The Future of Democracy in the UK

Public Attitudes and Policy Responses
Final Report of the Democracy in the UK
after Brexit Project

Alan Renwick, Ben Lauderdale,
and Meg Russell

November 2023

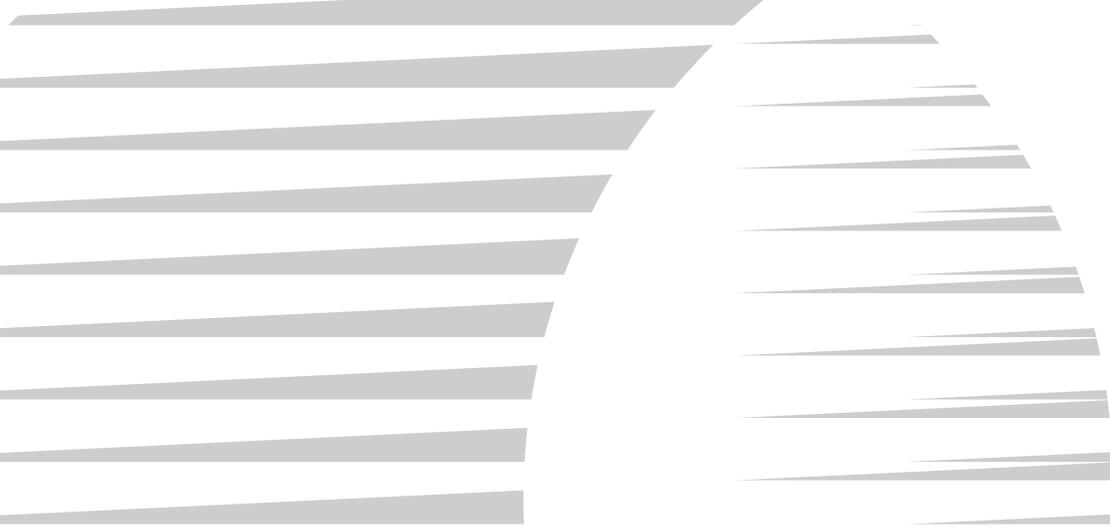# The Future of Democracy in the UK

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DEMOCRACY IN THE
UK AFTER BREXIT

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Executive Summary

Over the last three years, a Constitution Unit team has conducted detailed research into public attitudes to democracy in the UK. This has comprised two large-scale surveys of the UK population, conducted in summer 2021 and summer 2022, and the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK, which met over six ZHHNHQGV LQ ODWH 3UHYLRXV UHSRUWV KDYH VHWKRXW WKHLU ¿QGLQJV LQ IXOO SXOO WKHVH ¿QGLQJV WRJHWKHU VXSSOHPHQWLQJ WKHP ZLWK H[WHQV implications.

Chapter 1 examines perceptions of how democracy is performing in the UK at present , W ¿QGV KLJK OHYHOV RI GLVVDWLVIDFWLRQ PRVW SHRSOH ZDQW WR VHH VLJQL¿FDQW assembly members felt inadequately represented in the corridors of power, and that politics lacks honesty DQG LQWHJULW\ &RQ¿GHQFH LQ SROLWLFLDQV ZDV HVSHFLDOO\ ORZ 6X population, though somewhat less so among those who voted Leave in the 2016 Brexit referendum or Conservative in the 2019 general election.

Chapter 2 looks at attitudes towards democracy in the round . The overwhelming majority of people in the UK support democracy – though for most this is contingent on democracy delivering effective government. At the time of the research, support for 'strongman' leadership was lower than in some other recent studies. Research participants said that democracy should be representative of the public and responsive to their wishes. They wanted honest, serious political discourse, and said that people should have the information to make their own decisions. They valued freedoms of thought and speech. There is some variation between more 'populist' and more 'liberal' conceptions of democracy, but the population as a whole is not polarised on these matters.

Chapters 3–6 examine three central themes: standards in public life (Chapter 3); roles of core state institutions (Chapters 4 and 5); and the roles of the public (Chapter 6).

Chapter 3, on standards in public life , shows a strong desire for politicians to be honest, own up to mistakes, and act within the rules. Honesty is seen as requiring more than just not lying: people are very exercised by spin and dissembling too. Participants wanted independent regulators to be able to investigate allegations of wrongdoing. They thought that stronger action than at present is needed where wrongdoing is demonstrated. They rejected the view that holding politicians to account should be left solely to voters.

Chapter 4 focuses on government and parliament. People expect parliament to play a strong role in policy-making, as it represents everyone, rather than just those who voted for the governing party. Both survey respondents and citizens' assembly members thought it should play a stronger role than at present, having greater control over its agenda and timetable, and scrutinising all changes to the law. They wanted MPs to be PRUH UHVSRQVLYH WR DQG UHSUHVHQWHQWLUDWLYH \RULJKHF SXEOLV VX SSR LWR UHIR system by which MPs are elected. Respondents were divided on whether they wanted an elected, appointed, or mixed second chamber, but there was wide support for reforming the current system of appointments to the House of Lords. The principle of a neutral, permanent civil service was widely endorsed.

Chapter 5 turns to the law and courts . There was wide support for the rule of law and the protection of human rights – particularly core democratic rights such as the freedom of speech. Most people wanted the courts to have a role in protecting human rights, including by intervening where new laws might violate such rights. This applied across a wide range of claimed rights. Support for the courts' role weakened somewhat when reference was made to the Human Rights Act, the European Convention on Human Rights, or the European Court of Human Rights. But most respondents still thought the courts should at least be able to send a law back to parliament for reconsideration. There was also wide agreement that the courts should adjudicate disputes over the powers of the executive.

Chapter 6 explores attitudes to the role of the public . Though there were strong expectations around responsiveness to public opinion, most survey respondents did not want to take part in politics more than they already did. Assembly members proposed steps to enable public participation, including better education, information provision, and media coverage. There was strong support for freedom of speech; views on freedoms of association and protest were somewhat more muted or mixed. Assembly members

wanted a greater role for petitions. Views on referendums were more ambivalent. Members of the citizens' assembly strongly endorsed greater use of such assemblies, though only to inform debate and advise elected representatives; survey respondents backed the same view more mutedly.

Chapter 7 considers whether people care about political processes   , rather than just outcomes. Survey respondents said that the health of democracy in the UK mattered to them as much as issues such as housing, crime, and immigration, though less than the cost of living or the NHS.

 & K D S W H U   V X P P D U L V H V   W K H   ¿ Q G L Q J V   S O D F H V W K H P L Q F R Q W H [W   D It focuses on three key themes: the need to uphold ethical standards in public life; the value of checks and balances; and ways of enabling effective public participation.

• Fostering greater honesty in political discourse requires not just politicians and campaigners, but also those
   L Q   W K H   P H G L D   W R   U H À H F W   R Q   W K H L U   U H V S R Q V L E L O L W L H V   5 H J X O
  several proposals for this are already on the table.

• Likewise, proposals exist to give MPs greater control over their agenda, improve legislative scrutiny, and
  reform appointments to the Lords. Any moves to weaken the BBC's impartiality, the neutrality of the civil
   V H U Y L F H   R U   W K H   D E L O L W \   R I   W K H   F R X U W V   W R   F K H F N   D E X V H V   Z R X O

• Enabling effective and widespread public participation is hard. Areas for further consideration include
  improved education, better media coverage, and greater used of deliberative processes such as citizens'
  assemblies.

Introduction

Public attitudes to our democratic system matter. Democracy works best when many people are actively involved; but people are less likely to take part if they feel the system does not represent them or serve their needs. Effective policy-making often requires careful trade-offs and compromises among competing considerations; but that is harder if the individuals and institutions at the heart of politics are not trusted to act in the public interest.

Over the last three years, a team at the Constitution Unit, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), has therefore conducted detailed research into the state of public attitudes towards the democratic system in the UK. The project – called Democracy in the UK after Brexit – has examined attitudes to the system as a whole and to its various components parts. It has also explored what roles people think should be played by different elements of the system – including parliament, government, courts, and the public – and how these should be configured. We have asked currently work, how they should work, and how they might be reformed. For each of these elements, the project has sought to uncover attitudes of the public at large and how these views vary across different parts of the population. We have also sought to compare what people say in response to survey questions with what they say once they have had a chance to learn and think about the issues and discuss them in some depth. The project thus provides an exceptionally rich and varied set of insights into public perceptions on these vital matters.

MPs should perform, how they think the House of Commons should be composed and its members elected,
 D Q G   Z K D W   Y L H Z V   W K H \   K D Y H   R Q   W K H   U R O H   D Q G   F R P S R V L W L R Q   R I   W K H   + R
attitudes to the civil service. Chapter 5 turns to the law and the courts: what people think of the rule of law
and, particularly, of human rights, and what role they think the courts should play. Chapter 6 focuses on the
public. It highlights two features of public attitudes that may be in tension: people want the system to be
responsive to their needs and wishes; but most people don't particularly want to have to take part actively
themselves. The chapter then examines public views on how wider engagement in politics might be enabled.
It explores attitudes to the media, to core democratic liberties, and to mechanisms for participation, such as
petitions, referendums, and citizens' assemblies.

Chapter 7 steps back from the detail again to consider the broad question of whether people actually care
about political processes. It is often said that the public care about outcomes, not how those outcomes are
produced. The chapter considers the evidence on whether that is really true.

 & K D S W H U V   G U D Z V   R X W   F R Q F O X V L R Q V   , W   V X P P D U L V H V   W K H   S U R M H F W ¶ V
 V K R X O G   F D U U \   L Q   G H E D W H V   D E R X W   G H P R F U D W L F   U H I R U P   D Q G   ¿ Q D O O \
to be.

 7 K H   H Y L G H Q F H   L Q   W K H   U H S R U W   F R Q ¿ U P V   W K D W   P D Q \   S H R S O H   L Q   W K H   8 .
of politics today. Trust in politics and politicians has long been low, but it has been further battered by the
divisive debates and weaknesses of leadership seen in recent years. People do care greatly about how
politics is conducted. While they may not have much interest in the details of particular institutions, they are
affronted by what they see as low moral standards in politics. They think that those in public life are too often
 G L V K R Q H V W   G L V U H V S H F W I X O   R I   W K H   Z L G H U   S X E O L F   D Q G   L Q V X I ¿ F L H Q W
 , Q   F R Q W U D V W   W R   V R P H   S U H Y L R X V   U H V H D U F K   ¿ Q G L Q J V   W K H   H Y L G H Q F H   K

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Chapter 1. Views on How UK Democracy is Performing

A crucial starting question concerns how people view the performance of democracy in the UK today.
7KLV FKDSWHU ¿UVW H[DPLQHV DWWLWXGHV WR WKH ZRUNLQJ RI 8. GHPL
questions and evidence from the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK. The second section focuses particularly on attitudes to politicians and other key actors within the democratic system. Most people view politics primarily through actors and events, rather than through formal procedures or institutions. And, as this report shows, their concerns about the state of democracy focus primarily on perceived behaviours and ethical standards among those in public life. So understanding how people think about key actors is crucial.
7KH WZR ¿QDO VHFWLRQV RI WKH FKDSWHU WKHQ H[DPLQH KRZ SHUFHSW
across the population and the underlying drivers of these views.

7KH FKDSWHU LGHQWL¿HV KLJK OHYHOV RI GLVVDWLVIDFWLRQ ZLWK WKH
Most people see politics as distant and dominated by a self-serving elite who lack integrity. These concerns are shared widely across society.

Perceptions of the UK's democratic system

The surveys conducted for this project included two questions about views on how the UK's democratic
V\VWHP DV D ZKROH ZDV ZRUNLQJ 2QH RI WKHVH LQFOXGHG LQ ERWK V
WKH\ ZHUH ZLWK WKH ZD\ GHPRFUDF\ ZRUNV LQ WKH URRP WKH ¿UVW GRVXUY
summer 2021, were perhaps reassuring: though few people (only 7% of respondents) said they were 'very
VDWLV¿HG¶ DQ DEVROXWH PDMRULW\ GHVFULEHG WKLV RU WKDW WLHV¿HG¶
turned markedly more negative between the two surveys, however. By the second, in summer 2022, those
VD\LQJ WKH\ ZHUH YHU\ RU IDLUO\ VDWLV¿HG KDG GURSSHG WR ZKLO

We feel insecure about the way democracy the UK is working at the moment and question the strength of our democratic system to withstand attempts to rewrite fundamental principles of the British constitution without consultation with the people.

Figure 1.5. Trust in political actors in the UK

Question: To what extent do you trust or distrust each of the following to act in the best interests of people in the UK?

6RXUFH 6XUYH\   ± -XO\   DQG VXUYH\ $XJXVW ± 6HSWHPEHU

7KH VHFRQG VXUYH\ DOVR UHYHDOHG VSHFL¿FDOO\ WKDW HPRKWWZLF SO

7 K L V   F R Q F H U Q   D E R X W   S R O L W L F D O   G L Y G V   L V   F O H D U O \   U H À H F W H G   L Q   W K H

7 K L V   F R Q F H U Q   D E R X W   S R O L W L F D O   G L Y G V   L V   F O H D U O \   U H À H F W H G   L Q   W K H

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What drives these perceptions?

