Why Scotland voted 'No'
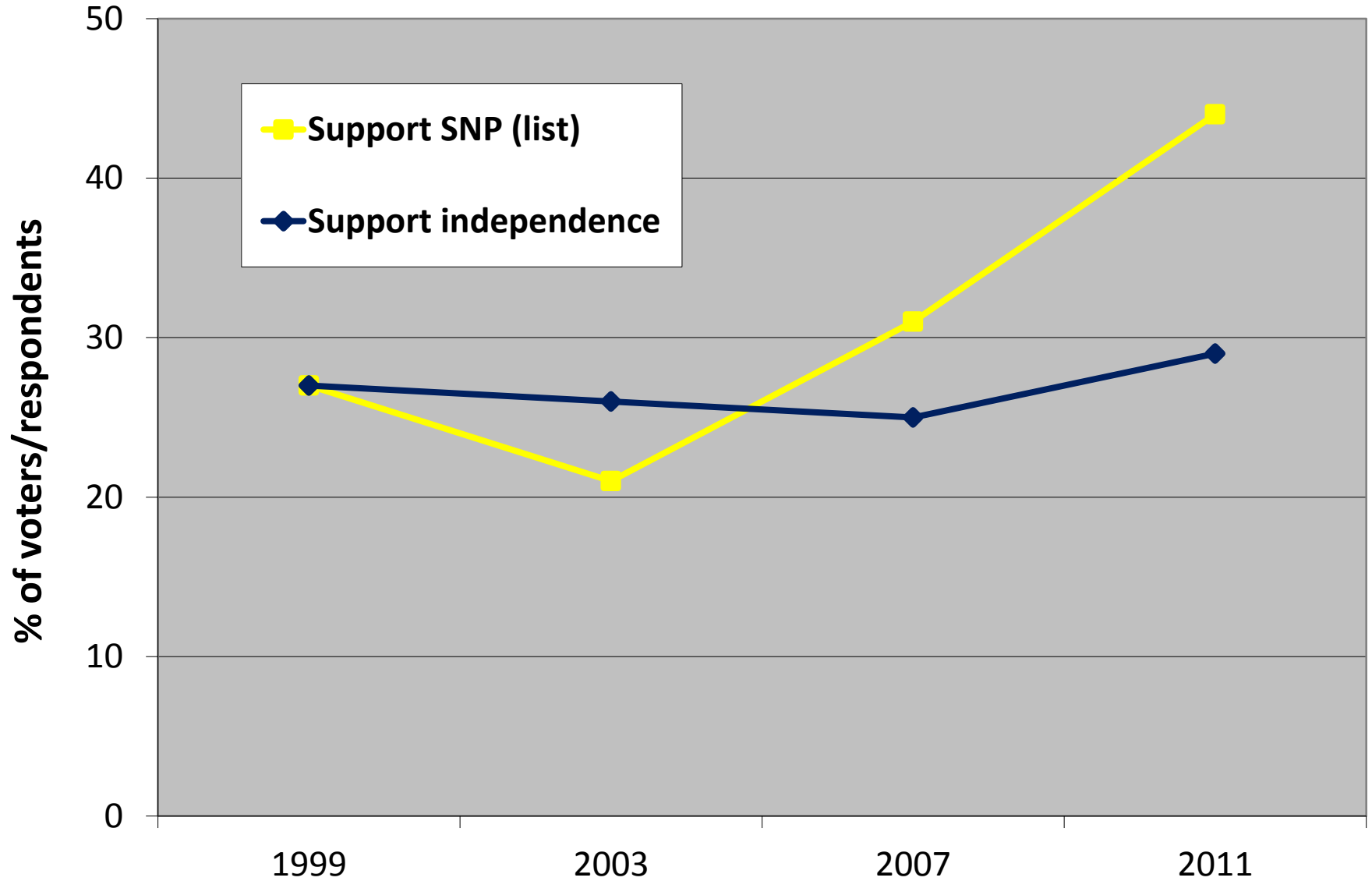
Presented at the Department of Politics & International Relations, Royal Holloway, University of London, 30 September 2014
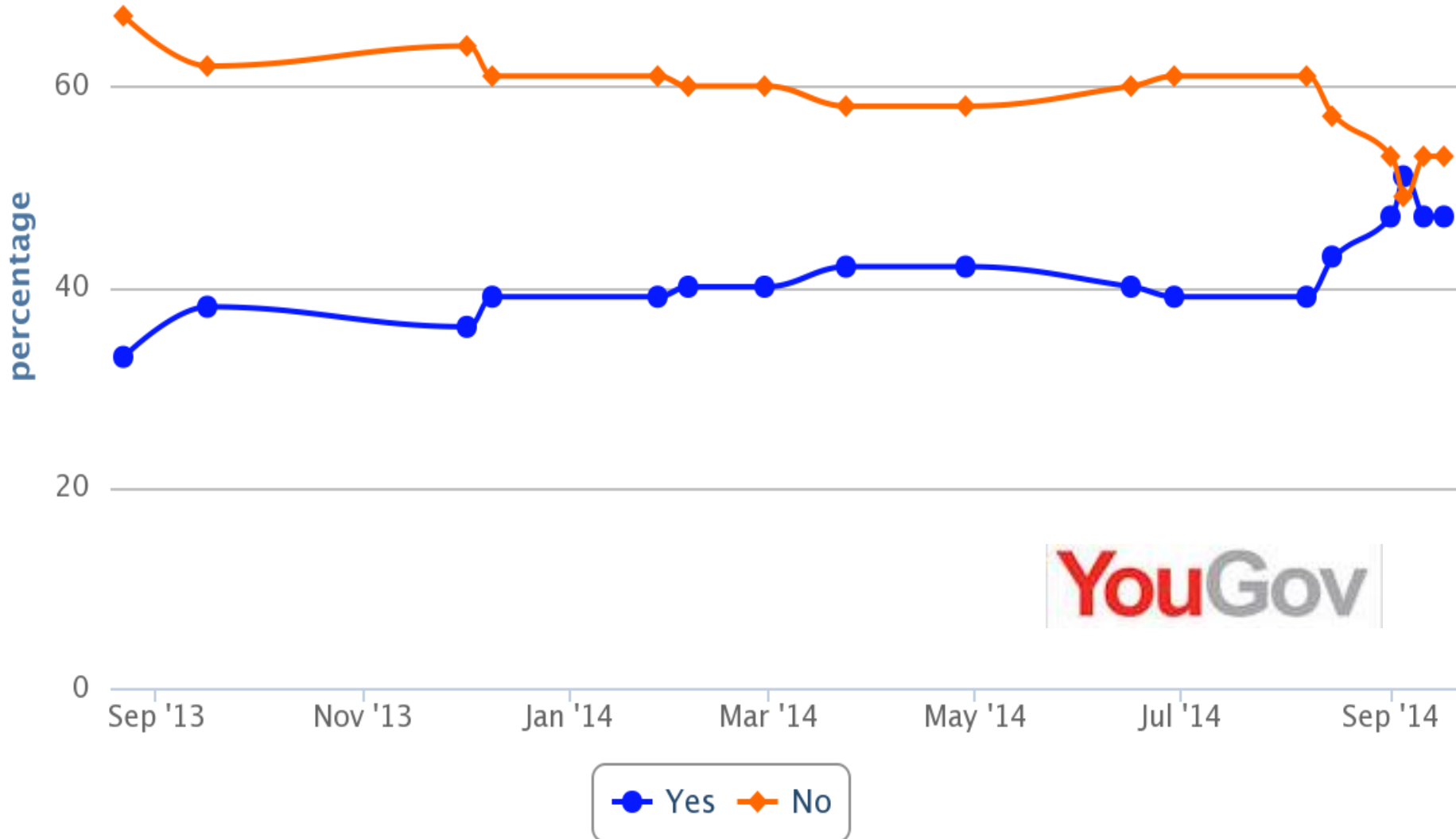
Rob Johns, Department of Government, University of Essex

