

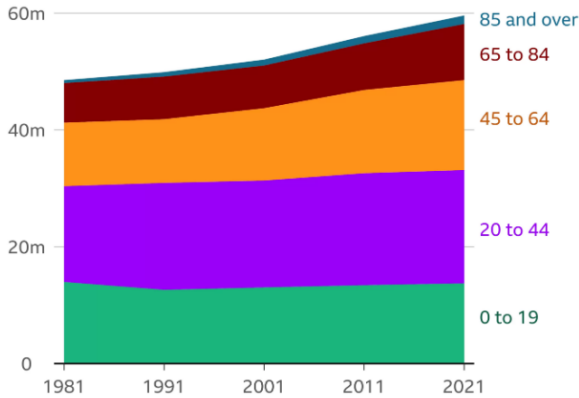
# Citizenship Revision Guide – Paper 1

## Theme A: Living together in the UK

### How have communities developed in the UK?

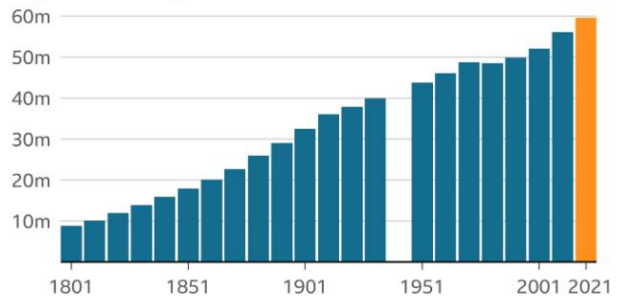
#### More than 11 million people aged 65+

Population of England and Wales by age, 1981 to 2021



#### England and Wales population nears 60m

Population of England and Wales, 1801-2021

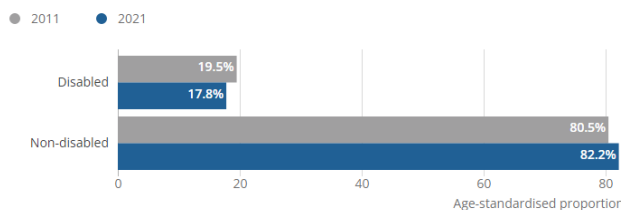


#### Religion in England and Wales

Religion	Number of people, 2021	% of population	Change, 2001 to 2021
Christian	27,522,672	46.2	Decreasing
No religion	22,162,062	37.2	Increasing
Muslim	3,868,133	6.5	Increasing
Hindu	1,032,775	1.7	Increasing
Sikh	524,140	0.9	Increasing
Other religion	348,334	0.6	Increasing
Buddhist	272,508	0.5	Increasing
Jewish	271,327	0.5	Decreasing
(Religion not stated)	3,595,589	6	Increasing

Source: Office for National Statistics

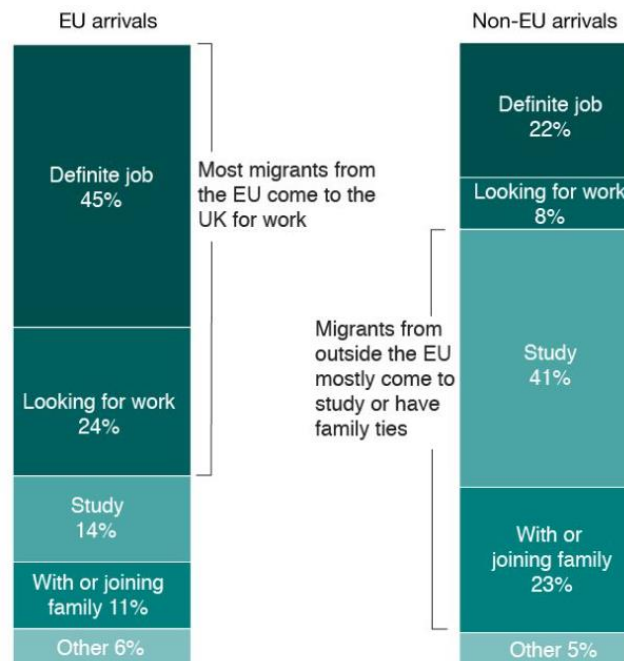
Figure 1: Age-standardised disability, 2011 and 2021, England and Wales



# census 2021

This data came from the 2021 Census. They happen every 10 years and only a small part of the results has been released so far.

**Immigration** to the UK has had a number of major effects on the UK. Society has changed and become more diverse as new cultures have migrated here; as a result, the country has become far more multicultural. The population has increased and there have been strains on the NHS, suitable housing and education. There have also been increased tensions in some parts of the country and groups such as the EDL (English Defence League) and the BNP (British National Party) have become popular as a result. This is partly because migrants often provide cheaper labour and services than UK citizens. A counter argument is that migrants fill gaps in the labour market and fill positions that UK citizens do not wish to fill, e.g. unskilled jobs, labouring jobs (building etc.). The UK has been seen as fairly welcoming to migration in the past so this encourages more migrants to come here. It's important to remember that immigrants don't just come here for employment.



There are all types of migrants coming to the UK:-

- **Economic Migrants** - someone who emigrates from one region to another to seek an improvement in living standards because the living conditions or job opportunities in the migrant's own region are not stable.
- An **asylum seeker** is a person who has sought protection as a **refugee**, but whose claim for **refugee** status has not yet been decided upon. Every **refugee** has at some point been an **asylum seeker**. Those **asylum seekers** who are found to be **refugees** are entitled to international protection and assistance and are allowed to live in another, safe country.

## Case Study - What is the UK's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda?

### The UK government wants to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda.

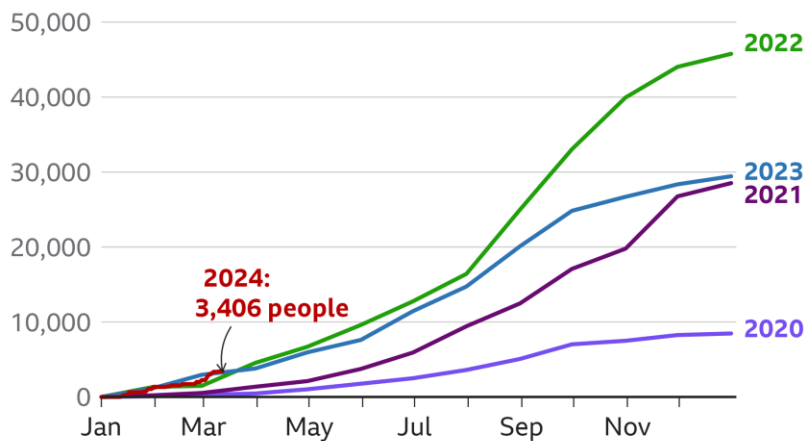
It is trying to pass new legislation to allow the scheme to go ahead, after the Supreme Court said the plans were unlawful.

### What is the Rwanda asylum plan?

Under a five-year agreement, some asylum seekers arriving in the UK would be **sent to Rwanda, to have their claims processed there**. If successful, they could be granted refugee status and allowed to stay. If not, they could apply to settle in Rwanda on other grounds, or seek asylum in another "safe third country". No asylum seeker would be able to apply to return to the UK. Ministers argue the plan would deter people from **arriving in the UK on small boats across the English Channel**.

### People crossing the English Channel in boats

Cumulative total people detected by year



Note: Data to December 2023 is monthly totals, more recent figures are daily totals. Some data from the latest week may be unavailable

Source: Home Office/Ministry of Defence, latest data 12 Mar

B B C

No asylum seeker has yet been sent to Rwanda, which is a small landlocked country in east-central Africa, 4,000 miles (6,500km) from the UK. The first flight was scheduled to go in June 2022, but was cancelled after legal challenges.

### What was the Supreme Court ruling and is Rwanda safe?

In November 2023, the UK Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the Rwanda scheme was unlawful. It said genuine refugees would be at risk of being returned to their home countries, where they could face harm.

This breaches the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which prohibits torture and inhuman treatment. The UK has signed up to the ECHR. The ruling also cited concerns about Rwanda's poor human-rights record, and its past treatment of refugees. Judges said that in

2021, the UK government had itself criticised Rwanda over "killings, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances and torture". They also highlighted a 2018 incident, when Rwandan police opened fire on protesting refugees.

**What is happening to the Rwanda bill in Parliament?**

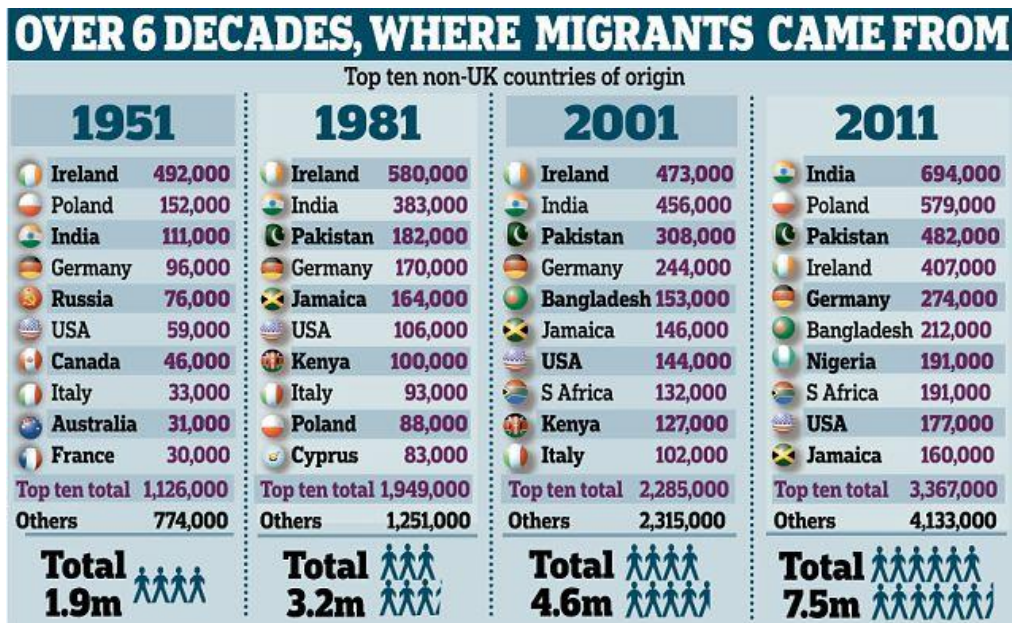
The bill was passed by the House of Commons on 17 January, despite opposition from some Conservative MPs. It was then debated in the House of Lords, where the government lost all 10 votes on the bill.

**What will the Rwanda plan cost?**

The UK government had paid £240m to Rwanda by the end of 2023. However, the total payment will be at least £370m over five years, according to the National Audit Office . Previously released official figures suggested that removing each individual to a third country would cost £63,000 more than keeping them in the UK.

There are also a wide range of reasons as to why people migrate: -

PUSH FACTORS (Reasons why people leave places)	PULL FACTORS (Reasons why people are attracted to places)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear for their lives (Terrorism/Natural Disasters)</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• No work</li> <li>• Disease</li> <li>• Lack of educational opportunities</li> <li>• Other members of family live there</li> <li>• High cost of living</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peaceful</li> <li>• Good record on human rights</li> <li>• Employment available</li> <li>• High standard of living</li> <li>• Good health care and education</li> <li>• Low Crime</li> <li>• Fair Government</li> </ul>

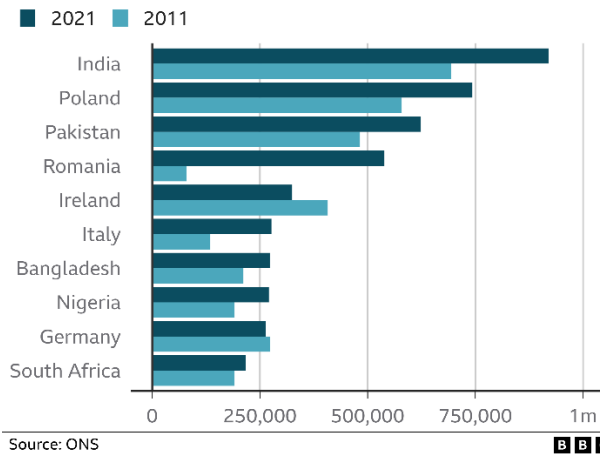


2021

India	920,000
Poland	743,000
Pakistan	624,000
Ireland	325,000
Italy	277,000
Bangladesh	273,000
Nigeria	271,000
Germany	263,000
South Africa	217,000

## Top ten non-UK countries of birth

Residents of England and Wales, 2021 and 2011



The UK has always had a great deal of migration, as the data above shows. In an ever changing and diverse society it is essential that there is mutual respect and that the different groups in society get along. This is called **Community Cohesion**; where people share a sense of belonging and community identity. They share values and goals and live together well. Where there is a high level of community cohesion people go out on the streets without fear, mix freely and experience low levels of discrimination and racism. Where there are low levels of community cohesion people are afraid to leave their homes, there is vandalism, graffiti and litter and there are high levels of discrimination and racism. In recent years, areas like Luton (where the EDL was born), Blackburn and Tottenham have experienced tensions between different groups.

### What is British citizenship and why does it matter?

Citizenship is a legal status that means a person has a right to live in a state and that state cannot refuse them entry or deport them. This legal status may be conferred at birth, or, in some states, obtained through 'naturalisation'. In democracies citizenship also brings with it rights to vote, rights to welfare, education or health care etc.

Citizenship can also indicate a feeling of identity and responsibility. Sometimes these are described in words like 'loyalty', 'values', 'belonging' or 'shared cultural heritage'. This also points to the complex and often assumed relation between citizenship and belonging to 'the nation'.

People with certain types of immigration status can acquire the right to remain indefinitely in the UK i.e. become 'settled'. This means they have the right to live and work in the UK without restrictions. Under certain circumstances settled migrants may still be deported, settled status may be revoked, and their children do not necessarily have British citizenship. In order to be 'non-deportable', a person has to have British citizenship. It is possible to apply for British citizenship after a period of settlement

## **Case Study – Shamima Begum**

(March 2024) Shamima Begum has lost a series of legal challenges aimed at overturning the government's decision to remove her British citizenship. Ms Begum, now 24, left the country as a teenager to join the Islamic State group in Syria and is barred from returning to the UK.

### **Who is Shamima Begum?**

Ms Begum is one of three east London schoolgirls who travelled to Syria in 2015 to support the IS group. She was born in the UK to parents of Bangladeshi heritage and was 15 when she left. She married an Islamic State fighter soon after arriving and went on to have three children, none of whom survived. Her UK citizenship was stripped on national security grounds in 2019. Ms Begum remains in a camp controlled by armed guards in northern Syria.

### **How can citizenship be removed?**

The government has the power to remove someone's UK citizenship in certain circumstances:

- If it is "for the public good" and would not make them stateless
- The person obtained citizenship through fraud
- Their actions could harm UK interests and they could claim citizenship elsewhere
- The power has been used against members of banned organisations such as al-Qaeda or the Islamic State group, and those who obtained British citizenship fraudulently.

The person must also be eligible to apply for citizenship in another country. The UK has responsibilities under international law to avoid leaving people stateless.

### **What happened in the Shamima Begum case?**

In February 2020, a tribunal ruled that removing Ms Begum's citizenship was lawful because she was "a citizen of Bangladesh by descent". It said removing her British nationality would not make her stateless. However, Bangladesh said that was not the case and that she would not be allowed into the country. In 2021, the Supreme Court decided that Ms Begum could not return to the UK to appeal against the decision to remove her citizenship.

