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**Democracy in Scotland and the UK**

**1a) A devolved system of government works well for the UK. Discuss. (20)**

**1b) ‘Some people think devolution is the best way to govern Scotland but others think independence is the best way to govern Scotland’. Discuss these different views (20)**

The UK currently operates on a devolved system of government. This means that the UK Parliament is responsible for decisions for reserved matters for the whole of the UK, but the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, and Northern Ireland Assembly are responsible for their own decisions on devolved matters. There is an ongoing debate as to how well the current system works, with some calls for changes. This essay will…and will conclude that…

The UK Parliament is in control of reserved matters for the whole of the UK. These include taxation, welfare, employment, defence and foreign affairs. For instance, the UK Government decides to maintain nuclear weapons on Trident submarines at Faslane Naval Base in Scotland. Supporters argue this is indispensable in protecting the UK from attacks in an unstable world, especially as several other countries, including the dictatorship of North Korea, possess them. Prime Minister David Cameron has labelled the weapons as an effective ‘insurance policy’ in deterring attacks. They also provide thousands of jobs in the UK’s nuclear defence industry, thereby proving the benefits of some policy areas being centralised. A majority of the Scottish population (55%) voted No in the Scottish independence referendum, so clearly most agreed that a devolved system of government currently works well for Scotland as it maintains the strength and security of a larger union. The Scots’ rejection of independence suggests that many evidently see devolution as a better alternative.

In saying that, the leaders of the 3 main Unionist parties at Westminster at the time – David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg, collectively signed ‘The Vow’ which the Daily Record newspaper in Scotland published as its front page days before the referendum. It promised ‘extensive new powers’ for the Scottish Parliament in the event of a No vote, and it was thought this persuaded some potential Yes voters to vote No. Polling by Lord Ashcroft shows 25% of No voters were persuaded to vote No as a result of the promise of The Vow, which ties in with evidence from the 2014 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey which showed that given the third option of ‘devo max’ on the ballot paper (all powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament except foreign affairs, defence and currency), this proved the most popular option. This suggests that there is significant desire for change to the constitution concerning greater devolution to Scotland, and it is felt even by a number of No voters. Indeed, the Smith Commission which was set up following the referendum recommended further devolution to Scotland and subsequently some further powers such as income tax have since been devolved to Scotland, so devolution is in flux. It would therefore be a mistake to equate a No victory with satisfaction with the constitutional status quo.

Critics, however, argue that nuclear weapons are a relic of a Cold War era that is now gone, and that modern threats of terrorism cannot be tackled effectively with nuclear weapons. Scottish taxpayers contribute around £300 million per year toward the maintenance of the UK’s nuclear weapons, and supporters of Scottish independence argue that they are unnecessary and divert funding from social issues such as health and education, to the extent that had there been a Yes vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, the SNP government were proposing to enshrine a ban on nuclear weapons in a Scottish constitution. 45% of the Scottish population voted Yes in the referendum, which although a minority, is a significant number of Scottish people (1.6 million) who believe that a devolved system of government is currently not working well.

Many believe devolution works well as it does allow a degree of independence for devolved assemblies without them having to assume perceived risks of full independence such as the lack of a formal currency union, lack of preparedness to absorb shocks to banks, and an over-reliance on volatile oil reserves. Regional assemblies / Parliaments are however responsible for making decisions on certain devolved matters giving a degree of autonomy to meet more local needs. This is what the Better Together campaign meant by their slogan ‘best of both worlds’ throughout the referendum campaign. In Scotland, for instance, health and education are devolved powers, which have allowed the Scottish Parliament to chart a different course to the rest of the UK in these regards – while England charges patients prescription charges and students tuition fees, Scotland has made both free. Crucially, Scotland did not require independence to do this, and as a result many are satisfied that devolution is currently serving Scotland well and that independence is not necessary to meet the different needs of different areas of the UK.

Furthermore, some believe devolution alone cannot fully meet the needs of people, as while any powers at all are centralised, they are not being made by the people of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland but instead by a Westminster government that often only England elected. Currently we have a majority Conservative government, but of 59 Scottish constituencies, Scotland returned just 1 Conservative MP and 56 SNP MPs in 2015. Consequently, a Conservative Minister under a Conservative led government now decides welfare policy for the whole of the UK, including Scotland, even though they are a minority party in Scotland. An example of the problems this can create is evident in the recent introduction of the ‘bedroom tax’ – reduction in housing benefit for recipients with spare bedrooms. This policy was widely opposed in Scotland and the Scottish government had to use some of its block grant funding toward mitigating its effects, effectively ending its implementation in Scotland in 2014, but because welfare policy is a reserved power, they cannot abolish it, they can only respond to its effects. Supporters of independence argue that rather than the devolved Parliament spending block grant funding dealing with the fallout of a deeply unpopular policy, it would make more sense for Scotland to be independent, in control of all matters including welfare, and not introduce the bedroom tax in the first place. For some, devolution is proving a strain to maintain in its current form while different parts of the UK pursue different political agendas.

Conclusion: Make your own decision based on the evidence and your opinion!

**2a) Analyse / Evaluate the impact of EU membership on the UK or:**

**2b) The EU is a beneficial institution for the UK to be part of". Discuss.**

Before the 2015 UK election, the Conservatives (perhaps motivated by some of their supporters intending to instead vote for UKIP, the anti-EU party) promised they would hold an in or out referendum on Britain’s membership by the EU. Upon subsequently winning a majority, PM David Cameron then renegotiated the UK’s membership terms within the EU in 2016. The deal would have restricted some benefits payments to new EU immigrants arriving in the UK and guaranteed that the UK would never have to join the Euro currency. There was a referendum held on June 23rd 2016 on whether the UK should remain in the EU or leave it. The PM, around half of his Conservative MPs, most Labour MPs, the SNP, the Liberal Democrats and Green party are all campaigning to remain, with UKIP, around half of the Conservative MPs and some Labour MPs campaigning to leave. Leave won, winning 52% of the vote, showing significant dissatisfaction with the EU, and ‘Brexit’ is now expected to be implemented in the coming years.

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| --- | --- |
| **EU beneficial / positive impact** | **EU not beneficial / negative impact** |
| **Trade**  Pro-EU commentators argue that the UK benefits from membership of the EU through its promotion of free trade. The UK population UK is just 60 million but as part of the EU, UK businesses have access to a much larger single market of 500 million EU citizens to buy and sell to, and UK citizens have access to a much wider variety of businesses and European shops such as Lidl and Ikea to choose from, giving UK consumers more choice. The increased competition should also keep prices low. If the UK left the EU millions of jobs could be lost as global manufacturers might choose to move to lower-cost EU countries. Britain's large foreign-owned car industry would shift into the EU and sectors linked to EU membership such as aerospace would also suffer. Airbus production could move to France and Germany, pro-EU commentators claim.  The EU is the UK's main trading partner, HMRC data confirms 44% of UK exports are to the EU and 53% of UK imports are from the EU. This suggests that the UK benefits economically from being in the EU and if we voted to leave we would have to renegotiate trade deals with individual EU member countries, perhaps on worse terms than we currently have inside the EU. PM David Cameron has said a ‘Brexit’ (vote to leave) would be the ‘gamble of the century’, saying it would threaten jobs, the UK’s economic stability, and even our security if we stop cooperating as closely with other EU member states. | **Trade**  However, EU critics such as UKIP leader Nigel Farage have labelled the ‘Remain’ campaign ‘Project Fear’ and accuse it of ‘scaremongering’ to terrify people with threats of economic instability and job losses into voting to Remain. These critics point to the high and growing cost of EU membership; the UK Treasury made a net contribution of £8.5 billion for membership in 2015, and the net cost has grown each year since 2009.  A vote to leave could have knock on consequences for the domestic political situation. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had said that there would ‘almost certainly’ be a second referendum on Scottish independence if Scotland votes to remain in the EU but was taken out against its will by an overall UK vote to leave. This is precisely what happened and the SNP are now adamant they will hold another independence referendum at some point. A vote to leave the EU has therefore created further constitutional uncertainty. |
| **Immigration**  As part of the EU principle of free movement of people to live, work and travel anywhere in the EU, there are one million Brits living in Spain, 330,000 living in France, 330,000 in Ireland and 65,000 in Cyprus, so we must remember that British people are currently taking advantage of freedom of movement.  Also, many think immigration from EU advantages the UK economically as many EU migrants are skilled and work in key UK services like the NHS, which arguably could not cope without foreign doctors and nurses. Overall EU migrants make a net contribution to the UK economy; 32 per cent of recent EU arrivals have university degrees compared with 21 per cent of the native UK population and European immigrants are half as likely as UK natives to receive state benefits or tax credits, according to a study by academics at University College London. | **Immigration**  Some are concerned that being part of the EU has resulted in too many immigrants from other EU countries moving to Britain. Recently poorer Eastern Europeans such as Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania have joined the EU, and there are fears that citizens from these countries can freely move to the UK simply to take advantage of our comparatively more generous welfare system, or to work for less and drive down British wages. If the UK voted to leave it would gain full **control of its own borders** - and be able to control, or stop, the flow of migrants from the EU, which accounted for 27% of total net migration in 2010. **2.3 million** citizens of other EU countries were living in the UK in 2011, says the Office for National Statistics UKIP leader Nigel Farage has said such numbers of EU nationals moving to the UK had left the UK ‘unrecognisable’. This problem has recently been worsened by the European migrant crisis as EU countries try to take their share of migrants or refugees fleeing conflict in Syria. Opinion polling consistently shows Brits are concerned with the levels of uncontrolled immigration and rank it as a very high priority. |
| **Law-making**  British people also benefit from EU employment laws and social protections, which could be stripped away if we left. For instance, the Working Time Directive, which gives all EU workers the right to a minimum number of holidays each year, rest breaks, and rest of at least 11 hours in any 24 hours; restricts excessive night work and guarantees a day off after a week's work. If Britain was to leave the EU, this protection for workers could potentially be lost, leading to excessive working hours and causing stress. | **Law-making**  Arguably the EU Parliament in Brussels is remote and not transparent enough in its decision making and takes too much power away from the Westminster and the UK could regain its sovereignty by leaving.  UK would be free from controversial EU proposals such as TTIP; the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, a proposed free trade agreement between the EU and the USA. Critics claim it would make it more difficult for EU governments, including the UK’s, to regulate markets for the public good and it would allow corporations to sue EU governments who did so if it damaged their profits. Under a similar law, the tobacco firm Philip Morris is currently suing the Australian government for replacing company logos on cigarette packages with images of the dangerous health effects of smoking. TTIP critics claim the law could be used to prevent the UK govt from reversing privatisation of the NHS. This led British journalist George Monbiot to claim TTIP is ‘a full frontal assault on democracy’, and that ‘it would subvert our laws, rights and national sovereignty’. In October 2014 alone there were 450 protest actions across 24 EU member states and a ‘European Citizens Initiative’ petition calling for an end to TTIP has amassed over 1 and a half million signatures across EU countries. |

**3a) Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of Parliamentary representatives in holding the Government to account / scrutinising the Government**

**3b) To what extent is the executive more powerful than the legislature?**

**3c) Analyse the power of an Executive branch of Government**

**You should refer to parliamentary representatives in Scotland, the UK, or both in your answer.**

**3d) Evaluate the importance of the different roles carried out by Parliamentary representatives in the decision-making process**

