

Poverty a key priority for people in Scotland in advance of May's election

This report presents the findings of polling carried out on our behalf by YouGov of 2,016 Scottish adults (aged 16+) between 16 February and 22 February 2021. It shows people in Scotland think tackling poverty is a key priority for the next Scottish Government and that they believe it is possible to significantly reduce poverty in Scotland.

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Key findings:

- Nearly three-quarters of adults in Scotland see poverty as a high priority for the next Scottish Government.
- In all groups, regardless of age or politics, a majority of adults in Scotland believe poverty could be significantly reduced, suggesting a nationwide consensus that with the right action, we can ensure no-one in Scotland suffers the injustice of poverty.
- However, a majority feel that this is only possible with changes to our current services and economy, and that the Scottish Government can and should do more.
- To seize on this public appetite all parties in the forthcoming election need to make bold commitments to significantly reduce poverty through making housing more affordable, driving down in-work poverty, and continuing to improve the social security system.

A chance to turn the tide on poverty in Scotland

Around one million people in Scotland are caught in poverty. With an election less than two months away we will look to the political parties to see how they plan to loosen the grip of poverty. As our analysis in February¹ showed this is a vital election because during the next Parliament the Scottish Government will have to meet the interim child-poverty target of reducing relative child poverty to below 18%.

Between 16-22 February, YouGov and JRF polled 2,016 adults (aged 16+) in Scotland on their views on the importance of tackling poverty for the next Scottish Government, as well as assessing their appetite for big changes to lift people out of poverty and whether, or not, they would be willing to pay more tax to do so.

The findings are clear, addressing poverty is a key priority for this election. Nearly three quarters of people (72%) said that poverty was a high priority for the next Scottish Government², and when compared to other key priorities such as the economy and the NHS, tackling poverty was the fifth most likely issue to be in people's top priorities for the next Scottish Government³.

We also set out to test people in Scotland's appetite for stronger interventions to tackle poverty. Much has been made of how the pandemic has drawn a line in the sand that we can't go back over, and that there is no better time than now to take on major issues. Our research shows that this appears to be reflected in public attitudes. People generally believe that we need major changes to our current public services and economy to reduce poverty, and support considerable changes to policy to do so; adding to the chorus of public and civic voices from the Citizens' Assembly⁴ and the Social Renewal Advisory Board⁵ that we expect a better Scotland, and that the time for change is now.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many fault lines in our society and economy and none less than those in our most deprived communities. Research by the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh⁶ show that 25% of all Intensive Care Unit cases as a result of COVID-19 come from our most deprived communities, and that being from a deprived background significantly increases your chances of dying as a result of the virus. It cited issues such as poor housing, reliance on public transport and being unable to work from home as contributing, as well as other well-known health impacts of poverty such as increased prevalence of diabetes and heart disease.

This briefing sets out the main findings from this polling and sends a clear message to all the political parties in Scotland that there is a strong mandate for bold policy change to reduce poverty now.

What they can do

If parties in this election are to seize on this public appetite, we think they need to commit to five things:

1. Identifying an agreed income floor below which no-one should drop as a first step in exploring how to ensure nobody goes below it.
2. Maximising the contribution social housing makes to reducing poverty and inequality.
3. Taking action to prevent arrears and debt built during the pandemic locking people in poverty.
4. Building on the work started by Social Security Scotland and ensuring that all support provided, including the new disability assistance payments, are taken up, are adequate and reduce poverty.
5. Making the vision of a Fair Work Nation real and working with employment support services, employers and workers to end in-work poverty.

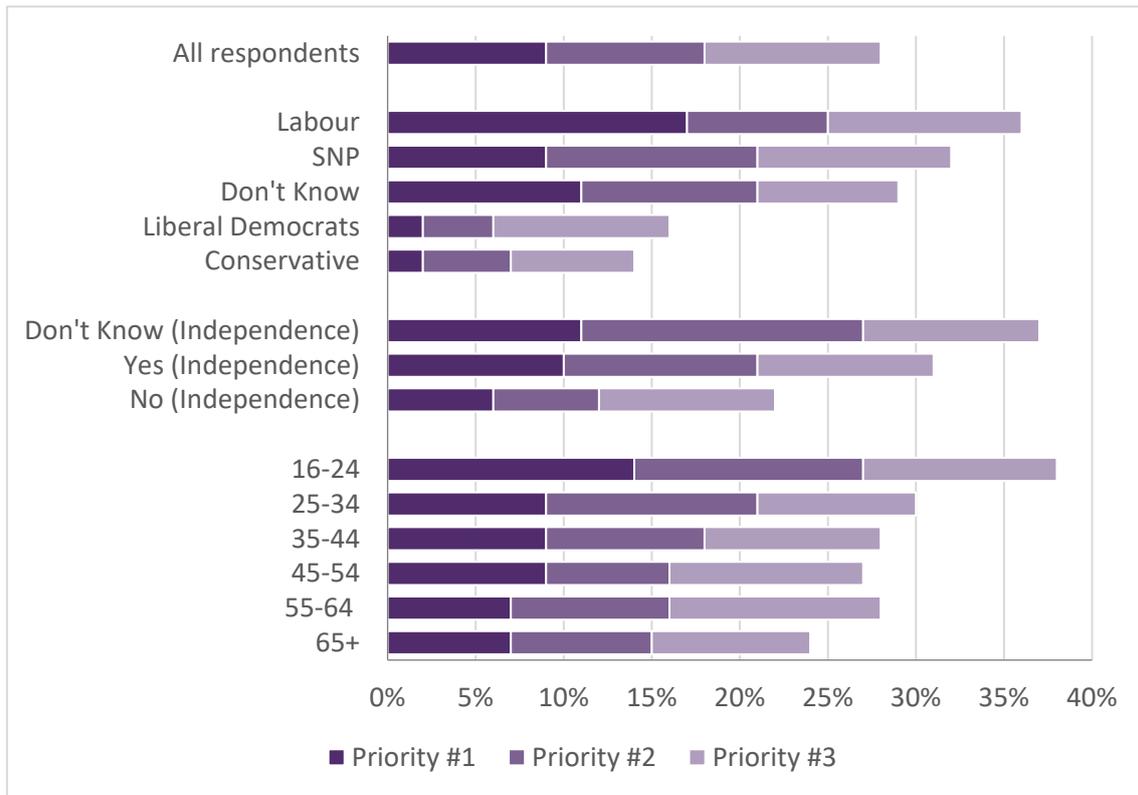
Tackling poverty is a key priority for people in the upcoming election

1. Ranking people's priorities for this election

The upcoming election will be vital in how Scotland responds to the health, social and economic storm that the pandemic has thrown us all into. We asked people what they thought the next Scottish Government's priorities should be – giving us a barometer of people in Scotland's priorities ahead of this election. Respondents were asked to rank their top three priorities, outside of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order, the most commonly selected top-three priorities were the economy (48% of respondents selected), NHS (44%), jobs and unemployment (41%), education (38%), poverty (28%), Scottish Independence (21%), climate change (20%), social care (17%), housing (13%) and cutting crime (8%).

