

PEOPLE & POWER

A COUNTRY DEMANDING CHANGE



08 / 2015



FOREWORD

“ People and Power is a much needed opportunity to gauge public opinion when so many constitutional issues remain at the forefront of debate and politicians from all parties are still contemplating messages delivered by voters in May’s General Election.

I am particularly interested in the questions concerning membership of the European Union but the survey’s value extends far beyond this.

Some of the anomalies in the General Election result are bound to lead to further consideration of our electoral system, and although House of Lords reform was a major feature of the manifestos of practically every major political party in 2010, there has been virtually no progress on this central feature of our Parliamentary democracy.

Quite aside from these huge constitutional issues, the fiscal deficit still casts a shadow across Whitehall, and attitudes to immigration continue to shape public discourse.

Overriding all of this is the question of empowerment. All politicians preach the virtues of involving the public more in decisions that affect their lives, but until now we’ve had insufficient information on the public’s attitude to whether they believe such sentiments to be genuine and, indeed, whether and how far this distillation of power should continue.

People and Power gives us greater understanding of public opinion on all these issues and everyone in political life would do well to heed the messages it brings.



Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP



**PEOPLE
& POWER**



A COUNTRY DEMANDING CHANGE

PEOPLE AND POWER provides a stark warning about the future of the United Kingdom. On issue after issue, the UK public believe the country is organised in the wrong way – and want structural change.

The findings reveal a country that its residents consider to be too centralised, where devolution remains incomplete, with an electoral system that commands little confidence, an upper house that few support, and whose principal international relationship – the European Union – most people struggle to see the benefits of. These frustrations with current power structures are particularly acute in Scotland and the North of England.

Yet, we remain attached to the United Kingdom. Only one in seven of us wants to see the country broken up. While more than a quarter of young people would consider leaving the country if the UK votes to quit the EU, many more say they'd never think about leaving. And, despite worries about public apathy, most of us want to have more influence over how our local services are run.

Above all, People and Power shows how badly the UK needs leadership and inspiration. The public know what the problems are, but don't know how they can be solved. More than half of us think the electoral system is out-of-date, but only 29% think it can be improved. Less than a quarter want to keep the English constitutional arrangements as they are, yet barely any more than that would support an English Parliament. Most of us think members of the House of Lords should be elected, but we doubt whether a referendum to replace it would be worth the time and money.

None of the challenges identified in the report will be easy to address. But, until they are, the demands for change will continue to grow, putting ever-greater pressure on the unity of the country.

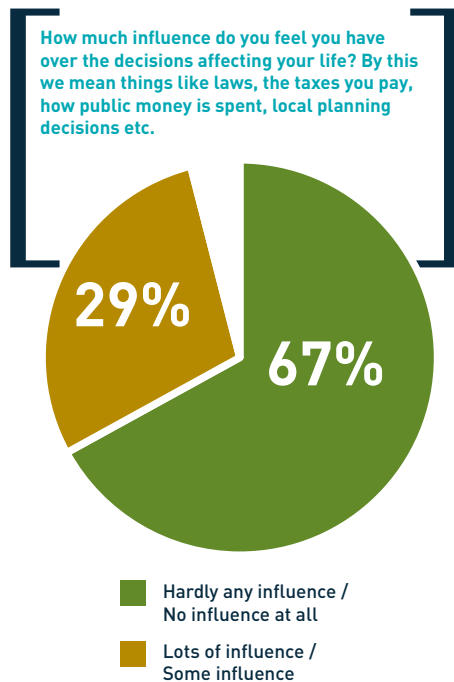


**PEOPLE
& POWER**

A COUNTRY DEMANDING CHANGE

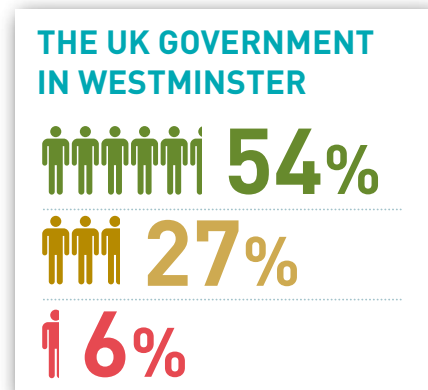
The key findings of **PEOPLE AND POWER** ARE:

Most of us feel we have too little power over the decisions affecting our lives

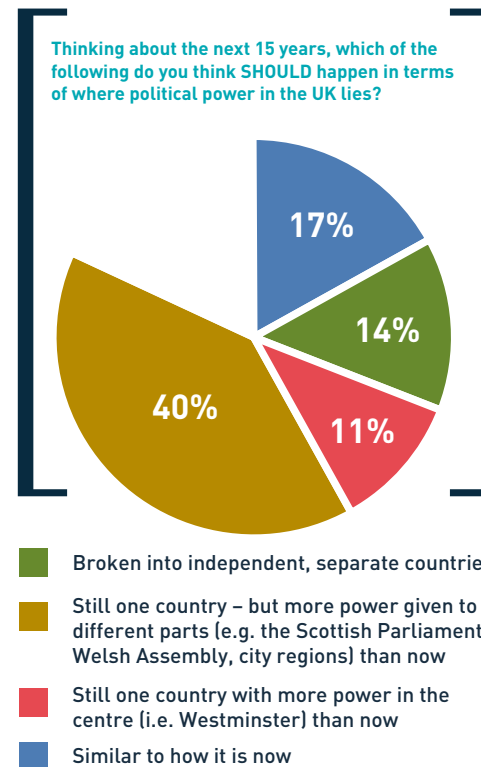


The UK government in Westminster is seen as too powerful

Thinking about the various different levels of government in the UK, would you say that each of the following levels have too much, too little or about the right level of control over how your area is governed?

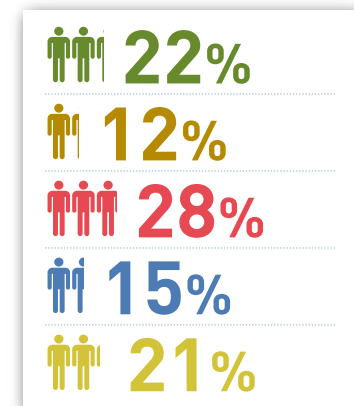


There is support for more devolution, but little desire for the UK to be broken up



Most people in England want change, but don't know what structure they would prefer

At the moment in England there is no form of devolved government similar to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly or Northern Ireland Assembly. This means that for areas like health, decisions for England are made by the UK government while for Scotland they are made by the Scottish government. There have been many suggestions for how, if at all, this should change... Which of the following would you most prefer to happen?



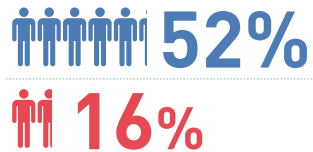
- Things continue as they are now (UK government makes policy for England, devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible there)
- Power in England to be devolved to city-regions (e.g. Greater Manchester)
- Power in England to be devolved to a new English Parliament
- Power in England to be devolved to new elected regional assemblies (e.g. in the North East, South West)
- Don't know

A COUNTRY DEMANDING CHANGE

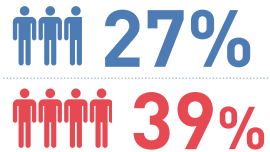
The key findings of **PEOPLE AND POWER** ARE:

First-past-the-post is seen as out-of-date and undemocratic, but few people believe it can be improved

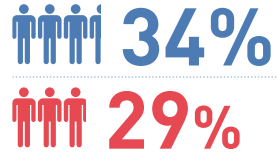
The UK election system worked in the old days of two big parties but is now out-of-date



The way votes are translated into seats in the House of Commons is democratic



The UK election system is better than any of the alternatives

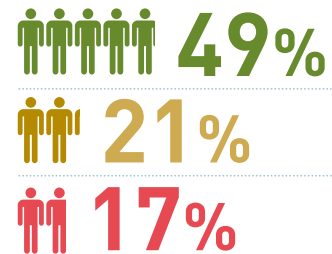


Agree Disagree

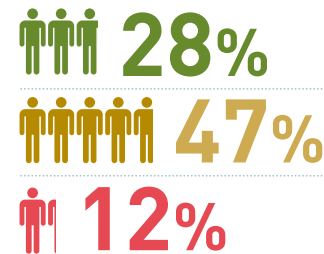
The costs of leaving the EU aren't clear: in many ways, people expect the UK would be better off out

If the UK were to leave the European Union (EU), would you expect each of the following areas, to get better or get worse?

IMMIGRATION TO THE UK



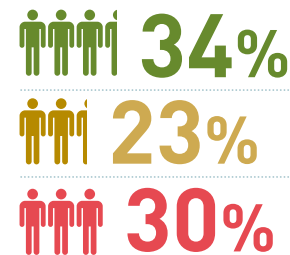
CRIME



UNEMPLOYMENT



THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY



Get better Stay about the same Get worse

Yet, a sizeable minority – particularly among Londoners and the young – would consider leaving the UK if we exit the EU

