

Scotland

Can Scotland and the rest of the UK get along?

Irrespective of the outcome of the referendum on Scottish independence on 18th September 2014, Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom will have to get along with each other, despite a referendum campaign that might have created antagonism between the two publics. What does opinion either side of the border tell us about the prospects for the future relationship between Scotland and the Rest of the UK in the event of either a 'Yes' or a 'No' vote?

What if Scotland votes 'Yes'?

Public opinion on the two sides of the border does not represent a major barrier to continuing collaboration between Scotland and the rest of the UK in the event of independence.



86% of people in Scotland would like to be able to carry on watching the BBC after independence, while 82% of those in England and Wales think they 'definitely' or 'probably' should be allowed to do so.



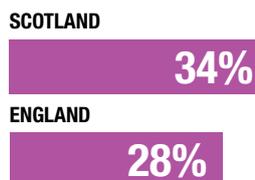
62% in Scotland think an independent Scotland should keep the same King or Queen as England; 65% in England and Wales agree.

What if Scotland votes 'No'?

Neither old grievances nor new pressures appear to be insurmountable to achieving an accommodation in the event that Scotland chooses to remain part of the UK.



As many as 63% of people in Scotland would like the Scottish Parliament to be responsible for taxes and welfare benefits in Scotland. 49% of people in England and Wales take the same view.



But there is reluctance on both sides of the border to accept the idea that tax rates and benefit levels could be different in Scotland than in England. For example, only 34% of people in Scotland, and 28% in England, think it would be OK for the old age pension to be different.

Introduction

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Irrespective of the outcome of the referendum on independence on 18th September 2014, Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom will have to get along with each other, one way or another. If Scotland votes to leave the UK, the two neighbours will have to agree the terms of the divorce and how far and in what ways they wish to collaborate in the future. If Scotland votes to stay in the UK, a constitutional settlement will have to be reached that is acceptable to the existing UK as a whole.

However, the claims and the counterclaims made during the referendum campaign may make reaching either kind of accommodation difficult. Inevitably, the campaign in favour of independence is critical of the way in which the UK is currently run. It argues that the economy meets the needs of (the south east of) England rather than those of the UK as a whole. Britain is portrayed as a relatively unequal society, and it is suggested that this reflects a less egalitarian outlook amongst voters in England compared with those in Scotland. More generally, supporters of independence suggest that Scotland is at perpetual risk of having public policies imposed upon it that are at variance with the views of a majority of Scotland's population (Scottish Government, 2013).

Those on the other side of the campaign fence point out that Scotland currently enjoys higher public spending per head than does either England or Wales, but that due to declining oil revenues it would be unlikely to be able to sustain this position under independence. Indeed, it is argued that Scotland's economy would suffer more generally under independence (HM Government, 2013). Meanwhile, doubts – or even outright opposition – are raised about the prospects for future collaboration between Scotland and the rest of the UK, not least in respect of a number of proposals put forward by the Scottish Government, including sharing the pound and continued access in Scotland to the BBC (Scottish Government, 2013; HM Government, 2014a). At the same time, it is argued that Scotland's social needs can be met more effectively and securely if welfare is funded from the larger pool of UK-wide resources rather than from the smaller Scottish tax base alone (HM Government, 2014b).

The expression of such sentiments could well come at a price – of greater antagonism between the publics on the two sides of the border. People in Scotland could become more critical of what they feel they currently get out of their country's membership of the United Kingdom. Those in the rest of the UK may increasingly think that Scotland is incapable of recognising a good deal when it sees one. As a result, the two publics' aspirations for the future may diverge, making it more difficult for their political leaders to reach an accommodation once the referendum ballot is counted and concluded.

In this chapter we look at public opinion on both sides of the border and what this might mean once the referendum is over. We start by looking at the prospects for a political accommodation in the event of a 'Yes' vote. Is there agreement on how the two countries should collaborate and, in particular, on the merits of the quite considerable sharing of facilities and institutions envisaged by the current Scottish Government? We then consider some of the issues that might have to be addressed if Scotland votes 'No'. Do the two publics agree or disagree about how Scotland should be governed within the framework of the Union? Or might a 'No' vote simply be a prelude to further wrangling between London and Edinburgh?



We look at public opinion on both sides of the border

We address these themes using data from two sources. The first comprises respondents to the British Social Attitudes survey who are resident in England or Wales. The second consists of the [Scottish Social Attitudes survey](#), an entirely separate survey from British Social Attitudes, but one that is conducted north of the border using exactly the same methodological approach. In 2013 the two surveys asked a variety of questions that either were worded identically or else covered the same subject matter from the perspective of their particular part of the UK. In some cases these questions have also been asked in the past, enabling us to look at whether attitudes have actually grown apart or not.

