



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Participation and Engagement in
Politics & Policy Making
Building a Bridge Between Europe and its
Citizens – Evidence Review Paper One

International Research



**PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICS
AND POLICY MAKING**

**BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND ITS
CITIZENS**

EVIDENCE REVIEW PAPER ONE

Dr Kesi Mahendran & Dr Deborah Cook
International Research, Analytical Services, Scottish Executive

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Emma Berry – Scottish Parliament
Nikki Brown – Scottish Executive
Laura Close – European Commission in Scotland
Susan Dalgety – Scottish Executive
John Edward – European Parliament in Scotland
Tom Jackson – Scottish Executive
Daniel Kleinberg – Scottish Executive
Iain McIver – Scottish Parliament
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Elizabeth Watson – Scottish Parliament

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trust in political institutions – Scotland

- While trust in British government, the British parliament and the United Nations (UN) has declined between 2002 and 2005, trust in Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) has increased in Scotland from 36% in 2002 to 72% in 2005.
- In terms of how Scotland sits with the rest of Great Britain, results from the 2003 Social Scottish Attitudes and British Social Attitudes Surveys show that the Scottish are slightly less interested in politics than the British average.
- Turnout to elections in Scotland is not widely different to the UK average.
- Political parties, the traditional vehicle connecting the public to politics, are the least trusted political institutions.
- In 2004 52% of people in Scotland trusted the Scottish Executive to work in Scotland's best long-term interest.
- Since its creation in 1999, people in Scotland have consistently trusted the Scottish Executive to look after Scotland's long term interests more than the UK government.
- Whilst this is perhaps unsurprising, it is evident that Scottish institutions do not seem to be subjected to the same decline in trust in the last five years associated with other political institutions.
- However, it is worth noting that the 2005 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey found that almost 60% of their respondents felt that the Scottish Executive was 'not very good' or 'not good at all at listening to people's views' (see Figure 14). Nevertheless, the Scottish Executive is seen to be better at listening than the UK government.

Knowledge of political institutions and representatives – Scotland

- Knowledge of what the Scottish Executive and the UK Government do is evenly distributed between approximately a third of people (30% - Scottish Executive, 34% - UK government) who know 'quite a lot or a great deal', a third who know 'some' and just over a third who know 'not very much or nothing at all'.
- People in remote areas have a greater awareness of the activities of both the Scottish Executive and the UK government than people in urban areas.
- Scottish people know more about what their local councillor does than about the activities of either their MSP or their MP.
- Scottish people have more contact with local government bodies than central government.

Participation & Engagement

- People in Scotland are slightly less likely to vote in elections than in the United Kingdom as a whole, 60.8% compared to 61.4% in the 2005 UK general election. 31% of people voted in the last European elections compared to 39% in the UK as a whole.
- 50% of people in Scotland voted in the last Scottish elections in 2003 compared to 60% in 1999.

Types of civic participation

- Civic participation is understood in this paper as a form of political participation which directly involves the public in the policy-making process, rather than through their elected representatives. The paper adopts Whiteley's distinction between *individualistic* forms of participation e.g. signing a petition, and *collectivistic* forms of participation, such as acting through a group or as a collective, e.g. working in an action group.
- People in Scotland and the UK as a whole tend to favour individualistic forms of participation when compared to people in other European member states (see Table 8).
- In 2004 nearly 60% of people in Scotland had signed a petition, 30% attended a public meeting and just of a quarter had given to a campaign.
- 13% of people in Scotland have gone on a demonstration.
- In the 2004 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey around a quarter of people in Scotland reported not having been involved in any form of civic participation.

Attitudes to participation

- Barriers to civic participation include a lack of awareness of the opportunities to participate, not being sure of one's ability to participate, personal preferences and perceptions about the participation process e.g. scepticism about consultations.
- "Survey respondents were asked about their views on consultation. On the one hand, respondents felt that government should consult on policy issues – even those that were manifesto issues – but on the other hand were sceptical about the value (of) consultation. Just over half (52%) felt that there is little point in participating because the decisions have been made already" (Hope and King, 2005:7).
- However this may be a result of the style of questioning, for example in the same study over half of the group that agreed there was no point in participating, said they would nonetheless be likely to participate in future Scottish Executive consultations.

- More information is the factor that is most likely to help people participate in government decision-making.

INTRODUCTION

1. In the context of the French and Dutch referenda in which votes in those countries rejected the proposed constitution for the EU, the European Commission's Vice-President Margot Wallström and Scotland's First Minister announced the *Building a Bridge* project in October 2005. The aim is to look at how the experiences of Scotland, as a region with legislative powers and a new system of government, might help the EU connect better with its citizens. To that end, this project was included in the European Commission's White Paper on a European Communication Policy.

2. This is the first of three evidence review papers prepared to support the *Building a Bridge* project. The three papers draw across a wide evidence base and have focused, where possible, on detailing the evidence of Scottish political attitudes and nature of engagement in order to shed light on the Scottish case-studies and events which form the central part of the report itself.

3. The review process involved three key steps; consultation with key agencies and academics, an analysis of the existing literature using specific search terms and, finally, it involved disaggregating Scottish data from surveys carried out across European member states such as the European Social Survey and Eurobarometer.

4. This first paper focuses on trust in political institutions and civic participation. It compares Scottish, UK and European levels of trust and participation, with the aim of setting Scottish levels of political activity within the context of Europe as a whole. The paper also devotes some time to more depth studies which explore attitudes to civic participation and barriers to such participation.

LEVELS OF TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS AMONGST THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC

Trust in institutions: Scotland and the UK compared

5. People living in Scotland have similar levels of trust to the people of the UK as a whole. Trust is a great deal stronger in radio and television than it is in press media. Both the European Commission and the British Parliament are trusted more than political parties. The Scots are, however, slightly less trusting than UK residents as a whole in relation to most institutions (see Table 1 below).

6. People in the United Kingdom tend to trust the United Nations and Non-Governmental Organisations more than they trust their own governments or parliaments. Evidence from successive Eurobarometers suggest that whilst trust in voluntary organisations, charities and NGOs more generally is increasing over time, trust in the British government is currently in decline. Scottish people's views follow this trend.

Table 1. Trust in Institutions – Scotland and United Kingdom 2004

Type of Institution	Scotland Percentage who trust	United Kingdom Percentage who trust
Radio	52%	59%
TV	50%	54%
Trade Unions	45%	46%
British Parliament	41%	44%
European Commission	36%	37%
British government	34%	36%
Big companies	20%	24%
Press	15%	18%
Political parties	15%	18%
Sample	519	6001

