

DO WE REALLY NEED BORDERS?

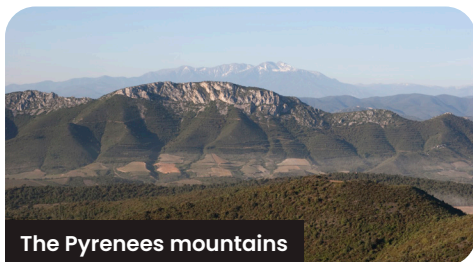
The countries of the world are divided by borders. If you've ever travelled abroad, the chances are that you had to show your passport to be allowed into another country. Having borders can offer stability and security to a country's citizens, but border issues are often in the news, particularly around the huge numbers of people who try to cross borders illegally in search of a better life. As climate change has an impact around the world, millions more people are likely to become **migrants** in the coming years. The world's borders have altered a lot throughout history, and they will continue to change in the future. The question is, are they really needed at all?

WHAT ARE BORDERS?

Borders are real or imaginary lines that separate different areas. On a map, the borders between countries are usually shown as solid lines, and countries are highlighted in different colours.

In reality, borders can be formed in a number of ways. Often, borders are created by nature, with things like mountains, rivers, lakes and deserts acting as dividing lines between different countries. For example, the Pyrenees mountains form a natural border between France and Spain.

However, many of the world's borders are man-made, having been decided upon by those in charge, often after a war over the land. For example, after



The Pyrenees mountains



All images: Getty

the **First World War**, borders changed, and Germany lost around 13% of its territory.

WHAT ARE BORDERS THERE FOR?

A border is there to show the exact area that each country's government controls. So, a country's laws can only be enforced within its borders, and the government collects taxes from the citizens who live there.

Every country has its own rules about who can live, travel and work there. People may need a visa or work permit in order to visit, work or live in different countries.

Keeping track of the number of people living in a country helps with the management of natural resources like land and water, and public services like schools and hospitals. Borders also help governments to control the goods that come into a country, to ensure they are safe and legal, and manage the economy by setting laws around how goods are traded with other countries. Borders also play a role in protecting each country's identity as, over time, countries have developed their own languages, culture and food.

Many people feel that borders are vitally important for security and stability, as they are clearly defined and can be protected.

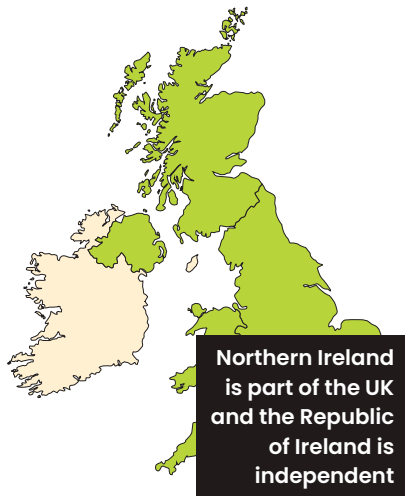


BORDERS AROUND THE WORLD

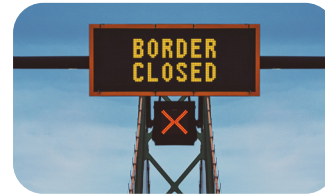
■ The **European Union** (EU) of 27 countries has an agreement that any of its citizens can travel freely to any other country within the EU. The United Kingdom was part of the EU from 1973 until 2020. The politicians who campaigned for the UK to leave the EU argued that leaving would give the UK more control over its borders.



■ Following the UK's vote to leave the EU, there were long negotiations on trade and border controls between Northern Ireland, which is part of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland, which is independent and still part of the EU.



■ During the Covid-19 pandemic, borders around the world were closed to visitors in order to slow down the spread of the virus.



■ After the **Second World War**, Germany was divided into four zones, under the control of the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. The country's capital city, Berlin, was divided into two halves. In 1961, the **Berlin Wall** was built to stop people getting from East Berlin to West Berlin. It became almost impossible to cross from one half of Berlin to the other, as there were observation towers and armed guards. At least 136 people were killed trying to cross the border. There were worldwide celebrations when the Berlin Wall was demolished in 1989.



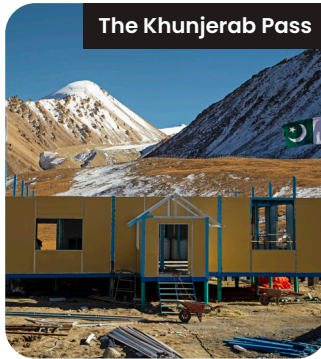
■ The wide border between North Korea and South Korea, called the Korean **Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)**, is guarded by fences and armed guards. Official permission is required for North Koreans to leave, or for people from most other countries to enter North Korea.



■ At 8,891 km long, the border between Canada and the United States is the world's longest undefended border.



■ The Khunjerab Pass, a mountain pass on the border of Pakistan and China, is the highest border crossing in the world, at 4,706m above sea level.



The Khunjerab Pass

■ US President Joe Biden has put forward a plan to cut down the high number of people illegally crossing the border from Mexico to the United States. If it becomes law, one of



The US/Mexico border fences in Arizona, USA

the changes would be that the border could be completely shut down if more than 5,000 people a day crossed it illegally.

