Why Wales Said Yes
The 2011 Referendum

Roger Scully
Aberystwyth, 24th June 2011
Outline of Seminar

1. Introduction
2. The 2011 Referendum: the Result
3. The 2011 Welsh Referendum Study
4. The Referendum Campaign
5. Voting in the Referendum:
   - Who Voted?
   - Who Voted Yes and No?
   - Explaining the Vote
6. Questions and Discussion
2011: The Result

Yes  517,132 (63.49%)
No   297,380 (36.51%)

*Turnout*  35.6%

- 21 of 22 areas voted Yes
- Highest Yes majority: Rhondda Cynon Taff
- Highest % Yes margin: Gwynedd
Turnout

• How low is low? Comparisons

• Reasons for the low turnout:
  – Declining turnouts generally
    • 3 UK GEs from 1987-97 average turnout = 74.8%
    • 3 UK GEs from 2001-10 average turnout = 62.0%
  – Nature of the question
  – Absence of official campaigns
  – Lack of interest from UK media
  – Referendum timing

• Variations in turnout within Wales
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referendum</th>
<th>Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Border Referendum’, Northern Ireland, 1973</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC Membership, UK, 1975</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution, Scotland, 1979</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution, Wales, 1979</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution, Scotland, 1997</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution, Wales, 1997</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland, 1998</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Mayor &amp; GLA, London, 1998</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devolution, North East England, 2004</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Devolution, Wales, 2011</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV Electoral Reform, UK, 2011</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Turnout

• How low is low? Comparisons

• Reasons for the low turnout:
  – Declining turnouts generally
    • 3 UK GEs from 1987-97, average turnout = 74.8%
    • 3 UK GEs from 2001-10, average turnout = 62.0%
  – Nature of the question
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• Variations in turnout within Wales
Variations in Turnout: LA correlations

% Yes vote  .16
1997 Ref turnout  .91
2010 UKGE turnout  .57
2011 NAW turnout  .92
% Welsh identity  -.07
% Welsh speaking  .68
% in employment  .13
% economically inactive  .03
1997: A Divided Nation
2011: a United Nation?
Yes .v. No: Homogenisation?

- Overall ‘swing’ from 1997 for Yes: 13.2%
- Yes % per LA closely correlated (r = .90) with % Yes in 1997
- BUT differences all → greater homogeneity
  - Average ‘swing’ in 1997 No areas = 16.8%
  - Average ‘swing’ in 1997 Yes areas = 10.4%
  - 8 highest ‘swings’ to Yes all in areas that voted No in 1997
- 4 largest Yes ‘swings’ all in North Wales
- Gap between highest and lowest Yes % = 26.6%, compared to 34.5% in 1997
## Variations in LA % Yes Vote: correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Welsh identity</th>
<th>.55</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Welsh speaking</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in employment</td>
<td>-.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% economically inactive</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Conservative vote 2010</td>
<td>-.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Plaid Cymru vote 2011</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 2011 Welsh Referendum Study

• Support from Economic and Social Research Council (Grant RES-000-22-4496)

• Fieldwork conducted by YouGov, via internet

• Sampling conducted in two waves:
  – Pre-referendum wave conducted as ‘rolling sample’ through the 4 weeks prior to the referendum; N = 3029
  – Post-Referendum wave conducted immediately after referendum vote; N = 2569
  – Post-Referendum wave drawn from pre-referendum respondents: Panel Data on the same individuals

• Questions on many potentially relevant areas
The Referendum Campaign

Can use WRS data to explore:

- Extent to which voting intentions changed over the course of the four week campaign (‘rolling averages’)

- Overall attitudes and reactions to the campaign
% ‘Certain to Vote’ across last 4 weeks of campaign
Voting intentions across last 4 weeks of campaign

Yes2
No
Not Voting/DK
## Campaign: Voter Contacts

% of WRS (post-referendum) respondents reporting being contacted about the referendum during the campaign by...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Contacted Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes for Wales</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True Wales</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaid Cymru</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall % contacted by anyone = 9.7%**
Campaign perceptions/reactions

Ref campaign ‘gave me enough information to make an informed choice’ 26.6%

‘The media coverage of the referendum made it difficult for me to understand what the referendum was really about’ 31.9%

‘The Yes campaign were completely invisible; I Didn’t hear anything about them’ 37.2%

‘The No campaign were completely invisible; I Didn’t hear anything about them’ 61.1%
Party Cues: Labour

Which way do you think Labour recommended people should vote in the referendum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not recommend</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Party Unity: Labour

Would you describe Labour as united or divided on which way to vote in the referendum?

United  30.9%
Divided  15.3%
Neither  11.3%
Don’t Know  42.5%
# Party Cues: Conservatives

Which way do you think the Conservatives recommended people should vote in the referendum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not recommend</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Party Unity: Conservatives

Would you describe the Conservatives as united or divided on which way to vote in the referendum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Party Cues: Lib-Dems

Which way do you think the Liberal Democrats recommended people should vote in the referendum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not recommend</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Party Unity: Lib-Dems

Would you describe the Liberal Democrats as united or divided on which way to vote in the referendum?

- United: 16.1%
- Divided: 18.6%
- Neither: 13.0%
- Don’t Know: 52.3%
Party Cues: Plaid Cymru

Which way do you think Plaid Cymru recommended people should vote in the referendum?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not recommend</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Party Unity: Plaid

Would you describe Plaid Cymru as united or divided on which way to vote in the referendum?

United 60.3%
Divided 3.0%
Neither 6.2%
Don’t Know 30.4%
Voting in the Referendum

WRS evidence can explore:

- Turnout: Who voted?
- Who Voted Yes and No
- Major Factors Shaping Vote Choices
Referendum participation: Age

![Bar graph showing voting participation by age group.](image-url)
Referendum participation: National Identity

% Voting

- Welsh Not British
- More Welsh
- Equal W & B
- More British
- British not Welsh
- Other/DK
Referendum participation:
Interest in politics

% Voting

- Very interested
- Fairly interested
- Not very interested
- Not at all interested
- DK
Referendum participation:
Importance of the Referendum

% Voting

- Great Deal
- Fair amount
- Not very much
- None at all
- DK
Referendum participation:
Constitutional Preference

% Voting

- No Devo
- Fewer Powers
- Leave as Now
- More Powers
- Independence
- DK
Referendum participation: party support

% Voting

Labour
Cons
LD
Plaid
None
Referendum Vote: Age

% Yes

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
Referendum Vote: Interest in politics

Referendum Vote

Not at all interest 72.00%
Not very interest 68.00%
Fairly interest 66.00%
Very interested 64.00%
Referendum Vote: Importance of the Referendum
Referendum Vote: Constitutional Preference

- No Devo
- Fewer Powers
- Leave as Now
- More Powers
- Independence
- DK
Referendum Vote: WAG performance evaluations
Referendum Vote: Party Support
Referendum Vote: the overall story

- Limited campaign impact: little changed
- Limited impact of social status variables, even those related to ‘Welshness’: referendum was not socially divisive
- Limited impact of attitudes to the UK government
- Referendum vote choice most strongly shaped by attitudes to how Wales should be governed; supplemented by attitudes to WAG performance
And to find out more...

Questions and Discussion