MORE LIKELY TO CONSIDER LEAVING THE UK



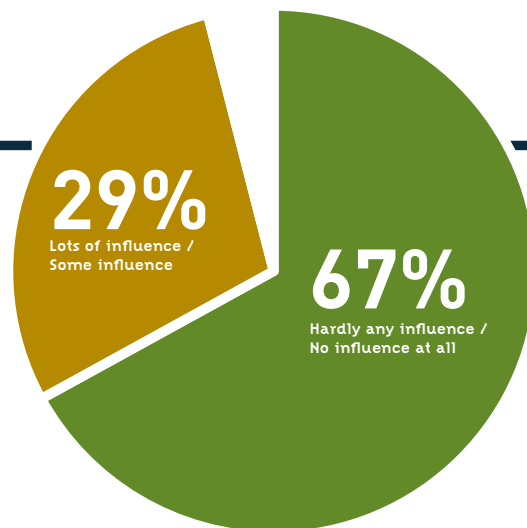
People aged 18-34
People living in London
People born outside the UK

ALL UK ADULTS: 15%

PEOPLE WITHOUT POWER

People across the UK feel powerless to shape the decisions that affect their lives, with two thirds saying they lack influence over laws, tax, public services and planning, and have a clear public appetite for greater influence over health, transport and council services.

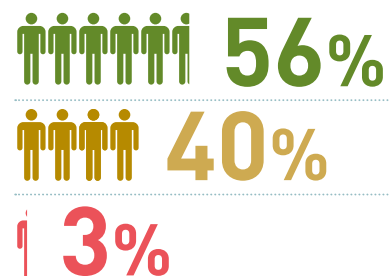
How much influence do you feel you have over the decisions affecting your life? By this we mean things like laws, the taxes you pay, how public money is spent, local planning decisions etc.



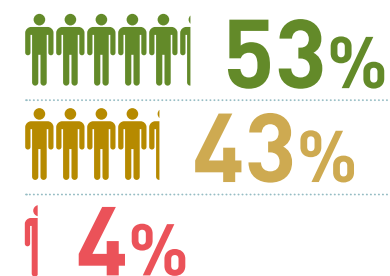
Results for "Other", "Don't know" and "No opinion" are not shown on this and subsequent charts.

Thinking about the level of influence you feel you have over each of the following services, would you say that this is too much, too little or about right? (top four would like more influence)

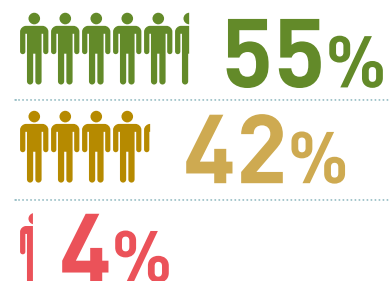
HEALTH-HOSPITALS



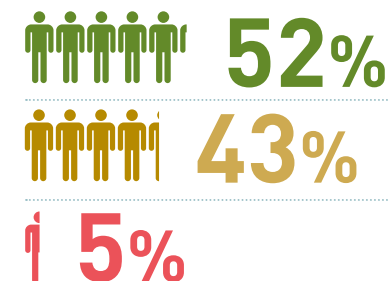
HEALTH-GPs



COUNCIL SERVICES (rubbish collection, cleaning etc):



LOCAL TRANSPORT (including roads, buses, trains etc):



- Not enough influence – I would like more
- About as much influence as I would like
- Too much influence – I don't want to have to get involved in this area



DISTANT RULERS

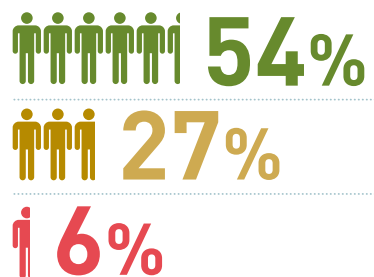
Westminster is seen to have too much control over the rest of the UK, particularly by people living in Scotland and the North of England. There are few such concerns about the power of the devolved bodies, which are often considered to have too little power.



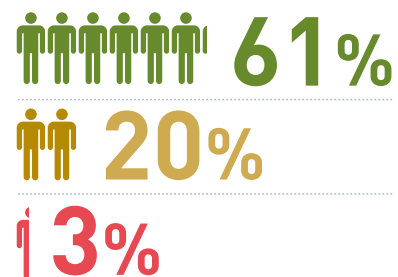
Thinking about the various different levels of government in the UK, would you say that each of the following levels have too much, too little or about the right level of control over how your area is governed?

THE UK GOVERNMENT IN WESTMINSTER

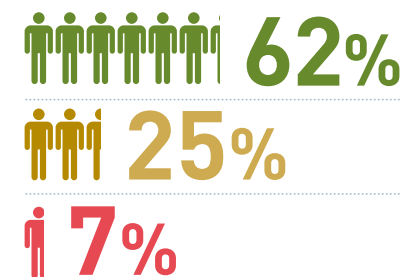
OVERALL



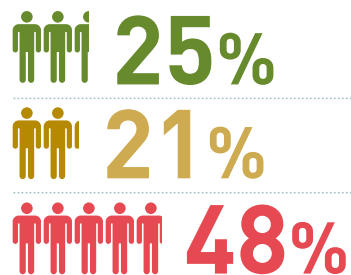
NORTH OF ENGLAND



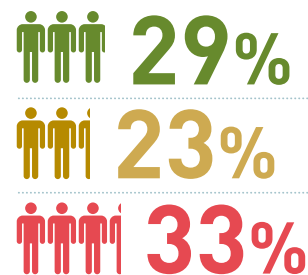
SCOTLAND



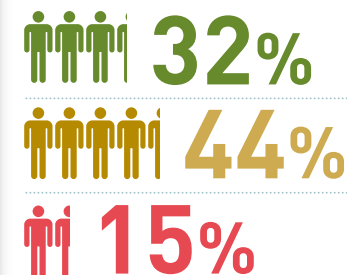
THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT IN HOLYROOD



THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT IN CARDIFF



THE MAYOR OF LONDON



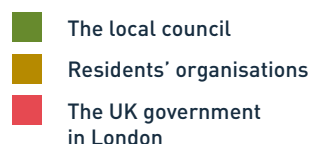
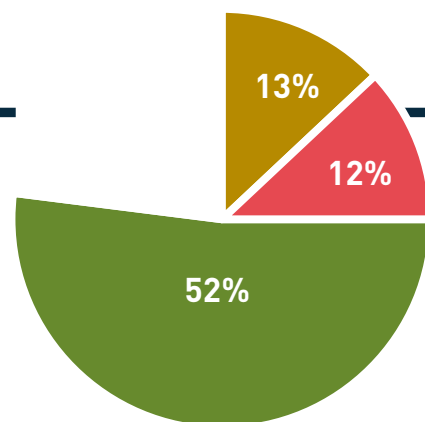
- Has far too much / a bit too much control
- About the right level of control
- Has far too little / a bit too little control

LOCAL AUTHORITY

There is a widespread belief that decisions about public services should be made locally, with two thirds of people saying that local councils or residents' organisations – as opposed to central government – should have the most influence.

Few people think charities or business should have most influence in local service delivery but there is broad acceptance that the private sector can work as a provider on some key services – though not on others.

Which, if any, of the following groups do you think should have the most influence over how local public services in your area, like schools, libraries and hospitals, are run? (top three responses)

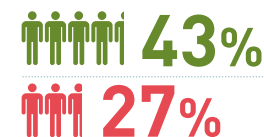


As long as the cost to the taxpayer was no higher and the quality of service was as good or better, how would you feel about these services being run by a private company under contract to the government / local council?