(Source: FCSD-Analytical Services using Flash Eurobarometer 184 - 2005)¹

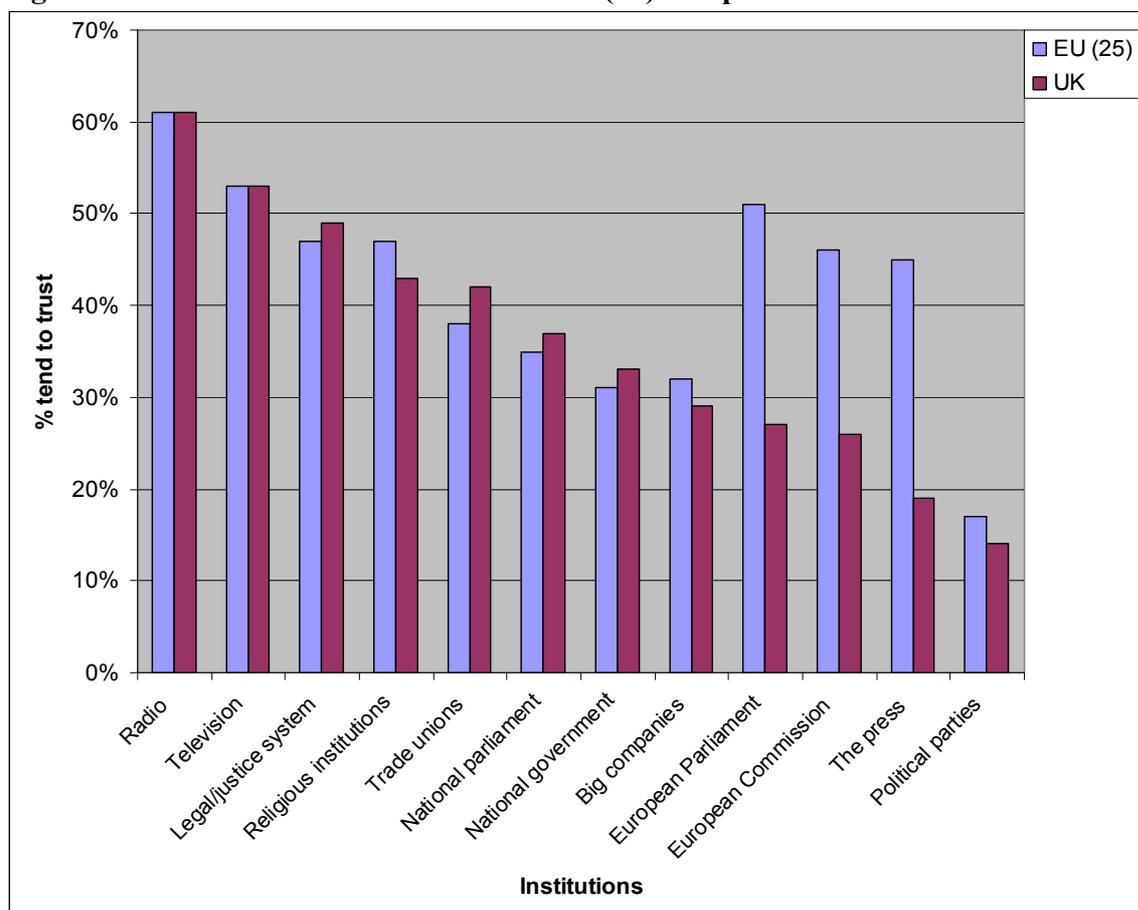
7. People in the United Kingdom tend to trust the United Nations and Non-Governmental Organisations more than they trust their own governments or parliaments. Evidence from successive Eurobarometers suggest that whilst trust in voluntary organisations, charities and NGOs more generally is increasing over time, trust in the British government is currently in decline. Scottish people's views follow this trend.

Trust in institutions: UK and the EU compared

8. Levels of trust in the UK are largely similar to the EU(25) average. However, people within the United Kingdom are currently much less likely to trust the European Parliament or the European Commission than people elsewhere in EU(25); they are also much less likely to trust their own press media (see Figure 2). Euroscepticism amongst people in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom is an issue taken up in Evidence Review Paper Two 'Attitudes towards Europe and challenges in communicating Europe'.

¹ Caution needs to be exercised when looking at Scottish samples within Eurobarometer surveys as these views may have been gathered from a small number of places and not be representative of Scotland as a whole.

Figure 2. Trust in institutions - UK and EU (25) compared



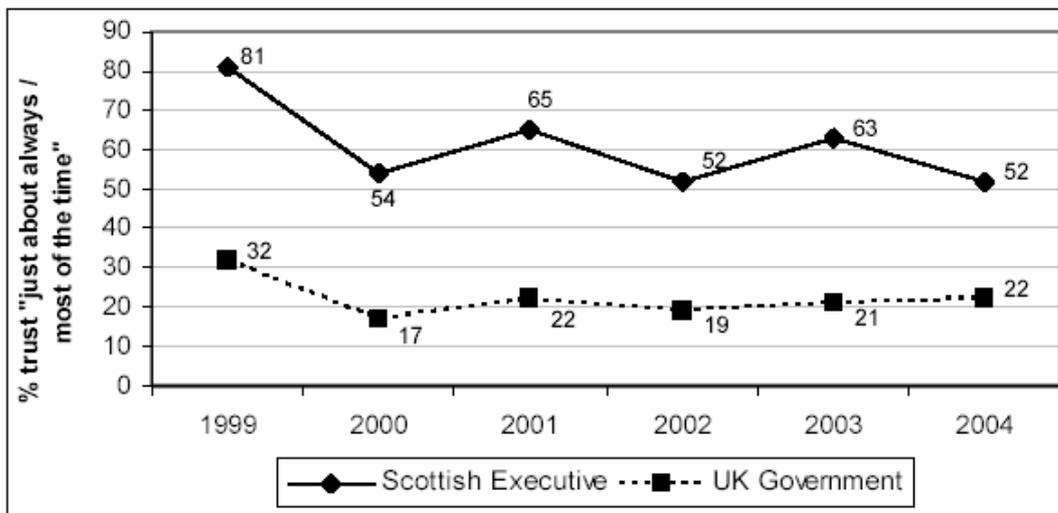
(Source: Scottish Executive: FCSD- Analytical Services using Standard Eurobarometer 65-2006)

People’s trust in the new political institutions of Scotland

“Campaigners for the Scottish Parliament had a vision that the Scottish political system would inspire trust and confidence among members of the public”(Scottish Civic Forum, 2002:6).

9. Since its creation in 1999 people in Scotland have consistently trusted the Scottish Executive more than the UK government to look after Scotland’s long term interests. Whilst the initial optimism has been tempered, and trust in the Scottish Executive fluctuates year on year, the Scottish Executive so far has not been associated with the steady decline in trust which is occurring with the UK Government or Parliament. Figure 3 demonstrates that trust in the UK government to work towards Scotland’s best long term interests remains steady.

Figure 3: Trust in the UK Government and Scottish Executive, 1999-2004



Source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2005:16) Question: How much do you trust the UK government/Scottish Executive to work in Scotland's (best) long-term interest?

Summary

10. There is little difference between the levels of trust in Scotland and the UK as a whole. However, the evidence demonstrates that the new Scottish institutions are more trusted than the UK government (whose trust is in decline). This may be partly a question of proximity or may suggest that there is something qualitatively different about the new devolved institutions that helps inspire trust. It is worth noting, though, that people often remain confused about the difference between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive². Levels of trust in the UK do not vary greatly from levels of trust across the EU(25), except in relation to EU institutions and the press media. As Eurobarometer notes this may be due to the partisan nature of British newspapers. Generally, there is more trust in non-traditional political institutions such as NGOs as opposed to actual governments and political parties.

