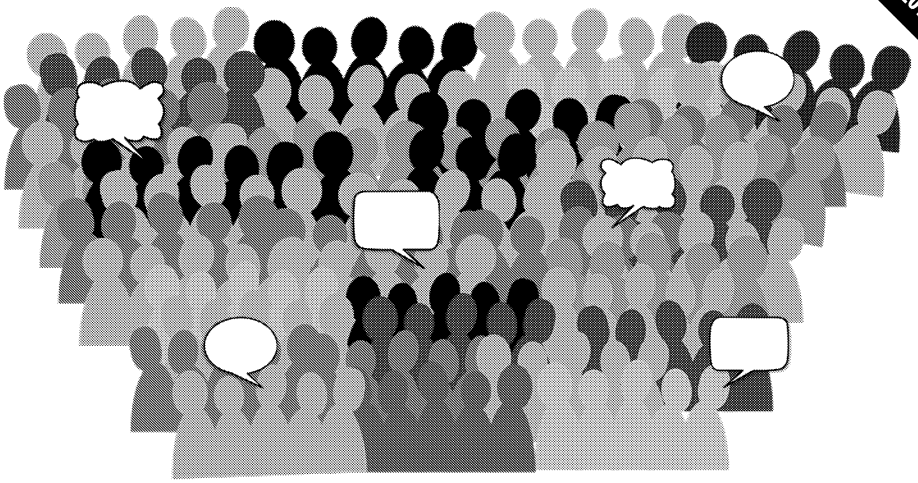
Politics

AS and A Level | Edexcel | 8PL0/9PL0

2017 specification
first exams in 2019 (2018 for AS)



Course Companion
for A Level Edexcel

Component 1: UK Politics

Democracy and Participation

2026 Edition

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POD 13004

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Teacher's Introduction

This pack is designed to provide students with a comprehensive educational resource on Democracy and Political Participation for AS and A Level Edexcel.

Remember!
Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

Understanding democracy is essential for learning about politics in the United Kingdom. The idea of representative democracy, the developments in the culture of democracy, and the introduction of legal rights are all fundamental parts of how democracy in the UK operates today. This chapter will give vital context to the rest of the students' learning about British politics. Students will be introduced to the concept of democracy and how it applies in the United Kingdom today, as well as how it has developed over time.

The democracy and participation module in the 2017 Edexcel specification covers four main topics: democracy in the context of the UK, the widening of the franchise, group politics, and rights in context. The idea of this chapter is to give students a basic understanding of what democracy means in the United Kingdom. The course companion is as comprehensive as possible, and covers key political developments up to and including the June 2017 general election.

This pack has been designed either to be worked through in order, or dipped in and out of to support your own lesson structures. Please use it in whichever way you prefer. The talking points and activities provided are designed to engage students while provoking the critical thought and analysis that will be required in the exam.

Each chapter contains:

- a brief overview and learning objectives for the chapter
- a list of key terms and key words
- students' notes and analysis of the key events
- 'talking point' questions designed to encourage discussion in class and develop key analysis skills

Second edition, April 2020
The second edition of this course companion has been updated to reflect recent developments, contemporary debates and new political contexts that have emerged since its initial publication. In relation to Democracy and Participation, this includes (but is not limited to) political developments since the 2017 general election, the evolution of policy commitments, the advancement of debates around the influence of European institutions and the role of the judiciary, and the impact of new pressure group activity.

Third edition, October 2022
The third edition of this course companion has been further updated to include developments such as the political context since the 2019 general election, the passage of new legislation, the emergence of new pressure groups, and the impact of Brexit on civil rights.

Fourth edition, January 2026
This edition incorporates the tumultuous events of the last three and a half years: a change of government, reform of the House of Lords, further electoral reform including a reversion of the change to mayoral systems, and the move towards votes at 16. New case studies include the debate on giving prisoners the vote, Marcus Rashford's free school meals campaign, and the removal of IPP sentences.

Unit 1.1 Democracy in the Contex

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Learn the features of, and similarities and differences between, direct and representative democracy
- ✓ Be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of direct and represe
- ✓ Have an understanding of the current health of democracy in the UK
- ✓ Know some of the key reforms proposed for UK democracy

Key Words

Democracy	Stems from the Greek words 'demos' (people) and 'kratia' (po idea that the people in a society should control how the society
Direct Democracy	A form of democracy in which the public is consulted direct representatives. Referendums are a mechanism of direct de
Representative Democracy	A system in which the electorate chooses officials (representat parliament through the process of elections. Representatives i organised into parties.
Pluralism	A political system in which many diff t views, opinions a and compete.
Democratic Deficit	A term used by people who believe that there is not enough the UK. This could mean that the public is not involved government is not held to account enough.
Election	A formal public vote to choose political representatives.
Judiciary	The system of courts in a society and a collective name for all uphold the law and make judgments in trials. They also hav
Media	All forms of mass communication in a country. This include television, radio and newspapers, as well as newer forms suc
Devolution	The movement of powers and responsibilities away from th in the UK) and towards regional bodies (such as the Welsh Scottish Parliament).
House of Commons	One of the Houses of Parliament; the house where the 650 r United Kingdom to represent their interests sit. The House and pass laws and scrutinise the government. The governm party in the Commons.
House of L	The Lords is the other House of Parliament. It is made up o main role is to scrutinise the government and make suggest
Accountability	In a democracy, accountability refers to the ability of the pu government and parliament are held responsible for their a

Representative and Direct Democracy

These important terms are a favourite in the exams. The first is the basis o
in the UK and many other states. There are particular aspects of democra
you should think about.

Let's get the basics out of the way first. 'Democr... literally means '**rule** b
Greek. The idea of democracy sounds fi... How could we object to the id
people of the state should decid... or not matters? There are two main

Direct Dem...ra...

A **direct de...acy** is a system that allows the people to make all the deci
rarely practicable today. We do use it in a way when we hold **referendun**
bound to follow those decisions. You would think that direct democracy w
government – a true government of and for the people. Yet, if we look aro
few examples of any state simply allowing its people to govern.

Representative Democracy

On the other hand, an **indirect** or **representative** democracy is where the p
represent their interests and to make the important decisions of governme
adopted a system of representative democracy, and developed it into a for
This is an aspect of politics that you should make thorough notes about fr

Similarities and Differences between R...presentative and Direct Democracy

Now we have determi... main features of direct and representative d
should try to work ... whether there are any similarities between them, a

The most important similarity between the two forms of democracy is tha
the will of the majority. In both systems the idea is that the best way to m
everybody what the right thing to do is, and do whatever the largest grou
democracies the interests of the many are represented by elected individua
democracies individuals represent their own interests. It is also true that r
tend to offer more protection for minority interests, but in total, the will of
important factor in both systems.

On the other hand, there are a great many differences between direct and r
a direct democracy, every political decision would be taken to a vote of ev
Citizens would be active in all sorts of decision-mak..., and there would b
other hand, in a representative democracy citizens take part in elections in
make political decisions on their beh...

There is a case for d... democracy as being the 'purest' form of democra
the hands ... public. However, although it may seem democratic, that
without dis...antages.

Talking Point

**Why do you think representative democracies are so m...
than direct democracies in the modern world?**

Advantages and Disadvantages of Direct Democracy

Advantages of Direct Democracy

1. The people elected in representative democracies tend not to be repre
the people who live in the state as a whole. In western democracies st
UK and the USA, they tend to be male, white a[illegible] fr[illegible]m an educated b
Direct democracy overcomes this pr[illegible]
2. Direct democracy encoura[illegible]ti[illegible]pation. Citizens are taken seriou
opinions are how p[illegible]s[illegible]rmed. Direct democracy encourages a se
comm[illegible]b[illegible] voters as they feel part of the governance of the c
3. Some [illegible] systems, such as simple plurality used in the UK and US
representation in terms of seats won. Direct democracy overcomes th
being properly represented.
4. Once elected, representatives can become corrupt and want to becom
makes them follow the orders of the party leader rather than the inter
democracy overcomes this problem.
5. The problems of vast numbers voting with direct democracy can be o
technology such as the Internet.
6. We already use direct democracy when we hold referendums in the UK, a
recent years.
7. Direct democracy means that governments will be directly accountab
the time. They would always worry about the interests of the people
election time.

Disadvantages of Direct Democra[illegible]

You could argue that stat[illegible]h[illegible]Switzerland carry out forms of direct d
government [illegible]d[illegible], such as the USA and the UK, but it would be di
governme[illegible]manently running on the direct actions of the people. Ev
never ment[illegible]ed the word 'democracy' and built in systems that would p
electing the President. So, what problems might there be with direct dem

1. It becomes impossible to reach agreement in a modern state with a la
millions of people.
2. It will be the will of the majority who bother to take part in elections t
the majority of people in the state. These might be influential for the
be undemocratic.
3. It is cumbersome and costly, and open to much corruption.
4. There are strong indications that most people would not have the
decisions. Turnout in elections in major democracies can often be ver
5. Uninformed voters will think of themsel[illegible]v[illegible]at[illegible]r than what is best f
6. Many of the issues of modern go[illegible]v[illegible]en[illegible]re too complex for ordina
7. It could lead to rule by th[illegible]n[illegible]d be open to emotional decisions
the majority.

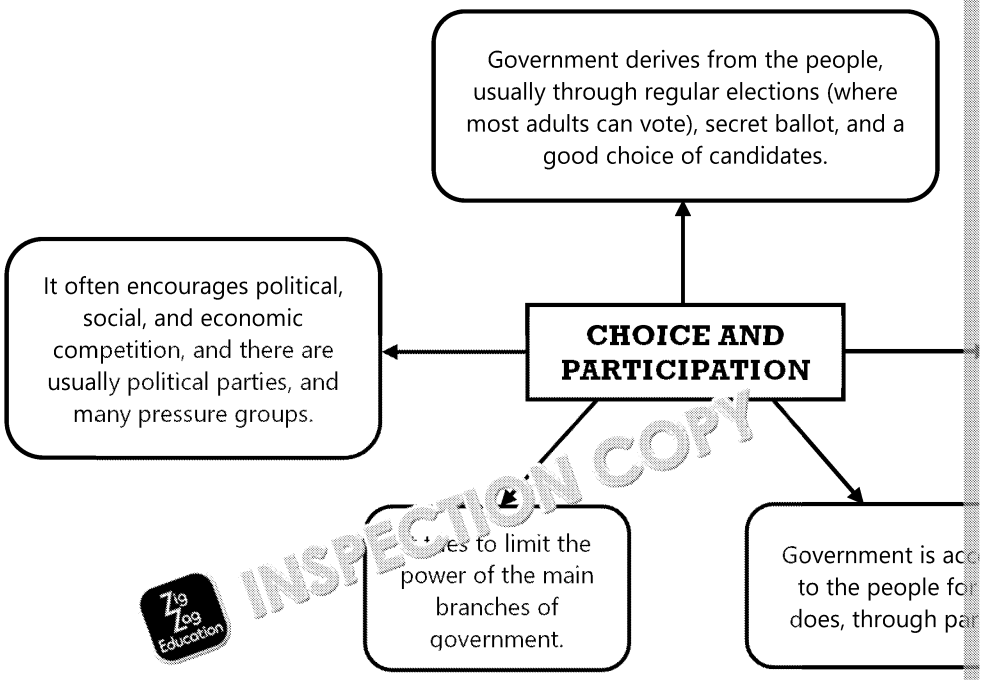
EXAM TIP:

Remember the advantages and disadvantages of both direct democ
representative democracy; they may come up in an exam. Remembe
help you to write a complete answer.

