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Democracy in Scotland and the UK

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

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

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

The UK Parliament is in control of reserved matters for the whole of the UK. These include taxation, welfare, employment, currency, defence and foreign affairs. For instance, being in charge of defence, the UK Government decides to maintain nuclear weapons on Trident submarines at Faslane Naval Base in Scotland. Critics claim they are unnecessary and a waste of money, but supporters argue this acts as a deterrent which protects the UK from attacks, especially as several other countries, including the dictatorship of North Korea, possess them. They also provide thousands of jobs in the UK’s nuclear defence industry, thereby proving the benefits of some policy areas being centralised. Arguably, only the ‘broad shoulders’ of the UK can afford the costs of nuclear weapons, and an independent Scotland would not be able to fund them. A majority of the Scottish population (55%) voted No in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, so clearly most agreed that a devolved system of government currently works well for Scotland as it maintains the strength and security of a larger union. The Scots’ rejection of independence suggests that many evidently see devolution as a better alternative.

In saying that, the leaders of the 3 main Unionist parties at Westminster at the time – David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg, collectively signed ‘The Vow’ which the Daily Record newspaper in Scotland published as its front page days before the referendum. It promised ‘extensive new powers’ for the Scottish Parliament in the event of a No vote, and it was thought this persuaded some potential Yes voters to vote No. Evidence from the 2014 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey showed that given the third option of ‘devo max’ on the ballot paper (all powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament except foreign affairs, defence and currency), this proved the most popular option. This suggests that there is significant desire for change to the constitution concerning greater devolution to Scotland, and it is felt even by a number of No voters. Indeed, the Smith Commission which was set up following the referendum recommended further devolution to Scotland and subsequently some further powers such as income tax have since been devolved to Scotland. It would therefore be a mistake to equate a No victory with satisfaction with the constitutional status quo. After all, 45% of the Scottish population voted Yes in the 2014 referendum, which although a minority, is still a very significant number of Scottish people (1.6 million) who believe that a devolved system of government is currently not working well.
Many believe devolution works well as it does allow a degree of independence for the devolved assemblies such as the Scottish Parliament without them having to take on the risks of full independence such as the lack of a UK wide common currency. Regional assemblies / Parliaments are however responsible for making decisions on certain devolved matters giving a degree of autonomy to meet more local needs. This is what the Better Together campaign meant by their slogan ‘best of both worlds’ throughout the referendum campaign. In Scotland, for instance, health and education are devolved powers, which have allowed the Scottish Parliament to chart a different course to the rest of the UK in these regards – while England charges patients prescription charges and students tuition fees, Scotland has made both free. Crucially, Scotland did not require independence to do this, and as a result many are satisfied that devolution is currently serving Scotland well and that independence is not necessary to meet the different needs of different areas of the UK.

However, some believe devolution alone cannot fully meet the needs of people, as while any powers at all are centralised, they are not being made by the people of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland but instead by a Westminster government that often only England elected. Currently we have a majority Conservative government, but of 59 Scottish constituencies, Scotland returned just 1 Conservative MP and 56 SNP MPs in 2015. Consequently, a Conservative Minister under a Conservative led government now makes decisions on policy for the whole of the UK, including Scotland, even though they are a minority party in Scotland. This is perceived by some as being undemocratic.

An example of the problems this can create is that because the UK voted as a whole to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum, Scotland as part of the UK is now having to leave the EU, even though a majority of votes in Scotland (62%) actually voted to remain in the EU. The SNP have consequently said that they may hold a second Scottish independence referendum as they think it is unacceptable that Scotland is being dragged out of the EU against its will. For supporters of Scottish independence, devolution is proving a strain to maintain in its current form while different parts of the UK pursue different political agendas. However, even since the EU referendum, opinion polls still consistently show a small majority of Scots opposed to Scottish independence, which suggests that they continue to value the union with the rest of the UK more than they do the union with other EU countries.

Conclusion: Make your own decision based on the evidence and your opinion!
2a) Analyse / Evaluate the impact of EU membership on the UK or:

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

Before the 2015 UK election, the Conservatives (perhaps motivated by some of their supporters intending to instead vote for UKIP, the anti-EU party) promised they would hold an in or out referendum on Britain’s membership by the EU. Upon subsequently winning a majority, there was then a referendum held in 2016 on whether the UK should remain in the EU or leave it. Leave won, winning 52% of the vote, showing significant dissatisfaction with the EU, and ‘Brexit’ (British exit from the EU) will now take place in the coming years, likely before the summer of 2019. However, there continues to be a debate over the merits of the decision, with British politics now largely dominated by the EU issue.

### EU beneficial / positive impact

**Trade**

Pro-EU commentators argue the UK benefits from EU membership through its free trade. The UK population UK is just 60 million but as part of the EU, UK businesses have access to a much larger single market of 500 million EU citizens to buy and sell too, and UK citizens have access to a much wider variety of European businesses to choose from, giving UK consumers more choice. Now that the UK will leave the EU, UK jobs could be lost as European businesses currently based in the UK might choose to move to other EU countries to avoid loss of trade.

The EU is also the UK’s main trading partner. HMRC data shows 44% of UK trade exports are currently to the EU and 53% of UK trade imports are from the EU. This suggests the UK benefits economically from being in the EU. Brexit now means we will have to renegotiate separate trade deals with individual EU member countries, maybe on worse terms than we currently have inside the EU. Prime Minister May met US President Trump in 2017 to begin negotiations for a UK-US trade deal, but there is no certainty this will be agreed, that it will be agreed quickly, or that any deal will be favourable to the UK.

### EU not beneficial / negative impact

**Trade**

However, EU critics such as former UKIP leader Nigel Farage labelled the ‘Remain’ campaign ‘Project Fear’ and accused it of ‘scaremongering’ to terrify people with threats of economic instability and job losses into voting to Remain. These critics point to the high and growing cost of EU membership; the UK made a net contribution of £8.5 billion for membership in 2015, and the net cost of being an EU member has grown each year since 2009.

Brexit could also have knock on consequences for the domestic political situation. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had said that there would ‘almost certainly’ be a second referendum on Scottish independence if Scotland votes to remain in the EU but was taken out against its will by an overall UK vote to leave. This is precisely what happened and the SNP are likely to hold another Scottish independence referendum at some point before Brexit happens in order to keep Scotland as part of the EU in accordance with the 62% of Scots voters who voted to remain in the 2016 referendum. A vote to leave the EU has therefore created further constitutional uncertainty.

### Immigration

As part of the EU principle of free movement of people to live, work and travel anywhere in the EU, there are currently many Brits living and working freely in other EU countries, such 1 million Brits living in Spain, over 300,000 living in France, and over 300,000 in Ireland, so we must remember that British people are currently taking advantage of freedom of movement also.

However, many are concerned that being part of the EU has resulted in too many immigrants from other EU countries moving to the UK. Recently, poorer Eastern European countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania have joined the EU, and there were fears that citizens from these countries may freely move to the UK simply to take advantage of its comparatively more generous welfare system, or to work for less and drive down British wages.
**Immigration continued**

Many think immigration from the EU advantages the UK economically as many EU migrants are skilled and work in key UK services like the NHS, which arguably could not cope without foreign doctors and nurses. Overall EU migrants make a net contribution to the UK economy; 32% of recent EU arrivals have university degrees compared with 21% of the native UK population and European immigrants are half as likely as UK natives to receive state benefits or tax credits, according to a study by academics at University College London.

As part of the EU, the UK did not have full control over its own borders and could not stop the flow of immigration from EU countries, with over 2 million citizens of other EU countries currently living in the UK according to the Office for National Statistics. This has led to some anti-immigration sentiments. Opinion polling consistently shows Brits are concerned with the levels of uncontrolled immigration and rank it as a very high priority. For example, in the most recent British Social Attitudes survey asking about immigration (2013), 77% of people said they wanted immigration reduced “a little” or “a lot”. This problem has recently been worsened by the European migrant crisis as EU countries try to take their share of migrants or refugees fleeing conflict in Syria. Concerns over immigration therefore are perhaps the main reason Britain voted to leave the EU.

**Law-making**

British people also benefit from EU employment laws and social protections, which could potentially be stripped away once we have left. For instance, the Working Time Directive, which gives all EU workers the right to a minimum number of holidays each year, guarantees rest breaks, and at least one day off work a week. This protection for workers could potentially be lost, leading to excessive working hours and causing stress.

Arguably the EU Parliament in Brussels is remote and takes too much power away from the Westminster and the UK could regain its sovereignty by leaving. The slogan of the ‘Vote Leave’ campaign during the EU referendum was ‘take back control’, meaning the UK Parliament should take back control from the EU over all decisions affecting the UK.

Conclusion: your own judgement on the question.
3a) Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of Parliamentary representatives in holding the Government to account / scrutinising the Government

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliament effectively holds govt to account / important role</th>
<th>Parliament not very effective / less important</th>
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<tr>
<td>Votes in Commons: Opposition MPs in the House of Commons can sometimes defeat the will of the Government by outnumbering them when voting on bills. For example, in 2013 MPs voted against a government motion urging British military involvement in Syria. Also, in 2015, the Government were forced to cancel a vote proposing to relax the foxhunting ban in England and Wales after it became clear they would have lost it when the SNP announced they would vote against the change. This shows how fragile the Conservatives’ slender majority is and reminds us that even majority Governments can be defeated with a united Opposition and / or some Government rebels. Just because the Government don’t lose many votes doesn’t necessarily mean they always get their way. The foxhunting example shows that they can be defeated before a vote is even held.</td>
<td>However, Parliament has no say in the choosing of Cabinet ministers, which is an executive power of the PM. For example in 2016 PM Theresa May appointed Philip Hammond as Chancellor and Boris Johnson as Foreign Secretary without having to consult Parliament. However, the government can usually make sure they win votes in the Commons through use of the 3 line whip - an instruction given to MPs by their party leader on how to vote on bills and a demand that they vote this way or face losing party privileges or even be kicked out the party. For example, in 2015 the Government won a vote to launch air strikes against Islamic State terrorists in Syria. Conservative MPs were whipped by then PM Cameron to support the Government motion and only 7 Conservative MPs out of 331 defied it and rebelled against their Government whip. MPs will usually obey the whip out of a sense of loyalty to their leader or because they seek promotion, limiting the ability of Parliament to hold government to account.</td>
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PMQs - One of the main ways for the House of Commons to hold the Government to account is through Prime Minister’s Questions - a half hour opportunity on Wednesdays for MPs to question the Prime Minister. In his 2010 autobiography, former PM Tony Blair called PMQs ‘the most nerve-wracking experience in his Prime Ministerial life’, and in 2015 former PM David Cameron said ‘there isn’t a Wednesday that you don’t feel total fear and trepidation about what is about to happen’, showing its ability to unnerve and control the PM to some extent. In 2017 Opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn asked PM Theresa May to answer for her Government’s running of the NHS after the Red Cross had said there was a ‘humanitarian crisis’ due to rising demand which the NHS was failing to cope with, and Corbyn labelled the Conservatives’ record on the NHS as a ‘failure’. May had to then defend the Government’s agreement of this in a public, televised arena, and received some criticism in the media afterwards, proving that PMQs can be an effective way to hold the Govt to account.
The second chamber of the UK Parliament is the House of Lords and it is another way for Parliament to scrutinise the government. Its over 800 members (peers) are unelected, appointed by the PM and Queen, but they have experience and expertise in fields such as politics, law, business, education, health and science, and their job is to scrutinise and review bills that have been passed by the Commons. After a bill is voted through the Commons, it passes to the Lords. If they also vote it through, it is signed by the Queen and becomes law. The Lords can delay and amend bills and defeat government motions. For example, in 2016, the Lords amended an Immigration bill, forcing the Government to relocate child refugees in the UK who had made it to Europe from Syria, against the wishes of the Government. Since 2010, the Government has been defeated over 100 times by the Lords. The Lords can also initiate bills themselves. The Conservatives do not have a majority of Peers so can be outvoted in the Lords, which reminds us of the power of Parliament to defeat the Executive branch of Government. If they want laws pushed through quickly, the Government will often accept amendments made by the Lords rather than wait a year.

