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EU citizens in the UK after Brexit

MIGZEN Research Brief, no. 2

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Key Findings

EU citizens in the UK after Brexit reports on the responses of 364 EU/EEA citizens who currently live in or have recently lived in the UK to the survey 'Migration and Citizenship after Brexit', which asked people about their experiences of migration and settlement after Brexit. The survey was carried out as part of the research project "Rebordering Britain and Britons after Brexit" (MIGZEN), funded by the Economic and Social Research Council under the Governance after Brexit programme [ES/V004530/1].

This is a largely settled population reporting plans to stay put in the long-term, with evidence of multi-generational settlement and changes to legal status to support long-term settlement in the country of residence. However, looking to the future, there is some divergence between those from older and newer EU member states in terms of migration plans and attitudes to mobility.

Among all respondents, perceived insecurity over legal status and right to residence is a primary concern and affects family relations and shapes thinking on future plans, particularly in mixed-status families.

Family, relationships and work are the main drivers for migration decision-making, both amongst those who have moved on from the UK since Brexit, and those who stayed put. They are also the main consideration for those who plan to move within the next five years.

Two third of participants said Brexit affected their feelings about Britain significantly and, for most, negatively.

Respondents express a strong attachment to the EU, triggered by the EU referendum and the Brexit negotiations that followed.

Covid-19 impacted on people's attitudes towards their country of residence, less so towards country of origin and the EU overall. As far as the country of residence is concerned, respondents praised responses by devolved authorities but were mostly critical of the British government.

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A multi-generational, diverse and rooted population

According to Office for National Statistics estimates, at the time of the Brexit referendum, EU-born UK residents, who overall accounted for 5% of the UK population, comprised between 0.7% and 25.8% of the resident population in local areas, with geographical distribution concentrated around London, the South East, and the East.¹ Over forty years of EU membership transformed the makeup of the EU-born population in the UK. In the first Census post-EU membership in 1981, EU-born citizens made up 1.8% of the UK population. A historical perspective on the evolution of EU population in the UK highlights the presence of long-established multi-generational communities who may be in their second and third generation in the UK. Major changes to the size and distribution of the EU population occurred after the EU enlargements in the 2000s.²

This report focuses on the survey responses by those who identified themselves as EU/EEA citizens who live or have lived in the UK. The sample includes 364 respondents originally from 22 EU member states. The top five nationalities are German (54), Italian (40), Dutch (25), French (16) and Polish (15). Four out of five residents were in the UK at the time of the survey. The remainder were living in the UK at the time of the 2016 EU referendum, but have since moved on, or repatriated to their country of origin (CoO) within the EU. Nine out of ten EU citizens have lived in their current country of residence (CoR) for over 3 years, with a large majority (75% of total) resident for over 5 years.

Socio-demographic data from the survey shows that three out of four respondents are between 30 and 59 years old and one fifth under 30. Two thirds of the respondents are women.

Due to the sample size, we will not systematically analyse the responses by nationality at birth, however, we will highlight where specific responses differed significantly between those originally from an older EU member state (EU14) or from a new EU member state from the post-2000 EU enlargement (EU11). Such clusters echo a division we have found in migration studies literature, which has largely focused on migration movements from Central and Eastern European countries following the EU enlargement in the 2000s.³

At the time of the survey, the majority of respondents (56%) has secured a 'permanent' legal status in the country where they reside. Over 30% of respondents indicated that they have two or more nationalities, with German and Italian respondents most represented in this subgroup. For some this is a fairly recent development, in line with the trend reported in official data on increases in British naturalisations among EU citizens.⁴ A minority of respondents is on fixed-term residence permits. It is noteworthy that, while most respondents have on paper a stable legal status, many still feel insecure when it comes to their legal status and rights and long for pre-Brexit 'security' based on their EU citizenship.

Family, partnerships and work key reasons for moving or staying put after Brexit

Despite the disruptions and uncertainties caused by Brexit, the majority of respondents (71%) did not change country of residence. Of those who had moved, one in three had moved more than once. This echoes ONS (2022) estimates that, despite an increase in EU emigration from the UK since 2016 and a decrease in new immigration from the EU, there is a sizeable long-term resident EU population in the UK. Recent figures on the uptake of EU Settlement Scheme show that to date over 3.2 million people have been granted settled status and 2.5 million pre-settled status.⁵

Among those who had changed their residence since the 2016 EU referendum, the primary reasons for moving were, respectively, family, partner or spouse (25%), Brexit (17%), work (16%), and study (14%). For respondents, ‘Brexit’ encompasses emotional, political and practical considerations as it transpires from the open responses. The relevance of intimate relationships, including both ‘family’ and ‘partner/spouse’, confirms the role of the inter-personal dynamics of in migration decision-making.

If we consider primary and secondary reasons for migration together (see Figure 1), it is notable that while considerations surrounding labour market and employment opportunities are of paramount importance to respondents, family and relationships are the main driver behind decisions to move. This is not surprising, considering concerns over differences in legal status and rights to move, visit and settle among family members featured highly among our respondents who were concerned with visa and passports tearing their transnational and mixed-status families apart.

