



Research Project - Brexit: Women's Perspectives Summary

1. Introduction

What are women's views on Brexit? The consortium recently asked this question in a research project that explored the views of women living and working in disadvantaged and rural areas of Northern Ireland.

2. Women's views: key findings

- **Participants were deeply divided on Brexit:** many supported it (believing it would bring positive outcomes for society at large); many opposed it (believing it could damage the economy and threaten equality); and, a tiny minority was unconcerned.
- **Support for Brexit** was particularly strong among some older women and in some areas with a Protestant/unionist majority, while **opposition to Brexit** was particularly strong in rural and border areas and those with a Catholic/nationalist majority.

Women's key Brexit concerns

- Potential **limits on the free movement of goods and people between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (i.e. a 'harder border'** with new custom and immigration controls).
- **Potential impact of a harder border on political stability.**
- **Potential impact of a harder border on the economy** (rural communities, border regions, cross-border employment, the agri-food and manufacturing sectors, food prices, living standards and cross-border cooperation in health, education and transport).
- **Potential post-Brexit economic downturn** (and what it might mean for low-income households, women's poverty, gender equality, rural communities, border regions and government funding of the wider women's sector).
- **Citizenship rights, women's rights and gender equality** post-Brexit.

- **Potential loss of EU funding post-Brexit** without replacement from government (and what it might mean for different sectors and areas, particularly the farming sector and border regions).
- **Brexit and rural wellbeing.**
- **Regulation post-Brexit** (such as the regulation of food safety and the environment).
- **Rise of anti-migrant prejudice.**

Brexit negotiations/outcomes: women's priorities

- **Proper recognition of women's interests and Northern Ireland interests.**
- A **soft border** between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- **Safeguarding of rights and equality protections** for women.
- **Adequate compensation** for any loss of EU funding in Northern Ireland.
- Action to **address the impact of any post-Brexit economic downturn** on low-income households.
- **Respect for Good Friday Agreement** commitments.

3. Project recommendations

Government urged to:

- ensure **proper representation of women's interests and Northern Ireland's interests** in Brexit and post-Brexit negotiations between the UK and EU;
- **safeguard EU derived equality protections** in UK law post-Brexit;
- **commit to gender-sensitive analysis** of Brexit policy change;
- **address the impact of any post-Brexit economic downturn** on women's poverty and vulnerability;
- take due account of the impact of Brexit on **rural communities**;
- ensure adequate **opportunity for stakeholders** to feed into and scrutinise Brexit policy change;
- provide clarity on **compensation for EU funding losses**; and,
- fully **respect its Good Friday Agreement commitments** post-Brexit.