

# Brexit

## Consultation Summary Report September 2017

NB: This consultation was designed to specifically canvas the views of non-UK EU citizens that are living, working or studying in Fife.



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# 1. Executive Summary

The following report outlines the process and findings Fife Centre for Equalities took to collect concerns that Brexit may have on communities on behalf of Fife Council.

It was agreed we would seek the opinions of 60 residents of Fife through who were concerned or wishing to share their views about Brexit. The conversations began in June 2017 and were themed around:

- Education
- Employment/business
- Welfare/Benefits
- Right to remain
- Hate crime
- Any other concerns

This summary report contains an overview of the detailed consultation data provided and identification of key themes and concerns. We identified the concerns below to be recurring and shared across interviewees:

- **Education:** the lessening of educational and career outcomes and opportunities for future generations.
- **Economy:** the negative impacts of losing low-paid EU workers staff and the European financial assistance to farming communities.
- **Welfare:** No direct links were drawn between Brexit and financial risk, those were instead associated with the wider Welfare Reform agenda that is seen to impact both UK as well as EU nationals.
- **Hate crime / Hate incidents:** concerns about hate / racist speech content becoming more prevalent (i.e. everyday conversations, as well as media/news stories), mainly as islamophobia rather than anti-EU / Brexit related; but otherwise no changes in perception in hate crimes

# 2. Consultation Methodology

We initially agreed to host a series of focus groups of 20 individuals in 3 different localities in Fife. This was done to make sure that our events were easily accessible and covered the North East, Central and South West areas so we could hear views and concerns from people from different communities across the region.

Participation in these events was lower than expected and individuals said they would have liked to be involved but did not have the time to attend the focus groups, but they would be happy to complete an online questionnaire.

We developed a questionnaire that could be completed online and in person and carried out an online campaign, attended events and spoke to individuals in person to gain their view and concerns.

All responses gathered in person or online were added to Survey Monkey for analysis.

### 3. Stakeholder Engagement

#### Summary of Activities

<u>Online Campaign</u>	<u>One to one interviews held in</u>	<u>Partners approached</u>
Facebook	Kirkcaldy	Fife Cultural Trust
Twitter	Burntisland	NHS Fife
Email networks	Cupar	Fife Migrants Forum
E bulletin	Rosyth	Fife Council
Weekly catch up	Dunfermline	St Andrews University Student Association Societies
	Leven	Fife Forum team
	Oakley	Dunfermline Advice Hub
	St Andrews	

#### Demographic Data

Number of people interviewed 61 with 32 individuals disclosing their nationality, 29 did not disclose their nationality. Out of those that did, reported resident status is as follows:

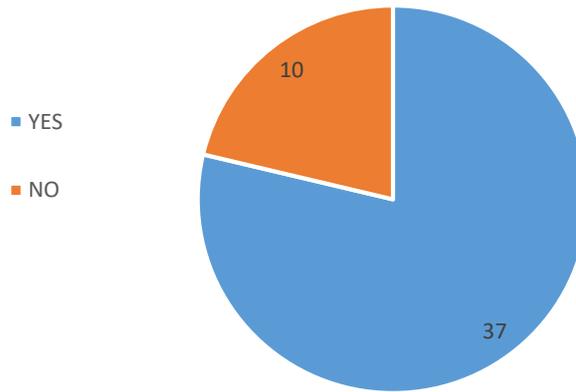
EU National who is working or seeking work	16
A EU National who is studying	4
A EU National who is self-employed	1
A EU National who is self-sufficient	2

