Take Action on Citizens' Assemblies

This Action Pack is packed with ideas on how to design actions focused on Citizens' Assemblies for your group.

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Citizens' Assembly Action Pack: Start Here



Upgrading politics is a golden thread throughout XR's Actions Strategy because our failed political system is the root cause of all our climate, nature and social justice issues.

So add a positive **Citizens' Assembly** message at **every action**:

- Banners or placards with simple messages like **Citizens Assemble!**, **Citizens' Assembly**, or **Decide Together** increase name recognition and awareness of the concept of Citizens' Assemblies.
- Our demographic bunting (Google doc) makes a great talking point to show how we can improve politics.
- Use leaflets (Google doc) and mention citizens' assemblies as a way to find fair solutions.
- Consider survey boards for extra engagement.
- At any action - or outside a town hall or constituency office - make the point that our politics needs improvement.



Check out the following pages for ideas of Citizens' Assembly themed actions!

Engaging with Politics

Demographic actions: MPs don’t represent us

Your council offices, town hall or MP’s constituency office is a great place for an action to show how politics doesn’t work.

This demographic bunting (Google doc) can start a conversation about how CA members are selected.



Speaking to your MP about CAs

Here are some talking points for rebels going to talk to their MPs about supporting Citizens' Assemblies. The objective is to make a solid argument that CAs do not undermine the MP's power.

- ### CAs help to redress the serious declining levels of trust in government, parliament and politicians

  Just 9% of the British public say they trust politicians to tell the truth, down from 12% in 2022. This makes them the least trusted profession in Britain. Although trust in politicians is usually low, the most recent score is the lowest for politicians since the first wave of the survey in 1983; aside from 2022 the previous low was a score of 13%, which occurred in 2009 following the expenses scandal (Source: poll on trust in government: 2023). Levels of trust in government varies by institution:

- Political parties: 20% trust
- Parliament only: 34% trust
- UK Government: 35% trust
- Local government: 42% trust

People and politicians working together builds trust

Incorporating citizens' assemblies in the routine democratic procedures at different levels of government may help rebuild trust in our democracy, and, by extension, in parties and politicians. Three-quarters (75%) of the UK population reported that they trust most other people, higher than the average among the OECD countries who participated in the survey (67%). CAs are an opportunity to improve people's participation in decision making, which in turn is also likely to rebuild trust in the system.

Political participation

The majority (58%) of the population were not confident that people like them have a say in what the UK government does (Trust in government, UK: 2023). CAs give people a voice, especially those from groups which are usually under-represented.

Supports MPs taking action

No political party risks losing any votes by promising to consult the people (via a citizens' assembly) on how to tackle the climate and nature crisis. There has been little action in over 50 years.

Citizens' assemblies can help gain support for difficult decisions

Citizens' assemblies involve everyday people drawn from many different walks of life in the decision making process, so that the resulting recommendations are much more likely to be broadly accepted as fair and just. There are numerous examples of well-intentioned climate and ecological policies that have failed to gain widespread public support due to concerns about their unfair impact on peoples' lives:

- In France the government increased tax on petrol without considering the rural population. With little public transport, consequently the burden fell on the poorer population, which gave rise to the Gilet Jaune movement.
- In the Netherlands the government told farmers their livestock would need to decrease in numbers, leading to protests and the rise of a far right farmers political party.
- In the UK we have Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) which have proven controversial.

- ## Current public opinion on climate change

  While two-thirds (64%) of the UK population felt that reducing the UK's contribution to climate change should be more of a priority of the government, one in ten (11%) said it should be less of a priority for the UK government. In light of this data, we can say that if people felt involved in climate-change related policies and felt that their concerns were listened to and the policies were not unfair or unjust, they would be broadly supportive of it.

- ## Increasing popularity of CAs

  There is growing interest in forms of direct democracy and political participation (e.g. from XR and Humanity Project). It is important to be ahead of the curve, especially to intercept the vote of those who are currently not politically active. This could be the core of a more general project to reform of our democracy (this might appeal to parties that support PR etc). It is important to be seen as a “change party” in current political climates. There are examples of CAs all over the world that have helped political decision making. For example in Ireland the Citizens’ Assembly on Drug Use: 2022, Citizens’ Assembly on Biodiversity Loss: 2022 and the Citizens’ Assembly on Gender Equality: 2020-2021.