In 2023, lawyers for Ms Begum challenged the removal of her citizenship at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC). They argued the decision was unlawful, as it did not consider whether she had been a child victim of trafficking. However, SIAC ruled that while there was a credible suspicion that Ms Begum was a victim of trafficking and sexual exploitation, that did not stand in the way of the home secretary stripping her of British citizenship, as she had become a threat. That decision was upheld at the Court of Appeal in February 2024.

On 25 March, she lost an initial bid to take the case to the Supreme Court.

### **How many people have lost their citizenship?**

According to the Home Office, 220 people were stripped of their British citizenship for the public good between 2010 and 2022. That was almost always due to national security concerns. The highest year on record was 2017, when 104 people lost their citizenship. In comparison, three people lost their citizenship in 2022, the latest year for which data is available.

### **What about other countries?**

US-born citizens cannot have their status revoked because citizenship is a birth right guaranteed in the US constitution. In Australia, a person can have their citizenship removed on national security grounds if they are a dual citizen of another nation.

Citizenship can be removed for treason, disloyalty and other national security reasons in 14 EU states, including Greece, France and Romania. It can also be removed without notice in the Netherlands.

## **Immigration since 1945**

**Since the end of World War Two, immigration has transformed the UK.**

After the war, fewer than one in 25 of the population had been born outside the country; **today that figure is closer to one in seven.**

There were four key turning points: -

### **1948: The Windrush Generation**

In the aftermath of the war, the UK saw huge investment in public infrastructure. Bombed cities were rebuilt, transport systems expanded and new institutions, such as the NHS, had to be staffed. There were lots of employment opportunities and people from all over the Commonwealth came to the UK to help fill the labour shortage.

Some of the first to arrive in 1948 were a group of 500 or so Caribbean migrants, who arrived on former troopship the Empire Windrush. Consequently, they and the 300,000 West Indians who followed them over the next 20 years, Alongside those from the Caribbean came some 300,000 people from India, 140,000 from Pakistan, and more than 170,000 from various parts of Africa.

However, the Home Office did not keep a record of those granted leave to remain. Despite living and working in the UK for decades, it emerged in 2018 that some Windrush migrants and their families had been threatened with deportation and even removed. The UK government was forced to apologise.

### **1956: The Hungarian Revolution**

The end of World War Two also brought huge political changes in eastern and central Europe. After liberating the region, the Soviet Union installed Communist regimes that were deeply unpopular with many people. In reaction, hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to the West. The first to arrive in the UK were about 120,000 Poles, who arrived in 1945; the substantial Polish communities in Manchester, Bradford and west London date from this time. About 100,000 people from Ukraine and the Baltic States also came to the UK for similar reasons. In 1956, the people of Hungary rose up against their Communist rulers. After Soviet tanks drove into Budapest to crush the uprising, almost 200,000 Hungarians fled the country. Britain took in 30,000 of these political refugees.

### **1971: Immigration Act**

The post-war boom in immigration from Commonwealth countries was not welcomed by everyone. In the late 1950s, racial tensions erupted in a series of riots, most famously in 1958 in Notting Hill and Nottingham. Under considerable pressure, the British government eventually cracked down on all forms of racial discrimination.

But it also introduced a series of laws limiting immigration.

The most important of these was the Immigration Act of 1971, which decreed Commonwealth immigrants did not have any more rights than those from other parts of the world. This effectively marked the end of the Windrush generation.

### **1992: The EU expansion**

In 1992, the UK joined other EU nations in signing the Maastricht Treaty on European integration. This granted all EU citizens equal rights, with freedom to live in any member state they chose. In the following decade, tens of thousands of EU citizens came to live and work in Britain.

Few people protested, possibly because these newcomers were balanced out by the tens of thousands of British people who moved away to other parts of the EU.

In 2004, the EU was expanded to include seven nations from the Eastern Bloc- Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary - while Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus also joined at the same time. Unlike Germany or France, the UK put no temporary restrictions on arrivals from these new member states.

The government predicted that EU enlargement would only cause a rise of up to 13,000 people a year in immigration. In the event, more than a million people from these countries arrived and stayed over the next decade. It was one of the biggest influxes in British history.



Since 2016, the year of the Brexit referendum, EU immigration has fallen - although more EU citizens still arrive in the UK than leave.

The Immigration Act received Royal Assent on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020, which meant an end to the free movement of EU citizens to the UK as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

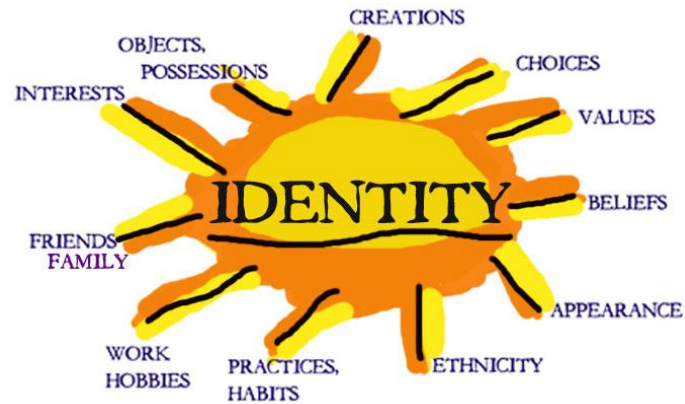
In the meantime, however, immigration from other parts of the world has increased to fill the gap. Despite government targets to reduce net migration to the "tens of thousands", the UK's net migration figures remain historically high in the context of the past century.

The government encourages respect for differences through laws such as The Equality Act 2010. This also criminalises behavior that could be seen as discriminatory. Other ways that tolerance and acceptance can be promoted are through: -

- Schools making sure that they have mixed entry, avoiding the types of **segregation** that occurred in the USA in the 50's and 60's';
- Having community events that celebrate different cultures;
- Learning and being respectful of religious events such as Diwali, Christmas, Eid etc.
- Encouraging and welcoming migrants to communities.



Our sense of identity come from a mixture of family traditions, school, friends, work colleagues, the media, British values, from an ethic group we may be a member of and from religion. People can have **Multiple Identities** which means that they have different cultural influences on their life, they may have differing values/beliefs in their family and they may have ancestry from a number of countries.



It's important to remember that although the people of the UK are often referred to as British, the nations within all have differing identities and characteristics; i.e. a 16 year old from Sutton will have many similarities with a 16 year old from the Scottish Highlands but will also have huge differences in terms of their identity – city v rural, differing opportunities etc.

Your **identity** can have a huge impact on your life. Increasingly it's impossible to ignore how much things like race, gender, and sexuality play a part in the choices we make and the opportunities we have. Certain jobs are associated with certain genders to the point that people's ability to choose that job is restricted by how it will be perceived by those around them. There were anti-homosexuality laws in 79 countries around the world in 2016, threatening the security of a homosexual person in the workplace and restricting their rights. There are few places in the world where women could vote before 1900, and the first woman to vote in Saudi Arabia only did so in 2015. People of colour in the United States were only given the legal protections needed to regularly vote in 1965, before which time they had a limited legal say in politics and society.

Unfortunately, parts of our identity are still the basis of how people might judge us, without actually knowing anything about us.

Example – BBC News -22 January 2020

“A transgender soldier in South Korea says she will sue the army after it dismissed her for violating regulations following her sex change. Byun Hui-soo, 22, joined the army as a man but had gender reassignment surgery last year after suffering from gender dysphoria and mental health issues.

A defence ministry spokesman told AFP news agency that the soldier had been undergoing tests at a military hospital, which classified the loss of male genitals as a mental or physical handicap.”



This is an American cartoon by Garry Trudeau from the Doonesbury comic strip. It comments on the calculations we make about one another.

Risk factors are things that might concern you.

Mitigating factors are things that might make you less concerned about the person.

## What are democratic values and where do they come from?

Ever since the Magna Carta in 1215, UK citizens have increasingly been given rights that protect their liberty and freedoms. These rights have then been further protected by UK laws, including the Human Rights Act 1998. Key rights include:

- equality (to be free from discrimination)
- representation (to vote and choose who represents us)
- to freedom of speech and opinion
- to freedom of association (to be able to meet with others, including at protests)
- to tolerance and respect (to be able to practice and respect our religions and cultures);
- to privacy.

Whilst it's great that these rights are promoted, protected and respected there is also a duty of citizens to respect the rights and freedoms of others, and to obey the law. Sometimes, different people or groups (nationally and locally) can come into conflict and need to be balanced in

different situations in life and work where there is inequality or unfairness. Some examples are below: -

**Security v Privacy:** People have the right to privacy for their letters, phone calls and emails. However, in 2009 the UK government decided that all emails and records of phone conversations should be made available to the police in order to improve our security from terrorism.

**Freedom of expression v encouraging hatred:** You have a right to say and write what you think in a responsible way. However, this leaves a lot to a person's own judgement. He or she may speak out in a way that encourages hatred of a particular religious or cultural group. This would take away the rights of those groups as they have a right not to experience hatred or discrimination.

**Press freedom v privacy:** There are often conflicts over whether the media have a right to write stories that may cause embarrassment to individuals and their families. The press are allowed to do this if the story is true and if they can show that the news is 'in the public interest'. They are not allowed to hack into people's phones, as happened in the Millie Dowler case.

The law is a complicated thing to understand, hence why solicitors and barristers are so well paid! Whilst law is created by Parliament, it is for judges to interpret it. Our legal system is based on the Rule of Law, which can be seen on the next page.



Although we've had the Human Rights Act since 1998, prior to this the UK used the UN Declaration of Human Rights and UK citizens had to take the government to EU courts if they felt the UK government was not respecting their human rights. Now UK citizens can use the Human Rights Act 1998 in UK courts.

# The Universal Declaration of HUMAN RIGHTS

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.

**WE ARE ALL BORN FREE AND EQUAL**  
**EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO THESE RIGHTS**  
NO MATTER YOUR RACE, RELIGION OR NATIONALITY  
**EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE, FREEDOM AND SAFETY**

No one has the right to hold you in slavery.

No one has the right to torture you.

You have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

We are all equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.

You have the right to seek legal help if your rights are violated.

No one has the right to wrongly imprison you or force you to leave your country.

You have the right to a fair and public trial.

Everyone is innocent until **PROVEN** guilty.

You have the right to privacy. No one can interfere with your reputation, family, home or correspondence.

You can travel wherever you want.

You have the right to seek asylum in another country if you are being persecuted in your own country.

Everyone has the right to a nationality.

All adults have the right to marriage and to raise a family.

You have the right to own property.

Everyone has the right to belong to a religion.

**Freedom of Expression:** You have the right to free thought and to voice your opinions to others.

Everyone has the right to gather as a peaceful assembly.

You have the right to help choose and to take part in governing your country, directly or through chosen representatives.

You have the right to social security and are entitled to economic, social and cultural help from your government.

**Workers' rights:** Every adult has the right to a job, a fair wage and to join a trade union.

You have the right to leisure and rest from work.

Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family.

Everyone has the right to education.

Your intellectual property as an artist or scientist should be protected.

We are all entitled to social order so we can enjoy these rights.

*You have the responsibility to respect the rights of others*

**NO ONE CAN TAKE AWAY ANY OF YOUR RIGHTS**

## Case Study – Bill of Rights to replace the Human Rights Act?

In recent years, the Conservative government has discussed replacing the Human Rights Act with a Bill of Rights. This has largely been because they felt that some groups – criminals, some seeking citizenship etc – were abusing our rights for their own benefit. Opponents stated that this was untrue and was actually designed to limit our rights.

### The need for a Bill of Rights

A bill of rights, sometimes called a declaration of rights or a charter of rights, is a list of the **most important rights enjoyed by citizens of a given country**. The purpose is to protect those rights against infringement from public officials and private citizens. Bills of rights may be entrenched or unentrenched.

The USA, South Africa, and most European countries have a Bill of Rights; the UK is one of the few western democracies that does not. Does this matter?

#### Advantages of a Bill of Rights

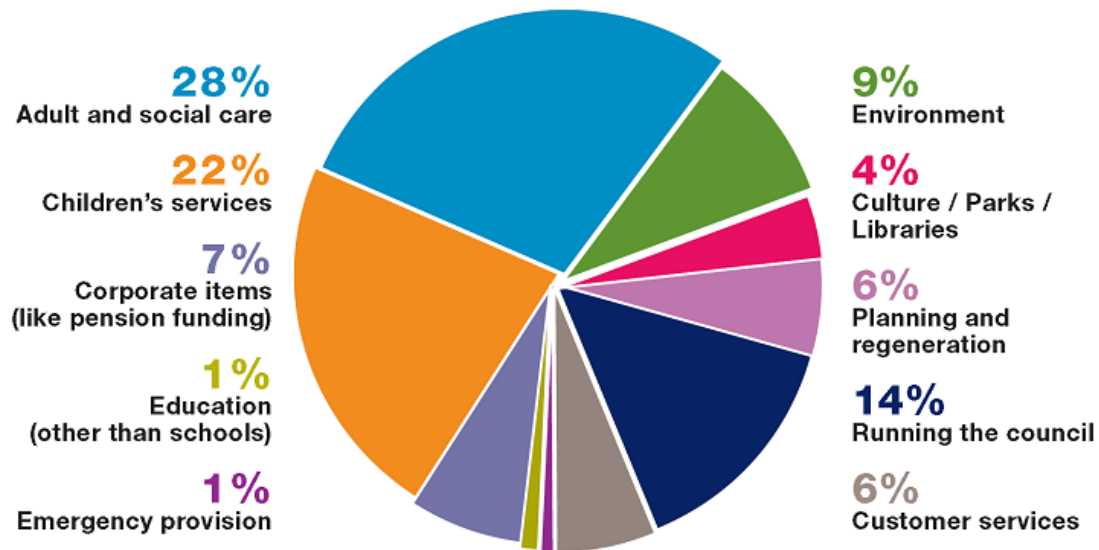
- Control on the executive – Bill of Rights offers a check on the huge powers of the executive (the Government and its agencies, e.g. police etc). Courts could refuse to apply legislation that was incompatible with the Bill of Rights
- The judiciary – under the HRA section 3, judges must interpret all laws so that they are compatible with human rights **but** only so far as it is possible to do so. This means that an Act that breaches rights in the Convention on Human Rights and Freedom can still prevail. This would not be possible if the UK had a Bill of Rights.
- The HRA is not **entrenched** – that is, a firmly established piece of law which is difficult to change or unlikely to be changed. Because it is not **entrenched**, it can be repealed. A UK Bill of Rights would be entrenched, cf. the US Bill of Rights. The UK has no laws that are entrenched.
- A Bill of Rights would introduce new rights, unlike the HRA, which did not.

### Arguments against a UK Bill of Rights

- Not needed – our rights are adequately protected.
- Inflexible - hard to change.
- Difficult to draft – what would you include?
- Could lead to uncertainty – loose drafting style of a Bill of Rights.
- A Bill of Rights is only as effective as the Government that underpins it.
- Increased power to the judiciary – judges would be unelected and power would be removed from Parliament.

