

Student A

Before we consider this question it is necessary to establish what is meant by 'liberal'. **a** I assume that liberal means a strong sense of protection of human rights, a belief in a democratic political system, widespread freedom and equality for all individuals and minority groups. Liberals also support equality and limited government. We can now examine how much the three main parties, Labour, Conservatives and even Liberal Democrats, are genuinely liberal. **b**

The Conservative Party is probably the least liberal of the parties although Theresa May, when she took over in 2016, said that she wanted to treat all people as equal. It is also true that the Conservatives protect human rights, although they have promised to repeal the HRA and replace it with a British Bill of Rights. It is also true that they accept the rule of law although there may be a suspicion that they would like to take more extreme anti-liberal steps in the interests of national security. **c**

The Labour Party has always been close to liberal parties. Labour believes in the equality of all and also believes in a strong democracy. Labour passed the Equality Act which makes sure that no groups in society, including women, are discriminated against. Labour also supports the idea of liberty, although in the past the party has sacrificed some liberty in the interests of socialist measures. **d** Labour is a very democratic party and it is also now very internally democratic. The way it elects its leader, with everyone having a vote, is very democratic even though it has caused great trouble as Jeremy Corbyn was elected against the will of the party's MPs. Social justice is something that liberals and social democrats agree upon. This means that society should be organised so that no people have excessive advantages over others. This is a view expressed by the philosopher John Rawls **e** who coined the difference principle which says that the rich should not prosper at the expense of the poor.

Turning to the Liberal Democrats themselves it is clear they are a liberal party. They support strong protection of human rights in Britain and hope to reform the constitution so that it is more democratic. They also believe strongly in human rights and want to entrench them even further. Therefore they support higher taxes for the wealthy and lower taxes for low-income groups. They also wish to promote equality for women and minority groups. Above all, members of the party support tolerance and they believe in a multicultural society and free movement of people.

All major parties in the UK are basically liberal. This is because liberalism is entrenched in British society, and there is a deep sense of tolerance, democracy, rights, fairness and a love of liberty. It follows then that all parties should follow these values. They are under threat from other parties such as UKIP, but it seems likely that Britain will continue to be a liberal political system. **f**

e 14/30 marks awarded. This is a reasonable answer in terms of explaining the positive view that all main parties are fundamentally liberal. **a** It starts well with a statement of liberal principles and a description of where the essay is going. **b** However, the answer then develops two serious faults. One is that it is not

thorough enough in its explanations of its analysis. This is clearly seen at **c** and **d** where an interesting and relevant theme is introduced but not explained properly. Similarly, at **e** the student introduces some modern liberal theory → of Rawls. This is taken from the political ideas part of the course and it is generally very good practice to do this, but unfortunately it is undeveloped. The second fault, exemplified by a limited conclusion, is that this is a very one-sided response. **f** The rubric states that your answer should include a counter view to the question in a balanced way. This is not done here. The ways in which parties are not liberal are sparse and very limited.

e A01: 6/10 marks, A02: 4/10 marks, A03: 4/10 marks

Student B

We cannot consider this question without determining what liberal principles we are talking about. If we take the liberal principles as expressed by such key liberal thinkers as Locke, Mill, Beveridge and Rawls we have an idea of what these principles are. Locke was interested in democracy and government by consent so that is a critical value. Mill added a stress on individual liberty and limited government. Beveridge believed in welfare and the idea that society has a responsibility to care for those unable to care for themselves. Finally, Rawls was concerned with social justice and reducing inequalities. **a** We can now evaluate the extent to which the main parties support these liberal values and assess ways in which they may fall short of them. In other words, we can assess how liberal they really are. **b**

We should obviously begin with the Liberal Democrats. They very strongly believe in Mill's and Locke's principles of freedom and rights, and representative government which is limited and controlled by the people. This is exemplified by their strong support for democracy and constitutional reform. They seek to make the political system more decentralised and wish to introduce greater constitutional safeguards against powerful government and in the interests of protecting freedom and rights. Their desire for greater democracy is exemplified by their seeking to have an elected second chamber and to reform the electoral system. The party very strongly supports the principles of the welfare state and has more recently come round to Rawls' view that social justice is essential, even if it means state intervention. This is the only possibly illiberal aspect of the party. Some members, known as Orange Book Liberals, believe that there has been too much interference in economic life in Lib Dem policies and they wish to restore free markets, a very old classical liberal idea. However, it is no surprise that Liberal Democrats are very liberal in their outlook. **c**

Labour has a great deal in common with the Liberal Democrats. It was Labour who introduced the Human Rights Act, reformed the constitution after 1997 and passed the Equality Act. Labour believes strongly in Rawls' idea of social justice by having a strong welfare system and a progressive tax system. Labour outlaws discrimination and supports tolerance for all groups in society. Above all, Labour has supported equality of opportunity, especially through education. New Labour abandoned many socialist principles but it replaced some of them with a commitment to such equality. In a free society there may be too much

inequality so Labour insists on strong education and opportunities to make it a fair society. **b** Having said all this, there are a few illiberal tendencies in Labour. While classical liberals are suspicious of too much state interference in the economy and society, Labour has always supported intervention and regulation to achieve its aims. It is also true that Labour is rather 'soft' on democratic reform. For example, it has not supported electoral reform to make the political system more representative. **b**

