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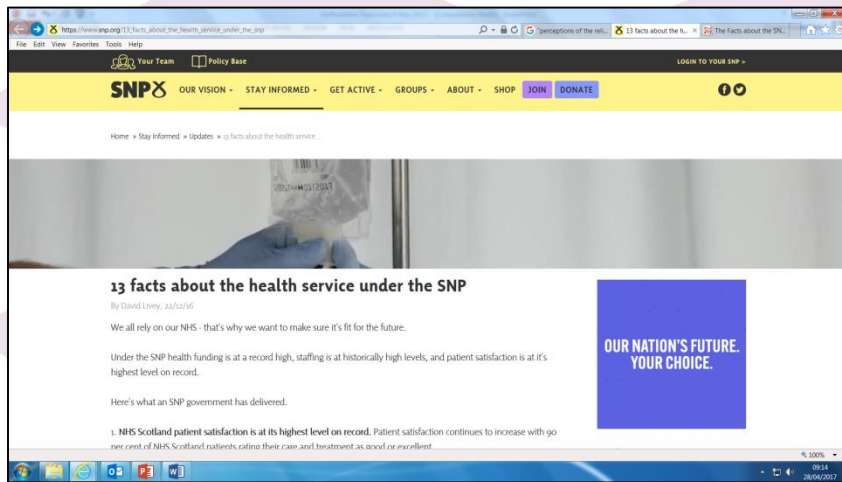
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# Information Search Engagement and 'Fake News'

## Democracy in a Post-Truth Age Workshop, 8 June 2017



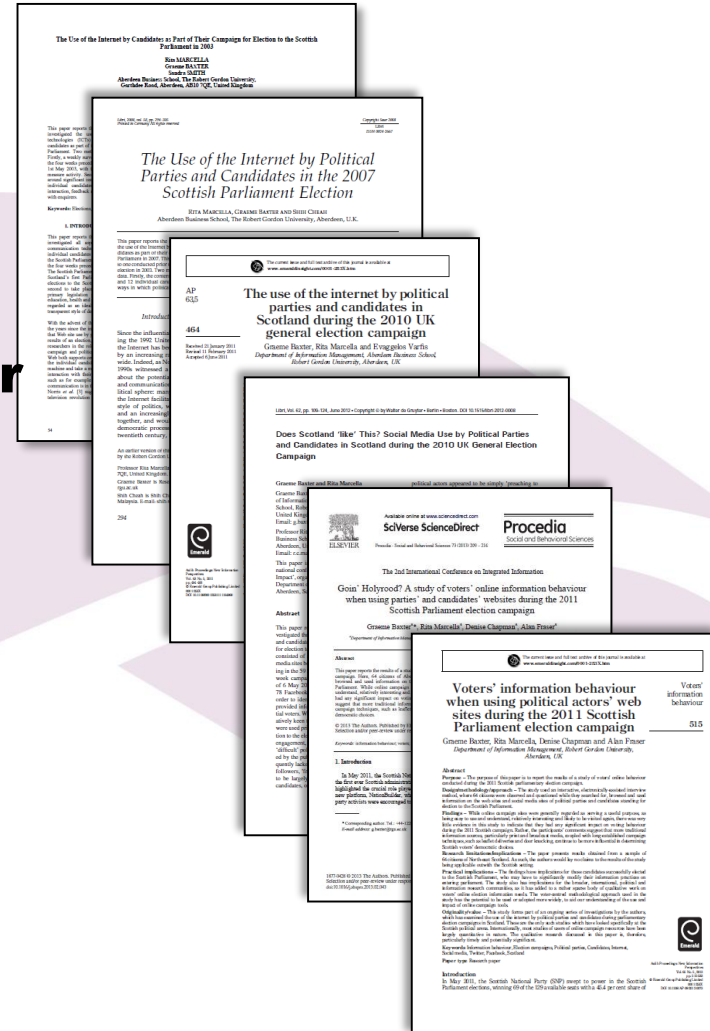
**Rita Marcella and Graeme Baxter**  
***School of Creative and Cultural Business***  
***Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen***