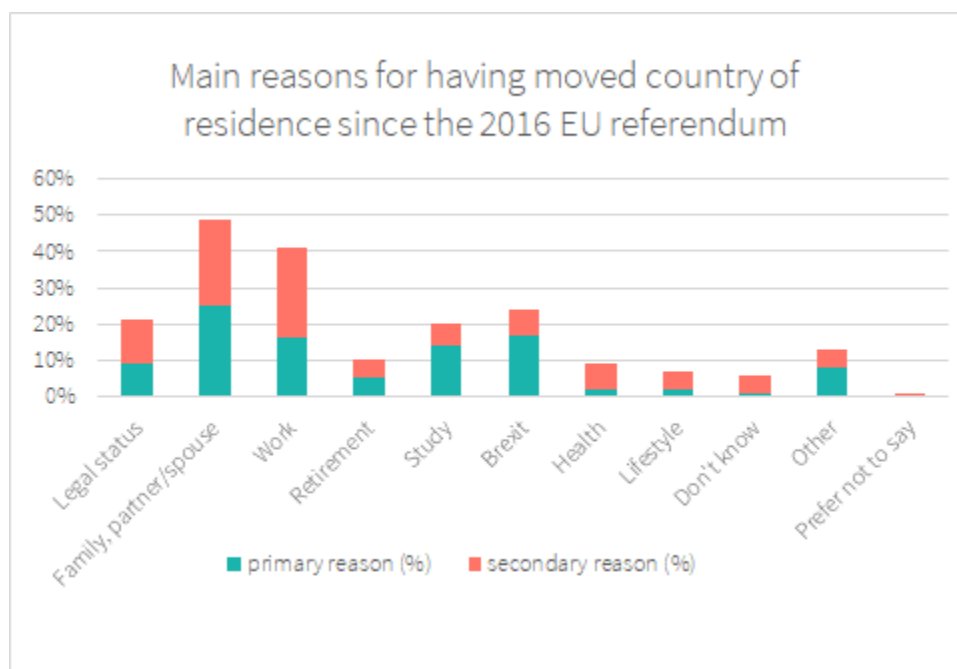


Figure 1: Primary and secondary reasons for having moved country of residence since the 2016 EU referendum

Among the EU citizens there is a larger proportion reporting having close family members with different migration status than among British citizens in the EU (see Figure 2). The difference in status is reported as a cause of concern by most respondents, however with some variation in intensity of this concern between male and female respondents. Almost all female respondents are to a different degree concerned, with over 50% either ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’. Among male respondents, one in five are not concerned at all, and just over 40% are ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ concerned.

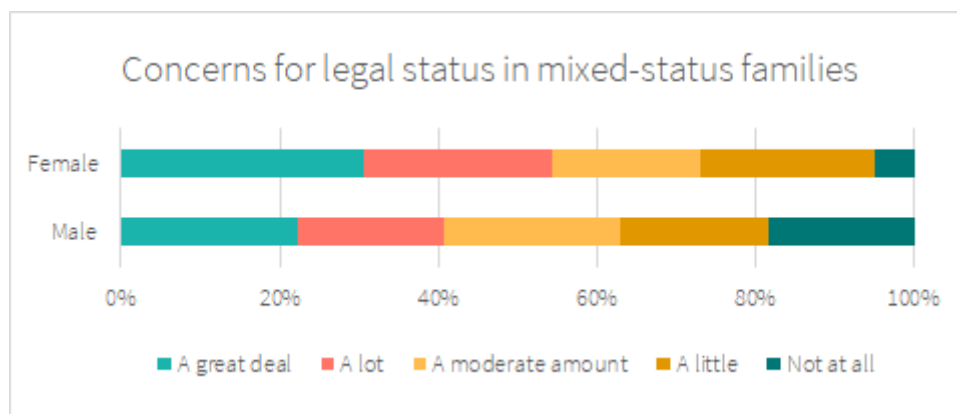


Figure 2: Concerns for legal status in mixed-status families

The impact of Brexit on a multi-generational mixed-status family is eloquently captured in this extract from a female respondent originally from France and in the UK since 1979 where she spent decades working for the NHS. Brexit was a shock for her and made her feel ‘betrayed, unheard, uncared for’. She eventually applied for naturalization as a British citizen ‘out of necessity’, she explains:

My daughter-in-law is British, my in-laws are British. My son has not yet sorted his passport to support his dual nationality. My son-in-law is Indian living in the UK on a visa (5-year route) and has to apply for visa to go to Europe. [...] I can barely express how hurt I am about the results of the referendum. I came in the UK in 1979 and worked in the NHS. I will for ever remember that Thursday in 2016 when I woke up and saw the result. I cried. I had to go to work. I have felt betrayed, unheard, uncared for, left to wonder about my life in the UK and what had been the point. I started to suffer from anxieties. I decided to apply for British citizenship not because I wanted to be British but so I could sleep at night again. When I got my British passport, I spat on it. (Female, French-British citizen in the UK since 1979, 64 years old)

Plans to migrate in the near future

The survey data suggests that, when it comes to plans for the future, amongst this population most EU citizens are not planning to leave the UK. However, we found greater propensity to re-migrate than the survey found in respect to British citizens living in the EU.⁶ Disaggregating the responses by macro-region of origin (EU14; EU11⁷), we found only marginal variation between citizens of the post-2000 accession countries and older EU member states in terms of their likelihood to move or stay put in the near future, with the only noticeable difference being that among EU11 there is a firmer resolve either to stay put or move, while the undecided are more numerous among EU14 citizens.