The Conservatives have been a neo-liberal party of course, but this is a different kind of liberalism. It represents economic freedom that classical liberals supported, but they have also been neo-conservative which supports a strong, harsh state, too strong for most liberals. On the other hand, many modern conservatives such as Cameron, Osborne and Clark have a liberal outlook. They accept there must be a degree of social justice and like Labour they support equality of opportunity. As May has said, they seek to govern for the many and not the few. This anti-elitism is very liberal in nature. However, it has to be said that the Conservatives are still willing to sacrifice civil liberties in the interests of national security. Furthermore, they have consistently opposed democratic reforms such as an elected second chamber and electoral reform. They may claim to be tolerant to all groups, but there is a suspicion that they are anti-multiculturalism and this is why they wish to curb immigration. **c** Turning to social justice, the party had adopted some liberal measures, such as increasing the minimum wage and reducing tax for the low paid, but it still defends the interests of the very wealthy and of business, where taxes have been reduced significantly. Finally, the Conservatives are less supportive of the welfare state than other parties. Some even argue they would prefer to abandon Beveridge's principles and privatise much of the welfare state.

So we can see that all main parties support some basic liberal principles such as tolerance, democracy and equality of opportunity but there are variations in the degree to which they support them. The Conservatives are certainly the least liberal of the parties. **e**

e 29/30 marks awarded. This is an excellent essay. **a** It begins with a very strong introduction defining the key ideas to be explored. **b** It also clearly indicates that this is going to be a genuinely evaluative answer. Several sections demonstrate this technique which is required in the rubric. **c** The section on the Conservative Party is especially strong on evaluation. A second great strength is that it draws extensively from the political ideas part of the course — **c** is a good example of this. References to key liberal thinkers throughout give this answer great authority. These two virtues — evaluation and synoptic links to other parts of the course — make it worthy of almost full marks. It is also extremely well organised and has a logical structure. **e** The only small weakness is a weak conclusion which is valid but underdeveloped.

e A01: 10/10 marks, A02: 10/10 marks, A03: 9/10 marks

Electoral systems

NB Students should perfect their knowledge also of the 2017 general election, but should use the same techniques as those indicated here to answer similar source-based questions on 2017.

Question 1

Study the data in the table and the commentary that follows.

The result of the UK general election, May 2015

Party	% votes won	% seats won	No. of seats won	Notes
Conservative	36.9	50.9	331	Conservative support is concentrated in southern England
Labour	30.4	35.7	232	Labour support is concentrated in northern England.
Scottish National Party	4.7	8.6	6	In Scotland the SNP won 95% of the available seats on 50% of the Scottish vote
Liberal Democrats	7.9	1.2	8	The party's support is widely dispersed
Democratic Unionist Party	0.6	1.2	8	The DUP only contests seats in Northern Ireland
Sinn Fein	0.6	0.6	4	Northern Ireland only
Plaid Cymru	0.6	0.5	3	Contests seats in Wales
UKIP	12.6	0.2	1	UKIP support is very widely dispersed
Green Party	3.8	0.2	1	Support for the Greens is very dispersed
Others	2.5	1.0	6	Mostly in Northern Ireland

On the face of it these data suggest that there is severe discrimination against some parties and in favour of others. However, it can also be argued that, despite the fact that no party won an overall majority of the popular vote, a single

party was able to form a government with a working parliamentary majority. We must also beware of declaring that first past the post always discriminates against small parties. The SNP's success is a case in point.

Using the source, evaluate the impact of first past the post in terms of representative democracy.

[30 marks]

In your response you must:

- compare the different opinions in the source
 - use knowledge and understanding to help you analyse and evaluate
- e** The impact of first past the post can be divided into three main parts. First, the way in which it discriminates in favour of, or against, certain parties. Use data from the source to illustrate this. Second, what impact it has on voters. Third, what impact it has on the formation of government. Use the data to evaluate whether the winning party has democratic legitimacy. An overall evaluation of whether the system serves representative democracy well or badly should be deployed.

Student A

First past the post is the electoral system used for general elections in the UK. It is a system which has often been criticised for its unfairness, especially to

smaller parties. The system also makes votes have unequal value and leads to a large number of wasted votes. In this essay I will evaluate the use of first past the post, stressing its advantages and disadvantages. **a**

The source material clearly shows the unfairness of first past the post (FPTP). The worst problem was faced by UKIP. It won 12.6% of the vote but won only one seat. This is because its support is spread evenly across the whole country. The Green Party also suffered with only one seat for 3.8% of the vote and the Liberal Democrats with eight seats for 7.9% of the votes. On the other hand, it was a huge advantage for the Conservatives. The Tories won only 36.9% of the total votes but were returned with an overall majority and 331 seats. **b**

Turning to votes, the system results in a large number of wasted votes. Wasted votes are those for small parties which have no chance of winning seats. Votes are also wasted in safe seats where only one party has any chance of winning. On the other hand, votes in marginal seats are worth much more as are votes for the larger parties. **c** Turning to the SNP we can see that it won virtually all the seats in Scotland even though it only won half of the votes there. This is because its support in Scotland is very concentrated. This is also why Labour and the Conservatives do relatively well.

