



Summary

This research set out to explore the national identity of Scots residing outside of the United Kingdom, whether they are expats, emigrants, or their ancestors - recent or past - were Scottish. The Scottish diaspora is immense, yet discussions of Scottish nationality have often excluded the identities of Scots overseas. This research intends to expand this discussion to include the diaspora, whilst also exploring how (or if) being Scottish plays a major role in the lives of Scots abroad.

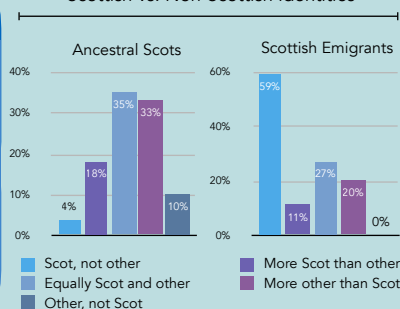
The Scottish identity is strong overseas, despite the diaspora being detached from Scottish civic society. Scots often express their identity, display their Scottishness, and embrace 'novelty' Scottish things which they may not otherwise do in Scotland. All of this is both supported and encouraged by the strong international perception of Scotland, which is a major asset and brings benefits to Scots overseas.

Scottish Households

Scotland enters the households of the diaspora overseas, often taking the form of Scottish food and drink, decorations, and day-to-day media and news. For emigrants, there is often greater interest in more 'novelty' Scottish things because of their heightened sense of Scottishness overseas.

Many expats and emigrants also introduce aspects of their own Scottish childhood to their children to keep the second-generation Scots in-touch with their Scottish roots.

Scottish vs. Non-Scottish Identities



Scottish Communities

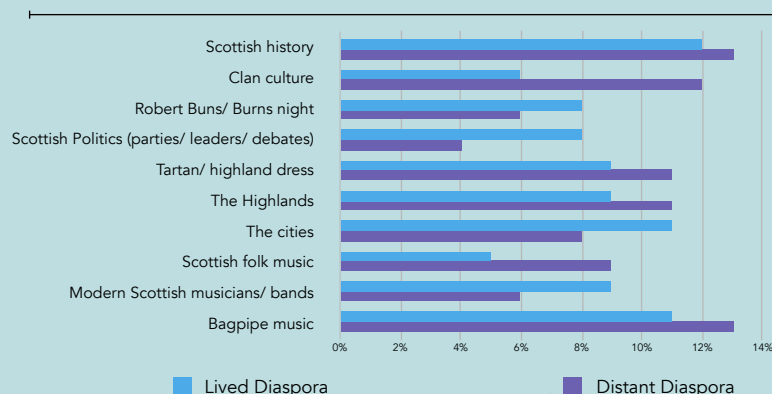
Many Scottish expats, emigrants, and ancestral Scots get involved with Scottish cultural events such as highland games, Scottish societies, and Burns Clubs overseas. Many 'lived' diasporic Scots (expats and emigrants who have lived in Scotland) love to get involved with these "over-the-top" events despite having had no interest in them in Scotland. However, some find these events inauthentic and cannot relate to either the event or the attendants - usually ancestral Scots who have never lived in Scotland. On the contrary, some Scots enjoy being around the ancestral diaspora as they share the same passion for Scotland and can express that during these events.

Engagement Within the Diaspora

The relationship between the lived diaspora and the distant diaspora (ancestral Scot's whose distant ancestors were Scottish) is a topic which splits expats and emigrants. Many ancestral Scots have a strong affinity to Scotland and ask lots of questions and enquire about Scotland to Scottish emigrants and expats. Some Scots enjoy this as they share their enthusiasm and affinity to Scotland, but others are less comfortable around "fake" Scots.

Using survey data (graphic below), I compared the image of Scotland across these groups to assess if they share the same perception of Scotland. More romantic images of Scotland (Scottish history, clan culture, bagpipe music) are generally more prominent in the mind of the distant diaspora, whereas more modern and authentic images of Scotland (Scottish politics, the cities, modern Scottish bands) are more prominent in the lived diaspora's image of Scotland. Perhaps the distant diaspora's generally less modern and candid image of Scotland is why a number of expats and emigrants cannot relate to them.

"When you think of Scotland, which of the following aspects of Scottish culture feature prominently in your image of the country?"



Methodology

A total of 61 online interviews were conducted with mostly Scottish expats and other individuals from the Scottish diaspora. Additionally, a survey which achieved 294 responses was circulated among predominantly ancestral Scots. Participants have collectively lived across 6 continents and over 40 countries. This research compared and contrasted Scot's experiences inside and outside of the English-speaking world, and between locations where there are many or very few Scottish diasporic individuals.

National Identity

Scottish expats and emigrants often define their Scottishness in terms of their birth and upbringing, and the ancestral diaspora in terms of their Scottish blood. None of these require Scottish residency, and so their Scottishness can (and does) exist strongly overseas despite their lack of civic connection. Even among distant descendants of Scotland, there still exists a potent sense of Scottishness.

Many Scottish expats and emigrants state that their sense of Scottish has actually intensified whilst living overseas.

Accent

Keeping one's Scottish accent was understood by many participants as very important to their Scottish identity, and most agreed that it was a desirable thing to retain overseas. Accent is also the most obvious identity marker for Scottish migrants, identifying them from other British and North American groups overseas.

When the accent is picked up on by non-Scots overseas, it also provides Scots with desired identity recognition.

Language

Scots also express their Scottish identity by using Scottish phrases in their households and workplaces overseas, often to share Scotland with non-Scots and to play on the intrigue which others have of Scotland outside of the United Kingdom.

Swearing is also seen as particularly Scottish, and some Scots swear overseas as a result of their Scottish identity, even if it breaks the social conventions of their host country.



A dot distribution map of my interviewed participant's most recent and past residences

Scottish and UK Politics

Very few Scottish expats and emigrants still feel connected to Scottish politics with the majority feeling disconnected, causing some distress. With Scottish statehood and EU membership being close to many Scot's hearts, several state they would return home to vote on these issues, to seek citizenship, or to return and live in an independent Scotland.

Some Scots living outside of the UK claim that their experience abroad has shaped their views on Scottish political issues. For example, Scots living in smaller EU nations feel like they have a better understand of Scotland's future if it were to rejoin the EU as an independent state, having witnessed the pros and cons of this in their host country.

"A kilt in Moscow makes you bulletproof"

The overarching theme of this research was that being Scottish is a major asset to Scots living overseas. In the English-speaking world and Europe, there is a great fondness of Scotland and Scots, and in the rest of the world there is a deep curiosity, interest, and excitement about Scotland. Expats and emigrants observe that a lot of the world is "pre-warmed to Scotland", and Scots are often met with a great reception, assisting with their integration into a new host country.

This fuels the Scottish identity, as it gives good reason for Scots to 'be Scottish' overseas. The international image helps to maintain Scottishness among the diaspora, and incentivises them to embrace and display their Scottish identity, often to their advantage.

