

# Do Scotland and England & Wales Have Different Views About Immigration?

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## Introduction

Immigration was a central issue in the EU referendum. Against a backdrop of high levels of net inward migration to the UK, those campaigning in favour of leaving the EU argued that Britain needed to leave the institution so that the country could end its adherence to the ‘freedom of movement’ provisions of the European Union, which enable any EU citizen who wishes to do so to live and work in another member state. The narrow vote in favour of leaving the EU has been widely attributed at least in part to the popularity of this argument.

However, reflecting the experience of a country whose share of the UK population declined during the course of the twentieth century, and whose population is expected to age even more rapidly than that of the UK as a whole (Webster, 2000; MacNab, 2017), devolved governments in Scotland of all political persuasions have sought to encourage people from elsewhere to come to Scotland to live and work. For example, the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition between 1999 and 2007 promoted the Fresh Talent initiative, whereby non-European Economic Area citizens who had completed a degree at a Scottish university were allowed to work without a work permit for up to 24 months after the completion of their studies. More recently the SNP-led government has called for the devolution of immigration powers so that it could pursue a more liberal policy on immigration than the rest of the UK (Scottish Government, 2018). Meanwhile, the fact that Scotland voted decisively in favour of remaining in the EU would seem to suggest that concerns about immigration have less sway north of the border.

But are public attitudes towards immigration very different in Scotland from those in England & Wales? In this paper, we report the findings of a systematic comparison of both the overall prevalence of positive and negative attitudes towards immigration on the two sides of the border and of the way in which those attitudes vary by demographic group and political outlook.

**The fact that Scotland voted decisively in favour of remaining in the EU would seem to suggest that concerns about immigration have less sway north of the border**

## Data

Our evidence comes from the most recent British (BSA) and Scottish (SSA) Social Attitudes survey conducted by NatCen/ScotCen Social Research during the second half of 2017. These surveys are both high quality exercises conducted face to face with a random sample of, in the case of BSA, those aged 18 and over living in Great Britain south of the Caledonian Canal, and, in the case of SSA, those aged 16 and over living anywhere in Scotland. For the purpose of the analysis here those respondents living in Scotland who were interviewed for the BSA survey are excluded from our analysis. Further details about these surveys are to be found in the appendix to this paper.

In 2017, both surveys carried the same two questions about attitudes to immigration. These questions read as follows:

*On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely bad and 10 is extremely good, would you say it is generally bad or good for Britain's economy that migrants come to Britain from other countries?*

*And on a scale of 0 to 10, would you say that Britain's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries?*

In order to assist respondents in the use of the 0–10 answer scale, the following showcards accompanied each question:

*0 – Extremely bad for the economy*

*1*

*2*

*3*

*4*

*5 – Neither*

*6*

*7*

*8*

*9*

*10 – Extremely good for the economy*

*0 – Cultural life undermined*

*1*

*2*

*3*

*4*

*5 – Neither*

*6*

*7*

*8*

*9*

*10 – Cultural life enriched*

## Are Liberal Attitudes More Prevalent in Scotland?

Figure 1 compares the distribution of responses to the question on the SSA survey in Scotland (shown in green) about the economic impact of immigration with that of the answers given by respondents in England & Wales to BSA. Three points immediately become clear. First, in both parts of Britain the single most commonly reported number, given by just under a quarter, was 5, the mid-point. So, a substantial proportion of the population on both sides of the border reckon that immigration is neither good nor bad for the economy. Second, however, in both cases more people offer a score of between 6 and 10 than a figure between 0 and 4, implying that rather more people think that on balance immigration is good for the British economy than believe it is bad. Third, not only are these patterns evident on both sides of the border, but the distribution of responses is almost exactly the same. In short, while Scotland would appear on balance to have a relatively positive view of the economic consequences of migration, it is no different in this respect from England & Wales.

