

Additional appendix: focus groups

Focus Group 1

How do you get your news?

Watch it on the TV.

Facebook and television.

We have 24-hour BBC news on the TV at work.

LBC radio.

Radio 2.

TV and newspaper.

Newspapers and on my phone. Google showing me or looking it up.

The Telegraph.

I get the news on my phone with different headlines.

I get headline on my iphone and news update notifications.

I have news app on my phone.

I watch it on BBC and Channel 4.

I've got the Sky News app and Sky Sports.

Do you feel the country as a whole is going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Right direction, with Brexit.

It's not going in any direction. No one knows where they're going.

Wrong direction because of Brexit.

In limbo.

I think we're going in the right direction. But I think the government needs to grow some nuts to make some proper decisions and do what the country voted for.

In terms non-brexit issues, is the country going in the right direction?

Right direction. Consider that unemployment is the lowest it's ever been. The economic climate is good regardless of Brexit. Shares are high, inflation is low.

No, I think there's a recession. I think we're in the middle of a recession.

I think Universal Credit doesn't really benefit people like me. I had to give up my job to look after my son. He has multiple things wrong with him. We'll be worse off with Universal Credit.

The housing situation is getting worse. Not enough being built, in particular social housing.

The problem with that was selling off council houses.

Homeownership is a good thing. But we're not building enough houses to keep on top of things.

Overpopulation is the problem. Cramming in too many people in one area.

We opened the borders to all and sundry.

You need the people to do the jobs. There aren't enough people to do the jobs. If we didn't have the diversity of culture then there would be problems.

What do you think about the NHS?

You can't just keep pumping money in.

People take advantage of it. People are coming to this country just to use it. Its disgraceful. Somebody brought their father over from Portugal for an operation. They come and use it and then go back home.

But if you have a heart attack in America, they will keep you alive and not do anything until they've worked out you've got insurance.

It was in the news today about America that people diagnosed with cancer are treated and lose all their money. All their savings have gone on their treatment.

What's the solution?

We have to tighten up somewhere.

People from overseas need to register before they get treatment.

Our hospitals won't turn anyone away.

They had this idea that if you wanted to fast track to a doctor you'd pay £10.

It depends where you live. My friends that live in Norfolk are getting far better treatment – far superior to treatment you get in Watford.

What do you think the biggest problems are that are facing this country?

Corbyn. He's very frightening. I think he's anti semitic, I think he's anti-everything. There's going to be a communist state.

Theresa May. I'm not her biggest fan. She's a diabetic herself, but I feel like she's got no compassion for other people with the illness. She's got it and she's got a fast track to all of the things she got (to cope with illness). I don't feel like she's someone that will help those with disabilities. Or families who have had to give up work. I don't think they think she's for people from a lower class.

This is a tight call. She voted remain and now she has to support the leavers. It's difficult for her getting pressure from all sides. Worst thing she did was have that election where she lost a big majority. Now she's struggling.

Let's put the country aside. What are the biggest issues for you?

I think the NHS is a big issue.

Law and order.

Why?

Well because there are more prominent crimes going up. Criminals are getting more lenient sentences. Crimes continuing to go up. I think it's an issue.

I think law and order is the same sort of issue as the NHS, education, and all the other services of the country that are being drained. Overworked and drained. Too many people; overpopulation.

Is that an austerity thing?

It might be helped by austerity but its not helped by the many million people that have come over in the past 10 years.

I think you need some immigration. The problem is mass immigration.

In one year we had 1 million foreigners come. Literally in one year. And I think that's a problem. Obviously you need some immigration.

They haven't got enough classrooms, and not enough teachers.

Do you think taxes are an issue?

Yeah.

My partner and I own properties. And I'm a higher rate taxpayer and were going to be absolutely hammered if Corbyn gets in. I work really hard but more and more money goes out. My taxes are someone else's salary – no. Then you see people not making much effort.

My mum used to work part time. She's recently picked up a full time job and entered a new tax bracket. Just because she wants to work a bit more she's being punished.

How do you feel about taxes going up to pay for public services?

If you knew it was going to people that were British citizens then yeah I don't mind paying for it. But when you know there's so much abuse in so many different areas in all public services then you just think... somebody needs to start managing these services properly.

The tax allowances go up every year which is now less than it's ever been. The problem is there is less of a threshold between low and high rates because it jumps from 22 to 40. It's a massive jump so there should be a third threshold between 30 and 40.

A lot of people stay below the tax band because they'd lose out.

Someone I know who earned a higher salary now does extra work, working until 10 o'clock at night, to cover the higher taxes.

So what kind of things do you think should happen? Should we cut income tax? Cut VAT?

Well it's 20%, it's quite high.

There are people who work in the black economy that aren't paying their share. If everyone was paying their share then we would be in a better position.

The government doesn't have any money; money comes from us. So most of the money they've got – that they can spend – comes from us. So you got to get the balance right.

But we've got more people that aren't paying tax.

More people in the country but the money available has stopped going up

Look at the likes of Amazon and Starbucks.

They're under the radar.

Yeah, and clever them! They've got good accountants who've worked it out.

Is it right that these big tech companies are paying what seems like small amounts?

Isn't it illegal?

No its not. It's legal.

It's not fair.

It's not just the tax money, they kill high streets because everyone buys online.

Yeah, look at debenhams.

Do you think taxes on businesses should be lower or higher?

Lower.

I think it should be fair.

But what is fair?

The likes of Amazon, Starbucks etc. should be paying a fair percentage. A lot of the other companies are paying fair taxes. And if everyone was paying then it would make a huge difference.

Is anyone concerned about defence?

Yes.

There aren't enough services.

Not enough money going into defence. There's a worry that it won't be enough to protect us

There's not enough soldiers, there's not enough ships.

If Corbyn gets in, there'll be even less.

Well obviously terrorism is a major issue.

I think the thing about defence is that it's very expensive and the spread of the load should be amongst the whole of Europe and America and France.

We got the United Nations. But it's so weak.

How do you feel about climate change?

Well if it means the sun is going to shine.

Makes me think of plastics. Some cities are just seas of plastic.

We are a tiny little island. What is everyone else going to do. China etc.

You see all the ice melting in Antarctica - its colossal.

Should something be done about it?

I don't think it's taxes.

They're making a small change on plastic straws.

You order a package these days and you get a bloody great big box.

What about childcare?

Too many people are having families where both parents have to be working. Because you just can't afford not to now. I think our children are suffering as a result.

Both myself and my partner are Catholics. We can't get him into Catholic school because they've overpopulated it. Quite a lot of Romanian children, Polish children, Portuguese. There weren't many English kids. The school I went to as a kid is where I wanted my son to go. We couldn't get him in. He's been on the waiting list since nursery.

What about higher education? Universities?

My daughter is 21 and she chose not to go to uni. For her it was the right thing

Can you elaborate on that?

She's dyslexic and didn't find school that easy. She felt pressure to go because everybody's going. She'll be on equivalent salaries to people coming out of university and will do better because of [not going to uni].

I think a lot of our kids are coming out of uni and finding that actually it's not making a big enough difference – it's like it didn't matter.

Too many people are going to university now.

Having a degree now is so commonplace that it's meaningless. They should make it much harder, as it used to be, so that it's only the 5% or 10% who are able to – and take the qualifications that are beneficial like engineering and not media studies.

I think there's a lot of people who have a lot of debt over their heads as they get older. I was watching a programme a couple of days ago that showed all these people finishing uni and having all this debt hanging over their head.

It's like another tax.

Well not really. You have a mortgage for your house they you pay so much off. You don't pay anything until you earn over £25,000. Low interest and it's spread over a long time.

