

Briefing

Results from a survey on 14-17 year old persons living in Scotland on the Scottish independence referendum

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Introduction to the survey

The results presented here are based on a survey developed by the research team listed above. The work has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) with over £180,000 through the "Future of Scotland and the UK" framework.

This survey is the first representative analysis of the attitudes of 14-17 year olds living in Scotland on the Scottish independence referendum to be held in 2014. It is highly relevant because the voting age will almost certainly be lowered to 16 for the referendum. This means that someone currently 14 and a half years old fulfilling residency criteria would be eligible to vote.

Most of questions for the survey were tried and tested questions from existing large-scale adult surveys. The questions were piloted with 110 school students in the target age group at Knox Academy, Haddington, East Lothian. About one third of the questions were changed subsequently to be more relevant to this age group following the feedback from the participating school students. In addition, external advice from experts of the Europe-wide think tank d|part helped to strengthen the quality of the newly designed questions.

The interviews were carried out by telephone by Market Research UK (MRUK) in April and May 2013. 1018 interviews were carried out in total – with equal numbers for each of the eight Scottish parliament election regions and using a random digit dialling procedure. Parents were asked for permission to interview their children and also asked a few questions themselves (5 in total). The children were asked 21 questions each.

The results here present an overview of the most relevant initial findings from the key questions on views on independence in relation to socio-demographic factors, parental views, national identity orientations and general political attitudes. Apart from presenting the results themselves, the outcomes of the research will be used to develop teaching materials for schools across Scotland to have materials that are relevant for young people in informing the debate.

Core results

The results for the referendum question as proposed by the electoral commission are as follows:

Table 1: "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

Yes	20.9%
No	60.3%
Undecided	18.8%
Total (100%)	1018

A substantial majority of all 14-17 year old respondents (over 60%) would currently say "No" to an independent Scotland. About equal proportions (approximately 1/5) say "Yes" or "Undecided".

Table 2: "Should Scotland be an independent country?" (excluding "Undecided" votes)

Yes	25.8%
No	74.2%
Total (100%)	827

When only considering the votes of those that are happy to make a decision at this point and not taking into account those who are currently undecided (which may be seen as the equivalent of counting the votes cast), 25.8% say "Yes" to Scotland being independent.

To understand these results, we can look further at respondents' concerns and motivations. Table 3 shows a striking result. While about 81% are happy to state their current decision on the referendum question over 2/3 of participants also said that they would "like more information before [they] finally decide." This tells us that these young people largely i) are not indifferent to the issue and ii) do not feel that they have enough information to make a final decision.

Table 3: Need for more information: "Thinking about the debate on Scottish independence so far, would you say..."

I have enough information to make a decision	32.8%
I'd like more information before I finally decide	67.2%
Total (100%)	1018

While the vast majority of those who are currently saying they are "Undecided" want more information (88%), the same applies also to those who at the moment are happy to say

“Yes” or “No” (Table 4). This suggests us that a substantial majority of 14-17 year olds could be influenced in their decision by further information.

Table 4: Need for information by voting intention

	Yes	No	Undecided
I have enough information to make my decision	32.4%	39.4%	12.0%
I'd like more information before I finally decide	67.6%	60.6%	88.0%
Total (100%)	213	614	191

The young people were very interested in participating in the referendum. Only 12.8% state that they are unlikely to take part, and about 2/3 are already confident about their participation in the referendum.

Table 5: Likelihood of voting

Very unlikely	7.0%
Rather unlikely	5.8%
Neither likely nor unlikely	17.0%
Rather likely	25.0%
Very likely	44.1%
Don't know	1.2%
Total (100%)	1018

Students are aware of the referendum (94% said they were aware that a referendum on Scottish independence will be held in 2014) and talk to others about it. Only 11% say that they have not talked to anyone about the referendum so far (Table 6).

Table 6: Persons young people have talked to about the referendum (multiple answers possible)

Parents	55.5%
Friends	50.0%
People in class	54.7%
Nobody	11.0%
Total	1018

A major determining factor in influencing young people's vote will be whether they would be confident about the future of an independent Scotland (Table 7). Of the small number (6% of the sample) who say they would feel 'very confident', a massive 93% would vote 'Yes'. But of the much larger number (47%) who would be 'quite worried' or 'very worried', an even larger majority would vote 'No' – over 97%.