## 4. Consultation Feedback

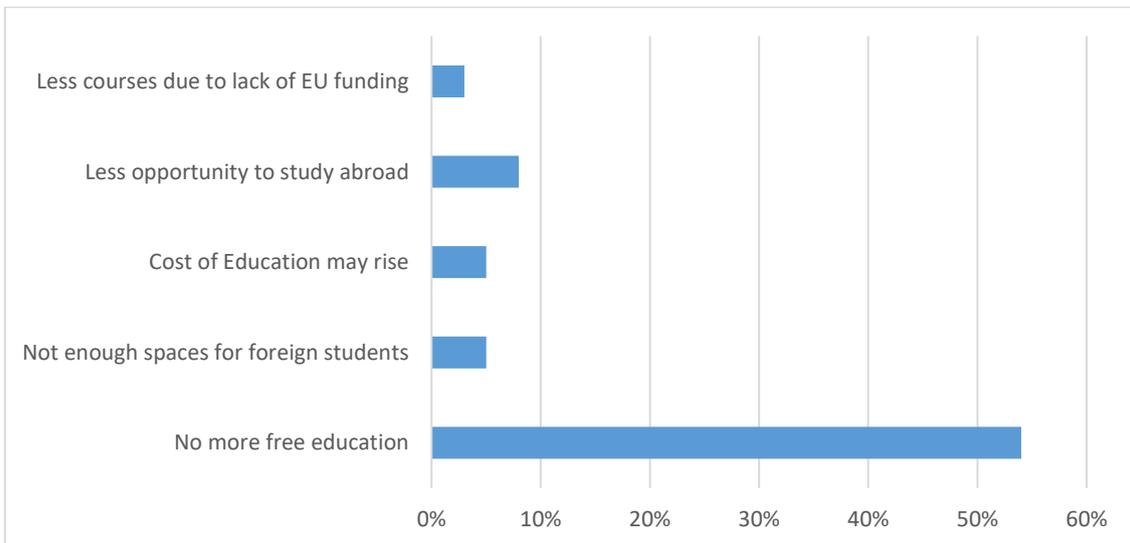
The following section identifies responses to key themes, with examples of concerns

### Q1. Are individuals concerned about educational opportunities after Brexit?

58 out of 61 people responded



Out of the 58 people that responded 37 people said they were concerned about education, 10 said they were not and the remainder didn't know.



**Concerns about education:**

*It matters that we continue with free education and that income generated by overseas students continues. My concern is on the impact Brexit may have on these areas and our opportunities for education may diminish*

*Yes I am concerned about education as I want my family to continue to get free education*

*Yes I am concerned that leaving the EU that will affect the free education and we might eventually have a paid education system like England.*

*Yes I am concerned about the education of the younger generation that they may not be able to obtain free education in particular my grandchildren.*

*Yes. I am concerned about education two of my friend have not applied for places to study as they do not feel secure to peruse education that without any security that they will be continuously funded*

*Yes will there be enough spaces for foreign students and how much will it cost to study and live over here. Then will a student be able to work to supplement their income to support their studies*

*I do believe there will be a lack of educational opportunities due to the loss of some European funding*

*It's pretty bad for equality in education, I like the idea of our students being able to go overseas, have exchange programmes etc. the whole thing has just made the world a lot more smaller for our young people what matters is that young people can afford to go in other countries and get to learn other cultures and different work. Brexit will just make it that much harder*

*Am very worried about students, their future and the chances they'll miss out on by not being able to go abroad. Now it's most likely there will be more form filling and a lot of barriers and it will just be the well-off who will be able to give their children a chance to experience another country, way of working etc. Summer schools are really good for our young and for the colleges - this will all get more difficult*

*I'm worried that there will be a lot less training and education opportunities after Brexit, because many courses and training schemes are funded by Europe.*

**Q2. What are your concerns about your job or business?**

55 people let us know their employment status:

Employers	11%
Retired	7%
Students	16%
Employees	51%
Those not in Employment	14%
No answer	11%

**Concerns as employers:**

*I think lots of businesses will suffer. We rely on our migrant workforce and my concern is that we cannot afford to lose people paying into the system as both jobs and businesses will suffer.*

*What happens about the subsidies, especially for farmers, we get from the EU what sort of impact will that have the prices of groceries are already increasing, the pound is in a very weak position against the euro*