This is in contrast to proportional systems where every vote counts and the various parties are treated more fairly. The regional list system is the fairest as far as parties are concerned.

First past the post has a number of advantages. It is a simple system which people understand and produces a quick result. People rejected an alternative system in a referendum in 2011. It also creates a strong connection between constituencies and their MP because there is only one MP (unlike STV where there are six). In some list systems there are no constituencies at all. **d** Above all though FPTP means that one party usually wins the election and there is a decisive result. This avoids all the problems of minority governments and coalitions and unstable governments as we see in places like Italy. **e**

In all elections in the UK apart from 2010 there has been a government with a parliamentary majority and very often the majority has been very large. Governments with a large majority can get all their legislation through and so government is far more efficient.

So we can see that FPTP has a number of drawbacks as far as the voters are concerned and discriminates against smaller parties, but we can also see that it is a better system when it comes to strong and stable government. In summary therefore it is a balanced argument and it depends what you want from an electoral system. **f**

e 15/30 marks awarded. This answer is structured well and addresses parts of the question, but it also has several fundamental faults. **a** The introduction would normally be satisfactory, but it does not address the exact question which is asking about representative democracy. In fact this is a general weakness of this answer — its failure to address the wording of the question. **b** There is some effective reference to the source, but there is not enough of it and it does not address the substance of the data which measure the relative value of votes. **c** The section on marginal and safe seats is accurate but does not relate the answer to

representative democracy (i.e. are voters in safe seats effectively represented?) **d, e** Parts of the answer are not really related to the question as they are discussing advantages and disadvantages without relating them to representative democracy. **f** The conclusion tries to summarise, but again does not address the question. There is also no assessment of how the information in the data comes to a different conclusion from the written section of the source.

e A01: 6/10 marks, A02: 4/10 marks, A03: 5/10 marks

Student B

The question refers to representative democracy. The UK is a representative democracy which means that the system should ensure that people are fully represented by individuals and parties. This means that their interests are taken into consideration and are protected if they are in danger. It also means fair representation, that everyone and every party has an equal influence in the system. Many critics have suggested that the electoral system (FPTP) does not serve representative democracy well. In particular, it makes votes have unequal value and discriminates unfairly against some parties and in favour of others. This essay will examine the arguments and assess whether they are valid, using the data and information shown in the source. **a**

The source data show that votes are of unequal value. It takes many more votes to elect a Green candidate, a Liberal Democrat and, most seriously, a UKIP member than it does to elect a Labour or Conservative member. As for the SNP it has a huge advantage with nearly all the seats in Scotland on only 50% of the vote in that country. **b**

The really serious problem here is that the two main parties are hugely over-represented and the extent of their support is over-exaggerated by the system. It also means that many millions of people are not really represented at all. The millions of UKIP voters have only one MP to represent all of them in parliament. On the other hand, the Scots are over-represented in parliament and the SNP has more influence than its support warrants.

The data do not show that there are too many safe seats in the UK. Safe seats are those that can only be won by one party or another. It means that the constituents there may not be well represented as the MPs are not really accountable to the electorate. **c** Those who represent marginal seats, on the other hand, are more accountable because they will have to fight to retain their seat at the next election.

Turning to the broader question raised in the written part of the source **d** we can see that the system is good for representative democracy because it produces governments with a clear majority and this means they have a clear mandate to govern. Coalition governments, which might result from a proportional electoral system, do not have a proper mandate and so are less representative. However, there is a great downside to this characteristic. No government since 1945 has ever won a majority of all the votes cast. In 2005 Labour was elected with only 35% of the national vote. In 2015 the figure was not much better at 36.9%. This raises the question of whether the government is truly representative. The system also weakens opposition because the small parties do not gain fair representation. We can therefore ask the question of whether the government

is properly accountable. Of course, opponents of this view will argue that the alternative is a chaotic system where small parties will hold the balance of power and have too much influence. Before the 2015 election there was a fear that a Labour government might have to depend on the support of the Scottish Nationalists who would demand independence as the price of their cooperation. This would distort representation. **e**

In conclusion we can see that there are advantages and disadvantages of FPTP in terms of representative democracy. In the end there is a strong case either way and the source expresses this. It really depends on what kind of representative democracy we want to see in the UK. **f**

e 27/30 marks awarded. This is a very strong answer. Its great strength is that it constantly refers directly to the question and addresses it. It has two small weaknesses. The first is that it does not use the statistical data fully enough. The second is that its conclusion is rather weak and indecisive.

a The introduction is excellent, making it clear how the answer is going to address the question and defining representative democracy. **b** The second paragraph is an example of the lack in the use of the statistical data. **c** The answer shows a good technique in demonstrating relevant information not shown in the source and how valuable it would be. Another strength of this answer is that it engages with all the source and this is demonstrated at **d**. **e** There is also some good historical context. Information about historical change is always useful and adds to A01 marks. **f** Unfortunately the conclusion is indecisive.

e A01: 9/10 marks, A02: 9/10 marks, A03: 9/10 marks

Question 2

Evaluate the use of referendums in the UK.

