2012 Elections & Mayoral Referendums

Post-election opinion research report: Scotland

1 Technical summary about the data

1.1 This report is based on a subsample of 1,000 Scottish adults from a total of 4,104 respondents from England, Scotland and Wales. ICM conducted 4,104 telephone interviews with voters and non-voters across Great Britain. The interviews were stratified by devolved area as follows:

- In England (excluding London) 1,354 interviews were completed. A total of 793 interviews were conducted with people voting in areas holding council elections only, with boosts in Mayoral city referendum areas taking the total within such English city areas to 561 interviews.
- In Scotland, 1,000 interviews were completed.
- In Wales, 750 interviews were completed.
- In London, 1,000 interviews were completed.

1.2 All interviews were conducted by telephone on 4-22 May, 2012. All respondents were selected at random, using Random Digit Dialled telephone numbers flagged at ward level. The profile of the contacted sample was designed to match that of the eligible population by key demographics such as sex, age and work status. In line with previous research, roughly equal numbers of voters and non-voters participated on the survey.

1.3 This research was undertaken to understand more about the electoral experiences of the public. The survey includes questions on a range of areas, including satisfaction levels, priorities when voting, confidence in the voting system (including polling station and postal voting), and views on electoral integrity.

1.4 On the 3rd May 2012, a number of different electoral events took place. They were as follows:

1. Council elections in 128 English councils in total, of which 36 were Metropolitan Boroughs, 18 were Unitary Authorities and 74 were second tier District Councils.

2. In Scotland, elections took place in every Scottish Unitary Authority.

3. In Wales, elections took place in every Welsh Unitary Authority.

4. In London, elections took place for the Mayor and Assembly

2 Summary of Findings

Satisfaction with registration

- 84% of Scottish adults are satisfied with the process of getting your name on the list of those people who are registered to vote. This is in line with the 2012 GB average, as well as the 2011 figure. However, Scots are less likely to be 'very satisfied' (47% vs. 52%) and more likely to be 'fairly satisfied' (37% vs. 32%).

- In a recurrent theme, there is an age gap whereby older people display a greater level of satisfaction with the process than younger people: 93% of those aged 55-65 and 65+ are 'satisfied' compared to 70% of 18-24s.

- There is also a link between satisfaction and knowledge: those who say they know 'a great deal/fair amount' (91%) about the local elections are significantly more likely to feel 'satisfied' than those who do not know much or anything (75%).

Turnout

- Official figures show that 40% eligible adults turned out to vote in Scotland. This is in line with the 39% recorded in the Welsh and London ballots respectively.

- The 2012 questionnaire provides a self-reported account of turnout on May 3rd and doesn't provide an accurate absolute measure of turnout. Nonetheless, in the relative context the data provides an insight into demographic and attitudinal influences on turnout.

- The results show that attitudes and knowledge play a key role in driving turnout. People who know 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' (70%) about local elections are far more likely to say they voted than those who do not know much (30%). The same is true for satisfaction with the voting procedure, where those who are satisfied (60%) are more likely than those who are dissatisfied (48%) to report voting.

- There are also familiar demographic patterns, with older people more likely than younger adults to report voting: 74% of those aged 65+ compared to 34% of 18-24s. Socio-economic grade also plays a role, with 59% of ABs reporting voting compared to 49% of C2s and 54% of DEs. It is worth noting, however, that these figures reflect self-reported behaviour rather than actual turnout.

Satisfaction with voting process

- Satisfaction levels in Scotland (74%) are slightly lower than they are at the overall GB level (79%).

- Older people tend to be more satisfied with the procedure for voting than younger people. Satisfaction ranges from a high of 82% amongst over 65s to a low of 64% amongst 18-24s.

- Attitudes and voting behaviour also have a bearing, with voters (83%) significantly more likely to express satisfaction than non-voters (63%). Similarly, people who know about local elections (82%) are more inclined to be satisfied than those who do not know much (64%).