Figure 1: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy, Scotland and England & Wales

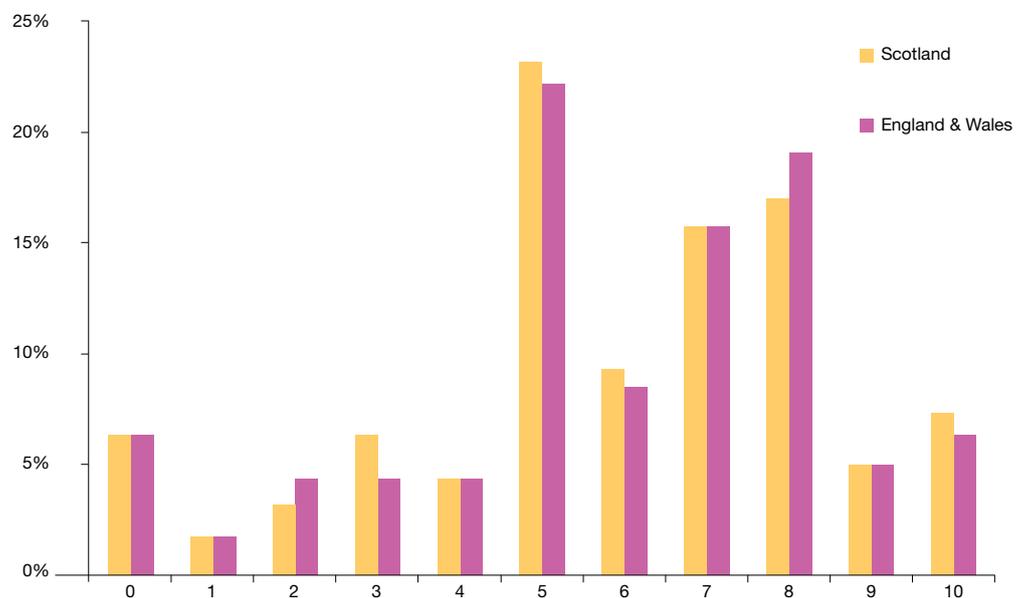
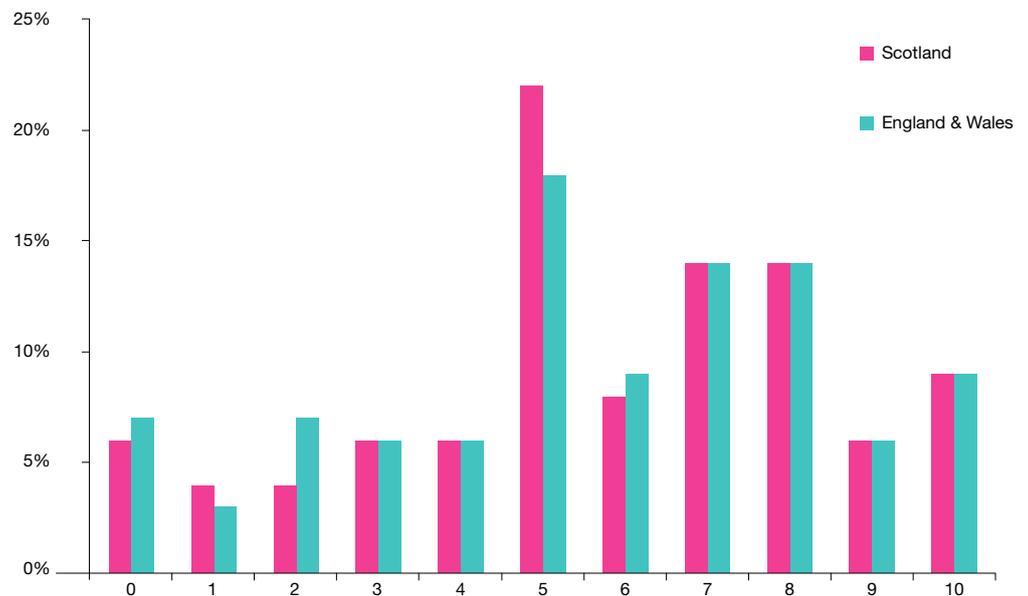


Figure 2 undertakes the same comparison of how people responded to the question about the cultural consequences of immigration. The picture here is remarkably similar to that in the previous figure. Again, the single most popular figure is 5, albeit it is not quite as popular as it is in the case of the economic consequences, and especially so in England & Wales. Equally, more people proffer a score of between 6 and 10 than a figure of between 0 and 4. And, once again also, in nearly every case the proportion giving each figure is the same or similar on both sides of the border. Here too, there is remarkably little evidence that public opinion in Scotland is any more liberal towards immigration than in England & Wales.