Yeah well that's what he was explaining to the kids - these kids don't really understand that.

Is there general agreement that too many kids are going to university?

Yeah.

I think it's changing though. I have an 18 year-old son and he didn't want to go to university. He just looks at it as – he's going to get this massive debt, there's nothing he particularly wants to study. He'd rather get an apprenticeship and start something now and by the time he's 24 he's established. Everyone's coming out of university with their degrees, all looking for jobs. He's there, he's got the experience and the salary – without the debt.

Degrees don't mean a lot nowadays.

Certain jobs you need a degree.

If you're a doctor, solicitor, accountant you have to have it.

There is a big variety in the number of degrees.

There are too many! It's ridiculous, some mean nothing really.

Some people would argue there's a benefit of going to university in itself. Do you agree with that?

The experience is great.

A couple of my son's friend are at university – they're not even going to lectures. What on earth is the point of it?

With apprenticeships you get paid to do it and then you've got the experience to go above those people. I've done NVQ 2, 3 and 4 and I got jobs over people that went to uni but have no experience.

So does everybody know how the tuition fee system works?

Yes

Note: All in agreement.

Do you feel that it's a fair system?

It's fair enough if you're learning something worthwhile where you're going to get a job.

I think it's fair that after 30 years it just goes.

I think if you're going to benefit society... my daughters a doctor and she will benefit.

How should universities be financed?

There's lots of overseas students paying. I think the system that's in is the right system.

If it's free, you'll get more and more people going there doing silly subjects.

Well no because, when it was free, there weren't as many institutions so it was much more competitive to actually get on your course. Not everybody got onto courses that they wanted to get onto in my day.

All the polytechnics are universities now. Whereas years ago, you had more universities than polytechnics, but now they're all polys. So there are about double the universities.

University with silly subjects – it's just really work avoidance.

What if people studying subjects with a social benefit – engineering or medicine perhaps – could have their tuition fees reduced?

A lot of businesses send students to uni and they pay for it. And it's beneficial to the company and its beneficial to the student and there's no pressure or paying back. And the business is getting the benefits of it.

I think you're right. I think if it's the jobs the country's looking for like engineering then they could have reduced fees. How many people do you need in media studies?

People are doing stage makeup as a degree – and I'm like really?

You're quite limited in terms of what you can do after that.

Doctors and nurses could have reduced fees, absolutely. But then they get paid a good salary.

If people do a degree they're bound to stay in this country for 25 years .

So, if they benefit society they get no tuition fees but have to stay in the country?

Yeah. Well it's a contract for a period of time.

Which is what happens with companies isn't it. If some company sponsors you, or the army or navy sponsors you, to go to uni, then part of their contract is they have to stay for a certain amount of time. I've got a friend who's training to be a quantity surveyor. And the company are going to sponsor him over the 5 year on an apprenticeship. And then one day a week at uni. So a bit like you were saying, 4 days he's doing the job and one day he's doing the theory. Okay it will take him longer but he's being paid when he's doing it.

Inequality. Is this something you are worried about?

Do you mean the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer?

I think the people in the middle are getting a bit stuck.

What about liberty? Is that something people are concerned about?

Freedom of speech.

I just think things are becoming out of hand PC wise. You can't say men, women, him - it's just a different world.

I saw a thing on Twitter and it was a Yorkie bars advert – instead of just for a man it says just for a person.

What about your freedom to make your own decisions. Do you feel like that's an issue? Something being encroached upon?

You can't think anymore or you have to think before you say anything. In case you offend anybody.

Does everyone else agree?

Yeah.

Note: All in agreement.

Those toilets, what is it? His, hers and other? Other? What's other?

What do people think of HS2?

Taking its time isn't it?

I think it's good for the country. Yeah. Very expensive but it's going to be.

What about transport in general?

Uber's good

What about the trains?

I think we've got to invest in the infrastructure. HS2 opens up the country. We've got quite a lot centred around London. As the country gets more and more populated we've got to spread that out a little bit. Urbanisation does bring jobs - it improves the economy.

What about community? Do you feel like there's a lot of community, a lot of belonging or there's actually a lack of community?

When we were younger you would talk to people. People just seemed to look out for each other much more.

I think people are too worried about getting involved in other people's stuff and protecting people and what's going to happen to them - it's just a nightmare.

Families are so dispersed now. How you keep that sense of community? It's really hard.

Even kids - there's nowhere for them to play. I just think my son isn't very safe. He can't play anywhere outside. I don't think there's any community.

Why has that happened?

Computers, technology.

Too much technology now. I think it's great but there's too much around now.

It's not so much that - I think it's that there's fear of children going out. I don't think crime has gone up that much, I just think it's the fear of it. I mean when I was younger I had never heard of the word paedophile.

I think the ease of getting information... we hear more information than we did when we were young. It always existed but I think people are desensitised to some stuff that they see now. Some of these games that the kids play. Look at Call of Duty, they are so violent.

Why is there less community than there was?

They're spending too much time indoors. It's a terrible thing to say but with my kids I know that they're playing and I know that they are safe indoors. I don't want them to be on their computers but at least you think - I know where they are.

There's nowhere for them to go. Especially when there's houses everywhere. Where do you want them to play - on the street? All the green spaces are going.

I think that's a bit extreme. My boys play rugby and football. They go to training, play football every weekend. They could join clubs.

It's expensive to join clubs. There are just no green spaces anywhere - nowhere to go.

Let's talk about an issue that we touched on a little bit to begin with: immigration. Do you think the number of people coming into this country should go up or down?

Down

Note: All in agreement on this

What kind of immigration should go down?

Illegal immigration should go down.

You see a lot of men coming over. Where are their families?

If you've got something to offer – you can come in and do a job or service – that's good immigration. If you just want to come over here for benefits and free hospitals, education etc... stay in your own.

They come over and then send their money home.

Sometimes I get quite frustrated because they just create their own community and they don't integrate. There are schools where English is the second language.

I was watching on TV the other night about Middlesbrough or Blackburn. The Asian community have moved in and all the white people moved out. There are like 50 white people left on the whole estate. Everybody else has made it their own. They don't integrate.

What people do you think should come in?

In trade or industry.

We need an Australian points based immigration system.

Do other people think points based immigration systems are good?

Yes.

We could say that we need nurses - and then we get nurses.

I think, to get a pension or something, you need to contribute to our system for a certain amount of time.

If you want to be part of the community and want to contribute - fine. I think we just get people coming over who think our streets are paved with gold and... free hospitals.

Some of them come over and they can't even speak English. The Australian attitude is: what can you give us, or what benefits are you going to bring to our country? Not what can I take from the country?

In my son's school there's a Romanian girl who can't speak any English. She has her own teaching assistant. My son has multiple special needs, but I have to apply, I've done a long massive process of applying to try and get him help – I'm still doing it now 2 years later – but that girl was given a teaching assistant straight away.

We've talked a bit about good immigration. How do you define that?

Good immigration is when people coming and they benefit... like we need people in hospitals – doctors, nurses – and that benefits the country. If people come in and they've got a job then they stay, and if they lose their job and they are unemployed then they have to go home

What about other high skilled people? Not necessarily doctors?

Like engineers? Yeah that's fine. Even builders, you know, tradesmen – if you're coming over and you actually do something.

And as long as you pay your taxes.

It's about qualifications.

Electricians for example have proper qualifications.

What about a visa? You can come here for a certain amount of time and see how you benefit the country. If you don't, then we won't accept you.

What about low skilled workers? Do we need these workers?

So long as they pay their tax and national insurance.

Well why don't they get permits? They're here for the summer, for six months, and then that's it. They go back. Its seasonal.

