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## public, *adj.* and *n.*

**Pronunciation:** Brit. /'pʌblɪk/, U.S. /'pəblɪk/

**Forms:** ...

**Frequency (in current use):**

**Origin:** Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from French. Partly a borrowing from Latin.

**Etymons:** French *publik*; Latin *pūblicus*.

**Etymology:** < Anglo-Norman *publik*, *pupplik*, Anglo-Norman and Middle French *public*, *publiq*, ...

**A. *adj.*** In general, and in most of the senses, the opposite of **PRIVATE *adj.***<sup>1</sup>

The various senses pass into each other by many intermediate shades of meaning. The exact meaning often depends upon the noun qualified; in some expressions the precise sense is unambiguous, but in others more than one sense is vaguely present, and it is difficult to determine in what sense precisely the thing in question was originally called 'public'. E. g. *public worship* may be public in senses A. 1a, A. 4a; a *public meeting* may be regarded as public in senses A. 1a, A. 2a, A. 3a, and A. 4a; and a *public examination*, originally public in sense A. 2b, is now apprehended as public in sense A. 4a.

**1.**

**a.** Open to general observation, view, or knowledge; existing, performed, or carried out without concealment, so that all may see or hear. Of a person: that acts or performs in public.

1394 in *Collectanea Topographica & Genealogica* (1836) III. 257 (*MED*) We..to this oure writyn certi[fi]cat han frelich sett oure selys, in ful and pupplik declaracion of trowthe in dede.

c1447 QUEEN MARGARET *To King* in R. Willis & J. W. Clark *Archit. Hist. Univ. Cambr.* (1886) I. Intro. p. lxxiii (*MED*) These accustomed of plain lecture and exposicion..parformyd daily twyes..to the publique audience of alle men frely, bothe seculiers and religieus.

c1475 tr. A. Chartier *Quadriologue* (Univ. Coll. Oxf.) (1974) 169 The deedes ben soo publique [a1500 *Rawl.* the werkis ben wittenessed so opiny] and the wisse is hunger intollerable.

1548 *Hall's Vnion: Richard III* f. xxvij<sup>v</sup> Ther inwarde grudge could not refrayne but crye out in places publike, and also priuate.

- 1557 *Bible* (Whittingham) Matt. i. 19 A publike exemple of infamie.
- 1597 R. HOOKER *Of Lawes Eccl. Politie* v. xix. 29 The Church, by her publique reading of the booke of God preacheth onely as a witsesse.
- 1652 R. BROME *Joviall Crew* II. sig. D3<sup>v</sup> That will be too publique for our Recreation.
- 1687 E. ARWAKER (*title*) The ministration of publick baptism of infants to be used in the Church.
- 1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 10. ¶7 The Count de Mellos..had made his Publick Entry into that City with much State.
- 1753 *Chambers's Cycl.* Suppl. *Burial of an ass, Asini sepultura*, an ignominious kind of burial, out of holy ground,..and performed by public hangmen.
- 1758 S. HAYWARD *Seventeen Serm.* p. xiv To think there is nothing in religion; by which means our public performances are despised.
- 1848 J. S. MILL *Princ. Polit. Econ.* I. iii. §2 Such..is the labour of the musical performer, the actor, the public declaimer or reciter.
- 1874 J. S. BLACKIE *On Self-culture* 23 A certain awkwardness and difficulty in the public utterance of thought.
- 1939 *Time* 25 Dec. 2/3 He wears a toupee..for cinema and most public appearances.
- 1965 *Mod. Law Rev.* 28 v. 520 Judges..had a near monopoly of the Chairmanships of Royal Commissions, indeed of public inquiries of every sort.
- 1997 J. SEABROOK *Deeper* iv. 105 I posted a public apology on the list where I first read his postings.

†**b.** Of a book, piece of writing, etc.: in print, published; esp. in *to make public*. *Obsolete*.

- α1500 (▷c1425) ANDREW OF WYNTOUN *Oryg. Cron. Scotl.* (Nero) IV. ProL. l. 2 Tullyus, [pat of Retorik A tretis made to be publik.
- 1533 J. BELLENDEN tr. Livy *Hist. Rome* (1901) I. 74/1 The samyn to be drawin out of his bukis to be inserit in public tabillis.
- α1641 R. MONTAGU *Acts & Monuments* (1642) iii. 159 The Prophets, whose writings were publique, and extant amongst the Jews.
- 1657 R. AUSTEN *Treat. Fruit-trees* (ed. 2) Ep. Ded. sig. a2 Your *Legacy of Husbandry*, (and other pieces made publique by your means).
- 1716 T. HEARNE *Remarks & Coll.* (1901) V. 264 Dr. South..hath many publick Works extant.
- 1777 W. ROBERTSON *Hist. Amer.* (1783) II. 451 The first of his dispatches has never been made public.

†c. Easily seen, conspicuous, prominent. *Obsolete. rare.*

1598 A. M. tr. J. Guillemeau *Frenche Chirurg.* 29 b/2 The ninth [vein] is very publique [Du. *seer openbare*; Fr. *fort apparente*], lying in the necke, and is called the *Iugularis*, vayne.

d. Of a person: in the public eye; prominent, well-known.

Now only in *public figure n.* at Special uses 2.

- 1650 T. HUBBERT *Pilula* 19 He is not so openly manifested to be wicked as the publike profane person.
- 1723 D. DEFOE *Hist. Col. Jack* (ed. 2) 340 I was not so publick here, as to be very well known.
- 1727 P. WALKER *Some Remarkable Passages Semple, Welwood & Cameron* 150 Mr. George Barclay..was very publick at that Time, and had his Hand at many a good Turn.
- 1794 *Columbian Gazetteer* 31 July (*advt.*) Elegant prints amongst which are a few proof prints of the following public characters, viz. General Washington, [etc.].

## 2.

a. Of or relating to the people as a whole; that belongs to, affects, or concerns the community or the nation.

Recorded earliest in *public good n.* at Special uses 2. Cf. *public enemy n.* at Special uses 2.

- 1427 in H. Nicolas *Proc. & Ordinances Privy Council* (1834) III. 239 Þei shulde be free to governe by þe said auctorite and aquite hem in al þing þat hem thought expedient for þe Kinges behove, þe good publique of his said roialmes & lordships.
- 1483 CAXTON tr. A. Chartier *Curial sig. iij<sup>v</sup>* Thanguysshes that he hath suffred in admynstracion publycque.
- a1525 (►a1500) *Sc. Troy Bk.* (Douce) l. 802 in C. Horstmann *Barbour's Legendensammlung* (1882) II. 251 Wnder Anthenor hys ledynge And Eneas þat was hys fere-Quhilkes publices [C. *publickis*] traytours were Of þar londe.
- 1533 J. BELLENDEN tr. Livy *Hist. Rome* (1903) II. IV. xi. 84 I will tak pyne..to do sic thingis for defence of public liberte.

- 1657 P. HEYLYN *Ecclesia Restavrata* I. ii. 23 The publique Liturgy in the vulgar tongue.
- 1667 J. GLANVILL *Philos. Considerations Witches* 5 Standing publick Records have been kept of these well attested Relations.
- 1673 J. RAY *Observ. Journey Low-countries* 163 He is entrusted with the management of public monies.
- 1687 A. LOVELL tr. J. de Thévenot *Trav. into Levant* I. 241 In the month of November there was..at Caire..a publick Rejoicing, because the Turks had taken two Castles in Hungary.
- 1712 J. MORRIS *Profitable Advice for Rich & Poor* 61 We have not yet, any common Publick Taxes on the province.
- 1731 SWIFT *To Gay* in *Wks.* (1735) II. 424 I knew a brazen Minister of State, Who bore for twice ten years the publick Hate.
- 1780 J. BENTHAM *Introd. Princ. Morals & Legisl.* (1789) xviii. §9 These may be termed public offences or offences against the State.
- 1822 *Sat. Evening Post* 29 June 3/1 He accepted this testimony of public confidence.
- 1929 *Syracuse (N.Y.) Herald* 16 June III. 8/4 Export representatives..report a public awareness of the distinct advantages of the air-cooled engine.
- 2003 *Contractor* (Nexis) 1 Aug. 7 Philadelphia plumbing codes require drinking fountains in all places of public assembly.

**b.** With reference to the older British universities:

belonging to, authorized by, or acting for the university as a whole (as opposed to a constituent college or an individual member); open or common to all members of a university.

Now *hist.* except in certain compounds, as **public examination, public lecture; public lecturer, public orator, public reader.**

In some compounds the term 'public' has given way to 'university' (as *University lecturer*), or to special designations (as *examination schools*). Cf. also *public library* n. (a) at Special uses 2.

- 1542 N. UDALL tr. Erasmus *Apophthegmes* I. i. f. 5 When I saied: that I meruailed why hym self dyd not practise Physicke, of whiche facultee he was a doctour and a publique reader [L. *demiranti quur artem medicandi quam profitebatur ipse non exerceat*]: I auayll mucche more, saieyth he in that I teache al the other phisicians.

- 1550 N. UDALL tr. P. M. Vermigli *Disc. Sacrament Lordes Supper* (title-page) A discourse or traictise of Petur Martyr..the publyque reader of diuinitee in the Uniuersitee of Oxford.
- 1645 A. WOOD *Life & Times* (1891) I. 116 William Strode..public orator of the University, died, M., 10 Mar. anno 1644/5.
- 1656 A. WOOD *Life & Times* (1891) I. 205 D<sup>r</sup> John Wilson, the public professor [of Music], the best at the lute in all England.
- 1731 *Ordinationes in Laudian Code* (1888) App. 320 The University Orator..to make a Speech in Commemoration of the Benefactors to the University in the Public Theatre once in the year.
- 1734 M. BARBER *Poems* Index Written for my Son, and spoken by him, at a public Examination for Victors.
- 1773 J. NAPLETON (*title*) Considerations on the public exercises for first and second degrees in the University of Oxford.
- 1810 *Oxf. Univ. Cal.* 56 A testimonial will be given him by one of the Public Examiners.
- 1862 *Oxf. Univ. Cal.* 134 The First Public Examination before the Moderators,..the Second Public Examination before the Public Examiners.
- 1870 W. S. JEVONS *Elem. Lessons Logic* (1890) xviii. 152 In former centuries it was, indeed, the practice for all students at the Universities to take part in public disputations.
- 1882 *Addenda to Statutes (Oxford)* §6 Of the Conditions upon which a Private Hall may become a Public Hall of the University.
- 1900 *Cambr. Univ. Cal.* 683 Unless the Fellow hold the office of Professor, Public Orator, Registrar, or Librarian in the University.
- 1943 *Times* 29 July 5/4 The Public Orator is presenting some great man for an honorary degree.
- 1957 D. BALSDON *Oxf. Life* 169 The College tutor's public lecture is an interruption in a week otherwise devoted to teaching pupils in his rooms.
- 1971 J. R. R. TOLKIEN *Let.* 25 Aug. (1995) 411 So far as his interest in Old English Poetry was due to me, this was derived from my public lectures.

**c.** Of or relating to the nations generally, or European, Christian, or civilized nations, as a single community; international. Now only in PUBLIC LAW *n.* 2. Cf. *public enemy n.* at Special uses 2.

Recorded earliest in PUBLIC LAW *n.* 2.

- 1548 COVERDALE et al. tr. Erasmus *Paraphr. Neue Test.* I. John vii. f. lviii He ought not after our common, or rather publike lawe [L. *legem publicam*], (that is to saye, a lawe whiche indifferently perteyneth to all men of euery state) to be condemned, except his cause be knowen before.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. cciiiij A publique war was attempted against the Barbarians.
- 1581 J. HAMILTON *Catholik Traictise* Quest. sig. Vvii Quhat vther nor ye Romane kirk..be publict concilis hes condemnit all heretikes.
- 1665 R. BOYLE *Occas. Refl.* IV. xvii. sig. Hh3 For almost all the publique Quarrels in Christendome.
- 1729 J. DISNEY *View Anc. Laws* x. 317 The Law of Nations will over-rule, in the case of Public Justice, or Public War.
- 1800 J. A. PARK *Syst. Law Marine Insurances* (ed. 4) iv. 66 A taking of the ships of goods belonging to the subjects of one country, by those of another, when in a state of public war.

†**d.** Of or belonging to the human race as a whole; =  
COMMON *adj.* 1b. *Obsolete. rare.*

- 1653 H. WHISTLER *Aime at Up-shot Infant Baptisme* 3 Whereby the guiltinesse of Adams sinne (as the publique Trustee for Man-kind) originally tainteth Children.
- 1697 DRYDEN tr. Virgil *Georgics* I, in tr. Virgil *Wks.* 68 The Sun..In Iron Clouds conceal'd the Publick Light.
- 1858 N. HAWTHORNE *Jrnl.* 17 Jan. in *Passages from French & Ital. Note-bks.* (1871) I. 54 Enjoying the public sunshine, as if it were their own household fire.

### 3.

**a.** Authorized by, serving, or representing, the community (cf. sense A. 4b); carried out or made on behalf of the community by the government or State.

*public prosecutor*: see *public prosecutor* n. at Special uses 2.

- c1485 (▶1456) G. HAY *Bk. Law of Armys* (2005) 189 This power is gevin generally to all publyk persone, that is to say, all commoun officer.
- 1533 J. BELLENDEN tr. Livy *Hist. Rome* (1901) I. iii. vii. 273 Ilk thing þat was afore done..mycht þan be abrogate and revocate be public commites.

- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. lxj He should be constrained to stand to the publique iudgement appoynted by you.
- 1606 P. HOLLAND tr. Suetonius *Hist. Twelve Caesars* 8 A public officer called Accensus should huisher him before and the Serjeants or Lictours follow after behinde.
- 1691 T. HALE *Acct. New Inventions* 92 Not by the arbitrage of private Patentees..but by the Public Conservators.
- 1710 T. MAIRNE *Let. from S. Carolina* 22 They (lower House) appoint the publick treasurer, call him to an Account, and dismiss him, when they see fit, by a Vote of their House.
- 1797 *Monthly Rev.* **23** 559 The first public measure which tended avowedly to republicanise France.
- 1867 DICKENS *Let.* Feb. (1999) XI. 315 Is it Sensational in a public officer when has nothing to say for his Department, basely and meanly to shelter himself under the Miserable Slang of the hour?
- 1890 *Law Times Rep.* **63** 734/1 A public prosecution, ordered by an official of the Crown, for what was considered to be a public object.
- 1976 *Birmingham Post* 16 Dec. 7/9 Two major hospital schemes in Dudley and Stafford, costing more than £20 million, may be delayed because of the public spending cuts.
- 1996 P. WILDE *Which? Guide to Renting & Letting* (rev. ed.) ii. 24 The tenant can refer this notice to his local rent assessment committee (an independent public body) for arbitration.

**b. Of financial or other assistance: provided to those in need out of public funds by the community or the State.**

*public housing*: see *public housing* n. at Special uses 2.

- 1637 *Bk. Common Prayer Church of Scotl. (rubric)* For the decent furnishing of that Church, or the publike relief of their poore.
- 1741 S. RICHARDSON *Pamela* IV. xiii. 75 Poor Housekeepers, who..are asham'd to apply for publick Relief.
- 1792 B. FLOWER tr. *French Constit.* 25 There shall be created and organised, a general establishment of public aid..to relieve the infirm poor.
- 1826 *Edinb. Advertiser* 5 May 28/1 Public grants had been made for the relief of real distress.
- 1884 B. JERROLD *At Home in Paris* II. xii. 185 That ready kindness of heart and chivalry towards the weak which pervade the 'Public Assistance' of the country.

- 1931 J. S. HUXLEY *What dare I Think?* iii. 87 A..method for exerting some control over population-growth would be to link it on to public relief.
- 1971 *Archivum Linguisticum* 2 50 A working man..on public assistance.
- 1999 *Chicago Tribune* 30 Jan. I. 7/5 The targeted population of working poor is difficult to reach because it is not necessarily tied to the state's public aid system.

#### 4.

**a.** Open or available to all members of a community, or all who are legally or properly qualified (as by payment); not restricted to the private use of a particular person or group; (of a service, amenity, etc.) provided by local or central government for the community and supported by rates or taxes.

See also *public bath n.* at Special uses 2, *public library n.* (b) at Special uses 2, *public park n.* at Special uses 2.

- c1485 (▶1456) G. HAY *Bk. Law of Armys* (2005) 38 Jn publik placis.
- 1533 J. BELLENDEN tr. Livy *Hist. Rome* (1901) I. I. xxi. 119 Pai war constrenit to mak public setis and scaffaldis in commoun placis quhare playis war devisit.
- 1585 T. WASHINGTON tr. N. de Nicolay *Nauigations Turkie* II. xix. 56 b [He] caused to be clothed two publique Turkish women, with very rich apparrell.
- 1607 B. JONSON *Volpone* II. ii. sig. D4 I..was euer wont to fixe my Banke in face of the publike Piazza, neare the shelter of the portico.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Antony & Cleopatra* (1623) II. ii. 236 I saw her once Hop forty Paces through the publicke streete.
- 1617 F. MORYSON *Itinerary* I. 77 Each Church hath a little market place..and a publike Well.
- 1699 M. LISTER *Journey to Paris* (new ed.) 150 I never saw in all the Markets once Sprouts..nor in their publick Gardens any Reserves of old Stalks.
- 1718 in *Rep. Rec. Commissioners Boston* (1883) VIII. 129 The Projection of an Act for a Publick Market in Boston..Voted disallowed.
- 1793 J. SMEATON *Narr. Edystone Lighthouse* (ed. 2) §59 His property was sold at public biddings.
- 1848 E. C. GASKELL *Mary Barton* I. i. 1 There are some fields near Manchester..through which runs a public footpath to a little village about two miles distant.



- a1854 LD. COCKBURN *Memorials* (1856) vi. 346 We were..very angry, and had recourse to another of these new things called public meetings.
- 1898 E. HOWARD *To-morrow* vii. 73 Their so-called ‘public markets’..are by no means public in the same full sense as are our public parks, libraries, water undertakings..which are carried on upon public property, by public officials, at the public expense, and solely with a view to the public advantage.
- 1924 J. BUCHAN *Three Hostages* vi. 85 I went into a public telephone-booth.
- 1933 *Radio Times* 14 Apr. 75/1 The war was newly over..and public clocks had resumed their forgotten chiming.
- 1969 A. CORNELISEN *Torregreca* iv. 139 Our meeting is not entirely private... Our mutual understanding must become public property.
- 1996 *EatSoup* Dec. 56/2 The list of places where it is illegal to smoke is staggering and growing: taxis, sports areas and public loos, to name but a few.

**b. Serving the public in a professional capacity; (in later use) *spec.* employed by local or central government.**

*public servant*: see *public servant n.* at Special uses 2.

- 1792 *N.-Y. Directory* 63 Heyer, Walter, public measurer, 6, Pearl-street.
- 1824 J. C. LOUDON *Green-house Compan.* I. 244 A public dealer can always afford to keep up a finer display of plants..than any private gentleman whatever.
- 1869 L. M. ALCOTT *Little Women* II. xi. 162 She excited the suspicions of public librarians by asking for works on poisons.
- 1937 *Ann. Amer. Acad. Polit. & Social Sci.* **189** 65/2 In most states and in most municipalities, the average public employee is chosen without regard to civil service qualifications.
- 1969 *Palatine (Illinois) Herald* 20 Oct. 1/2 Illinois has been ahead of the federal courts in supplying public attorneys to indigents.
- 1981 *Times* 11 May 20/3 A lack of appreciation among some of the examiners..of what..the activities of a public accounting practice are all about.
- 2004 *High Country News* 8 Nov. 6/3 It's not just public employees like teachers, police officers and firefighters who are being priced out.

**5. Of or relating to a person in the capacity in which he or she comes into contact with society, as opposed to his or her private or personal capacity; official, professional. Also in extended use.**

*public image*: see *public image* at *IMAGE* n. 5b.

- a1538 T. STARKEY *Dial. Pole & Lupset* (1989) 41 Both in the pryvate & publyke state of every man.
- 1673 J. ALLEINE *Christian Lett.* 141 I am not now in my former publick capacity, such things being required of me to say and subscribe, as I could by no means yield to.
- 1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 10. ¶1 Effects..upon the publick and private Actions of Men.
- 1794 S. T. COLERIDGE *Coll. Lett.* (1956) I. 110 He is a High Church man..and is guilty..of so many Rascalities in his publick Character, that he is obliged to drink three bottles of Claret a day in order to acquire a stationary rubor.
- 1814 J. AUSTEN *Mansfield Park* III. iii. 67 The preacher..is a man whom one could not (in his publick capacity) honour enough.
- 1932 H. NICOLSON (*title*) *Public faces*.
- 1961 *Listener* 2 Nov. 732/2 He [sc. John Reith] created what in modern jargon would be called a public image of the B.B.C.
- 1962 *Listener* 1 Mar. 366/2 There is the question of Egypt's public face, the face which she presents to the world.
- 1988 H. DAVID *Fitzrovians* (1989) i. 13 Whistler..had soon created a public personality which vied with Swinburne's in its outrageousness.

**6.** Of, relating to, or designating the business, government, or service of a community or nation; frequently in **public affairs, public life**. Of a person: engaged in such service; holding a position of influence or authority in the community.

- 1539 R. TAVERNER *Garden of Wysdom* sig. B.viii<sup>v</sup> Sophistrie is vnprofytable vnto publicke affayres & to the comen felawshyppe of man.
- 1571 J. CHILLESTER tr. Chelidonius *Instit. Chr. Princes* (title-page) A Hystorie..very necessarie to be red not only of all Nobilitie and Gentlemen, but also of euerie publicke person.
- ?a1600 (►a1575) N. HARPSFIELD *Life T. Moore* (Emmanuel) (1932) 15 But yet did the king forbear, as well least he might seeme trenchy to writings and breake the auncient libertie of the Parliament house for the free speaking touching the publicke affaires.

- 1611 T. CORYATE *Crudities* sig. Q8 The Duke sat about the publicke affaires with the other Senators.
- 1654 J. TRAPP *Comm. Ezra* i. 5 Men of publike places.
- 1673 J. RAY *Observ. Journey Low-countries* 170 Those who assist the Commonwealth..have liberty granted to them to be present in this Council, and to understand the management of public affairs.
- 1716 R. WODROW *Corr.* (1843) II. 145 I cannot promise upon this so very soon, we having much public business.
- 1758 J. BROWN *Explanatory Def. Estimate of Manners & Princ. Times* 38 This was the Time for honest Men of every Rank to join with those Men of public Station in so laudable a Work.
- 1783 JOHNSON in J. Boswell *Life Johnson* (1887) IV. 178 With how little real superiority of mind men can make an eminent figure in publick life.
- 1817 *Parl. Deb.* 1st Ser. 10 July The community at large, who knew Mr. Ponsonby only as a public man.
- 1822 *Sunday Times* 20 Oct. 1/3 (*heading*) Aspect of public affairs.
- 1861 EARL RUSSELL in *Times* 16 Oct. 8/5 When I embarked in public life I did so with the view of carrying great measures into effect.
- 1901 *Westm. Gaz.* 11 Dec. 1/3 Public men are made for public affairs, not public affairs for public men.
- 1937 *Burlington Mag.* Feb. 94/2 The management of public affairs.
- 1993 *Times Educ. Suppl.* 5 Mar. (Review Suppl.) 14/6 Respect for dynasticism in families such as the Nehrus and the Bhuttos seems to have overcome sexism sufficiently to allow daughters to follow their fathers in public life.

7. Aimed at or devoted to the promotion of the general welfare; committed to the best interests of the community or nation; patriotic. Now chiefly in *public spirit* *n.* at Special uses 2 and PUBLIC-SPIRITED *adj.* See also Special uses 1.

- 1607 J. NORDEN *Surueyors Dialogue* v. 200 Some will be peruerse, and wilful, and hinder the best publike action that is.
- 1652 J. HOWELL tr. A. Giraffi *Exact Hist. Late Revol. Naples* (new ed.) II. 78 Known to be a good Patriot, and of a publike soul.
- 1665 R. HOWARD & DRYDEN *Indian-queen* IV, in R. Howard *Four New Plays* 161  
Wou'd it not breed Grief in your publick heart to see her bleed?

- 1744 J. THOMSON *Winter* in *Seasons* (new ed.) 217 That Ray of purest Heaven,  
which lights the public Soul of Patriots, and of Heroes.
- 1779 W. TUDOR in *Orations Delivered at Request Inhabitants Town of Boston* (1789)  
117 It first unfits men for patriotic energies, and soon teaches them to consider  
public virtue as a public jest.
- 1850 R. W. EMERSON *Napoleon* in *Representative Men* vi. 229 Napoleon had been  
the first man of the world, if his ends had been purely public.

## B. n.

### 1. *in public*.

**a.** In a public place; before spectators or onlookers;  
publicly, openly, without concealment. Formerly also *†in*  
***the public*** (*obsolete*).

*†into public*: into print; (also) into the public eye; (*obsolete*).

- c1429 *Mirour Mans Saluacioune* (1986) l. 923 To convers in publike [*glossed* in  
comon place] hase sho fledde all hire lif, Halsing solitarie estat and pure  
contemplatif.
- 1494 *Loutfut MS* f. 112, in *Dict. Older Sc. Tongue* at *Public* The appellacioun..[to] be  
opnyt & red in public.
- a1572 J. KNOX *Hist. Reformation Scotl.* in *Wks.* (1848) II. 279 That any suche  
questioun was at any time moved in publict or in secret.
- a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Winter's Tale* (1623) II. i. 199 Follow vs, We are to speake in  
publique .
- 1642 T. LECHFORD *Plain Dealing* sig. A2 I have..presumed to enter into publique,  
for these reasons.
- 1662 W. GURNALL *Christian in Armour: 3rd Pt.* 138 They read it at home, and hear  
it preacht powerfully in the publick.
- 1689 J. EVELYN *Let.* 12 Aug. in *Diary & Corr.* (1852) III. 301 The room where he [sc.  
the Earl of Clarendon] used to eat and dine in public.
- 1727 *Country-post* in Swift et al. *Misc.* II. 288 They having of late appear'd very  
much in Publick together.
- 1778 F. BURNEY *Evelina* I. xxii. 178 She would never more take me into public.
- 1816 J. AUSTEN *Emma* II. xiv. 267 The idea..of her going into public under the  
auspices of a friend of Mrs. Elton's.
- 1859 E. BULWER-LYTTON *What will he do with It?* (1st Edinb. ed.) I. I. i. 7 Kisses,  
though pleasant in private, are insipid in public.