Figure 2: Perceived impact of migration on British cultural life, Scotland and England & Wales



Of course, comparing the prevalence of eleven different responses across two sets of data does not necessarily provide the easiest comparison to follow of the distribution of attitudes on both sides of the border. So, to aid our further analysis in this paper of who has a positive view of the consequences of migration and who does not, we collapse the answers given by our respondents into three different groups. Those providing a response of between 0 and 3 are categorised as viewing immigration as either bad for the British economy or as undermining cultural life in Britain, while those choosing a response of between 7 and 10 are categorised as believing that immigration is either good for the British economy or enriches British cultural life. Those selecting a response of between 4 and 6 form a group that seemingly perceive immigration as having largely neither a positive nor a negative economic or cultural impact.

Doing so immediately clarifies the picture portrayed in Figures 1 and 2 (see Table 1). Far more people in Scotland think that immigration is good for Britain's economy (46%) than think it is bad (17%), but the figures are almost identical in England & Wales. Equally voters in Scotland are much more likely to feel that immigration enriches Britain's culture (43%) than to believe it undermines that culture (20%), but again in this they are little different from their counterparts in England & Wales. Such small differences as there are between the two parts of Britain are far from being statistically significant.

**Table 1: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy and British culture, Scotland and England & Wales**

	Economy		Culture	
	Scotland	England & Wales	Scotland	England & Wales
	%	%	%	%
Bad / Undermined	17	16	20	23
Neither	36	36	35	33
Good / Enriched	46	47	43	43
<i>Base</i>	<i>1234</i>	<i>941</i>	<i>1234</i>	<i>941</i>

Further, the relationship between people's answers to our two questions is very similar in both parts of Britain. For example, almost four fifths (79%) of those in Scotland who feel that migration enriches British cultural life also see migration as having a positive impact upon the British economy, while almost all of the remainder of this group (20%) believe that migration's impact upon the economy is neither good nor bad. In England & Wales the picture is almost identical, with 78% of those who believe that migration enriches British cultural life adopting a positive view of migration's economic consequences, and a further 19% of the opinion that migration's impact upon the economy is neutral.



## Demographic Differences

Attitudes towards immigration have long been shown to vary above all by two main demographic characteristics (Ford and Lymperopoulou, 2017). Older voters and those who have relatively few, if any, educational qualifications are typically found to be less supportive of immigration than younger voters and university graduates. But perhaps these differences are less marked in Scotland, suggesting that the issue is less divisive north of the border?

### *Differences by Age*

There is little sign of this being the case so far as differences by age are concerned. Older people in Scotland are markedly less likely than their younger counterparts to feel that immigration has had a positive economic impact (see Table 2). While around half of those aged 18–34 (52%) and those aged 35–54 (50%) in Scotland view immigration as good for the economy, just 36% of those aged 55 and over believe this to be the case. The equivalent figures in England & Wales are much the same. Fifty-four per cent of those aged 18–34 and 53% of 35–54 year olds in the rest of Britain are of the opinion that immigration is good for the economy, but just 37% of those aged 55 and over believe that to be the case.

**Table 2: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy by Age Group, Scotland and England & Wales**

	18–34		35–54		55+	
	Scotland	E&W	Scotland	E&W	Scotland	E&W
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Bad	14	11	17	16	20	20
Neither	34	35	32	29	42	42
Good	52	54	50	53	36	37
<i>Base</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>191</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>326</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>425</i>

Note: E&W=England & Wales

In a similar vein (see Table 3), while 51% of those aged 18–34 and 45% of those aged 35–54 in Scotland see immigration as enhancing cultural life in Britain, just 35% of those aged 55 and over adopt this view. Meanwhile, in England & Wales, over half of those aged 18–34 (52%) and those aged 35–54 (53%) view immigration as having a positive impact upon Britain’s cultural landscape, while just 29% of those aged 55 and over feel positive about immigration’s effect upon British culture.

