



# **Public Attitudes towards Additional Devolution to the Scottish Parliament**

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The Edinburgh Agreement, signed in 2012, ensured that the 24 month period before the referendum would be spent discussing the benefits or challenges of Scottish independence. The agreement not to include a question on more powers for the Scottish Parliament ensured that alternative forms of devolution were not central to the deliberation by parties and voters, at least until the late stages of the campaign. In the final two weeks of the campaign heightened attention was given to the extent of additional devolution that might be established should Scotland vote No. Immediately after the No vote on 18 September, the Smith Commission was charged with producing cross-party agreement on additional devolution.

The following explores survey data on voter attitudes to the constitutional status quo in Scotland and to alternative models of additional devolution, particularly those put forward by the main Scottish parties. It seeks to account for the differing levels of support for constitutional alternatives. We also consider what voters in England think of constitutional change in Scotland.

The main messages are that:

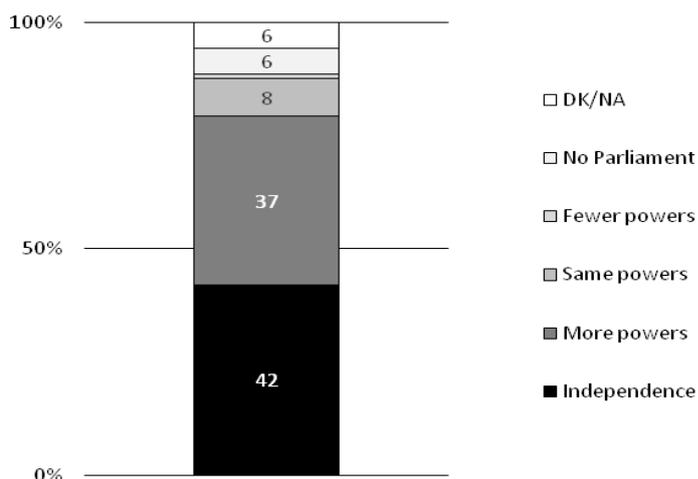
- independence is the single constitutional option earning most support from our Scottish respondents but, when asked to rate various alternatives, ‘more powers’ is rated higher than independence
- when presented with a blank slate respondents call for the Scottish Parliament to be given powers that would make it among the most autonomous sub-state legislatures in the world, BUT
  - there remains a devolution paradox, with respondents calling for the Scottish Parliament to be the most influential institution in how Scotland is run, but a simultaneous desire for policy uniformity across the UK; Scots want the Scottish Parliament to be more powerful, but want the outcome of its decisions to be the same as decisions made elsewhere in the UK
  - levels of knowledge about the existing powers of the Scottish Parliament are high but preferences on additional powers vary significantly based on the information provided to respondents. Those provided with more information are likely to favour lower levels of both policy and fiscal autonomy
- voters in England likewise welcome more powers for the Scotland Parliament, partly for the reasons cited in Scotland but a sizeable group believe it would bring fiscal accountability to the Parliament. English voters want English votes for English laws and, like Scottish respondents, want policy uniformity across the UK.

Our survey on post-referendum constitutional preferences included 1500 Scottish residents (age 18+) and 1000 English residents. These analyses are based on the first 1000 responses to the Scottish survey and the full English sample. A Welsh sample will be analysed separately. The Scottish online survey was conducted by ICM from 6-12 November 2014, while the English fieldwork took place 7-13 November 2014.

## Constitutional preferences

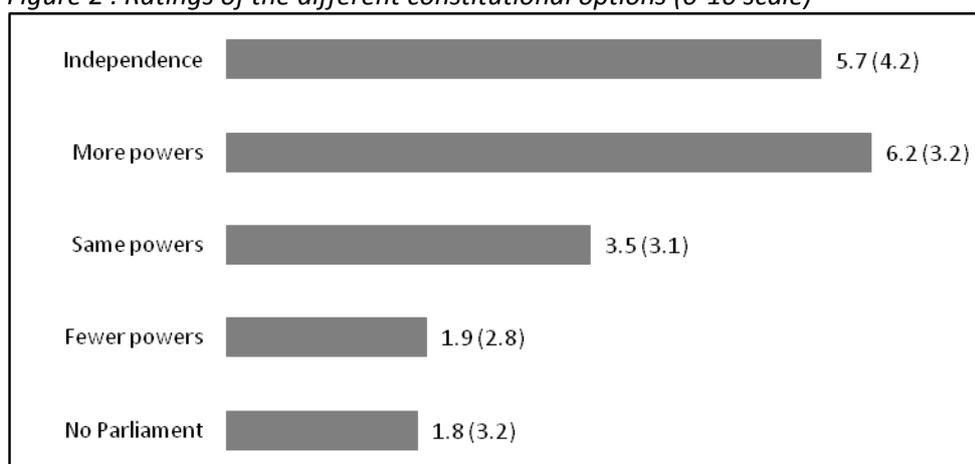
We asked respondents which constitutional option they most preferred. Independence is the option with most support, earning support from 42% of our sample. More powers, preferred by the median voter, is the second most popular, with support from 37% of respondents.

Figure 1. Constitutional Preferences



Before this we asked respondents to rate their support for different constitutional options on a 0-10 scale. A Scottish Parliament with enhanced powers receives the highest rating. Independence receives the next highest rating. The standard deviation for 'more powers' is lower than that for independence. In other words there is more consistency in the support for 'more powers' than there is for independence.

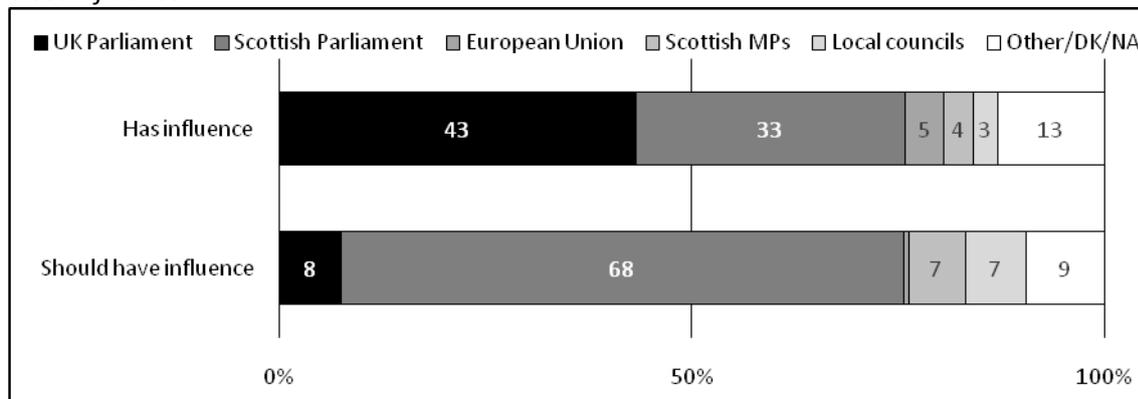
Figure 2 . Ratings of the different constitutional options (0-10 scale)



Mean ratings. Standard deviation in parentheses.