What if Scotland votes ‘Yes’?

The Scottish Government’s vision for independence envisages considerable continuing collaboration between Scotland and the rest of the UK (Scottish Government, 2013). It proposes that Scotland would continue to keep the Queen as its Head of State. Although it would establish its own public broadcasting corporation, the new body would continue to broadcast existing BBC channels, simply inserting its own programmes into the BBC schedule (much as BBC Scotland currently ‘opts out’ of the corporation’s network coverage). Meanwhile the Scottish Government proposes that Scotland would continue to use the pound as part of a currency union with the rest of the UK, a proposition that the UK government (and the opposition Labour Party) has already indicated it would reject (Balls, 2014; HM Government, 2014a).

Shared institutions?

There are two important questions to be asked of the Scottish Government’s proposals for collaboration. First, do people in Scotland necessarily want the collaboration that the current Scottish Government envisages? Second, are people in the rest of Britain willing to accept the idea that they should share institutions and procedures with a part of the UK that has just voted to leave? Unless we can answer both questions in the affirmative, it is likely to prove more difficult for negotiators on the two sides to broker the kind of deal that the Scottish Government has proposed.

First of all we consider whether Scotland wishes to keep the Queen. On the 2013 Scottish Social Attitudes survey respondents were asked whether an independent Scotland, “should keep the same King or Queen as England, or should it have its own President instead?” Most said they would like to retain the monarchy, though only 44 per cent said Scotland should “definitely” do so (while another 18 per cent only reckoned it “probably” should). In contrast, only a third definitely or probably wanted a President.

Scotland appears to be even keener to retain access to the BBC. We asked:

*The BBC currently provides public service television in Scotland.
If Scotland became an independent country, which of these statements on this card comes closest to your view?*

*The BBC should be available in Scotland in the same way as it is now
The BBC should be replaced by Scotland’s own public TV service
The BBC should be available and Scotland should have its own independent public TV service*



Most said they would like to retain the monarchy

79%
of people in Scotland think Scotland should continue to use the pound in the event of independence

As many as 61 per cent said they would simply like to keep the access they already have and do not feel that the country should develop its own independent public television service. Another 25 per cent want both the BBC and for Scotland to have its own independent television service, while just 11 per cent believe the BBC should be replaced by Scotland's own public broadcaster. In short the overwhelming majority of people in Scotland, no less than 86 per cent, would like to keep the BBC available to viewers and listeners in Scotland. Just over one in three (36 per cent) want any kind of separate or additional public television service. It seems that here the Scottish public are even more enthusiastic about continuing collaboration than is their current government.

Keeping the pound is also a popular idea north of the border. The 2013 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey asked people the following question:

If Scotland became independent which do you think it should use, the pound, the euro or its own new currency?

Eight in ten (79 per cent) said it should continue to use the pound. Only 11 per cent said that it should have its own new currency and just 7 per cent opted for the euro. It should be noted, however, that the question did not distinguish between using the pound as part of a formal currency union with the rest of the UK (as proposed by the Scottish Government) and using it unilaterally without any such formal agreement. At the time the 2013 survey was being conducted (in the summer and early autumn of that year) this distinction was not one that had received much attention in the public debate. More recently it has done so, not least as a result of the controversial announcement that all the principal parties currently represented in the House of Commons would oppose the creation of such a union (Balls, 2014; HM Government, 2014a). Even so, it appears that long before that announcement in February 2014, there was quite a widespread appreciation that Scotland might not be allowed to use the pound. For when respondents to the 2013 Scottish Social Attitudes survey were asked separately "if Scotland became independent which currency do you think it would be using after a few years", just 57 per cent named the pound. Overall, no less than 28 per cent of people said they wanted to be able to use the pound if Scotland became independent, but anticipated that in practice this would not be possible.

So for the most part public opinion in Scotland backs continuing collaboration on the monarchy, the pound, and the BBC. But if such collaboration is to be sustainable then it will need to be acceptable to public opinion south of the border. But is public opinion in the rest of Britain willing to accept such arrangements with an independent Scotland? It appears that in each case the answer is, 'yes', albeit not overwhelmingly so.

This is certainly the picture that emerged in respect of the monarchy when we asked:

If Scotland becomes an independent country, separate from the rest of the UK, should Scotland be allowed to keep the same King or Queen as England and Wales or not?

Around two-thirds (65 per cent) of people in England and Wales think that an independent Scotland should be allowed to keep the same King or Queen, while only around a quarter (26 per cent) believe it should not. That said, just 35 per cent said that it should "definitely" be allowed to do so, while 30 per

65%
of people in England and Wales think an independent Scotland should be allowed to keep the same King or Queen

cent only agreed that it should “probably” be allowed to keep the monarchy. Such apparent equivocation might exist because many respondents had not considered the issue before – or it might reflect a feeling that Scotland should be allowed to share the Queen so long as the arrangement formed part of a wider settlement that was acceptable to both sides.