Representative Democracy

Liberal democracy – our form of representative democracy – has developed
John Locke, who believed that governments should be removed by the peo
and Adam Smith, who believed in reasonable individual freedom, especiall
business. It has some special characteristics. The 'liberal' part refers to the b
of the individual. It is a particular form of represen[illegible]emocracy, and th
interchangeably. The UK turned to liberal [illegible]y when electoral reform
to vote towards the end of the nin[illegible]tury. This developed further i
producing a type of dem[illegible] th[illegible] can also be described as a mass democ
allowed to p[illegible]olitics if they wish to do so, and where all citizens

Some Characteristics of Liberal or Representative Democracy



Let's repeat that liberal democracy is a system that believes in civil rights a
politics. It also owes something to the ideas of writers such as the eighteen
Rousseau and the nineteenth-century thinker **J S Mill**. But Rousseau onc

> *The people of England believe they are free. They are seriously mistaken.*
> *during the election of Members of Parliament.*

Think about that idea as you go through the course. Develop your own op
Rousseau was right. When you read below about some of the problems wi
about some of the good points. After all, we do c[illegible] our governments t
happened strongly in 1979, 1997 and 202[illegible] W[illegible] let the government kn
methods such as **referendums** [illegible] pressure groups, and through a fre
amount of freedom wh[illegible] other states don't allow, and so on. Make s
balanced.

Talking Point

'The people of England believe they are free. They are seriou
only during the election of Members of Parliament.' How far do
statement, and why?

Advantages of Representative Democracy

1. The only workable system in places with large populations. It means t
can focus on governing, leaving everyone else to get on with their own
democracies have developed the concept of a professional politician w
their time to thinking about policies, government and representation.
society to do the same thing would be unreasonable
2. Is much more efficient than trying to run a vote for every issue. Imagi
every decision in the United Kingdom, it would be challenging to say t
3. Elections mean that there is still a clear link to the electorate. Even tho
will be directly making a decision on each issue, if free and fair electio
then the representatives will still have to act on behalf of the public or
representative is linked to a constituency (as they are in the 'first past t
can be closer to the electorate of their constituency and gain an unders
4. Can protect minority rights and stop the tyranny of the majority. Repr
exercise their discretion to protect minority groups in a way that direct
For example, in a referendum there is essentially no representation for
parliament there will be representatives for every group, rather than ju
5. Encourages a diversity of opinions to be represented; this is known as

Disadvantages of Representative Democracy

1. Politicians may have to follow their own judgments. Should the peopl
our wishes, or should they decide for themselves what is best? In the
Burke believed the second was true, and that MPs should be represen
for themselves, and not delegates following our every command.
2. Today, the growth of political parties, which is often a typical part of
parliaments, has meant that MPs usually have to follow the party line
that minority groups agree with what local voters want.
3. There are many different ideas that it's impossible for every voter to g
that we all follow the decision of the majority. But what happens to t
very large in number. Who will protect their interests?
4. Some, such as Marxists, would say that it's only the rich who actually g
the capitalists who hold the real power in our society. Government is
capitalist state. Others would add that it's the media that holds the rea
people of this country.

Talking Point

After looking at the advantages and disadvantages of direct and representative democracy, which do you think would be better for the United Kingdom? Can you think of examples of when the other system has been used?

Why Do We Hold Elections?

You know by now that an important aspect of liberal democracy is **repres** direct democracy to be generally practical. In the UK, this means holding and local level to choose people who will represent our interests. We tend Most candidates who successfully become MPs or local councillors are rep Theoretically, to be fair, we should end up with the number of representati councils that is directly in proportion to the percentage of the votes their p work like that in the present system of voting for parliament, or for local c at that later. Before you read any further, try to draw up a list saying **why** (Remember what we've already said about representative democracies.)

The Purpose of Elections

1. The UK does not generally use direct democracy. It is an indirect democra in local and national government.
2. We need to retain a democratic hold on governments by making politician
3. Elections provide a way for us to participate in politics and to influence the (and our lives as citizens) to take.
4. We wish to protect the freedom that a liberal democracy offers, and to ha those in power from changing that.
5. We look at our own history or at other states that don't hold fair elections chance to vote has become.
6. We might one day want to change the political system altogether, and vot bloodshed.

A point to ponder. If this list is true, why do you think so few people in th and European elections? Why did only 66.1% of voters take part in the 20 figure since 1918? Turnout has been steadily rising since 2001, peaking at increased political disengagement and fewer issues regarded as 'settled'. H 59.8% in the European election, perhaps reflecting voter frustration with a perc political choice. Low turnout presents another problem for representation else for you to think about as you carry on through the course.

The Mandate

The mandate means that the winning party in an election will claim that they ha carry out the policies that they promised before the elections. Often, it's very di given the winning party a mandate on every issue, because there are usually so about a **general mandate** to govern, and this might include changing some of change. But obviously, a mandate can be taken away if the voters think that the much from its promises. Margaret Thatcher, for example, always claimed that h people to govern. But when she introduced the so-called Poll Tax, many people uncertain terms through demonstrations and rioting for her resignation in

The Poll Tax was opposed in protests around the country in 1990.

Remember how representative d the public choo

The Health of Democracy in the UK

We have not yet looked comprehensively at what makes a state more or le
we can assess the health of democracy in the UK we must first understand
democracy. Some of the most important functions are:

- **Representation:** The people must be able to have their views adequat
and government.
- **Participation:** It must be possible for the public to engage with the po
- **Openness:** A democracy should be open to all those who wish to part
of **pluralism.**
- **Accountability:** It must be possible to force the government to take re
to rem e government if necessary.
- **Protection of minorities:** Liberal democracies must have a method fo
particularly for stopping minorities from being persecuted by the maj
- **Checks and balances:** It should not be possible for one branch of gov
powerful in a democracy. One of the main features that distinguishes
dictatorships is that there is no all-powerful and unaccountable entity

Signs of a Healthy Democracy in the UK

Free and Fair Elections

The UK has elections roughly once every five years to choose its represent
both free and fair, meaning that everyone can participate (both by standing
voting) and no one group has any institutional advantage. Elections are o
and non-party interest groups, and overseen by a regulatory body called t
which makes sure that the election is run as fairly and transparently as pos
with an election, a member of the public or a political group can go to the
Election Courts to settle the dispute. The Electoral Commission was introd
ensure the integrity of elections held in the UK. When there are signific
(such as unreported expenses) then the Electoral Commission can issue fin

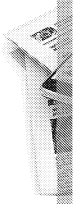
In an election the public is able to throw out a representative they do not a
them to account) and is able to show its preference for policies. Elections a
which the public exercises their power over their representatives. Howev
way in which UK democracy is healthy.

Independent Judiciary

Representatives are also held to account by the judiciary. This is the name
for all of the courts in the land, the highest of which is the UK Supreme
Court, established in 2009. The judiciary enforces the laws that Parliamen
passes. One example of the judiciary ensuring that there are checks and
balances on the government was the *R (Miller) v Secretary of State for Exiti
the European Union* case in January 2017. It was decided that the
government could not invoke Article 50 (meaning start the process
of leaving the European Union) without first getting an Act of
Parliament. This meant that the judiciary had effectively
constrained the power of the government to act without making
sure that representatives approved of the decision. The judiciary is also
there to help minority interests be protected.

Free Media

A media system is the main means of mass communication, including newspapers, television and the Internet. In the UK the media system shows a high level of diversity, and is not constrained by the government in what it chooses to publish. The UK media includes many privately owned media companies (newspapers such as the *Daily Mail, The Times* or the *Guardian*) and a publicly owned broadcaster (the BBC).



Electron

The media system in the UK is very complicated, but the most democrati[c] [fe]ature is that it is not fully controlled by the governmen[t]. different o[p]inions can be represented in the media. This is especially true [o]f media, where anyone can broadcast their opinions to a wide audience.

Devolved Governments

Since the 1990s, there has been a process of **devolution**. This means that m[any] hands of regions rather than at the centre of the UK. This has added anoth[er] UK democracy in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These bodies ar[e] under different electoral systems. The addition of more local representati[on] closer to politics, and policies can be more tailored to local interests.

Pluralism in Political Opinion

One of the clearest signs that the UK has a healthy democracy is the range [of] represented in the public sphere. In the British media, in the House of Co[m]mons, Lords, in the devolved parliaments and the parties, in pressure groups, and [in] there is no end to the diversity of opinion expressed in British politics.

Referendums

Since the [1]970s there has been a marked increase in the number of referen[da] are a form of direct democracy, and you will learn much more about them [later]. know for now is that a referendum is a public vote on a single political iss[ue]. involve the public directly they are seen as part of a healthy democracy. R[ef]erendums chance for citizens to participate.

Talking Point

What parts of the UK's political system do you think are the b[est] has a healthy democracy?

Signs of an Unhealthy Democracy in the UK

Although the UK has many signs of being a healthy democracy, there are s[ome] UK is governed, saying there is a **democratic deficit.** Some of the main issu[es] democracy are the followin[g]:

First Past the Post

You will hear a lot in your study of UK politics about first past the post. T[his] to elect MPs to Parliament. It is not a proportional system, meaning that th[e] does not necessarily match the votes cast. FPTP favours the larger parties [and] struggle to win seats. Many see the electoral system as unfair to smaller p[arties] excluding those who support smaller parties from participating as fully as [they]

House of Lords

The famous

The House of Lords is the second chamber of Parliament, and although less important than the House of Commons, still has a major part to play in British politics. Its main role today is to scrutinise laws passed through the Commons and hold the Commons to account. The House of Lords is completely unelected. In 1999, Labour significantly reduced the number of hereditary peers (members of the House of Lords who inherit their seats), and a further bill to remove them entirely was introduced by the Labour government in 2024. In the of the 26 Church of England Bishops in the Lords, the Ho special privilege for one religion. Most of its members have been appointe ministers. Although there is a House of Lords Appointment Commission appointed as Lords, the House of Lords is still not elected, and, therefore, l Lords are also not accountable, and hold their seat until they die. They ar

European Legislation

During the 2016 referendum on whether Britain should leave the EU, ther having EU laws over the UK was undemocratic. People opposed to Britis argued that the EU forced its laws on the UK. A good example of EU law in the *Factortame* decision of 2000 when a case over fishing rights resulted could overrule UK law in the event that it was opposed. Defenders of the governments can participate in creating EU law and blocking it if they dis

Citizens' Rights

The European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into UK la because it is not binding on Parliament, there is still not strong enough pro example t many citizens' rights groups see as evidence that the Human the Terrori cts passed from 2000. These allowed suspects to be impris 14 days.