Table 7: Voting intention by Confidence in an independent Scotland: "If Scotland were to become independent, would you feel confident about Scotland's future, worried, or neither confident nor worried? (excluding those "Undecided")

	Very confident	Quite confident	Neither confident nor worried	Quite worried	Very worried
Yes	93.0%	74.0%	21.8%	2.3%	2.1%
No	7.0%	26.0%	78.2%	97.7%	97.9%
Total (100%)	57	150	170	343	94

A large group of young people is rather or very interested in politics generally (59%) and only 7.8% say that they are not interested at all (Table 8). It is noteworthy that when asked which political party they feel closest to, 58.8% say "none". So the political interest of young people does not seem to be captured by party affiliation. People with a great deal of interest in politics were more likely to intend to vote "Yes" than those with less interest (26.0%), and – not surprisingly – the less interest people had in politics, the more likely they were to say that their voting intention was still "Undecided".

Table 8: Interest in politics: "How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics?"

A great deal	12.1%
To some extent	46.9%
Not very much	32.9%
None at all	7.8%
Don't know	0.4%
Total (100%)	1018

Table 9: Voting intention by how much interest people have in politics

	A great deal	To some extent	Not very much	None at all
Yes	26.0%	19.5%	22.4%	16.5%
No	65.0%	63.1%	55.2%	55.7%
Undecided	8.9%	17.4%	22.4%	27.8%
Total (100%)	123	477	335	79

Socio-demographics/Background

Table 10: Voting intention of children by parental voting intention

	Parent/Legal guardian's response to independence question			
		Yes	No	Undecided
Child's response	Yes	50.6%	11.5%	22.4%
	No	30.3%	74.1%	48.8%
	Undecided	19.1%	14.5%	28.9%
	Total (100%)	178	594	246

There is a substantial association between parental voting intention and children’s voting intention (overall about 57% of children chose the same category as their parents). However, it is by no means a perfect association. The closest agreement is for a “No” vote with about ¾ of young people whose parent wants to vote “No” intending to vote “No” as well. Regarding a “Yes” vote there is only an agreement between parent and child in 50% of cases and for “Undecided” it is less than one quarter. While there is a relationship, it is clear that teenagers will not necessarily just vote the same way as their parents.

Table 11: Voting intention by age

	14	15	16	17
Yes	24.6%	16.7%	22.3%	20.4%
No	51.5%	66.7%	60.1%	60.9%
Undecided	23.9%	16.7%	17.6%	18.7%
Total (100%)	138	162	296	422

There is no strong pattern for the age with regards to voting intention – the fluctuations between the age groups are not greater than would be expected by chance. This suggests that it is meaningful to treat the sample as a whole with regards to age.

Table 12: Voting intention by sex

	Male	Female
Yes	25.0%	17.3%
No	57.5%	62.9%
Undecided	17.5%	19.9%
Total (100%)	485	533

The pattern is similar to the adult population: Male respondents are slightly more likely to vote yes than female respondents.

Table 13: Voting intention by highest parental educational attainment (**excluding those “Undecided”**)

	Higher education degree	Higher education without degree (e.g. HND)	Upper secondary (e.g. Higher Grade, or A levels)	Lower Secondary (e.g. Standard Grade)
Yes	21.6%	28.9%	22.2%	32.7%
No	78.4%	71.1%	77.8%	67.3%
Total (100%)	287	218	189	107

There is no simple pattern regarding parental education. 14-17 year olds with parents with lower secondary as highest attainment are more likely to vote “Yes” than those with parents who hold higher education degrees and those with parents who have upper secondary as highest attainment. But the level of “Yes” voting is rather similar to those whose parent has higher education below degree level.

