

# BRIEFING: THE FUTURE SHAPE OF THE UK (SCOTLAND)

The constitutional future of Scotland within the United Kingdom has been a key factor in Scottish politics over the past decade. As Christians we should be inspired by hopes to create a better future, but does this future reflect the values that we believe are important?



## CONTEXT

The Acts of Union in 1707 merged the two countries of England and Scotland into the Kingdom of Great Britain. In September 1997, the people of Scotland voted in a referendum for devolution. The UK Parliament then passed the Scotland Act 1998 which established the Scottish Parliament, which met in May 1999 – adjourned since March 1707. Some powers previously held at Westminster were transferred to the Scottish Parliament.

In 2007, the Scottish National Party won the Scottish Parliament election and formed a minority administration. They have remained in power since then and now lead a majority government in the Scottish Parliament. A referendum on Scottish independence was held in September 2014 on the question, 'Should Scotland be an independent country?'

The 'No' side won with 2,001,926 (55.3%) voting against independence, and 1,617,989 (44.7%) voted Yes. The turnout for the referendum was 84.6% which is the highest recorded for an election or referendum in the United Kingdom since the January 1910 General Election, which was held before the introduction of universal suffrage. The electorate (which included 16 and 17 year olds and EU citizens) were told that the vote would be once in a generation.



An exit poll from the 2014 referendum found that retention of the pound sterling was the deciding factor for those who voted No, while "disaffection with Westminster politics" was the deciding factor for those who voted Yes.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CANDIDATE

What would you do to ensure that Scotland, either as part of the UK or as an independent Scotland is able to care for the poor and most marginalised in our society?

What will you do to ensure that respectful dialogue characterises relations between Scotland and the rest of the UK whatever happens in the election?

The referendum was quickly followed by the 2015 UK General Election, in which the SNP won an unprecedented 56 out of 59 seats. In 2017, the SNP again won the General Election in Scotland, winning 35 seats.

The 2016 Brexit referendum means that the political landscape has changed considerably since 2014, and the SNP want another opportunity for the people of Scotland to readdress the question of independence.

Given that the majority of Scotland voted against leaving the European Union, the SNP are demanding the right to choose independence. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP has said: "[This election is Scotland's chance to escape Brexit and to put our future in our own hands.](#)" The UK Conservative Government has repeatedly ruled out the possibility of authorising a second independence referendum. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has said that he would not rule out consenting to a referendum if he became Prime Minister, and the Liberal Democrats have said they do not want another Scottish referendum.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

People disagree for a variety of reasons on whether or not Scotland should remain part of the United Kingdom. What are the values you believe are important to maintain in either of these scenarios?

If Scotland votes to become independent, how will this affect the way you see others in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Since devolution, the powers of the Scottish Parliament have increased to include agriculture, forestry and fisheries, education, environment, health and social services, aspects of social security, housing, law and order, local government, sport and the arts, tourism and economic development, many areas of transport and tax raising powers. A video talking about the devolved powers can be viewed [here](#).