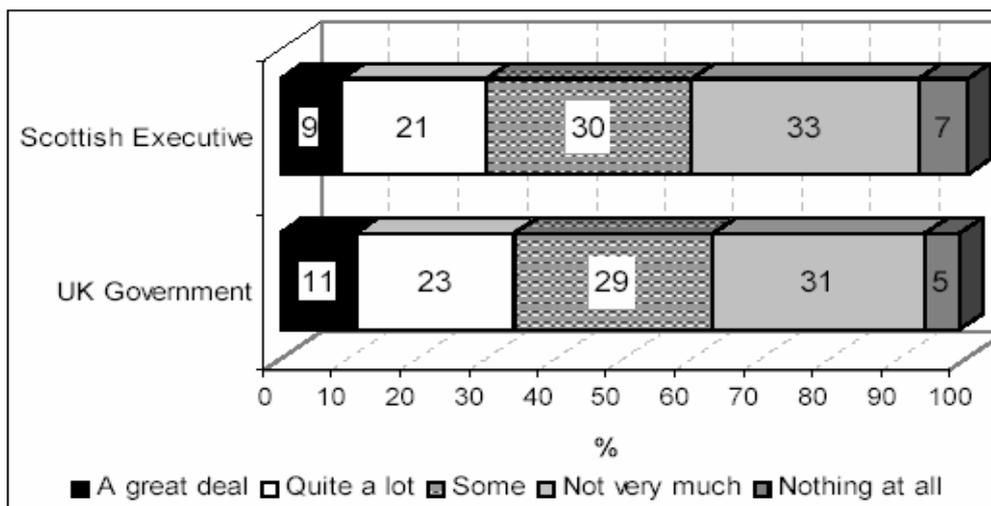
AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

11. People in Scotland report more or less the same knowledge about the activities of the Scottish Executive and the UK Government. Knowledge of either institution's activities is evenly distributed between people who know something, people who know quite a lot and people who remain relatively ignorant. It remains a minority of people who would describe themselves as knowing 'quite a lot or a great deal' about the activities of either institution.

12. People have the most knowledge about the work of local councillors followed by knowledge about MPs. Knowledge about the work of MSPs was not too far behind MPs, with 21% saying they 'know a lot or a fair amount' about MSPs' work in comparison with 29% in relation to MPs (Hope and King, 2005:4).

² Bromley & Given (2005) in Scottish Social Attitudes Survey

Figure 4. Knowledge of Scottish Executive and UK Government activities over the last year (2004)



Source: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2004) Questions: How much have you heard about the work of the Scottish Executive/UK government over the last twelve months?

13. It is interesting to note that, amongst young people, knowledge about MSPs is higher than knowledge of MPs – the extent of young people’s trust in political institutions and involvement in political processes is reviewed in Evidence Review Paper Three. Knowledge of MEPs, despite the fact that the European parliament has existed for over 25 years, is however lower than knowledge of either community councillors or MSPs, demonstrating further evidence of the democratic deficit discussed within the context of the period of reflection on Europe. Again, young people, have the most awareness of what MEPs do.

14. The greater awareness of the work of local councillors is most notable amongst the over 45s (see Table 5). In general, it could be suggested that the level of awareness of what local councillors do demonstrates the importance of the local context of politics to people and their lives.

Table 5: Knowledge of the work of representatives by age of respondent (% saying ‘a lot’ or ‘a fair amount’)

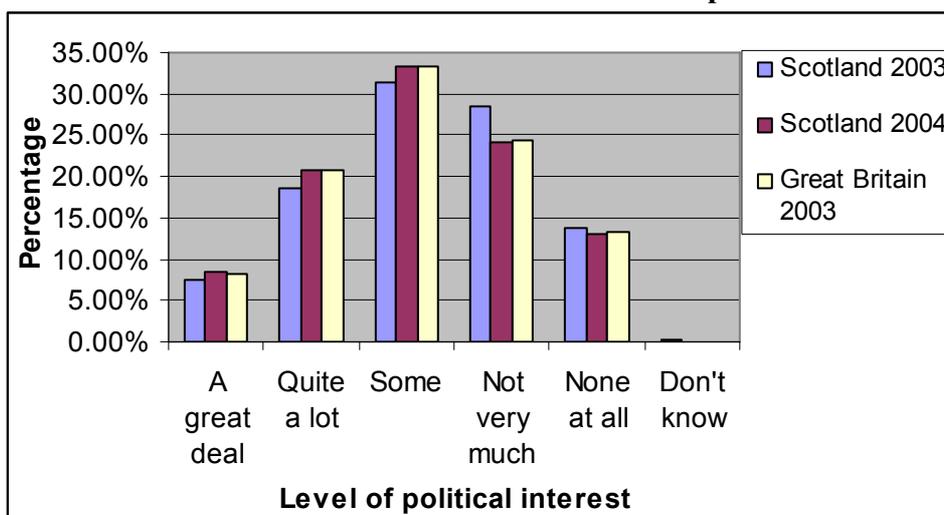
	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 59	60 to 74	75 plus	All
MP	22	20	27	35	38	23	29
MSP	25	18	20	24	24	7	21
MEP	12	7	4	8	8	3	7
Local councillor	27	26	31	41	46	35	35
Community Councillor	14	15	16	25	30	20	20

Source: Table 2, Hope and King, (2005:4), Question: How much do you feel you know about what each of the following does?

Interest in politics

15. Comparisons between the British Social Attitudes data and Scottish Social Attitudes data demonstrates that people generally have either ‘some interest’ or ‘quite a lot of interest’ in politics (see Figure 6) with about a third of people having ‘little’ or ‘no interest’ in politics – this trend is the same in both Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole.

Figure 6: Political interest – Scotland and Great Britain compared



Source: Scottish Executive – FCSD – Analytical Services using British Social Attitudes Survey (2003) (n = 4432) and Scottish Social Attitude Surveys (2003) (n=1508), and (2004) (n=1637).

Factors affecting trust, interest and awareness

16. Age, sex, where people live, type of employment, and political affiliation all affect people’s levels of interest in politics, trust and awareness of political institutions and representatives.

17. Higher levels of education are associated with a higher interest in politics, a greater degree of trust in political institutions and a greater awareness of the activities of institutions. Men tend to report themselves as having a greater level of interest in politics.

18. People in remote areas have a greater awareness of the activities of both the Scottish Executive and UK Government, as do people in the public sector and people who are self-employed³.

19. Further factors affecting trust in the political institutions include political identification and constitutional preference, where supporters of the political party in power at the time tend to be more trusting than supporters of the opposition (Bromley and Curtice, 2002). In Scotland, people’s constitutional preferences also play a part in understanding levels of trust (Bromley and Given, 2005:17)

Summary

20. People in Scotland are broadly similar in their awareness and interest in politics to people in Britain as a whole. The Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament have made their way into people's awareness. A possible generational change may be occurring, with the youngest age group being the most aware of MSPs. The public have a greater awareness of local councillors, suggesting the importance of the local context to people's appreciation of politics.

³ Bromley & Given (2005) in Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, Electoral Commission and Hansard Society, (2005).

PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

21. This section describes levels of voting and then offers a comparative analysis of other types of political participation. The review takes as its departure point a definition of *political participation* as "any action that tries to influence and impact on the political and policy process". Civic participation is understood as a form of political participation.

22. Civic participation is understood as

“The involvement by the public in the policy-making process other than through their elected representatives. The scope is all policy areas, economic as well as social. The ‘public’ includes representative and other organisations from the different sectors as well as individuals as citizens. Civic participation is approached as a manifestation of *participative* democracy rather than as *representative* democracy. The tools of civic participation are mainly those of *consultation*” (Scottish Executive Policy Unit, 2000:4).