Knowledge of the referendum and elections

- More than half (56%) of Scottish adults say they knew 'a great deal' (12%) or 'a fair amount' (45%) about the local elections taking place on 3rd May. These levels of awareness compare favourably to the overall local council election figure (52%), but lag behind London's levels (73%).

- A far greater level of knowledge is recorded amongst voters (73%) than amongst non-voters (36%). Similarly, people who are confident that the election was well run are more likely to know a 'great deal' or a 'fair amount' (65%) than those who are not confident (29%).

- The gender gap is as apparent in Scotland as it is across GB: 61% of men claim to know 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' about the elections compared to a lower 52% of women. There is also a socio-economic gap, with knowledge ranging from a high of 62% amongst ABs to a low of 51% amongst C2s and 55% amongst DEs.

- Older people report a higher level of knowledge than younger adults: the figure of 68% amongst those aged 65+, compares to 39% amongst 18-24s and 48% amongst 25-34s.

Confidence referendum & elections well-run

- Three-quarters (75%) of Scots are confident that the election was well run on 3rd May, with 30% saying they are 'very' confident, and 45% saying 'fairly' confident. This is in line with the overall GB average, although confidence is slightly higher in London (78%).

- People who are satisfied with the voting procedure (83%) are more likely to voice confidence than those who are dissatisfied (57%).

Voter experience

- A very large majority (98%) say they were satisfied with the process of voting at a polling station/place, with 69% saying 'very satisfied' and 29% saying 'fairly satisfied'. This is in line with GB average, although a large proportion of voters at the overall level say they are 'very satisfied' (74%). Satisfaction is virtually unanimous across subgroups.

- Polling station voters seem to have been impressed by the experience, with a large majority saying 'it was safe' (99%), 'well ordered' (99%) and 'well run by staff' (98%).

- Satisfaction with the process of postal voting (97%) is also very high, with 77% saying they are 'very satisfied', and 20% saying 'fairly satisfied'. This is in line with the GB average.

- 53% think that voting by post on 3rd May was convenient based on what they have seen, heard or experienced. The figure is much higher amongst those who actually cast a postal vote themselves (97%).

- There is a consensus that the help available from staff and through written instructions was useful. 97% of postal voters say that they written instructions on how to return their vote was useful, and 68% say 'very useful'.

- Nine in ten (92%) found it easy to fill in the ballot paper for the Scottish local council elections, and 75% found it 'very easy'.

- Similarly, a large majority of voters in Scotland (96%) they found it 'very' or 'fairly' easy to find the candidates name they wanted to vote for on the local election ballot.

- All Scottish respondents were also asked whether using electronic machines to count votes makes the count more or less accurate. 40% said it would make it more accurate, while the same percentage that said it would make no difference. One in ten (10%) feels that the use of machines would make the count less accurate.

- Respondents were also asked whether electronic machines to count the votes cast in all elections would give you more or less confidence in the voting process. Over a quarter (26%) said more confidence, 12% less so and six in ten (60%) said it would make no difference.

Electoral fraud

- When asked what they understand by the term 'electoral fraud', 23% say 'someone voting using someone else's vote/name/false identity', and 18% mention 'cheating/dishonesty/fraud/corruption/vote rigging'. However, a quarter (26%) say they 'don't know/don't understand it'.

- 37% of people in Scotland know 'a lot' (6%) or 'a little' (31%) about electoral fraud, but the majority (63%) know 'hardly anything at all' (34%) or 'nothing at all' (29%).

- When asked to identify instances of electoral fraud from a list of statements, 94% select 'someone pretending to be another person so they can vote more than once to influence the election result'. This is also deemed the most serious when respondents were asked which example of fraud is most concerning.

- Four in five (82%) feel that voting is safe from fraud and abuse, with 19% saying 'very safe' and 63% saying 'fairly safe'. Voting at a polling station (89%) is perceived as being safer than voting by post (57%).