



PolicyWISE



Public Attitudes Toward Intergovernmental Cooperation in Scotland and Wales

Polling February 2026



The polling was conducted by More in Common on behalf of PolicyWISE between 30 January - 10 February 2026. 1,035 were polled in Scotland, and 806 in Wales. Respondents have been weighted according to age/sex interlocked, 2024 election vote, Scottish or Welsh regions, ethnicity, and education level.

Public Attitudes Toward Intergovernmental Cooperation in Scotland and Wales

The public overwhelmingly wants stronger cooperation rather than confrontation, as 95% of those asked want devolved governments and Westminster to improve their relationships.

Executive summary

- Public perceptions show extremely low confidence in current intergovernmental cooperation.
- 95% of the public in Scotland and Wales want stronger cooperation between their governments and Westminster.
- Only 26% in Scotland and 20% in Wales perceive intergovernmental working as effective.
- Majorities believe effective cooperation is possible but not happening.
- The public's top cross government priorities are the cost of living, the economy, the NHS, energy, immigration, and VAWG. This includes issues that are the responsibility of both devolved and Westminster governments.
- Fewer than 5% support more distance or confrontation between governments.
- Westminster is widely perceived as acting mainly for England, but is not clear in communicating this, contributing to dissatisfaction.

1. Current perceptions of intergovernmental effectiveness

Across both Scotland and Wales, public dissatisfaction with current cooperation between devolved governments and Westminster is pronounced.

- Only 26% of Scots and 20% of people in Wales feel their devolved governments and Westminster work well together.
- 68% in Wales, and 60% in Scotland feel that their devolved governments and Westminster do not work well together at the moment. These results are similar in both nations, despite Labour's promise of "partnership in power" between London and Cardiff.

When asked which tier of government has the greatest influence on national outcomes, the UK Government only tops the devolved governments in one area:

- **Cost of living** – Scotland: UKG 40% vs SG 20%; Wales: UKG 52% vs WG 9%.

2. Potential for improved collaboration

Despite dissatisfaction with the current situation, optimism remains high:

- A majority in both Scotland (54%) and Wales (51%) believe their governments could work well with Westminster but are not doing so currently.
- In both countries, the public would prefer that the devolved government worked "much more closely" with the UK government on their top policy priority rather than "standing firm against the UK government". In Scotland, 51% want closer working v 28% who want standing firm. In Wales it's 42% for closer working, and 36% for standing firm. There is a clear appetite in both nations for cross-administration policy co-operation.
- Only a fifth (22%) in both nations think that their devolved governments and Westminster "will never be able to work well together."

3. Comparative views in how government works for citizens

Public confidence in how the UK's governments work together varies:

- 48% of Scots feel that devolution has been a good thing, compared with 36% in Wales.
- However, only 22% of Scots and 16% of Welsh respondents think that the Westminster-based government has been a good thing for their nations. Nearly a third in both nations think that the Westminster government has been a bad thing for them.
- Degree holders in both nations are more likely to view devolved governments positively.
- In both countries, Westminster is frequently perceived as acting "mainly as a government for England" (Scotland 43%, Wales 42%).

4. Public support for strengthened intergovernmental engagement

The public overwhelmingly wants stronger cooperation rather than confrontation.

- Less than 5% want devolved governments to distance themselves from Westminster.
- Only a fifth in both nations (22%) think that their devolved government and Westminster "will never be able to work well together." A majority think that they can work together well, with a small number viewing the current relationships as working well.
- Only 16% in Scotland and 20% in Wales want governments to prioritise "standing up to Westminster" over working constructively.
- Both nations also identify the same top two reasons why the devolved nations should work more closely with Westminster and each other (including Northern Ireland) on devolved issues:
 - **53%** in Scotland and **49%** in Wales believe closer working ensures their nation's interests are taken into account during UK-wide decision making.
 - **31%** in both Scotland and Wales see it as an opportunity to have a say on Westminster's policies that could have knock-on effects in the devolved nations.
- Around a quarter in both nations think being able to deliver better outcomes on problems that affect more than one part of the UK, and sharing expertise and lessons across the UK, is a good reason for cross-UK collaboration.

