



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Scottish Social Attitudes

Survey 2005

Scottish Executive Core Module

Report 3: Awareness and
Perceptions of Government

Office of Chief Researcher



social
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SCOTTISH SOCIAL ATTITUDES SURVEY 2005
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CORE MODULE
REPORT 3:
AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF
GOVERNMENT

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Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report, and for all interpretation of the data, lies solely with the authors.

Lisa Given
Rachel Ormston

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Preface

This report is the third in a series of three presenting findings from a module of questions in the 2005 *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey on attitudes to government and public services in post-devolution Scotland. The module has been funded from 2004 to 2006 by the Scottish Executive's Office of Chief Researcher. The report focuses on findings about public knowledge and awareness of the Scottish Executive and Parliament and on public perceptions of the influence of the devolved Scottish institutions within Scotland and the UK. The other two reports in the series cover evaluations of public services, trust in government, public involvement and voting.

Introduction

1. The creation of the Scottish Parliament and Executive in 1999 transformed the political landscape in Scotland. Policy on many key domestic matters, such as health, education and law and order, are now settled by these institutions, for whom Scottish affairs are their sole concern (Bromley et al, 2006). Advocates of the devolution settlement hoped that the redistribution of powers and responsibilities between Scotland and Westminster would not only give Scotland greater influence over its own affairs, but also strengthen Scotland's voice in the UK. Moreover, in giving Scotland greater autonomy to determine its own policies, it was hoped that devolution would succeed in re-engaging a public displaying increasing disenchantment with government in general (Dewar, 1998, Bromley et al, 2006). The Consultative Steering Group (the group responsible for considering the operational needs and working methods of the new Parliament) placed a strong emphasis on the need for the Parliament to secure public interest and engagement in its activities. It envisaged a more active role for individuals and organisations in decision-making and stated that the new Parliament 'should adopt procedures and practices that people will understand, that will engage their interest, and that will encourage them to obtain information and express their views' (Scottish Office, 1999).

2. This report considers the extent to which these aspirations for devolution have been met in the eyes of the Scottish public. In particular, it addresses the following key questions:

Key questions

- How aware are people of the Scottish Executive's activities and how does this compare with awareness of UK government activities?
- How much do people know about devolved government in Scotland?
- Who do people think *has* most influence over how Scotland is run and who do they think *should* have most influence?
- Do people believe devolution has strengthened, weakened or made no difference to Scotland's voice in the UK?

3. In the first section of this report, we compare evidence from the 2004 and 2005 *Scottish Social Attitudes* surveys on awareness of the work of the Scottish Executive and UK Government. Awareness may not be a sufficient condition for engaging the public with government (since awareness of activities does not imply active involvement or interest in them), but it is arguably a necessary one. If the public is not aware of what the Scottish Executive is doing, they are unlikely to be engaged at any more meaningful level. Moreover, if devolution has indeed brought government closer to the people of Scotland, it is also arguable that they should be at least as aware of the activities of the Scottish Executive as they are of the work of the UK government at Westminster.

4. If the Parliament and Executive have adopted 'procedures and practices that people will understand', one might also expect that people should have a basic knowledge of how governance in Scotland now works. We explore findings from a knowledge 'quiz' to assess how much people know about governance in Scotland. Further, given the aspiration of the Consultative Steering Group that the Parliament succeed in engaging 'in particular those groups traditionally excluded from the democratic process' (Scottish Office, 1999), we also

explore which groups are more or less aware of Scottish Executive activities and who is more or less knowledgeable about Scottish devolution and governance.

5. In addition to comparing levels of *awareness* of the UK government and Scottish Executive, we also explore perceptions of the comparative *influence* of these bodies over how Scotland is run. Using data from *Scottish Social Attitudes* surveys from 1999 to 2005 we explore trends in public perceptions of where the balance of power in Scottish politics *does* and *ought* to lie. How do the public view the actual influence of Westminster and Scotland over Scottish affairs? Are they happy with the current state of affairs, or would they prefer the Scottish institutions to have more influence?

6. The success of devolution in giving Scotland a greater voice in the UK has also been widely debated in the Scottish and UK media (see for example the controversial assessment of devolution published in the *Economist* in May 2006¹). In the final section of this report, we examine the attitudes of people in Scotland towards this issue – do they think devolution has strengthened, weakened, or made no difference to Scotland’s voice in the UK?

7. Our data come from the *Scottish Social Attitudes* (SSA) survey conducted by the Scottish Centre for Social Research. SSA is an independent survey that aims to provide high quality survey data on a wide range of social and political attitudes in order both to inform public policy and to facilitate the academic study of public opinion. As part of this endeavour SSA has tracked attitudes to devolved government in Scotland annually since 1999, the year of the first election to the Scottish Parliament. This report details the survey’s most recent findings based on interviews conducted in 2005. Between July and December of that year a random sample of 1,549 adults aged 18 plus resident in Scotland was interviewed, representing a response rate of 56%. Further technical details about the survey are included in a separate technical report².