(30 marks)

e Your introduction should define referendums and explain when they have been used, together with a general statement of why they have become controversial. You should evaluate this question by looking at the advantages and disadvantages of referendums. Your answer should be full of examples from recent referendums. In your conclusion you could suggest the circumstances when referendums might be appropriate and when they might not be.

Student A

A referendum is a vote held to determine an important political issue. It is a reality of referendums that the question has to be yes or no. There can be no other answer. The verdict of referendums has to be compulsory even though parliament is sovereign. It is unimaginable that parliament would overturn a referendum. The most important recent referendum was in 2016 over the UK's membership of the European Union when a majority decided we should leave. There have also been many other referendums which will be described in this essay. **c**

There are a number of reasons why referendums are desirable. The first is that they settle an issue once and for all. When there is major controversy it can disrupt the political system for a long time. A second reason is that the government itself might be divided on an issue so a referendum can end the uncertainty. This was long the case with the Conservatives who have been divided over the EU. Third, referendums represent the purest form of democracy. It is the verdict of the people and in the end, in a democracy, the people are sovereign. Finally, a referendum secures the consent of the people in a way that parliament and government cannot. So we can see that there are several good reasons for holding referendums. **b**

On the other hand, there are also several drawbacks to referendum use. First, there is the tyranny of the majority. This means that the majority who vote one way are forcing the minority into a decision with which they do not agree. This is, however, unavoidable because there has to be a majority and a minority. **c** Second, referendums undermine representative democracy so there is a danger that the people will no longer respect parties, government and parliament if they become used to making their own decisions. A third problem with referendums is that the people may not understand the issue well enough. They may also be fed dubious information and opinion, as occurred during the EU referendum. Elected representatives are more likely to be moderate in their opinions and try to find compromises. **d**

In general, referendums can be very divisive. They split the nation and they reveal how divided we can be. Elected politicians can unite the nation but referendums tend to do the opposite.

We have had several referendums in recent years. The EU referendum was in many ways a problem because it has caused more controversy than it has solved. The Scots believe they have been forced to leave the EU against their wishes. The same is true of London which voted to stay in the EU. In contrast, however, the Scottish referendum did solve an issue which was threatening the unity of the UK. There was a referendum in 2011 over whether to change the electoral system to AV. There was a very decisive rejection which was clear enough but it has to be pointed out that many people used it as a vote against the Liberal Democrats who had broken their promise over tuition fees when they were in coalition with the Conservatives. So we do not really know what the population thought about a new system. It was, incidentally, a very difficult issue for ordinary people to understand. **d**

It is a very balanced argument whether referendums are a good thing or not. It is very difficult to evaluate the issue. The answer is probably that it depends on the issue. Some issues are suitable for a referendum and others are less so and should be determined by government and parliament. **e**

e 17/30 marks awarded. In some ways this is a solid answer. It describes four positive aspects of referendums and four disadvantages. However, it contains a number of problems. **a** The introduction defines referendums well enough but then does not place the question in context (an ideal context would be the controversies surrounding the EU referendum). Some examples are added at

the end but would be so much better used if they directly illustrated the four advantages and four disadvantages of referendums as described in **b**. **c** The issue of Scotland and the EU vote would be a perfect opportunity for this approach.

d When the examples are included, the descriptions are not fully developed and are limited in scope. A few other examples should be added, for example the devolution votes in 1997 or local votes on congestion charges. **e** Finally, the conclusion is weak. It is an interesting conclusion to reach — it depends on what the referendum is about — but the student does not illustrate this point with specific examples. Introductions and conclusions should be as fully developed as any other part of a long answer.

e A01: 6/10 marks, A02: 6/10 marks, A03: 5/10 marks

Student B

Referendums are votes held to resolve an important political or constitutional issue. These normally concern proposed changes to how we are governed or to how we are taxed. Two recent referendums, of course, on Scottish independence and EU membership, have been about very fundamental issues which is why the voice of the people was needed. Referendums, though, are highly controversial. Are they as democratic as we believe? Are they preferable to decisions made by an accountable government? Do people understand issues well enough? There are many questions to be asked like this. This essay will describe the key issues and try to find some conclusions. **a**

The great attraction of a referendum is that it is the pure voice of the people, the purest form of democracy as favourably described by Plato in ancient Greece. **b** The people are really sovereign in a democracy, so surely it is they who should make such decisions? The referendum on Scottish independence is the most important example of this. Who else should decide the future of the Scottish people but the Scottish people? The Scots would probably not have accepted a decision if independence had been forced on them! As it happens it was rejected so the issue was settled, at least until the outcome of the EU referendum re-opened the controversy.

Referendums can also resolve issues which divide the government and the people. The Scottish vote was also an example of this, but so too was the EU referendum. The Conservative Party and the whole nation were divided about Europe and had been for many years so this was an opportunity to deal with the problem. However, as we will see, it perhaps was a failure because it only divided the nation further rather than uniting it.

A third claim made for referendums is that the people will respect and consent to decisions they have made themselves. There is a great deal of disillusionment with politics and politicians at this time so referendums give us decisions which will not be disputed. The 2011 vote on changing the electoral system is a good example. Would the people have respected a new electoral system imposed on them by politicians, especially unpopular ones?