Understandably the economy, the NHS, education, and jobs are the top priorities with tackling poverty making up the top 5 priorities. Clearly there are interrelations between all of these issues but even in this torrid time it is clear that releasing people from the grip of poverty is an important issue for adults in Scotland. Almost 3 in 10 respondents (28%) said that poverty should be one of the top three priorities for the next Scottish Government, with around 1 in 10 (9%) saying it should be the top priority. Voters intending to vote Labour at the next Holyrood election were most likely to say that poverty should be the top priority (17%) with only the NHS (24%) ranking higher as the number one priority for this group.

Figure 1: Almost 3 in 10 adults in Scotland consider poverty to be a top priority for the next Scottish Government



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16-22 February

Note: the question asked of respondents was "Apart from tackling COVID-19, what do you think should be the top priorities for the next Scottish Government? Please pick up to three in order of importance." Options available were Cutting crime, the Economy, Jobs and unemployment, Housing, Public transport, Scottish independence, Education, Social care, NHS (not COVID-related), Climate change, Poverty, Taxation, Other, Don't know. Figures shown represent the proportion of respondents who selected poverty as a top priority, broken down by rank in terms of whether the respondent assigned poverty first, second or third place in their list of priorities. Voting intention as shown in the chart refers to respondents' voting intention for the 2021 Holyrood Election.

Amongst younger respondents, poverty was seen as a key issue, with almost 4 in 10 (38%) of 16 to 24-year-olds saying it should be one of the top three priorities. This was the most commonly selected issue as the top three priorities by this age group, alongside jobs and unemployment (also 38%).

We also asked people what level of priority, on a scale from 0 to 10, tackling poverty should be for the next Scottish Government with 10 being the highest priority. Nearly three quarters (72%) of all respondents said that poverty should be high (i.e. giving a score of seven or over) priority for the next Scottish Government while just 3% said it was a low priority (i.e. giving a score under four). Those who intend to vote for the SNP (81%) and Labour (78%) in the next Holyrood Election were more likely to say poverty should be a high priority compared to 51% of those intending to vote Conservative. However, less than 1 in 10 (8%) of those intending to vote Conservative said it should be a low priority. Younger respondents were also more likely to say poverty was a high

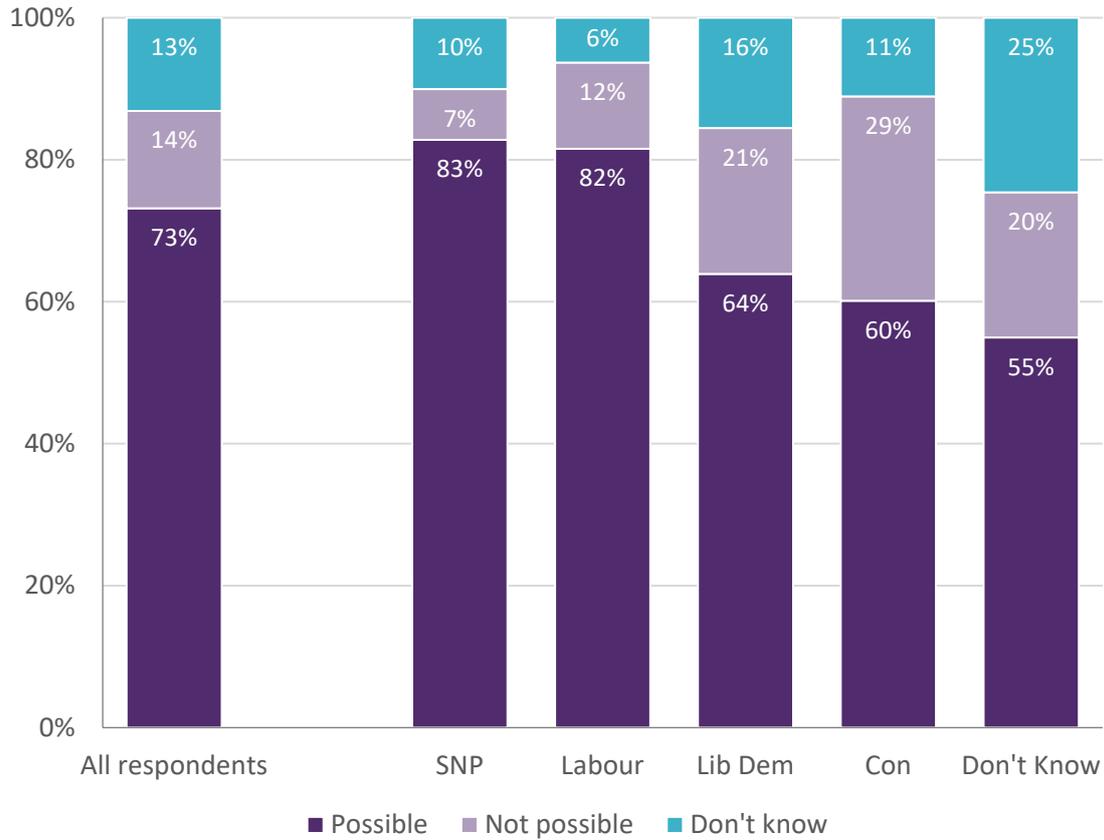
priority than older age groups, with 80% of 16 to 24-year-olds saying it was a high priority.

This poll indicates that adults in Scotland want to see the next Scottish Government approach poverty as a priority issue, with releasing people from poverty's grip an important goal for adults in Scotland (and especially younger age groups). While there are certain pressing issues that some deem to be more important right now, many of these (such as jobs and the economy) factor into solutions for poverty, and an overwhelming majority of people still feel that poverty must be a high priority for the next Scottish Government.

