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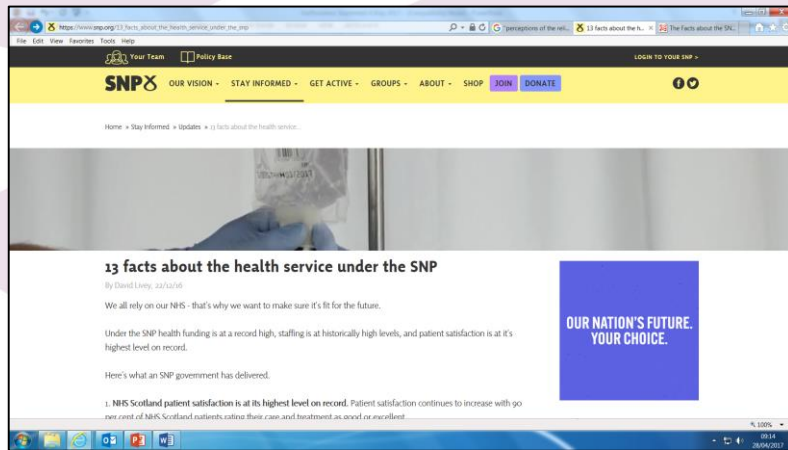
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#alternativefacts?

Citizens' perceptions of the reliability of 'facts' presented online by political parties in Scotland

Staffordshire University Library Teachmeet, 4 May 2017



Graeme Baxter and Rita Marcella
School of Creative and Cultural Business
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

Methodology

- **Online survey (526 responses at 28 April)**
- **23 electronically-assisted interviews with citizens in Aberdeenshire, North-East Scotland**

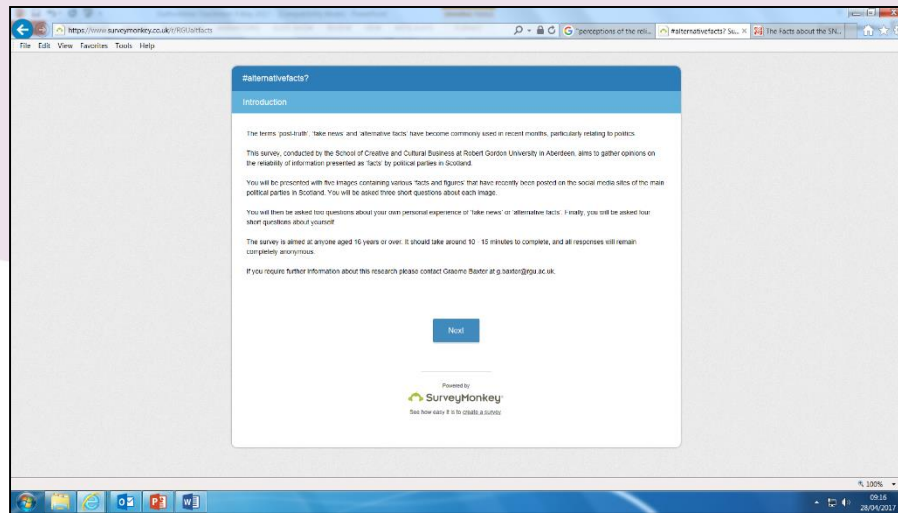


Image 1 (Scottish National Party)

SNP Scottish National Party (SNP)
10 March at 11:21 · ©

88.7% of school leavers from Scotland's most deprived communities going on to a positive initial destination – the highest ever proportion and up from 83.9% in 2011/12.

Read more about our action to tackle the educational attainment gap:
https://www.snp.org/raising_attainment_in_schools

A record proportion of school leavers from Scotland's poorest areas are continuing in education, training, or going on to get a job