Finally, Parliament can check the work of Government through Select Committees; cross party groups of around 11-15 MPs who meet weekly to monitor government departments by scrutinising government bills, gathering evidence from expert witnesses, and writing reports with recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Minister. For example, in 2016 the Liaison Committee called PM Theresa May before them and questioned her for almost 2 hours on amongst other things, the Government’s plans for negotiating an exit from the EU. Committees are arguably more effective than the Commons at holding Government to account as they are cross-party and have more time to question, meaning Ministers may struggle to get away with the evasive sound bite which they often use in the Commons. The lack of media coverage allied with a civilised and calm atmosphere may make Ministers more relaxed and candid when giving evidence, meaning the Committees can be an effective way to expose truths.

However, the Commons have supremacy over Lords. The Lords can only delay bills for a maximum of 1 year, not indefinitely, so if they want, the Government simply have to wait to overturn Lords decisions in the Commons 1 year later. Furthermore, there are several areas where the Lords are bypassed - such as votes on military action. For example, the 2015 Commons vote to launch air strikes against Islamic State terrorists in Syria did not require the approval of the Lords, and in fact technically did not even require the approval of the Commons, as it is an executive power of the PM. Also, the PM appoints many of the members of the House of Lords, so its ability to scrutinise the Government is limited. In 2015, for example, David Cameron appointed 26 new Conservative Lords, increasing the influence of the Conservatives in the House of Lords and arguably making future Conservative government defeats in the Lords less likely. It has also been accused of cronyism and in need of reform. The SNP have called the Lords ‘a sorry list of rejected politicians, cronies and hangers on with big chequebooks’ and have called for the House of Lords to be abolished.

However, the government is under no obligation to act upon recommendations made by committees, so it could be argued that Committees are limited in their ability to hold the Executive to account, especially as committees do not generate significant media coverage, so often the public are not as aware of what goes on at committees as they may be of PMQs.

Overall, conclusion on the question.
4a) Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of an electoral system(s) in providing fair representation

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPTP provides fair representation / better than AMS</th>
<th>FPTP provides poor representation / AMS better</th>
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<tr>
<td>2011 Alternative Vote referendum - voters chose not to replace FPTP with AV - suggests people feel well represented by FPTP. Also higher turnout for UK 2015 election (66%) than in Scottish Parliament using a more complicated, proportional system of voting - Additional Member System (AMS) - 56% in 2016. Turnout may be an indicator that people feel better represented in FPTP, and high turnout is healthy for democracy. People seem to think ‘Most votes wins’ rule of FPTP is fair, clear, and easy to understand.</td>
<td>FPTP disproportionate so poor representation. E.g, in 2015 UK election Conservatives won 37% of the vote but 51% of seats, and UKIP won 12.6% of the vote but won just 0.15% of seats (only 1 seat). FPTP leads towards a 2-party system as over time support converges around the 2 main parties as voters vote tactically against the party they dislike most as opposed to for their preferred party. This was reinforced before the 2015 UK election as parties urged tactical voting; for instance the Conservatives urged English floating voters to vote Conservatives to prevent a potential Labour-SNP coalition. Arguably such routinely tactical voting is leading to poor representation as people are discouraged from voting for the candidate/ party they feel would best represent them. In contrast, AMS is more proportional; in the 2016 Scottish election, Labour won 19% of the vote and gained 19% of the seats, which is fair and perhaps encourages voters of smaller parties to take part as they can win seats.</td>
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Arguably FTPT provides clearer representation as only 1 MP means it is clear who represents people. E.g. voters in Rutherglen and Hamilton West know exactly who to speak to if they have an issue - their 1 MP Margaret Ferrier. Usually proportional systems inevitably have to create larger constituencies which elect several representatives, therefore losing the direct link between constituency and Parliament.

Under FPTP voters can still choose and elect candidates from smaller parties. E.g. in 2015 election Brighton Pavilion re-elected Caroline Lucas (Green) and Clacton elected a UKIP MP, Douglas Carswell. This shows that although overall the system tends to favour larger parties, it does still offer scope for smaller parties to gain representation given they have enough support within a constituency, and some may argue that if a party cannot command the support of most of a constituency then they should not be given seats purely as a reflection of their national share of the vote, as then the direct link between constituency and Parliament would be lost, and people would not feel directly represented.

FPTP usually results in strong, stable majority govts that can implement manifesto pledges and avoids unstable coalitions. Despite a 2010 coalition between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, FPTP in 2015 produced a majority Conservative govt, meaning they are more accountable in delivering their manifesto in full and cannot use compromise with other parties as an excuse for breaking promises.

Less choice under FPTP. Voters in safe seats denied choice. Safest seat in 2015 UK election by number of votes was Knowsley. Labour’s George Howarth has a 34,000 majority, so supporters of other parties are effectively wasting their vote - lack choice. AMS offers more choice as you have 2 votes (1 for a constituency MSP, one for 7 regional MSPs) compared to just 1 vote for FPTP. Voters of smaller parties given more choice with AMS as they benefit from proportionality of second vote. AMS also offers more choice in terms of the number of representatives available to choose who to speak to. A person in Rutherglen is represented by just 1 MP (Margaret Ferrier, SNP) compared to 8 MSPs from different parties currently including Clare Haughey (SNP) James Kelly (Labour), Adam Tomkins (Conservative) and Patrick Harvie (Green) following the 2016 election. Therefore, a Rutherglen constituent who does not like the SNP or Margaret Ferrier has no alternative, leaving them perhaps feeling poorly represented under FPTP, whereas they have greater variety of MSPs using AMS. Overall........your judgement on the question.
5. Evaluate / Analyse the factors which affect voting behaviour in Scotland and/or the UK.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors and their effectiveness</th>
<th>Factors and their lack of effectiveness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
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Social class is traditionally hugely influential. In ‘60s and ‘70s Labour traditionally got support from lower social classes who worked in heavy industry due to Labour’s welfare support and links with trade unionism, and Conservatives traditionally got more support from higher social classes due to their policies of lower taxes SC continues to be an important factor today. In 2015: Conservative got most of their support from class AB voters (44%) and least from DE (29%), and Labour got most of their support from voters from social class DE (37%), and least from AB (28%).  
Con AB: 44%  
Lab AB: 28%  
Con DE: 29%  
Lab DE: 37%  
Also, for 2014 Scottish independence referendum, according to IPSOS Mori, 65% of those living in the fifth most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland voted Yes, compared with just 36% of the fifth wealthiest, showing class differences and shape attitudes. |

| Media | Media |  
Newspapers can be biased and seek to influence readers by shaping the news agenda in a certain way and by urging voters to vote for particular parties. In the 2015 UK election, according to YouGov polling, 69% of Telegraph readers voted Conservative after they had endorsed a vote for the Conservatives, and 67% of Daily Mirror readers voted Labour after they had endorsed Labour, suggesting newspapers can influence.  
Since 1974, the Sun newspaper (read by between 4.8 million per day) has always supported the party that ends up winning most seats in Commons, e.g. in 1997 they endorsed Labour -Labour won landslide, and in 2010 they switched to Conservatives-they won most seats. In 2015 the English Sun backed Conservatives and the Scottish Sun backed SNP. The Conservatives won a majority of seats across UK and SNP won 56 of 59 Scottish sears. Also, of 37 newspapers in Scotland, only 1 (Sunday Herald) publicly supported a Yes vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and No won - arguably showing the major influence of newspapers.  
Also, although BBC TV news coverage is impartial, they do frame the news agenda by choosing which stories to report on and which not to.  
However, arguably newspapers simply respond to changing political attitudes, rather than create them. It is possible that readers choose which newspaper(s) to read based on pre-existing political opinions, rather than allowing the newspapers to shape them.  
A few days before the 2015 UK election the English Sun backed Conservatives and the Scottish Sun backed SNP but the polls were already showing both parties in the lead, so perhaps newspapers are not that influential, they just react to existing public opinion so as to avoid being seen as out of touch with the public mood.  
Also in the 2015 UK election, the Express endorsed UKIP, and while UKIP did get most of its support from Express readers (27%), almost double this percentage of Express readers voted Conservative (51%), showing that in this instance the media had a limited impact on voting behaviour and other factors must have proved more influential.  
Also, the BBC are required by law to be politically impartial so arguably they do not affect voting behaviour as much as newspapers do. |
**Geography**

There is a clear North South divide in voting behaviour: in the 2015 UK election, of the 59 Scottish constituencies, 56 elected SNP MPs and there is only 1 Conservative MP (David Mundell) from a Scottish constituency, despite the Conservatives winning a majority of seats across the UK. The south of England mostly votes Conservative. In addition, in the 2016 EU referendum, Scotland voted 62% to remain in the EU, whereas England voted just 47% remain, so different regions certainly do seem to have different political opinions and vote differently.

**Age**

In 2015, the younger people were they were more likely to vote Labour and less likely to vote Conservative, and the older people were they were more likely to vote Conservative and less likely to vote Labour.