**Table 3: Perceived impact of migration on British culture by Age Group, Scotland and England & Wales**

	18–34		35–54		55+	
	Scotland	E&W	Scotland	E&W	Scotland	E&W
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Undermined	15	17	20	21	25	30
Neither	34	30	34	26	38	41
Enriched	51	52	45	53	35	29
<i>Base</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>191</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>326</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>425</i>

Note: In this table those living in Scotland aged 16 and 17 are excluded from the analysis. No respondents of this age were interviewed in England & Wales

### *Differences by Educational Background*

There is also little evidence that differences of view by educational background are less pronounced in Scotland. Our survey data show that those holding higher educational qualifications are more likely than those with few, if any, qualifications to feel that immigration has a positive economic and cultural impact – and that these relationships too follow a relatively similar pattern on both sides of the border.

In Scotland, three quarters (75%) of those with a university degree think that immigration has a positive impact upon the economy, compared with only around a quarter (26%) of those without any formal qualifications (see Table 4). Meanwhile, in England & Wales, again around three-quarters (76%) of those with degree-level qualifications believe that migration has been good for the British economy compared with just under a quarter of those with no formal qualifications.

**Table 4: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy by Highest Educational Qualification, Scotland and England & Wales**

	Degree		Higher/A-level		Standard Grade/ GCSE		None	
	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Bad	2	1	15	13	26	27	33	32
Neither	22	21	38	42	47	41	40	42
Good	75	76	47	44	25	32	26	24
<i>Base</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>306</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>221</i>	<i>181</i>

Note\*: Highest Education Qualification: 'Higher/A-Level' includes those whose highest educational qualification is a Scottish Higher, an A-Level, a higher educational qualification below degree level or equivalent qualification. 'Standard Grade/GCSE' includes those with a GCSE or Standard grade at any level, a CSE, or equivalent qualification.

Note\*\*: Scot=Scotland.

**The educational divide in attitudes towards immigration is much the same in Scotland as in England & Wales**

Meanwhile, 71% of those in Scotland with a degree feel that migration has enhanced British cultural life compared with 27% of those with no formal qualifications (see Table 5). South of the border, too, 71% of those with degree-level qualifications hold the view that migration has enhanced British cultural life. However, at 19%, the proportion of those without any qualifications who hold that view is somewhat lower than the equivalent figure in Scotland. There is then a slight suggestion that those in Scotland without any qualifications might be just a little more likely to take a positive view of the consequences of migration. However, this is but a small caveat to the general conclusion that the educational divide in attitudes towards immigration is much the same in Scotland as in England & Wales.

**Table 5: Perceived impact of migration on British culture by Highest Educational Qualification, Scotland and England & Wales**

	Degree		Higher/A-level		Standard Grade/ GCSE		None	
	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Undermined	6	9	19	21	32	33	29	39
Neither	21	20	39	35	42	41	41	41
Enriched	71	71	42	44	24	26	27	19
<i>Base</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>306</i>	<i>225</i>	<i>221</i>	<i>181</i>

Note: Highest Education Qualification: See note to Table 4

## Political Differences

We have established that the pattern of attitudes towards the cultural and economic consequences of immigration is much the same in Scotland as it is in England & Wales and that not only is this the case among voters as a whole, but is also the case if we look separately at older and younger voters, or at graduates and those with fewer qualifications. Yet we also know that voters in Scotland vote very differently from their counterparts in England & Wales. This juxtaposition suggests that people with similar views about immigration must vote rather differently on the two sides of the border.