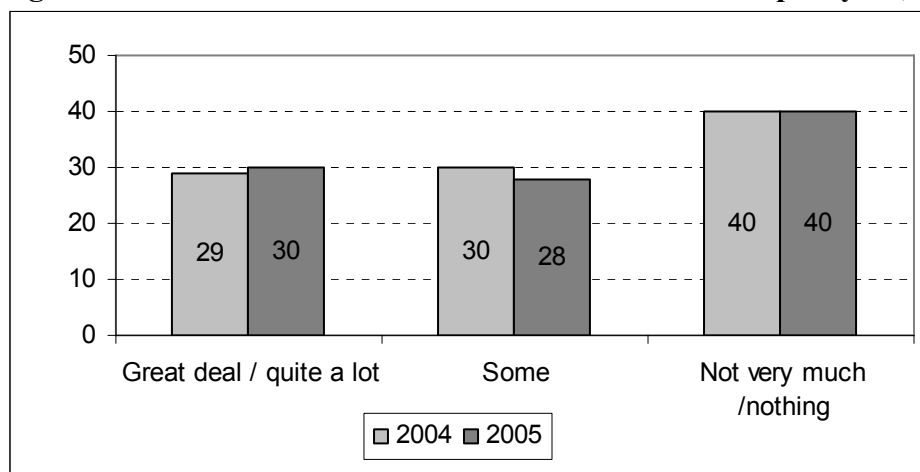
Awareness of the Scottish Executive’s recent activities

8. The 2004 and 2005 *Scottish Social Attitudes* surveys asked people how much they had seen or heard about the work of (a) the UK government and (b) the Scottish Executive over the last twelve months. In both 2004 and 2005, 3 in 10 said they had heard ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ about the work of the Scottish Executive in the last year (Figure 1). A similar proportion indicated ‘some’ awareness of Scottish Executive activities. However, while around 6 in 10 have at least ‘some’ awareness of recent Scottish Executive activities, 40% said they had heard ‘not very much’ or ‘nothing at all.’ This suggests there is a sizeable proportion of Scottish public whose attention the Scottish Executive has yet to engage.

¹ The *Economist* (May 18 2006) ‘Home truths about home rule’
http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=6941798

² Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research

Figure 1 Awareness of Scottish Executive activities over past year, 2004 and 2005 (%)

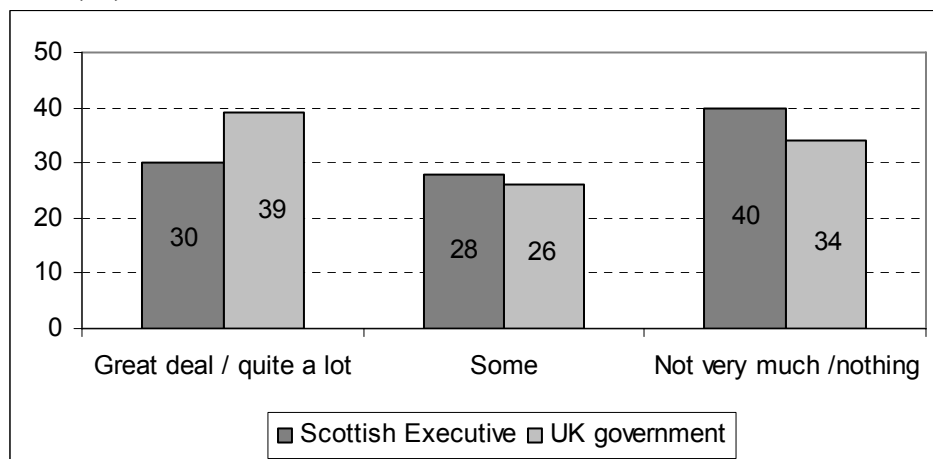


Sample size: 2004 = 1637, 2005 = 1549

Are patterns the same for the Scottish Executive and the UK Government?

9. Raising public awareness of their activities is a problem also faced by other governments. Awareness of UK government activities in the last 12 months is also fairly low - 39% say they have seen or heard 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' compared with 34% who have seen or heard 'not very much' or 'nothing at all' (Figure 2). However, awareness of UK government activities is slightly higher than awareness of the work of the Scottish Executive. Thirty-nine percent have heard a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' about UK government activities, compared with 30% who say the same of the Scottish Executive. Further, this gap has increased slightly, from 5 points in 2004 to 9 points in 2005.

Figure 2 Awareness of Scottish Executive and UK government activities over past year, 2005 (%)



Sample size: 1549

Who is most aware of Scottish Executive activities?

10. Logistic regression analysis was conducted to determine which demographic and attitudinal factors are significantly and independently associated with high levels of awareness of Scottish Executive activities (Table 1)³. Logistic regression is a statistical technique used to summarise the relationship between a ‘dependent’ variable (in this case, high levels of awareness of Scottish Executive activities) and one or more ‘independent’ explanatory variables (for example, sex, age, party-political identity, etc). It is particularly useful when explanatory variables are likely to be related to each other (for example, area deprivation and class), since it takes the relationships between these into account in determining which are statistically significant.

11. Key *demographic* factors related to high levels of awareness are sex and employment sector. As Bromley and Given (2005) note, it has long been the case that women have lower levels of interest in politics than men. Given this, it is perhaps unsurprising that men are more likely than women to have heard ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ about the Scottish Executive in the last year (38% compared with 23%) (Table 1). Awareness of Scottish Executive activities is also 10 points higher amongst those who work in the public sector than those who work in the private sector, perhaps because the former are more likely to be aware of Scottish Executive policies and action through their work.

12. *Attitudes* that are strongly related to awareness are: interest in politics, trust in the Scottish Executive and constitutional preference. Those who are disengaged in terms of general interest in politics are unlikely to be aware of the work of the Executive. Fourteen percent of people with little or no interest in politics had heard ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’, compared with 52% of those with a strong interest in politics in general. People with low levels of trust in the Scottish Executive⁴ also indicate low levels of awareness of its activities (55% had heard ‘not very much’ or ‘nothing at all’ compared with 28% of those with high levels of trust in the Scottish Executive). It is not possible to establish from this analysis whether trust is influencing awareness of Scottish Executive activities, or vice versa. It could be that those who are least trusting of the Executive pay less attention to its work as a consequence. Equally, lack of trust may stem, at least in part, from a lack of awareness of what the Scottish Executive actually does.

