average of 28 respondents per constituency

Fieldwork dates

Fieldwork was carried out between 29th May and 5th June

MRP Inputs

Focldata's MRP model uses a range of individual and constituency level variables. Individual variables selected for this model were age, gender, education, region (NUTS1), constituency, plus previous election votes (2019, 2017, 2016 referendum).

These were selected due to their predictive power in our analysis of each of the questions we applied MRP to. Additionally, we had an interaction term combining 2019 General Election vote and 2016 EU Referendum votes, to capture more accurately the different patterns of eg 2019 Conservative Remain voters and 2019 Conservative Leave voters. For more details on variable selection, see 'Detailed comments on MRP methodology' below. For constituency variables, we include a significant number of variables, which include (but are not limited to) population density, % long term unemployed, % leave 2016, GE2017 and GE2019 vote share, deprivation index and EU parliament 2019 vote share. All data is sourced from the Office for National Statistics (Annual Population Survey and Census) where possible, plus the Electoral Commission for election data, and estimated by focldata otherwise.

Model specification

Focaldata uses a Bayesian Exploded Logit model, which is fit using Hamiltonian Monte Carlo with the open-source software Stan. The models are trained on the Google Cloud Platform. As the questions modelled were not vote intention, there was no turnout model applied, so results are representative of nationwide opinion (rather than the opinions of those who turn out to vote).

Questions

There were two questions that we modelled using MRP:

1. Do you think the cost of daily essentials will get better or worse if the UK leaves the transition period without a trade deal?

- a. Better
- b. Worse

2. The Conservative campaign manifesto said the Government would pursue "...a new Free Trade Agreement with the EU [and that]...this will be a new relationship based on free trade and friendly cooperation..." – how important is it that the Govt keeps this promise?

- a. Very important
- b. Important
- c. Somewhat important
- d. Not important

About focaldata

Focaldata is an AI-driven polling company based in London. It has conducted MRP for a range of commercial organisations and campaigns including Propercorn, Hanbury Strategy, Hope not Hate, M&C Saatchi, AbinBev and Best for Britain. It was the main MRP provider for the Conservative Party for the 2019 General Election, although focaldata is a politically neutral organisation. focaldata is a member of the British Polling Council (BPC) and abides by its rules. focaldata is also a member of the MRS.