*I want to start my own business running a café. My concerns are whether I would be eligible to get financial help with start-up costs and that not being a British citizen that I may not be able to apply for particular licences, for example alcohol licence. I am also concerned about how much it will cost to hire and keep staff and the possibility of the rise in prices that could stop me making a living*

*Yes I am very concerned as this will result in the UK at large failing to access specialized skills that are possessed by EU nationals.*

*The uncertainty. I may lose a reliable and cost effective seasonal workforce so I can get my fruit and veg picked or it may cost me more to take on foreign workers so it won't be worth it.*

*My concerns are around funding and specifically the loss of European funding, subsidies help me keep afloat.*

**Concerns as employees:**

*Whether I can come back and work on the farm next year or if I will have to pay to come over to work that wouldn't be worth my while*

*I am worried that I will have to go through time- and energy-consuming application procedures, and that opportunities for people from outside the UK*

*will be limited. I wouldn't like to be discriminated on the basis of my EU nationality*

*I work in a pub and am concerned that I won't have my rights protected as I am not a British Citizen*

*For jobs it might get worse, it's hard to say for now. for working conditions though that's really bad news, I can see that go downhill with less safeguards and zero hours everywhere it feels like we're being pushed to work longer hours like the US my big worry is losing chances to work overseas, or there being no one to challenge minimum wages - it is so bad for young people it is really unfair*

*I think it will directly impact employment rights - EU law has put loads of safeguards for workers in place and I don't trust the conservative government to keep those in place after the repeal but it's going to be pretty big knock-on effect for the third sector - in Fife close 50% of employment funding is from ESF, what will happen to that? Fife businesses will be affected - but it's not just that there's no jobs, plenty of jobs that no one in Scotland wants to do. I used to strawberry pick when I was still at home and help pay bills with my parents, no one does that anymore*

*Businesses are moving out of the UK, how that will impact post Brexit is quite a daunting thought and will it have an impact on me?*

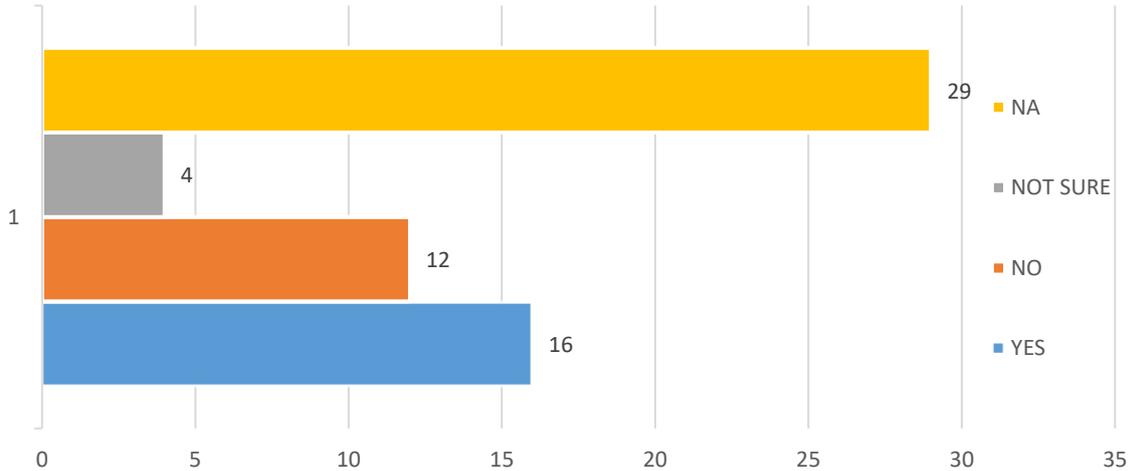
*I'm worried about my status after Brexit, as I have been in the UK for over 30 years, but have always retained my German nationality. I don't know whether I will have to apply for a work permit or pay over £1000 for naturalisation. I don't want to have to marry my long term partner for the sake of convenience*