13. In the context of the current debate in the UK and beyond on waning public interest in politics, these results are not particularly surprising. However, they do underline the uphill struggle the devolved institutions, along with the body politic as a whole, face in meeting the aspiration of the advocates of devolution and engaging the disengaged.

³ For further details see Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research

⁴ Level of trust is based on a question which asked ‘how much do you trust the Scottish Executive to work in Scotland’s best interests?’. Detailed findings on this question are covered in the second report in this series, *Trust and involvement in the governance of Scotland*.

Table 1 Awareness of Scottish Executive activities over last year, by significant demographic and attitudinal factors, 2005⁵

% who have heard ...	'A great deal' or 'Quite a lot'	'Not very much' or 'Nothing at all'	Sample size
All	30	40	1549
Awareness of UK government activities			
Great deal / quite a lot	61	19	605
Some	14	26	408
Not very much / none at all	9	77	510
Trust in Scottish Executive			
Just about always/most of the time	38	28	850
Some of time/never	21	55	643
Interest in politics			
Great deal / quite a lot	52	23	487
Some	27	35	497
Not very much / none at all	14	60	564
Constitutional preference			
Independence	32	40	526
Scotland in UK with its own parliament	32	36	676
Scotland in UK without Scottish parliament	31	46	215
Sex			
Men	38	37	658
Women	23	44	891
Employment sector			
Public	38	30	478
Private	28	46	778
Self-employed	34	33	149

What explains differences in awareness of the Scottish Executive and the UK government?

14. It is possible to argue that higher awareness of government is not always a 'good thing'. Awareness may relate to negative media coverage of government action, for example. However, given the argument, outlined in the introduction, that a reasonable level of awareness is a necessary, if not a sufficient condition for public engagement with government activities, it seems worth exploring possible reasons for the Scottish public's relatively higher levels of awareness of the UK government compared with the Scottish Executive. To do so, we examined:

- which groups of people had relatively higher levels of awareness of the work of the Scottish Executive compared with the UK government and
- which groups had relatively higher levels of awareness of UK government compared with Scottish Executive activities (Table 2).

⁵ The factors included in this table were determined by logistic regression analysis, which was used to determine which factors are significantly and independently associated with high levels of awareness of Scottish Executive activities. For more detail on logistic regression, see Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research.

15. For all of the groups we examined, the proportion who were relatively more aware of UK government activities (column B) was higher than the proportion who were relatively more aware of Scottish Executive activities (column A). However, the size of the gap between these two categories varied significantly. For example, the gap was much *narrower* for people with high levels of trust in the Scottish Executive than for people with lower levels of trust. Similarly, the gap was *narrower* for those who favour Scottish independence than for those who would prefer Scotland to remain in the UK without a Scottish Parliament (and, to a lesser extent, those who support the current devolution settlement). Meanwhile, the gap was much *wider* for those working in the private sector than it was for those working in the public sector. Thus, while awareness of the UK government is somewhat higher across most groups, those with low levels of trust in the Scottish Executive, those who would prefer Scotland to remain in the UK without a Scottish Parliament and those working in the private sector stand out as having particularly low levels of awareness of the Scottish Executive relative to their awareness of UK government.

Table 2 Awareness of Scottish Executive and UK Government activities over past year, by significant demographic and attitudinal factors, 2005⁶

% who are ...	A - More aware of Scottish Executive than UK government activities	B - More aware of UK government than Scottish Executive activities	<i>Difference between A and B</i>	<i>Sample size</i>
All	13	27	+14	1549
Trust in Scottish Executive				
Just about always/Most of the time	16	26	+10	850
Some of the time/Never	9	28	+19	643
Interest in politics				
Great deal / quite a lot	12	35	+23	487
Not very much / none at all	12	17	+5	564
Constitutional Preference				
Independence	17	20	+3	526
Scotland in UK with its own Parliament	14	29	+15	676
Scotland in UK without Scottish Parliament	7	37	+30	215
Sex				
Men	13	28	+15	658
Women	13	25	+12	891
Employment sector				
Public	19	24	+5	478
Private	10	27	+17	778
Self-employed	14	29	+15	149

Knowledge of Scottish governance and devolution

16. In addition to exploring overall awareness of Scottish Executive activities, broader knowledge of Scottish devolution and governance was explored through a series of questions

⁶ The factors included in this table were determined by logistic regression analysis. For more detail on logistic regression, see Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research.

presented as a ‘quiz’. People were asked to say whether a series of statements about Scottish Executive and UK government responsibilities and the mechanics of devolution were true or false.

17. Table 3 shows the results, with the proportion giving the correct answer highlighted in bold. These confirm findings from 2004 that people have a better knowledge of the *powers and responsibilities* of the Scottish Executive and Parliament (e.g. the areas of public spending over which they exercise control) than about the *mechanics of the devolved institutions* (e.g. how the Scottish Parliament is composed and the difference between the Parliament and the Executive). Half (49%) correctly identified that decisions on health spending are made by the Scottish Executive and a similar proportion (54%) that the Scottish Executive does not decide the level of unemployment benefit paid to people in Scotland. However, only 13% correctly identified that the Scottish Parliament does not have around 70 members (the correct number is 129) and just a third correctly identified that the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament are not the same body.