So, we can see that there are a number of good reasons for using referendums, but they also have their problems. The main problem is that they create a majority which might be seen to be dictating to a minority. This was best seen in 2016 when Scotland was unwillingly being dragged out of the EU against its will. The same was true of London. It all hinged on deciding whether the UK is indeed one single nation. **c** Politicians, on the other hand, can find compromises between the majority and minorities. However, this was perhaps not possible in the case of the Scottish and EU referendums where there was a straight yes or no / leave or remain. **c**

We can turn to the problem that many people do not understand the issues. This was a major criticism of the EU and the AV referendums. It was also true that the people were subjected to a large amount of half truths and sometimes simple misinformation. Elected politicians are not likely to suffer from this problem.

There are also a number of smaller issues. What happens, for example, if the turnout is very low, as happens with votes on local congestion charges. Are such referendums democratically valid? Also, what if the outcome is very close? This happened over Welsh devolution in 1997 when there was 1% between the two sides and the EU vote when the gap was 4%. Is such a tiny majority a good enough reason to make a major change? Finally, we can point to the influence of the tabloids and their appeals to people's emotions rather than their reason. **d**

In conclusion, any evaluation is difficult to make because there are balanced arguments in favour and against referendum use. To some extent it may depend on the issues. Scottish independence calls demanded a referendum, but was it necessary for a change to electoral reform? However, there is one compelling argument that works against the future use of referendums except in certain particular circumstances. This is that referendums tend to divide communities whereas the main aim of democratic politics is to unite the community. This was strongly illustrated by the EU vote. **e**

e 30/30 marks awarded. This is a very strong answer worthy of full marks. It is well constructed, with a good introduction and decisive conclusion, and a logical pattern of points with plenty of well-applied examples. **a** The introduction describes referendums and when they have been used and then puts the question in context, explaining why it is important today. **b** There is a small error in that Plato actually criticised this form of democracy, but positive marking means that all the good points of this answer outweigh such a minor problem. **c** The greatest strengths of this essay are its evaluation and use of examples. **d** A good technique used here is to add several minor points at the end without spending excessive time explaining them. This broadens the whole evaluation. **e** Finally, there is a very good, firm conclusion which summarises the evaluation but comes up with a decisive conclusion that one side outweighs the other.

e A01: 10/10 marks, A02: 10/10 marks, A03: 10/10 marks

Voting behaviour and the media

Question 1

Study the two tables of data and the commentary that follows.

Class DE voting for Labour

Election year	% class DE voting Labour
1964	64
1987	53
1997	59
2010	40
2015	41
2017	59

Source: Ipsos MORI/Earlham Sociology

It used to be said that long-term voting behaviour could always be explained by social class. Certainly the early data, going back to the 1960s, suggested this. However, two factors are disturbing this

Class AB voting for the Conservatives

Election year	% class AB voting Conservative
1964	78
1987	57
1997	59
2010	40
2015	45
2017	43

Source: Ipsos MORI/Earlham Sociology

belief. First, other demographic factors are becoming important, and second, many more voters are becoming volatile and unpredictable in their voting habits.

Using the source, evaluate the importance of class in voting behaviour.

(30 marks)

In your response you must:

- compare the different opinions in the source
 - use knowledge and understanding to help you analyse and evaluate
- e The sources show that social class used to be important but appears to be becoming less so. This should be described at the outset and data from the sources quoted. You then need to offer explanations of, first, why class appears to be becoming less significant and, second, what factors may have replaced class in explaining voting behaviour. You also need to attempt an overall evaluation of how important class remains today.

Student A

Class used to be the main determinant of voting behaviour but this has reduced in recent times and there are now many other ways in which we can predict how people will vote. In particular this essay will look at factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and income levels. Class is still important and can perhaps explain about 50% of voting behaviour, but the question is how we can explain the other 40–50%. This essay will also look at why people are so much more volatile in their voting habits. a Obviously class is very important. The source says that about 59% of the working class voted Labour in 2017 and 43% of the middle class voted Conservative. This compares with about 80% of the middle classes supporting the Conservatives in the 1960s and about 64% of the working class voting Labour, so class is important but nowhere near as important as it used to be. Let us now look at other demographic factors. b

There is a very big correlation between age and support for the parties. In 2017 the 18–24 age group supported Labour in much greater numbers than the Conservatives, 67% against 18%. As people get older, however, they become increasingly Conservative in their outlook and voting. If we look at the over 65 age group we see that twice as many of this group voted Conservative as voted Labour. When we look at the EU referendum we find that the age factor is even more marked with most over 65s voting to leave. c The same was true of the Scottish independence vote in 2014 where most older people voted against independence and the young, especially the very young, tended to vote for independence. c

Gender tells us little. The evidence for some time has been that men and women divide their votes about equally between the two parties. This is also true of voting for the Liberal Democrats which is 50–50. So we can ignore gender as being insignificant.

Ethnicity is important. The vast majority of black and Asian voters support Labour. In 2017 two thirds of this group voted Labour while only a quarter voted Conservative. However, the number supporting each party is falling so it is declining as a factor. Increasingly, Sikhs and Hindus are supporting the Conservatives.