## How does local democracy work?

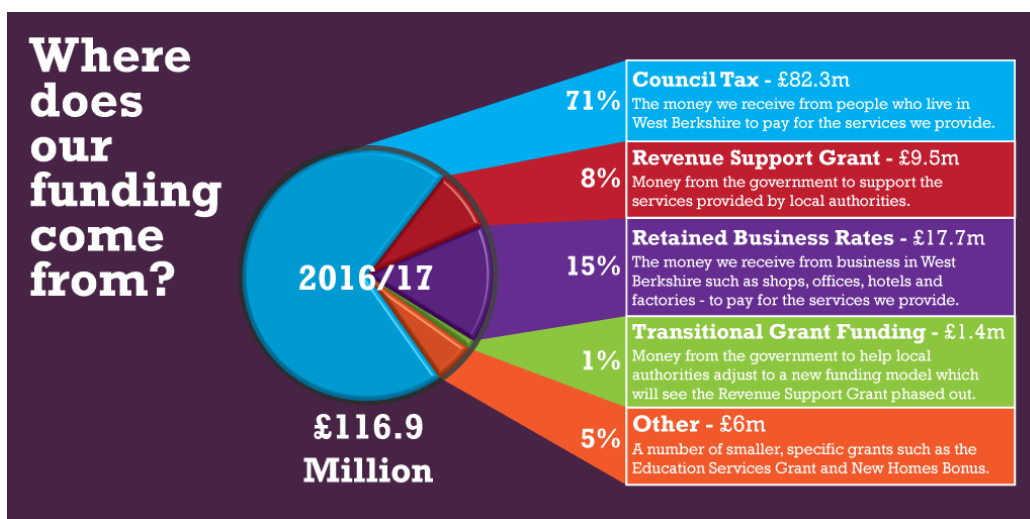
Citizens vote for local **councillors** who represent them on their local council; most councillors will belong to one of the main political parties. Whilst councillors are elected most council employees, such as council officers, are permanent employees and don't leave if a new party takes over control of the council. Below shows where a London council spends its budget.



## Councils are responsible for a wide range of services including:-

Adoption, Air Pollution, Disabled Parking, Cemeteries, Waste Collections, Planning Permission, Street Lighting, Graffiti Removal, Libraries, Housing Benefit, Sports Centres, Street Lighting, Trading Standards, Police and Safety and much more.

The image below shows where one local council will be getting its money from: -



## Theme B: Democracy at work in the UK

### Who runs the country?

Conservative Party	Labour Party	Liberal Democrats
<p>The Conservative Party thinks that individuals should own and control businesses and services and make profits from them; the government should not interfere too much with these things. This is likely to create a gap between rich and poor but that is an unavoidable result of a competitive society and economy.</p> <p>Tax should be low, so that you can keep as much of what you earn as possible. As businesses and services are privately owned, it's thought that people will have more money to spend on these things, instead of the government taking your money and choosing for you. In turn this will improve public services, because in order to get you to use them, they need to be good.</p> <p>Traditional values should be encouraged to help build strong communities and families. Strict discipline and respect will cut crime and criminals should be treated harshly.</p> <p>Traditions such as the monarchy and the House of Lords are a very important part of Britain's history. They should be left as they are.</p>	<p>The government should work with private companies to provide good public services. The government should be involved in helping to close the gap between rich and poor by providing opportunities for those in need. All public services such as schools and hospitals need to receive funding from the government in order to provide good-quality services that are available for everyone to use.</p> <p>There need to be different levels of tax depending on how much you earn. The more you earn, the more you should pay - otherwise you end up with a group of very, very rich people and a group of very, very poor people. The tax is used to provide services for everybody, rich and poor.</p> <p>Communities need to be strong by promoting tolerance of and respect for all and by all. Everyone should enjoy their individual rights but they must also understand that they have responsibilities to those around them.</p>	<p>The Lib Dems, as they're called for short, are somewhere between the Labour and Conservative parties in their beliefs. They believe in personal freedom and a fair and open society where there is equality for everyone and strong communities. This can be achieved through free healthcare and education for all and by encouraging business to flourish but not interfering.</p> <p>The poor and those in need should receive help from the government. This would probably mean an increase in income tax. The environment can only be saved by reducing pollution from cars. The party believes there should be a strong and effective transport system.</p> <p>The Lib Dems think it's more important to deal with the causes of crime not just the effects, otherwise it can never be reduced.</p> <p>The Lib Dems believe that Britain should have a role in Europe.</p>



There are other political parties that have some success in elections. UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) campaigned for the UK to leave Europe; the Greens focus on the environment and the SNP (Scottish National Party) has campaigned for Scotland to be an independent country. The Brexit Party were created to ensure Brexit happened.

The main 2 parties



Conservative Party

Labour Party

The Government

The Official Opposition (because they are the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest party)

Leader: Rishi Sunak (The Prime Minister)

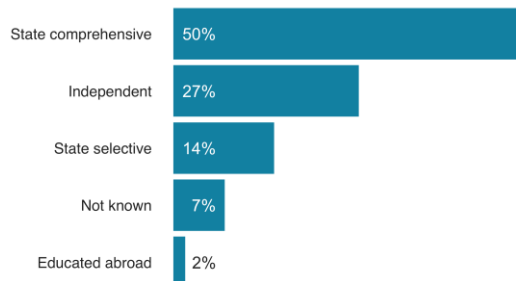
Leader: Keir Starmer

No of MPs: 349 (54% of all MPs)

No of MPs: 196 (30% of all MPs)

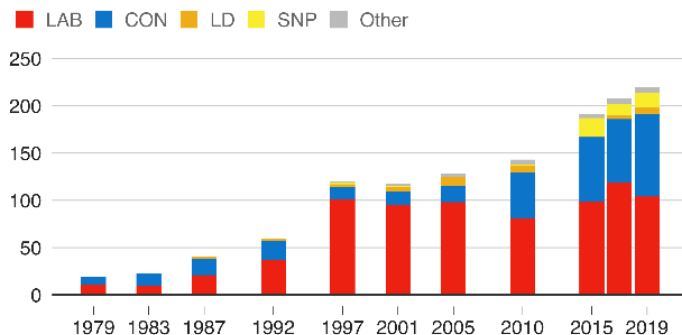
For years there has been criticism that the MPs that are in Parliament are not representative of the population. Whilst 90% of all students go to a comprehensive like Overton, only around 50% of MPS did. At least 27% went to private schools.

More than a quarter of MPs were educated at independent schools



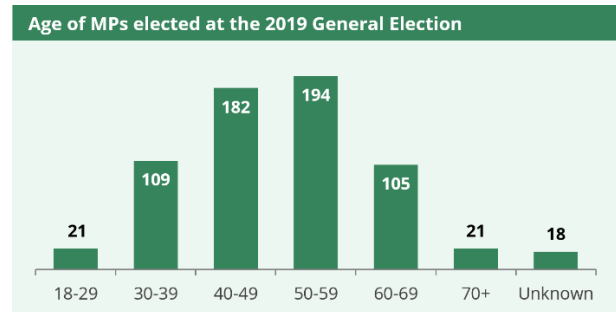
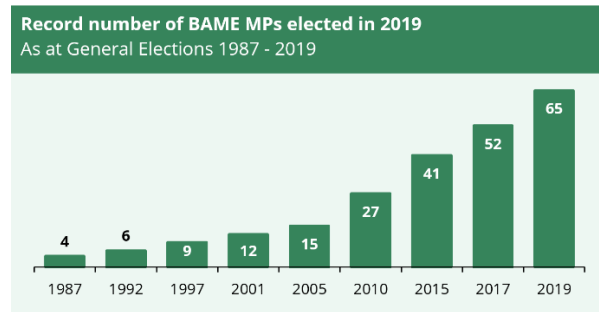
Number of women MPs continues to rise

Seats won by women at general elections, 1979-2019



Of our 650 MPs, 65 (10%) are from ethnic minorities.

In 2019, only 21 MPs (3%) were under 30 years old.



There are 220 female MPs (up from 208 in 2017) – the majority of Labour and Lib Dem MPs are female.

## Citizens and Politics

There are a wide range of ways in which citizens can participate in politics: -

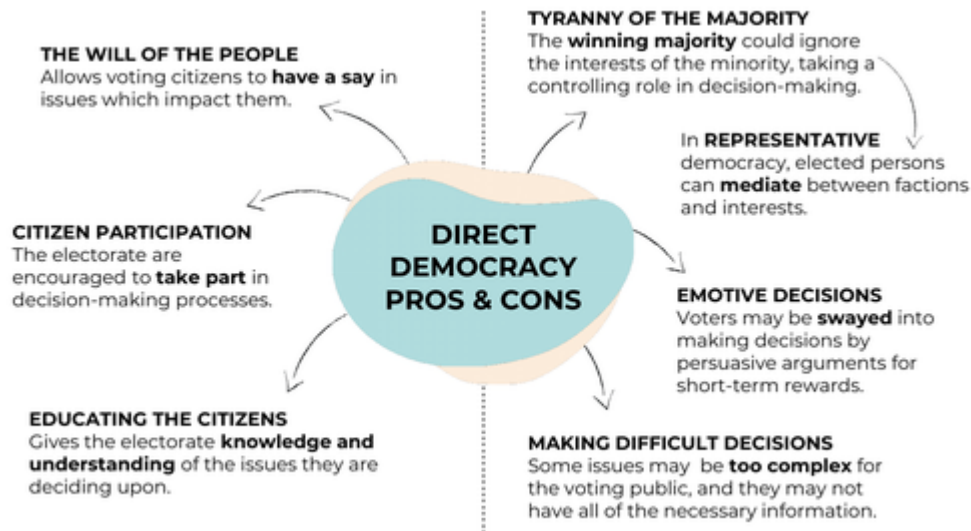
- They could stand for election as an MP;
- They could campaign on behalf of a political party;
- They could join a political party or a pressure group;
- They could join relevant protests and marches;
- They could join in other forms of political action such as boycotts, strikes or civil disobedience;
- They could stand for election as a member of the local council (a councillor)
- They could vote in elections;
- They could sign petitions, or
- They could even share political stories, articles, viewpoints on social media.

## Elections and voting systems

We live in a **Representative Democracy**, where everyone has the right to have a say in choosing the people who take decisions. This is done by voting in General Elections (for MPs), Local Elections (for councillors in Sutton), European Elections other elections like London Mayor.

Occasionally we get to vote in **Referendums**, which is a form of **Direct Democracy** (we are directly deciding something, e.g. *Brexit Referendum* – we were deciding to remain or leave the EU). Direct democracy, sometimes called "pure democracy," is a form of democracy in which all laws and policies imposed by governments are determined by the people themselves, rather than by representatives who are elected by the people.

In a true direct democracy, all laws, bills, and even court decisions are voted on by all citizens.



The UK has the following democratic features: -

- Free and fair elections—all adults over the age of 18 may vote in a secret ballot.
- Representative institutions such as parliament.
- Free press and media—no government control.
- The rule of law.
- Freely operating pressure groups and political parties.
- Little political corruption.
- An impartial, anonymous, permanent civil service.

How do I become an MP?

1. The first step is to make sure you're eligible. If you're over 18 and hold a British passport, then you're well on your way.
2. If you're a prisoner serving more than one year, you've been declared bankrupt and it has not yet been discharged, you're a police officer or serving member of the armed forces, or (understandably enough) if you have ever been convicted of electoral fraud or similar, then you are ruled out.
3. To put yourself forward in a constituency, you must be able to find 10 local registered voters who are prepared to back your candidacy.
4. You can either represent one of the main parties if they've chosen you or you can stand as an independent.
5. Then send £150, a £500 deposit (you'll get it back if you get more than five per cent of the vote), and a filled-out nomination form to the Returning Officer before the deadline. You will then be put on the ballot sheet, with your name and the name of your party.
6. It's not cheap, running for political office. You won't need the billions spent on the US Presidential election, but you will need around £5,000 in running costs and advertising.
7. Make yourself known. Poster campaigns, newspaper coverage and campaign leaflets are obvious ways, as are signs on supporters' homes. And, of course, get out, knock on doors, shake hands and kiss babies. The last bit is simple; get more votes in the ballot

box than anyone else. You need to keep campaigning to the last minute - knocking on doors to remind supporters to go to the polls - as well as finding time to vote yourself.

### **Types of MPs**

Every MP represents a **constituency**. This is a geographical area that has around 70,000 voters in it. There are 650 MPs in the UK, with some MPs representing small areas that contain 70,000 voters, whereas some constituencies have their 70,000 voters spread over a large area (e.g. in the Scottish Highlands). The largest constituency is Ross, Skye and Lochaber. It measures approximately 12,000 square kilometres. The smallest constituency is Islington North at 7.35 square kilometres.

If a party has a majority of MPs (50%+) then the MP who is the leader of that party will become the **Prime Minister**.

Some MPs are known as **backbenchers**. Backbenchers are MPs or members of the House of Lords that are neither government ministers nor opposition Shadow ministers. They are so called because, in the Chamber, they sit in the rows of benches behind their parties' spokespeople who are known as **frontbenchers**.

MPs that have added responsibility are called **Ministers**. Ministers are the MPs and members of the House of Lords who are in the Government. They are appointed by the Prime Minister and each given a specific area of government policy to oversee. Ministers speak on behalf of the Government from the frontbenches during parliamentary debates and must answer questions put to them by other MPs or members of the House of Lords. The biggest opposition party (currently Labour) will also have their own version of ministers, called Shadow Secretary of State for each department.



Rishi Sunak  
MP  
Leader of the Party with most MPs so becomes the **Prime Minister**.



Paul Scully  
MP (for Sutton)  
Used to be the **Minister** for London, so was also a **frontbencher**.



Theresa May  
MP  
Was Prime Minister but resigned. Isn't a minister so has become a **backbencher**.



Keir Starmer  
MP  
Leader of the Party with second most MPs so becomes the **Leader of the Opposition.**



David Lammy  
MP (for Tottenham)  
Also the **Shadow Foreign Minister**, so is a **frontbencher** sitting opposite the government.



Apsana Begum  
MP (Poplar and Ealing)  
Isn't a minister so is a **backbencher.**

Positives of UK Democracy:

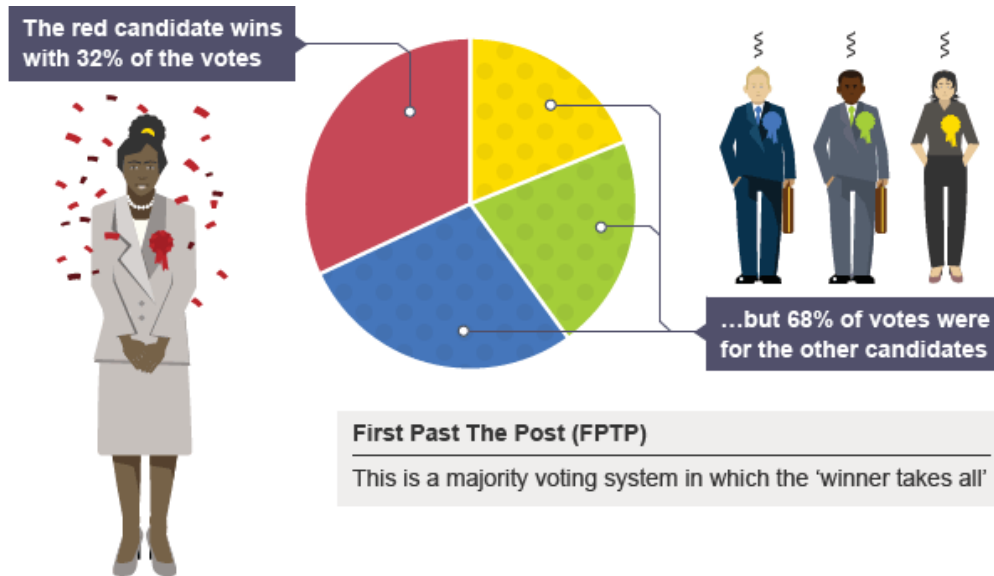
- Free and fair elections (every 5 years)
- Political Parties are free to air their views and campaign for their policies
- Politicians are accountable to the electorate at election time. We can vote them out if we wish.
- Freedom of speech/Freedom of the press
- Freedom of association
- Freedom of assembly
- No official discrimination against minority groups
- Human Rights Act

Negatives of UK Democracy

- Elections are not free (they cost money) and governments choose the date
- Smaller political parties suffer as a result of the electoral system (see below)
- Falling turnout at general elections can question the legitimacy of the government
- There are limitations on freedom of speech regarding race, etc.
- The Police can break up assemblies they deem to be riotous
- Human Rights Act is just an Act- it can be replaced.