The preceding analysis suggests that concerns about democracy in the UK are not much associated
ZLWK ZKHUH D SHUVRQ OLYHV KRZ ROG WKH\ DUH$ QRUWWKHLZDIRRUPDO HG
thinking about underlying drivers for people's perceptions is to ask what people have in mind when they
think about politics and the political system. As our previous reports have pointed out, most people do
not ordinarily think about political institutions or abstract questions such as the features of a healthy
democracy. So what is in their minds when they are asked to consider such questions?

Analysis of the citizens' assembly transcripts helps to examine this issue. As might be expected,
members often looked at the democratic system through the lens of recent events, or of prominent
SROLWLFDO¿JXUHV7KH¿JXUHQWV WKDW ZHUH PHQWLRQHG PRVW ZHUH %UH[LW FLW
we analysed) and the Covid-19 pandemic (102 times). Brexit came up in many contexts. Most references
related to the referendum, with some members welcoming it as an opportunity for all voters to have a
say on equal terms, while others criticised aspects of the process. Points were also made about the roles
of parliament and the courts following the referendum, and the way in which the debate had left lasting
divisions in society. Covid was similarly mentioned in a variety of contexts. Members recognised the
scale of the interventions in people's lives that politicians had decided on during the pandemic period.
Some mentioned that this highlighted a need for checks and balances, so that liberties could not be taken
away too easily. Others emphasised that speed of action had been vital, and that strongly consultative
SURFHVVHV ZRXOG KDYH EDFN¿UHG %UHDFKHV LQ ORFNGRZQ UXOHV ± S
Matt Hancock – were also a recurring theme. The Partygate affair began to emerge shortly before the
DVVHPEO\¶V ¿QDO ZHHNHQG DQG ZDV IUHTXHQWO\ PHQWLRQHG RQ WKRV

Some earlier events were also repeatedly highlighted, though far less often than either Brexit or Covid.
Those from recent years included the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, the 2011 voting system
referendum, the 2009 expenses scandal, and the military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11.
References to the Second World War and Nazism were not uncommon, and some members brought
up the subject of Magna Carta on several occasions.

Turning to the people who were mentioned, the most oft-cited person was, unsurprisingly, the Prime
Minister of the day, Boris Johnson (mentioned 56 times in the sampled analysed transcripts). Further
illustrating the salience of Covid and of concerns around 'one rule for them, another for everyone else',
the second most frequently mentioned person was Matt Hancock (41 references). David Cameron
came third, mentioned 35 times, as the person who led the 2010–15 coalition government, initiated the
Brexit process, and resigned as soon as the referendum result was announced – which some assembly
PHPEHUV UHJDUGHG DV D GHUHOLFWLRQ RI GXW\ 6HYHUDO DVSHFWV RI
FULWLFLVHG 2WKHUV UHFHLYLQJ VLJQL¿FDQW QXPEHUV RI PHQWLRQV L
Murdoch (23 mentions), Queen Elizabeth and Tony Blair (cited 17 times each), Marcus Rashford (14),
Vladimir Putin (11), and Theresa May (10). Priti Patel was the most mentioned Cabinet minister of the
GD\ ZLWK HLJKW UHIHUHQFHV 5HÀHFWLQJ WKH VWDWH RI SXEOLF FRQV
barely registered with members, being mentioned only twice.

As the references to Vladimir Putin indicate, assembly members sometimes referred to international
examples. Outside the UK, the United States was by far the most frequently mentioned country, coming
up 39 times in the analysed transcripts. It was sometimes cited positively: for its system of checks and
balances, for high public knowledge of the Constitution, and for the strict separation between the state
and religion. But references were much more commonly negative: there were concerns that unduly
strong checks and balances can lead to gridlock, that a written constitution can hand excessive power
to the courts, that money carries too much power, that basic voting rights are under threat, that the norm
of following the rules has been weakened, and that political debate has become very polarised. Russia
and China were the next most frequently mentioned countries, on nine and six instances respectively,
while individual assembly members brought up examples from a range of other places. The EU received
VLJQL¿FDQW DWWHQWLRQ WRR EHLQJ PHQWLRQHG WLPHV

This analysis provides evidence of the frames through which assembly members viewed the various
aspects of the democratic system that they discussed. Their dominant political memories were of
the processes around Brexit and Covid-19 – the latter including various scandals, culminating in the
Partygate affair that broke shortly before the assembly concluded. How far current perceptions of

democracy have been caused by experiences of Brexit and Covid is not possible to determine – that would require equivalent evidence also from before these developments took place. But understanding these frames is useful for interpreting the views expressed, both here and in later chapters.

Conclusion

Chapter 2. Views on How Democracy Should Work

$ I X U W K H U X V H I X O V W H S L V W R F R Q V L G H U K R Z S7HKRHS OUHI VWWKLVQFNWLDRRQUK RVI GWVK

chapter examines whether people in the UK support democracy and key features that democracy implies – such as that leaders are subject to the rule of law and constrained by parliament. The second section considers what people's priorities for the democratic system are: what do they see as being the key components of democracy or the key principles that the democratic system should uphold? The third section ties this thinking back to the UK in particular, by investigating what changes people think would make democracy in this country better or worse.

Do people value democracy?

Survey 1 asked respondents whether they thought democracy was the best form of government. As Figure 2.1 shows, the responses were overwhelmingly positive: only 3% said that it was not. At the same time, most respondents' support was contingent: they thought democracy was good so long as it delivered effective government. Only around a third said that 'democracy is always the best form of government'.

Figure 2.1. Support for democracy

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agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, our survey in 2022 found agreement at only 29%. That clearly raises important questions about why there is such a difference.

One possible explanation is that opinion shifted dramatically over time. The Hansard survey was conducted in late 2018, amidst Theresa May's battles with parliament over her Brexit deal. At that moment, many people may just have wanted someone to push a settlement through. By contrast, our 2022 survey was conducted at the height of concerns that the Prime Minister of the day had not followed the rules and had subsequently misled parliament, potentially lodging thoughts about the shortcomings of strongman leadership. But there are other possible explanations relating to how the surveys were conducted. Perhaps most plausibly, the Hansard survey asked the question towards the end of a list of mostly negatively worded statements that respondents were asked to express a view on, such as 'Britain is in decline' and 'Britain's system of government is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful'. Ours was a standalone question that immediately followed one asking 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that the people, and not politicians, should take our most important policy decisions?' These contexts may have put respondents in very different frames of mind.

Figure 2.2. Views on a 'strongman' leader

Question: To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with this statement: Britain/The UK needs a strong leader willing to break the rules.

1RWH 7KH VWDWHPHQW LQ WKH +DQVDUG TXHVWLRQ VWDUWHG µ%ULWDLQ Q
8. ZLGH UDWKHU WKDQ *% ZLGH VDPSOH VWDUWHG µ7KH 8. QHHGVZ«KUH QVD
LQGLFDWHG RXUV WR PDLQWDLQ FRQVLVWHQF\ DFURVV WKH VXUYH\ GLG Q

Figure 2.3. Further views on a 'strongman' leader

1 R W H   (D F K   U H V S R Q G H Q W   V D Z   H L W K H U   W K H   T X H V W L R Q   R Q   W K H   O H I W   R U   W K H   T X I
L Q   ) L J X U H

6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W   ±   6 H S W H P E H U

Finally, another version of the question asked respondents to indicate not how far they agreed with, or found acceptable, one stated proposition, but rather which of two statements was closer to their view. As will be apparent from this report, we tended to favour questions that were structured in this way, as it asks respondents to weigh the pros and cons of alternatives. In line with the previous questions, the results, shown in Figure 2.4, suggested that many more people would see empowering government over parliament as too risky than would welcome it. Yet that pattern was this time much V W U R Q J H U among young people than in older age groups – the opposite of the pattern seen above. The explanation for this likely lies in different wording: the questions above referred to 'a leader' in the abstract, whereas the question here referred to 'the government'; that likely put respondents in mind of the government in power at the time, which young people overwhelmingly disliked (YouGov 2022: 1). Yet the evidence further bolsters scepticism towards claims that young people are turning towards strong leadership and away from democracy.

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Figure 2.4. Views on empowering government

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

%2?J @7 E96 4@F?ECJOD
AC@3=6>D 4@F=5 36 562=E
H:E9 >@C6 67764E:G6=J :7 E96
8@G6C?>6?E 5:5?OE 92G6 E@
H@CCJ D@ >F49 23@FE
G@E6D :? A2C=:2>6?E

!E H@F=5 36 C:D<J E@@
E96 8@G6C?>6?E >@C
A@H6C E@ 562= 5:C64
H:E9 >2?J @7 E96
4@F?ECJOD AC@3=6>

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ± 6HSWHPEHU

The second alternative to democracy that we asked about was technocracy: the idea that government is best done by people with technical expertise rather than by politicians. Survey 2 included two questions on this, ERWK VKRZQ LQ)LJXUH PHQWLRQHG JHQHUDO H[SHUWLVH WKH VHFRQG VS particular form of expertise – namely, businesspeople. The responses suggest greater support for experts in JHQHUDO WKDQ IRU EXVLQHVVSHRSOH ¿WWLQJ WKH SDWWHUQV UHJL technocratic decision-making appears somewhat higher than support for strongman leadership, though caution is needed here, as the questions are not directly comparable. Large numbers of respondents chose either the 'I agree/disagree with both' option or the 'Don't know' option, however, suggesting that many did not have a clear or strong view.

Figure 2.5. Views on empowering experts or businesspeople

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ± 6HSWHPEHU

Looking across the evidence presented in this section, we can say that the overwhelming majority of people support the principle of democracy, and that support for 'strongman' leadership may be lower than some other evidence gathered several years ago suggested. On the other hand, much of that support for democracy is
F R Q W L Q J H Q W   R Q   S H U I R U P D Q F H   D Q G   V X E V W D Q W L D O   P L Q R U L W L H V   G R   ¿ Q
There is also some support for technocracy, though it would be valuable to investigate further what people actually meant when answering these questions as they did.

How do people conceive of democracy?

Beyond the broad dispositions towards democracy examined in the previous section, the next question to ask concerns how people conceive of democracy. What do they see as the core elements of a healthy democracy? How do they think democracy ought to function? Much is written about alternative models of democracy: liberal versus populist, for example, or representative versus direct versus deliberative. What sorts of model are people in the UK attracted to?

Some hints on this have already come from the analysis in Chapter 1 of the statements drawn up by members
R I   W K H   F L W L] H Q V '   D V V H P E O \   (D F K   R I   W K R V H   V W D W H P H Q W V   K D G   W Z R   S D U W V   & K D S
relating to how members felt about 'democracy in the UK today'. The second part addressed what a 'good' democracy would look like. The main theme that emerged from these second elements was the view that a
J R R G   G H P R F U D F \   Z R X O G   E H   U H S U H V H Q W D W L Y H   R I   W K H   S X E O L F   D Q G   U H V S
this theme highlighted a variety of aspects:

In a 'good' UK democracy those we elect to represent us would prioritise representing the people that voted for them and the issues that are important to their constituency.

In a 'good' UK democracy citizens and politicians would be open minded, and minority opinions listened to and acknowledged. There would be a stronger relationship between elected representatives and their constituents – with both being responsible for this!

In a 'good' UK democracy there would be fair, equal and proportionate representation in government, so that it represents the public as a whole. We should all experience the same version of democracy and be able to see ourselves within it.

In a 'good' UK democracy there would be better connection and engagement between people and their elected representatives, and governments would be brave enough to listen to the recommendations of a Citizens' Assembly.

In a 'good' UK democracy the people, and their welfare, would be at the forefront of all policy, laws and decision making.

In a 'good' UK democracy there would be new political parties which are changing with the times, a spending cap on campaign funding, and an opportunity to explore proportional representation to enable the better inclusion of everyone's views in parliament.

In a 'good' UK democracy, where the system is working as it should, we the public would have better mechanisms to allow our voices to count. We would also be well informed and better able to identify
Z K D W   L V V X H V   W R   S X V K   I R U Z D U G   D Q G   F R Q ¿ G H Q W   L Q   W K H   E H O L H   W K D

In a 'good' UK democracy we would have a representative system where elected members display respect for the core elements of our democracy and the people's right to choose.

7 K H   V H F R Q G   W K H P H   L G H Q W L ¿ H G   L Q   & K D S W H U   ±   W K D W   S R O L W L F L D Q V   V K
through strongly:

In a 'good' UK democracy, we would want evidence of honesty and integrity in politics, backed up by investigative journalism and a balanced media that is able to challenge and scrutinise government and ensure the public are well informed.

In a 'good' UK democracy the people in power would have integrity.

In a 'good' UK democracy the system would be open, honest and transparent and there would be a culture of respect. Politicians would lead by example and be accountable for their actions.