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| --- | --- |
| **Parliament effectively holds govt to account / important role** | **Parliament not very effective / less important** |
| **Votes in Commons**: e.g. in 2013 MPs voted against a government motion urging British military involvement in **Syria**, defeating the PM. In 2015, the Government were forced to cancel a vote to relax the foxhunting ban in England and Wales after it became clear they would have lost it when the SNP announced they would vote against the change. The Government retreat shows how fragile their slender majority is and reminds us that even majority Governments can be defeated with a united Opposition and some Government rebels. Just because the Government don’t lose many votes doesn’t necessarily mean they always get their way. The foxhunting example shows that they can be defeated before a vote is held.  **PMQs** - In his 2010 autobiography, former PM Tony Blair called PMQs ‘the most nerve-wracking experience in his Prime Ministerial life’, and in 2015 PM David Cameron said ‘I’ve been doing PMQs for more than 4 and a half years and there isn’t a Wednesday that you don’t feel total fear and trepidation about what is about to happen’, showing its ability to unnerve and control the PM to some extent. E.g. in 2016 Opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn asked PM Cameron to justify the low tax rate (3% on their UK profits) that **Google** pay in the UK. Cameron had to then defend the Government’s agreement of this rate in a public, televised arena, and received some criticism in the media afterwards, proving that PMQs can be an effective way to hold the Govt to account.  Events in the Commons generate publicity in the media, so it is perhaps the best place to hold the Government to account. | Parliament has no say in the choosing of Cabinet ministers, which is an executive power of the PM. For example in 2016 PM Theresa May appointed Philip Hammond as Chancellor and (another) without having to consult Parliament.  However, the **3 line whip usually works** –an instruction given to MPs by their party leader on how to vote on matters and a demand that they vote this way or could lose party privileges or even be kicked out the party. E.g. in 2015 the Government won a vote to launch air strikes against Islamic State in Syria. Conservative MPs were whipped to support the Government motion and only 7 Conservative MPs out of 331 rebelled against their Government whip. MPs will usually obey the whip out of a sense of loyalty to their leader or because they seek promotion, limiting the ability of Parliament to hold govt to account.  Also, the **Fawcett Society** have claimed there is ‘something unhealthy about the UK’s political culture’ which they identify as ‘aggressive, knock-about and sexist’. Sarah Champion, the MP for Rotherham, described the levels of sexist abuse she encountered in the Chamber as ‘utterly appalling’. Speaker of the Commons John Bercow has said that some women MPs have told him that the atmosphere at PMQs is so bad that they no longer attend. Clearly therefore, many feel the Commons is an arena for cheap political point scoring and therefore limited in its effectiveness in holding the Executive branch to account. |
| **House of Lords** – The second chamber of the UK Parliament. Its over 800 members (peers) are unelected, appointed by the PM and Queen but they have experience and expertise in fields such as politics, law, business, education, health and science, who scrutinise and review legislation passed from the Commons. After a bill is passed by the Commons, it passes to the Lords. If they vote it through, it is signed by the Queen and becomes law. Lords can delay and amend bills and defeat government motions. E.g. in 2016, the Lords amended an Immigration bill, forcing the Government to relocate child refugees in the UK who had made it to Europe from Syria, against the wishes of the Government. Since 2010, the Government has been defeated over 100 times by the Lords. The Lords can also initiate bills themselves. The Conservatives do not have a majority of Peers so can be outvoted in the Lords. | However, the **Commons has supremacy over Lords.** Lords can only delay bills for a maximum of 1 year, not indefinitely, so the Government simply have to wait to overturn Lords decisions in the Commons 1 year later. Furthermore, there are several areas where the Lords are bypassed – such as votes on military action – the 2015 vote to launch air strikes against ISIS in Syria did not require the approval of the Lords, and in fact technically did not even require the approval of the Commons, as it is an executive power of the PM. Also, PM appoints many of the members of the House of Lords, so it is limited. In 2015, for example, David Cameron appointed 26 new Conservative Lords, increasing the influence of the Conservatives in the House of Lords and arguably making future government defeats in the Lords less likely. It has also been accused of cronyism (being stuffed with government donors) and in need of reform. The SNP have called the Lords ‘a sorry list of rejected politicians, cronies and hangers on with big chequebooks’ and have called for the House of Lords to be abolished. |
| Parliament can check the work of Government through **Select Committees**; cross partygroupsof around 11-15 MPs who meet weekly to monitor government departments by scrutinising government bills, gathering evidence from expert witnesses, and writing reports with recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Minister.  E.g. In **2016 the Liaison Committee** called PM David Cameron before them and questioned him for an hour and a half on the EU referendum and the issue of child refugees coming to the UK from Syria. Committees are arguably more effective than the Commons at holding Government to account as they are cross-party and have more time to question, meaning Ministers may struggle to get away with the evasive sound bite which they may use in the Commons. | However, the **government is under no obligation to act upon recommendations made by committees**, so it could be argued that Committees are limited in their ability to hold the Executive to account, especially as committees do not generate significant media coverage.  In saying that, the lack of media coverage allied with a civilised and calm atmosphere may make Ministers more relaxed and candid when giving evidence, meaning the Committees can be an effective way to expose truths. |

**4a) Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of an electoral system(s) in providing fair representation**

**4b) Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of different electoral systems**

**4c) ‘Electoral systems do not always provide for fair representation. ’Discuss.**

**4d) Analyse the ways in which an electoral system you have studied allows the views of the electorate to be represented**

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| --- | --- |
| **FPTP provides fair representation / better than AMS** | **FPTP provides poor representation / AMS better** |
| **2011 Alternative Vote referendum- voters chose not to replace FPTP with AV- suggests people feel well represented by FPTP**. Also higher turnout for UK 2015 election (66%) than in Scottish Parliament using a more complicated, proportional system of voting – Additional Member System (AMS) -56% in 2016. Turnout may be an indicator that people feel better represented in FPTP, and high turnout is healthy for democracy. People seem to think ‘Most votes wins’ rule of FPTP is fair, clear, and easy to understand.  Arguably **FPTP provides clearer representation** as only 1 MP means it is clear who represents people. E.g. voters in Rutherglen and Hamilton West **know exactly who to speak to** if they have an issue – their 1 MP Margaret Ferrier. Usually proportional systems inevitably have to create larger constituencies which elect several representatives, therefore losing the direct link between constituency and Parliament. | **FPTP disproportionate** so poor representation. E.g, in 2015 UK election Conservatives won 37% of the vote but 51% of seats, and UKIP won 12.6% of the vote but won just 0.15% of seats (only 1 seat). FPTP leads towards a 2-party system as over time support converges around the 2 main parties as voters vote tactically against the party they dislike most as opposed to for their preferred party. This was reinforced before the 2015 UK election as parties urged **tactical voting**; for instance the Conservatives urged English floating voters to vote Conservatives to prevent a potential Labour-SNP coalition. Arguably such routinely tactical voting is leading to poor representation as people are discouraged from voting for the candidate/ party they feel would best represent them. In contrast, **AMS is more proportional**; in the 2016 Scottish election, Labour won 19% of the vote and gained 19% of the seats, which is fair and perhaps encourages voters of smaller parties to take part as they can win seats. |
| Under FPTP voters **can still choose and elect candidates from smaller parties**. E.g. in 2015 election Brighton Pavillion re-elected Caroline Lucas (Green) and Clacton elected a UKIP MP, Douglas Carswell.  This shows that although overall the system tends to favour larger parties, it does still offer scope for smaller parties to gain representation given they have enough support within a constituency, and some may argue that if a party cannot command the support of most of a constituency then they should not be given seats purely as a reflection of their national share of the vote, as then the direct link between constituency and Parliament would be lost, and people would not feel directly represented.  **FPTP usually results in strong, stable majority govts that can implement manifesto pledges and avoids unstable coalitions**. Despite a 2010 coalition between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, FPTP in 2015 produced a majority Conservative govt, meaning they are more accountable in delivering their manifesto in full and cannot use compromise with other parties as an excuse for breaking promises. | **Less choice under FPTP**. Voters in **safe seats** denied choice. Safest seat in 2015 UK election by number of votes was Knowsley. Labour’s George Howarth has a 34,000 majority, so supporters of other parties are effectively **wasting their vote** + lack choice.  AMS offers more choice as you have 2 votes (1 for a constituency MSP, one for 7 regional MSPs) compared to just 1 vote for FPTP. **Voters of smaller parties given more choice with AMS as they benefit from proportionality of second vote**. **AMS also offers more choice in terms of the number of representatives available to choose who to speak to.** A person in Rutherglen is represented by just 1 MP (Margaret Ferrier, SNP) compared to 8 MSPs from different parties currently including Clare Haughey (SNP) James Kelly (Labour), Adam Tomkins (Conservative) and Patrick Harvie (Green) following the 2016 election. Therefore, a Rutherglen constituent who does not like the SNP or Margaret Ferrier has no alternative, leaving them perhaps feeling poorly represented under FPTP, whereas they have greater variety of MSPs using AMS. Overall…….your judgement on the question. |

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

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

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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 the fifth most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland voted Yes, compared with just 36% of those in the one-fifth most affluent. This shows traditional class 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.’ Class’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, suggesting newspaper endorsement can influence.  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. In addition, in the 2016 EU referendum, Scotland voted 62% to remain to 38% leave, whereas England voted 53% leave to 47% remain, so different regions certainly do seem to have different political opinions and vote differently. | However, geography is also linked to class as there are more working class people in North of England and Scotland due to heavy industries being previously concentrated in the North. Also, in the 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 is arguably more of an influence than geography. It may be the case that what appear to be differences in different geographical areas voting differently are in fact class differences. |
| **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. |
| **Religion**  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. | Overall, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is the most significant factor affecting voting behaviour because………………..  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is probably the least significant factor because………………………………………  Overall…judgement on the question. |

**6a) Evaluate the influence of pressure groups on the political system.**

**6b) To what extent are pressure groups effective in influencing government decision-making?**

**You should refer to pressure groups in Scotland, the UK, or both in your answer.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Pressure groups that are effective** | **Pressure groups that are less effective** |
| Pressure groups are non-governmental organisations who try to influence government policy. **Insider pressure groups** are ones that have a close working relationship with the Government and often have expertise that the Government rely on when setting policy or considering changes to laws – e.g. the **British Medical Association (BMA)** -respected and knowledgeable health professionals – were invited before and gave evidence to UK Health Select Committee on dangers of passive smoking when Govt were considering a ban. The BMA recommended a smoking ban and the UK Government then banned smoking in public places in 2006. The fact that the Government not only consulted with the BMA, but acted upon their advice is a clear demonstration of their influence, and arguably shows the positive role pressure groups can play in UK democracy as they can offer expertise and advice to government. | On the other hand, **outsider groups** are ones that Government does not consult closely with, either because they are a protest group not interested in a close working relationship with government, or they cannot offer the Government expert information – e.g. **Fathers 4 Justice**, a fathers’ rights organisation, do not ‘have the ear’ of government and so often resort to direct and sometimes illegal action – e.g. scaling Buckingham Palace as a publicity stunt and throwing purple powder at then PM Tony Blair during 2004 PMQs. These tactics may generate publicity, but they are unlikely to lead to influencing policy as they can turn the media, public and Government against the group if they see them as immature and wasting police time and taxpayers’ money. They have so far failed to force significant changes in the law, and some believe they are a negative, disruptive influence on UK politics. |
| Large, well-resourced, well-organised and privileged groups – e.g. Confederation of British Industry (CBI), an insider group, represents over 200,000 UK businesses and are often consulted by Government over issues such as corporation tax rates and minimum wage rates. Prime Ministers and Chancellors often attend CBI meetings and dinners. CBI campaign for business friendly policies such as lower corporation taxes and Chancellor George Osborne’s 2015 budget lowered corporation tax to 20%, probably as a result of CBI influence. It has been lowered every year since 2010 even though the UK already has the lowest rate in the G20, showing the power of the CBI. If it wasn’t they may threaten to take their businesses out of the UK, so the Government feel they must listen to them. Some people feel this threatens democracy as well-funded and well-organised groups who represent minority interests can get their way and effectively buy access to Government and changes in policy. The Government may feel forced into lowering corporation tax to appease the CBI, but this reduces the tax intake and the ability of government to provide public services for the majority, showing that perhaps professional lobbying by powerful interest groups actually corrupt the political process. | **Smaller, less well-resourced and less privileged groups** cannot influence in the same way larger, well-resourced and privileged groups can –e.g. the group **Republic** campaign for the abolition of the monarchy in the UK, but at time of Queen’s diamond jubilee celebrations in 2012, a Guardian poll showed record popularity for monarchy – 69% said Britain would not be better off without a monarchy. Also, according to the 2015 UK Social Attitudes Survey, in 2015 73% of people were in favour of the monarchy, showing pro-Monarchy feeling has actually increased since 2012. There are no credible plans to abolish the monarchy so Republic can be considered unsuccessful. At time of the Queen’s Jubilee, Republic had just 25,000 members. The Government know this does not represent significant numbers of voters so do not feel that they have to accommodate or listen to their views. Most mainstream media in the UK tend to be quite pro monarchy, and interest groups are more influential when they have media backing. Generating media publicity is not enough though, it has to be positive media publicity – which both F4J and Republic lack, causing them to have limited broad appeal.  Overall, clearly not all pressure groups influence the political system. Large membership obviously helps, but it is not a necessary precondition for a successful pressure group. More important is insider or privileged status, as evidenced by the BMA and CBI, both courted by the Government as a result of their respected status and financial power respectively. A final important point to make is that pressure group influence is largely dependent on the Government of the day. Trade unions campaigning for stronger workers’ rights have historically enjoyed close ties with the Labour party, but have found more right wing Conservative Governments ideologically unsympathetic to their cause, with the Conservative government in 2016 passing a law – the Trade Union Act, that makes it more difficult for unions to take strike action, so the influence of some interest groups is directly linked to and may change depending upon who is in power.  Overall….interest group influence positive or negative? |

**7a) Evaluate the influence / role of the media on the political system.**

**7b) Analyse the ways citizens are informed about the political system.**

**You should refer to media in Scotland, the UK, or both in your answer.**

UK citizens are informed about the political system mainly through the media. This essay will consider the extent to which newspapers, TV and internet inform and influence…

