

# While the Scottish people may be on the brink of the unknown, the Welsh continue to prefer familiarity

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*Has the Scottish independence debate and the narrowing of the opinion polls ahead of the referendum stirred desire for an independence referendum in Wales? [Adam Evans](#) looks at how the polls have changed over time, finding the Welsh are still showing little appetite for independence.*



As the clock continues to count down towards the UK state's date with destiny on the 18<sup>th</sup> September, it is perhaps unsurprising that amidst the flurry of media commentary on the independence referendum, increasing attention is being paid to the impact that Scottish independence might have on Wales. A recent article in the *The New York Times* grappled with this question, querying whether a 'Yes' vote in September will spark a similar clamour for statehood in Wales. Similarly, the former prime minister, John Major eschewed his normal reserve to question whether an independent Scotland could "[inflare a greater independence demand in Wales](#)" and the BBC's online coverage of the independence referendum includes [a number of articles](#) exploring the potential consequences of a 'Yes' or a 'No' vote for Wales, including the prospect of Welsh secession. If the independence referendum is increasingly inescapable, even for the Welsh public, then what impact has it had on the minds of the Welsh electorate? Has the sight of Scottish independence being treated as a plausible prospect and the [narrowing of the opinion polls](#) ahead of the referendum stirred a similar desire for an independence referendum in Wales?

Historically support for Welsh independence has been, to put it kindly, a minority sport, more county championship cricket than Premier League football. In a [2006 poll for the BBC](#), ICM found only 6 per cent support for an independence from the UK and EU, rising to 10 per cent support for independence within the EU. Although a [BBC Newsnight-ORB](#) poll in 2007 found 19 per cent support for Welsh independence, the sample size was only 527. Indeed, in a [2008 BBC Wales-ICM](#) poll support for independence outside the EU was only 5 per cent, rising to 8 per cent inside the EU. And in the [2009 BBC Wales-ICM St. David's Day](#) poll, independence outside the EU again only polled 5 per cent, with 8 per cent support for independence within the European Union. In 2010, [BBC Wales-ICM](#) found that support on both measures had fallen slightly. Support for independence outside the EU at 4 per cent and within the EU at 7 per cent, figures that were repeated in the 2011 [BBC Wales-ICM](#) poll. With support for some broad form of independence (i.e. combining support for independence inside and outside the EU) ranging from 11 per cent to 19 per cent, Welsh independence has truly been the Accrington Stanley of constitutional preferences in Wales, tenacious no doubt, but not a contender.

However, that still leaves the question of whether the debates on Scottish independence, since the SNP secured an overall majority in the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary election, has made any significant difference to support for independence in Wales. The [BBC Wales-ICM St. David's Day](#) poll in 2012, for example, found that only 7 per cent of Welsh voters supported independence, a figure that rose to 12 per cent in the event of Scottish independence. A year later in the [2013 BBC Wales-ICM St. David's Day](#) poll, support appeared to have risen marginally to 9 per cent, although unlike in 2012 voters were not asked whether Scottish independence would alter their constitutional preferences. The Scottish independence referendum, at least in the initial stages of the campaign, appeared to have made little impact in whetting any appetite in Wales for independence.

If the Scottish referendum had negligible impact in Wales initially, has this changed at all as the race enters the home stretch? In February this year, [ICM](#) carried out a poll of Welsh voters as part of the BBC Wales annual St David's day poll. When asked their constitutional preferences, 5 per cent of Welsh voters agreed with the statement "Wales should become independent, separate from the UK", with support for independence only rising to 7 per cent of Welsh voters in the event of Scottish independence. In May, a [YouGov ITV Wales-Wales Governance Centre](#) poll found that support for Welsh independence stood at 14 per cent, rising to 16 per cent in the event of Scottish

independence. In a later poll, published in June, by [ICM](#) for BBC Wales, 14 per cent of Welsh voters agreed that “Scottish independence should lead to the Welsh people voting for independence” as opposed to 17 per cent who agreed that “Scottish independence should lead to more powers for the Welsh Assembly” and 61 per cent who concurred with the statement that “Scottish independence should not make any difference to how we govern ourselves here in Wales.”

While there has been a degree of fluctuation between individual polls, the overall story is one of broad continuity. Support for independence in Wales ranged around the teens prior to 2011, and has remained there since, despite the ongoing referendum battle in Scotland. The Scottish people may be on the brink of an adventure into the unknown, the Welsh it seems, for now, prefer familiarity.

*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the British Politics and Policy blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please read our [comments policy](#) before posting. Featured image credit: [National Assembly for Wales](#) CC BY 2.0*

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