**Referendums** are often viewed as positive occasions for the population to participate in politics as the Government trusts its citizens to make a key decision. But some people question their

use – is it really better to get an uninformed population to decide something rather than knowledgeable politicians? Would you trust your health to your friend rather than a Doctor? Referendums also cost a lot of money – the Brexit referendum was around £130m+.



Above shows us how our electoral system works - you just need to get more votes than anyone in your area (constituency). What's great is that it's really simple to work out the winner, is fairly quick to work out and is cheap compared to other systems. But a negative is that you can be elected with more people wanting someone else rather than actually wanted you.

Most UK citizens can vote (around 47m citizens). Those who can't include: -

- prisoners
- Members of the House of Lords
- EU citizens living in the UK
- Anyone found guilty of corruption in previous elections

The King can vote, though it's seen as unconstitutional to do so.

In recent years there have been calls for the franchise to be extended to 16 year olds (for them to be given the right to vote).

- You pay income tax at 16 – You should have a say how the money is spent through voting.
- You can join the army or get married at 16 but not able to vote.
- It gets young people more involved with politics.
- It will promote political education from an early age.
- It gets young people listened to – gives them a voice.

**OR**

- 18 – 24 year olds don't vote anyway, so why should we give 16 – 17 year olds the same opportunity?
- Lowering of the voting age to 16 imposes an unwanted responsibility to vote on young people.
- Young people aged 16 and 17 years old are likely to vote for radical parties.
- Young people are not informed or mature enough to vote at 16 and 17 years old.

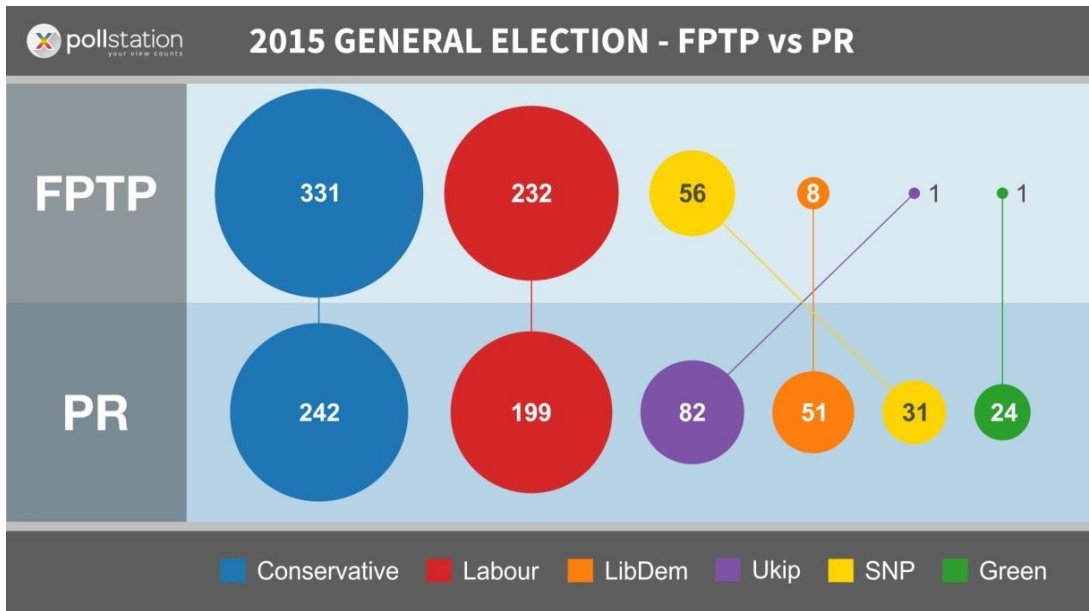
General Elections (GE) are now held once every 5 years, although a Prime Minister can decide to have an earlier GE as long as they can get 2/3 of Parliament to agree to it.

For many years our election system, First Past the Post has been criticized for being unfair and disproportional. To win a constituency, such as Sutton, you need to be the candidate with the most votes. Paul Scully (Conservative) won the constituency in 2019 and became the MP for the area. He did this with 50% of the votes.

But in most areas the winner doesn't have over 50% of all the votes, but just has the most votes of any candidate. In Belfast South, the winner only had 30% of all the votes, which meant that 70% of people didn't want them!

Another problem of First Past the Post is that smaller parties don't win the number of MPs/seats that their vote deserves because they don't have concentrated support in any area to win that particular constituency. They have support all over the country but never enough in an area to beat the bigger parties such as Labour and Conservatives. Below shows you how unfair the system is – in 2015, UKIP won one constituency (0.2% of all MPs), despite having 12.6% of all the UK's votes. If we had a fairer system – such as Proportional Representation (PR) – then they would have achieved 82 MPs. A proportional election system is one that gives you a similar percentage of MPs to your vote (i.e. 10% of the vote gets you 10% of the MPs).

FPTP just rewards the winner of each constituency and every other vote is wasted. PR would mean votes aren't wasted. Because the elections for the European Parliament are done using PR, smaller parties such as UKIP and the Greens receive MEPs in line with their percentage of the vote.



Why then would people use FPTP if it's not fair?

- It's quick to work out results
- It's simple to understand

**Vote for one option.**

- Joe Smith
- John Citizen
- Jane Doe
- Fred Rubble
- Mary Hill

- You tend to get one party winning over 50% of the MPs and being able to govern on their own. This is because both Labour and Conservatives have areas of concentrated support (Labour – cities, Conservative – rural and wealthier areas).
- Small extremist parties are unlikely to ever win enough support to win a single constituency let alone the whole country.
- Has worked well for hundreds of years.
- Everyone has an individual (MP) who is in Parliament who they know and can go to if they have concerns. Some election systems don't give voters a specific individual they can go to.

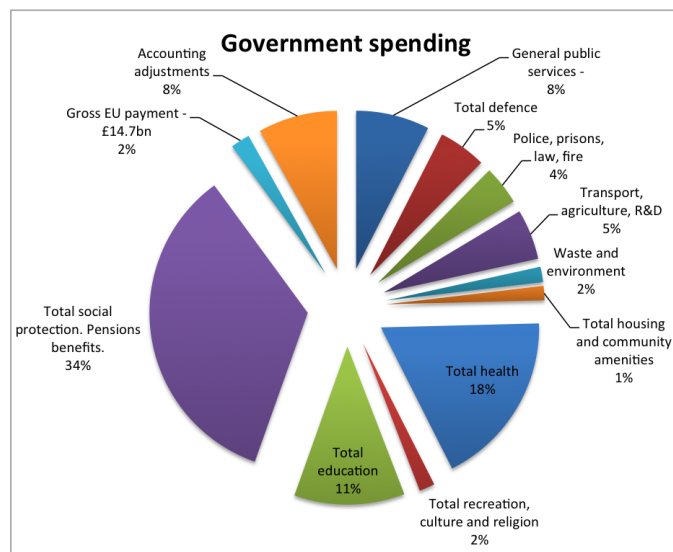
Loads of benefits then, but the disadvantages are: -

- As mentioned previously, the results aren't fair or proportional. Smaller parties tend to suffer;



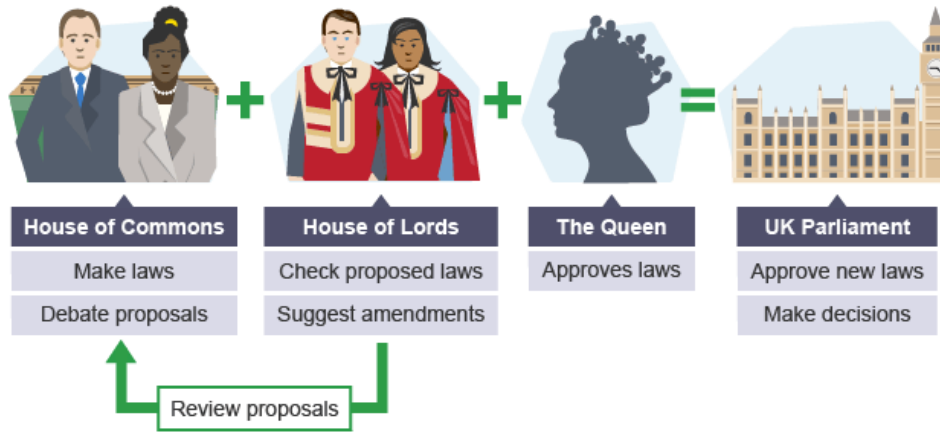
- Minority groups aren't often represented well by the parties that are elected;
- A huge number of votes are wasted (any that go to a losing candidate)
- Some areas are 'Safe Seats'. Reigate will always elect a Conservative so is there any point of supporters of other parties bothering to go and vote?

The government is organized into departments and ministries. Each of these will have a Minister responsible for them, i.e. The Foreign Minister is Lord Cameron. You can see some of the other departments on the pie chart below; each will have a number of ministers and junior ministers responsible for them. Because government can change from being controlled by one party to another (i.e. Labour from 1997-2010, then Conservative since) it's important that there are permanent people working in each department. These are called civil servants.



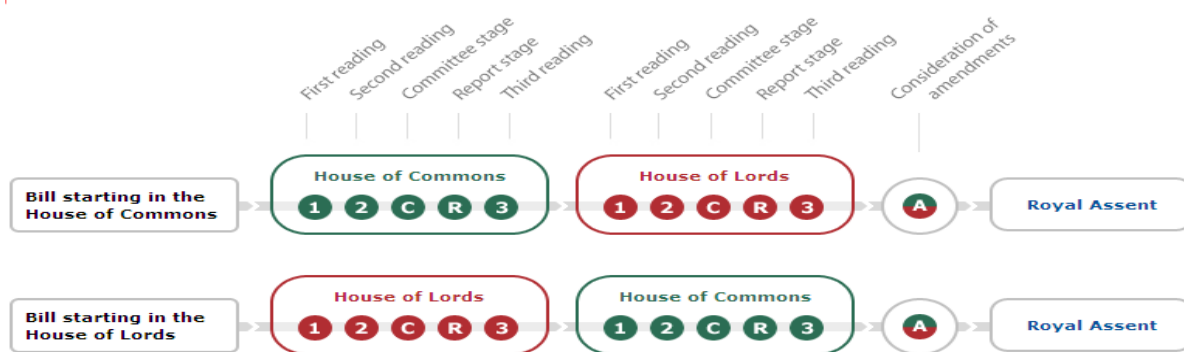
## How does Parliament work?

Often when people talk about Parliament and power in the UK, they mention words such as executive, legislature, judiciary and monarchy. The **Executive** is basically the decision-making branch of government. So it's the Prime Minister and their Cabinet (group of key senior ministers and advisers who are chosen by the Prime Minister). The **Legislature** is the law-making part of the system, so Parliament then, as that's where laws are debated and created. The **Judiciary** is the courts and the judges who work within them. They interpret and practice the law. The **Monarchy** is the King or Queen.



The House of Commons is where most law begins, the House of Lords then use their knowledge and expertise to scrutinize (check) the laws and make sure they're appropriate and working.

### Passage of a Bill



Unlike the USA, the UK does not have all of its main rules and powers written down in a single document – a **constitution**. Our rules and arrangements about power are in various different documents and traditions. So, our constitution is seen as unwritten, flexible and easy to change.

### What are constitutions and why do they matter?

The term 'constitution' refers to the principles, rules and laws that establish and underpin a political system. The constitution creates and defines the powers of different political institutions and determines how they should relate to each other. It sets out the limits of these powers and regulates the relationship between the state and its citizens.

Constitutions place both limitations and obligations on governmental organisations in their relationship with the people, and provide opportunities for the public to influence the political process.

### Is the constitution of the United Kingdom written down?

It is often noted that the UK does not have a 'written' or 'codified' constitution. It is true that most countries have a document with special legal status that contains some of the key features of their constitution. This text is usually upheld by the courts and cannot be changed except through an especially demanding process. The UK, however, does not possess a single constitutional document of this nature. Nevertheless, it does have a constitution.

The UK's constitution is spread across a number of places. This can make it more difficult to identify and understand. It is found in places including some specific Acts of Parliament; particular understandings of how the system should operate (known as constitutional conventions); and various decisions made by judges that help determine how the system works.

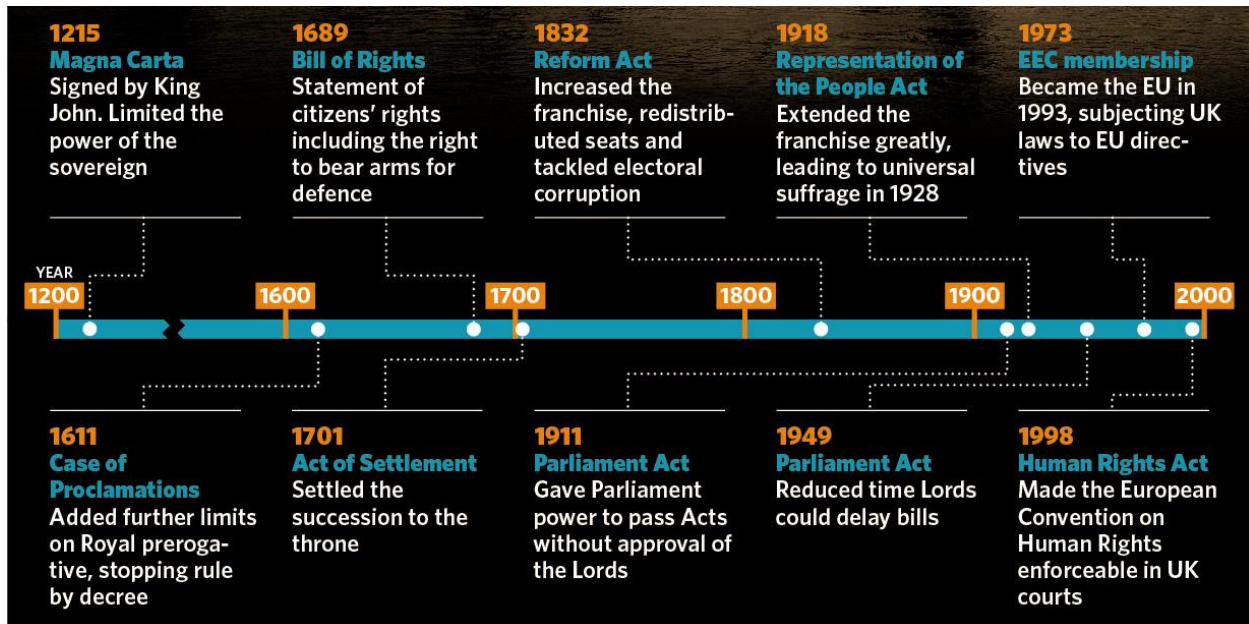


## **The Major sources of the British Constitution**

- Statute Law – Acts of Parliament
- Common Law – Decisions of Courts
- Conventions – Unwritten rules, i.e. the Prime Minister must sit in the House of Commons
- Law and Customs of Parliament - Procedures
- Works of Authority – Expert texts such as Bagehot (The English Constitution 1867)
- EU Law
- European Convention Human Rights (signed 1998)

## The long road to rights

Key dates in the evolution of the UK's unwritten constitution



All of the above events are parts of our constitution.

