

Politics and Public Participation

Topic: Politics

A. Why Politics Matters

Politics affects almost every aspect of our daily lives, from the quality of education and healthcare to the cost of housing and public transport. Governments make decisions about how public money is spent, which laws are introduced, and what services are available to citizens. For this reason, understanding politics is important, even for people who are not particularly interested in it.

In democratic countries, citizens have the opportunity to influence political decisions, mainly by voting in elections. However, political participation involves more than simply choosing a candidate. People can also sign petitions, join public demonstrations, contact politicians, or take part in local meetings. These activities allow citizens to express their opinions and show governments which issues matter most to them.

B. Public Trust in Politicians

In many countries, people have become less confident in politicians and political institutions. One reason is that governments sometimes fail to keep their promises. For example, politicians may promise to improve public services or create more jobs, but these changes do not always happen as expected.

When people feel that politicians do not listen to their concerns, they may lose interest in politics. Some stop voting, while others support new political movements that promise to change the existing system. Although

dissatisfaction can encourage positive changes, it can also make people more willing to believe politicians who offer simple solutions to difficult problems.

To build public trust, governments need to be open about their decisions and explain how public money is used. They should also accept responsibility when things go wrong. When citizens believe that their opinions matter and that politicians are willing to listen, they may be more likely to take part in public life.



C. Social Media and Politics

Social media has changed the way people learn about politics and share their opinions. In the past, many people received political information mainly from television, newspapers, or radio. Today, they can follow politicians online, discuss current events, and share information with thousands of people.

These platforms have made it easier for ordinary citizens, especially young people, to become involved in political discussions. Online campaigns can also help bring attention to problems that might otherwise be ignored.

However, social media has some disadvantages. False information can spread quickly, and people do not always check whether what they read is accurate. In addition, users often see opinions that are similar to their own. As a result, they may find it difficult to understand why other people have different views.

This can increase political division and make public discussions less productive. Although disagreement is a normal part of democracy, people

need to listen to different opinions and be willing to change their minds when presented with convincing evidence.



D. The Role of Education

Schools can help young people understand how political systems work and why their participation matters. Political education does not mean telling students which parties or politicians to support. Instead, it should teach them how to understand political issues, check information, and form their own opinions.

For example, students could discuss how governments should spend public money or whether more resources should be invested in public transport. Such discussions help them understand that political decisions often involve different interests and priorities.

Learning to think critically is particularly important in the digital age. Students need to recognise the difference between facts and opinions and understand that information shared online is not always reliable. These skills can help them become more informed citizens who make decisions based on evidence rather than emotion.

E. Can Ordinary People Make a Difference?

Although citizens have many ways to express their opinions, their participation does not always lead to immediate change. Signing a petition or attending a demonstration may raise awareness of a problem, but it does not guarantee that politicians will take action.

The amount of influence people have often depends on the political

system and how willing decision-makers are to listen. Wealthy individuals and large organisations may have more opportunities to influence government decisions than ordinary citizens. This can create a situation in which some groups have a stronger voice than others.

To address this problem, some communities organise public meetings where residents can discuss local issues and suggest solutions. Other governments ask citizens to share their opinions before making important decisions. These approaches can help people feel more involved in their communities.

Ultimately, a healthy democracy depends on both responsible governments and active citizens. Governments need to listen to the public, while citizens should make an effort to understand important issues and take part in political life. Even small actions, such as voting, discussing local problems, or checking political information carefully, can contribute to a better-informed society.



PART 1. VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Study the 15 words and expressions from the reading passage.

No.	Word or expression	Definition	Example sentence
1	Political participation	Taking part in political activities and decisions.	Voting is one of the most common forms of political participation.
2	Public services	Services provided or supported by the government, such as education and healthcare.	Governments should invest more money in public services.
3	Keep a promise	To do what you said you would do.	Politicians should keep their promises to voters.
4	Public trust	The belief that people or institutions are honest and can be relied upon.	Open communication can help governments build public trust.
5	Take responsibility	To accept that you are responsible for something.	Leaders should take responsibility when their decisions cause problems.
6	Raise awareness	To help more people understand an issue or problem.	Online campaigns can raise awareness of environmental problems.
7	Reliable	Able to be trusted or believed.	Students should use reliable sources when researching political issues.
8	Political division	Disagreement and separation between groups with different political views.	Political division can make it difficult for governments to introduce new laws.