Such hesitancy is less apparent when it comes to sharing the BBC. No less than 54 per cent say that everyone in an independent Scotland should “definitely be allowed” to “watch BBC television programmes just as they do now” while another 27 per cent think they should “probably be allowed” to do so. Only 13 per cent oppose the idea. Doubtless such willingness would be conditional on people in Scotland continuing to pay the same television licence fee as everyone in the rest of the UK, but it would appear that there is an appetite on both sides of the border to continue to have access to the common body of news information and cultural entertainment that the BBC currently provides.

There is rather less enthusiasm about the prospect of allowing Scotland to share the pound, where the balance of opinion closely mirrors that on sharing the same monarchy. On the one hand, 69 per cent in England and Wales said that an independent Scotland should be allowed “to continue to use the pound as its currency if it wants to”, while just 26 per cent were opposed. Those figures appear to cast doubt on the suggestion that most people in the rest of the UK would not be willing to contemplate the formation of a currency union with an independent Scotland (Holehouse, 2014). On the other hand, only 38 per cent think an independent Scotland should “definitely be allowed” to use the pound while almost as many, 31 per cent, only say that it should “probably be allowed” to do so. This suggests the issue is one where the eventual balance of public opinion in the rest of the UK could well depend on the lead given by its politicians. The public south of the border may come to decide that a currency union is a bad idea if that is the message they hear (Curtice, 2014); equally it seems that they could also be persuaded to tolerate the idea.

For the most part, then, it appears that British public opinion does not look like a serious barrier to continuing collaboration between the two countries in the event of independence. Both publics seem at least willing to tolerate sharing the monarchy, the BBC and the pound, though perhaps tolerance should not be mistaken for enthusiasm.

Citizenship in a new Scotland

One of the key issues that both governments would have to decide between them in the event of a ‘Yes’ vote in the independence referendum is who would have the right to become a Scottish citizen and who among those living north of the border would be allowed to retain their existing British citizenship. The Scottish Government has indicated that any British citizen born in Scotland or living in Scotland on independence day would automatically become a Scottish citizen. At the same time, however, so far as the Scottish Government is concerned such persons would also be able to keep their British citizenship should they wish to do so (Scottish Government, 2013). The UK government has been a little less forthcoming; it has acknowledged that it normally allows individuals to hold dual citizenship, but also states:

it cannot be guaranteed that dual nationality would be available to all persons who would be British citizens prior to independence, and who then became Scottish citizens. (HM Government, 2014c: 62)



British public opinion does not look like a serious barrier to continuing collaboration between the two countries in the event of independence

On this topic, however, neither government can be confident that its policy position reflects the broad swathe of public opinion in their part of Britain. As the concept of 'citizenship' is not that widely understood amongst the public in Britain, we addressed the issue in terms of one of the key concomitants of citizenship, the right to hold a passport. In Scotland we posed the following question:

If Scotland became independent what choices about passports should be available to citizens living here?

People should have to choose whether they keep their British passport or have a Scottish one

People should be able to keep their British passport and have a Scottish one

People should only be able to have a Scottish passport

47%

of those living in Scotland think people should be able to keep their British passport and have a Scottish one too

Just under a half (47 per cent) of those living in Scotland think that people should be able to keep their British passport and have a Scottish one too. A third (32 per cent) feel people should have to choose between the two, and 17 per cent think people should only be able to have a Scottish passport. Perhaps the pattern of responses reflects an innate suspicion of people being allowed to have two passports, but it could equally well indicate that many people feel that those who become Scottish citizens should demonstrate some commitment to the new country.

To ascertain people's views on this issue in England and Wales we asked:

Say that Scotland becomes an independent country, separate from the rest of the UK, and everyone living in Scotland who currently has a British passport becomes entitled to have a Scottish passport. Which of the statements on this card comes closest to your own view about what should then happen?

People in Scotland should have to choose whether they want to keep their British passport or have a Scottish one instead

If they want, people in Scotland should be able to keep their British passport and have a Scottish one as well

Here the majority view is that British citizens living in a newly independent Scotland should have to make a clear choice, with just under six in ten (58 per cent) backing that position. Only a third (33 per cent) think people should be able to have both. The UK government might thus find itself under some pressure to limit the ability of those who take up Scottish citizenship to retain their full rights as British citizens as well.