*Dire for some and will leave gaping hole in some local industries particularly agricultural activity in Fife. In terms of the Third Sector, I believe this will be squeezed as budgets become more constrained and commissioning will become less about quality and more about savings.*

*I have no concerns over my own job but I do for business in general. If you look at the current exchange rates and how much they have been affected. It is fine if you export but not so good if you are having to import. How long before these costs are passed on to ourselves??*

**Q3. Do the possible changes in welfare put you at financial risk?**

61 out of 61 people responded to this question as follows:



16 said they were concerned, 12 were not concerned, 4 were not sure and 29 people said it was not applicable

**Concerns about financial risk:**

*Yes as I won't earn enough money to finance a private insurance and therefore will have to take the risk of not having one... The future is fearful...*

*Yes I'm concerned about benefits as I feel the Tories will take the opportunity to take away benefits from people I have been long term disabled and the government will cut down on benefits*

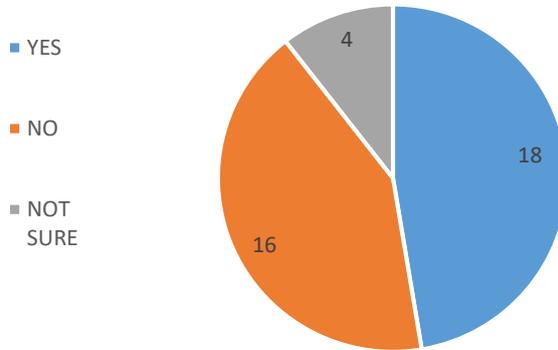
*We get help (parents of 4 children) with tax credits and child benefit. We would really struggle if we didn't have those benefits to help us. And it would not be worth both of us working as childcare for 4 children would cost too much*

*I've already had a drop in my work hours, there's no money for many communities and peoples, and welfare is getting worse we need more young people to come in and work and get taxes paid, it's no wonder welfare is getting less and less. What's even worse is the fee to pay in employment tribunals, it's up to 1200 pounds for discrimination - who can pay this now. Am not sure the Scottish government is really committed to removing this*

*None on myself directly but I do fear for those on a low income or not working at all. I think the benefits system is broken and needs fixed and quickly.*

**Q4. Does Brexit create challenges for you family life/are you applying for British/EU nationality?**

38 respondents out of 61 responded

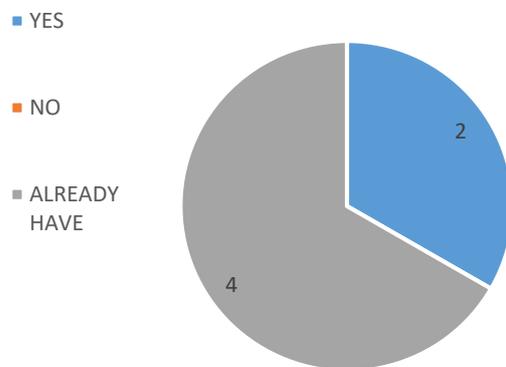


18 said yes, 16 said no and 4 were not sure

**Applying for British or EU Nationality**

6 people responded to this question

Chart Title



4 stated they have and been successful and 2 are applying.

**Concerns about impact to family life:**

*I have friends who are moving back to their country of birth as the uncertainty is using concern and not to be part of the EU is a concept that is hard to come to terms with*

*Yes: several of my European and British in-laws have already emigrated elsewhere (to South Africa, America, Australia and France) as they received no guarantee to keep either their jobs or rights etc. My British family want to leave the UK and apply for a new nationality because they are ashamed of the level of racist comments circulating on social media (by the tabloid press as well), also by the lack of political engagement to defend the EU nationals' situation within the UK. I've considered applying for British nationality but now I wouldn't as I feel insulted by it all and by the lack of support received.*

*Yes I am concerned, even though in Scotland they are reassuring people that they are welcome to Scotland*

