In American English, **collective nouns** (e.g. mob, jury, team, committee etc) always take a singular verb. In British English, collective nouns can be followed by both singular and plural verbs. Singular verbs are preferred when the speaker thinks of the group as a single whole. Plural verbs are preferred when the reference is to the individual members in the group.

Compare:

The mob **has** gathered quickly. (Here we use a singular verb because the reference is to the group and not to the individuals of which it is composed.)

The mob **were** scattered in all directions. (Here we use a plural verb because the reference is to the individual members of which the group is composed.)

The nouns **means** and **pains** take either the singular or the plural verb; but the construction must be consistent.

His **means are** small but his heart is generous. (Plural)

**All possible means have** been tried to restore peace. (Plural)

In the nineteenth century a new **means of transport was** developed.

Great **pains have** been taken to solve the problem.

**None** should be used in the singular but popular usage accepts the plural form as well.

**None** of his books **are** best sellers. (Plural)

‘Are there any pens in the box?’ ‘There **are none.**’ (Plural)

‘Was there any letter for me?’ ‘There **was none** for you.’