

A Report on the Referendum on the Political Status of the Falkland Islands

Explanation of Corrections Made

The first version of this paper was published on the SAC website and covered by MercoPress and *Penguin News* on 28 June 2013. Four days later, a Falkland Islander contacted me to challenge my estimate in Table 6 of 18 Argentine-born Islanders being on the Falkland Islands electoral registers.

From the exchange of e-mails, I realised that I had made a simple, but significant, error in reading the 2009 Constitution. Section 32 (1) (a) specifies a person over 18-years old can be registered as an elector, if “he or she is a citizen and has Falkland Islands status”. I had not noted the citizenship requirement and had misread this article as giving the vote to all adults with Falkland Islands Status. When writing the paper, I was wrongly assuming adults with Falkland Islands Status who were not British citizens, including Argentine citizens, could be voters.

However, this error did not completely answer the challenge made by the Islander. Among the 18 Argentine-born adults with Falkland Islands Status, reported in Table 6, only five were Argentine citizens. According to this data from the April 2012 census, the 13 Argentine-born British citizens with FIS should be on the electoral registers.

Using the census data to estimate the number of Argentine-born electors is complicated by three factors. Firstly, various small changes in the population occurred in the year between the April 2012 census and the March 2013 referendum. Secondly, before the 1982 hostilities, some Islander women went to Buenos Aires to give birth and returned with their babies to the Falklands. This should not affect the data in Table 6, because one of the census questions was used to exclude babies born outside the Islands who came to the Falklands within six months of their birth. Thirdly, as is mentioned in the paper, not all those who were eligible to be on the electoral registers had actually been registered.

My challenger still insisted that I must be wrong to suggest there could be as many as thirteen Argentine-born adults with the right to vote in the referendum. However, he went through all the names on the registers and realised he was mistaken. He quickly identified ten Argentine-born people. Two of these were Chileans who parents had been in Argentina when they were born. The other eight were Argentines who had been so integrated into Island life for decades that they had not come to my challenger’s mind as having Argentine backgrounds. I believe this sustains the validity of my concept of some immigrants becoming Incorporated Islanders, who are fully accepted into the community.

The remaining three Argentine-born British citizens in the census count have not yet been identified, but this is too small a difference to need resolving. Perhaps, they include unidentified individual Incorporated Islanders; or one or two of the few people, who died between the census and the referendum; or people who had failed to register as electors.

There is a minor exception to the rule that Islanders must be British citizens to have the vote. Section 32 (1) (b) of the 2009 Constitution specifies that Commonwealth citizens who were registered before January 2009, in accordance with the provisions of the 1985 Constitution, were to remain as electors. I have been told by the Policy Unit of the Falkland Islands Government Secretariat that the 16 adults who have FIS but not British citizenship, from the smaller minority groups, include seven Commonwealth citizens. If these seven people were electors in 2008 and were still in the Falklands in March 2013, then they were able to vote in the referendum.

The Occasional Paper is now being re-issued, with minor copy-editing and four substantive sets of changes.

- All text suggesting a Falklands elector does not have to be a British citizen has been deleted or amended.
- All data estimating the numbers of Incorporated Islanders on the electoral registers has been amended to reflect the need for most electors to be British citizens. (The concept of an Incorporated Islander being a foreign-born, new immigrant, who has gained Falkland Islands Status remains unchanged.)
- Where necessary, allowance has been made for the possibility of up to seven Commonwealth citizens being electors. (They were previously included in my estimates solely on the basis of having FIS.)
- The two Argentine-born Incorporated Islanders with Chilean parents have been noted, but not re-classified.

It is acknowledged that the electoral registers do not contain all residents who are entitled to be electors, but this does not require any change to the original text. The caveat remains that all data estimates about the electorate derived from census must be inaccurate to the extent that any population changes occurred during the year 2012-2013.

The net effect of the changes is to reduce the estimate of the number of Incorporated Islanders able to vote in the referendum from 182 to 151 British citizens, plus up to seven Commonwealth citizens. Neither this reduction nor any errors in the data estimates are enough to change the conclusion that 100 to 150 Incorporated Islanders did vote Yes.

I am grateful to the Islander who challenged me, so that my errors have been corrected. (He wishes to remain anonymous.)