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Media influential / positive** | **Media’s influence limited / negative** |
| **Newspapers** can heavily influence voting behaviour and public opinion as they can be **biased**: since 1974, the Sun (read by between 4-8 million per day) has always supported the party in UK elections that ends up winning most seats; in 1997 they endorsed Labour –Labour won majority. In 2015 they backed the Conservatives who won a majority. 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 shows influence of newspapers. Many Yes voters suggested voters could not be fully informed if the majority of information provided by newspapers was being presented in a slanted way  In the referendum, 71% of 16-17 year olds voted Yes, but just 27% of 65+ group voted Yes according to polling by Lord Ashcroft. These figures say a lot about the influence of the media on the political system; as older people are more likely to read newspapers, this form of media has a greater effect on them. Young people are less likely to read newspapers and more likely to access news on the internet and through social media sites as shown by the large discrepancies in the way different age groups voted in the referendum.  **Media influence positive**  Newspapers also serve an important function of **scrutinising govt** – in 2009 Daily Telegraph exposed that a number of MPs had been abusing their **expenses** claims. This led to public outrage and social media campaigns ensuring MPs expenses were revealed. Then PM Gordon Brown changed the law to limit what MPs could claim in expenses and to make claims more transparent, showing ability of media to set news agenda and directly influence the legislative process. This example also arguably shows the positive influence the media can have in holding politicians to account and forcing necessary reforms. | However, arguably newspapers **simply 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. E.g. a few days before the 2015 UK election the English Sun endorsed the Conservatives and the Scottish Sun endorsed the SNP but the polls were already showing Conservatives in the lead in England and the SNP in the lead in Scotland, so perhaps newspapers are not that influential, maybe they just react to existing public opinion so as to avoid being seen as out of touch with the public mood.  **Media influence negative**  However, newspaper bias can distort the truth and leave the British public unable to make informed judgements. A poll by the Trades Union Council in 2013 showed British people had serious misconceptions about welfare. It showed that on average, people think that 41% of the entire welfare budget goes on benefits to unemployed people, while the true figure is just 3%. This difference is surely due to the prominence some newspapers such as the Daily Mail and the Daily Express give to promoting myths of large numbers of work shy ‘scroungers’ and benefit fraudsters. Furthermore, a 2016 Yougov poll showed that a majority of British people believed the mainstream media has displayed deliberate bias against Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, leading to a breakdown in trust in the mainstream media from. |
| **Media influence positive**  TV media plays an important role in informing UK citizens of current affairs. Because the BBC are required by law to be politically impartial, their role is to provide expert and trusted news coverage in a balanced way, allowing people to make informed judgements about politics, which is healthy and positive. The BBC News at 6 is on average watched by 4 million viewers each night, arguably an effective way to widely counteract much of the bias found in newspapers. Young people especially are increasingly using social media to access news, and consequently there is some evidence that youth engagement with politics in the UK is growing – evidenced by a very high 85% turnout for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum in which 16 and 17 year olds had the right to vote. | **Media influence negative**  However, recently the impartiality of even the BBC has been called into question by some. Between 2012 and 2013, Professor John Robertson of the University of West Scotland led a team carrying out a year long study analysing BBC news coverage of the Scottish independence referendum. The study concluded that 317 news items broadcast by the BBC favoured the 'No' campaign compared to just 211 favourable to the 'Yes' campaign. The study also found that news reports, even when they could be argued as balanced overall, were more often than not framed in such a way that the report began with bad news for the Yes campaign. Being ‘balanced’ in the sense of simply giving two sides in a debate equal time could still be considered unfair if the BBC prioritises news stories that are damaging to one side, leads with them and simply allows the other side to respond. The study also found that the BBC tended to ‘personalise’ the issue of independence with the ‘wishes’ of then Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond in a way they did not do with the No campaign’s Alistair Darling. There were subsequently protests by Yes supporters outside the BBC’s Scotland headquarters in Glasgow. All this suggests that even the apparently neutral BBC is not universally trusted and respected in UK politics. |
|  | Conclusion: Overall, the media serves an important function in informing UK citizens of its political system and a positive role in exposing corruption and educating citizens over important issues. Because they can be biased, newspapers have a greater ability to influence than TV media, some would say too much influence, and in some ways arguably a damaging influence when sensationalism and bias can lead to a poorly informed public and misconceptions about UK politics. Some think bias is not exclusive to newspaper and even extends into the BBC. Perhaps as internet and social media takes over, newspaper and TV influence is weakening. Your judgements? |

**8a) Evaluate / Analyse the ways in which citizens can participate in the political system.**

**8b) To what extent are citizens able to have a significant influence on the political system?**

**8c) Evaluate / Analyse the influence of groups outside Government on the political system.**

**8d) Analyse the ways in which individuals and groups in society can influence government decision-making**

The Democracy Index is an annual rank of countries compiled by the independent group the Economist Intelligence Unit. It measures the degree of democracy in countries according to electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. Its most recent 2015 publication ranked the UK as 16th most democratic country of 167 countries. While not perfect, it nevertheless ranks as a ‘full democracy’ and shows that the UK is open to democratic influence from citizens. This essay will consider the extent to which….exact wording of question.

There are a range of elected bodies which UK citizens can **vote** for. The Scottish Parliament uses a more **proportional** system of election than the UK Parliament, known as the **Additional Member System**, where voters can vote for an MSP for their constituency and vote for a party on a regional list, which usually means that more parties are represented in the parliament. Following the 2016 Scottish election, a voter from Rutherglen, for example, was represented by their constituency MSP Clare Haughey (SNP), as well as 7 additional Glasgow regional MSPs from different parties including James Kelly (Labour), Adam Tomkins (Conservatives) and Patrick Harvie (Green). This gives a range of positions across the political spectrum influence and representation in the Scottish Parliament, whom voters can then contact and lobby according to their preference.

Voters can also exercise their vote in **referenda**. Recent UK wide referenda include the 2011 referendum on changing the UK voting system, and the 2016 EU referendum. In Scotland, the 2014 independence referendum saw unprecedented levels of political engagement. Ordinary people campaigned on both sides by leafleting, door to door canvassing, through social media, and participated in TV debates and radio phone ins. Turnout was 85%, the highest recorded for any election in the UK since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1928, and membership of the SNP now exceeds 120,000, a more than quadruple increase from 25,000 on referendum day. Clearly, Scottish citizens are currently engaging with, participating in and influencing politics on a scale unseen in recent years.

In contrast, the UK Parliament uses a **First Past the Post** voting system, which tends to produce **disproportionate** results. In the UK Parliament, citizens have just one MP representing their constituency. Voters from Rutherglen and Hamilton West constituency are represented solely by SNP MP Margaret Ferrier. Here, supporters of parties other than SNP may feel they are not represented particularly well. In ‘safe seats’ where the winning candidate wins by very large majorities, apathy can set in. The constituency of Knowsley was the safest seat at the 2015 UK election, with Labour’s George Howarth winning with a majority of over 34,000. Many votes were effectively wasted. Across the UK, supporters of smaller parties with widespread but not concentrated support may feel similarly disengaged and apathetic given that their votes have limited influence. Despite winning 12.6% of the vote in the 2015 UK election, UKIP won just 0.15% of seats (only 1 seat). Arguably, therefore, voting as a means to influence the political system is more effective in Scotland than in the UK. In saying that, turnout in the 2015 UK election (66%) was higher than in the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections (56%). These figures suggest that significant numbers of people across the whole of the UK evidently do not feel they have enough of a stake in the result to merit voting, which is unhealthy for democracy.

There are many ways to participate in and influence the political system other than through voting. Citizens can also **sign petitions, join pressure groups, use social media** and **involve the mainstream media** in their cause. For instance, the pressure group ‘Republic’ have 25,000 members and campaign for the abolition of the monarchy in the UK, although they have very limited influence; at time of the Queen’s diamond jubilee celebrations in 2012, a Guardian poll showed record popularity for the monarchy – 69% said Britain would not be better off without a monarchy. Also, according to the 2015 UK Social Attitudes Survey, in 2015 73% of people were in favour of the monarchy, showing pro-Monarchy feeling has actually increased since 2012, so the ability of citizens to participate and influence through pressure groups should not be overstated.

Overall, there are a variety of ways citizens can participate in and influence the UK political system. Voting is often considered the cornerstone of democracy, and mainly as a result of its proportional electoral system, Scottish politics is more open to engagement and influence from citizens than UK wide politics. However, it is important not to forget the other means of engagement; lobbying representatives, joining and campaigning for political parties, joining pressure groups and taking part in marches or demonstrations, all of which have been used to varying success.

**Social issues in the UK – Social inequality**

1. **Evaluate / Analyse the extent of social inequality in the UK**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Social inequalities being reduced** | **Social inequalities continue** |
| **Economic: Income**  Because women and ethnic minorities are often concentrated in low paid, unpromoted part-time work due to childcare commitments, they have disproportionately benefited from the UK’s National Minimum Wage, which has lifted many out of poverty since its introduction in 1998. In 2015, the UK government announced the introduction of a new ‘National Living Wage’ guaranteeing all workers over 25 a wage of at least £7.20 per hour at present, so this should help the poorest families thereby reducing inequalities. | **Economic: Income**  However, neither the minimum wage nor ‘living wage’ has not helped those who are unemployed out of poverty. There are currently over 2 million people unemployed reliant on benefits such as JobSeekers Allowance.  The Living Wage Commission (LWC) who campaign for a higher ‘Living Wage’, claim it is too low, being lower than the minimum identified by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation charity for a decent standard of living, and that it fails to take into account varying costs of living in different parts of the UK. Out of 13 million people living in poverty in the UK, 6.7 million are in a family where someone works, the LWC said, and they called the figure a ‘national scandal’. The fact that so many working people in poverty are working suggests the NMW has not successfully tackled inequality and proves that poverty is not isolated to those on benefits.  Furthermore, the Trussell Trust food bank charity, says it has handed out over 1 million emergency food parcels in the last year, up from 347,000 the year before. They blame cuts to benefits as the cause of the rapid increase in the need for emergency food supplies. This suggests that welfare cuts are not encouraging the unemployed into work; they are simply pushing them and others reliant on benefits further into poverty.  There are also wide inequalities in life expectancies. Glasgow is the region with the lowest life expectancy in the UK; 73 for men, 78 for women, both significantly below the UK average of 79 for men and 83 for women.  A 2011 BBC documentary ‘Poor Kids’ showed 47% of children with asthma are from the poorest 10% of families and 85% of children living in damp flats suffer breathing problems, further reinforcing that housing inequalities remain and are linked to health inequalities. |
| **Social: Gender**  The Equalities Act 2010 forces public sector employers to disclose salary structures in an attempt to close the pay gap. In certain situations, public bodies such as schools or police will be allowed to ‘positively discriminate’ in favour of women to reduce gender inequalities. There has been some evidence of success; 55% of full time university undergraduates, showing that gender inequality is no longer as extensive as it once was. | **Social: Gender**  However, female over-representation at university does not translate into the workforce, where just 44% are female. Such under-representation is true in all areas of life. Women make up just 29% of MPs, 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel.  According to the 2015 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap report, the UK is only the 18th most gender equal country in the world, showing we have some way to go. Women still earn just 80% of men’s average earnings. Childcare commitments continue to make promotion and long-term employment difficult, especially for lone parents, and so gender inequality remains extensive. |
| **Scotland**  **The Scottish Govt** (SNP) are more centre left than the UK Conservative Government, and have pledged to reduce inequality in Scotland, which they have attempted to do by introducing free prescriptions, free school meals for Primaries 1-3 pupils, and free college and university tuition. The latter may make society more equal in the long term as it gives people from low incomes access to further education and the means to achieve. After being re-elected in 2016, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has pledged that her priority will be to close the poverty-related educational attainment gap. | However, there remain wide inequalities in Scotland. A 2013 report by Oxfam Scotland found that the wealthiest households in Scotland are 273 times better off than the most deprived ones and that the gap is widening  Educational inequalities also persist and educational inequalities begin at a very young age; studies by the Child Poverty Action Group show that by the age of just 3 years old, poorer children are already on average 9 months behind wealthier children in terms of their educational development, and this gap continues to grow: for example 27% of pupils at Cathkin High in Cambuslang are entitled to free school meals and just 24% of Cathkin school leavers leave with 5 or more Highers, whereas just 7% of pupils at St Ninian’s in well-off East Renfrewshire are entitled to free school meals and 73% of its leavers leave with 5 or more Highers. 3 schools in deprived Glasgow – Drumchapel High, Govan High and Lochend High score zero or close to zero of their school leavers gaining 5 or more Highers. Free tuition may be helpful, but it does little to prevent the fact that the education gap is well-established long before people reach college or university age, so early intervention is therefore required.  There appears to be a clear correlation between income and educational attainment. Failure to achieve educationally leads to low income, and low income leads to poor education, as low income does not allow for people to afford houses in high-demand catchment areas within high achieving councils such as East Renfrewshire. This is the cyclical nature of inequality, reinforcing the argument that to a large extent, many people are born socially disadvantaged and inequality is extensive. |

**2a)** **Evaluate / Analyse the causes of social inequality in the UK.**

**2b) Analyse different views as to the main causes of social inequality in society**

Causes are:

* The economic system
* The cycle of poverty
* Poor education
* Government policies, cuts to benefits and austerity measures
* Gender
* Poor individual lifestyle choices

**2c) To what extent are individual lifestyle choices the main cause of social inequality?**

(Here you would discuss poor lifestyle choices but also say that the other factors are also causes)

According to Professor of Human Geography Danny Dorling, the UK is currently the 4th most unequal country in the developed world. This essay will……

Collectivists would argue that the main cause of social inequality is the **economic system**. The UK is a broadly capitalist economy, which means the Government does not necessarily consider it its duty to interfere in the running of the economy or to ensure equality. Instead, markets are largely free to set prices and wages and individuals themselves are largely responsible for their socio-economic position. As a result, some people can earn lots of money while others may have to rely on benefits.

Many are born into a **cycle of poverty**, live in run down areas, attend low-achieving schools, gain few qualifications and struggle to find jobs, often leading to low income, reliance on benefits, depression, alcoholism, drug abuse and poor health. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates 13 million people in the UK (20% of the population) currently live in poverty, and the reality for them is low life expectancy, unemployment, physical and mental ill-health, poor educational attainment and social exclusion.

The **cycle of poverty** is sometimes considered the main cause as it is difficult to break. For example, Glasgow is the region with the lowest life expectancy in the UK; 73 for men, 78 for women, both significantly below the UK average of 79 for men and 83 for women. Also, a 2011 BBC documentary ‘Poor Kids’ confirmed the link between poverty and poor health; it showed 47% of children with asthma are from the poorest 10% of families, and that 85% of children living in damp flats suffer breathing problems.

The cycle of poverty leads to **poor education,** which also causes inequality. Educational inequalities persist and begin at a very young age; studies by the Child Poverty Action Group show that by the age of 3 years old, poorer children are already on average 9 months behind wealthier children in terms of educational development, and this gap continues to grow: for example 27% of pupils at Cathkin High in Cambuslang are entitled to free school meals and just 24% of Cathkin school leavers leave with 5 or more Highers, whereas just 7% of pupils at St Ninian’s in well-off East Renfrewshire are entitled to free school meals and 73% of its leavers leave with 5 or more Highers. 3 schools in deprived Glasgow – Drumchapel High, Govan High and Lochend High score zero or close to zero of their school leavers gaining 5 or more Highers. Free tuition in Scotland may be helpful, but it does little to prevent the fact that the education gap is well-established long before people reach college or university age, so early intervention is therefore required. This has prompted Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon to pledge that her government’s key priority will be closing the poverty-related attainment gap in Scotland.