- 1873 *Act 36 & 37 Victoria* c. 89 §13 The inquiry shall be held in public before an officer.
- 1936 M. MITCHELL *Let.* 7 July in *Gone with the Wind Lett.* (1986) 20 Utter strangers collar me in public and ask the most remarkable questions.
- 1992 *National Forum* 1 Nov. 23/2 These issues need to be talked out, not snuffed out by those who abhor washing dirty laundry in public.

†**b.** In general; collectively. *Obsolete. rare.*

- 1653 H. HOLCROFT tr. Procopius *Persian Wars* I. 8 in tr. Procopius *Hist. Warren Justinian* Bestowing many benefits upon their City in publique, and on particular men.

## 2.

†**a.** With *singular* concord. The community or people as an organized body, the body politic; the nation, the state; the interest or well-being of the community, the common good. Chiefly with *the*. *Obsolete.*

- 1586 SIR P. SIDNEY *Arcadia* (1590) III. xix. 325 You are a Prince, & a father of people, who ought..to set downe all priuate conceits, in comparison of what for the publike is profitable.
- 1611 B. JONSON *Catiline* v. sig. Q Hee's scarce a friend vnto the Publicke .
- 1640 in J. Nicholson *Minute Bk. War Comm. Covenanters Kirkcudbright* 13 Nov. (1855) 92 For the better furtherance of the service of the publict.
- 1673 J. RAY *Observ. Journey Low-countries* 154 Though the public be not so rich as it hath been, yet will it soon recover itself.
- 1699 LD. SHAFTESBURY *Inq. conc. Virtue* I. iii. 65 We see that in a State or Public, a virtuous and good Administration..is of service.
- 1764 R. BURN *Hist. Poor Laws* 209 Sustained, not at the expence of such parish or place, nor of the county,..but of the publick, to be paid out of some such rate as the land tax.
- 1769 W. BLACKSTONE *Comm. Laws Eng.* IV. xi. 151 If both these points are against the defendant, the offence against the public is complete.
- 1783 JOHNSON *Let.* 31 Dec. (1994) IV. 267 The Ministry is again broken..the times are dismal and gloomy. But to a sick man what is the publick.

**b.** With *the* and *singular* or *plural* concord. The community or people as a whole; the members of the community collectively.

- 1621 J. REYNOLDS *Triumphs Gods Revenge: 1st Bk.* sig. A3 I only represent what they have acted, and give that to the publike, which they obscurely perpetrated in private.
- 1665 R. BOYLE *Occas. Refl.* Introd. Pref. sig. A8 The favourable Reception that the publick has hitherto vouchsafed to what hath been presented it.
- 1705 in tr. Aristotle *Art of Poetry* Pref. sig. b4 I leave it to the Publick, and time, to Judge of my Work, for I will neither Court, nor slight their Favours.
- 1711 R. STEELE *Spectator* No. 258. ¶2 Another Project which..will give the Publick an Equivalent to their full Content.
- 1752 G. G. BEEKMAN *Let.* 23 Oct. in *Beekman Mercantile Papers* (1956) I. 152 Mr. Bradfords the printer his paper also acquaints the Publick that the price is 6/.
- 1796 E. BURKE *Two Lett. Peace Regicide Directory France* ii, in *Wks.* (1808) VIII. 257 The publick is the theatre for mountebanks and impostors.
- 1808 *Times* 6 Feb. 3/2 The Nobility, Gentry, and the Public, are respectfully informed, that there will be a masquerade at this Theatre on Thursday.
- 1854 LD. COCKBURN *Memorials* (1856) vi. 371 There was a feeble murmur against the ejection of what the few murmurers termed ‘The Public’.
- 1878 J. L. PATTERSON *Maguire's Pius the Ninth* xviii. 357 Supposing..the libraries were not open to the public, what right had the State to confiscate them.
- 1945 V. BELL *Let.* 10 Apr. in *Sel. Lett.* (1993) viii. 493 We have netted £20 each just for 2 drawings. The public is clamouring for more.
- 1999 K. HICKMAN *Daughters of Britannia* (2000) v. 111 A week later.., the public were let into the embassy compound.

†**c.** The human race. Cf. sense A. 2d. *Obsolete. rare.*

- 1699 LD. SHAFTESBURY *Inq. conc. Virtue* I. ii. 28 The Mind..readily discerns the good and the ill towards the Species or Public.

### 3.

**a.** *colloq.* Short for PUBLIC HOUSE *n.* Cf. PUB *n.*<sup>1</sup> *arch.*

- 1685–6 J. DUNTON *Summer's Ramble* iv, in *MS Rawl. D. 71* f. 138 Here I had no Acquaintance, but took Sanctuary in a Publick, where there was Extraordinary good Cyder.
- 1709 *Churchwardens' Accts. St. Dunstan's, Canterb.* For the Improvement of its [*sc.* the newly-planted tree's] growth, aiournd to the publick and moistned it to the Root.
- 1756 WHITEFIELD *Life & Jrnls.* 3 My Mother..kept me in my tender Years from intermeddling in the least with the public Business.
- 1799 R. SOUTHEY *Let. to T. Southey* 5 Jan. What, don't you keep a public?
- 1824 SCOTT *Redgauntlet* III. ii. 32 He is a statesman, though he keeps a publick.
- 1840 T. ARNOLD *Jrnl.* 23 July in A. P. Stanley *Life & Corr. T. Arnold* (1845) II. App. C. 426 Iron foundries and publics have no connexion with mere book literature.
- 1899 A. WEST *Recoll.* I. ii. 67 There was a 'public' called the 'Half-Way House'.
- 1912 W. OWEN *Let.* 14 Nov. (1967) 168 Spending the evening at 'the public'.
- 1954 *Recorded Interview* (Brit. Libr. Sound Archive) (Survey Eng. Dial.: C908) (MS transcript) Track 43 [Westmorland] I used to go..with another woman who kept a public at Crosby.
- 1993 S. STEWART *Ramlin Rose* xv. 145 There was a little 'public' there with a trough outside for the 'orses to 'ave a drink too.

**b. colloq.** Short for *public bar* **n.** (b) at Special uses 2.

- 1957 N. MARSH *Off with his Head* ii. 29 The bar-parlour at the Green Man..lay at right angles to the Public.
- 1969 M. DUFFY *Wounds* i. 19 The pints of beer she had to pull for the pensioners in the public.
- 1971 L. LAMB *Worse than Death* vii. 64 They had finished doing the bars, and..were having a cup of tea in the Public.

**4.**

**a.** With *the* and modifying adjective, or as a count noun. A section of the community, or of the human race, having a particular interest or connection.

- 1709 LD. SHAFTESBURY *Sensus Communis: Ess. Freedom of Wit* 70 They..enjoy the common Good and Interest of a more contracted Publick.

- 1795 W. PALEY *View Evidences Christianity* (ed. 3) I. i. i. 32 That general disbelief..which..prevailed amongst the intelligent part of the heathen public.
- 1817 S. T. COLERIDGE *Biographia Literaria* I. iii. 49 A shelf or two of Beauties, elegant Extracts and Anas, form nine-tenths of the reading of the reading public.
- 1843 J. RUSKIN *Arrows of Chace* (1880) I. 21 There is a separate public for every picture, and for every book.
- 1868 M. PATTISON *Suggestions Acad. Organisation* 3 The British public will not long ask this question without helping itself to the answer.
- 1894 *Pop. Sci. Monthly* Aug. 458 While it is the most capricious of publics it is also the most sheeplike.
- 1926 H. W. FOWLER *Dict. Mod. Eng. Usage* 316/2 The mass of the picture-loving public, however, may be assured of good value for the shillings.
- 1977 *Gramophone* Oct. 653/2 He earned the devotion and affection of a large concert-going and record-buying public right up until the 1950s.
- 2001 *Times* 12 Sept. 13/2 Moderate Arab governments whose unfeigned horror at what has happened is dictated as much by anxieties about the impact on their own publics as it is by common humanity.

**b.** With possessive adjective. The section of society which is interested in or supportive of the person referred to; *esp.* a writer's readership; a performer's audience.

- 1823 SCOTT *Quentin Durward* Introd. p. xxxiv My Public are to be informed, that I gradually sipp'd and smoked myself into a certain degree of acquaintance with *un homme comme il faut*.
- 1893 H. JAMES *Let.* 2 May in C. Mackenzie *My Life & Times* (1963) II. 309 If your public..can't see any of that charm, and wants such a bêtise instead, we are engaged in a blind-alley.
- 1921 H. CRANE *Let.* 19 Sept. (1965) 64 I am 'sold out' and will have to rush rhymes and rhythms together to supply my enthusiastic 'public' as fast as I can.
- 1952 W. GRANVILLE *Dict. Theatr. Terms* 145 My public will hate me in this part.
- 1996 'E. LATHEN' *Brewing up Storm* (1998) ii. 17 Rugby positioned himself before the larger-than-life-size statue of a chuck wagon and addressed his public.

**c.** *Sociology.* A collective group regarded as sharing a common cultural, social, or political interest, but who as



individuals do not necessarily have any contact with one another.

- 1911 *Amer. Jrnl. Sociol.* **16** 470 According to the proximity of members groups may be face-to-face or comrade groups or they may be dispersed publics.
- 1933 F. H. ALLPORT *Institutional Behav.* v. 87 Since the public is no specific group of individuals, but is defined wholly by the range of the common interest in a particular transaction, there may be a separate public for every issue raised.
- 1954 G. A. LUNDBERG et al. *Sociol.* xiii. 491 One may belong to as many publics as one has interests.
- 1999 *Theory & Society* **28** 145 Our aim here is..to carve out a new conceptual space for civil and associational relationships (and for the 'publics' that emerge from within this space).

†**5.** *U.S. College slang.* At Harvard College: a form of reprimand in which a student's grades are reduced and a notification sent to his parents or guardian. *Obsolete.*

- 1837 *Knickerbocker Mag.* **9** 244 Accordingly I was reported to the government..and received a 'public'.
- 1842 *Knickerbocker Mag.* **19** 439 Prayers he has cut, to the extent of a 'public'.
- 1851 B. H. HALL *Coll. College Words* 249 At Harvard College, the punishment next higher in order to a private admonition is called a public admonition... It is often called a public.
- 1876 G. H. TRIPP *Student-Life Harvard* 133 If we make a noise..we shall get publics, if nothing worse.

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## PHRASES

### ***to go public.***

**a.** *Business.* Of a privately owned company: to make its shares available to be traded on a major stock exchange; to become a public company.

- 1957 *Jrnl. Finance* **12** 401 It should be required reading for the teacher of finance who..serves as consultant to companies which might some day plan 'to go public'.
- 1988 *Computer Graphics World* Feb. 26/2 Synercom..had to reposition itself from a hardware company to a software company since going public in 1986.
- 2000 S. INGHAM in J. Adams et al. *Girls' Night In* 570 Candy was about to make multi-millions when her Internet business went public.

**b.** To make one's actions or intentions known to the public;  
to reveal details about a previously private or secret concern.

- 1976 'A. HALL' *Kobra Manifesto* xv. 211 The girl's fever..had either driven or panicked Kobra into the open and in seizing the Boeing they'd gone public.
- 1990 *Creative Rev.* Mar. 28/4 After the startled woman went public the partners apologised.
- 2001 A. DANGOR *Bitter Fruit* (2004) viii. 109 Silas would have to find the right kind of words—when they went public—to extricate his Minister from the web of his own ambiguity.

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## SPECIAL USES

**S1.** Parasynthetic adjectives (and nouns formed from them) (in sense A. 7).

**public-hearted** *adj.*

- 1655 S. HARTLIB *Reformed Common-wealth Bees* sig. A2 That zealous, publick-hearted and learned Gentleman, Thomas Brown.
- 1757 J. DYER *Fleece* II. 64 Public-hearted Roe, Faithful, sagacious, active, patient, brave.
- 1968 *Caribou County (Soda Springs, Idaho) Sun* 7 Mar. 3/6 Your public-hearted men deserve the fullest acclaim!

† **public-heartedness** *n.* *Obsolete*

- 1650 R. WESTON *Discours Husbandrie* Ep. Ded. sig. A2v I have found unexpectedly from your Honors som peculiar expression of favor towards my self, upon the account of my public-heartedness.

- 1703 *Clarendon's Hist. Rebellion* II. VI. 101 Their publick-heartedness, and joynt concernment in the good Cause.
- 1868 *Sloan's Archit. Rev.* July 3/2 Improve upon whatever of enterprise, taste, or large public-heartedness, they mark among their competitive neighbors.
- 1907 *Times* 12 Sept. 4/2 A speech thanking the head of the Tagore House for his never-failing generosity in charitable causes, his unvarying loyalty to the Government, and his great public-heartedness.

**public-minded** *adj.*

- 1660 D. LLOYD *Mod. Policy Compleated* II. 52 So little did this publike minded Worthy care for his own things, and so much for the things of others.
- 1755 G. S. GREEN *O. Cromwell* II. 73 Let not such dull Sophistry mislead My honour'd, injur'd, public-minded Father.
- 1887 *Science* 13 May 456/2 All public-minded citizens can do good service by fostering a public opinion which will sustain boards of health in their efforts to suppress traffic in swill-milk.
- 1993 M. MEYER *Politics of Music in Third Reich* iv. 386 Socially, Germans became public-minded, but they did not influence policy, nor did they care to.