23. Today there is increased recognition of the role played by civil society (commonly understood as the sphere of citizens separate from government and the economy) in fostering democracy. Recognising the role of civic participation leads to a broadening out of the political from traditional actions such as voting. This chimes with the notable move away from party politics to issue politics, as evidenced by the rise of single issue campaigns and decline in political party memberships.

24. Whiteley (2004) makes a useful distinction between different types of participation undertaken by citizens: *individualistic* participation, where people act independently and do not need to be part of an organisation; *collectivist* participation, where people act as part of a collective; and *contact* participation, where people engage through contacting state officials or representatives – this can be either as individuals or as a part of a collective.

Voting

25. Across Western Europe national parliament election turnout has generally declined since the early to mid 1990s (Ellis, 2000:8). Factors explaining levels of turnout include: the kind of electoral system; when elections are held; the proximity of voters to representatives; how long elections have been established; obligation/legal compulsion to vote; frequency of calls to vote; mobility; education and income (Ellis, 2004:8-9; Rose 2004:20).

26. Scottish election turnout does not differ greatly to the UK average, but turnout in Scotland for the 2005 and 2001 general elections have been slightly less than the UK average (see table 7 below). Slightly more people in Scotland turn out to general elections than Scottish Parliament elections. The last two European Parliament elections attracted the lowest turnout in both Scotland and across the UK.

27. This behaviour contrasts with people’s attitudes towards the importance of voting where the vast majority of people in Scotland (around 80%) think that it is very important or fairly important to vote in elections whether local, Scottish or General. A lower percentage - although still a majority at 64% - also hold this view for European Parliament elections (Scottish Social attitudes survey, 2004)

Table 7. UK and Scottish turnout at elections 1999-2005

Election	2005 General	2004 European	2003 Scottish	2003 Local	2001 General	1999 European	1999 Scottish	1999 Local
Country								
UK	61.4%	38.83%			59.4%	24%		
Scotland	60.8%	30.75%	49.4%	49.6%	58.1%	24.7%	58.2%	59.58 %

Sources: FCSD: Analytical Services

Other kinds of political participation: UK compared with Europe

28. Examination of other kinds of political participation reveals that the most common activity in the UK is signing a petition, followed by boycotting certain products and then contacting politicians or officials. Fundamentally, these are largely individualistic and contact rather than collectivistic actions. The UK is below the European average on collectivist action (Whiteley, 2004:37) and seems to favour individualistic forms of participation. In terms of *contact* activities, participation in the UK is similar to the rest of Europe in relation to contacting a politician or government official.

Table 8: Participation by citizens over the last 12 months: Europe⁴ and UK compared

Country	UK	European average	High	Low
Type of Participation in last 12 months				
Signed petition	35.54%	24.5%	Iceland 48.76%	Greece 2.95%
Boycotted certain products	20.58%	16.2%	Sweden 34.75%	Ukraine 1.79%
Contacted politician or government official	14.94%	12.5%	Iceland 30.30%	Portugal 5.46%
Worked in another organisation or association	7.98%	13.1%	Iceland 49.47%	Slovenia 1.68%
Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker	7.5%	8.1%	Iceland 34.4%	Hungary 1.34%
Taken part in a lawful demonstration	3.75%	10.8%	Ukraine 21.69%	=Hungary Slovenia, 1.61%
Worked in political party or action group	2.22%	4.0%	Iceland 14.24%	0.94% Hungary

Source: Scottish Executive – FCSD – Analytical Services using European Social Survey 2004/2005

⁴ It should be noted that not all European countries are included in the sample. Countries covered include: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom

Other kinds of political participation: Scotland and Britain compared

29. Scottish research shows that ‘signing a petition’ is the most common participation activity (see Table 9). Again, individualistic actions are more prominent than collectivist forms of participation, although going on a protest or demonstration appears to do better in this survey than within the domestic surveys.

30. Chequebook participation (see Jordan and Malonely, 1997) in the form of giving money to campaign/organisation featured more highly than joining an organisation, taking part in a campaign, raising an issue in an organisation or forming a group of like-minded people. Thus, for the greater number of people who donate to campaigns/organisations, as opposed to the smaller number who actually participate in organisations, participation, it could be argued, is in effect contracted out.

Table 9. Participation in Scotland (% of respondents who had participated in the different activities)

Type of participation	Participated
Signed a petition	59.2%
Attended a public meeting	30.5%
Given money to campaign/organisation	26.5%
Contacted an MP or MSP	24.1%
Spoken to an influential person	15.3%
Gone on a protest or demonstration	13.1%
Responded to a consultation document	12.8%
Contacted a government department directly	11.2%
Attended an event organised as part of a consultation exercise	10.1%
Actively took part in campaign (e.g. leafleting, stuffing envelopes etc.)	9.2%
Joined an existing organisation	8.8%
Contacted radio, TV, or a newspaper	8.7%
Raised issue in an organisation I belong to	7.5%
Formed a group of like-minded people	4.7%
No have not done any of these	25.7%

Sources: Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSAS) 2004 (n = 1637). Question: Have you ever done any of the things on this card as a way of registering what you personally thought about an issue? People can tick as many as they like.

31. When compared to surveys of British people in the same year there are broadly similar patterns of participation. This further evidence indicates that people in Britain as a whole favour more individualistic forms of participation.

Levels of organisational membership/organised civil society participation

32. Evidence which examines people in Scotland’s membership of groups (see Table 10) suggested that the vast majority of people are no longer members of groups whether recreational, religious or political. The groups that most people are members of are sports/recreational and religious groups.

Table 10. Group membership by type of groups⁵ (% mentioned)⁶

Type of group membership	Scotland % Mentions	GB
Sports/recreation club	23.6%	19.7%
Religious/church group	14.6%	12.2%
Political parties/trade unions	7.6%	9.5%
Social club/working men's club	7.6%	9.3%
Education/arts/drama/evening class	6%	9.1%
Tenant's/residents group	4.3%	6.2%
Parent-teachers/board of governors	5.3%	6.7%
Environmental/conservation group	2.7%	4.7%
Group for older people e.g. lunch club	2.3%	2.7%
National/international group	3%	2.8%
Local groups which raise money for charity	2.3%	4.9%
Youth groups	3.3%	4%
Women's group/Women's Institute	2.3%	2.9%
Local community/voluntary group	2.3%	3.6%
Pressure group/campaigning group	1.3%	2.4%

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey (2003) Are you currently a member of, or do you regularly join in the activities of, any of the organisations on this card?

33. When people in Scotland are asked about which organisations or groups they have *actively engaged with* over the past 12 months, voluntary organisations, charity or community groups receive the most mention, followed by church, religious or faith based groups (the latter kind of group was similarly high in membership mentions in the British Social Attitudes Survey).

34. According to Hope and King's recent research in Scotland, involvement with campaigning groups appears to be relatively high in comparison to the percentage of members recorded in the British Social Attitudes survey. Active involvement with political parties, though, was low, with only 2% reporting involvement in the last 12 months. Further, there is a large proportion of people who have not been active in any of these groups (53%) (Hope and King, 2005:3), reaffirming that not only political participation but broader participation in organised civil society⁷ may be the preserve of a minority - albeit a significant minority - of the population. Generally, the evidence suggests that much of the civil participation that is occurring in Scotland is independent of government.

⁵ These figures may also mask the numbers of people who are members of two or more organisations in the same organisation category.