To understand better support for additional powers we asked about the perceived status quo. Voters might well want more powers, but it is worth determining whether Scottish voters believe their Parliament to be influential as things stand now.

Figure 3. Which institution has the most influence over the way Scotland is run? Which should have most influence?



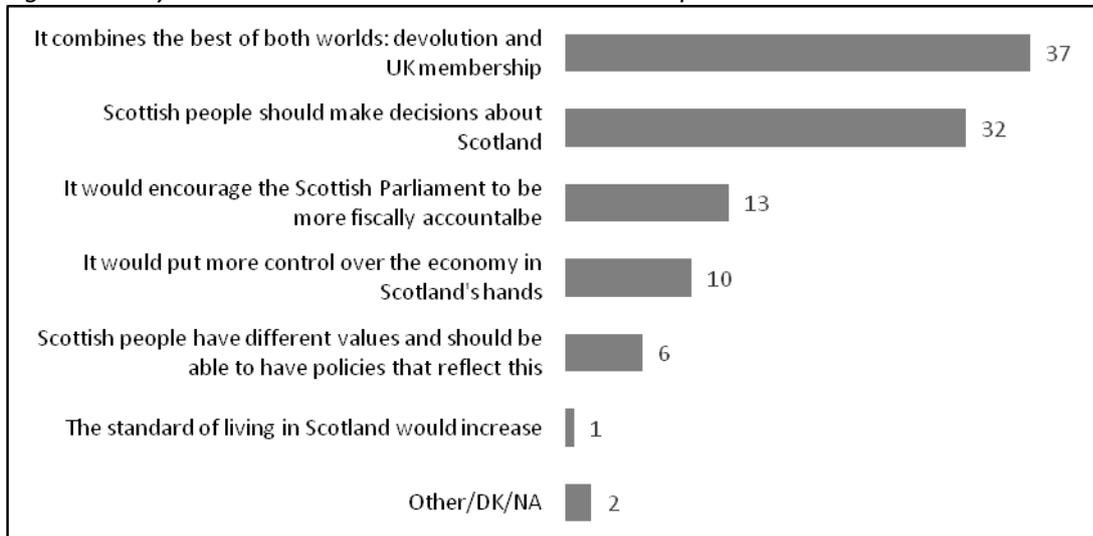
The results show that the largest group of respondents (43%) believe that the UK Parliament has the most influence over how Scotland is run. The next largest group – approximately one third of the sample - believes that the Scottish Parliament is most influential. We have significantly smaller numbers for the European Union, Scottish MPs or local councils. When we ask who *should* have the most influence, however, over two thirds (68%) believe that the Scottish Parliament should have the most influence over how Scotland is run. There is also a significant jump in the ideal influence of local councils when compared to how things are perceived to operate, but the base level of support was rather low. Approximately the same number of people believe that local councils should have the most influence over how Scotland is run as believe the UK Parliament should have the most influence. These figures are consistent with what we know from Scottish Social Attitudes Survey data as well as data from the Citizenship After the Nation State project and the Future of England Survey.

To those who indicated that they felt the Scottish Parliament should have more powers we asked them to identify the single most important reason why. Possible reasons included self-government as a principle, cultural explanations around differences in values, or pragmatic views of institutional performance. We tried to create responses that matched claims made by the two different campaigns and main political parties before and after the referendum. These included claims about values (Yes Scotland) and the benefits of unionism (Better Together) as well as claims about fiscal accountability (Conservative Party), and so on.

Two answers were clearly more popular than the others. Just under one third indicated that they wanted more powers because of the principle of self-government ('Scottish people should make decisions about Scotland') and almost forty percent (37%) cited the mixed benefits of devolution and the union ('It combines the best of both worlds: devolution and UK membership'). Pragmatic performance issues (an increased standard of living, for example) and claims about distinctly Scottish values – both of which were key features of the Yes campaign - were less popular. In other words, key claims made about the benefits of independence are not felt by Scots to be key components of the drive for more devolved powers. Of course this question was asked of those whose preferred constitutional option was 'more powers' for the Scottish Parliament, many of whom may well have voted No rather than Yes. This might well explain why key Yes campaign claims are less influential. To check this we distinguished between Yes and No voters to see if we could identify different justifications for more powers. We do not find statistically significant differences between the two

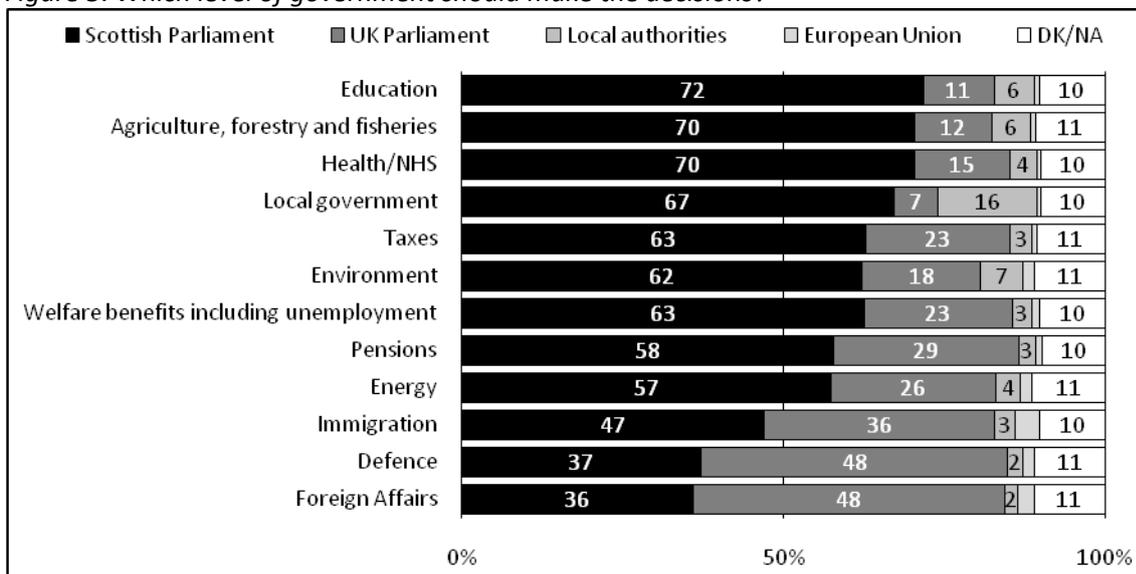
groups but they differ slightly in terms of which option they cite. Yes voters were more likely to cite the principled justifications of self-government whereas No voters were more likely to cite the ‘best of both worlds’ argument. Other options were less popular among both groups, although Yes voters were twice as likely (9.2% vs 5.3%) to suggest that more powers were needed because Scots have distinct values.