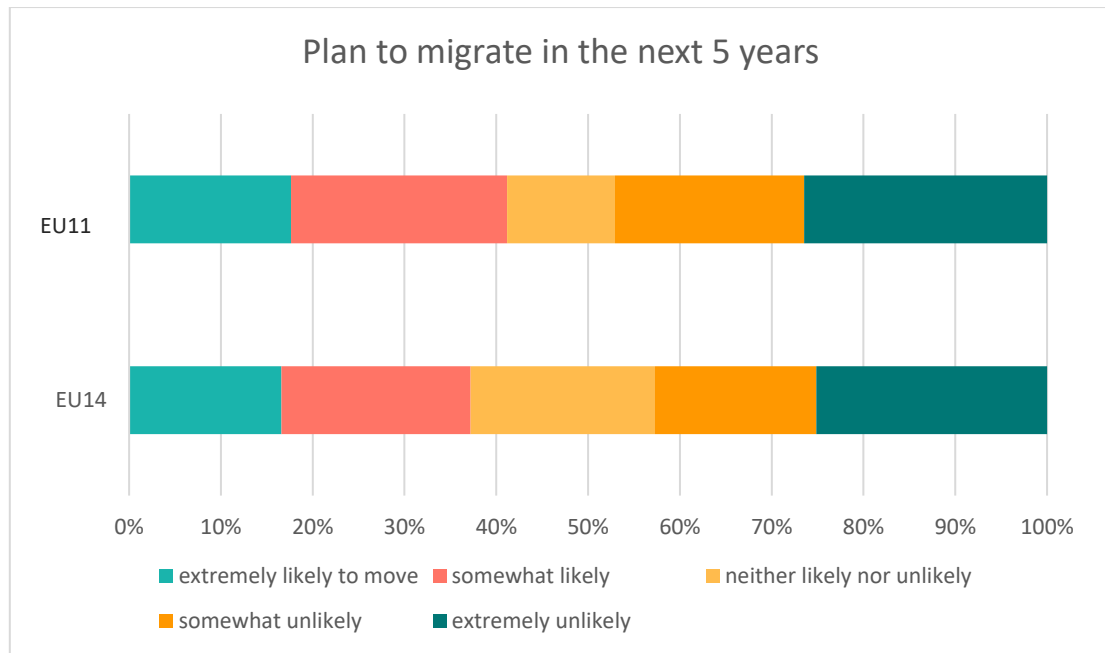


Figure 3: Plan to migrate by region of origin in the EU

Taken together, over a third of respondents (36%) are either extremely or somewhat likely to move, while 46% are somewhat or extremely unlikely to move. Of those who responded that they are considering to move in the future, the largest share (19%) said that ‘work’ was the primary reason for such a move. This echoes concerns expressed in the open text questions on Brexit damaging the British economy and leading to the ‘reduction of employment opportunities’ for all, while EU citizens from Eastern and Central Europe report instances of discrimination in the labour market and a sense of being not sufficiently protected from discrimination.

Brexit jeopardises the future prosperity of this country and my place in it. (Male, Italian citizen in the UK, 37 years old)

I feel less welcome in the UK and feel there is less professional opportunities. It's still home but not the same. I moved here as part of the same idea, philosophy now feel like that common idea is gone and I feel like an immigrant. (Male, Dutch citizen in the UK, 40 years old)

Hostility increased by Brexit. Not sufficient protection from discrimination. Polish not welcome in office jobs. Employment Tribunals sways judgments. (Female, Polish citizen in the UK, 42 years old)

In turn, some reflect on job opportunities (or lack thereof) in their country of origin and its broader political and social situation, and on their ability to change their situation in the UK, with some describing their situation as being ‘stranded in the UK’, while others stressing how Brexit has made them reassess their own country of origin and the advantages that it offers.

Being confronted with the inability to return due to family reasons and lack of comparable job opportunities. feeling stranded in the UK, with an uncomfortable sense of unfulfillment. (Male, Italian-British citizen in the UK, 46 years old)

After all, Italy is not that bad, and it is not populated or governed by racists. Shame that I work in an industry that is overwhelmingly English-speaking. (Male, Italian citizen in the UK, 33 years old)

It suddenly became a very attractive place to move to - with family being close, more safe, better work opportunities in IT, better living conditions, more money left over after paying the bills. (Female, Estonian citizen returned to Estonia after leaving the UK, 33 years old)

In terms of variations by EU region of origin, being able to stay connected with family members and partners is of greater concern among EU11 citizens than EU14. For EU11 respondents ‘work’ as reason for future mobility follows at some distance. Among EU14 citizens, family and relationships and work score closely in the list of the reasons for migration. Retirement also features as a reason for migration among EU14 but didn’t at all among EU11, similarly mobility as a ‘lifestyle’ choice is almost absent among EU11 citizens. Finally, considerations around legal status, which were reported early on in relation to previous occurred movement, are almost absent here.

