

REFERENDUMS – FOR AND AGAINST

FOR	ISSUE	AGAINST
Referendums give the general public direct and unmediated control over decision-making, ensuring that their own views and interests are expressed, not those of politicians	<i>Direct democracy</i>	The general public is ill-informed, poorly educated and little interested in politics; its interests are best safeguarded by representative democracy – government by politicians
Wider political participation will help to create a better informed, more educated and more politically engaged electorate	<i>Political education</i>	Referendums do not educate the electorate because their views are largely a reflection of media manipulation and pressure from the political elite
Governments are made more responsible because referendums force them to listen to public opinion between elections	<i>Responsible government</i>	Governments can absolve themselves of responsibility by handing decisions over to the electorate – governments are elected to govern (that is, make decisions)
Referendums provide a much needed check on government power because they have less control over their outcome than over Parliament	<i>Government power</i>	Referendums extend government power because governments can manipulate the outcome by deciding whether and when and over what issues to call referendums, and they can also dominate the publicity campaign
Constitutional issues should not be decided simply through the normal legislative processes because they alter the way the country is governed: they thus need to be popularly endorsed	<i>Constitutional issues</i>	Referendums provide only a snap-shot of public opinion at one point in time, and so are not appropriate for making constitutional decision that have far-reaching effect