Media

Although there are many different opinions expressed in the media in the U louder than others. Some business own a large number of media companie group owns *The Times, The Sun* and Sky News. Having all of the media co unelected politicians raises questions about how accountable these powerf also increasing pressure to reform social media regulations. Facebook and fault for any news spread on their platform, but critics argue that they bear (not all of it real) that their platforms are used to broadcast.

Low Turnout

If elements are one of the most important parts of democracy in the UK, th vote at elections can be a clear sign that not everything is healthy i shows the extent to which people are participating in elections, and also c a governm voter turnout saw a moderate increase following the 2001 of 59.4%, but this trend reversed in 2024. The general elections of 2017 an 68.7% and 67.3% respectively, yet by 2024 turnout dropped again to only 5 always lower for elections outside Westminster; average turnout in the M only 32.0%.

England

Since devolution, there has become something of a problem in the divisio
in Parliament – the so-called West Lothian Question, which asks whether
from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland should be allowed to vote on m
which only affect England – the problem being that MPs from the devolve
administrations can vote on English-only matters but n
2015 the Conservative Government introduced a
designed to address this problem, tho
in 2021. Some want to introdu

Party Mer

Another in
In 1983, 3.8% of people in the UK were members of a political party; by 20
approximately 0.8%. However, in recent years party membership has start
figure at 1.5% in 2022. This differs between the parties, with the Labour Pa
increase in members since the 2015 leadership contest. While Labour's me
peak of over 500,000 in 2020 to approximately 300,000 in 2025, Reform UK
over 200,000, overtaking the Conservatives and gaining on Labour. (These
reported so can only be glimpsed at key moments such as leadership elect
membership might indicate that people no longer identify strongly enoug
or that people are choosing to express their political interests outside polit
groups, or independently, through social media. However, the gradual revival of political party membership in recent years suggests this trend might not be so clear-cut.

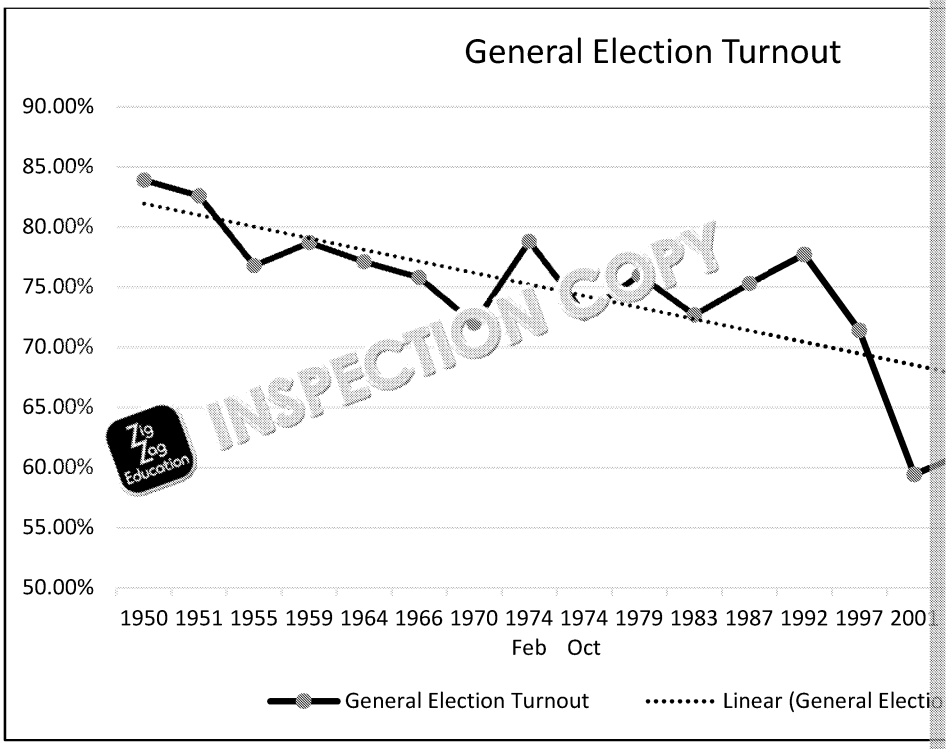
Remember to expla
to an ideal democra

A Crisis of Participati

Although i
evidence t
the new importance of social media in connecting people to politicians an
their news consumption, there is also a system of e-petitions. These e-peti
viewpoint online that will be considered for a debate in parliament if it ge
However, the most successful e-petitions have not yet caused any real cha

It is possible that one of the reasons people do not choose to participate in
trust politicians. Since the parliamentary expenses scandal in 2009 (when
found to be abusing their expenses allowances for their own gain) many p
politics. Politicians have always been an unpopular group with the public
corruption, scandals and hypocrisy are widespread. This all adds to a situ
choose to isolate themselves from politics rather than
The referendums on Scottish Independence a
voted on with a much larger than a
referendum was 84.6%, and

It is possib
because the
of the way in which UK democracy is run. The theory by many reformers
their voice is not being heard, and that means they stop bothering to parti
more democratic, people might be more likely to participate.



Talking Point

Is there a crisis of participation in the U

How Should Democracy in the UK Be Improved?

Change the Electoral System

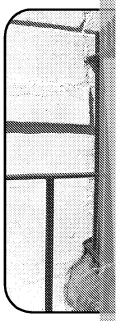
Many grou ch as the Electoral Reform Society, the Liberal Democrats, a changing t toral system by which representatives in Westminster are e debate in UK politics, and the last major news in the debate was the referend voting system (the alternative vote) in 2011. The pro-AV side lost the referen from that it seemed that there is little public support or interest in changing t reformed electoral system would allow for seats won to more evenly match v the advantage that the larger parties have because of first past the post. If th don't worry – the debate over electoral systems will be explored in much mo your course.

House of Lords Reform

Some suggest a wholly or partially elected House of Lords would make th parties in the UK are committed to scrapping the Lords in favour of a mor as stated in their 2024 manifestos. How r, the Conservative Party resist introduce elections to the Lords in their spell in government, and Lab reforms face heavy opp m the Lords themselves. Peers currently vested inte reform to maintain their positions, as demonstrate hereditary in 1999, which resulted in the compromise whereby 92 w

An elected House of Lords would be a significant change in UK politics, a dimension of legitimacy and accountability to the Lords. The questions st the Lords look like and what would it do after reform? Would it have the completely new set of responsibilities and powers?

Change the Way We Vote



Physical p

There are two common responses to calls for increasing turnout: making voting compulsory (as it is in Australia) or introducing electronic voting.

Compulsory voting is a contentious proposal for a n[illegible]er of reasons. Forced participation could be insinc[illegible] could lead to people casting their votes [illegible] on consideration of policies, but based on som[illegible] itrary feature, such as how much they like som[illegible] or where a candidate is on the ballot paper. Un[illegible]ystem of compulsory voting, people would not have to vot[illegible] any candidate (there is usually a no-vote option on the ba[illegible] reopen nominations), but they would have to cast their vote or face a legal

Electronic voting is another proposal that has caused a large amount of de[illegible] of e-voting claim that voters will be more likely to turn out to vote if they [illegible] home. Those against the change argue that it would be open to cyberattac[illegible]

More Devolution

There have been calls for further devolution of powers away from Westmi[illegible] support for these initiatives is mixed. Since 2010, there has been a growing [illegible] authorities' which have powers over transport, policing, and housing. Som[illegible] introduced directly elected mayors through referendu[illegible], but turnout is u[illegible] between 20% and 30%. In 2004, a referendum [illegible]d on whether to esta[illegible] the entire North East region, but this [illegible]elmingly rejected by 77.9[illegible] assembly's limited powers d[illegible]y the significant logistical costs, wh[illegible] assembly would be t[illegible]d on Newcastle, leaving rural areas under-re[illegible]

Talking Point

What reforms (if any) do you think should be [illegible] the UK political system?

Arguments for and against an elected House of Lo	
The House of Lords should be fully elected	**The House of Lords**
If the House of Lords were elected, then it would better represent the people of the country.	The appointments pr win seats in the Lords, win elections
An elected Lords would mean that voters could hold Lords to account and would stop underserving or corrupt Lords from serving in Parliament.	The Lords are not afraic speak openly on issu consequence, meaning open and thorough in
The House of Lords is a relic of privilege and an undemocratic relic of the past. This is symbolised by the fact that there are still hereditary peers and Bishops with a seat in the Lords. Not anyone can become a Lord; they need to be given the seat by birth or political patronage.	The powers and respo would need to be extremely complica Attempting reform ma tricky constitutional q time for discussion o
At the moment a prime minister can change the composition of the Lords by appointing whoever they want, giving them great powers over the scrutiny procedure. Tony Blair appointed 162 Labour Lords, and only 62 Conservative Lords.	The Lords tend to be le and so are more likely t and unbiased judgm interest. There are cur meaning they are not
The House of Lords has been superseded by the Supreme Court in one of its main functions; it should be changed to reflect its reduced responsibilities.	It is possible that voter anyway, and asking t

Arguments for and against compulsory voting	
Voting should be compulsory	**Voting shoul**
Voting is a responsibility as well as a right. Every citizen should contribute to the way their democracy is run.	Voters may turn out to but that does not me result of an election voting based on arbitr they l
If the main role of Parliament is to represent the public, then everyone should have to vote. Non-compulsory voting means that Parliament only represents a self-selected group. At the moment 30–40% of people are not represented.	The essence of parti Forcing people to vot takes away our free
The consistent non-voters are ignored in the current political system, despite their having interests.	Compulsory voting doe people choose not important problem increases participatio undoubtedly more su people
It would still be possible to choose not to vote for any of the candidates if someone objects to them.	The religious belie Jehovah's Witnesses point of moral
Politicians would have to run a campaign to appeal to the true majority of people, rather than the majority of the voting population who are more likely to turn out.	Politicians will still be some areas, such as ge demographics – u dramatically c

Talking Point

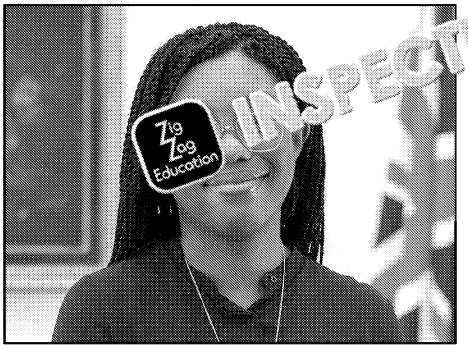
Should voting be compulsory?