### *Relationship with Vote*

At the 2017 election the Conservative party repeated a commitment it had made at the two previous general elections to reduce net migration to less than 100,000 a year, a stance that neither Labour nor the Liberal Democrats endorsed (Woodcock, 2017). We therefore

**Those who voted for the Conservatives or Labour in Scotland appear to be somewhat less likely than the supporters of those parties in England & Wales to take a positive view of the economic consequences of immigration**

might anticipate that those who voted Conservative at that election are less likely to express a positive view about the consequences of migration than those who voted Labour or Liberal Democrat. Meanwhile the SNP suggested that, post-Brexit, Scotland, at least, needed to continue to be able to attract migrants into the country to live and work. We therefore might anticipate that its supporters hold a relatively positive view of migration.

Table 6 breaks down separately for Scotland and for England & Wales people's perceptions of the economic consequences of immigration by how they voted in the 2017 general election. We can see that in England & Wales those who voted Labour or Liberal Democrat are indeed much more likely than those who backed the Conservatives to give a score that implies they think migration is good for Britain's economy. Around three-fifths of Labour and Liberal Democrat voters proffer such a score (with the latter perhaps slightly more likely to do so than the former), compared with two-fifths of Conservative supporters. That said, even among Conservative voters, only 15% state that immigration is bad for Britain's economy.

North of the border, those who voted for the SNP are generally inclined to take a positive view of the economic consequences of migration; nearly three-fifths (59%) of those who voted for the SNP in 2017 give a score that implies they think that migration is good for Britain's economy. But if many of those in Scotland who think that immigration is good for the economy back the SNP while the proportion of all voters in Scotland who take that view is much the same as in England & Wales, then it follows that those who voted for other parties are very likely to hold less positive views about migration than their counterparts south of the border.

True, this does not appear to be the case for those who voted Liberal Democrat, whose views about the economic consequences of migration (58% think it has a positive impact) appear to be similar to the perceptions of those who backed the SNP. However, those who voted for the Conservatives or Labour in Scotland do appear to be somewhat less likely than the supporters of those parties in England & Wales to take a positive view of the economic consequences of immigration. Only around a half (51%) of Labour voters in Scotland think that migration is good for Britain's economy, compared with the nearly three-fifths (59%) that do so in England & Wales. Similarly, only three in ten (30%) Scottish Conservative voters feel that immigration is good for the economy, compared with the nearly two-fifths (39%) who do so south of the border. At the same time, as many as 22% of Scottish Conservative voters believe that migration is actually bad for the economy – noticeably higher than the equivalent figure of 15% for Conservative supporters in England & Wales.

**Table 6: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy by Vote in 2017 General Election, Scotland and England & Wales**

	Conservative		Labour		Lib Dem		SNP
	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Bad	22	15	14	10	6	4	12
Neither	47	45	35	31	34	26	29
Good	30	39	51	59	58	64	59
<i>Base</i>	220	282	240	301	77	62	343

Table 7 undertakes the same analysis of our question about the cultural consequences of immigration. The pattern is in many respects similar. Around three-fifths of Labour (56%) and Liberal Democrat (64%) voters in England & Wales give a score that indicates that they are inclined to the view that migration enriches Britain's cultural life, with Liberal Democrat voters again appearing marginally the more positive about the impact of migration. In contrast, only three in ten Conservative voters (30%) express that opinion – a somewhat lower proportion than (as we saw above) are inclined to the view that immigration is good for the country's economy.

Meanwhile, north of the border, those who voted SNP (57%) are especially likely to take a positive view of the cultural consequences of migration – indeed they are more likely than supporters of any of the other parties to do so. At the same time, not only Labour but also Liberal Democrat voters in Scotland are noticeably less likely than such voters in England & Wales to indicate that migration enriches the country's culture. For example, just 45% of Labour voters in Scotland hold that view compared with 56% in England and Wales. However, here those who voted for the Conservatives in Scotland (28%) are not significantly less likely than their counterparts in England & Wales to say that Britain's culture is enriched by migration – and, equally, are no more likely either to say that it is undermined. The relatively sceptical outlook expressed by Conservative voters in England & Wales is simply replicated by their counterparts north of the border.

