H

National Qualifications 2025

X858/76/12

Politics
Paper 2

THURSDAY, 22 MAY

11:15 AM – 12:30 PM

Total marks — 28

Attempt **BOTH** questions.

Write your answers clearly in the answer booklet provided. In the answer booklet you must clearly identify the question number you are attempting.

Use **blue** or **black** ink.

Before leaving the examination room you must give your answer booklet to the Invigilator; if you do not you may lose all the marks for this paper.

X8587612

Total marks — 28

Attempt BOTH questions

1. Study **Sources A** and **B** then attempt the question which follows.

SOURCE A

The case for parliamentary democracy

In a parliamentary democracy, citizens elect representatives to act on their behalf. These representatives are usually from several different political parties. This means that groups of people will come together to agree on a set of principles and policies that they plan to enact if they are elected. At elections, the parties present the people with manifestos of policies to choose between. This also means that there is opportunity for debate and discussion about the laws, as parties are encouraged to set different priorities and take alternative stances on issues. It has been argued that the need to win elections encourages the political debate to become very binary. A feature of parliamentary democracy is that there is a government and an opposition. However, polarisation on issues and policies often tends to prevent detailed discussion. This can help create an aggressive and oppositional style of politics. The parliamentary system of Westminster has been accused of short-termism, in that political parties might be encouraged to think only about winning the next election, rather than putting in place policies to benefit future generations.

The Conservative theorist Edmund Burke suggested that politicians owe the electorate their expertise, which should mean that people who have more life experience and expertise are selected as representatives in order to make the best decisions on behalf of their constituents. This arguably suggests a hierarchical approach to decision-making where the people cannot be entrusted to understand all of the detail. Political philosopher Carole Pateman has argued that parliamentary democracy makes decision-making distant from voters and this means that people may not engage with the issues as they leave decisions to politicians. We have seen that voting levels tend to be lower in more deprived communities.

In most parliamentary systems, government ministers are members of the parliament and therefore sit in the parliamentary chamber. This means that there are opportunities for backbench representatives to ask ministers about issues that are affecting the country and their constituency. This is a built-in opportunity for scrutiny and accountability within the system, which should lead to openness in government. However, we have seen how these questioning opportunities can be used for parliamentary theatre and political point scoring rather than effectively holding the government to account.

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1. (continued)

SOURCE B

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The case for participatory democracy

In a participatory democracy, people have additional opportunities to speak and make decisions for themselves. It is argued that there is a high level of transparency in a participatory system as people can see exactly how decisions are made and can ask the questions that need to be answered. For example, in Northeast Syria there are regular meetings held for communities to decide on and plan priorities for the year, and then there are local committees to deal with how to follow these through. Each area has a peace committee which considers how to keep peace in the area and overcome any conflicts that arise. People can attend and ask questions providing a high level of scrutiny.

For participatory democracy to work, people living in communities must build consensus and work together towards a shared goal. This is not a competitive form of decision-making and is not necessarily based on conflict. In a participatory democracy, it is necessary to build negotiation skills and to start to see how politics does not have to be a 'winner takes all' situation, but that compromise and collaboration can build towards more long-term solutions to issues.

Where participatory systems have been put in place, studies have found that there are higher levels of political engagement from groups who traditionally have not taken part in political decision-making. In such a system people are empowered to deal with their local issues in the way that the local community thinks best. Dundee Decides was an example of participatory democracy in Scotland. Citizens of Dundee were empowered to make decisions about how funding in the city would be spent. More than 11,000 people took part in the process, and it was found that many people who had taken part were from more deprived areas. A study carried out by Dundee Council showed that 78% of participants said that they had never taken part in decisions about their community before. When people are trusted to make decisions for themselves, they tend to make good ones. This system recognises that people are experts in their own lives, communities and wellbeing.

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Use only the information in Sources A and B.

Compare the cases for parliamentary and participatory democracies.

In your answer you **must** make **three** points of comparison and reach an overall conclusion.   **8**