2. People believe we can end the injustice of poverty

For us as a society to take the steps we need to lift people out of poverty it is vitally important that we have a collective belief that we can do so. This polling shows that this belief is high in Scotland. Around three quarters (73%) of people polled believe that it is possible to significantly reduce poverty in Scotland. Young people and supporters of Scottish independence are most likely to think reducing poverty is possible, with over four in five (83%) aged 16-24, and over four in five (83%) of those saying they'd vote for independence in another referendum saying they believe it's possible. In all groups, however, regardless of age or politics, a majority believed poverty could be significantly reduced, suggesting a nationwide consensus that with the right action we can ensure no-one in Scotland is stuck in poverty.

Figure 2: Almost three-quarters of adults in Scotland think significantly reducing poverty in Scotland is possible



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16 - 22 February

Note: the question asked of respondents was "Do you think it is possible or is not possible to significantly reduce poverty in Scotland?" Voting intention as shown in the chart refers to respondents' voting intention for the 2021 Holyrood Election.

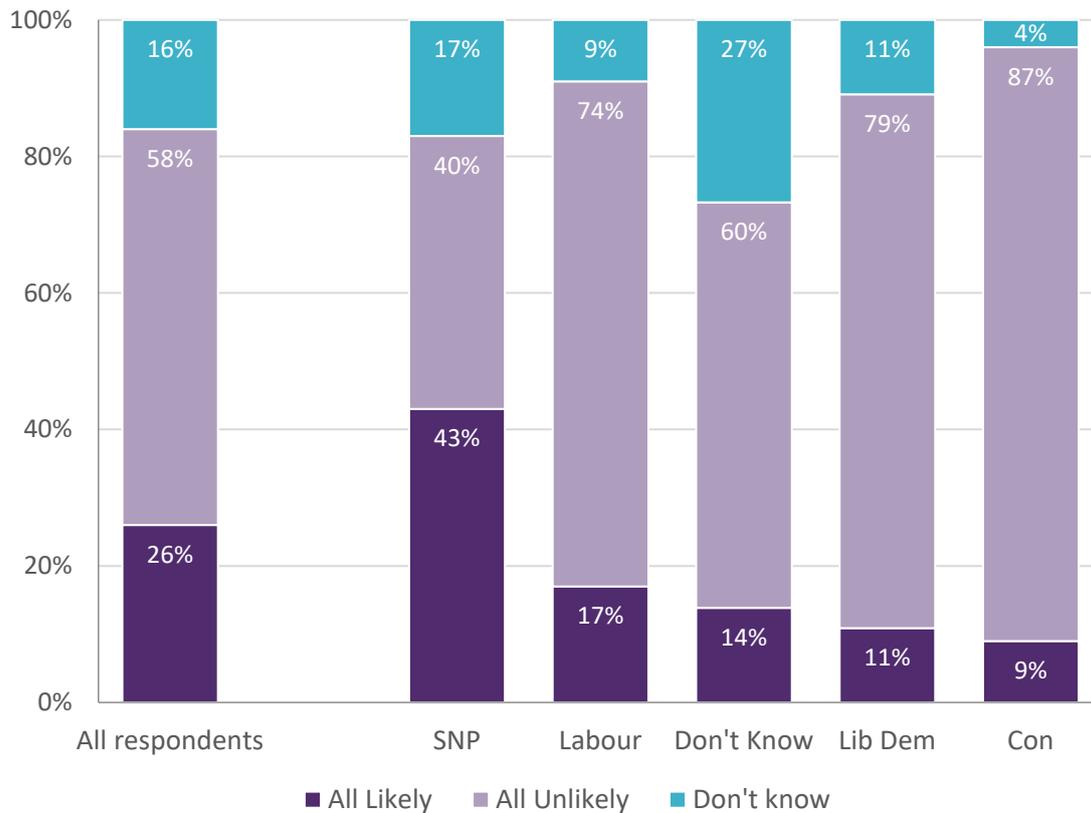
It is also important to understand whether adults in Scotland are satisfied with the way things are now or whether they wish to see change. A majority of people in Scotland feel that the current income distribution is unjust with 56% thinking it is somewhat or very unfair⁷.

The Scottish Child Poverty Targets

In the middle of the next Parliamentary Term the Scottish Government must reduce relative child poverty to below 18% and, in the long term, the Scottish Government have set the target of reducing child poverty to below 10% by 2030.

We asked people whether they thought the Scottish Government were likely to meet the 2030 child poverty target.

Figure 3: Only a quarter of adults in Scotland think that the Scottish Government will meet their child poverty targets by 2030



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16 - 22 February.

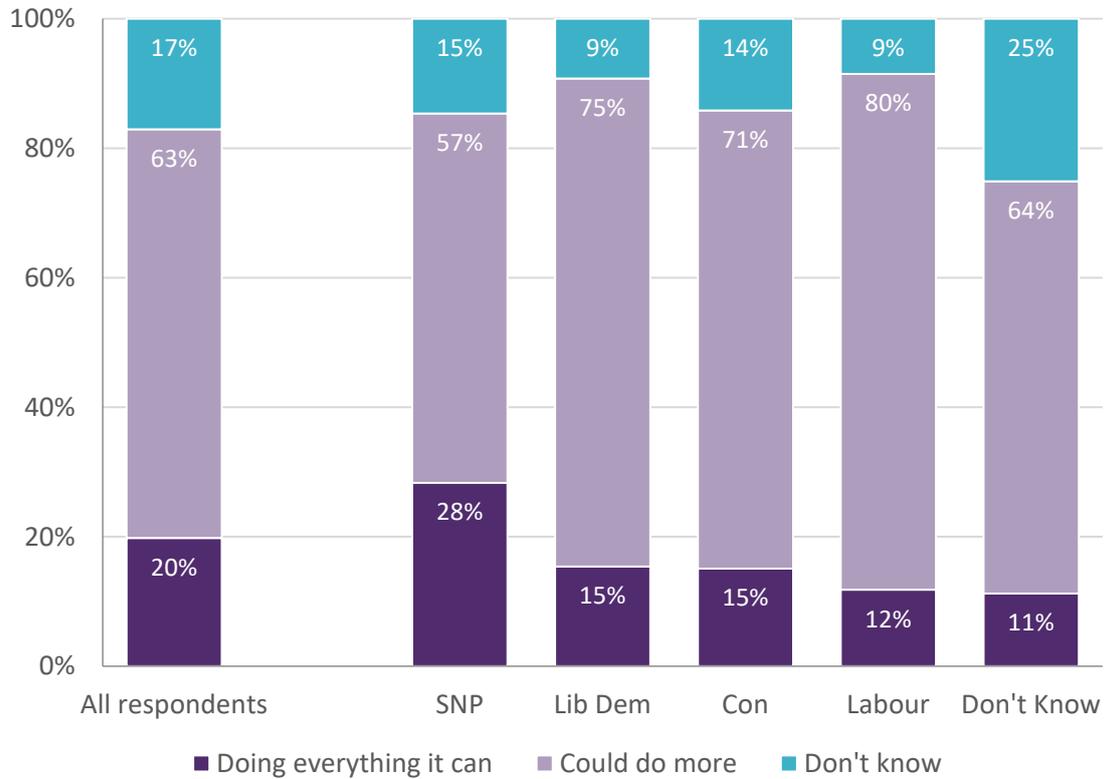
Note: the question asked of respondents was "Currently one in four children in Scotland are living in poverty. As a reminder, the Scottish Government has set targets to reduce child poverty to only affect 1 in 10 children. How likely or unlikely do you think it is that Scottish Parliament will meet this target?". Voting intention as shown in the chart refers to respondents' voting intention for the 2021 Holyrood Election.