I have some relatives up in Norfolk and they've got the big chicken factories. A lot of Eastern Europeans work for them. Without them they wouldn't be able to function.

But provided they're there with a work permit – you've got to check if they are the right people.

Echoing what's been said, if they've come to benefit us and they've come to do things for us then they can come.

What about refugees. Do we take too many or too few?

Well the idea of a refugee is if you have a problem in your country, being persecuted or whatever, then you move to the next safe country. You don't travel halfway across the world. Refugees yes, but you move to where it's safe. You don't say oh I better go to England.

Some refugees are going through safe countries to get here. A lot are going from their traditions and culture but actually there's a safe place near to them that would benefit them. We've got so many religions and cultures here now. Why would you not want to go to a safe place near your country where they share you culture?

See the problem with refugees is economic. Those who are in France are safe there. Why come here?

What about the argument that we should take our fair share of refugees? So that Italy, France and other don't have to take a huge portion?

They've got a lot of space. We haven't got the capacity to take them.

I think first-world countries could be doing more to help out and make these countries safe for people.

And help them be self-sufficient.

At the end of the day we've got to look at our country like a ship. You keep putting people on it and draining the resources, were gonna sink.

What about students?

Well they pay to be here.

I saw a programme about a student who came over. He was really positive, really nice guy. You should learn the language and integrate with other people. A lot of people I know haven't learned English and haven't made an effort.

If they're self funded or they've contributed to the country then it's a good thing.

What do you think about the government's target for reducing annual net migration to the 10,000s?

I don't think it's going to work.

No. It's unrealistic.

They haven't managed it for the past however many years. Particularly when we don't have enough people to manage the borders. Currently whether that influences Brexit or how we manage it I have no idea.

We'll never know the true figures of immigration. The government manipulates figures. Same they do with unemployment.

We do need some kind of target. You can't just keep filling the country up.

If you don't have a measure, then it's a free-for-all.

Should there be a set amount of people coming into the country every year no matter what their skills are?

No

Note: All in agreement.

We are a small island, we can't just let anyone in without setting a number

Should we let as many skilled people come into the country as possible?

No

Note: All in agreement.

Only if there's a demand for them.

It should be regulated.

If you look at Australia, if they need doctors they'd get X amount of doctors in.

Is it better to have low skilled immigration from Europe than high skilled immigrants from the rest of the world?

No

Note: All in agreement.

Should we give priority to those that speak English in the immigration system?

Yes

Note: All in agreement.

Should those that come here have to learn English?

Yes!

Absolutely.

Note: All in agreement.

Should those that don't speak English be required to learn it before coming over?

Yes they should.

No, that's a bit much.

Note: The group was divided on this issue.

Should you only be allowed to come to the country if you have a certain amount of money in the bank or are going to earn a certain amount?

Yeah I like that.

Yeah fair enough.

What should that certain amount of money be?

It depends where you go and where you're living.

Self-sufficient.

Minimum wage.

It depends on whether there is demand for them. If they are needed then they come under a visa or permit.

They've got to have a job before they come.

Should we prioritise immigration from commonwealth countries

No.

Note: All in agreement.

Everyone should be treated fairly.

Should we increase government funding for areas with high levels of immigration? More money for the NHS, for example?

No. Deal with the immigration problem.

Deal with the root of the problem. You're just making that golden ticket even more golden.

Should we help existing migrants to become UK citizens?

We should help. If they're putting something into the system - something worthwhile - yes.

And if they are paying their taxes.

Do you think we should make it harder for migrants to become UK citizens?

You go back to the Windrush situation where people are having their citizenship taken away.

What do you think the immigration system should look like?

Well regulated. Vetted.

We can't have a policy where anyone can walk in.

We let quite a few terrorists into this country without knowing who they are or what they've done.

And what about the Australian immigration system? They have more immigration than the UK.

They are a huge country - and less populated.

Their population is about 20 million.

They're very selective.

It seems a lot of this is about bringing benefits to the country. Is that the nub of the issue for you? Is it about fairness?

It should be fair. People won't mind about immigration if everyone benefits from it – if their schools are good, their hospitals are good, if the services are well-funded.

They have an age limit in Australia, so if you're like 90 years old you don't get let in. We have whole families coming over here. You need to be contributing to the system.

But then should be able to come over with X amount of money not just sponge off our system. If this 90 year old woman is going to come here and take all our benefits...

How many of these people come over with money to retire in the UK? They don't. People here they retire and go off to live in Portugal or Spain. I don't see many people retiring to come and live in London. But when people here retire abroad, they go with money.

Let's talk about housing. Is housing an issue?

We're not building enough.

There's not enough social housing.

Where I live, prices have gone up dramatically. Prices are ridiculous. So there's no social housing. It's gone. They're just building more and more (for the rich).

They've still got this Right to Buy, which is ridiculous. Demographically, when it first started, population was going down. And there wouldn't be a need for social housing. And suddenly with immigration the balance is gone. Demographic figures show that there isn't a smaller population, there's a larger population. You can't blame Thatcher for that because circumstances took over. But then they should say, right, no more selling. Social housing is for people that need it.

The Conservatives won't change it.

The people that are in the council houses still have Right to Buy but now they have 7 year tenancies.

Is the simple answer that we just build more houses?

Yes

Note: All in agreement.

We need to build more social houses

What about foreigners buying houses in the UK?

I think there are too many of them buying but not renting them out. They should be forced to have to rent out.

Either live in them or rent them out.

Too many empty houses.

What about rent controls?

Well then you're getting into a communist state.

It's supply and demand.

What about developers having to use land within a certain timeframe?

Yes.

Note: All in agreement.

What about higher taxes on people that buy second homes?

No.

Note: All in agreement.

How do you feel about politicians in general?

Very despondent.

I don't think there's anyone at the moment capable of running the country.

Has that always been the case?

No. I'm sure there's some sort of shining star somewhere. Theresa May has taken on a horrendous role, and I do feel sorry for her but she took it on. I think Corbyn's incredibly dangerous. And who have we got? Boris Johnson? Who is there? He ran a mile. As soon as Brexit was announced he headed for the hills with Gove. She was very brave to say I'd do it.

I think it's challenging. We complain they're paid too much but people doing equivalent roles in business who are the bright minds, who have got that capability to run a major business are paid so much more than a politician is. Why would you, as a very capable person who could earn a lot of money, go into politics?

Anywhere else, if you were doing a great job you wouldn't even question it. If they were running the country properly and everything was going smoothly then people would think they were worth every penny.

Are there any politicians you trust?

No.

Not really.

They say one thing and then do something completely different.

All just a bunch of liars.

Some people have suggested that there should be a new political party. What do you think?

At the end of the day, unfortunately, all politicians are liars.

UKIP tried that.

I think one thing we need to think about is that the people who run the country are the civil servants behind the politicians. And they are the same civil servants whether you're Labour or Conservative... and they just keep going in whatever direction civil servants go.

How does everyone feel about the Conservative Party?

They're not very impressive but they're better than Labour

Best of a bad lot

What values do you associate with the Conservative Party?

I think: take from the poor.

I think they look after themselves.

I think they're middle ground. They don't take from the poor.

They balance the books and they don't waste money. Whereas a Labour Government is spend spend spend, the Tories are regulating expenditure.

And how about the Labour Party?

I think the leader of the Labour Party is a bit of a lunatic.

I think they are left wing. Corbyn is incredibly left wing. Tax the rich.

I usually vote Labour because of disabilities and benefits.

Take from the rich.

And they don't necessarily give to the poor.

If Corbyn wasn't there would it make you more interested in voting for Labour?

No.

I think he's a very dangerous idiot.