**public-mindedness** *n.*

- 1659 J. FERGUSSON *Brief Expos. Epist. Paul* vi. 481 The more the heart is exercised in spirituall duties..it groweth more warm and more enlarged to the exercise of all those saving graces..and especially to publick-mindednesse.
- 1701 P. WARWICK *Disc. Govt.* 173 The Physicians of our State..should..endeavour to raise a publick mindedness in particular men.
- 1883 *Times* 13 Sept. 3/2 A superb monument of native art and an eloquent sign of the liberality and public-mindedness of the Viennese citizens.
- 2005 *Irish Times* (Nexis) 21 Oct. 5 A culture of integrity and public mindedness that is unique to the civil service.

**S2.**

**public access** *adj.* and *n.* *U.S.* (*a*) *adj.* designating or relating to a form of television (esp. cable television) in which members of the general public can produce or contribute to programmes; (*b*) *n.* public access television.

- 1970 *Stanford Law Rev.* **22** 237 With respect to cable television, many have urged that the cablecasting channels be subjected to a public-access requirement.
- 1971 *N.Y. Times* 26 Oct. 83/2 Public Access..permits individuals and community groups to air their views on a first-come, first-served basis on designated cable channels.
- 1990 *Los Angeles Times* 9 Mar. E1/4 Produce your own witty, campy show for the raw arena of public-access cable television.
- 2004 J. DEREK *Confessions of Serial Egg Donor* xv. 148 Peter and I were filming an episode of his talk show on public access.

**public accountability** *n.* the fact or condition of being publicly accountable, or accountable to the general public, for one's conduct or performance.

- 1828 *Anti-Masonic Rev.* No. 11. 334 We believe that man is incapable of exercising great power uncontrolled by public accountability, without abusing it.
- 1931 *Economist* 28 Mar. 665/2 Mr. Morrison's final conclusion that the proper authority to be set up is a 'business Board' of five members, incorporating what he defined as 'an element of public accountability'.
- 2001 *N.Y. Times Mag.* 15 Apr. 36/1 Consuming Western goods while ignoring the core Western values of respect for the individual, acceptance of impersonal norms, meritocracy and public accountability.

**public act** *n.* (a) an act of which the courts take official notice without requiring the existence of the legislation to be specially proved; cf. *public bill n.* (b); contrasted with *private Act n.* at PRIVATE *adj.*<sup>1</sup>, *adv.*, and *n.* Special uses 2; † (b) a written instrument issued in the king's (or other ruler's) name (*obsolete*).

- [1539 *Act 31 Hen. VIII* in *Statutes of Realm* (1817) III. 717 Inactitata & stabilita fuerunt hec sequentia Statuta, viz. Actes Publicke.]
- 1598 *Orig. Lords Jrnls.* 8 Feb. **6** 222 To a publique Acte allowed La Royne le veult.
- 1661 *Jrnl. House of Commons* 13 May **8** 247/2 A Bill for confirming of publick Acts was this Day read the First time.

- 1765 W. BLACKSTONE *Comm. Laws Eng.* I. Intro. iii. 85 A general or public act is an universal rule, that regards the whole community; and of these the courts of law are bound to take notice judicially and *ex officio*, without the statute being particularly pleaded..by the party who claims an advantage under it.
- 1840 H. H. MILMAN *Hist. Christianity* II. 381 The public acts..of Constantine, show how the lofty eclectic indifferentism of the Emperor..gave place to the progressive influence of Christianity.
- 1870 E. A. FREEMAN *Hist. Norman Conquest* (ed. 2) I. vi. 453 He dated his public acts by the regnal years of the King.
- 1923 *Northwestern Reporter* **193** 875/2 The order so made stands unappealed and was authorized by Act No. 404, Public Acts 1919.
- 1999 A. CLARKE *Prelude to Restoration in Irel.* iii. 90 The commissioners forwarded the draft of a statute..providing for all public acts of the English parliament enacted since 1495 to be 'deemed and judged good and effectual and accepted used and executed in Ireland'.

**public analyst** *n. Brit. rare* a health official responsible for analysing food and drink for impurities, contamination, etc.

- 1860 *Times* 24 Oct. 6/7 The appointment..of Dr. Letheby to be the public analyst of food and drinks purchased within the City of London.
- 1994 T. BYRNE *Local Govt. in Brit.* (ed. 6) xiii. 394 There are close links between the community physician and local authorities' public analysts and environmental health officers.

**public bar** *n.* †(a) = BAR *n.*<sup>1</sup> 23a (*obsolete*); (b) a bar serving drinks to the public; (now) *spec.* the more plainly furnished bar in a public house (cf. *lounge bar n.* at LOUNGE *n.* Compounds 2, *saloon bar n.* at SALOON *n.* Compounds 2).

- 1654 J. CRANDON *Mr. Baxters Aphorisms Exorized & Anthorized* (new ed.) I. 289 This latter is at the public bar. I answer, so is the former even that bar of God, at which all that ever have been..shall have the sentence of Justification pronounced to them.

- 1818 *Times* 26 Jan. 3/1 A Gentleman who attended on the Grand Jury laments the very trifling crimes for which several of the prisoners were arraigned and detained at the public bar.
- 1833 *Republican Banner* (Gettysburg, Pa.) (Electronic text) 26 Nov. That he possesses stern and inflexible principles is evidenced in the very transaction for which he is now arraigned at the public bar.
- 1858 *Badger State* (Portage, Wisconsin) 19 Feb. 1/4 In addition to the public bar where refreshments are sold, there were apartments above where private parties could be served with supper.
- 1930 W. S. MAUGHAM *Cakes & Ale* xi. 136 He was rather fond of going down to the Bear and Key..and having a few beers in the public bar.
- 2000 *Canoeist* Apr. 29/2 The Ship bar is boat shaped and the public bar is in a former blacksmith's sword shop.

**public bath** *n.* chiefly *Brit.* (usually in *plural*, with *plural* or (occasionally) *singular* concord) a building containing public washing facilities or (in recent times) a public swimming pool.

- 1611 T. CORYATE *Crudities* sig. Hh7 In an open court *sub dio* two publike bathes.
- 1726 G. LEONI tr. L. B. Alberti *Archit.* II. 74/1 A public Bath or Therme.
- 1804 R. SUTCLIFF *Jrnl.* 31 July in *Trav. N. Amer.* (1811) 42 This morning I was conducted..to one of the Public Baths [in New York City].
- 1904 *Daily Chron.* 23 Jan. 5/2 On January 23, 1849, the first public baths in London, those at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, were opened.
- 1962 J. BRAINE *Life at Top* x. 136 The Warley Council's plan for a new public baths.

**public bill** *n.* †(a) a document or notice fixed in a public place (*obsolete rare*); (b) *Brit.* a Parliamentary bill which deals with matters of national policy and is generally applicable to the whole of the United Kingdom, or to one of its constituent jurisdictions, or to a major locality; contrasted with *private bill n.* at PRIVATE *adj.*<sup>1</sup>, *adv.*, and *n.*  
Special uses 2.

- 1579 T. NORTH tr. Plutarch *Liues* 571 He tooke all power & authority from Lucullus..& did moreouer prohibite by publicke bills [Fr. *affiches*] set vp in euery common place , that they should no more repayre vnto him.
- 1607 *Jrnl. House of Commons* 27 June (1803) I. 388 It was followed, and pressed, as a publick Bill, but was indeed, by all former Precedents, to be accounted and taken as a private Bill, being only for Three Shires.
- 1859 T. E. MAY *Law of Parl.* (ed. 4) xxiv. 613 Established by a public bill, brought in by the government, but otherwise treated as a private or 'hybrid' bill.
- 1996 F. KRUG et al. *Three Pillars Liberty* iii. 45 Public bills..are debated in principle by both chambers and then go for detailed scrutiny into standing committee (in the Commons) and a committee of the whole House in the Lords.

**public box** *n. rare (a)* a box at a theatre that is available to the public; *(b)* a public telephone box.

- 1825 H. WILSON *Mem.* III. 38 We wanted to go to the play..but we had..no private box. I have never in my life, frequented the public boxes.
- 1928 D. L. SAYERS *Unpleasantness at Bellona Club* viii. 90 His call came from a public box.
- 1992 B. JAMES *Gospel* xx. 184 Sanquhar-Perry telephoned the public box in the Monty from another public box.

**public broadcaster** *n.* a broadcasting company funded or subsidized by the State or public funds; a non-commercial broadcaster.

- 1936 *Educ. by Radio* Dec. 47/1 Gradually, educational and public broadcasters are improving their methods, but at every turn of the road they are confronted with the lack of sufficient funds to do the job as well as they might.
- 1968 *Washington Post* 21 Nov. C9 (*headline*) Public broadcasters urged to be critics.
- 2004 G. CRAIG *Media, Politics & Public Life* i. 12 The national public broadcaster, the ABC, carries great political influence throughout the country.

**public broadcasting** *n.* broadcasting by an organization funded or subsidized by the State or public funds; non-commercial broadcasting.

- 1922 *Nebraska State Jrnl.* 12 Jan. 7/4 Mr. Howell has a vision of great systems of public broadcasting that will cover the entire country.
- 1938 *Yale Law Jrnl.* 48 165 Already the British Broadcasting Corporation has served as something of a model for public broadcasting in Canada and Australia.
- 2003 A. SPARKS *Beyond Miracle* vi. 122 There is a new plan to 'corporatize' the SABC and split it into two entities, one to carry out the public broadcasting mandate and the other to be a commercial broadcaster.

**public building** *n.* a building used by the public for any purpose, such as assembly, education, entertainment, or worship.

- 1561 T. HOBY tr. B. Castiglione *Courtyer* II. sig. R.iiii<sup>v</sup> To make greate Theatres, and other publyque buildinges.
- 1673 W. TEMPLE *Observ. United Provinces* ii. 86 The Magnificence of their Publique Buildings, as Stadthouse and Arsenals.
- 1855 *Act 18 & 19 Victoria* c. 122 §3 'Public building' shall mean every building used as a church, chapel, or other place of public worship; also every building used for purposes of public instruction; also every building used as a college, public hall, hospital, theatre, public concert room, public ball room, public lecture room, public exhibition room, or for any other public purposes.
- 2005 D. CRUICKSHANK *Around World in 80 Treasures* 131 At the heart of the city is a series of public buildings—mosques, madrasahs and tombs.

**public charge** *n.* now chiefly *U.S.* a thing which is the responsibility of the State; a person who is dependent upon the State for care or support.

- 1662 W. PETTY *Treat. Taxes in Tracts* (1769) 2 A third branch of the public charge is that of the pastorage of men's souls.
- 1820 *Republican Compiler* (Gettysburg, Pa.) (Electronic text) 19 Sept. To permit the owners of slaves to emancipate them..where the person so emancipating will give security that the slave so emancipated will not become a public charge.
- 1883 *Statutes at Large U.S.A.* XXII. 214 Any convict, lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge.
- 1952 W. S. BURROUGHS *Let.* 13 July (1993) 135 If I had not received the \$180 I would have become a public charge.



2003 M. BERNSTEIN et al. *Building Better Homes* iv. 61 Innovations that reduce energy costs, maintenance costs, insurance risks, or transportation costs all provide a way to help fulfill this public charge.

**public choice** *n.* *Politics* the decision-making behaviour of politicians, voters, and interest groups in relation to government policies (frequently *attributive*); (also) a branch of economic theory concerned with this.

1968 *Amer. Econ. Rev.* **58** 1067 (*heading*) Problems in the theory of public choice.

1979 C. S. RUSSELL *Collective Decision Making* 4 A problem for public choice theory is that when the rational pursuit of self-interest is taken to be equivalent to the maximization of the expected value of an action, it can be shown to be irrational for individuals to vote.

1991 J. KINGDOM *Local Govt. & Politics in Brit.* i. 2 A Conservative government came to power at Westminster espousing the ideas of the public choice theorists along with a set of free-market doctrines.

2000 *Econ. Affairs* **20** 13/2 Public choice is a useful tool in understanding the operation of the factors that discourage and limit the development of the Internet.

† **public commoner** *n.* *Obsolete rare*<sup>-1</sup> = *public woman n.*

α1616 SHAKESPEARE *Othello* (1623) IV. ii. 75 Oh, thou publicke Commoner.

**public company** *n.* a company whose shares are traded on a major stock exchange.

1730 A. M. RAMSAY *Trav. of Cyrus* (ed. 4) II. vii. 108 Those who cannot employ themselves in trade shall lodge their money in these public companies.

1804 *Ann. Rev.* **2** 238 The managers and actuaries of our public companies.

2000 *Wall St. Jrnl.* 16 May A18/1 The case is part of a two-year SEC campaign against public companies..which use accounting gimmicks to puff up earnings.

**public convenience** *n.* (*a*) the convenience of the public; (*b*) (originally) a facility available for public use;

(now) *spec.* a lavatory for the use of the public, a public toilet.