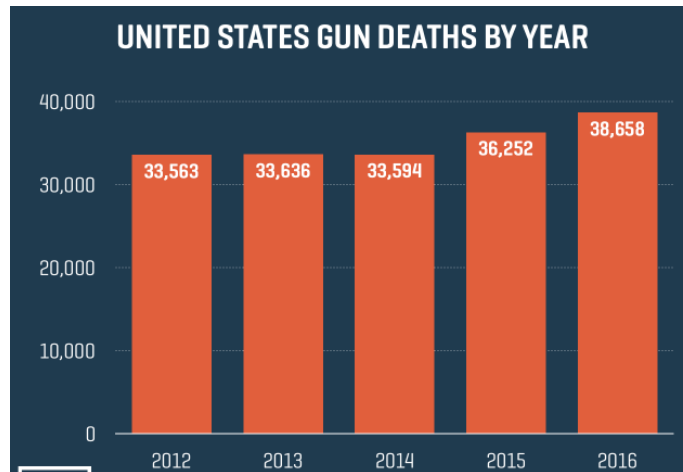
### Is Magna Carta (1215) our constitution?

Magna Carta (translated as Great Charter) was an agreement reached at Runnymede in 1215 between King John and a group of English barons who had been part of a rebellion against the King.

Magna Carta became significant in placing limits on the King's power over his subjects, and in that the law should also apply to the monarch. This was the beginning of the rule of law (that everyone within a state should be bound by and entitled to the benefit of the law).

Much of its impact came through inspiring and supporting future developments, such as 'habeas corpus': that a person may not be detained without legal reason. It also established that citizens should have the right to a fair trial and not be given unfair punishment.

Magna Carta is often seen as the birth of Human Rights and is still an important part of our constitution today.



The chart above shows the number of gun deaths in the USA by year; in 2017, it continued to increase further – there were 39,773 gun deaths. The US constitution is partly to blame for this as in a similar period there were only 700 gun deaths in the UK. The US constitution includes a 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment which allows its citizens to bear arms (have weapons). Originally this was included so that citizens could protect their houses (and country) from foreign invaders, most likely the British. The US constitution is very difficult to change so this right has been in place for over 200 years. As a result, there are now thought to be more guns in the USA (400 million) compared to the population (330 million).

The UK constitution's flexibility and the ease with which it can be changed means the UK is far less likely to be left with disastrous laws. Any time a government is elected, they have the ability to cancel any laws created by previous governments. This means if a party introduced a dangerous law such as the gun laws of the USA, then the next government elected could abolish this law. Provided you have a majority of MPs in parliament, then you have huge power to change law and therefore the constitution.

Because our constitution can change fairly easily, there have been lots of constitutional changes since 1997:-

- Devolution (explained on p28)
- Brexit (explained on p30)
- The Human Rights Act was introduced
- The Equality Act 2010 was introduced
- The House of Lords was reformed, meaning that the vast majority of Lords/Ladies are appointed rather than get a place there on a hereditary basis (basically getting a place there because they took it over from their parent).
- Introduced an elected mayor of London

Also, as new laws are introduced this changes our constitution. So new laws such as the Upskirting ban and changes to the laws on protest and striking will change our constitution.

## Power in the UK

**The King** is a figurehead – his powers are limited by the laws and customs of Britain. Every law has to be signed off by the monarch – this is called Royal Assent. Only once in 600 years has the monarch not signed a law. (1707 – Scottish Militia). The King is head of the armed forces, the Church of England, the legal system and the country is governed in his name

**Parliament** Parliament has the power to:

- make laws
- raise taxes

In Britain we have the idea of **Parliamentary Sovereignty** - that because Parliament and its MPs are elected by the citizens of the UK then it should have complete power. In reality though there are lots of limits, such as: -

- Upsetting the electorate (the public will then just vote them out)
- Judges can rule that Parliament has created laws that are unjust
- Parliament can introduce laws that go against European law

**PM** The Prime Minister exercises power in the King's name. He/she can:

- appoint other ministers
- make the important decisions of government
- tell the MPs in their party which way to vote (although they don't always do as they are told)
- conduct relations with other countries and declare war and make treaties in the King's name

**Judiciary** Judges interpret and implement the laws created. Decide whether laws introduced are fair and legally sound.

They can conduct Judicial Review. This is a vital role to ensure that democracy is achieved. Basically, it means that the judiciary check that the government and public bodies (like councils) haven't done things that they don't have the power or legitimacy to do.

### Case Study: **Judicial Review**

For example, Boris Johnson 'pro-rogued' Parliament in 2019, which basically meant he shut it down. He was frustrated with Parliament opposing his Brexit deals and so temporarily closed it

down, to stop debate and discussion. The Supreme Court decided that this was wrong and ordered that Parliament must reopen. The power of Judicial Review is important as it ensures that the government don't act in a way that exceeds their power. This was also the case when Donald Trump tried to introduce a ban on travel into the USA from countries with a large Muslim population; courts blocked this until he changed the law.

As you can see, there are a number of key figures that have real power in the UK. Due to this, they are all able to ensure that no other part of the system misuses their power and becomes too powerful. Parliament can vote against the Government/PM's proposed laws. In the last 5 years, the Government has lost votes in Parliament on Syrian air strikes, longer hours trading on Sundays and increasing benefits cuts. The House of Lords can delay laws made in the House of the Commons. The King could refuse to sign and accept a law. If a citizen believes that the Government has acted illegally then they can use Judicial Review to get judges to decide if this was the case. The media also play a huge role in affecting power in the UK.

The main functions of the UK Parliament are to:

- **Check and challenge the work of the Government (scrutiny)**
- **Make and change laws (legislation)**
- **Debate the important issues of the day (debating)**
- **Check and approve Government spending (budget/taxes)**

Parliament's key role is to pass and creating law but it also exists to question and check up on the work of the Government and the PM.

Parliament checks and challenges the work of government by conducting Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) every Wednesday, where the PM has to answer questions about their work, their plans for the future and other topical issues. Parliament holds debates over laws, where politicians from all parties can give their views. They can make and change laws or suggest changes to existing laws. Committees exist, made up of parties from all parties, to check up on the work of the government. Matt Hancock and Boris Johnson had to face a number of committees to explain their actions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ultimately Parliament is seen as being the most powerful body in the UK, more than the government. **Parliamentary Sovereignty.** Parliamentary sovereignty is a principle of the UK constitution. It makes Parliament the supreme legal authority in the UK which can create or end any law. Generally, the courts cannot overrule its legislation and no Parliament can pass laws that future Parliaments cannot change. Parliamentary sovereignty is the most important part of the UK constitution.

## How is power shared between Westminster and the devolved administrations?

Since 1999, the way the United Kingdom is run has been transformed by **devolution** - a process designed to decentralise government and give more powers to the three nations which, together with England, make up the UK.

The United Kingdom is made up of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Devolution essentially means the transfer of powers from the UK parliament in London to assemblies in Cardiff and Belfast, and the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. Public votes were held in 1997 in Scotland and Wales, and a year later in both parts of Ireland.

This resulted in the creation of the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

### NORTHERN IRELAND

After the Good Friday Agreement 1998, the Northern Ireland Act paved the way for a Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. The Assembly is composed of 90 members elected by a single transferable vote system. The Executive is structured to ensure power sharing and inclusivity.

### WALES

Following a referendum in 1997 the Government of Wales Act (1998) provided for the establishment of a National Assembly for Wales. Now formally known as the Welsh Parliament (Senedd), it comprises of 60 members elected under the additional member system (AMS).



### SCOTLAND

A referendum was held in 1979 with 74% of Scots in favour of a Scottish Parliament. In 1978 the Scotland Act was passed. There are 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), with 73 constituency MSPs and 56 regional members under the additional member system (AMS). The largest party or parties form the Executive.

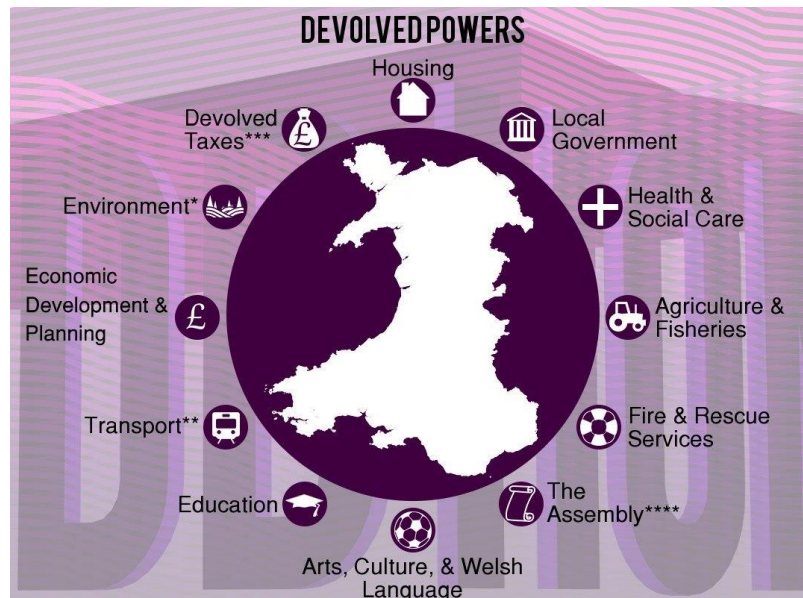
### ENGLAND

London has a mayor (elected under the supplementary vote system) and assembly created in 2000. England also has eight metro mayors, created after 2016. These mayors have varying powers and budgets.

THE  
CONSTITUTION  
SOCIETY



These are the powers that have been devolved (given to) the Welsh assembly for the UK Parliament in Westminster.



The UK government, led by the prime minister in Downing Street, is responsible for national policy on all powers which have not been devolved - known usually as "reserved powers".

The main areas which are reserved to Westminster are:

- The constitution (e.g. the rules about how the country is run)
- Defence and national security (e.g., going to war, army numbers etc.)
- Foreign policy (e.g.. deals and treaties with other countries)
- Immigration and citizenship (e.g.. who can/cannot come into the country, how to become a British citizen))
- Tax policy (income tax rates devolved in Scotland) (e.g.. how much tax we're all supposed to pay)

### Why did this happen?

For years, the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland complained that all the main decisions about their countries were made miles away in London. They asked that some decisions could be made in their own parliament/assemblies. Each country had a referendum and the citizens of each decided they would like more decisions to be made in their own assemblies/parliaments rather than in Westminster.

This has encouraged Scotland to look at becoming an independent nation and to leave the United Kingdom. In 2014, they had a referendum to leave the UK. 55% of Scots voted to remain in the UK. Despite this, there are still calls for another independence referendum by the SNP (Scottish National Party), under their leader Nicola Sturgeon. This has increased since the Brexit

vote. Whilst the UK as a whole voted to Leave, Scotland voted to Remain (62%); so the chance of Scottish independence happening, still remains. The argument is that if Scotland were an independent country then they would still remain in the EU and that it's because of England's larger size and support for Brexit that the whole of the UK are having to leave.

### **Case Study – Scottish Independence**

In 2014 Scotland had an independence referendum, with 55% of voters deciding against independence with 45% wanting independence. According to successive Conservative prime ministers, 2014 settled the matter. Yet the constitutional debate has raged on.

The shock result of the June 2016 Brexit referendum increased support for the independence movement as Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain, by 62% to 38%, while the UK overall voted to leave by 52% to 48%. The main Scottish Party - the SNP - said the Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold another referendum as Scotland had been taken out of the EU against its will.

Support for independence manifested in mass marches and rallies for independence. After tens of thousands took to the street of Edinburgh in October 2019, the SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon tweeted: "Be in no doubt - independence is coming."

In June 2022, Ms Sturgeon proposed 19 October 2023 as the date for a second referendum. In one of his last acts before resigning as prime minister, Mr Johnson told Ms Sturgeon that it was "not the time" to hold a referendum.

In November 2022, the Supreme Court ruled that the Scottish government could not hold an independence referendum without the UK government's consent. The new SNP leader, Humza Yousaf said the government will seek independence negotiations with Westminster if the SNP wins the most seats in Scotland at the next general election.

### **What was Brexit all about?**

Brexit is a word made up to describe the "*British Exit*" from the European Union (EU). In a vote on June 23, 2016, more than half of the people of the United Kingdom (UK) chose to leave the EU.

To decide about Brexit, the UK held a special kind of vote called a "referendum". The results were close to tied. 51.9% of the people who voted wanted to leave. People had different reasons for wanting to leave the EU. Many people wanted to limit immigrants – people who come to the UK from other countries. Some people in the UK wanted to be independent of Europe. Some people thought that leaving the EU would be better for businesses in the UK.

# Remain

The arguments for remaining in the EU focused on the benefits of being part of a wider union, and the security and favourable trading relationship made possible through EU membership.

## Key arguments for remain

### ✓ Foreign affairs

As part of a community of 500 million people, Britain could have greater influence over international matters as a member of the EU.

### ✓ Sovereignty

Britain proved that it could opt out of some EU policies which it considers counterintuitive, such as adoption of the euro, the Schengen Agreement and enforced migrant quotas.

### ✓ Security

A union better equipped Britain to tackle threats to security, including terrorism and cross-border crime.

### ✓ Money

European businesses invest billions of pounds in the UK every year, both in the public sector and private sector.

### ✓ Trade

EU membership provided unrestricted access to the European single market, which was invaluable for trade and enables the easy movement of goods, services and people across member states.

# Leave

Key arguments for why the UK should leave the EU included greater control over foreign affairs, greater national sovereignty and the potential for glitzy new trade deals with countries like the US.

## Key arguments for leave

### ✓ Foreign affairs

Continued EU membership would've limited Britain's international influence, ruling out an independent seat at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

### ✓ Sovereignty

Britain will have more control of its laws and regulations, without the risk of having counterintuitive European policies forcefully imposed.

### ✓ Security

Some in the Leave camp believe that Britain's domestic security could benefit from full border controls, which it would hope to gain outside the EU.

### ✓ Money

EU membership fees – amounting to billions – could be repurposed and spent on issues that matter most to people in the UK.

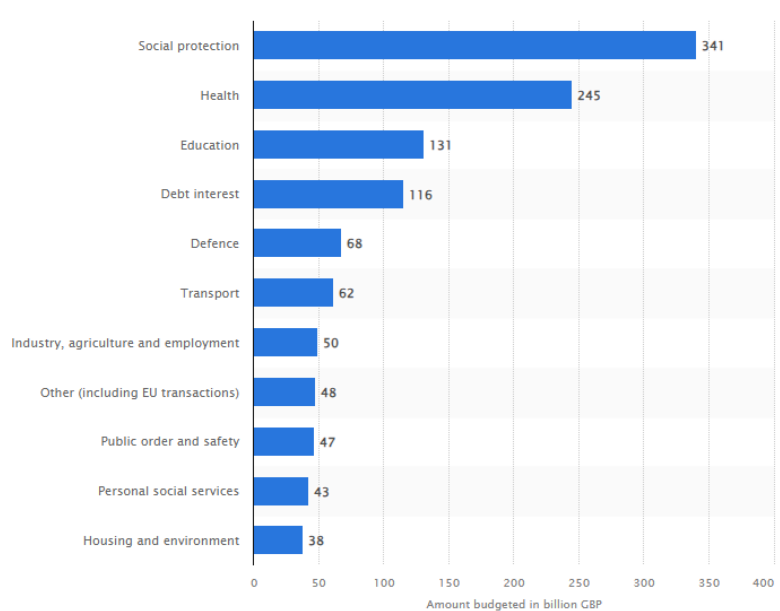
### ✓ Trade

Membership of the EU kept Britain from fully capitalising on trade with other major economies such as Japan, India and the US.