At the moment, it is clear that people think it is unlikely that we will meet this target. Given that our analysis⁸ has shown that we are on track to miss the interim target of below 18% this is unsurprising, but shows that the parties must raise their ambition and determination to meet the targets, particularly when public will is so strong and so many are trapped in poverty in the meantime. They all signed up to these targets so they need to show the public that they will take the action to meet them.

3. Is the Scottish Government doing enough to tackle poverty now?

Another reason people may think we will miss the 2030 target is that respondents felt the Scottish Government could be doing more right now to tackle poverty. Almost two-thirds respondents (63%) felt that the Scottish Government could do more to help tackle poverty in Scotland, and over half (54%) felt that they could do more to specifically help low-income families with children.

Figure 4: Only one in five adults in Scotland think that the Scottish Government is doing everything it reasonably can to help tackle poverty in Scotland. Three in five think they could do more.



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16 - 22 February.

Note: the question asked of respondents was "Taking into account what you already know ... do you think the Scottish Government is doing everything it reasonably can do to help tackle poverty in Scotland?". Voting intention as shown in the chart refers to respondents' voting intention for the 2021 Holyrood Election.

This was the case regardless of politics, with a majority of respondents across the political spectrum saying they felt the Scottish Government could do more to tackle poverty. Even amongst those intending to vote for the SNP in the next Holyrood election, 57% believe the Scottish Government could do more.

It's interesting to note that a higher proportion of people think the Scottish Government should do more to tackle poverty generally than to tackle poverty amongst low-income families with children. This could reflect the range of high-profile interventions aimed at lifting children out of poverty such as the Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grants and efforts to close the attainment gap⁹. In any event, ultimately child poverty is a result of the poverty that their parents experience so this is an important reminder that to release children from poverty we must do more to ensure that parents have the quality of life we all expect.

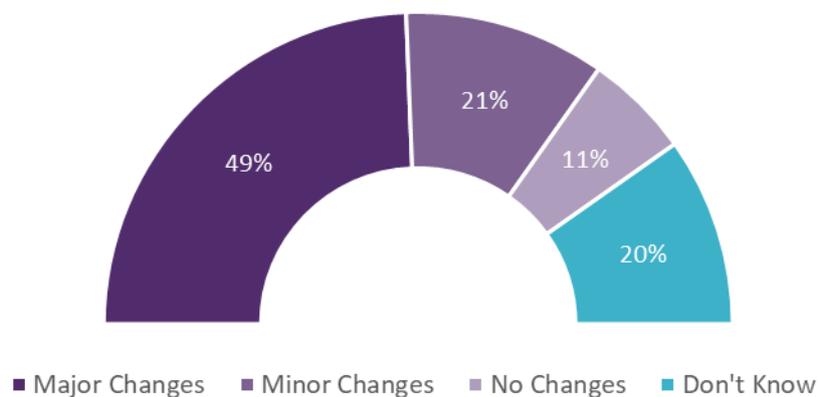
4. Need for and appetite for major changes

Given that there is consensus amongst the majority of adults in Scotland that the Scottish Government could do more to help tackle poverty, we wanted to test the extent to which people believe major changes to our current systems and policies

were necessary, and the sort of changes they might support. This polling shows that people in Scotland believe there is a need for major change to tackle poverty and would support the action needed to do so, although more work will be needed to explore the particular solutions that would garner the most public support.

Only 11% of adults in Scotland believe that it is possible to reduce poverty with our current public services and economy, with 49% saying that only major changes can bring a reduction in poverty.

Figure 5: Almost half of adults in Scotland think that poverty in Scotland can only be reduced with major changes to our current public services and economy



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16 - 22 February.

Note: The question asked of respondents was "Which of the following best reflects your view?" Options available were "Reducing poverty would be possible with only minor changes to our current public services and economy (shown in chart as Minor Changes)", "Reducing poverty is only possible with major changes to our current public services and economy (shown in chart as Major Changes)", "Reducing poverty is possible with our current public services and economy (shown in chart as No Changes)" and "Don't Know"

Given that such a significant proportion of people felt major changes were needed, respondents were then asked if they would support or oppose a range of interventions to raise people's incomes through social security; some specific proposals that are part of the wider debate such as a 'universal basic income' or 'minimum income guarantee' and other more general proposals to lift benefit levels for certain groups. The full list of interventions we polled on were; 'minimum income guarantee', 'universal basic income', increasing the level of benefits closer to the cost of living, increasing the level of benefits for families with children who are in poverty, increasing benefit levels for those who are unemployed, and increasing the level of benefits for those at greater risk of poverty such as single parents or disabled people.

For the sake of simplicity, we concentrated on social security solutions here but there are clearly interventions within housing and the labour market that could have significant impacts on poverty levels and quality of life. Our analysis from February⁸ also showed that even large social security payments only go so far in reducing poverty levels, to achieve the eradication of poverty that we want to see we require a broader range of changes.