Help our political influencing campaign

XR's Political team are working to persuade MPs and candidates to support a UK-wide Citizens Assembly for Climate and Ecological Justice.

Contact us on xr-CitizensAssembly@protonmail.com if you can help our political influencing campaign, by helping our teams in target seats ask for a Citizens Assembly for Climate and Ecological Justice. You don't need to live in a target seat to help!



Outreach on Citizens' Assemblies

Citizens' Assembly Stall



We'd love you to hold an outreach stall at a community event or XR action!

We can provide help and resources:

- Leaflets (Google doc)
- Banners and bunting
- Demographic placards (Google doc) with information about proportions of people around the UK (this also works well printed onto fabric and used as bunting)
- Volunteers from our CA team who can help on the day

Email us xr-CitizensAssembly@protonmail.com to let us know your plans, and which of the resources above you are interested in!



Idea 1: Street Talks

A street talk is a great way to engage people about Citizens' Assemblies.

This talk is designed to be given:

- by any rebel
- with no speaker training
- with minimal preparation; just read out if you don’t have time to learn it
- for a group of listeners
- within a regenerative approach - pauses to breathe and allow absorption; slow down for added meaningful impact and absorption

Remember, this talk will be many people’s first experience with XR, so be open, kind and respectful.

Great in conjunction with an outreach hub or an action.

If you need more guidance on giving this street talk contact the Citizens Assembly working group on Mattermost or email xr-citizensassembly@protonmail.com.

Guidance for Speakers

Download as Google doc.

Citizens' Assembly Street Talk - 2 and 5 min versions

Download as Cloud OnlyOffice doc or Google doc.

Idea 2: Build momentum by organising a community assembly

A community assembly in your area is a great way to build relationships at a local level, give people a taste of deliberative democracy, and grow support for a UK-wide Citizens' Assembly for Climate and Ecological Justice.

To learn more see the community assemblies pages. These pages also contain a form to submit to tell us that you are planning a community assembly.

To learn more about how community assemblies work and help build support for a UK wide Citizens' Assembly you should watch the Introduction to the Community Assemblies Escalation Plan (90 minutes).

Performance & Visual Actions

Make a mini UK - from different walks of life

This action outside the Welsh parliament used shoes to represent CA participants - selected at random from many walks of life.

Have an outreach stall or survey boards nearby to hold conversations and sign people up to XR.

Use our demographic placards to visually demonstrate how a UK-wide citizens' assembly will bring together people from many different walks of life.

You could use it in conjunction with a CA outreach event or mini talks.



Example text for an event advert/invitation:

> Westminster's not working. But for many of us it's hard to imagine anything beyond our current political system. And yet, as the climate and ecological emergency worsens, the need for democratic reform becomes ever more acute. On DATE/TIME, we'll bring a sense of what a citizens' assembly sounds and feels like to VENUE. Join us to take part in a conversation about how we can upgrade our democracy. The action runs from 1pm to 3.30pm.

Theatrical Performance- Modelling the difference between business as usual and citizens' assemblies

Near your constituency office or place of power, set up two tables, about 3m apart.

A sign in front of the first table reads: **"Politicians argue to score points and represent the interests of lobbyists."**

Seat 2-3 people dressed in suits on both sides of the first table, representing politicians. They should argue with those seated on the opposite side of the table. 1-2 suited people stand behind them and occasionally hand them a document or note. These are lobbyists or funders, telling the politicians what they should say.

A sign in front of the second table reads: **"In a citizens' assembly, participants listen and deliberate together, and represent the interests of ordinary people."**

Seat 5-6 people dressed normally around the second table so that they are not sitting on opposite sides. They represent assembly members, and they should respectfully listen to each person in turn, and then discuss amongst each other. A facilitator should be at the table assisting the discussion.