2. Study **Sources A—F** then attempt the question which follows.

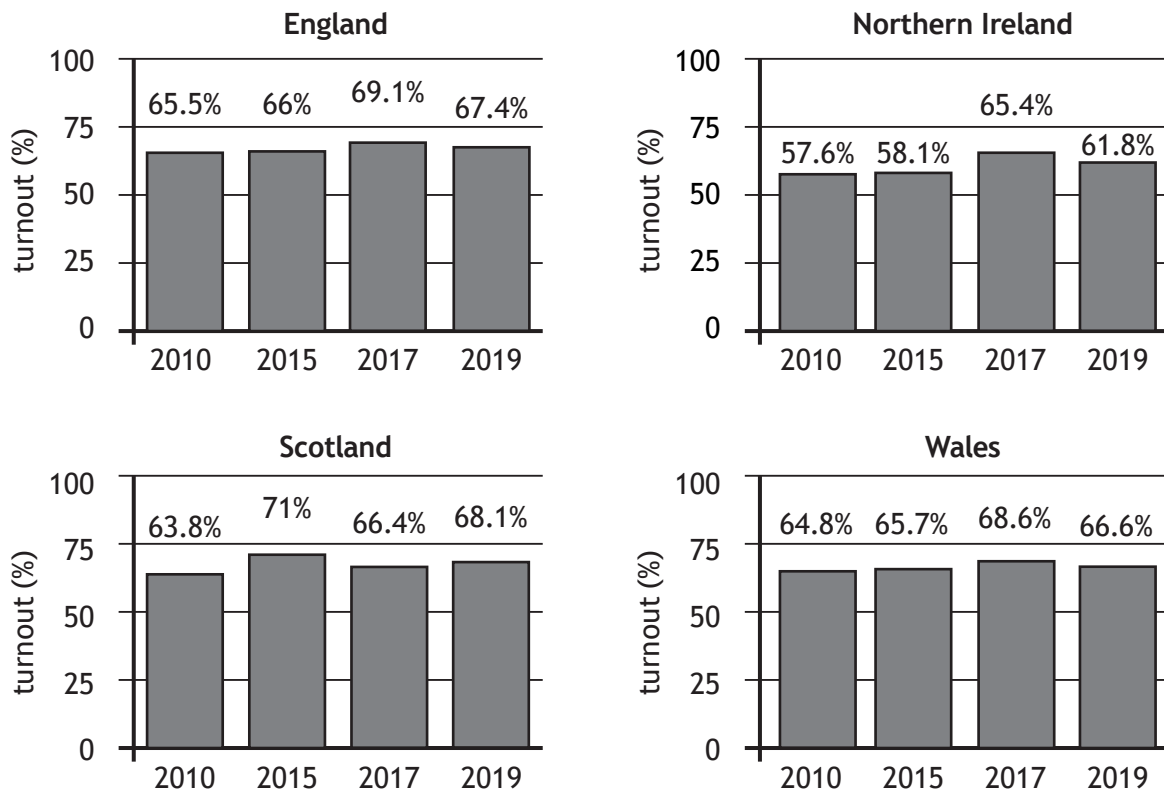**SOURCE A**   Election results for the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments, 1999–2021

	Scottish Parliament (MSP = Member of the Scottish Parliament)				Welsh Parliament/Senedd (MS = Member of the Welsh Parliament/Senedd)			
Election year	Number of Female MSPs	% of female MSPs	Number of ethnic minority MSPs	% of ethnic minority MSPs	Number of Female MSs	% of female MSs	Number of ethnic minority MSs	% of ethnic minority MSs
1999	48/129	37	0/129	0	24/60	40	0/60	0
2003	51/129	40	0/129	0	30/60	50	0/60	0
2007	43/129	33	1/129	0.7	28/60	47	1/60	1.6
2011	45/129	35	2/129	1.5	25/60	42	2/60	3.3
2016	45/129	35	2/129	1.5	25/60	42	3/60	5
2021	58/129	45	6/129	4.6	26/60	43	3/60	5

SOURCE B   Latest census data for the devolved nations of the United Kingdom

	Gender		Race				
			White	Ethnic minorities			
Devolved nation	Male	Female	White	Asian	Mixed race/other	Black/ Caribbean	Ethnic minorities total
Northern Ireland	49.2%	50.8%	96.8%	1.6%	1.0%	0.6%	3.2%
Scotland	51.4%	48.6%	92.9%	3.9%	2.0%	1.2%	7.1%
Wales	48.9%	51.1%	93.8%	2.9%	2.4%	0.9%	6.2%

2. (continued)

SOURCE C   UK Parliament general election turnout for the nations of the United Kingdom, 2010–2019

England

Year	Turnout
2010	65.5%
2015	66%
2017	69.1%
2019	67.4%

Northern Ireland

Year	Turnout
2010	57.6%
2015	58.1%
2017	65.4%
2019	61.8%

Scotland

Year	Turnout
2010	63.8%
2015	71%
2017	66.4%
2019	68.1%

Wales

Year	Turnout
2010	64.8%
2015	65.7%
2017	68.6%
2019	66.6%

SOURCE D   Scottish voter turnout figures for selected elections for Scottish Parliament elections, Scottish local council elections and European Parliament constituency elections in Scotland.

Scottish Parliament elections

Election year	1999	2003	2007	2011	2016	2021
Turnout	57.9%	49.4%	51.7%	50.4%	55.7%	63.5%
Largest party	Labour	Labour	SNP	SNP	SNP	SNP

Scottish local council elections

Election year	1999	2003	2007	2012	2017	2022
Turnout	59.1%	49.6%	52.8%	39.6%	46.9%	44.8%
Largest party	Labour	Labour	SNP	SNP	SNP	SNP

Scotland European Parliament constituency elections

Election year	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Turnout	24.7%	30.9%	28.5%	33.5%	39.9%
Largest party	Labour	SNP/ Conservative/ Labour	SNP/ Labour	SNP/ Labour	SNP

2. (continued)

SOURCE E   Northern Ireland Assembly election results, 2003–2022

Election year	2003	2007	2011	2016	2017	2022
Turnout	63.1%	62.3%	55.7%	54.9%	64.7%	63.6%
Largest party	DUP	DUP	DUP	DUP	DUP	Sinn Féin

SOURCE F   Welsh Parliament election results, 1999–2021

Election year	1999	2003	2007	2011	2016	2021
Turnout	46.3%	38.2%	43.7%	42.2%	45.3%	46.6%
Largest party	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour	Labour

Compared to other Scottish Parliament elections, the 2021 election saw the biggest improvement in diversity of MSPs and Parliament became close to being fully representative of Scottish society. However, in every election year, the Welsh Parliament has had a more diverse chamber than the Scottish Parliament. In all UK general elections since 2010, the changes in turnout each year have seen similar trends in all nations of the UK. In Scotland, a majority of voters have turned out to vote in all elections. In the devolved nations, the most recent elections to the national legislatures saw the best turnout.

Using only the information in Sources A–F.

To what extent does the evidence contained in these sources support the viewpoint above?

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