- 1658 W. SANDERSON *Compl. Hist. Life King Charles* 431 Acts of so high injustice, as no publick convenience can expiate or compensate.
- 1739 *Old Whig* II. LXXX. 246 On terms which may without any injustice be limited, regulated, diminished, or extinguished, for the public convenience, by the legislature.
- 1759 B. MARTIN *Nat. Hist. Eng.* I. 133 St. Helier is a well-built and well-inhabited Town, accommodated with public Conveniences, and much improved of late Years.
- 1775 J. CAMPBELL *Polit. Surv. Brit.* (ed. 2) III. 275 The repairing old and making new roads and other public conveniences.
- 1843 *Civil Engineer & Architect's Jrnl.* 6 278/2 Public convenience demanded great accuracy in weighing the currency.
- 1921 G. D. H. COLE *Future of Local Govt.* ii. 15 There is an overwhelming case, from the standpoint of public convenience and efficiency of service, for the regional planning of publicly owned road transport services.
- 1931 D. L. SAYERS *Five Red Herrings* xiv. 154 A small alley..containing..a public convenience.
- 2004 C. CONNELLY *Attention All Shipping* (2005) 167 I reached the end of the esplanade, passed the public conveniences and the beach huts.

**public corporation** *n.* (a) a municipal corporation; (b) a government-owned company or corporation.

- 1796 *Times* 19 Mar. 2/4 The impropriety of the Directors of public Corporations recommending annual lists to the Proprietors of the persons whom they wish to succeed to vacancies.
- 1827 J. KENT *Comm. Amer. Law* II. xxxiii. 222 Public corporations, are such as exist for public political purposes only, such as counties, cities, towns and villages.
- 1928 *Britain's Industr. Future* (Liberal Industr. Inq.) 95 We propose..a special class of Company to be designated Public Corporations... The distinction..should depend..mainly on their preponderant position in their own industry or trade.
- 1993 *Canad. Living* Jan. 123/3 Lauzon, who recently looked at 676 public and crown corporations, says 'In 1990, 60 per cent of the companies had no women in top executive positions.'

**public defender** *n.* *U.S.* a lawyer or staff of lawyers employed by the government to represent in a criminal action a defendant unable to afford legal assistance.

- 1822 *Times* 30 Oct. 2/5 St. Laurent, Public Defender and Interpreter at Port-aux-Cayes.
- 1828 T. HARRIS & R. W. GILL *Rep. Court of Appeals Maryland* 1 496 The tribunal, on the petition of Mr. Walker, present, assisted by Mr. Mallery, public defender, granted the act to the said Walker.
- 1918 *Policeman's Monthly* Oct. 9/2 (*caption*) A public defender needed.
- 2002 J. RAY *Step-ball-change* ii. 17 Not that Tom was exactly raking it in. He had left corporate law by then and was working in the public defender's office.

**public diplomacy** *n.* diplomacy conducted openly; (in later use) *spec.* official efforts to influence foreign public opinion in service of diplomatic goals.

- 1856 *Times* 15 Jan. 6/3 The statesmen of America must recollect that, if they have to make..a certain impression upon us, they have also to set an example to their own people, and there are few examples so catching as those of public diplomacy.
- 1960 K. W. THOMPSON *Polit. Realism & Crisis World Politics* iii. 120 Its [*sc.* the United Nations'] possibilities for private or quiet diplomacy are as great as its role for parliamentary or public diplomacy.
- 2005 *National Interest* Spring 130/2 Through effective public diplomacy, the United States can make these movements even less popular.

**public education** *n.* †(*a*) education provided at a school rather than at home (*obsolete*); (*b*) education at a (British) public school; (*c*) education provided by the State.

- 1581 R. MULCASTER *Positions* xxxix. 183 (*heading*) Of priuate and publike education, with their generall goods & illes.
- 1653 J. SEDGWICK *Serm. preached at St. Marie's* 34 If this..be inconsiderable..I must want that these places of publick education are uselesse.
- 1797 W. GODWIN *Enquirer* I. vii. 59 Public education is best for..a..healthful mind.

- 1835 T. ARNOLD *Let.* 15 Apr. in A. P. Stanley *Life & Corr. T. Arnold* (1845) I. 421  
Public education is the best where it answers... I should certainly advise anything  
 rather than a private school of above thirty boys.
- 1935 *Daily Courier* (Connellsville, Pa.) 29 Jan. 4/4 Overcrowding in public schools  
 will tend to introduce the four-quarter plan of public education with controlled  
 vacations of pupils.
- 1990 *Times Educ. Suppl.* 26 Oct. 12/5 Taken seriously, choice is a revolutionary  
 reform that introduces a new system of public education.

**public employment** *n.* employment by the State; cf.  
 PUBLIC SERVICE *n.*

- 1625 S. PURCHAS *Pilgrimes* I. IX. xv. 1595 It is alwaies knowne amongst themselues,  
 who is next capable of publique employment.
- 1782 *Gentleman's Mag.* 52 122/1 The deficit in the accounts of men entrusted with  
public employment.
- 1889 G. B. SHAW *Fabian Ess. Socialism* 195 The superior prestige and permanence of  
public employment.
- 1997 *London Rev. Bks.* 23 Jan. 20/4 Goldhagen claims that the 1933 purge of Jews in  
public employment was 'wildly popular'.

**public enemy** *n.* [compare Middle French, French  
*ennemi public* (1560 or earlier)] an enemy common to a  
 number of nations, a general enemy (cf. sense A. 2c; (also,  
 now the usual sense) a person considered as a threat to the  
 community (cf. sense A. 2a); cf. *public enemy number one n.*

- 1548 *Hall's Vnion: Henry VII* f. ii Who woulde be obstinate & refuse to returne to his  
 parte, should be accepted and taken as a publike enemy to hym and his country.
- 1651 T. HOBBS *Leviathan* 390 Nor is there any repugnancy between fearing the  
 Laws, and not fearing a publique Enemy.
- 1756 G. WHITEFIELD *Short Address* 9 We may as lawfully draw our swords, in order  
 to defend ourselves against our common and public Enemy.
- 1842 A. ALISON *Hist. Europe from French Revol.* X. lxxvii. 840 A declaration  
 was..signed by all the Powers..which..proscribed Napoleon as a public enemy,  
 with whom neither peace nor truce could be concluded.

- 1890 *Star & Sentinel* (Gettysburg, Pa.) (Electronic text) 27 May The average tramp is a public enemy and will usually commit crime when he has the opportunity.
- 1940 'N. BLAKE' *Malice in Wonderland* II. ix. 123 The presence of a public enemy in our midst.
- 1999 *N.Y. Rev. Bks.* 20 May 70/4 The FBI reacted to his provocations by making Elijah a public enemy.

**public enemy number one** *n.* (also **public enemy no.**

1) orig. *U.S.* the first person named on a list of wanted criminals; the person regarded as the one it is most important to apprehend; (in extended use) that which poses the greatest threat to the welfare or security of a community, nation, etc.

- 1930 *Coshocton (Ohio) Tribune* 1 Nov. 1 How about Al Capone?.. Some authorities must know his whereabouts. Why isn't he, as public enemy No. 1, ever placed under arrest?
- 1935 *Daily Mail* 23 Oct. 18/1 (*advt.*) We all know who is Public Enemy No. 1 when it's time to get up! The 'Droops'.
- 1939 LD. CAMROSE in M. Gilbert *Winston S. Churchill* (1976) V. lii. 1081 Well, Winston was Public Enemy No 1 in Berlin, and Eden was the same in Italy.
- 1958 *Listener* 17 July 75/1 Iraq..has been Public Enemy No. 1 to Egypt's propagandists.
- 1967 M. MURRAY *Ballad of Bonnie & Clyde* (song) 3 Bonnie and Clyde got to be public enemy number one—Running and hiding from ev'ry American lawman's gun.
- 1996 *Denver Post* 13 Apr. A19/1 Smugglers are public enemy No.1.

**public eye** *n.* the attention, scrutiny, opinion, or estimation of the general public (usually with *the*) ; esp. in **in the public eye**.

- 1594 *Willobie his Auisa* I. f. 3 There she dwels in publique eye, Shut vp from none that list to see.
- 1629 W. DAVENANT *Trag. Albovine* Ded. My Numbers I do not shew unto the publick Eye, with an ambition to be quickly known.
- 1751 JOHNSON *Rambler* No. 155/3 We are secretly conscious of defects and vices which we hope to conceal from the publick eye.

- 1816 *Times* 31 Dec. 2/2 The next question in the public eye is the expediency of continuing for a longer time the Direct Tax.
- 1867 DICKENS *Let.* 26 Oct. (1999) XI. 462 I suppose the dresses..to be new to the public eye, and very picturesque.
- 1955 *Radio Times* 22 Apr. 15/2 It was a gramophone recording that first brought her before the public eye.
- 1991 *Outrage* Feb. 9/3 Immigration, AIDS and gay relationships are all controversial in the public eye.

**public figure** *n.* a person known of by the general public.

- 1871 J. MCCARTHY *Lady Judith* in *Galaxy* Sept. 299 The old Scotchman's acquaintance with the..public figures of Europe and America seemed..to have ceased twenty years before... He..had never even heard of..Bismarck.
- 1883 *Times* 28 Mar. 4/3 That old familiar public figure in the political life of this country, Mr Bright.
- 1949 F. MACLEAN *Eastern Approaches* I. ii. 24 There was nothing new in the 'liquidation', as it was called, of public figures. For some years past numerous politicians and others had met with this fate.
- 2000 Z. LEADER in K. Amis *Lett.* p. xlv After the success of *Façade* (1923), a Modernist 'entertainment' for voice and orchestra.., she became a public figure.

**public good** *n.* (also †**good public**) [compare classical Latin *bonum pūblicum*, Middle French, French *bien public* (second half of the 14th cent.)] (*a*) the welfare of the community as a whole, public interest; (*b*) a commodity held in common (usually in *plural*); (*Economics*) a commodity or service provided, without profit, to all members of a society (whether by the government or privately).

1427 Good publique [see sense A. 2a].

- 1516 *Acts Lords of Council Civil Causes* XXVIII. f. 59, in *Dict. Older Sc. Tongue at Gud*  
*n.* My lordis will provid..as thai think expedient for the gud public of the realme and weile of the bordouris.
- 1605 E. SANDYS *Relation State of Relig.* sig. T4<sup>v</sup> The world having extinguished the care of the publique good, by an over-care of their private.

- 1635 R. SIBBES *Soules Confl.* (1833) xvii. 136 Law being the joint reason and consent of many men for the public good hath a use for guidance of all action that fall under the same.
- 1692 (▶1440) in J. Stevenson *Lett. & Papers Illustr. Wars Eng. in France* (1864) II. 445 Ayeinst the gode publique of youre royaumes.
- 1708 B. SHOWER *Reports* 257 If a Ferry were granted at this Day, he that accepts such Grant, is bound to keep a Boat for the Publick Good.
- 1801 *Med. & Physical Jrnl.* 5 528 Not only to accomodate the poor and the needy, but to advance the public good.
- 1855 *Rep. Explor. & Surv. Route for Railroad Mississippi River to Pacific Ocean* (U.S. War Dept.) V. v. 58 Captain Gunnison..succeeded in purchasing horses from the Indians with the public goods which had been brought for that purpose.
- 1898 *Jrnl. Polit. Econ.* 6 399 The expenses connected with the sale of public goods.
- 1961 V. OSTROM et al. in O. P. Williams *Democracy in Urban Amer.* xviii. 193 A public good on a neighborhood or community scale can be viewed as ‘packaged’ within appropriate boundaries so that others outside the boundaries may be excluded from its use.
- 1994 W. A. BOGART *Courts & Country* ii. 64 The restraint of individualism for the public good.

**public holiday** *n.* a national holiday.

- 1736 *Lett. from Moor at London* 273 Every Sunday, or publick holiday, the priest should read one of these acts.
- 1786 *Daily Universal Reg.* (Electronic text) 3 Aug. If Tuesday was not a Holiday at the Bank, the printed List of the Public Holidays from which it is taken is Erroneous.
- 1850 N. HAWTHORNE *Scarlet Let.* xxi. 276 On this public holiday, as on all other occasions for seven years past, Hester was clad in a garment of coarse, gray cloth.
- 1901 *Scotsman* 28 Feb. 7/4 A bill was introduced in the Canadian parliament to make Victoria day—May 24th—a permanent public holiday throughout Canada.
- 2001 *Financial Times* 27 Jan. 6/2 Millions of people were relaxing on a public holiday watching the Republic Day festivities on television.

**public housing** *n.* housing subsidized by public funds and provided for people on low incomes.

- 1913 S. P. ORTH *Socialism & Democracy in Europe* 302 The advancement of public housing plans... Providing cheaper homes in municipal houses and tenements.
- 1997 I. SINCLAIR *Lights out for Territory* (1998) 236 A drab block of public housing set around some tarmac on which trashed vehicles try to gather enough spare parts to make it to the breaker's yard.

**public intellectual** *n.* an intellectual who expresses views (esp. on popular topics) intended to be accessible to a general audience.

- 1967 *N.Y. Times* 15 Sept. 45/1 Fashion editors, artists, certain politicians, film people, public intellectuals, culture mongers, [etc.].
- 2001 *New Republic* 29 Jan. 36/2 He was familiar on television and radio, the paradigm of the vaguely left-wing London liberal and public intellectual.

**public interest** *n.* the benefit or advantage of the community as a whole; the public good.

- 1591 R. COSIN *Apol. for Sundrie Proc.* II. v. 90 Now the publike interest doth not onely rest in this, when some benefite is comming towards the common treasure, but is chiefly shewed by procuring common tranquillity and repose of the subiect.
- 1678 S. BUTLER *Hudibras: Third Pt.* III. ii. 102 Both Parties joyn'd to do their best, To Damn the Publick Interest.
- 1730 BOLINGBROKE *Craftsman* (1731) VII. 22 No Man, who adheres to it, hath the least pretence left him to say that he pursues the publick Interest.
- 1858 DISRAELI in *Hansard Commons* 27 Apr. 1822 Not..one who proposes a course which will conduce to the advantage of the public interest.
- 1995 *Times* 25 Sept. 21/1 He was the government watchdog who snapped at the heels of those price-fixers and trade rings who were operating against the public interest.