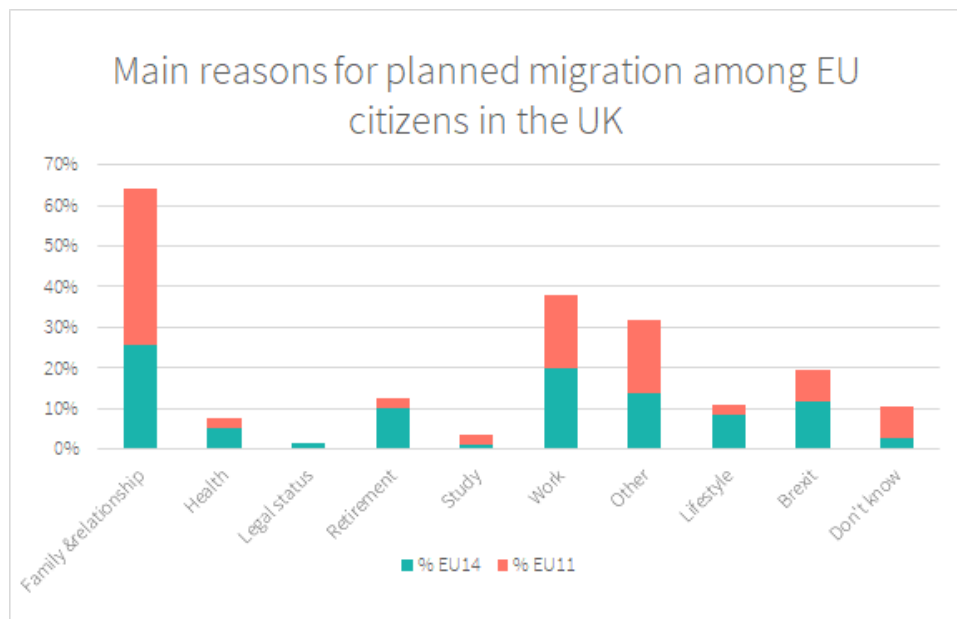


Figure 4: Main reason for planned move by EU region of origin

Amongst those who were planning to move, 31 countries were named as potential destination countries, with the most common one being Germany (17%). This was followed by Italy (12%) and Spain (11%). France followed (8%). A cross tabulation of respondent nationality and planned destination country suggests that most EU11 nationals (although based on a limited number of observations) were

planning on returning to their country of origin. For EU14 nationals, the picture is more mixed. While many of those who plan on moving are considering ‘return’ to their country of origin (e.g. 100% for Belgians, close to that for Swedes, about half of most other EU14 nationals), there is also significant onward migration. Spain and Ireland are both popular choices. Spain is an interesting case: only 2 Spanish nationals want to return to Spain, while 13 other nationals consider it their favoured future destination. While retirement features prominently as a reason given for wanting to move to Spain, people also cite health reasons (incl. of family members), and more general dissatisfaction with life in the UK.

Asked about the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 on their migration plans, 54% of respondents felt that Brexit has had a significant impact on their life and migration plans. On the contrary, more than half of respondents (53%) said that Covid-19 did not impact on their migration plans ‘at all’, while a further 19% said it impacted ‘a little’. In sum, our survey data shows that Brexit has had an impact on people’s migration plans, but what ‘Brexit’ stands in for varies among our respondents. Among those who declared to be ‘extremely likely’ to migrate in the next five years, Brexit plays a major role.

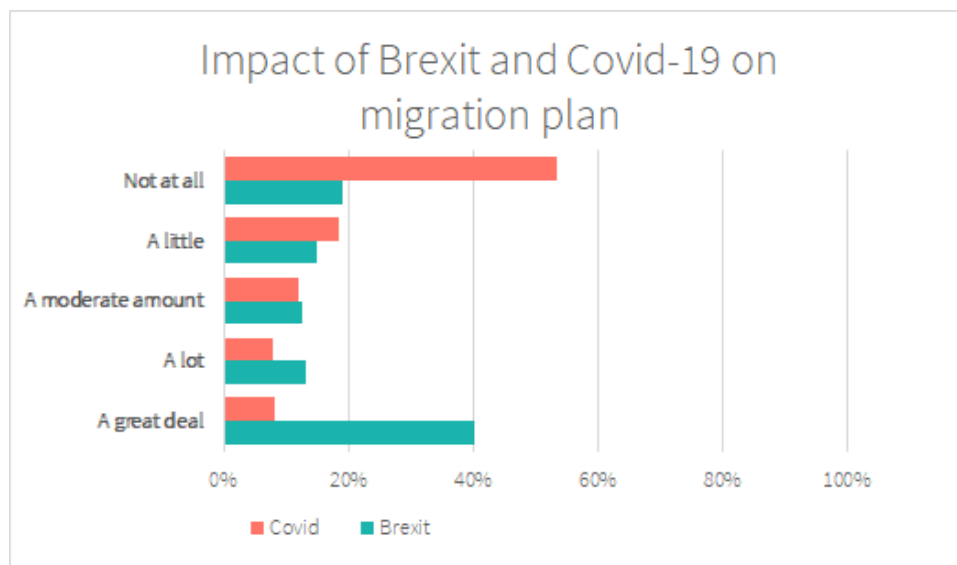


Figure 5: Impact of Brexit and Covid-19 on migration plans

In order to make more sense of people’s migration plans and strategies, we will now delve deeper into the sections of the survey that asked people about their sense of attachments and belonging to origin and destination countries (as well as the EU). We thus situate the data on people’s migration plans and Brexit within a broader picture on changing senses of belonging and attachment.

Renegotiating belonging in times of crisis

Questions around belonging and identity – especially national identity - are often framed as binaries in public and political discourse. But how do EU citizens see themselves in relation to their countries of origin and residence? Does feeling a strong attachment to one’s country of origin necessarily mean a weaker tie to the country of residence or vice versa? Are attachments to a supranational European identity at odds with – or even mutually exclusive of - national identity and belonging for migrants? Does one replace the other? Or do they co-exist and overlap – in harmony or tension? Through our survey data we glean some insights that can help us answer these questions.

Figure 6 below summarises how EU citizens feel about their country of residence, origin and the EU. In the section below, we will explore these responses more closely drawing also on open text comments. In particular, we will consider the relationship between these sentiments and if and how Brexit and Covid-19 have or not affected these sentiments.