# Background

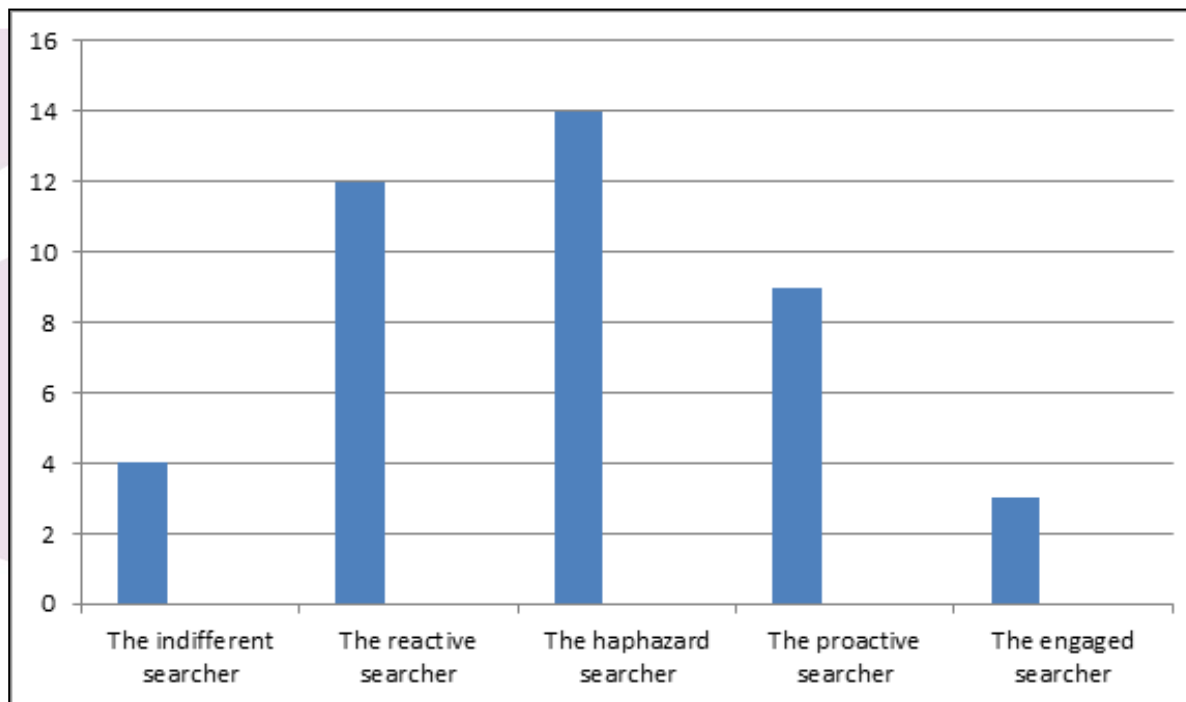


# Studies conducted to date

- **Citizenship information provision and needs**
- **Parliamentary information online**
- **Members' needs**
- **European Parliament Library user study**
- **Election campaigns online in Scotland, 2003 to date**
- **Voters' information behavior online**
- **MSPs on Twitter, in 'peacetime', early 2014**
- **Scottish independence referendum, Sep 2014**



# Emerging Typology of Information Searchers



# Methodology

- **Online survey (538 responses at 1 June)**
- **Electronically-assisted interviews with 23 citizens in Aberdeenshire, North-East Scotland**