rajohn@essex.ac.uk

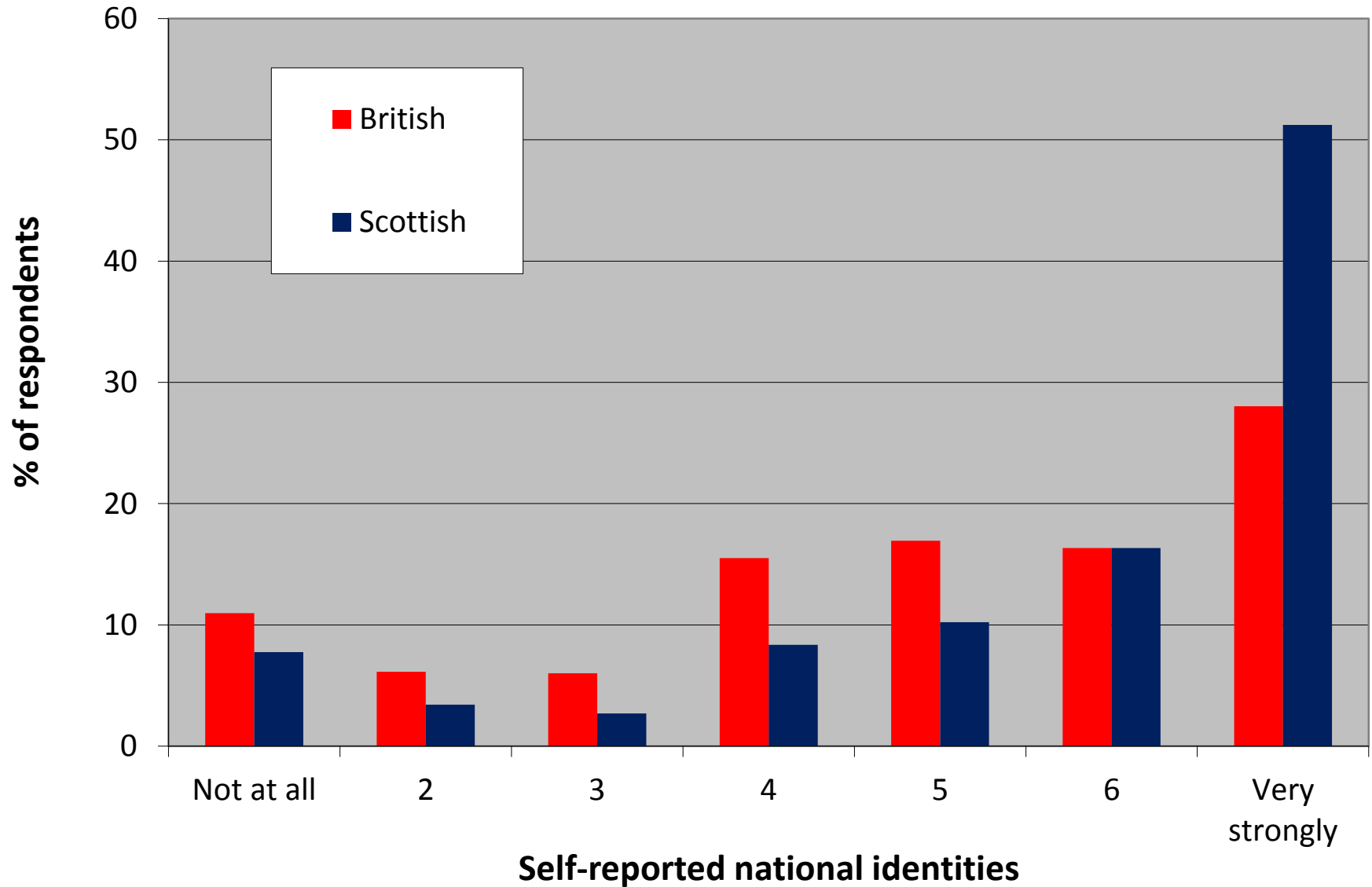# The key background

Boredom, then excitement

Data sources

- Two waves of a multi-wave panel survey

- Conducted over the internet via YouGov

- **British Election Study Wave 2**
  - June 2014

- **SRS pre-referendum wave**
  - Rolling cross-section in four one-week batches
  - 22 August-17 September 2014

- N ≈ 5,000

Why a big lead for 'No'?