⁶ Small samples sizes mean that caution should be exercised when examining differences between Scotland and the UK. It is not possible for example to talk of statistically significant differences.

⁷ One indication of the level of non-organised activity in civil society (not discussed here) is the level of informal volunteering. Volunteer Development Scotland (2006:5) estimates some 81% of Scots do some form of informal volunteering.

Table 11. Involvement in community and voluntary organisations in the last 12 months, Scotland (% mentioning each)

Voluntary organisation, charity or community group	19
Church, Religious or Faith Based Group	14
Caring organisation (e.g. helping older people, people with disabilities)	8
Children's Group (e.g. playgroup, mothers and toddlers group)	8
Trade Union	8
Youth Group (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs etc.)	8
School Board or Parents Teachers Association	6
Tenants Group, Housing Association or Residents Association	5
Neighbourhood Watch Scheme	5
Campaigning organisation (e.g. pressure group)	5
Environmental Group	4
Community Council, Social Inclusion Partnership or Community Planning Partnership	4
Heritage Group (e.g. local history group, amenity society etc.)	4
Political Party	2
Other	1
None of these	53
Don't know	1

Source: Table 1, Hope and King (2005:3) Question: Which, if any, of these have you been actively involved with in the last 12 months?

Limits and barriers to participation - the role of choice

35. A useful distinction in explaining variations in levels of participation and engagement is to distinguish between *sociological* explanations and explanations which emphasize the *choice process* (Whiteley 2004). The former emphasises the role of family, education, class and community in shaping our participation. The latter highlights incentives, costs and benefits of participation. Whiteley, from his analysis of the 2000 UK Citizen Audit Survey, finds that both sociological and choice variables affect levels of participation.

36. The evidence for sociological factors is touched upon in this paper's analysis which identified differences in participation levels, for example between the deprived and well off. Whitely found more evidence for the role of choice in shaping participation concluding that measures designed to foster participation *can* potentially *impact*: "The fact that participation is driven more by choice variables than by structural variables makes it possible to promote participation successfully" (Whiteley, 2004:48).

37. There are a number of different barriers to participation that can be categorised in the following way:

- structural (not being aware of opportunities/unable to get to meetings)
- personal efficacy (being embarrassed about speaking out)
- personal considerations/preferences (lack of time, don't feel strongly about issues)
- perceptions of politics/participation (e.g. consultations are a waste of public money)

38. Perceptions of participation seem to play a key role. Hope and King (2005) found that a lack of awareness of opportunities, scepticism about the value of consultation (see Table 12 below) as well as quite simply 'not understanding the terms used' were all commonly cited as barriers to participation.

Table 12: Factors affecting involvement in decision-making by age of respondent (% mentioning each)

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	60-74	75 plus	Total
I'm not aware of ever having the opportunity	27	32	22	23	29	20	26
There is no point participating in consultations	17	18	25	27	27	30	24
I would feel embarrassed speaking out at a public meeting	17	14	14	16	13	14	15
I often don't understand the terms people use	19	10	16	13	13	13	14
Consultations allow me to influence Government decision making	5	13	20	20	11	6	14
They wouldn't be interested in opinions from people like me	7	8	12	10	21	16	12
I'd like to take part in public meetings, but generally can't get to them	10	15	17	14	4	4	12
I find it difficult to say just how I feel	12	10	11	10	11	12	11
People who respond know a lot more about the issues than I do	15	9	10	10	10	15	11
I trust those who have been elected to make these decisions for me	4	10	10	11	17	20	11
Consultations are a waste of public money	7	10	6	13	16	9	11
I generally don't feel strongly about issues	10	12	8	8	7	16	10
I don't have time to consider/take part in consultation exercises	8	17	8	8	3	1	8
I'm generally not very interested in the decisions	9	4	6	4	9	12	7
Politicians should make their own decisions	11	6	6	3	8	8	6
None of these	3	2	6	5	11	4	5
Don't know	10	4	0	3	3	5	4

Source: Table 9: Hope and King (2005: 10)

39. This might lead change-agents to emphasize information and communications campaigns to challenge such perceptions and make people aware of the issues. It is worth noting that self-perception or personal efficacy also featured quite highly.

40. Interestingly the same survey asked an open question about what would help individuals to participate in government decision-making and concluded that “those who were currently less involved were generally unable to identify anything that would encourage them to increase participation.” (Hope and King, 2005:2).

Table 13: Factors that would encourage participation by respondent's age (% mentioning each)

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-59	60-74	75 plus	Total
More information	28	34	37	29	24	20	30
Training	0	1	1	2	2	0	1
Support/assistance from Scottish Executive	0	2	1	1	1	1	1
Resources (e.g. internet access)	2	7	8	4	4	1	5
Translation services	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
More time	2	7	8	8	2	1	5
Other	12	15	21	18	17	5	16
Don't know	18	7	7	11	14	14	11
None of these	41	43	30	37	42	62	40

Source: Table 10 Hope and King (2005: 10) Question: Is there anything that would help you to participate in Government decision making?

41. The inability to offer ideas may be a feature of the open question. It is worth also noting that “over half of the respondents who agreed with the statement about their being no point in participating said they would, nonetheless, be likely to participate in future Scottish Executive consultation” (Hope and King, 2005:8).

Good participation

42. There are several themes that emerge from the literature on what constitutes good participation:

- An ability to input early on/throughout the process
- Feedback on how participants' input has been used:
"The lack of clarity about how response affects the development of legislation leads to suspicion that in some cases they do not affect it all." (Scottish Civic Forum, 2002: 83)
- Participation tailored for each project
- Special mechanisms and new thinking to foster engagement with "hard to reach" groups.

43. What constitutes good participation and good engagement will vary with the project at hand and the participatory mechanism deployed. For specific participatory mechanisms see Scottish Executive Policy Unit (2001) which outlines pros and cons of different participatory methods as well as Nicholson's (2005a) review of different kinds of participation.

Summary

44. Signing a petition is the most common form of civic participation in the UK and Scotland. When comparing participation in the UK and other European countries, the UK respondents seemed to be more engaged in individualistic than collectivistic forms of participation. This pattern was also evident in Scotland amongst those who registered the way they felt about an issue.

45. The evidence suggests that those interested in increasing participation would need to focus on those mechanisms designed for individuals rather than groups. This is further supported by the strikingly low membership of groups reported by people in both Scotland and Britain as a whole. However it may be that people join together to act collectively around specific issues or events such as the G8 Summit in Gleneagles. This phenomenon is not generally explored in the survey data that dominates the evidence base. As Whiteley notes, "mobilisation – the fact that people are asked to participate – plays an important role in influencing participation of all types" (Whiteley, 2004:47).

46. Change agents interested in increasing participation need to be aware of the role of adequate information in promoting participation as well as the role played by people's perceptions of participation, and the impact their participation might have.

ENGAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND'S POLICY-MAKING SYSTEM

47. The final aspect of participation and engagement reviewed by this first paper is people's actual engagement in Scotland's policy-making system. This section identifies the backdrop and context for citizen participation in the new devolved structures and discusses research on other regions and citizen participation as well as specific participatory mechanisms. Many of the studies mentioned here do not openly declare their methodology and appear rather as observations or perceptions derived from secondary literature. This is not unique to Scotland with the OECD finding that:

“No OECD country currently conducts a systematic evaluation of government performance in producing information, conducting consultation and engaging citizens in policy-making” (OECD, 2001:4).