In a 'good' UK democracy we would see integrity and accountability demonstrated at all levels of

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The citizens' assembly provides two further sources of information regarding general conceptions of democracy. First, besides the statements set out above, the assembly's members also developed a set of principles that they thought should underpin a 'good' democracy in the UK. They began working on these

Box 2.1. Principles of a 'good' democracy   (Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK)

% support among
members

1. Honesty in politics

« V R W K D W W K H S X E O L F F D Q W U X V W W K H L U H O H F W H G U H S U H V H Q W D W

in the democratic system   98%

2. Freedom of thought and speech

… so that divergent views are welcomed and recognised in the public domain and there is

DEMOCRACY IN THE

Second, we can analyse the transcripts from the discussion sessions within the assembly to see which features of democracy members referred to most often. Figure 2.7 shows the results of such analysis, in which comments made by assembly members in the course of their deliberations have been categorised so as to capture the ideas they contained about how democracy should function (see the appendix for L Q I R U P D W L R Q   R Q   W K H   F R G L Q J   S   F T€ûÜP , F R G L Q J

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Fourth, assembly members were very concerned about protecting rights and freedoms: 378 comments were categorised as relating to this value, while only 10 mentioned concerns that protections of rights and freedoms can sometimes be taken too far. In discussing these matters, members focused mainly on basic democratic rights, such as rights of speech and protest, the right to vote, and the right not to be imprisoned without trial – though there were exceptions to that:

> When Magna Carta was sealed by King John in 1215, that in combination with the Bill of Rights which came along in 1688/89, actually lays down what our constitutional rights are. Obviously we have constitutional responsibilities, and the responsibility most fundamentally is that we don't harm anybody. And that all makes perfect sense to me.

> The government never should have the ability to take away the right of people to vote. […] Women's rights and everything and the right to vote should never, ever be taken away.

> Basic human rights – you know, freedom of speech has always been protected, you know. We're a free country, we can say, even if people don't like it, you can still say it.

> When they were trying to get migrants to prove their status before they could get medical treatment. Like those rights aren't fundamentally protected. They, they can be eroded and taken away. […] They are still human beings so they still deserve medical treatment and the same rights as any other human being on this planet.

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Figure 2.8. Components of democracy

Question: People sometimes say the following things are both important to have in a democracy. Which, if either, would you say is more important to have in a democracy?

Figure 2.9. Options for democracy

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

6RXUFH 6XUYH\   ±   -XO\   DQG VXUYH\ $XJXVW ±   6HSWHPEHU

Statistical analysis makes it possible to identify patterns in these responses, both across the questions and among the respondents. Figure 2.10 shows the results of what in technical terms is called Graded 5HVSRQVH 0RGHO DQDO\VLV 6XFK DQDO\VLV GRHV WKUHH WKLQJV)LUVW questions tended to line up, such that people who gave a particular answer to one question tended also to give particular answers to other questions. Second, it shows how strong that alignment was. Third, it allows us to examine how perspectives varied across different parts of the population. This analysis is more complex than any other part of the report. But it yields considerable insights, and the following paragraphs take readers through it step by step.

Figure 2.10. Conceptions of democracy

1RWH (DFK SDQHO VKRZV WKH UHVXOWV RI *UDGHGDSHVSRQVHKRRGHLQDQDXOW
PHDQLQJ RI WKH KRUL]RQWDO GLPHQVLRQ LV H[SODLQHG IXOOFRQWVK WRHQ V
RI GHPRFUDF\ IXUWKHU WR WKH ULJKW LQGLFDWHV D PRUH µSRSXOLVW¶ FR
7KH PHDQ UHVSRQVH LV VKRZQ E\ µ ¶ 7KH VKDGHDQVZHUWKRZVKRRFDDQHGUH
SRLQW DORQJ WKH VFDOH 7KH ZKLWH GRW VKRZV WKH ORFDWLRQ RI WKH P
WKH UDQJH VKRZQ E\ WKH WKLFN EODFN OLQH

4XDOL¿FDWLRQ OHYHOV DUH8GRHYRYHQHGQDPHRFQRWUG\ LHEODDWPROLVWFFRWURQSRQGV WR OR
JUDGHV OHYHO WR KLJKHU *&6(JUDGHV OHYHO WR $ OHYHO DQG OHYHO

that, while the economic and cultural divides have been analysed for decades and repeatedly been found to play a role in voting patterns, we have evidence on conceptions of democracy only from one rather unusual election. There is no guarantee these same differences will persist over time.

How could UK democracy be improved?

Much of the preceding evidence carries implications for how people think democracy in the UK could be improved. They would like it to be more representative of and responsive to public opinion. They would like political discourse to be honest, serious, and based on information. They would like those in public life to act with integrity and to pursue the public good.

Figure 2.11. Options for democratic reform

Question: How much better or worse would democracy in the UK work if …?

1 R W H   (D F K   U H V S R Q G H Q W   Z D V   D V N H G   W K H   T X H V W L R Q   W Z L F H   Z L W K   W Z R   L W H P V   U

6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W   ±   6 H S W H P E H U

D

Conclusion

The overwhelming majority of people in the UK value democracy. For many, however, that support is conditional on democracy delivering effective government. At the time of our research in 2021 and 2022, support for ‘strongman’ leadership was much lower than some studies in the preceding years had found; ZKHWKHU WKDW SDWWHUQ ZLOO SHUVLVW RU ZDV D UHÀHFWLRQ RI W knowable only through further research in the coming years.

This chapter has presented evidence from a variety of different ways of examining the kind of democracy that people want. The overarching theme that appears to run across all of them is that people want a democracy that delivers for everyone, not just for a privileged few. They therefore want those who hold positions of power to be genuinely representative of the public and responsive to their wishes, and they want politicians to act with honesty and integrity, and to be motivated by public service. In addition, they want core democratic rights to be upheld. They think ministers should be constrained by checks and balances, while still able to make and implement decisions. Issues should be discussed seriously. It should be easier for people to become informed and get involved, and the media, alongside politicians, have an important part to play in that.

There is some tendency for ideas about democracy to line up into more ‘liberal’ or more ‘populist’ perspectives – but such patterns should not be exaggerated. The public in the UK are not polarised in their conceptions of democracy, and there are few meaningful differences in ideas about democracy across different age groups, levels of educational attainment, or the parts of the UK. Nevertheless, some divergence in conceptions of democracy can be observed between Leave and Remain voters in the 2016 referendum, and between Conservative voters and voters for other parties in the 2019 general election. In both cases the former group was somewhat more inclined towards ‘populist’ ideas of democracy, favouring speedy and decisive action by elected leaders, while the latter tended towards more ‘liberal’ ideas, emphasising the value of taking decisions carefully, including many voices, and upholding checks and balances.

7KH [illegible] RWKHU FKDSWHU [illegible] FXODU F@W

Chapter 3. Standards in Public Life

As the preceding chapters have shown, members of the public in the UK are particularly concerned about standards of behaviour among those in public life. They think politicians have low ethical standards – that politicians are dishonest and self-serving. They want politicians who are honest, have integrity, act within the rules, and pursue the public good. It is striking that the statements about a good democracy developed by members of the citizens' assembly and quoted in Chapter 2 touched upon every one of the seven so-called 'Nolan principles' that were developed in the 1990s to guide action in public life (see Box 3.1). Beyond the concrete evidence set out above, our own experience in running the citizens' assembly and engaging with the members was that no other subject raised passions to the same extent as this one.

Box 3.1. The seven principles of public life

```
* 6 = 7 = 6 ⅅⅅ ? 6 Ð
 '$   * + '   ( - $ !   '   !    + ' - $     ,  + ' $   $ 1   ‼& !,&*;%++', ,    ( - $
!? E 6 & C : E
 '$   * + '   ( - $ !   '   !    % - + ,   . ' !   ( $   ! &   , &1%'+$$ . ;+!'&& ,'*(  '($   '* '* , &!+%,!!'& +,* 1
!& ((*'(*! , $1 ,' !& $ - &   ,   % !& ,   !* /'*#, '* ,1 #+  '-$!+&''& + !& '*   * ,'    !&  !&  &   $ '*
', *% , *!$   & !,+  '*   %+ $. +  , ', ‼! & %!$1 1'*%,-+!*   $ *   &   * +'$.   &1 !&, * +,+
* $Ð`À Ð   •!U V 8 `Ð
```

This chapter begins by examining public expectations regarding standards in public life in further detail. , W   W K H Q   I R F X V H V   V S H F L ¿ F D O O \   R Q   K R Q H V W \   ±   D   Y D O X H   W K D W   F D P H   X S   D priority. Finally, the chapter explores public views on the mechanisms through which standards in public life should be upheld.

Public expectations on standards

Our surveys asked respondents about the characteristics that they thought politicians should embody. The list of characteristics that we offered was wide-ranging, including moral standards, but also items such as 'getting things done', 'having had a job outside politics', and 'being inspiring'. Figure 3.1, reproduced from R X U   ¿ U V W   U H S R U W   V K R Z V   W K H   ¿ Q G L Q J V   I R U   E R W K   V H W V   R I   characteristics, showing that the top item overall was for politicians to 'always tell the truth', closely followed by 'owning up when they make mistakes'. The focus on representation and responsiveness that the previous chapter highlighted was also evident again here, with 'being in touch with ordinary people' coming third. Mirroring the question about components of democracy discussed in Chapter 2, these values came well D K H D G   R I   µ J H W W L Q J   W K L Q J V   G R Q H ¶   6 X U Y H \   U H S H D W H G   W K L V   T X H V W L R Q   L Q W K H   R U G H U   R I   W K H   ¿ U V W   W Z R   L W H P V   U H Y H U V H G

D

Figure 3.1. Preferences for politicians' characteristics

Question: Is it more important for a politician to [A] or to [B]?

1RWH (DFK UHVSRQGHQW VDZ WZR UDQGRPO\ VHOHFWHG RSWLRQV IURP WKH
UDQJH RI XQFHUWDLQW\ DURXQG WKHVH ZLWK WKH OHDVW IDYRXUHG RSWLR
WKH SHUFHQWDJH RI UHVSRQGHQWV VHOHFWLQJ GLIIHUHQW RSWLRQV D)RRUG H
µ*HW WKLQJV GRQH¶   WKH QXPEHU FKRRVLQJ WKH IRUPHU ZRXOG EH   S
FKRRVLQJ WKH ODWWHU

6RXUFH 6XUYH\   ±   -XO\

%XLOGLQJ RQ WKLV ¿QGLQJ WKH VXUYH\V DOVR DVNHG UHVSRQGHQWV V
choose between acting with integrity or delivering on outcomes. Respondents were randomly assigned
GLIIHUHQW YHUVLRQV RI WKH TXHVWLRQ FRQWDLQLQJ GLIIHUHQW IRUPV
WKH ¿QGLQJV IURP VXUYH\   +HUH ZH UHSRUW WKRVH IURP VXUYH\   ZK
take account of concerns that the initial phrasing may have generated inadvertent biases.

As Figure 3.3 shows (and as was also the case in survey 1), respondents placed three of the four forms of integrity – acting honestly, acting within the law, and acting transparently – ahead of delivery. Only with the fourth form of integrity – honouring promises – did more respondents favour the delivery option. Of the four IRUPV RI LQWHJULW\ UDQNLQJ GKLJKRHVWW ORU HDVH RI LQWHUSUHWDWLRQ
for the four forms of integrity while aggregating across the various forms of delivery.

Figure 3.3. Integrity versus delivery, by forms of integrity

Question: Please imagine that a future Prime Minister has to choose between [INTEGRITY] and [DELIVERY]. Which should they choose?

1RWH)RU HDFK UHVSRQGHQW >,17(*5,7<@ ZDV UHSODFHG ZLWK RQH RI IRXU DO
DOWHUQDWLYHV 7KH FKDUW VHSDUDWHV RXW WKH IRUPV RI ,17(*5,7< VKRZQ RQ
'(/,9(5<

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ± 6HSWHPEHU   UH@ÀpÀHVW H RO 0PHVW ` TPHV

Honesty

7KH HYLGHQFH KLJKOLJKWHG VR IDU KDV UHSHDWHGO\ LGHQWL¿HG KRQH backed by 98% of citizens' assembly members as a core democratic principle, and was also mentioned in PDQ\ RI WKH VWDWHPHQWV DERXW GHPRFUDF\ WKDW PHPEHUV ZURWH ,Q DUUD\ RI SROLWLFLDQ FKDUDFWHULVWLFV DQG ¿UVW DPRQJ DQ HTXDOO\ works. Survey respondents gave it greater priority than policy delivery, or than the values of transparency, following the rules, or honouring promises.

But what do people mean by 'honesty'? Valuable illumination comes from the citizens' assembly. The most widely agreed democratic principle among assembly members was:

Honesty in politics

« VR WKDW WKH SXEOLF FDQ WUXVW WKHLU HOHFWHG UHSUHVHQWDWL democratic system

Principle 1; see Box 2.1

As was set out in the assembly's report, members prioritised honesty as most important because they believed it had a knock-on effect for all of the other principles. Beyond an almost-universal call for politicians WR µQRW OLH¶ PHPEHUV LQ WKHLU GLVFXVVLRQ LGHQWL¿HG NH\ IHDW WKDW WKH\ IHOW ZHUH FUXFLDO LQFOXGHG SHDSRO JLVLQJ IRU PLVWDNHV GH admitting when you don't know the facts; not relying on optimistic spin; and dealing truthfully with the public even when the news is bad (e.g., about taxes going up).

7KLV LV VLJQL¿FDQW EHFDXVH LW KLJKOLJKWV WKDW SHRSOH VHH KRQH lies. Politicians who evade questions or offer partial spin are also seen by most people as dishonest.

7KHVH ¿QGLQJV DUH FRUURERUDWHG E\ WKH DQVZHU WR VHYHUDO TXH randomly assigned to one of three questions that sought to elucidate different aspects of the issue. One of these explored whether people saw a difference between spinning and lying. As Figure 3.5 shows, most said the two were equivalent.

Figure 3.5. Lying versus spinning

Question: Sometimes, politicians are accused of lying outright. At other times, they are said to 'spin' issues in a way that is misleading but not strictly false. Which of the following statements comes closer to your view?