STREET CLEANING



BUS SERVICES



RUBBISH COLLECTION



POLICE SERVICE



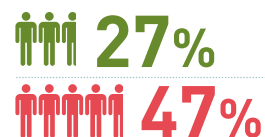
HOSPITALS



FIRE SERVICE



LOCAL SCHOOLS



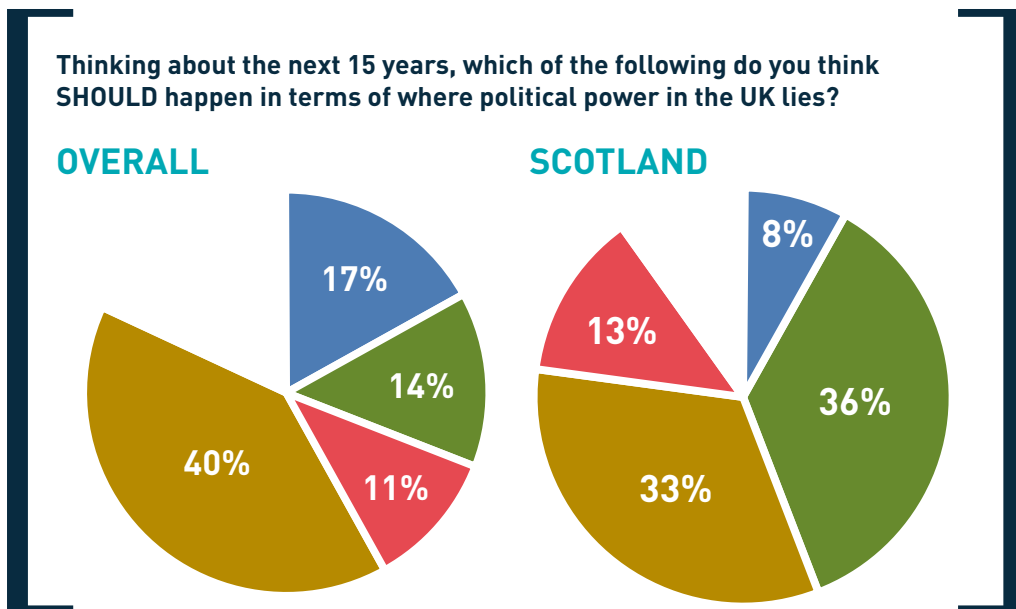
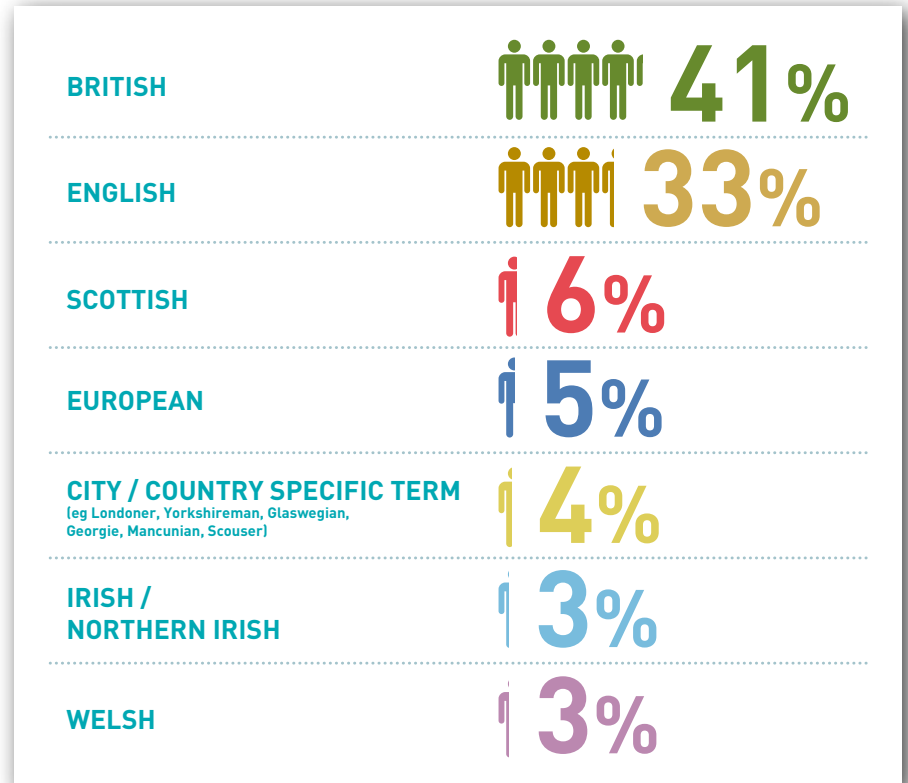
DOCTORS' SURGERIES / GP's



KINGDOM COMING APART

The public want to see less centralised power by 2030, with more than half wanting more devolution, or even for the country to be broken up. In Scotland, roughly equal numbers of people want separation or more devolution, while only around 1 in 12 are happy with the status quo. Overall, only two in five of us principally describe ourselves as, first and foremost, British, rather than English, Scottish or with another term.

We'd now like to ask you about how you think of yourself and your identity... which would you say **MOST** describes you? (showing top 7)



-  Broken into independent, separate countries
-  Still one country – but more power given to different parts (e.g. the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, city regions) than now
-  Still one country with more power in the centre (i.e. Westminster) than now
-  Similar to how it is now

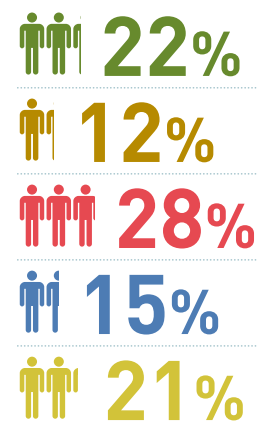
THE ENGLISH QUESTION

Less than a quarter of people in England want to keep current political structures, with over half preferring some form of English devolution. But there is no agreement on whether city regions, English Parliament or regional assemblies offer the best solution, and preferences differ across the country.

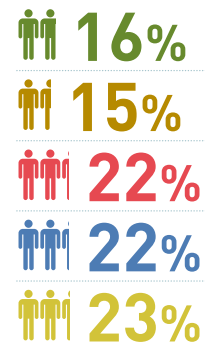
At the moment in England there is no form of devolved government similar to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly or Northern Ireland Assembly. This means that for areas like health, decisions for England are made by the UK government while for Scotland they are made by the Scottish government. There have been many suggestions for how, if at all, this should change... Which of the following would you most prefer to happen?

