

The inevitability of independence according to the University of Edinburgh



New research from the University of Edinburgh suggests that most people in the UK now believe Scotland will become an independent country and eventually leave the UK.

The findings are taken from a survey of more than 7,000 voters across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland which asked people about a range of constitutional issues.

The majority of people across the four nations believe that Scotland will eventually leave the UK – 69 per cent in Scotland; 59 per cent in England; 54 per cent in Wales; and 59 per cent in Northern Ireland.

 Deputy First Minister John Swinney said:

“The Scottish Government continues to believe independence is the best option for Scotland, and the survey finds most Scots think this is where the constitutional journey will take us.

“We also believe strongly that Scotland being taken out of the EU in a referendum in circumstances, where a majority of Scots had voted to stay in, would be massively damaging economically and have major constitutional implications.

“The referendum on independence was a wonderful experience of democratic engagement, bringing people into politics who in some cases had not been involved in decades, if at all.

“I therefore welcome the findings that political engagement in Scotland is higher than in the rest of the UK, particularly among young people and that there remains a strong appetite

for debate over the constitution. Scots are significantly more likely to say that they will vote in the 2015 Westminster election.”

Last September the result of the Scottish Independence Referendum was a 55% vote for the status quo. There was a record turnout of 84% of the electorate. The leaders of the main political parties in the No campaign had promised further devolution powers in ‘The Vow’ which was published a few days ahead of the referendum vote and the Prime Minister promised this again in the speech which he made the morning after the votes were cast. (You can see this in full below)

On 19 September 2014 David Cameron said: “Political leaders on all sides of the debate now bear a heavy responsibility to come together and work constructively to advance the interests of people in Scotland, as well as those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, for each and every citizen of our United Kingdom.

“To those in Scotland sceptical of the constitutional promises made, let me say this we have delivered on devolution under this government, and we will do so again in the next Parliament.”

The Smith Commission followed and was charged with recommending extra powers to be devolved to Scotland. The draft legislation put forward in January this year included these recommendations:

- □ The Parliament will be given the power to set income tax rates and bands on earned income and will retain all of the income tax raised in Scotland. A share of VAT will be assigned to the Parliament and Air Passenger Duty will be fully devolved.

- □ The Parliament will be made permanent in UK legislation and given powers over how it is elected and run including the power to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote.
- □ The Parliament will be given powers to create new benefits in devolved areas and make discretionary payments in any area of welfare. Also a range of other benefits that support older people, carers, disabled people and those who are ill will be fully devolved.

The draft legislation will be included in a bill to be debated by the UK government when it reconvenes after the General Election.

This is the speech which David Cameron made on the morning after the referendum vote: