

Is Britain Stronger or Weaker After 20 Years of Devolution?

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‘The UK in a Changing Europe’

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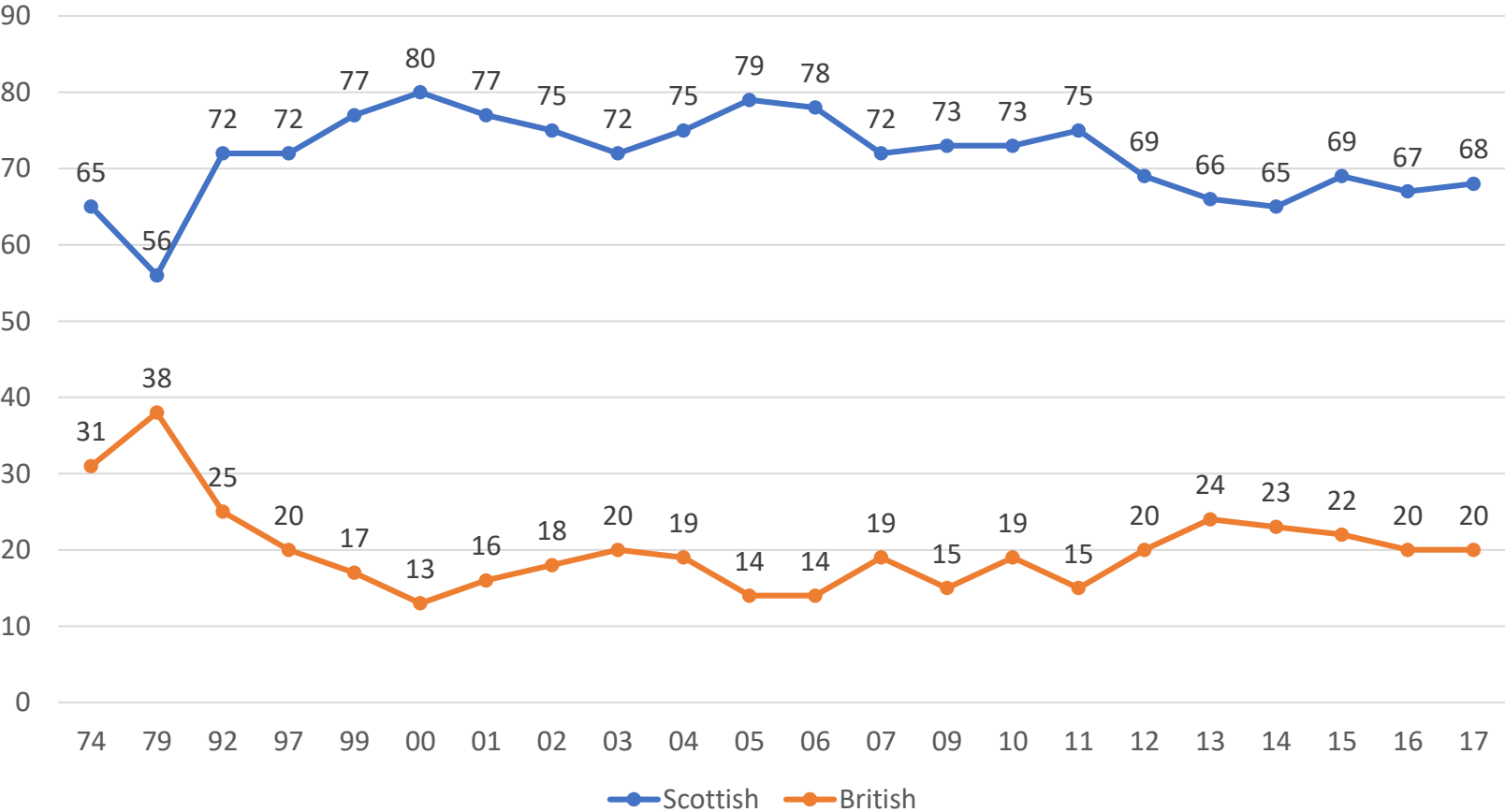
The Argument

- Devolution was intended to strengthen the UK
- Would demonstrate that the UK state could recognise and meet the distinctive needs, aspirations and identities of Scotland & Wales
- (and create opportunities for the better government of England)
- But in recognising difference might devolution stimulate and politicise it?
- Meanwhile, questions of identity and difference also raised by Brexit

The Outline

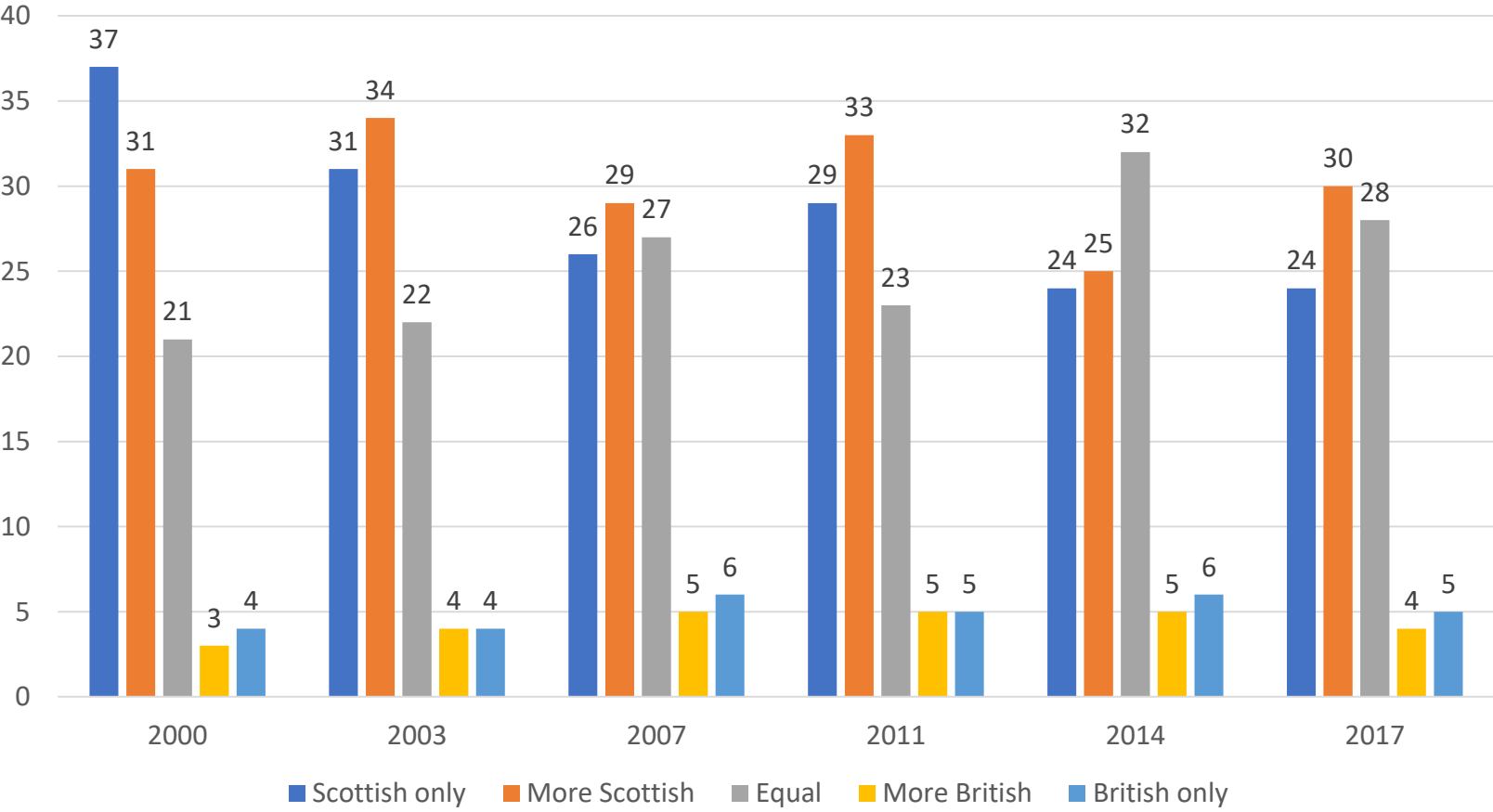
- Identity
- Constitutional Preferences
- Mobilising Identity

Forced Choice National Identity Scotland: 1974-2017



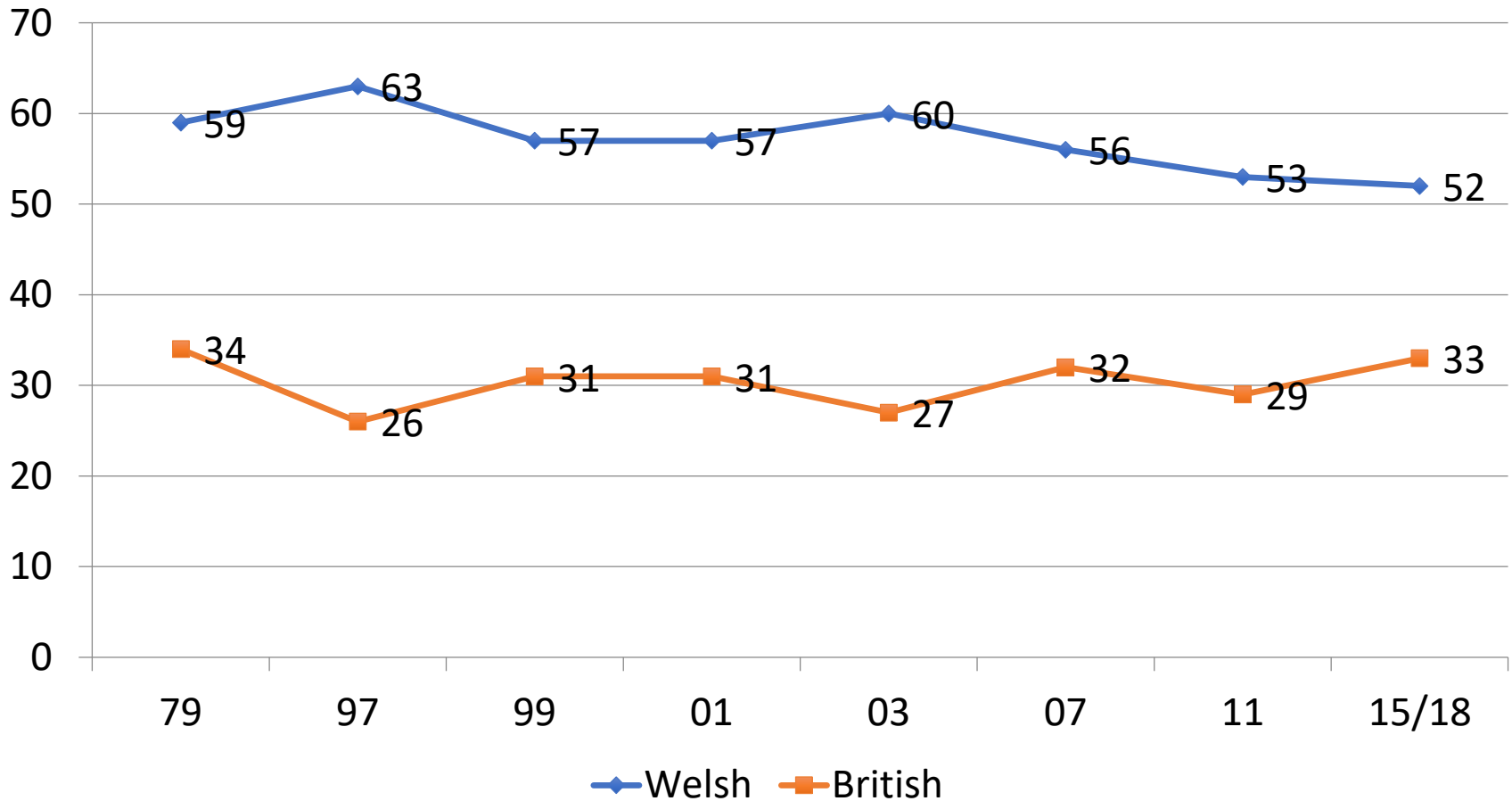
Source: Scottish Election Studies; Scottish Social Attitudes

Moreno National Identity: Scotland (Selected Years)



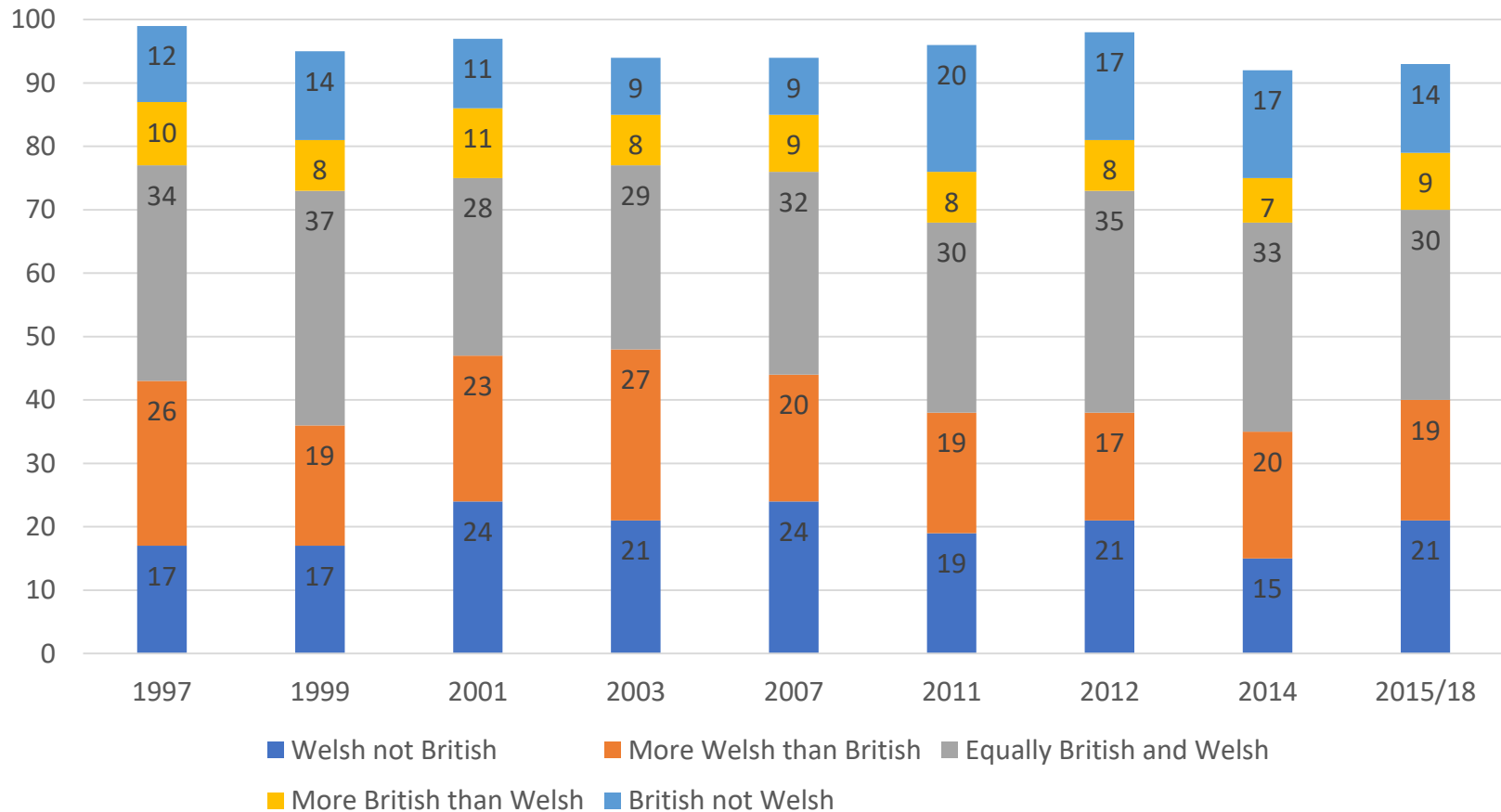
Source: Scottish Social Attitudes

In Wales



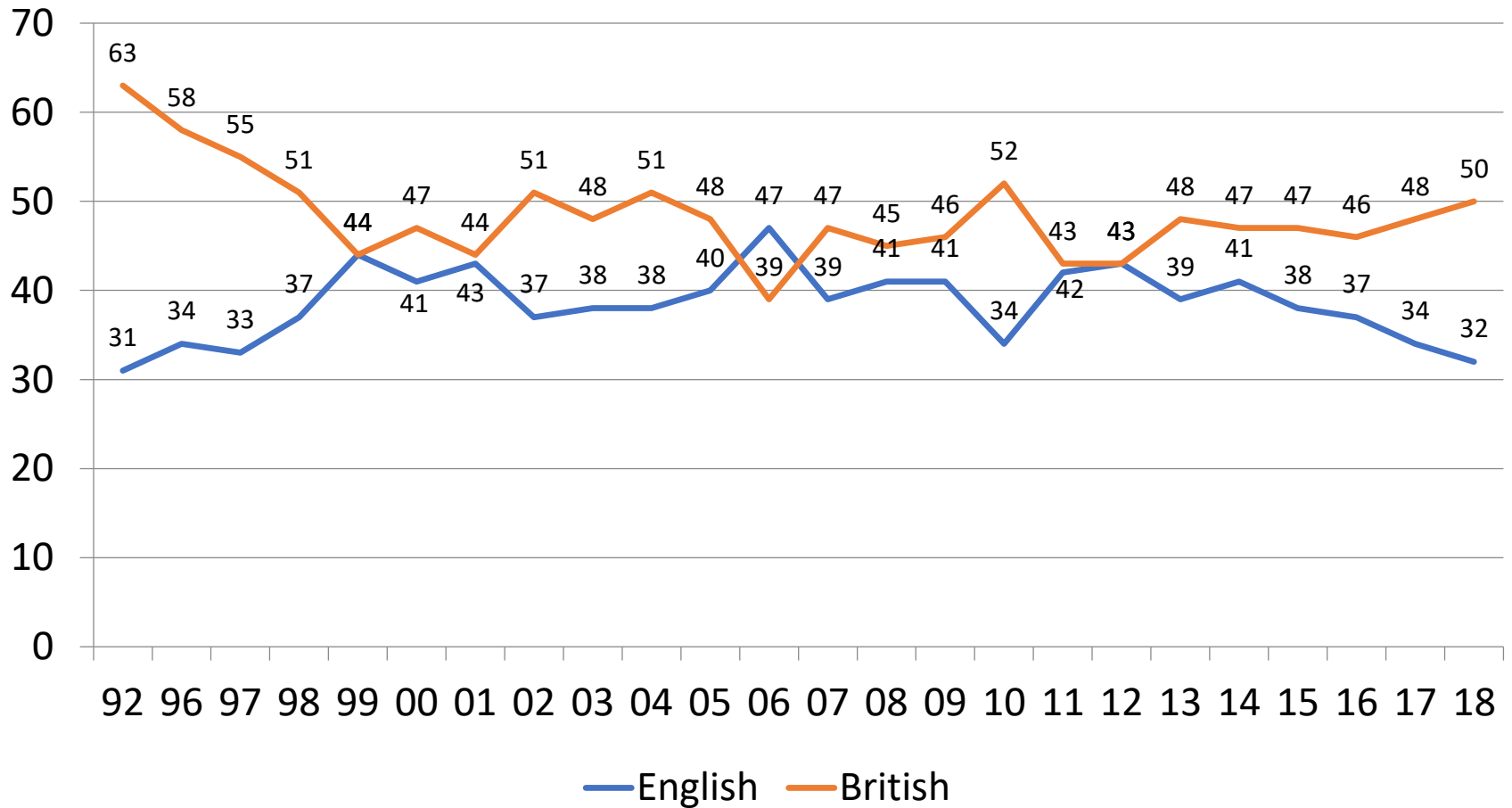
Sources: 1979: Welsh Election Study; 1997, 1999, 2011: Welsh Referendum Study; 2001-7: Welsh Assembly Election Study; 2011: Wales Life & Times Survey 2015-18: British Social Attitudes (respondents in Wales, N=657)

Moreno Identity in Wales



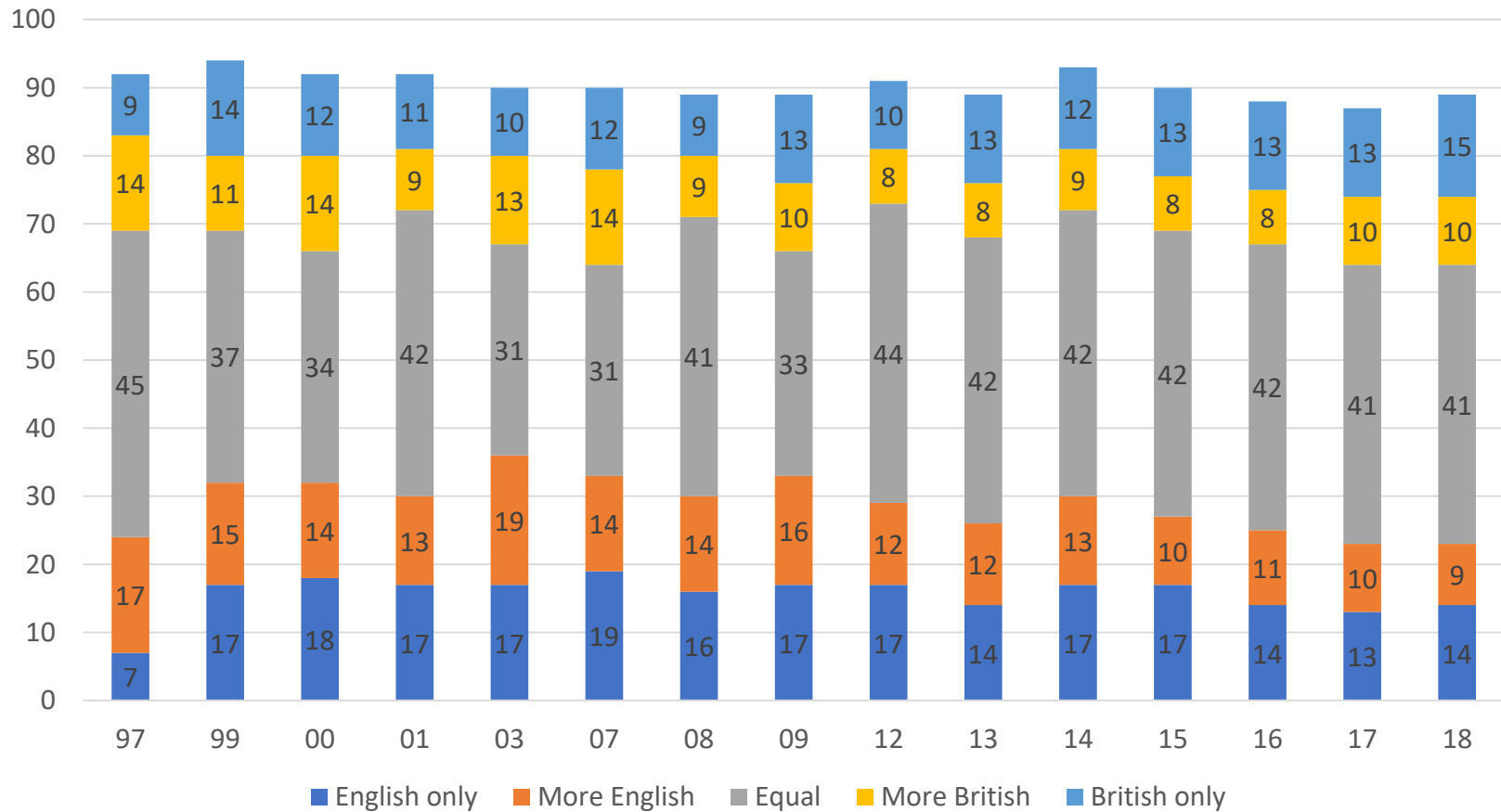
Source: 1997, 2011: Welsh Referendum Study; 1999-2007: Welsh Election Study; 2012, 2014: ICM; 2015/18 BSA (respondents in Wales, N=749)

English or British?



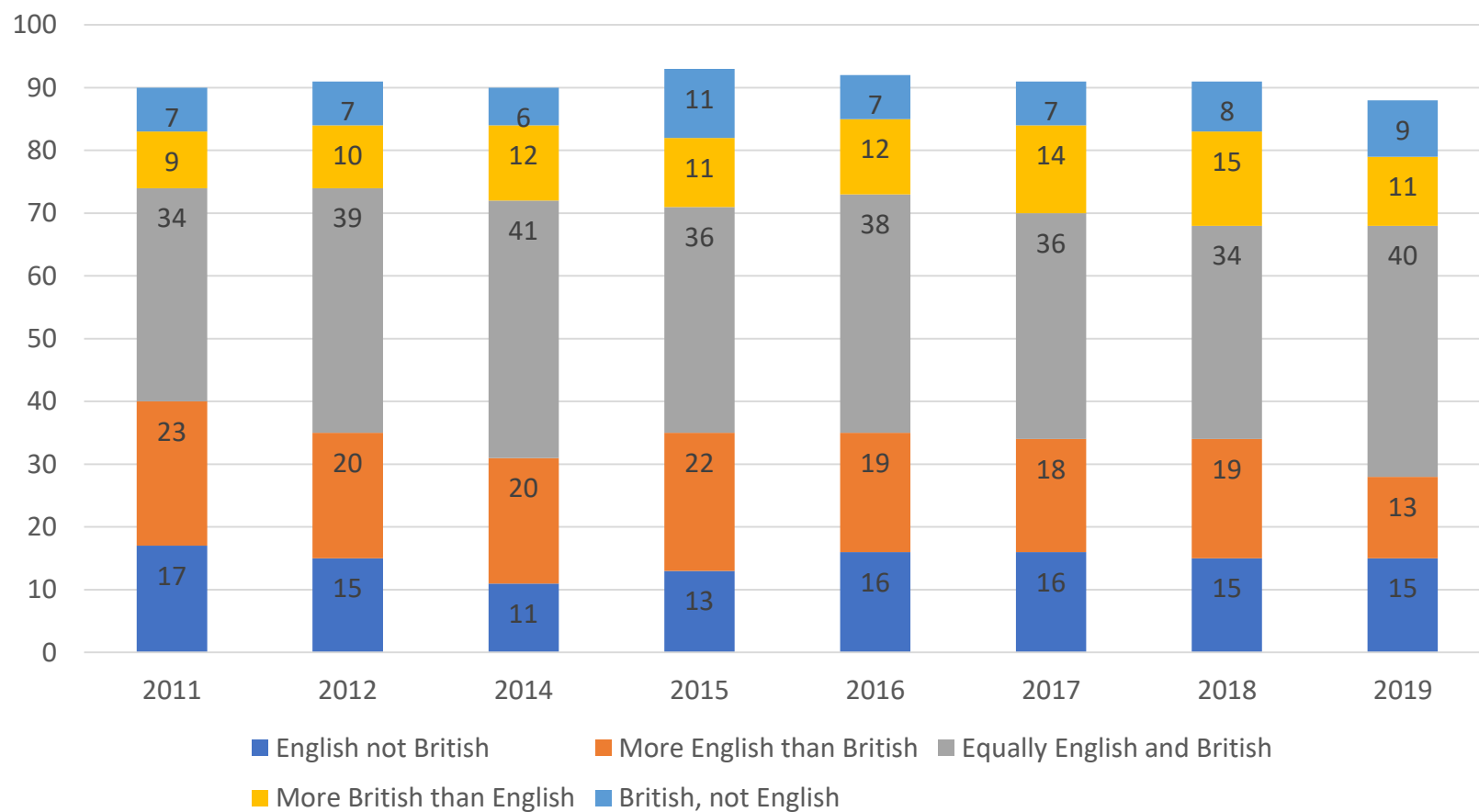
Source: British Social Attitudes (respondents living in England) except 1992, 1997: British Election Study

Moreno Measure in England



Source: British Social Attitudes. Respondents in England only

YouGov (incl FoE) Time Series



Source: YouGov. In some years figures represent averages of 2 or more readings

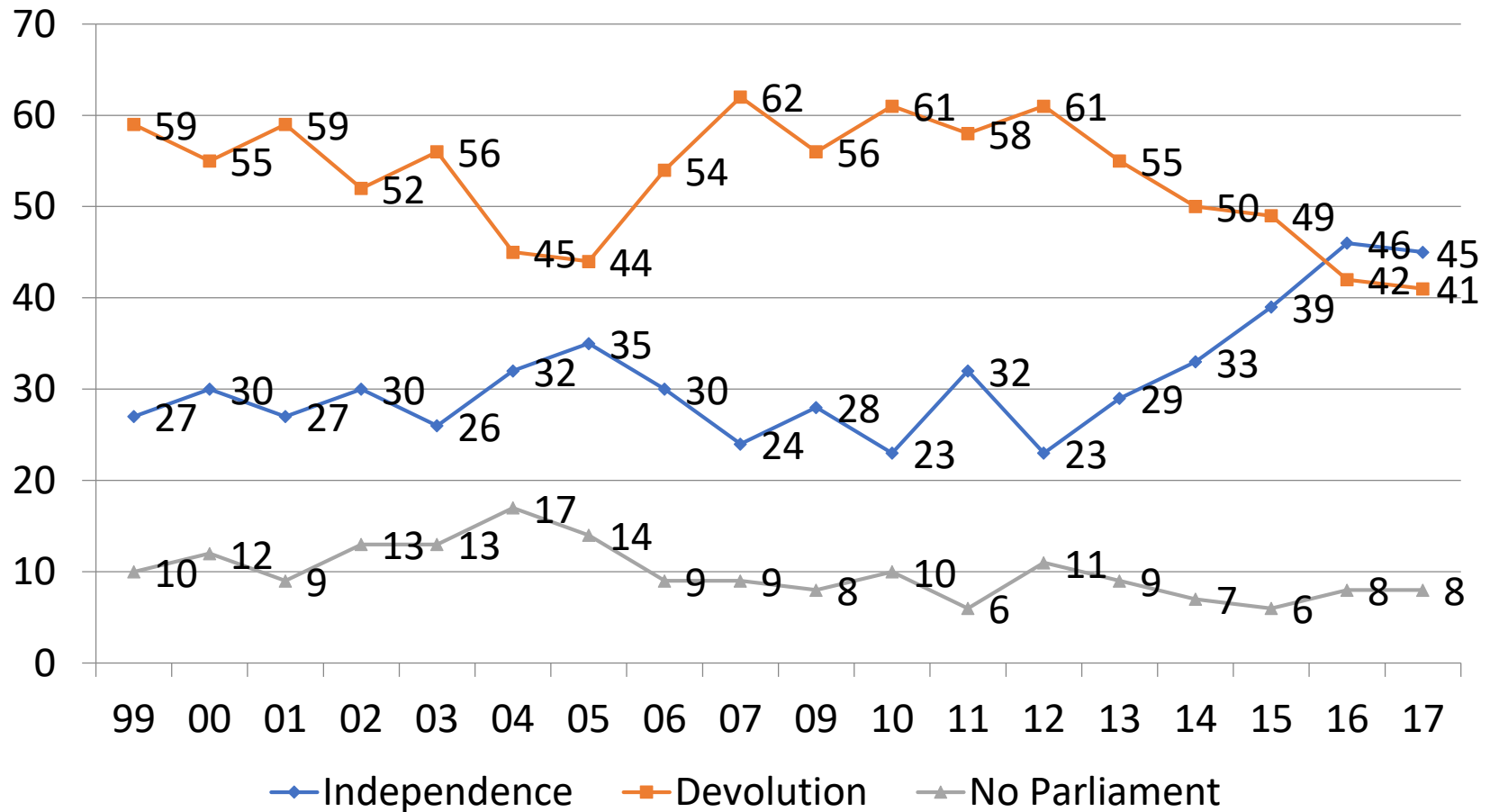
Identity

- Devolution was a recognition of an existing distinctive sense of Scottish/Welsh identity
- With the exception of England in the late 1990s, not clear that British identity has weakened in the wake of devolution in any part of Britain
- Many still feel 'British and...'

SSA's Long Standing Question

- Which of these statements comes closest to your view?
- Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK and the European Union
- Scotland should become independent, separate from the UK but part of the European Union
- Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has **some** taxation powers
- Scotland should remain part of the UK, with its own elected parliament which has **no** taxation powers
- Scotland should remain part of the UK **without** an elected parliament

Attitudes towards How Scotland Should Be Governed, 1999-2017



An Alternative Approach

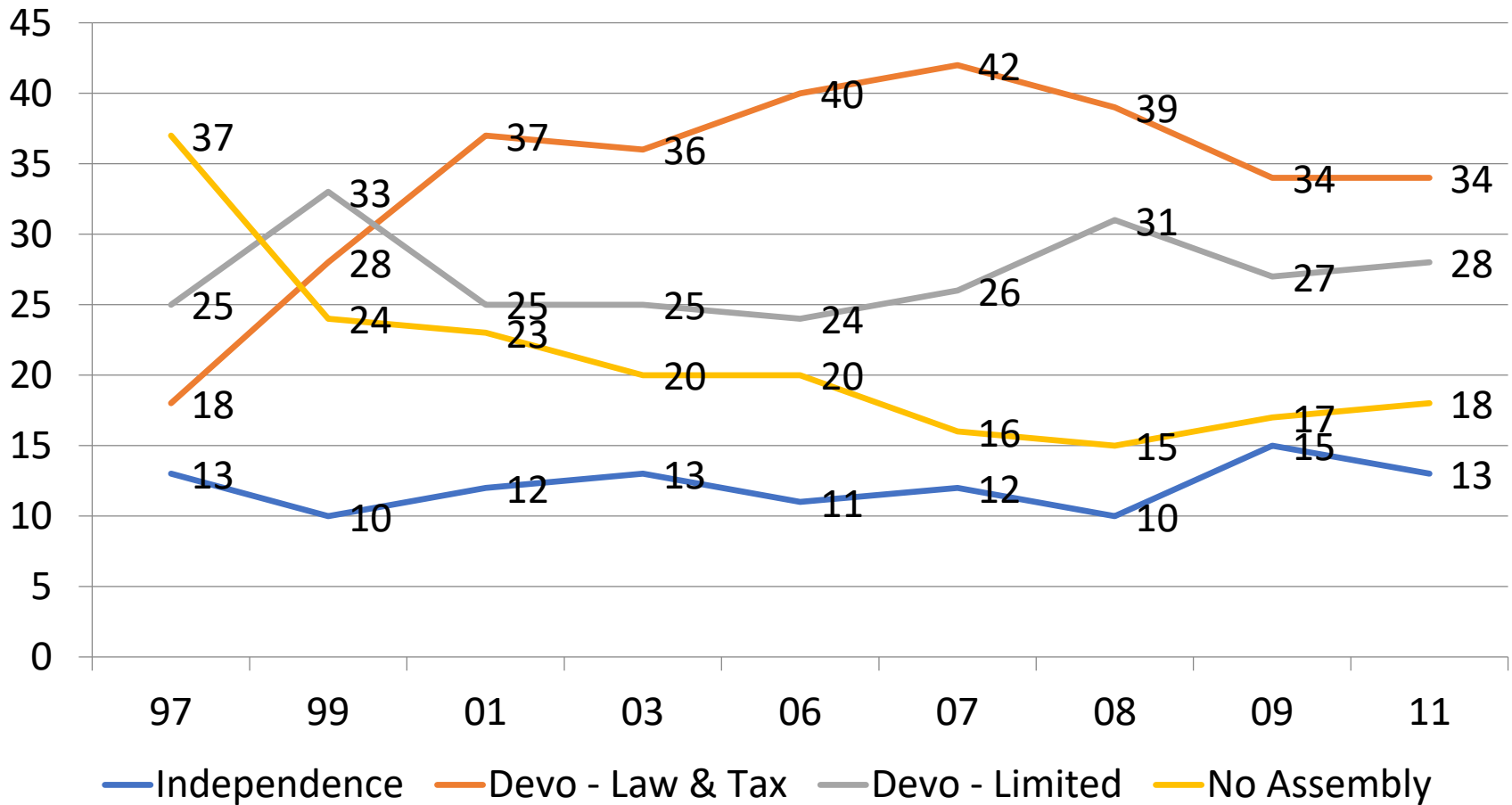
- Which of the statements on this card comes closest to your view about who should make government decisions for Scotland?
- The **Scottish Parliament** should make all the decisions for Scotland
- The **UK government** should make decisions about defence and foreign affairs; the **Scottish Parliament** should decide everything else
- The **UK government** should make decisions about taxes, benefits and defence and foreign affairs; the **Scottish Parliament** should decide the rest
- The **UK government** should make all decisions for Scotland

A Wish for Autonomy?

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All SP	28	43	35	31	41	51	49	46
All except Defence & Foreign	32	29	32	32	27	30	31	32
Not tax or welfare	27	21	24	25	22	12	12	14
UK	10	5	6	8	6	3	4	4

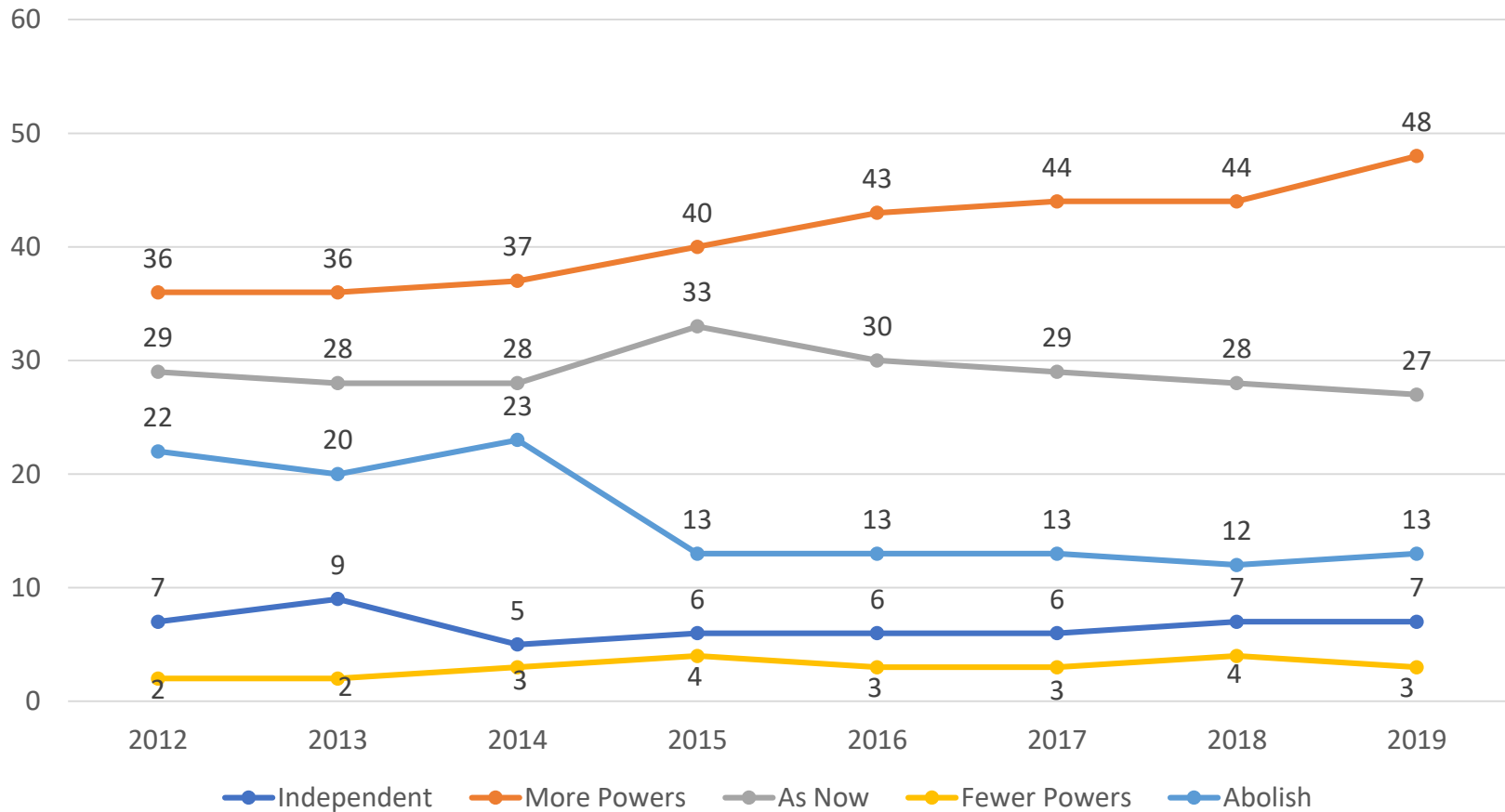
Source: Scottish Social Attitudes

Constitutional Preferences – Wales 1997-2011



Source: 1997, 2011 Welsh Referendum Study, 1999-2007, 2011 (?) Welsh Election Study ; 2006 NOP; 2008: ICM (?); 2009 YouGov

Constitutional Preferences – Wales 2012-19



Source: ICM/BBC St David's Day Polls

The English Devolution Debate

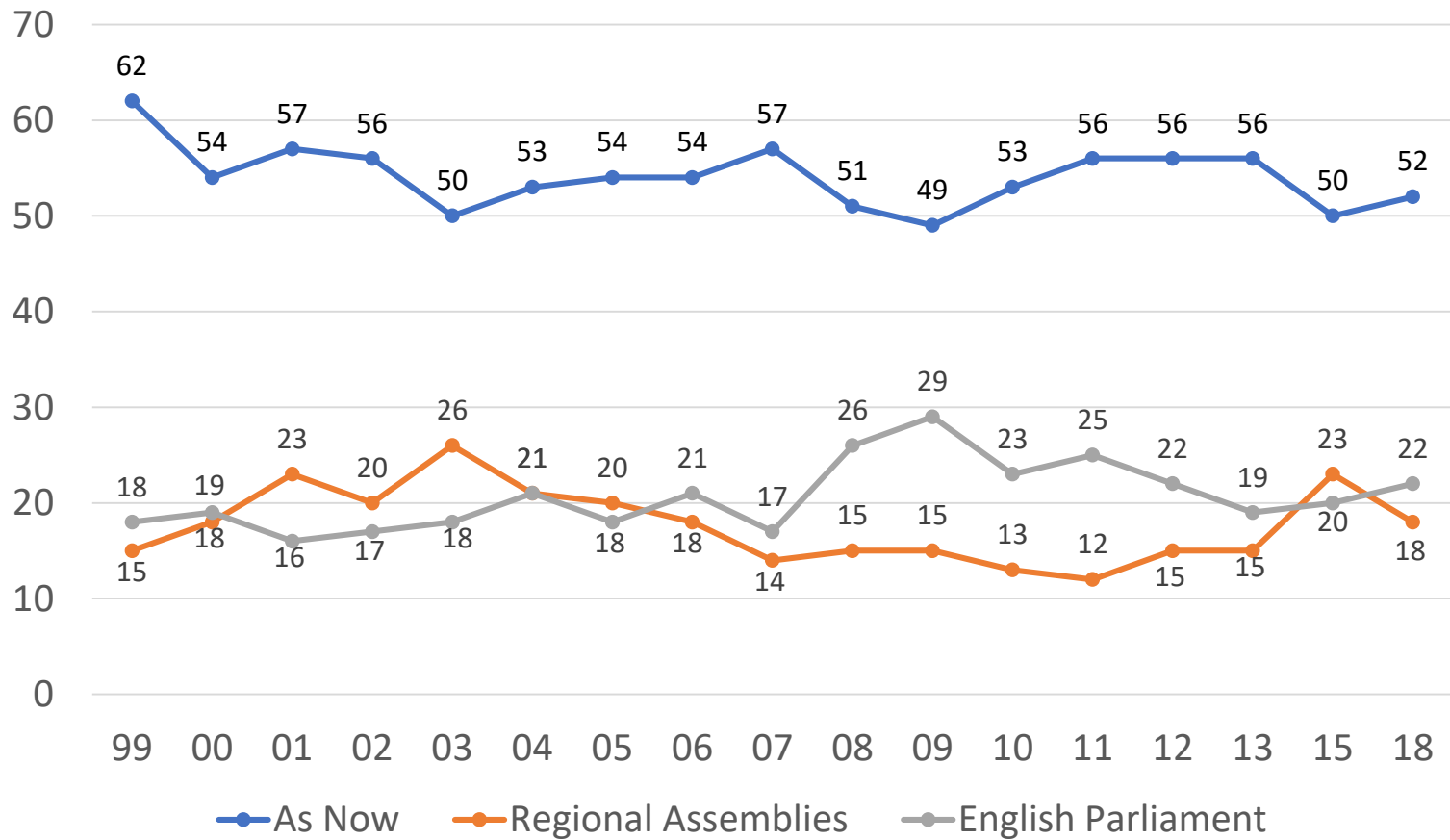
- Regional devolution – rejected in NE referendum in 2004
- City Regions - Revival of old (little loved?) structures (Greater Manchester, Avon etc.)
- Directly elected mayors - outside London not proven very popular when put to voters in referendums
- Impetus from Scottish independence referendum – EVEL/English Parliament

Forms of Devolution

- With all the changes going on in the way the different parts of Great Britain are run, which of the following do you think would be best for England...
- ...for England to be governed as it is now, with laws made by the UK parliament,
- for each region of England to have its own assembly that runs services like health,
- or, for England as a whole to have its own new parliament with law-making powers?

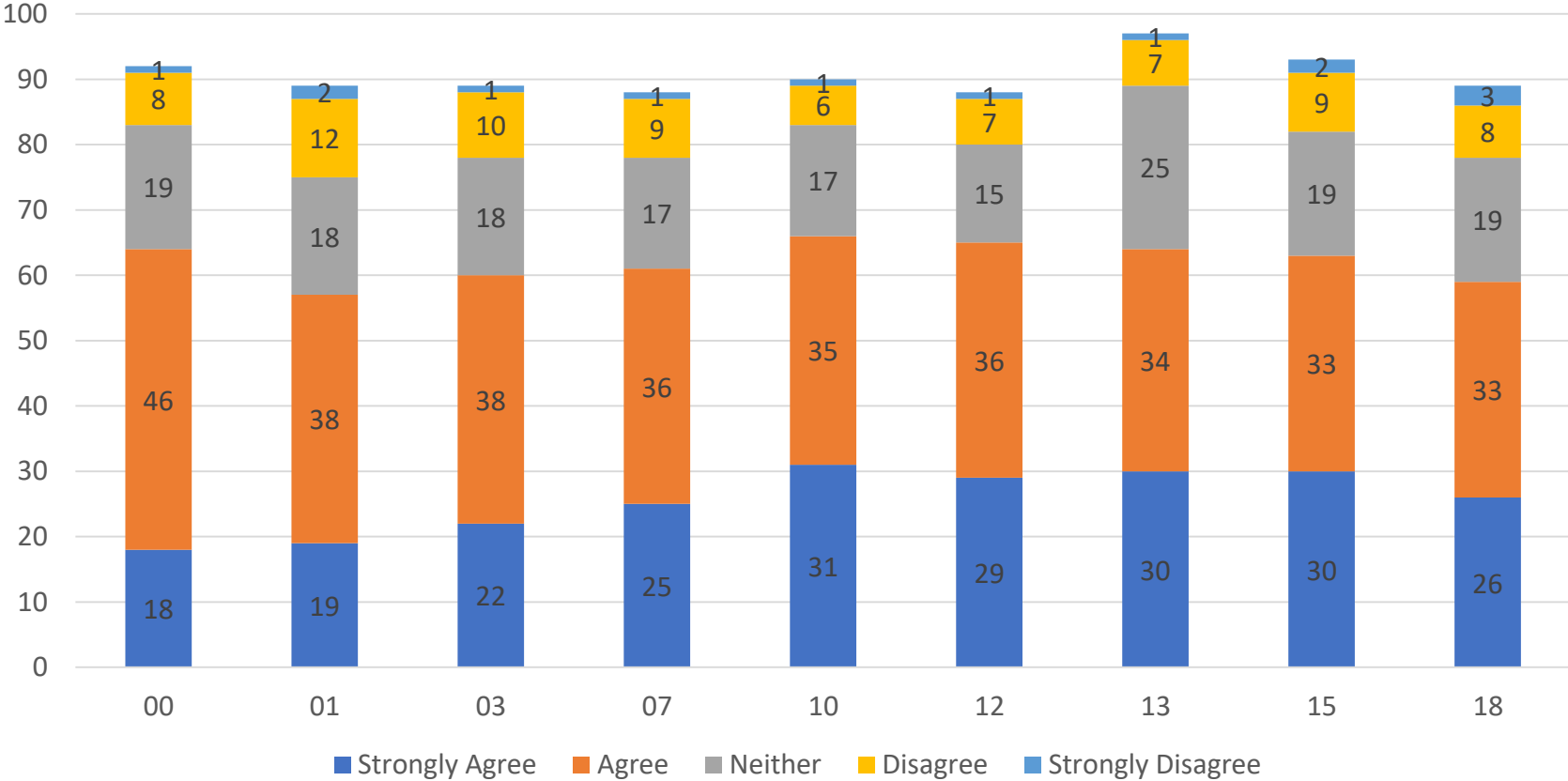
In 2004–2006 the second option read “that makes decisions about the region’s economy, planning and housing”.

The Governance of England



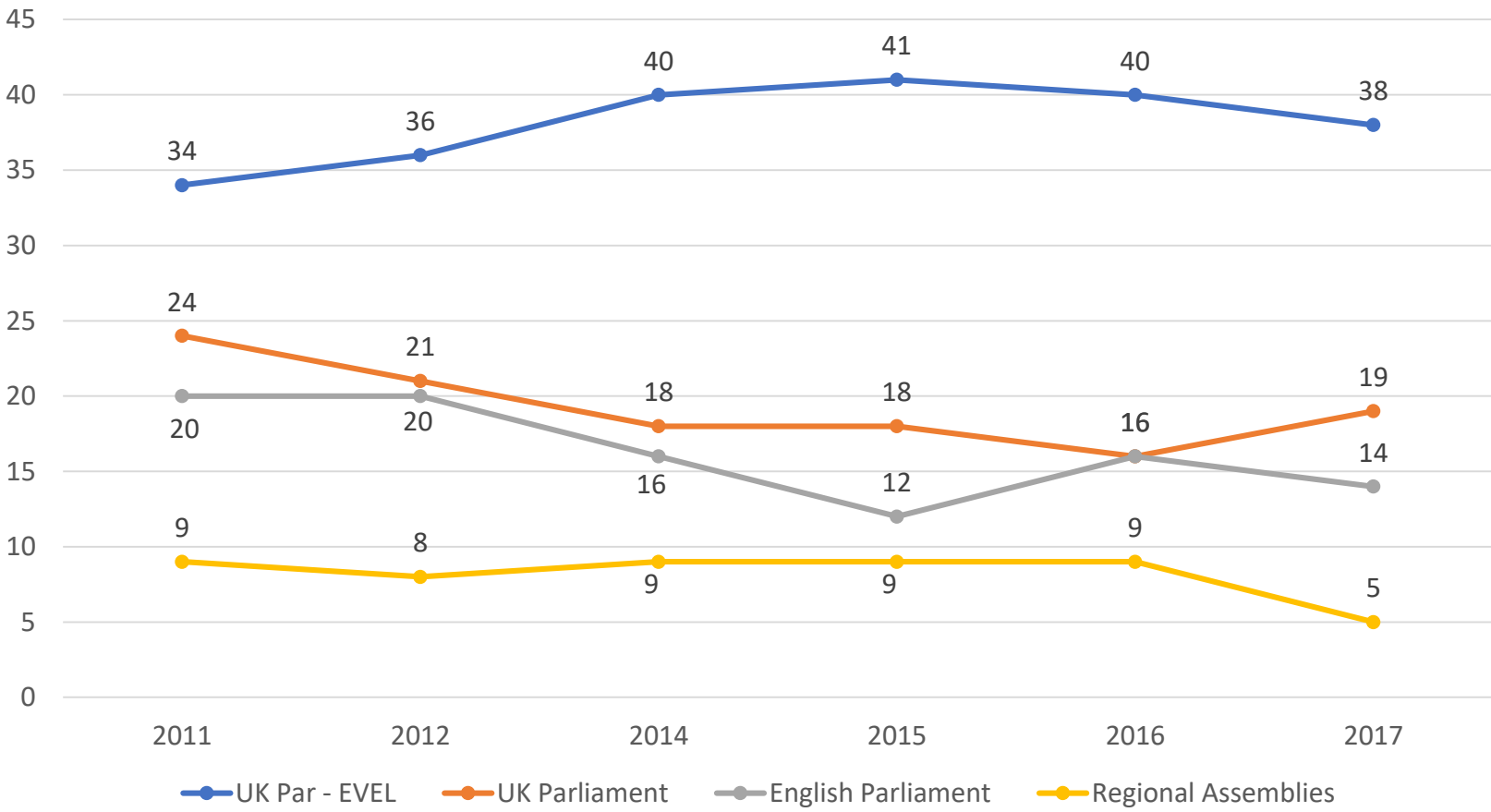
Source: British Social Attitudes. Respondents in England only

Scots MPs not vote in English Laws?



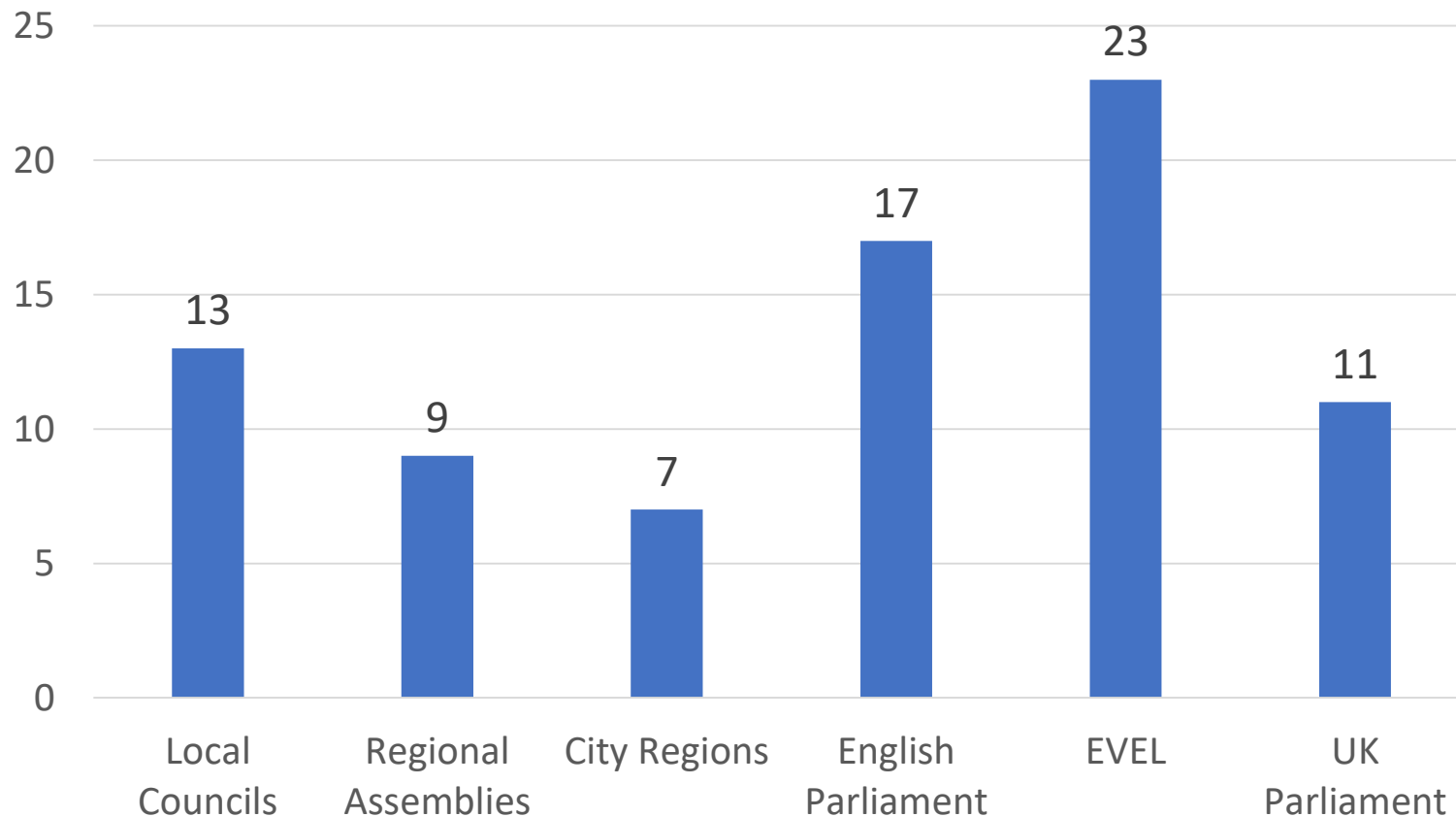
Source: British Social Attitudes. Respondents in England only

With EVEL as an option

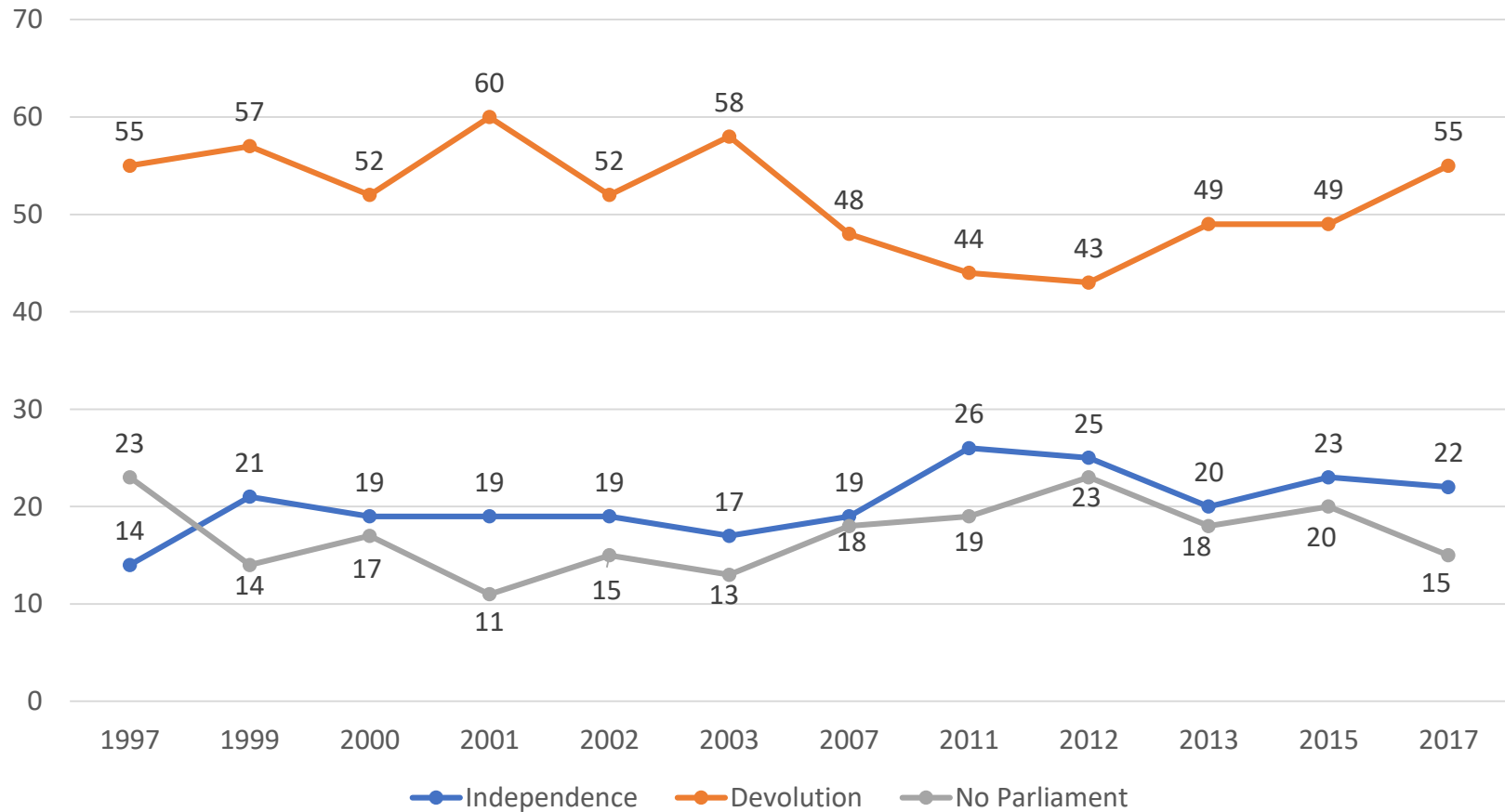


Source: YouGov/Future of England survey

Who Ought to Have Most Influence?



England on Scotland



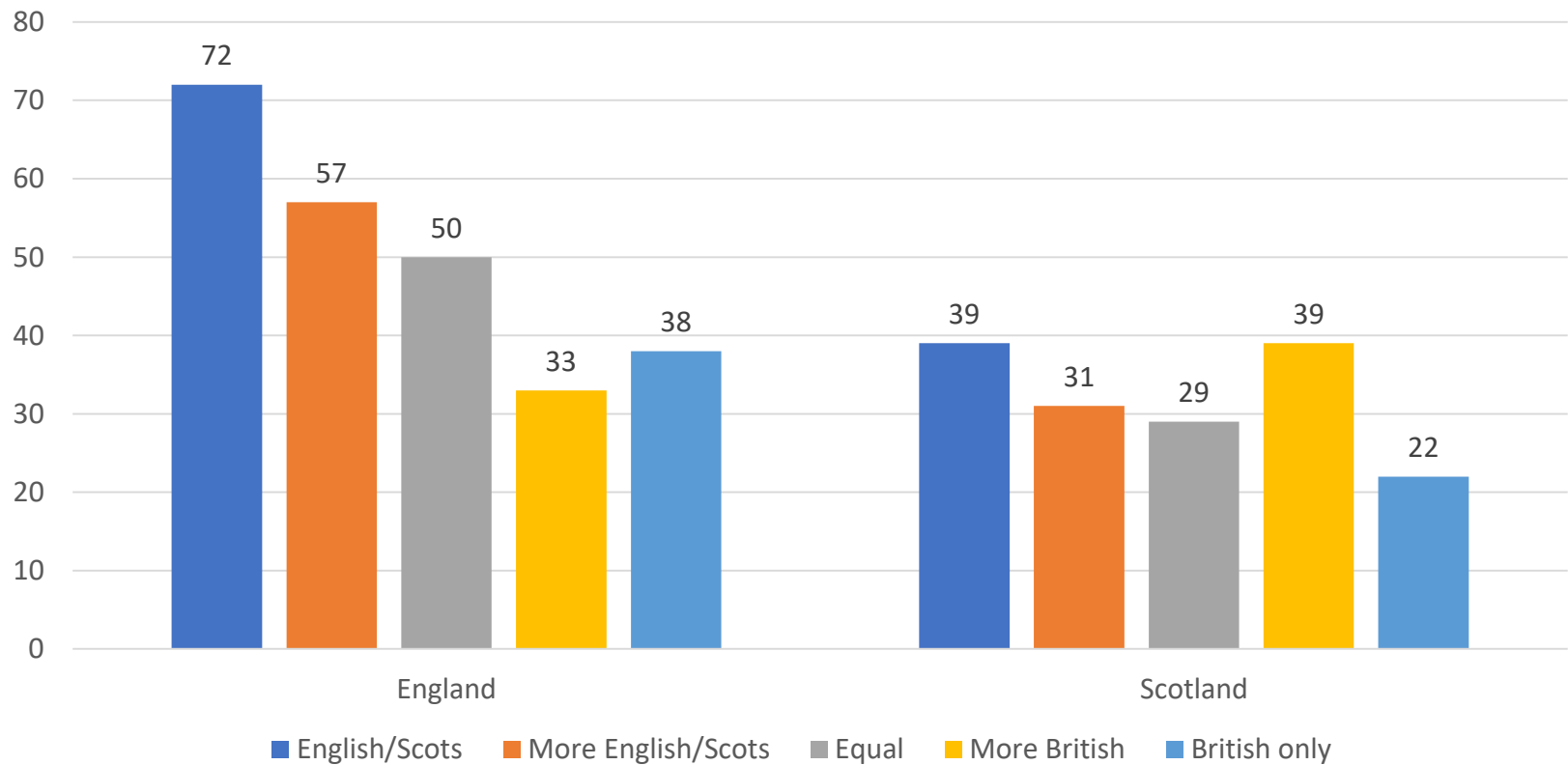
Source: British Social Attitudes, respondents in England only, except 1997 British Election Study, respondents in England only

Preferences

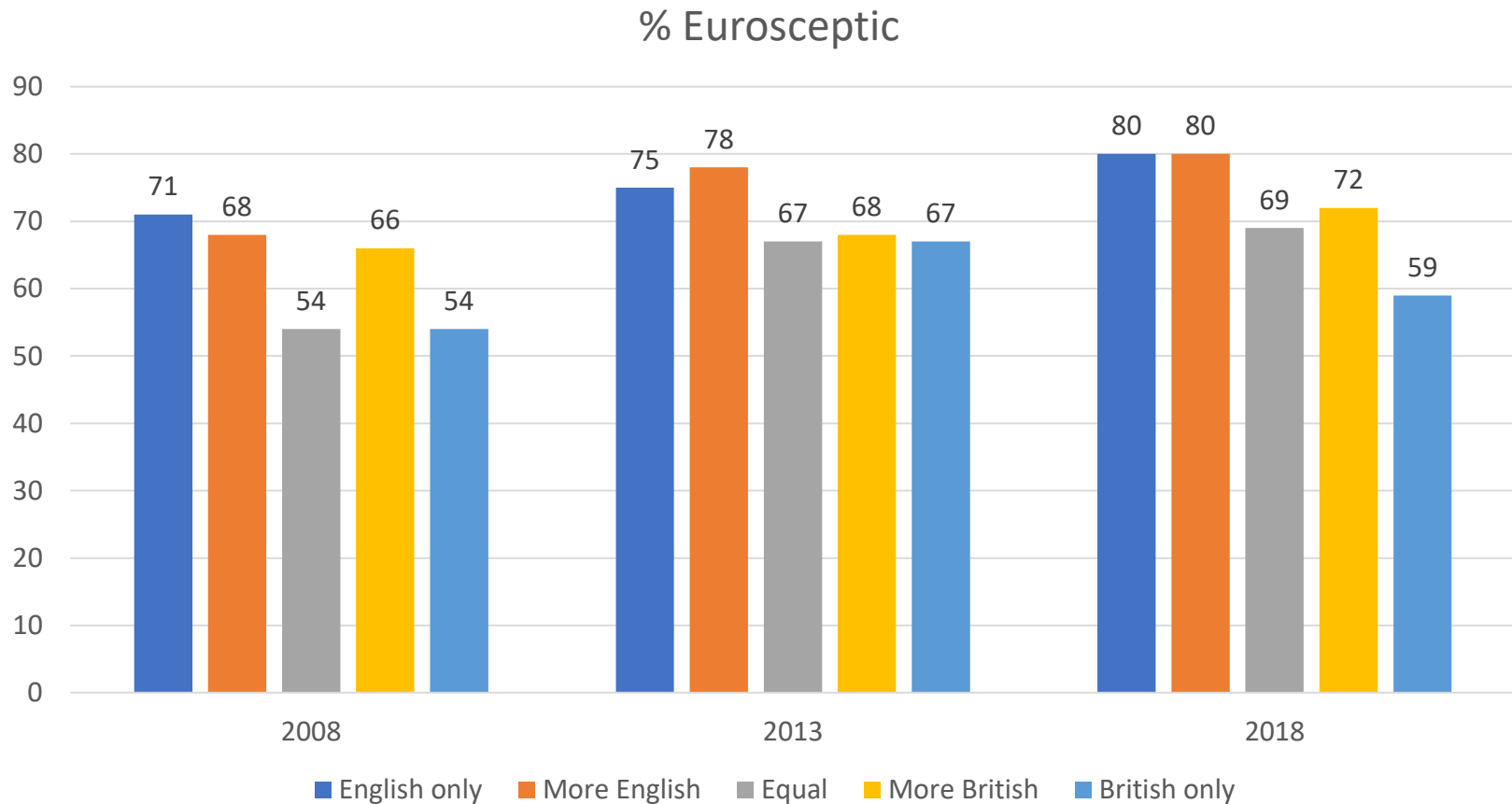
- The debate in England remains fragmented.
- Despite a clear sentiment against the involvement of Scottish MPs in English laws – little sign of any sustained backlash against Scottish devolution
- Wales has come to embrace its assembly – but still little support for independence
- Support for independence in Scotland has grown in the wake of the 2014 referendum

Brexit and Identity

% Leave, 2016 Referendum

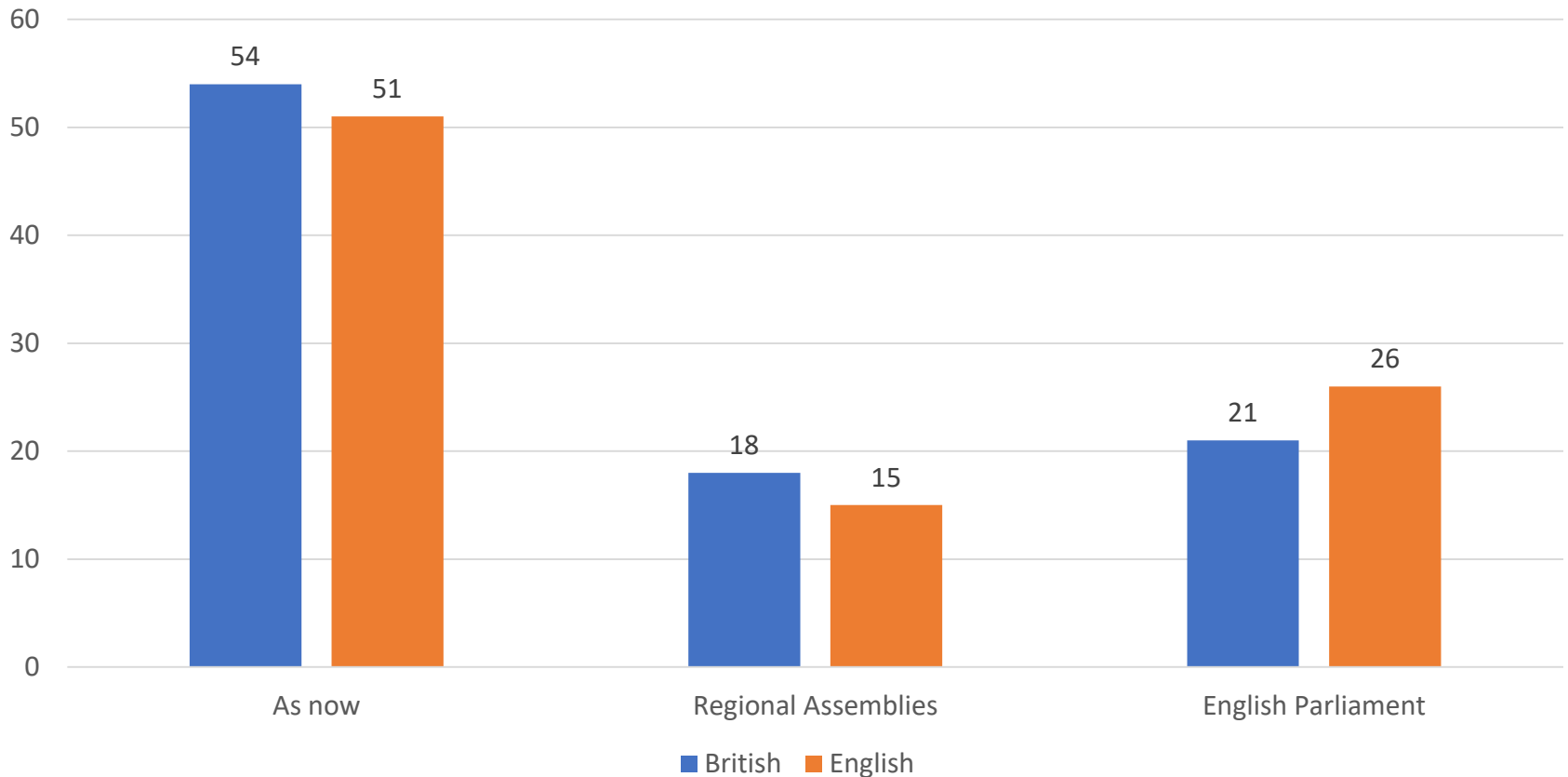


Link between English Identity and Euroscepticism Predates Brexit



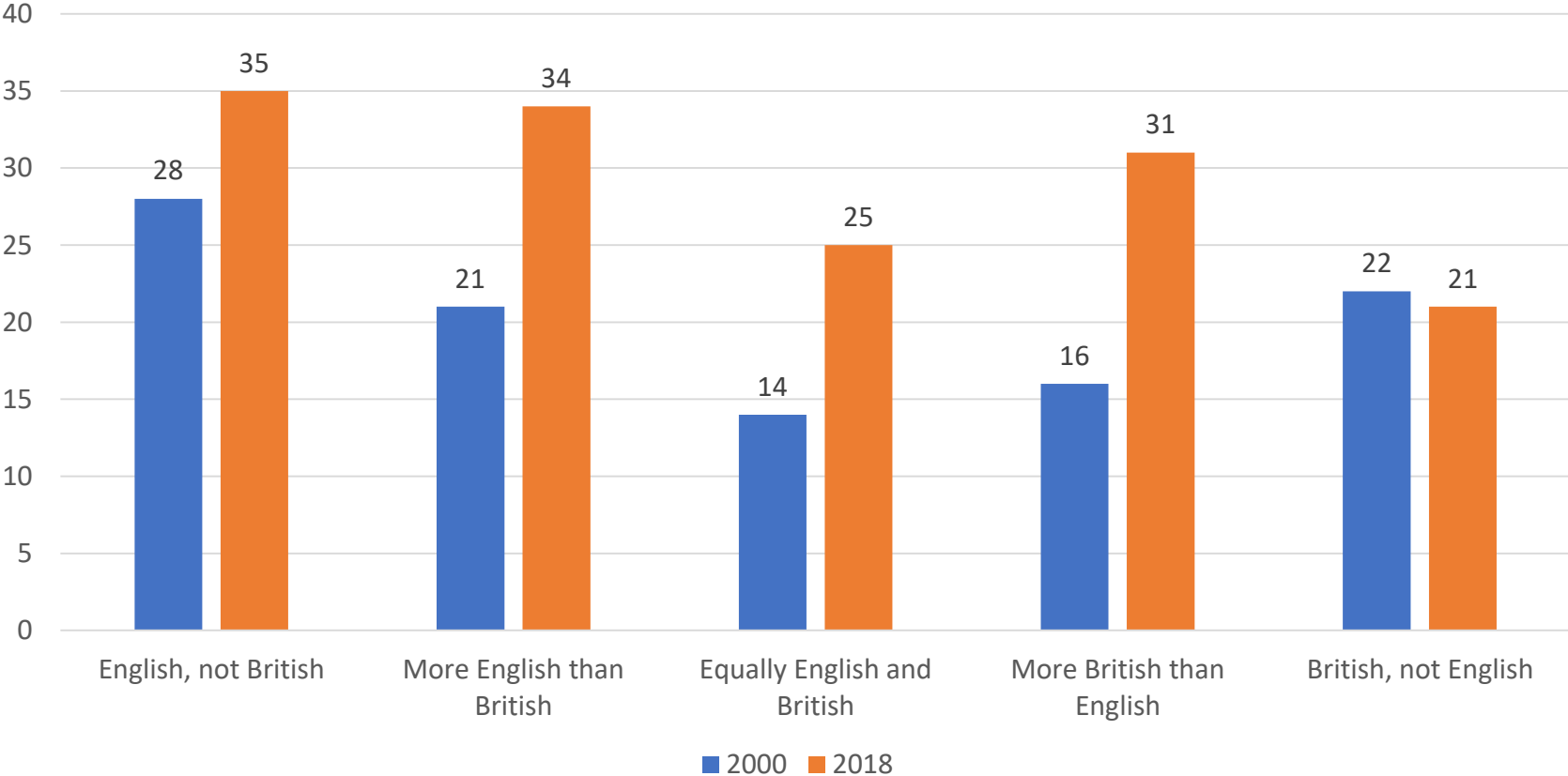
Source: British Social Attitudes, respondents in England only

Governing England not a Question of Identity?



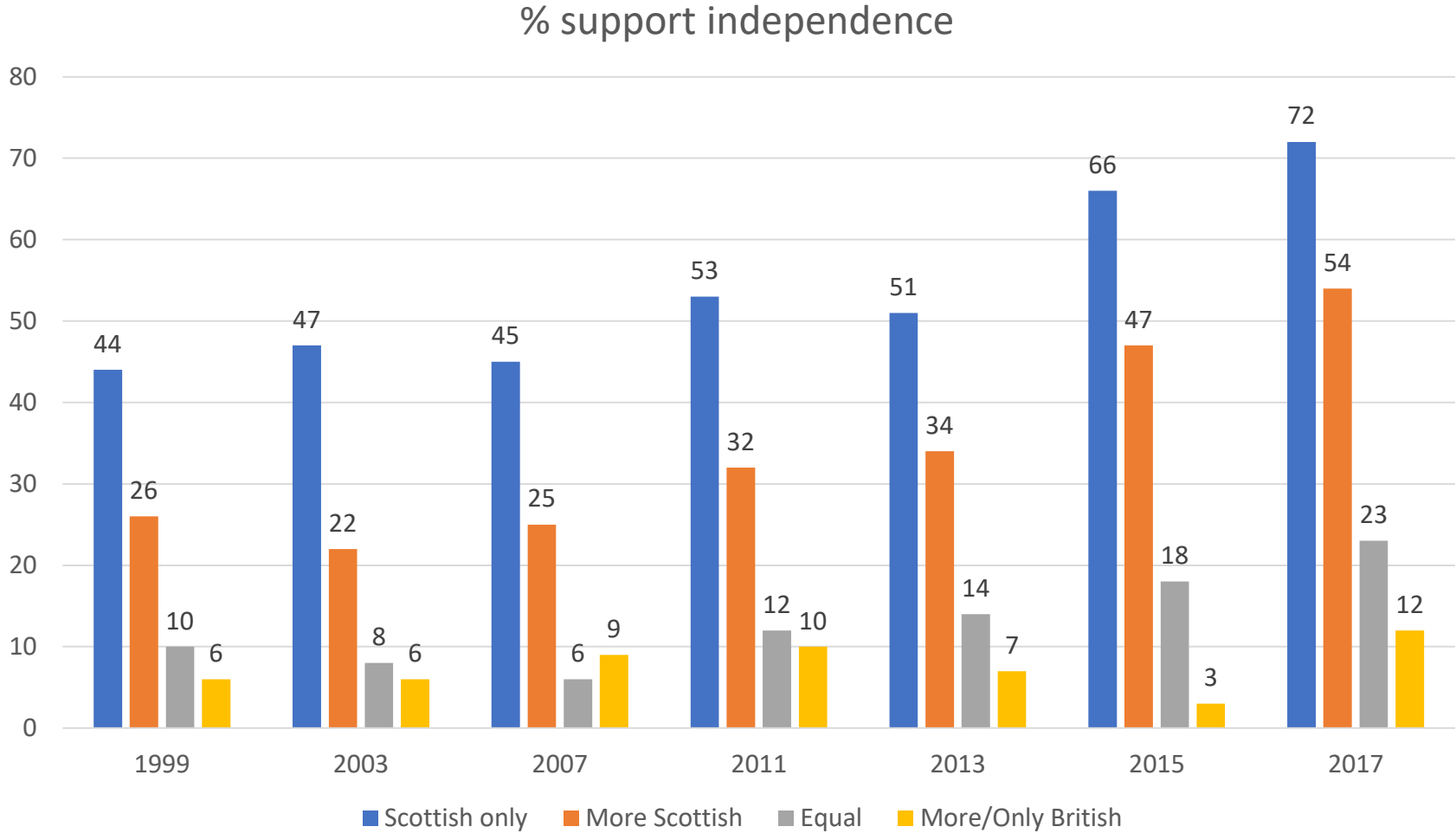
Source: British Social Attitudes 2018. Respondents in England only

As for Relations with Scotland



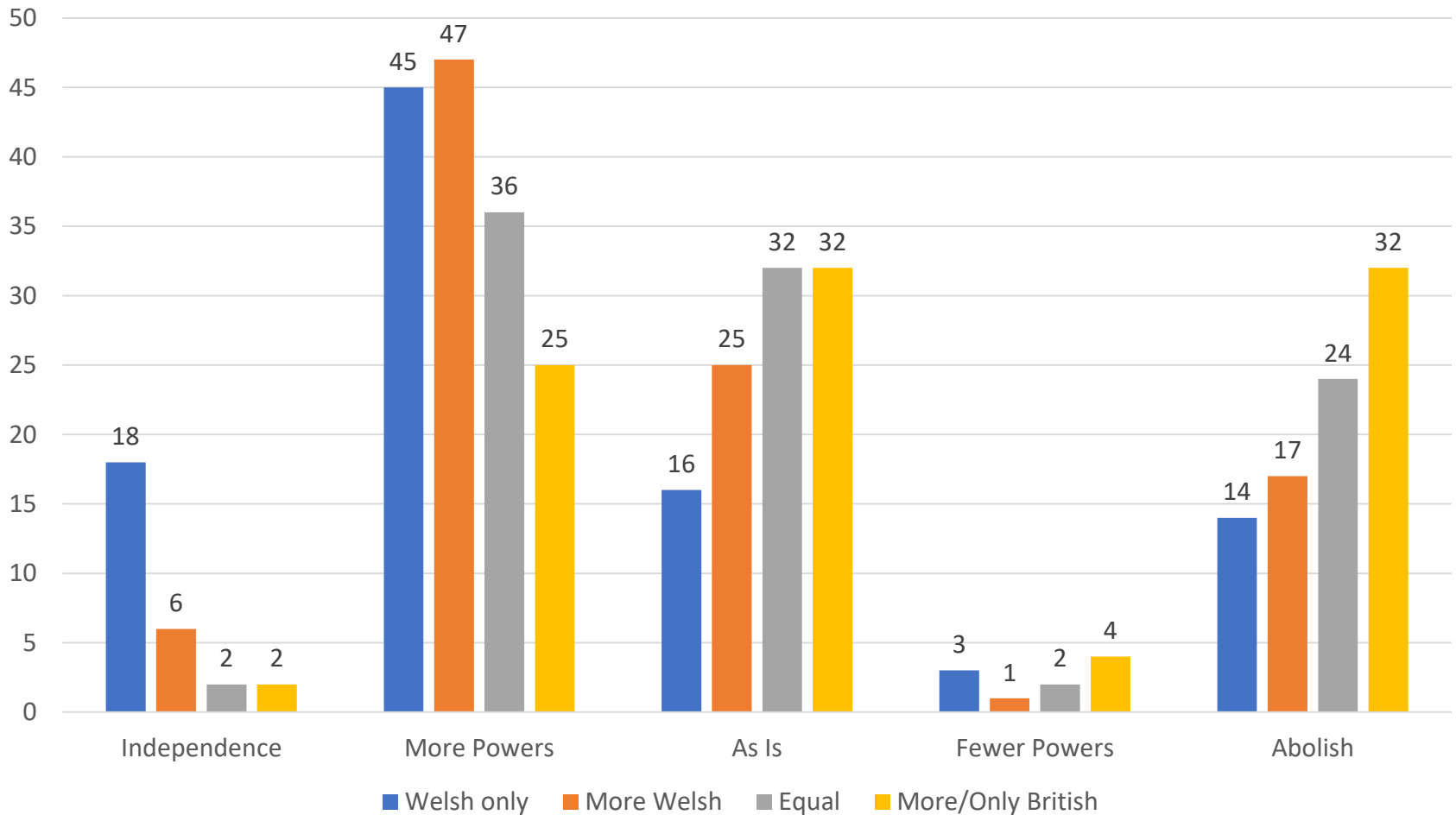
Source: British Social Attitudes. Respondents in England only

A Mobilised Identity?



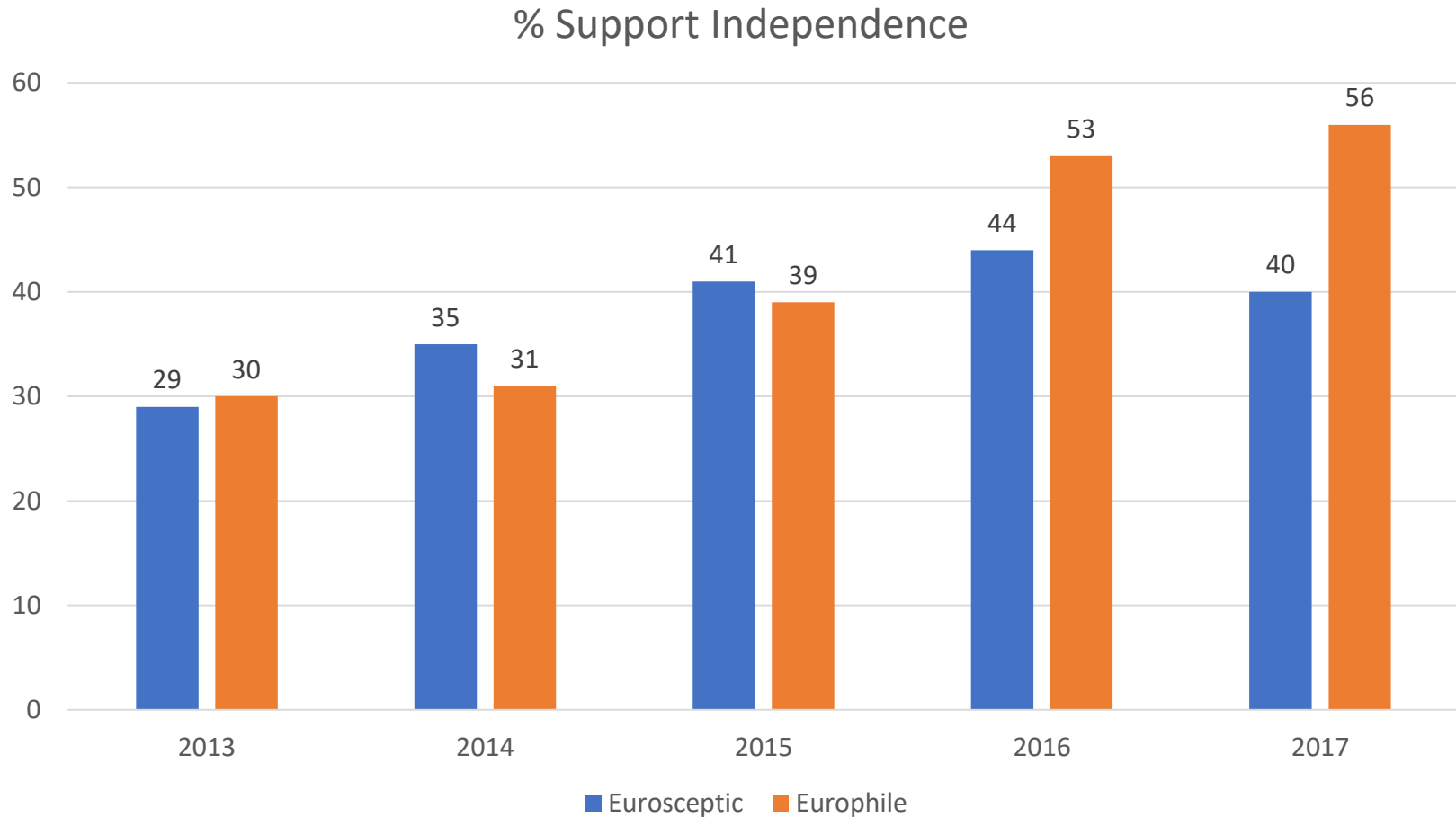
Source: Scottish Social Attitudes

Identity and Preference in Wales

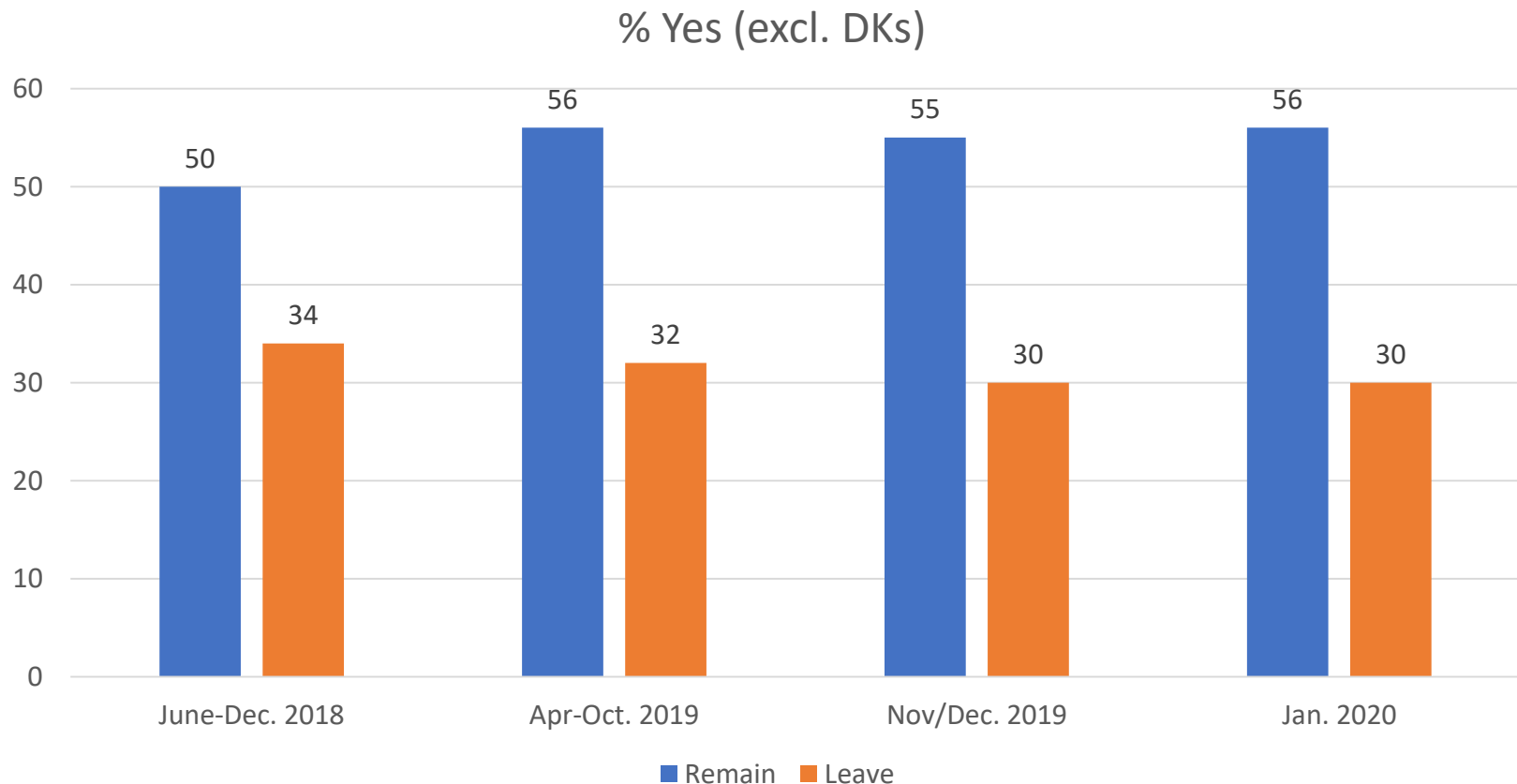


Source: ICM/BBC St David's Day Poll 2014

How Brexit Created A New Divide

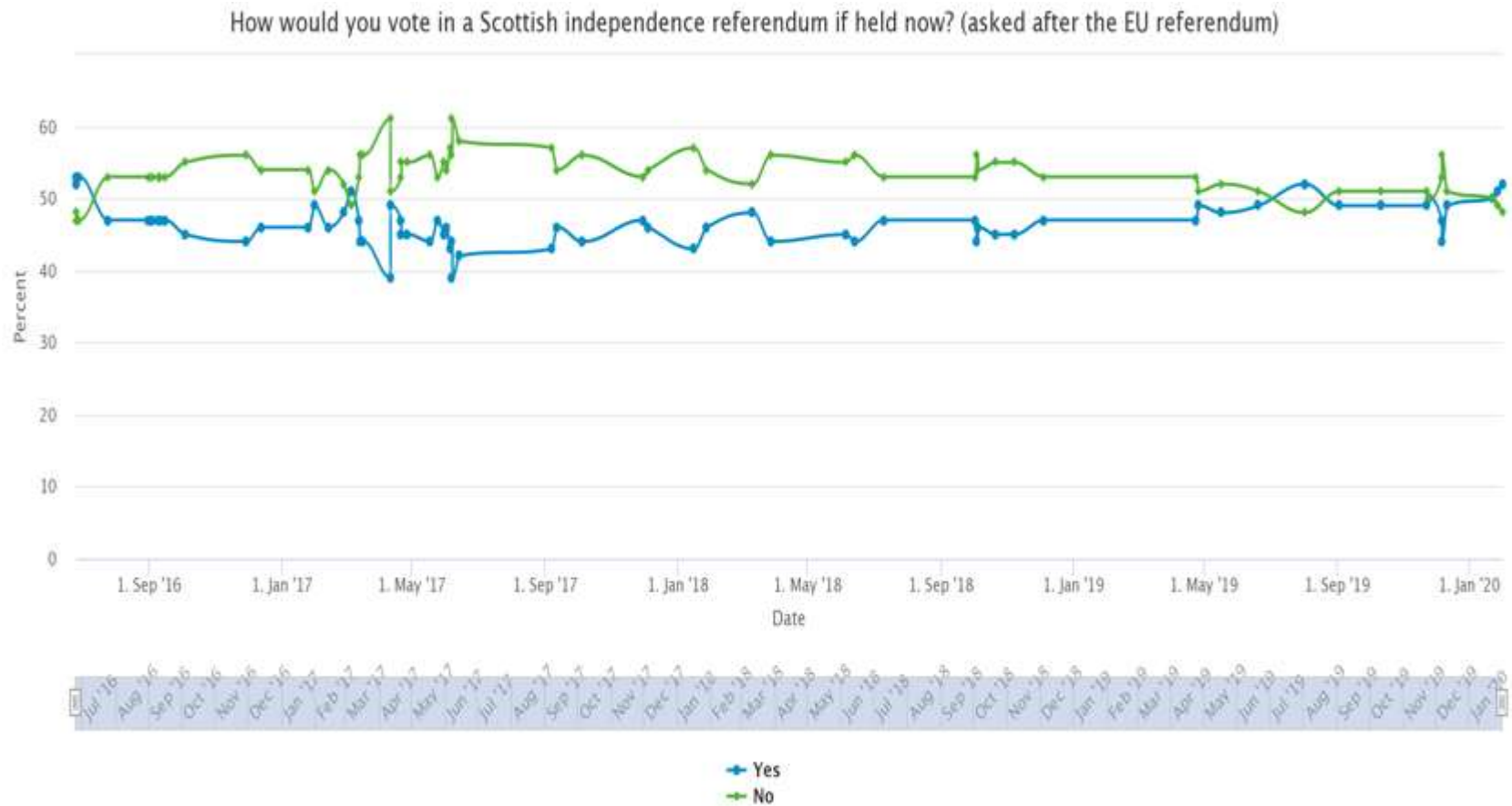


Growth in Support for Independence Among Remain Voters



Sources: June- Dec 2018: Average of 8 polls by Panelbase, Survation and YouGov;
Apr - Oct 2019: Average of 7 polls by Ashcroft, Panelbase and YouGov
Nov. 2019: Average of 5 polls by Ipsos MORI, Panelbase, Survation and YouGov
Jan. 2020: Average of 2 polls by Survation and YouGov

A Divided Country



Source data at www.whatscotlandthinks.org run by ScotCen Social Research

Mobilising Identity

- Despite a (longstanding) link between attitudes towards Brexit and English identity, the debate about how England should be governed only has a (continuing) weak link with identity
- In contrast constitutional preference is linked with identity in Scotland & Wales
- In Scotland the growth in support for independence has occurred primarily among those with a strong Scottish identity
- Brexit has added a new dimension to the independence debate in Scotland

Conclusion

- Wales has embraced a devolution that reflects Welsh identity, but still shows little sign of seeking independence. Devolution succeeded?
- The devolution debate in England is fragmented and attitudes continue to have little link with identity. Devolution stalled?
- In Scotland devolution has created a pathway to greater support for independence that has mobilised a distinctive identity – and has now been further fuelled by Brexit. Devolution failed?