Younger voters tend to be more left wing and gave more support than older voters to centre-left or left wing parties such as the SNP and Greens. Younger voters tend to be more ‘idealistic’ and as they are less likely to be in employment or well-paid employment, they may not be as concerned as older voters by higher taxes and instead prioritise public services and protection of benefits and free college or university tuition, which they may need more and which centre-left parties are more likely to support.

In the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, according to polling by Lord Ashcroft, 71% of 16-17 year olds voted Yes, but just 27% of the 65+ group voted Yes, so age is clearly a factor, but perhaps the real underlying influence here is media, as the older generation more likely to read newspapers, which as already noted mostly supported a No vote, and younger voters are more likely to use social media such as Twitter and Facebook to get their news, and The Yes movement was very active on social media. The evidence shows age is clearly one of the most significant factors affecting how people vote, but it does not exist on its own, instead it is directly related to the media people of different age groups use.

**Gender**

Gender does not seem to be a particularly significant factor. Although traditionally males and females may have voted with different priorities, with males perhaps being more concerned with employment related policies as they were more likely to be in employment and females perhaps prioritising issues such as childcare, the evidence does not support the notion that many people vote in a gender specific way. In the 2015 UK election, for instance, both males and females were more likely to vote Conservative than Labour according to Yougov polling.

Males: Con 37%, Lab 29%
Females: Con 38%, Lab 33%

These figures are not markedly different and both genders were quite consistent in the support they gave to other parties, suggesting that gender is not a particularly important factor shaping people’s political opinions or affecting their voting behaviour.

**Ethnicity**

British Muslims have traditionally favoured Labour over the Conservatives, but anger over the UK’s invasion of Iraq in 2003 under a Labour government has turned many against the party, and has contributed to the sense of alienation from politics that in part explains why Muslim turnout is lower than other religions.

Overall, ____________ is the most significant factor affecting voting behaviour because.................

____________________ is probably the least significant factor because.................................

Overall...judgement on the question.
6b) To what extent are pressure groups effective in influencing government decision-making?

### Pressure groups that are effective

Pressure groups are non-governmental organisations that try to influence government policy. Insider pressure groups are ones that have a close working relationship with the Government and often have expertise that the Government rely on when setting policy or considering changes to laws - e.g. the British Medical Association (BMA) - respected and knowledgeable health professionals were invited before and gave evidence to UK Health Select Committee on the dangers of passive smoking when Government were considering a ban. The BMA recommended a smoking ban and the UK Government then banned smoking in public places in 2006. The fact that the Government not only consulted with the BMA, but acted upon their advice is a clear demonstration of their influence, and arguably shows the positive role pressure groups can play in UK democracy as they can offer expertise and advice to government.

Large, well-resourced, well-organised and privileged groups have the ability to influence. For example, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), represents over 200,000 UK businesses and are consulted by Government over issues such as corporation tax rates and minimum wage rates. Prime Ministers and Chancellors often attend CBI meetings and dinners, making them an insider group. CBI campaign for business friendly policies such as lower corporation taxes and the UK Government’s 2015 budget lowered corporation tax to 20%, probably as a result of CBI influence. It has been lowered every year since 2010 even though the UK already has the lowest rate in the G20, showing the power of the CBI. If it wasn’t lowered, they may threaten to take their businesses out of the UK, so the Government feel they must listen to them. Some feel this threatens democracy as well-funded groups representing minority interests can get their way and effectively buy access to Government and changes in policy.

### Pressure groups that are less effective

On the other hand, outsider groups are ones that Government does not consult closely with, either because they are a protest group not interested in a working relationship with the Government, or they cannot offer the Government expert information - e.g. Fathers 4 Justice, a fathers’ rights organisation, do not ‘have the ear’ of government and so often resort to direct and sometimes illegal action such as scaling Buckingham Palace and throwing purple powder at then PM Tony Blair during 2004 PMQs. These tactics may generate publicity, but they are unlikely to influence government policy as they turn the media, public and Government against them as they are seen as immature, wasting police time and taxpayers’ money. They have so far failed to force significant changes in the law, and some believe they are a negative, disruptive influence on UK politics.

Smaller, less well-resourced and less privileged groups cannot influence in the same way larger, well-resourced and privileged groups can - e.g. the group Republic campaign for the abolition of the monarchy in the UK, but in 2012, a Guardian poll showed record popularity for monarchy - 69% said Britain would not be better off without a monarchy. Also, according to the 2015 UK Social Attitudes Survey, in 2015 73% of people were in favour of the monarchy, showing pro-Monarchy feeling has actually increased since 2012. There are no plans to abolish the monarchy so Republic can be considered unsuccessful. They have just 25,000 members. The Government know this does not represent significant numbers of voters so do not feel that they have to accommodate or listen to their views. Mainstream media in the UK tends to be pro-monarchy, and interest groups are more influential when they have media backing. Generating media publicity is not enough though, it has to be positive media publicity - which both F4J and Republic lack, causing them to have limited broad appeal.
The Government may feel forced into appeasing the CBI, but this reduces the tax intake and the ability of government to provide public services for the majority, showing that perhaps professional lobbying by powerful interest groups actually corrupt the political process.

**Clearly not all pressure groups influence the political system.** Large membership obviously helps, but it is not a necessary precondition for a successful pressure group. More important is insider or privileged status, as evidenced by the BMA and CBI, both courted by the Government as a result of their respected status and financial power respectively. A final important point to make is that pressure group influence is largely dependent on the Government of the day. For example, trade unions campaigning for stronger workers’ rights have historically enjoyed close ties with the Labour party, but have found more right wing Conservative Governments ideologically unsympathetic to their cause, with the Conservative government in 2016 passing a law – the Trade Union Act, that makes it more difficult for unions to take strike action, so the influence of some interest groups is directly linked to and may change depending upon who is in power.

Overall conclusion on the question.
7a) Evaluate the influence / role of the media on the political system.

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

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

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

### Media influential / positive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>can heavily influence voting behaviour and public opinion as they can be biased: since 1974, the Sun (read by between 4-8 million per day) has always supported the party in UK elections that ends up winning most seats; in 1997 they endorsed Labour -Labour won majority. In 2015 they backed the Conservatives who won a majority. Also, of 37 newspapers in Scotland, only 1 (Sunday Herald) publicly supported a Yes vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum and No won - arguably shows influence of newspapers. Many Yes voters suggested voters could not be fully informed if the majority of information provided by newspapers was being presented in a slanted way. In the referendum, 71% of 16-17 year olds voted Yes, but just 27% of 65+ group voted Yes according to polling by Lord Ashcroft. These figures say a lot about the influence of the media on the political system; as older people are more likely to read newspapers, this form of media has a greater effect on them. Young people are less likely to read newspapers and more likely to access news on the internet and through social media sites as shown by the large discrepancies in the way different age groups voted in the referendum.</th>
<th>Media’s influence limited / negative</th>
<th>However, arguably newspapers simply respond to changing political attitudes, rather than create them. It is possible that readers choose which newspaper(s) to read based on pre-existing political opinions, rather than allowing the newspapers to shape them. E.g. a few days before the 2015 UK election the English Sun endorsed the Conservatives and the Scottish Sun endorsed the SNP but the polls were already showing Conservatives in the lead in England and the SNP in the lead in Scotland, so perhaps newspapers are not that influential, maybe they just react to existing public opinion so as to avoid being seen as out of touch with the public mood.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media influence positive</td>
<td>Newspapers also serve an important function of scrutinising govt - in 2009 Daily Telegraph exposed that a number of MPs had been abusing their expenses claims. This led to public outrage and social media campaigns ensuring MPs expenses were revealed. Then PM Gordon Brown changed the law to limit what MPs could claim in expenses and to make claims more transparent, showing ability of media to set news agenda and directly influence the legislative process. This example also arguably shows the positive influence the media can have in holding politicians to account and forcing necessary reforms.</td>
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### Media influence negative

However, newspaper bias can distort the truth and leave the British public unable to make informed judgements. A poll by the Trades Union Council in 2013 showed British people had serious misconceptions about welfare. It showed that on average, people think that 41% of the entire welfare budget goes on benefits to unemployed people, while the true figure is just 3%. This difference is surely due to the prominence some newspapers such as the Daily Mail and the Daily Express give to promoting myths of large numbers of work shy ‘scroungers’ and benefit fraudsters. Furthermore, a 2016 Yougov poll showed that a majority of British people believed the mainstream media has displayed deliberate bias against Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, leading to a breakdown in trust in the mainstream media from.
### Media influence positive

TV media plays an important role in informing UK citizens of current affairs. Because the BBC are required by law to be politically impartial, their role is to provide expert and trusted news coverage in a balanced way, allowing people to make informed judgements about politics, which is healthy and positive. The BBC News at 6 is on average watched by 4 million viewers each night, arguably an effective way to widely counteract much of the bias found in newspapers. Young people especially are increasingly using social media to access news, and consequently there is some evidence that youth engagement with politics in the UK is growing - evidenced by a very high 85% turnout for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum in which 16 and 17 year olds had the right to vote.

### Media influence negative

However, recently the impartiality of even the BBC has been called into question by some. Between 2012 and 2013, Professor John Robertson of the University of West Scotland led a team carrying out a year long study analysing BBC news coverage of the Scottish independence referendum. The study concluded that 317 news items broadcast by the BBC favoured the 'No' campaign compared to just 211 favourable to the 'Yes' campaign. The study also found that news reports, even when they could be argued as balanced overall, were more often than not framed in such a way that the report began with bad news for the Yes campaign. Being ‘balanced’ in the sense of simply giving two sides in a debate equal time could still be considered unfair if the BBC prioritises news stories that are damaging to one side, leads with them and simply allows the other side to respond. The study also found that the BBC tended to ‘personalise’ the issue of independence with the ‘wishes’ of then Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond in a way they did not do with the No campaign’s Alistair Darling. There were subsequently protests by Yes supporters outside the BBC’s Scotland headquarters in Glasgow. All this suggests that even the apparently neutral BBC is not universally trusted and respected in UK politics.