There appears to be a clear link between income and educational attainment. Failure to achieve educationally leads to low income, and low income leads to poor education, as low income does not allow for people to afford houses in high-demand catchment areas within high achieving councils such as East Renfrewshire. Wealthier students can also afford private tutors or attend private schools where there are more resources and smaller class sizes allowing teachers to give more help to students. This is the cyclical nature of inequality, reinforcing the argument that to a strong extent, many people are born socially disadvantaged, and are victims of their own circumstances.

Some claim **government policies, recent cuts to benefits and austerity measures** are the leading cause of inequality today. A 2013 report by Oxfam Scotland found the wealthiest households in Scotland are 273 times better off than the most deprived ones and that the gap is widening. The report blamed the UK government’s austerity measures and cuts to benefits. Oxfam are clear as to the cause, saying ‘this is a structural problem caused by the economy.’ As the report points out, if escaping poverty was simply a matter of trying hard enough to find a job, then why do 6.7 million of Britain’s 13 million living in poverty come from a working household? This suggests the current UK National Minimum Wage of £7.20 per hour for workers over 25 is too low, leading to poverty wages. That even those in employment suffer poverty suggests much of individuals’ poverty is not their own doing.

Some think these austerity measures are **making social inequality worse**; Austerity is arguably hitting the poorest hardest and widening economic inequality. The Trussell Trust food bank charity, says it has handed out over 1 million food parcels in the last year, up from 347,000 the year before. The Trust has blamed the cuts to benefits as the cause of the rapid increase in the need for emergency food supplies, and 83% of food banks reported that benefits sanctions - when payments are temporarily stopped - had resulted in more people being referred for emergency food. This suggests that welfare cuts are not encouraging the unemployed into work; they are simply pushing them and others reliant on benefits further into poverty.

**Gender** can also be a cause of inequality. On average, women in the UK currently earn just 80% of men’s average earnings. Lack of flexibility in working hours and childcare arrangements may prevent women from finding suitable employment, as might discrimination from employers wary of hiring women for fear they may fall pregnant. Although gender equality may now be enshrined in legislation such as the 2010 Equalities Act, prejudiced attitudes still exist. Consequently, females make up just 29% of MPs, 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel, despite making up half the population. This under-representation suggests gender is a key cause of inequality, and that it is a deep structural problem not of individuals’ own doing.

Individualists, however, argue that it is not the above factors, but **poor individual lifestyle choices** which cause inequality. Poor economic circumstances are the result of an individual’s poor choices, they claim. People who choose to drink, smoke and eat fatty foods to excess whilst not exercising will likely have poorer health than those who lead healthy lifestyles*.* The number of weight loss operations carried out by the NHS has quadrupled in the last 6 years and obesity has doubled in the last 20 years. Individualists point out that the economic system does not force anyone to make lifestyle choices that result in obesity, only individuals themselves can, and they are therefore the cause of health inequalities. Similarly, alcohol kills 20 per week in Scotland. 21% of the UK smokes and according to Cancer Research UK, 86% of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking, so there is clear evidence that it is lifestyle choices as opposed to government policy which has caused many of the UK’s health inequalities. Journalist Peter Hitchens makes the individualist argument, claiming ‘people have a choice over whether or not they drink or take drugs’ and that people experiencing health inequalities as a result of drug or alcohol consumption are there due to lack of willpower, nothing else, as addiction is a ‘fantasy’. Perhaps some people living in poverty simply choose not to help themselves.

Arguably, though, lifestyle choices are **linked to poverty** as people often turn to alcohol or smoking as a **coping mechanism** to escape the realities of being continually exposed to stress, and they eat poorly because often fast food is cheaper and more convenient. Smoking rates in the most deprived areas of the UK are four times higher than in the least deprived areas. Also, better off people can afford better diets, better housing in safer environments, leisure activities that promote good health, and private healthcare. In 2015, journalist George Monbiot wrote an article referencing a report in the medical Journal Lancet based on a study of 176,000 obese people over 9 years. It found that once people had become obese, 98% failed to return to a healthy weight, as biological changes lock people into that condition, meaning it is effectively an incurable disease. This suggests that a lot of health inequalities are not due to lifestyle choices and that people often cannot simply change their circumstances.

In conclusion….­­­­evaluate / analyse

**3a) Evaluate / Analyse the different lifestyle choices that may result in poor health.**

**3b) Evaluate the main causes of health inequalities in Scotland and / or the UK**

**3c) To what extent can ill health be blamed on the lifestyle choices of the population?**

Individualists argue that it is not the economic system, the government or structural factors, but individuals themselves and their lifestyle choices which cause poor health. Poor health is the result of an individual’s poor choices, they claim. People who choose to drink, smoke and eat fatty foods to excess whilst not exercising will likely have poorer health than those who lead healthy lifestyles. This essay will………

There is firm evidence that **smoking** causes poor health. 21% of the UK smokes, and according to Cancer Research UK, 86% of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking. Smoking rates in the most deprived areas of the UK are four times higher than in the least deprived areas. Arguably therefore, smoking is a response to deprivation, a coping mechanism to deal with its effects, but it is not just causing poor health, it is disproportionately affect the UK’s poorest. The dangerous health effects of smoking are the reasons both Scottish and UK Governments have passed smoking bans. They have been very successful: a Scottish government review has found decreased smoking rates overall, a 70% reduction in the exposure of second hand smoke to children, reduced hospital admission rates for heart attacks, and a 15% decrease in the number of children with asthma since the ban in 2005. This success has led to Scotland recently banning the display of cigarettes in shops and supermarkets.

**Alcohol** is also a major cause of health inequalities in the UK. Scotland in particular has a problem with excessive alcohol consumption and binge drinking being part of the culture. Alcohol kills 20 per week in Scotland. Although it is not a problem solely confined to people living in poverty, people living in poverty may be more likely to binge drink as a coping mechanism to escape the realities of their difficult lives and exposure to depression, anxiety and stress. Others argue that these are simply poor individual lifestyle choices caused by a lack of willpower, not forced on anyone. Journalist Peter Hitchens, for instance, makes this individualist claim, arguing ‘people have a choice over whether or not they drink or smoke and that addiction is a ‘fantasy’.

Either way, alcohol is arguably the main lifestyle cause of health inequalities, and the measures taken by governments to combat it is evidence of this. In 2012, for example, the Scottish Government set a minimum price per unit of alcohol at 50p to tackle the problem of high strength, low cost alcohol. Minimum alcohol pricing has not yet been implemented as it is being challenged by the EU, so it remains to be seen if it will work, but it may help to gradually change the culture of drinking in Scotland. Until binge drinking becomes socially unacceptable in the same way heroin use is, alcohol will continue to negatively affect the health of so many.

**Poor diet and lack of exercise** also damages health and creates inequalities. The number of weight loss operations carried out by the NHS has quadrupled in the last 6 years and obesity has doubled in the last 20 years, a result of diets high in salt and fat. Again, these are problems associated with poverty although not exclusive to it. Not everyone agrees that poor diet is simply a lifestyle choice though. Poorer people may eat poorly because often fast food is cheaper and more convenient. Better off people can afford better diets, better housing in safer environments, leisure activities that promote good health, and private healthcare. In 2015, journalist George Monbiot wrote an article referencing a report in the medical Journal Lancet based on a study of 176,000 obese people over 9 years. It found that once people had become obese, 98% failed to return to a healthy weight, as biological changes lock people into that condition, meaning it is effectively an incurable disease. This suggests that a lot of health inequalities are not due to lifestyle choices and that people often cannot simply change their circumstances.

In short, the main lifestyle risks in the UK leading to health inequalities are smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and poor diet / lack of exercise. Although smoking and drinking rates are generally on the decrease as people grow more aware of health consequences, helped in part by UK wide smoking bans and minimum alcohol pricing in Scotland, the health effects are still devastating for those who do smoke and drink. Recent reports suggest alcohol consumption is decreasing as people grow more aware of the health consequences, but there are still regional inequalities, with the North of Britain more likely to smoke and drink to excess than the South. **All poor lifestyle choices appear to be conclusively linked to poverty** **as their root cause**, meaning that reducing poverty itself will have a knock on effect of improving lifestyles overall.

**4a) Evaluate / Analyse the impact social inequality has on a specific group or groups in society.**

**4b) Analyse the consequences of social inequality on a group or groups you have studied**

Social inequality in the UK has had a significant and varied impact on **women**. This essay will consider the impact inequality has had on women with regard to education, income and employment, and it will conclude that…

Women still earn **just 80% of men’s average earnings**. **Childcare commitments and inflexible working hours** in many jobs continue to make promotion and long-term employment difficult, especially for lone parents. With the National Minimum Wage being just £7.20 per hour for workers over 25, many lone parents rely on benefits rather than seek employment and pay expensive childcare costs, as it makes more financial sense**. According to the 2015 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap report**, the UK is only the 18th most gender equal country in the world, showing we have some way to go to achieve gender equality.

**Eva Neitzert, the deputy chief executive of Fawcett Society**, says the inequality is largely due to the **minimum wage being too low**, and current UK government **austerity measures** and cuts to benefits, hitting women hardest as they are more likely than men to be concentrated in low-paid, insecure and short-term jobs, or unemployed and claiming benefits. She has said: “Any government committed to gender equality must lift the national minimum wage and ensure that any future welfare changes do not disproportionately impact women.”

Since 1970 there has been various **laws ensuring equality of pay and treatment at work for women**. Most recently, the **Equalities Act 2010** forces public sector employers to disclose salary structures in an attempt to close the pay gap. In certain situations, public bodies such as schools or police will be allowed to ‘positively discriminate’ in favour of women to reduce gender inequalities. There has been some evidence of success: girls tend to outperform boys in educational attainment, and research by the Higher Education Statistics Authority found that **females currently represent 55% of full time university undergraduates**. The Equality and Human Rights Commission’s (EHRC) 2011 report ‘Sex and Power’ estimate there will be more female than male doctors by 2017 and female MPs increased from 23% to 29% following the 2015 UK general election. Furthermore, the current Prime Minister is female – Theresa May, and of the 5 parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, 3 are currently led by women – SNP leader and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, Conservatives leader Ruth Davidson, and Labour leader Kezia Dugdale. Clearly, this shows progress and reminds us not all women experience social inequality.

However, these individuals are the exception, not the rule. Female over-representation at university does not currently translate into the **workforce, where just 44% are female**. Such under-representation is true in all areas of life. Women currently make up just 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel.

Also, importantly, women currently make up just 29% of MPs. Although this is an increase on the previous Parliament, it is still a significant minority, prompting the **Fawcett Society** to note that “Britain is a country run largely by men.” They claim there is **‘something unhealthy about the UK’s political culture’ which they identify as ‘aggressive, knock-about and sexist’**. Sarah Champion, the MP for Rotherham, has described the levels of sexist abuse she encountered in the Chamber as ‘utterly appalling’. Speaker of the Commons John Bercow has said that some women MPs have told him that the atmosphere at Prime Minister’s Questions is so bad that they no longer attend. The Fawcett Society conclude that UK politics makes women feel **‘neither welcome nor valued’**. It is difficult to achieve gender equality when the legislators themselves are considered part of the problem. Until women achieve equal representation in Parliament, or at least until women feel more welcome and valued in that Parliament, the root cause of gender inequality which is discriminatory attitudes, will continue to fail to be addressed.

Clearly many women succeed in the UK. The minority of women who do may not feel that social inequality is a problem that affects them greatly, but the overall picture shows that as a whole, women are **considerably and negatively affected** in their experience of social inequality. Although some limited progress has been made in some areas - notably education - unfortunately despite a raft of equality legislation, there is little that can be done to outlaw outdated and discriminatory attitudes. This has resulted in **women suffering through income, employment, and even sexism in the House of Commons**. There remain large barriers to women achieving equality with men in the UK today.