I used to vote Labour but I actually changed my mind after I saw what they offered my community. Now I vote UKIP in local elections.

It sounds like there's a brand issue for both parties. Is that right?

They've both got good and bad.

There's not much between them actually. They're all sort of middle ground-ish. If you look at Blair etc.

But he's not Corbyn.

But of course Corbyn is one to worry about because he might go more extreme. But if you think of Blair, he was almost a Tory himself.

Focus Group 2

How do you get your news?

Facebook.

Daily Mail, the Express.

Everything's so negative in the papers. If I'm not working I'll put on *This Morning* on or something.

The TV is on at work all day.

I have Facebook but I don't have any news on there.

My phone will automatically give me notifications of news titles. So sometimes I'll see things online.

Mine does this too.

I do this on facebook. If a story comes up I'll read it.

Do you think the country is going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Wrong direction. Because of Brexit. We should have stayed.

Nothing's actually been done on Brexit yet.

It's become more of a mess than it intended and a waste of money that we don't have, as a country.

I think it's mixed. I voted for Brexit, I'm still for it. I think a new referendum would be a waste of money. I believe strongly that the UK should be investing in education, NHS, roads, streets. I think it's going in the wrong direction at the moment because we're being bullied by Europe. Theresa May being strangled.

What about in terms of the country as a whole?

I think it's gone the wrong direction completely, with knife crime. Back in the day you used to have a disagreement with someone and you'd go to the park, get your arse kicked and that would be it... No one should have to feel unsafe where they live.

There's no funding for public sector. Already the knife crime is greater than previous years and that's because there are less policeman because of the cuts.

I'd say, neutral. To me there is no recession, there's no austerity. There's always poor, there's always people who have no food, no place to live. I remember when we had one million unemployed, three day weeks, that's where I'm coming from.

A few years ago people were buying houses left right and centre. Nowadays it's impossible to get on the housing ladder.

They're saying that employment stats are better. Fewer people unemployed than in the past.

But they're all on zero hours contracts. People are wondering why there's so much crime - it's because these people are having to pull 50 or 60 hour weeks - it's all a vicious circle.

It gives you more flexibility.

Flexibility is fine if you can afford it. If I've got something to pay I can't afford to not turn up on Friday.

Do you think that taxes are going up?

I feel like they are. Everything around you is taxed, regardless of who you are, what you earn.

Prime example, I was with a friend over the weekend and they purchased a gift for a family member and the tax was £50 or something.

If you give a gift of money that's taxed. And inheritance.

Do you think inheritance tax is a good thing?

Some parents work hard to set their kids up.

That money has been taxed already.

For my family who have worked for 60 to 70 years, and getting close to retirement age and then you're told you can't retire for another 10 years, and they've put all their money into savings to help out their grandkids. It's not fair.

What do you think the biggest problem facing the country is other than Brexit?

I think one of the biggest shocks is going to be when the next generation get their pensions. Because unless you've planned for it you won't have much. In London, our parents got houses for three or four thousand pounds. Those houses are now worth a million.

Homelessness.

Debt.

Personal debt or government debt?

Both

I think personal debt. It's so easy to get stuff in finance.

Its crazy how glamorous they make the credit card adverts. Then you wonder why so many people are in debt.

At the end of the day it's at your discretion, but it's so easy to get one.

Company's need to give out proper contracts so people don't need to go to personal debt. You get a family where there's a single parent and they're trying to provide for their children. It doesn't help with the latest technology making it so easy.

My daughter is training to be a vet. She's going to leave uni with £125,000 worth of debt. I mean what a way to start life.

I was given a grant at uni which meant I could go. I dropped out because of illness and it meant that I had to give the grant back because it was technically a gift. As well as the two years of fees.

I'm left in about £40,000 of debt. I don't earn over the threshold of debt so I don't pay it back, but for someone earning slightly more, that's a lot of debt.

It would put you off trying to earn more.

Should university be funded by the taxpayer?

We pay enough tax already.

I saw something the other day which was saying that everything does get taxed. Sandwiches, trains, whatever it is.

I think they do whatever's best at that time. So when I was starting university and looking at what I wanted to do, the midwifery courses were absolutely free.

How many poor people go to university? They just don't go.

They're doing paid apprenticeships now. Instead people are opting to do stupid degrees.

I think anything that will benefit the public should be taxpayer funded – doctors, psychiatrists – all of those things.

Universities get so much money now. I looked into where all of this money was going and it turns out that the uni had spent 125k on first class flights to fly abroad.

Do you think that higher education in the UK is worth it these days?

People are going to uni to do stupid degrees, it's ridiculous. Why don't you do apprenticeships?

A lot of this stuff you can do on apps these days. But people are doing 3 or 4 year courses for a stupid amount of money. Then there are people that might be doctors who would benefit society loads but they can't get into uni because they can't afford the costs.

I think it definitely depends on what you want to study. Even if I completed my degree it still wouldn't have been worth it. For me, when I left I got myself a job straight away as a nanny and I was earning almost exactly the same wage as a teacher. I could be earning the exact same with the qualifications I already have, without going to uni and becoming a teacher.

So isn't the solution to pay teachers more?

I would a thousand percent agree. Anyone who has had any experience in teaching will say that you go to work to work and then you come home to work.

Do you think there are too many people going to university?

Yes.

As far as I'm concerned, instead of going to college people should just be doing apprenticeships. There are some jobs that you can't do unless you've been to uni. But also the apprenticeships only pay 1 or 2 pounds an hour. I can't afford that.

Do you think we should say that people should only go to uni if they get certain grades?

I think that's the case anyway. But I think it puts a lot of pressure on future generations.

You shouldn't limit people on what they can do.

The current system is fair, universities prioritising people with higher grades.

My friend was doing criminal psychology and all she talked about was Freshers' Week and the bars on campus. You be lucky if she even turned up to her lectures.

What about saying that you can only do courses that mean you'll earn more in the long run?

I think we should.

I'd be happy to ban glass-making and painting courses.

As an option maybe you should have to do a year of work experience before you go to uni. You have to do a job that matches your course and then you can proceed.

How's the NHS doing?

It gives out stuff too easily. If you go to any hospital... you go there and there are people who don't need to be sitting there.

We have something that other countries don't have. But I also recognise the frustrations about waiting times, for appointments or specialists.

When I went to hospital the other week, in triage, this woman came in with her daughter and was told you need to go home and see the GP because it's not major at all. She refused to leave and that's just another person creating weight. I think there needs to be more to stop people abusing services.

What about climate change?

I appreciate the hot summers.

We had that 6 or 7 week period of heatwave, which was great. But when you look into it its not good.

It's good people are using electric cars but they're so expensive.

What do you think about community? Do you feel you have a community?

Where I live there's no community.

When I was younger people would get together but now all they do is drive around.

It's because of cuts, no money.

There's no spirit anymore.

When I was younger everyone knew what each other's names were. If you wanted to borrow something you'd just knock. If something came up you could just ask your neighbours to take your kids after school... give them some tea and then send them back home. Now, no one does that.

No one trusts anyone anymore. Don't know why.

Everyone's working.

I made an effort to get to know my neighbours when I moved in. We look out for each other. But only because I made the effort. No one else bothers.

Depends what you mean by community. I come from the poor side of town, so I see a different side to the middle class side. But on the poor side it's always been like that, it's never changed. There's always been austerity. We were lucky enough to have a church. All the kids went to church and we hated it but it gave us a sense of community. That spiritual thing is important. We came away knowing we shared something.

One borough was trying to charge the people in a street to close the street and hold a little party. When you get things like Grenfell then you see true community. People come together.

Let's talk about immigration. What are your thoughts?