Income is another important factor. In particular those on lower incomes are major supporters of UKIP and of Brexit. Higher income groups tend to reject UKIP and mostly voted to remain in the EU. Income is not quite the same as class as there is a weaker correlation between income and parties than can be seen in the classes. c

An increasing number of voters are becoming unpredictable. This is because they are swing voters who make their decisions based on specific factors such as the policies of the parties (rational choice model). Some also take into account the image of the parties and party leaders. They may, for example, not trust a party to handle the economy well.

So, if we ask whether class is helpful in explaining voting behaviour, we have to say yes it is, but with two exceptions. The first is that other factors such as age and ethnicity are also important. The other is that class is declining in importance. While it was crucial in the 1960s it is now only a rough guide to voting intentions. e

e 18/30 marks awarded. a There is quite a good introduction which makes it clear how the essay will be organised and addresses the question broadly. b The student refers to the source in the second paragraph, but this is rather brief and incomplete. It is important to engage fully with the source. c There is a reasonable section on age, although again this could be more thorough. d From then on the answer becomes generalised and there are few data or facts to underpin the arguments made. It is important to use as much specific evidence as possible. e The conclusion does address the question but does not really fully engage with it and does not evaluate successfully, estimating which factors are more important than others.

e A01: 5/10 marks, A02: 6/10 marks, A03: 7/10 marks

Student B

In the 1960s political scientists saw class as the most important factor in voting behaviour and so they concentrated on the minority who did not vote with their class identity. The source clearly shows this strong correlation. But that was back in the 1960s, the situation has now changed. It has changed in several ways — class is less an indicator of voting behaviour than it was. The source shows this change with working-class Labour voting falling from 64% to 41% and middle-class Tory voting going down from 78% to 45% by 2015. Even though working class Labour support grew again in 2017, it remains true that the link between class and party support remains relatively weak. Second, there are other demographic factors such as age, region and ethnicity that have become important. Finally, there are other new theories of voting behaviour such as rational choice, economic and instrumental voting which are becoming more important than class. The source says that this leads to unpredictable voting and volatile voting with voters changing from one party to another between elections. This undermines our understanding of the effect of demographic factors. **a**

There has also been a process known as class dealignment. Fewer people associate themselves with their class and so their voting becomes less predictable.

If we look at the 2016 EU referendum people voted unpredictably in terms of class. The working classes mostly voted Leave which was a policy of the right-wing UKIP party and the right wing of the Conservatives. Class does tell us something about voting for small parties, with class AB voters tending to support the Greens and Liberal Democrats. The working class DE heavily support UKIP. So we can now see that class is less important than it used to be in terms of voting habits **b** but it remains an important factor in some regards.

If we look at other demographic factors we can see that they have become just as important as class in predicting voting. Beginning with age there is a very strong link between age and voting. People over 65 are more likely to vote for the Conservative Party. Nearly half of the over 65 age group voted Conservative compared with only 23% for Labour. Very few young voters support the Liberal Democrats who are heavily supported by the middle aged. We can therefore say that age is as good a predictor of voting behaviour as social class because the correlation figures are very similar. **c**

Ethnicity is an even better indicator. The vast majority of BME voters support Labour. This is a declining number, however. In 2017, 65% of BME voters voted Labour compared to 70% in 1997. The source does not really tell the full story here. This is because some factors are affecting other factors. So, the south is mostly Conservative but this is likely to be because incomes are usually higher in the south, so it is income, not region that is at work. Similarly, BME people are more likely to have low incomes and so will support Labour but not UKIP for obvious reasons. Again it is class and income at work here, not ethnicity. **d**

Recent elections showed very marked regional variations in voting. London, for example, broke the general trend and a majority supported Labour. The same is true of most, but not all, of the north where UKIP used to do well. Conversely, the south of England was solidly Conservative. Region has become extremely important, rivaling class as a factor. Generally Labour is stronger in cities than in small towns and the countryside.

The source refers to non-demographic factors. **e** Increasingly voters are proving volatile and many are floating voters. This means they look at each election separately. Economic performance and trust is a key issue, meaning the image of the parties and their leader as being economically responsible. The Labour defeat in 2015 was considerably to do with the fact that the party was seen as divided, irresponsible with the economy and poorly led by Ed Miliband. Much of the research suggests this was true.

Rational voting is also important. This is where voters look at party policies and decide which is the best for them. It may well be, therefore, that in both 2010 and 2015 large numbers of voters were attracted to the Conservatives because they promised tax cuts and to UKIP with the prospect of a referendum on EU membership and reductions in immigration which was a major issue in 2015.

One factor that appears to tell us virtually nothing is gender because men and women show the same voting patterns.

In summary, therefore, class remains useful in explaining voting behaviour, though far from as useful as it was decades ago. The majority of voters still vote the way we would expect given their occupation and income. However, there is no doubt that other demographic factors give us strong clues as to voting behaviour. Finally, we must remember that a growing number of voters do not conform to these factors and instead judge each party on their merits and examine policies carefully. The source shows a clear correlation between class and voting, but then accepts that other factors may now be more important. This is a valid analysis. **f**

e 29/30 marks awarded. The great strength of this answer is that it engages with the source material. In this case, the essay's conclusion agrees with the analysis in the source and the student has explained why in the body of the essay.

a, b There is very good use of data. There is a slightly weaker section at **c** when the answer becomes a little too generalised. There is a very strong engagement with the evidence at **d** when conventional data are challenged. This is good technique. **e** It is also good technique to refer to the source material at various opportunities. **f** The conclusion is meaningful, summarises the analysis and again engages with the source.

e A01: 9/10 marks, A02: 10/10 marks, A03: 10/10 marks

Question 2

Evaluate the relative importance of different demographic factors in voting behaviour.

e At the beginning you need to establish which demographic factors you are going to examine. You should only attempt a question like this if you have command of some key data to use as evidence. Vague generalisations will gain some credit, but not as much as hard data. Using data as evidence, you need to identify which factors are more important than others. You should then attempt an overall evaluation of what the most decisive factors are.