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stronger enforcement was needed (see Figure 3.8). It should be acknowledged that the wording of the question could be read as implying that politicians who do not act with integrity currently go unpunished. It therefore may be felt to have nudged respondents towards this answer. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority choosing it tells a meaningful story. Supporters of change included 78% of 2016 Leave voters, 87% of Remain voters, 80% of 2019 Conservative voters, and 83% of Labour voters.

Figure 3.8. Views on punishing politicians who act without integrity

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

The survey then asked two specific questions about how to respond into alleged misconduct, the other on who should decide a minister's fate when failure had been demonstrated. In the first see Figure independent regulator should have the authority said to launch an investigation themselves, whatever the nature of the alleged wrongdoing. Around twice as many took this view as held that such matters should be left to the Prime Minister or to parliament. It was the most favoured option even among Conservatives, who, understandably, were more likely at that time than other respondents to support prime ministerial authority.

Figure 3.9. Investigating allegations of ministerial failure

Question: Please imagine there are allegations that a minister in government has [FAILURE]. Which, if any, of the following do you think should happen?

Box 3.2. Citizens' assembly recommendations: upholding standards

Resolution 6

We believe that the public should be able to trust their elected representative to behave honestly and VHOÀHVVOÀ :KLOH WKH SROLWLFDO V\VWHP LV LQWHQGHG WR KDYH PHL that they are not working well and that greater involvement of independent regulators is needed.

Supported by 95%

Recommendation 6.1: The public should be able to expect members of parliament to conduct themselves ethically in their work and that regulators will investigate conduct that appears dishonest or self-interested, or lacks integrity.

Supported by 96%

Recommendation 6.2: The Code of Conduct for MPs, peers and government ministers needs to be strengthened to give clear guidance on what a breach will result in. Regulators need to recommend consistent VDQFWLRQV WR DOO SDUWLHV DQG

D

Recommendation 6.4, against just 4% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. On the reworded Resolution 6, 68% agreed or strongly agreed, while 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed (and a large proportion – 28% – said that they didn't know or that they neither agreed nor disagreed). Thus, while the assembly members became more informed about current realities and different policy options, the evidence does not suggest that they became unrepresentative of underlying public attitudes.

Conclusion

People in the UK care deeply about the standards of behaviour displayed by those in public life. They want politicians to be honest, to act with integrity, and to pursue the public interest, and they feel that many politicians fall far short of these standards at present. They think that systems for enforcing high standards should be tough on demonstrated wrongdoing. Most people think enforcement mechanisms are L Q D G H T X D W H D W S U H V H Q W   , Q S D U W L F X O D U   D W W K H W L P H W K H U H V in the system was being undermined by a perception that leading politicians – especially the Prime Minister at the time, Boris Johnson – had lied regularly but faced no consequences. Most people did not know about existing enforcement mechanisms; so far as they could see, action was either not being taken, or moving far too slowly.

At the same time, many people, particularly after deliberation, recognise that there are some quandaries in how to design a system of enhanced enforcement: on the one hand, they think that the role of independent U H J X O D W R U V V K R X O G E H E R O V W H U H G   R Q W K H R W K H U K D Q G   W K H \ G the expense of voters. They see no danger to the second of those values from enhancing the powers of regulators to investigate allegations of wrongdoing and thereby provide transparency. Whether they think that regulators, judges, or other independent actors should also have powers to levy sanctions depends in S D U W R Q W K H Q D W X U H R I W K H Z U R Q J G R L Q J W K D W K D V E H H Q L G H Q W L think politicians should be subject to the same rules as everyone else. When it comes to poor ministerial performance, they are more inclined to think that elected politicians should decide the appropriate sanctions. But they are clear that, where the latter approach is taken, politicians do need to take their enforcement U R O H V H U L R X V O \   2 W K L V Z H P H O D P H F R E H L U M O Z D ¶ U Q H G   S X E O L F F R Q ¿ G H Q decisions be removed from politicians' hands.

Across all of this evidence, survey respondents and citizens' assembly members clearly rejected the view, expressed by some politicians, that, in a democracy, the ballot box should provide the sole mechanism by which the elected are held to account. Indeed, in our conversations with assembly members, some expressed rage at the idea that they should have to use their precious vote – available only once every four R U ¿ Y H \ H D U V ± W R G H O L Y H U D Y H U G L F W R Q D S R K O H L W Z L D F Q L W D G Z K R R V F K D P to exist for such cases to be dealt with swiftly, so they could concentrate at the ballot box on the core policy choices.

Chapter 4. Government and Parliament

The government and parliament lie at the heart of the representative system, in the UK as in other modern GHPRFUDWLHV7KLVFKDSWHU WKHUHIRUH H[SORUHV SXEOLFLFUDYV WWLHWXGLHRQ VORR WRW views on the appropriate distribution of power between government and parliament. Do people believe that leaders need substantial freedom to craft and implement coherent policy agendas, or that parliament needs a JUHDWHU UROH WR HQVXUH WKDW SURSRVDOV DUH VXEMHFW WR GHWDLO outcomes? The next three sections then focus on the House of Commons: on the role of MPs, the composition of the chamber, and the voting system through which MPs are elected. The subsequent section turns to the +RXVH RI /RUGV H[DPLQLQJ YLHZV RQ LWV LQ DUROH VHFDWLRQ GHORPSRRNVV EULRQÀ\ D within the executive branch: particularly, the role of the civil service.

It is important to emphasise again that most people do not have detailed knowledge of current institutional arrangements. When they respond to questions about those arrangements, they are not responding to the longstanding debates about possible democratic reforms that may be familiar to many of the people ZKR UHDG WKLV UHSRUW 5DWKHU WKHLU UHVSRQVHV UHÀHFW WKHLU E governed. Members of the citizens' assembly clearly had much greater knowledge by the time they drew their conclusions, but, even there, we should not exaggerate the depth of understanding gained within the limited time that was available.

(YHQ LI WKH UHVSRQVHV SULPDULO\ UHÀHFW EURDG LWVKLQVWLQFWLW HDWPLHD

the them/Ac D4C0056>Tt w0003>Tpan<<Cre5ab<020>>hapedgs: rstscctu BDC <0003>Tj EMC <00450048>Tj /Span<</Ac

FOHDUFOHDURÊïï¬®ì FOHDU EURDG   7KLV 0

FOHDU¬®ìLQVWLQFV

Figure 4.1. The strength of government and parliament

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W   ±   6 H S W H P E H U

7 K H   U H O D W L R Q V K L S   E H W Z H H Q   J R Y H U Q P H Q W   D Q G   S D U O L D P H Q W   Z D V   W citizens' assembly. In their overarching resolution on the topic, most assembly members, like most survey respondents, saw a need to strengthen parliament. Indeed, the majority for this view after deliberation was

Box 4.1. Citizens' assembly recommendations: government and parliament

Resolution 1

We believe that parliament needs to be able to play a stronger role in scrutinising the actions of government.
Collectively, it represents the voice of the electorate as a whole, whereas not everyone voted for the government.

Supported by 92%

5 H F R P P H Q G D W L R Q   : K H Q V L J Q L ¿ F D Q W Q H Z S R O L F L H V D U H D Q Q R X Q F H G
opportunity for full parliamentary scrutiny before decisions are made.

Supported by 96%

Recommendation 1.2: While there needs to be scope for the opposition to question policies proposed by a
democratically elected government, and for MPs to scrutinise details, when a policy was clearly laid out in
their manifesto the government should not be unduly blocked or delayed in implementing it.

Supported by 92%

Recommendation 1.3: In the interest of transparency, but subject to the need to maintain security, there
should be a public record of the expert advice given to the government to inform their policy decisions so
that membershe governmifesto the government should not be unduly blocked or delayed ic receeiEMC Tcxmoctasiked or dem

6 X U Y H \   T X H V W L R Q V   D Q G   W K H   G H O L E H U D W L R Q V   R I   W K H   F L W L] H Q V ¶

The citizens' assembly agreed several recommendations regarding parliamentary time (see Box 4.1, above).
7KLV ZDV DPRQJ WKH VSHFL¿F WRSLFV DGGUHVVHG E\ H[SHUW VSHDNHUV
of views. Members concluded that more time should be devoted to non-government business, such as
private members' bills and petitions (Recommendation 1.9). They thought that MPs should be able to amend
the government's proposals for parliamentary recess dates (Recommendation 1.10) and be able to force
the recall of parliament during recess (Recommendation 1.11). Finally, most thought that an early general
election should be possible only following a Commons vote (Recommendation 1.12) – one of relatively few
cases where the post-deliberation conclusions of assembly members contradicted the views of the greatest
number of survey respondents.

Beyond options for the control of parliamentary time, the surveys and citizens' assembly also explored
views on the relationship between government and parliament in policy-making. Survey respondents
overwhelmingly thought that parliament's approval should be needed before changing any law. The 2022
VXUYH\ SXW WKUHH YDULDQWV RI WKLV TXHVWLRQ WR GLIIHUHQW UHVSR
general, the second about law-making 'on urgent matters', and the third about law-making 'on minor matters'.
Though respondents were somewhat more likely to favour government action on urgent or minor matters
than on changes in general, the large majority in each case thought that parliamentary scrutiny and approval
should be required. (Figure 4.4). Conservative voters were more willing to allow law-making by government
than were Labour voters: for example, 23% of 2019 Conservative voters thought that government should be
able to change the law on urgent matters without full parliamentary scrutiny, compared to only 3% of Labour
voters. Nevertheless, the majorities saying that parliament should always need to approve changes were in
both cases again clear: 53% of Conservative voters chose this option, as did 78% of Labour voters. Clearly,
IHZ SHRSOH NQRZ LQ GHWDLO KRZ ODZV DUH PDGH EXW WKH ¿QGLQJV V
understood how widely delegated legislation is used at present.

Figure 4.4. The roles of government and parliament in changing the law

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

1RWH (DFK UHVSRQGHQW ZDV JLYHQ RQH RI WKHVH SDLUV RI VWDWHPHQW
6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ±   6HSWHPEHU

Citizens' assembly members again heard from experts expressing competing stances on this point.
Having considered this evidence, they reached conclusions that were very similar to the views of survey
UHVSRQGHQWV 2I WKH PHPEHU SDUWLFLSDWLQJ LQ WKH ¿QDO YRWH
VLJQL¿FDQW QHZ SROLFLHV EHIRUH DQ\ GHFLVLRQV ZHUH PDGH 5HFRPP
DQG   OLNHZLVH VDLG WKHUH VKRXOG EH QR VLJQL¿FDQW OHJDO FKDQ
7KH\ À rpÐNHZLVH %R[OVÀP€• P€ FKDQJHV VHH IWÐNHZLVH VHH

As in the case of the assembly's recommendations on standards set out in Chapter 3, we added a further check on whether the views of assembly members might have deviated from those of the wider public over the course of their deliberations by putting six of the twelve recommendations shown in Box 4.1 to the respondents in survey 2. In all cases, over half the respondents said that they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the recommendations. Most widely supported were Recommendations 1.1 (full parliamentary scrutiny for new policies) and 1.7 (that MPs should be able to ensure important matters are debated): these were backed, respectively, by 72% and 76% of all respondents. Recommendation 1.6 (that MPs should be free to vote with their constituents against the party line) and Recommendations 1.10 and 1.11 (calling for greater parliamentary control over recess dates and recall) received roughly two-thirds support. In all these cases, only 4–6% of respondents said they 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. The lowest support was for Recommendation 1.12, on requiring a Commons vote before an early dissolution of parliament – which was also the recommendation relating to parliament and government with the least backing among assembly members. Even here, however, 52% of respondents backed the recommendation, while only 15% opposed it. In all cases, substantial numbers of respondents – between 21% and 33% – said that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the recommendation or that they didn't know. All of this suggests that the assembly members' views remained strongly in line with wider public opinion at the conclusion of the six weekends of deliberations: views became richer, more detailed, and more considered across the assembly, but did not markedly change.

The role of MPs

The survey findings also illuminate broader questions that people held considerable and varied views as to what they think MPs should perform. There is a centuries-old discussion – often pegged to Edmund Burke's address to the electors of Bristol in 1774 (Burke 1777 [1774]) – over whether MPs should be delegates who follow their constituents' wishes or trustees who exercise their own judgement as to what will best serve the public interest. The 2022 survey asked respondents to choose between these different visions of representation, and almost twice as many chose the delegate model of representation (as reflected in the findings shown above in Figure 4.5), that people are much warier of trusting MPs to decide what 'is best' rather than simply what 'is best'. Both questions relate back to the low public trust in politicians shown in Chapter 1.

Figure 4.5. The role of MPs: delegates or trustees

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

Further illumination comes from two additional questions. First, the 2022 survey asked about whether MPs should follow the party whip or work across party lines. Knowing that many people have a very negative view of political parties, we framed this question in a manner that might overcome that negativity, linking whipping to accountability to voters. Nevertheless, as shown in Figure 4.6, cross-party working was favoured by a margin of more than 3:1.