### Conclusion

Overall, the media serves an important function in informing UK citizens of its political system and a positive role in exposing corruption and educating citizens over important issues. Because they can be biased, newspapers have a greater ability to influence than TV media, some would say too much influence, and in some ways arguably a damaging influence when sensationalism and bias can lead to a poorly informed public and misconceptions about UK politics. Some think bias is not exclusive to newspaper and even extends into the BBC. Perhaps as internet and social media takes over, newspaper and TV influence is weakening. Your judgements?
8a) Evaluate / Analyse the ways in which citizens can participate in the political system.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are many ways to participate in and influence the political system other than through voting. Citizens can also sign petitions, join pressure groups, use social media and involve the mainstream media in their cause. The UK Government must respond to any petition on their website that gathers over 10,000 signatures, and the UK Parliament must debate any petition that gathers over 100,000. For instance, in 2017 almost 2 million Brits signed a petition to demand that US President Trump should not be invited into the UK as part of an official state visit. The UK government responded by rejecting this demand, so the influence of petitions should not be exaggerated. However, the fact that they were forced to respond shows that the Government must be responsive and citizens are able to influence politics to a degree.

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic: Income</th>
<th>Social inequalities being reduced</th>
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<tr>
<td>Because women and ethnic minorities are often concentrated in low paid, unpromoted part-time work due to childcare commitments, they have disproportionately benefited from the UK’s National Minimum Wage, which has lifted many out of poverty since its introduction in 1998. In 2015, the UK government announced the introduction of a new ‘National Living Wage’ guaranteeing all workers over 25 a wage of at least £7.20 per hour at present, so this should help the poorest families thereby reducing inequalities.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Economic: Income</th>
<th>Social inequalities continue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>However, neither the minimum wage nor ‘living wage’ has not helped those who are unemployed out of poverty. There are currently over 2 million people unemployed reliant on benefits such as JobSeekers Allowance. The Living Wage Commission (LWC) who campaign for a higher ‘Living Wage’, claim it is too low, being lower than the minimum identified by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation charity for a decent standard of living, and that it fails to take into account varying costs of living in different parts of the UK. Out of 13 million people living in poverty in the UK, 6.7 million are in a family where someone works, the LWC said, and they called the figure a ‘national scandal’. The fact that so many working people in poverty are working suggests the NMW has not successfully tackled inequality and proves that poverty is not isolated to those on benefits. Furthermore, the Trussell Trust food bank charity, says it has handed out over 1 million emergency food parcels in the last year, up from 347,000 the year before. They blame cuts to benefits as the cause of the rapid increase in the need for emergency food supplies. This suggests that welfare cuts are not encouraging the unemployed into work; they are simply pushing them and others reliant on benefits further into poverty.</td>
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There are also wide inequalities in life expectancies. Glasgow is the region with the lowest life expectancy in the UK; 73 for men, 78 for women, both significantly below the UK average of 79 for men and 83 for women. A 2011 BBC documentary ‘Poor Kids’ showed 47% of children with asthma are from the poorest 10% of families and 85% of children living in damp flats suffer breathing problems, further reinforcing that housing inequalities remain and are linked to health inequalities.
Social: Gender

The Equalities Act 2010 forces public sector employers to disclose salary structures in an attempt to close the pay gap. In certain situations, public bodies such as schools or police will be allowed to ‘positively discriminate’ in favour of women to reduce gender inequalities. There has been some evidence of success; 55% of full time university undergraduates, showing that gender inequality is no longer as extensive as it once was.

However, female over-representation at university does not translate into the workforce, where just 44% are female. Such under-representation is true in all areas of life. Women make up just 29% of MPs, 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel.

According to the 2015 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap report, the UK is only the 18th most gender equal country in the world, showing we have some way to go. Women still earn just 80% of men’s average earnings. Childcare commitments continue to make promotion and long-term employment difficult, especially for lone parents, and so gender inequality remains extensive.

Scotland

The ScottishGovt (SNP) are more centre left than the UK Conservative Government, and have pledged to reduce inequality in Scotland, which they have attempted to do by introducing free prescriptions, free school meals for Primaries 1-3 pupils, and free college and university tuition. The latter may make society more equal in the long term as it gives people from low incomes access to further education and the means to achieve. After being re-elected in 2016, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has pledged that her priority will be to close the poverty-related educational attainment gap.

However, there remain wide inequalities in Scotland. A 2013 report by Oxfam Scotland found that the wealthiest households in Scotland are 273 times better off than the most deprived ones and that the gap is widening.

Educational inequalities also persist and begin at a very young age; the Child Poverty Action Group show that by the age of just 3 years old, poorer children are already on average 9 months behind wealthier children in terms of educational development, and this gap continues to grow; for example 27% of pupils at Cathkin High in Cambuslang are entitled to free school meals and just 24% of Cathkin school leavers leave with 5 or more Highers, whereas just 7% of pupils at St Ninian’s in wealthy East Renfrewshire are entitled to free school meals and 73% of its leavers leave with 5 or more Highers. 3 schools in deprived Glasgow - Drumchapel High, Govan High and Lochend High have almost none of their school leavers gaining 5 or more Highers. Free tuition may be helpful, but it does little to prevent the fact that the education gap is well-established long before people reach college or university age, so early intervention is therefore required.

There appears to be a clear link between income and educational attainment. Failure to achieve educationally leads to low income, and low income leads to poor education, as low income does not allow for people to afford houses in high-demand catchment areas within high achieving councils such as East Renfrewshire. This reinforces the argument that to a large extent, many people are born socially disadvantaged.

Overall conclusion on the question
2a) Evaluate / Analyse the causes of social inequality in the UK.

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

Causes are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gender can also be a cause of inequality. On average, women in the UK currently earn just 80% of men’s average earnings. Lack of flexibility in working hours and childcare arrangements may prevent women from finding suitable employment, as might discrimination from employers wary of hiring women for fear they may fall pregnant. Although gender equality may now be enshrined in legislation such as the 2010 Equalities Act, prejudiced attitudes still exist. Consequently, females make up just 29% of MPs, 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel, despite making up half the population. This under-representation suggests gender is a key cause of inequality, and that it is a deep structural problem not of individuals’ own doing.
Individualists, however, argue that it is not the above factors, but **poor individual lifestyle choices** which cause inequality. Poor economic circumstances are the result of an individual’s poor choices, they claim. People who choose to drink, smoke and eat fatty foods to excess whilst not exercising will likely have poorer health than those who lead healthy lifestyles. The number of weight loss operations carried out by the NHS has quadrupled in the last 6 years and obesity has doubled in the last 20 years. Individualists point out that the economic system does not force anyone to make lifestyle choices that result in obesity, only individuals themselves can, and they are therefore the cause of health inequalities. Similarly, alcohol kills 20 per week in Scotland. 21% of the UK smokes and according to Cancer Research UK, 86% of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking, so there is clear evidence that it is lifestyle choices as opposed to government policy which has caused many of the UK’s health inequalities. Journalist Peter Hitchens makes the individualist argument, claiming ‘people have a choice over whether or not they drink or take drugs’ and that people experiencing health inequalities as a result of drug or alcohol consumption are there due to lack of willpower, nothing else, as addiction is a ‘fantasy’. Perhaps some people living in poverty simply choose not to help themselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Either way, alcohol is arguably the main lifestyle cause of health inequalities, and the measures taken by governments to combat it is evidence of this. In 2012, for example, the Scottish Government set a minimum price per unit of alcohol at 50p to tackle the problem of high strength, low cost alcohol. Minimum alcohol pricing has not yet been implemented as it is being challenged by the EU, so it remains to be seen if it will work, but it may help to gradually change the culture of drinking in Scotland. Until binge drinking becomes socially unacceptable in the same way heroin use is, alcohol will continue to negatively affect the health of so many.
Poor diet and lack of exercise also damages health and creates inequalities. The number of weight loss operations carried out by the NHS has quadrupled in the last 6 years and obesity has doubled in the last 20 years, a result of diets high in salt and fat. Again, these are problems associated with poverty although not exclusive to it. Not everyone agrees that poor diet is simply a lifestyle choice though. Poorer people may eat poorly because often fast food is cheaper and more convenient. Better off people can afford better diets, better housing in safer environments, leisure activities that promote good health, and private healthcare. In 2015, journalist George Monbiot wrote an article referencing a report in the medical Journal Lancet based on a study of 176,000 obese people over 9 years. It found that once people had become obese, 98% failed to return to a healthy weight, as biological changes lock people into that condition, meaning it is effectively an incurable disease. This suggests that a lot of health inequalities are not due to lifestyle choices and that people often cannot simply change their circumstances.

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

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

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

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

However, these individuals are the exception, not the rule. Female over-representation at university does not currently translate into the workforce, where just 44% are female. Such under-representation is true in all areas of life. Women currently make up just 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel.
Also, importantly, women currently make up just 29% of MPs. Although this is an increase on the previous Parliament, it is still a significant minority, prompting the Fawcett Society to note that “Britain is a country run largely by men.” They claim there is ‘something unhealthy about the UK’s political culture’ which they identify as ‘aggressive, knock-about and sexist’. Sarah Champion, the MP for Rotherham, has described the levels of sexist abuse she encountered in the Chamber as ‘utterly appalling’. Speaker of the Commons John Bercow has said that some women MPs have told him that the atmosphere at Prime Minister’s Questions is so bad that they no longer attend. The Fawcett Society conclude that UK politics makes women feel ‘neither welcome nor valued’. It is difficult to achieve gender equality when the legislators themselves are considered part of the problem. Until women achieve equal representation in Parliament, or at least until women feel more welcome and valued in that Parliament, the root cause of gender inequality which is discriminatory attitudes, will continue to fail to be addressed.