Nuclear weapons

There is, however, one area where the Scottish Government has set its face against continuing collaboration with the rest of the UK. The UK's current submarine based nuclear weapons facility is based on the estuary of the River Clyde. That fact alone would mean that a key UK defence establishment would be located on foreign soil should Scotland become independent. But to make matters more complicated, the Scottish National Party (SNP) is opposed to the possession of nuclear weapons and thus, in the event of independence, the current SNP Scottish Government would seek the removal of the UK's nuclear weapons from Scottish waters. Meanwhile, although the UK government has delayed making a final decision on the future of the UK's nuclear weapons facility until 2016, in 2007 the House of Commons voted in favour of initial proposals to replace the current Trident facility when it comes to the end of its operational life.

However, public opinion on the subject of nuclear weapons is nothing like as different on the two sides of the border as these different governmental stances might suggest. In Table 2.1 we show how people in the two parts of the UK responded when asked their view about the principle of Britain having its own nuclear weapons. On the one hand, it is the case that, in England and Wales more people (43 per cent) support having nuclear weapons than oppose their possession (36 per cent), whereas in Scotland, where 37 per cent are in favour and 46 per cent opposed, the opposite is true. On the other hand, the differences in the level of support are not that large, and both parts of the UK could reasonably be described as being divided on the subject. A decision either to retain or to scrap Britain's nuclear capability could be expected to meet considerable opposition on both sides of the border.

Table 2.1 Attitudes towards Britain's possession of nuclear weapons, England and Wales and Scotland

	England and Wales	Scotland
Are you in favour or against Britain having its own nuclear weapons?	%	%
Strongly in favour	18	13
Somewhat in favour	25	24
Neither in favour nor against	17	16
Somewhat against	16	18
Strongly against	20	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	991	1497
<i>Unweighted base</i>	984	1497

Source: England and Wales – British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England and Wales only); Scotland – Scottish Social Attitudes

Given the division of opinion, we should not perhaps be surprised that people in Scotland are not necessarily convinced that becoming independent should require the removal of British nuclear weapons. In fact slightly more people agree (41 per cent) than disagree (37 per cent) with the proposition that:

If Scotland becomes independent, Britain's nuclear weapons submarines should continue to be based here

The country is evidently just as divided over what it would want the rest of the UK to do with its weapons in the event of independence as it is over the principle of their possession in the first place.

However, people in England and Wales are more of one mind on this issue. Here the question we asked was:

At the moment, Britain's nuclear weapon submarines are based in Scotland. Regardless of whether you support or oppose Britain having nuclear weapons, if Scotland became an independent country, separate from the rest of the UK, should Britain's nuclear weapons remain in Scotland or should they be moved to somewhere else in Britain?

Only around a quarter (26 per cent) think Britain's nuclear weapons should remain in Scotland in these circumstances, while 63 per cent feel they should "definitely"



People in Scotland are not necessarily convinced that becoming independent should require the removal of British nuclear weapons

63%

of people in England and Wales think Britain's nuclear weapons should be moved elsewhere if Scotland becomes an independent country

or “probably” be moved elsewhere. Ironically, should Scotland vote ‘Yes’, it is public opinion in the rest of the UK that would be keen to see Britain’s nuclear weapons removed from Scotland rather than people within Scotland itself – most likely in many cases out of a wish to ensure that those weapons are still in a location that is fully within the UK’s control.

Summary

For the most part, public opinion on the two sides of the border does not appear to represent a major barrier to the development of a collaborative arrangement between Scotland and the rest of the UK. However, Scotland might find that there is a demand south of the border for Britain’s nuclear weapons to be moved out of Scotland, even if a future Scottish Government were not to insist on their removal from the Clyde. Meanwhile both governments might find that there are limits to public tolerance of any approach that allowed large numbers of people to claim dual citizenship of both Scotland and the rest of the UK. Here perhaps is an issue where both governments would need to tread carefully.

What if Scotland votes ‘No’?

What if Scotland chooses to remain in the United Kingdom? Will it be possible to find an arrangement for the governance of the UK that the public on both sides of the border would find acceptable? There are, after all, already some well-aired grievances about the allegedly advantageous position that the current asymmetric devolution settlement affords Scotland. Some question the right of Scottish MPs to vote on laws that will not apply north of the border when English MPs have no say over any equivalent Scottish legislation (Conservative Democracy Task Force, 2008; Heffer, 2005; Russell and Lodge, 2006). Others suggest it is unfair that Scotland enjoys a higher level of public spending per head than England, especially when it is not necessarily obvious that such spending can be justified by levels of need (McLean, 2005; McLean et al., 2008). Meanwhile, north of the border, various proposals have been put forward for giving the Scottish Parliament more powers and responsibilities (Devo Plus Group, 2012; Campbell, 2012; Lodge and Trench, 2014; Scottish Labour Devolution Commission, 2014; Trench, 2013). So there may well be pressure for Scotland to be given even more devolution than it enjoys now, a pressure to which the rest of the UK may or may not be willing to accede.

