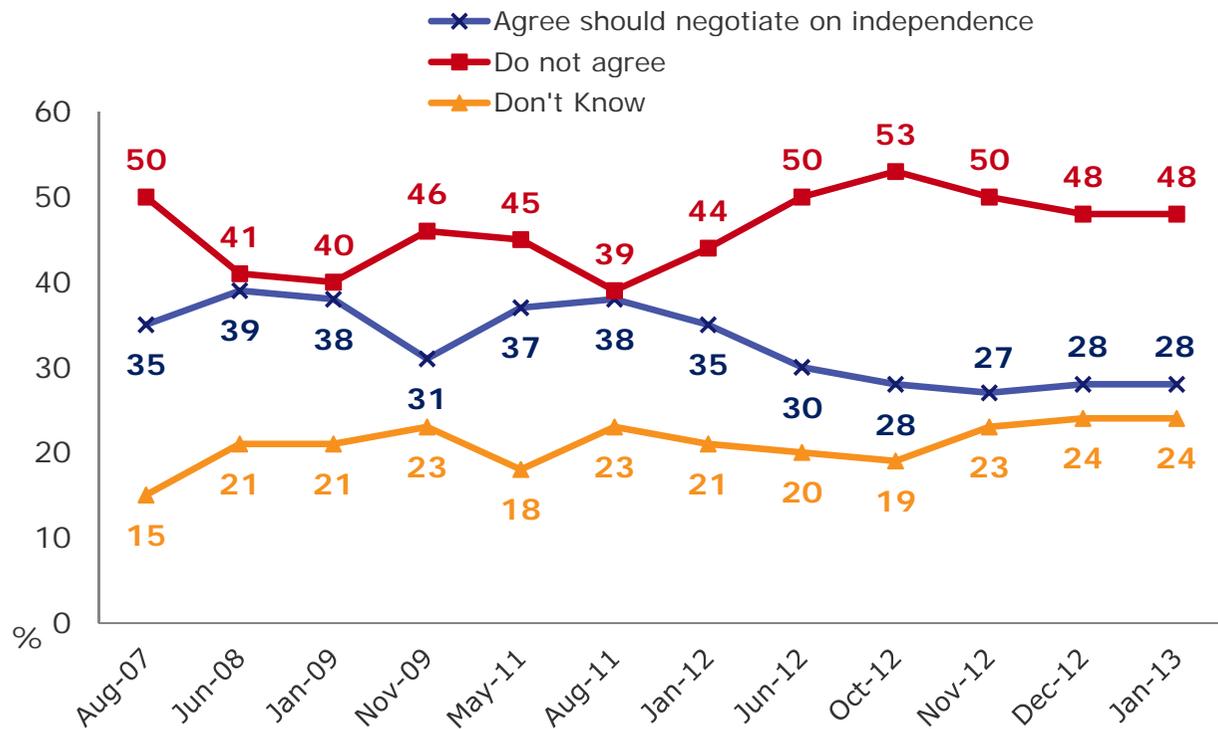


Referendum on Scottish independence

Press release - 14th January 2013

Q1

The SNP are outlining their plans for a possible referendum on Scottish independence in the future. If such a referendum were to be held tomorrow, how would you vote?



Findings

After a period of volatility in attitudes towards independence following the SNP's success in the 2011 Scottish parliamentary election, opinion has stabilised in recent months, with opposition consistently recorded at around the 50% level and support some 20% lower. With just over 1 in 4 in favour. Just under 1 in 4 remain undecided.

The main effect of the Edinburgh Agreement between Cameron and Salmond in October was an increase in the undecideds and slight decline in support from its peak of 53%, rather than any more positive influence on opinion. Similarly, the recent debate around automatic EU membership or not following independence has had no adverse effect on levels of support, which might suggest that these current levels of opposition and support are based much more on principle than the detail. They are a reflection of the heart rather than the head at this stage.



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While this gives the 'Yes' campaign a sizeable base on which to build and a significant 24% undecided to attempt to win over, the gap of 20% remains large and, if the opposition is consolidating at around 48%, the challenge is considerable.

It is worth noting that the introduction of 16-17s to the sample has no effect on overall opinion, such is the low level of their representation within the electorate as a whole.

Background

In August 2007, the SNP published a white paper on Scotland's future, containing the bill which would authorise a referendum on Scottish independence and setting out a proposed ballot paper.

Using our omnibus, Scottish Opinion Survey, TNS BMRB conducted a poll at that time to establish how the Scottish electorate would respond to the two options specified if such a referendum were to be held at that time. This poll was then repeated periodically over the next 2 years to monitor any changes in public opinion.

Some 4 years on, the temperature was raised considerably by the success of the SNP in winning an outright majority in the Scottish Parliament election in May 2011 and declaring that a referendum will be held during the course of this Parliament.

Against this background, TNS BMRB restarted its series of independence polls, using the same question as before to maintain trend data.

The situation developed further in January 2012, when Alex Salmond announced a proposed date of autumn 2014 for the referendum and, on 25th January, launched a consultation on this, which included a revised question wording of, 'Do you agree that Scotland should be an independent country?'

While it was recognised that our poll did not reflect the latest suggested question wording – on which, incidentally, there is some debate over its neutrality - it did provide a stark measure of how attitudes towards independence per se had moved since the SNP first came to power in 2007 and announced their intentions on this issue.



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Since then, in 2012, we have seen the launch of both the pro-independence campaign and the 'Better together' campaign promoting the status quo and, in October, an agreement signed between the Westminster and Scottish Governments formalising the date, single question format of the referendum and the extension of the franchise to all aged 16+ on this occasion.

For our polling, we have retained the same question throughout to provide an accurate measure of trends in support for the alternatives over time, which we believe to be more insightful than to reflect any current variations on wording approach.

Method

A sample of 1012 adults aged 16+ was interviewed face-to-face in-home in 55 constituencies across Scotland over the period 3rd – 9th January 2013.

While polling was previously restricted to 18+, we have included those aged 16 and 17 in recent polls to reflect agreement on their eligibility to vote in the referendum.

To ensure the sample was representative of the adult population of Scotland, it was weighted to match population profile estimates in the analysis.

Data tabulations have been supplied separately.

Respondents were asked:

The SNP are outlining their plans for a possible referendum on Scottish independence in the future. If such a referendum were to be held tomorrow, how would you vote?

I AGREE that the Scottish Government should negotiate a settlement with the Government of the United Kingdom so that Scotland becomes an independent state.

I DO NOT AGREE that the Scottish Government should negotiate a settlement with the Government of the United Kingdom so that Scotland becomes an independent state.

(Don't know) – not shown on screen



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