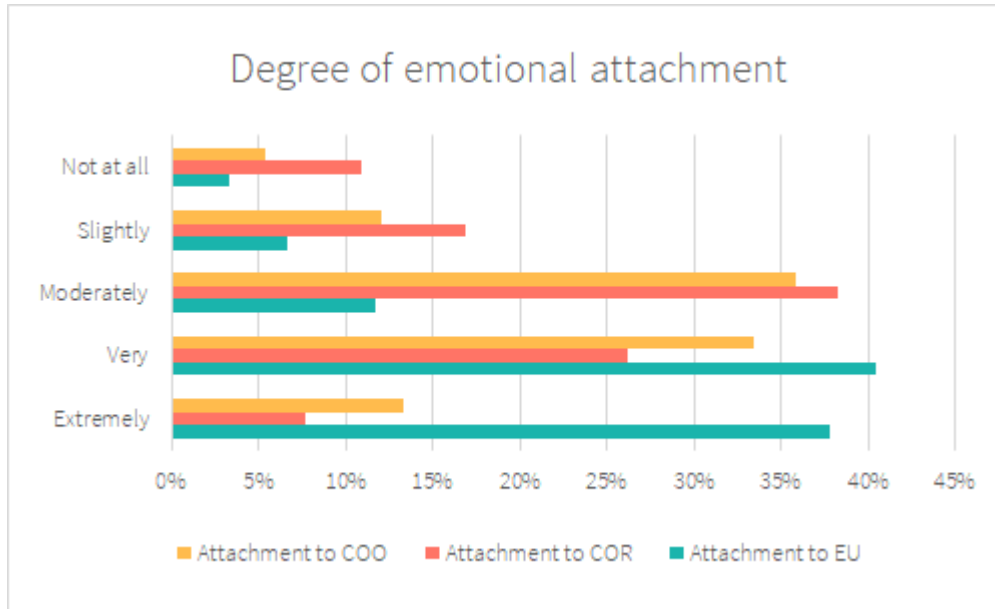


Figure 6: Degree of emotional attachment to the country of residence, country of origin and EU

A few initial observations to make: first, the majority of our respondents overall express attachment to their countries of origin and residence and to the EU. Second, while the first two subjects of attachment we invited respondents to reflect upon refer to complex entities - encompassing institutions as well as people, and places - in the case of the EU, the subject is defined more narrowly through its institutional denomination. Third, while positively attached to all three entities, it is noticeable how responses towards both country of origin and residence are spread across the spectrum, including people expressing no or slight attachment to them. Amongst these, it is worth noting that sentiments of 'no' or 'slight' attachment are more pronounced toward the country of residence (26%) than the country of origin (16%), which is not surprising given the degree of upheaval Brexit caused to the lives of EU citizens. In the case of the EU, respondents report overwhelming positive attachment, with only 8% reporting that they are 'not at all' or 'slightly' attached. Fourth, the degree of intensity of positive attachment varies between, the EU on the one hand, towards which 8 out of 10 respondents have either a 'very strong' or 'extreme' attachment, and the countries of origin and residence on the other hand, where 'moderate' attachment prevails and 'extreme' attachment is chosen by a minority of respondents. Again, the country of origin gains slightly warmer responses, with a higher proportion of 'very attached' than the country of residence.

'Brexit changed everything': emotional attachment towards the UK

Almost three quarter of our respondents (72%) said that they are emotionally attached to their country of residence. The intensity of the attachment however varies, with roughly half of them stating they are 'moderately' attached, and the other half stating that they are 'very' and, to a lesser extent, 'extremely'

attached. For a quarter of the sample, the attachment to the country of origin is only ‘slightly’ and ‘not at all’, with one in ten declaring no attachment at all, which is higher than what was reported by British citizens living in the EU.⁸

Brexit was certainly a transformative event when it comes to how EU citizens felt towards the UK. Almost half of respondents (43.8%) said that their feeling about their CoR had been changed ‘a great deal’ by Brexit, with a further 24.8% saying it changed ‘a lot’. A further 13.8% said it had changed ‘a moderate’ amount, and 6.93% responded with ‘a little’. For 10.58% of respondents Brexit had not changed their feelings about their CoR at all. The range and intensity of feelings is captured in the word cloud below. We asked respondents to choose three words to express their feelings towards their country of residence. While expressions of disappointment, frustration, betrayal are strong, the list also include more positive words such as love, family, home, and opportunities, which suggest an ambivalent and complex set of feelings towards country of residence.



Figure 7: Word cloud on feelings towards CoR

Open text responses confirm this ambivalence, with a prevalence of negative sentiments. A Dutch-born male respondent explains how Brexit triggered a significant change in his attitude towards British society and government and affected the way he interacts with people in public and his sense of belonging.

Up to the 2016 Referendum, I was at home here. When hearing my accent, people would ask me where I came from. I told them, and that was that. After the referendum, I am less eager to speak in public, as my accent will give me away. People still ask me where I come from and when I go home, but now those questions have lost their innocence. (Male, Dutch-born British citizen living in the UK, 43 years old)

Notably, Brexit also shaped his feelings toward The Netherlands, particularly when he faced the conundrum of how to secure his legal status in the UK and the implications this would have on his Dutch citizenship, as the Dutch government resisted pressures from Dutch emigrants to soften their restrictions on dual citizenship. As he continued,

By chance I found out that I - as non-married person - had to give up Dutch citizenship when applying for UK citizenship. Despite intense lobbying, there hardly is any political appetite in The Hague to pull its citizenship legislation into (at least) the 20th century. This has made me feel rejected and unwanted not just in the UK, but also in the Netherlands.