Table 3 Responses to the knowledge of devolution ‘quiz’, 2005

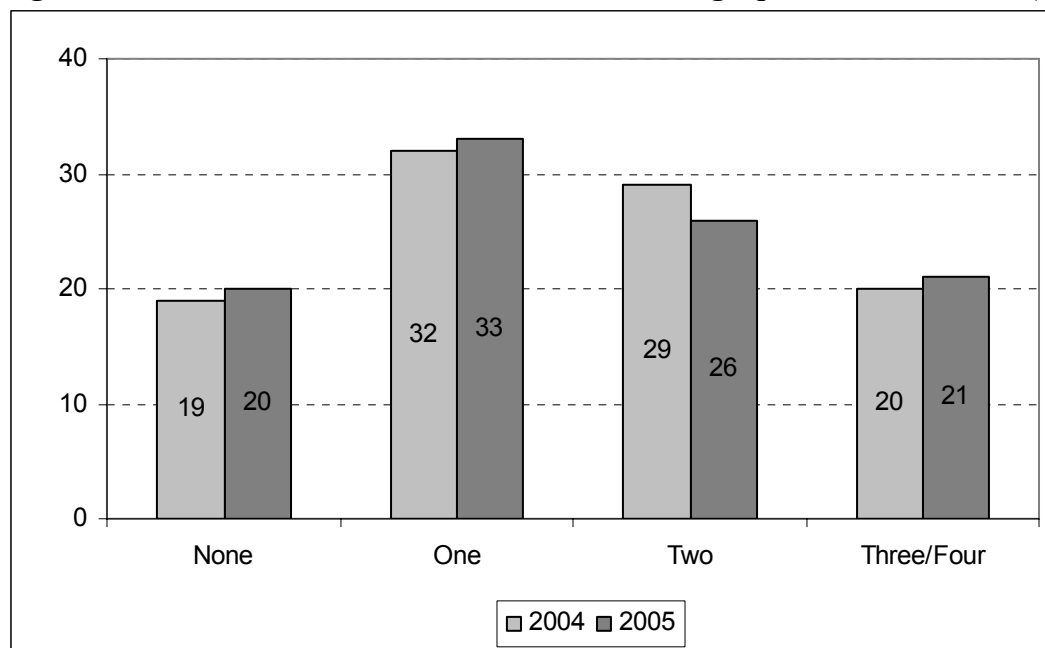
% who say ...	Definitely / probably true	Definitely / probably <u>not</u> true	Can’t choose
The Scottish Executive makes most decisions about how money should be spent on health service in Scotland [T]	49	28	21
The Scottish Executive decides level of unemployment benefit paid to people in Scotland [F]	21	54	22
The Scottish Parliament has around 70 elected members [F]	40	13	43
The Scottish Executive is just another name for the Scottish Parliament [F]	41	32	25
<i>Sample size: 1409</i>			

18. In some respects, knowing the details of how many MSPs the parliament has or the names of the devolved institutions may seem less important than knowing what areas of policy the Scottish institutions are responsible for. If the Executive and Parliament wish to engage the Scottish public in their decision-making, arguably the most important thing for them to know is which areas of public life this covers. However, given the aspiration of the Consultative Steering Group that the new institutions adopt ‘procedures and practices that people will understand’, it could be argued that there is scope for improvement in public understanding of the ‘mechanics’ of devolution (in particular, the distinction between the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament).

Who is most likely to display high levels of knowledge about devolution?

19. Using each of the individual knowledge ‘quiz’ questions, a ‘knowledge scale’ was created, with those people who failed to answer any questions correctly at one end and those who got all four right at the other. Overall, one in five people got none right, around half answered one or two correctly, and one in five (21%) got three or four right answers (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Number of items of correct in the knowledge quiz, 2004 and 2005 (%)



Sample size: 2004 = 1474, 2005 = 1358

Note to figure: excludes those who did not give any answer for one or more items in the 'quiz'

20. Unsurprisingly, knowledge levels vary across different groups (Table 4). Key differences include:

- Knowledge of the devolved institutions and their powers is strongly associated with self-reported interest in politics. Over a third (36%) of the most politically interested answered 3 or 4 items correctly, compared with just one in ten (11%) of those with low levels of interest.
- Those living in the least deprived areas are nearly three times as likely as those living in the most deprived areas to have a high level of knowledge (36% compared with 13%).
- Men are twice as likely as women to have a high level of knowledge (29% compared with 14%).
- Readers of broadsheet newspapers are more than twice as likely (40%) to have a high level of knowledge than those who read tabloids (15%) or those who don't read any daily newspaper at all (19%). This highlights the potential importance of the media in shaping people's knowledge about devolution (though the direction of this relationship is not necessarily obvious – it is arguable that choice of newspaper is affected by people's knowledge and interest in politics in the first place). It is also worth noting the strong relationship between education – which is also likely to affect knowledge levels - and newspaper readership⁷.
- Those who favour Scottish independence are less likely than those who favour devolution to have a high level of knowledge about the devolved institutions and their powers (16% compared with 25%).

⁷ However, newspaper readership was significantly related to knowledge levels even *after* its relationship with education was taken into account using logistic regression. This suggests that the relationship between newspaper readership and knowledge is not solely a reflection of differences in the educational background of those who read broadsheets and tabloids, or do not read newspapers at all. For more detail on the logistic regression analysis conducted for this report see Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research.

- Public sector employees were more likely (27%) than private sector employees (19%) to display high levels of knowledge.

