

# Study shows risk-takers more likely to vote 'Yes' in referendum

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Professor David Bell

People who are more willing to take risks are more likely to vote 'Yes' in Scotland's referendum, according to researchers at the University of Stirling.

Professor David Bell, Professor Liam Delaney and researcher Michael McGoldrick from the University of Stirling's Management School, looked at individual traits and constitutional change in Scotland.

The academics looked at how a representative sample of Scottish voters was likely to vote and how this related to other attitudes, beliefs and personal characteristics.

The study says people's acceptance of risk is "highly predictive" of voting intention... "with respondents who display lower levels of [risk aversion](#) being more likely to state that they would vote 'Yes' in the referendum."

The study also examined people's willingness to accept short-term costs for long-term benefits, another factor that is considered key in decision making. As discussed in the report, risk attitudes substantially predict people's voting intention, while attitudes towards the future are not predictive.

The researchers said: "Our survey showed that a majority of respondents were in favour of retaining the Union. The difference between the support for a 'No' vote and that for 'Yes' partly reflect the situation in Dec 2013, when the survey was carried out: since then the margin has narrowed."

"Consistent with previous research, males are more supportive of a 'Yes' vote than females and there is somewhat less support among older voters. Around 18 per cent of the gender effect is explained by higher levels of risk aversion among female voters."

"Support for independence is related to a wide variety of economic beliefs and preferences including beliefs that an independent Scotland will have better debt and inflation outcomes. However, there is strong

support for Scotland keeping the pound among those who intend to vote 'Yes'."

Professor Liam Delaney said: "The upcoming referendum poses a difficult choice for Scottish voters and one that requires consideration of many complex economic and political factors. Our evidence bears out the importance of people's core attitudes to risk in determining their voting intention".

Professor David Bell said: "The upcoming referendum will be decided partly by people's perception of economic costs and benefits. It is important to understand how these perceptions are formed and our research provides a strong step in this direction."

The study also found that religion could affect the decision to vote with Roman Catholics and those with no religious affiliation having the highest level of support for independence.

Income per household is also an important determinant of voting intention, which those belonging to higher income households more likely to [vote](#) 'No'.

The survey was carried out by YouGov in December 2013 as part of the Future of the UK and Scotland work which aims to inform the referendum debate. It had 2,037 respondents who gave answers on factors such as age, income and their views on independence.

**More information:** The full results are published online at [www.futureukandscotland.ac.uk](http://www.futureukandscotland.ac.uk) and at [www.scotfes.com](http://www.scotfes.com).

Provided by University of Stirling

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