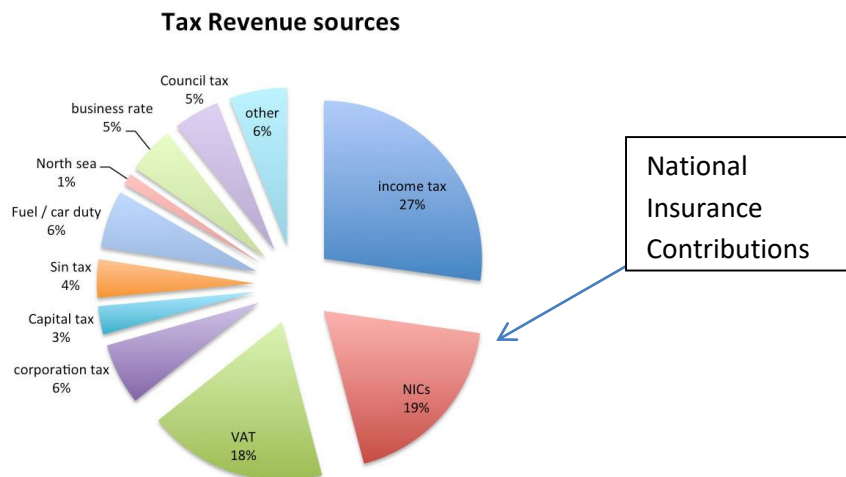
## How does government manage public money?

The main areas of spending are social protection (benefits, pension etc.), the NHS and the education system.

In 2023/24, the expenditure of the United Kingdom government is expected to reach **1,189 billion British pounds**, with the highest spending function being the 341 billion pounds expected to be spent on social protection, which includes pensions and other welfare benefits. Government spending on health was expected to be £245 billion



## Where does the UK government get all this money from?



The more you earn, the more you end up paying in tax. If you earn up to £12,570 per year, you pay no income tax. From £12,570-£50,270, you pay 20% in income tax and then so on (see below).

## Income tax levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland\*

Band	Earnings	Rate
Personal allowance	First £12,570**	0
Basic rate	£12,571 to £50,270	20%
Higher rate	£50,271 to £125,140	40%
Additional rate	Over £125,140	45%

\*Scotland sets its own bands and rates

\*\*Reduced by £1 for every £2 earned between £100,000 and £125,140

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is the minister who is responsible for deciding how to use the income that the government has. Obviously they will speak with other ministers and the Prime Minister to decide how much the various departments receive in terms of funding. There is always arguments and pressure from each department to receive even more funding, so the Chancellor has a careful balancing impact in terms of spending the Government's responsibility sensibly.

### Where does Sutton council get all its money from?

Local government is responsible for a range of vital services for people and businesses in defined areas. Among them are well known functions such as social care, schools, housing and planning and waste collection, but also lesser known ones such as licensing, business support, registrar services and pest control.

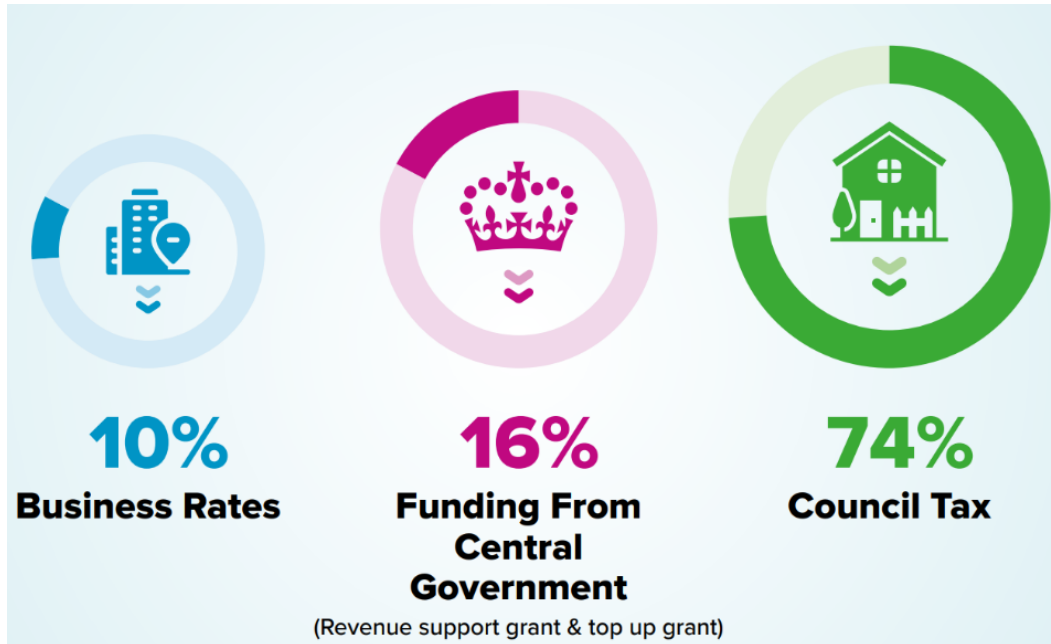
In England, more than one million people work in local government across a range of different types of authorities, providing more than 800 different services to local communities.

Local councils, which is the most common type of local authority, are made up of councillors who are elected by the public in local elections.

Local authorities have three main sources of revenue:

- Government grants – money from central government for local services
- Council tax – a property tax levied on residential properties
- Business rates – a property tax levied on business premises






This is where Sutton’s budget comes from:-



Sutton’s 2023-24 Budget sets out how the council would invest in services including:



Some of the specific things they will do include:-

 <b>£6.6m</b> in roads, pavements, street lighting and public safety	 <b>£7.4m</b> in school place expansion and maintenance	 <b>£17.1m</b> in Sutton High Street and the London Cancer Hub
 <b>£50m</b> in building new council homes and regeneration	 <b>£26m</b> in council home improvements	

They also have a number of challenges to face: -

### The challenge

**60% less**  
Government  
funding than  
2010 in  
real terms



**£13m**  
more savings  
we need to  
make by 2022/23



**£200**  
less to spend  
per person  
in Sutton  
since 2010



**£1m**  
more needed this  
year alone for adult  
social care

**£300k**  
more needed this year  
to support children and  
their families in need

We've declared a  
**CLIMATE  
EMERGENCY**  
which needs  
urgent action

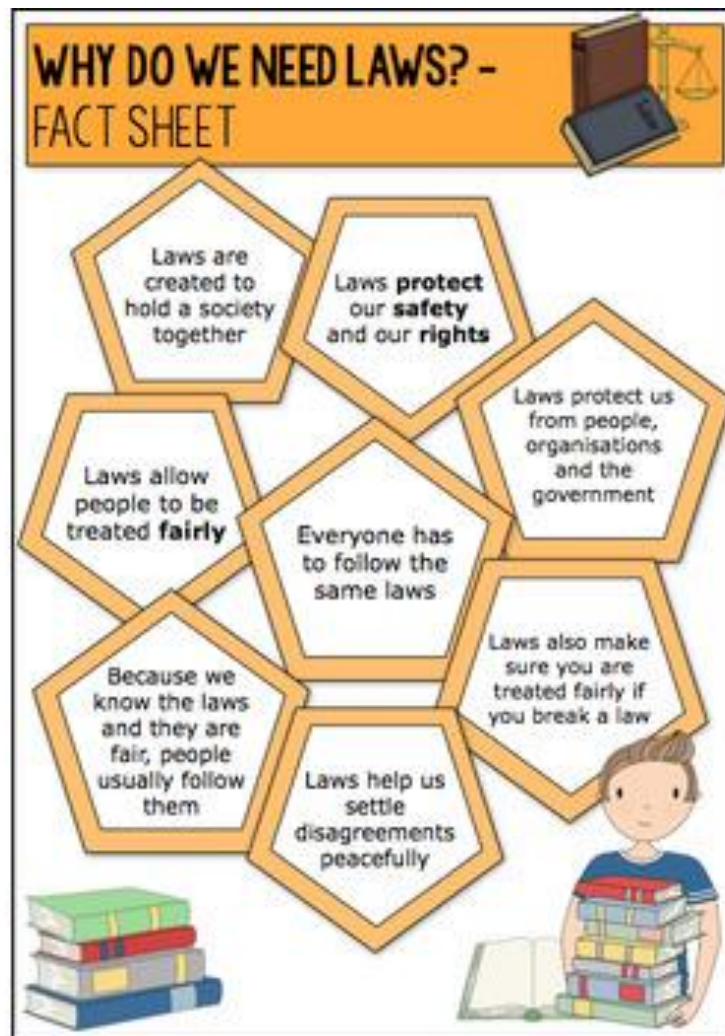
## Theme C: Law and justice

### What is the law for and how does it affect us?

Law is the official rules and regulations that are used to govern a society and to control the behaviour of its members, so law is a form of social control. Legal systems are particular ways of establishing and maintaining social order.

#### **A legal system must: -**

- apply to the whole of society, not just one part;
- reflect the moral attitudes and views of society (e.g. punish actions that society believes should be illegal)
- change and adapt to reflect changing moral values (e.g. increasingly, same sex marriage has been allowed in countries)
- punish people who commit criminal offences (e.g. whether through fines, imprisonment etc.)





Laws are also needed to help change the behavior of some citizens; if they are not given specific boundaries of acceptable behavior then they may offend with little thought/consideration for others. Laws are often introduced to respond to new situations in society (including scientific and technological developments and changing values), see below: -

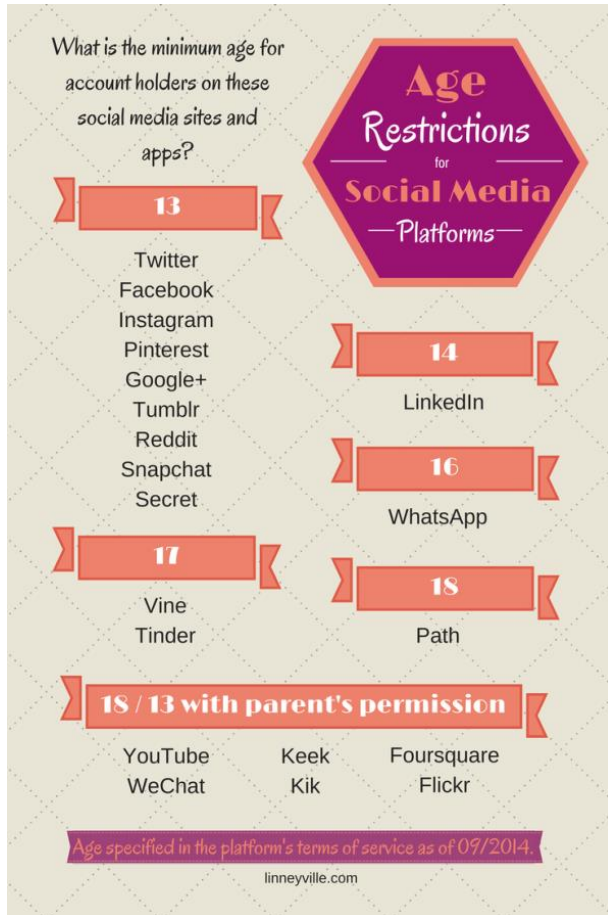
Case Study: -

In 2015, the **Serious Crime Bill** was introduced to deal with an increase in domestic abuse. Domestic abusers who control victims via social media or spy on them online could now face up to five years in prison under the new law. The legislation will target those who subject spouses, partners and family members to psychological and emotional torment but stop short of violence. It paves the way for charges in cases where there is evidence of repeated "controlling or coercive behaviour". This is behaviour that could include isolating a person from their friends and family; controlling what they do, where they go, who they can see, what they wear and when they sleep; repeatedly putting them down, such as telling them they are worthless and threats to reveal or publish private information.

The UK system compared with other countries

- In the UK legal system, judges and juries play an impartial role meaning they are entirely neutral. They listen to the evidence provided by the defence and prosecution and decide guilt/innocence on the basis of this information. Other countries have a system where the judge will question witnesses and prepare evidence. This system can be more open to bias.
- The UK uses a system of common law, where laws are written by Parliament and in the judgements that judges make. Some countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Northern Nigeria, have religious law. This where a religious document is the basis of that country's laws.
- England and Wales uses juries in criminal trials; this is so that 12 ordinary members of the public can decide the guilt/innocence of the accused. (In Scotland, it's 15 jurors on a criminal trial). In South Africa, cases are heard without a jury and the decision on guilt is made by the judge/magistrate. That is why Oscar Pistorius' murder trial didn't feature a jury.
- The UK doesn't feature corporal punishment (use of force on a person) or capital punishment (the death penalty) unlike in other countries. 33 countries still use corporal punishment, including Ecuador, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. 58 countries still actively use the death penalty including the USA, China and Iran.

## Legal Ages



Countries have differing legal ages for when their citizens are allowed to complete particular actions/freedoms. Whilst the age of sexual consent is 16 in the UK, it's only 14 in Germany whilst being 18 in Turkey. Some legal age restrictions are constantly broken – look at the age restrictions on social media platforms.

Age restrictions on drinking alcohol and smoking are largely down to the health implications on developing bodies and the need for a mature approach to them.

The age of criminal responsibility in the UK is 10; this is because there is a belief that by 10 a child should have a fair understanding of the difference between right and wrong. The UN suggests a minimum of 12 years old and most of Europe follows this. In 33 states of the USA, there is no minimum age!

## Legal age you can...



Other key legal ages: -

16 – consent to medical treatment, consent to sexual activities

17 – drive most vehicles

18 – vote (16 for Scottish Parliament elections), buy cigarettes, buy alcohol in pubs, get married.

### **Case Study – Age of Criminal Responsibility**

The age of criminal responsibility in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is 10-years-old. The age of criminal responsibility in Scotland is 12-years-old.

England and Wales

In England and Wales children between 10 and 17 can be arrested and taken to court if they commit a crime. They are treated differently from adults:

- the case is dealt with by youth courts
- they are given different sentences
- if given a custodial sentence, they will be sent to special secure centres for young people, not adult prisons.

In England and Wales, children under 10 cannot be charged with committing a criminal offence.