Figure 4.6. Party voting versus working cross-party

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W ±   6 H S W H P E H U

Second, a question in the 2021 survey asked respondents to prioritise a range of different factors that MPs P L J K W W D N H L Q W R D F F R X Q W Z K H Q G H F L G L Q J K R Z W R Y R W H   ' R L Q J Z K D W large margin. Doing what their own party's voters supported or what their party's manifesto contained also fared poorly. Respondents instead gave roughly equal backing to four remaining options: that MPs should do what most people in their constituencies supported, do what they personally promised at the last election, follow expert recommendations, or follow the views of the UK public (Figure 4.7). The last three of these items suggest a clear preference for acting according to the general public interest rather than any more sectional L Q W H U A—v1)

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7KHVH YDULRXV ¿QGLQJV VXJJHVW WKDW PRVW SHRSOH DUH DWWUDF
WRJHWKHU WR ¿QG WKLVE¿HWW WWR¹XW LᵦGLQ FDᵥV VUHRᵦOₕHWDLWₑHₘHQₚV V
Chapters 1 and 2: people want politicians to work constructively in the public interest. One of the assembly's
agreed principles was:

> Power sharing …
>
> so that the interests of all are taken into account and decisions are made for the 'good of
> the people' as a whole.

(Principle 13; see Box 2.1)

,W DOVR ¿WV ZLWK WKH DVVHPEO\¶V 5HFRPPHQGDWLRQ   PHPEHUV
on matters that had not been 'key manifesto pledges'. Yet, while most people want MPs to perform such a
deliberative role, they do not trust them to do so in pursuit of the public interest rather than their own interests.
As seen in Chapter 1, trust in politicians is very low; most people feel the political world is unrepresentative of
them and unresponsive to their wishes.

Many MPs see the trustee model of representation as sacrosanct, and work hard to embody its demands in
their work. But successful trusteeship requires trust, which is lacking. Without it, most members of the public
cleave strongly to a delegate model of representation.

=Å <Q V € YQ V V P P À R P E H U V E R V¬®À € P

interpreted with caution: this item necessitated a different kind of wording, so the option on the left was framed more narrowly than for the other versions of the question. When respondents were asked about descriptive representation in general (see the bottom row of the chart), the support for this was equal to that for selection solely on 'merit'.

Figure 4.8. Ideas about descriptive representation

Question: Is it more important for parliament to [BACKGROUND], or to contain people of merit, whatever their backgrounds?

4 @ ? E 2 : ? A 6 @ A = 6 @ 7
> 6 C : E   H 9 2 E 6 G 6 C
E 9 6 : C 3 2 4 < 8 C @ F å C ７

1 R W H   ) R U H D F K U H V S R Q G H Q W > % $ & . * 5 2 8 1 ' @ Z D V U H S O D F H G E \ R Q H R I W K H S K U

6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W ±   6 H S W H P E H U

Electing MPs

Given time constraints, we did not include the system through which MPs are elected among the topics for
G L V F X V V L R Q D W W K H D V V H P E O \ ￼ L Q Q ￼ ¿ F D Q W Q X P E H U V R I P H P E H U V Z H U H L Q W H
D Q G W K L V Z D V U H À H F W H G G L U H F W O \ L Q W Z R R I W K H S U L Q F L S O H V W K D W

Free and inclusive elections …

so that everyone can participate – regardless of profession, background, gender, race or religion – and have their vote count equally

(Principle 5)

Fair representation …

so that the people who are elected are actually representing the views of their electorate and decisions are driven by 'we the people'.

(Principle 8; see Box 2.1)

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6HYHUDO RI WKH VWDWHPHQWV DERXW D µJRRG¶

6HYHUDO RI WKH VWDWHPHQWV DERXW D µJRRG¶

Figure 4.10. Views on what the voting system should do

Question: Which of the following is it more important for the voting system used in general elections to do?

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Figure 4.11. Composition of the House of Lords

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W   ±   6 H S W H P E H U

As Figure 4.12 indicates, however, overwhelming majorities did support certain reforms: that appointments should be made by an independent body rather than the Prime Minister, and that there should be a cap on the size of the chamber. There were some differences between voters for different parties, but these were never large. Even among 2019 Conservative voters, 55% supported an independent body to make appointments, while just 10% thought that the Prime Minister should have this role. Conservatives (at 77%) supported a cap on the size of the chamber more strongly than did any other group.

Figure 4.12. Appointments to the House of Lords

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W   ±   6 H S W H P E H U

On the role of the House of Lords, survey 2 asked different respondents slightly different questions in order to explore how far views depended on whether the second chamber was presented as having the power to overrule the House of Commons or merely ask it to look at a decision again (Figure 4.13). In the version where the Lords could just require MPs to look again, substantially more respondents backed this role than

opposed it – even though the question referred to the Lords rather negatively as 'unelected'. Faced with the notion of the Lords overruling the Commons, by contrast, the split was more even, with the greater number RSSRVLQJ :H DOVR YDULHG TXHVWLRQ ZRUGLQJ ¿QGLQJ WKDW UHVSRQ Lords if the question mentioned that peers 'are often experts', and less likely to do so if it noted that MPs 'are accountable to voters'.

Figure 4.13. Role of the House of Lords

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

1RWH (DFK UHVSRQGHQW ZDV JLYHQ RQH RI WKHVH SDLUV RI VWDWHPHQWV

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ± 6HSWHPEHU

:LWKLQ WKH H[HFXWLYH EUDQFK WKH U

7KLV UHSRUW KDV DOUHDG\ ORRNHG DW RQH DVSHFW RI WKH UROH RI LP towards the role of regulators in upholding standards in public life, with particular reference to cases of alleged failure by ministers. This showed that both survey respondents and members of the citizens' assembly saw the function of regulators as important, both in investigating allegations of wrongdoing and in enforcement.

The project did not examine the wider role of civil servants in detail. But one question in survey 1 did inquire about attitudes towards the core principle structuring the civil service: whether civil servants should be politically neutral (as is the case in the UK today), or whether they should be appointed by the politicians in power at any given time to align with their agenda (as is true to varying degrees in some other countries, most prominently the United States). As shown in Figure 4.14, a substantial majority of respondents backed WKH SULQFLSOH RI WKH 7KLV SD UW V L Z L Q F K YW L O HV HH FX H LQJ WKHPH VHHQ WK responses to questions about institutional arrangements: a suspicion of concentrated power and a desire to see policy-making shaped by an inclusive range of voices, including those of experts. As elsewhere, this presumably also related to most people's underlying distrust of politicians.

Figure 4.14. Attitudes to the civil service

4XHVWLRQ 'R \RX WKLQN WKDW XQHOHFWHG VHQLRU RI¿FLDOV people who are neutral and permanent government employees, or do you think they should be people who are appointed by the government of the day?

9

6RXUFH 6XUYH\   ± -XO\

Conclusion

The evidence set out in this chapter reinforces the conclusions reached in previous ones. Most members of the public in the UK are sceptical towards the concentration of power in the hands of a few ministers, and prefer to see strong checks and balances – provided by parliament, and also by the impartial civil service. They certainly do not want such arrangements to be taken too far: there is also a desire for governments to be able to implement their manifesto commitments without undue constraint. But the desire for checks DQG EDODQFHV DSSHDUV7WKR KKUDYYW LLWZ RR HEJDDWWHLVYH WKH ORZ WUXVW LO Chapter 1. If you do not trust those in power to act with integrity, you are likely to want them to be subject to limits. The other driver is more positive: a recognition that the UK contains many people with diverse views, and a belief that policy-makers should take account of such views when making policy. These themes are examined further in Chapter 8.

0RUH VSHFL¿FDOO\ WKHUH LV SXEOLF VXSSRUW IRU JLYLQJ SDUOLDPH and for empowering backbenchers to push issues up the agenda and introduce legislation. There is also a strong belief that the government should not be able to make laws without the full scrutiny of parliament. Most people want MPs to be more responsive to public opinion than they are perceived to be at present. Many people are very open to the idea of electoral reform – though supporters of the status quo have arguments that also resonate with the public. There is near-universal concern about the current system for appointments to the House of Lords. Many people back at least an elected element in the second chamber, but there is substantial support for the inclusion of appointed experts as well. The principle of a neutral and permanent civil service is widely backed.

Chapter 5. Law and the Courts

Some of the most divisive constitutional debates of recent years have focused on the proper role of law and the courts. Almost all politicians pay at least lip service to the rule of law, and for most it is a fundamental and unshakable principle; but some have appeared at times to regard it as dispensable when it has posed a barrier to their preferred course. Equally, while rights or liberties are highly esteemed on all sides, there are

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A prioritisation of rights is evident in the survey responses as well. For example, that 'all citizens have equal political rights' was among the highest ranked components of democracy shown in Figure 2.8. Still, there are two caveats to that. First, the list of components of democracy in Figure 2.8 includes several rights-related elements that received lower priority: that 'people are free to organise or join pressure groups', 'people are free to take part in protests and demonstrations', and 'people are free to join or organise political parties'. As emphasised in Chapter 2, low prioritisation does not necessarily mean respondents thought these features of democracy undesirable, only that they ranked them as less important than others. Still, the differences are meaningful and striking.

6HFRQG LQ DQRWKHU TXHVWLRQ   DQ RSWLRQ SKUDVHGDWWUDFFÀFMDHQCGÖO rather lower support, as shown in Figure 5.1. Among those who were prepared to choose between following the will of the majority and protecting the rights of minorities, twice as many opted for the former as the latter. Fully half of all respondents avoided choosing at all, many of them presumably hoping that it is possible to achieve both.

Figure 5.1. Majority will versus minority rights

Question: Which comes closer to your view?

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ±   6HSWHPEHU

Further evidence on attitudes to rights protection is bound up with evidence on attitudes to the role of the courts, which is explored in the next section.

The role of the courts

We have already seen several pieces of evidence regarding public attitudes to the role of the courts. Figure 1.5 showed that trust in 'the court system' is markedly higher than trust in politicians, and Figure 1.6 indicated much more favourable perceptions of judges' ethical standards than of the standards of either politicians or businesspeople. In Figure 3.10, it was seen that many people think judges should have a role in deciding the consequences of ministerial wrongdoing.

As was noted in Chapter 2, members of the citizens' assembly wrestled with competing instincts as to what role judges should play. In their initial discussions, they formulated a principle for good democracy according to which no unelected bodies should make policy decisions. There was a clear view that unelected bodies may be unrepresentative or biased towards the perspectives of the already powerful, and therefore lack the legitimacy to make such decisions. But support for this principle weakened as the assembly continued, as members considered the roles of expert advice, direct citizen participation, independent regulators, and judges. Their concerns over the behaviour and motivations of many politicians caused them to want to place constraints upon WKRVH SROLWLFLDQV 5HÀHFWLQJ WKLV VKLIW LQ WKLQNLQJ WKH WKH GXULQJ ZDVKÀÿDSSUHFLEOYÝQ RI WKHWWLSRÖRUWWLFHDNt

(Y H Q   V R   P D Q \   P H P E H U V   F R Q W L Q X H G   W R   ¿ Q G   W K L V   ¿ Q D O   W H [W   S U R E O H P
vote, but 30% did not. This compares to over 90% support for most of the other principles.

: K H Q   W K H \   H [D P L Q H G   W K H   U R O H   R I   W K H   F R X U W V   V S H F L ¿ F D O O \   D V V H P E O
that courts should play a central role in upholding rights. At the same time, their doubts about empowering
X Q H O H F W H G   D F W R U V   S U R P S W H G   W K H P   WKHLVSHFYLHUIDRUGKLWQLDUGLWVRKQLWR
recommendations are set out in Box 5.1. The resolution, agreed by 92% of members who voted, stated that
courts have an important role in protecting 'basic rights and core democratic principles'. Recommendations
D Q G   V S H F L ¿ H G   W K D W   F R X U W V   V K R X O G   E H   D E O H   W R   R Y H U W X U Q   O D Z
rights' or 'basic democratic rights', and Recommendation 7.4 again emphasised 'basic democratic freedoms
V X F K   D V   W K H   S X E O L F ¶ V   U L J K W   W R   S U R W H V W   D Q G   I U H H G R P   R I   V S H H F K ¶
the power to overturn laws should not extend beyond these recognised rights (Recommendation 7.1), and
such powers 'should be used sparingly' to avoid being 'governed by the courts rather than the people we
H O H F W   W R   U H S U H V H P H Q W   X V ¶   W K L V   Q D O   W Z R   U H F R P P H Q G D W L R Q V   U H O D W H G
F R X U W   S R Z H U V   W K D W   K D G   E H H Q   À R D W H G   E \   P L Q L V W H U V   D U R X Q G   W K H   W L
D V V H P E O \   P H P E H U V   W K R X J K W   X Q M X V W L ¿ H G

Box 5.1. Citizens' assembly recommendations: the role of the courts

Resolution 7

We believe that there is an important role for the courts to play in limiting the laws that can be passed by government when they are seen to challenge basic rights and core democratic principles.

Supported by 92%

Recommendation 7.1: Courts should be able to overturn laws that are judged as violating legally recognised human rights. Otherwise they should not have the power to override the sovereignty of parliament.

Supported by 86%

Recommendation 7.2: The basic features of our democracy that protect the public's constitutional rights to participate and be represented should be hard for any government or parliament to change, and courts V K R X O G   E H   D E O H   W R   R Y H U W X U Q   R U   U H T X L U H   P R G L ¿ F D W L R Q V   W R   O D Z V

Supported by 90%

Recommendation 7.3: If the courts were to be given wider scope to challenge unfair laws and ask parliament to think again (beyond legally protected human rights) that power should be used sparingly.