Current grievances

We start by considering how far public opinion in England is exercised about some of the alleged unfairness of the current devolution settlement. As Table 2.2 shows, people in England are certainly not very happy about the fact that Scottish MPs can vote on laws that only affect England. As many as 62 per cent agree that they should not, while only 8 per cent take the opposite view. However, the level of agreement is no higher now than it was in the early days of devolution, and to that extent people in England have not become increasingly concerned about the issue – though the proportion who “agree strongly” that Scottish MPs should not vote on English laws has grown by some ten percentage points or so since the early years of devolution. It seems unlikely that this issue will go away, though as yet the proposals of a government appointed commission to address the apparent anomaly through creating an opportunity for English MPs alone to express their views on ‘English’ laws are at present still gathering dust (McKay, 2013).

62%

of people in England agree that Scottish MPs should not vote on laws that only affect England

Table 2.2 Attitudes in England towards Scottish MPs voting on English laws, 2000–2013

	2000	2001	2003	2007	2010	2012	2013
Now that Scotland has its own parliament, Scottish MPs should no longer be allowed to vote in the House of Commons on laws that only affect England	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree strongly	18	19	22	25	31	29	29
Agree	45	38	38	36	35	36	33
Neither agree nor disagree	19	18	18	17	17	15	26
Disagree	8	12	10	9	6	7	7
Disagree strongly	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	1721	2387	1548	752	794	806	823
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1695	2341	1530	739	773	802	815

Note: In 2013 respondents were not offered the option 'Can't choose' (the results for which are not shown). In previous years they were

Source: British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England only)

On the other hand, England seems to be rather less concerned about Scotland's share of public spending, though critics are more numerous than they once were. We asked:



England seems to be rather less concerned about Scotland's share of public spending

Would you say that compared with other parts of the UK, Scotland gets pretty much its fair share of government spending, more than its fair share, or less than its fair share of government spending?

Please choose your answer from this card.

- 1. Much more than its fair share of government spending*
- 2. A little more than its fair share of government spending*
- 3. Pretty much its fair share of government spending*
- 4. A little less than its fair share of government spending*
- 5. Much less than its fair share of government spending*

As Table 2.3 shows, only just over a third (36 per cent) now think Scotland gets more than its "fair share". At least as many (37 per cent) think that it simply secures "pretty much its fair share", though only one in twenty feels that Scotland gets less than its fair share. The proportion who think that Scotland gets more than its fair share is undoubtedly higher now than in the early years of devolution, when only a little under a quarter were of that opinion, but it is slightly lower than the figure of two in five or so that hitherto has prevailed since 2008. So while there is some resentment about Scotland's perceived share of public spending, it is far from widespread and is not necessarily continuing to grow. It is also notable that each year between a quarter and a fifth of respondents say they do not know whether Scotland secures its fair share or not, an indication perhaps that the subject is not very salient in many people's minds.

Table 2.3 Attitudes in England towards Scotland's share of public spending, 2000–13

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Would you say that compared with other parts of the UK, Scotland gets ...	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Much more than its fair share	8	9	9	9	16	21	18	21	22	21	18
A little more than its fair share	13	15	15	13	16	20	22	17	22	23	18
Pretty much its fair share	42	44	44	45	38	33	30	29	30	30	37
A little less than its fair share	10	8	8	8	6	3	4	3	3	4	4
Much less than its fair share	1	1	1	1	1	*	*	1	*	1	1
Don't know	25	23	22	25	22	23	25	28	23	22	23
<i>Weighted base</i>	1956	2786	2931	1929	870	1001	992	928	974	937	936
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1928	2761	2897	1917	859	982	980	913	967	937	925

Source: British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England only)

But how do people in Scotland react when these propositions are put to them? Would they be upset if the rights of Scottish MPs to vote on English laws were to be limited? Does Scotland itself feel that it gets a good financial deal out of the UK, or might it think it should attract more government spending?



There would be relatively little objection in Scotland to limiting the right of Scottish MPs to vote on English laws

It seems that there would be relatively little objection in Scotland to limiting the right of Scottish MPs to vote on English laws. As Table 2.4 shows, typically just over half agree that Scotland's MPs should not be voting on such laws, while only around one in five or so disagree. Both proportions have changed little since the advent of devolution, other than that perhaps opposition to the idea may have fallen a little (from 24 per cent in 2001 to 18 per cent now), while the proportion that "agree strongly" has increased from 14 per cent in 2000 to 21 per cent now.