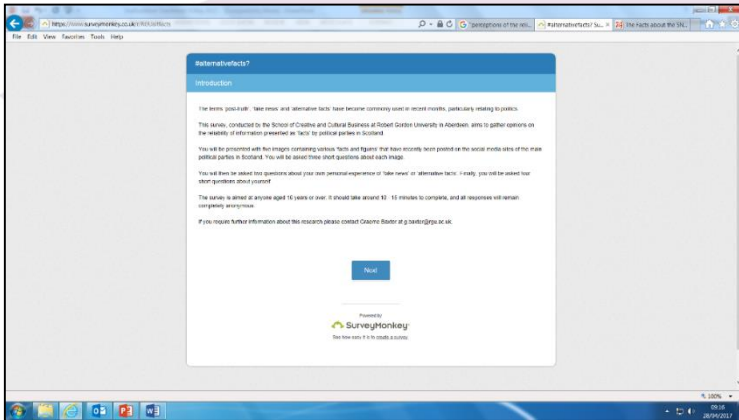


Image: Urban Realm



Image: Aberdeenshire Council

# 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](https://www.snp.org/raising_attainment_in_schools)

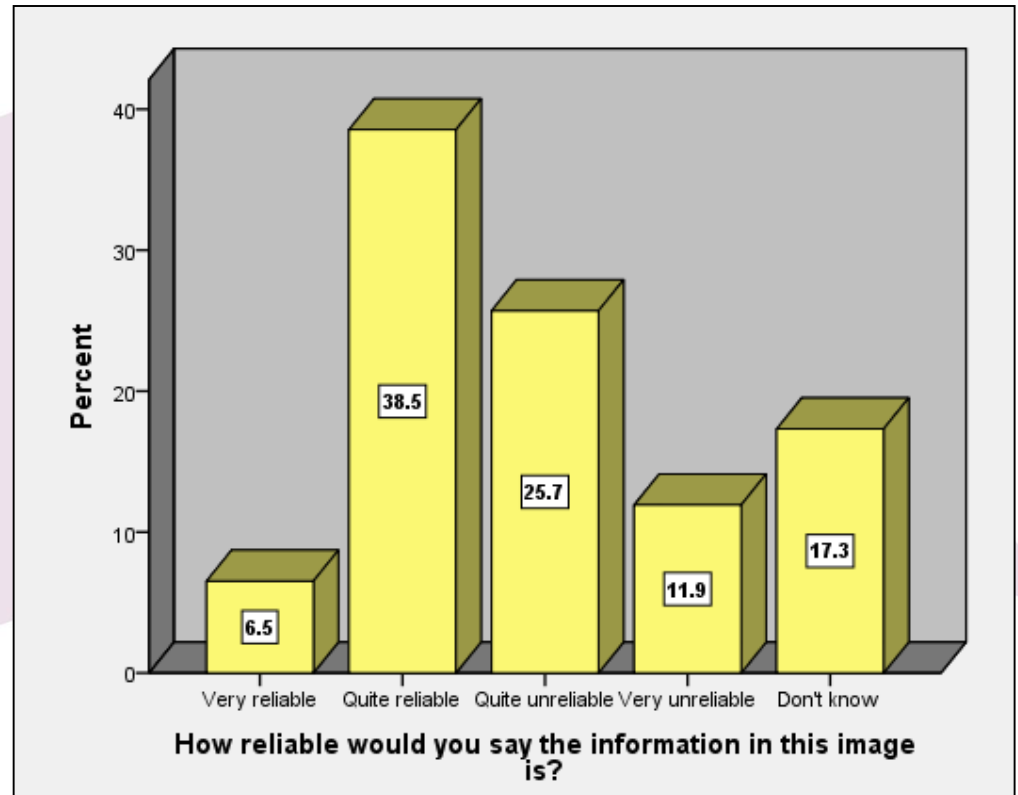
**A record proportion of school leavers from Scotland's poorest areas are continuing in education, training, or going on to get a job**