Table 4 Knowledge of devolution, by significant demographic and attitudinal factors, 2005⁸

% with ...	Low score (0 items correct)	High score (3 or 4 items correct)	Sample size
All	20	21	1,358
Interest in politics			
Great deal / quite a lot	8	36	431
Not very much / none at all	33	11	469
Sex			
Men	15	29	571
Women	23	14	787
Newspaper readership			
Tabloid	21	15	509
Broadsheet	8	40	273
No paper	24	19	574
SIMD			
1 Least deprived	14	36	280
2	19	20	332
3	21	20	274
4	19	13	247
5 Most deprived	26	13	225
Constitutional Preference			
Independence	18	16	465
Scotland in UK with its own Parliament	17	25	606
Scotland in UK without Scottish Parliament	17	28	188
Awareness of UK activities over last 12 months			
Great deal/quite a lot	11	31	543
Some	17	20	364
Not very much/nothing at all	30	10	432
Self-rated hardship			
Living very comfortably	19	33	150
Living comfortably	16	23	518
Coping	22	19	490
Finding it difficult/very difficult	26	12	197
Employment sector			
Public	15	27	423
Private	22	19	688
Self-employed	16	23	121

Note to Table: bases exclude those who did not give any answer for one or more items in the 'quiz'

21. These findings again highlight the challenge faced in increasing knowledge of the devolved institutions among those otherwise disinterested in and/or traditionally excluded from the democratic process. Those with low levels of interest in politics, including women

⁸ The factors included in this table were determined by logistic regression analysis. For more detail on logistic regression, see Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research.

and those living in more deprived areas of Scotland, all have relatively low levels of knowledge about devolution. We suggested in the introduction that a basic level of knowledge about the powers, responsibilities and institutions of devolved government in Scotland might be required in order for people to be able to engage with decision-making in Scotland in a more active way. If aspirations for government in Scotland to be accessible to all are to be realised, specific groups, including women and those in deprived areas, may need support and encouragement to develop this knowledge.

Where does power and influence lie?

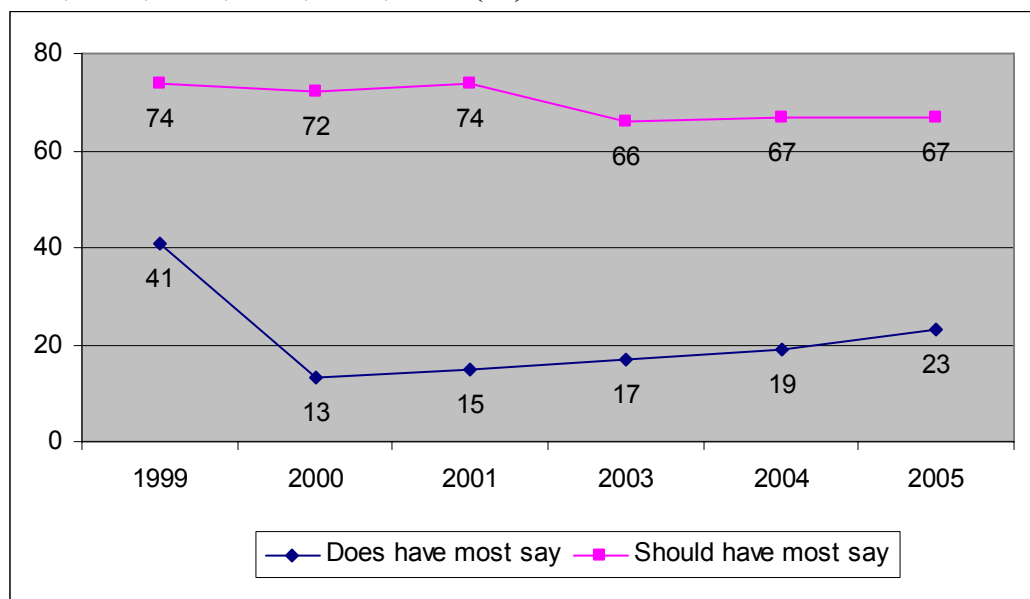
22. The issue of how much influence different institutions have and ought to have over how Scotland is run is covered by two questions, asked on five occasions since the *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey began in 1999. The first asks who people think *has* most influence over the way Scotland is run – the Scottish Parliament or Executive, the UK government at Westminster, local councils or the European Union. The second asks which of these bodies *ought* to have most influence.

23. The wording of these questions has changed slightly at 2 key points. First, in 1999 the initial question was worded prospectively, asking “When the new parliament starts work, which of the following **will** have most influence...?” Second, from 2005 both questions have asked about the Scottish Executive (which is arguably more comparable with the UK government option), rather than the Scottish Parliament⁹.

24. Since 2000 (a year after the Scottish Parliament was established), there has been a gradual but significant increase in the proportion of people saying that the Scottish Executive or Parliament *does* have most influence, from 13% in 2000 to 23% in 2005 (Figure 4). However, the proportion saying that the Scottish Executive or Parliament *should* have most influence has remained steady at around two-thirds since 2003 (67% in 2005). As a result, the gap between the two has narrowed gradually over the past 3 years, and if both these trends continue we would expect it to narrow further in the future.

⁹ The second change of wording was introduced following a split sample experiment in 2004. Half the sample were asked about the Scottish Parliament and half about the Scottish Executive. Analysis of this experiment concluded that it made little difference which institution the question asked about.

