1.9 The Media, Opinion Polls and Their Influence on UK Elections: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be answered in note form unless a question asks for a developed sentence. For levels-marked questions, write a well-structured, developed response using accurate political knowledge, named examples, and precise terminology. Allow approximately 30 minutes for the whole paper.

1 Evaluate the view that the media has a significant impact on voting behaviour in the UK.

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(Total for Question 1 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.9 The Media, Opinion Polls and Their Influence on UK Elections: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic knowledge of media influence with little analysis or evaluation. Answers may be descriptive, lacking developed argument or clear judgement.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear, accurate knowledge and some developed analysis of how different media types can influence voting behaviour. Evaluation is present but may be one sided or superficial.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed knowledge and sustained analysis of multiple media influences, including social media, broadcast impartiality, and partisan press, with considered evaluation of empirical evidence and counterarguments.	**13-18**
Level 4 Wide ranging and well supported analysis applying theory and evidence to weigh the significance of media influence, including discussion of limits, methodological issues in measuring impact, and clear, substantiated judgement.	**19-24**
Level 5 Sophisticated evaluation that integrates strong factual knowledge, conceptual clarity and balanced critical reasoning. Demonstrates awareness of causation versus correlation, drawing on an array of evidence across elections and media types, and reaches a clear, well-justified conclusion on the extent of media impact.	**25-30**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that media has significant impact: agenda setting and framing by major tabloids and broadcasters shape which issues voters view as salient, influencing vote choice where voters rely on media for cues; high circulation tabloids with clear endorsements can shift undecided or weakly attached voters; social media can rapidly amplify narratives and microtarget persuadable individuals.
- Evidence and examples: historical cases where tabloid campaigns coincided with voting shifts, the role of television in leader debates altering perceptions of leaders, and targeted social media adverts influencing turnout among specific groups.
- Theoretical mechanisms: priming, framing, agenda setting, media cueing for low information voters, and mobilisation effects via online networks.
- Arguments for limited impact: selective exposure and partisan reinforcement mean media often reinforces existing preferences rather than converting strong partisans; the role of social networks and interpersonal influences may mediate media effects; measurement problems make causal attribution difficult because correlation does not equal causation.
- Empirical limitations: polling and survey evidence can show associations between media consumption and vote intention but isolating direct causal effects is methodologically challenging; recall bias and self selection into media types complicate inference.
- Role of regulation and context: statutory impartiality for broadcasters constrains overt bias in traditional broadcast media, limiting its partisan influence relative to the unregulated press; the fragmented media environment since 2010 means effects are dispersed and conditional on audience demographics.
- Countervailing factors: party identification, local campaigning, tactical voting, and socio economic determinants remain powerful influences on voting behaviour and can reduce the marginal effect of media messages.
- Balanced conclusion: a reasoned judgement might state that the media has a significant conditional influence, especially in setting agendas, framing debates and mobilising certain groups, but its power to directly change voting decisions is often limited by partisan reinforcement, regulatory constraints and the continuing importance of non media factors.

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