- <u>Not</u> a matter of identity
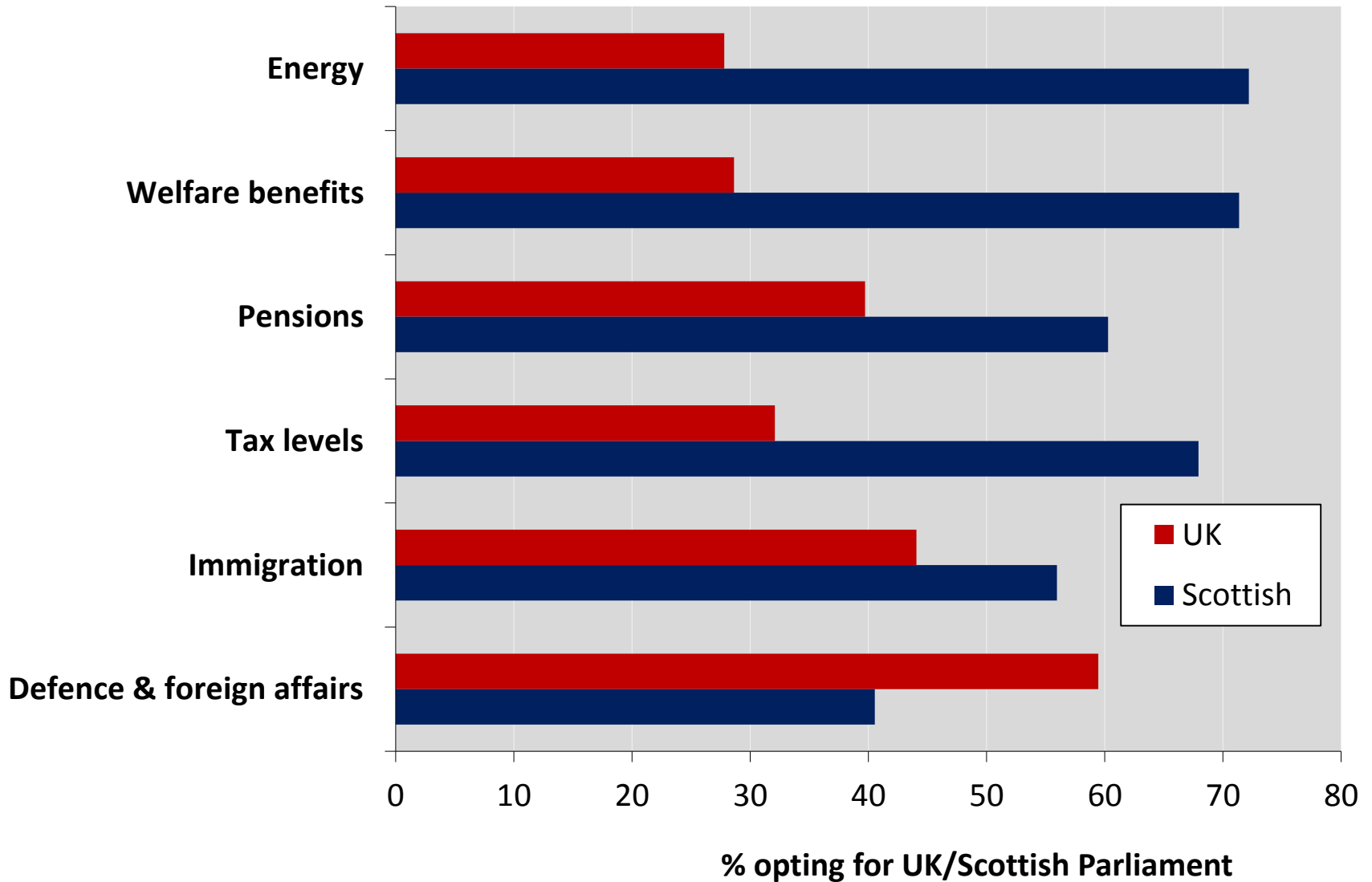
Scottish > British identity

Why a big lead for 'No'?

- <u>Not</u> a matter of identity

- <u>Not</u> a preference for multi-level governance

Where powers should lie

% opting for UK/Scottish Parliament

Legend: UK (red), Scottish (blue)

Categories (top to bottom): Energy, Welfare benefits, Pensions, Tax levels, Immigration, Defence & foreign affairs

Stage 1: why a big lead for 'No'?

- <u>Not</u> a matter of identity

- <u>Not</u> a preference for multi-level governance

- <u>Not</u> widespread optimism about the Union

Consequences of remaining in Union

	Likely (%)	Unlikely (%)
UK government would cut spending available for Scottish public services	49	28
Gap between rich and poor would get wider	57	14
Westminster will transfer substantially more powers to the Scottish Parliament	33	41
The UK will vote in a referendum to leave the European Union	53	19
Trident submarines would remain based at Faslane on the Clyde	79	7
Welfare benefits will go down	54	14

Stage 1: why a big lead for 'No'?

- <u>Not</u> a matter of identity

- <u>Not</u> a preference for multi-level governance

- <u>Not</u> widespread optimism about the Union

- <u>Not</u> widespread pessimism about independence

Consequences of independence

|	Likely (%)	Unlikely (%)
The general economic situation in Scotland would be worse	41	38
Scotland would keep using the pound	56	26
Scotland would retain membership of the EU on similar terms	41	39
Scotland would have a weaker voice in the world	47	35
There would be passport and border controls between Scotland and England	25	57
Scotland and the UK would arrange defence cooperation	48	25
I personally would be better off	23	42

Stage 1: why a big lead for 'No'?

- <u>Not</u> a matter of identity

- <u>Not</u> a preference for multi-level governance

- <u>Not</u> widespread optimism about the Union

- <u>Not</u> widespread pessimism about independence

- So what, then?

- Fear, risk, uncertainty – independence as an existential threat

- And how much people have to lose…
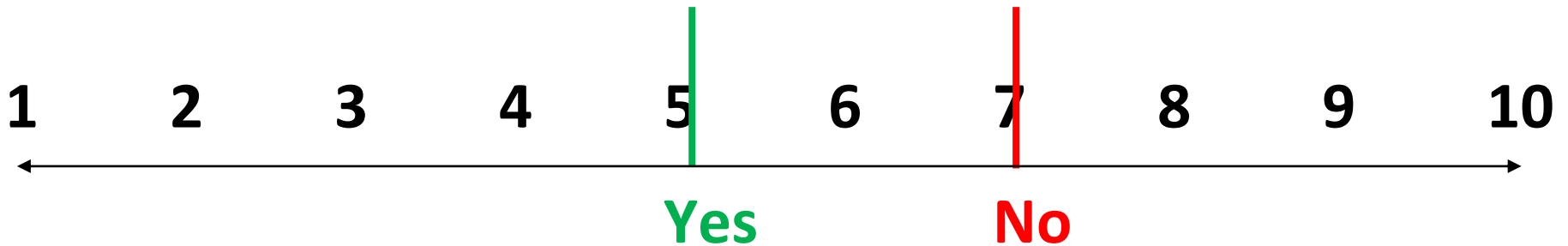
'Yes' voting by risk-willingness

Intending to vote 'Yes'