**Table 7: Perceived impact of migration on British culture by Vote in 2017 General Election, Scotland and England & Wales**

	Conservative		Labour		Lib Dem		SNP
	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot	E&W	Scot
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Undermined	29	30	18	14	12	4	15
Neither	42	40	35	30	33	32	28
Enriched	28	30	45	56	52	64	57
<i>Base</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>282</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>301</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>343</i>

The fact that those who back Scotland's largest party, the SNP, hold relatively positive views about migration helps create the impression that Scotland as a whole does so as well. However, we have seen that the relative success of the SNP in securing the support of those with positive attitudes towards migration is counterbalanced by some tendency for those who back one of the other three main parties in Scotland to be less positive about immigration than those who support those parties in England & Wales. Consequently, although the balance of opinion about migration is much the same in Scotland as in the rest of Britain, the link between attitudes towards the subject and how people vote at election time is somewhat different north of the border.<sup>1</sup>

### *Relationship with Attitudes towards Independence*

The relatively positive view that supporters of the SNP have of immigration suggests that those who support independence for Scotland might take a more favourable view of the consequences of immigration than do those who would like Scotland to remain part of the UK. This does indeed prove to be the case. As Table 8 shows rather more than half of those who say they would vote Yes in another independence referendum believe that immigration has been good for the economy (56%) and has enriched Britain's culture (53%). In contrast only somewhat more than a third of those who would vote No express similar views.

<sup>1</sup> Much the same conclusion is reached if instead of measuring party support by how people voted in the 2017 general election we do so using a more general measure known as party identification. This, for example, finds that whereas 57% of Labour supporters in England & Wales think that immigration has enriched Britain's cultural life, only 51% of Scottish Labour identifiers take that view.

**Table 8: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy and British culture by Current Scottish Independence Referendum Vote Intention**

	Economy		Culture	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
	%	%	%	%
Bad / Undermined	16	21	19	21
Neither	27	44	27	42
Good / Enriched	56	38	53	35
<i>Base</i>	<i>479</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>479</i>	<i>612</i>

### *A Question of Identity?*

Given that those who support the SNP and back independence are also more likely to have a strong sense of Scottish identity, we might anticipate that having such an identity is also linked to having a more positive view of immigration. If so, this might stand in stark contrast to the position in England, where it has long been argued that those with a strong English rather than British identity are less likely to regard immigration favourably (Curtice and Seyd, 2001; Jeffrey et al., 2014).<sup>2</sup> The SNP have long espoused a civic, inclusive conception of what it means to be Scottish, but in England it is Britishness, not Englishness that has been promoted as a multicultural, inclusive identity (Keating, 2001).

To pursue this possibility, Tables 9 and 10 use the so-called Moreno measure of national identity, which in Scotland invites respondents to indicate what mixture of being British and Scottish, and in England, of being British and English, best describes themselves (Moreno, 2006). The second half of Table 9 supports our expectation that, so far as the economic consequences at least are concerned, there is a link between identity and perceptions of the impact of immigration in England. More than two in five (43%) of those who say they are 'English, not British' are inclined to the view that immigration is bad for Britain's economy, whereas less than one in five (17%) of those who feel 'British, not English' or 'More British than English' support that position. In contrast, in Scotland there does not appear to be any consistent link between identity and perceptions of the economic consequences of immigration. Relatively few people north of the border say that they feel exclusively or primarily British rather than Scottish, but among those that do around half feel that immigration has been good for the economy—a proportion that more or less

<sup>2</sup> The pattern of national identity is, of course, very different in Wales from that in England, and so respondents living there are excluded from our analysis in this section. (There are too few BSA respondents in Wales to analyse separately the relationship there between national identity and attitudes to immigration.)

**In Scotland there does not appear to be any consistent link between identity and perceptions of the economic consequences of immigration**

matches the position among those who say they are ‘more Scottish than British’ (51%). Meanwhile, at just over a third (37%), the proportion who think that migration has been good for the economy among those who say they are ‘Scottish, not British’ is much the same as that among those who feel ‘equally Scottish and British’ (38%).

