

## Nicola Sturgeon 'out of touch' with Scots over Brexit as poll shows support for Theresa May vision



Major new research shows Scots do not want a separate Brexit deal or for free movement to continue

By [Simon Johnson](#), Scottish political editor

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Nicola Sturgeon has been accused of being out of touch with Scotland about [Brexit](#) after a major survey found almost two-thirds of Scots oppose her demand for a different deal and support Theresa May's UK-wide blueprint.

[The First Minister's justification for a second independence referendum](#) was severely undermined by the NatCen research, which found 62 per cent of Scots think trade and immigration rules should be the same as in the rest of the UK.

An overwhelming majority also support Mrs May's plan to curtail free movement from the EU and oppose the First Minister's insistence that it continue, with 64 per cent believing that immigrants from the Continent should be subject to the same restrictions as those from elsewhere in the world.

The research concluded that Scots' views are similar to those of people in the rest of Britain and warned Ms Sturgeon that her argument that the Prime Minister's Brexit blueprint justifies an independence vote "is unlikely to prove particularly persuasive." The Conservatives said the survey showed it was Ms Sturgeon who is out of touch with Scots' views on Brexit, with even a majority of independence supporters demanding curbs on immigration.

It was published as David Davis, the Brexit Secretary, formally rejected [Ms Sturgeon's highly complex proposal for Scotland to stay in the EU single market when the rest of the UK comes out](#). This would have seen Scotland adopt completely separate trade and immigration regimes.

In a letter to the Scottish Government, Mr Davis said this was not deliverable and argued that the Prime Minister's vision would achieve almost all of Ms Sturgeon's aims using a different method, such as a comprehensive free trade agreement.



The survey was unveiled by Professor John Curtice CREDIT: MARK THOMAS / I-IMAGES

The research was conducted by Professor John Curtice, Britain's most eminent psephologist and a senior research fellow at Nat Cen.

He said: "This means that on immigration in particular voters in Scotland seem to be more in tune with the stance taken by the UK government than that adopted by the Scottish Government.

"Indeed, it seems that even amongst those who voted Yes to independence in September 2014 there is a limited appetite for having a more liberal regime on EU migration in Scotland than there is in England and Wales."



Prof Curtice concluded that it was “far from clear” the concerns about Brexit would translate into increased support for independence if the UK Government succeeds in delivering free trade and immigration control.

Adam Tomkins, the Scottish Tories’ constitution spokesman, said the report exposes the “myth” that Scots have different opinions about the Brexit deal from people in the rest of the UK. He added: It shows once again just how out of touch the Scottish Government is.”

This survey, conducted between February 5 and March 2, found almost unanimous support north and south of the Border for maintaining free trade.



The survey found Scots want free movement from the EU to end CREDIT: WRONAPHOTO.COM / ALAMY

The proportion of Scots who wanted EU immigrants to face the same restrictions as those from elsewhere in the world (64 per cent) was only slightly lower than the UK-wide figure of 68 per cent.

While Remain voters in Scotland were much less likely than Leave supporters (82 per cent) to back immigration control, more than half (53 per cent) were still in favour of ending freedom of movement.

Scots were slightly more willing (61 per cent) than their British counterparts (54 per cent) to forego immigration control in order to get a free trade deal in the Brexit talks. But it found only 34 per cent of Scots wanted more relaxed EU trade rules than England and Wales, and a mere 25 per cent said they wanted a more liberal immigration policy than south of the Border.

At least three in five of those who voted for independence were opposed to the maintenance of freedom of movement, while they are no more likely than those who voted No to back free trade.

Contrary to the SNP's claims the EU referendum result justifies another independence vote, the study found clear evidence that Scots' views on one issue do not "necessarily correspond in any way" to their opinion on the other.

The study concluded: "Those who voted Yes in 2014 are on balance barely any keener on having a closer relationship with the EU than are those who voted No. What both Yes and No voters want from Brexit is much the same as what voters elsewhere in Britain want."

A Scottish Government spokesman said: "The poll demonstrates people in Scotland continue to value the protections and rights offered by the EU, particularly on key issues such as free trade and freedom of movement.

"It also highlights greater support in Scotland across many important issues to maintain the benefits of EU membership, compared to the UK as a whole."

