1. **Evaluate / Analyse the factors which affect voting behaviour in Scotland and/or the UK.**

**Factors: Social class, Media, Geography, Age, Gender and Ethnicity.**

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| **Factors and their effectiveness** | Factors and their lack of effectiveness |
| **Social class**  Is traditionally hugely influential.  In ‘60s and ‘70s Labour traditionally got support from lower social classes who worked in heavy industry due to Labour’s welfare support and links with trade unionism, and Conservatives traditionally got more support from higher social classes due to their policies of lower taxes SC continues to be an important factor today. In 2015: Conservative got most of their support from class AB voters (44%) and least from DE (29%), and Labour got most of their support from voters from social class DE (37%), and least from AB (28%).  Con AB: 44% Lab AB: 28%  Con DE: 29% Lab DE: 37%  Also, for 2014 Scottish independence referendum, according to IPSOS Mori polling, 65% of those living in one of the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland voted Yes, compared with just 36% of those in the one-fifth most affluent.  Shows traditional SC loyalties still exist and shape attitudes | Class dealignment in ‘70s and ‘80s. Traditional working class occupations, e.g. heavy industry such as shipbuilding and coal mining were replaced with middle class occupations, e.g. tourism, IT. Class boundaries were blurred and traditional class loyalties weakened.  Tony Blair’s rebranding of Labour as ‘New Labour’ moved Labour toward the centre political ground and said in 1999 ‘the class war is over’. SC’s influence was declining.  2015 stats: although trend is still for AB to vote Conservative and DE to vote Labour, significant numbers in both in 2015 voted the reverse, which shows there are clearly other factors at play and that the influence of social class as a factor affecting voting behaviour is not as strong as it once was. |
| **Media**  Newspapers can be biased and seek to influence readers by shaping the news agenda in a certain way and by urging voters to vote for particular parties. In the 2015 UK election, Conservatives won most support from Telegraph readers (69%) and Daily Mail readers (59%) after both these papers had endorsed a vote for the Conservatives. Labour won most support from Mirror readers (67%) and Guardian readers (62%), after both these papers had endorsed a vote for Labour.  Newspapers: since 1974, the Sun newspaper (read by between 4-8 million per day) has always supported the party that ends up winning most seats in Commons, e.g. in 1997 they endorsed Labour –Labour won landslide, and in 2010 they switched to Conservatives-they won most seats. In 2015 the English Sun backed Conservatives and the Scottish Sun backed the SNP. The Conservatives won a majority of seats across UK and SNP won 56 of 59 Scottish sears. Also, of 37 newspapers in Scotland, only 1 (Sunday Herald) publicly supported a Yes vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and No won – arguably influence of newspapers. | However, arguably newspapers respond to changing political attitudes, rather than create them. It is possible that readers choose which newspaper(s) to read based on pre-existing political opinions, rather than allowing the newspapers to shape them.  A few days before the 2015 UK election the English Sun backed Conservatives and the Scottish Sun backed SNP but the polls were already showing both parties in the lead, so perhaps newspapers not that influential, they just react to existing public opinion so as to avoid being seen as out of touch with the public mood.  In the 2015 election, the Express endorsed a vote for UKIP, and while UKIP did get most support from Express readers (27%), almost double this percentage of Express readers voted Conservative (51%), showing that in this instance the media had a limited impact on voting behaviour and other factors must have proved more influential. Also, the BBC are required by law to be politically impartial so arguably they do not affect voting behaviour as much as newspapers do, although they do frame the news agenda by choosing which stories to report on and which not to. |
| **Geography**  North South divide: In 2015 UK election, of the 59 Scottish constituencies, 56 elected SNP MPs and there is only 1 Conservative MP (David Mundell) from a Scottish constituency, despite the Conservatives winning a majority of seats across the UK. South of England mostly votes Conservative, so different regions certainly do seem to vote differently. | However, geography also linked to class as more working class people in North of England and Scotland due to heavy industries being previously concentrated in North. Also, in Scottish independence referendum, the 4 council areas that voted Yes (Dundee, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire) were the 4 with highest levels of deprivation, and East Renfrewshire, considered Scotland’s flagship council in terms of desirability to live and school exam results, voted 63% in favour of No, so class arguably more of an influence than geography. |
| **Age**  In 2015, the younger people were they were more likely to vote Labour and less likely to vote Conservative, and the older people were they were more likely to vote Conservative and less likely to vote Labour.  18-29 year olds: Lab 36%, Con 32%  60+ year olds: Lab: 25%, Con 45%  Younger voters tend to be more left wing and also gave more support than older voters to centre-left or left wing parties such as the SNP and Greens. Younger tend to be more ‘idealistic’ and as they are less likely to be in employment or well-paid employment, they may not be as concerned as older voters by higher taxes and instead prioritise public services and protection of benefits, which they may need more and which centre-left parties offer.  In Scottish independence referendum, 71% of 16-17 year olds voted Yes, but just 27% of 65+ group voted Yes, so age clearly a factor, but perhaps the real underlying influence here is media, as older generation more likely to read newspapers, which as already noted mostly supported a No vote, and younger voters more likely to use social media such as Twitter and Facebook to get their news, and The Yes movement was very active on social media.  The evidence shows age is clearly one of the most significant factors affecting how people vote, but it does not exist on its own, it is directly related to the media people of different age groups use and the issues they prioritise. | **Gender**  Gender does not seem to be a particularly significant factor. Although traditionally males and females may have voted with different priorities, with males perhaps being more concerned with employment related policies as they were more likely to be in employment and females perhaps prioritising issues such as childcare, the evidence does not support the notion that many people vote in a gender specific way. In the 2015 UK election, for instance, both males and females were more likely to vote Conservative than Labour according to Yougov polling.  Males: Con 37%, Lab 29%  Females: Con 38%, Lab 33%  These figures are not markedly different and both genders were equally quite consistent in the support they gave to other parties, suggesting that gender is not a particularly important factor shaping people’s political opinions or affecting their voting behaviour.  Conc: judge most important factor(s) / least. |
| **Ethnicity / Religion**  Another factor said to affect voting behavior is ethnicity. With the wide diversity of different ethnic groups, it no longer makes any sense to discuss the ethnic minority vote as a single, combined group. Labour continues to win a clear majority among people whose roots are in the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian sub-continent—although even here between one fifth and one third voted Conservative. However, when we consider the votes of people with roots in Asia outside the Indian sub-continent—such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Korea—we find that the Conservatives (47 per cent) lead Labour (34 per cent) by a full 13 points. British Muslims have traditionally favoured Labour over the Conservatives, but anger over the UK’s invasion of Iraq in 2003 under a Labour government has turned many against the party, and has contributed to the sense of alienation from politics that in part explains why Muslim turnout is lower than other religions. |  |