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The surveys also included two detailed questions about the role of the courts, one of which focused on their role in rights protection. We varied several elements of the question between respondents, making it possible to see how stated attitudes were affected by which rights were at stake, what the legal source of those rights was, and which courts were potentially involved in decision-making. Figure 5.2 shows the overall results, while Figures 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5 show how the responses were affected by the three dimensions of variation.

As indicated in Figure 5.2, only a small minority of respondents thought the courts should have no role in rights protection. A large majority thought that courts should be able to require parliament to think again

Figure 5.3. The courts and human rights: variation by right

Question: Please imagine the government has proposed a new law and parliament has approved it. Some people believe that this law violates [RIGHT]. Should the courts be able to decide whether people's legal rights have been violated as claimed?

2 C:89E E92E H@>6? 92G6 E@ 6BF2=
EC62E>6?E :? E96 H@C<A=24

1RWH)RU HDFK UHVSRQGHQW >5,*+7@ ZDV UHSODFHG E\ RQH RI WKH SKUDVHV

6RXUFH 6XUYH\   ± -XO\

Figure 5.4 shows the impact of what the question said about the legal origin of the claimed rights. We wanted to see whether specifying a particular legal origin – the UK Human Rights Act or the European Convention on Human Rights – made a difference. The tenor of public debate on the matter might suggest that support IRU D MXGLFLDO UROH ZRXOG EH ORZHU ZKHQ WKHW(KHURSMDQ &RQYHQWLRQ specifying a legal origin did reduce support for the courts having a role to a degree: the combined extent RI WKH WZR FDWHJRULHV RQ WKH OHIW RI WKH FKDUW GLPLQLVKHG :KH 5LJKWV $FW RU WKH (XURSHDQ &RQYHQWLRQ RQ +XPDQ 5LJKWV PDGH QR VLJ that both have become associated in some people's minds with unpopular court rulings. Given that most respondents would know little of the European Convention and might think it related to the European Union, ZH LQFOXGHG D YHUVLRQ WKDW H[SODLQHG ZKDW LW LV ERWWRP EDU L the results. The differences between these versions of the question and the original version, where the legal RULJLQ ZDV XQVSHFL¿HG DUH QRWHZRUWK\ 1HYHUWKHOHVV WKH PDLQ the versions, substantial majorities thought the courts should retain an important role.

Figure 5.4. The courts and human rights: variation by legal origin

Question: Please imagine the government has proposed a new law and parliament has approved

Figure 5.5. The courts and human rights: variation by court

Question: Please imagine the government has proposed a new law and parliament has approved it. Some people believe that this law violates [RIGHT]. Should [THE COURTS] be able to decide whether people's legal rights have been violated as claimed?

1RWH (DFK UHVSRQGHQW VDZ D VSHFL¿F SURSRVHG UHJXUJKW LQ SODFH RI ZKHUH ...

Figure 5.6. Courts and determining the powers of government

Question: Please imagine there is a dispute over whether the government has the legal authority to decide a particular matter on its own or whether it needs parliament's approval. How should this dispute be settled?

■ @ G 6 C ? > 6 ? E > : ? : D _ 6 (@ D : E : 4 : 2 ? D : ? A 2 C = : 2 > 6 ? E E 9 6 4 @ C C @ ? E < ? @ H
D 9 @ F = 5 9 2 G 6 E 9 6 = 2 D E H @ C 5 2 G 6 E 9 6 = 2 D E H @ C 5 2 3 = 6 E @ 5 6 4 : 5 6
H 9 6 E 9 6 C E 9 6 8 @ G 6 C ? > 6 ? E
@ C A 2 C = : 2 > 6 ? E 5 6 D 6 C G 6 D
E 9 6 = 2 D E H @ C 5

6 R X U F H 6 X U Y H \   ± - X O \   D Q G V X U Y H \ $ X J X V W ± 6 H S W H P E H U

This question also explored the robustness of the responses to alternative question wordings. We varied whether politicians in parliament in the second response option were described simply as 'politicians' or as 'elected politicians' or 'party politicians'. Similarly, we varied whether judges in the third response option were described simply as 'judges' or as 'unelected judges' or 'independent judges'. We expected that mention of 'elected' or 'unelected' would increase support for politicians to decide, while mention of 'party' or 'independent' would increase support for judges. The scale of such differences would allow us to check the degree to which results might just be by-products of question wording, and the extent to which respondents did have clear preferences.

Figure 5.7 shows the impact of these two sets of variations. The effects were all in the expected directions: mentioning that politicians in parliament were elected increased the likelihood that respondents would choose this option, while mentioning their link to political parties reduced it; mentioning that judges were unelected reduced the popularity of their being involved; mentioning that they were independent increased it. But these shifts were all small, and did not affect the overall pattern of opinion: in every case, more people said that judges should decide than the combined total who said that ministers or parliamentarians should decide (though that was barely the case when judges were described as unelected). The fact that varying the T X H V W L R Q Z R U G L Q J F K D Q J H G W K H U H V X O W V F R Q ¿ U P V W K D W Q R W D O reading the question. But the fact that the effects were relatively small suggests that many people have at least fairly clear instincts in favour of holding politicians subject to legal checks and balances.

Figure 5.7. Courts and determining the powers of government: impact of question wording

Question: Please imagine there is a dispute over whether the government has the legal authority to decide a particular matter on its own or whether it needs parliament's approval. How should this dispute be settled?

1RWH (DFK UHVSRQGHQW VDZ >32/,7,&,$16@ UHSODFHG E\ HLWKHU µ3ROBWH @ `
>-8'*(6@ UHSODFHG E\ µ-XGJHV¶ µ8QHOHFWHG MXGJHV ¶ RU µ,QGHSHQGHQW MXG

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ±   6HSWHPEHU

$ ¿QSOHRHYLGHUHQFHODWWRKWHVHDFVRLMRXQUVUHHVSRQGWGLHVFRPPHQGRDWKLRÀDGV ``
assembly relating to the role of the courts. Survey 2 included questions about two of those recommendations (Recommendations 7.1 and 7.2, stating that courts should be able to overturn laws found to violate human or democratic rights). Absolute majorities stated agreement with both: 54% agreed or strongly agreed with
5HFRPPHQGDWLRQ   GLG VR ZLWK 5HFRPPHQGDWLRQ   2QO\   LQ
either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Again, an instinct in favour of a strong role for the courts in checking politicians' freedom is evident.
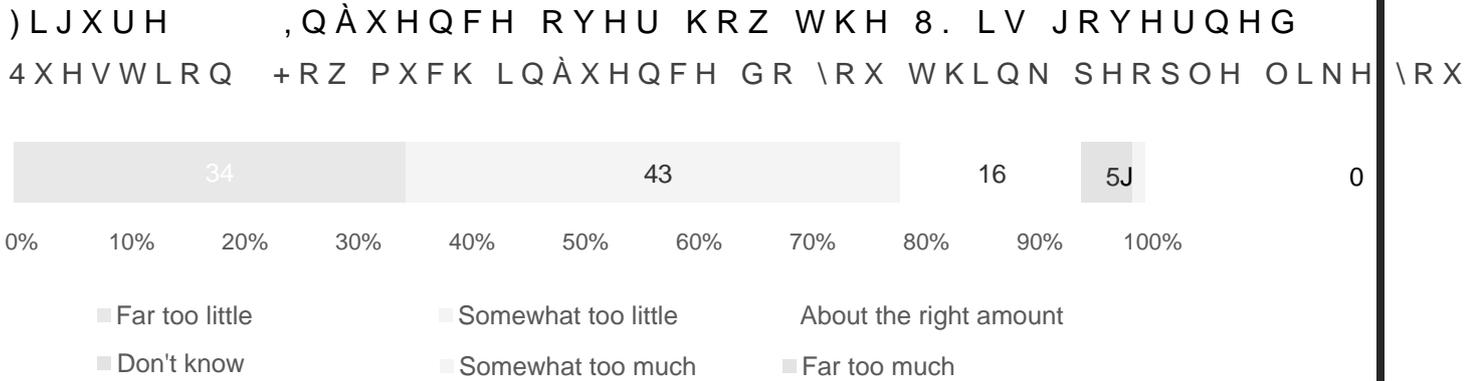
Conclusion

Chapter 6. The Roles of the Public

: H O H D U Q H G Z K L O H U X Q Q L Q J E V L Q J E V L Q J E V L Q J E V L Q J E V L Q J E V L Q J \ L Q W K H 8 . K R Z K D U G F about government, parliament, law, and the courts: for many, these are distant and rather alien abstractions of which they are only dimly aware. That is much less the case when considering the roles of the public. As was the case when looking at standards of ethical behaviour in public life, this was a topic that most people could relate to personally.

7 K L V F K D S W H U E H J L Q V L Q W K H ¿ U V W W Z R V H F W L R Q V   E \ K L J K O L J K W L Q J   R Q W K H R Q H K D Q G   P R V W S H R S O H W K L Q N W K H G H P R F U D W L F V \ V W H P L V interests; on the other hand, few people participate very actively in politics or want to increase their participation. : H V X J J H V W W K D W L W L V Z U R Q J W R W K L Q N W K D W V X F K S D W W H U Q V Q H F barriers to effective public participation that ought to be addressed. The subsequent sections therefore explore public attitudes towards ways of encouraging greater engagement, including improved education about po < 0 t h a < 0 0 0 3

Similar views were evident in the surveys. For example, Figure 2.6 showed that, when respondents were asked who, if anyone, should have more power in the political system, the most popular of a range of options was 'voters in general'. And, as Figure 6.1 shows, an overwhelming majority of respondents thought that
SHRSOH OLNH WKHP KDG HLWKHU IDU VRPHZKDW WRR PXFK RU WRR OLWWOH WR VMKH 8. LV JRY

)LJXUH   ,QÀXHQFH RYHU KRZ WKH 8. LV JRYHUQHG

4XHVWLRQ +RZ PXFK LQÀXHQFH GR \RX WKLQN SHRSOH OLNH \RX

| 34 | 43 | 16 | 5J | 0 |

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

■Far too little   ■Somewhat too little   About the right amount

■Don't know   ■Somewhat too much   ■Far too much

6RXUFH 6XUYH\   ± -XO\

Attitudes to taking part

Notwithstanding their desire for a democracy that is responsive to public wishes, most survey respondents indicated that they had not recently taken part in political activities beyond voting or signing a petition (Figure 6.2). Indeed, fewer than half (43%) of respondents said they had participated in any of the activities listed other than those two. Furthermore, as Figure 6.3 shows, most said that they did not want to take part more.

Figure 6.2. Reported participation in politics

4XHVWLRQ :KLFK RI WKH IROORZLQJ KDYH \RX GRQH LQ WKH SDVW ¿YH

7KH IXOO WH[W RI WKLV RSWLRQ ZDV µ7DNHQ SDUW LQ D SURFHVV WKDW EURXJ
LVVXH DQG FRPH XS ZLWK UHFRPPHQGDWLRQV¶

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ± 6HSWHPEHU

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Figure 6.3. Preferences for taking part in politics

Question: To what extent, if at all, would you ideally like to get involved in politics more than you are?

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ±   6HSWHPEHU

When asked about why they did not get more involved, the greatest number of respondents said that they felt they didn't know enough to do so (Figure 6.4). Many also said they didn't like how politics works, or didn't think they could make a difference. There were few marked differences between different groups, though Labour voters were slightly more likely than Conservatives to cite a dislike for how politics works.

Figure 6.4. Reasons for not getting involved in politics

Question: What are the main reasons you don't get involved in politics more?

1RWH 5HVSRQGHQWV FRXOG UDQN XS WR WKUHH RSWLRQV IURP D ¿[HG OLVW
FKRRVLQJ HDFK RSWLRQ DV WKHLU WRS UDQNHG UHDVRQ RUDQJH DQG DV F

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ±   6HSWHPEHU

As for what form people would want participation to take, respondents were asked which forms they thought should have more impact in an ideal democracy (Figure 6.5). They favoured mechanisms involving broadly representative participation by all – referendums and elections – and more deliberative mechanisms, such as consultations and citizens' assemblies. They did not want donations to yield an impact. They were

Recommendation 2.4: Information on what is happening in parliament and government should be freely available to all in a form that is concise, factual, accessible, and unbiased. More work is needed so that S H R S O H   N Q R Z   Z K H U H   W R   O R R N   D Q G   F D Q   T X L F N O \   ¿ Q G   W K H   L Q I R U P D W L

Supported by 95%

Recommendation 2.5: We need a strong, independent media, supported by enhanced regulation, to ensure the fair and balanced reporting of political issues and increased public access to reliable fact-checking services.

Supported by 97%

Recommendation 2.6: To allow for effective public participation in political debate and scrutiny, freedom of speech and the right to protest need to be protected.

Supported by 95%

Recommendation 2.7: The people elected to represent the public in parliament need to be more diverse and more closely represent the make-up of the UK population so that people can recognise themselves and their interests within the representative system.