**5. Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of government policies to tackle inequalities that affect a group or groups in society.**

**Women** are a group in society affected by inequality. Almost 40 years have passed since the Sex Discrimination Act was passed, and over 40 years since the Equal Pay Act was passed in the UK, and yet gender inequality remains. This essay will…

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Govt policies have tackled inequalities that affect women** | **Govt policies have failed to tackle inequalities that affect women** |
| The **National Minimum Wage (NMW)** helped tackle gender equality. Because women are often concentrated in low paid, unpromoted part-time work due to childcare commitments, they have disproportionately benefited from NMW, which currently stands at £7.20 per hour for workers over 25.  The NMW was partly intended to achieve greater parity in employment between the genders. It has raised the wages of many, including lone parents, which has helped them afford childcare in order to move into work themselves. In this respect there has been some progress: It is estimated that there will be more female than male doctors by 2017, and female MPs increased from 23% to 29% following the 2015 UK general election. Although these positive trends cannot all be attributed to the NMW, arguably, the NMW encouraged women to seek employment in the first place and it is bearing fruit with these encouraging figures. | However, the **Living Wage Commission argue the NMW is too low**, meaning many female lone parents still struggle to afford suitable childcare and consequently rely on benefits rather than seek employment, as it makes more financial sense. Women still earn just 80% of men’s average earnings. Childcare commitments and inflexible working hours in many jobs continue to make promotion and long-term employment difficult, especially for lone parents.  According to the 2015 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap report, the UK is only the 18th most gender equal country in the world, showing we have some way to go to achieve gender equality.  Eva Neitzert, the deputy chief executive of Fawcett Society, said the inequality was largely due to the NMW being too low, the impact of the recession, and current UK government austerity measures and cuts to benefits, hitting women hardest as they are more likely than men to be concentrated in low-paid, insecure and short-term jobs, or unemployed and claiming benefits. She said: “Any government committed to gender equality must lift the national minimum wage and ensure that any future welfare changes do not disproportionately impact women.” |
| **The Equalities Act 2010** forces public sector employers to disclose salary structures in an attempt to close the pay gap. In certain situations, public bodies such as schools or police will be allowed to ‘positively discriminate’ in favour of women to reduce gender inequalities. There has been some evidence of success; girls tend to outperform boys in educational attainment, and research by the Higher Education Statistics Authority found that females currently represent 55% of full time university undergraduates, which suggest that perhaps the Equalities Act is reducing gender inequality.  In saying that, we should remember that the current Prime Minister is female – Theresa May, and of the 5 parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, 3 are currently led by women – SNP leader and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, Conservatives leader Ruth Davidson, and Labour leader Kezia Dugdale. Clearly, this shows progress and reminds us not all women experience social inequality. This shows that although it is limited, progress is being made and that arguably Government policies aimed at promoting the status of women are paying off. | However, female over-representation at university does not currently translate into the workforce, where just 44% are female. Such under-representation is true in all areas of life. Women currently make up just 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel.  Also, importantly, women currently make up just 29% of MPs. Although this is an increase on the previous Parliament, it is still a significant minority, prompting the Fawcett Society to note that “Britain is a country run largely by men.” They claim there is ‘something unhealthy about the UK’s political culture’ which they identify as ‘aggressive, knock-about and sexist’. Sarah Champion, the MP for Rotherham, has described the levels of sexist abuse she encountered in the Chamber as ‘utterly appalling’. Speaker of the Commons John Bercow has said that some women MPs have told him that the atmosphere at Prime Minister’s Questions is so bad that they no longer attend. The Fawcett Society conclude that UK politics makes women feel ‘neither welcome nor valued’. It is difficult to achieve gender equality when the legislators themselves are considered part of the problem. Until women achieve equal representation in Parliament, or at least until women feel more welcome and valued in that Parliament, the root cause of gender inequality which is discriminatory attitudes, will continue to fail to be addressed. The Government has failed to address this problem and does not appear to be taking it as seriously as they ought to.  In conclusion, clearly some women succeed in the UK. The minority of women who do may not feel that social inequality is a problem that affects them greatly, but the overall picture shows that as a whole, women are **considerably and negatively affected** in their experience of social inequality. Although the Government has made some limited progress in some areas - notably education - unfortunately despite a raft of equality legislation, there is little that can be done to outlaw **outdated and discriminatory attitudes.** This has resulted in women suffering through income, employment, and even sexism in the House of Commons. There remain large barriers to women achieving equality with men in the UK today, and government policies have been very **limited** in tackling this problem. In order to achieve greater gender equality, the government should implement a policy of free or heavily subsidised childcare, which would incentivise work and have a long-term beneficial impact. |

**6a) Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of government policies to tackle social inequalities**

**6b) ‘Government policies have failed to reduce social inequalities’. Discuss**

**A question on government responses could isolate one of the following 4 state provisions:**

* Benefits
* Housing
* Health
* Education (Consider isolated factor first, but discuss the other 3 as alternatives)

e.g. **6c) Evaluate the effectiveness of the benefits / welfare system in tackling social inequality**, or

**6d)** **Evaluate the effectiveness of housing provision in tackling social inequality**, or

**6e)** **Evaluate the effectiveness of health services in tackling social inequality**, or

**6f)** **Evaluate the effectiveness of the education system in tackling social inequality**

**6g) To what extent has (isolated factor) been effective in tackling social inequality?**

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| --- | --- |
| **Effective** | **Less effective** |
| **Benefits / Welfare system**  UK citizens with no source of income or on a low income are helped by a range of welfare benefits provided by the UK gov’t to meet their needs. These include the **state pension** for the elderly in retirement, **child benefit** to help with the cost of raising children, and **Jobseekers Allowance** (JSA) to help the unemployed while they are searching for a job.  An unemployed person over 25 and seeking work can claim up to £73 per week in JSA. Another benefit - Child benefit - is paid to lower income families to help with the costs of raising children. The amount currently paid is £20.70 per week for the eldest child and £13.70 for each additional child. This used to be a universal benefit paid to all parents regardless of income, but the gov’t recently made it means-tested instead, meaning only lower-income families receive it. Arguably this helps tackle inequality as it is targeted at those who need it most, and does not help the rich who can already help themselves without taxpayers’ money.  The principle of having a benefits system is **widely supported** by the British public. According to a **2011 IPSOS Mori** poll, 92% of people agreed that ‘we must have a benefits system that provides a safety net for everyone who needs it.’  The UK gov’t is currently cutting benefits. They say this will reduce poverty as it will reduce welfare dependency and people who are currently on benefits will be encouraged to get themselves into work and out of poverty. | **Benefits / Welfare system**  Some people think the benefits system is ineffective as it is too generous and creates a ‘something for nothing culture’ where people rely too much on benefits rather than work hard to help themselves. The 2011 IPSOS Mori poll showed that 72% agreed that ‘the benefits bill should be cut’. This shows that while in principle the public agree that there should be a benefits system, they also think it should be stricter and that it is not currently serving its purpose.  **Others think benefits are currently being mismanaged by the UK government for different reasons; they are not generous enough, and are not tackling inequality but making it worse. Recent cuts to benefits are hitting the poorest hardest and widening economic inequality. The Trussell Trust food bank charity, says it has handed out over 1 million emergency food parcels in the last year, up from 347,000 the year before. They blame cuts to benefits as the cause of the rapid increase in the need for emergency food supplies. This suggests that cuts to benefits are not encouraging the unemployed into work, they are simply pushing them and others reliant on benefits further into poverty.** |
| **Housing**  Under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, the UK Conservative government gave people the ‘right to buy’ their council home from the Government and make it their own private property. In 2015 the current Conservative UK government announced that they would extend this right to also apply include tenants in housing associations, who would get a loan or a discount from the Government to buy their own home – known as ‘help to buy’. This arguably reduces inequality as it gives poorer people in council housing the right to a home at subsidised cost, and to be more socially mobile and potentially sell their home for profit. This policy may also reduce the housing benefit bill, freeing up money to reduce inequalities in other areas. | **Housing**  However, some think the UK government’s ‘right to buy’ and ‘help to buy’ have actually widened social inequality, not reduced it, as it has taken most of the council housing stock away, especially the best council houses in the best areas, leaving a shortage of council houses and long waiting lists for low income people seeking one. These people are often then forced to rent in the private sector from private landlords who charge high rates they struggle to afford, and recent cuts to housing benefit has hit them hard. **Housing is a devolved matter and the Scottish Parliament has scrapped the right to buy scheme in Scotland, which they say will protect council houses for those who need them. They have pledged to build 35,000 additional council houses by 2021, which if met should tackle housing inequality in Scotland.** |
| **Health**  Across the UK, there is a taxpayer funded NHS free to use at the point of service. Without it, poorer people would struggle to afford healthcare. The UK’s health has improved greatly since the NHS was introduced in 1948. In many ways it is a victim of its own success; because we have such high expectations of it, we are quick to criticise when it fails to meet the high standards we have become accustomed to. An ageing population is putting strain on the NHS so if we are to maintain its standards we may have to lower our expectations or be willing to pay more tax to fund it.  In 2011 the Scottish Government **abolished prescription charges**. The aim was to encourage poorer people to seek medical treatment. Since prescriptions became free in Scotland, the number of items given out for long-term conditions such as asthma and diabetes has increased year on year, suggesting people must need them but could previously not afford them. This should reduce health inequalities as it will prevent illnesses becoming more serious longer term.  The Scottish Gov’t also now provide **free school meals to all school children in Primaries 1-3**. Previously, this was means tested, and just 33,000 children were eligible to claim free school meals, but now that it is universal, an additional 135,000 children in P1-3 get a free meal provided at lunch. This should tackle child poverty and improve health as it will ensure a nutritious meal for all, tackling obesity and ensuring pupils’ wellbeing at school, thus improving their education. More importantly, it will encourage children who were already entitled to a free lunch to use their entitlement, as the stigma to claim is removed now that everyone is entitled. | **Health**  However, critics claim the NHS is not effective in tackling inequality as it is under-staffed and under-funded. Recent media coverage has concentrated on the winter pressures faced by Accident and Emergency departments across the UK. Many of these departments have failed to meet waiting times targets. Many in the UK also use private health care. This creates a divide in society. Those who can afford to go private can skip the queue and those who can’t have to wait for a poorer service from the NHS.  However, prescription charges still apply in England, causing regional inequalities across the UK, and in any case free prescriptions are not supported by everyone in Scotland. As a universal benefit, even rich people get free prescriptions in Scotland. Scottish Conservatives leader Ruth Davidson says she would scrap free prescriptions and make them means tested. People like her who oppose universalism think the best way to tackle inequality is to target services at the poorest instead of using taxpayers’ money to make them free for everyone.  In addition, free prescriptions only help tackle existing illnesses and conditions, they do not tackle the root cause of illnesses such as asthma – often damp housing. There remain widespread health inequalities in Scotland, and life expectancy in Scotland is lower than in England. It remains to be seen whether free prescriptions can close this gap longer term. |
| **Education**  State education at primary and secondary level is free all across the UK. Pupils from poor and wealthy backgrounds often attend the same schools and receive exactly the same education, meaning education should in theory contribute to equality. The Scottish Gov’t have **abolished tuition fees** which should give students from poorer backgrounds access to further education without creating debt for themselves, and provides them the means to get a good job and therefore not be reliant on benefits later in life, thereby reducing educational inequalities and income inequalities in the long term. | **Education**  However, while free tuition in Scotland may be helpful to some working class students, it does little to prevent the fact that the education gap is well-established long before people reach college or university age. Studies by the Child Poverty Action Group show that by the age of 3 years old, poorer children are already on average 9 months behind wealthier children in terms of educational development, and this gap continues to grow: for example 27% of pupils at Cathkin High in Cambuslang are entitled to free school meals and just 24% of Cathkin school leavers leave with 5 or more Highers, whereas just 7% of pupils at St Ninian’s in well-off East Renfrewshire are entitled to free school meals and 73% of its leavers leave with 5 or more Highers. 3 schools in deprived Glasgow – Drumchapel High, Govan High and Lochend High score zero or close to zero of their school leavers gaining 5 or more Highers. There appears to be a clear correlation between income and educational attainment.  Because educational inequality begins at a young age, early intervention is therefore required. This has prompted Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon to pledge that her government’s key priority will be closing the poverty-related attainment gap in Scotland.  Overall, refer to isolated factor, but remind us there are other ways to tackle inequality  Evaluate….. |

**7. Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of different ways to tackle inequality**

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| **Effective ways** | **Less effective ways** |
| **Government** – mention some of above govt policies in benefits, housing, health and education | **Government** – mention some of above govt policies in benefits, housing, health and education |
| Also, the **voluntary sector** and **charities** can work to reduce inequality. Food banks are an example of charities working to reduce inequality by providing emergency food to people most in need. There are over 400 food banks across the UK, 50 in Scotland. Perhaps as a consequence of UK government cuts to benefits, there has been a massive rose in the number of food banks in the UK recently. A 2015 BBC documentary ‘The Food Bank: Scotland’s Hidden Hunger’ showed that the Trussell Trust charity which runs the food banks, says it has handed out over 1 million emergency food parcels in the UK in the last year, up from 347,000 the year before. This suggests that they are doing vital work as so many people are using them. It also suggests that the public are keen to support food banks, as they are entirely dependent on donations from the public. If they did not exist, perhaps many of these people would have nothing to eat at all. The Trussell Trust has blamed the changes to benefits as the cause of the rapid increase in the need for emergency food supplies. Food banks are especially necessary for people who have recently become homeless and do not have cooking facilities, as the food bank can provide ready meals or instant meals with hot water. | However, as valuable as **charities** are, they do not set policy but rather simply respond to it, so they are often powerless to actually change the direction of the Government. Arguably, the growing dependency on food banks suggests the ineffectiveness of the Government in tackling inequalities. SNP MP Mhairi Black made this point in 2015, saying:  *“Food banks are not part of the Welfare State, they are a symbol that the Welfare State is failing.”*  Perhaps the rise of food banks is a sign that the Minimum Wage is too low. The Living Wage Commission recommend a higher ‘living wage’ instead but over 5 million people currently earn below the set Living Wage, and some of those using food banks are the working poor. |
| Some think **individualistic approaches** are an effective way to tackle inequality. Some people do not rely on the state or charity but become socially mobile themselves through individual hard work, regardless of their background. Journalist Peter Hitchens has made the individualist argument on how best to overcome health inequalities, claiming ‘people have a choice over whether or not they drink or take drugs’ and that people experiencing health inequalities as a result of drug or alcohol consumption are there due to lack of willpower, nothing else, as addiction is a ‘fantasy’. Also, the fact that some people can overcome difficult circumstances to succeed and break out the cycle of poverty themselves may be an argument that everyone is capable of doing so. Perhaps some people living in poverty simply choose not to help themselves. | However, others would argue individual examples of poor people **breaking the cycle of poverty are exceptions to the rule**, and that it is no coincidence that people born into privilege are considerably more likely to have good health, attain well at school and get a well-paid job. For instance, a 2011 BBC documentary ‘Poor Kids’ showed that 47% of children with asthma are from the poorest 10% of families, and that 85% of children living in damp flats suffer breathing problems. These children are born into poverty and experience inequality through no fault of their own and require government intervention.  Individualistic approaches may work for some, for not for the majority, and they are therefore not in themselves enough to tackle inequalities. |
|  | Overall, give conclusion on which is the most effective means of tackling inequality – government, charities, or individualistic approaches, and justify it…. |

**World power: The USA**

1. **With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of the political system in checking the Government.**

Here, we consider ‘the Government’ to mean the President / Executive branch of Government, and ‘the political system’ to mean the other branches – Congress and Supreme Court.