Case Study – Elections Act 2022

A controversial bill to reform aspects of how elections are run in the UK was intro into Parliament in July 2021. Measures within the bill included scrapping the use supplementary vote system, giving voting rights to citizens who live overseas, an ending the independence of the Electoral Commission from ministerial directives.

The most controversial measure, however, was the introduction of photo identificatio requirements for voters. The Conservative government argued that voter ID is needed combat electoral fraud – people casting votes that they are not entitled to. They ar that public confidence in elections will be improved as a result. However, critics say there is no evidence of electoral fraud being a widespread issue in the UK, and the government is trying to tip elections in their favour, perhaps believi that those likely to vote for other parties are less likely to have costly photo ID

Arguments for and against voter ID	
Voter ID should be used in elections	**Voter ID should**
Voter ID helps to ensure that election results are genuine and not fraudulent.	There is no evidence o
Voter ID gives electors greater confidence that they are participating in a secure process.	Certain demographic identification, which
Requesting ID when voting is no more of a burden than requesting ID for any other activity.	Many low-income ind form of identific
Election fraud can be hard and costly to prove, but easier to prevent.	Voter ID may preve genuine votes



[...] paramount we protect the integrity [...] remain secure for generations to come.

[The Elections Act 2022] now means we [...] make elections more inclusive, ensuring [...] vote will continue to have the opportunity

Kemi Badenoch, Conservative MP

'Voting is safe and secure in Britain. Ministers should be promoting confidence in our elections instead of spreading baseless scare stories which threaten our democracy.

Millions of people lack photo ID in this country – in particular the elderly, low income and black, Asian and ethnic minority voters. The Conservatives are reversing decades of democratic progress.'

[...]at Smith, Labour MP

Talking Point

Does the Elections Act 2022 help or hinder demo

Unit 1.2 A Wider Franchis

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Know the main events in the extension of the franchise
- ✓ Know how the franchise was extended to include the working class and wom
- ✓ Learn the importance of the suffragists and suffragettes in extending the fra
- ✓ Learn the main arguments for and against extending the right to vote to inclu

Key Words

Franchise/Suffrage	The right to vote in elections.
Suffragettes	A group who protested in favour of women being al often used more extreme forms of protest such as ar were led by Emmeline Pankhurst and the WPSU.
Suffragists	People who argued women should be allowed to v peaceful means. The largest suffragist group was t Fawcett. The group was mainly middle class.
Plural Voting	Voting more than once, for more than one represen possible when graduates of certain universities we wanted to represent that university for the rest of th their home constituency representative.
Borough	The old name for some constituencies. Before the R 1832 there were many problems with 'rotten borou living in them but still got to elect an MP.
Electorate	All the people who can vote in an election.

Key Milestones in Widening the Franchise

The **franchise** is the ability and right to vote in elections (also known as 'su franchise is set before every election, when the election is called, but must i groups. In the UK all citizens are now able to vote in public elections, wit

- Anyone under the age of 18 (with the exception of some elections in Sc independence referendum) – this restriction is due to be lowered to 16 elections bill in 2026
- Some EU citizens can vote in local elections
- Members of the House of Lords cannot vote in elections
- Prisoners cannot vote in elections
- Those convicted of an electoral crime are banned for up to five years
- People detained in a mental hospital cannot vote in elections

Irish citizens and Commonwealth citizens resident in the UK are eligible t UK citizens who have lived abroad for under 15 years. Anyone who wish must be registered to vote at an address in the UK.

However, it has not always been this way. There were many groups of pe voting before the reforms that we will now look at. Most shocking is prob only been able to vote on the same terms as men since 1928.

Timeline of the Extension of the Franchise

Timeline

Before 1832	Before the 1832 Great Reform Act, the franchise wa land worth at least 40 shillings. The franchise was re rather than by law. The num f people who could only about 200,000 co d to a population of a also many l es who could vote in certain bo very s s, these were known as rotten boroug for m to become more democratic.
1832 Great Reform Act	In 1832 there was the first major change to the fran property holders were granted the vote for the first abolished and seats were created for urban areas. representation across the country. There was still a p the act equalised the qualifications needed to vote a increased to about 650,000 – around 5% of the adu the age of 21 were able to vote.
1867 Reform Act	Male suffrage was further increased to include men property qualification. This was a further increase to classes who could vote. The number of people who c from approximately one to two million – around 13%
1884 Representation of the People Act	The 1884 act redressed the discrepancies in the fran and the countryside. Rural householders were grante borough ones had received since the 1867 reform a five million – around 25% of the adult population. A still without the right to vote. Property was still the m was granted.
1918 Representation of the People Act	This Act was introdu ea e end of the First Wo 21 and all over 30 the right to vote. Practica wer d. The First World War was extremely , and one of the features of the act was that war could vote under the age of 21. Women were a contribution to the war effort. 75% of the adult popu
1928 Equal Franchise	In 1928 the terms for the franchise were equalised be was given to all women over 21 years old without any made women a majority of the electorate as they wer The act was passed by the Conservative Party without
1948 End of plural voting	This reform ended the process of plural voting, and e vote system that exists today. It meant that all MPs w (no more university seats).
1969 Voting age reduced	The voting age was reduced to 18. This reflected the adulthood in the 1960s. The provision for students to was also put in place.
1981 British Nationality Act	This act provided Commonwealth citizens with the rig Representation of the People Act 1985 gave British for a five-year period after had left the United essentially extended fr hise to groups who oth able to vote nl they were in the UK or had
Before 2029	At t writing, the government intends to fulf voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds before

Suffragettes and Suffragists

As you can see from the timeline, there were two major trends in the push towards universal suffrage. The first was to allow people without property to be able to vote, thereby ensuring the democratic rights of the poor and the working class. The second was the push towards equal voting rights for women. Equal voting rights for women were only established in 1928, less than 100 years ago. The fight for women's suffrage was a long and difficult one, and before the late nineteenth century there was very little support. Some MPs had argued in favour of equal voting rights for women (most notably John Stuart Mill), but there had been no success.

In 1897 the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was formed under Millicent Fawcett. The members of this group were known as suffragists. Suffragists were mainly middle class, and were non-violent. They preferred to campaign in favour of women's suffrage through petitions, lobbying and other forms. Progress was slow. Fawcett said that the movement was like a glacier: slow. suffragists also allowed men to join their organisation.

The progress of the NUWSS was too slow for some campaigners, who beca. The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was formed in 1903 by Em. a more militant, women-only organisation, who used hunger strikes, breaki. order to pressure the government into change. One of the most famous exa. was when Emily Davison threw herself under the King's horse at the Epsom her injuries. After her death, 5,000 suffragettes accompanied her coffin in p. and 50,000 people came out to see her coffin pass. As this example shows, t. the suffragettes' actions. However, they also provoked public hostility beca. some occasions the government force-fed suffragettes who were on hunger.

The suffragettes received a mixed reaction from the public. Some were sy. the way the government had treated them, whereas others saw them as too. suspended their campaign at the outbreak of the First World War, which s. support for Britain during the war as important enough to stop their previ.

The first act to allow limited female enfranchisement came in 1918. Wome. householders or the wives of householders were given the right to vote (co. the right at age 21). Men were given the right to vote without a property q. impact of the First World War, when many young working-class men has t. for a political system that they had no stake in.

The question as to whether the suffragettes were successful is a controversi. the issue of women's voting rights on the agenda in the decade before the F. argued that the violence of the suffragettes put members of the public off t. the other hand, it could also be argued that the more radical methods of th. publicity than any non-violent actions that the suffragists did. Overall, the impact of the movements is hard to gauge, and the First World War provided the immediate reason why suffrage was extended to both some women and all adult men.

Ta.
Wh.
im.
fra.

The Right to Vote

As we have seen from the reforms that extended the right to vote, the vote
citizen's political rights. Without the vote, a person cannot be represented
time in the history of the United Kingdom, the right to vote was restricted
This meant that, in effect, withholding the right to vote was a form of disc
political disempowerment.

If withholding the right to vote is [illegible] discrimination and political di
about the people who [illegible] today? Prisoners are unable to vote in U
found by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) that the British b
a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). While a 2
prisoners released on temporary licence to vote led to the ECtHR droppin
prohibition remains in place. Scottish Parliament legislated in 2020 that pr
than 12 months could vote in Scottish elections, while the Senedd Cymru
to reform prisoners' rights in the future.

The most recent major debate on the franchise was over who should vote
European Union membership. UK and Gibraltar residents who were Britis
citizens were entitled to vote. That EU citizens living in the UK were not e
referendum caused controversy, as the European citizens living in the UK
in the event that the referendum result was to leave. The question of whet
the UK should get the right to vote is another one that divides opinion. So
might possibly be affected by a parliament's decision should be allowed to
left EU citizens with even fewer voting rights, allowing them to vote in loc
agreement exists for UK citizens in their respective country.

Members of the House of Lords cannot vote in general elections. They are
authority [illegible] in the European parliamentary elections. The ratio
that they already represented in Parliament because they can sit in the
opinions. It is also seen as part of the constitution that separates the Comm

There are many debates over whether the currently disenfranchised shoul
in the same way as working-class people and women were in the past. Pe
these is whether the vote should be extended to 16–18-year-olds.

European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg

Always try to use
Keep an eye on th
not be on the fron
voting rights.

Current Movements to Extend the Franchise

With the election of the Labour government in 2024, the movement to exte
secured a key goal: to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in UK elections. T
already vote in Scottish elections, but not in general elections. The Labour
franchise to 16- and 17-year-olds in their 2024 manifesto while the Conserv
they would not change the voting age.

This is at least partly due to the ... of votes at 16, a coalition including t
the National Union of St... and the British Youth Council, among othe
consistently ... t ... g age should be changed to include 16- and 17-y

Other press ... groups such as Unlock, the National Association of Ex-Offe
Trust, have argued that prisoners should also have the right to vote.

Arguments for and against extending the franchise t	
Arguments for prisoners voting	**Arguments a**
Participating in politics by voting is a human right – the European Court of Human Rights reprimanded the UK for the current ban in 2005.	Convicted crimina because they hav judgment and could those rights w responsibility as
The right to vote would give prisoners a link to outside society, increasing social cohesion, and encourage an interest in soci... as ...ole.	Regaining the right ... would be an additi... want to be freed, ... them
If MPs had ... ca... ...or the votes of prisoners in their c... ...ency, they would be more likely to represent them properly and consider their needs and interests as citizens – and as prisoners, given that prison conditions have been poor for a long time.	Prisoners would f... bloc in constitue... skewing representa... do not participate ...
Although prison is reserved for the worst offenders, not everyone in prison is there for things that most people would consider deeply immoral.	Allowing prisoners ... popularity of the g... the reaction in new voters. Is the expe...
Some ethnic minorities are over-represented in prisons, and this is an indication of systemic bias and/or social exclusion. Therefore, excluding them ... from voting damages the representation of pa... demographics.	Prisoners do not ha... information and n... for

Unit 1.3 Group Politics

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Know how participation in a democracy can have an impact on society
- ✓ Understand what a pressure group is, and how pressure groups attempt to
- ✓ Know the different theories on how pressure groups operate: pluralism, elitis
- ✓ Know the methods, motives and access points used by pressure groups
- ✓ Be able to conclude why a pressure group might be successful
- ✓ Understand the cases of Brian Haw, UK Uncut and Stonewall, and their diffe
- ✓ Unde[illegible] how other collective organisations, such as think tanks and corpo influe[illegible]icy.