I see both sides. My grandparents are from South America for education. When my granddad came over he was called a monkey, told to climb a tree. I see the real negative effects. I think

now were a lot more accepting but recently we've gone the other way. My sisters are all white with blonde hair and they're fine – I'm not and I get remarks sometimes.

Do people think that the number of people coming in should go up or down?

Down.

Note: All in agreement.

It should be capped.

There's a shortage of housing! This is the problem.

It is because of the immigrants. I went through the care system when I was a kid. When I was in there my social worker was dealing with refugees. One guy was 27 but claimed he was 15. So they put him straight into school, gave him social housing. And it turns out that they spend all this money and he was actually 27.

It 100% needs to be reduced. I think we should do something like Australia. Criminal convicts should not be allowed in. It would cut down on crime, cut down a lot because a lot of people are getting through and reoffending.

They're all like against the government. You go into the street and there's no English people there.

In my day, when my family came over, you had the national front, the BNP - they smashed windows. We've got stronger as a result but we're going to get to the point where our hospitals are full, our education system is struggling - we need to control it. The only ways to control it is controlling immigration. If you welcome them into the UK - what job are you going to do? What services can you provide? Are you good for our economy?

It's like the Eastern Europeans – a lot of them come over and send all their money back to their own country. It's not right.

What about an Australian system? Is that a good idea?

Yes.

After the war, Britain was in really bad shape. The government went to other nations and said we want you to help us rebuild. Fast forward a few years. Now we get people to pick food on our farms. When I go to Starbucks I play a game - I spot the Englishman. There are people from every part of the world but not one Englishman. That's what immigration looks like. It's up to the people that live in this country to decide whether to embrace those people or walk away from the European Common Market. And then let us try and run the country without all those people in all those coffee bars, in those farms - let's see then. I'm not saying I'm for or against it...

They are saying the stats for unemployment are the lowest they've ever been.

I'm a three day week person!

I think it's quite upsetting and wrong that immigrants get benefits and social housing rather than our servicemen. You get these immigrants - they haven't been invited, but they're our responsibility.

It's a tough one. If people come here and are dying on the street what are we meant to do? If people are persecuted and beg us to come in... Do we embrace those people or do we push them away?

But there's only so many people you can help.

The reason a lot of people voted for Brexit was to try and get control of our borders.

They're the same people that are running coffee bars and running parts of our industry. You have turned around and said we don't need you go away.

It's very hard to get in.

It can't be that hard if people are coming through on lorries.

Should there be a set amount of people that come to the country every year no matter what their skills are?

Yes.

Note: The group mostly agreed on this.

It should be based on their skills.

I think skills are important too.

Is it better to have low skilled migrants from Europe than high skilled migrants from the rest of the world?

Disagree.

Note: All in agreement.

Should we let as many people come into the country as possible?

Only if they're are required.

Then there's no control.

Should we give priority to those that speak english in the immigration system?

Yes.

Note: All in agreement.

Should those that do come here be required to learn English?

Yes.

Definitely.

Note: All in agreement.

Should those who don't speak English be required to learn it before they come into the country?

Yes.

Note: All in agreement.

Should you only be allowed to come to the country if you have a certain amount of money in the bank or a job paying a certain wage?

I disagree with that. I do believe in fairer opportunities, not everyone comes from the same background. Just because you don't have the money doesn't mean you don't have the skills to do a job.

You could just get a job and when you're in just dump it off and do nothing.

They should have a job lined up before they come over, so they don't go on benefits.

I'm just concerned about criminals. If you have a criminal record you shouldn't be allowed in. It would be great for numbers and crime.

I think they should give back to the country for a certain amount of time before they get a job – to stop too many people.

Should we prioritise people coming in from commonwealth countries?

That's a hard one because that doesn't mean that they're going to be more skilled or to be able to benefit the country more than other people.

It's a hard one because you don't want to be discriminating against someone because they're not from the right background.

But that exactly the same as Brexit, you're just discriminating against those that are from Europe.

Should we increase government funding for areas with high immigration?

No.

Note: All in agreement.

Because you're not solving the problem.

You're just attracting more of it.

The question you've got to ask is, if this place gets 800mil a year in funding, what will be effective?

What should our immigration system look like?

Skills based.

They've got a skill like a doctor or an engineer.

They've got to have a job lined up.

It should be like a job. There should be a 3 to 6 month probation period and if you're out you're out.

How do you feel about politicians in general?

Overpaid.

I don't think they are trustworthy. They try and promise a whole load of things.

Are there any politicians you trust?

No.

Note: All in agreement.

What about the idea of someone setting up a new political party?

The thing is you can't have everything. There isn't the money to have everything.

Note: The group was generally unsure or uninterested in this.

What do you feel about the Conservative Party?

I've always voted Conservative but I'm disappointed at the moment.

I have never voted Conservative in my life.

I was very upset that David Cameron resigned the minute we had the Brexit vote. He didn't stick to his word. I don't think Theresa May is very good, leadership-wise.

They're all disagreeing within their own party.

I wouldn't vote for them.

I think the Conservative Party is a tragedy. Everyone thought we were going to say no [to Brexit]. What you are experiencing now is people trying to doublespeak. People are trying to say something they don't agree with. We've got a situation where they government are trying to please the country when they know they cannot please the country. And they haven't got any leaders that can really take the country on. Theresa May is trying to do something that's not in her nature. And the Labour Party are saying we want to be traditional Labour Party people. The country doesn't want that.

What do you think of the Labour Party and it's values?

I've always been brought up thinking, because I'm from a poorer family, that they're the party of the people. They're the people trying to push forward for the support of poorer people, for schools, looking out for people on low incomes... that's how I've been brought up. They've changed but I'm still inclined to vote for them.

Generally they believe in investing in education and the NHS. The principles are there but the leader isn't.

I think they need to sort out the person in charge and get on the same wavelength as each other.

I don't like Jeremy Corbyn.

Are there any values you associate with the Conservative Party?

They do help the business people. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. It's like a gentleman's club at the top and a workmans club at the bottom. It a bit like the North/South divide we used to have.

I was reading this thing a while back where it was talking about a council, and one half was poor and one half was classed as more wealthy. There's a split down the middle.

Something someone told me really shocked me - when property is built and you have to designate a certain amount for council homes - they do that but a lot of them have two entrances. One for wealthy people and then a back door. I was so shocked at that segregation.

A home is what you make it not who you live around.

Who do you vote for?

Tories.

I was Labour but now I vote Conservative. I switched because they weren't getting their act together.

Never vote.

And what about Brexit?

Remain. I can't understand why anyone would vote to leave.

They've made such a mess of it.

Those European guys have been making money from us for years, and they don't want us to go because they need us. Right now they feel like they are cutting their arm off and it's killing them.

I feel like we paid an awful lot to be in the European Union and we just didn't get our money's worth back.

Focus Group 3

How do you get your news?

On the apps. BBC or Sky.

TV news.

Heart Radio.

Good Morning Britain.

We get the mail online. My husband reads it every day. I just look at the headline really. And the BBC news app.

I listen to the radio on the way to work. Does anyone still read newspapers?

I read the metro.

Metro and standard on the commute. I look at the BBC website. I'm not into apps - they're just too small.

I look at facebook every morning but if I see a story then I would look it up properly.

Do you feel like the country is going in the right direction?

Wrong.

It's going round.

I think it's going in the right direction but its taking a long time.

There's a lot of uncertainty at the moment - whatever the outcome next year it will still take the country a long time to rebuild.

We need a strong character to take the country in the right direction.