Like Comment Share

362 Top comments

89 shares

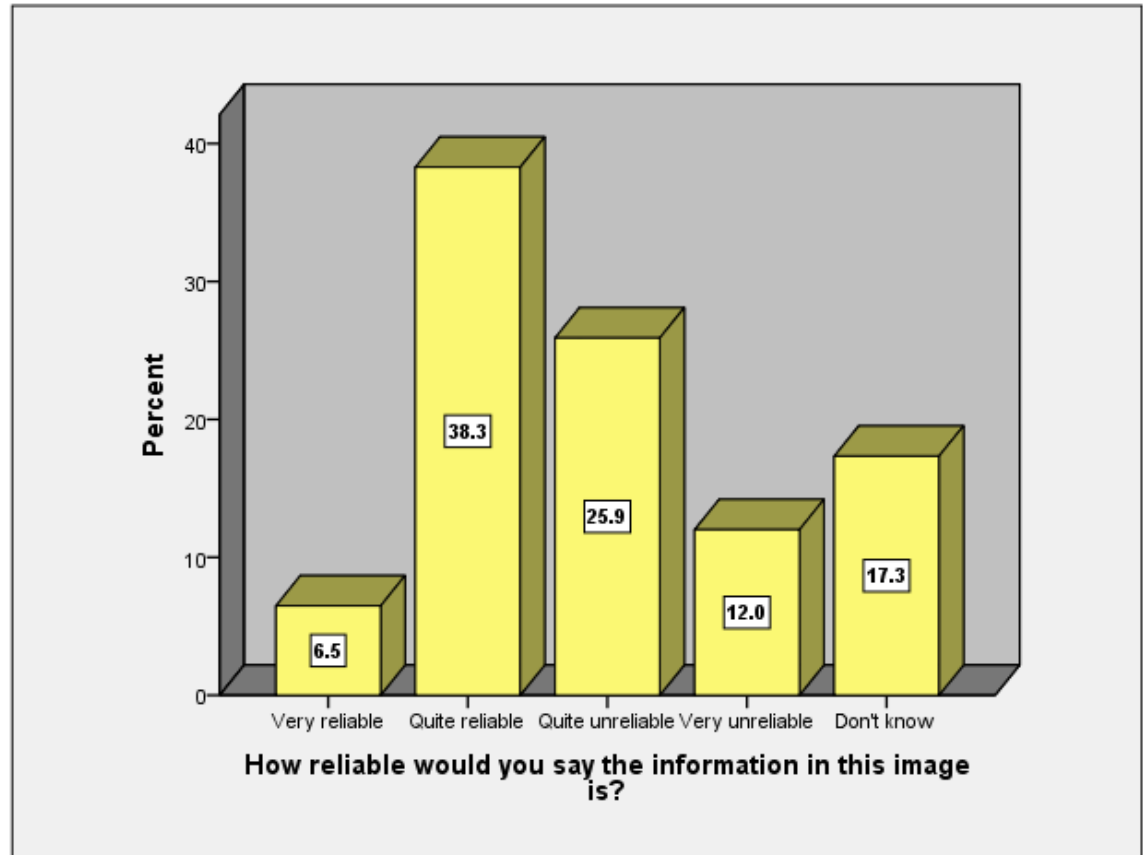


Image 2 (Scottish Conservatives)

ScotConservatives @ScotTories · Mar 21

We should be discussing the 152,000 college places cut by the SNP, rather than #IndyRef2



WE SHOULD BE DISCUSSING:

152,000
college places cut by the
SNP since 2007

INSTEAD OF INDYREF2

Scottish
Conservative
& Unionist

15 155 165

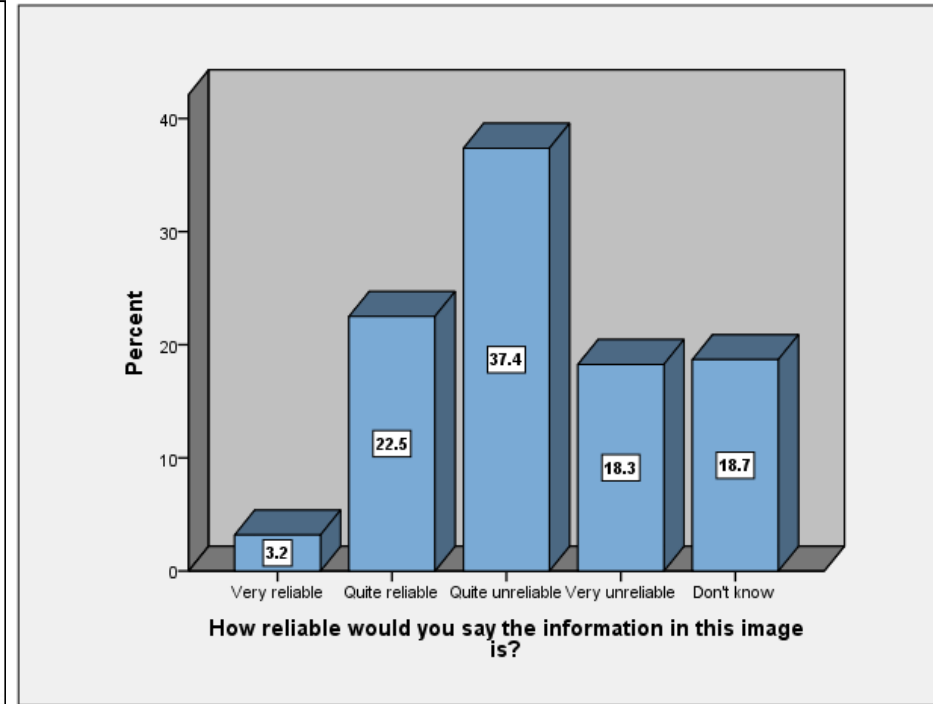


Image 3 (Scottish Labour)

Scottish Labour @scottishlabour · Mar 9

KD: John Swinney has looked at the numbers and he knows the case for independence lies in tatters. #FMQs

"The early years of an independent Scotland are timed to coincide with a massive North Sea oil boom."

John Swinney, March 2013

Revenue the Treasury expects to receive this year: **£0.9billion**

Revenue the SNP claimed would be generated this year: **£11.8 billion**



25 30 21

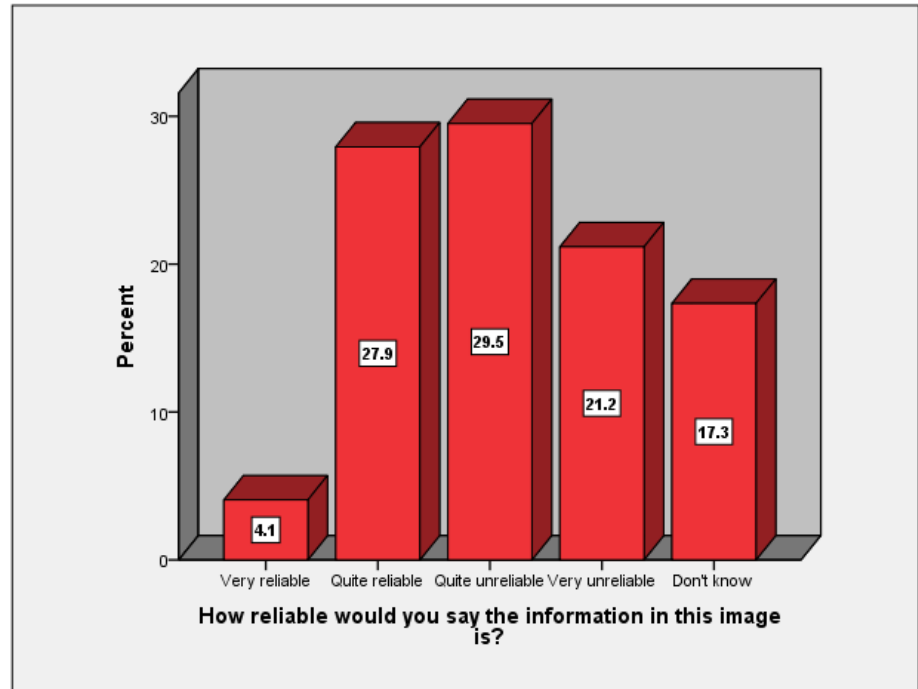


Image 4 (Scottish Greens)

Scottish Greens @scotgp · 17 Dec 2016

#scotbudget should be an anti-poverty budget.



Scotland has some of the highest childcare costs in the UK, and childcare costs remain a major barrier to people meeting the **Minimum Income Standard**.

42% of single parent families were out of work for childcare reasons in 2012. Affordable, high quality childcare provision would make a big difference these families: **31% of single mothers said they could work more if this was available.**