Idea: A short outdoor “debate”



On one side is an MP (dressed in a formal suit and tie) and on the other **a Citizens’ Assembly member** (in relaxed everyday clothes). Example debate below:

I am a Member of Parliament and vote on the decisions that affect your day to day life: healthcare, taxes, housing, education etc. I represent you as my party was voted into power at the last election. Being a politician is a career and I have been working towards it most of my life and I am keen to be promoted. Obviously, we are interested in making decisions that are popular so we remain in power for as long as possible. After all, I don’t want to be out of a job!

> “I am a member of a citizens’ assembly. I was selected using a system like they use for jury service and am representative of some of the people in the population in terms of where I live, age, gender, level of education etc. So I am

> part of a really diverse group of people from different walks of life, people I would not normally meet. I agreed to take part because I am interested in helping to make fairer decisions that benefit us all.

Well, we're pretty representative, out of 365 Conservative MPs, 25% are female, that's not bad going! I mean, that's a quarter! 6% of our MPs are black or ethnic minorities. The vast majority of MPs went to university, some of the best universities in the country, so people can rest assured that some of the best brains are making decisions on your behalf. What more could you want?

> Since over half of the population (51%) are women, 51% of assembly members are women and education levels range from university to none but we are all listened to and respected. The collective intelligence of a group of people from different walks of life actually make bolder and better decisions than a group of people who all think pretty much the same. What's more, we have nothing to lose.

Basically, the party provides me with briefing notes with all I need to know shortly before a vote. Our funders, bankers, lobbyists and powerful people in industry and the media help shape the position the government takes. We obviously have to keep them all onside if we want to be re-elected. I have to admit that often MPs haven't even read the notes but it doesn't really matter too much because we are told how to vote anyway, we all have to follow the party line. It's about winning the argument, keeping on top.

> What's really interesting in a citizens' assembly is that we are presented with really wide ranging ideas from experts and people with lived experience, so everyone is working from the same background materials and we come to agree on the same facts leading to informed decisions rather than opinion. We have honest conversations with each other in small groups and bring our own knowledge and experience to the table, weighing up the pros, cons and trade-offs before making recommendations. It's not about winning or losing, it's about working together.

MPs are very much in touch with ordinary people. We are very aware how the cost of living crisis is affecting everyone which is why we are no longer supporting the 1.5 degree global heating target, it is just too expensive to implement.

> Well, that's what I heard and believed to be true. In the citizens' assembly we have been presented with that argument, one widely covered in the media, but

> we have been investigating further and I no longer agree. Further evidence we have been presented with suggests that if action is not taken now, the cost of damage is likely to be six times higher than the cost of addressing the situation now. That is just short term thinking, pushing the problem down the line for our children and future generations to deal with which is unfair. We are thinking long term for the future of us all.

Events to improve your knowledge of Citizens' Assemblies

Discuss our central demand at your group meeting

If you are part of a local or community group (XR or not!) why not devote a meeting to the UK-wide Citizens' Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice?

Activities to engage and educate a group around Citizens' Assemblies:

- Watch the presentation: Why XR demands a citizens' assembly.
- Watch this 4 minute video:America in one room - how a weekend of discussing politics shifted the views of these Americans
- Why not plan an outreach event or a citizens' assembly action to reach more people?

Organise a talk by a CA expert

Invite an expert to talk at your meeting.

We have people with expert knowledge of citizens' assemblies and our central demand who can be booked to give a talk.

Ideally we need more than 20 participants - so join with other nearby groups (XR or not!) If possible we'll come in person, but we're always happy to present and answer questions over Zoom.

Contact us at xr-CitizensAssembly@protonmail.com. Tell us the dates, times, location (if in person). It's a half hour presentation with time for follow up questions.

Got an idea for a CA action? Need help?

We can:

- Help with banners
- Send a CA expert to help you answer the more difficult questions
- Talk to your XR meeting about CAs

If any of the above sounds like it would be of help, get in touch via xr-CitizensAssembly@protonmail.com

Also feel free to send us photos of your action, and tell us how you got on!