

A gathering storm?

Rising risks of identity-based violence in Britain

The promise of Brexit has raised the temperature of political debate, not only in Westminster but up and down the country. During these crucial weeks of debate in Parliament, we urge all Members of Parliament to show leadership in detoxifying national discourse.

Our recent research has found:

- **More than one in three believe that the protection of human rights become less important at a time of nation crisis**
- **Public trust in politicians, Government and the press is low**
- **Prejudice towards minorities has become mainstream**
- **Many Leave voters hold high expectations of the positive impact Britain's exit will have on their lives and communities**

We forecast that if left unchecked, current and emerging negative social trends will continue to gather momentum and lead to further, long-term rises of identity-based violence in Britain.

Given the complex realities of the Brexit process and the big promises that have been made, we predict a heightening of anxieties among those who would feel their promised future threatened; in these circumstances we would be particularly concerned for the safety and wellbeing of minority communities in the UK.

Recommendations for Members of Parliament:

- **Show individual and collective leadership in detoxifying and lowering the temperature of political debate in Britain**
- **Support your local communities to create spaces for dialogue and reconciliation to foster locally-led bridging of divides**
- **Work across party to prioritise investment in long-term community building and comprehensive civic education**

The majority of those who voted to Leave the EU in 2016 believe Brexit will have a positive impact on their own lives, on their community, and for their children; very few believe the consequences of Brexit will negatively affect them. Should these benefits not come to pass, for what ever reason, grievances and disappointment (whether well or ill founded) will inevitably follow.

Weakening confidence in the institutions of Parliament, Government, and in the press should be of urgent concern, and interpreted as an early indicator of long-lasting social-political challenges. Should divisions in Britain worsen and identity-based violence increase, low trust in media, parliament and Government will impede effective response and sustainable prevention.

The matter of if or under what terms the UK withdraws from the European Union is of immense significance, but that the manner in which the current impasse is overcome is as important to Britain's success and cohesion as the outcome itself.

* Data from Protection Approaches / Attest social attitudes survey conducted 11/01/19, UK nationally representative sample (exc. N.I), 1250 respondents

Most of those we polled do not feel their point of view is valued by journalists, the Government, or by politicians



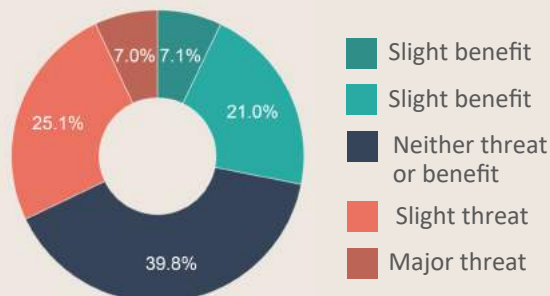
66% feel their point of view is rarely or not at all valued by journalists

70% feel their point of view is rarely or not at all valued by the Government

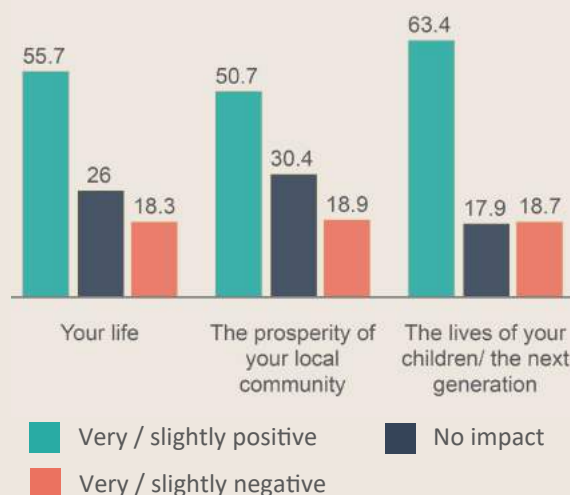


71% feel their point of view is rarely or not at all valued by politicians

When asked if they see journalists as a threat or benefit to Britain's success and prosperity, nearly a third of those polled said journalists are a threat



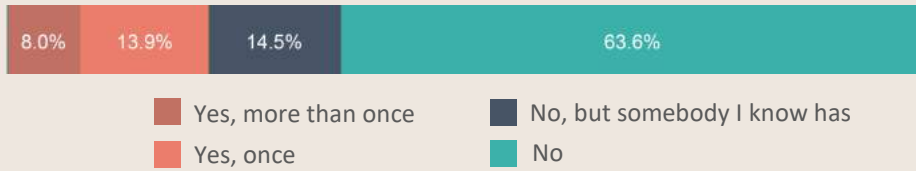
When asked how Brexit will effect them and those around them, most people who voted leave in 2016 say Britain's exit will have a positive effect



Social cohesion is not a 'nice to have' but a fundamental tenet of contemporary British stability and security.

