This chapter examines why the UK Parliament has invested heavily in public engagement over the last decade. Since the 1960s, the UK Parliament has been facilitating public engagement through a variety of ways. However, it is also an institution which is far more vulnerable and criticized by both the public and media. The chapter first defines public engagement before discussing the importance of parliamentary public engagement today. Four key inter-related factors that explain the rise in the importance of public engagement for parliaments are highlighted: the steady trend of increasing scepticism towards politics; the improved access to education and information; the increased opportunities created by digital media; and the growing appeal of participatory democracy. The chapter goes on to analyse how public engagement developed in Parliament and asks whether this has led to changes in public attitudes towards the institution.
29. Parliament and Public Engagement

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