

**EMBARGOED: 00.01, MONDAY 11 OCTOBER 2021**

New report finds widespread support for British democracy, but majority think political elite make up rules and don't care about public.

- **Extensive research by More in Common finds 2 out of 3 people now think our democracy is rigged to only serve political class.**
- **One in two Britons feels the country is more divided than at any point in their lifetimes.**
- **Support for democracy high but people feel let down by ability of politicians to deliver improvements to their everyday lives.**
- **Eight in ten believe politicians don't care what people like them think**
- **Over a quarter of Britons willing to trade away democratic rights and protections for a better life**

More in Common has found that while one in two Britons feels the country is more divided than at any point in their lifetimes, the country is not riven into two camps. In fact, Britons share a surprising amount of common ground. But a disconnect between the public and decision makers is driving polarisation and fracture.

In the Britain's Choice project, More in Common identified seven British segments of the population and have now surveyed these segments' attitudes to democracy for ground-breaking new analysis. That analysis published today in 'Democratic Repair: What Britons want from their democracy' found that while Britons overwhelmingly support the principles of democracy, many feel frustrated by a system that isn't working for them and let down by a politics which falls short of their expectations.

Only half of Britons are satisfied with the way democracy is working. In only two of the seven British segments - Backbone Conservatives and Established Liberals - do more than half believe that democracy in the UK works for the majority.

The report warns that people who feel that the system is rigged, that their voices are ignored, or that democracy doesn't work for them, are more likely to embrace the alternatives to democracy advanced by authoritarians or to be seduced by populists. The report finds that those groups disengaged with democracy are more likely to say they would trade away democratic rights and protections for a better life.

At its worst, frustration with the system can progress to rejecting democratic principles, embracing extremism and at the worst, violence leading to tragic consequences. But even without these more extreme outcomes, a dysfunctional democracy makes it harder to address complex long-term challenges – the rise of China, the transition to a net zero carbon economy, funding the National Health Service and caring for our elderly.

**More In Common UK Director Luke Tryl said:**

**“Britain is the birthplace of parliamentary democracy and across the country Britons told us of their pride in that heritage and of their strong commitment to democratic principles today. But as our report today shows, that commitment to democracy in principle is being undermined in practice because too many people feel our politics isn't delivering for them and that they are looked down on by politicians and decision makers.**

**Tackling that and rebuilding trust must now be a priority. Recent events in the United States and across the world have highlighted the threats to democracy in deeply divided societies, threats to which Britain is not immune.**

**The urgent task of the coming years lies in ensuring more people feel the benefits of democracy in their lives, bringing decision making to people in their local communities, rather than expecting it to work the other way around.”**

The report is clear that we should not have unrealistic expectations about people’s willingness to participate in democratic activities - what matters most is **not** that everyone should be highly engaged in democratic activities, but that everyone feels that they have a stake in the system. Given the role of democratic process in resolving differences and building a more cohesive society, we should focus on outcomes, more than just process: on how we restore trust and higher levels of satisfaction in democracy. We should not see greater participation as the best proxy for satisfaction.

The report also sounds a warning about the attitudes of young people to those who have different views to them, finding many young people are unwilling or even fearful of engaging in debates with others – one third of Gen Z believe that those with opposing political views are factually wrong and 45 per cent are scared that others hold different values to them. More in Common’s research suggests that this is because young people are not being taught enough about the value of respecting other people’s opinions in school and university.

More in Common’s recommendations for increasing satisfaction with UK democracy include:

- Improving accountability in public life – with better enforcement of the rules against those who break them in public life, so that the public don’t think there’s one rule for politicians and one rule for the public.
- Finding innovative ways of allowing people to participate in democracy during their own time – using technology or revealed preference, like people’s shopping habits so that we have a better idea of what they want.
- Doing more to empower local communities to have a say over the issues that affect them – particularly as the Government thinks about how to ‘level up’ deprived parts of the country. Focusing on tangible small improvements that really matter to people rather than big abstract debates.
- When engaging people on those ‘big’ issues, grounding it in what it will mean for their lives, families, and community.
- Politicians thinking twice before trashing their opponents and besmirching their motives. Showing disagreement can be done respectfully and finding opportunities to show common ground.
- An expectation that schools do more to help young Britons understand democracy, including robust discussion and debate.

## **CONTACT DETAILS:**

**Angus Walker**  
**Denford Associates**  
**07976 890868**

[angus.walker@denford-associates.com](mailto:angus.walker@denford-associates.com)

**Link to embargoed report: <https://bit.ly/democraticrepairembargoedversion>**

## NOTES

More in Common has worked with data scientists and social psychology researchers to build a model that maps the British population not according to their party, age, income, or other demographic factor, but according to their values and core beliefs. Analysing a representative sample of more than 10,000 people in partnership with YouGov and conducting focus group conversations and one-on-one interviews with hundreds of Britons, we have identified seven distinct population groups – the ‘British Seven’.

- **Progressive Activists:** A passionate and vocal group for whom politics is at the core of their identity, and who seek to correct the historic marginalisation of groups based on their race, gender, sexuality, wealth, and other forms of privilege. They are politically engaged, critical, opinionated, frustrated, cosmopolitan, and environmentally conscious.
- **Civic Pragmatists:** A group that cares about others, at home or abroad, and who are turned off by the divisiveness of politics. They are charitable, concerned, exhausted, community-minded, open to compromise, and socially liberal.
- **Disengaged Battlers:** A group that feels that they are just keeping their heads above water, and who blame the system for its unfairness. They are tolerant, insecure, disillusioned, disconnected, overlooked, and socially liberal.
- **Established Liberals:** A group that has done well and means well towards others, but also sees a lot of good in the status quo. They are comfortable, privileged, cosmopolitan, trusting, confident, and pro-market.
- **Loyal Nationals:** A group that is anxious about the threats facing Britain and facing themselves. They are proud, patriotic, tribal, protective, threatened, aggrieved, and frustrated about the gap between the haves and the have-nots.
- **Disengaged Traditionalists:** A group that values a well-ordered society, takes pride in hard work, and wants strong leadership that keeps people in line. They are self-reliant, ordered, patriotic, tough-minded, suspicious, and disconnected.
- **Backbone Conservatives:** A group who are proud of their country, optimistic about Britain’s future outside of Europe, and who keenly follow the news, mostly via traditional media sources. They are nostalgic, patriotic, stalwart, proud, secure, confident, and relatively engaged with politics.

## Methodological information

The qualitative research in the report was carried out in March 2021, June 2021 and September 2021. Participants were screened using the British Seven segmentation survey. Focus groups in March were recruited by YouGov and moderated by YouGov. Focus groups in June and September were recruited by the independent research recruitment agency (CRD) and moderated by More in Common’s researchers.

The polling cited in the report was carried out by YouGov between February 2020 and February 2021. The dates of fieldwork and sample sizes are below.

- February 2021, N= 2,378 (Fieldwork: 29.01.2021 – 05.02.2021)
- December 2020/January 2021, N=2,107 (Fieldwork: 21.12.2020-03.01.2021)
- June 2020, N=2,282 (Fieldwork: 19.06.2020-28.06.2020)
- February 2020, N=10,105 (Fieldwork: 14.02.2020-09.03.2020)