Table 2.4 Attitudes in Scotland towards Scottish MPs voting on English laws, 2000–13

	2000	2001	2003	2007	2009	2012	2013
Now that Scotland has its own parliament, Scottish MPs should no longer be allowed to vote in the House of Commons on laws that only affect England	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree strongly	14	15	13	14	15	19	21
Agree	39	36	34	36	32	33	32
Neither agree nor disagree	17	21	29	26	28	27	28
Disagree	19	16	18	18	18	15	15
Disagree strongly	4	8	5	4	4	5	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	1663	1605	1508	1508	1482	1229	1340
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1663	1605	1508	1508	1482	1229	1340

Source: Scottish Social Attitudes

40%

of those living north of the border say that Scotland secures less than its fair share of spending

Scotland is not so sanguine when it comes to its share of public spending. When asked exactly the same question as we have already seen was posed to people in England, two in five (40 per cent) of those living north of the border say that Scotland secures **less** than its fair share of spending, while only around one in ten (11 per cent) believe the country is being treated generously. However, people in Scotland are less likely to be critical of the share of spending that they get than they were in the early days of devolution, when as many as 58 per cent said that Scotland received less than its fair share. Indeed, it is notable that this perception has been less common ever since the SNP first came to power in Edinburgh in 2007 (when the proportion feeling that Scotland gets less than its fair share fell from 49 per cent two years earlier to 36 per cent). Any move to reduce Scotland's share of public spending, as a minority of people in England would seemingly like to happen, would doubtless be unpopular, but it seems that there is no reason to anticipate any imminent public pressure from north of the border for Scotland to be given a bigger slice of the cake than it already enjoys.

Table 2.5 Attitudes in Scotland towards Scotland's share of public spending, 2000–13

	2000	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Much more than its fair share	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
A little more than its fair share	8	8	8	7	13	11	12	9	11	9
Pretty much its fair share	27	36	34	32	37	39	41	39	39	42
A little less than its fair share	35	32	35	32	25	29	28	30	30	28
Much less than its fair share	23	15	13	17	11	8	10	12	12	12
Don't know/not answered	4	6	7	8	11	9	7	8	6	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	1663	1605	1508	1549	1508	1482	1495	1197	1229	1497
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1663	1605	1508	1549	1508	1482	1495	1197	1229	1497

Source: Scottish Social Attitudes

Future changes

On the other hand, should Scotland decide to vote in favour of staying in the UK there is likely to be pressure for the country's devolved institutions to be given more power and responsibility. Some changes are indeed already in train; under the provisions of the 2012 Scotland Act the Parliament will become responsible (in 2015) for landfill tax and stamp duty on property purchases and (in 2016) for the first 10p of income tax.^[1] However, this still means that the bulk of decisions about taxation and welfare will remain the preserve of the UK government at Westminster, and that these will remain the principal areas of domestic policy that are not wholly or primarily in Edinburgh's hands. Yet a clear majority of people in Scotland would appear to want their devolved parliament to be more powerful than this. As Table 2.6 shows, in recent years typically around a third or so have said that the Scottish Parliament should make all the key decisions for Scotland (a proposition that is tantamount to independence) while another third have indicated that it should be responsible for everything apart from defence and foreign affairs.



A clear majority of people in Scotland would appear to want their devolved parliament to be more powerful

Table 2.6 Attitudes in Scotland towards who should make government decisions for Scotland, 2010–13

	2010	2011	2012	2013
	%	%	%	%
The Scottish Parliament should make all the decisions for Scotland	28	43	35	31
The UK government should make decisions about defence and foreign affairs; the Scottish Parliament should decide everything else	32	29	32	32
The UK government should make decisions about taxes, benefits and defence and foreign affairs; the Scottish Parliament should decide the rest	27	21	24	25
The UK government should make all decisions for Scotland	10	5	6	8
<i>Weighted base</i>	1495	1197	1229	1497
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1495	1197	1229	1497

Source: *Scottish Social Attitudes*

But would the rest of the UK be happy to see yet more powers devolved to Scotland? The answer appears to be “probably”. When in 2013 respondents in England and Wales were asked the question outlined in Table 2.6, 24 per cent said that the Scottish Parliament should make all the decisions for Scotland, while another 25 per cent backed the devolution of everything apart from defence and foreign affairs. On the other side of the fence, 27 per cent indicated that taxation and welfare should continue to be a UK responsibility, while 18 per cent indicated that they believed that there should not be a Scottish Parliament at all. In short, just under half (49 per cent) backed the idea that Scotland should be responsible for the bulk of its domestic affairs, while slightly fewer, 45 per cent, would prefer no Scottish Parliament or one with no more powers than those it has already.