48. Within Scotland the Consultative Steering Group and pre-devolution Scottish Constitutional Convention provide the natural starting point to explore Scotland’s policy-making processes and civic/public participation (see Lindsay 2000:406-407). It is worthwhile outlining this backdrop as it helps in understanding the current system in place.

Run up to devolution

49. The campaign for devolution was conducted largely through the vehicle of the Scottish Constitutional Convention that started in 1989 and comprised of sections of the voluntary sector, the churches, STUC and the non-governing political parties. In turn this body provided much of the momentum and many of the ideas for the devolution campaign and the eventual settlement.

50. The Scottish Consultative Steering Group (CSG), was given the task to flesh out the working methods/order of the Scottish Parliament and carried out its work under the guidance of four principles⁸, which the Scottish Parliament subsequently endorsed:

- the Scottish Parliament should embody and reflect the sharing of power between the people of Scotland, the legislators and the Scottish Executive;
- the Scottish Executive should be accountable to the Scottish Parliament and the Parliament and Executive should be accountable to the people of Scotland;
- the Scottish Parliament should be accessible, open, responsive, and develop procedures which make possible a participative approach to the development, consideration and scrutiny of policy and legislation;
- the Scottish Parliament in its operation and its appointments should recognise the need to promote equal opportunities for all.

51. These principles are often used as benchmarks for assessing the reality of the devolution (see for example Bonney, 2003:259; Scottish Civic Forum 2002). Of particular interest is the idea that power should be shared and that a “participative approach” to policy and legislation should be adopted. The Scottish Executive's obligations to consult and encourage the public to participate in its work are mostly informal. Further, the Race Relations Act requires consultation on certain issues (Nicholson, 2005:6). Nicholson (2005:6) posits that the Scottish Executive vision to modernise government helped to drive it to develop and use participatory mechanisms.

Regional comparisons – UK Regions

52. The active involvement of citizens and citizen groups in the new devolved structures is by no means a Scottish only prerogative. In comparison to Wales, the Greater London Assembly and Northern Ireland, Scotland has the most informal set up, having a concordat (referred to as a "compact") with the voluntary sector, which lends itself to accountability and flexibility. In contrast, the devolved assemblies in Northern Ireland and Wales have formal

⁸ See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents-w5/rcsg-04.htm>

obligations to either consult or partake in dialogue (Lindsay, 2000:409). However, the new civic forum structures do have aspects in common:

“All claim that civic organisations are important channels of public participation. They attract far more citizen involvement than do political parties. They work on important contribution to policy debates” (Lindsay, 2000:409).

53. The findings of a CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation) civil society index study conducted in both Scotland and Wales⁹, found Scottish Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) received a high score for influencing public policy (Shah, 2006:55). The Welsh CSOs, however, were seen to be good at putting issues on the policy agenda but were not able to influence government policy (WCVA, 2002:33).

54. However, the Scottish finding must be viewed with caution as assessment of success in changing policy is often based on anecdotal evidence rather than systematic tracking or evaluation. With this in mind, it is worth noting Shah's comment that “Anecdotally, this role [in influencing Public Policy] appears to have grown in strength and the scale of civil society representation and policy influencing appears to have increased”(Shah, 2006:55). The study's advisory group attributes this high level of Scottish civil society impact to the role of civil society in giving evidence to parliamentary committees (Shah, 2002: 62).

55. The Scottish study also lacked evidence to assess whether civil society holds the state to account but it was felt that Scotland was relatively weak in this area. The Welsh report found that "the state is seen to play a positive role by requesting civil society organisation to be involved in policy formulation (particularly at a national level), requesting civil society's independence and recognising people who have shown great public service in civil society" (WCVA, 2002:3).

Regional Analysis - European regions

56. There is, as yet, relatively little analysis which examines the relationship between sub-national authorities and political participation. Painter (2003) in his analysis on European citizenship and the particular regions (Scotland, Catalonia, Upper Silesia, Veneto) found that civil society is regionalising in all four regions. He identifies Scotland as having "perhaps the strongest 'regional civil society'" (Painter, 2003:16).

57. The existence of regional government equally can be associated with the curtailing of NGOs. Reilly, with a specific focus on European Structural Funds, compares Lower Saxony and Germany, Catalonia and Spain, West Midlands and Great Britain, and notes that "the existence of a regional government tends to inhibit innovation and certainly excludes a range of actors in Catalonia and Lower Saxony to an extent that would not otherwise have been tolerated in the West Midlands" (Reilly, 2001:13). He found that the lack of formality, localisation and flexibility, political constraints and fuller understanding of partnerships within the English system has allowed West Midlands to bring together and consult with a range of subnational actors (including voluntary and business groups).

⁹ The Welsh study was part of a pilot of the index framework and was a survey conducted in 2002, whereas the Scottish study was released in 2006 on the back of interviews, consultations, an advisory group and secondary literature.

The current nature of Scotland's civic participation

58. As discussed, Scottish civic interests and groups played a role in shaping the current system of Scottish governance today (Jones, 1999; Lindsay, 2000; Paterson 2002). The activity of civil society in the devolution process also led to the establishment of a Scottish Civic Forum (a network of organisations) set up to engage with the new Scottish devolved structures.

59. Bonney examined the extent of a participatory democracy in the Scottish Parliament. Explaining that 'participatory democracy' "[aims] to include in the political process those 'who do not currently engage' by means of visit to various localities around Scotland, consultation mechanisms, the provision of educational and information services and the extensive use of information and communications technologies (ICT)" (Bonney, 2003:459).

60. Bonney draws attention to efforts of the parliament to hold meetings outside Edinburgh and the existence of key stakeholder groups such as the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations. Bonney, like Paterson, argues that "civic" participation with the Scottish Parliament is largely confined to organised interests or "stakeholders" and that this risks preserving "the status quo rather than produce major change" (Bonney, 2003: 466)

61. This does seem to be partly the case, with commentators noting that groups with regular access to the Scottish Executive for instance "tend to be the small elite of relatively 'large nationals'" (Burt and Taylor, 2002:88). Yet Ford and Casebow (2002) comment that the Scottish Executive is effective at bringing together such stakeholders, drawing on the examples of foot and mouth disease in Dumfries and student tuition fees.

62. Returning to the Scottish Parliament, outsider organisations tend to have lower expectations of public engagement with the Scottish Parliament and its committees (McLaverty, Morris and Strangward, 2004:16). There does, however, seem to be a consensus that the level of consultation between groups/citizens and Scottish political institutions has increased post-devolution (Jones, 1999; Paterson, 2002b:59; Scottish Civic Forum 2002, 2003). Further, 79% of respondents to a survey of SCF members reported an increased level of contact with the Scottish government post-devolution.