It is worth noting that there is clearly overlap between many of the solutions we included in our poll – those who would benefit from specific interventions would also benefit from the universal ones. The consistently high level of support we found for such interventions does underline, though, the inadequacy of the current social security system. With income replacement rates in the UK remaining some of the lowest amongst OECD countries¹⁰, and the risk of a further cut to universal credit in September¹¹, coupled with rising unemployment, there is much work to do to highlight the inadequacy of social security and the need for it to be strengthened.

By far the most supported intervention was a ‘minimum income guarantee’ – that we defined as where the state guarantees that your income does not fall below a certain level – with over three quarters (77%) of respondents supporting it and just 12% opposing it. It was supported by over 60% of voters across all parties and was the intervention most supported by those who did not yet know who they would vote for in the upcoming Holyrood election.

More general proposals that saw high levels of support from respondents targeted increased benefits to groups more likely to experience poverty, many of which reflect the priority groups identified by the Scottish Government as being at risk of poverty. Increasing the level of benefits for people at greater risk of poverty, such as single parents or disabled people, was supported by 72% of respondents while increasing the level of benefits for families with children who are in poverty was supported by 71% of respondents. Both interventions were supported by more than half of voters across all political parties with particularly high levels of support from SNP voters (85% and 82% respectively). The broader policy of increasing the level of all benefits closer to the cost of living was supported by almost two thirds of respondents (65%) however, there is more variation in support for this across the political spectrum with higher levels of support from those intending to vote SNP (76%) and Labour (75%) than Conservatives (45%).

Lower levels of support were found for ‘universal basic income’ (UBI) (49%), which we defined as a flat payment that everyone receives no matter their income or employment status, and increasing benefit levels for those who are unemployed (46%). These interventions did not command majority support amongst respondents and there is significant variation in support based on voting intention and age; 56% of 16 to 24-year-olds supported UBI while just 41% of respondents aged 65 or older supported it.

Although 46% of adults in Scotland would support raising social security for people that are unemployed, this option was also opposed by 37% of respondents, suggesting opinions in Scotland may be heavily split for this intervention. However, it is important to note that people who are unemployed would also benefit from proposals such as a ‘minimum income guarantee’, and will often be in one of the groups at high risk of poverty.

5. Would people be willing to pay more tax in the next Parliament?

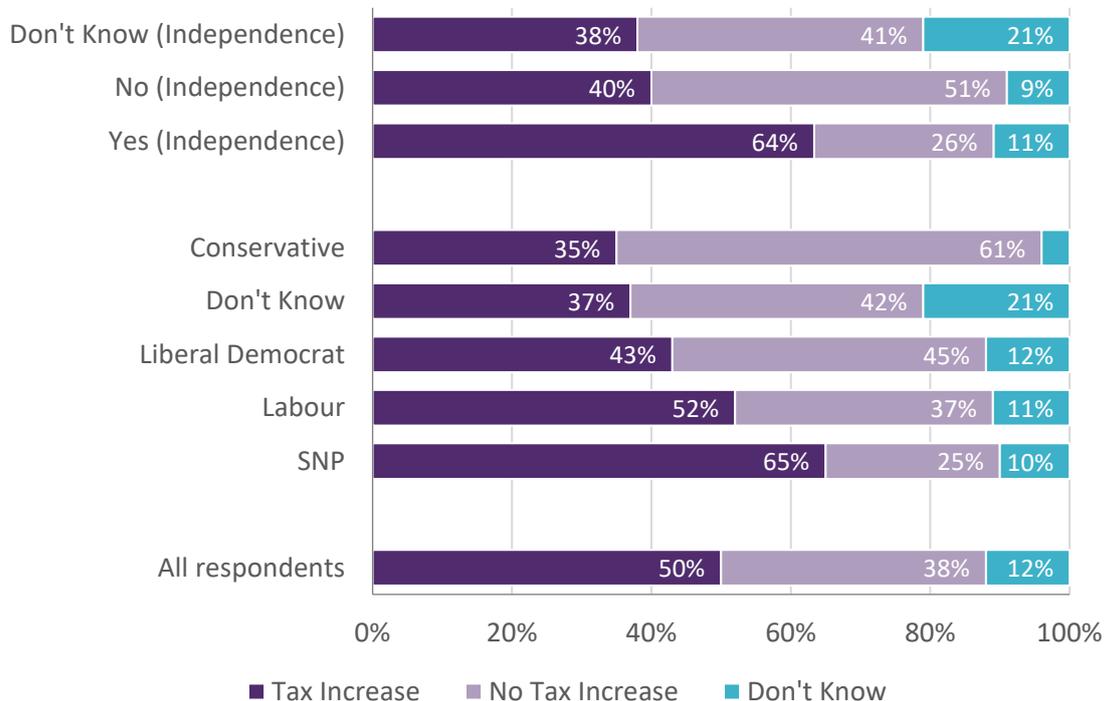
The cost of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is great both in terms of the impacts on individuals but also on public finances. When combined with public will to take action on tackling poverty and the widely held view that only major changes in policy will release people from poverty's grip, it is clear that something big has to change.

Clearly one way to pay for actions to tackle the impacts of both the pandemic and poverty is to reduce spending elsewhere. The Scottish Parliament, though, is also at something of a crossroads where public expectations of the level of public services versus the tax raised from individuals and businesses are starting to diverge.

The Scottish Government does not have significant borrowing powers, particularly for day-to-day spending, so will face a more binary choice between reducing spending elsewhere and increasing revenues. To explore support for tax increases, we asked respondents whether they believed tax rises were necessary to fund the COVID-19 recovery and whether they personally would be willing to contribute.

Should taxes be raised?

Figure 6: Half of Scottish adults think taxes should be raised to help fund Scotland's post COVID-19 recovery



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16 - 22 February.