The change in how people interact with others in public recurs in several open text responses. For some, post-Brexit Britain is becoming not only less welcoming towards EU citizens but also less accommodating when it comes to the reality of mixed-EU families and relationships,⁹ which were arguably the by-product of the freedom of movement and settlement in the EU. In the open text, one of our respondents who has left the UK to work in Brussels while retaining close family ties in the UK explains how after Brexit she felt more uncomfortable carrying her identity as ‘European’, while acknowledging nonetheless that this is something that was there at least to some extent, already before Brexit:

Perhaps because I was the product of two nationalities, I grew up feeling "European" and speaking two languages. Most of my education, but not all, took place in the UK and there was always a "them and us" feeling, far too much emphasis on "class" and where one came from. Since leaving the UK to work in Brussels, I have on frequent visits been told in no uncertain terms to "speak English" when I have been talking to my husband or children while travelling on public transport. What language I speak to my family when travelling on public transport is my business and nothing to do with those sitting/standing nearby. (Female, Dutch-British citizen living in Italy, 75 years old)

I moved here as part of the same idea, philosophy now feel like that common idea is gone and I feel like an immigrant. (Male, Dutch citizen living in the UK, 40 years old)

This response captures the ways in which, for many, the 2016 EU referendum triggered an existential conundrum. It demonstrates how the terms on which people’s identity and sense of belonging were constructed, and are transformed and called into question by the referendum and the successive Brexit negotiations. Brexit is perceived at the individual level as a loss of social status, which some explain with the transition from being an EU citizen in the EU, to being an immigrant in Britain.¹⁰ The fear of the UK’s hostile environment policy towards migrants is mentioned in the open text responses, with a respondent from a racialised community explaining how:

As a brown woman living in the UK, Brexit has made the institutional racism of this country even more apparent to me. It has made me feel even less welcome than I did before. (Female, Portuguese citizen born in India, now living in the UK, 31 years old)

Echoing findings from previous research on intra-UK variations on how Brexit has been experienced by EU citizens, in open text responses a distinction is made between Scotland and England and how differently EU citizens have felt.¹¹

First, I need to make a distinction between Scotland, where I live, which has been nothing but welcoming, which has been dragged along in all this and which I am proud to have as my adopted home, and the UK as a whole, which now feels like a foreign and hostile country to me. (Female, Finnish-French citizen living in the UK, 25 years old)

Disconnected, neglected and proud: ambivalent feelings towards the country of origin

Respondents reported a marginally stronger attachment to their CoO than the CoR, with 35.8% saying they were ‘moderately attached’, 33.44% saying they were ‘very attached’, and 13.38% saying they were ‘extremely attached’. Only 5.35% were ‘not at all’ attached.

45.26% of respondents said that Brexit had not changed how they feel about their CoO. A further 19.71% said it changed ‘a little’, while 16.42% it changed ‘a moderate amount’. Only 11.68% said it changed ‘a lot’, while 6.93% said it had changed ‘a great deal’. For most people the EU referendum was a political battle between the United Kingdom and the EU, as a collective institution. EU member states played a relatively minor role in the protracted negotiations, this may at least to some extent explain why sentiments towards CoO were only marginally affected, particularly if we compare them with the impact of Brexit on sentiments towards the EU. Among those who were strongly impacted by Brexit are long-established EU residents who felt at home in the UK and had gradually lost contact with their country of origin. This sentiment is encapsulated by one of our respondents:

Looking at the impact of Brexit on the country of origin, it has changed too much and I feel a tourist over there after so long away. (Female, French citizen living in the Netherlands after leaving the UK, 48 years old)

Besides feeling disconnected, some EU citizens report also feeling neglected and by their CoO governments:

Hungary, a racist and totalitarian country is still in the EU - UK has left. Should be the other way around. (Female, American-Hungarian citizen living in Switzerland after leaving the UK, 56 years old)

Slovakia feels more distant now. It is not as easy to travel, visit or do economic activities as it used to be. (Male, Slovak citizen living in the UK, 41 years old)

Others, particularly, among EU14 citizens, reported more positive feelings ranging from increased patriotism and sense of belonging, to gratitude for providing a passport that grants freedom of movement within the EU and privileged mobility around the world, for themselves and their children. Below some extracts from the open text questions:

I feel more German and more attached to Germany since 2016. (Female, German-British citizen living in UK, 45 years old)

Brexit has empowered my sense of nationalism towards Ireland. (Male, Irish citizen living in Belgium after leaving the UK, 39 years old)

I appreciate that my country of origin provides me with an EU passport. (Male, Greek citizen living in the UK, 46 years old)

Often the observations on the CoO are framed in juxtaposition with what the respondents see as the new reality of post-Brexit Britain.

I understand better how it works (I'd never heard of Article 50 before the Referendum, for example). I appreciate it even more than before. My feelings towards it have not really changed. (Female, German citizen returned to Germany, 42 years old)

I had a vague idea of how the EU worked and what it offered its citizens. I've learnt much more about the EU since 2016 and come to admire the project and its positive impact on EU citizens lives. (Female, Belgian-Brazilian-British citizen who left the UK for Spain, 55 years old)

But there were also people who reported more negative feelings towards the EU since Brexit. In some cases, these feelings were expressed especially in relation to Brexit negotiations, but also more broadly in relation to the functioning of the EU:

Initially feeling very European, over time, since Brexit, sad to see a distance growing and frustrated by continuous bickering between governments. (...) Brexit enhanced my feelings of sadness and despair that the EU is a lost potential. Money have always been at the centre of both Brexit and the EU, and there is nothing humane about all this. How did we manage to create such hostile societies based on a narration of unity? (Male, Italian-British citizen living in the UK, 46 years old)

At the opposite end of the spectrum of emotions, others reported that Brexit increased their feelings of Europeanness, for some replacing their attachments to their CoR, for others supplementing it:

I feel more strongly about the EU. It is not a perfect structure, but it has brought me close to fellow Europeans from various countries. It has erased a lot of the cultural biases that existed between the countries, and I strongly believe it is important to preserve the unity to avoid conflicts such as those currently being cultivated by the UK. (Female, French citizen living in the UK, 37 years old)

I identify the EU as my homeland now, I identify as a EU citizen before I identify with any nationality. (Male, Irish citizen living in the UK, 35 years old)

Finally, while with some ambivalence and for some a sense of being caught between two fires, many respondents reported that Brexit made them realise that the EU was something precious that they had taken for granted, something that had to be protected and could be or already had been lost:

I took it for granted before Brexit, now aware of how precious it is, even if not perfect. (Female, French citizen returned to France, 52 years old)

I never used to pay much attention to what the eu stood for or what it did, but i have since learned a lot more in order to defend it from the constant lies peddled in the press. (Female, Italian citizen living in the UK, 44 years old)

I feel it's been a fight between the EU and UK and we have been forgotten and used by both sides. (Female, Spanish citizen living in the UK, 52 years old)

Changes due to Covid-19

Did responses to Covid-19 affect how people feel about their country of origin, residence and the EU? As Figure 9 illustrates, Covid-19 had limited impact on sentiments towards the country of origin and the EU, with the impact on the former slightly more pronounced in relation to the former. As far as the CoO

is concerned, 38.95% of respondents said that Covid-19 had not changed the way they felt about their CoO 'at all', while the remaining 61% said it had changed at least somewhat. 19.48% said it had changed 'a little', 17.98% said it changed a moderate amount, while a further 17.6% said it had changed a lot. Only 5.99% said it had changed 'a great deal'. By far, the largest share of respondents (46.42%) said that Covid-19 had not changed how they felt about the EU. Meanwhile, 23.77% said that it had changed a little, and 18.87% said it had changed a moderate amount. Only 6.79% felt it had changed a lot and 4.15% felt it changed 'a great deal'.

Responses reveal a stronger impact of Covid-19 on how EU citizens felt about their country of residence, with the largest share (24.72%) reporting that Covid-19 had not changed how they felt about their CoR. However, the combined share of strong sentiments reaches well over 30%, highlighting the significance of the Covid-19 response for a sizeable section of the sample, although the direction of this change in sentiments is not uniform.

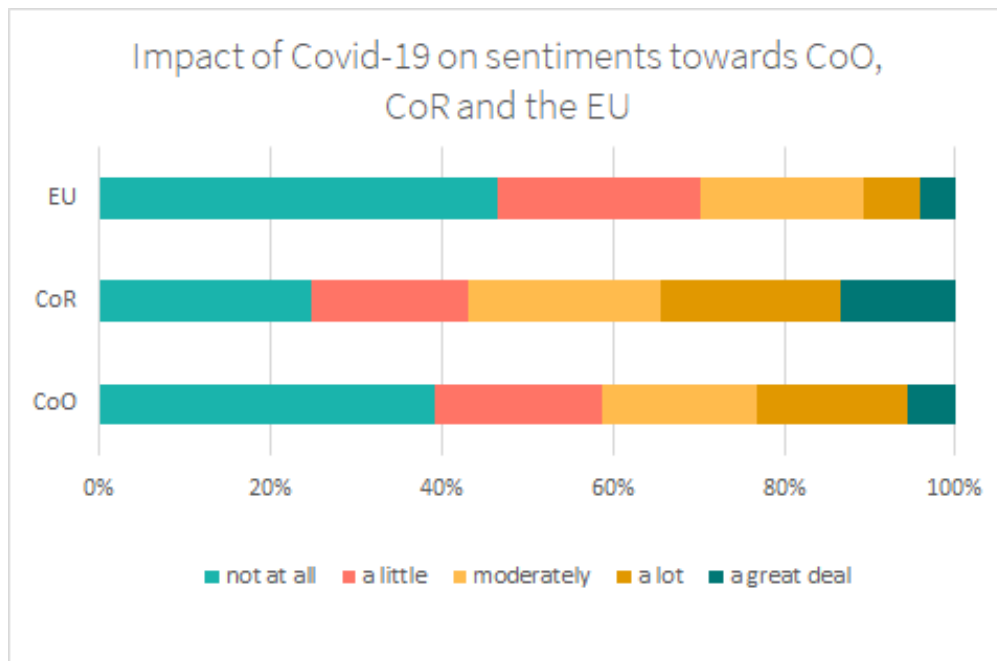


Figure 9: Impact of Covid-19 on sentiments towards CoO, CoR and the EU

Most EU/EEA citizens living in the UK report that Covid-19 impacted negatively (with only a few taking the opposite view) on their feelings towards the UK, specifically the UK government's (and in particular PM Johnson's) pandemic response.