How willing to take risks?
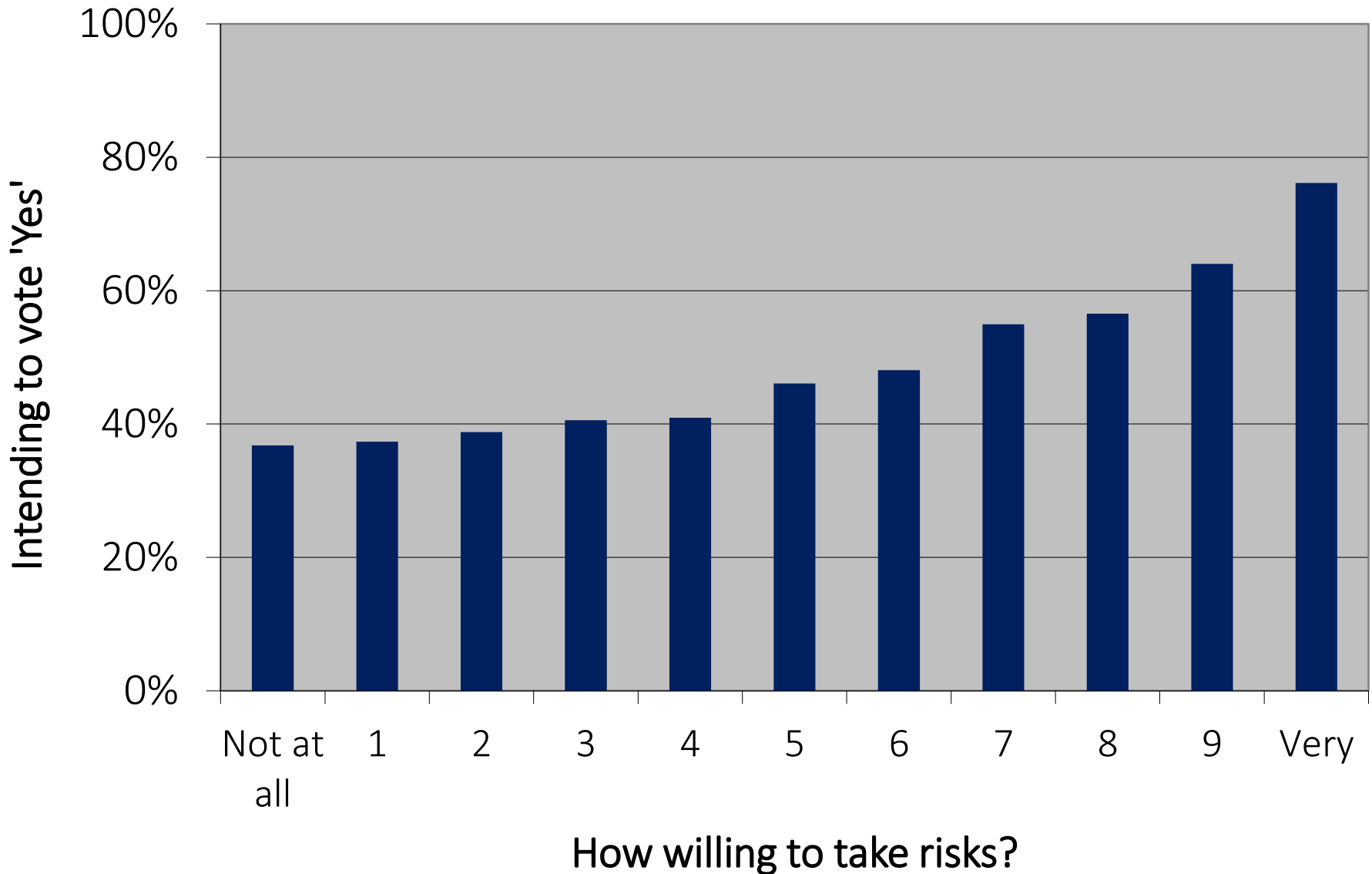
'Yes' voting by openness to experience
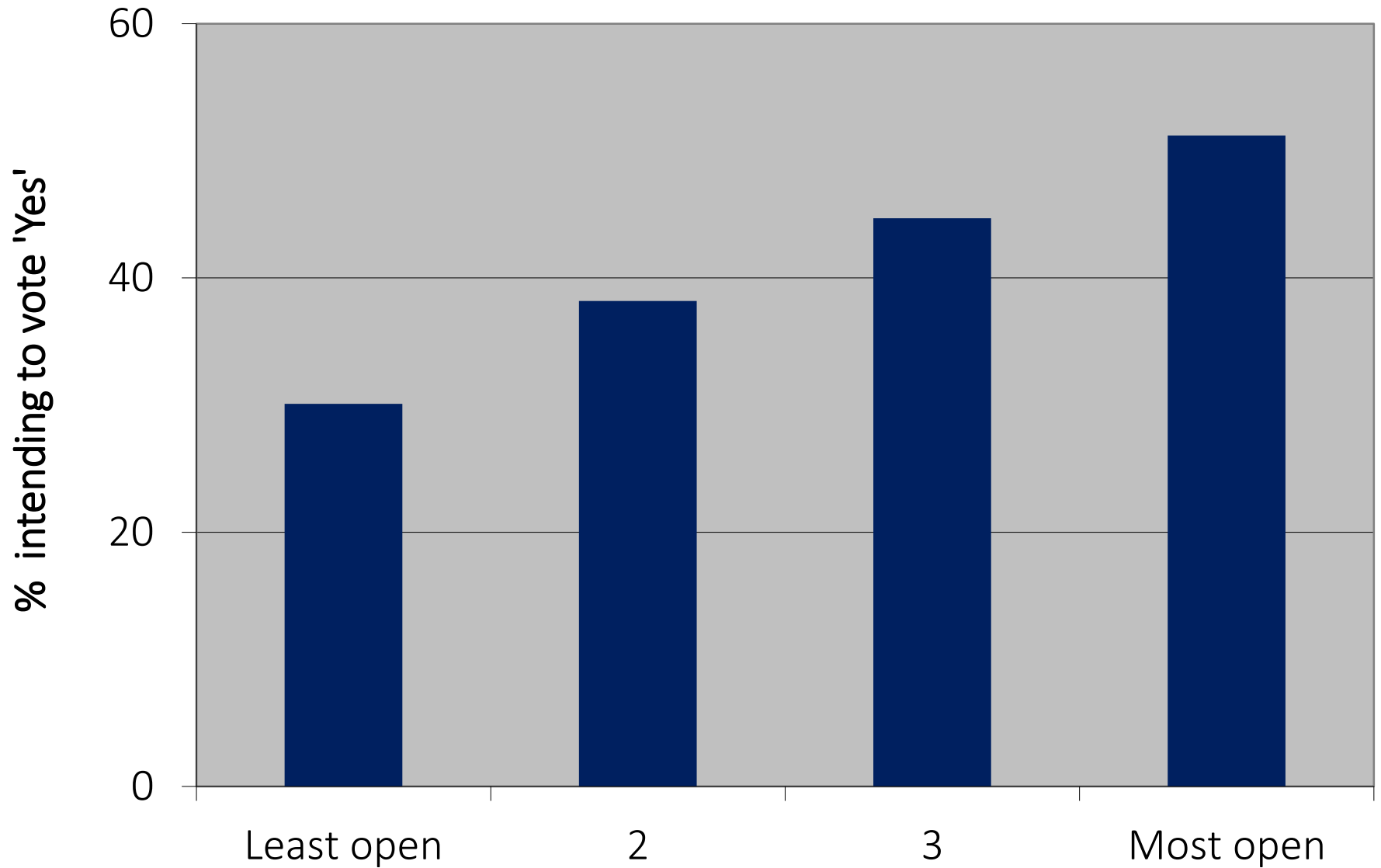
Q1: On a scale from 1 ("doesn't bother me") to 10 ("utterly terrified"), what number best describes your reaction to that photo?

Q2: Should Scotland be an independent country?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Yes   **No**

Would you like £10?