**public interest immunity** *n.* *Law* (in the United Kingdom and some Commonwealth countries) a principle whereby the government may request that sensitive documents are not used as evidence in a trial, on the



grounds that to do so would be against the public or national interest.

- 1979 *All Eng. Law Rep.* **3** 731 The judge..wrongly exercised his discretion when he refused to inspect unless public policy (of which public interest immunity is a manifestation) required him to refuse.
- 1982 *Canada Supreme Court Rep.* **2** 690/1 Any testimony under oath..would result in a violation of Crown privilege (or public interest immunity).
- 1999 A. TOMKINS in M. Sunkin & S. Payne *Nature of Crown* vii. 171 Public interest immunity (PII) has become both controversial and newsworthy in recent years as a result of the government's extended use of PII in the context of criminal trials, most notably in the collapsed Matrix Churchill prosecution.

**public interest immunity certificate** *n.* (in the United Kingdom) a document authorized by a government minister or senior civil servant which prevents specified information from being used in a trial.

- [1982 *Times* 8 May 6/5 The secretary of state had claimed public interest immunity. In such cases the court had first to peruse the public immunity claim certificate.
- 1987 *Times* (Nexis) 27 Nov. The Home Secretary had signed a certificate of public interest immunity which had restricted the questioning of Sir Robert by counsel for the newspapers.]
- 1988 *Times* 10 Sept. 5/7 Treasury counsel acting for the Government, said he could answer the question within the bounds of two public interest immunity certificates issued by two Cabinet ministers.
- 2000 D. BARTLETT in L. Cliffe et al. *Politics of Lying* viii. 130 [There was] widespread suspicion that ministers and officials had..sought to pervert justice by preventing the disclosure of documents through Public Interest Immunity Certificates.

**public language** *n.* (also †**language public**) †(*a*) a common or international language (*obsolete*); (*b*) language of a register or kind used in a public context.

- 1521 in H. Bradshaw *Lyfe St. Werburge* 2nd balade sig. s.iii One of thy clientes..Hath chaunged newly, o mayde..Thy legende latine, to our language publique.

- 1790 *Times* 11 Sept. 2/1 There cannot be a doubt that the public language of the Duke of Fitz-James's letter to the King of France, expresses the secret sentiments of the far greater part of the Nobility of that country.
- 1891 *Cent. Mag.* Aug. 486/1 The public language..which the Emperor uses sounds strangely autocratic when read in the columns of one of our dailies.
- 1992 *N.Y. Times Mag.* 13 Sept. 64/3 I've always had a secret desire to harangue a crowd of people for 10 hours in the sweltering heat... It's the origin of my fascination with public language.

**public lavatory** *n.* = *public toilet n.*

- 1880 *Times* 14 Aug. 11/1 The object of the company is to provide public lavatories..in the thoroughfares, squares, parks, gardens, and other open spaces of London.
- 1933 E. WAUGH *Scoop* I. iii. 50 There was a dense crowd round the public lavatory.
- 2001 J. LE FANU *They don't know what's Wrong* xi. 175 There is something uniquely embarrassing about going into a crowded public lavatory, waiting for an empty urinal, getting ready to pass urine and then finding nothing happens.

**Public Lending Right** *n.* the legal entitlement of authors or publishers to a fee each time one of their books is borrowed from a public library; abbreviated *PLR*.

- 1960 *Times* 11 Mar. 6/1 A Parliamentary Bill aimed at creating a public lending right for authors of books..has been drafted by Sir Alan Herbert.
- 1993 *Capilano Rev.* Spring 10 Everyone..was being paid save the writer of the books being borrowed. Public Lending Right was invented to redress that injustice and the first PLR cheques were paid out to Canadian authors in 1986.

**public liability** *n.* (a) a debt owed by the State; (b) *Insurance* a legal responsibility to make financial reparation to a member of the public for death, injury, or damage to property caused by failing to take reasonable care in one's actions; frequently *attributive*, esp. in **public liability insurance**.

- 1839 *Star & Republican Banner* (Gettysburg, Pa.) (Electronic text) 19 Mar. Its [sc. the administration's] exertions will continue to be steadily directed to discharge the public liabilities.
- 1893 *Manufacturer & Builder* Nov. 252/3 It insured steam boilers, machinery of every description, employers' liability, public liability and general accidents.
- 1898 *Fitchburg* (Mass.) *Sentinel* 26 Mar. 4/5 Foreign insurance companies transacting surety, employers' or public liability insurance in this state.
- 1952 P. STUDENSKI & H. E. KROOSS *Financial Hist. U.S.* x. 115 The state adopted a free banking system, requiring a 100 per cent reserve against all public liabilities.
- 2000 *Plumbing Mag.* (Inst. of Plumbing) May 32/2 Whilst many of our members hold Public Liability insurance, there are still some members who do not hold any insurance whatsoever.

**public library** *n.* †(a) in the older British universities: a library open to all members of the university (*obsolete*); (b) a library maintained for the use of the public, usually out of public funds.

Early public libraries were frequently subscription libraries. In Britain the Public Libraries Act of 1850 gave local boroughs the power to establish free public libraries.

- 1597 T. BODLEY *Let.* in *Trecentale Bodleianum* (1913) 24 Where there hath bin heretofore a publicke library in Oxford..I will take the charge and cost upon me, to reduce it again to his former use.
- 1614 in R. Willis & J. W. Clark *Archit. Hist. Univ. Cambr.* (1886) III. 35 There is an intention of erecting a new publicque library in Cambridge in imitation of that of Oxford.
- 1674 J. OXENBRIDGE *Will* 12 Mar. in J. Winsor *Memorial Hist. Boston* (1880) I. 501 To the Public Library in Boston or elsewhere, as my executors and overseers shall judge best, Augustine's Works in six volumes, the Century's in three volumes, [etc.].
- 1753 *Chambers's Cycl.* Suppl. The public library at Milan is also called the Ambrosian Library.
- 1814 G. DYER *Hist. Univ. Cambr.* I. 247 You enter the quadrangle that forms the public schools through the portico of the public library.
- 1817 J. TORREY *Intellect. Torch* (rev. ed.) 9 Well selected free public libraries, it is believed, would form a very important auxiliary of public instruction, in all our schools, academies, hospitals, alms houses, cantonments,..state prisons, penitentiaries, work houses, &c. &c.

- 1829 (*title*) A catalogue of the South African Public Library, Cape of Good Hope.
- 1851 *Eliza Cook's Jrnl.* 29 Mar. 343/1 The spirited townfolks of Manchester have taken up the project of a Free Public Library, and already proceeded to set it on foot.
- 1892 (*title*) Finding list of the free public library of the city of Evanston, Ill.
- 1994 *Globe & Mail (Toronto)* 29 Jan. D8/1 Public libraries were meant to ensure that books were not the exclusive domain of the *literati*.
- 2012 D. L. GILTON *Lifelong Learning Public Libr.* i. 4 Many public libraries now instruct adults of all ages on computer use, promoting several literacies.

**public limited company** *n.* *Stock Market* a public company with limited liability; *spec.* such a company registered as such in the United Kingdom (abbreviated *plc*).

- 1908 *Econ. Jrnl.* **18** 192 Shall it be a private firm (or partnership), or a private limited company, or a public limited company?
- 1990 R. IZHAR *Accounting, Costing, & Managem.* I. xii. 188 In addition to gearing and profitability ratios investors will be interested in a number of additional ratios applicable to public limited companies. These include the dividend yield..and earnings per share.
- 2003 *Eurobusiness* Aug. 91/2 The authority..will be 100 per cent state owned, although it is a public limited company.

**public menace** *n.* †(*a*) a threat made in public (*obsolete*); (*b*) a person or thing considered a threat or annoyance to the community, a public enemy.

- 1683 tr. Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* VII. xi. 123 What patient sufferance of publick menaces, of exclamations against us, and of perils, and of persecutions.
- 1763 J. JOHNSON *New & Royal Eng. Universal Dict.* I. *Denunciation*, the act of denouncing; a public menace.
- 1877 *Decatur (Illinois) Republican* 16 Feb. 2/3 He is now standing up, not for Tilden, whose rule would be a public menace, but for 'ten thousand voters of Louisiana against four rascals'.
- 1888 *Cent. Mag.* July 413/1 The Ministry..shrank from war, but..desired to reap all the advantages of a public menace, even while privately disclaiming one.

- 1926 *Amer. Mercury* Apr. 501/2 Milton..was subsequently clapped into the hoosegow as a public menace.
- 2003 *Mail on Sunday* (Nexis) 22 June 23 Dudley has graduated from being a spoilt brat to a full-blooded public menace whose gang beats up weaker children for the fun of it.

**public notary** *n.* see NOTARY *n.* 1b.

**public nuisance** *n.* a thing or act that causes annoyance, inconvenience, or danger to the community; (*Law*) the crime of doing or not doing something which interferes with the exercise of a right common to all (cf. *private nuisance n.* at PRIVATE *adj.*<sup>1</sup>, *adv.*, and *n.* Special uses 2).

- 1638 W. CHILLINGWORTH *Relig. Protestants* I. iv. §67. 228 Shall it bee a fault to straiten and encumber the Kings high way with publique nuisances?
- 1776 A. SMITH *Inq. Wealth of Nations* II. v. ii. 486 Instead of being useful to society by their industry, they become public nuisances by their vices and disorders.
- 1877 TROLLOPE *Amer. Senator* I. xxvii. 288 ‘What a very queer bird he is.’ ‘He is a public nuisance.’
- 1933 S. WALKER *Night Club Era* 213 The police under Whalen..wrecked many a noble barroom under the public nuisance law.
- 1993 R. LOWE & W. SHAW *Travellers* 169 Seven of us have got to go to court in two months on a charge of causing a public nuisance.
- 2004 *Daily Tel.* 9 Feb. 19/4 Cockling gangs have been a serious public nuisance in Morecambe Bay for some time.

**public offer** *n.* *Stock Market* (orig. *U.S.*) = *public offering n.*; (formerly also) †an offer to the shareholders of a company to buy their shares (= *tender offer n.* at TENDER *n.*<sup>2</sup> 3b) (*obsolete*).

- 1854 *N.-Y. Daily Times* 29 Mar. 8/5 This continued advance could be avoided by a public offer of the stocks at the then current market price.

- 1889 *Times* 2 Mar. 16/2 The capital taken up has been almost exclusively subscribed by customers, no previous public offer having been made.
- 1968 *Jrnl. Finance* 23 614 The predominate use of the public offer can be, in part, attributed to the federal regulation of securities issued by interstate utility companies under which a public offering of new security issues is required.
- 2005 *Wall St. Jrnl.* 30 Aug. D6 Maybank Fortis will subsequently make a public offer for the remaining shares after completion of the deal.

**public offering** *n.* *Stock Market* (orig. *U.S.*) an offering to the general public of shares in or bonds of a particular company; cf. *initial public offering n.* at *INITIAL adj.* and *n.*  
Additions.

- 1889 *Washington Post* 16 June 7/5 The advancing price of..Railroad stock has been one of the events of the week,..the lowest public offering being at 50.
- 1962 R. F. MIKESELL *U.S. Private & Govt. Investm. Abroad* ix. 236 Joint operations with the World Bank involving public offerings of bonds in the U.S. private capital market totalled \$236 million.
- 2002 P. AUGAR & J. PALMER *Rise Player Manager* iii. 55 He had been assigned to the image management of a firm that had undergone a high profile public offering.

**public office** *n.* (also †**office public**) (*a*) a position or function involving responsibility to the public, esp. in government; the fact of holding such a position; (*b*) a building or set of buildings used for civic business, such as judicial courts, departments of municipal officials, etc.

- 1481 CAXTON in tr. Cicero *De Senectute* sig. d4<sup>v</sup> Some olde men ben so feble that they shuld not mowe execute nor doo ony publique office of dignyte [L. *ut nullum officii aut omnino vitae munus exsequi possint*].
- 1696 T. SPRAT *Disc. Ld. Bp. of Rochester to Clergy* 67 Towards the obtaining which Blessed Ends, you can never think of any better..Means than..in your public Office, by defending and supporting the Church.
- 1792 *Act 32 Geo. III* c. 53 §3 A certain Publick Office within the Liberty of Westminster known by the Name of The Public Office in Bow Street.
- 1891 *Birmingham Daily Gaz.* 2 Mar. 7/8 Birmingham Public Office. First Court. —Saturday.

- 1996 L. AL-HAFIDH et al. *Europe: Rough Guide* (ed. 3) II. ix. 454 A spacious pedestrian precinct containing the standard cocktail of high-rise luxury hotels, public offices, boxlike flats, [etc.].
- 2000 *Irish World* 2 June 9/5 Helping out one's friends is a fine thing in private life, but to use public office for that purpose is unacceptable.

**public opinion** *n.* (originally, as a count noun) an opinion held by the majority of people; (later also, as a mass noun) views prevalent among the public; what is generally thought about something; cf. OPINION *n.* 1b.