My feelings towards Scotland are unchanged, but my view of the UK is more negative due to the incompetence of the UK government in handling the pandemic. (Female, German-British citizen living in the UK, 45 years old)

Very poor decisions from politicians as Boris wanted to protect capitalism, tax evasion, did not follow advice from scientists enough, if households could not afford a computer or tablet per child education was very disrupted, NHS staff used and abused as cannon fodder without proper equipment, very vague rules not followed. (Female, French citizen living in the UK, 62 years old)

The shambolic handling of Covid-19 further amplified my negative feelings towards to UK. (Female, Hungarian citizen living in the UK, 45 years old)

The UK caused many unnecessary deaths and is treating (and blaming) the NHS and care homes with content (sic), by lies, misinformation and much too late reactions to the urgent events. (Male, Dutch citizen living in the UK, 58 years old)

Among those taking a more positive view on the UK's response to Covid-19, it was the rollout of the vaccination campaign and the NHS that were especially praised. It is noteworthy that the response of devolved authorities (i.e. Scotland and Wales) was looked at more positively than that of the central government.

The UK, especially England has handled the Covid most appallingly. Scotland has done far better. (Female, French citizen living in the UK, 58 years old)

Delighted with the vaccine rollout, not so much on more recent complacency within the Westminster Parliament and Government. In Wales, however, the official approach has been more positive and thought through. (Male, Dutch citizen living in the UK, 64 years old)

Also, the feelings are more positive because vaccinations were made available to the UK residents faster than to residents of many other countries. (Female, Lithuanian citizen living in the UK, 47 years old)

Well done with the vaccination programme but shameful putting the economy before people's health and wellbeing. Also, disgusting the way Downing Street kept having his parties during lockdown. (Female, Italian citizen living in the UK, 45 years old)

Key findings and outstanding issues

EU citizens in the UK after Brexit reports on the responses to the survey ‘Migration and Citizenship after Brexit’ by 364 EU/EEA citizens who live or who had lived in the UK. Respondents originate from 22 EU/EEA member states, and they are a predominantly working age population, whose residence in the UK exceeds 5 years. These patterns of settlement have led to them putting down roots and forming families in the UK with evidence of established multi-generational communities.

Such long-term residence is further supported by the predominance of permanent legal status in the country of residence and above average incidence of dual citizenship.

Despite holding a stable legal status on paper, many reported continuing to feel insecure in the context of the transformation of their rights through Brexit. This insecurity was even more pronounced among those in mixed-status families, for whom the difference in status was reported as a major cause for concern.

The removal of freedom of movement impacts on patterns of migration and settlement from the EU to the UK as these migrations adjust to a changed landscape of immigration controls in the UK. When it comes to plans for the future, despite reporting concerns, most EU citizens are not planning to leave the UK. For those who are considering a move, the most common response was to highlight the possibility of repatriation to the country of origin, with family and personal relationships and work emerging as key motivations.

Brexit was a transformative event in respect to how EU citizens felt towards the UK but also gave rise to ambivalent feelings towards their country of origin, and significantly strengthened their attachment to European identities. In contrast, the Covid-19 pandemic had limited impact on feelings towards the EU and the country of origin, while more pronounced towards the UK.

Looking to the future, there is also likely to be a flashpoint for individuals if they do not secure settled status in a timely fashion when their pre-settled status lapses— due to what this might mean for their related rights and entitlements, access to employment and healthcare and consequences for their wellbeing. There are also continuing issues relating to digital-only migration status and its practical and psychological implications for EU citizens, including in terms of access to accommodation, labour market, and international mobility.

Notes

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6. Benson, M., Zambelli, E., Sigona, N., Craven, C. (2022b) 'British citizens in the EU after Brexit', *MIGZEN Research Brief*, No. 1, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6515640>
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About the Survey

The online survey on which this report is based was the first stage of the research in this mixed-methods project. The survey was directed at: (a) British citizens or nationals who are currently living/have lived in an EU/EEA country (excluding UK); (b) EU/EEA citizens or nationals who are currently living/have lived in the UK, and (c) Foreign-born, non-British and non-EU/EEA citizens or nationals who are currently living / have lived in the UK. More specifically, the survey aimed to understand whether and how Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic have affected respondents' perceptions, plans and decisions on whether to stay put, migrate, or repatriate, how these events have changed, if at all, attitudes towards the EU, country of residence and origin, understandings of citizenship, identity and belonging.

The survey, which was administered via Qualtrics, contained 96 questions, organised into 6 modules, exploring: Current residency and migration/legal status; Citizenship and Migration trajectories; Relationships; Identities and belongings; Social, political and community participation; Socio-demographic information

The survey was open for five weeks (13 December 2021 - 16 January 2022). In this time, we collected 2,024 unique and valid responses. Data was exported from Qualtrics, anonymized, and analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, using STATA and NVivo software respectively.

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About MIGZEN

Rebordering Britain and Britons after Brexit (MIGZEN) explores the long-term impacts of Brexit and Britain's shifting position on the world stage on migration to and from the UK. It is funded the ESRC through the Governance after Brexit scheme [ES/V004530/1]. It is a collaborative research project involving academics at the Universities of Birmingham and Lancaster, and partners The 3 Million, British in Europe and Migrant Voice. It aims to produce new and timely knowledge on how the changing legal and political relationship between the UK and EU in consequence of Brexit shapes migration and migrant experience - including settlement, questions of identity, citizenship and belonging. It adopts a unique approach to understanding Britain's migration story, that brings together emigration with immigration, and that considers British citizens, EU citizens and Third Country Nationals alongside one another.

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How to cite this report

Sigona, N., Craven, C. Benson, M., and Zambelli, E. (2022) *EU citizens in the UK after Brexit*, MIGZEN Research Briefing 2. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6620739 Online: www.migzen.net/publications



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