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

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

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<tr>
<th>Govt policies have tackled inequalities that affect women</th>
<th>Govt policies have failed to tackle inequalities that affect women</th>
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<td>The National Minimum Wage (NMW) helped tackle gender equality. Because women are often concentrated in low paid, unpromoted part-time work due to childcare commitments, they have disproportionately benefited from NMW, which currently stands at £7.20 per hour for workers over 25.</td>
<td>However, the Living Wage Commission argue the NMW is too low, meaning many female lone parents still struggle to afford suitable childcare and consequently rely on benefits rather than seek employment, as it makes more financial sense. Women still earn just 80% of men's average earnings. Childcare commitments and inflexible working hours in many jobs continue to make promotion and long-term employment difficult, especially for lone parents.</td>
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<td>The NMW was partly intended to achieve greater parity in employment between the genders. It has raised the wages of many, including lone parents, which has helped them afford childcare in order to move into work themselves. In this respect there has been some progress: It is estimated that there will be more female than male doctors by 2017, and female MPs increased from 23% to 29% following the 2015 UK general election. Although these positive trends cannot all be attributed to the NMW, arguably, the NMW encouraged women to seek employment in the first place and it is bearing fruit with these encouraging figures.</td>
<td>According to the 2015 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap report, the UK is only the 18th most gender equal country in the world, showing we have some way to go to achieve gender equality.</td>
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<td>Eva Neitzert, the deputy chief executive of Fawcett Society, said the inequality was largely due to the NMW being too low, the impact of the recession, and current UK government austerity measures and cuts to benefits, hitting women hardest as they are more likely than men to be concentrated in low-paid, insecure and short-term jobs, or unemployed and claiming benefits. She said: “Any government committed to gender equality must lift the national minimum wage and ensure that any future welfare changes do not disproportionately impact women.”</td>
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<td>However, female over-representation at university does not currently translate into the workforce, where just 44% are female. Such under-representation is true in all areas of life. Women currently make up just 35% of MSPs, 38% of secondary school headteachers, 18% of senior police officers, 13% of senior judges, 5% of national newspaper editors, and 2% of senior army personnel. Also, importantly, women currently make up just 29% of MPs. Although this is an increase on the previous Parliament, it is still a significant minority, prompting the Fawcett Society to note...</td>
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In saying that, we should remember that the current Prime Minister is female - Theresa May, and of the 5 parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, 3 are currently led by women - SNP leader and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, Conservatives leader Ruth Davidson, and Labour leader Kezia Dugdale. Clearly, this shows progress and reminds us not all women experience social inequality. This shows that although it is limited, progress is being made and that arguably Government policies aimed at promoting the status of women are paying off.

that “Britain is a country run largely by men.” They claim there is ‘something unhealthy about the UK’s political culture’ which they identify as ‘aggressive, knock-about and sexist’. Sarah Champion, the MP for Rotherham, has described the levels of sexist abuse she encountered in the Chamber as ‘utterly appalling’. Speaker of the Commons John Bercow has said that some women MPs have told him that the atmosphere at Prime Minister’s Questions is so bad that they no longer attend. The Fawcett Society conclude that UK politics makes women feel ‘neither welcome nor valued’. It is difficult to achieve gender equality when the legislators themselves are considered part of the problem. Until women achieve equal representation in Parliament, or at least until women feel more welcome and valued in that Parliament, the root cause of gender inequality which is discriminatory attitudes, will continue to fail to be addressed. The Government has failed to address this problem and does not appear to be taking it as seriously as they ought to.

In conclusion, clearly some women succeed in the UK. The minority of women who do may not feel that social inequality is a problem that affects them greatly, but the overall picture shows that as a whole, women are considerably and negatively affected in their experience of social inequality. Although the Government has made some limited progress in some areas - notably education - unfortunately despite a raft of equality legislation, there is little that can be done to outlaw outdated and discriminatory attitudes. This has resulted in women suffering through income, employment, and even sexism in the House of Commons. There remain large barriers to women achieving equality with men in the UK today, and government policies have been very limited in tackling this problem. In order to achieve greater gender equality, the government should implement a policy of free or heavily subsidised childcare, which would incentivise work and have a long-term beneficial impact.
6a) Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of government policies to tackle social inequalities

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

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

- Benefits
- Housing
- Health
- Education

(Consider isolated factor first, but discuss the other 3 as alternatives)

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

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

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

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

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

Effective

Benefits / Welfare system

UK citizens with no source of income or on a low income are helped by a range of welfare benefits provided by the UK gov’t to meet their needs. These include the state pension for the elderly in retirement, child benefit to help with the cost of raising children, and Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) to help the unemployed while they are searching for a job. An unemployed person over 25 and seeking work can claim up to £73 per week in JSA. Another benefit - Child benefit - is paid to lower income families to help with the costs of raising children. The amount currently paid is £20.70 per week for the eldest child and £13.70 for each additional child. This used to be a universal benefit paid to all parents regardless of income, but the gov’t recently made it means-tested instead, meaning only lower-income families receive it. Arguably this helps tackle inequality as it is targeted at those who need it most, and does not help the rich who can already help themselves without taxpayers’ money.

The principle of having a benefits system is widely supported by the British public. According to a 2011 IPSOS Mori poll, 92% of people agreed that ‘we must have a benefits system that provides a safety net for everyone who needs it.’

The UK gov’t is currently cutting benefits. They say this will reduce poverty as it will reduce welfare dependency and people who are currently on benefits will be encouraged to get themselves into work and out of poverty.

Less effective

Benefits / Welfare system

Some people think the benefits system is ineffective as it is too generous and creates a ‘something for nothing culture’ where people rely too much on benefits rather than work hard to help themselves. The 2011 IPSOS Mori poll showed that 72% agreed that ‘the benefits bill should be cut’. This shows that while in principle the public agree that there should be a benefits system, they also think it should be stricter and that it is not currently serving its purpose.

Others think benefits are currently being mismanaged by the UK government for different reasons; they are not generous enough, and are not tackling inequality but making it worse. Recent cuts to benefits are hitting the poorest hardest and widening economic inequality. The Trussell Trust food bank charity, says it has handed out over 1 million emergency food parcels in the last year, up from 347,000 the year before. They blame cuts to benefits as the cause of the rapid increase in the need for emergency food supplies. This suggests that cuts to benefits are not encouraging the unemployed into work, they are simply pushing them and others reliant on benefits further into poverty.
<table>
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<th>Housing</th>
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<td>Under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, the UK Conservative government gave people the ‘right to buy’ their council home from the Government and make it their own private property. In 2015 the current Conservative UK government announced that they would extend this right to also apply include tenants in housing associations, who would get a loan or a discount from the Government to buy their own home - known as ‘help to buy’. This arguably reduces inequality as it gives poorer people in council housing the right to a home at subsidised cost, and to be more socially mobile and potentially sell their home for profit. This policy may also reduce the housing benefit bill, freeing up money to reduce inequalities in other areas.</td>
<td>However, some think the UK government’s ‘right to buy’ and ‘help to buy’ have actually widened social inequality, not reduced it, as it has taken most of the council housing stock away, especially the best council houses in the best areas, leaving a shortage of council houses and long waiting lists for low income people seeking one. These people are often then forced to rent in the private sector from private landlords who charge high rates they struggle to afford, and recent cuts to housing benefit has hit them hard. Housing is a devolved matter and the Scottish Parliament has scrapped the right to buy scheme in Scotland, which they say will protect council houses for those who need them. They have pledged to build 35,000 additional council houses by 2021, which if met should tackle housing inequality in Scotland.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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<td>Across the UK, there is a taxpayer funded NHS free to use at the point of service. Without it, poorer people would struggle to afford healthcare. The UK’s health has improved greatly since the NHS was introduced in 1948. In many ways it is a victim of its own success; because we have such high expectations of it, we are quick to criticise when it fails to meet the high standards we have become accustomed to. An ageing population is putting strain on the NHS so if we are to maintain its standards we may have to lower our expectations or be willing to pay more tax to fund it.</td>
<td>However, critics claim the NHS is not effective in tackling inequality as it is under-staffed and under-funded. Recent media coverage has concentrated on the winter pressures faced by Accident and Emergency departments across the UK. Many of these departments have failed to meet waiting times targets. Many in the UK also use private health care. This creates a divide in society. Those who can afford to go private can skip the queue and those who can’t have to wait for a poorer service from the NHS.</td>
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<td>In 2011 the Scottish Government <strong>abolished prescription charges</strong>. The aim was to encourage poorer people to seek medical treatment. Since prescriptions became free in Scotland, the number of items given out for long-term conditions such as asthma and diabetes has increased year on year, suggesting people must need them but could previously not afford them. This should reduce health inequalities as it will prevent illnesses becoming more serious longer term.</td>
<td>However, prescription charges still apply in England, causing regional inequalities across the UK, and in any case free prescriptions are not supported by everyone in Scotland. As a universal benefit, even rich people get free prescriptions in Scotland. Scottish Conservatives leader Ruth Davidson says she would scrap free prescriptions and make them means tested. People like her who oppose universalism think the best way to tackle inequality is to target services at the poorest instead of using taxpayers’ money to make them free for everyone.</td>
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<td>The Scottish Gov’t also now provide <strong>free school meals to all school children in Primaries 1-3</strong>. Previously, this was means tested, and just 33,000 children were eligible to claim free school meals, but now that it is universal, an additional 135,000 children in P1-3 get a free meal provided at lunch. This should tackle child poverty and improve health as it will ensure a nutritious meal for all, tackling obesity and ensuring pupils’ wellbeing at school, thus improving their education. More importantly, it will encourage children who were already entitled to a free lunch to use their entitlement, as the stigma to claim is removed now that everyone is entitled.</td>
<td>In addition, free prescriptions only help tackle existing illnesses and conditions, they do not tackle the root cause of illnesses such as asthma - often damp housing. There remain widespread health inequalities in Scotland, and life expectancy in Scotland is lower than in England. It remains to be seen whether free prescriptions can close this gap longer term.</td>
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State education at primary and secondary level is free all across the UK. Pupils from poor and wealthy backgrounds often attend the same schools and receive exactly the same education, meaning education should in theory contribute to equality. The Scottish Gov’t have abolished tuition fees which should give students from poorer backgrounds access to further education without creating debt for themselves, and provides them the means to get a good job and therefore not be reliant on benefits later in life, thereby reducing educational inequalities and income inequalities in the long term.

However, while free tuition in Scotland may be helpful to some working class students, it does little to prevent the fact that the education gap is well-established long before people reach college or university age. Studies by the Child Poverty Action Group show that by the age of 3 years old, poorer children are already on average 9 months behind wealthier children in terms of educational development, and this gap continues to grow: for example 27% of pupils at Cathkin High in Cambuslang are entitled to free school meals and just 24% of Cathkin school leavers leave with 5 or more Highers, whereas just 7% of pupils at St Ninian’s in well-off East Renfrewshire are entitled to free school meals and 73% of its leavers leave with 5 or more Highers. 3 schools in deprived Glasgow - Drumchapel High, Govan High and Lochend High score zero or close to zero of their school leavers gaining 5 or more Highers. There appears to be a clear correlation between income and educational attainment.

Because educational inequality begins at a young age, early intervention is therefore required. This has prompted Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon to pledge that her government’s key priority will be closing the poverty-related attainment gap in Scotland.