Note: the question asked of respondents was "There are different options available to the next Scottish Government to help fund Scotland's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. One of these options is raising money through taxation. Which of the following best describes your view on this?" Options were "I don't think the next Scottish Government should raise any taxes and the recovery should be funded in other ways (shown in chart as No Tax Increase)", "I think at least some taxes should be increased to fund

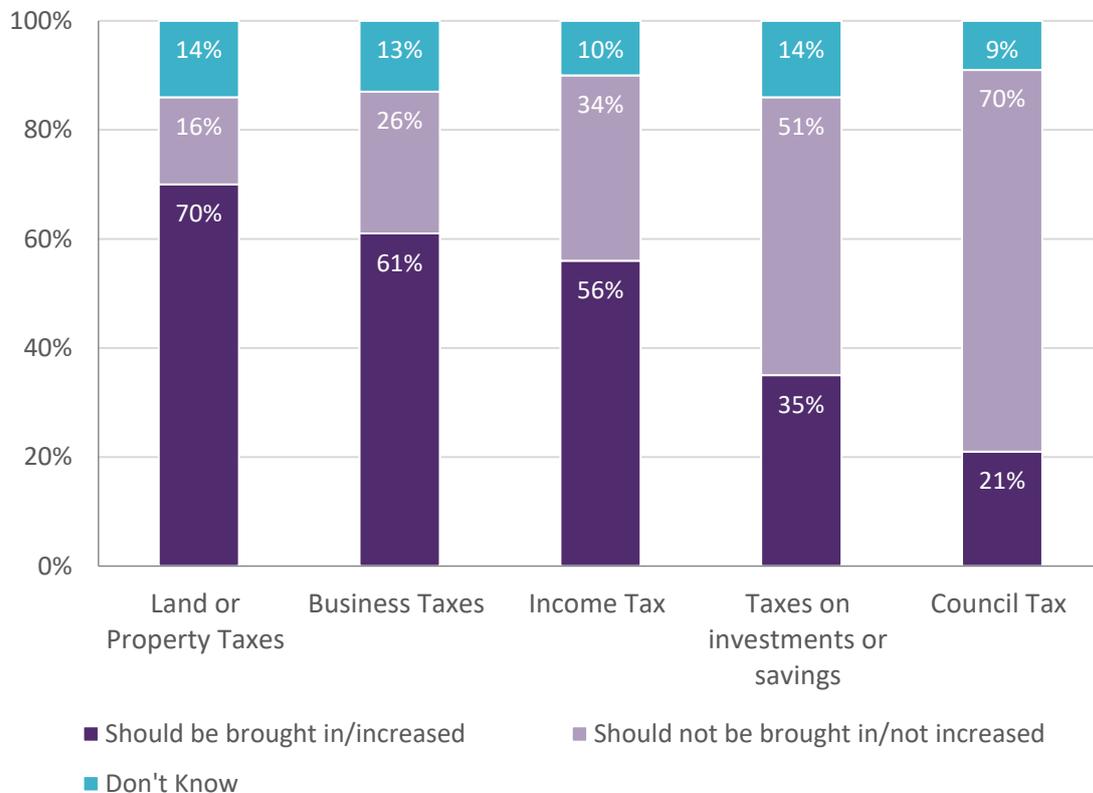
the recovery (shown in chart as Tax Increase)" and "Don't know". Voting intention as shown in the chart refers to respondents' voting intention for the 2021 Holyrood Election.

A total of 50% of adults in Scotland think at least some taxes should be increased to help pay for the recovery from the pandemic, but as this chart shows there is significant variation between voting preferences. Over half of those intending to vote for the SNP (65%) or Labour (52%) in the upcoming Holyrood election supported increasing taxes but only 35% of those intending to vote Conservative were supportive of such increases. In contrast, three in five (61%) of those intending to vote Conservative said that taxes should not be increased to fund the COVID recovery.

Which taxes should be raised?

We then asked those who think at least some taxes should be increased, which taxes they think should be increased or brought in. It's worth noting that the Scottish Government does not have full control over all of these taxes¹². For those who supported an increase in taxes, changes to land and property taxes (70%) and business taxes (61%) were most widely supported. However, only 21% said council taxes should be increased.

Figure 7: 7 in 10 of those who support tax increases would support changes to Land or Property Taxes, while just 2 in 10 would support increases to Council Tax



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16 - 22 February.

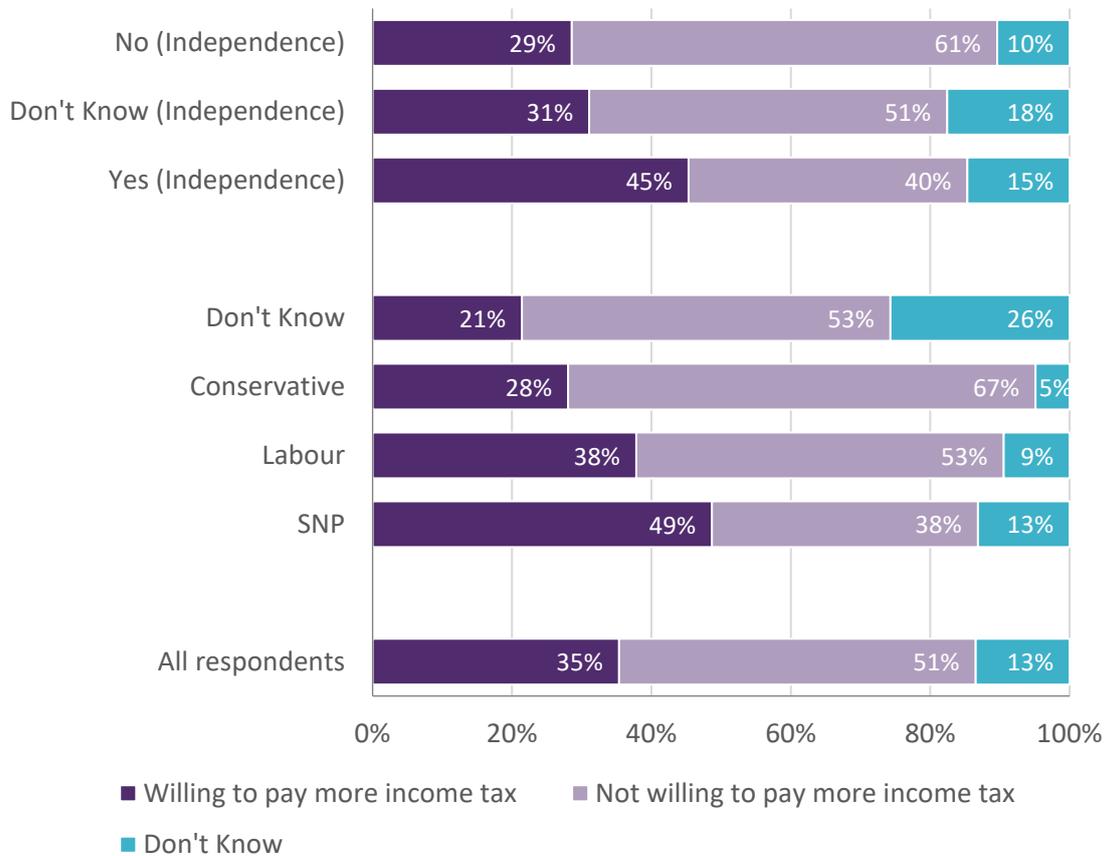
Note: the question asked of respondents was "You previously said that you think some taxes should be increased to fund Scotland's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. Which of the following taxes do

you think should be increased or brought in? Please tick all that apply." Figures shown are as a proportion of the 50% of respondents who said they support tax rises to help fund the pandemic recovery.