Figure 4 Perceptions of the Scottish Parliament/Executive’s role in how Scotland is run, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005 (%)

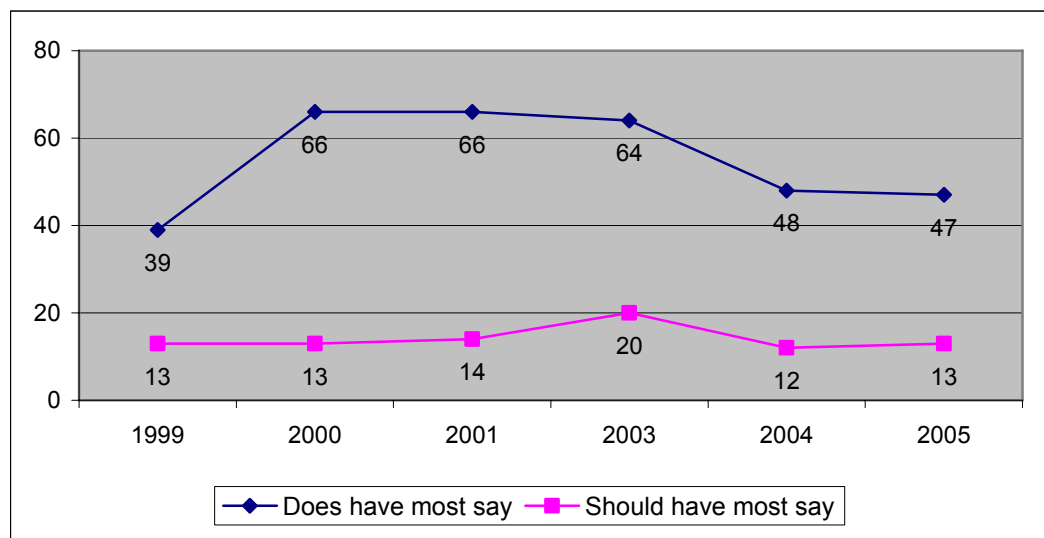


Sample size: 1999 = 1482, 2000 = 1663, 2001 = 1605, 2003 = 1508, 2004 = 1637, 2005 = 1549

25. In each year the question was asked, the only other body viewed as having significant influence over how Scotland is run has been the UK Government. Every year since *SSA* began, the proportion who think the UK government *does* have most say in how Scotland is run has by far outweighed the proportion who say that it *ought* to do so (Figure 5). However, perceptions of power do appear to be shifting. In 2004 there was a large drop in the proportion who thought the UK government had most influence. This drop was maintained in the 2005 survey where it appeared to be associated with a shift towards the Scottish Executive.¹⁰

¹⁰ In 2004, the shift away from saying the UK government had most influence coincided with a large increase in the proportion who thought local government had most influence. In 2005 the proportion saying local government had most influence fell 5 points.

Figure 5 Perceptions of the UK Government’s role in how Scotland is run, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005 (%)



Sample size: 1999 = 1482, 2000 = 1663, 2001 = 1605, 2003 = 1508, 2004 = 1637, 2005 = 1549

26. In the following section we explore this apparent shift in more detail. However, it is worth noting that the gap between the proportion of people who think the UK government has most influence (47%) and those who think the Scottish Executive has most influence (23%) remains large. Only further years of data will confirm whether this gap will reduce any further.

What explains changes in perceptions of where power and influence lie?

27. In order to explore possible reasons for changes in the proportions saying the Scottish Executive and UK government have most influence, we examined which factors were most closely associated with each position in 2000 and 2005 (Table 6). This allowed us to determine whether perceptions have changed across the board, or whether certain groups are particularly likely to have shifted to thinking the Scottish Executive has most influence. The first thing to note is that the proportion saying the Scottish Parliament or Executive have most influence increased between 2000 and 2005 *across* different demographic groups and among people with different political outlooks – for example, both men and women were more likely to say the Scottish Executive had most influence in 2005 than they were to say the Scottish Parliament had most influence in 2000. Similarly, the proportion saying the UK government has most influence has *decreased* across all the groups included in the analysis. Thus, there does appear to have been a general shift in perception of where influence lies.

28. However, the 2005 SSA found some interesting variations between these different groups when compared with the 2000 survey. For example, while there was only a 2 point difference in the proportion of tabloid and broadsheet newspaper readers saying the Scottish Parliament had most influence in 2000 (13% of tabloid compared with 15% of broadsheet readers), in 2005 the difference was 7 points (20% compared with 27%). In relation to the UK government, the findings are even more striking – in 2000, broadsheet readers were 5 point *more* likely than tabloid readers to say the UK government had most influence, while in

2005 they were 8 points *less* likely. Again, this highlights the potential importance of the media in shaping perceptions of government.

29. There were also some interesting variations in 2005 by party political identification and employment sector. In 2000, there was no difference in the proportion of Conservative and Liberal Democrat party identifiers¹¹ who said that the Scottish Parliament had most influence (Table 6). By 2005 there was an 11 point difference between these groups, with Liberal Democrat identifiers the group most likely to say the Scottish Executive has most influence in 2005. In terms of employment sector, while public sector employees were 5 points more likely than private sector workers to say the Scottish Parliament had most influence in 2000, in 2005 they were 9 points more likely. Employment sector was statistically significant on 2005 but not in 2000¹².

30. Thus, while overall the findings suggest that belief in the influence of the Scottish Executive has increased *across* social and political groups, the widening gaps between some groups in particular suggests that their views may be particularly important in explaining this increase. The large increase in the proportion of Liberal Democrats saying the Scottish Executive has most influence perhaps suggests that seeing the party one identifies with in power (particularly for the first time at a national level) increases the likelihood of viewing the governing institution as influential. Working for the public sector, and perhaps becoming more aware of the work of the Scottish Executive as a result, may also increase perceptions of its influence. Finally, coverage of Executive activities in the broadsheets may have affected the views of some readers on the relative influence of the Scottish Executive and UK government on how Scotland is run (though as discussed above, the direction of the relationship between political attitudes and newspaper readership is not always clear).