Overall, refer to isolated factor, but remind us there are other ways to tackle inequality

Conclusion on the question.
7. Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of different ways to tackle inequality

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

Overall, give conclusion on which is the most effective means of tackling inequality - government, charities, or individualistic approaches, and justify it....
World power: The USA

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

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

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

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<th>Powers of President / Executive over Congress / SC</th>
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<td>The US President is <strong>Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces</strong>. They are in charge of national security and can order the use of troops abroad in ‘Executive actions’ that do not require permission of Congress. For example in 2014 President Obama ordered US airstrikes targeting Islamic State fighters in Syria, without a vote from Congress, showing that in some ways the political system is unable to check the power of Government. Another example of a President using executive powers is that in 2017 President Trump issued an executive order which temporarily banned refugees and national citizens of 7 Muslim majority countries from entering the US, leading to it being labelled a ‘Muslim ban’. Trump was able to do this without the approval of Congress, showing Executive power.</td>
<td>However, the <strong>separation of powers</strong> as outlined in the Constitution ensures the Executive branch of government is held in check by the other 2 branches - the Legislative and Judicial branches. A series of <strong>checks and balances</strong> are built into the US system of government to ensure no individual (e.g. President) or branch can become too powerful. The President, both houses of Congress (the Senate and House of Representatives), as well as a majority of the 9 Supreme Court judges all have to approve a bill before it becomes law. This makes law-making a slow and often difficult process that usually makes compromise necessary, ensuring the President’s power is limited. The President may face particular problems pushing through his legislative agenda if <strong>Congress is controlled by the opposing party</strong>. For instance, although former President Obama was a Democrat, both Houses of Congress were controlled by Republican majorities at the end of his term in 2016, meaning his wishes were often blocked. For example, despite Obama’s repeated calls for stricter gun control laws including tougher background checks for gun purchases, he was thwarted by Congress during his term in office and could not pass such laws. Obama said his inability to implement ‘sufficient and common sense’ gun controls was the ‘greatest frustration of his presidency’. This shows he had to make significant compromises with a Republican majority in Congress, showing the US political system can be hugely effective in checking the power of Government as the Constitution deliberately ensures the separation of powers.</td>
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The President has the power of appointment; President appoints Secretaries of State to their Cabinet- e.g. Obama appointed Joe Biden his Vice President and John Kerry as US Secretary of State. President Trump is currently deciding on his cabinet appointments, and although he needs Senate approval for them, this should be straightforward as starting from 2017, the Republicans control both houses of Congress as well as the Presidency.

The US Constitution allows that a President can be **impeached** by Congress if they commit crimes such as treason, bribery or perjury. This would require a majority vote in the House of Representatives and a two thirds vote in the Senate. In 1998 the House of Representatives voted to impeach President Bill Clinton for lying under oath to cover up an affair he had had with a woman named Monica Lewinsky, but the Senate voted not to convict him, so Clinton continued in office.
The President also nominates Supreme Court judges and can nominate judges who share their political views so they do not block legislation the President wants. Although these nominations do have to be confirmed by the Senate, President elect Trump will likely nominate a sympathetic, Republican leaning Supreme Court judge to the one current vacancy in 2017, and will likely get the approval of the Senate as they have a Republican majority. This will mean the balance of the judges in the Supreme Court will probably be 5-4 who are more ideologically sympathetic to Republican beliefs. This suggests President Trump will have significant power, perhaps more so than any other President in recent memory, as his party will control all 3 branches of Government, which makes it difficult to check him as the Constitution intended.

In 1974, Republican President Nixon resigned before he was impeached following the ‘Watergate’ scandal, where Republican staff burgled the Watergate hotel in Washington D.C., the Democrats’ headquarters - in order to find out their campaign strategies. Nixon was found to have been involved in covering this scandal up and was effectively forced to resign or face impeachment. This shows the limitation of Presidential power and the power of Congress to hold the President to account.

Although not a member of Congress and unable to personally initiate bills, he or she can put pressure on members of Congress from their own party to support bills he or she wants passed - e.g. Obama’s PPACA- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, passed in 2010- demonstrating the President’s power to implement laws they want passed, perhaps as only loyal representatives in Congress will be considered for Cabinet positions by the President.

Even if the President signs a bill passed by Congress, the Supreme Court has the power to stop any law if a majority of 9 Judges decide it is unconstitutional. This shows the power of the political system to block the Executive’s wishes, as the President cannot dictate who judges are without Senate agreement. In any case, the Supreme Court’s job is not to politically support or oppose the President, but to independently uphold the Constitution, so even though President Trump may have Republican leaning judges forming the majority of the Supreme Court, they should still block him from approving unconstitutional laws. For example, in 2016 Donald Trump tweeted that he believes anyone who burns the American flag should be imprisoned, but the Supreme Court would likely block this if it ever came to a bill as it would violate the Constitutional First Amendment to freedom of speech.

The President also has power of veto. This means that if Congress passes a bill the President objects to, he or she can simply refuse to sign it into law. Obama used the veto five times. In practice Presidents can threaten to use their veto many more times, persuading Congress not to waste time passing a bill that will never become law, so this represents significant power for the President. On all 5 occasions Obama has used his veto, Congress has then failed to achieve the two thirds majority required in both houses to overturn it. It is very difficult to overturn a Presidential veto as Congress is rarely so unbalanced that one party has a two thirds majority in both chambers. This demonstrates the limitations of the political system at times to check the Government.

Technically though Congress can override a Presidential veto by a two-thirds majority vote in both houses of Congress. The last time Congress successfully overrode a Presidential veto was in 2008 during George W Bush’s Presidency. President Bush wanted to allow doctors’ pay to be cut, but the override from Congress prevented him getting his way. Although it is very difficult, this shows it is possible for the political system to overturn a veto so long as there is broad political will to do so.

Overall...conclusion on the question.
2a) With reference to a world power you have studied:

Evaluate / Analyse the political rights and responsibilities of citizens.

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

Discuss with reference to a world power you have studied

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<th>Constitutional rights should be protected</th>
<th>Constitutional rights should be amended/removed</th>
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<td>America’s 1st amendment to the Constitution guarantees citizens the right to freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Freedom of speech and expression are vital to the health of any democracy. In order for the Government to be held to account, citizens and newspapers must be free to criticise them.</td>
<td>However, President Trump was elected in 2016 after promising to temporarily ban Muslims from entering America, and he also tweeted suggesting people who burn the American flag should be imprisoned. Both these pledges, if they ever materialise, would surely breach the 1st Amendment and suggest that Constitutional rights may not be safe forever.</td>
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<td>America’s 2nd amendment to the Constitution allows citizens the right to ‘keep and bear arms’. This gives them the right to possess and if necessary use guns in self-defence. Many Americans see this right as protection against tyrannical government as the USA became independent by defeating the British army with guns. Many are therefore wary that any attempt to strip them of their gun rights would leave them defenceless against any similar occupation in future. They also may worry that if their 2nd amendment right is taken away, other constitutional rights could be threatened too. Radio host Alex Jones defended the 2nd amendment in a 2013 debate with British journalist Piers Morgan who wants stricter gun control. Referencing American independence, Jones said: “1776 will commence again if you try to take our firearms, we will not relinquish them.” This shows how strongly some feel about gun rights, confirmed by the fact that 5 million Americans are members of pro 2nd amendment pressure group the National Rifle Association.</td>
<td>However, many Americans are opposed to the 2nd amendment and point out that the Constitution was written over 230 years ago and that now they are a long-established independent country, US citizens no longer have to fear tyranny and stricter gun controls should therefore be introduced. Critics of the 2nd amendment also point out that it has been abused recently in a spate of mass murders. For instance, in 2015, 14 people were killed in a mass shooting in California. This shows that guns are not being used responsibly for the defensive purposes the Constitution intended.</td>
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<td>Despite former President Obama’s repeated calls for stricter gun control laws including tougher background checks for gun purchases, he failed to win support from Congress. The fact that Congress would not approve his proposals suggests there is much support for second amendment rights. Most Americans also seem to support the 2nd amendment. According to a 2015 poll by Pew Research Centre, 52% believed protecting gun ownership rights was more important than controlling gun ownership, with 46% saying the reverse, so there is clearly a significant degree of support for second amendment rights.</td>
<td>Former President Obama has said his inability to implement ‘sufficient and common sense’ gun controls was the ‘greatest frustration of his presidency’. Obama pointed out that gun rights are infringing on other constitutional rights, as mass shootings have taken place as Americans have tried to exercise rights such as attending worship services or watching a movie. He said “The right to bear arms is not more important than the right to worship freely or peaceably assemble.”</td>
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The fact that a former President wants stricter gun control shows that there is political will at the very top level of the Executive branch, supported by 46% of Americans according to the Pew Research poll, confirming that there is significant opposition to full 2nd amendment rights.
| The 4th amendment to the Constitution essentially guarantees citizens the right to privacy unless the government has ‘probable cause’ of involvement in crime. A debate over the extent to which the US Government are respecting citizens’ 4th amendment rights was sparked by former National Security Agency (NSA) employee and whistleblower Edward Snowden’s revelations of extensive internet and phone surveillance by the US Government. He revealed that the NSA was spying on millions of ordinary Americans, intercepting and collecting their telephone calls and emails, and accessing their social media profiles. Snowden, who is currently claiming political asylum in Russia as a result of his leaks, has said:  

“I do not want to live in a world where everything I do and say is recorded.”  

He believes the NSA spying programme breaches the 4th amendment, saying:  

“The 4th Amendment as it was written no longer exists. Now all of our data -our private communications, who we talk to, what you buy, what you read, who we love, can be collected without any suspicion of wrongdoing on our part, without any underlying justification.”  

The 4th amendment only allows government invasion of privacy ‘upon probable cause’ of a crime being committed but currently they are violating privacy of ordinary Americans they have no reason to suspect of criminal or terrorist activity.  

| However, in the debate over the extent to which civil liberties can be encroached upon in the interests of national security, some have claimed the interests of national security are greater. President Obama said:  

“You can’t have 100% security and then also have 100% privacy and zero inconvenience; we’re going to have to make some choices as a society.”  

Perhaps the 4th amendment is obstructing national security and should be diluted. However, a 2014 Gallup opinion poll found that just 29% of Americans support closing Guantanamo while 66% would keep it open. This shows that the majority of Americans value what they consider to be the national security benefits brought about by indefinitely detaining suspected terrorists over 5th amendment rights, and suggests they do not feel as strongly about protecting the 5th amendment as they do other rights.  

Your thoughts on the above.  

Conclusion on the question. |
3a) With reference to a world power you have studied:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The above 4 are broadly asking the same thing, but tweak your wording to suit the question.