Or would you prefer to toss a coin…

You win £25 | You win nothing

Now, you have to give me £10

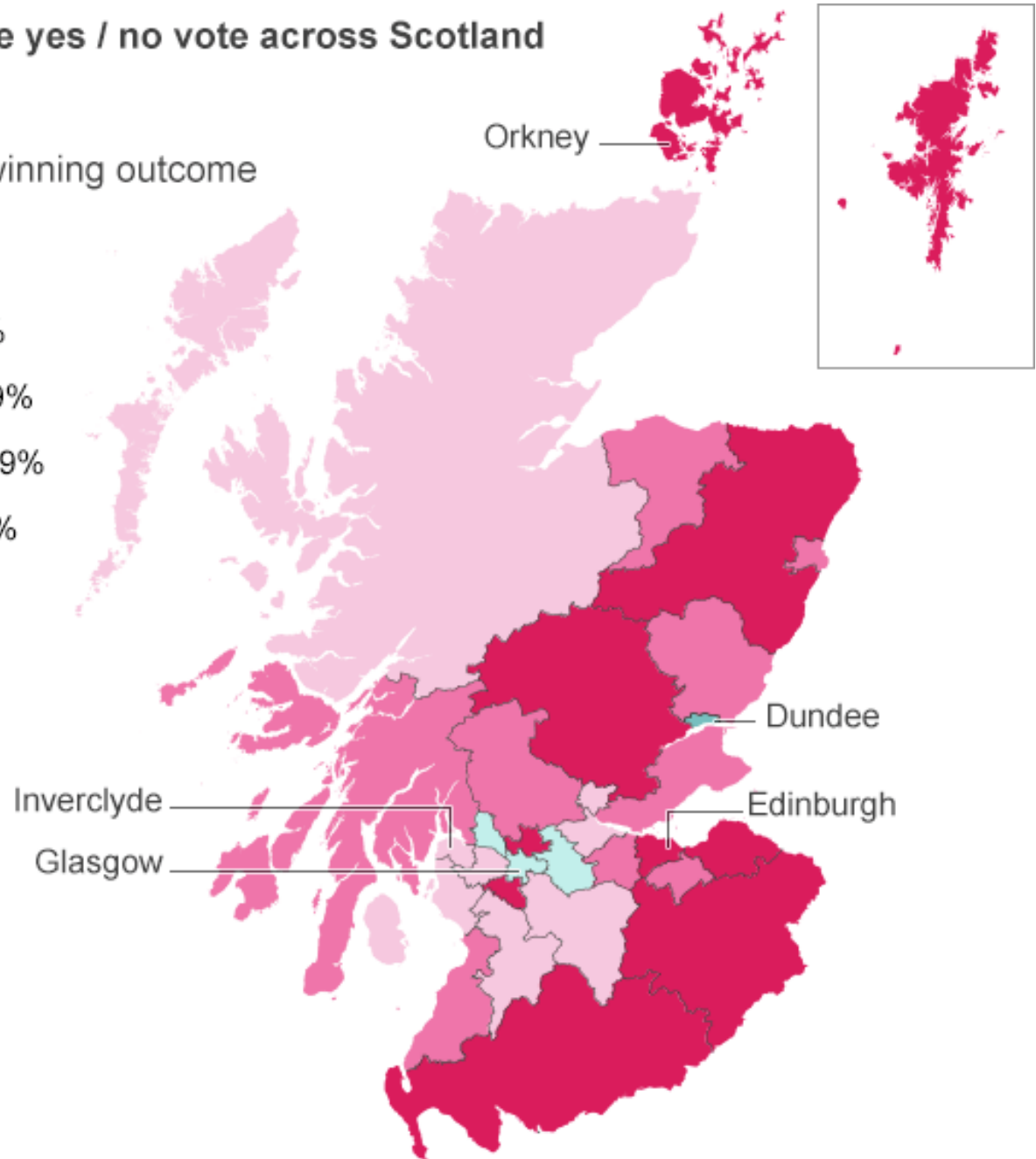## Or we can toss a coin…

You give me £25 | You give me nothing
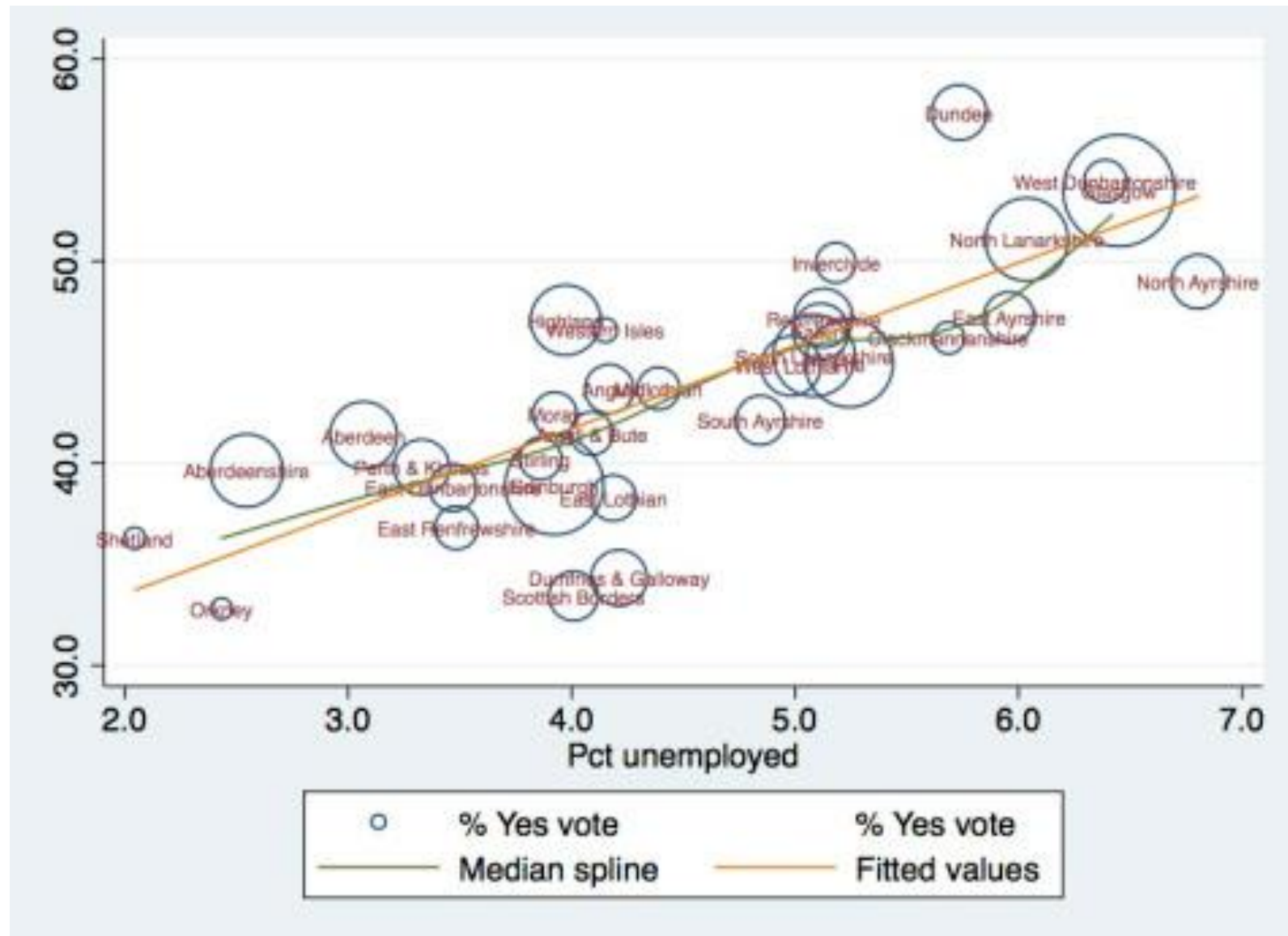
Strength of the yes / no vote across Scotland