However, this line of questioning does not refer explicitly to Scotland being granted more powers than it has at present. Perhaps if this is made clear, people in the rest of Britain would be inclined to say that, “enough is enough”. To assess this possibility we asked respondents in England and Wales:

Say that Scotland decided it wished to remain part of the UK, but that it wanted the Scottish Parliament to have more power and responsibility for making key decisions about taxation and welfare benefits in Scotland. Would you be in favour or against allowing Scotland to have more power and responsibility in these areas?

In practice, this question did not evince any greater hostility; nearly half (45 per cent) said they would be in favour, while only 27 per cent would be opposed, with 23 per cent saying they would be neither in favour nor against. Public opinion in the rest of the UK would not necessarily be enthusiastic about more Scottish devolution, but would probably be willing to tolerate it.

Exploring the consequences of more autonomy

Giving the Scottish Parliament substantial power and responsibility for taxation and welfare would, however, have two important consequences. First, it would imply that rates of taxation and of benefits could be different on the two sides of the Anglo-Scottish border. Second, it would mean that taxes raised in Scotland



Public opinion in the rest of the UK would not necessarily be enthusiastic about more Scottish devolution, but would probably be willing to tolerate it



There is considerable reluctance to embrace the idea that taxation or welfare benefits might be different on the two sides of the border

would be used primarily to fund services in Scotland alone rather than being shared across the UK as a whole. Equally much of the money used to pay the benefits that people in Scotland receive would have to come primarily out of tax revenues collected in that country rather than from a UK-wide pot. Perhaps these implications cut across a feeling that British citizens should all have the same ‘social rights’ backed by the same state-wide pool of taxation resources, irrespective of where in the UK they live (Calman, 2009; Scottish Labour Devolution Commission, 2014).

As Table 2.7 shows, there is considerable reluctance to embrace the idea that taxation or welfare benefits might be different on the two sides of the border – but in this respect people in Scotland and those in the rest of Britain are largely at one. A little over a half of people in Scotland feel that the basic rate of income tax should always be the same on both sides of the border, a view that is at variance with the provisions of the 2012 Scotland Act, let alone any further devolution. At around three-fifths or so, the proportion who think the old age pension should be the same is even higher. Meanwhile, as one might anticipate, the idea that income tax and the pension should be the same throughout the UK is even more popular in England than it is north of the border.

Table 2.7 Attitudes in England and Scotland towards differential rates of income tax and pensions in England and Scotland, 2011–2013

	Scotland			England
	2011	2012	2013	2013
Should the basic rate of income tax ...	%	%	%	%
... always be the same in Scotland as in England	50	51	52	58
... or is it ok for it to be different in Scotland – either higher or lower - than it is in England?	48	44	41	31
Should the old age pension paid out by the government ...	%	%	%	%
... always be the same in Scotland as in England	56	63	58	65
... or is it ok for it to be different in Scotland – either higher or lower – than it is in England?	41	34	37	28
<i>Weighted base</i>	583	614	1497	936
<i>Unweighted base</i>	595	623	1497	925

Source: Scotland – Scottish Social Attitudes; England – British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England only)

We might, though, have anticipated that people in Scotland would be relatively keen that the monies raised from taxation in Scotland should be used to fund public services just in Scotland, and not be used to help pay for services across the UK as a whole. Table 2.8 shows the responses to two questions designed to assess this issue. The first of them reads as follows:

Regardless of what happens at present, how do you think the money raised by the income tax paid by people in Scotland should be used? Should it be used to help pay for public services across the UK as a whole, or should it be used to help pay for services in Scotland only?

The same question was then asked about, “the money raised through taxes on North Sea oil in Scottish waters”.

In both cases public opinion in Scotland is split more or less evenly on the issue. Indeed, despite the fact that “it’s Scotland’s oil” was a famous slogan that the SNP used during its first electoral breakthrough in the 1970s (and even though allegations of misuse of those revenues by the UK government forms part of the nationalist case for independence), slightly more people (50 per cent) think the revenues from North Sea oil should be shared across the UK as a whole than feel they should be spent exclusively in Scotland (44 per cent). However, there is no doubt where the balance of public opinion on this subject lies in England and Wales – there most people feel the revenues from Scottish taxation should be used to help pay for services across the UK as a whole, and this feeling is particularly widespread when it comes to the revenues from North Sea oil.