63. The SFC argue that in 2002 "overall, there is a fairly strong sense of satisfaction with the Executive's effort to engage with civic society" (SCF, 2002:75). The SCF's analysis of the new democratic structures in 2002 does throw up concrete examples and statements that groups and organisations have made a difference and have been able to influence the legislative process. For example, the first bill introduced by a committee - the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Bill - was the result of lobbying from women's organisations:

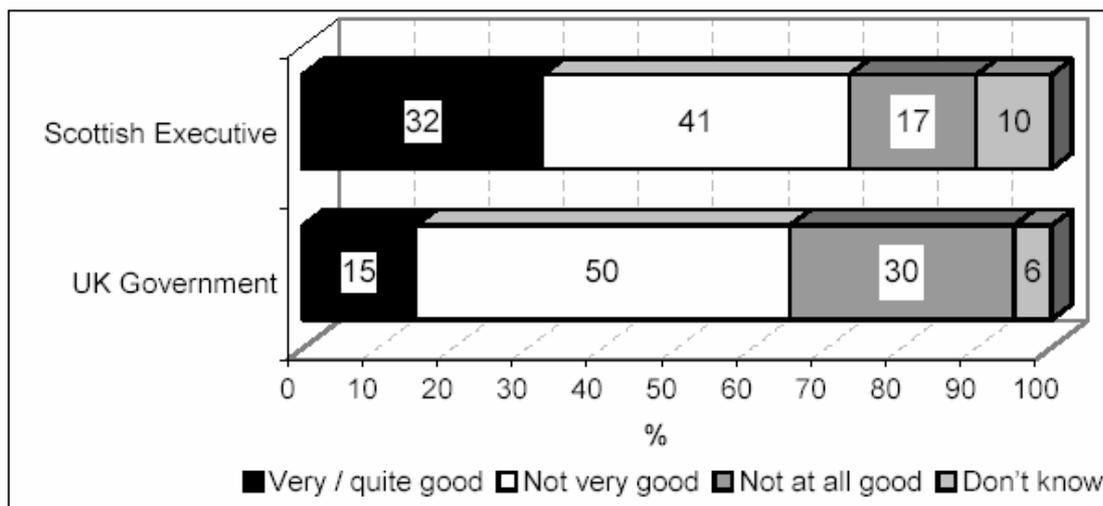
"By teaching themselves about the legislative process and the way the Parliament works, persevering and running a focused campaign, they raised the profile of an issue to the extent that they were mentioned by name in the debate which saw the law passed" (Scottish Civic Forum, 2002:21).

64. On the negative side, the SCF study found that the bill process is complicated and there is a lack of information about how responses to consultation are treated by the Executive. Groups do not see how their response effects policy and that views are often sought to late in the policy process (SCF, 2002). This lack of concern about how people's

responses are treated is echoed elsewhere in more general concerns about how good the Scottish Executive is at listening to people's views. For example, 52% of the people Hope and King surveyed “felt that there is little point in participating because the decisions have been made already” (Hope and King 2005:7).

65. The 2005 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey found that almost 60% of respondents felt that the Scottish Executive was ‘not very good’ or ‘not good at all at listening to people's views’ (see Figure 14). The Scottish Executive is however seen to better at listening than the UK government.

Figure 14: How good is the Scottish Executive/UK Government at listening to people's views?



Source: Figure 4.2 Bromley and Given (2005:28)

66. Furthermore, the idea discussed previously that it is *groups* who are already engaged may be self-perpetuating, with the results of public survey finding that when people were asked to what extent they wished to be engaged, most people agreed with the statement "I like to know what the {institution} is doing but happy to let them get on with their job" (Hope and King, 2005:5).

67. Much of the current analysis on the Scottish Parliament’s attempts at engaging the public is positive “There is also a widespread, though not unanimous, view that the committees have made considerable progress in respect of engaging with the public." (McLaverly, Morris and Strangward, 2004:46). Indeed, people found clerks and MSPs on committees to be accessible (McLaverly, Morris and Strangward, 2004:16).

68. The nature of Scottish Executive "civic participation" activities has been researched by Nicholson (2005b).¹⁰ This research found that the most commonly mentioned activity was written consultation (39%) with “just over half aimed at seeking views on policy options, documents and rationales” (Nicholson, 2005b:3). Moreover, many of the activities were conventional forms of participation such as meetings. Nicholson points to the relatively ineffective nature of written consultations and meetings, with focus groups instead seen to being the most effective in meeting aims.

¹⁰ Methods included: a survey and telephone interviews with Scottish Executive officials and comments on CRES (an internal Scottish Executive Consultation Registration and Evaluation System). The survey responses referred to 273 civic participation activities to support 191 policy initiatives.

69. More generally, the research found that, with the exception of focus groups and opinion surveys, “such early “experimentation” [such as people’s panels and citizen juries] has been replaced with a greater adherence to more conventional forms of activity such as seminars and meetings” (Nicholson, 2005:16). This may not necessarily be a bad thing with traditional methods (excluding web-based approaches) frequently mentioned when members of the Scottish public were asked how they would prefer to make their opinions known (Hope and King, 2005:11).¹¹

70. The most common targets for participation activities were public authorities, legal/justice groups, health boards and local enterprise companies. Perhaps then it is unsurprising that the research revealed “[a]mongst the gaps in achieved targets of civic participation activities, individual members of the public and members of minority ethnic communities, faith groups and their representatives emerged as most prominent” (Nicholson, 2005:24). Such sentiments do concur with the idea that the new structures are geared up for interest group engagement rather than individual citizen participation.

71. Once more, the public’s perception that involvement does not influence decisions appears to be partly justified with “fewer than half (45%) of the civic participation activity undertaken in 2004 were reported as having “highly influenced” or “very highly influenced” their respective policy initiative” (Nicholson, 2005:4). Focus groups and deliberative approaches instead were seen as more influential (Nicholson, 2005:4).

Table 15: How respondents would prefer to make their opinions known, Scotland (% mentioning each)

Write a letter	35
Attend a public meeting	19
Send an e-mail	17
Complete a survey like this	17
Fill in a form on the internet/world wide web	10
Give my opinion at a public meeting	8
Respond by post to information leaflets through the door	8
Telephone	8
Attend a focus group/interview as part of a group	5
Use a bulletin board	1
Other	10
Don't know	14

Source: Table 11, Hope and King (2005:11) Question: If you were to take part in government decision making of some kind about an important issue, how would you prefer to make your opinions known?

72. Nicholson’s work did, however, note examples of good practice in civic participation including the older people’s unit special webpages and newsletter as well as a regular older people’s consultative forum (representative of main older people’s organisations) which meets with Minister and officials.

¹¹ The question is however limited as it excludes the more novel ways to express opinions via juries etc.

Tensions between representative democracy and participatory democracy

73. The apparent tensions between representative and participative democracy is an issue that is discussed in the literature on the role of civic participation in Scotland (see McLaverty Morris and Strangward, 2004). This revolves around the apparent contradictions in the CSG principle's commitment to "power-sharing" and including citizens in policy-making and the legitimacy of the parliament which rests on elections and representatives elected on party political platforms. In other words, the Scottish Parliament is composed of elected representatives, who were elected to fulfil a mandate on the back of widescale citizen (electoral) participation. Therefore, it is argued, only elected representatives should make the decision about policy and legislation, and thus the role of civil groups and citizens must be limited in a representative democratic system.

74. Others argue civic participation can be a way of keeping the government more responsive, a way of proofing policy. Beetham et al (2002) criticise the over sharp contradiction between direct (participatory) and representative democracy, arguing that continuous citizen participation ensures that representative government works more democratically in the long periods between elections" (Beetham et al, 2002:209).

