

Table 9.4 Positive and negative aspects of representative democracy in the UK

Positive aspects of representative democracy in the UK	Negative aspects of representative democracy in the UK
Everyone is represented through a constituency MP.	Due to the FPTP electoral system, there are many minority MPs who were not voted in by a majority of their constituents.
The FPTP electoral system is simple and provides a clear winner for each seat.	The electoral system leads to wasted votes and unrepresentative outcomes in parliament.
Britain has a variety of parties that contest elections, with 11 parties in parliament and many others contesting elections.	Safe seats across the UK mean that there is a lack of real choice in many constituencies. In addition, the fact that only two parties are in a realistic position to form a government reduces the level of choice.
Everyone over the age of 18, who is not a prisoner, mentally incapable or a peer, has the right to vote.	<p>There are issues concerning the denial of the franchise to 16- and 17-year-olds as well as prisoners.</p> <p>There are also many groups who are effectively disenfranchised by the process of registration, such as the homeless.</p> <p>There is relatively low turnout, with only around two-thirds of people voting in general elections, raising concerns about the democratic legitimacy of the government.</p>
There are thousands of pressure groups representing a wide variety of interests and groups which can compete.	Due to a variety of factors, including wealth, size and status, the competition between pressure groups is often unfair and elitist, giving some groups much greater power than others.
New groups and parties can easily be created to take on new issues.	In a situation of hyperpluralism, important issues can be drowned out by the sheer number of campaigns.
The Electoral Commission works hard to ensure that parties adhere to rules on spending and campaigning.	<p>Parties are able to find ways around the regulations to spend more.</p> <p>The increasing use of the internet has effectively allowed parties to by-pass the broadcasting restrictions imposed in other areas.</p>

Activity

Democratic Audit UK is an organisation that investigates and analyses the state of UK democracy. Visit its website to read its annual report and various articles relating to the state of democracy in the UK.

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