The US Constitution demands a democratic and republican form of government. Democracy is essentially the ability of citizens to exercise rights and to participate in and influence the political process. This essay will measure this ability...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratic / Citizens can participate and influence</th>
<th>Undemocratic / Citizens don’t participate / influence</th>
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| The Democracy Index is an annual ranking of countries compiled by the independent group the Economist Intelligence Unit. It measures the degree of democracy in countries according to among other things the rights of citizens, the functioning of government, and the ability of citizens to participate and influence the political system. Its 2015 publication ranked the USA as 20th most democratic country of 167 countries ranked. While not perfect, it does show the USA is at least comparably democratic and open to participation and influence from citizens. | However, many Americans do not participate at all in politics. In the 2016 Presidential election, turnout was estimated at just 58%, meaning 42% of the electorate, or 95 million Americans who were entitled to vote, chose not to exercise this right. Turnout was even lower in the 2014 midterm elections to elect Congress, (36%). These are worryingly low figures and suggest America is perhaps not a healthy democracy where people feel able to participate and influence the political process. Some voters do not feel there is a significant enough difference between the main parties to merit voting, and that neither fully represents them. This may explain why America elected Donald Trump President in 2016; as a media personality with no political experience, he was considered to be outside of ‘the establishment’.

Central to democracy is citizens’ rights to elect their government. Although the Constitution did not originally extend voting rights to blacks or women, today all US citizens have full voting rights and their votes can count. Although they ordinarily participate less in politics as a result of poor representation, many blacks mobilised in 2008 to campaign for, fund, and elect the first black President in American history; Barack Obama, and he was re-elected in 2012. For the first time in US history, in 2012 black voter turnout was higher than white voter turnout, and significantly 93% of blacks voted the winning candidate; Obama. This shows that previously disenfranchised citizens can not only participate in the political process, but they can meaningfully influence it. | There are smaller parties, but in reality the US is a two party system dominated by the Democrats and the Republicans, so supporters of other parties may feel their vote would be wasted and consequently feel shut out of the electoral process. Furthermore, Bernie Sanders, a Democrat candidate for the 2016 Presidential election, has warned that the money spent on election campaigns is in danger of turning the US into an ‘oligarchy’, where only the super-rich can fund and win elections, meaning poor people will not be represented well and therefore not participate. |

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In particular, ethnic minorities participate less. This results in a lack of representation; there are currently just 3 black Senators of 100, which in turn fuels the cycle of apathy. Hispanics may also participate less due to language barriers. Since equality of participation and representation are vital to a functioning democracy, the USA must be said to be lacking in this regard.

Also, voter turnout is often lower in ‘safe states’, where a state is considered ‘safe’ for one party or candidate. Presidential elections are only truly competitive in approximately 10 ‘swing states’ which effectively decide the outcome. Consequently, candidates / parties campaign heavily in these states and basically ignore safe states, which isn’t democratic.

The 1st amendment guarantees the right to freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Many Americans have used this opportunity to join a pressure group to campaign for a cause they believe in, some of which are influential. For instance, 5 million Americans are members of the National Rifle Association (NRA) who campaign to protect 2nd amendment rights to keep and bear arms. They have successfully lobbied Congress to preserve gun rights. It could be claimed this damages democracy as it means decisions are made by a small majority of wealthy, powerful individuals.

Whether or not such influential pressure groups are good for democracy is up for debate, but what is unquestionable is that they do represent clear opportunities for at least some people to participate and influence the political process.

However, to too many Americans, there remains an inability to meaningfully participate and influence a somewhat closed political process. In 2014, a black man named Eric Garner was stopped by New York police on suspicion of selling unlicensed cigarettes. When Garner denied this, he was arrested and placed in a chokehold by a policeman. The incident was filmed by Garner’s friend and Garner is heard repeatedly saying he couldn’t breathe. One hour later he was dead as a result of compression to his neck and chest caused by the police restraint. Despite the incident being filmed, the policeman was not charged. This sparked outrage and protests across America, with many black Americans feeling that they are second class citizens in a racist justice system. Despite the protests, they have been unable to affect changes. Former President Obama himself admitted:

“To many Americans feel deep unfairness when it comes to the gap between our professed ideals and how laws are applied on a day to day basis.”

Central to any democracy is the legal equality of all its citizens, but the US still has a major racism problem.

There is a ‘We the People’ petition site on the White House website, where citizens can start and sign petitions. Those that gain 100,000 signatures within 30 days receive a response. In 2012 a petition calling for it to be made legal to unlock mobile phones to be used on any network reached over 100,000 signatures and the White House then urged Congress to do this, which they did. This shows that people can participate in and influence the political process effectively, and that the political system is responsive to the needs of people, which is democratic.

The vast majority of petitions, however, are rejected, regardless of the number of signatures. Several other petitions which meet the criteria for a response have been left unanswered for months or years, which calls into question the effectiveness or democratic nature of the petition system.

Overall...conclusion on the question.
4. With reference to a world power you have studied:

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

**Inequality** is a current and significant socio-economic issue which exists in the USA. There are widespread *wealth inequalities*. The 2012 documentary ‘Park Avenue’ showed that the richest 400 Americans own the same wealth as the 150 million poorest Americans, the richest 1% of Americans own 40% of the nation’s wealth and the poorest 20% own just 1%. The wage gap between the richest and poorest 20% is $170,000 today whereas in 1992 it was $130,000. This shows that not only is inequality in the USA extensive, it is growing.

Inequality is largely *divided along racial lines*. 8% of whites live in poverty compared to 23% of blacks and 24% of Hispanics. Average annual income is $48,000 for whites, $30,000 for blacks and $33,000 for Hispanics. 8% of whites are unemployed, 10% of blacks are.

These inequalities have on knock on **health and educational consequences**. Not all schools are equal in the USA and everyone does not get the same chance of a good education. Therefore many Americans start their lives at a disadvantage. Whites are more likely to attend good schools in the suburbs and be able to afford college and university fees, whereas ethnic minorities are more likely to attend poor, low achieving inner-city schools, and many cannot afford college and university fees. The average cost to attend Harvard University, for example, is over $50,000 per year. Students from poorer families often struggle to pay such fees or get themselves into a lot of debt by going to university, which impacts them their whole life as they struggle to repay it.

Also, **America does not have an NHS funded by taxation like the UK**. Instead, it is the responsibility of individuals to meet their own health needs by buying health insurance from a private healthcare company such as Cigna, Humana, or Kaiser Permanente. As many cannot afford it, they choose to go uninsured. Currently 10% of the population do not have health insurance and therefore may avoid seeking treatment for illnesses which then deteriorate. Again, this is divided along racial lines; 9% of whites are uninsured; the figure is 19% for blacks and 33% for Hispanics. Consequently, there are extensive health inequalities; for instance black life expectancy is just 73 compared to 78 for whites.

An impact of health inequalities is that the US Government has responded by implementing legislation to reduce it, such as the **2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)** sometimes shortened to **ACA** and nicknamed ‘Obamacare’, which makes it easier than it previously was for those on low incomes to get health insurance, provides government subsidies to achieve this, and makes it more difficult for health insurance companies to deny insurance to those applying for it because of a poor financial or health history. The law rules that all Americans must have health insurance or face a penalty. Since its passage into law in 2010, 20 million more Americans have gained health insurance coverage and the numbers of uninsured Americans has dropped from 18% to 10%. As the penalty for going uninsured gets higher each year, the numbers of uninsured and therefore health inequalities is likely to decrease. The majority of those that benefit will be ethnic minorities since they are disproportionately concentrated amongst the poorest Americans. However, health inequalities may increase even further in the coming years as new President Trump has pledged to repeal the ACA without specifying what if anything it will be replaced with.
There is also considerable political inequality. Racial inequalities may in part be due to the lack of ethnic minority representation in Congress. Ethnic minority voter turnout is generally lower than white turnout. This leads to a lack of ethnic minority representation. For instance, of 100 Senators, just 3 are currently black. Some Hispanics may participate less due to language barriers. With the vast majority of political representatives being white, and the majority of voters being white, inevitably it does not appear to be a political priority to implement policies aimed at reducing racial inequalities, which in turn fuels the cycle of apathy among ethnic minorities who often feel disconnected from politics, meaning they continue to suffer inequality.

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

To conclude, inequalities exist in the USA and are extensive because it has a capitalist economic system, broadly believes in free market economic principles and individual responsibility. These are principles over which the 2 major political parties - Democrat and Republican - are largely in agreement with. This means that some inequality is inevitable and acceptable and not necessarily seen as a major problem needing ‘solved’ by the Government. There is a prevailing individualist view that the state is not responsible for reducing inequality, or at least not economic inequality. Jacob Hacker, Professor of Political Science at Yale University has said ‘Americans are not of the view that all inequalities of wealth or income are unjust’, sentiments echoed by Republican Congressman Paul Ryan who says ‘if we go down the path where we put the government in place to equalise people’s lives, we’ll all be more equally miserable.’ It is therefore unlikely that inequalities will be significantly reduced in the foreseeable future while both major political parties and a significant portion of American public opinion does not believe in the need to reduce wealth inequality, and in fact believe it is a price worth paying for allowing the pursuit of wealth and individual freedoms. However, there is evidence that the Americans public believe the inequality gap is now too wide. According to a 2015 Gallup poll, 52% of Americans say the government should redistribute wealth by taxing the rich more, the highest percent saying this since Gallup first started asking the question in 1998.
5. With reference to a world power you have studied

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

Inequality is a current and significant socio-economic issue in America, and it greatly affects ethnic minorities specifically. There are widespread wealth inequalities which are largely divided along racial lines. 8% of whites live in poverty compared to 23% of blacks and 24% of Hispanics. Average annual income is $48,000 for whites, $30,000 for blacks and $33,000 for Hispanics. 8% of whites are unemployed, 10% of blacks are.

These inequalities have an impact on health and educational consequences for ethnic minorities. Not all schools are equal in the USA and everyone does not get the same chance of a good education. Therefore many Americans start their lives at a disadvantage. Whites are more likely to attend good schools in the suburbs and be able to afford college and university fees, whereas ethnic minorities are more likely to attend poor, low achieving inner-city schools, and many cannot afford college and university fees. The average cost to attend Harvard University, for example, is over $50,000 per year. Students from poorer (often ethnic minority) families often struggle to pay such fees or get themselves into a lot of debt by going to university, which impacts them their whole life as they struggle to repay it.

Also, America does not have an NHS funded by taxation like the UK. Instead, it is the responsibility of individuals to meet their own health needs by buying health insurance from a private healthcare company such as Cigna, Humana, or Kaiser Permanente. As many cannot afford it, they choose to go uninsured. Currently 10% of the population do not have health insurance and therefore may avoid seeking treatment for illnesses which then deteriorate. Again, this is divided along racial lines; 9% of whites are uninsured; the figure is 19% for blacks and 33% for Hispanics. Consequently, there are extensive health inequalities; for instance black life expectancy is just 73 compared to 78 for whites.