- 1615 N. BYFIELD *Expos. Epist. Colossians* iv. 199 Some thinke the Laodiceans wrote to the Apostle, and propounded their doubts,..this is the most publike opinion.
- 1631 T. MAY tr. J. Barclay *Mirroure of Mindes* vi. 204 There is a great and publike opinion of their cruelty.
- 1735 VISCT. BOLINGBROKE *Diss. upon Parties* (ed. 2) Ded. p. xxxi Let them stand, or fall in the publick Opinion, according to their Merit.
- 1892 *Pall Mall Gaz.* 29 Nov. 5/1 When the court has pronounced its decision, then let it be freely commented upon; but until then parties must not attempt to influence public opinion.
- 1900 'M. TWAIN' *Man that corrupted Hadleyburg* 298 A Government cannot satisfy all these public opinions; it can only go through the motions of trying.
- 1935 *Oakland (Calif.) Tribune* 24 Oct. 34/4 The subjects, contacted in the public opinion poll, were asked the question: What part of the Government spending would you like to see abandoned?
- 2003 *Daily Star* 3 Apr. 23/3 We must look at how the law is framed to ensure it ties with public opinion.

**public ownership** *n.* *Political Economy* State ownership of an asset, corporation, or industry.

- 1846 *N. Amer. Rev.* July 23 In no nation..would a government dare to perform any acts that implied public ownership of the whole country.
- 1919 A. M. TODD (*title*) Public ownership of railroads.
- 1995 *Daily Tel.* 13 Feb. 23/2 His solution is socialism without public ownership, and 'republicanism' without removing the monarchy.

**public park** *n.* a park that is open to the public.

- 1822 J. C. LOUDON *Encycl. Gardening* III. IV. 1186 Public Parks, or Equestrian Promenades, are valuable appendages to large cities.
- 1903 *U.S. Statutes* XXXI. 765 An Act To set apart certain lands in the State of South Dakota as a public park to be known as the Wind Cave National Park.
- 1975 *Country Life* 2 Jan. 38/3 In 1963 Cypress was given to the City of Charleston as a public park.

**public policy** *n.* (a) policy, esp. of government, that relates to or affects the public as a whole; social policy; (b) *Law* the principle that prospective injury to the public good is a basis for refusing to enforce a contract which would otherwise be valid.

- ?1556 E. P. in tr. T. Cranmer *Confut. Verities* Pref. sig. C.iiii (*margin*) Priuate commodite, and Popishe sutteltie ouercame good publike policie and brought in tirannye.
- 1689 N. BACON *Hist. & Polit. Disc. Laws & Govt. Eng.* x. 57 I will not touch upon every particular, but onely upon two, which reflect somewhat upon the publick Policy; the one touching the course of Inheritance., the other touching pleading in the Courts of Civil Justice.
- 1770 G. WILSON *Rep. Cases King's Courts* 1 230 This court constantly sets aside such bargains, upon the principles of public policy.
- 1846 *Penny Cycl.* Suppl. II. 457/2 There are contracts which ought to be declared void for reasons of public policy, or, to use a more correct expression., reasons of public utility.
- 1973 I. M. SINCLAIR *Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties* v. 110 The gradual establishment in common law jurisdictions of the principle that certain types of contract are, by their very nature, injurious to society and therefore contrary to public policy.
- 1998 *Independent* 13 Jan. I. 16/2 A new 'affluence test', under which women at work might lose their maternity pay unless they could prove that they need it, would introduce an extraordinary and dangerous new principle into public policy.

**public prints** *n.* see *the public prints* at PRINT *n.* 12a.



**public–private** *adj.* orig. *U.S.* involving investment from both the public and private sectors.

- 1951 *N.Y. Times* 15 Oct. 24/2 Is the future of metropolitan transit to be public ownership, perhaps by an authority? Or shall we..through public–private partnership encourage expanded service?
- 1992 D. MORGAN *Rising in West* III. x. 176 The Central Valley Project added a new element to California's mixed public-private economy.
- 2002 *Big Issue* 4 Nov. 6/4 Many Labour MPs think the so-called public-private finance initiative is a failure where it has been introduced into the health service.

**public prosecutor** *n.* a law officer appointed to conduct criminal prosecutions on behalf of the crown or the State, or in the public interest; (*Sc.*) the procurator fiscal of a district.

- 1750 T. NUGENT tr. C.-L. de S. de Montesquieu *Spirit of Laws* II. XXVIII. xxxvi. 304 The Roman law had popular forms for the prosecution of crimes, which were inconsistent with the office of a public prosecutor [Fr. *Le Droit Romain avoit des formes populaires pour la poursuite des crimes, qui ne pouvoient s'accorder avec le Ministère d'une Partie publique*].
- 1771 G. JOHNSTONE *Thoughts on Acquisitions in E. Indies* 40 The necessity of a public prosecutor is so evident, that the wonder will rather arise that there has not been one already appointed.
- 1809 *Edinb. Advertiser* 9 May 1/2 The Public Prosecutor was intitled to insist on having the dogs in question destroyed.
- 1877 *Encycl. Brit.* VI. 590/2 The distinguishing feature of Scotch criminal law is the existence of a public prosecutor.
- 1919 M. M. STEYN *Diary* 280 We had a proper jury, usher, policeman, counsel for the prisoner,..and public prosecutor.
- 1996 *Sunday Tel.* 4 Feb. (Review section) 5/5 Several of the lawyers had red bow-ties, and the public prosecutor had an impressive sweep of brilliantined hair.

† **public reason** *n.* *Obsolete rare*<sup>-1</sup> = *reason of State n.* at REASON *n.*<sup>1</sup> Phrases 1b.

1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* IV. 389 Public reason just..compels me now To do what else..I should abhorre.

**Public Record Office** *n.* an institution where the official archives of a nation, state, province, etc., are preserved; *esp.* that of the United Kingdom between 1838 (when it was created) and 2003 (when it was subsumed in the National Archives).

1838 *Act 1 & 2 Victoria* c. 94 §8 As soon as conveniently may be after the Appointment of a Deputy Keeper of the Records., a Public Record Office shall be established under the Direction of the Master of the Rolls.

1887 *Northern Notes & Queries* Dec. 140 In the public record Office are the comptures of the Embassy.

1977 A. J. P. TAYLOR *Let.* 21 Feb. in *Let. to Eva* (1991) 332 I am writing on Marquand's life of MacDonald... MacDonald's papers are not open and can be seen at the Public Record Office.

1999 *Herald-Sun (Melbourne)* (Nexis) 8 Feb. 10 The document forms part of a collection of material deposited in Victoria's Public Record Office.

**public room** *n.* a room in which the public may be received, or in which public gatherings are held; (also) a reception room in a house.

1617 F. MORYSON *Itinerary* 154 [The friars] haue no beds, but sleep vpon straw, and eat priuately In their owne Celles, only eating together in the publique roomes on the feast dayes.

1658 *Publick Intelligencer* No. 152. 16 The Officers of his Highness Army attending him here in one of the publick Rooms, His Highness delivered his mind to them in a most pious and affectionate Speech.

1686 BP. G. BURNET *Some Lett. conc. Switzerland* iii. 144 They [*sc.* nuns] receive much company: but that which I saw was in a publick Room, in which there were many grills for several Parlors.

1762 in A. M. Earle *Customs & Fashions in Old New Eng.* (1893) 247 At the Public Room of the above Inn will be delivered a series of Moral Dialogues.

- 1898 J. CONRAD *Let.* 12 Oct. in E. Garnett *Let. from Joseph Conrad* (1956) 147 If the public room on 1st floor is crowded retain the *cabinet*—if not, retain a table good for three.
- 1965 *Scotsman* 14 June 8 House contains 2 public rooms, 2 bedrooms, boxroom, scullery and bathroom.
- 1978 'D. RUTHERFORD' *Collision Course* 121 They paid admission to the Casino and..strolled through the public rooms.

**public sector** *n.* the part of a country's economy which is controlled by the State.

- 1934 F. V. FIELD in *Econ. Handbk. Pacific Area* v. 295 The basic reason for this increase [in the share of the national income] in the public sector is the utilization of large masses of labour in the industrial and collectivized agricultural development.
- 1995 *Independent* 12 Jan. 2/5 Merseyside Development Corporation (MDS) cost the public sector and local businesses more than £1m.

**public servant** *n.* (originally) a person whose labour is for the public or the common good; (later) a State official; a government or Crown employee; a civil servant.

- 1598 I. D. tr. L. Le Roy *Aristotles Politiques* II. v. 91 Hee [*sc.* Plato] seemeth..by the establishment of such lawes to make the City small, if all Craftsmen shall bee publicke seruants [Fr. *si les artisans sont publiques*], and not comprised within the corporation of the Citie.
- 1671 MILTON *Samson Agonistes* 1616 Immediately Was Samson as a public servant brought, In thir state Livery clad.
- 1676 T. HOBBS tr. Homer *Iliads* I. 307 Talhybius and Eurybates..Two public servants of the king were these.
- 1842 DICKENS *Amer. Notes* I. viii. 301 The Presidential housemaids have..an ample amount of 'compensation:' which is the American word for salary, in the case of all public servants.
- 1942 E. PAUL *Narrow Street* xxii. 189 She is an ideal public servant, having all the minor ailments possible, a fiendish disposition,..and a healthy dislike for mankind.

- 1979 *Globe & Mail (Toronto)* 8 Feb. 8/2 Bilingual public servants will speak in one official language as a protest against the federal Government's proposal to withdraw bilingualism bonuses.
- 2003 *Independent* 14 Apr. I. 7/1 He will return to the Middle East and Iraq next month as the incumbent of one of the toughest and most uncharted overseas jobs any public servant can imagine.

**public speaker** *n.* a person who engages in public speaking.

- 1646 *Demurre to Bill preventing Growth of Heresie* 3 Let some course be taken and charge given to the publique speakers, that they..divert the streame of their discourses against the ugliness of vice.
- 1712 J. BRIGHTLAND *Gram. Eng. Tongue* (ed. 2) 189 Those Things which are peculiar to a public Speaker.
- 1837 T. CARLYLE *French Revol.* II. V. ii. 283 Most mellifluous yet most impetuous of public speakers.
- 1998 *N.Y. Times Bk. Rev.* 20 Sept. 8/1 Morel..became a radical, round-the-clock journalist and public speaker.

**public speaking** *n.* the action or practice of addressing public gatherings; the making of speeches.

- 1587 J. BRIDGES *Def. Government Church Eng.* IX. 660 How Caluine digresseth hereupon from Womens publique speaking to their publike government, and with what hard tearmes he concludes against it.
- 1759 W. SMITH *Disc. Public Occas. App.* 221 This attention to public speaking, which is begun here [*i.e.* in the College of Philadelphia] with the very rudiments of the mother-tongue, is continued down to the end.
- 1837 T. CARLYLE *French Revol.* I. VI. v. 329 Nor has public speaking declined, though Lafayette and his Patrols look sour on it.
- 1923 *Polit. Sci. Q.* **38** 450 When there was need for some public speaking to be done he could rely upon the oratorical abilities of the mellifluent Depew.
- 2004 D. COSPER *Wedding Season* I. 21 I am very much less than fond of public speaking..in a subzero kind of way.

**public spirit** *n.* a willingness or disposition to act in the best interests of the community when there is no personal benefit.

- [1643 D. CAWDREY *Good Man* 24 All these considered, you will hardly find a man of so publicke a spirit in all Scripture.]
- 1649 W. PRYNNE *Speech made in House of Commons, 4 Dec. 1648* 105 There was no man of publick Spirit that engaged with, contributed towards, or took up Arms in the Parliaments service or Cause at first.
- 1712 R. STEELE *Spectator* No. 294. ¶1 The greatest Instances of publick Spirit the Age has produced.
- 1803 *Censor* Sept. 107 I am not influenced by motives of private revenge, but by a public spirit.
- 1914 H. H. PEERLESS *Diary* 30 May in *Brief Jolly Change* (2003) 176 John Kyrle distinguished himself by his philanthropy and public spirit, lending a helping-hand to all sundry.
- 1999 *Gloucestershire Echo* (Nexis) 31 Mar. 8 Congratulations for your public spirit in saving the Holst Birthplace Museum from closure.

**public state** *n.* [compare classical Latin *rēs pūblica* REPUBLIC *n.*] now *rare* (chiefly with *the*) the nation, the State, esp. considered in terms of its people; the body politic, the commonwealth.

- 1546 T. LANGLEY tr. P. Vergile *De Invent.* f. xl<sup>v</sup> Aboute thre hundreth yere after the buildyng of Rome ye publike state was transferred from the consulshyp vnto the rule of tenne called *decem viri*.
- a1628 F. GREVILLE *Inquis. Fame & Honour in Certaine Wks.* (1633) 54 It therefore much concernes each publike State, To hoyses these costlesse sayles vp to the skye.
- 1651 T. HOBBS *Leviathan* IV. xlvi. 376 And this private measure of Good, is a Doctrine, not onely Vain, but also Pernicious to the Publique State.
- 1781 H. DOWNMAN tr. Voltaire *Brutus* II. ii. 253 The lure of subtle policy to arm My discontent against the public state.
- 1800 *Times* 26 Apr. 1/4 Speculations which, if greatly acted upon, would subvert the whole economy of the Public State; would viciate and defame all the classes of Society.

- 1908 *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.* 47 669 Astrology..concerned itself in Babylonia and Assyria with the general welfare and the public state.
- 1985 *Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc.* 75 69 (*heading*) The public state and the common good.