Things are getting worse. Prices are going up. I work in retail I see on a weekly basis a 50p here or there, and if you're in a hurry you might not notice it. The cost of living has gone up. People are becoming more horrible to each other - which I've never felt in 36 year in living here. It makes me sad.

I feel like we've moved away from core principles. It can be racism, cost of living - away from core politics.

Petty crime, people think they can get away with it. The police don't have time to deal with it.

I can't understand how we can make cuts to health services when we say we're going to make a better health service. And closing A&Es, I don't know where that's coming from. Particularly for someone who's been using it for a long time. And I think the same thing is happening to the police. They are making cuts to the police force and yet they are saying were cutting crime. We don't have police walking around our streets anymore like we used to.

How about the NHS specifically?

I've had a positive experience with the health service.

We had a super hospital in Watford and they've sold it off. Closing wards. It was going to be the major trauma centre but it will never happen in our lifetime because of cuts.

I love the NHS. I cannot fault the NHS.

I think all of us realise how lucky we are.

It needs more money but I think we also abuse the NHS.

If you miss an appointment you should pay.

It's a bit of a postcode lottery - it depends where you live. And I think there's a social divide and everything always comes back to money.

Is there general agreement about paying more money towards the NHS?

Yeah.

I would.

I disagree because I want to see some savings. I would pay more tax if I saw how it was being used.

There's an issue with paracetamol. It's cheaper to buy it from the shop. The NHS should say, you know what, we're not going to prescribe that.

It's about how these organisations are run. The NHS is a shambles in terms of how its run. That's spread up and down the country. It comes down to the finances and how you balance the books. And the government, whichever party is in power, has got that wrong.

If all our bills are going up just to survive... To be asked to pay more for the NHS, which I would love to... But basically I don't have the money to pay my mortgage and all the other stuff.

People in this country don't know how lucky they are. You just take it for granted. I think the more you give people for free the worse it is.

This is what Great Britain is all about.

People have this perception that health tourism is a big problem - its not. It's a drop in the ocean.

What other big issues are there for you?

Lots of tower blocks are being built but there's no provision for surgeries etc.

There's big plans to build everywhere. But while we're doing this we need to say: hold on, where's the infrastructure actually going in?

There's no provision in the suburbs and London just keeps expanding out.

Why is that happening?

Because more people want to live here and the Londoners are getting more and more. More people are migrating or moving into the town to find work because there isn't any work elsewhere. It's just growing.

People say it's immigration, that there's too many people coming in. But it works the other way too. There are lots of British people who also move out. The new generation, the younger people, they're exploring the world. I think it balances out somewhere.

You asked what's the biggest issue. I think it's housing.

Do others agree that housing is an important issue?

I think it is.

It's a massive issue.

Historically people used to grow up, move out of their parents' home and live locally. But with industrialisation and everything else, people are migrating into cities. And the general population has been growing so demand has grown.

What is the solution to the housing problems? What should we do?

It's this affordable housing thing.

More renting.

The thing is, with the Right to Buy, they didn't build any more houses to make up for the ones they sold off.

I think Right to Buy was good for some people because otherwise they wouldn't get a chance to buy a home.

There are some people that have inherited a couple of 100k and there are others that will never be able to afford to actually buy in the first place. So it makes the social divide between rich people and poor people bigger.

As soon as houses go up for sale now, people are buying it and renting it out.

If the local authority took it back under their control and owned the housing stock then they control who goes into them.

How would we pay for more housing?

More taxes.

I'm a working mum and people are asking me to pay more for the NHS and for more housing - I can only afford so much.

Some people say that developers should be forced to use land that they buy.

I agree.

Absolutely.

Yes.

What about the idea of reducing stamp duty?

Yes.

There is almost a stigma about renting.

The thing is the basic price of houses is still going up because there's a shortage of supply.

What about rent controls?

I lived in New York for 16 years I actually somewhat benefited because my rent could only go up 100 dollars a year.

What about community?

I think community these days is very different. There isn't so much structure. Younger generations don't stay near their parents and families, so they don't contribute to developing the

local community. People are being forced to move away from their roots due to things like the housing market.

This new generation has opportunities that we don't have. It used to be you'd grow up in your little corner.

I think that's okay if its a choice. I think at the moment it isn't a choice. I just dont think its affordable to live in certain areas. You had your family unit and if, say, your child gets ill you could just ask someone to help. But now it's like: I've got no sleep, I've got to got to work early tomorrow etc. What do you do? It's very difficult.

We don't talk to our neighbours, we all live in our own little world. It's very sad.

We've become much more individualistic.

I'm very friendly with my neighbours. Our kids to Halloween together.

It's very rare now that you have your family very close to you.

Community used to mean extended family. The definition of community has massively changed.

The country has become more diverse. That's the bottom line. We've welcomed people into this country. Like-minded people will always get on. If people are different they will never integrate.

Immigration. Do you think the number of people coming into this country should go up or down?

Depends whether were leaving [*the EU*] or not.

It depends whether we need them.

I think our whole country has been built on immigration.

They also need to want to integrate themselves with us. That is a big issue. It's fine as long as they're going to come and integrate and contribute.

As long as they learn how to speak english, they go to school.

What about refugees? Should we be taking more or less?

Would you just grab your child and run away to a different country for no reason? I think we should be taking more refugees.

I would hate to think someone would shut the door on us.

They're very necessary to run the country.

Does it matter if immigrants who come in are low skilled or high skilled?

We need both.

We need everybody. And if you're talking about refugees it doesn't matter whether they are high skilled or not.

Only if they contribute to society.

The points system like in Australia would be good.

Who would be happy to see immigration increase?

We've got to manage it.

Controlled immigration.

There are only so many people you can take into an island. Everyone tends to just come to the South East. You need some kind of controlled environment to accept people. A points system is one we've referred to - I don't know is the honest answer. You can't just open the floodgates.

Should there be a set amount of people that come into the country every year, no matter what their skills are?

No.

Note: All in agreement.

Is it better to have low skilled migrants from Europe than high skilled migrants from the rest of the world?

No.

Note: All in agreement

Should we let as many skilled people come into the country as possible?

No.

It's a supply and demand thing.

Depends what's needed.

Should we give priority to those that speak English?

If you don't, then you're using more resources to provide lessons.

Note: The group was divided on this issue.

Should those that don't speak English be required to learn it before coming into the country?

Yes.

No. I think they should be given time when they get there. But those that do come here should have to learn it.

Note: General agreement with requirement to learn English, only one exception.

Should you only be able to come to the country if you have a certain amount of money in the bank or you earn so much when you arrive?

If we're not prepared to pay more tax, then why are we prepared to let people in who have no money?

If you've got a job, or you have enough money to support yourself until you find a job, then that's alright. If we did that, it would change the way people look at immigration. I wanted to move to America. I was only going to do it if I knew I was capable of supporting myself when I got there.

Should we prioritise immigration from commonwealth countries?

No.

Note: All in agreement.

What do you think the immigration system should look like?

I don't think there's too much wrong with the current immigration system. If they want to move into the country the only thing they should need to do is prove they have somewhere to go. And perhaps the prospect of having some work. Whether its skilled or unskilled.

I think the vetting process could be tighter in terms of criminal records.

What are your thoughts on schools?

We should make teaching jobs attractive to people who just come out of teacher training. The pay is really bad. The hours are long. They don't get much support.

My wife works in a school and she does more teaching than the teachers do. The teachers actually get a decent salary.

I don't think it's about the money. You just need to work smarter.

No, there's only so much harder you can work. You do need to put more money into the people.

Some people have suggested that we should ban mobile phones in schools. Do you agree?

Yes.

Yes.

In primary schools you have to leave them in the office.

At my daughter's school, nobody has their mobile phones.