Figure 4. Why the Scottish Parliament should have more powers?



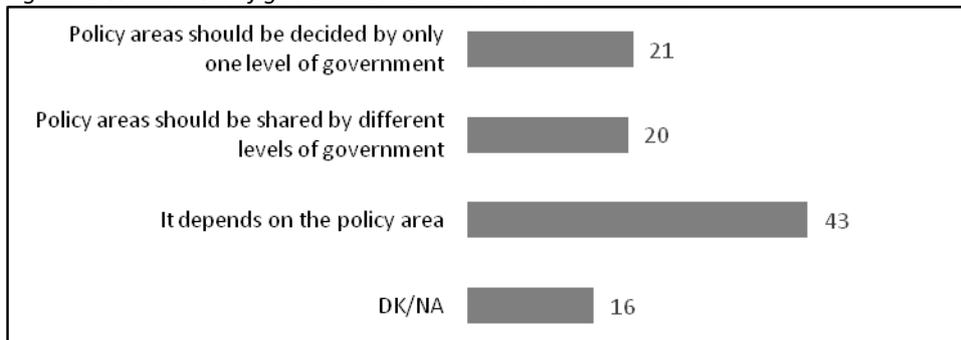
Of course more powers can mean different things to different people. We asked about different policy areas, and specifically which policy areas should be controlled by Holyrood and which should be controlled by Westminster. For all but three – immigration, defence and foreign affairs – a majority of respondents supported Scottish Parliament control. With immigration, Holyrood control is still the most popular choice, but short of a majority. Only with defence and foreign affairs are there larger groups of people calling for policy control by Westminster. Across the various policies, levels of support for Holyrood control are highest for those policy areas that are already within the jurisdiction of the Scottish Parliament. In terms of current reserved powers, 63% of respondents want Holyrood to control welfare benefits including unemployment, 58% want control over pensions, and a similar proportion want control over energy.

Figure 5. Which level of government should make the decisions?



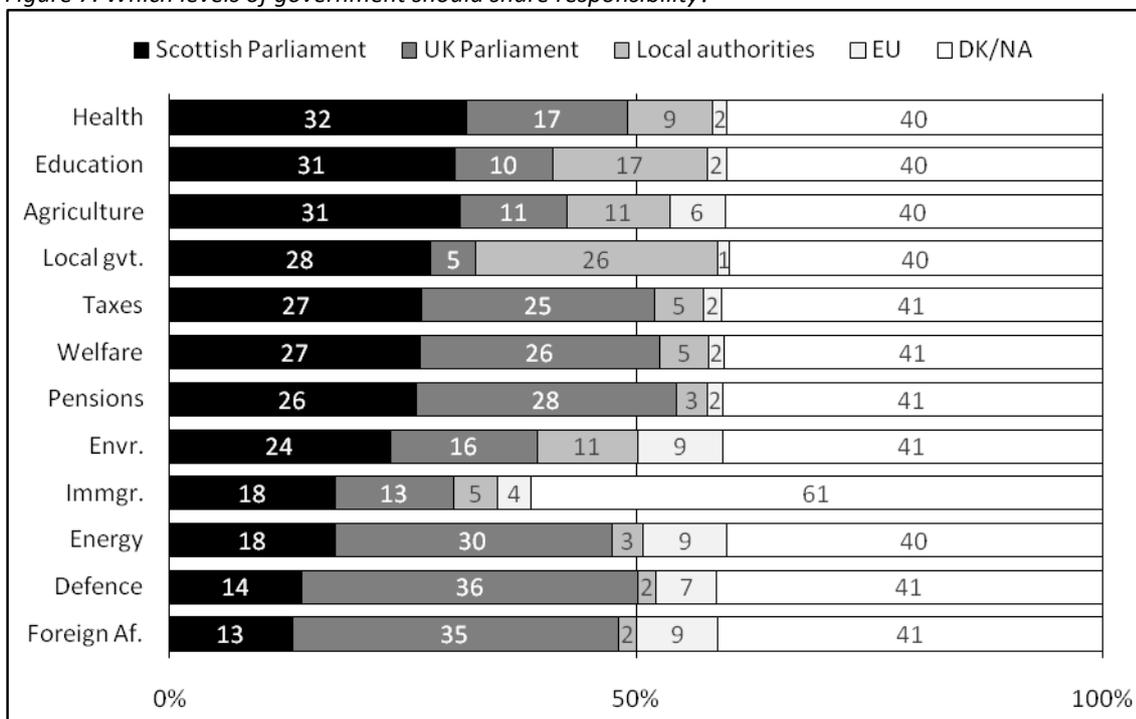
We know that in other federal or decentralised systems of government policy competence is often shared across multiple levels of government. As a result we asked if respondents had preferences over sole or shared jurisdiction. Almost half said that a desire for shared jurisdiction depends on the policy area and similar proportions (one fifth in each case) had preferences either way.

Figure 6. Which level of government should make the decisions?



