

Public attitudes 2023 | Electoral Commission Search Public attitudes 2023 You are in the Our research section Home Our research First published: 25 May 2022 Last updated: 6 April 2023 Public Opinion Tracker 2023 Since 2007, the Electoral Commission has been tracking public attitudes towards different aspects of elections and democracy in the UK. Our most recent study was carried out online, across the UK, in February 2023. It had over 4,000 respondents. Summary of findings A majority of people remain confident that elections are well-run in the UK. Despite a slight decline in recent years, the long-term pattern is positive. There has been a long-term decline in the public's perception of the transparency of party and campaign finance. Although this decline has slowed in 2023, the perceived level of transparency remains low. There is an increasing trend in the proportion of people who perceive problems around various aspects around democracy. Younger people are less likely to consider as unacceptable behaviour that could be construed as bullying or abusive towards MPs, compared to older generations. People in Northern Ireland are less likely to see themselves as eligible to vote in a UK parliament election than other parts of the UK. There has been a decline in the proportion of people who believe that votes are counted accurately at elections in the UK. There is a significant decline in the proportion of people who perceive the Electoral Commission as independent, compared to last year. There has been an increased awareness of the need for voter ID since the Election Act became law. More people in the UK are dissatisfied with the way democracy works than are satisfied. Confidence and satisfaction with the electoral process A majority of people (73%) remain confident that elections are well-run in the UK. Despite a slight decline in recent years, the long-term pattern is positive. Similarly, 79% of people are satisfied with the process of voting. Both measures are in line with their long-term average. Party finance There has been a long-term decline in the public's perception of the transparency of party and campaign finance. Although this decline has slowed in 2023, the perceived level of transparency remains low. More people have a negative perception than a positive one. 24% of people believe party funding is transparent. Over twice as many people see it as not transparent (58%). As recently as 2019, more people saw the transparency of funding as transparent (41%) than not transparent (36%). There has been a decrease in the number of people who think that if a political party or another campaigner is caught breaking the rules, the authorities will take appropriate action (30% agree). This is less than the 39% who disagree that appropriate action will be taken. As recently as 2018, 57% of the population agreed that appropriate action would be taken, which was three times the number who disagreed (19%). Perceptions of the problems faced by democracy There is an increasing trend in the proportion of people who perceive problems related to UK democracy, with people on average selecting 4.3 problems from a list of 9. This has increased from 3.6 problems selected on average in 2021. The top three concerns are bias in the media (72%), lower voter turnout (66%), and inadequate regulation of political parties' spending (60%). Attitudes to negative behaviours towards MPs Younger people are less likely to see as unacceptable behaviour that could be construed as bullying or abusive towards MPs compared with older generations. The difference in attitudes is consistent across different behaviours, including social media posts, verbal threats in public, and the use of foul language. For example, 75% of those who are 75+ say that verbally threatening an MP in public is totally unacceptable compared to 32% of 18–24-year-olds. Perceived eligibility for UK parliament elections People in Northern Ireland are less likely to see themselves as eligible to vote in a UK parliament election than people in other parts of the UK,

with 62% of people in Northern Ireland seeing themselves as eligible compared to 91% in the rest of the UK. Separate qualitative research we have conducted in Northern Ireland suggests that because largely different parties are on a parliamentary election ballot paper in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the UK, some people don't associate the elections with the UK Parliament. Perception that the vote is counted accurately There has been a decline in the proportion of people who believe that votes are counted accurately at elections in the UK, with 70% saying they are counted accurately in 2023, down from 85% in 2021. The decline is much greater among younger people. In 2021, 79% of those aged 18-24 agreed that this was the case, but by 2023, 52% agreed that this was the case. Perceptions of the Electoral Commission Of those people who have heard of the Commission and were able to choose a word to associate with us, the most commonly chosen word is independent. However, there has been a significant decline in the proportion of people who perceive the Electoral Commission as independent, with 19% of people believing this to be the case in 2023, compared with 26% in 2022. awareness There has been an increased awareness of the need for voter ID since the Election Act became law. At the beginning of February, 44% of people were aware that voter ID is required, while 39% believe that it is not needed. Satisfaction with Democracy in the UK More people in the UK are dissatisfied (39%) with the way democracy works than are satisfied (33%). There does appear to be a party political aspect to this, as those who support the Conservative Party are nearly four times more likely to be satisfied (61%) than dissatisfied (16%). Opposition party supporters are much more likely to be dissatisfied, led by SNP supporters, of whom 61% are dissatisfied and 19% satisfied. Very few of those people without any party affiliation (18%) are satisfied with the way democracy works in the UK. Tables Tables Public Opinion Tracker 2023 tables 2018-2023 Data table Public Opinion Tracker