

Independence - FAQ

Finance

- **An independent Scotland could not afford to pay the same benefits as the UK does today.**

The official government statistics, [Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland \(GERS\)](#), which includes contributions to so-called UK national expenditure e.g. the Olympics funding, show that less is spent on benefits in Scotland proportionally than the rest of the UK. Plus, the current coalition government and the Labour opposition both intend to reduce benefits in the UK using austerity as an excuse. An independent Scotland could easily afford fully funded benefits and structure them to suit Scottish needs.

- **In an independent Scotland what will happen to my pension/child benefit/unemployment benefit?**

The current Scottish Government is dedicated to a dynamic wealth producing economy which also provides a social safety net. Future governments in an independent Scotland would be in a strong financial position and would be likely to follow similar policies if we vote for them. In contrast, the current UK coalition government has so far failed to reduce the national debt and seems to have [decided on a course of reducing benefits](#) rather than increasing taxes. The current opposition leader at Westminster has publicly stated that a future [Labour government wouldn't reverse the cuts](#) agenda.

A much longer discussion specifically on pensions can be found on the YesScotland website at http://www.yesscotland.net/pensions_in_an_independent_scotland.

- **Scotland could not afford to bail out the banks.**

A Scottish government would have been able to bail out the banks, if it wanted to, as it would only have been responsible for the proportion of the banks' operation in this country. For example, had the bank bailout happened when Scotland was independent [EW&NI would have been responsible](#) (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) for about 90% of the RBS bailout as that is the proportion of their business in these countries. Furthermore, RBS received [nearly \\$85 billion](#) from the US Federal Reserve to bailout their [operations in that country](#) (primarily Citizens Bank and Greenwich Natwest).

- **The Scottish economy relies on subsidies from the UK.**

The Scottish economy is very strong. [Government figures](#) (GERS) for 2011 revealed that exports to the rest of the world were nearly £24 billion, up by £1.6 billion on the previous year, and these sales **do not include North Sea oil and gas**. The top exporting sectors in the Scottish economy were: Food & Beverages (£4.2bn), Coke, Refined Petroleum & Chemical products (£3.7bn this is not oil and gas), Computer, Electronic & Optical Products (£1.4bn) Finance and Insurance (£1.4bn) and Manufacture of Machinery and Equipment (£1.4bn). These figures would place Scotland within the top 10 of countries in the world per capita before oil and gas was included.

The Scottish Government receives a block grant which is the means used to fund its activities but it is not a subsidy. The GERS data also reveals that more is raised in taxation in Scotland (9.6%) than is spent (9.3%).

- **North Sea oil is running out and the price is too volatile.**

From the time that North Sea oil drilling was started, in the 1970s, 39 billion barrels have been extracted. [Recent estimates](#) have suggested that there are at least 24 billion barrels left. "At current prices these reserves could have a wholesale value in excess of £1 trillion." (Fergus Ewing, Holyrood Energy Minister). New oil fields and new extraction methods for existing fields are being developed every year. For example; BP recently announced a second phase development at the Clair field west of Shetland and Statoil [announced a massive £4.3bn new investment](#) in December 2012 creating 700 jobs.

The growth of developing economies such as Brazil, China and India will create huge future demand for oil, so, the price is only likely to rise.

- **Scotland won't be allowed to use the Pound Sterling and/or will be forced to use the Euro.**

The Bank of England is a historical misnomer as it is really the UK central bank, [which was nationalised in 1946](#), and therefore nearly 10% of the bank belongs to Scotland. It would also be in the interests of EW&NI to keep Scotland in a "sterling zone" as strong Scottish manufacturing exports plus oil and gas would help

strengthen the pound. In 2010 oil and gas contributed £32bn to the economy almost halving the UK deficit. Oil and gas activities accounted for **one quarter of all UK corporation tax**.

There is no mechanism to force EU countries to use the Euro as a currency. A precursor to joining the Euro is that a country *must* be a member of European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM-2) for at least two years. However, joining ERM-2 is entirely discretionary.

- **Scotland wouldn't benefit from the UK AAA credit rating.**

In simple terms the ratings agencies assess the probability that a nation would be able to repay a loan and do it in a timely manner. A triple "A" rating is the highest possible and suggests that a nation has a strong economy and would be able to repay loans and is therefore "typically" given lower interest rates. Lower ratings might mean more expensive borrowing. There is no reason to assume that a strong Scottish economy wouldn't also benefit from a high credit rating, particularly, as we would be the largest energy producer in the EU. The UK has already lost the AAA rating from both *Moody's* and *Fitch Ratings* two of the top ratings agencies, and is on a negative outlook from other well known agencies. There is no reason to expect that Scotland could not gain a triple "A" rating in common with other **small independent nations such as** Denmark, Finland, Norway and Luxembourg.

- **Scotland is too poor to go it alone.**

Scotland has huge resources of fish, oil and gas, renewable energy potential and successful export industries such as whisky. **Although Scotland has run a deficit** in recent times this is not an unusual situation for a European developed nation economy. From 1980-1 to 2009-10 Scotland had a cumulative deficit of £41bn, however, during this same period the UK deficit was £715bn. Following the logic of the argument the UK is too poor to go it alone.

Defence

- **Scotland wouldn't be able to defend itself without the UK armed forces.**

Scotland has probably contributed more than its share, by population, to all the armed services since the union in 1707. There is no doubt that the Scottish people have the ability to staff the Army, Navy and Air Force. Currently, the Westminster government are: reducing the numbers of full-time soldiers in the British Army to be **replaced with reservists**, unable to maintain a **replacement Nimrod** air/sea reconnaissance service (which is scandalous for an island nation), has decided to build an **aircraft carrier without planes** and is desperately trying to recoup a huge **defence overspend** from previous decades. By contrast, Scotland could fund armed services in a manner similar to other small independent European nations such as Denmark, Norway or Ireland.

- **What about defence against terrorism in an independent Scotland?**

In an interview published in The Sunday Herald Allan Burnett, Scotland's recently retired counter-terrorism co-ordinator with the rank of **Assistant Chief Constable** said *"The truth is that an independent Scotland would face less of a threat, intelligence institutions will be readily created, and allies will remain allies."* He also was quoted as saying *"with the biggest Special Branch outside London and substantial existing capacity to deal with terrorists and organised crime – [Scottish policing] already has the basis of a strong MI5-style domestic security service."*

- **If Scotland decided to become nuclear weapons free we would have to pay for Trident to be re-located.**

International precedent doesn't support the assertion that Scotland would have to pay for the removal of Trident. For example, when the Russian Federation removed their nuclear weapons from the Ukraine the **Russians paid for the removal costs**.

Foreign affairs

- **In an independent Scotland we would require a passport to visit our Auntie in Carlisle.**

The UK, Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands co-operate within the **Common Travel Area** which enables citizens to travel to and from these areas without the need for a passport. The Common Travel Area came about because the UK and the other states had historical ties and none of them had a land border with continental Europe. None of these factors would change with Scottish independence. Passports are required

when travelling between Common Travel Area and the Schengen Area (the Continental Europe free movement area). However, there is no requirement in the EU that a member state must sign the Schengen Agreement as demonstrated by the fact that the Common Travel Area members are not also Schengen members. Ireland has, since 1995, [refused to sign](#) the Schengen Agreement as "it is not in Ireland's overall interest to do so".

- **Scotland couldn't afford to have embassies all across the world.**

A per capita share of the current UK embassy properties would belong to a future independent Scotland. It is not unusual for nation states to share Embassy and Consulate buildings and such an arrangement between Scotland and EW&NI could be envisioned. The [Visegrád Group of countries](#) have an arrangement where the four member countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) [share mission facilities](#) in certain countries of Central Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Czech Republic and Slovakia were one country and are now successful independent states who co-operate on many policy objectives.

The [UK already shares](#) some diplomatic missions and embassy offices with Canada.

- **An independent Scotland would be forced to re-apply for EU membership.**

The UK originally came about through the Treaty and Acts of Union in 1706/7 between the two states Scotland and England. The UK then signed various treaties which combined defines our EU membership. If Scotland votes to dissolve the Union either both Scotland and EW&NI [will be successor states](#) or neither will be. However, the EU is expansionist in nature and would be keen to have both Scotland and EW&NI as members particularly as they would be net contributors to the EU budget. Furthermore, the EU would be keen to have Scotland as a member as we have large reserves of oil, gas, renewable energy and fish stocks.

Once EU citizenship has been granted, as it has for more than 40 years, to the people of Scotland it would be [extremely difficult to revoke](#) that right. Furthermore, the EU wouldn't want tens of thousands of their citizens, living in Scotland, to lose their right to be here.

- **Scotland being part of the UK means we have more international influence.**

Scotland has no direct influence in organisations like the EU Council of Ministers, NATO, and the United Nations because we are not yet a sovereign state. Only if our needs coincide with that of the UK as a whole, and that often isn't the case, can it be argued that we have any influence. In many circumstances where we do get some representation it is reduced because we are part of the UK. An example is with electing members to the [European Parliament](#). The European Parliament is balanced in a way that small nations have proportionally more members per capita than the larger nations. Similar sized nations to Scotland, namely Finland, Denmark, Slovakia, Ireland and Lithuania have between 12-13 MEPs, Scotland as part of the larger UK [only gets 6 MEPs](#).

- **The UK has so many bilateral treaties Scotland would never be able to re-negotiate them all in the time between a Yes vote and Independence Day.**

The Scottish Government has [published a timetable](#) that in the event of a Yes vote in autumn 2014 Scotland would regain independence in March 2016, a period of approximately 18 months. The No campaign supporters have argued that that would not be enough time to re-negotiate as many as [14,000 international treaties](#) that the UK has signed. However, the 14,000 is the complete historical collection of treaties the UK has signed over several hundred years. Most of these treaties are defunct or were with states that no longer exist. [An example](#), "*Convention of Commerce and Navigation between Great Britain, on the one part, and Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Wurtemberg ... on the other part*" signed on March 2nd 1841.

Furthermore, the international convention is that when two states secede from each other they are both bound by any treaties signed by the former union state until such time that they are re-negotiated. When Slovakia and the Czech Republic separated this is how the Czech Republic handled their [treaty obligations](#) "*In conformity with the valid principles of international law and to the extent defined by it, the Czech Republic, as a successor State to the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, considers itself bound ... by multilateral international treaties to which the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic was a party on that date...*". An independent Scotland could take the same approach so nothing in the short-term would change until *relevant* treaties could be re-negotiated to better suit our country.

Culture, Media & Sport

- **People in an independent Scotland won't be able to view their favourite BBC or ITV television programmes.**

Television is broadcast across the UK using terrestrial digital transmissions and cable, but, the same programmes are also seen across the world via satellite and the internet. Future technology will probably enable people to have more channels to choose from delivered in even more diverse means. The BBC and ITV both require financing by television licence (tax) and advertising respectively. Neither organisation would want to lose nearly 10% of their audiences overnight so they will make efforts to retain a Scottish audience. The infrastructure for TV broadcasting would still exist, so it would be commercial madness not to use it.

- **Big events like the Olympics, which can only be hosted in London, are good for Scotland as well as rest of the UK.**

The Olympics cost at least £11.3bn the vast majority of this money being spent in London on facilities and infrastructure. The cost was considerably more than the £4.2bn the London government claimed it would spend in 2005. Not only did London benefit directly from the spending but Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland were specifically denied the Barnett consequential that would normally be due on English regeneration funding because the Labour Westminster government reclassified it as UK spending in 2007. The devolved administrations lost out on £330m of funding.

While it was probably the case that the Olympics increased tourism and created a short-term jobs bonanza the effect was limited to London. During the same period Scotland's tourism income plunged by £50m.

- **If Scotland and EW&NI are separate countries won't I have to pay additional roaming charges for my mobile 'phone?**

A unanimous vote in the European Parliament supported the abolition of, so called, "roaming charges" for the provision of voice and data services when travelling between member states. It is expected that the provisions will come into effect by 2015. So, there will be no roaming charges between Scotland and EW&NI or any other EU member states.

Health

- **Independence will mean we lose our NHS.**

The NHS in Scotland is already a separate organisation and has been since its inception. A precursor of the NHS was the *Highlands and Islands Medical Service* which was created in 1913 and run from Edinburgh. The Scottish NHS was then created by *The 1947 NHS (Scotland) Act*. The current Scottish Government has striven to protect the NHS in Scotland while the service in England & Wales has been subjected to wholesale privatisation, cuts to funding and the extension of public payment. The nature of the Barnett Formula means that cuts in funding of the NHS in England & Wales will result in a reduced NHS in Scotland. Independence is the only way to safeguard the Scottish NHS.

The Barnett Formula is a means of calculating the block grant handed back to Scotland based on the level of spending in England & Wales.

- **If we are independent we will no longer be able to have cross border medical treatment with EW&NI.**

It is sometimes the case when a patient requires specialist treatment for a medical condition that they are transferred to another health trust area or even to another country in the UK. These transfers happen for clinical reasons normally due to specialist equipment or expertise being located elsewhere. Some transfers go to other EU countries and also outside Europe where there are agreements with, for example, Russia and Australia. Transfers into Scotland are also fairly common with 5,200 patients from elsewhere in the UK being treated here in 2011.

Reciprocal agreements between Scotland and England, Wales & Northern Ireland, as well as other parts of the EU, will continue after independence just as they do now. The specialist centres receive payments when they accept patients from other health trust areas so they have a monetary incentive to continue cross border treatment.

Constitution

- **We won't be able to retain the Queen as head of state.**

It is entirely possible that Scotland would retain Queen Elizabeth as head of state but that would be a decision for the Scottish people to make after independence was achieved. The current Scottish Government has expressed a view that it favours retaining Queen Elizabeth as head of state. Many countries beyond the UK have the queen as head of state including Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

- **We have devolution and that will always provide us with everything we need.**

The UK does not have a formal constitution and therefore any devolved powers, and indeed the Scottish Parliament itself, could be removed at any time at the whim of the governing party. The governing party(ies) at Westminster needs a majority of only one MP to make any changes it wants. In addition the Scottish Parliament, and all its areas of responsibility, is wholly funded by a block grant administered by Westminster. The nature of the block grant is not protected and can be altered at any time. Other countries with devolved or federal structures have long since recognised this weakness and have instituted [constitutional protections](#) such as requiring support from at least [2/3rds of all elected representatives](#) before changes can be made.

[Polls have consistently suggested](#) Scots would like the Scottish Parliament to have more powers but the No Campaign parties have refused to say in advance of the referendum what powers they would offer. Furthermore, the [Electoral Commission](#) (EC) have recommended that the Yes and No campaigns should clarify their positions prior to the referendum. The No campaign have claimed they would abide by all the EC recommendations and yet they [refuse to clarify](#) what would happen in the event of a "NO" vote. Even if all the No Campaign parties agreed to a set of powers to grant to the Scottish Parliament it is difficult to see how election promises could be considered binding. Furthermore, and this has already been [conceded by the No Campaign](#), substantial transfer of powers from within the UK would need the agreement of voters in EW&NI. Should the referendum result in a "NO" vote there would no longer be any pressure on the unionist parties to deliver on their promises.

- **What is the objective of the Yes Declaration?**

The Yes campaign is aiming to achieve 1 million signatures to the [Yes Declaration](#). By signing each signatory is showing their support for the ideals expressed in the Yes Declaration.

- **What is the wording of the Yes Declaration?**

"[I believe](#) it is fundamentally better for us all, if decisions about Scotland's future are taken by the people who care most about Scotland, that is, by the people of Scotland.

Being independent means Scotland's future will be in Scotland's hands.

There is no doubt that Scotland has great potential. We are blessed with talent, resources and creativity. We have the opportunity to make our nation a better place to live, for this and future generations. We can build a greener, fairer and more prosperous society that is stronger and more successful than it is today.

I want a Scotland that speaks with her own voice and makes her own unique contribution to the world: a Scotland that stands alongside the other nations on these isles, as an independent nation."

- **When will Scotland's Referendum be held?**

Thursday, [18th September 2014](#).

- **What is the Referendum question?**

The question is [Should Scotland be an independent country?](#). The [ballot paper](#) will present the voter with a Yes box and a No box with the instruction ""Vote (X) ONLY ONCE"".

- **Who will be eligible to vote in the Referendum?**

A person will be eligible to vote in the Referendum if they meet following conditions on the date of the poll: aged 16 or over, registered in the register of local government electors or the register of young voters, not subject to any legal incapacity and a Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a relevant citizen of the European Union.

Politics

- **A vote for independence is a vote for the SNP.**

A majority Yes vote in the referendum will mean all decisions about Scotland will be made by the people who care most about Scotland; that is by the people of Scotland. The Yes Campaign comprises people from all the political parties and those with no party affiliation. The Yes Campaign has been endorsed by the SNP, the Greens, and the Scottish Socialist Party. There are also many individuals from other political parties including Liberal Democrats, Labour and The Conservatives who support the Yes Campaign. [YesScotland](#) also have many special interest groups who support independence including: Business, Christians, Creative Scots, Cultural Communities, EcoScots, LGBT, New Scots, Pensioners, Students & Youth, Women for Independence and Teachers.

- **Independence is anti-English.**

Scottish independence is about having Scotland's future decided by the people living in Scotland regardless of where they came from originally. The Yes Campaign contains people from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as people who have been Scots for generations.