

# Messaging Dos and Don'ts

## Do's and don'ts for talking about citizens' assemblies

Based on research done for a number of democracy organisations including XR. You can find more detail in [Reforming the political system - A Messaging Guide](#).

**Do say:** UK-wide citizens' assembly

**Don't say:** National citizens' assembly

Only the United Kingdom government can pass laws on the scale needed to address the crisis. The CA must include all 4 nations - Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and England.

**Do say:** Publicity and upfront agreement on what will happen with the recommendations

**Don't say:** Legally binding

To hold a legally binding CA would require an Act of Parliament taking several years. In any case, there is no such thing as legally binding as a future government can always change things. Much more important is public understanding and pressure.

**Do say:** Different walks of life

**Don't say:** All walks of life

Although a CA is very diverse, we couldn't possibly include every walk of life!

**Do say:** Politics / political system

**Don't say:** Democracy / democratic

Democracy has positive connotations for many people, whereas politics does not. The root cause of our problem is the political system, not the politicians. Most people don't want to get rid of our democratic system.

**Do say:** The system is old fashioned / Victorian / needs updating / upgrading

**Don't say:** Democracy is broken

People have some pride in the UK's democratic history and don't agree that democracy is broken. However, they agree that there is plenty of room for improvement to make it fit the 21st century. Talking about updating or upgrading makes it clear that the system is designed by human beings and can be changed.

**Do say:** Who will do right by us

**Don't say:** Who will make the best decision

'Best decision' makes us consider qualifications and competence - that decisions should be left to politicians and elites. "Who will do right by us" implies honesty, sincerity, and who has our best interests at heart. Politicians can't compete with the public in this way, as trust in politicians is so

low.

**Do say:** We all have a right to contribute to decisions

**Don't say:** The public are shut out of decisions

Many people say that the opportunity to vote, lobby your MP and stand for election are examples of how ordinary people take part in politics. However, elections are only every few years and we could contribute much more.

**Do say:** We, us

**Don't say:** The public, they

We are the public! Don't separate our interests and experiences from those of the public.

**Do say:** People like us

'People like us' is a sticky phrase that people recall.

**Do say:** Teachers, doctors, scientists, shopkeepers. People from different walks of life

Specifying these groups reminds us that we already trust people from our communities with important decisions.

**Do say:** Like a jury, we all have an equal chance of being selected

**Don't say:** Random selection

'Random selection' tends to cue 'randoms' i.e. odd, untrustworthy people. In comparison, a jury is understood and trusted by the public.

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