Supported by 83%

5 H F R P P H Q G D W L R Q   0 L Q L V W H U V   Q H H G   W R   E H   N Q R Z O H G J H D E O H   L Q   W K S X E O L F   F D Q   E H   F R Q ¿ G H Q W   W K D W   W K H   G H F L V L R Q V   W K H \   D U H   U H F R P P H Q

Supported by 93%

Recommendation 2.8 – arguing that ministers should be knowledgeable about the area of their U H V S R Q V L E L O L W L H V   ±   U H À H F W H G   D   U H F X U U L Q J   W K H P H   L Q   E R W K   W K H   D V expertise, and a process of policy-making based on careful examination of evidence and options. But they perceived that the current process is based on partisan point-scoring. Assembly members thought people would be more willing to take part in politics if issues were discussed sensibly. Similar concerns also relate to Recommendation 1.3 (see Chapter 3), which called for publication of the advice given to ministers, to H Q K D Q F H   S X E O L F   F R Q ¿ G H Q F H   W K D W   S R O L F \   G H F L V L R Q V   D U H   H Y L G H Q F H   E

Three of these recommendations were put to respondents in survey 2. Reactions to Recommendation 2.7 (that parliament should be more diverse and representative) were discussed in Chapter 4. Recommendation 2.4 (calling for factual and accessible information on what is happening in parliament and government) received overwhelming backing: 78% agreed or strongly agreed with it, while just 2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Recommendation 2.2 (better education about politics for young people and lifelong learners) Z D V   D O V R   V W U R Q J O \   V X S S R U W H G   ¿ U P V   W K D W   W K H   G H V L U H   I R U   E H W W H U education about political matters was not simply a product of participation in a deliberative forum where the value of informed decision-making was highlighted; it appears also to be the preference of the public at large.
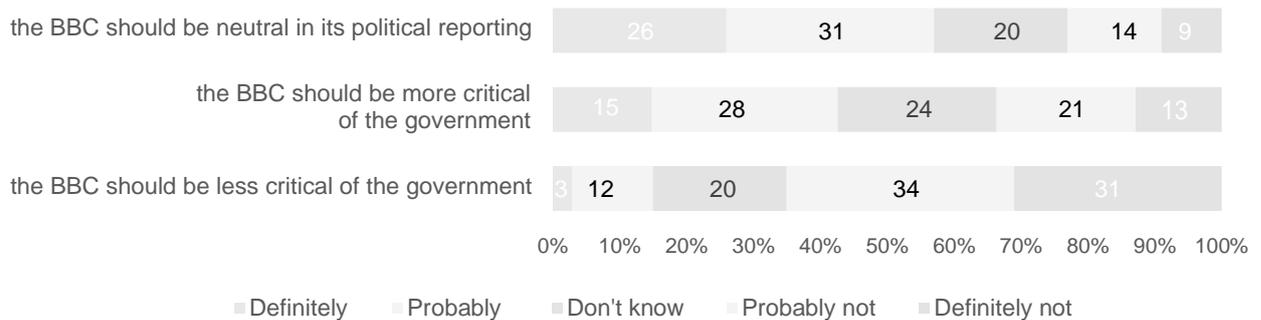
The role of the media

Most people experience politics largely through the media, and it is important therefore to examine how they see the media and what role they think the media ought to play. As set out in the preceding section, members of the citizens' assembly regarded strong, independent media as essential, but also had grave concerns about what they saw as media bias and poor quality information. Similarly, survey 2 found that one of the most widely supported changes to the functioning of the system was if 'media reporting of politics was more factual and less based on opinion': 73% thought this would improve how democracy works, against just 3% who thought it would make things worse (Figure 2.11).

Survey 1 included a question designed to elicit attitudes to the principle of impartial broadcasting. This described a hypothetical candidate for the role of Chair of the BBC and asked whether respondents thought this person suitable for the job. Several aspects of the description were varied, but the important one concerned previous statements attributed to the candidate: that the BBC should be neutral in its

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political reporting, more critical of the government, or less critical of the government. As shown in Figure 6.6, respondents were much more likely to think the candidate suitable if they had backed the principle of impartiality than in either alternative scenario. In addition, far more respondents thought it might be appropriate for an incoming Chair to wish the BBC to be more critical of the government than would welcome a less critical approach. This fits the general pattern of favo[uring...]

Figure 6.6. Views on impartial broadcasting

Question: The UK government has the power to appoint the Chair of the BBC. Imagine that the preferred candidate … has previously said that [POLICY]. Do you think this person could be a suitable candidate to be Chair of the BBC?

	Definitely	Probably	Don't know	Probably not	Definitely not
the BBC should be neutral in its political reporting	26	31	20	14	9
the BBC should be more critical of the government	15	28	24	21	13
the BBC should be less critical of the government	3	12	20	34	31

Note: [POLICY] was replaced for each respondent by one of the stat[ements...]

Source: Survey 2 – July [...]

It is clear from the evidence here and in the previous section that most people think democracy ought to be founded on high-quality public discussion rooted in hard facts and evidence. Yet many politicians, journalists, and others may look at such attitudes wryly, pointing out that information such as this does exist, but few people choose to access it – and that, if mainstream media outlets adopted this approach, they would soon see their audiences shrink. It may be that we know what is good for us, but don't like it when it is offered to us. Yet there is an evident public desire to bridge that gap, and it is the job of those wanting to improve democracy to work out how that might be done. The concluding Chapter 8 returns to this theme.

Freedoms of speech, association, and protest

The project yielded several strands of evidence regarding attitudes to core democratic freedoms, such as freedom of speech, association, and protest. These suggested strong support for free speech, while attachment to other freedoms was somewhat more muted or equivocal.

As discussed in Chapter 2, that 'all citizens have equal political rights' was one of the components of democracy that survey respondents regarded as most important, closely followed by 'people are free to express their political views openly'. But freedoms to join or organise pressure groups or political parties, and the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations ranked much lower (see Figure 2.8).

In another of the questions reported in Chapter 2, respondents were asked how much better or worse they thought democracy in the UK would work if (among a range of possible changes) 'people were more free to take part in protests, even if that causes disruption for others'. As shown in Figure 2.11, 35% thought this would make democracy work a lot or a bit better, while 13% thought it would make things a lot or a bit worse. This question elicited a sharper divergence of opinion between supporters of different political parties than any other in either survey: just 7% of 2019 Conservative voters thought more freedom for protests would make democracy better, while 50% thought this would make it worse; among Labour voters, the equivalent figures were [...] who thought democracy would be improved and [...]

Box 6.2. Citizens' assembly recommendations: petitions

Resolution 3

:H E H O L H Y H

the central events in UK politics over the past decade, many people have developed clear views on whether they welcome such votes or not.

It might initially be expected that views would differ between respondents who voted Leave in the 2016 Brexit referendum and those who voted Remain. But Figure 6.7 shows only a moderate divergence between these groups in their attitudes to referendums. Hansard Society research found that, immediately following the 2016 ballot, Brexit supporters were overwhelmingly favourable to referendums, while opponents of Brexit were much more ambivalent (Hansard Society 2017: 23). But such reactions appear not to have left a lasting legacy of sharply differing views.

Figure 6.7. Attitudes to referendums in general

Question: Which comes closer to your view?
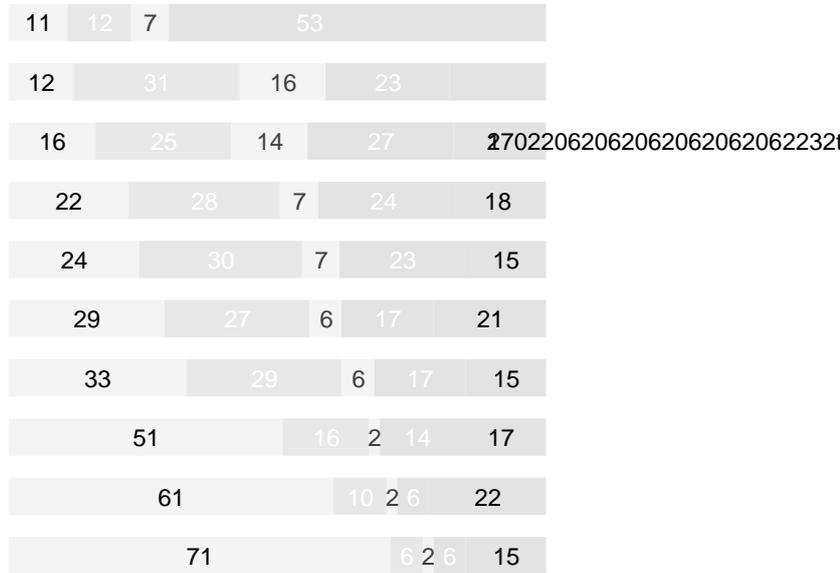
6 R X U F H   6 X U Y H \ $ X J X V W ±   6 H S W H P E H U

Despite these results, other evidence from the project indicates that many people feel ambivalent about referendums, and some are actively hostile. That hostility was visible in the list of possible democratic reforms shown in Figure 2.11: as many respondents to survey 2 thought holding more referendums would

)LJXUH $WWLWXGHV WR UHIHUHQGXPV RQ VSHFL¿F LVVXHV

Question: Please imagine that the UK is deciding [ISSUE]. Do you think this should be decided…

11	12	7	53	
12	31	16	23	
16	25	14	27	2702206206206206206206202232t
22	28	7	24	18
24	30	7	23	15
29	27	6	17	21
33	29	6	17	15
51	16	2	14	17
61	10	2 6		22
71		6 2 6		15

1RWH ,Q SODFH RI µ>,668(@¶ HDFK UHVSRQGHQW VDZ RQH RI WKH VWDWHPH

6RXUFH 6XUYH\   ±   -XO\

The views on referendums expressed by the members of the citizens' assembly were very similar to those offered by survey respondents. They too saw referendums as an important tool for public participation, but RQH WKDW VKRXOG EH XVHG IRU RQO\ D UDSUDFKLLQJOV HVROXWLRQ DQG VSHFL issue are shown in Box 6.3.

Box 6.3. Citizens' assembly recommendations: referendums

Resolution 4

We believe that referendums are an important tool for direct democracy that can add to a good democracy in the UK by handing important decisions back to the people.

Supported by 83%

The specific recommendations in this area focused on when and Recommendation 5.1 suggested they might be particularly valuable on issues that are important but divisive. Recommendations 5.4–5.6 proposed several particular contexts in which they could be deployed.

Recommendations 5.2 and 5.3 were perhaps most illuminating. Recommendation 5.3 insisted that processes such as citizens' assemblies should be taken seriously in government and parliament, with a guarantee that their results be made public and lead to debate in parliament. At the same time, Recommendation 5.2 said that assembly recommendations should not be binding on decision-makers, 'as that would be undemocratic since the members are not elected'. In developing these recommendations, members built on their underpinning principles for democracy, set out in Chapter 2 (Box 2.1). Principle 16 held that those elected to represent the public must ultimately be responsible for the decisions taken. But Principles 10 and 11 emphasised the importance of evidence and expertise in decision-making, while Principle 13 focused on the value of coming together to examine issues and develop solutions that work for society as a whole.

The assembly's Recommendation 5.1 hinted at a concern that citizens' assemblies are not yet widely known or trusted by the public. This issue was in turn reflected in survey responses. We included a question that explained what a citizens' assembly is and then asked whether respondents thought this a good idea. As Figure 6.9 shows, a (bare) majority said that it was, and opposition was low; but around a third of respondents were unsure, presumably in many cases reflecting

Figure 6.9. Attitudes to citizens' assemblies

Question: One possible way to resolve a difficult political issue is to resolve a difficult political issue together in what's called a 'Citizens' Assembly'.

In this approach, a group of people are selected by lottery, in much the same way as for jury service. Organisers try to make sure people of different ages, genders, ethnicities, class backgrounds and political views are represented. These people are given information about the issue and hear different arguments. They get to ask questions, think about the evidence, and discuss different views among themselves. Then they vote on what they think and their conclusions are made public.

To what extent would you support or oppose having this kind of Citizens' Assembly become part of how the UK decides difficult political issues?

Source: Survey   August – September

Similar uncertainty was evident when two of the assembly's recommendations relating to citizens' assemblies were put to survey respondents. On Recommendation 5.1 (calling for the use of deliberative processes on divisive issues), 49% expressed agreement and only 13% disagreement, but 38% said either that they neither agreed nor disagreed or that they didn't k

a

Conclusion

A fundamental driver of current dissatisfaction with the state of politics is a perception that the democratic
V\VWHP LV LQVXI¿FLHQWO\ UHVSRQVLYH\$V WWRK HSXEODPLHF VZLLO\RVKHVHD QGH RSOOHHU K
enthusiasm for engaging in politics as it is currently practised: they don't feel that they know enough about
politics to get more involved; they don't like how politics works; and they don't think their participation
would make much difference. There is therefore support for measures that would address these concerns.
Such measures include some of those discussed in previous chapters – above all, enhancing standards of
ethical behaviour in public life. They also include improving education about politics and making accurate,
trustworthy, impartial information about political matters more readily accessible, through the media and
other channels. There is overwhelming public support for free speech, while views on freedoms of protest
and association are more mixed.

7KH ¿QDO WKUHH VHFWLRQV RI WKLV FKDSWHU H[DPLQHG DWWLWXGHV W
processes such as citizens' assemblies. There is considerable support among the public for all of these, but
LQ HDFK FDVH WKHUH½À0UHIHUHQGXPÀsJŸÏ þÿ p°€P‹Ü UHIÌà IWR UHIHUHQGX

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Figure 7.1. Issues that matter to people

Question: When thinking about politics today, would you say that issues around [A] or around [B] are more important to you?