¹¹ Party identification was derived from two questions. The first asked, 'Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, nationalist or what?'. Those who did not identify themselves as supporters of a particular party at this question were asked 'Do you generally think of yourself as a little closer to one of the parties than the others?'

¹² For further details see Given & Ormston (2006) *Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2005: Scottish Executive Core module, Technical report*, Scottish Executive Social Research

Table 5 Belief the Scottish Executive and UK government have most influence on how Scotland is run, by significant demographic and attitudinal factors, 2000 and 2005

% who say ...	Scottish Parliament/Executive has most influence ¹³		UK government has most influence	
	2000	2005	2000	2005
All	13	23	66	47
Sex				
Men	14	22	69	52
Women	12	24	63	42
Age				
18-24	7	17	72	54
25-39	11	20	69	52
40-64	13	26	66	45
65+	18	25	57	39
Newspaper readership				
Tabloid	13	20	65	53
Broadsheet	15	27	70	45
No paper	11	25	64	41
Employment Sector				
Public	17	30	64	42
Private	12	21	67	48
Self-employed	10	18	69	51
Interest in politics				
Great deal/quite a lot	16	24	69	50
Some	14	26	68	47
Not very much/none at all	10	21	62	43
Party identification				
Conservative	12	21	64	47
Labour	17	27	65	49
Liberal Democrat	12	32	69	40
SNP	8	18	74	55
None	11	16	57	41
<i>Overall sample size</i>	<i>1,663</i>	<i>1,549</i>	<i>1,663</i>	<i>1,549</i>

Is the Scottish Parliament giving Scotland a stronger voice in the UK?

31. Every year the *Scottish Social Attitudes* survey has asked whether people in Scotland think devolution is strengthening, weakening or making no difference to Scotland's voice within the UK.¹⁴ Only a very small minority of respondents have ever said that having a Scottish Parliament is weakening Scotland's voice in the UK (Figure 6). However, since 2000 (when devolution had been in place for a year) views on whether the Parliament is strengthening Scotland's voice or making no difference have fluctuated. Most recently, in both 2004 and 2005 the proportion who said it was making no difference outweighed the proportion who said it was strengthening Scotland's voice. However, there was a 6

¹³ In 2004, an experiment was run whereby half the sample was asked about the Scottish Parliament and half was asked about the Scottish Executive. The change of wording made negligible difference to the responses given therefore Scottish Executive was asked about in 2005.

¹⁴ The question wording in each year was:

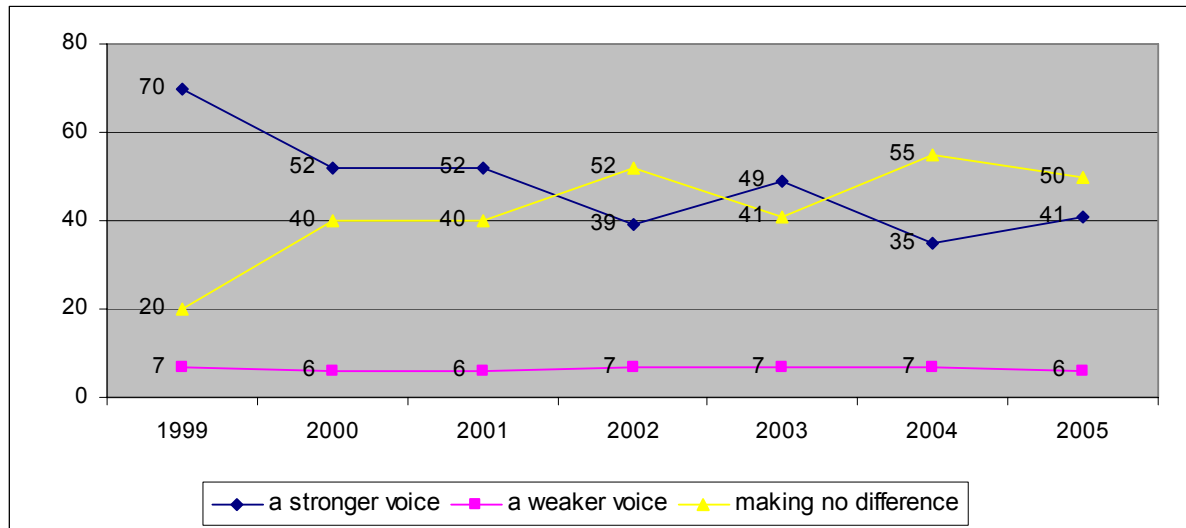
1999 "Will a Scottish Parliament..."

2000 "Do you think that having a Scottish parliament is going to..."

2001-2005 "Do you think that having a Scottish Parliament is giving..."

percentage point increase in 2005 in those saying it is giving Scotland a stronger voice (35% in 2004 to 41% in 2005).

Figure 6 Do you think having a Scottish Parliament is giving Scotland a stronger voice in the UK? 1999-2005 (%)



Sample size: 1999 = 1482, 2000 = 1663, 2001 = 1605, 2002 = 1665, 2003 = 1508, 2004 = 1637, 2005 = 1549

32. Analysis was carried out to determine which factors are significantly and independently related to whether people think the Scottish Parliament has given Scotland a stronger voice in the UK or not. With the exception of age (younger people, aged 18-24, are most likely to believe the Scottish Parliament is giving Scotland a stronger voice), very few individual-level demographic factors are significant once their relationship with other factors is taken into account. Instead, attitudes towards the success of the Scottish Parliament in giving Scotland a stronger voice are strongly related to other attitudes toward devolution in particular, and to political attitudes more generally (Table 7).

