



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## *News Release*

Issued: 13 March 2015

---

**UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL: 00.01 GMT, MONDAY 16 MARCH**

### **Most Britons believe UK is heading for split, study says**

Most people in the United Kingdom believe that Scotland will become an independent country, despite the outcome of the recent referendum, new research suggests.

More than half of people in Scotland (69 per cent), England (59 per cent), Wales (54 per cent) and Northern Ireland (59 per cent) believe that Scotland will eventually leave the UK.

The findings emerge in a survey of more than 7000 voters across the UK. Researchers from the University of Edinburgh quizzed people on a range of constitutional issues that may influence voting in the upcoming Westminster election.

Last year's referendum on Scottish independence appears to have made a lasting impact on levels of political engagement north of the border.

Scots are significantly more likely to say that they will vote in the 2015 Westminster election (76 per cent) compared with the other parts of the UK - 64 per cent in Wales, 63 per cent in England and 55 per cent in Northern Ireland.

This difference is most pronounced among the youngest voters. While 65 per cent of 18-19 year olds in Scotland say they will vote, only 34 per cent of their English counterparts intend to head to the polls.

However, only a quarter of Scots (25 per cent) believe that ordinary people are able to influence how the UK is run. The figure is only slightly higher than in England and Wales (21 per cent in each) and Northern Ireland (17 per cent).

Survey respondents said the main factors influencing how the UK is governed are Westminster politicians (77 per cent) and political parties (73 per cent). This was followed by businesses (55 per cent), trade unions (37 per cent), politicians in local councils (28 per cent) and ordinary people (21 per cent).

In Scotland the status of the Scottish Parliament appears to have strengthened, with 57 per cent believing it influences how the UK is governed. In Wales 42 per cent of respondents said the Welsh Assembly had influence and 28 per cent in Northern Ireland said the same of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

---

*Ranked among the top universities in the world*

The survey also showed that satisfaction with the UK's current constitutional arrangements varies greatly.

Nearly half of people in England and Scotland (43 per cent and 44 per cent respectively) believe their country receives less government spending than it is due, compared with 37 per cent in Northern Ireland.

In Wales, however, 68 per cent are dissatisfied with the current arrangement.

There is agreement that a referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union should be decided by a majority of votes across the UK. That would rule out individual countries, such as Scotland, being allowed to veto the result.

Less than half of Scots (45 per cent) support a proposal that each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would have to vote in favour of an EU exit for it to happen. Support is even lower in other countries: 40 per cent in Northern Ireland; 36 per cent in Wales; 32 per cent in England.

A majority of people (59 per cent in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) would like all devolved administrations to have control over the same powers, rather than the current system. Scots are evenly split on this proposition.

The researchers also interviewed politicians, civil servants and campaigners, including at least one member from each political party who sat on the Smith Commission on Scottish Devolution.

Most respondents in these interviews said their emphasis was on creating a good political solution in a tight timescale, but they may have underestimated the public appetite for continued constitutional discussion.

Only about a quarter of voters in each of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England say that too much time has been spent on discussing constitutional issues. Between 45-50 per cent say too little time has been spent on these subjects.

Researcher Dr Jan Eichhorn, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Social and Political Science, said: "People across the UK show an appetite for discussions about how the country should be governed. Seeing a lasting, positive effect on political engagement in Scotland beyond the referendum is encouraging and shows that people can be activated politically. However, it is worrying to see how little people think they can actually make a difference."

Researcher Dr Daniel Kenealy, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Social and Political Science said: "Despite Nicola Sturgeon's call for an EU referendum veto by the four nations of the UK, and First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones' support for the idea, it remains unpopular with people across the UK. This shows us that on some issues people across the UK still think in terms of a single political unit making big decisions."

The research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and carried out at the University of Edinburgh by Dr Jan Eichhorn, Dr Daniel Kenealy, Richard Parry, Prof Lindsay Paterson, all based in Social Policy, and Alexandra Remond, based in Politics and International Relations.

---

*Ranked among the top universities in the world*

The survey was undertaken in late January and early February 2015.

**For further information please contact:**

Dr Jan Eichhorn, School of Social and Political Science,  
Tel 00 44 75 35 434 014 Email [Jan.Eichhorn@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Jan.Eichhorn@ed.ac.uk)

Ronnie Kerr, Press and PR Office  
Tel 0131 650 9547 or 44 (0)7979 446 209 Email [Ronald.Kerr@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Ronald.Kerr@ed.ac.uk)

---

*Ranked among the top universities in the world*