Would individuals be willing to pay more tax?

We also sought to understand whether people’s desire for change and belief that taxes should rise, translate to a willingness to pay more tax themselves. We focussed on income tax and asked whether people would be willing to pay more tax:

Figure 8: Just over a third of Scottish income taxpayers would be willing to pay more income tax themselves to help fund Scotland’s post-pandemic recovery.



Source: JRF Analysis of YouGov polling 16 - 22 February.

Note: the question asked of respondents was "Thinking about other taxes already in place ... would you, or would you not be willing to pay more income tax to fund Scotland’s recovery from the pandemic?" Figures shown exclude all respondents who do not currently pay income tax. Liberal Democrats not included in this chart because of small sample size. Voting intention as shown in the chart refers to respondents’ voting intention for the 2021 Holyrood Election.

Across all people currently paying income tax, 35% of people were willing to pay more income tax and 51% were not. The only groups where there was a greater proportion in favour of paying more income tax than were opposed was prospective SNP voters (49% support) and those who support independence (45% support), but in both cases, a majority was still not in favour of paying more tax themselves. However, amongst

income tax payers, who thought at least some taxes should rise, 64% were willing to pay more tax themselves, suggesting there is a willingness to pay amongst people who thought tax rises were needed.

Where on the income scale should people pay more tax?

We also wanted to test the theory that there was a gap between those that were willing to pay more tax to fund Scotland's recovery from the pandemic and the level of income at which people should start paying more.

- Across all respondents there was a general consensus that if income taxes were to be increased, then those earning the top and higher rates (i.e. incomes over £43,665) should pay more tax. A total of 75% of respondents said that those paying the higher rate should pay more, and 87% said those on the top rate should pay more. However, these tax bands make up just 8% of adults (and 15% of taxpayers) in Scotland.
- At the other end of the spectrum there is little support for increasing rates for the Starter or Basic rate¹³. Just 3% of respondents thought that those paying the starter rate should pay more, and just 8% said those paying the basic rate should pay more.
- This leaves the Intermediate rate which makes up around a fifth of income taxpayers in Scotland, and therefore could raise significant revenues, yet only 32% of respondents supported increasing income tax for this group.

There are a number of factors, however, that seem to relate to whether or not people support increasing revenues from the intermediate rate:

- Respondents aged 65 and older were more likely to say that this group should pay more (42%) although more still felt this group should not pay more (51%).
- Where people thought that some taxes should be raised, generally they were more likely to think that this group should pay more (44%), but even within this group a majority (50%) felt the intermediate rate should not pay more.
- However, a majority of those willing to pay more tax themselves would support a raise in this rate; 54% of this group thought the intermediate band should pay more tax if taxes were to be increased compared to 43% that thought they shouldn't.

As a result, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on who, if anyone, people think should pay more tax. While 35% of people have said they would personally be willing to pay more tax, the general view is that only the top 15% of taxpayers should be liable for higher tax. To raise significant additional revenue for the Scottish Government this would be relying on a small tax base.

For comparison purposes, the latest figures show that the top 25% of earners in Scotland would be earning over around £38,000 and the top 10% over £51,000.

It reinforces the importance of the Scottish Government continuing their work to raise public awareness of how income tax operates to support their budget¹⁴.

It also underlines how important it is for parties who may advocate for tax rises to make clear to people what that additional revenue might be used for, as general support for tax rises is hard to quantify and arguably comparatively low. This may also be as a result of the gloomy prevailing economic circumstances that, understandably, may mean some tax rises have unintended consequences within the economy.

How to seize on public will

Five commitments to end the injustice of poverty in Scotland

This polling shows the significant public appetite for ending the injustice of poverty in Scotland. Coupled with our analysis that shows we are currently on track to miss the child poverty targets⁸ this election is a crucial moment for all parties in Scotland to show political confidence and urgency to end poverty in Scotland. Clearly there is no one way to do so but we think these five key commitments should be at the core of the election debate.

1. Identifying an agreed income floor below which no-one should drop as a first step in exploring how to ensure nobody goes below it.

There appears to be strong public support for the idea that the state should guarantee that people's income should not fall below a certain level and there have been similar considerations in the recent Social Renewal Advisory Board Report⁵. The next Scottish Government should test this concept further and, as a first step, commit to exploring the minimum income that people in Scotland should expect. Crucially, it should do so with people who experience poverty at the moment. This will give us a vital platform for our journey towards the child poverty targets.

2. Maximising the contribution social housing makes to reducing poverty and inequality.

The next Scottish Government must ensure that the costs of building sufficient new high-quality social homes while responding to the climate emergency are not borne disproportionately by those with the lowest incomes, which could deepen and entrench poverty still further. Renters in both the private and social sector have been hit hard by COVID-19 and despite having the least financial headroom as we entered the pandemic, are likely to shoulder a disproportionate hit to their employment and incomes when furlough is withdrawn, for some time to come. Achieving a just recovery must mean sharing the costs and rewards more fairly and building in resilience that was lacking.

The Scottish Government has committed to £3.4 billion of infrastructure investment to deliver up to 53,000 affordable new homes in the next Affordable Housing Supply Programme 2021-2026, and this is a welcome and firm commitment for the sector to

plan around. However, sector colleagues warn that balancing development costs of new supply, with rising costs of construction, land, and achieving new standards in energy efficiency and net-zero carbon energy threaten to push up rents further in the sector, as does insufficient investment to transform existing homes.

All the political parties must set out credible taxation and investment strategies to achieve the three golden threads of addressing housing inequality post-COVID, the climate emergency, and reducing child poverty, without jeopardising the delivery of the new social homes we need, especially in high-demand areas of the country.