Key Words

Pressure Group	A group that tries to influence the government or parlia It is different from a political party because it does not tr
Sectional Group	A group that represents a particular section of society representing workers.
Cause Group	A pressure group that tries to promote a certain cause, r particular group of society. The Campaign for Nuclear
Insider Group	A group that is consulted by governments on certain issues is such a group[illegible]ome think tanks.
Outsider Group	A group that the government does not accept, or whos on a policy issue. These include protest groups such a
Elitism	The idea that society is governed by elites and that pres pluralism; they just enshrine the strength of elites.
Lobbying	Seeking to influence a representative or government o is a technique used by pressure groups.
Think Tank	A group of experts who seek to advise the governmen political goal in mind.

The Impact Participation Can Have on Society

Every democracy in the world is based on the idea of citizen participation participate, then how can their views be heard? In a representative demo citizens can participate through the election of representatives, but this is There are other ways that the public can make sure their opinions a between elections.

Citizens can join parties in order to influence policies and run for election. groups (known as pressure groups) designed to pressure lawmakers into Citizens can also choose to demonstrate in public in large-scale protests.

Groups are recognised as having certain democratic rights in the same wa
are allowed to assemble in groups, and some groups have other rights (su
to make sure they can protect their members against the government.

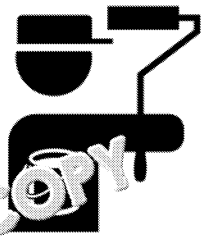
Groups who come together because they have similar interests, or all belie
called 'pressure groups'. They are different from politi l parties because
office; they simply want to influence the gover en of the day (or other
the policies that they agree with.

Participation is seen as ing for democracy in and of itself. The la
participati a cracy, the more likely it is that policies enacted wil
people as p e. It can also ensure that no group is overlooked and, the
minority interests.

There are thousands of pressure groups active in the UK today. They rang
together for local issues, to huge multinational corporations looking to gai
the government. We will have a look at all of the different types of pressu
their successes and failures.

Talking Point

Is it a moral duty for citizens to participate in their democracy?



Pressure Group

**Definitio ssure groups are groups of like-minded people who see
in power w out acquiring political power themselves. They are usual**

1. **Sectional groups** – these represent the interest of particular sections i
doctors or transport workers. Good examples are the National Union
Confederation of British Industry (CBI).
2. **Promotional (cause) groups** – these promote issues such as anti-frack
sugar or reducing animal cruelty. Examples are Greenpeace or the RS
usually set up with a particular cause in mind. They do not represent
group of people united by anything other than their belief in a single
3. **Insider** and **outsider** groups. Insider groups such as the National Far
Union and the CBI are those that are accepted by the government and
consulted when policy is being made. Th ar known as core inside
groups. Outsider groups either ca t into this position or don't wa
such as some radical act gr ps who believe in violent demonstrat
action, such as th rried out by some antivivisection groups. A goo
exam an outsider group is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmam
which een a pressure group for years, with widespread support,
approach them for advice on matters of defence. There can also be gr
insider groups, such as Charter 88, who could be accepted by the gov
who stridently oppose acceptance from the government.

Remember that these classifications are not always neat, and many groups could fit into both sectional and promotional categories, e.g. the Ramblers' Association.

EXAM TIP:
Remember to use exam
arguing in favour of or

Pressure Groups and Democracy

Good for Democracy

1. They are important if [illegible] want to participate actively in politics, es
joining [illegible]s.
2. They a[illegible]important way of influencing those in power between ge
the environmental lobbies.
3. They provide the resources and information necessary for people to rep
in Oxfam.
4. They encourage cooperative action, enabling people to work together
5. They provide a vital check on government power.
6. They can give expert advice to governments, as in the Royal Society fo

Bad for Democracy

1. There is a danger that minorities can wield too much political influen
and Business Association, a disproportionately powerful group repres
privileged minority.
2. They can turn society selfish by demanding re[illegible]s for individual c
a whole.
3. Power can be concentrated in the hands of a just a few people who ha
such as some trade union leaders. This is known as 'elitism'.
4. Certain [illegible]up[illegible]ple may have strong influence over governments
becau[illegible]cial and educational background, while others are not se
5. Pressure groups are not necessarily right in what they believe, and mi
militant groups on the extreme left and right of the political spectrum
6. The more recent trend for large demonstrations and direct action, per
Internet, can lead to riots and damage to property. This tends to happ
economic summits, when people from many different backgrounds g
such as Third World debt.

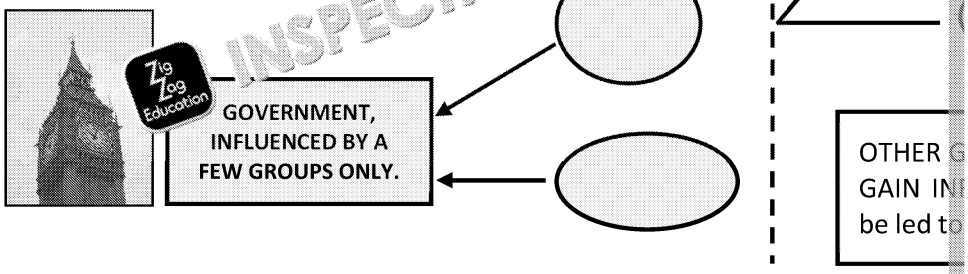
What is Pluralism?

Pluralism is where a society allows many different and competing ideas to
where **power** lies within society, and about the di[illegible]ution of power amo
Not all societies will permit a pluralist ap[illegible]ch. Some will be fearful tha
groups will have an influence o[illegible]vernment. The UK is said to have a
many different points of [illegible]allowed, and where pressure groups can
the state is [illegible]rn[illegible]. Those who defend **pluralism** say that the richer, mo
become to[illegible]nant because smaller groups will join to form new groups
compete with them. This is called **countervailing power**. The governmen
make sure society runs fairly.

Criticisms of Pluralism

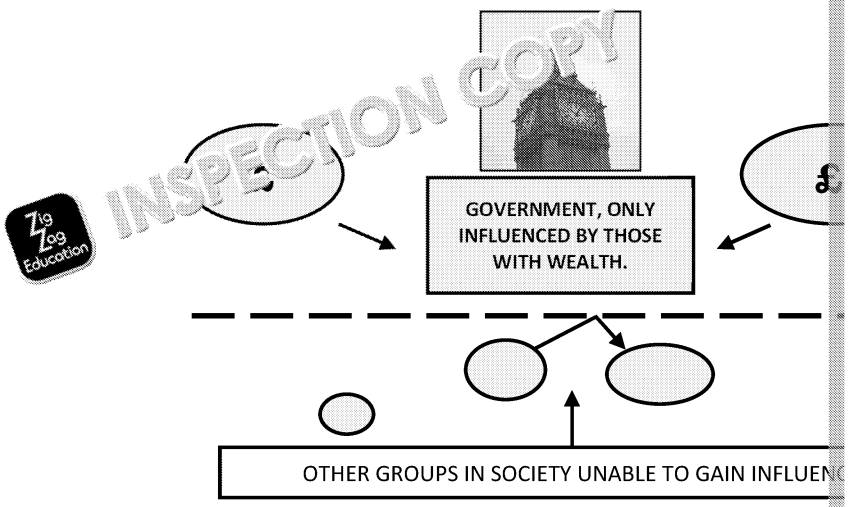
The **elitist** school of thought argues that a few important groups will alwa
because they have things in common such as educational background and
will not be considered seriously when it comes to making policy, althoug
their views matter.

1. Elitist Arguments



2. Marxist Arguments

Marxists argue that the idea of pluralism doesn't really work at all. Gover
capitalist state, dominated by systems and interests that support big busin
who want other things don't stand a chance, but are wrongly led to believ
might matter.



What Political Access Points Will Pressure Groups Use?

1. The executive – Whitehall civil servants, ministers, the Prime Minister. influential figures will be hard to get, so pressure groups can influence they are highly regarded by the current executive.
2. The legislature – both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. large number of MPs and Lords, it is much easier to get some access to sympathetic to the cause. Pressure groups may try to petition Members them in person to advise them on an issue.
3. Individual MPs, especially those with influence in committees.
4. Political parties – through individual MPs, through influencing the ma supporting MPs and parties financially. Some pressure groups are very parties. The Labour Party has strong historical links to trade unions.
5. The public, especially through the media. This is one of the most com groups. If a pressure group is able to get the support of the public, the lawmakers much more easily that their cause is the right one to choose advocates managed this before the 2004 law to ban fox hunting.
6. The judiciary. Pressure groups can bring cases to court in order to for that might help them achieve their goal.
7. Local and regional government. Local governments are much more re issues. Organisations may form on very specific issues, such as the clo the local government to stand against the bus route closure. In any loc groups campaigning on local issues putting pressure on the local gove

Why Might a Pressure Group Form?

Pressure groups can form for a number of good reasons. Sectional group usually form as a result of a group in society believing that their interests need to be protected. This was the origin of trade unions. Unions are collections of workers who believed that by joining together they could become powerful enough to challenge their employers, and, therefore, demand better treatment. The union movement has been one of the most enduring and successful movements ever, comprising pressure groups acro most countries. The current Labour Party grew out of the union movement of the nineteenth century, and dedicated itself towards representing the interest of workers. The relationship between the unions and the Labour Party is one of the most important examples of pressure groups having an impact on government and party policy.

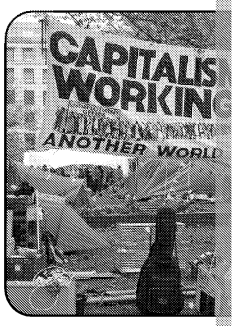
Cause groups usually develop as a result of a specific incident or policy proposal, but they might simply represent the views of a large non-specific group (such as non-smokers). Just Stop Oil was a high-profile single-issue group that campaigned against new fossil fuel extraction licences in the UK. Significantly, they disbanded in 2025 claiming success after a ban on new l groups can be created for almost any reason. They are most likely to form support for their cause. There is a small group of people who are very p

Thinking Point

What do you think are the most important access points for p does it depend on the group?