Vote share of winning outcome

- No 60%+
- No 55 - 59.9%
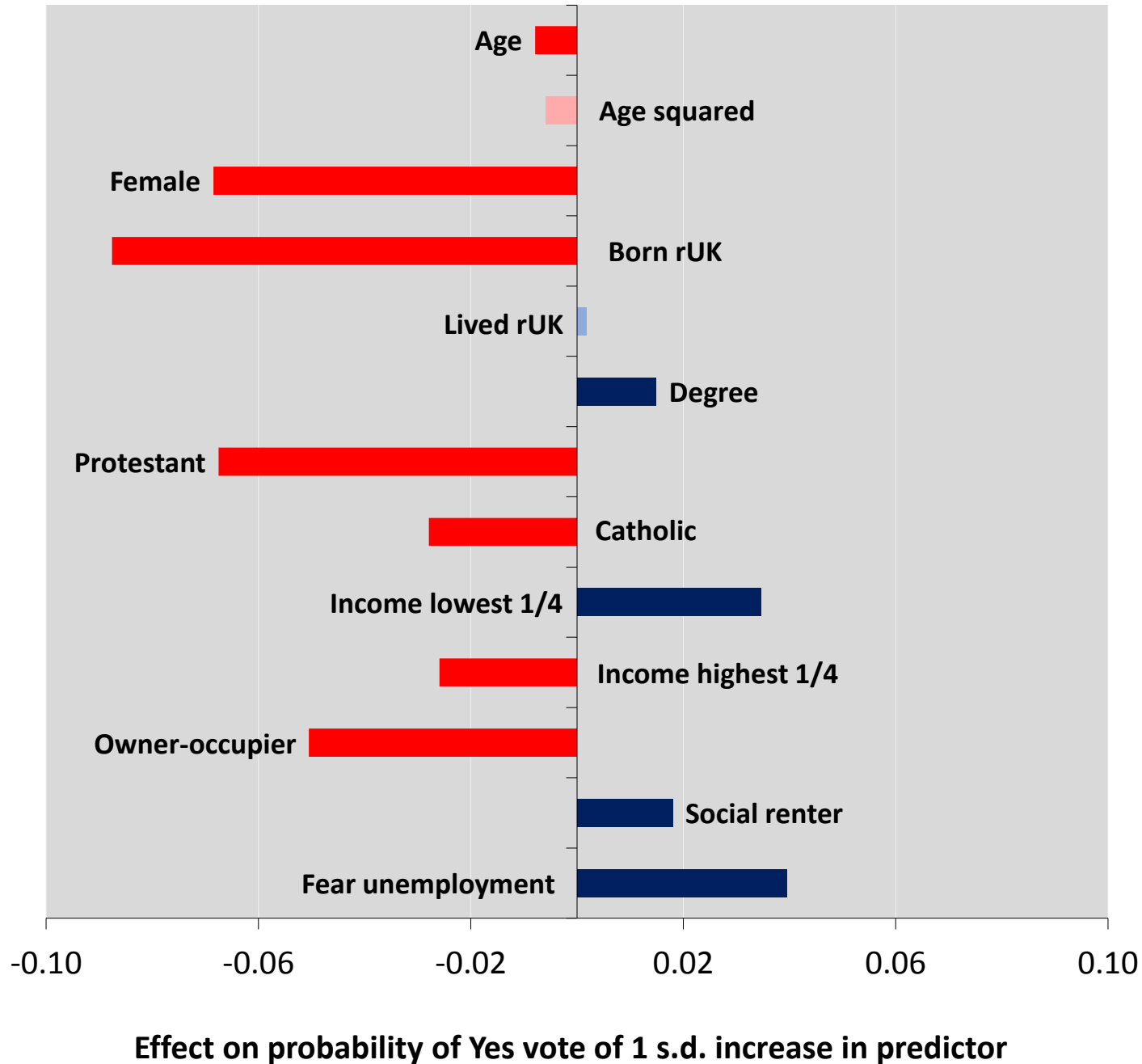- No 50.1 - 54.9%
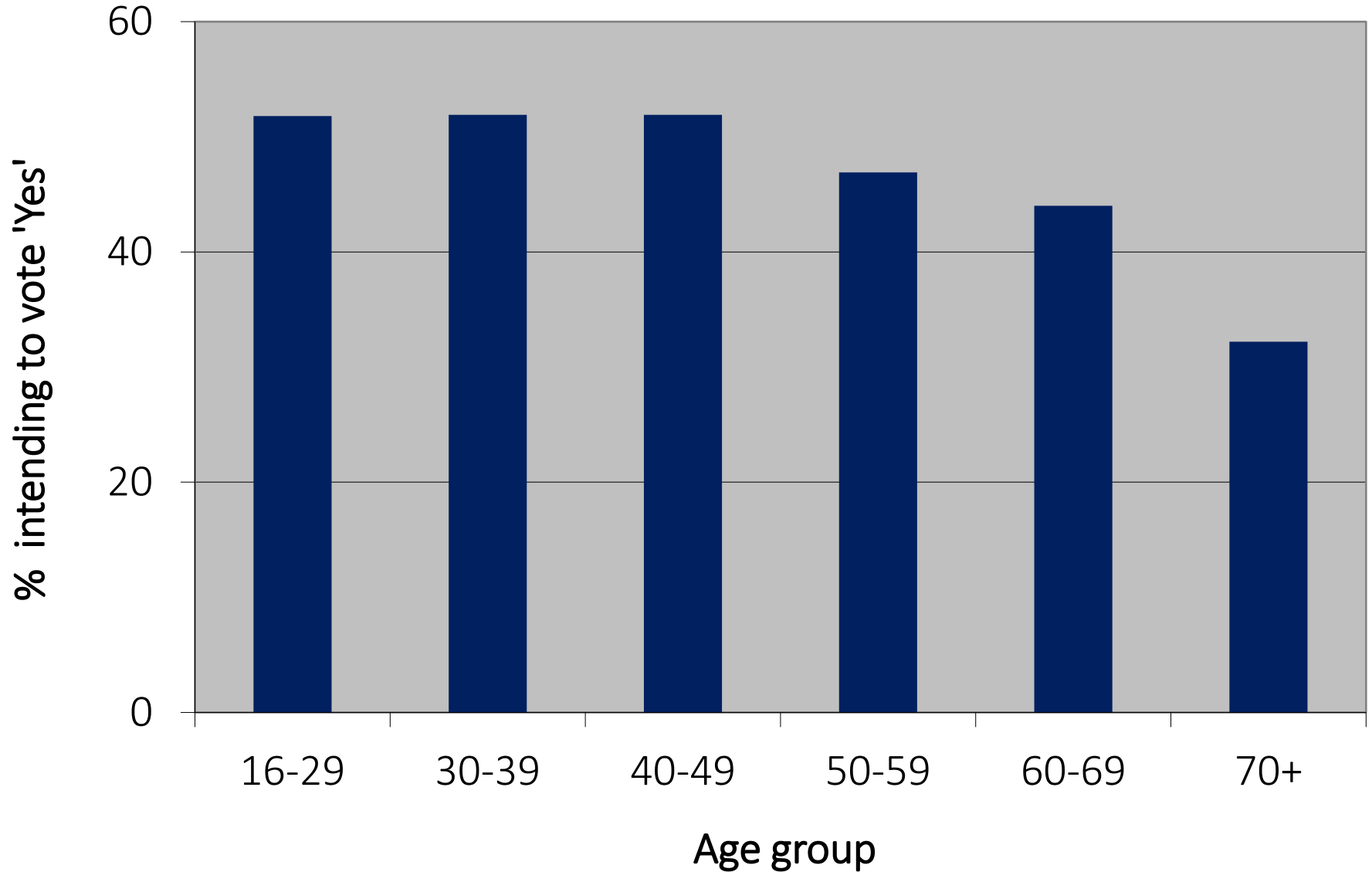- Yes 50.1 - 54.9%
- Yes 55 - 59.9%
- Yes 60%+