**Table 9: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy by Moreno National Identity, Scotland and England**

Scotland	Moreno National Identity				
	Scottish	More Scottish than British	Equally Scottish and British	More British than Scottish	British
	%	%	%	%	%
Bad	28	13	17	7	23
Neither	34	35	44	37	27
Good	37	51	38	53	50
<i>Base</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>372</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>68</i>

England	Moreno National Identity				
	English	More English than British	Equally English and British	More British than English	British
	%	%	%	%	%
Bad	43	35	20	17	17
Neither	38	34	35	18	33
Good	19	29	45	64	50
<i>Base</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>365</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>107</i>

Much the same pattern is observed in Table 10, which compares the link between national identity and perceptions of the cultural consequences of migration in Scotland with that in England. The more strongly that someone feels English relative to their sense of being British, the more likely they are to believe that immigration has undermined Britain’s culture, and the less likely they are to indicate that immigration has enriched that culture. Meanwhile in Scotland there is again no consistent pattern, with the balance of responses among those who say they are ‘more Scottish than British’ much the same as it is among those who identify as ‘more British than Scottish’.

**Table 10: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy by Moreno National Identity, Scotland and England**

Moreno National Identity					
Scotland	Scottish	More Scottish than British	Equally Scottish and British	More British than Scottish	British
	%	%	%	%	%
Undermined	29	15	23	12	21
Neither	34	37	38	41	26
Enriched	34	46	37	43	51
<i>Base</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>372</i>	<i>359</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>68</i>

Moreno National Identity					
England	English	More English than British	Equally English and British	More British than English	British
	%	%	%	%	%
Undermined	32	23	14	9	8
Neither	40	36	39	31	32
Enriched	28	38	46	56	60
<i>Base</i>	<i>134</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>365</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>107</i>

The SNP's promotion of 'Scottish' as an inclusive identity appears to have helped it attract a body of support that is relatively positive about immigration. However, it has seemingly not ensured that those who adhere strongly to a Scottish identity are especially likely to feel that way. Rather it simply seems to have contributed to a position where those who feel strongly Scottish do not stand out as being either markedly more negative or especially positive about immigration – in stark contrast to the negative perceptions of those south of the border who feel strongly English.

### *The Brexit Debate*

Immigration was, of course, a key issue in the EU referendum (Curtice, 2017). This was also a ballot where, despite the fact that their views about the consequences of immigration are not that dissimilar, voters in Scotland voted very differently from their counterparts in England. No less than 62% of voters in Scotland voted for Remain while just 38% backed Leave, whereas in England & Wales only 47% supported Remain and 53% cast a vote for Leave. This suggests that here too the link between perceptions of the consequences of immigration and how people voted was rather different in Scotland than in England, and that, in particular, perhaps

those who voted Remain in Scotland are not necessarily as positive about immigration as those who did so in England (Montagu, 2018).

Table 11 upholds this expectation so far as perceptions of the economic consequences of migration are concerned. True, those in Scotland who voted Remain are much more likely (56%) than those who backed Leave (22%) to say that immigration has been good for Britain. However, the difference between the two groups is smaller in Scotland than it is in England & Wales. South of the border, at 26% the proportion of Leave supporters who say that immigration has been good for the economy is not dissimilar to the 22% who express that view in Scotland. However, at 70%, the proportion of Remain voters in England & Wales who are inclined to the view that immigration has been good for the economy is noticeably higher than the equivalent figure (56%) in Scotland.

**Table 11: Perceived impact of migration on the British economy by 2016 EU Referendum Vote, Scotland and England & Wales**

	Scotland		England & Wales	
	Remain	Leave	Remain	Leave
	%	%	%	%
Bad	11	30	4	28
Neither	33	48	26	45
Good	56	22	70	26
<i>Base</i>	<i>667</i>	<i>277</i>	<i>370</i>	<i>351</i>

**The Remain campaign was more successful in Scotland than in England & Wales at securing the support of those who do not necessarily feel positive about the consequences of immigration**