Information about the new institutions

75. The provision of information about the new institutions and their participatory mechanisms is important if people are to be able to see what is going on in order to participate. The Scottish Civic Forum (2002) points out that the Parliament is fairly transparent, making available most of its information. The Scottish Parliament's website has also hosted discussion forums, MSPs have individual email addresses and petitions can be submitted electronically. The Scottish Executive also posts forthcoming, current and past consultations on its website and has a weekly email alert on consultations called seConsult. The Scottish Parliament has a partner library network but the Scottish Civic Forum (2002) found that up take and advertisement was low, despite there being interest in the scheme from further afield:

“the network has attracted a good deal of interest outside Scotland: it is being used as a model for the development of similar schemes in Slovakia, Northern Ireland and Wales and was commented on very favourably by researchers on the US system" (Sheehy and Sevetson, 2001, cited in Scottish Civic Forum, 2002:16).

76. Indeed the low level of interest is reflected in the lack of awareness of the Scottish Parliamentary Library Network. In response to a survey question that asked about whether respondents were aware of different information sources, the Scottish Executive's website and then Scottish Parliament's website came out on top (see Table 16 below), with just 7% of people reporting awareness of the SPLN. The education services and school visits section of the Scottish Parliament are however seen to be popular and successful by members of the Scottish Civic Forum.

Table 16: Awareness of information sources and consultation resources (% aware of each)

Scottish Executive website	35
Scottish Parliament website	34
Public Internet Access Points	24
Scottish Executive Consultation website	10
The Scottish Parliament Library Network	7
seConsult	3
None of these	48
Don't know	3

Source: Table 12, Hope and King (2005:12) Question: Can you tell me, are you aware of any of the following items on this list?

Specific participatory mechanisms

- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- Petitions
- Social Inclusion Partnerships – citizen panels and citizen juries

77. There are a range of specific participatory mechanisms which have received special attention. This section outlines on Freedom of Information, petitions, social inclusion partnerships and SE/SP use of the Internet.

- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

78. The Freedom of Information Act, which allows citizens to access information held by Scottish public authorities (in line with the rest of the UK) came into force in January 2005. There has been increased awareness of the act and use over time. Survey work in 2005 found that 57% of respondents in October 2005 definitely having heard of the act (as compared to 49% in April 2005) and 8% (up from 4% in April 2005) having made a written request for information that a public authority holds (Scottish Information Commissioner, 2005:2-3, 5).

- Petitions

79. The Public Petitions Committee considered a wide range of over 800 petitions in its first 6 years and interest in petitions has increased (Adams, Macintosh and Johnston 2005:4):

“The e-petition process was nominated for a eEurope award for e-government and also provided inspiration for the German Bundstag epetition system” (e-government news, 2005:1).

- Social Inclusion Partnerships – citizen panels and citizen juries

80. Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) are broadly based partnerships which have the local community at their heart and work along thematic and geographic lines on a range of subjects. Funding for citizens' panels¹² was offered to all 34 SIPs, and 24 SIPs ran panels¹³.

¹² “People’s Juries represent an intensive but limited form of community engagement involving a relatively small number of people, focusing on a single issue for a short period of time” (Stevenson, Gibson and Lardner, 2004:iii).

¹³ Citizen’s Panels consist of a broadly “representative” cross section of the community, who can be surveyed on particular issues or drawn on for participants for other consultative mechanisms.

Citizens' juries, which are generally more deliberative than panels, were piloted in two SIPs and then all SIPs were offered funding for these.

81. Research on the juries found that they could be an effective participatory approach to involve people who do not usually get involved (Stevenson, Gibson and Lardner, 2004). However, it was difficult to identify where juries had impacted upon decision-making, as many of the topics they studied, and consequently their recommendations, were very general.

82. Examples of citizens' panels being influential were also found. The research highlighted a number of issues - including the need for resources - which would need to be addressed in order to make panels and juries effective. Participants of both juries and panels "generally viewed the experience positively... If anything, people wanted to be more involved and consulted more often" (Stevenson, Gibson and Lardner, 2004:v). The researchers concluded that panels and juries are effective methods for community engagement if used appropriately (Stevenson, Gibson and Lardner, 2004).

83. Follow-up research on the pilot citizens' juries was conducted six months later and found that the citizen's juries had increased participants' knowledge and their interest in being involved in community groups. The research noted that "the majority confirmed that participating in the Jury process had increased their understanding of consultation methods and particularly how these might be used to inform debate" (Rennie, 2001:1). There was a range of factors affecting progress, including the extent to which the recommended action was in line with organisational priorities, the timing of the jury and the inclusion of jury stakeholders with enough seniority and commitment to create progress. It was again hard to attribute policy change directly to jury activity.

- Internet

84. There is not enough space in this review to fully assess the role that the Internet is now playing in civic participation. However, according to the survey data outlined earlier, the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament websites are two sources of information which have relatively high levels of awareness among Scots. The Parliament hosts on-line discussions, petitions be signed and sent in electronically and MSPs can be emailed.

85. Hope and King note that in Scotland there are still significant limitations to the Internet as a means to facilitate participation, as people still prefer to receive information in traditional media forms and that "awareness of internet-based resources was low among respondents in the more deprived areas in particular" (Hope and King, 2005:15). However, the internet may help solve some of the problems of participation associated with geographic isolation in rural areas, with rural respondents being keener to receive information via the web.

86. Other survey work has reinforced the finding that not all people are keen to use/have access to the Internet. Analysis of the British Social Attitudes Survey found that "socio-economic factors such as education, income and social class are all significant predictors of whether or not someone used the internet" (Bromley, 2004:76). There is also a big divide in generational usage. There is also higher levels of political participation among those with a great interest in politics and who are long term Internet users (Curtice and Norris, 2004:111). The extent to which the internet can reach the public as a whole today remains limited:

“So although the Internet may help increase the level of political efficacy amongst a minority, it is unlikely to transform levels of political efficacy amongst the public as a whole” (Curtice and Norris, 2004: 113).

However with the advent of podcasting and other advances a full understanding of the capacity of the internet remains elusive and there seems to be value in further research to evaluate the internet’s potential role in increasing political engagement.

CONCLUSION

87. Much of the evidence on civic participation in Scotland's policy-making system is incomplete, providing a partial picture. What is evident is that both the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament have increased opportunities for participation with citizens and civil society groups and there is some evidence of increased participation (amongst groups in particular). The Scottish Executive is seen to be better at listening to citizens’ concerns than the UK government, although 60% still believe it is not particularly good at listening. There is also a lack of comparative data looking at citizen participation across different European regions. There is, though, some scepticism over the value of consultation and there are gaps in citizen participation identified by those involved in the policy process.

88. Nevertheless the review demonstrates that Scottish governance and perhaps the nearness of the Scottish Executive to people’s everyday life has led to relatively high levels of trust in Scottish political institutions and relatively high levels of knowledge. This is thrown into sharp relief when these two dimensions are examined in relation to EU institutions in review paper two – *Attitudes towards Europe and challenges in communicating Europe*. Low levels of trust in and knowledge of EU institutions could suggest there is value in further dialogue between the EU and the regions on their developing techniques for civic participation.

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N =4432

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N =1320
Fieldwork October 2005.

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N of Brits Interviewed = 1897
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Number of Scots = 500, weighted 519,
N= 6001.
Fieldwork 1 December 2004 - 6 January 2005

Flash Eurobarometer, (2003), *The United Kingdom & the European Union (November 2002)*, No. 137,
Number of Scots=500, weighted 522,
N=6029
Fieldwork 8-26 November 2002
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N = 1508

Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2004)
N =1637
Fieldwork July 2004 - November 2004.

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