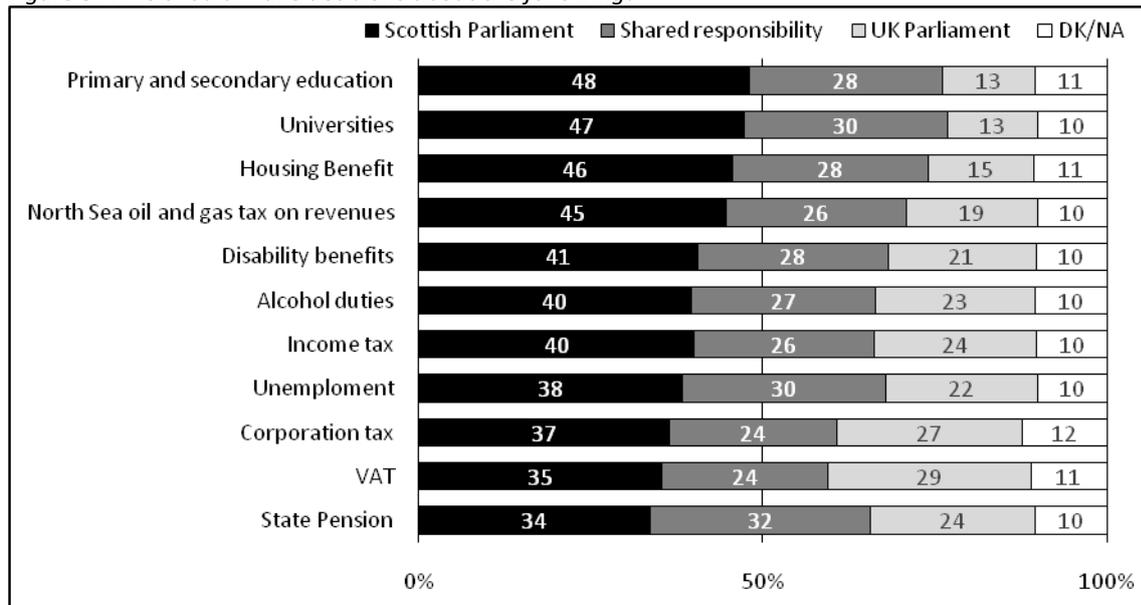
When we turn again to specific policy areas, however, there is disagreement on which levels of government should share responsibility. Figure 7 reveals which levels of government respondents think should share responsibility for a particular policy area. Across all policy fields the Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament are often the most popular, although local authorities receive greater support than the UK Parliament for education and local government. Typically just over one quarter believe that the Scottish and UK governments should share jurisdiction although it is worth noting that the most common response to each policy area was ‘don’t know’

Figure 7. Which levels of government should share responsibility?



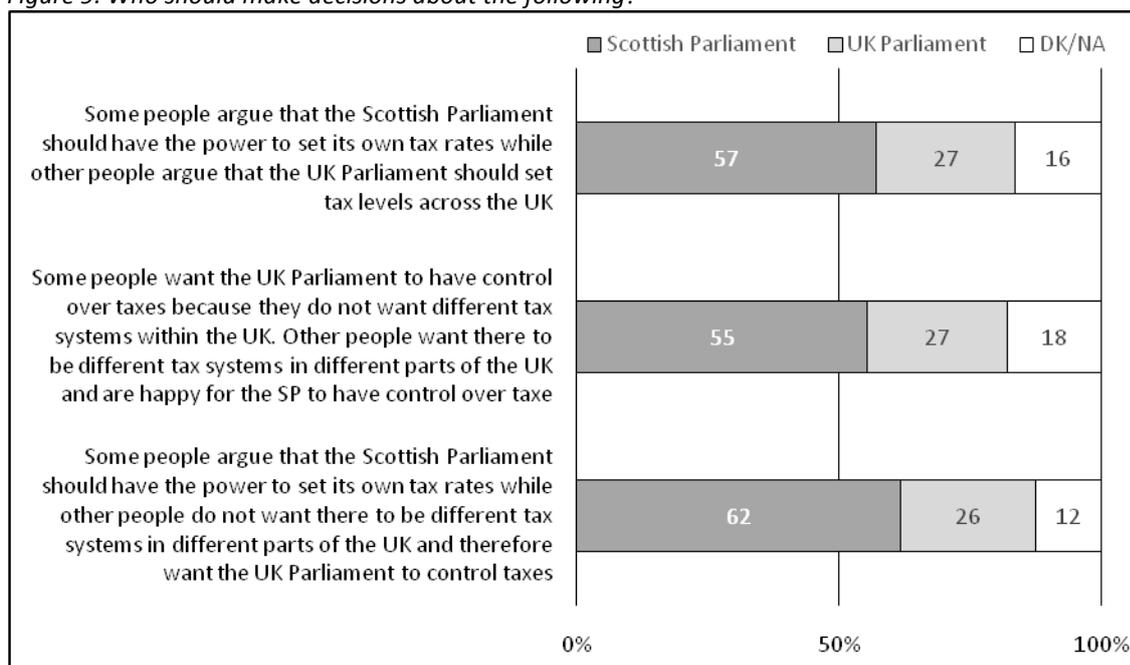
Of course many of these policy areas are very broad, and contain within them a number of discrete policy issues that voters might well believe should be controlled by different levels. We have disaggregated a number of issues in the areas of education, benefits and taxes in Figure 8. This shows that the most popular preference in all cases is the Scottish Parliament, but at levels never exceeding 50%, while shared responsibility is the preferred option of between one quarter and one third of respondents.

Figure 8. Who should make decisions about the following?



We asked a number of questions about taxes. In seeking to determine whether the Scottish Parliament should control taxes we sought to determine whether support for more tax powers varied if we pointed to the Scottish Parliament’s ability to set its own rates on the one hand, or to the existence of multiple tax systems across the UK on the other. When we refer to different tax systems we get lower levels of support than if we ask about the freedom to set rates, but in both cases levels of support for Holyrood control over taxes exceeds 50% and when we pit the two arguments against each other (the freedom to set tax rates versus the concerns over different tax systems), support for devolved control over taxes is highest.