It is crucial to acknowledge the relationship between rising identity-based violence and the apparent normalisation of abusive, divisive, and exclusionary commentary in both public and political spheres, and the apparent impunity for those who display such behaviour. It is feeding old and new prejudices.

We asked 'have you been verbally or physically attacked in the past two years because of an aspect of your identity?'



Whatever the outcome of Britain's Brexit dilemma, the coming months and years will see contestation of national, local and even individual values and identity. There are already signs of worsening social disintegration, political polarisation, and of rising prejudice. However, there are realistic and responsible actions that can impede negative trends and begin to bridge Britain's divides. Building safe, strong, and cohesive societies requires sustained effort, from grassroots communities, Government, across industries and from Parliament.

Recommendations for Members of Parliament:

- **Show individual and collective leadership in detoxifying and lowering the temperature of political debate in Britain**

All individuals, but particularly those who are in the public eye, have a responsibility to ensure their own contributions to debate reject hate speech, exclusionary language, personal attack, misinformation and 'fake news'. This might be achieved through a voluntary charter of standards.

- **Support your local communities to create spaces for dialogue to foster locally-led bridging of divides**

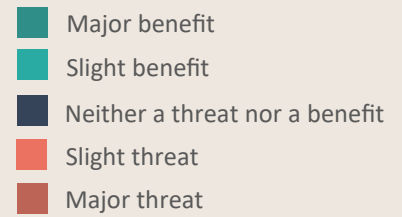
It is crucial during this period of uncertainty, growing social tensions, and rising hatreds, to encourage dialogue and to provide safe, inclusive environments where diverging opinions can be heard. Such forums must be rooted in and led by the local community, and founded upon principles of community building, dialogue, and reconciliation.

- **Work across party to prioritise investment in long-term community building and comprehensive civic education**

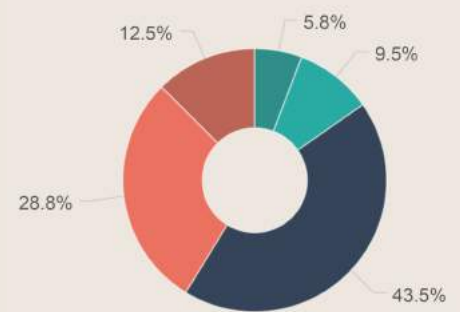
Articulating a positive message of inclusivity is important, however investment of financial, human and political resource in upstream community building will be essential if the damage already done to British society is to be reversed. Community building must once again be prioritised in Britain with far greater attention given to inclusive programmes that build capacity and increase representation of marginalised communities. There is an urgent need for long term education programmes to help people of all ages to analyse information and think critically about rumours, stereotypes, and other prejudices.

For full research findings please see our report *A gathering storm? Assessing risks of identity-based violence in Britain*, published 7 March 2019, available www.protectionapproaches.org

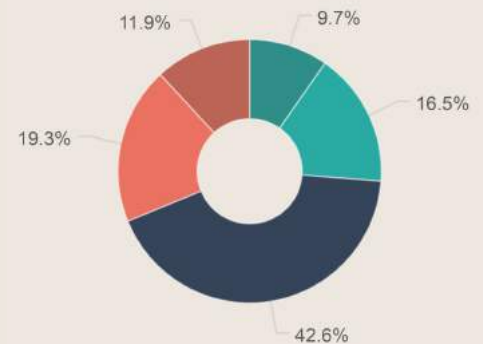
We asked 'To what extent do you think each of the following is a threat or benefit to Britain's success and prosperity?'



Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities



Muslim people



Immigrants