[30 marks]

Student A

In this essay I will be looking at a variety of demographic factors including social class, age, gender, ethnicity and region. There is no doubt that class remains the most important factor, but some of the other factors are important too. The only factor that has little importance is gender because men and women pretty much vote in the same way. There is no difference between them. First I will look at class. **A** Class used to be the most important factor with two thirds of the working class supporting Labour and even more of the middle class supporting the Conservatives. Now, however, class is less important. There are many more 'deviant voters' who do not vote the way their class suggests they would. Only about 40% of people vote the way their class would suggest.

There is now a case for saying that age is the key factor. The young are much more likely to support Labour as well as the Greens and the Liberal Democrats and the SNP in Scotland. On the other hand, older people have become increasingly Conservative in their outlook. The over 65 age group vote Conservative by a majority of three quarters to one quarter. **B** It was always true that older people are more conservative, but now it is very marked indeed. It is also true that older people are much more likely to vote for UKIP.

Region is very important. In places like London and the northeast of England Labour is well ahead whereas in the south and the southwest (where the Conservatives won all 15 Liberal Democrat seats) the Tories are dominant. In Scotland, of course, the SNP swept the board and are very dominant. The other three main parties lost nearly all their seats in Scotland. So if we are looking for the best indication of how people will vote, class and region are the most important and almost equal in importance. **C**

Having said all this, the best indicator of how people will vote is their ethnic identity. Black and Asian British voters are far more likely to support Labour than the Conservatives. The only group that is different are Muslims whose voting is mixed between the main parties.

It is therefore clear that class remains a key factor, but it is not as important as ethnicity and it is now closely rivalled by region as a factor. One of the reasons for this is class dealignment. Fewer and fewer people identify themselves with one class or another. This means that the link between class and voting is getting weaker. **D**

E 15/30 marks awarded. This is a reasonable essay with a good structure and coverage of the main issues. It suffers from the problem of being somewhat out of date, using 2015 figures rather than 2017. **A** The introduction promises a well-constructed answer. However, it has one major weakness and one lesser weakness. The major weakness is its lack of hard statistics as evidence. The statements made are broadly accurate but are too generalised. **B** and **C** both lack hard data. The other weakness is that there is no mention of referendums. The demographic factors in the Scottish and EU referendums were especially interesting and informative. **D** The conclusion is fine, though the material on class dealignment should be in the body of the answer.

E A01: 4/10 marks, A02: 5/10 marks, A03: 6/10 marks

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Student B

Back in the 1960s it was said with great justification that social class was by far the most important indicator of how a person would vote. There was the phenomenon of the 'working-class Tory voter', also called deviant voters, but still 65% of the working class voted Labour in the 1960s. Class was more important in society at that time. The working class was very distinct, as was the middle class. About 75% of the middle class voted Conservative. Furthermore, the turnout among the middle classes was higher so the Conservative disadvantage was reduced, given that the working class was larger than the middle class in the 1960s. As we shall see, class has become far less important in today's world and other demographic factors have grown in significance. This essay will examine these changes and evaluate their importance. **A**

Class is no longer as dominant as it used to be in most circumstances, although in some cases class still plays a big part in voting. In 2010 and 2015 the middle class (class AB) voted Tory in 40% and 45% proportion respectively. In the same elections working-class support for Labour was about 40%. So there is a correlation, but it is much weaker than it was 50 years ago. When we look at small parties, 17% of the working class voted UKIP but only 5% voted Liberal Democrat. There was clear converse support for the Lib Dems among class AB. Turning to the EU referendum there was a large middle-class bias for Remain (57%) and a working-class bias for Leave (64%). **B** So class remains important in circumstances other than a general election. In 2017 the picture did change a little, however, with 59% of working class voters supporting Labour — a big increase over 2015.

Gender is not an important factor. Men and women divide their vote between the parties almost in the same proportion as the whole population. Therefore this tells us nothing about voting behaviour and can be discounted.

The same cannot be said for ethnicity. Taking BME (black and ethnic minorities) as our factor, we will see that there is a very great bias towards Labour. In 2015 65% of the BME voters supported Labour (though this number has fallen by 10% since 1997). Only 23% of this community voted Conservative.