-  Things continue as they are now (UK government makes policy for England, devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible there)
-  Power in England to be devolved to city-regions (e.g. Greater Manchester)
-  Power in England to be devolved to a new English Parliament
-  Power in England to be devolved to new elected regional assemblies (e.g. in the North East, South West)
-  Don't know

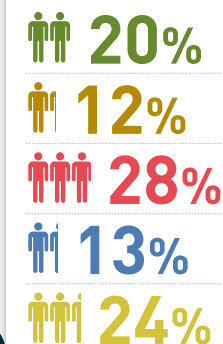
OVERALL (ENGLAND ONLY)



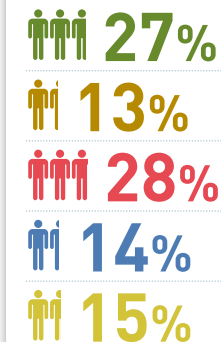
NORTH OF ENGLAND



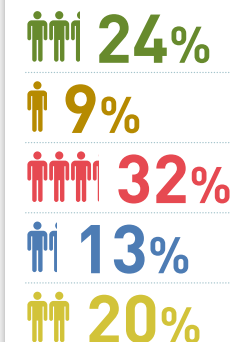
MIDLANDS



LONDON



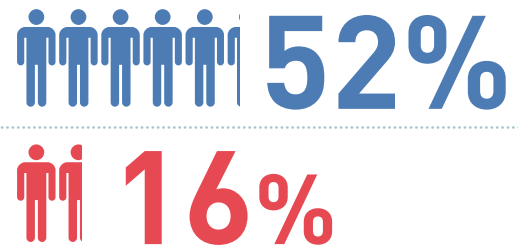
SOUTH AND EAST



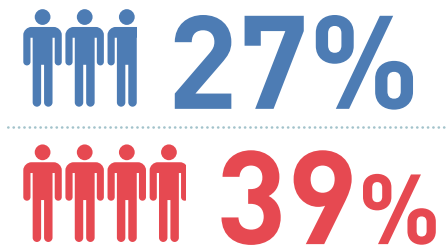
A VOTE WITH NO CONFIDENCE

By a factor of three to one, most people think the UK's electoral system is outdated, while only around a quarter think the way votes are translated into seats is democratic. However, there appears to be little hope that the electoral system could be improved, with only 3 in 10 disagreeing that it is better than any of the alternatives.

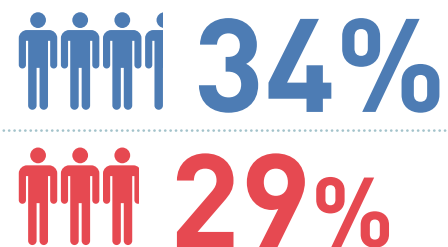
The UK election system worked in the old days of two big parties but is now out-of-date



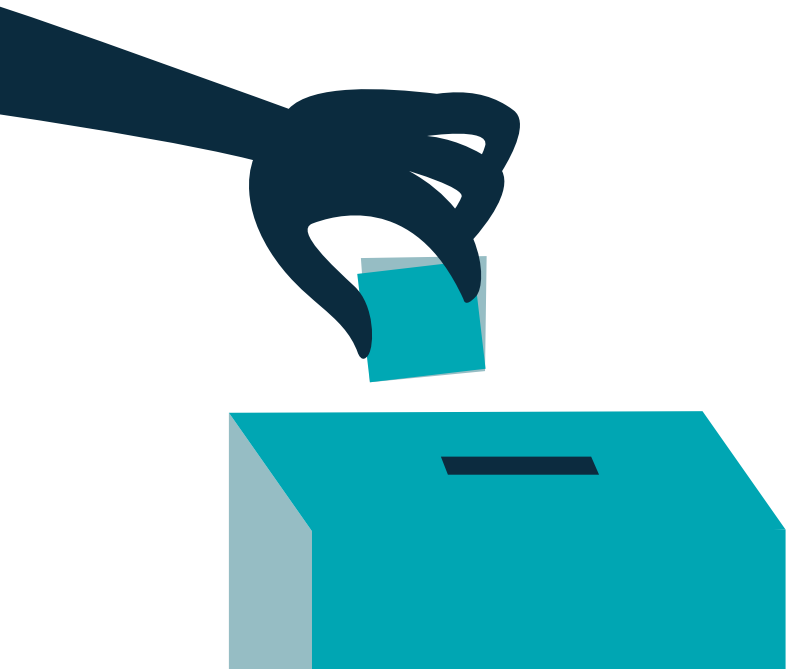
The way votes are translated into seats in the House of Commons is democratic



The UK election system is better than any of the alternatives



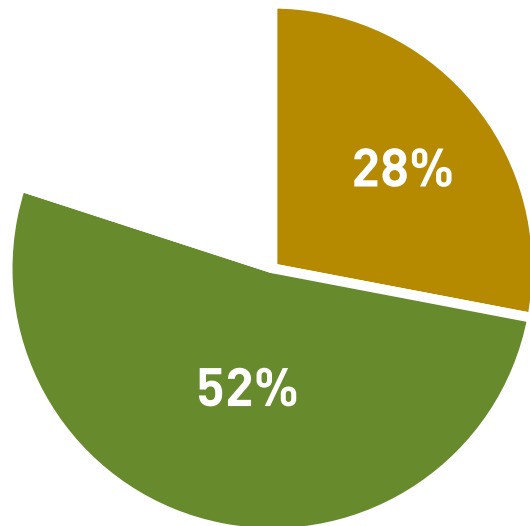
■ Agree
■ Disagree



NO VOTE AND NO CONFIDENCE

There is clear public opposition to the way members of the Lords are chosen, with nearly twice as many saying lawmakers should be elected, rather than appointed. But while there is general support for a referendum to replace the Lords with an elected body, only a small plurality think it would be worth the money and time.

