

# 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](mailto: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!