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| **Powers of President / Executive over Congress / SC** | **Powers of Congress / SC over President / Executive** |
| **President is Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces**. President is in charge of national security and can order the use of troops abroad in ‘**Executive actions’** that do not require permission of Congress. E.g. President Obama authorised the killing of terrorist Osama Bin Laden in 2011. Bin Laden was killed by a team of US Navy Seals in a high-security compound in Pakistan as part of a mission ordered and overseen by Obama. He did not need authorisation of Congress or SC to order this. Also, in 2014 Obama approved US airstrikes targeting Islamic State fighters in Syria, without a vote from Congress, and in 2016 he issued a series of executive orders tightening loopholes that allow some people to sell guns without licenses and buy guns without proper background checks, showing that in some ways the political system is unable to check the power of Government. | **The separation of powers** ensures the Executive branch is held in check by the Legislative and Judicial branches. A series of **checks and balances** are built into US system of govt to ensure no individual (e.g. President) or branch can become too powerful. The President, both houses of Congress – the Senate and the House of Representatives –, and a majority of the 9 Supreme Court judges all have to approve a bill before it can become law. In 2013 there was a stalemate between the Executive Branch (President) and the legislative branch (Congress) over the budget to finance Govt spending. Congress refused to approve Obama’s budget in protest at funding of the ‘Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act’ (PPACA) or ‘Obamacare’ – reforms to healthcare. This caused a lack of funding and a temporary govt ‘shutdown’ which caused the Government to stop providing ‘non-essential’ services. That Congress has the ability to stop the functioning of Government is an important limit on Executive power.  The President may face particular problems pushing through his legislative agenda if **Congress is controlled by the party he is not a member of**. For instance, although Obama is a Democrat, both Houses of Congress are currently controlled by Republican majorities:  **Senate (100):** 54 Reps, 44 Dems, 2 Independent  **House of Representatives (435):** 247 Reps, 188 Dems  In 2014, the Senate debated the **Minimum Wage Fairness Bill**, which would have increased the federal minimum wage for employees to $10.10 per hour.  The bill was strongly supported by Obama who argued “if you pay people well, there's more money in everybody's pockets, and everybody does better.” However, it was opposed by Republicans in Congress, and as the Republicans currently control both Houses of Congress, it has not yet passed into law.  Obama therefore has to make significant compromises with a Republican majority in Congress, showing the US political system can be hugely effective in checking the power of Government as the Constitution deliberately ensures no individual could repeat the tyranny the British monarch had on them before independence. |
| **Power of appointment**; President appoints Secretaries of State- e.g. Obama has appointed Joe Biden his Vice President, John Kerry as Secretary of State, and Ashton Carter as Defence Secretary. President also nominates Supreme Court judges. President can nominate judges who share his political views so that they do not block legislation the President wants to push through into law. However, these nominations have to be confirmed by the Senate. President Obama has successfully appointed 2 Supreme Court judges to replace retiring judges, meaning at least 2 of the 9 judges ought to be fairly sympathetic to him. Following the death of the conservative Justice Antonin Scalia in 2016, Obama is currently planning to nominate a replacement. In some ways this shows the power of the President. | The US Constitution allows that a President can be **impeached** by Congress if they commit crimes such as treason, bribery or perjury. This would require a majority vote in the House of Representatives and a two thirds vote in the Senate. In 1998 the House of Representatives voted to impeach President Bill Clinton for lying under oath to cover up an affair he had had with a woman named Monica Lewinsky, but the Senate voted not to convict him, so Clinton continued in office.  In 1974, Republican President Nixon resigned before he was impeached following the ‘Watergate’ scandal, where Republican staff burgled the Watergate hotel in Washington D.C., the Democrats’ headquarters - in order to find out their campaign strategies. Nixon was found to have been involved in covering this scandal up and was effectively forced to resign. This shows the limitation of Presidential power and the power of Congress to hold the President to account. |
| Although not a member of Congress and unable to personally initiate bills, he or she can put pressure on members of Congress from their own party to support bills he or she wants passed - e.g. Obama’s PPACA- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, passed in March 2010- power to sign bills into law. | Even if the President signs a bill passed by Congress, the **Supreme Court** has the power to repeal any law and ensure it is not applied in any US court if a majority of 9 SC Judges decree it unconstitutional. A majority of states appealed to the Supreme Court that Obama’s 2010 healthcare reform bill (PPACA) is unconstitutional as it violates rights of individual states. Although in 2012 the Supreme Court declared the law constitutional, it is nevertheless a significant check on Executive power that they had the authority to repeal it.  The Supreme Court shows the power of the political system to block the Executive’s wishes, as the President cannot dictate who judges are without Senate agreement, which is currently not controlled by the President’s party. In any case, the Supreme Court’s job is not to politically support or oppose the President, but to independently uphold the Constitution. |
| The President has **power of veto.** This means that if Congress passes a bill the President objects to, he or she can simply refuse to sign it into law. Obama has used the veto five times. In 2015 he vetoed a bill passed by Congress to authorise increased spending on defence. Obama claimed it was too much. In practice Presidents can threaten to use their veto many more times, persuading Congress not to waste time passing a bill that will never become law, so this represents significant power for the President. On all 5 occasions Obama has used his veto, Congress has then failed to achieve the two thirds majority required in both houses to overturn it. It is very difficult to overturn a Presidential veto as it almost always requires significant numbers of representatives from the President’s party voting to overturn his veto, and Congress is rarely so unbalanced that one party has a two thirds majority in both chambers. This demonstrates the limitations of the political system at times to check the Government. | **Congress can override a Presidential veto** by a two-thirds majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The last time Congress successfully overrode a Presidential veto was in 2008 during George W Bush’s Presidency. The bill prevented doctors’ pay from being cut. Although it is very difficult, this shows it is possible for the political system to overturn a veto so long as there is broad political will to do so.  Overall…conclusion on the question. |

**2a) With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Evaluate / Analyse the political rights and responsibilities of citizens.**

**2b) ‘The political system guarantees and protects the rights of all citizens’.**

**Discuss with reference to a world power you have studied**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Constitutional rights are important and should be protected** | **Constitutional rights should be amended/removed** |
| America’s **second amendment** to the Constitution allows citizens the right to *‘keep and bear arms’*. This gives them the right to possess and if necessary use guns in self-defence. Many Americans see this right as protection against tyrannical government and they understand that their country was born through citizen militias defeating the British army with guns. Some are therefore very wary that any attempt to strip them of their gun rights would leave them defenceless against any similar occupation in future. They also may worry that if their 2nd amendment right is taken away, their other constitutional rights could be threatened. Radio host Alex Jones defended the 2nd amendment in a 2013 CNN debate with British journalist Piers Morgan who wants stricter gun control. Referencing the American revolution and the Declaration of Independence, Jones called Morgan a ‘redcoat’ and said: “1776 will commence again if you try to take our firearms, we will not relinquish them.” Jones also set up a petition to deport Morgan back to Britain and it gained over 100,000 signatures, showing a significant degree of support for second amendment rights.  Despite President Obama’s repeated calls for stricter gun control laws including tougher background checks for gun purchases and limits on assault weapons, he has failed to win support from Congress. That Congress would not vote through the proposals suggests there is much support for second amendment rights despite some abuses of its responsibilities only to use guns in self-defence. Most Americans also seem to support the 2nd amendment. According to a 2015 poll by Pew Research Centre, 52% believed protecting gun ownership rights was more important than controlling gun ownership, with 46% saying the reverse. | However, many Americans point out that the Constitution was a snapshot in history over 230 years ago and that now they are a long-established independent country, US citizens no longer have to fear tyranny and as such stricter gun controls should be introduced. Critics of the 2nd amendment also point out that it has been abused recently in a spate of mass murders. For instance, in 2015, 14 people were killed in a mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, carried out by a married couple in what President Obama has called an act of terrorism. This shows that guns are not being used for the defensive purposes the Constitution intended.  President Obama has said his inability to implement ‘sufficient and common sense’ gun controls is the greatest frustration of his presidency. In 2016 he issued a series of executive orders tightening loopholes that allow some people to sell guns without licenses and buy guns without proper background checks. Obama pointed out that gun rights are infringing on other constitutional rights, as mass shootings have taken place as Americans have tried to exercise rights such as attending worship services or watching a movie. He said “the right to bear firearms is not more important than the right to worship freely or peaceably assemble”, and he called upon Congress to be "brave enough to stand up to the gun lobby's lies." The fact that President wants stricter gun control shows that there is political will at the very top level of the Executive branch, supported by 46% of Americans according to the Pew Research poll, confirming that there is significant opposition to full 2nd amendment rights. |
| **The fourth amendment** to the Constitution guarantees citizens the right to be *‘secure in their persons, houses and papers, against unreasonable searches and seizures’.* Essentially, it guarantees the right to privacy unless the government has ‘probable cause’ of involvement in crime. A debate over the extent to which the US Government are respecting citizens’ 4th amendment rights was sparked by whistleblower and former National Security Agency (NSA) employee Edward Snowden’s revelations of extensive internet and phone surveillance by the US Government. He revealed that the NSA was spying on millions of ordinary Americans, intercepting and collecting their telephone calls and emails, and accessing their social media profiles. Snowden, who is currently claiming political asylum in Russia as a result of his leaks, has said “I do not want to live in a world where everything I do and say is recorded." He believes the NSA spying programme breaches the 4th amendment, saying *“the 4th Amendment as it was written no longer exists. Now all of our data – our private records, our private communications, who we talk to, what you buy, what you read, who we love, can be collected without any suspicion of wrongdoing on our part, without any underlying justification.”* The 4th amendment only allows government invasion of privacy ‘upon probable cause’ of a crime being committed but currently they are violating privacy of ordinary Americans they have no reason to suspect of criminal or terrorist activity.  In 2013, Glenn Greenwald, the journalist responsible for releasing the information leaked by Snowden, said *“the evidence we are disclosing is not about spying on terrorists, it is about spying on innocent human beings.”* | However, in the debate over the extent to which civil liberties can be encroached upon in the interests of national security, some have claimed the interests of national security are greater. The US has charged Snowden with theft of government property and unauthorised communication of classified information.  President Obama said: *“You can't have 100% security and then also have 100% privacy and zero inconvenience; we're going to have to make some choices as a society.”* Perhaps the 4th amendment is obstructing national security and should be diluted. |
| The **Fifth amendment** right to a free trial is arguably being broken by Guantanamo Bay detention centre remaining open and detaining suspected terrorists indefinitely, including American citizens, without the right to defend themselves. Upon coming to office in 2009, President Obama called Guantanamo *‘a sad chapter in American history’* and vowed to close it, but he has been thwarted by Congress and has been unable to do so. | However, a 2014 Gallup opinion poll found that just 29% of Americans support closing Guantanamo while 66% would keep it open. This shows that the majority of Americans value what they consider to be the national security benefits brought about by indefinitely detaining suspected terrorists over fifth amendment rights, and suggests they do not feel as strongly about protecting the 5th amendment as they do other rights.  Conclusion on the question. |

**3a) With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Evaluate the extent of democracy / how democratic the political system is**

**3b) With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Evaluate / Analyse the ability of citizens to influence and participate in the political process.**

**3c) With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Analyse the ways in which citizens’ views are represented within the political system.**

**3d) With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Evaluate the effectiveness of the political system in representing the wishes of the population**

The above 4 questions are broadly asking the same thing, but in your essay be sure to tweak your wording to suit the question.