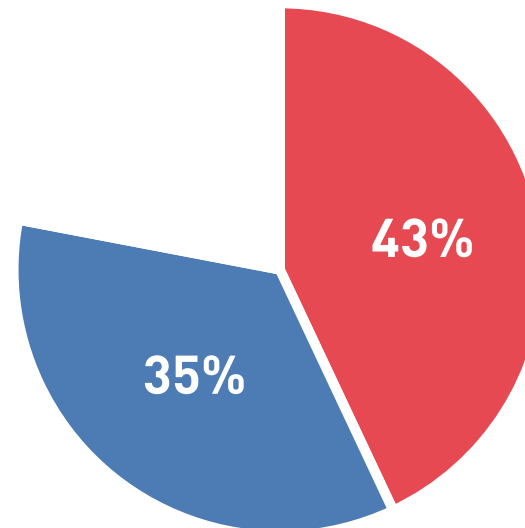
Currently most members of the House of Lords are appointed by the Queen (on the recommendation of the Prime Minister) and serve for life. Members of the Lords scrutinise legislation and offer amendments but their votes can be overruled by the House of Commons... Please tell us which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



■ People who decide our laws should always be elected and voters should be trusted to elect the best people

■ It is better to have the experience and knowledge of the Lords to make sure experts can review new laws before they are passed

Do you think it would be worth the money and time for the UK (or the relevant regions) to hold a referendum on whether to replace the House of Lords with an elected body?



■ Would be worth the time and money

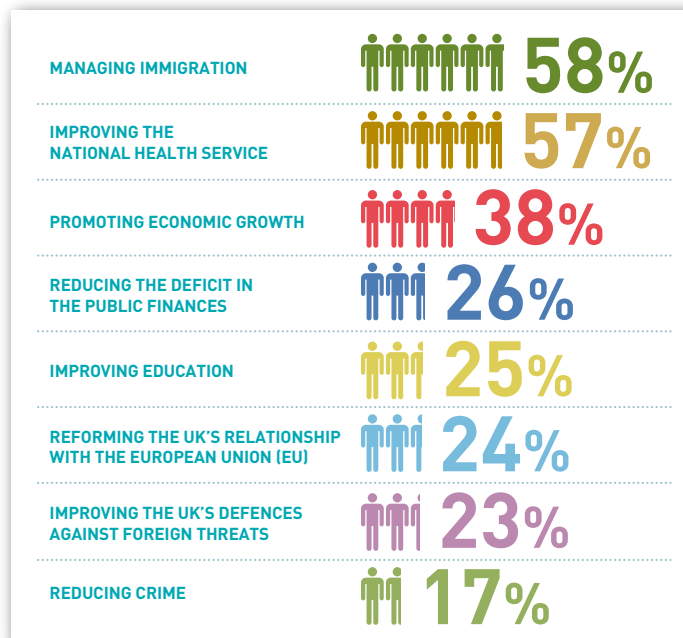
■ Would not be worth the time and money



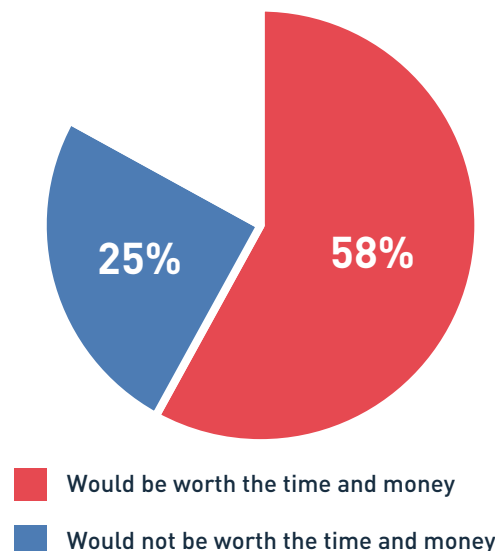
READY FOR THE EU VOTE

Only one in four people think the government should prioritise reformation of the UK's relationship with the EU but the case for the referendum still appears to have been won. The proportion of people who think it would be worth the time and money outweighs those who don't by more than 2:1 – the only issue tested where a majority think a referendum would be worthwhile. Many of those that oppose a referendum do so because they are concerned about the effects of leaving the EU.

Of the issues below, what do you think should be the top 3 priorities for the government to address?



Do you think it would be worth the money and time for the UK (or the relevant regions) to hold a referendum on the following issues?