Orkney

Dundee

Inverclyde

Glasgow

Edinburgh

Voting by council area

Deprivation and 'Yes' voting

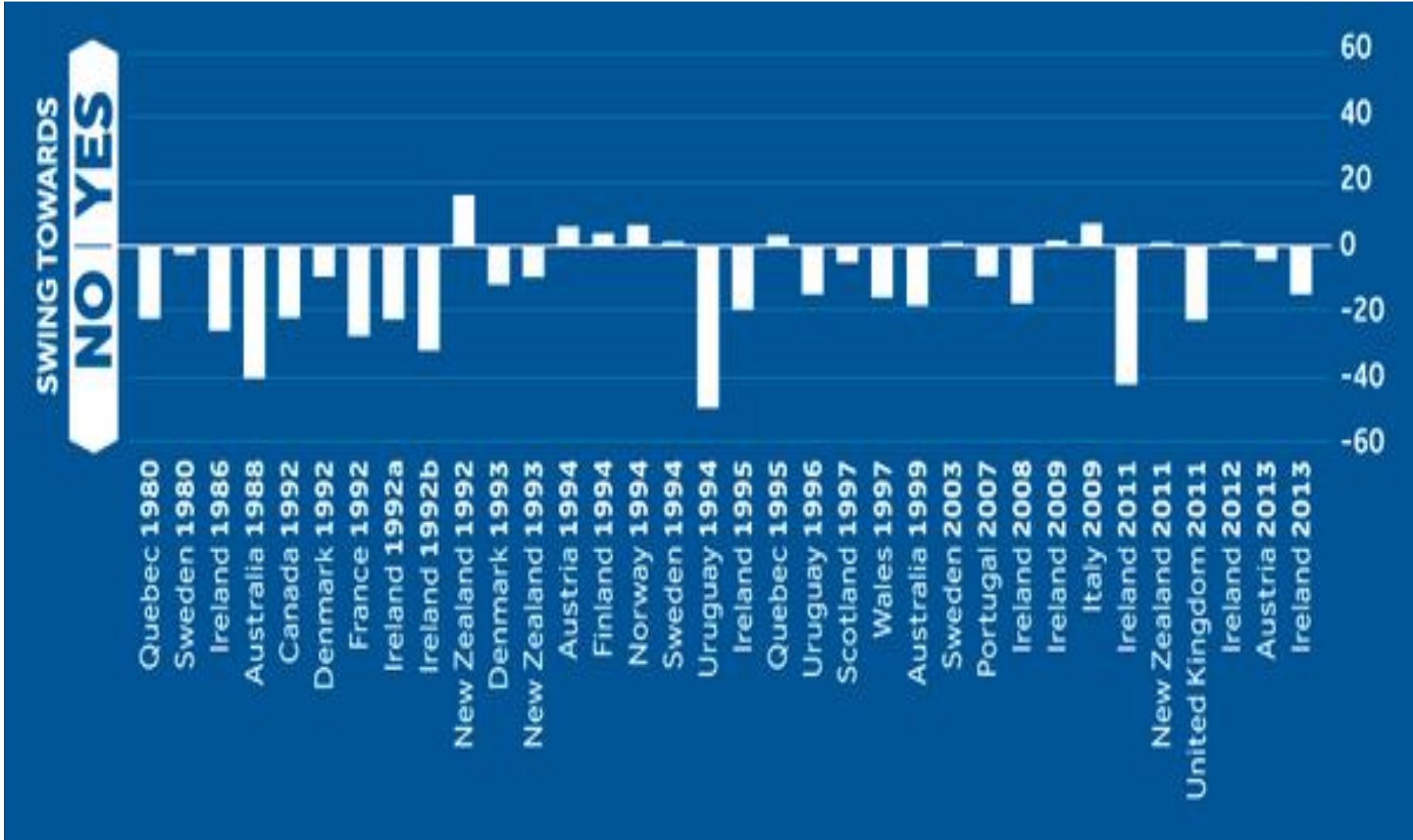**Socio-economic drivers of vote choice**

Age
Age squared
Female
Born rUK
Lived rUK
Degree
Protestant
Catholic
Income lowest 1/4
Income highest 1/4
Owner-occupier
Social renter
Fear unemployment

-0.10   -0.06   -0.02   0.02   0.06   0.10

Effect on probability of Yes vote of 1 s.d. increase in predictor

Why the new voters made little difference

What drove decisions?