1RWH ,Q SODFH RI µ>$@¶ DQG µ>%@¶ HDFK UHVSRQGHQW VDZ WZR RI WKH RSW
UDQJH RI XQFHUWDLQW\ DURXQG WKHVH ZLWK WKH OHDVW IDYRXUHG RSWLRQ V
WKH SHUFHQWDJH RI UHVSRQGHQWV VHOHFWLQJ GLIIHUHQW RSWLRQV)RU H[DPS
    DQG µ,PPLJUDWLRQ¶   WKH QXPEHU FKRRVLQJ WKH IRUPHU ZRXOG EH   SH
QXPEHU FKRRVLQJ WKH ODWWHU

6RXUFH 6XUYH\ $XJXVW ±   6HSWHPEHU

Another way of getting at what matters to people, rather than asking directly, is to ask a range of questions and see what makes a difference to the responses. In this case, we described the policy platforms of two s tformpr2eScarry030053weightcinlibed the po'Tf 9s. Ineciss . s. Ie dTwe dprovid2eS1nmsa50de de so-hgnlfaci two

D

There was some variation in these proportions across questions, suggesting respondents had clearer views on some matters than on others. Stability was greatest for the choice between the statement that 'Once a decision has been agreed on democratically, people should accept it and move on, even if they disagree with it' and the alternative that 'In a democracy, it is good if people continue campaigning against decisions that they disagree

ZLWK HYHQ DIWHU D GHFLVLRQ KDV EHHQ PDGH¶ 2I WKRVH ZKR FKRVH Y

in survey 2; for the second option, the proportion was 67%. This trade-off question related to a choice that became highly salient in the years before the survey was conducted – whether the result of the 2016 Brexit

UHIHUHQGXP VKRXOG EH WUHDWHG DV ¿QDO ± ZKLFK OLNHO\ H[SODLQV W

for the choice between the statements 'Judges have an important role in ensuring that elected politicians operate within the rules' and 'Elected politicians must themselves be responsible for ensuring that they act within the rules': here, only 63% and 45% of respondents (respectively) maintained their original choice.
This appears therefore be an issue where people's views are less certain.

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Chapter 8. Implications for Democratic Reform

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what the research indicates about public attitudes to democracy and the democratic system in the UK.
6HFRQG LW SODFHV WKHVH ¿QGLQJV LQ FRQWH[W KLJKOLJKWLQJ D
FRQGXFWHG DQG UHÀHFWLQJ RQ KRZ IDU WKH ¿QGLQJV DUH OLNHO\
UHVSRQVH WR SDUWLFXODU HYHQWV ,Q GRLQJ VR LW LGHQWL¿HV
the future. Third, the chapter returns to the question raised in the Introduction – of whether and in what ways
the public attitudes revealed through this project's research might matter. Finally, it considers the implications
RI WKH UHVHDUFK ¿QGLQJV :KDW VKRXOG EH GRQH LQ OLJKW RI ZKD
be introduced? In what ways, if any, should politicians and others alter their behaviour?

7KH ¿QGLQJV RI WKH UHVHDUFK

The results set out in the report show that most survey respondents and citizens' assembly members were
GHHSO\ GLVVDWLV¿HG ZLWK WKH ZD\ GHPRFUDF\ ZRUNV LQ WKH 8.
be honest, to be responsive to and representative of the public, and to serve the public interest. The claim
that people do not care about political processes is wrong. While it is undoubtedly true that issues such
as economic well-being (summed up by ongoing concerns over the cost of living) and the quality of public
services mattered to respondents more, the widespread feeling that the political world treats members of
the public with contempt ran deep. Even if they shift relatively few votes in the end, such perceptions can
FRUURGH SXEOLF FRQ¿GHQFH LQ WKH V\VWHP DQJHU FDQ GDPDJH WUXVW LV
democracy and for effective policy-making. By fuelling negative perceptions of politicians, it also harms
politicians personally.

,Q WKLQNLQJ DERXW SRVVLEOH UHIRUPV WR WKH GHPRFUDWLF V\VWH
On the one hand, they wanted voters to be in charge. They therefore thought that those who make important

Regarding public participation, many survey respondents and citizens' assembly members were again
VRPHZKDW FRQÀLFWHG 2Q WKH RQH KDQG WKH\ ZDQWHG WKH V\VWHP W
interests. But, on the other, their distaste for and disillusionment with current politics meant that few had much
appetite to become actively involved themselves. Nevertheless, as just noted, they supported mechanisms
such as petitions, referendums, and citizens' assemblies. They also wanted barriers to effective participation
to be lowered, through better education about politics and through the provision of accurate, trustworthy
information about political matters.

7KH ¿QGLQJV LQGLFDWHG WKH SUHVHQFH RI VRPH GLYHUJHQFHV RI RSLQ
within the population. Those who voted for the Conservatives in the 2019 general election and (to a lesser
extent) those who voted Leave in the Brexit referendum of 2016 tended to be more favourable towards
concentrating power in the hands of the executive than were others – who voted for Remain or for other
parties. The former groups also expressed somewhat more 'populist' ideas about democracy as a whole,
being more favourable to speedy decision-making by elected leaders, whereas the latter exhibited more
'liberal' views that emphasised deliberation, inclusion, and checks and balances. But such differences were
not as great as might have been expected, and should not be exaggerated. The evidence suggested that the
public in the UK do not hold polarised visions of democracy. The basic patterns described in the preceding
paragraphs applied to all or most groups.

3ODFLQJ WKH ¿QGLQJV LQ FRQWH[W

As the Introduction to the report indicated, the research for this study was conducted in relatively unusual
FLUFXPVWDQFHV 0RVW QRWDEO\ WKH ¿HOGZRUN IRU WKH   VXUYH\ W
Johnson – had been forced to announce his resignation, because most of his colleagues (and most of the
SXEOLF KDG FRQFOXGHG WKDW KLV UHFRUG RI GLVKRQHVW\ DQG FRQWU
had already been rising during the course of the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK, which met
between September and December 2021: the Owen Paterson affair and the 'Partygate' scandal both broke
LQ WKLV SHULRG (YHQ DW WKH WLPH RI WKH ¿UVW VXUYH\ LQ -XO

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were hard for them, but that they were willing to back the team view. Yet such moves would be possible
only if the media did not pounce on such statements as evidence of indecision or splits. Developing such
G L V F R X U V H   L V   H D V L H U   L I   W K H U H   L V   D   G H J U H H   R I   S X E O L F   W U X V W   D Q
or manipulative headlines for what they are. This creates a quandary: trust will grow only if behaviour is
trustworthy; but trustworthy behaviour is easier if trust is already high. If the problem isn't dealt with, however,
L W   F U H D W H V   D   U L V N   W K D W   X Q W U X V W Z R U W K \   S R O L W L F L D Q V   D F W L Y H
concluding that they can behave dishonestly, and consequently eroding trust further. Some fear that this
has already happened in the UK.

Chapter 3 showed high public support for a role for regulators in helping to uphold standards. The clearest
¿ Q G L Q J   Z D V   D   Y L H Z   W K D W   U H J X O D W R U V   V K R X O G   E H   D E O H   W R   L Q Y H V V
That accords with the view of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) and many other bodies.
The most notable change that it implies from current arrangements is that the Prime Minister's Independent
Adviser on Ministers' Interests should be able to launch investigations without requiring the Prime Minister's
S U L R U   D X W K R U L V D W L R Q   K D W   Z R X O G   E H   D   V L J Q L ¿ F D Q W   F K D Q J H   E X W   Z R X O G   F O H D
dynamics substantially. CSPL has also suggested that other regulators should be strengthened by being put
on a statutory basis.

Parliamentary regulators have taken several important steps in the period since the evidence in this report
Z D V   F R O O H F W H G   1 R W D E O \   W K H   K L J K   S U R ¿ O H   3 U L Y L O H J H V   & R P P L W W
D Q G   U H F R P P H Q G H G   V L J Q L ¿ F D Q W   V D Q F W L R Q V   D J D L Q V W   W K H   I R U P H U   3
Commissioner for Standards has taken a more public role, seeking to explain his responsibilities and
approach, and thereby to foster public understanding of the system. The evidence we gathered suggests
that such developments could have positive effects: at the time of the Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in
the UK, many members' perception was that wrongs were being committed, but that nothing was being done
D E R X W   W K H P   ' H P R Q V W U D W L Q J   W K D W   D   U R E X V W   V \ V W H P   H [L V W V   L V   V
the Privileges Committee's report indeed suggested that most people supported its conclusions (Peacock
          * U H D W H U   V S H H G   R I   D F W L R Q   F R X O G   D O V R   D L G   F R Q ¿ G H Q F H   ±   W K L
against the need to ensure fair treatment.

Turning to the role of checks and balances, public attitudes appear to chime with the views of most experts.
Both survey respondents and members of the citizens' assembly saw it as crucial for parliament – as the
body that represents all points of view and all parts of the country – to play a central role in the policy
process. Mechanisms for achieving this include giving MPs greater control over the parliamentary agenda,
limiting the use of delegated legislation, strengthening public bill committees, and allowing a greater role
for private members' bills. In the wake of the expenses scandal in 2009, MPs recognised that restoring
parliament's reputation required demonstrating that the institution had a valuable role to play, and they
pursued that through reforms including a strengthening of select committees. A similar attitude seems
necessary today. Reform to the system of appointments to the House of Lords would, meanwhile, help
reduce reputational damage to parliament.

$ W   W K H   V D P H   W L P H   S D U O L D P H Q W D U L D Q V   V K R X O G   X Q G H U V W D Q G   W K D

Appendix: Project Details

Both surveys were conducted online by YouGov. Samples were representative of the UK voting-age S R S X O D W H R ¿ O H O G Z R U N G D W H V D Q G V D P S O H V L] H V Z H U H

- Survey 1: 23–29 July 2021; 6,432 respondents.

- Survey 2: 26 August and 5 September 2022; 4,105 respondents.

All respondents to the 2022 survey had also completed the survey in 2021, meaning that the views of the same group of people can be compared over time. The full survey questionnaires are available on the project website: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/deliberative-democracy/democracy-uk-after-brexit. Response datasets will be archived with the UK Data Service after the completion of the project.

The Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK met online over six weekends between September and December 2021. The assembly had 67 members, who were carefully recruited to be representative of the UK population in terms of factors such as gender, age, region, and political attitudes (Table A.1). The details of the recruitment process were set out in the assembly's report (Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK 2022: 14–15).

The assembly's agenda was determined by the research team, with adjustments over time in response to members' interests. Meetings were designed and facilitated by Involve, the UK's leading public participation charity. Members heard from and questioned a wide array of experts, and they discussed the issues in depth among themselves in small groups, gradually working towards conclusions at each stage. The assembly's report summarises the content of the six weekends (Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK 2022: 21–27). Recordings of all of the assembly's plenary sessions are available on the project website.

Beyond the assembly's own conclusions, this report includes the results of analysis of the discussions within the assembly. These discussions took place in small groups, each of which was aided by a facilitator. There were 11 groups at any time, whose membership rotated between weekends. A subset of group discussions were recorded and transcribed, and then analysed using a specially developed coding scheme. The coding F R Y H U H G D O O E X W W K H D V V H P E O \ ¶ V ¿ U V W L Q W U R G X F W R U \ Z H H N H Q G P H

Public disaffection with the state of democracy in the UK today is high. That matters, as it harms the effective working of the democratic system. Over the last three years, a team at the UCL Constitution Unit has therefore conducted detailed research into these public attitudes. Comprising two large-scale surveys of the UK population, and a Citizens' Assembly on Democracy in the UK, the research has been designed both to provide a broad overview of public perceptions and to drill deeper into what people think when WKH\ KDYH KDG D HFKFKDQ LQFH GWWRV DLHFQ

7KLV ¿QDO UHSRUW IURP WKH SURMHFW GUDZV WRJHWKHO QGWWRKR WKUH Contrary to what is sometimes said, the public in the UK do care about the health of the democratic system. They want politics to be honest and politicians to act with integrity in pursuit of the public interest. 7KH\ SHUFHFLWYHV GRHQ¿ DOO WKHVH SRLQWV DW SUHVHQW DQG ZDQW DFWLR low trust in politicians, they want a robust system of checks and balances, with parliament, the courts, regulators, civil servants, the media, and the public themselves all placing some limits on what holders RI H[HFXWLYH RI¿FH FDQ GR 7KH\ DOVR ZDQW DFWLRQ WR HQDEOH PRUH

7KH UHSRUW¶V OHDWWW FROD SWWKHLU PHLO LFDWLRQ RI WKHVH ¿QGLQJV IRU SR KRQHVW\ LQ SROLWLFDO GLVFRXUVH UHTXLUHV SROLWÀHFWLRQV WKHLSDUJ responsibilities. Proposals already exist to strengthen parliament and regulators. Any moves to weaken the neutrality of the civil service, the ability of the courts to check abuses or the BBC's impartiality would QRW ILQG SXEOLF IDYRXU :KLOH HQDEOLQJ HIIHFWLYH DQG ZLGHVSUHDG further consideration include improved education, media coverage that better enables understanding, and greater use of deliberative processes such as citizens' assemblies.

About the Constitution Unit

The Constitution Unit is a research centre based in the UCL Department of Political Science. We conduct timely, rigorous, independent research into constitutional change and the reform of political institutions. 6LQFH RXU IRXQGDWLRQ LQ WKH 8QLW¶V UHVHDUFK KDV KDG VLJQL¿ policy-makers engaged in such changes – both in the United Kingdom and around the world.

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