Why do you think it would not be worth the money and time to have a referendum on whether the UK should remain part of the European Union?

THE RISKS OF LEAVING THE EU WOULD BE TOO GREAT

46%

THERE ARE OTHER MORE IMPORTANT ISSUES

31%

IT IS TOO COMPLICATED AN ISSUE FOR THE PUBLIC TO DECIDE ON

28%

I DON'T TRUST THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE SURE THE REFERENDUM IS FAIR

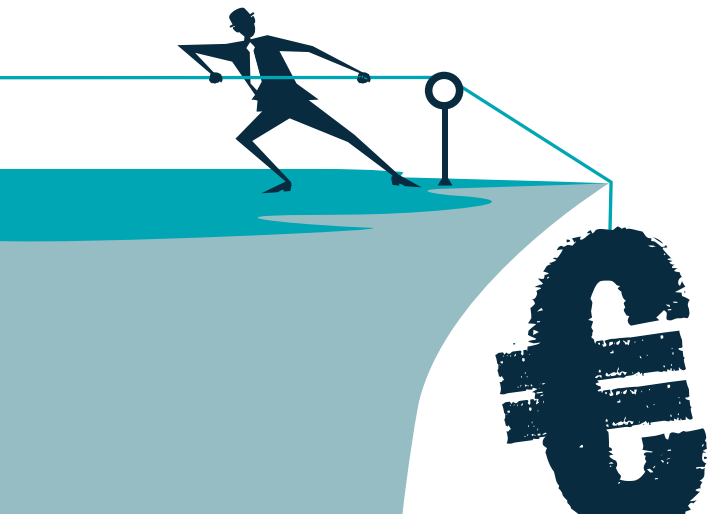
24%

WE SHOULD JUST LEAVE THE EU WITHOUT A PUBLIC VOTE

12%

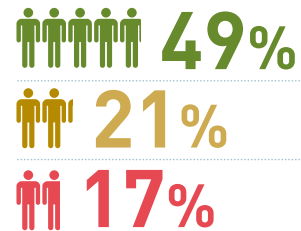
WILL WE MISS THE EU?

Worryingly for supporters of the UK's membership of the EU, there is little expectation that things would get worse after a vote to leave. Immigration, crime, unemployment, working conditions and the economy are all expected to improve, while only the UK's position in the world would be expected to worsen. However, more than a quarter of 18 to 34-year-olds say they'd be more likely to consider leaving the UK if we quit the EU, with more than one in five Londoners of all ages saying the same.

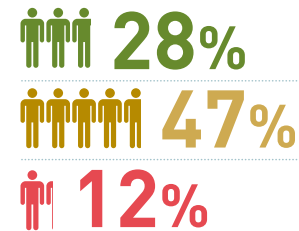


If the UK were to leave the European Union (EU), would you expect each of the following areas, to get better or get worse?

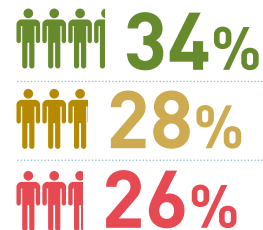
IMMIGRATION TO THE UK



CRIME



UNEMPLOYMENT



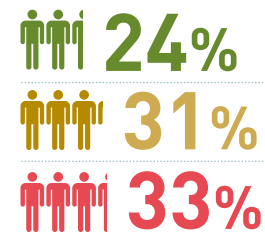
WORKING CONDITIONS AND RIGHTS FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE



THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY



THE UK'S POSITION IN THE WORLD



Get better Stay about the same Get worse

If the UK were to leave the European Union (EU), do you think this would make you more or less likely to consider leaving the country and living somewhere else?

MORE LIKELY TO CONSIDER LEAVING THE UK



People aged 18-34
People living in London
People born outside the UK

SURVEY DETAILS

Opinium Research carried out an online survey of 2,147 UK adults from 21st to 25th August 2015. Results have been weighted to nationally representative criteria according to age group, gender, region, working status, social grade and how, if at all, they voted in the May 2015 General Election.

Respondents were recruited from Opinium's consumer panel of circa 30,000 UK adults according to pre-set quotas for age group, gender and region of residence to ensure a representative sample.

Figures for regions are subsets of the national sample and have been weighted as part of UK-wide statistics. While the age, gender and socio-economic balance of the sub-sample in each region is broadly correct, no additional region-specific weighting has been used. Figures for regions should therefore be viewed in this context.

Full tables and results are available [here](#).

DHA Communications delivers powerful research, communications and advocacy strategies for UK and international not-for-profit and public sector organisations working to create meaningful social change. Our work ranges across social justice and education, the environment, arts and culture, public services and international development.

www.dhacommunications.co.uk

Opinium is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on the pulse of what people think, feel and do. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter.

www.opinium.co.uk

