

Democracy

Etymology

democracy, literally, *rule by the people*. The term is derived from the Greek *dēmokratia*, which was coined from *demos* (“people”) and *kratos* (“rule”) in the middle of the 5th century BCE to denote the political systems then existing in some Greek city-states

Excerpt from the Britannica Chatbot

What is democracy?

Democracy is a system of government in which laws, policies, leadership, and major undertakings of a state or other polity are directly or indirectly decided by the “people,” a group historically constituted by only a minority of the population (e.g., all free adult males in ancient Athens or all sufficiently propertied adult males in 19th-century Britain) but generally understood since the mid-20th century to include all (or nearly all) adult citizens.

Where was democracy first practiced?

Studies of contemporary nonliterate tribal societies and other evidence suggest that democracy, broadly speaking, was practiced within tribes of hunter-gatherers in prehistoric times. The transition to settled agricultural communities led to inequalities of wealth and power between and within communities and hierarchical nondemocratic forms of social organization. Thousands of years later, in the 6th century BCE, a relatively democratic form of government was introduced in the city-state of Athens by Cleisthenes.

How is democracy better than other forms of government?

States with democratic governments prevent rule by autocrats, guarantee fundamental individual rights, allow for a relatively high level of political equality, and rarely make war on each other. As compared with nondemocratic states, they also better foster human development as measured by indicators such as health and education, provide more prosperity for their citizens, and ensure a broader range of personal freedoms.

Find the following words in the text here above (in the chronological order)

- a) Inventé (pour les mots seulement) – b) siècle – c) citoyens – d) chasseur – e) cueilleur – f) établi (du verbe s'établir à un endroit) – g) richesse – h) empêche – i) faire la guerre – j) encourager – k) santé – l) plus large

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What do you think is worth remembering from the text here above?

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Watch the video from Open University and try to explain briefly what are the drawbacks of democracy according to Plato. What are the advantages according to Derek Matravers?

Inconveniences

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Advantages

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What does EM Forster's quote 'So, two cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism.' mean?

Who said (and when was it said?): "Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed **it has been said** that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." What does it mean?

What are the fundamental principles of a democracy in your opinion?

Which foundational documents guaranteeing democracy can you think of?

Democracy in 2025 in the English-speaking world

In the USA

3 branches of state

Checks and balances

Power to the people?

What kind of democracy is the USA?

Political representation

In the UK

3 branches of state

Balancing of power

Power to the people?

What kind of democracy is the UK?

Political representation

Elsewhere in the English-speaking world...

Do you know which countries have the following institutions?

Storemont? Westminster? Holyrood? Congress? Senate? House of Representatives? House of Commons?

House of Lords?

Democracy in music and art

Which songs can you think of, which are defending or dealing with democracy?

A visit to the museum - <https://www.mfa.org/exhibition/power-of-the-people-art-and-democracy#field--name-body--127061>