Methods Used by Pressure Groups

1. Taking action in the UK and international courts to challenge governm legal decision on an issue can be one of the most effective tactics in ch The Supreme Court's declaration of Boris Johnson's prorogation of Pa probably the most famous example of this.
2. Using professional lobbyists – businesses that are set up to contact and p of the pressure group. It is hard to see the direct impact of lobbying beca the public eye.
3. Attempting to provide politicians with funds or expert advice. Pressu politicians in order to gain their ear.
4. Using the media in a variety of ways, e.g. publicity stunts, advertising traditional media still has a place in advertising pressure group beliefs people still do not get their news from social media, the importance o be being overlooked. One good example of a pressure group that use was Fathers 4 Justice, who dressed up as superheroes and attracted w
5. Direct mail shots to peoples' homes. This is an old-fashioned method groups. It is a reliable way of making sure people hear about a group a successful one for making people care.
6. Demonstrations and public protests. Another common technique use Demonstrations and public protests can help to draw the public's atte convince the government that a cause is worth paying attention to.
7. Illegal actions such as damage to property or even murder to force oth most controversial method that pressure groups can use, and blurs the and terrorist organisation in some cases.
8. Internet activism. By far the most important recent development in pre Internet provides a platform for groups to publicise their views, a place means by which to contact the government. E-petitions and the fact tha social media platforms have meant that the Internet has become a key to to communicate with politicians. However, e-petitions rarely cause a ch



Occupy

EXAM TIP:
Remember the different methods used by pressure groups, and try to think about which ones, in your opinion, are the most likely to lead to success.

New Types of Pressure Group Activity

Grant, who first defined the idea of insider and outsider groups, has since
distinction is not so clear now as before. Many more groups are potential
right sort of pressure at the right time. He also points out that a newer me
activity is occurring, namely the presence of large-scale demonstrations ar
organised on a national or global scale, using the Int . Such action wa
demonstrations against the war in Iraq (2003) ar regular international
environmental and economic summi the G20 protests in 2009, or th
2011/2012). In the UK, we h se large demonstrations both against th
(2002) and against th r (2003). The Iraq War protests were conside
political hi over one million in attendance; however, the goverr
position. S demonstrations against rises in university fees provoked
achieve their aims of preventing the changes. Most recently, large demons
people in support of a second referendum on leaving the EU failed to pers
day. Often, this pressure group activity is characterised by having no clea
presenting itself as originating from the mass of the people. While such ty
inconvenient and difficult to manage, it has to be said that governments do
to be overly influenced them. In 2011 Parliament set up a website that allow
start an online petition on any topic for which the UK Parliament or govern
petition which reaches 100,000 signatories can be considered for a debate
in Parliament, and pressure groups have certainly encouraged members
and supporters to get involved as another way of furthering their cause.

It remains true, however, that pressure groups have had to adapt their
methods in order to stay effective, as demonstrated b ge investments
many groups have made into digital strate ie ernments now tend
to consult much more with all typ ure group before they carry
out major changes, and this b the difference between insider and
outsider grou . Y need to ask yourself whether these new
methods h ved successful. Look back at some of the reasons why
some grou more successful than others, and see whether these
apply to these new social movements, which are often hard to identify
and which seem to have several purposes.

What Makes Some Pressure Groups Successful?

1. **Resources**, in terms of both money and people. A large or dedicated
   subscriptions to be part of the pressure group means that the group is
   They can pay staff, rent offices and organise more lobbying activities.
   pressure groups can get more publicity through advertising. The Tra
   federation of trade unions that represents over 5.6 million members a
   The Congress is, therefore, very influential beca of its resources an
2. An **appropriate strategy** that seems re p at the time to governm
   seen in the different ways th agettes and the suffragists wer
   More violent or sho hods can be a good way of getting media
   necessa th way of gaining public sympathy. In a more mode
   agains lanned rise in tuition fees (organised and led by the Nati
   University and College Union) was criticised after several hundred of
   taking part branched off and attacked the Conservative Party headqu
   violence of the protest became the main focus of all coverage rather th
   protestors had been trying to spread.

3. **Compatibility with the aims of the government**, at least to some exten
insider groups. Trade unions have always been considered more unde
whereas large business interest groups, such as the Confederation of Bri
influential when the Conservatives are in power. Think tanks are espec
The Centre for Policy Studies was very influential in creating Thatcher's
the Institute for Public Policy Research under Blair.

4. **Accepted by the public** for their cause, e.g. the Snowdrop campaign
1996 massacre in Dunblane, where children and a teacher were kill
support for a total ban on handguns. The Snowdrop campaign was a
widespread public sympathy for their cause. Compare and contrast w
attempts to introduce more stringent gun control laws has been frequ

5. **Unity.** There are some pressure groups that do not present a united fr
similar ideals. There is no leading teachers' union (unlike many profe
result in the government taking less care in its decisions regarding tea
one union. The merger of the NUT and the ATL in 2017 demonstrates
pressure groups.

6. **Good leadership.** A highly motivated and well-organised leadership
much more likely to succeed. In the 1980s the leaders of trade unions
figures. In particular, Arthur Scargill of the National Union of Mineworkers
a way that caused national attention. Union leaders today can still be
their leadership abilities. This is the case with the former General Secr
Lynch, who became an unofficial spokesperson for the wider trade uni
profile rail strikes in 2023.

7. **Support of a public figure** and possibly patronage, e.g. the anti-landmi
Princess Diana. Diana's support allowed for the issue to become more p
household-name celebrities led to many pressure groups being more s
might be seen. The anti-phone-hacking group Hacked Off became m
actor Hugh Grant speaking on its behalf. This has been a feature of pres
of the celebrity, and among the most famous are the animal rights work
and Marcus Rashford's campaign for free school meals.

Talking Point

Based on what makes a pressure group successful,
with elitists that a few pressure groups will always

Case Studies of Different Groups

Case Study 1: Stonewall and Same-sex Marriage

Following the agreement between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats t
in 2010, it was announced that a consultation would take place two years lat
marriage for same-sex couples. Stonewall, the leading pressure group repres
(lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people set about preparing their res
consultation. First, they allowed a period of time for their members to send in
produced a document reflecting these contributions, and, finally, they sent this
2012 while it was in crisis for lobbying MPs and ministers.

This approach reflects the nature and type of pressure group Stonewall wan
by a small group which set out to get the infamous Section 28 of the 1988 Lo
Its website says the aim from the start was to create a professional lobbying g
others to put the case for equality of LGBT people onto the mainstream polit
in England, Scotland and Wales, employs a professional staff and has a budg
is a good example of a sectional group which has, or aims for, insider status.

The debate on the issue of same-sex marriage generated a wide range of stro
supported same-sex marriage so that the relationship homosexual people co
equally valid as the relationships to which heterosexual couples committed.
prejudice against them. While the government's consultation was on same-s
argued that any legislation should allow same-sex religious marriages to take
body was in favour. Legislation was introduced in Parliament in January 2
allowing for religious same-sex marriages. Party leaders agreed MPs would
fierce opposition, the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Bill was passed in the Co
and in the Lords by 35[illegible] to 1[illegible] June. It received Royal Assent in July 2013.

Each of these studies illustrates well not only the importance of leadersh
organisation, resources and methods, but also the vital point that the cause u
sympathy to be successful. It is worth comparing the different approaches ta

Case Study 2: Extinction Rebellion

In May 2018, a group of academics signed an open letter calling for direct action to encourage political urgency in responding to climate change and other global environmental crises. They declared their support for a new pressure group called Extinction Rebellion, which aimed to raise awareness of what they described as a 'sixth mass-extinction event' and sought to force politicians to acknowledge the crisis as a global climate emergency. Their methods were to encourage disruptive but non-violent civil disobedience among a large group of committed activists which they hoped would bring publicity for the issue and force the government to act by inflicting damage to the economy.

In November that year, large groups of activists caused significant disruption in Central London, blockading most of London's bridges over t
occupying roads around Trafalgar Square, Parliament, the Department for
Industrial Strategy and other government buildings. The disruption lasted

large-scale actions continued to take place throughout 2019. In contrast to p
Extinction Rebellion was different because it encouraged participants to g
warned those not willing to be arrested not to take part. It took this appro
would become so overstretched processing large numbers of arrests that t
quickly break up the protests and end the disruption. Extinction Rebellion
outsider group, without any links to government. It is a decentralised mov
economic and public pressure on the governm[illegible] disruption and
make the government declare a climate and ecological emergency, and to
the advice of a 'citizen's assembly' on taking action to tackle climate change

Extinction Rebellion protestors blocking Waterloo Bridge in Central London in April 2019.

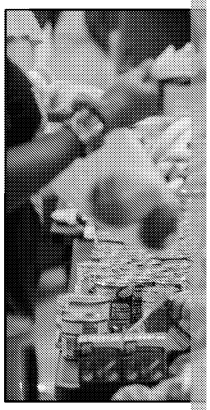
The group has seen
more than similar p
successfully blocka
London, Extinction
generate significant
their actions and ra
Many pollsters rec
environment as a p
significantly in 201
YouGov recorded
public's tenth mos
8% of the public ci
election, it had bec
[illegible]ressing matter, tie
of respondents saying it was a major factor in [illegible]ting preference. This
to Extinction Rebellion's actions. The group has been significantly less suc
government to take action, however. Although the government did comm
carbon-neutral by 205[illegible], this is far below the target of 2030 that the group h
some of Extinction Rebellion's methods have been criticised for alienating
the London Underground system have angered commuters and received
the Underground is considered a more environmentally friendly method
said to represent a tension between the group's strategy of disruption and
environmental sustainability.

EXAM TIP:
When judging how successful a pressure group is, remember that they
Some might seek to influence government policy, while others focus o

Case Study 3: Marcus Rashford and FareShare

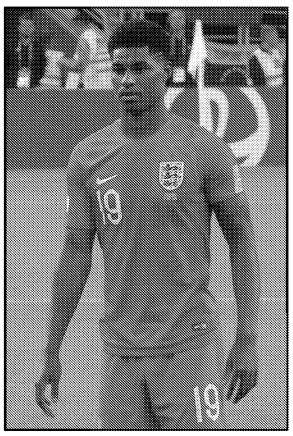
FareShare is a national charity which seeks to reduce food waste and food p
collects food from suppliers which is due to be thrown away, and redistribu
community groups to help feed low-income families. In early 2020, at the o
pandemic, FareShare partnered with Manchester United footballer Marcus R
resources and publicity as FareShare attempted to fe ldren from low-i
normally receive free school meals, but were g v hout due to the closu

In June 2020, Rashford publ ed a gly publicised open letter to all MPs g ing that the government ensure all lli children entitled to free school meals are f ing the summer holidays. The letter gained strong public support, and a number of Conservative MPs applied pressure on the government to implement the policy. The next day the government announced that it would issue summer holiday food vouchers to all low-income families, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson congratulating Rashford on his successful campaign.



