

Varied views towards the Falkland Islands dispute from young Argentines

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Researchers at the University of Liverpool have found that the opinions of young people in Argentina towards the Falklands/Malvinas Islands are varied and influenced by a number of factors including geographical location, family history and their views on domestic politics.

A [pilot study](#) involving 20 18 - 26 year olds from throughout Argentina, found that despite being well-informed about the sovereignty dispute, young people did not always conform to the views of either the Argentine Government or the media. Many of the young people considered domestic political issues to be more important, while others supported the Islands' independence. Despite this there was recognition of the importance of natural resources to the Argentine state and some expressed concerns with having a 'colonial' presence in the Latin American region.

The research undertaken from December 2009 to June 2010 sought to explore the significance of the disputed Islands in everyday life amongst young [citizens](#) of Argentina. Opinion polls from 2010 showed that 45% of the Argentine population have little or no interest in Las Malvinas and the age group 18 – 29 year olds have the least interest of all. However, 52% - mainly male and over-50 - were found to regularly follow the news on Las Malvinas. More recent opinion polls – since tensions between Argentina and the UK have increased - suggest more interest from all [age groups](#).

Dr Matt Benwell, from the University's School of Environmental Sciences, who led the research said: "This study found that young people were influenced by a number of factors and contexts. Many of the young people did not put the issue of who owned the Falkland Islands as high on their list of concerns as international trade, higher education or the issues of drugs and insecurity.

"We found that if interviewees had a family member, or knew of someone who had taken part in the 1982 conflict, then the issue was more important to them, although that didn't necessarily mean they supported the government's actions. Also, the views of young people who lived nearer to the South Atlantic territories were far stronger than those who lived in Buenos Aires, or the northern regions of Argentina."

"The recent drilling for oil and gas around the Islands was more important to [young people](#) than the issue of who the Islands belonged to. The management of natural resources and the potential future benefits for the Argentine economy were seen as significant, as were the potential ecological hazards in light of events in the Gulf of Mexico last year."

The dispute over the Islands is a fundamental part of [everyday life](#) in Argentina. The issue is referred to in many subtle ways in street names, monuments, postage stamps, stadia and weather reports as well as more obvious reminders via politicians, through education and the media. It is brought to the forefront of public consciousness on the 2 April each year when Argentina commemorates its war veterans. The forthcoming 30th anniversary has witnessed a "hotting up" in the war of words over the Falkland Islands with an associated spike in global media coverage and an increase in global awareness.

Sovereignty of the Islands is at the forefront of the current Argentinean government's agenda, spearheaded by the nationalist President Cristina

Kirchner. [Argentina](#) consistently registers its disapproval at "illegal" British occupation of the [Islands](#) and pursues reclamation using peaceful and diplomatic means. She wants the UN to mediate negotiations over sovereignty; however, the UK refuses to discuss it, instead supporting the islanders' right to self-determination and to remain British citizens.

Provided by University of Liverpool

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