33. The groups most likely to say having a Scottish Parliament is giving Scotland a *stronger* voice include:

- people with high levels of trust in the Scottish Executive
- people who favour either independence or devolution
- people who think that the Scottish Executive does and ought to have most influence over how Scotland is run
- those who identify with the parties involved in the current Scottish Executive coalition (52% of Labour and 46% of Liberal Democrat identifiers), and
- people with a high level of awareness of Scottish Executive activities.

34. It is not possible to establish from this analysis which of these attitudes comes first. For example, does trust in the Scottish Executive lead people to believe that having a Scottish Parliament is giving Scotland a stronger voice? Or does the belief that devolution has given Scotland a stronger voice lead people to place greater trust in the institutions of devolution? It is also worth noting that party identification is likely to be associated with other underlying attitudes – for example, constitutional preference. However, in fact party political identification is independently significant, even after its relationship with constitutional preference was controlled for in statistical analysis. The fact that higher proportions of

Labour supporters believe that devolution is giving Scotland a stronger voice is not simply a reflection of their support for the principle that Scotland should have its own parliament.

35. What these findings do demonstrate is that evaluations of the success of the Parliament in strengthening Scotland's voice are closely associated not only with assessments of devolution in *practice* (trust in the Executive, awareness of its activities, and perceptions of its influence), but with people's overall support for the *principle* of devolution in addition to whether their *party political* views are represented in the Scottish Parliament and Executive.

Table 6 Perceptions of the impact of devolution on Scotland's voice in the UK, by significant demographic and attitudinal factors, 2005

% who say having a Scottish Parliament is giving Scotland...	A stronger voice in the UK	A weaker voice in the UK	Making no difference	Sample size
All	41	6	50	1549
Trust in Scottish Executive				
Just about always / most of the time	56	4	39	850
Some of the time / never	22	10	67	643
Constitutional preference				
Independence	46	7	45	526
Scotland in UK with a Parliament	47	4	48	676
Scotland in UK with no parliament	15	13	71	215
Who has most influence over how Scotland is run?				
Scottish Executive	60	6	33	349
UK government	36	6	57	710
Party identification				
Conservative	28	9	62	245
Labour	52	6	41	534
Liberal Democrat	46	7	44	214
SNP	42	6	51	195
None	26	5	61	293
Awareness of Scottish Executive's activities over past year				
A great deal / quite a lot	54	7	39	456
Not very much / nothing at all	28	7	61	628
Age				
18-24	45	5	47	101
65+	37	6	54	386
Who ought to have most influence over how Scotland is run?				
Scottish Executive	47	4	47	1027
UK government	24	16	59	195

Conclusions

36. Six years on from the first elections to the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Executive appears to have had mixed success in engaging the attention of the Scottish public. In 2005, 58% had heard at least something about Scottish Executive activities over the last 12 months. However, the proportion with low levels of awareness (having heard 'not very much' or

‘nothing at all’) continues to outweigh those with high levels of awareness (‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’). At the same time, the Scottish public continues to indicate slightly higher levels of awareness of the activities of the UK government than the Scottish Executive.

37. Although higher levels of awareness of the activities of government cannot always be taken as straightforwardly ‘positive’ (for example, where awareness stems from negative media coverage), arguably a reasonable level of awareness of its activities is required if the Scottish Executive is to be successful in engaging the public with its work. Our analysis shows that women, those working in the private sector and those with low levels of interest in politics in general have particularly low levels of awareness. The Scottish Executive may wish consider whether there is a need to target these groups to raise their awareness of its activities.

38. Findings on levels of knowledge about devolution suggest that, in general, people appear to have a greater understanding of the responsibilities and remit of the Scottish institutions than of the mechanics of those institutions. In particular, just 32% are aware that the Scottish Executive is not just another name for the Scottish Parliament, suggesting that disentangling evaluations of the two is likely to be problematic. Again, if the Scottish Executive considers there is a need to improve levels of knowledge about devolution (particularly in relation to the mechanics of devolved government) to foster engagement, it may wish to consider targeting those groups who are relatively less knowledgeable at the moment.

39. Perceptions of power and influence in devolved Scotland appear still to be evolving. The proportion of the Scottish public who think the Scottish Executive has most say over how Scotland is run (23%) continues to be outweighed both by the proportion who think the UK government has most say (47%) and by the proportion who think the Scottish Executive *ought* to have most say (67%). However, since 2000 there has been a slow but significant increase in viewing the Scottish Parliament or Executive as the body with most influence. Meanwhile, in 2004 there was a substantial decrease in the proportion who thought the UK government was most influential.

40. These shifts in attitude are apparent across social groups, although there is some evidence to suggest that Liberal Democrats and broadsheet newspaper readers are particularly likely to have shifted their opinion since the early days of devolution on where influence lies. If these trends continue in future years, the gap between the aspirations of the Scottish public about who should have most say and their assessment of the influence of the devolved institutions in practice should narrow.

41. Only a very small minority of people in Scotland think that having a Scottish Parliament has weakened Scotland’s voice in the UK. However, the aspiration of advocates of devolution that it would give Scotland a stronger voice in the UK does not appear to have been conclusively met either. In 2005, 41% thought having a Scottish Parliament was giving Scotland a stronger voice, while 50% thought it was making no difference. Findings on what drives positive assessments of the impact of devolution on Scotland’s voice in the UK suggest that any future change is likely to be bound up with changing assessments of devolution in *practice* (trust, awareness and perceptions of the influence of the devolved institutions), and variations in levels of support for the *principle* of devolution and *party political* affiliation.

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