Political attitudes/perceptions

Table 14: Voting intention by national identity orientation (**excluding those "Undecided"**)

	Scottish, not British	More Scottish than British	Equally Scottish and British	More British than Scottish	British, not Scottish
Yes	67.5%	32.9%	13.7%	3.9%	0
No	32.5%	67.1%	86.3%	96.2%	100%
Total (100%)	83	307	402	26	9

National identity matters, but it is not a perfect match. Those who identify solely as Scottish have a greater likelihood of intending to vote "Yes" – 67.5%. The position is reversed for those who feel "More Scottish than British": 67.1% would vote "No". The more British a person identifies the less likely they are to vote "Yes".

Overall, the young people are nearly evenly split between favouring the same education across the UK and favouring separate policies for Scotland (Table 15). There is some distinction between voting intentions according to these views: those who favour separate education policies for Scotland are more likely to vote "Yes" (Table 16). (Note that almost the whole of education is *already* devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and thus that devolved Parliament is free to determine all aspects of curriculum and exams for Scotland.)

Table 15: Education policy: "Thinking about school education and in particular the curriculum and exams, do you think that..."

The curriculum and exams should be the same for everyone in the UK	51.1%
Or should the Scottish Parliament be able to decide what the curriculum and exams are like in Scotland	47.2%
Don't know	1.7%
Total (100%)	1018

Table 16: Voting intention by education policy: "Thinking about school education and in particular the curriculum and exams, do you think that..." (**excluding "Don't know" and "Undecided"**)

	The curriculum and exams should be the same for everyone in the UK	Or should the Scottish Parliament be able to decide what the curriculum and exams are like in Scotland
Yes	18.9%	33.6%
No	81.1%	66.4%
Total (100%)	417	396

The young people are firmly in favour of common principles of public health (Table 17): 83.9% would like the quality of healthcare to be the same for everyone, and only 13.8%

would allow people to pay for better healthcare. But there was no variation between these groups in their voting intention for the referendum.

Table 17: (Non-territorial) egalitarian attitudes: "Should the quality of healthcare always be the same for everyone, or should people who can afford it be able to pay for better healthcare?"

Same for everyone	83.9%
Able to pay for better healthcare	13.8%
Don't know	2.4%
Total (100%)	1018

The Applied Quantitative Methods Network (AQMeN) is a Research Centre that aims to develop a dynamic and pioneering set of projects to improve our understanding of current social issues in the UK and provide policy makers and practitioners with the robust independent research-based evidence to build a better future. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), AQMeN has three primary strands of research involving a multidisciplinary team of researchers from the UK and abroad that will be developed over a four year period from 2013 to 2016:

Crime and Victimisation – led by Professor Susan McVie (University of Edinburgh) and involving Professor Brian Francis, Dr Les Humphries, Jon Bannister, Dr Paul Norris and Professor Paul Nieuwbeerta

Education and Social Stratification – led by Dr Cristina Iannelli (University of Edinburgh) and involving Professor Lindsay Paterson, Professor Adam Gamoran, Professor Marita Jacob, Dr Emer Smyth and Dr Selina McCoy

Urban Segregation and Inequality – led by Professor Gwilym Pryce (University of Glasgow) and involving Dr Nick Bailey, Dr Nema Dean, Dr Duncan Lee, Dr Stephan Heblich and Professor Chris Timmins

AQMeN currently has several additional, one-year projects that are also supported by ESRC investment. Three of these projects are part of the ESRC's Future of the UK and Scotland programme of work that aims to address issues around the future of Scotland and will aim to both inform the debate in the run-up to the referendum and assist in planning across a wide range of areas which will be affected by the outcome of the vote, whether for independence or the Union:

A survey of young Scots (age 16-17) about national identity, political interests and attitudes towards independence - led by Professor Lindsay Paterson (University of Edinburgh) and involving Dr Jan Eichhorn, Dr Michael Rosie and Professor John MacInnes

Investigating the impact of social media discussion threads on public sentiments and opinions towards Scottish independence and other political issues – led by Dr Mark Shephard (University of Strathclyde) and involving Dr Stephen Tagg and Professor Lindsay Paterson

Measuring public attitudes to Scotland's constitutional future using the 2013 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey – led by Professor Lindsay Paterson (University of Edinburgh) and involving Dr Jan Eichhorn, Professor John Curtice and Rachel Ormston