Demand for food ba

Rashford received an MBE for his campaigning, and continued to speak o
hunger. He started a parliamentary petition to expand the free school mea
more than 300,000 signatures in a few days, and led to a parliamentary de
MPs were whipped to vote against the popular policy. On the back of the
high-profile campaign, raising significant funds a ing support from
government to issue food vouchers. His parli m y petition continued
million signatures over the next fo a subsequently, the government
Rashford's demands, allo a further £400 million for the expansion o
programme. Conse MPs were privately angry they had been whipp
measure, r the government to give in to the demand just days later



Rashford's campaigning forced the government into two high-profile U-turns.

In January 2021, photos circulated online depictin
being sent to households by government contracto
were clearly of a value considerably lower than th
expected to receive. Rashford once again spoke ou
public outcry received reassurances from the prim
voucher scheme would be reviewed and the issue

Over the course of 2020, Rashford's campaigning
FareShare deliver 21 million meals to children, an
government provision of food for children from lo
campaigning can be seen as a xample of the imp
endorsement, particu v en a campaign is po
effectively or d alongside civil society groups

these case studies illustrates well not only
se of the media, organisation, resources and met
that the ca ually has to attract public sympathy to be successful. It is
different approaches taken and the reasons for them.

Talking Point

What do the three case studies
pressure group can become su

Other Collective Groups

Pressure groups are by no means the only way that groups can have an in
government of the day. There are also professional lobbying groups, larg
pressure groups that spontaneously organise based on a single issue.

Think Tanks

A government can also be influenced by a group that assembles in order t
advice. These pressure groups are called 'think tanks' and they are non-g
produce research on a wide range of policy areas. Think tanks tend to be more su
the day is sympathetic to their views. The Centre for Policy Studies was a
reducing the power of the state, and became very influential during the ye
was prime minister. The CPS's support for free market economics and tra
meant that it was in line with Margaret Thatcher's own political views, an
influence policies by providing research on possible policy impacts. For a
older links to the Labour Party, see the Fabian Society, a socialist organisa
of the Labour Party for over 100 years. More recently, the Institute for Pub
major think tank in the New Labour era.

Think tanks can also be less obviously ideological. Chatham House is a th
international affairs, and the Foreign Policy Centre explores the impact of
have a very specific policy goal that drives their research, such as the Elec
tanks hope that their research will be influential in driving policy change b

Lobbyists

A lobbyist is anyone who tries to influence the decisions of a lawmaker or
However, a professional lobbyist or lobbying service can be employed by
influence the government. Around 4,000 people are lobbyists in the UK a
lobbying e[illegible]ar.

There are several major issues to do with the ethics of lobbying. The first
is the process by which people can move rapidly between the lawmaking
could create a certain conflict of interest when a person's responsibilities a
interests as a lobbyist come into conflict. For many years, lobbying was co
but in 2014 there was a law passed requiring lobbyists to register. Critics b
transparent enough.

Another issue on the ethics of lobbying is that the pressure groups with th
invariably afford to lobby more effectively. Far from pressure groups add
increasing plurality of opinion, they add to the imbalance of power in the
privileged a louder voice. One of the ways that this has been criticised is th
hire lobbyists much more easily than ordinary citizens can.

Corporations

As well as citizens' organisations can form pressure groups. In almost any
can benefit from a relaxation of government regulations, or a new governm
attempt to pressure the government into action. Tobacco companies have
commitment to pressuring the government by campaigning against legisla
of cigarettes to anyone born after 2009. However, influential pressure gro
UK support the measure, and with cross-party backing, the legislation app

Unit 1.4 Rights in Contex

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Know what rights and responsibilities are, and how they have deve
- ✓ Understand the major milestones in the development of rights in the
- ✓ Understand the current debates in politics in the UK, especially on ho primacy of parliament and the problem of rights and democracy
- ✓ Know the tensions between individual and collective rights, and how

Keywords

Rights	A moral or legal entitlement to do something free from i
Human Rights	Rights that are believed to belong to every person. Thes right to freedom from torture and the right to free speech
Civil Rights	Any right that belongs to a person as a citizen. These law, employee rights, and the right to vote.
Civic Duty	Any responsibility that a person has as a citizen. This taking up arms in a war.
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a do gave a common standard for all rights across the world
Human Rights Act	Act passed in the United Kingdom in 1998 which en law. The rights enshrined in the HRA are taken from t Human Rights.
Parliamentary Sovereignty	The idea that Parliament is the supreme legal authority restricted in what laws it passes by any other body or s

The Concept of Rights and Responsibilities

One of the other major features of a liberal democracy is the concept of rig
liberties. Individual rights are the legal or moral entitlements to do somet
person's rights are the actions that they can take without government inte
the UK, you can almost do whatever you like, so long as you don't break a
There wasn't a written list of rights in the UK unti**l t**he **Human Rights Act**
force in 2000. What the UK has built up over the centuries are two kinds o
– the right to do certain things (positive rights) and the right not to have ce
(negative rights). Let's be clear – **human rights** are those rights that all hu
irrespective of wh[illegible]live. Examples of these are the right to food, sh

Civil liberti[illegible]re those rights that a person enjoys through being a citizen
can vary. In the UK, for example, most adults are free to criticise the gove
break any law. In some other states, citizens don't have that particular fre

Some important **civil liberties** we are said to enjoy in the UK include the f
1. Freedom of speech, which refers to our right to state our views freely
2. Freedom of movement, which is said to allow us to travel peacefully i
   without fear of being arrested when doing so
3. Freedom of association, which allows us to gather in public for a vari
4. Freedom of worship, which allows us to follow any legal religion we
   arrested for doing so
5. Freedom to vote in free and fair elections

Responsibilities are a much more difficult con[illegible]t to define. There are de
everyone in a society needs to follow (such as paying taxes or paying fines)
state depends much more on i[illegible] beliefs. Some people consider vo
in their democracy, as [illegible] their responsibilities as a citizen. Others see
during a c[illegible]t a[illegible]sponsibility. You may often see citizens' moral res
'civic duty' [illegible]here is no legal standing for this concept. What constitut
debate in contemporary society.

The problem is that Parliament passes laws, and in trying to preserve orde
state, may have to allow certain things that infringe our rights. For examp
exercise our right to freedom of speech, what would happen if we spoke ou
person in a television interview? We might truly believe that our opinion
find ourselves in court, being sued for defamation. We soon see that civil
human rights, to which every human being should be entitled all the time,
tortured. Civil rights or liberties are rights that the state **allows** us to have,
depending on public attitudes, economic circumstances, and so on.

In the 1970s members of trade unions enjoyed a [illegible]ge of rights. But
government believed it was pleasing pu[illegible]opinion and following its ow
disappeared in laws passed fro[illegible]1992. In other words, governme
civil rights that they be[illegible]majority will accept, and that might leave
position. Mi[illegible]riti[illegible]often only be protected if the judiciary is impartia
deciding w[illegible]aws are passed or which laws are acceptable. Even then,
problems with this. In June 2006 David Cameron called for the Human Ri
rewritten to make the rights of individual citizens more clear. The govern
looking to alter aspects of the act, mainly because it was proving difficult
who had committed criminal offences in the UK. The chorus of criticism t
indicated just what a difficult task it was to lay down rights for every indi

Judges are there partly to make sure that the rights and liberties of the citi
other citizens and from governments that might choose to ignore them. In
have much power against a government and a parliament that chooses to
are harsh, and have no power to change those laws, even to protect civil li
do is to declare that a particular law or government regulation is incompa
Act and point that out to Parliament, or to the governm t. Parliament th
law changed through a fast-track system. Laws have been changed that w
tied in that they also have to follow the decisions of the European Court o
will be applied to cases in our courts. Unlike the Supreme Court of the US
strike down (end) parts of laws that might be seen as unjust, even if they
Act of 199 er . Also, the Human Rights Act has been accused of pro
e.g. convic rorists who may not be sent back to their countries of orig
there, and judges have no powers to protect others from the consequences
the civil liberties of citizens also brings up the arguments that we've alread
minorities, while governments are more interested in the feelings of the m
independent of governments and neutral when it is working? Will it alwa
justice and the rights and freedom of the citizens, or will it be sympathisin

The most recent debate on civil rights in the UK is regarding the effect of B
European Union in 2020, many EU-derived laws were retained to ensure l
included important environmental standards and consumer safety protect
sceptical over whether these laws should be kept. The UK has also remain
European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which, although separat
with British leadership, has raised further questions over the influence of
on British politics. The issue is further compli d by the fragile political
where the ECHR plays a central role in the Good Friday Agreement. Signe
governments alongside North rn Ireland's main political parties, the agre
ending decades of sectarian violence and political instability in the region.

Talking Point

Is the right to vote a human right or a civil r

Major Milestones in the Development of Rights

Magna Carta – 1215	The Magna Carta can be seen as the first explic in British history. It restricted the power of the subjects. This is the first recognition that laws monarch. It included a ban on retroactive puni
Habeas Corpus Act – 1679	This act was a step towards the idea of a fair tr right of a person charged with a crime to go be whether they had been rightly detained.
English Bill of Rights – 1689	The bill passed after the glorious revolution. T powers of the monarch and drew up the powe established the requirement of regular parliam established the civil liberty that people should unusual punishment.
Universal Declaration of Human Rights – 1948	After the Second World War, there was an inte enshrine fundamental human rights across all adopted by the United Nations and gives a ran everyone, all over the world, is entitled to. This liberty and security.
The European Convention on Human Rights – 1950	The European Convention on Human Rights (treaty drafted by the Council of Europe in 1950 the UDHR, and had a similar aim – to uphold The European Convention on Human Rights is Court of Human Rights. All members of the Eu signatories of the ECHR.
Human Rights Act – 1998	The HRA was passed by New Labour, and inco British law. The HRA meant that people could courts to argue that their rights had been infrin the European Court of Human Rights. It includ freedom from torture and the right to life. The Parliament (because of parliamentary sovereign accusations that Parliament has overruled it sin
Equality Act – 2010	This Act expanded on previous legislation, suc or the acts prohibiting discrimination based on protected characteristics such as disability, rac were legally protected from discrimination by This strengthened the ability of individuals wh discriminated against to take their cases to cou and merged nine existing pieces of legislation

Talking Point

Which development do you think was the most important in establishing rights in the UK?

Debates over the UK's Culture of Rights

Parliamentary Sovereignty

If there is one central problem with the application of human rights in the U[illegible] is also the fundamental principle of parliamentary sovereignty. The questio[illegible] Parliament votes to infringe human rights, which [illegible] takes precedence? So [illegible] because the Human Rights Act is an act like any other – there is nothing to st[illegible] or amending it if they can get a simple majority.