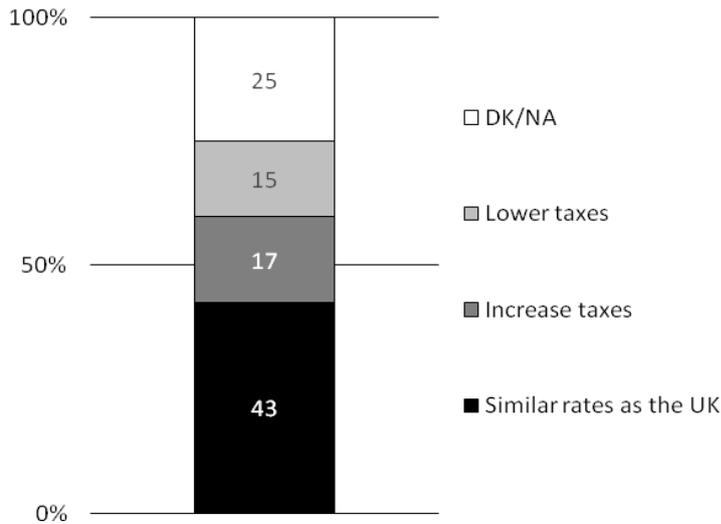
Figure 9. Who should make decisions about the following?



### The Devolution (and Fiscal) Paradox

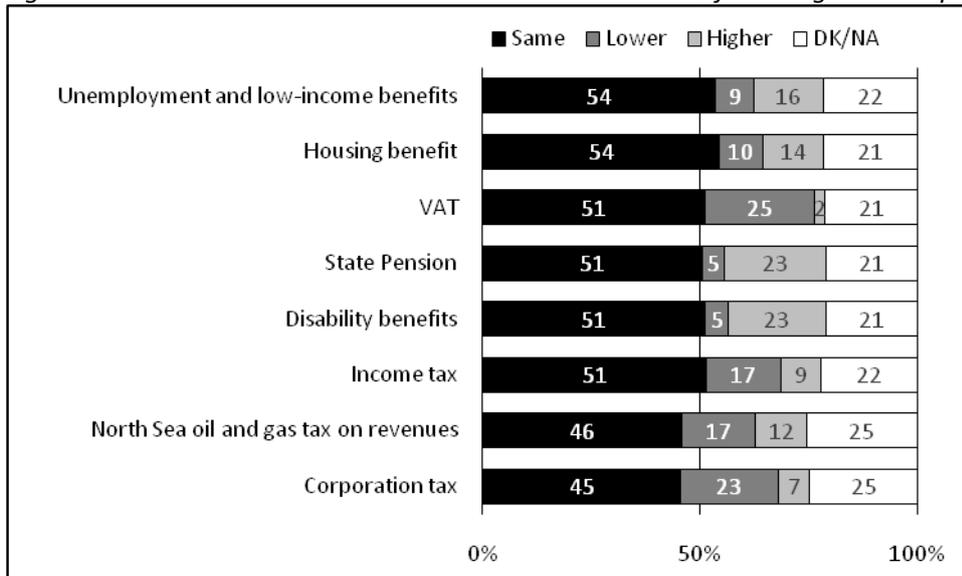
We know from earlier studies that there is a ‘devolution paradox’ in sub-state jurisdictions in Europe. Voters want their sub-state legislature to have the most influence over how things operate in the jurisdiction concerned, but are less supportive of the sub-state legislature having powers in specific policy fields and of policy variation across the different jurisdictions of the state. With respect to policy control we do not see evidence of a devolution paradox in Scotland: voters consistently want a strong Parliament and specific policy areas for the Parliament to control. With respect to policy variation, however, the evidence is more mixed. On the issue of taxes, specifically, we asked if the Scottish Parliament should raise, lower or keep tax rates the same as in the rest of the UK. The most popular option, with 43% support, is to keep taxes at the same level as the rest of the UK. The next most popular option was ‘don’t know’, with roughly equal portions wanting taxes either higher or lower than in the rest of the UK.

Figure 10. What the Scottish Parliament should do with its new taxation powers?



When we ask about specific taxes and benefits, the most popular response in each case is to keep them the same as in the rest of the UK. The majority preference is for the state pension, disability benefits, unemployment benefits, VAT, and income tax to remain the same as the rest of the UK. In other words Scots want to pay the same rate of taxes and get the same levels of benefits as other Britons.

Figure 11. What the Scottish Parliament should do with the following taxation powers?

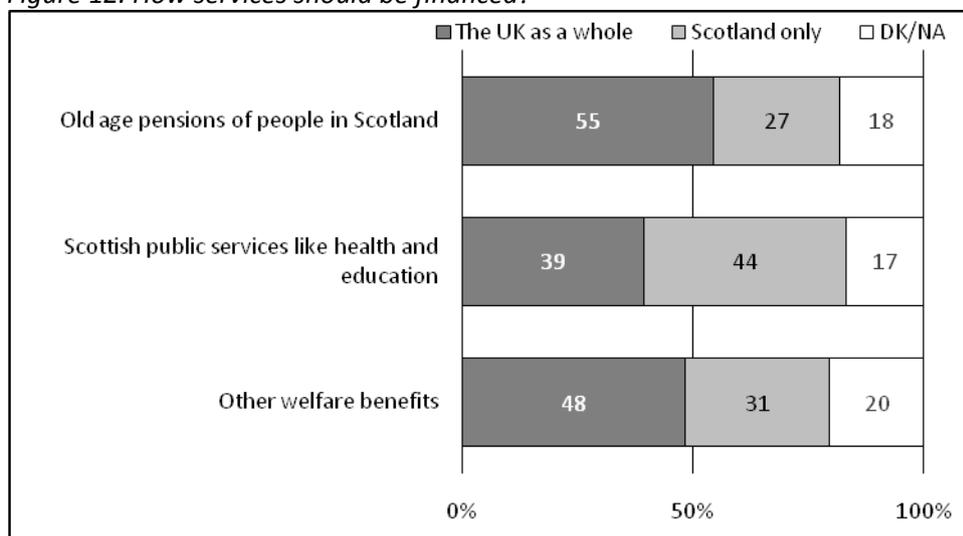


The next most popular option, however, reveals a different kind of paradox: a more general – and more familiar – fiscal paradox. One quarter of respondents want state pensions at a higher level than the rest of the UK, a similar proportion want higher disability benefits than the rest of the UK, and 16% want higher unemployment benefits than the rest of the UK. At the same time, one quarter want lower VAT, one quarter want lower corporation tax and just under one fifth want lower income tax. A sizeable portion of the population therefore wants the Scottish Parliament to deliver higher levels of benefits with lower levels of tax, while the remainder wants things to remain at identical levels to that found in the rest of the UK. For the moment, it seems that voters want the Scottish Parliament to have power to make its own decisions but they want the outcome of those decisions to be the same as those reached in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Part of the explanation for this may be in another question we asked about more powers. Over half of respondents (53%) agreed ‘There is no need to change tax and benefit rates in Scotland at the moment but I would prefer future decisions on taxes and benefits to be made at Holyrood rather than Westminster’. A further 20% neither agreed nor disagreed.