It's a policy which a school should be able to set.

I would agree with a blanket ban actually, like in France.

What do you think about higher education?

Oh, it's unaffordable for people these days. It's a worry for people that have kids.

For my daughter – she's a barrister – it was money well invested.

If you've got people that want a change in career then they can't afford it. If you stick to that degree related job you can go into something quite low paid.

If you don't meet the threshold you don't start paying back. And by the age of 40 it gets written off. So my sister had kids and by the time she was ready to join the workforce again the debt was cancelled out. I think the repayment of student loans system is a good one but they also have additional things - like paying for rent. The cost of being able to do that is exorbitant.

First of all you only pay £30 a month.

But you still have to pay it back. Not everyone is going to have a well paid job like a barrister.

I've got two boys and I do worry about them because I'm not going to be able to pay for them. I was talking to one of my friends and he was saying he wouldn't do a degree to become an accountant - he would do it all online because it's free.

I think there are some useless degrees out there too. You spend £9,000 a year - someone said to me the other day I'm doing a modelling degree.

Does everyone agree that there are some courses that aren't useful?

Yes.

I think apprenticeships are wonderful things for people not going to uni. We have apprenticeships where I work and they get £2.50 an hour.

Could some degrees be shortened?

Yes.

You could go earlier than that. You could cut two years off schooling.

Could some degrees be done as technical apprenticeships?

Yes.

Only if it's monitored properly. I think so long as you get what's on the tin. I think some companies just use them as cheap labour.

Yeah but doctors get paid rubbish wages when they first start. They work long hours.

Who thinks the tuition fee system works?

Yes.

I think in terms of the value that my boys get it's pretty bad.

It's a big business now, isn't it. Every single vice-chancellor that I've heard of has had a pay rise. But if you look at the results they've delivered over the last few years, it's dropped.

It's a two tiered system. It's charging overseas students an astronomical amount while charging students here £9,000.

If it's free i think you'll have more people taking it up but it would be at a loss. Having to pay for it shows that you've got skin in the game.

Some people have suggested that we should have a national service. Do you agree?

No.

YES! Bring it back. It should be 2 years.

I think so. You could enter the military, the fire service. Something where you're doing a community service. You could volunteer for the council in the parks and recreation department. Let's look at how you can benefit the nation, rather than just push people into the military.

A lot of kids are fine; they don't need that direction. I would prefer it if it were done in the months of July, August and September.

I think this generation needs to toughen up.

I think there's a huge lack of respect in this generation.

Note: Mixed response. Some agreed, some disagreed.

Would you be happy for your kids to do that?

Yeah.

Not for anything military, no.

Yes, because it's charitable.

Why do they have to do something? Who says they have to do something?

Well, it's useful, isn't it?

No, no.

People should get involved. You're building a nation.

How do you feel about politicians in general?

Greedy.

Pretty hopeless.

Overpaid.

Liars.

Do any of you trust politicians?

No.

None.

Some. The people who actually get into politics because they want to make a difference

There's not a strong enough leader - we've got the best of a bad bunch right now.

You've seen in France, Macron built something out of nothing – a sort of movement. How would you feel about that in the UK?

I would absolutely love it.

It would be so refreshing.

I think it's a good idea.

What word would you use to describe the Conservative Party?

Very polite.

Weak.

Struggling.

Disunited.

The Tories look after themselves.

I would say lost.

I think they've damaged their reputation for a generation. Cameron proposed Brexit, and walked out. Then May called that general election. The Conservatives have done themselves no favours whatsoever.

What word would you use to describe the Labour Party?

Disjointed.

Disaster.

Unelectable.
Scary.
Ineffectual.
Struggling.
Weak.

What policies do you associate with the Labour Party?

None.

For the working class. But at the moment it doesn't seem like that at all.

At the last election I sat down and read all the literature. I read the Labour one with an open mind. There were no solutions. I just thought: You haven't told me what you stand for, you've just told me what you don't like.

Who thinks there should be a second referendum?

We voted already. We made our choice.

The referendum already happened. To have a second referendum is ridiculous.

Focus Group 4

Where do you get your news?

TV... I watch the news, BBC news, the evening news.

Sky news.

Newsnight on BBC2.

I listen to LBC.

I read the Daily Telegraph.

I read the papers but I take it with a pinch of salt. Our press has one of the worst reputations in the world.

When I'm commuting - Metro or free newspapers.

I read social media quite a lot and it's sort of replaced other news sources.

Note: When asked, everyone said they were on Facebook.

Is the country going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

Wrong.

I think they've cut back too much on social funds for police and education, they've taken it a step too far now.

I agree. The people who caused the crash aren't the people who've suffered.

Everyone says that austerity is over but until we see money coming back in the NHS and other things, it doesn't feel like it.

We got too many problems in this country, shouldn't be sending money abroad. We've got servicemen sleeping on the streets. Theresa May is a joke. I'd rather have Mr Bean in charge, because he gets some things right by mistake.

When you cut the police this much you're asking for trouble.

We've got two traitors leading the two main parties.

Theresa May isn't strong enough but I'm not gonna vote for Jeremy Corbyn.

There seems to be a lot of discomfort and no one is happy in general.

It's hard to judge decisions being made without access to the knowledge and facts behind it.

Note: No one said the right direction.

What are the biggest issues facing the country?

The Labour Party are pushing down the army all the time and making it hard for soldiers. They are siding with the enemy of this country.

I think the cutbacks in the police is a dreadful thing at the moment, and it's leading to more crime.

Lack of affordable housing... everybody under 40 not being able to buy a house.

Everything is so London-centric.

If I lose 30% of the value of my home, that's a big problem for me.
Not enough houses being built.
Wages haven't gone up but house prices have.
No affordable housing, so there is no one getting on the ladder... this is a problem for everyone because it damages retirement plans.
Transport is bad already, there can't be 400 more houses because then it will just get worse...
Schools are full already.
Too many flats being built - not enough houses as homes... in 20-30 years time they will not last.
They're not built to last nowadays.
We should build more social housing.
More prefab housing, like on the continent.
Constant flux of people coming is a big problem. If it goes on then we'll still have a crisis.
There's been an awful lot of development where I live... the council haven't been very strict on the minimum amounts of affordable housing because they're trying to hit house building targets.
All the developer needs to say is that it's not viable to build affordable housing.
You've gotta have the infrastructure near where you build new houses – transport, schools, everything.
New towns are probably ideal... you can build the infrastructure with the population.

Note: Most participants have heard of Help to Buy but not sure whether it has been successful.

Foreign investments should be limited... It's nonsense the way it's been going. A lot of the time they don't even live there.
But they are putting money into the economy.
No, they're taking money out of the economy.
Foreign investors buying up properties pushes the prices up.
Depleting the social housing stock was an absolute social disaster.

How do you feel about immigration?

If we don't sort this problem out, we aren't going to have a country at all... Not all muslims are bad but most terrorists are muslim. A lot of the extremist want to take over. Brexit goes hand in hand because I'm not saying we should stop immigration completely but I agree with Boris Johnson that we should have a skills based and points based system.

Note: There is quite a lot of discomfort in the room at this moment but some seem to agree with the sentiment.

We are letting too many people come in... we are letting rapists in our country, it's just not on.
You're absolutely right, it's not politically correct but you're right.
If you come into this country and can support yourself you're alright.

Prominence of young males coming in... the Albanians and Romanians coming over here and there is crime, and they get away with it.

Crime is horrific now... when the Poles and the Czechs came over, it was fine, but the gypsy village mentality that is coming over. In a points system they wouldn't be allowed over, because they have no skills - unless they're trying to improve the country by creating as many criminals as possible, that's the only skill they got.