An impact of health inequalities amongst different ethnic groups is that the US Government has responded by implementing legislation to reduce it, such as the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) sometimes shortened to ACA and nicknamed ‘Obamacare’, which makes it easier than it previously was for those on low incomes to get health insurance, provides government subsidies to achieve this, and makes it more difficult for health insurance companies to deny insurance to those applying for it because of a poor financial or health history. The law rules that all Americans must have health insurance or face a penalty. Since its passage into law in 2010, 20 million more Americans have gained health insurance coverage and the numbers of uninsured Americans has dropped from 18% to 10%. As the penalty for going uninsured gets higher each year, the numbers of uninsured and therefore health inequalities is likely to decrease. The majority of those that benefit will be ethnic minorities since they are disproportionately concentrated amongst the poorest Americans. However, health inequalities may increase even further in the coming years as new President Trump has pledged to repeal the ACA without specifying what if anything it will be replaced with.
There is also considerable political inequality that affects ethnic minorities. Racial inequalities may in part be due to the lack of ethnic minority representation in Congress. Ethnic minority voter turnout is generally lower than white turnout. This leads to a lack of ethnic minority representation. For instance, of 100 Senators, just 3 are currently black. Some Hispanics may participate less due to language barriers. With the vast majority of political representatives being white, and the majority of voters being white, inevitably it does not appear to be a political priority to implement policies aimed at reducing racial inequalities, which in turn fuels the cycle of apathy among ethnic minorities who often feel disconnected from politics, meaning they continue to suffer inequality.

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

To conclude, inequalities in the USA are extensive and are largely racial in their nature. Racial inequalities exist in the USA partly because of a fairly recent history of slavery and racism, but also because the USA has a capitalist economic system, broadly believes in free market economic principles and individual responsibility, as inequalities affecting ethnic minorities are so closely tied in with wealth inequalities. The 2 major political parties - Democrat and Republican - are largely in agreement with capitalist principles. This means that some inequality is inevitable and acceptable and not necessarily seen as a major problem needing ‘solved’ by the Government. There is a prevailing individualist view that the state is not responsible for reducing inequality, or at least not economic inequality. Jacob Hacker, Professor of Political Science at Yale University has said ‘Americans are not of the view that all inequalities of wealth or income are unjust’, sentiments echoed by Republican Congressman Paul Ryan who says ‘if we go down the path where we put the government in place to equalise people’s lives, we’ll all be more equally miserable.’ It is therefore unlikely that racial inequalities will be significantly reduced in the foreseeable future while both major political parties and a significant portion of American public opinion does not believe in the need to reduce wealth inequality, and in fact believe it is a price worth paying for allowing the pursuit of wealth and individual freedoms.
6. With reference to a world power you have studied:

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

Inequality is a significant socio-economic issue which exists in the USA, and the Government has recently taken some measures aimed at reducing inequality...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gov’t has effectively responded to inequality</th>
<th>Gov’t has not effectively responded to inequality</th>
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<tr>
<td>The 2007 Fair Minimum Wage Act sets the federal minimum wage in America at $7.25 per hour and is applied to all workers engaged in ‘interstate commerce’. Arguably it has been effective, as before it came into law approximately 3 million workers paid by the hour were paid below $7.25 an hour, so it will have helped them. The jobs most likely to benefit from the Act are the lowest paid ones - which tend to be the ones ethnic minorities do. Since it has only increased the wages of these lowest paid workers and not those who already earned above it, it has helped some escape poverty.</td>
<td>However, the Act has not proven very effective as tipped jobs such as waiters and bartenders are exempt. They can be paid a minimum of $2.13 per hour so clear wage inequalities continue. Also, while states cannot pay lower than the minimum, they can pay higher, which 29 of 50 states do. For example, the states of Massachusetts and Washington pay $11 per hour, the highest of all. This simply creates more inequality between the states that pay the exact minimum and the states that pay more. Furthermore, despite the Act, significant economic inequalities remain. A 2012 documentary ‘Park Avenue’ showed the richest 400 Americans own the same wealth as the 150 million poorest, the richest 1% of Americans own 40% of the nation’s wealth and the poorest 20% own just 1%. The wage gap between the richest 20% and poorest 20% is $170,000 today whereas in 1992 it was $130,000. This shows not only is US inequality extensive, it is growing. Thus, the Act has helped a small minority but has failed to reduce vast wealth inequalities.</td>
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In saying that, under President Obama the US Government made reducing health inequalities a priority and in 2010 they passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), often shortened to the ‘ACA’ and nicknamed ‘Obamacare’. This law came into effect in 2014. It makes it easier than it previously was for those on low incomes to get health insurance and provides government subsidies to achieve this. It also makes it more difficult for health insurance companies to deny insurance to those applying for it because of a poor financial or health history. However, PPACA has not introduced an NHS style system of universal health care to all Americans. Health care and insurance is still by provided by private companies like Cigna, Humana and Kaiser Permanente, and insurance can still be very expensive. The average cost of a mid-tier insurance plan is $328 per month (approximately $4,000 per year), which is still very expensive for poorer Americans, and clear inequalities in health continue to exist, such as the fact that white life expectancy is 78 whilst black life expectancy is just 73.
The law rules that all Americans must have health insurance or pay a fee, so it reduced inequalities of access to health care. Since it became law, the percentage of uninsured Americans has dropped from 18% to 10%. Previously, many people on low incomes would risk going without health insurance, especially if they had a poor health history, as their insurance would often be very expensive or they could be denied insurance entirely, so they could not afford medical treatment if they fell ill and would not see their doctor. This caused greater health inequalities between the richest who could afford insurance, and the poorest who could not. The law has therefore reduced inequalities by allowing the poorest more access to health insurance and therefore health care.

Part of the reason why the Government have not significantly reduced inequalities is because the USA has a capitalist economic system, broadly believes in free market economic principles and individual responsibility. The 2 major political parties - Democrat and Republican - are largely in agreement with capitalist principles. This means that some inequality is inevitable and acceptable and not necessarily seen as a major problem needing ‘solved’ by the Government. There is a prevailing individualist view that the state is not responsible for reducing inequality, or at least not economic inequality. Jacob Hacker, Professor of Political Science at Yale University says: ‘Americans are not of the view that all inequalities of wealth or income are unjust’, echoed by Republican Congressman Paul Ryan who says: ‘If we go down the path where we put the government in place to equalise people’s lives, we’ll all be more equally miserable.’

Perhaps the Government have not ‘failed’ to reduce inequality, they have simply not tried as it is not considered a problem. Clearly therefore, it is unlikely that inequalities will be significantly reduced in the near future while a large portion of American opinion does not believe this is necessary, and in fact believe inequality is a price worth paying for allowing the pursuit of wealth and individual freedoms.

Overall...conclusion on the question.
7. With reference to a world power you have studied:

a) Evaluate / Analyse their influence in international relations.
b) Evaluate / Analyse their involvement in international organisations
c) Evaluate / Analyse their relationship with other countries
d) Evaluate / Analyse their ability to influence other countries

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

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

The US also uses its UN veto power to defend its close ally Israel. Since 1972, the US has used its veto more than any other country. In 2011, for instance, they vetoed a resolution condemning the building of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, meaning the resolution failed. The US’s permanent member status in the UN Security Council clearly gives it considerable leverage to influence politics and to shape policy in the interests of itself and its allies.

However, in 2016, the US refused to veto a UN resolution condemning Israeli settlement building in Palestinian territory as violating international law, therefore allowing the resolution to pass, and sparking anger from Israel. This indicated a change in relations between the US and Israel, with then US Secretary of State John Kerry criticising Israeli settlement building as a threat to peace, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responding that Kerry was ‘skewed’ against Israel. In response to the heightened tension between both countries, Donald Trump (at the time President elect) tweeted ‘we cannot continue to let Israel be treated with such total disrespect’, suggesting he intends to return to good relations with them now that he is President.

It is important to remember, though, that the US is not the only country with a permanent UN veto. The US often supports resolutions which are vetoed by the other 4 permanent members. For example, in 2014 the USA voted for a resolution to condemn violations of international law and human rights by Syria, but this was vetoed by Russia and China. This shows that although the US has significant political power, it does not always get its way and reminds us that there are other world powers, sometimes enemies of the US, who are also powerful and whom the US cannot always influence.
The US also has substantial **military** power. It was one of the original countries that set up the ‘**North Atlantic Treaty Organisation**’ (NATO) military alliance in 1949 and remains its most influential member. In terms of finance and troop commitments, the USA contributes far more than any other single member of NATO so the US is therefore able to influence other NATO members militarily. For example, they successfully persuaded other NATO members to join them in waging war in Afghanistan following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001.

However, the USA’s commitment to NATO has recently been questioned. Historically, NATO has existed partly to counter a perceived military threat from Russia, who have been an enemy of America, but new President Trump has pledged to change that. He has praised Russian leader **Vladimir Putin** as a strong, effective leader and has said ‘if the US gets along with Russia that’s not a bad thing’. He has also said NATO is now ‘obsolete’ meaning outdated, and claims the USA is taking too much responsibility for it, suggesting a shift away from strong relations with other NATO members in Western Europe and towards a new, more friendly relationship with Russia, which had previously deteriorated.

The US’s military reach is not limited to NATO. In 2014, the US, with allies such as the **UK**, **France** and **Saudi Arabia**, launched air strikes in Syria to target **Islamic State** militants, showing its ability to persuade other countries to support them in military operations.

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

As the world’s largest economy, the US enjoys huge **economic influence and many countries are keen to have trade deals with the US**. For example, in 2017, US President Trump met with UK Prime Minister Theresa May to discuss a possible trade deal that would allow US-UK trade to take place more easily and for workers to move between the 2 countries more easily following the UK’s vote to leave the EU. The US is also close trading partners with **Saudi Arabia** and their relationship can be simplified as ‘oil for security’; the USA buys oil from Saudi Arabia and sells them weapons in return. This deal is said to benefit both as they share common enemies in the Middle East, such as **Iran** and **Syria**, and **Islamic State terrorists**. Having economic power allows the US to influence other countries in a way that protects its own economy. However, human rights organisations have criticised the US for not speaking out more strongly against Saudi Arabia’s terrible record on human rights, women’s rights and gay rights.

In conclusion, it is clear that the US is not the only powerful country in the world. However, on balance they remain the most powerful country in the world; they have enormous political, military and economic power, and they exercise influence in international relations beyond the reach of any other nation.