However, they can be given a:

- local child curfew
- child safety order.
- Children under 10 who break the law regularly can sometimes be taken into care, or their parents could be held responsible

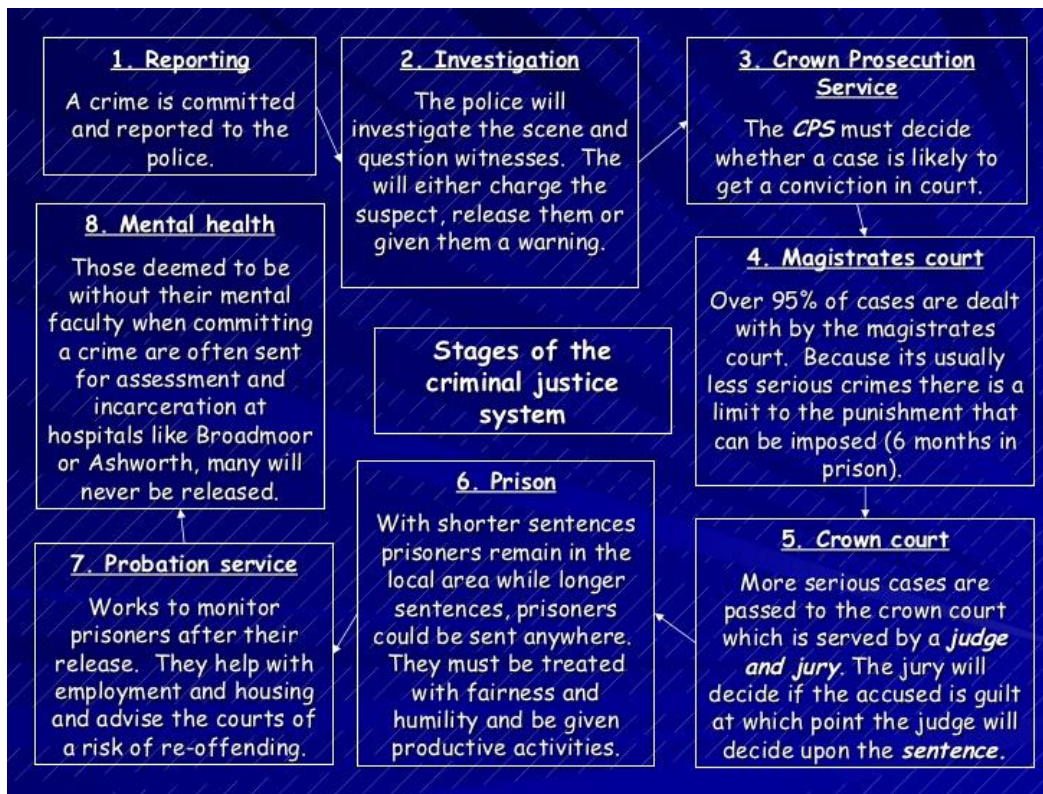
No 10- or 11-year-olds have been imprisoned in England and Wales since 2010, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has said, as the criminal justice system becomes ever more reluctant to criminalise primary-school-age children.

There has been a huge drop in the number of very young children cautioned or convicted in England and Wales in recent years. In 2010, 781 youth cautions or sentences were given to 10-year-old children, according to information released by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act. In the year ending March 2022, the most recent figures available, just 16 10-year-olds and 80 11-year-olds were convicted or cautioned, mostly for offences involving violence or arson.

But the government has repeatedly refused to increase the age of criminal responsibility from 10, one of the youngest in the world, since the 10-year-olds Robert Thompson and Jon Venables were found guilty of murdering the Liverpool toddler James Bulger in 1993. Increasingly, charges against 10-year-olds are dropped once they reach court. Children in care are disproportionately likely to end up in court. A large study in September found that children who have lived in care are eight times more likely to have received a youth justice caution or conviction than those who have not.

Whilst citizens have a range of rights at different ages, they also have a wide range of responsibilities. Legal requirements for all citizens include: -

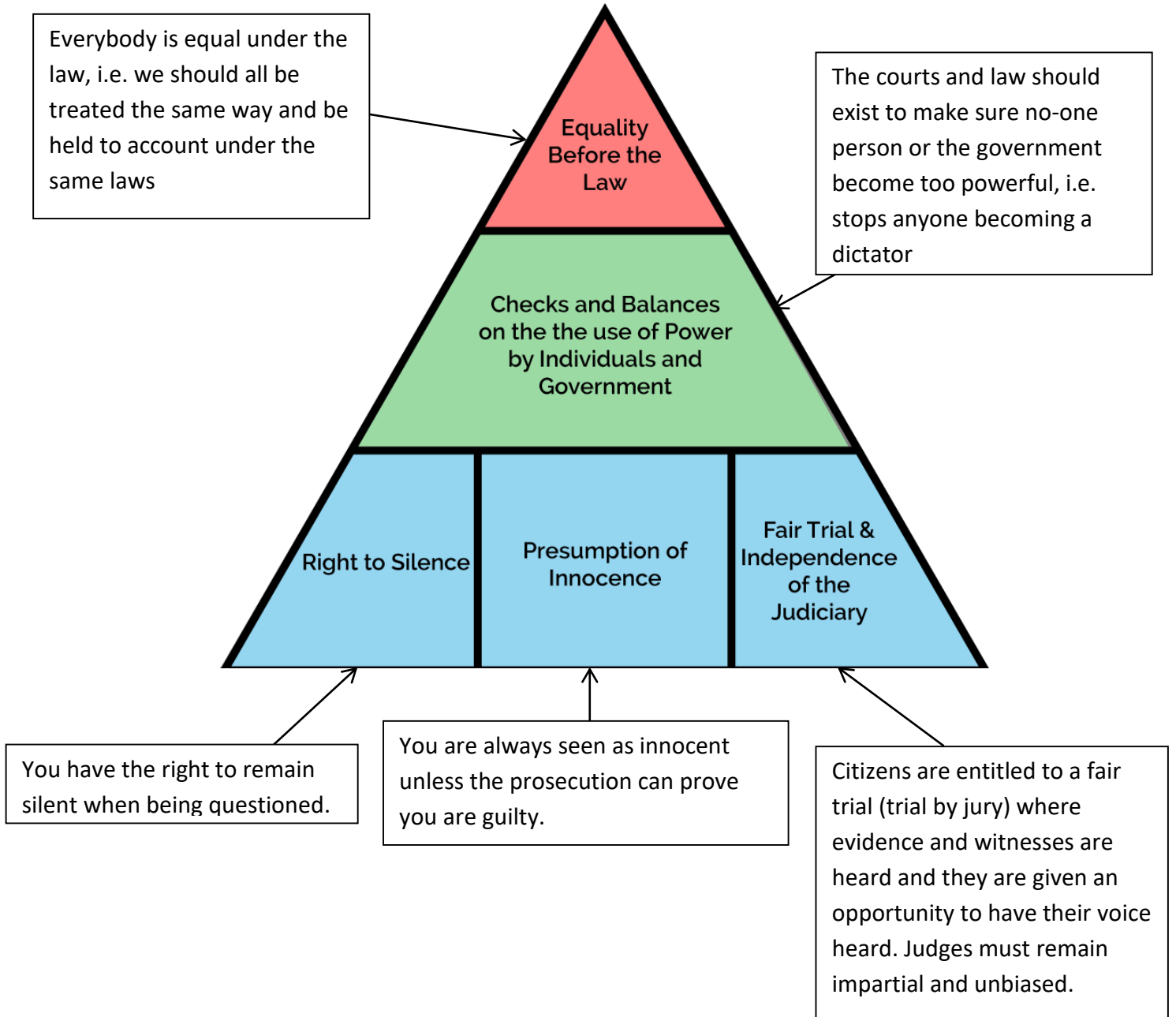
- that they must pay taxes if they earn enough to do so;
- that they should obey the laws of the land;
- doing jury service service if they are selected;
- that they are responsible for their children. If the parents separate, both are still required to contribute towards the costs of looking after their children;
- as all citizens have the right to free speech we have a responsibility to allow them to express their views as long as their views aren't discriminatory or incite violence;
- being a responsible citizen also means that you should uphold the moral values of society, this might include things that upset the life of others. Playing music really loudly for hours might not be illegal but might upset your neighbours. This would be more of a moral concern, although if the volume got too loud or went on too late at night then it could become a legal issue.



**“The Rule of Law”**

The most important rule in law is that there must be equality before law. This means that everyone should be treated equally regardless of their background and identity. This is vitally

important to maintain the fairness of the system because your wealth, age and education shouldn't dictate whether you are treated more favourably in a court of law.



### **Case Study**

Lavinia Woodward, a young medical student at Christ Church, Oxford, was found guilty of wounding her boyfriend, a Ph.D. student at Cambridge, during a quarrel. Intoxicated, she stabbed him with a bread knife. When, terrified, he called emergency services, he exclaimed that she was high on cocaine—which, as it later proved, she often was.

Woodward is the daughter of rich parents and was a brilliant student—indeed, first in her class. She had already coauthored papers in prestigious scientific journals. Her ambition was to be a cardiovascular surgeon, and she certainly had the intellectual capacity to achieve it: though, of course, far more than intellectual brilliance is needed to be a good surgeon.

Woodward pleaded guilty to the attack on her boyfriend (the facts were not in dispute). But the judge first deferred sentencing, noting that, while her crime would normally draw an immediate prison sentence, he considered it wrong to blight so promising a career. Four months later, he suspended the prison sentence.

Many commentators have argued that her wealth, background and class meant she received a lenient sentence. Some would argue if she had been male and her victim had been male then it would have led to a prison sentence. The chance of this would be further increased if it had been a poor, ethnic minority defendant. In this case, a lot of people thought it showed that the law wasn't really equal for all. If you had wealth and privilege you were more likely to get away with a crime.

In addition, all citizens must have access to justice. This means that if they don't have a solicitor and/or can't afford one, then one will be provided for them.

England and Wales have a slightly different legal system from Northern Ireland and Scotland. The Scots legal system is unique in having three possible verdicts for a criminal trial: "guilty", "not guilty" and "not proven".



Our law comes from: -

- Acts of Parliament (the laws that Parliament makes)
- Delegated Legislation (bylaws that councils make, like parking rules)
- EU Law (laws the EU have made – won't apply when we leave Europe)
- Case Law (when the courts have clarified an unclear law and made a decision)
- Custom (Traditions)
- Legal Texts (books about law written by legal experts)

Our law also is shaped by the UN Declaration of Human Rights. After the horrors of World War II it was recognised that whilst democracy is a partial check on power, it is not enough. The world community came together to agree on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR set minimum standards that protect everyone. A way of ensuring that never again can an elected government decide who matters and who does not. So British law is designed to ensure that the wide range of human rights are protected.

An example of a recent law that helps ensure that human rights are upheld, is the Equality Act 2010. Article 14 of the UDHR requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination. The Equality Act 2010 supports this by ensuring that it is illegal to discriminate.



The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

This shows that laws change and adapt as society and morals change. Some examples of laws that demonstrate this are:-

- 2013 The Marriage (Same-sex) Act. This marked history as marriage was extended to same-sex couples in England and Wales, allowing the solemnization of the marriage to be carried out in register offices and on approved premises. Civil partnerships continued to be recognised, and same-sex couples have the option to convert their partnership into a marriage.
- In 2020, abortion was made legal in Northern Ireland.
- Cigarettes can still be sold but have to be hidden behind shutters in shops. Smoking was banned in July 2007 from public places, including pubs and restaurants.

### **How does the justice system work?**

Criminal law, one of two broad categories of law, deals with acts of intentional harm to individuals but which, in a larger sense, are offences against us all. It is a crime to break into a home because the act violates the privacy and safety of the home's occupants - but it also



affects others as it makes us feel we might not be secure in our own homes. A crime is a deliberate or reckless act that causes harm to another person or another person's property.

Civil law deals with disputes between private parties, or negligent acts that cause harm to others. For example, if individuals or companies disagree over the terms of an agreement, or who owns land or buildings, or whether a person was wrongfully dismissed from their employment, they may file a lawsuit asking the courts to decide who is right. As well, the failure to exercise the degree of caution that any normal person would take in any situation may result in a negligence claim. Depending on the circumstances, a person may be held responsible for any damages or injury that occurs as a result of their negligence.

The purposes of criminal law:

- used to protect the public from harm such as in cases where crimes are committed against a person or property.

The purposes of civil law:

- to settle civil disputes, such as debt, personal injury, and family matters.

### **The justice system in England and Wales**

For someone to be convicted of a crime, it must be proven that a crime was committed and, for most offences, that the person meant to commit the crime. For instance, striking another person is the crime of assault but it is only a crime if the blow was intentional. There are two factors that must occur for someone to be found guilty.



*Actus Reus* means you must have committed the act you've been accused of. But this alone doesn't necessarily mean you would be found guilty. The prosecution will also need to prove there was *Mens Rea* – basically that you intended to commit the crime. Crimes that might not

rely on *Mens Rea* would include situations where people have been reckless or not necessarily realized they were committing a crime. e.g., In 2005 a 15-year-old boy was convicted of sexually assaulting a child under 13 (she had consented) although the courts accepted the boy's claim that he had believed the 12-year-old girl to be 15. Although he didn't have the *Mens Rea* (intention) to commit the crime, he had been reckless and was given 12 months detention.

### The Police

Police officers play a central role in the law enforcement system. They monitor criminal activity, take part in community patrols, respond to emergency calls, issue tickets, make arrests, investigate crimes and testify in court as needed. The police can stop anyone in a public place and ask you to account for yourself. The police can stop and search any person, vehicle, and anything in or on the vehicle for certain items. However, before they stop and search they must have reasonable grounds for suspecting that they will find stolen goods, drugs, an offensive weapon, or any article made or adapted for use in certain offences, for example a burglary or theft, or knives, or items which could damage or destroy property, for example spray paint cans.



### Judges

Essentially, the role of judges is to interpret and uphold the law. They are the 'referee' of a court case, ensuring that the defence and prosecution teams are operating within the rules. If a jury decides that the accused is guilty then it is up to the judge to decide the sentence that they

should serve as a result. They can't just pluck a punishment out of the air – they have to use the guidance on punishments that they are given.

### **Magistrates**

The largest group of judges are **magistrates**. These are ordinary citizens who are not legal professionals - they have no legal training and are appointed not for any legal expertise but in order to ensure that the local community is involved in the running of the legal system and that its decisions reflect to some extent community values. There are around 30,000 lay magistrates. They sit as groups of three (as a "bench"). The magistrates preside over criminal trials in the magistrates' courts, which deal with the vast majority of criminal cases.



Key: **A** Witness **B** Magistrates **C** Clerk of the court  
**D** Lawyers for the prosecution and the defence  
**E** Court usher **F** Defendant **G** Others

### **Solicitors**

Solicitors undertake most of the work in magistrates' courts and county courts - both preparation of cases and also representing people. They also find barristers for clients.

### **Barristers**

Barristers present cases in court where their ability to speak and to think quickly "on their feet" as the evidence unfolds is what they are skilled in. The barrister will be "briefed" (instructed) by a solicitor - it is the solicitor who first contacts the client and has initial conduct of the case. Barristers are often experts in certain types of case (murder, speeding etc.)

Citizens can also be involved in the justice system. They can participate simply by being responsible and respecting the rights of others. They can also participate in **juries**.

## Advantages of Trial by Jury

- Trial by jury involves the public in the administration of justice, which also helps to educate the public.
- The use of juries means that judges do not have to make all the court decisions.
- Juries are composed of people from many different backgrounds, who bring a fresh perspective to the courtroom and who can reject oppressive laws.
- Juries may base their decisions on current social values, rather than strict legal precedent.
- The defense needs to convince only one juror to favour the accused or have reasonable doubt; a jury's decision must be unanimous.
- Dramatic rhetoric may be more likely to move a juror than a judge, who hears lawyer's arguments routinely.
- A jury may feel empathy for the accused, especially if the charge is one with which they identify.

Obviously there are also disadvantages of using a jury. They're not legally trained and may not understand a case. They may ignore the law and feel that the accused had a moral justification for breaking the law and then find them not guilty. Sometimes jurors don't take the case seriously and make decisions without great thought. In recent years, juries have consulted ouiji boards, the Bible and their mates before making a verdict; all not allowed.

**What to do if you're arrested by the Police**

- 1 YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO LEGAL ADVICE**  
It is crucial you seek legal advice immediately. Whether you are innocent or guilty of the offence, you need the support of a specialist solicitor. Hayes Law offers free police station representation
- 2 YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO NOTIFY SOMEBODY OF YOUR ARREST**  
(Except in very limited circumstances)
- 3 THE POLICE MUST FOLLOW THE 'CODES OF PRACTICE'**  
When you are at the police station, the police must show you a written notice detailing your rights. You are also entitled to medical assistance if you are injured or unwell.