General economic situation worse

Keep using the pound

Retain EU membership

Weaker voice in world

Narrower gap between rich and poor

Personally better off

UK government cut public services

Wider gap between rich and poor

Substantially more devolution

UK votes to leave EU

Welfare benefits to be cut

-0.4   -0.2   0.0   0.2   0.4
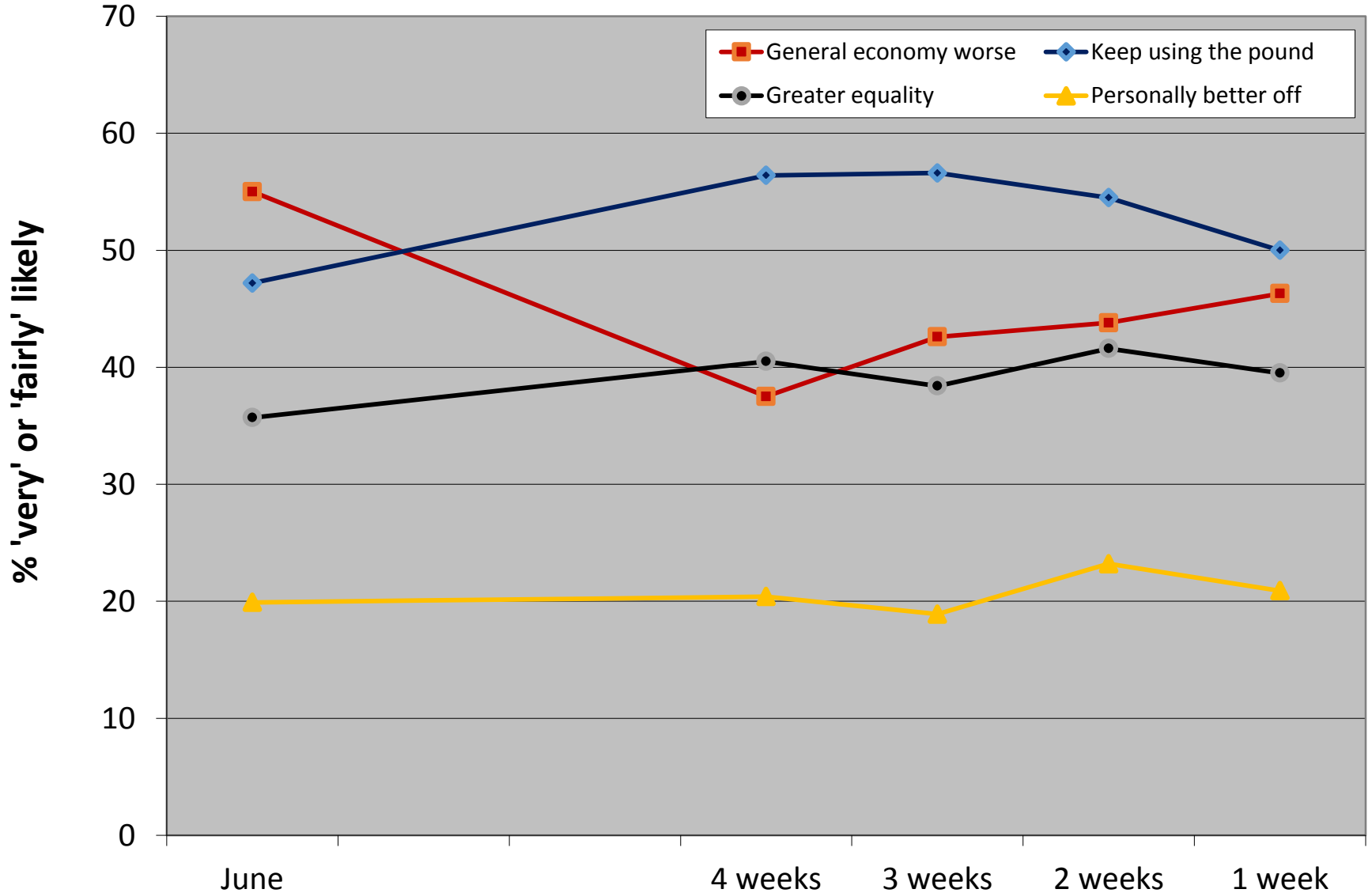
Effect on probability of Yes of 1 s.d. increase in predictor
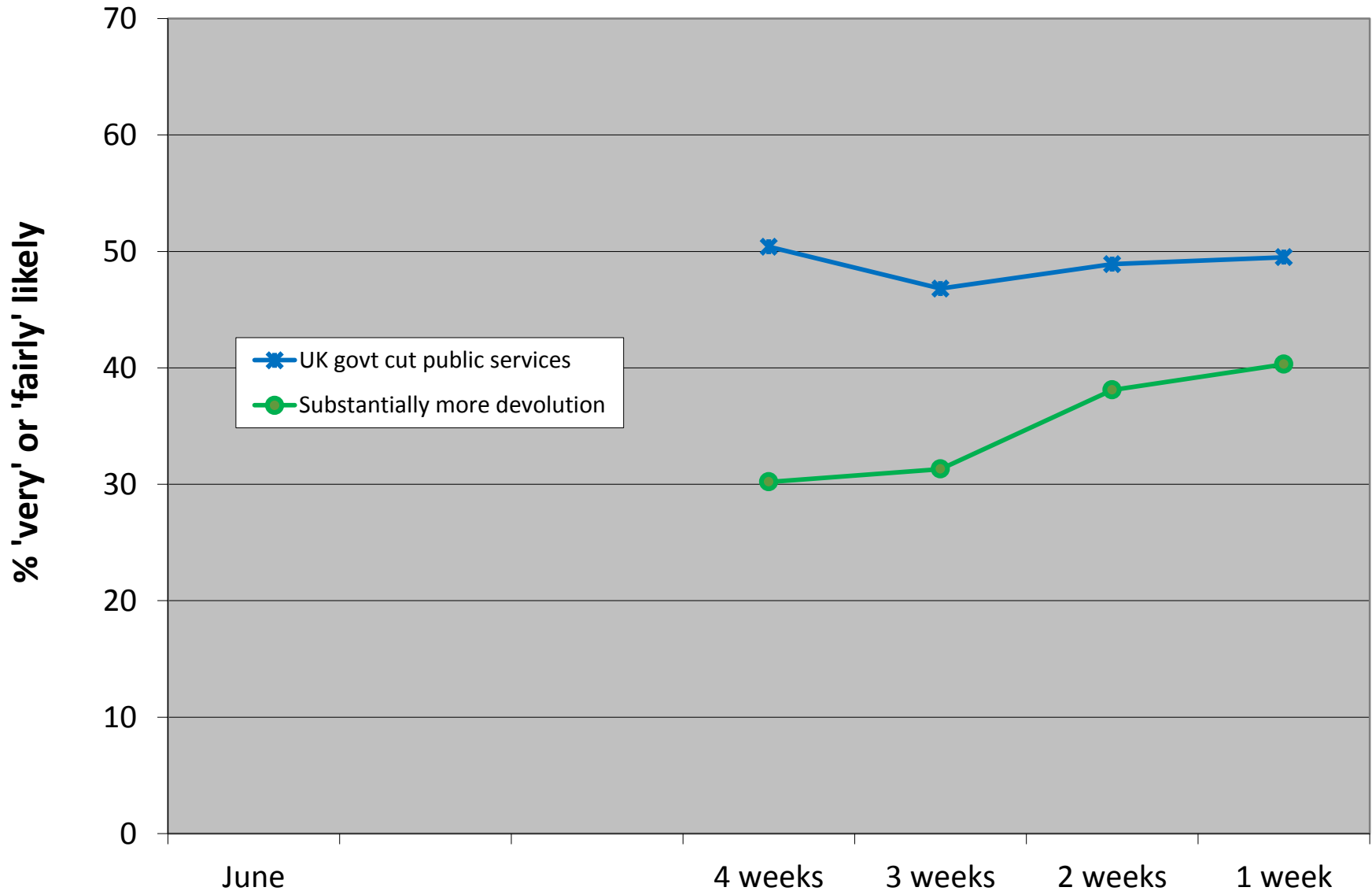
Late dynamics: in general

# Late dynamics: in expectations after a Yes

Late dynamics: in expectations after a No

Conclusions

- Identity provided core support for both camps

- But economic risk decided the outcome

- The median voter:
  - Feels more Scottish than British
  - Wants almost all powers at Scottish level
  - Questions legitimacy of Westminster government
  - Optimistic about independence but economic doubts

- 'No' campaign didn't change what Scots want; just scared them out of going for it

- So is that really it for a generation…?
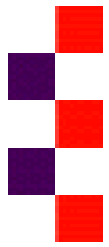
Why Scotland voted 'No'

Presented at the Department of Politics & International Relations, Royal Holloway, University of London, September 2014

Rob Johns, Department of Government, University of Essex

rajohn@essex.ac.uk