BIG ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Looking at whether the world needs borders brings up a number of extremely complex issues, including:

■ **Inequality:** Having borders means that people who are born in the world's poorest countries aren't able to easily travel to more developed countries, where they would have more opportunities to improve their standard of living. Do borders create an unequal world, where only those born in richer countries are able to have a standard of living that's

denied to others who happen to have been born elsewhere?

■ **Climate change:** Extreme weather events, such as droughts, wildfires and flooding, have already forced millions of people around the world from their homes. The Institute for Economics and Peace estimates that over the next 30 years, so many areas will become **uninhabitable** that 1.2 billion people could be forced to leave the places where they now live. The natural world is adapting to climate change, and animals and plants are changing how and where they choose to live, but humans are unable to make the same decisions, because we have a world that's been divided by borders. How do we ensure that people who are the most affected by climate change have a safe place to go to within the current system?

■ **Illegal immigration:** Vast numbers of people leave the country where they were born to seek a new life elsewhere. This may be to escape discrimination, violence, war or a natural disaster, or because they are in search of a better way of life. Some may be able to claim **asylum**, which means they are legally allowed to stay in another country because they are **refugees** who are fleeing a dangerous situation. However, there is a huge issue with illegal immigration, where people try to get into another country without permission, often paying criminals to help them make a long and difficult journey. Since 2020, more than 100,000 people have come to the UK illegally by making the dangerous trip across the English Channel in small boats. **The International Organization for Migration** estimates that at least 64 people have died making this journey. Some argue that these

people are being denied their basic human right to a safe place to live, others say that the UK simply can't cope with the numbers of people who are trying to come here, and that we have to crack down on illegal immigration.

■ **Digital technology:** Some people argue that borders are unnecessary in a world where digital technology has connected us and transformed our lives, making it easier than ever to find out about and communicate with each other.

A BORDERLESS NATION

In northern Europe, the Sámi people are thought of as a 'borderless nation'. Many of the Sámi people are reindeer herders, and they travel around according to the season. The Sámi don't have a bordered nation of their own, as they live across Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia, but they have their own parliaments to protect their language, culture and way of life.



OPINIONS

American politician Mike France says: "A country can no more survive without borders than a person can live without skin. When borders break down, our personal security suffers along with our national **integrity**."

Environmental journalist Gaia Vince says borders will need to change to cope with the challenges facing the world: "These imaginary lines are not fit for the world of the 21st century with its soaring population, dramatic climate change and resource **scarcity**."



migrant – a person who travels to a different country or place, often in order to find work

European Union – a partnership between 27 countries in Europe, known as Member States, which allows trade and the free movement of people between member countries

First World War – the first huge global conflict, known as the Great War, which lasted from 1914-1918

Second World War – the second huge global conflict, which lasted from 1939-1945

Berlin Wall – a heavily guarded wall that divided East and West Berlin between 1961 and 1989. It was put up by East German authorities to stop people from getting from East Germany to West Germany, as the country had been divided after the Second World War

Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) – a wide border that divides North Korea from South Korea. Troops guard both sides of the border

The Institute for Economics and Peace – a research organisation that aims to change the way the world thinks about peace

uninhabitable – when conditions make it impossible for a place to be lived in

immigration – the process of moving to a new country with plans to live there permanently

asylum – a place of safety

refugee – a person who flees their home due to a dangerous situation and seeks safety in another region or country

The International Organization for Migration – the part of the United Nations that promotes international cooperation on issues around migration

integrity – being whole and undivided (it can also mean being honest with strong moral principles)

scarcity – a shortage or lack of something



YES, WE REALLY DO NEED BORDERS...



- 1.** Borders define countries and the area that each government controls, providing security and stability for the people who live there.
- 2.** Borders are vital so that governments can manage natural resources like land and water, and public services, such as schools and hospitals. These resources and services would be overwhelmed if people were allowed to move anywhere they wanted, and there were too many people living in one place.
- 3.** The language, culture and food that make each country unique have developed over a long period of time. Borders help to protect this cultural identity.



NO, WE REALLY DON'T NEED BORDERS...



- 1.** Borders create inequality, because people in some of the world's poorest countries are unable to easily travel to other countries where they could have more opportunities and a better standard of living.
- 2.** Due to laws over who can live and work in each country, there are huge issues with illegal immigration. Thousands of people are risking their lives to make dangerous journeys, which could be avoided if they were free to legally travel to other countries to find a job and a home.
- 3.** The world has to change to cope with the climate crisis and this includes changing borders to ensure that everyone has a safe place to live. We are more connected than ever thanks to digital technology, so we need to see everyone as a citizen of the world, rather than a citizen of their individual country.

QUESTIONS



Have you ever been to another country? If so, did you have to show your passport?

Whereabouts in the world would you like to visit?

Do you think people should be free to live wherever they choose?

Did you know that borders have changed a lot throughout history?

If the world had no borders, what issues might it create?

Do you have any friends or family members who live abroad?

Are you interested in living or working in another country when you're older?

Do you think it's important for different countries to celebrate and protect their identities, such as their language, culture and food?

Do you think borders will need to change in the future due to climate change?

If you were in charge, would you remove the world's borders?