14 retweets, 8 likes

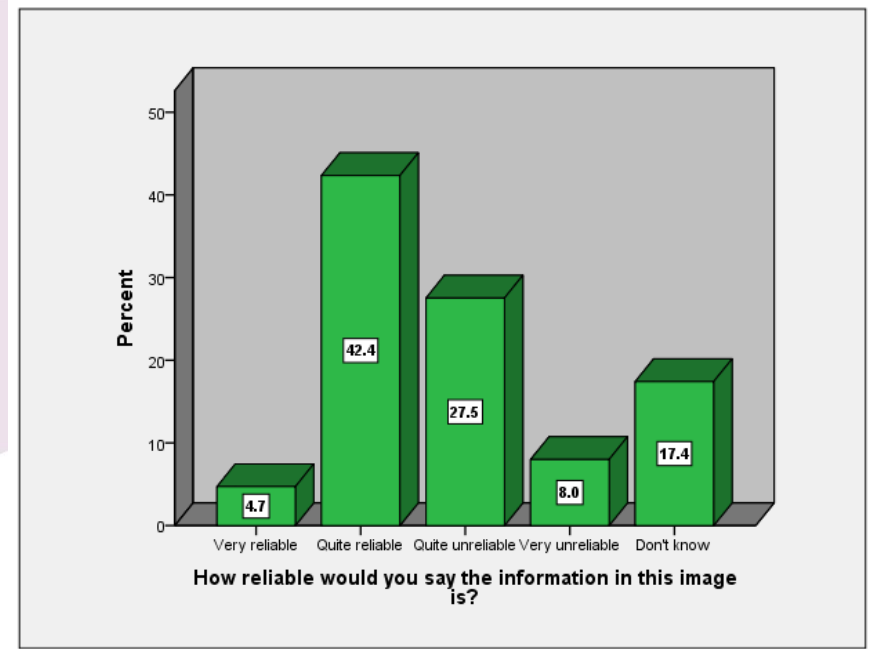


Image 5 (Scottish Liberal Democrats)

Scot Lib Dems @scotlibdems · 23h

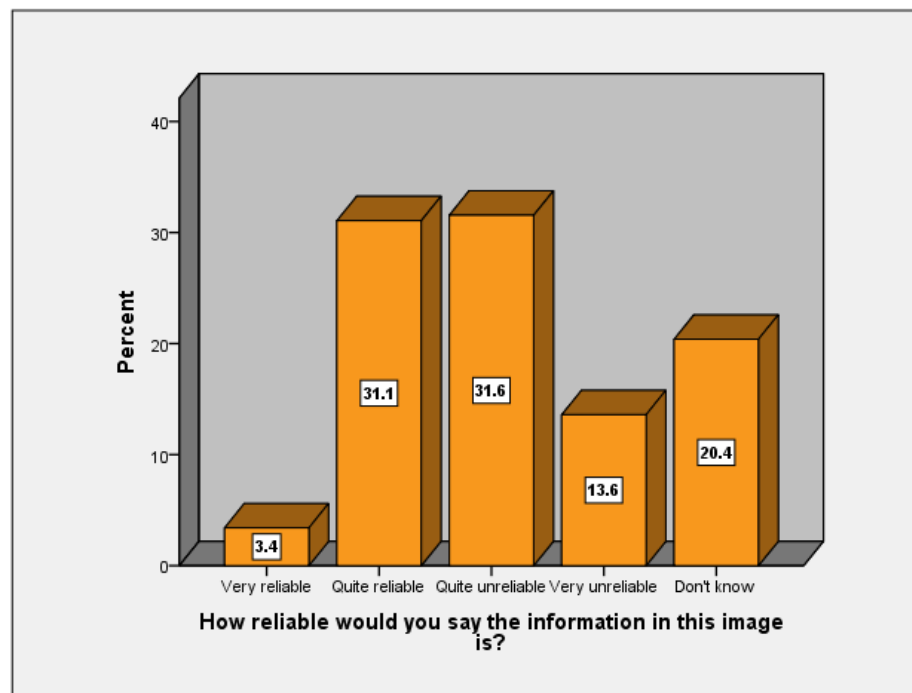
Question on education at #FMQs.
Here's what the First Minister won't tell you today:



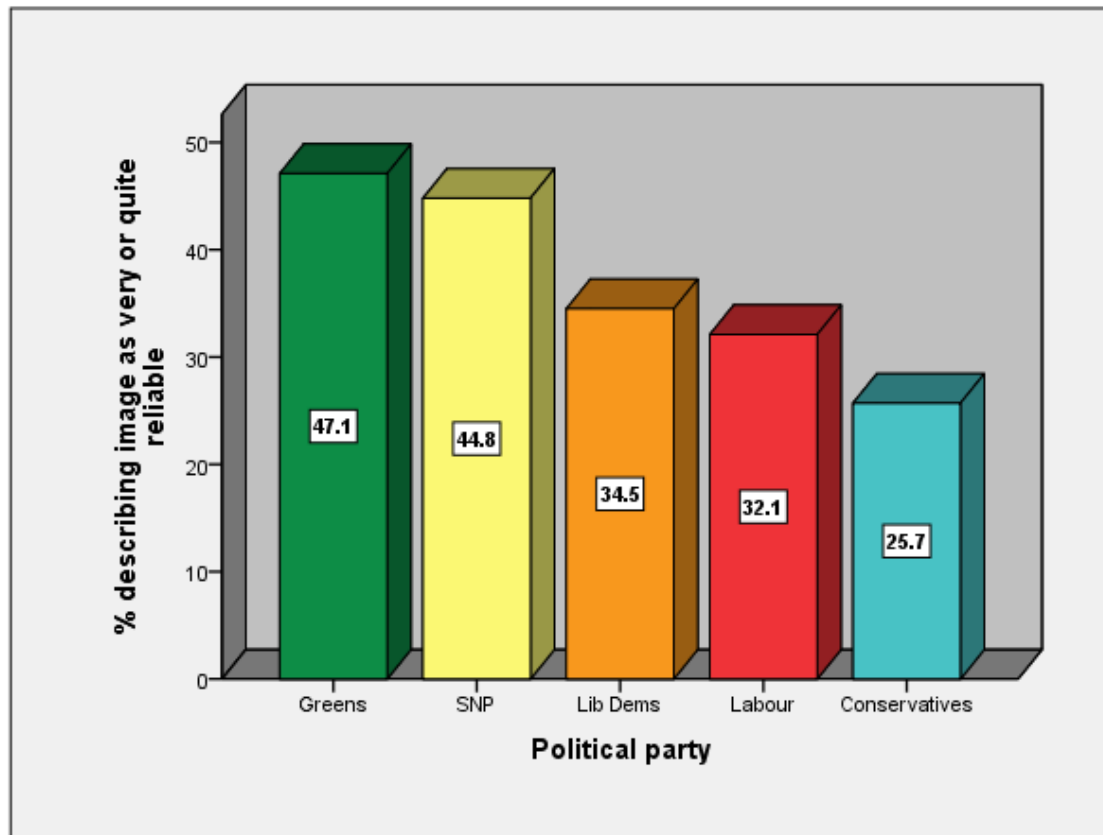
SNP Schools Record
150,000 children in larger classes
- 4,000 fewer teachers
+ 20,000 pages of teacher "guidance"
- Now below England & Vietnam in world education rankings
= a decade of SNP failure on education

www.scotlibdems.org.uk

3 15 9



Cross-Party Summary: % Describing Image as 'Very' or 'Quite' Reliable



Factors Affecting Trust in 'Facts'

- **Levels of trust in politicians in general**
- **Levels of trust in specific politicians or parties**
- **Political allegiance – e.g. 74.5% of SNP supporters felt the SNP facts were very or quite reliable (cf. 44.8% of entire sample)**
- **Perception that 'facts' will be biased in some way, or subject to some form of 'spin'**
- **Whether or not the source of the 'facts' has been given**
- **Respondents' professional or personal experience, particularly in relation to education, healthcare and childcare**

Likely Sources of Information to Verify or Debunk 'Facts'

- **UK or Scottish Government websites**
- **Websites of government agencies, e.g. Audit Scotland, Office for National Statistics**
- **Universities or think tanks**
- **Third sector organisations and interest groups**
- **Newspaper and news media websites, e.g. BBC, ITN, Herald, Scotsman**
- **Use Freedom of Information legislation**
- **But, emphasis on Google as first port of call**



Examples of 'Facts' Exposed as Falsehoods?

- **Iraq and weapons of mass destruction**
- **Brexit bus**
- **US presidential campaign**
 - **inauguration attendance figures**
 - **'terrorist incident' in Sweden**
 - **'Pizzagate'**
 - **Bowling Green 'massacre', etc.**



Image: Huffington Post



Image: CNBC

And in Scotland...

- **Scottish Government's oil & gas revenue projections**
- **'The Vow' of more devolved powers for the Scottish Parliament**



Personally Misled by 'Facts'?

- **Very few respondents admitted to having been personally misled by political 'facts'**
- **But a number gave examples of being misled by other 'facts', including:-**
 - **Food labelling**
 - **Purchase of endowment policies**
 - **Slimming tablets**
 - **April Fool jokes in the media**



Image: timeanddate.com



**ROBERT GORDON
UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN**

Thank you...



Image: NBC News