

## Democracy and Participation Keywords

**1) What is a legitimate government?** – A government that most citizens recognise as having been authorised by the people to hold power, likely by winning a free and fair election.

**2) What is democracy?** – ‘People power’ – a system of government where the people are involved in making political decisions.

**3) What is direct democracy?** – A form of democracy where the people directly have a say on political decisions, perhaps through a referendum vote, or a town hall meeting.

**4) What is representative democracy?** – A form of democracy where the people elect representatives to make political decisions on their behalf.

**5) What is a referendum?** – A vote on a political question, usually with a yes or no answer.

**6) What sorts of issues does Parliament usually allow a referendum vote on?** – Significant constitutional reforms – changes to how our democracy functions, rather than social issues.

**7) Why is Parliament politically, but not legally, bound by referendum results?** – Parliament is sovereign, so ultimately, it is up to Parliament to decide how to respond to a referendum result, but, politically, it would undermine Parliament’s legitimacy to ignore the clear will of the people, and so referendums effectively entrench certain constitutional reforms.

**8) What are popular/veto referendums?** – The public collects a required number of signatures to hold a vote on a bill recently passed by the legislature.

**9) Why have referendums become more common since 1997?** – New Labour promised to make a number of constitutional reforms, many argued that today’s more educated public could and should decide these issues. As a result, a constitutional convention has now been established that referendums should be used for significant constitutional reforms.

**10) What is the Electoral Commission and what role does it play in referendums?** – Created by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (2000) to oversee all UK elections and referendums. Designates a ‘lead campaign group’, provides grants, posts out information on the referendum, oversees all donations and recommends changes to the question.

**11) What is meant by ‘the tyranny of the majority’?** – When issues are decided by majority rule, it is possible for the majority to oppress and take away the rights of minority groups, who lack the numbers to win referendums.

**12) What is the UK General Election?** – Held every five years to elect representatives to the House of Commons – 650 constituencies, each electing a single MP.

**13) What is a parliamentary democracy?** – In a parliamentary democracy, the prime minister is not directly elected and is instead usually the leader of the largest party. The government is drawn from the legislative branch, and depends on the confidence of the legislative branch for survival.

**14) What did the Representation of the People Act (1969) do?** – Lowered the voting age for men and women to 18.

**16) What are four examples of non-electoral participation?** – Contacting local MPs, government consultations, e-petitions, joining/donating to parties/charities, joining pressure groups, boycotts, strikes, marches etc.

**17) What is the difference between a manifesto and a mandate?** – Parties produce manifestos ahead of elections to explain what they would do if elected. The winning party then claims to have a mandate, or in other words, the authority, to carry out these policies in government.

**18) What was the POWER Inquiry and what did it conclude?** – The inquiry was established to investigate declining political participation. It concluded that the public was not apathetic, or too busy for politics, but that our electoral system and political parties had become out-dated, and, while formal participation was declining, other forms, like pressure groups, were very popular.

**19) What is a liberal democracy?** – A democracy where there is usually a constitution establishing clear limits government power, as well as the rights of citizens, to protect individual freedom.

**20) What are four features of the UK's political system that do not conform to the principles of a liberal democracy?** - Uncodified constitution, no entrenched rights, weak separation of powers, unelected House of Lords, unelected head of state, royal prerogative powers, electoral system that produces disproportional results, elitism (influence of wealthy, well connected groups).