
How Pluralist Democracy Are Affected By Pressure Groups

To what extent do pressure groups strengthen pluralist democracy?

Pressure groups can be categorised into many different types, depending on their ideologies and ambitions. 'Insider' and 'outsider' are the two main categories in which pressure groups correspond to – insider groups being pressure groups that have political influence on the government and work to inform them, outside groups being pressure groups excluded from government that mostly focus on gaining public approval and informing the public about their issues. Both groups are seen as essential in a pluralist society to represent diverse interests.

On the one hand, pressure groups do strengthen democracy as they enable particular interests and causes to be heard. They are also able to exert influence on public decision-making through the use of protests for example, meaning that the public are able to make more well-rounded decisions on important matters. These issues may then be discussed by the government, for example, ASH has been very influential on government policy surrounding the use of cigarettes. In summary, pressure groups allow a vast range of groups, interests, beliefs and ideologies to be taken into consideration, which is vital in a pluralist democracy.

Another reason arguing that pressure groups do strengthen pluralist democracy is that it helps the issue of political apathy. They increase participation and access to the political system as some people may not want to actually make decisions by voting but rather choose to have their say through joining these pressure groups and discussing important causes/issues that way. Because people are joining groups of various different beliefs and causes, the government has more access to hearing about groups with many different ideologies. An example of a big pressure group that has had a lot of influence and therefore emphasises the idea of a pluralist democracy in the UK is Greenpeace, with 130,000 supporters here alone and 2.8 million worldwide.

On the other hand, pressure groups weaken pluralist democracy as some groups may have more influence than others. Groups in a higher economic position are obviously able to get across their views more clearly than groups lower down the economic scale. This is often then used to 'buy' their power through the use of advertising for example. Core insider groups such as the British Medical Association have vast influence in terms of shaping policy. This therefore shows that the UK may not have such a pluralist democracy as if some parties have more influence than other, not all views are taken into consideration/heard – can lead to biased

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

decisions by the government.

Another argument against pressure groups strengthening democracy is that the government may favour certain groups over others. This may be because some pressure groups are more electorally beneficial to them. For example, the Labour Party tends to support trade unions as they help fund the party, whilst the Conservative Party favours private lenders that fund them. The government may favour certain groups also because (if insider especially,) they may have information on the government which they would rather keep secret, therefore they continue to support these groups instead of others. Again this shows a weakness in the pluralist democracy.

Pressure groups strengthen pluralist democracy to a certain extent as they allow the public to campaign for issues that may affect them directly, therefore covering a vast scale and meaning the government has access to many issues promoted by these groups. It also encourages more people to engage in politics and become more aware of the political system. However, they also slightly weaken pluralist democracy as certain groups have more power than others and are able to influence government policy, whilst other groups are ignored.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)