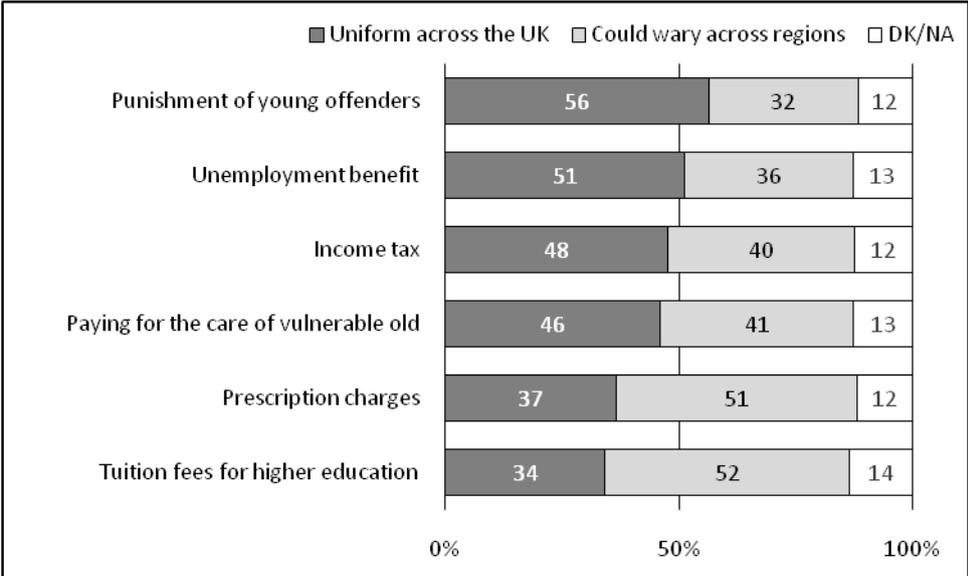
Furthermore, Scottish voters support the notion that taxes collected across the UK as a whole should pay for public services in Scotland, although we see different results across policy fields. With respect to old age pensions, a clear majority (55%) believe that they should be funded from a pot of money generated by taxes collected across the UK. Just under one half of respondents said something similar about other welfare benefits. The most popular options for public services such as health and education – in other words existing areas of jurisdiction for the Scottish Parliament – was that they should be paid for by taxes collected in Scotland. We can see in these answers echoes of support for policy control discussed above, where there was greater support for Scottish control over health and education and lower (but still high) levels of support for pensions and welfare to be devolved.

Figure 12. How services should be financed?



We also asked about a range of specific areas of policy variation to probe support for policy uniformity. There is majority support for variation on tuition fees and prescription charges, two areas where there is already variation across the UK, but not majority support for variation in the punishment of young offenders or levels of care for vulnerable old people, where there is also current variation, or for unemployment benefits, or income tax. Levels of support for policy uniformity are highest for the punishment of young offenders (56%) and unemployment benefits (51%). As usual these figures include an additional portion of the sample (in this case ten percent) saying that they do not know whether they want policies to vary or to be uniform across the UK.

Figure 13: Support for policy variation across the UK



## Levels of knowledge

We asked respondents about their existing levels of knowledge, both subjective knowledge and knowledge about jurisdictional control. We wanted to know whether there was a relationship between knowledge and support for different constitutional options, and specifically whether more knowledge would make respondents likely to back less radical options.

In general, respondents are both interested in and report that they feel knowledgeable about politics. Approximately 70% of respondents said they were interested in politics in general and Scottish politics at Holyrood in particular. The figure rises to 85% for interest in the referendum, but was lower (59%) for interest in UK politics. We asked on a 0-10 scale whether people felt they had a very little knowledge or a very large amount of knowledge about different issues, such as issues raised during the referendum campaign. If we treat anyone who responded 8, 9 or 10 as feeling informed, the figures are often over 50%. Almost 60% (56.4%) feel they have a lot of knowledge about the consequences of Scotland having voted to remain within the UK.

When we ask about control over specific policy areas, the results are more varied. In general, respondents were better able to identify reserved policy areas, such as foreign affairs, defence and immigration, as controlled by Westminster than to correctly attribute devolved areas to the Scottish Parliament, although local government, health and education, the most visible devolved policy areas, were accurately predicted as controlled by Holyrood. Levels of knowledge were lowest for the environment and agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

*Table 1. Knowledge of policy control (bold=devolved)*

	Correct	Incorrect	DK/NA
Foreign Affairs	84.5	3.7	11.9
Defence	84.3	3.4	12.3
Immigration	82.9	4.1	13.0
Pensions	79.6	8.0	12.4
Taxes	79.5	9.3	11.3
Welfare benefits	75.9	11.9	12.1
<b>Local government</b>	67.1	18.7	14.1
Energy	61.0	20.0	19.1
<b>Education</b>	59.1	27.3	13.7
<b>Health</b>	55.6	31.9	12.5
<b>Agriculture, forestry and fisheries</b>	41.5	39.2	19.4
<b>Environment</b>	36.2	44.4	19.4

We asked half the respondents to our survey to indicate what percentage of the Scottish Parliament's spending should be raised by taxes collected in Scotland, in other words how fiscally autonomous the Parliament should be. The average answer was 63.5%, and the most popular answer was 100% (selected by just over 40% of those asked this question). We told the other half of respondents that the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Conservative Party were each calling for the Scottish Parliament to raise 40% of its spending from taxes collected in Scotland. For the group presented with this information, the average answer was 50%. Just under one quarter wanted 100% of the Parliament's spending to come from Scottish taxes while 43% wanted between 30 and 50% of parliamentary spending to come from Scottish taxes. In other words, providing respondents with information about the demands of political parties had a significant impact on responses and lowered the level of autonomy desired.