3. Taking action to prevent arrears and debt built during the pandemic locking people in poverty.

Our research, as well as many others', has shown a worrying increase in renters struggling to pay their rent or household bills during the pandemic. Without further support this could cause preventable homelessness and create impossible choices for people between paying debts and meeting day-to-day essentials like food, clothing and heating. As a result, parties should commit to a just solution to debts which have built up as a result of the pandemic. Whether through enhancing existing support (such as Discretionary Housing Payments) or creating new support (such as the recent payment related to Council Tax Reduction), we need to find a way to ensure the short-term impact of the pandemic does not lead to long-term damage. They should also commit to raising awareness of the full suite of appropriate debt-management solutions, and improve access and take-up of support.

4. Building on the work started by Social Security Scotland and ensuring that all support provided, including the new disability assistance payments, are taken up, are adequate, and reduce poverty.

The Best Start Grants and the Carers Allowance Supplement have shown the sort of action that the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland can take, and early signs are positive that the payments and the way they are being administered is improving people's lives. The Scottish Child Payment has been a further welcome commitment that will lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty.

The introduction of the Child, Adult and Pension Disability Payment will, however, mark a watershed for the new Agency. Billions of pounds of payments will transfer to it but most importantly so will a cohort of people who have been badly let down by the present system. It is vital that the new payments are delivered in the way that the Scottish Government has envisaged - with dignity and poverty reduction at their core. In the next Parliament we will need to explore the adequacy of all these payments and whether they provide the quality of life that we all rightly expect.

5. Making the vision of a Fair Work Nation real and working with employment support services, employers and workers to end in-work poverty.

The next Government must deliver a Fair Work Nation that has as an outcome of a significant reduction in poverty for all those in the labour market. It should lower dramatically the financial and social barriers to decent jobs. Currently over 60% of children in Scotland in poverty are in working families. That is intolerable and incompatible within a credible Fair Work Nation. The public institutions and policy approach must bridge the artificial distinctions between financial capital (investment and incentives) and human capital (skills and access).

Successful businesses rely on both stable financing and the social and economic wellbeing of their workforce and consumers. This requires a cross-sector approach to working with employment support services, employers and workers to target sectors (accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail and health and social care), people (women, lone parents, disabled people, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, those with few or no educational qualifications) and communities where in-work poverty is most prevalent. Fair work for all is a desirable and achievable goal and all parties must set out how they plan to achieve it and how it will play its part in reaching the child poverty targets.

Taken together this briefing shows that lifting people out of poverty in Scotland is possible, people want to see it and that they support significant change to do so.

Notes

¹ Birt, C (2021) Scotland's child poverty targets are possible - with political confidence and urgency [Online] Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/scotlands-child-poverty-targets-are-possible-political-confidence-and-urgency> [Accessed: 5 March 2021].

² Respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 how much of a priority they felt tackling poverty should be for the next Scottish Government. Responses of seven or over were categorised as “high” priority.

³ Poverty was the fifth most likely to be selected amongst respondents’ top three priorities for the next Scottish Government. This does not factor in where poverty ranked in respondents’ top three priorities.

⁴ Citizens’ Assembly of Scotland (2021) Doing Politics Differently: The vision and recommendations of the Citizens’ Assembly of Scotland [Online] Available at: <https://citizensassembly.theapsgroup.scot/summary/Citizens-Assembly-Summary-Report.pdf> [Accessed: 5 March 2021].

⁵ Scottish Government (2021) If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021 [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/> [Accessed: 5 March 2021].

⁶ Lone, N I, et al. (2021) ‘Influence of socioeconomic deprivation on interventions and outcomes for patients admitted with COVID-19 to critical care units in Scotland: A national cohort study’, The Lancet Regional Health – Europe, Vol. 1.

⁷ It’s also worth noting that 20% said that they ‘didn't know’.

⁸ Birt, C and Milne, B (2021) Turning the tide on child poverty in Scotland [Online] Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/turning-tide-child-poverty-scotland> [Accessed: 7 March 2021].

⁹ Scottish Government (2020) Every child, every chance - Tackling child poverty delivery plan [Online] Available at: <https://bit.ly/3kVlz43> [Accessed: 7 March 2021].

¹⁰ OECD (2021) Benefits in unemployment, share of previous income [Online] Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/benwage/benefits-in-unemployment-share-of-previous-income.htm> [Accessed: 5 March 2021].

¹¹ Innes, D and Schmuecker, K (2021) JRF Spring Budget 2021 analysis [Online] Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/jrf-spring-budget-2021-analysis> [Accessed: 7 March 2021].

¹² Of these taxes the Scottish Government has full control over council tax, non-domestic rates (business rates) and land and buildings transactions tax. It has

significant powers to vary non-savings and dividend rates and thresholds of income tax. In terms of ‘business taxes’ as mentioned the SG controls business rates (what you might call local business taxes) but has no control of corporation tax. In terms of land and property taxes, land and buildings transactions tax would fall into this category as would any replacement for the council tax. The SG has no power of savings and investment taxes (such as income tax on those or capital gains tax). It is possible, however, for the Scottish Government to introduce new taxes with the consent of the UK Parliament (no such taxes are currently proposed).

¹³ 2020 to 2021 Scottish Income Tax rates:

Band	Taxable income	Scottish tax rate
Personal Allowance	Up to £12,500	0%
Starter rate	£12,501 to £14,585	19%
Basic rate	£14,586 to £25,158	20%
Intermediate rate	£25,159 to £43,430	21%
Higher rate	£43,431 to £150,000	41%
Top rate	over £150,000	46%

¹⁴ ‘The role of income tax in Scotland’s budget’¹³ was published in 2017 and provided useful insight but this polling would suggest more work is needed to raise public awareness of income levels and how they relate to tax bands.

¹⁵ Scottish Government (2017) The role of income tax in Scotland's budget. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/role-income-tax-scotlands-budget/> [Accessed: 5 March 2021].

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,016 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16 - 22 February 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Scotland adults (aged 16+).

About the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent social change organisation working to solve UK poverty. Through research, policy, collaboration and practical solutions, we aim to inspire action and change that will create a prosperous UK without poverty.

We are working with private, public and voluntary sectors, and people with lived experience of poverty, to build on the recommendations in our comprehensive strategy - [We can solve poverty in the UK](#) - and loosen poverty's grip on people who are struggling to get by. It contains analysis and recommendations aimed at the four UK governments.

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