The US Constitution demands a democratic and republican form of government. It established that people should elect their political representatives and that powers should be separated between the three branches of government; Executive, Legislative and Judicial to avoid tyranny by one. It guaranteed citizens rights such as freedom of speech, right to privacy, and the right to a fair trial. In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln praised democracy as ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’ and to this day American democracy can ultimately be measured by the ability of citizens to participate and influence the political process. This essay will analyse this and will conclude that…

|  |  |
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| **Democratic / Citizens can participate and influence** | **Undemocratic / Citizens limited in participation / influence** |
| The **Democracy Index** is an annual rank of countries compiled by the independent group the Economist Intelligence Unit. It measures the degree of democracy in countries according to electoral process, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. Its most recent 2014 publication ranked the USA as 19th most democratic country of 167 countries ranked. While not perfect, it does show the USA is at least comparably democratic and open to participation and influence from citizens.  Central to democracy is citizens’ rights to elect their government. Although the Constitution did not originally extend voting rights to blacks or women, today all US citizens have full voting rights and their votes can count. Although they ordinarily participate less in politics as a result of poor representation, many blacks mobilised in 2008 to campaign for, fund, and elect the first black President in American history; Barack Obama, and he was re-elected in 2012. For the first time in US history, in 2012 black voter turnout was higher than white voter turnout, and significantly 93% of blacks voted the winning candidate; Obama. This shows that previously disenfranchised citizens can not only participate in the political process, but they can meaningfully influence it. | However, many Americans do not participate at all in politics. **In the 2014 midterm elections to elect representatives in Congress, national turnout was just 36%;** the lowest since 1942, meaning a significant majority chose not to exercise their right to vote. The New York Times cited apathy, alienation and anger at negative campaigning as the main reasons, especially among poor Americans who feel they have been let down by both parties in recent times. **Some voters do not feel there is a significant enough difference between the main parties to merit voting**, and that neither fully represents them. Professor Noam Chomsky, for instance, has claimed the Democrats and Republicans are merely ‘2 factions of the Business Party’. There are other, smaller parties, but in reality the First Past the Post nature of elections leads to a 2 party system, with supporters of the smaller parties feeling their vote would be wasted and consequently feeling shut out of the electoral process. Bernie Sanders, who stood as a Democrat candidate for the 2016 Presidential election, has warned that the money spent on election campaigns is in danger of turning the US into an ‘oligarchy’, where only the super rich can fund and win elections, meaning poor people will not be represented well.  **Ethnic minorities participate less**. Black turnout dropped below whites in the 2014 midterms, suggesting increased black turnouts in 2008 and 2012 can be attributed to blacks identifying with Obama. Overall blacks still feel somewhat disconnected from politics. This results in a lack of representation; there are just 2 black Senators of 100, which in turn fuels the cycle of apathy. Hispanics may participate less due to language barriers.  **Turnout is often lower in ‘safe states’**, especially in Presidential elections where a state is considered ‘safe’ for one party or candidate. The strongest Republican majorities usually come from Wyoming and Utah, with Democrat votes effectively being wasted there. The Democrats are strongest in Massachusetts and Maryland. Presidential elections are only truly competitive in approximately 10 ‘swing states’ which effectively decide the outcome. Consequently, candidates and parties campaign most heavily in these states and can effectively ignore safe states, which is not very democratic.  In addition, some consider the election of 2 Senators from each state regardless of population undemocratic and not representative. California, with a population of almost 40 million, and Wyoming with a population of just over 500,000, is each represented by 2 Senators. |
| The 1st amendment enshrines the right to freedom of speech and to peaceably assemble. Many Americans have used this opportunity to join a **pressure group** and to campaign for a cause they believe in. Some of these are very influential. For instance, 5 million Americans are members of the **National Rifle Association (NRA**) who campaign to protect second amendment rights to keep and bear arms. They have successfully lobbied Congress to preserve gun laws despite some political opposition calling for stricter gun control measures in light of gun massacres. Arguably this is a result of NRA pressure. It could be claimed this distorts democracy as it effectively means decisions are made by a small majority of wealthy and powerful individuals. On the other hand it could be considered the very definition of democracy; as founding father of USA and its third President Thomas Jefferson said: *‘when government fears the people, there is liberty’*. Whether or not such influential pressure groups are good for democracy is up for debate, but what is unquestionable is that they do represent clear opportunities for at least some people to participate and influence the political process. | However, to too many Americans, there remains an inability to meaningfully participate and influence a somewhat closed political process. In 2014, a black man named **Eric Garner** was stopped by New York police on suspicion of selling unlicensed cigarettes. When Garner denied this, he was arrested and placed in a chokehold by policeman Daniel Pantaleo. The incident was filmed by Garner’s friend and Garner is heard repeatedly saying he couldn’t breathe. One hour later he was dead as a result of compression to his neck and chest caused by the police restraint. Despite the incident being filmed, a grand jury decided not to charge Pantaleo. This decision sparked outrage and protests across America, with many black Americans feeling that they are second class citizens in a two-tier and racist justice system. Despite their protests, they have been unable to affect changes to justice. Obama himself responded by admitting *“too many Americans feel deep unfairness when it comes to the gap between our professed ideals and how laws are applied on a day to day basis.”* Central to any democracy is the equality of all its citizens, but this case shows that the US still has a racism problem. |
| The Obama administration initiated a **‘We the People’ petition site** on the White House website, where citizens can start and sign petitions. Those with over 100,000 signatures within 30 days receive a response. In 2012 a petition calling for it to be made legal to unlock mobile phones to be used on any network reached over 100,000 signatures and the White House then urged Congress to do this, which they did. This shows that people can participate in and influence the political process effectively. | **The vast majority of petitions, however, are rejected**, regardless of the number of signatures, such as the one requesting that Texas be allowed to secede from the USA, signed by 125,000 people. Several other petitions which meet the criteria for a response have been left unanswered for months or years, which calls into question the effectiveness or democratic nature of the petition system.  While people are allowed to participate, often they cannot influence **unless they represent privileged, powerful interests**. When National Security Agency employee Edward Snowden exposed mass government surveillance on US citizens, he had to flee and is currently claiming political asylum in Russia. People should not have to claim political asylum from functioning democracies, which suggests that while Americans are ordinarily permitted to participate in their political process, this is only tolerated so far as they do so within a spectrum acceptable to the government. Although press freedoms are enshrined in the first amendment to the Constitution, arguably citizens’ and journalists’ ability to freely report on the crimes of their own government are limited. **The 2015 Press Freedom Index by the group Reporters without Borders ranks USA’s press freedom as ‘satisfactory’ only and ranked 49th of 180 countries**; a not overly impressive score and at odds with public perceptions of America as ‘land of the free’.  **In any true democracy, the media has an important role to educate and inform the public. However, a 2015 poll of Republican voters showed 30% said they agreed the US should bomb Agrabah, a fictional kingdom from Disney film Aladdin. This suggests that the US media are not performing their democratic duty to educate citizens well enough, leaving some US citizens poorly informed.**  **Overall…conclusion on the question.** |

1. **With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Evaluate / Analyse the impact / consequences of a recent socio-economic issue.**

Inequality is a recent socio-economic issue which exists in the USA. There are widespread **wealth inequalities** which are largely divided along racial lines. 8% of whites live in poverty compared to 23% of blacks and 24% of Hispanics. Average annual income is $48,000 for whites, $30,000 for blacks and $33,000 for Hispanics. 8% of whites are unemployed, 10% of blacks are. 73% of whites own their own home, just 49% of blacks and 48% of Hispanics do. These racial inequalities may in part be due to the lack of ethnic minority representation in Congress. Despite there being the first black President in US history, blacks and Hispanics do not participate in politics as much, and ethnic minority voter turnout is generally lower than white turnout. This leads to a lack of ethnic minority representation. For instance, of 100 Senators, just 2 are black. Some Hispanics may participate less due to language barriers. With the vast majority of political representatives being white, and the majority of voters being white, inevitably it does not appear to be a political priority to implement policies aimed at reducing racial inequalities, which in turn fuels the cycle of apathy among ethnic minorities who often feel disconnected from politics, meaning they continue to suffer inequality.

2012 documentary ‘**Park Avenue’** showed the **richest 400 Americans own the same wealth as the 150 million poorest Americans**, and the average CEO makes 386 times the average workers wage. The richest **1% of Americans own 40% of the nation’s wealth**. The **richest 20% of Americans own over 80% of America’s wealth, and the poorest 20% own just1%.** The average annual wage gap between the richest and poorest 20% is around $170,000 today. In 1992 it was $130,000. This shows that not only is inequality in the USA extensive, it is growing.

There are also significant **crime inequalities**; blacks make up just 12% of the US population but 40% of its prison population. Whites comprise 64% of the population but just 35% of the prison population. In 2014, a black man named **Eric Garner** was stopped by New York police on suspicion of selling unlicensed cigarettes. When he denied this, he was arrested and placed in a chokehold by a policeman. The incident was filmed by Garner’s friend and Garner is heard repeatedly saying he couldn’t breathe. One hour later he was dead as a result of compression to his neck and chest caused by the police restraint. Despite the incident being filmed, a grand jury decided not to charge the police officer. This decision sparked outrage and protests across America, with many black Americans feeling they are second class citizens in a two-tier and racist justice system. Despite the protests, they have been unable to affect changes to justice. Even President Obama’s proposals to ensure more police have body cameras so they cannot get away with brutality looks meaningless in light of the Garner case. Obama himself responded by admitting “too many Americans feel deep unfairness when it comes to the gap between our professed ideals and how laws are applied on a day to day basis.” This case shows America’s continuing racial divide and lack of equality in justice for ethnic minorities.

America does not have a national **health** service funded by taxation like in the UK. Instead, it is the responsibility of the individual to meet their own health needs by purchasing health insurance from a private healthcare company such as Cigna, Humana, or Kaiser Permanente. As many cannot afford it, they choose to go uninsured. Currently 13% of the population do not have health insurance and therefore may avoid seeking treatment for illnesses which then deteriorate. Again, these are divided largely along racial lines. **12% of whites are uninsured; the figure is 19% for blacks and 33% for Hispanics.** Consequently, there are extensive health inequalities. Hispanics are significantly more likely to have diabetes, suffer strokes and contract HIV / AIDS than other groups, and black life expectancy is just 73 compared to 78 for whites.

In response, the US Government has implemented measures to reduce social inequality; e.g. 2010 Patient **Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA**) which makes it easier than it previously was for those on low incomes to get health insurance, provides government subsidies to achieve this, and makes it more difficult for health insurance companies to deny insurance to those applying for it because of a poor financial or health history. The law rules that all Americans must have health insurance or face a penalty. Since its passage into law in 2010, 20 million more Americans have gained health insurance coverage and **the numbers of uninsured Americans has dropped from 18% to 10%.** As the penalty for going uninsured gets higher each year, the numbers of uninsured and therefore health inequalities is likely to decrease. The majority of those that benefit will be ethnic minorities since they are disproportionately concentrated amongst the poorest Americans.

**Inequalities exist in the USA because it has a capitalist economic system, broadly believes in free market principles and individual responsibility**. These are principles over which the 2 major political parties – Democrat and Republican – are largely in agreement with. This means that some inequality is inevitable and acceptable and not necessarily seen as a major problem needing ‘solved’ by the Government. There is a prevailing individualist view that the state is not responsible for reducing inequality, or at least not economic inequality. Jacob Hacker, Professor of Political Science at Yale University has said ‘Americans are not of the view that all inequalities of wealth or income are unjust’, sentiments echoed by Republican member of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan who says ‘if we go down the path where we put the government in place to equalise people’s lives, we’ll all be more equally miserable.’ Clearly therefore, it is unlikely that inequalities will be significantly reduced in the foreseeable future while both major political parties and a significant strain of American public opinion does not believe this is necessary, and in fact believe inequality is an inevitable price worth paying for allowing the pursuit of wealth and individual freedoms. However, it may be the case that inequality is getting out of hand even for Americans. According to a 2013 Gallup poll, 52% of Americans say the government should redistribute wealth by taxing the rich more, the highest percent saying this since Gallup first started asking the question in 1998, so there are disagreements.

Overall….conclusion on the question.

1. **With reference to a world power you have studied**

**Evaluate / Analyse the impact / consequences of a recent socio-economic issue on a specific group in society**

**Inequality** is a recent socio-economic issue in America, and it greatly affects **ethnic minorities** specifically. There are widespread **wealth inequalities** which are largely divided along racial lines. 8% of whites live in poverty compared to 23% of blacks and 24% of Hispanics. Average annual income is $48,000 for whites, $30,000 for blacks and $33,000 for Hispanics. 8% of whites are unemployed, 10% of blacks are. 73% of whites own their own home, just 49% of blacks and 48% of Hispanics do. These racial inequalities may in part be due to the lack of ethnic minority representation in Congress. Despite there being the first black President in US history, blacks and Hispanics do not participate in politics as much, and ethnic minority voter turnout is generally lower than white turnout. This leads to a lack of ethnic minority representation. For instance, of 100 Senators, just 2 are black. Some Hispanics may participate less due to language barriers. With the vast majority of political representatives being white, and the majority of voters being white, inevitably it does not appear to be a political priority to implement policies aimed at reducing racial inequalities, which in turn fuels the cycle of apathy among ethnic minorities who often feel disconnected from politics, meaning they continue to suffer inequality.

There are also significant **crime inequalities along racial lines**; blacks make up just 12% of the population but 40% of the prison population. Whites comprise 64% of the population but just 35% of the prison population. In 2014, a black man named **Eric Garner** was stopped by New York police on suspicion of selling unlicensed cigarettes. When he denied this, he was arrested and placed in a chokehold by a policeman. The incident was filmed by Garner’s friend and Garner is heard repeatedly saying he couldn’t breathe. One hour later he was dead as a result of compression to his neck and chest caused by the police restraint. Despite the incident being filmed, a grand jury decided not to charge the police officer. This decision sparked outrage and protests across America, with many black Americans feeling they are second class citizens in a two-tier and racist justice system. Despite the protests, they have been unable to affect changes to justice. Even President Obama’s proposals to ensure more police have body cameras so they cannot get away with brutality looks meaningless in light of the Garner case. Obama himself responded by admitting “too many Americans feel deep unfairness when it comes to the gap between our professed ideals and how laws are applied on a day to day basis.” This case shows America’s continuing racial divide and lack of equality in justice for ethnic minorities.

America does not have a national **health** service funded by taxation like in the UK. Instead, it is the responsibility of the individual to meet their own health needs by purchasing health insurance from a private healthcare company such as Cigna, Humana, or Kaiser Permanente. As many cannot afford it, they choose to go uninsured. Currently 13% of the population do not have health insurance and therefore may avoid seeking treatment for illnesses which then deteriorate. Again, these are divided largely along racial lines. 12% of whites are uninsured, 19% of blacks are and 33% of Hispanics are. Consequently, there are extensive health inequalities. Hispanics are significantly more likely to have diabetes, suffer strokes and contract HIV / AIDS than other groups, and black life expectancy is just 73 compared to 78 for whites.