Doctors should have a high score, and so should how much money you have.

We do need certain skills in this country... another thing is people shouldn't come here who can't speak the language, it's nonsense...I also think you should be able to be trained to speak it.

A lot of English people don't want to be paid the minimum wage - and then won't do the job properly anyway.

We all feel desperately sorry for all the people who've been forced to flee. But it seems to be predominantly young men. And what % of refugees are actually from a terrorist group? They are a potential danger to the indigenous population. It would be better to help them in their own country than to bring them here.

Places like Sweden and Denmark are in danger of losing their culture. You don't see culture in Europe anymore.

I go out to the shops and I don't see an English person anymore. It's concerning, because you start to question your own identity.

The other day we were out and my husband said 'I feel as though I'm on holiday in a different country.

I'm concerned about that as well, certainly.

It [immigration] is taking over the country and it's too late to get people to leave.

It's not gonna change anytime soon because the government, Conservative or Labour, won't do very much about it. Big businesses want lots of cheap migrant labour.

Even though I find immigration concerning, and I don't feel like I'm in my own country anymore. I'm still all for immigration - we need the labour from a business point of view.

What about community?

It's changed over time... less integration between people in the same street as there used to be.

Technology is a reason.

Safety of children - we are more worried about crime now

I think that in remote areas of the country there is strong community but where we live there is much less community in towns and city centres, this is where it's completely changed

Immigration is damaging community because they don't integrate.

Immigrants tend to congregate and take over certain areas.

Kids grow up and leave their areas - now they can go 500 or 5000 miles away from home

It's been a downward trend since Mrs. Thatcher - the period of individualism from the 1980s.

Community values were eroded during that period.

What about higher education?

Too many people go now, from Tony Blair's era... it has lessened the value of a degree.

I think it's a big investment people make who don't really know what to do, especially people from a less well off background. There's no guarantee of a high-paid job.

People are pushed into university and it perhaps isn't the right place for them to further their education.

Apprenticeships are very valuable.

You get so used to being a student and it's difficult to become anything other than a student... you become a drain on society.

They drag it on for 4 or 5 years with a gap year and so on, and then they don't want to work.

People with no money and people with loads of money are fine - people in the middle are squeezed by tuition fees.

Some people say we should bring back National Service. What is your view?

So boys can become men? My initial reaction is yes, especially for young offenders.

Give some discipline to young people? Yeah but it involves a bit of coercion... unsure that in this day and age that is a good idea.

We can't even fund the NHS and the police force, how will we fund this?

It would do people a lot of good.

But would it be absolutely compulsory? I still think there are issues with liberty and coercion.

Do public services need more money?

Public services need more money but also there's too many people at the top of these institutions.

Efficiencies can be made. There's too much wastage.

People say they would pay more tax and want more funding, but when it comes to the election they vote the other way.

We should stop sending money abroad.

Amazon and people like that aren't paying enough tax - they're swerving it!

The current rules allow that to happen but ethically it's wrong.

What do you think about politicians?

Politicians are traitors.

Everybody attacks everything they do... it's a tough job.

They just line their pockets - all they care about is money.

Some politicians are there for the national interest, but people like Boris Johnson are there for their own ego.

I trust Theresa May, she's a very decent woman.

I trust her but I think her judgement isn't good enough. She can't negotiate for toffee and has no plan B.

You can't go into negotiations unless you're prepared to walk away.

Some people say we need a new party. What would you think of that?

YES!

A new party which actually cares for the people! The swing is going from left to right, people are fed up with politicians.

Common sense parties - they're all as bad as each other.

There's not a lot of difference between the current parties.

Can you describe the Conservatives in one word?

Historic.

Capable.

Disappointing.

Realistic and pragmatic.

Can you describe the Labour Party in one word?

I hate and detest Corbyn.

Hate.

Traitor on all levels.

Mediocre.

Not for the poor.

Focus Group 5

Is the country going in the right or wrong direction

Wrong.

Bit off the rails at the moment.

Note: No one thinks it's going in the right direction.

Putting Brexit aside what are the biggest issues? Personally and politically

When I'm working there's not much conversation between me and my colleagues, because I'm the only English one. The others are Romanian.

Hard to get on the housing ladder - prices are only going up.

Homelessness.

Hard to get your kids into a good school.

4-5 weeks to get a GP appointment.

Not enough money in the NHS.

It's a recruitment problem as well. There's not enough doctors. Considering the hours they have to do, it's not an attractive proposition any more.

What about housing specifically?

Mortgage repayment is astronomical. There's no way out of renting.

I looked at help to Buy but house prices in my area are so high the scheme wouldn't help.

Up the percentage of council homes.

Every developer should be forced to build a certain percentage of affordable houses.

For some people 60% of their monthly wages go on rent or mortgage payments. That's crazy.

I don't have a problem with houses going up but we need the infrastructure. As part of the new development there should be a school. Adding 2,000 more people with no infrastructure is terrifying.

Do you agree with rent controls?

Yes, definitely.

Rent is more expensive than a mortgage, exploiting people with no ability to buy.

Maybe people wouldn't mind so much about renting if it was cheaper.

There are people out there who are exploiting people, providing shoddy accommodation and charging astronomical amounts of money, and overdwelling.

How do you feel about community?

There isn't enough of it. People hardly know each other.

People don't stay in one place.

We should create incentives for young families to buy a house cheaper but they have to stay in that house for 10-20 years.

You can't force people to get along.

What are your thoughts on higher education?

Too expensive.

I think it should be free.

I think it should be harder to get in to. Because the problem is that the more people that go to university, the more graduates competing for jobs. I don't think you should have to pay for higher education but I don't think there should be joke degrees that don't get you a job.

You should do a placement as part of your degree.

Too many people are going now and it's become a joke. I don't have a problem with the fact that universities are expensive. Let them be expensive, but let's make the education meaningful. Let's make it harder and whoever is capable of finishing that degree will do so.

At school I feel that teachers drum it into you that you have to go to university and they don't give you enough options.

They don't tell you there's other options available.

Some people have suggested that we should have a national service. Do you agree?

It's a way to gain skills and help out in your community.

It's implying that we as parents can't raise our children to be good citizens without it being forced upon us.

Nowadays you see a lot of kids in gangs.

What do you think about immigration?

My business needs immigrants because English people won't do the job. We need more immigration..

We need to control it

The number of people coming into the country should go down.

There's too many coming at the moment.

Low skill workers, like fruit-pickers, will see wages go up if there's not as many immigrants.

Immigration should be skill-based.

We need controlled immigration.

Should let as many skilled people into the country as possible?

No.

Only as required.

Government should speak to local businesses and councils and decide what skills we need.

Should people who come here have to learn to speak English?

Yes.

Note: All in agreement.

What do you think about politicians?

Overpaid.

Untrustworthy.

There must be some that are trying to do the right thing.

I think they're actually out of touch with what's going on in the country.

Are there any politicians you trust?

Jeremy Corbyn.

No I don't like him, he's antisemitic. I used to be a fan, but not anymore.

Boris Johnson. He says things I can relate to.

No, he's a blithering idiot.

What about political parties?

I don't think there is a political party that represents me anymore.

It's all a bit of a game.

Labour. Tories are more for rich people..

Labour were for the working class but they're not now

What about the creation of a new party?

Since none of the main parties are relatable anymore I could see if something new came out I'd be intrigued by it.

It would need to be something that no one has said before.

What one word would you use to describe the Labour Party?

Social.

Personable.

Understandable.

Antisemitic.

Untrustworthy.

What one word would you use to describe the Conservative Party?

Posh.

Lies.