We wanted to know whether knowledge of policy areas had an impact on desired Scottish Parliament policy control. To test this we can make two calculations. First, we provided one third of the sample with no information about existing policy control and merely asked for their preferences about which level of government should have jurisdiction over different policy areas. For the remaining two thirds we provided information about the existing distribution of policy competences. For many policy areas, we do not see significant differences in support for Scottish Parliament policy control across the two groups, although we see higher proportions of ‘don’t knows’ for the group that wasn’t given any information. There are, however, some exceptions, namely education, agriculture, welfare and immigration. In each case, the group receiving information about the status quo reported greater support for the Scottish Parliament to exert policy control.

Second, we can check to see whether this is uniformly true across respondents with different levels of knowledge. Presumably those who were already able correctly to identify areas of policy competence would be less swayed by information about the division of jurisdiction. Those who said they did not know who controlled particular policy areas and received information about who controls health, for example, were three times as likely to say that the Scottish Parliament should control health, and 50% more likely to say that the Scottish Parliament should control environmental policy. Among those who got the attribution of reserved policy areas wrong (or didn’t know), however, we see *slightly* contradictory results. Those who did not know that the UK government controlled taxes were, when they learned the truth, twice as likely to believe the UK should retain control of taxes. In general, those who had originally correctly judged jurisdiction were not swayed by information, but those who did not know or guessed incorrectly were more likely to be swayed and often were swayed to confirm existing jurisdictional control. Often, however, we see an increase in support for both Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament control as respondents move from being ‘don’t know’ to stating a preference.

These differences between experimental and control groups occur more frequently in our post-referendum survey than we found in other surveys conducted before the referendum. This suggests that referendum preferences were considerably less malleable than are attitudes to post-referendum constitutional reform and that providing voters with information – about what political parties want, about what the Scottish Parliament currently does – has a dramatic effect on the level of autonomy sought by voters.

### **Attitudes to the Process for more Constitutional Change**

We asked respondents about their knowledge of the Smith Commission and their attitudes to the process by which further constitutional change might occur. Just under half (46.4%) had heard of the Smith Commission, and of those, 91.2% correctly identified that it was exploring constitutional change for Scotland following the referendum. The remainder either didn’t know, thought it was investigating a new electoral system for the UK, negotiating a new budget rebate from the EU or was investigating cruelty to animals.

We also asked about the process leading to the Smith Commission and the timetable under which it is operating. Almost 60% believe that the referendum should have included an option on more powers. One quarter believe that we should not feel bound by the Vow for more powers made by the UK party leaders and over half believe that if a deal isn’t reached quickly more powers will not arrive. There appears to be considerable knowledge of and support for the work of the Smith Commission.

Table 2: Attitudes to process

	Total agree (%)
The Scottish Referendum should have included an option on more powers for the Scottish Parliament	59.2
The 'Vow' for more powers made by the UK party leaders during the referendum was not very well thought through and we should not feel bound by it	26.2
If a deal isn't reached quickly we won't get more powers	50.3

### The view from England

We conducted a parallel survey in England and asked similar questions about Scotland. Here, more powers for Holyrood was the most popular option among those surveyed and, as in Scotland, this option received the highest rating, although the next most popular option was 'the same powers', followed by 'fewer powers' and 'No Parliament'. Independence had the lowest rating of any of the possible constitutional options facing Scotland and had a significantly lower rating than any of the constitutional options that Scotland is *likely* to face in the future

Figure 14. Constitutional Preferences

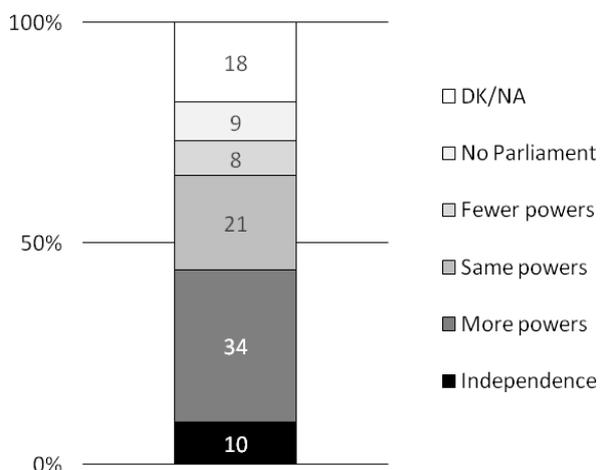
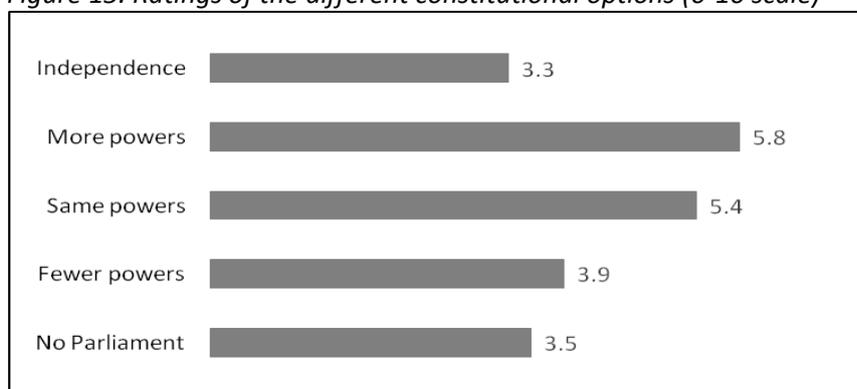


Figure 15. Ratings of the different constitutional options (0-10 scale)