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



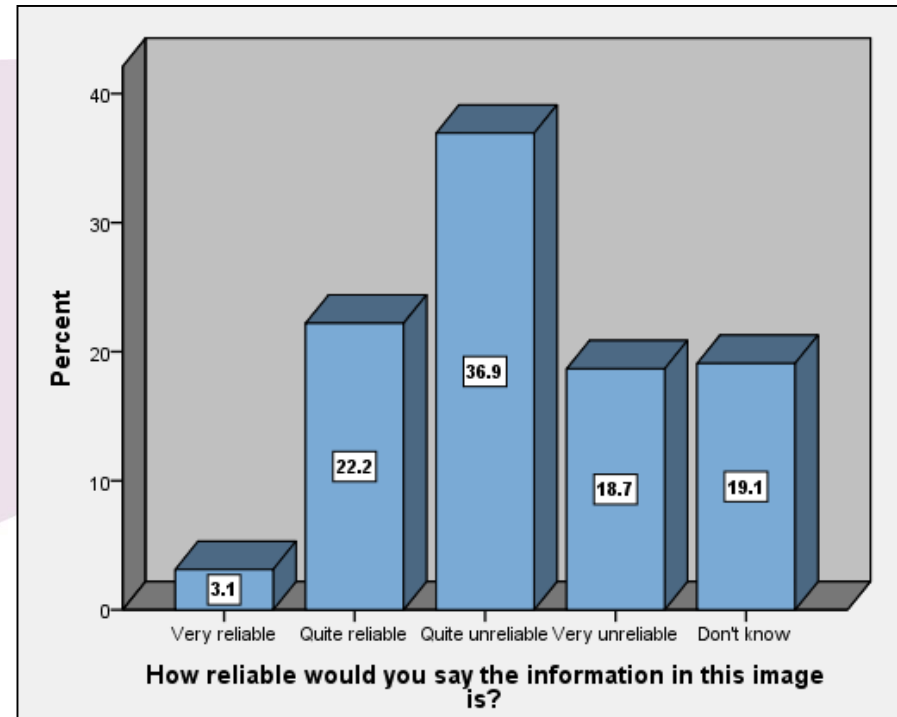
**WE SHOULD BE DISCUSSING:**

**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

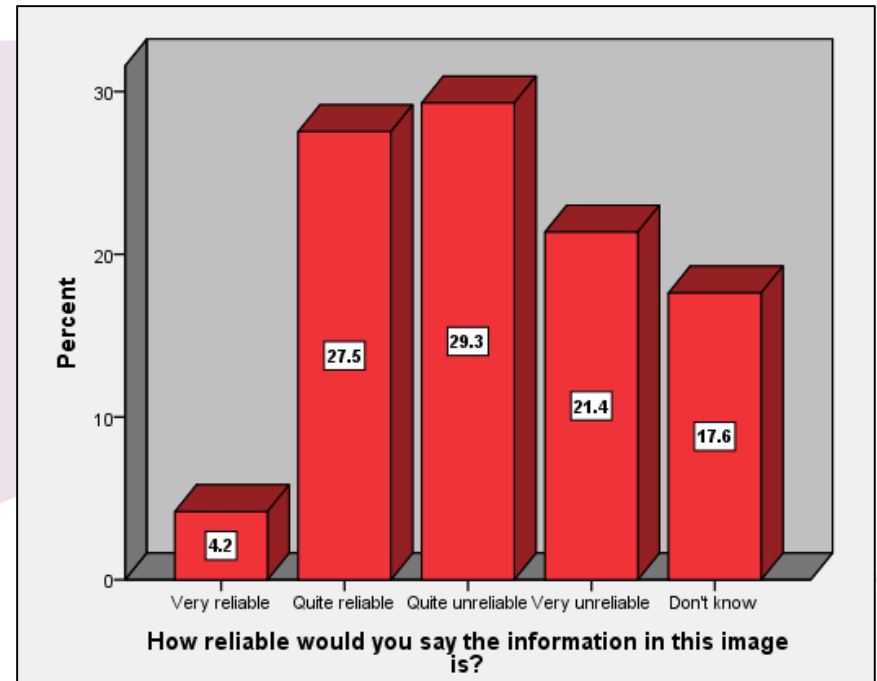
KD: John Swinney has looked at the numbers and he knows the case for independence lies in tatters. #FMQs