A similar pattern is also evident in respect of the perceived cultural consequences of migration (see Table 12). While those in Scotland who voted Remain (54%) are more likely than those who voted Leave (23%) to say that migration has enriched Britain's culture, they are less likely to do so than those who voted Remain in England & Wales (66%). It would appear that the Remain campaign was more successful in Scotland than in England & Wales at securing the support of those who do not necessarily feel positive about the consequences of immigration. Further analysis suggests that the explanation lies in the fact that Conservative voters in Scotland (and to some extent Labour ones too) were more likely than their counterparts in England & Wales to vote to Remain in the EU even though they did not necessarily feel positive about immigration. This might well be a reflection of the fact that there were no senior politicians from any party north of the border who were campaigning in favour of Leave.

**Table 12: Perceived impact of migration on British culture by 2016 EU Referendum Vote, Scotland and England & Wales**

	Scotland		England & Wales	
	Remain	Leave	Remain	Leave
	%	%	%	%
Bad	13	35	6	41
Neither	32	42	28	37
Good	54	23	66	21
<i>Base</i>	<i>667</i>	<i>277</i>	<i>370</i>	<i>351</i>



## Conclusion

Scotland may have voted differently from England & Wales in an EU referendum in which immigration was a key issue and it may have a devolved government that is much more positive about immigration than is the UK government in London. But that does not mean that the balance of public opinion about the consequences of immigration is markedly more positive than it is in England & Wales, or that the demographic differences that are in evidence south of the border are not just as apparent in Scotland too. Rather, what differs between Scotland and the rest of the UK is how attitudes towards migration are reflected in the ballot box. The SNP has gathered for itself an electorate that is relatively positive about immigration, an electorate whose views are then counterbalanced to some degree by a pattern of support for other parties in Scotland that is somewhat less positive towards migration than is found among those in England & Wales who back such parties. Support for Scottish independence is associated with a more positive outlook too, even though on its own a strong Scottish identity is not. Meanwhile, because it secured considerable support from (less pro-immigration) supporters of unionist parties, the Remain campaign in Scotland was more successful than its counterpart elsewhere in Britain at securing the backing of those north of the border who do have less positive views about immigration.

Our analysis is a reminder of the dangers of attempting to infer the prevalence of attitudes from the outcome of an election or a referendum. Two sets of voters with very similar attitudes to each other can behave very differently if the political choices with which they are presented and the political appeals to which they are exposed are very different. The relative success of the SNP, with its civic nationalist appeal, means that the link between how people vote and their views about immigration are rather different in Scotland than in England & Wales. But the party's relative liberalism about immigration does not necessarily accurately reflect the views of Scots as a whole.

**What differs between Scotland and the rest of the UK is how attitudes towards migration are reflected in the ballot box**

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## APPENDIX: The British and Scottish Social Attitudes surveys

Conducted annually since 1983, NatCen's British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) is Britain's longest-running annual survey of public attitudes. It uses a random probability sampling methodology to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18+ living in private households in Britain. The majority of questions are asked by an interviewer face-to-face in the form of a Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI), while a smaller number are answered by respondents in a self-completion booklet. Data are weighted to correct differential selection probabilities and biases caused by differential non-response, and to reflect known demographic characteristics. BSA 2017 was conducted between July 2017 and October 2017, and achieved a response rate of 46%. Further details can be found in Phillips et al. (2018).

ScotCen (as NatCen is known in Scotland) has carried out the annual Scottish Social Attitudes survey (SSA) since the advent of devolution in 1999. SSA employs an almost identical methodology to its sister-survey BSA. The only differences of note are (i) that, following the reduction in the age for Scottish Parliament elections, the sample includes respondents aged 16 and 17, and (ii) those questions that on BSA are administered via a self-completion paper and pencil questionnaire are answered on SSA in the form of a computer-assisted self-interview. Thus, when the surveys carry the same questions, the similarity of the SSA methodology with that of BSA means that between them they provide a robust basis for comparing attitudes in Scotland with those in the rest of Britain. The 2017 SSA was conducted between July 2017 and February 2018, and achieved a response rate of 50%.

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