Table 2.8 Attitudes in England and Wales and in Scotland towards the use of tax revenues raised in Scotland

	England and Wales				Scotland	
		Help pay for services across the UK	Help pay for services in Scotland only		Help pay for services across the UK	Help pay for services in Scotland only
Use of money raised through income tax in Scotland	%	66	25	%	47	48
Use of money raised through taxes on North Sea oil	%	81	12	%	50	44
<i>Weighted base</i>		991	991		1497	1497
<i>Unweighted base</i>		984	984		1497	1497

Source: England and Wales – British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England and Wales only); Scotland – Scottish Social Attitudes

 **Scotland itself is even less keen on funding welfare benefits out of its own resources than it is on keeping its tax revenues to itself**

Scotland itself is even less keen on funding welfare benefits out of its own resources than it is on keeping its tax revenues to itself. This became evident when respondents were asked:

What about the cost of paying benefits to people in Scotland who lose their job through no fault of their own? Regardless of what happens at present, should the money to pay this come from the taxes collected across the UK as a whole, or from those collected in Scotland only?

The same question was also asked in relation to the “cost of paying the government old age pension to people living in Scotland”. As Table 2.9 shows, in both cases around three-fifths would prefer the necessary funding to come from across the UK as a whole. In contrast, people in England and Wales take much the same view of how these welfare benefits should be funded as they do about how income tax revenues should be used, with two-thirds (66%) saying they should be funded from a UK-wide pot.

Table 2.9 Attitudes in England and Wales and in Scotland towards the funding of welfare benefits paid in Scotland

	England and Wales			Scotland		
		From taxes collected across the UK	From taxes collected in Scotland only		From taxes collected across the UK	From taxes collected in Scotland only
Money to pay for unemployment benefits	%	66	27	%	58	36
Money to pay for old age pension	%	66	27	%	61	34
<i>Weighted base</i>		991	991		1497	1497
<i>Unweighted base</i>		984	984		1497	1497

Source: England and Wales – British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England and Wales only); Scotland – Scottish Social Attitudes



Future Scottish Governments may find it politically quite difficult to introduce different tax rates from those found south of the border

There are perhaps two ways of looking at the apparent inconsistency, evident on both sides of the border, between a largely favourable attitude towards the principle of devolving decisions about taxation and welfare in Scotland to the Scottish Parliament and less favourable views towards some of the consequences of doing so. On the one hand, it suggests that exercising the powers of further devolution may be more difficult than is immediately apparent, and that, in particular, future Scottish Governments may find it politically quite difficult to introduce different tax rates from those found south of the border. If so, that would appear to reduce the risk that tax (and welfare) devolution might come to offend English and Welsh sensibilities. On the other hand, the inconsistency also indicates that public opinion on both sides of the border remains sympathetic to the principle of sharing resources and benefits across the UK as a whole, and that might be thought to provide a valuable foundation for continuing collaboration across the UK as a whole should Scotland eventually decide to vote No.

Conclusions



Should Scotland vote ‘Yes’, the country would like to keep the monarchy, the BBC and the pound

One clear theme runs through this chapter. Whether Scotland votes ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ on 18th September 2014, there is broad agreement between people in Scotland and those in the rest of the UK about how their future relationship should be handled. Should Scotland vote ‘Yes’, the country would like to keep the monarchy, the BBC and the pound, and it appears that public opinion in the rest of Britain could be persuaded to accept such arrangements. The Scottish Government’s wish to see Britain’s nuclear weapons facility removed from the Clyde might be thought a potential flashpoint, but it seems that whatever people in Scotland think, their counterparts in England and Wales would not want these weapons to stay in an independent Scotland anyway. The one issue where there might be some difficulty is whether people in Scotland should be allowed to retain their existing British citizenship while claiming a new Scottish one, not because the two publics take a different view on the subject but because both are apparently rather suspicious of allowing people to carry more than one passport.

If Scotland votes 'No' there are potentially both old grievances and new pressures that would have to be addressed. Yet neither seems insurmountable. Public opinion in England would like to stop Scottish MPs from voting on English laws, but it seems that most people in Scotland would not object. Meanwhile, Scotland's share of public spending still does not seem to be a point of serious contention between the two publics. Scotland would, in principle, at least like to see its devolved institutions have more responsibility for taxation and welfare, but this appears to be a pressure to which England would be willing to accede. In any event, there is a lack of enthusiasm among the Scottish public to see greater responsibility translate into major policy differences between Scotland and its neighbours. Meanwhile, both publics are still willing to accept the idea of sharing the risks and responsibilities associated with taxation and welfare across the United Kingdom.



Public opinion in England has become a little more concerned about Scotland's share of public spending

There is nothing inevitable about this state of affairs and attitudes could well change. For example, we have seen that public opinion in England has become a little more concerned about Scotland's share of public spending and having Scottish MPs voting on English laws than it was in the early days of devolution. The rhetoric of the referendum campaign might yet create differences between the two publics. But once the heat of the battle is over and the combatants on both sides have to deal with the consequences of whatever vote transpires, it seems that if they listen to their publics they should be able to reach an accommodation with which most people would be willing to live.

Notes

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