**"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**



# Image 4 (Scottish Greens)

 Scottish Greens @scotgp · 17 Dec 2016

**#scotbudget** should be an anti-poverty budget.

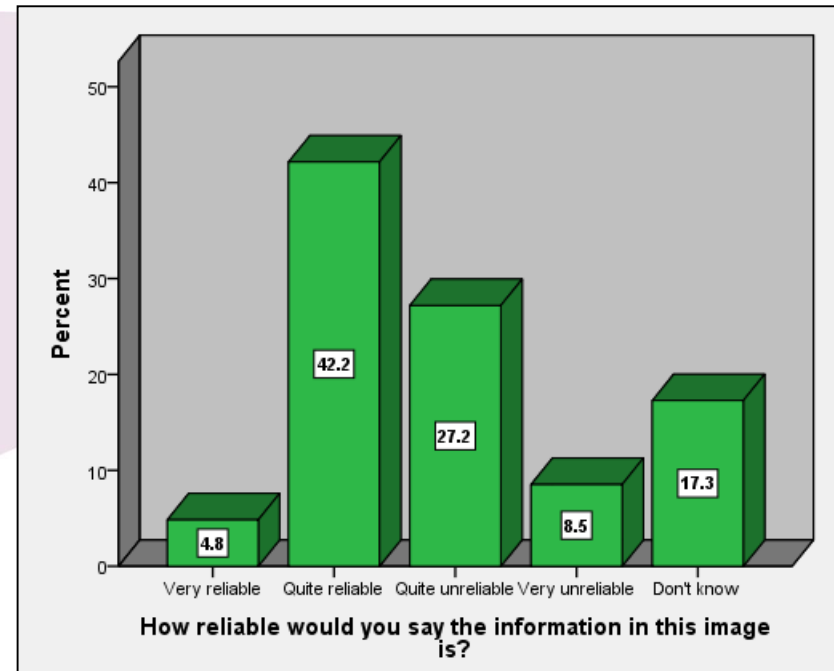


Scotland has some of the highest childcare costs in the UK, and childcare costs remain a major barrier to people meeting the **Minimum Income Standard**.

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 ❤️ 8



# Image 5 (Scottish Liberal Democrats)

Scot Lib Dems @scotlibdems · 23h

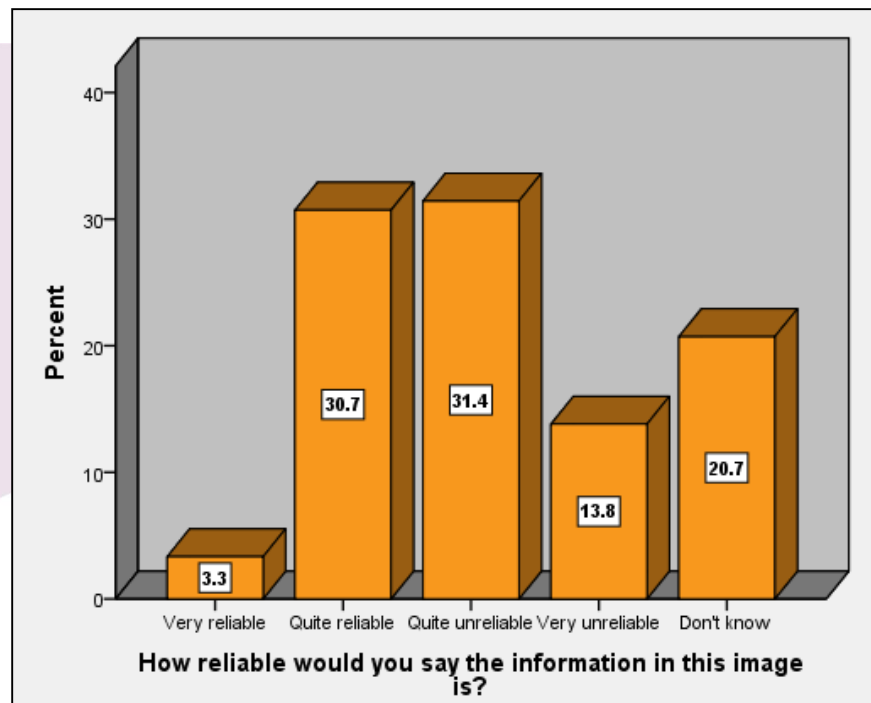
Question on education at #FMQs.  
Here's what the First Minister won't tell you today:



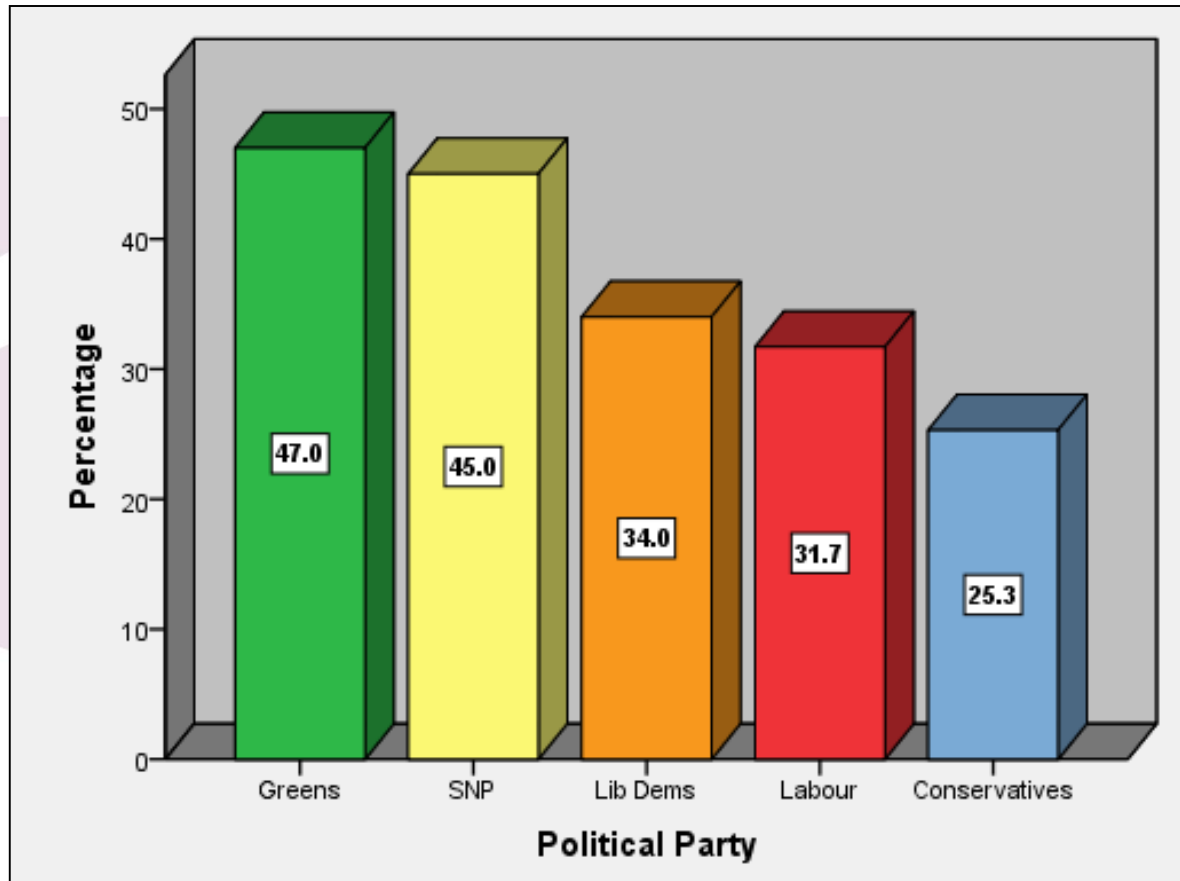
SNP Schools Record  
150,000 children in larger classes  
- 4,000 fewer teachers  
+ 20,000 pages of teacher "guidance"  
- Now below England & Vietnam in world education rankings  
= a decade of SNP failure on education

[www.scotlibdems.org.uk](http://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. 75.0% of SNP supporters felt the SNP facts were very or quite reliable (cf. 45.0% of entire sample)**
- **Perception that 'facts' will be cherry-picked, 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 during IndyRef campaign**
- **'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