*I have been in the UK for over 8 years I have permanent residence status. I have little sisters that have been in the UK for only a few years they might have to meet extra conditions in order to obtain permanent residence*

*I am concerned that farmers in Fife will have a harder time in getting workers that will harvest for them*

*Very unpredictable as their not proper planning and this will result in not the best conditions that will affect people that are trying to remain the UK*

*I am concerned as I think that most EU nationals will have to meet conditions as there are growing global barriers and I think Brexit is one of them.*

*Think it's too early to tell. Things are not clear and it's hard to plan my future*

*It may have as I am from Portugal and mu husband is Scottish not sure how we will be affected. We don't have enough information about what is happening at the moment*

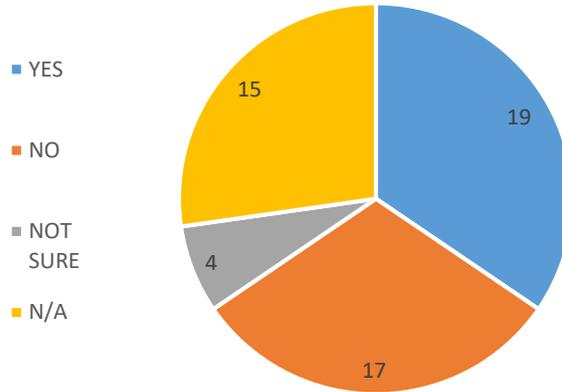
*Have EU nationality not sure what will happen in the future as the children were born in the UK*

*I already have EU nationality and it is easy for my family to visit me in Fife. I hope it won't change in the near future.*

*Yes on an everyday basis as all will be impacted upon. Nationality status should not be prohibitive but choosing a nationality either way might be*

**Q5 In your experience has there been a rise in hate crime or other incidents related to other EU nationalities since Brexit?**

55 out of 61 people responded



19 people said yes, 17 said no 4 were not sure and 15 stated it didn't apply

**Concerns about hate crime or incidents:**

*Yes definitely, to the point that some of us feel like we are the new Jews on the block. I am not there yet but I absolutely see why they are feeling that way. It is still subtle but it is there. In Scotland, we still feel safe but for how long? I was told with defiance in a public environment "You will go back to your country one day! Some Polish and German nationals in England had extreme right wing comments or drawings made onto their door, car or posted on social media etc. I have closed my website and do not have any social media activity in anticipation of some potential growing racism coming our way*

*Yes. I feel hate crime is on the increase but is directed towards people from Middle East who are being labelled Muslim but not directly to EU citizen mainly because of all the terror attacks that have occurred down in England*

*Yes hate crime will increase I have some negative experiences that I have had but they cannot be classified as hate crimes*

*Yes hate crime has been increasing and I am concerned .Scotland is peaceful and I am concerned that the situation in Scotland will change as a result of the Brexit.*

**Concerns about hate crime or incidents (cont'd):**

*My only information is derived from the news and newspapers. There does seem to have been a rise in hate crime. However, there is too much publicity, based on loose information. This gives the impression of an increase, which could be misleading*

*It's hard to tell, I don't see a lot has changed since the campaign but I know and I've heard more people are saying racist stuff*

*Not really, just during last year with the referendums, nothing this year. But I know several workers from Poland and that have had more problems at work and are picked on. It's always been like that*

*Most definitely, it's all over the news, papers, everywhere. I'm really not looking forward to Brexit and did not vote for it.*

*Within my community I have not noted any significant rise in hate crimes but I have noted a change in language which is more negative. EU citizens in particular are painted in a very negative way by the media (largely printed press) and politicians (not all) fuel this for their own party or selfish ends. I believe this issue of immigration is misinformed and the focus is clearly towards the negative. Leaders tend to take a lowest common denominator approach to this with the intent of appealing to sentiment rather than trying to shape or change this for the better.*