9	Critical thinking	The ability to examine information carefully and make logical judgements.	Critical thinking helps people recognise misleading information online.
10	Form an opinion	To develop a personal view about something.	Young people should have the opportunity to form their own opinions about politics.
11	Make a difference	To have a positive or important effect on a situation.	Voting is one way citizens can make a difference in their communities.
12	Influence a decision	To affect the choice someone makes.	Public demonstrations can sometimes influence government decisions.
13	Express an opinion	To communicate what you think or believe.	Citizens should be free to express their opinions respectfully.
14	Take action	To do something to deal with a problem.	Governments need to take action to improve public transport.
15	Be involved in	To participate in or take part in something.	Young people should be encouraged to be involved in community activities.

Useful collocations for IELTS Speaking and Writing

- improve public services
- build public trust
- keep election promises
- take responsibility for decisions
- raise awareness of social issues
- check whether information is reliable
- reduce political division
- develop critical thinking skills
- form an independent opinion
- make a difference in society

- influence government decisions
- express personal opinions
- take action to solve a problem
- become involved in politics
- encourage public participation

PART 2. VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Complete each sentence with the correct word or expression below.

awareness | critical thinking | involved | make a difference | public trust | reliable | responsibility | services | take action | influence

1. Governments need to provide high-quality public _____, including healthcare and education.
2. Political leaders should take _____ for their decisions, even when things go wrong.
3. Social media campaigns can raise _____ of problems that receive little public attention.
4. People should check whether the information they read online comes from a _____ source.
5. Schools should help students develop _____ skills so that they can evaluate information carefully.
6. Citizens can sometimes _____ government decisions by signing petitions or attending public meetings.
7. When politicians fail to keep their promises, they may lose _____.
8. Young people should be encouraged to become _____ in their local communities.
9. Governments need to _____ to address serious problems such as unemployment and poor housing.
10. Even small actions, such as voting or helping with a local campaign, can _____ in society.

Speaking Part 3: Discussion Questions

Topic 1: Politics and society

1. Why is it important for people to understand politics?
2. Do you think young people are interested in politics? Why or why not?
3. What are the most important responsibilities of a government?
4. Why do some people choose not to vote in elections?
5. How can ordinary citizens influence decisions made by the government?

Topic 2: Public trust and government

6. Why do some people lose trust in politicians?
7. What can governments do to build public trust?
8. Should politicians be held responsible when they fail to keep their promises?
9. Why is it important for governments to explain how public money is spent?
10. Do you think governments should ask citizens for their opinions before making important decisions?

Topic 3: Social media and politics

11. How has social media changed the way people learn about politics?
12. What are the advantages and disadvantages of discussing politics online?
13. Why do some people believe information they see on social media without checking it?
14. Should schools teach students how to recognise false information online?
15. Do you think social media encourages people to listen to different opinions, or does it make them more divided?

Topic 4: Education and citizenship

16. Should schools teach students about politics and government?
17. How can teachers encourage students to think critically?
18. Why is it important for young people to form their own opinions?
19. How can young people become more involved in their communities?
20. Should people have a responsibility to stay informed about important social issues?

Topic 5: The future of democracy

21. What problems might democratic countries face in the future?
22. How can governments encourage more young people to participate in politics?
23. Can online petitions and social media campaigns lead to real change?
24. Why is it sometimes difficult for people with different political opinions to agree?
25. What can ordinary citizens do to make their communities better places to live?

Answer key (PART 2. VOCABULARY PRACTICE)

1. services
2. responsibility
3. awareness
4. reliable
5. critical thinking
6. influence
7. public trust
8. involved
9. take action
10. make a difference