5. Priority policy areas for enhanced joint working

When asked which two reserved issues (i.e. Westminster's responsibility) require the UK Government to work most closely with the devolved governments, the same four priorities emerge in both nations:

- Immigration: 37% in Wales and 32% in Scotland.
- Energy policy: 31% in Wales and 31% in Scotland.
- Trade: 25% in Wales and 27% in Scotland.
- Relations with the EU: 24% in Wales and 27% in Scotland.

Tech and AI regulation receives 11% overall, but support is notably higher among Green Party voters – 32% in Scotland and 23% in Wales.

When asked which two issues most require the devolved governments to work closely with the UK Government in order to make progress, different views emerge:

- Tackling poverty – Behind health and the economy, tackling poverty was the third most popular option in both nations (22% in Wales and 21% in Scotland). However, Welsh men were nearly twice as likely to prioritise it for cooperation as Welsh women (27% vs 16%).
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG) – Identified as a priority by 10% in Scotland and 8% in Wales. In Wales, nearly twice as many women as men identified this as important.

These results demonstrate a distinction between reserved economic and international issues where Westminster is expected to work more closely with devolved governments, and social policy areas where devolved governments are seen as needing cooperation from the UK Government to make progress.

6. Nation specific priorities

While both nations share broad cooperation priorities, key differences emerge:

Scotland

- Top priority for the next Scottish Government: **Cost of living (36%)**.
- Top area for closer working with Westminster: **The economy (45%)**.
- Westminster is seen as generally **a bad thing for Scotland**, especially among those aged 35–64.

No political leader or party commands overwhelming confidence in Scotland, with the Conservatives, Keir Starmer, and Labour performing particularly poorly on net confidence measures.

Wales

- Top issue for the next Welsh Government: **Cost of living (33%)**.
- Top area for closer working: **The NHS (52%)**.
- Younger age groups (16–44) are more likely to view devolved government as a good thing (40%+)

7. Preferred approaches to intergovernmental relations

Most people favour cooperation, even if compromise is needed.

- **Scotland:** 36% prefer constructive working; another 35% favour balancing cooperation with challenge.
- **Wales:** 30% want constructive working; 39% prefer a balanced approach.

Gender differences persist:

- Women are more likely to prefer a balanced, cooperative style.
- Men are more inclined toward a more oppositional style.

Across both nations, the public would generally prefer their devolved governments to work mostly with Westminster, on issues including:

- Energy and net zero
- The economy
- Transport and infrastructure
- The NHS
- Housing

Only around a quarter in both nations show a preference for their devolved government to include English mayors and regional governments alongside Westminster when working collaboratively.

Significant concerns persist about perceptions of how Westminster functions within the union:

- **43%** in Scotland and **42%** in Wales believe Westminster acts mainly as a government for England.
- Many, especially in Wales (**52%**), think Westminster is unclear when decisions affect only England.

These concerns fuel frustration with current cooperation arrangements.

8. Political affiliation and expectations for improving IGR

When asked which party would best improve intergovernmental relations, answers align closely with broader political loyalties:

- Wales: Reform UK (21%) leads, followed by Plaid Cymru (14%) and Labour (13%).
- Scotland: SNP leads (23%), followed by Labour (17%).

This reflects wider political landscapes rather than a distinct judgment on intergovernmental capability.

9. Devolved priorities

When asked which three issues the two respective devolved governments should focus on post elections,

- Scotland identified the cost of living (**58%**), supporting the NHS (**45%**), and levels of immigration (**23%**).
- Wales also picked the cost of living (**56%**), supporting the NHS (**49%**), and levels of immigration (**27%**).

Taken together, this demonstrates how policy challenges are shared throughout the UK making them suited to closer working and shared learning.

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The Open University has been awarded £1m in funding from Dangoor Education to establish and run PolicyWISE. The funding has supported the launch of PolicyWISE in 2023 and our development over the following four years.