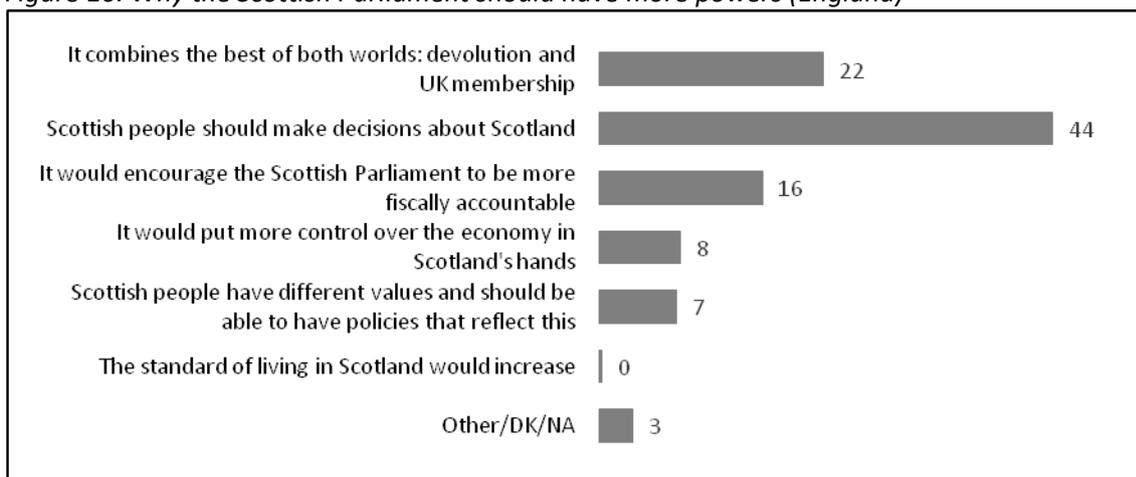


Mean ratings.

Levels of awareness of the Smith Commission are considerably lower in England, with just over 10% of respondents having heard of it, of whom 62.7% were able to identify that it was exploring constitutional change for Scotland. Over ten percent of those aware of the Commission believed that it was exploring a new electoral system for the UK. With respect to the pace of change, English voters are less convinced that powers should arrive quickly, with only 25% agreeing that more powers are unlikely to arrive if a deal is not reached. This is roughly half the proportion in Scotland agreeing with the same statement. A slightly higher proportion than in Scotland believes that leaders should not be bound by the Vow made before the referendum. When asked about possible constitutional options in England, a clear majority agrees with the principle of English votes for English laws (55.3%). The comparable figure for Scottish respondents is 47.7%. Furthermore 45% of English respondents believe that the Scottish Parliament should be given control over the majority of taxes raised in Scotland, something we know from the findings set out above is consistent with Scottish preferences.

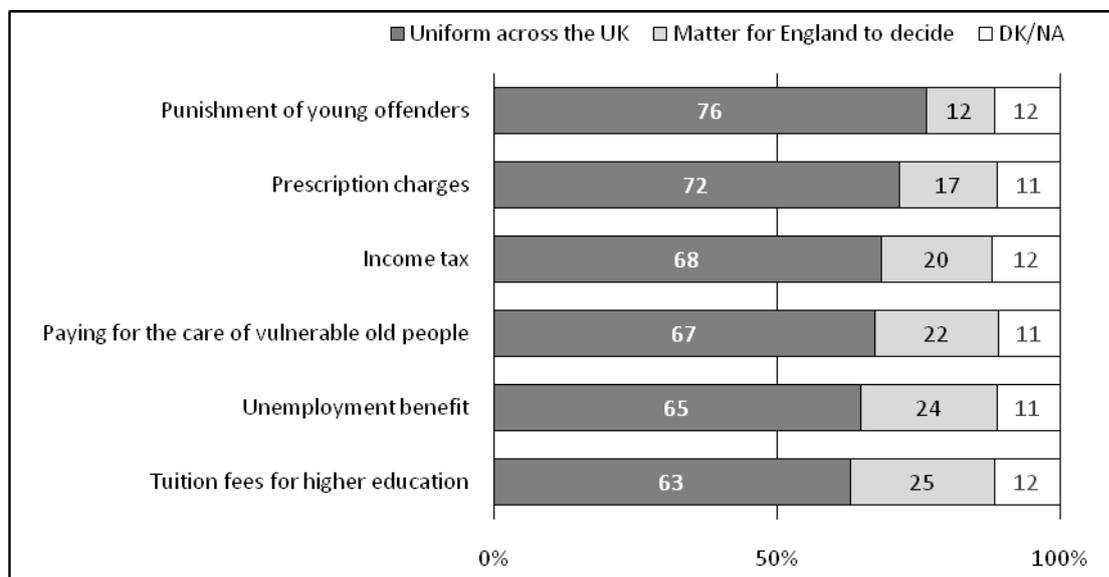
When we turn to the reasons people use to justify more powers for the Scottish Parliament, we can see that the same two reasons cited in Scotland are most popular in England, although they are preferred to differing degrees. The significant difference between Scotland and England is the sizable proportion (16%) of English respondents who believe that the benefit of a more powerful Scottish Parliament is that it would make the legislature more fiscally accountable.

Figure 16. Why the Scottish Parliament should have more powers (England)



We also see English support for the principle of policy uniformity. While in Scotland we have majority support for uniformity on the punishment of young offenders and unemployment benefit and plurality support for uniform income tax and the care of older people, in England we have majority support for policy uniformity across each of the policy topics we list.

Figure 17: Support for Policy Uniformity (England)



On these issues at least, we see differences of degree rather than fundamentally divergent views from English and Scottish residents. English voters support more powers for the Scottish Parliament and for broadly the same reasons as those cited by Scots, although with an enhanced emphasis on fiscal accountability. We see slightly higher levels of support for policy uniformity in England and lower levels of knowledge about the Smith Commission but given the focus of public debate in both places this is hardly surprising. We see majority English support for the principle of English laws but Scottish support is close to 50% on this issue as well. There are two obvious points of divergence. First, with respect to the pace of change, English voters are less convinced that change must occur quickly for the opportunity not to be lost. Second, English voters rate independence for Scotland as less popular than the status quo or fewer powers for the Scottish parliament, or indeed its abolishment. Both populations seem to rate an enhanced Parliament as the best option, but differ considerably on the next best alternatives.

## Conclusion

The results of our survey suggest that Scottish voters would welcome greater policy and fiscal control for the Parliament but it is equally clear that such voters would prefer policy choices to remain the same across the UK. This is true for levels of benefits as well as taxes imposed on the different electorates in the UK. We see too that attitudes to additional devolution are more malleable than during the referendum, with voters significantly affected by information about the preferences of parties. Scottish respondents want to retain the 'best of both worlds', particularly with respect to UK-wide funding of particular public services. All of this is consistent with the view that support for more devolved powers in Scotland is rooted in a desire for Scotland to be the author of decisions without a clear desire for it to make *different* policy choices.