*There will always be some element of hate crime, it's the society we live in.*

**Q6. Are there any other concerns you would like to tell us about Brexit?**

*I am concerned about freedom of movement as there are so many checks that are already being done when travelling don't need more conditions. There will be an increase in living cost and I feel that they are already going up.*

*That people will become more unfriendly to people from the EU feel that Scotland instead being given a big enough say in the matter of which Brexit will affect Scotland and that Brexit will be another global barrier*

*It would be good to have more information about what is happening and what it means. You read stuff in the papers and you don't know what to believe*

*About being able to travel to UK in the future for holidays and how expensive it could be*

**Other concerns about Brexit (cont'd) –**

*Just that we come to work to make money and the prices are higher this year it's getting harder to save or send money back*

*I am really worried I will feel like an uninvited, unwanted guest in the UK after Brexit. I don't think I will want to stay here if this will be the case.*

*As a nation and as individuals we require information of what each stage of Brexit will involve and the consequences of change. This should not be party political, but should inform all. I am very concerned about the strengthening polarisation of the political parties. For something that is of such importance the politicians really should make 'common cause' and find ways to develop Brexit in a way that will be widely understood and guide people towards a considered future. The politicians could benefit from speaking with members of the public and learning of their views - across generations and backgrounds, not from their political associates*

*I'm just worried about the laws, like equality and rights for people - it's not a problem to be an independent country but I don't trust politicians to make it fair for everyone.*

*Concerned that this gives organisations like the National Front a mandate to abuse non UK nationals. Do worry that this is taking us back to the 60's and send immigrants back home - we needed immigrants to do work then and we need them just as much now. Will there be a backlash against the children of European nationals as very hard to differentiate between those born in this country and those who have migrated here later in life.*

*Yes: let's face it, we have become second class citizens so we better get ready for what is coming next. What matters most to me is to be treated the same way as I was when I came here 23 years ago, and it does not seem to go that way. We need guarantees: if we don't, we are going to struggle for example to have loans, i.e. to buy a car. The risk is that we are starting not to be visible or seen as not part of the economic market*

## 5. Key Themes/topics

### **Education:**

The lessening of educational and career outcomes and opportunities for future generations was a common theme across put across by several interviewees. This could be summarised firstly as a worry about a negative impact on education providers in the UK due to lower numbers of foreign students and secondly as longer term impact to student development, due to possible loss of study exchanges programmes and EU work placements.

### **Economy:**

Employers are concerned about negative impacts on recruitment of low-paid staff or high-skilled workers to keep businesses afloat. There is also concerns about the loss of European financial assistance to farming communities.

Employees, as expected are primarily concerned about the loss of employment rights protecting their in-work conditions following Brexit, while there is no concern at this stage about availability of jobs or level of remuneration.

### **Welfare:**

No direct links were drawn between Brexit and Welfare Reform, however the concerns about the long-term financial welfare of UK citizens (and EU nationals) was noticeable as a common thread across interviews was the diminishing amounts of money and/or rising personal debt for individuals and families.

### **Hate crime / Hate incidents:**

The majority of respondents did not voice concerns about a rise in hate crime against EU nationals as such, but noted that more pro-racist speech (i.e. including media/news stories) was becoming more common and that this was aimed towards members of Muslim communities.

### **Also of note:**

There is concern about:

- The ability to trust the press and media and/or access clear information on Brexit and its impact on Scotland's communities
- The lessening (or loss) of Human Rights
- The rising influence of extremist / far-right organisations in deprived communities due to the current context

## Keywords

#brexit #concerns #localauthority #residents #Fife

## Further Information

More information about Inclusive Communication or other equality, diversity or inclusion matters, please contact Fife Centre for Equalities by email

[info@centreforequalities.org.uk](mailto:info@centreforequalities.org.uk) or telephone 01592 645 310.

Fife Centre for Equalities aims to build a collective voice to champion equality, diversity, inclusion and social justice across Fife and beyond.

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