In the 2000s, Terrorism Acts showed the power that Parliament has ove[illegible] cases (the [illegible] the leaker David Miranda's detention as the main one) w[illegible] that the Terrorism Acts are not compatible with the European Convention [illegible] are able to take two actions in any situation where the Human Rights Act [illegible] found to be incompatible: either interpret the legislation in a way that is co[illegible] that is not possible, then the higher courts can issue a declaration of incom[illegible]

Because one of the main features of some human rights is that they are me[illegible] say, they cannot be breached under any circumstances) having a parliame[illegible] to disregard human rights, or the decisions of the European Court of Hum[illegible] court said that prisoners in the United Kingdom should be allowed the rig[illegible] government disregarded the decision), constitutes a lack of proper protect[illegible] are always rights that are qualified, such as the right to free expression, wh[illegible] your expression may be a threat to national security. The problem with pa[illegible] however, is that it means that there are no pro[illegible] to rights, and nothin[illegible] by Parliament. Other political systems around the world (those with entre[illegible] protect rights through their [illegible], which puts limits on what their g[illegible] such as the Basic Law in Germany or the Bill of Rights in the United States [illegible] Human Rights Act can simply be repealed by a parliamentary majority.

Case Study – David Miranda

The David Miranda case has caused a re-examination of the current terrorism le[illegible] over the case and what it has meant for the antiterror acts.

David Miranda is a partner of a former Guardian journalist who was covering th[illegible] blower Edward Snowden. Miranda was detained in August 2014 at Heathrow A[illegible] Terrorism Act 2000. His mobile phone and laptop were seized, and he was foun[illegible] materials. He was not a journalist, but his flights had been paid for by The Gua[illegible]

Miranda challenged the legality of his detention, and the High Court ruled that h[illegible] on the needs of national security.

Miranda appealed the High Court decision, and the Court of Appeal made a ju[illegible] of the Terrorism Act 2000 were incompatible with the European Convention on H[illegible] that if the Act could result in journalists deciding not to publish stories of public in[illegible] confidentiality breaches, the Act was incompatible with the right to free exp[illegible] free to publish material without having to show it to police based on the idea th[illegible] judges concluded that his detention was still lawful under current legislation.

Undemocratic Judges

The shift in the UK constitution that took place with the introduction of th
the judiciary a greater role in UK politics. The Human Rights Act has give
Parliament and government to account for not complying with the Conve
name of the process by which the courts supervise the exercise of power o
judicial review has been exercised much more since the passage of the Act
reviews in 2000, and 15,600 in 2013. The increase in centrality of legal rights
is criticised for decreasing the power of Parliament relative to judges (altho
previous section, not as much as in most other democracies).

The increa ow judges is contested because it gives unelected perso
decisions. estion of judicial independence has become a political flas
profile Supreme Court rulings: the 2017 decision requiring parliamentary a
and the 2019 unanimous judgment declaring Prime Minister Boris Johnson's
unlawful. These interventions prompted concern among senior Conservati
imbalance of power between the executive and judicial branches and that th
authority. Included in the 2019 Conservative manifesto was a provision to r
between the government, parliament and the courts', which has been interp
these rulings. Tensions further increased in 2023 when the Supreme Court r
Rwanda asylum scheme was unlawful, as Rwanda could not be considered a
relocation. In response, the government passed the Safety of Rwanda (Asyl
which sought to prohibit legal challenges based on Rwanda's safety – prom
the erosion of judicial independence.

Undeserved Protection

One particularly prominent criticism of human rights legislation is that it
people who do not deserve prot me factions of the Conservative
supported the repeal of the Human Rights Act and its replacement with a
Rights'. Pre al would reduce some of their perceived grievance

One situati at illustrates the reasons the Conservative Party found the
internment of Abu Qatada. Abu Qatada was an extremist Islamist preach
violent methods to promote his cause. For many years, the security servic
deport him to his home country of Jordan. Abu Qatada's lawyers protecte
arguing that if he was deported to Jordan then he might be tried using evi
a contravention of the Human Rights Act. Abu Qatada was only flown ba
made between Jordan and Britain promising that evidence obtained using

More controversial have been some judgments by the UK Supreme Court, which is bound by the HRA to take into account the rulings of the **European Court of Human Rights**. In 2011, it ruled that sex offenders could appeal against having to register with the police for life. The Supreme Court said the lack of a opportunity for review was incompatible with the European Convention of Human Rights. Conservative backbenchers th decision was offensive and seemed to common sense. Judg the European Court of Human Rights have also. A fa t has been its decision taken on four separate occasi rule that th s ban on all prisoners voting in elections contravenes the Rights. The European Court of Human Rights has exercised its right to ca has no power to enforce it. Both the Labour and Coalition governments d was a consensus in Parliament to remove the ban on all prisoners voting. committee recommended that prisoners serving a sentence of 12 months o However, these attempts have never satisfied a majority of MPs.

Both these issues were seen as undermining the authority of the UK Parliam
the sovereign lawmakers. Others see the cases as the courts responding to

Equality Act Protected Categories

The 2010 Equalities Act brought together existing legislation to create prote
characteristics protected by the Act include: age; disability; gender reassign
partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexu

The act has caused some controversy with the limits that it has placed on o
Breastfeeding has become legally protected, but there are often reports in
owners who have objected to breastfeeding mothers, and the public debate
whether business owners should be allowed to discriminate on certain grou

There has also been criticism from some disabled rights activists who say t
recognise the specific needs that disabled people have in order to avoid dis
particular issue with the Act where it regards disabled people in that it oft
change in some way (to improve accessibility, etc.) but does not establish w
implementing this change and making sure it has happened. The Act may
but it does not necessarily enforce steps to reduce discrimination without a
been made.

The Conservatives' Commitment to Replacing the HRA with a Brit

As a result of the controversies generated by court decisions, the Conserva
themselves in their 2010 and 2015 election manifestos to replacing the Hum
with a so-called 'British Bill of Rights'. The Liberal Democrats stopped this
the Coalition government of 2010–2015, but the Conservatives' win in the 2
them with the opportunity to pursue this commitment. However, the timet
consultation document failed to find schedule amid divisions within the Con
principle of human rights complexities over the implications it will have for th
devolved authorities, and possible complex constitutional change which in

The issue regained traction in the wake of Brexit, embedded in a broader n
control from European institutions. Although the European Convention on
not connected to the EU, some Conservative figures argued that leaving th
fully reclaim legal sovereignty. This sentiment culminated in the introduct
2022 under Justice Secretary Dominic Raab, which sought to limit the role
of the Supreme Court. However, passage of the bill was halted in 2023 by t
Minister, Liz Truss, amid criticism from legal experts and human rights gr

Under Keir Starmer, Labour remains committed to the Human Rights Act a
the ECHR. However, in June 2025, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood an
reform. While rejecting full repeal or withdrawal, Labour aims to restore p
reform. This marks a shift from a purely defensive stance, contrasting with post-
Conservative efforts to replace the Human
Rights Act entirely.

Talking Point

Would repealing
sovereignty back

The Work of Advocacy Groups

There are a number of pressure groups dedicated to civil liberties. We will determine the impact that they have had on rights in the UK.

The Howard League for Penal Reform is the oldest prison reform organisation in the world. Founded in 1866 as the Howard League, it campaigns to reduce the number of people in prison and to tackle what it sees as the real causes of crime. Members fundamentally believe that prisons do not solve the problem of crime, and that other types of solution should be sought. In the past the Howard League has fought for prisoners' rights and succeeded in a number of key cases. In 2003 the League took the government to court and won, arguing that children in prison and in custody should both be entitled to welfare support. In 2014 the Howard League successfully campaigned for the government to remove restrictions on the books that prisoners could receive from friends and family. In the past the Howard League had also campaigned in favour of the abolition of capital punishment. The Howard League has become synonymous with the rights in the United Kingdom. It provides evidence to the government in c and campaigns against policies that it sees as unjust. The Howard League advocacy pressure group that has become well respected and entrenched in has focused on abolishing Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) senten detention for those deemed an ongoing risk to the public. Although abolish affected. The Howard League helped secure reforms in 2024 to limit licenc campaign for full resentencing of those still imprisoned.

Liberty is another pressure group protecting legal rights. The group was f the police brutality at the National hunger march. Liberty has campaig liberties issues throughout the years. They were opposed to racial discrimi and lobbied in favour of the Race Relations Act. They have used the Huma including supporting Christine Goodwin's fight for transgender rights. The support test cases, and provide free advice to people concerned that their ri In 2020, Liberty supported a successful legal challenge to the use of live faci Police, marking the world's first court ruling against police use of the techn found the practice breached privacy and data protection laws and failed to discrimination. In most cases Liberty is campaigning against what it sees as into civil liberties.

Although pressure groups can be very successful in promoting a cause, the government reconsideration is often limited. You could look now at the pa League and Liberty on their websites, and see that they have had some hig some failures. Remember as well that their work is always ongoing; each c continue to advocate for reform for as long as they believe that rights are b certainly true is that the introduction of the Human Rights Act (and before European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg) have empowered the pres judicial system to fight legislation that they disagree with, rather than focu

Individual Liberty vs Collective Rights

Perhaps the most controversial recent debate over human rights has been o
collective rights (such as security) and individual liberty. This has been the
terrorism legislation introduced since 2000. The 9/11 attacks in the USA, as
bombings in 2005, resulted in the government introducing legislation that li
protect what they saw as the national right to secu

The argument is that in giving te protections under the Human Rig
private communication, f expression or free association) terrorists are ab
will result i m t population later on. The government has argue
communic onstitutes a threat to public safety, then it should be overr
importance of people's right to life.

In December 2004 the Law Lords (the highest court before the introductio
that indefinite detention of terrorism suspects was discrimination, and, th
Rights Act. The challenges to the government's proposed policies have of
their interpretations of the Human Rights Act. Successive governments ha
allows the government to collect data on citizens (such as the Investigatory
some civil rights campaigners say is a breach of the public's right to privac

The government has often not been able to extend their policies as much a
Blair's Government was defeated in the Commons in 2005 when it propos
suspects, and was forced instead to compromise on 28 d ys.

However, Liberty and other civil liberti dv cacy groups have been una
that they oppose. The Investig o vers Act 2016 was still passed desp
liberties groups. Liber a that the Act, in allowing for interception of
browsing h es, is a breach of the right to privacy. After an Act is pass
becomes th h way to oppose a bill that is believed to infringe civil libe
can be long and often requires an appropriate test case. Liberty raised £50
launch a legal challenge to the 2016 Investigatory Powers Act; however, in
High Court.

Most recently, the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Act 2021 has legalis
police and security service activities which were previously conducted in a
manner. Supporters stated that it was important for intelligence gathering
footing, but opponents argued that gave undercover officials immunity fr
the most serious crimes.

For most governments, the issue is not one of erodi il liberties in favo
finding what could be considered a 'balan e' bet en the two.

Thinking Point

Which is more important in your opinion: individu
or national security? Is there really a tension betw