We can now turn to age and region, both of which rival class in predicting voting behaviour. With age there is a startling result from the Scottish independence referendum: 71% of the new 16- and 17-year-old voters supported independence, while only 27% of the over 65s agreed with them. The young also tend to support more radical parties such as the Greens and the SNP while the over 65s remain conservative in their outlook. In the 2015 general election only 27% of the 18-24 group voted Conservative compared to 43% for the Labour Party. In the over 65 group the outcome was almost the exact opposite of this. **C**

Britain has always had big regional variations in voting, with the north being mostly Labour and the south Conservative. With the exception of London, the south remains solidly Conservative and this was even more pronounced in 2015 (though it fell back slightly in 2017) when the Conservatives captured all the

Liberal Democrat seats. UKIP does well in the north of England in terms of votes, until its collapse in 2017 though this is probably a class rather than a regional factor. **c** Of course Scotland is the most dramatic example of regional bias, with half the votes there in 2015 going to the SNP. SNP support dipped in 2017 so it remains difficult to establish how permanent this regional bias will be. The same happened in the 2016 Scottish parliamentary election.

We therefore have a great deal of conflicting evidence. We can definitely say that class remains important though its significance is in decline, gender tells us nothing, ethnicity is crucial (except among Hindu origin people who are balanced) and region has become exceptionally important. However, demographic factors are constantly changing so it is difficult to be too dogmatic. **e**

e **30/30 marks awarded.** This is a very strong answer deserving of full marks. It brings the information reasonably up to date, which is important. **a** There is an excellent introduction which sets the scene, followed by a well-structured answer. **b, c** The greatest strength of this answer is the wealth of specific statistics which are quoted as evidence. There are no generalisations unsupported by data. There is also some very good original evaluation, such as is found at **d**. **e** The conclusion is a good summary of the content of the evaluation and contains an interesting observation about historical change.

e **A01: 10/10 marks, A02: 10/10 marks, A03: 10/10 marks**

Knowledge check answers

- 1 ■ Age UK is the most important pressure group representing the elderly.
 - Members of the Welsh Assembly are called Assembly Members (AMs).
 - People elected to local government are called local councillors.
 - The 2011 referendum asked whether the UK should adopt the alternative vote (AV) system for general elections.
- 2 ■ In UK general elections turnout has been steadily falling with a slight recovery in 2010, 2015 and 2017.
 - Turnout at referendums tends to vary greatly but it is more predictable for general elections.
 - Yes. At these elections turnout tended to be a little higher.
- 3 People participate in several ways:
 - voting at elections
 - joining a political party
 - being active in a pressure group
 - taking part in a protest
 - signing a petition or e-petition
 - joining an online political campaign
- 4 The groups are classified as follows:
 - Greenpeace is an outsider promotional group.
 - The CBI is an insider sectional group.
 - The NSPCC is an insider promotional and sectional group.
 - The NFU is an insider sectional group.
 - The Countryside Alliance is an outsider sectional and promotional group.
- 5 ■ Reduce the levels of tax avoidance and evasion.
 - Labour and the Conservatives disagree on taxation levels for high income groups and the level of spending on the NHS.
 - Two particular Liberal Democrat policies are constitutional reform and strong environmental protection measures.
- 6 ■ Momentum is left wing.
 - Tory Reform Group is centrist.
 - Conservative Way Forward is right wing.
 - Liberal Democrats are centre-left.
 - Blairites are also centre-left.
- 7 ■ The following parties won over 1 million votes in June 2017: Conservative; Labour; Liberal Democratic Party.
 - The additional member system tends to produce the most proportional result.
 - The single transferable vote gives most choice to voters.
 - First past the post is most likely to produce an overall majority for the winner.

- 9 ■ The highest turnout was for the Scottish independence vote in 2014.
 - The local referendums concerned the possible introduction of congestion charges.
 - The devolution votes in 1977, the vote on Northeast devolution in 2004 and the vote on the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 were all regional.
 - The rejection of devolution to Northeast England in 2004, a no majority of 55.8%.
 - The narrowest majority was for Welsh devolution in 1997, a majority of 0.6%.
- 10 ■ (a) 78% of middle-class voters supported the Conservatives in 1964; (b) 43% of middle-class voters voted Conservative in 2017.
 - (a) 64% of working-class voters supported Labour in 1964; (b) 59% of working-class voters supported Labour in 2017.
 - The Conservatives have suffered more from class dealignment: support fell from 78% to 45%.
 - 4% of the 18–24 age group voted Green in 2017.
 - In the 65+ age group 59% voted Conservative in 2017, while 23% voted Labour.
 - Support for the Conservative Party among 18–24-year-olds fell from 42% in 1979 to 18% in 2017.
 - 65% of the BME community voted Labour in 2017, compared with 21% for the Conservatives.
- 12 ■ The least significant social factor is gender (virtually no difference).
 - The most significant social factor is ethnicity.
- 13 ■ The Conservative defeat in 1997 was a combination of the disunity of the party, a recent economic recession and Labour being perceived to have a stronger leader (Blair versus Major).
 - The Conservative/Liberal Democrat victory was largely about: Labour's perceived lack of economic competence, the financial crisis that was occurring, Labour's leader (Brown) being perceived to be indecisive and a strong anti-Labour media campaign.
 - The Conservative victory in 2015 was largely about perceptions of leadership. Cameron was viewed more sympathetically than Clegg and Miliband. The Conservatives were also viewed as the most economically competent party.
- 14 ■ The Conservatives have most press support, both in terms of how many publications and the size of their circulation.
 - The two most important Conservative-supporting papers are *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*.
 - The only mass circulation paper that supports Labour is the *Daily Mirror*.