In response, the US Government has implemented measures to reduce social inequality; e.g. 2010 Patient **Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA**) which makes it easier than it previously was for those on low incomes to get health insurance, provides government subsidies to achieve this, and makes it more difficult for health insurance companies to deny insurance to those applying for it because of a poor financial or health history. The law rules that all Americans must have health insurance or face a penalty. Since its passage into law in 2010, 20 million more Americans have gained health insurance coverage and the numbers of uninsured Americans has dropped from 18% to 10%. As the penalty for going uninsured gets higher each year, the numbers of uninsured and therefore health inequalities is likely to decrease. The majority of those that benefit will be ethnic minorities since they are disproportionately concentrated amongst the poorest Americans.

Clearly, inequalities are extensive and are largely racial in their nature. Racial inequalities exist in the USA partly because of a fairly recent history of slavery and racism, but also because the USA has a **capitalist economic system, broadly believe in free market principles and individual responsibility**. These are principles over which the 2 major political parties – Democrat and Republican – are largely in agreement with. This means that some racial inequality is inevitable and acceptable and not necessarily seen as a major problem needing ‘solved’ by the Government. There is a prevailing individualist view that the state is not responsible for reducing inequality, or at least not economic inequality. Jacob Hacker, Professor of Political Science at Yale University has said ‘Americans are not of the view that all inequalities of wealth or income are unjust’, sentiments echoed by Republican member of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan who says ‘if we go down the path where we put the government in place to equalise people’s lives, we’ll all be more equally miserable.’ Clearly therefore, it is unlikely that racial inequalities will be significantly reduced in the foreseeable future while both major political parties and a significant strain of American public opinion does not believe this is necessary, and in fact believe inequality is an inevitable price worth paying for allowing the pursuit of wealth and individual freedoms. However, it may be the case that inequality is getting out of hand even for Americans. According to a 2013 Gallup poll, 52% of Americans say the government should redistribute wealth by taxing the rich more, the highest percent saying this since Gallup first started asking the question in 1998, so there are disagreements.

Overall…conclusion on the question

**6. With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness / success of the Government / Government policies in responding to / tackling a recent / significant socio-economic issue.**

**Inequality** is a significant socio-economic issue which exists in the USA….

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Govt has effectively responded to inequality** | **Govt has not effectively responded to inequality** |
| The **2007 Fair Minimum Wage Act** sets the federal minimum wage in America at $7.25 per hour and is applied to all workers in all 50 states considered to be engaged in ‘interstate commerce’. Arguably it has been effective, as before it came into law approximately 3 million workers paid by the hour were paid below $7.25 an hour, so it will have helped them. The jobs most likely to benefit from the Act are the lowest paid ones- which tend to be the ones ethnic minorities do. Since it has only increased the wages of these lowest paid workers and not those who already earned above it, it has undoubtedly reduced inequality. | However, the **Fair Minimum Wage Act** **has perhaps not proven very effective** as domestic workers (e.g. employees of local newspapers, babysitters) are exempt from it. Also, while individual states cannot pay lower, they can pay higher. 29 states out of 50 pay higher, e.g. the states of California and Massachusetts pay $10 per hour, the highest of all. Arguably, however, this simply creates more inequality between the 21 states that pay the minimum and the 29 states which pay more.  Also exempt from the Minimum Wage is tipped jobs such as waiter - they must be paid only a minimum of $2.13 per hour so clear inequalities continue.  Despite the Act, **significant economic inequalities remain**: 8% of whites live in poverty compared to 23% of blacks and 24% of Hispanics. Average annual income is $48,000 for whites, $30,000 for blacks and $33,000 for Hispanics. 8% of whites are unemployed, 10% of blacks are.  **2012 documentary ‘Park Avenue’** showed the richest 400 Americans own the same wealth as the 150 million poorest Americans, and the average CEO makes 386 times the average workers wage. The richest 1% of Americans own 40% of the nation’s wealth. The richest 20% of Americans own over 80% of America’s wealth, and the poorest 20% own around 1%. The average annual wage gap between the richest and poorest 20% is around $170,000 today. In 1992 it was $130,000. This shows that not only is inequality in the USA extensive, it is growing, which suggests the govt have not done enough.  In 2014, the US Senate debated the **Minimum Wage Fairness Bill**, which would have increased the federal minimum wage for employees to $10.10 per hour.  The bill was strongly supported by President Obama who argued “if you pay people well, there's more money in everybody's pockets, and everybody does better.” However, it was opposed by Republicans in Congress, and as the Republicans currently control both Houses of Congress, it has not yet passed into law.  Part of the reason why the Government have not tackled these economic inequalities is because the USA has a **capitalist economic system, broadly believes in free market principles and individual responsibility**. This means that some inequality is inevitable and acceptable and not necessarily seen as a major problem needing ‘solved’ by the Government. There is a prevailing individualist view that Govt is not responsible for reducing inequality. Jacob Hacker, Professor of Political Science at Yale University has said “Americans are not of the view that all inequalities of wealth or income are unjust”, sentiments echoed by Republican member of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan who says “if we go down the path where we put the government in place to equalise people’s lives, we’ll all be more equally miserable.” Perhaps the Government have not ‘failed’ to reduce inequality, they have simply not tried as it is not considered a problem and in fact is encouraged. Clearly therefore, it is unlikely that inequalities will be significantly reduced in the near future while a large strain of American opinion does not believe this is necessary, and in fact believe inequality is an inevitable price worth paying for allowing the pursuit of wealth and individual freedoms. |
| In saying that, under President Obama the US Government has made reducing health inequalities a priority and in 2010 they passed the **Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)**, often known as **‘Obamacare’.** This lawcame into effect in 2014. Itmakes it easier than it previously was for those on low incomes to get health insurance and provides government subsidies to achieve this. It also makes it more difficult for health insurance companies to deny insurance to those applying for it because of a poor financial or health history. The law rules that all Americans must have health insurance or pay a fee, so it should reduce inequalities of access to health. Since its passage into law in 2010, millions more Americans have gained health insurance coverage and **the numbers of uninsured Americans has dropped from 18% to 10%**. Previously, many people on low incomes would risk going without health insurance, especially if they had a poor health history as their insurance would often be very expensive or they could be denied insurance entirely, so they could not afford medical treatment if they fell ill and would not see their doctor. This caused greater health inequalities between the richest who could afford insurance, and the poorest who could not. Arguably therefore, the law is already reducing inequalities and this trend of more people becoming insured will likely continue.  PPACA is also growing in popularity. According to a Gallup opinion poll, in 2014 just 38% of Americans approved of PPACA, but in 2015 approval rating was at 47%, the highest it has been since its introduction. | However, there have been **problems with the implementation of PPACA.** The law has not introduced an NHS style system of universal health care to America, and health insurance can still be very expensive. The average cost for a mid-tier health insurance plan is $328 per month, or approximately $4,000 a year, which is still very expensive for poorer Americans. Although PPACA is growing in popularity, the Gallup opinion poll from 2015 shows more Americans disapprove of it (48%) than approve (47%). It is worth noting though, that among those who disapprove are people who believe it does not go far enough as well as those who think it goes too far in reforming healthcare.  One of the more unpopular aspects of the law is the ‘individual mandate’, which requires Americans to pay an annual fee if they choose not to be insured. For an adult this penalty will later this year rise to whichever is higher out of $695 or 2.5% of taxable income. Some Americans resent this as they feel as it is effectively the government forcing people to buy a product. Also, there are still over 30 million Americans (10%) currently without health insurance, and significant health inequalities remain. 33% Hispanics are without health insurance, compared to 19% of blacks and 12% of whites so there remain clear racial inequalities in health. Consequently, Hispanics more likely to contract HIV/AIDS, higher rates of diabetes and strokes.  Republicans have criticised PPACA as ‘socialised medicine’ and ‘Obamacare’. They say it attacks individual freedoms and choice and have promised to repeal it if they win Presidency in 2016. Republican Presidential frontrunner for the 2016 election Donald Trump has called it a ‘disaster’, and has said he would do away with it if he wins the Presidency. Overall, PPACA has had a limited impact in reducing health inequalities, and potentially it could be abolished altogether soon. |
|  | There are also continuing **racial inequalities** which the government have either been unwilling or unable to tackle effectively. Blacks comprise just 12% of the US population but 40% of its prison population.  In 2014, a black man named **Eric Garner** was stopped by New York police on suspicion of selling unlicensed cigarettes. When he denied this, he was arrested and placed in a chokehold by a policeman. The incident was filmed by Garner’s friend and Garner is heard repeatedly saying he couldn’t breathe. One hour later he was dead as a result of compression to his neck and chest caused by the police restraint. Despite the incident being filmed, a grand jury decided not to charge the policeman. This decision sparked outrage and protests across America, with many black Americans feeling that they are second class citizens in a two-tier and racist justice system. Despite the protests, they have been unable to affect changes to justice. Even President Obama’s proposals to ensure **more police have body cameras** so they cannot get away with brutality looks meaningless in light of the Garner case. Obama himself responded by admitting “too many Americans feel deep unfairness when it comes to the gap between our professed ideals and how laws are applied on a day to day basis.”  This case shows America’s continuing racial divide and lack of equality in justice for ethnic minorities.  Overall…conclusion on how effective you think US Govt has been at reducing inequalities. |

**7. With reference to a world power you have studied:**

**a) Evaluate / Analyse their influence in international relations.**

**b) Evaluate / Analyse their involvement in international organisations**

**c) Evaluate / Analyse their relationship with other countries**

The USA plays a key role in international relations **politically**, **militarily** and **economically**. This essay will consider the extent to which the USA exerts its power and influence and will conclude that through its involvement in international organisations, the USA shapes global policy in its own interests and in the interests of its allies to a very considerable degree.

The USA exerts **political** influence through its leading role within the **United Nations**. The UN Security Council is the body charged with maintaining international peace and security through resolutions establishing peacekeeping operations, enforcing sanctions against other countries and authorising military action where necessary. It consists of 15 member states, just 5 of which are permanent. The USA is one of these 5 countries in the world along with China, Russia, France and the UK. As such they have the privilege of a **‘permanent veto’** – the ability to reject outright any resolution no matter its level of support. This gives them enormous power, which the USA often uses to penalise one of its main enemies, **North Korea**. In 2016, the UN, with America’s backing, placed economic sanctions on North Korea and condemned them as a ‘clear threat to international peace and security’ after they had tested a long-range rocket and a nuclear bomb in violation of existing sanctions. North Korea has previously threatened to attack the US and President Obama has called their ‘provocative actions’ ‘unacceptable’. That the US can contribute to isolating North Korea economically shows its influence within the UN.

The US also uses its UN veto power to defend its close ally **Israel**. Since 1972, the US has exercised its veto more than any other country. In 2011, for instance, they vetoed a resolution condemning the building of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. The USA provides $3 billion in financial support to Israel each year. America’s close relations with Israel may be in part due to the pressure placed on the US government by a pro-Israeli US pressure group – the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). They have over 100,000 members and are well-resourced, meaning they can pressure the US government to support Israel. The US’s permanent member status gives it considerable leverage to influence politics and to shape policy in the interests of itself and its allies, in this case Israel, a key ally given its strategic importance in the oil rich Middle East.

In saying that, it is important to remember that the US is **not the only country with a permanent veto**, and that often it will support resolutions which are then vetoed by the other 4. For example, **in 2014 the USA voted for a resolution to condemn ‘widespread violation’ of international law and human rights by Syria**, but this was vetoed by both **Russia** and **China**, both of whom the US has tense relations with. This example shows that although the US wields significant power, it does not always get its way and reminds us that there are other world powers, sometimes enemies of the US, who are also powerful.

The US also wields substantial **military** power. It was one of the original countries that set up NATO in 1949 and remains its most influential member. In terms of finance, troop and resource commitments to NATO, the USA provides far more than any other single member of the Alliance so in one sense the US can be seen as the most important member of arguably the world’s most powerful military alliance. The USA played a lead role in NATO’s bombing of Libya in 2011 to remove their leader Colonel Gaddafi, a US enemy.

Although the USA may dominate NATO in terms of its contribution, **NATO’s 28 members have equal** **voting rights** and there must be unanimous agreement before action can be taken. This meant that for NATO to invade Afghanistan after 9/11, for example, all the members had to be in agreement as opposed to the USA simply ordering it.

However, the US’s military reach is not limited to NATO. In 2014, the US, with allies such as the **UK**, **France** and **Saudi Arabia**, launched air strikes on Syria to target **Islamic State** militants, again showing their ability to lead military operations and to persuade other countries to support them, often in return for diplomatic, financial and military support.

As the world’s second largest economy, the US enjoys enormous **economic influence**. President Obama has talked of America’s ‘special relationship’ with the UK. The US is also close trading partners with **Saudi Arabia** and the relationship is often simplified as ‘oil for security’; the USA buys oil from Saudi Arabia and sells them weapons in return. This deal is said to benefit both as they share common enemies in the Middle East, such as **Iran** and **Syria, and Islamic State terrorists**. However, human rights organisations have criticised the US for not speaking out more strongly against Saudi Arabia’s terrible record on human rights, women’s rights and gay rights. Also **China** recently overtook the USA as the world’s largest economy, again demonstrating that the USA’s economic reach is not unrivalled.

The US is also one of just a handful of the world’s countries to possess **nuclear weapons**. They have the second largest arsenal of nuclear weapons in the world, and are the only country to have ever used them in warfare. However, **Russia** possesses more nuclear weapons than the US, again showing that the US they are not the world’s sole military superpower, but the USA’s nuclear stockpile nevertheless makes them an extremely privileged global military force.

In sum, given that other countries too possess equal voting rights at the UN, that NATO is an alliance of equals, and that China is fast emerging as an economic superpower, it is clear that **the US is not the only powerful country in the world.** However, **on balance they remain the most powerful country in the world; they have enormous political, military and economic power, and they exercise influence in international relations beyond all other nations**.