

Case Study:

The UK as a Democracy



The United Kingdom is a democracy, which means power comes from the people. Citizens have a voice in how the country is run, mainly through elections. In the UK, elections are held to choose Members of Parliament (MPs). These MPs represent different areas, called constituencies, and together they form the House of Commons.

The UK is a representative democracy. Instead of every citizen making every decision, people vote for MPs who then make laws and decisions on their behalf. This system allows everyone's views to be included through their chosen representatives.

The right to vote is called the franchise. Over time, the franchise in the UK has expanded. In the past, only wealthy men could vote. Now, almost all citizens over 18 have the right to vote — and the government is planning to give this right to 16- and 17-year-olds too.

Key features of democracy in the UK include:

- Free and fair elections – everyone's vote counts equally.
- Representation – citizens elect MPs to speak for them.
- Accountability – leaders must explain their decisions and can be voted out if people are unhappy.
- Rule of law – everyone, including the government, must follow the law.
- Rights and freedoms – citizens are free to express opinions, join groups, and protest peacefully.
- Democracy matters because it ensures that the government reflects the will of the people. It gives citizens the power to shape their future and hold leaders to account.

Reflection Questions

Why do you think the UK uses a representative democracy rather than asking citizens to vote on every law directly?

How has the franchise in the UK changed over time? **Why is this important?**

Which key feature of democracy do you think is the most important — and **why?**

Do you think lowering the voting age to 16 will make UK democracy stronger?

Explain your opinion.