**public statute** *n.* = *public act n.* (a).

- [1572 J. BRIDGES tr. R. Gwalther *Hundred, Threescore & Fiftene Homelyes vppon Actes Apostles* xxviii. 895 It was a thing of it self daungerous among the Romanes, to professe the Christian faithe and Religion, which during the raigne of Tiberius..was condemned by publike statute and decree.
- 1659 P. HEYLYN *Examen Historicum* 290 I represented many passages in it, disagreeable to the Laws of God and his Church, and repugnant to the publick Statutes of Parliament.]
- 1739 J. CAY (*title*) An abridgment of the publick statutes in force and use from Magna Charta..to the eleventh year of his present Majesty King George II. inclusive.
- 1856 L. S. CUSHING *Lex Parliamentaria Americana* 818 The preamble of a public statute recites the inconvenience which proposes to remedy.
- 1910 *Encycl. Brit.* I. 828/1 The public statutes of the United States are to be found in the *Revised Statutes* of 1873.
- 2004 *Independent* (Nexis) 2 Apr. 16 According to a 1993 decision in another commons case, rights over land could not be acquired by conduct prohibited by public statute.

**public switched telephone network** *n.*

*Telecommunications* the network of telephone circuits that are accessible by the public and require the setting up of a dedicated connection between the calling and the called numbers for the duration of each call.

- 1965 *Times* 7 Oct. 23/2 A high speed half duplex data transmission terminal..will work on-line into its Manchester Atlas computer over the G.P.O. public switched telephone network using the G.P.O. Datel Set 1A.
- 1993 *Videography* Winter 22/3 Dial tone carries with it connotations of the flexibility of the entire public switched telephone network (PSTN): the ability to call anywhere in the world, at any time, for any purpose.

2005 *Gold Coast Bull.* (Austral.) (Nexis) 5 Apr. 27 VoIP transmits your voice from one phone to another using the internet..at a fraction of the cost of using the public switched telephone network.

† **public table** *n.* *Obsolete* (*a*) [after post-classical Latin *publica tabula* (1559 in the passage translated in quot. 1561)] a public record or archive; (*b*) a common table for guests at an inn or hotel; = TABLE D'HÔTE *n.*

- 1561 T. NORTON tr. J. Calvin *Inst. Christian Relig.* I. vi. f. 12<sup>v</sup> At length that by continual proceeding of doctrine, the trueth suruiuing in al ages might stil remaine in the world, the same oracles which he had left with the fathers, his pleasure was to haue as it were enrolled in publike tables [L. *quasi publicis tabulis*; Fr. *comme en dépost*].
- 1631 P. HEYLYN *Hist. St. George* II. ii. 147 For besides the Consuls Ordinarie, appointed for the yeare, whose names onely occurre in the publicke Tables: there was another sort of Consuls, call'd Consuls honourarie, appointed onely for a Moneth.
- 1695 R. SOUTH *Tritheism* 301 The time of which [sc. his taking the oath] was fairly intimated by a Friend of his at a Publick Table at Oxon, about three months before he took it.
- 1742 LADY M. W. MONTAGU *Let.* 23 May (1966) II. 281 Nothing is cheaper than living in an Inn in a Country Town in France they being oblig'd to ask..25 sous for dinner and 30 for supper and lodging of those that eat at the public Table.
- 1872 'G. ELIOT' *Middlemarch* II. xxxix. 313 He had..returned later than usual, having given himself the rare treat of dining at the public table of the Blue Bull.

**public telephone** *n.* a telephone that is available for use by the public.

- 1889 *Pall Mall Gaz.* 22 Jan. 7/2 In New York..news agency 'tickers', messenger calls, private as well as public telephones, burglar and fire alarms,..are to be found in all well appointed offices.
- 1893 *McClure's Mag.* 1 394/2 There were even days when the Joneses questioned whether they were not running a public telephone, so often did the bell ring.
- 1971 R. BUSBY *Deadlock* v. 74 A public telephone stood in one corner of the discreetly lit foyer.

† **public thing** *n.* (also **thing public**) [after classical Latin *rēs pūblica* REPUBLIC *n.*; compare Middle French *chose publique* (late 14th cent.)] *Obsolete* = *public state n.*

a1450–1500 (►1436) *Libel Eng. Policy* (1926) l. 912 (*MED*) This was his labour for the publique thinge.

1483 J. RUSSELL in J. G. Nichols *Grants Reign Edward V* (1854) p. xliii The fyrst institution of the thyng public there made by Romulus.

**public toilet** *n.* orig. *U.S.* a toilet for use by the public; cf. *public lavatory n.*, *public convenience n.* (b).

*Public restroom* or *public bathroom* are now more usual in North American use.

1895 *Oakland (Calif.) Tribune* 6 Nov. 1/3 The men's public toilet was in a similar condition to that of a public toilet at a railroad station.

1967 *Sunday Truth (Austral.)* 16 July 28/4 To save gas she washes in public toilets, and if she feels like a drink she has a swig from a wino's bottle at South Brisbane.

2005 I. SANSOM *Mobile Libr.: Case Missing Bks.* xii. 187 Something should be done about the state of the public toilets.

**public transport** *n.* transport available for public use; a transport system (of buses, trains, etc.) that runs on fixed routes at set times and may be used by anyone on payment of a fare.

1859 *Sci. Amer.* 29 Jan. 172/1 The removal of any difficulties which stand in the way of entire success in this system of public transport.

1955 B. PYM *Less than Angels* x. 126 The vague but confident tone of one who never has to worry about getting to places or to rely on the uncertainties of public transport.

1961 E. WAUGH *Unconditional Surrender* I. i. 23 I'll drop you back at your office. Can't have you using public transport on your birthday.

1997 *BBC Top Gear Mag.* Nov. 171/3 If we all start using public transport when the arteries become blocked, anarchy will descend.



**public transportation** *n.* chiefly *N. Amer.* = *public transport n.*

- 1851 *Weekly Wisconsin (Milwaukee)* (Electronic text) 18 June Foreseeing the ultimate permanent success of this new description of public transportation, Alyan Adams, of Boston started another express on the same route.
- 1947 G. GREER *Your City Tomorrow* xi. 201 From and to the suburb you are obliged to travel under conditions resembling a nightmare, whether you drive your car or use public transportation.
- 2000 D. ADEBAYO *My Once upon Time* (2001) ii. 13 My street was quiet, apart from a few worker bees scurrying to the safety of their vehicles or the public transportation.

**public utility** *n.* a service or supply regarded as essential to the community, esp. the supply of electricity, gas, and water; (also) a company providing such a service or supply.

- 1895 H. L. CALL *Coming Revol.* iii. 50 The private control of transportation and other public utilities.
- 1915 *Polit. Q.* May 106 Now coal mining is a 'public-utility' industry.
- 1928 *Daily Chron.* 9 Aug. 7/2 Crops have been destroyed and communications and public utilities have been crippled.
- 1976 H. TRACY *Death in Reserve* xvii. 129 Public utilities worked with the servicemen with an impressive coherence.
- 1992 *Beaver* Aug. 52/3 Not everyone supported the private ownership of public utilities.

**public-voiced** *adj.* having or using a voice suited to speaking in public; expressed in a public forum.

- 1909 *N.E.D.* Public-voiced.
- 1970 *Nineteenth-Cent. Fiction* 24 444 A loud-spoken public-voiced narrator.
- 1992 S. S. LANSER *Fictions of Authority* iii. 47 Practices of overt authoriality opened women novelists to the same charges..levelled at women writing in other public-voiced genres.

**public walk** *n.* a public promenade in or near a town.

- [1599 tr. *Historia de Donne Famose* sig. B2<sup>v</sup> She walked foorth, & falling down in the very publique walke amongst the whole rous..she brought foorth her first begotten.]
- 1651 T. HOBBS *Leviathan* IV. xlvi. 368 Every Master took some place for that purpose. Plato in certain publique Walks called Academia.
- 1733 *Let.* in *Hist. Reg.* (1735) No. 79. 182 The prisoner was conducted from the Gate of the Palace..in the Midst of a Concourse of so many people in a publick Walk.
- 1841 DICKENS *Old Curiosity Shop* II. xliv. 37 In the public walks and lounges of a town, people go to see and to be seen.
- 1999 *William & Mary Q.* 56 542 The center of the Federal City was organized by two principal poles... These were placed on extensive public squares and linked by..a public walk.

**public weal** *n.* the well-being or welfare of a country; = *public good n.*; (formerly also) †a nation, a State, esp. considered in terms of the welfare of its people (*obsolete*); cf. WEAL-PUBLIC *n.*

- ▶ a1470 MALORY *Morte Darthur* (Winch. Coll. 13) (1990) I. 185 The Emperour Lucius, Procurour of the publyke wele of Rome.
- 1576 R. ROBINSON tr. F. Patrizi *Moral Methode Ciuile Policie* Ep. Ded. For the continual conseruation of the publique weale therof universally.
- 1737 R. GLOVER *Leonidas* VII. 255 Ye vile deserters of the public weal,..that mingled with the heaps Of those, who perish in their country's cause.
- 1823 BYRON *Let.* 9 Oct. (1981) XI. 43 Various attempts made to extract my monies, but to these I demur, until sure that they are to be applied to the public weal.
- 1995 *Frank* 25 Oct. 3/2 The moral high-rollers at CBC television take seriously their self-imposed task as guardians of journalistic integrity and public weal.

**public wealth** *n.* (a) public welfare, the public interest (now *arch.*); (b) public financial resources, national wealth.

- 1541 COVERDALE tr. H. Bullinger *Christen State Matrimonye* xi. f. xxvi Bringge vp children vnto the prayse of God, and to the publik welth, profit and counfort of

thy selfe and other thy neyghbours [Ger. *dir und deinen Nächsten zum Nutzen und Frommen*].

- 1660 W. DAVENANT *His Sacred Majesties Most Happy Return to Dominions* 5 No more shall publick wealth on Spies be spent.
- c1700 DRYDEN tr. Boccace in *Wks. John Dryden* (1885) XI. 506 The governor and government are gone; The public wealth to foreign parts conveyed.
- 1828 I. D'ISRAELI *Comm. Life Charles I* II. i. 2 Charles the First has never been accused of a wanton profusion of the public wealth.
- 1954 F. R. SCOTT in R. Brown & D. Bennett *Anthol. Canad. Lit. in Eng.* (1982) 353 The bold commands of monopoly, big with machines, Carving its kingdoms out of the public wealth.
- 2002 *Scotl. on Sunday* (Nexis) 3 Mar. 20 This contribution from those in commerce is an enormous contribution to the public wealth of the country.

**public welfare** *n.* = *public interest n.*

- 1579 T. ROGERS tr. J. Habermann *Enimie of Securitie* 75 They rule not for their owne cause, but for the publike welfare.
- 1652 L. S. *Natures Dowrie* X. 18 In such particulars..as are not momentous to the impairing of the publick welfare.
- 1759 A. SMITH *Theory Moral Sentiments* IV. §i. 351 The same principle..serves to recommend those institutions, which tend to promote the public welfare.
- 1858 M. ARNOLD *Merope* 119 Let us a union found..Bas'd on pure public welfare.
- 1901 *Edinb. Rev.* Apr. 378 The chief trustee of public welfare is, in this country, Parliament.
- 2000 *New Republic* 3 Apr. 16/2 It's not important to the public welfare whether you secure convictions or not.

**public woman** *n.* (also †**woman public**) [compare Middle French, French *femme publique* (early 15th cent.)] a prostitute; = *common woman* at COMMON *adj.* 6b .

- c1510 H. WATSON tr. *Valentine & Orson* sig. B.iiiij In the stede of the clothe of golde that I was wonte for to were, I am as a woman publyke ful of iniuryes and vytupere commytted & aourned.
- 1655 tr. A. Semedo *Hist. China* I. vi. 30 The women of the better quality use gold and silver, the Courtesans, or publique women are not suffered to weare them.

- 1749 P. ANNET *Social Bliss Considered* III. 93 If dealing with public women be thought a sin against posterity, by not promoting it; so is matrimony, when ill.
- 1862 *Frank Leslie's Illustr. Newspaper* 14 June 160/1 He ordered that all women guilty of such conduct should be treated as public women.
- 1994 *Eighteenth-Cent. Stud.* **28** 221 (*heading*) Public virtue and public women: prostitution in Revolutionary Paris.

**public works** *n.* †(*a*) deeds done for the public good (*obsolete rare*); (*b*) construction or engineering operations carried out by or for the State or local government on behalf of the community.

- 1587 A. FLEMING et al. *Holinshed's Chron.* (new ed.) III. Contin. 1549/2 (*margin*) A great furtherer of all publike works.
- 1600 P. HOLLAND tr. Livy *Rom. Hist.* I. 37 Being now earnestly bent and busily occupied about laying the foundations of the Temple, and following other publike works in the citie.
- 1676 in E. D. Neill *Virginia Carolorum* (1886) 361. For haveing upon specious preferences of publique works raised great unjust taxes [etc.].
- 1783 B. FRANKLIN *Let.* 27 July What bridges, Aqueducts, new Roads, and other public Works, Edifices, and Improvements..might have been obtained by spending those millions.
- 1891 R. WALLACE *Rural Econ. Austral. & N.Z.* xxxviii. 488 No public-works undertaking can be made economically to suit any purpose whatever when that purpose has only been named without being formulated.
- 1961 B. CRUMP *Hang on a Minute Mate* 65 He was working in a Public Works road gang, clearing slips off roads and digging drains and things.