# A SOLICITOR CAN PROVIDE ADVICE AND SUPPORT AT EACH STAGE OF YOUR CASE

## WHEN YOU ARE ACCUSED OF A CRIME

If you are accused of a criminal offence, you should contact a solicitor as soon as possible so they can let you know what to expect, represent your case and make sure you are treated fairly.



## AT THE POLICE STATION

If you are arrested or invited to go to a police station to be questioned, it is your right to have a solicitor present to support and advise you. You can ask for a duty solicitor or your own solicitor if you know one. The advice from either will be free of charge.

Duty solicitors are available 24 hours a day, so you can always get access to one.



Your solicitor will:

- Explain what could happen now and in the future with your case
- Make sure your rights are protected when you are at the police station. Solicitors are independent of the police
- Discuss what evidence the police have and whether it is strong enough for the police to charge you
- Provide advice and be with you when you are interviewed by the police
- Answer any legal questions you have.

## IN COURT

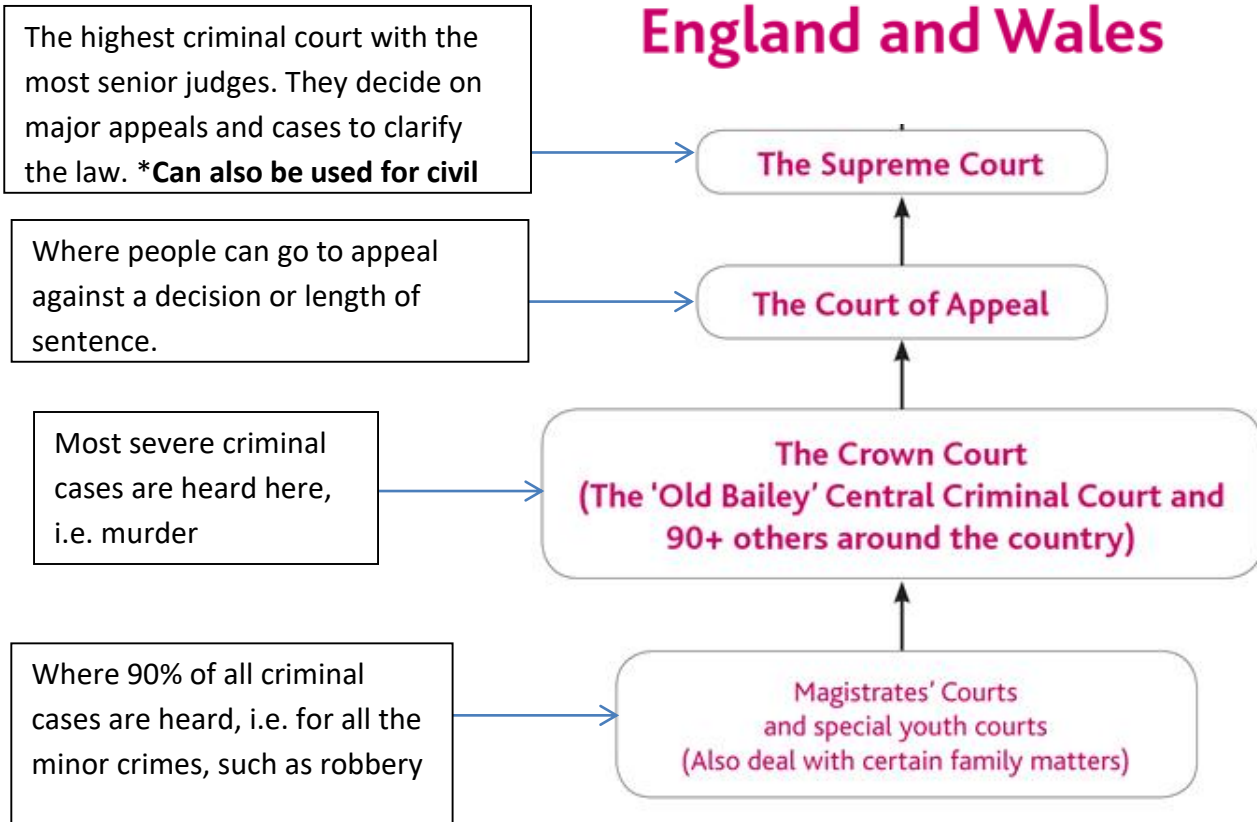
If you need to go to court, your solicitor will:

- Gather and prepare evidence for your case
- Interview witnesses or get expert reports to challenge the evidence against you or find evidence to support your case
- Arrange for you to be represented in court by an advocate to present your case.



## Courts and tribunals

# The criminal courts of England and Wales



## Types of civil courts

- **Tribunals:** administrative questions
- **County Courts:** small claims, land cases, divorce, wardship
- **High Court:** Queen's Bench Division (Contracts + torts), Family Division (divorce), Chancery Division (land, mortgages, bankruptcy)
- **Court of Appeal (Civil Division):** Appeals from High Court / County Court

\*Supreme Court is also the highest court for civil cases.

There are also other types of courts such as tribunals. **Tribunals** operate in a similar way to courts of law, but have different rules and procedures; and only operate in a specialised area. They are used for situations such as people taking their employer to court. There are dozens of different types of appeals and disputes which are heard in tribunals. Proceedings in tribunals are often relatively informal compared to the courts. Although some types of hearings take place in rooms which look very much like a court (for example in Immigration and Asylum cases) others have the tribunals judges and members and the user sitting around a table (for example in Social Security appeals). Tribunal users often appear without legal representation so the judges and members generally explain the proceedings to users and ask questions to get more information about the case they are hearing.

Not every dispute has to go to the courts. There are other ways of solving this through methods known as **Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR)**. Often this is much cheaper, quicker and is more likely to please both parties.

## The various methods of resolving disputes

Method	Brief description
• <b>Negotiation</b>	• <b>The parties themselves</b>
• <b>Mediation</b>	• <b>The parties with the help of a neutral third party</b>
• <b>Conciliation</b>	• <b>As above, but a neutral third party plays an active role in suggesting a solution</b>
• <b>Arbitration</b>	• <b>The parties agree to let a third party make a binding decision</b>

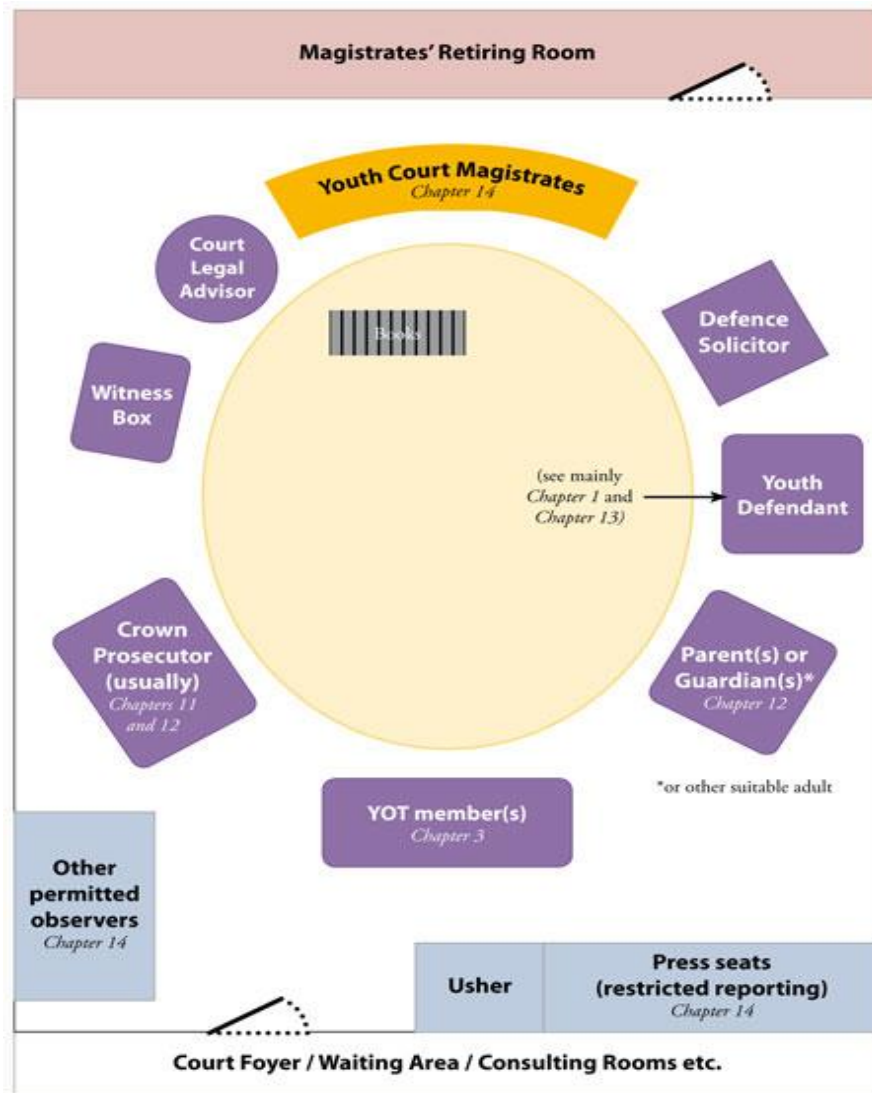
### Youth Court

Magistrates' courts may deal with cases which involve people under 18 but only if they are tried with an adult. Young people also appear in the Crown Court if they are being jointly tried with an adult whose case needs to be heard in that court. Murder cases will always be heard in the Crown Court. The Youth Court may also send a young person to the Crown Court if the offence is very serious and the sentencing powers of the youth court are thought to be insufficient. Unless the case is one of those mentioned above, 10 to 17 year olds will have their case dealt with in the Youth Court.

The Youth Court is not open to the general public and only those directly involved in the case will normally be in court. The press may attend court and report the proceedings but will not usually be allowed to publish the defendant's name. A hearing in the Youth Court is similar to one in the magistrates' court though the procedure is adapted to take account of age of the defendant.

### Youth justice facts and figures

- In 2023 there were 440 young people in custody aged 18 and under.



Example of a youth court layout



## Is crime increasing in society?

Crime in England and Wales has seen its largest annual rise in a decade, according to the Office for National Statistics. The total number of crimes reported to and recorded by the police rose by 10% between April 2016 and March 2017 to almost five million. Violent crime was up by 18%, robbery by 16% and sex offences by 14%. The figures come as Home Office data shows the number of police officers is the lowest since 1985.

Despite the rise in crime recorded by police, the Crime Survey of England and Wales, based on people's experiences of crime, showed a 7% drop. The Crime Survey is always published on the same day as the ONS figures. Its results are based on a face-to-face survey of 38,000 adults and children in which they are asked about their experiences of crime in the previous year. The method means it includes crimes that are never reported to the police.

From <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40665733>

Why might crime be increasing?

- Less Police officers and Police funding
- People have more need to commit crime
- More unemployment may lead people to turn to crime
- More reoffending
- People might not be worried about the punishments
- People might think that the rewards are worth the risk
- Victims don't tell the police



There are multiple strategies to reduce crime including through prevention, protection and punishment. Prevention includes the use of things like bike locks, CCTV, house alarms, secure passwords for your online presence etc. Crime protection is a role that is fulfilled by the Police, and the security services. Punishment includes the court system and the various sentences that they can give to offenders.

### **Sentences and punishment**

Only 9% of crimes end with suspects being charged or summonsed in England and Wales. In the 12 months to March 2018, 443,000 crimes resulted in a charge or summons out of 4.6 million offences - the lowest detection rate since 2015. Data also shows police closed nearly half (48%) of all cases because no suspect could be identified.

If you are found guilty of a crime, your sentence will depend on a number of factors, including the type, seriousness and circumstances of the crime.

When deciding on a sentence, the judge or magistrate will consider things like:

- your age
- the seriousness of the crime
- if you have a criminal record
- if you pleaded guilty or not guilty

Your sentence might depend on any 'aggravating' or 'mitigating' circumstances.

An aggravating circumstance is something that makes a crime more serious, such as burgling someone's house while they are asleep in bed, if the crime featured any form of discrimination etc.

A mitigating circumstance is something that may reduce your sentence, such as having problems in your personal life that have affected your behaviour.



Although the UK doesn't use public shaming as a form of punishment there are a large number of sentences that can be given to offenders. These include:-

- Fines
- Custodial sentence (prison)
- Community Service
- Behaviour Orders (banning someone from a particular type of behavior or a particular place)
- Curfews (having to be at home for certain times of the day)
- Compensation to the victim (mostly in civil cases when the offender has to repay the victim for damage caused)
- Caution (a warning)
- A suspended sentence (if you commit that type of offence again. then you will receive a sentence)

## **Punishments explained**

**Discharge** - Discharges are given for the least serious offences such as very minor thefts. The court may give an absolute discharge, which means it decides not to give a punishment because the experience of going to court has been punishment enough. However, the offender still gets a criminal record.

**Fines** - Fines are the most common type of sentence given. That's because they are given for lower level crimes that are common such as minor driving offences or theft. The amount is set by the court after considering the seriousness of the offence and how much money the offender can pay.

**Community Sentences** - A community sentence combines punishment with activities carried out in the community. It can include one or more of 13 requirements on an offender. This could be carrying out up to 300 hours of unpaid work, which might include things like removing graffiti or clearing overgrown areas. Offenders might have to do unpaid work, go to rehab, obey a curfew, be banned from going to certain areas, be stopped from travelling abroad etc.

**Custodial sentence** - Imprisonment is the most severe sentence available to the courts. Custodial sentences are reserved for the most serious offences and are given when the offence committed is "so serious that neither a fine alone nor a community sentence can be

justified for the offence”

In 2017, 86,275 defendants were given an immediate custodial sentence. Murder receives a maximum sentence of Life imprisonment. But apart from the most serious cases, that doesn't mean life in prison. Instead, most people have to serve a minimum term in prison, which is determined by the judge in court after they're found guilty.

On average, those who are released will have served about 16 years in jail, with a life on licence with the probation service to follow, unless they are recalled to prison.

**Curfews** - The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 created a power to move on or send home any young person under 16 not accompanied by an adult who is out on the streets in a dispersal zone between 9pm and 6am. The police can use these powers even if they have no reason to believe that the young person in question is actually involved in or is likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour.

## **Restorative Justice**

In criminal justice, restorative practice is widely known as restorative justice. Restorative justice gives victims the chance to meet or communicate with their offenders to explain the real impact of the crime – it empowers victims by giving them a voice.

It also holds offenders to account for what they have done and helps them to take responsibility and make amends. Government research demonstrates that restorative justice provides an 85% victim satisfaction rate, and a 14% reduction in the frequency of reoffending.

Restorative justice is about victims and offenders communicating within a controlled environment to talk about the harm that has been caused and finding a way to repair that harm.

For offenders, the experience can be incredibly challenging as it confronts them with the personal impact of their crime. For victims, meeting the person who has harmed them can be a huge step in moving forward and recovering from the crime.

Restorative justice conferences, where a victim meets their offender, are led by a facilitator who supports and prepares the people taking part and makes sure that the process is safe. Sometimes, when a face to face meeting is not the best way forward, the facilitator will arrange for the victim and offender to communicate via letters, recorded interviews or video.

For any kind of communication to take place, the offender must have admitted to the crime, and both victim and offender must be willing to participate.