**LIBERAL DEMOCRACY**

**Liberal democracy** is the combination of a [liberal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberalism) [political ideology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_ideology) that operates under an [indirect democratic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representative_democracy) [form of government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_of_government). It is characterised by [elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections) between [multiple distinct](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluralism_%28political_philosophy%29) [political parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_parties), a [separation of powers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers) into different [branches of government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Branches_of_government), the [rule of law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law) in everyday life as part of an [open society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_society), a [market economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Market_economy) with [private property](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_property), and the equal protection of [human rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights), [civil rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_and_political_rights), [civil liberties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_liberties) and [political freedoms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_freedom) for all people. To define the system in practice, liberal democracies often draw upon a [constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution), either codified (such as [in the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_United_States)) or [uncodified](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncodified_constitution) (such as [in the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_United_Kingdom)), to delineate the powers of government and enshrine the [social contract](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_contract). After a period of expansion in the second half of the 20th century, liberal democracy became a prevalent political system in the world.

A liberal democracy may take various constitutional forms as it may be a [constitutional monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) or a [republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic). It may have a [parliamentary system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_system), a [presidential system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_system) or a [semi-presidential system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-presidential_system). Liberal democracies usually have [universal suffrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage), granting all [adult](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adult) citizens the right to vote regardless of [ethnicity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group), [sex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex), property ownership, race, age, sexuality, gender, income, social status, or religion. However, historically some countries regarded as liberal democracies have had a more [limited franchise](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffrage#Forms_of_exclusion_from_suffrage). Even today, some countries, considered to be liberal democracies, do not have truly universal suffrage. For instance, in the United Kingdom people serving long prison sentences are unable to vote, a policy which has been ruled a human rights violation by the [European Court of Human Rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Court_of_Human_Rights). A similar policy is also enacted in most of the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States). According to a study by Coppedge and Reinicke, at least 85% of democracies provided for [universal suffrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage). [Many nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_identification_laws) require positive identification before allowing people to vote. The decisions made through elections are made not by all of the citizens but rather by those who are members of the electorate and who choose to [participate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_democracy) by [voting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_participation).

The liberal democratic constitution defines the democratic character of the state. The purpose of a constitution is often seen as a limit on the authority of the government. Liberal democracy emphasises the separation of powers, an [independent judiciary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_judiciary) and a system of checks and balances between branches of government. [Multi-party systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multi-party_system) with at least two persistent, [viable political parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viable_political_party) are characteristic of liberal democracies. In Europe, liberal democracies are likely to emphasise the importance of the state being a *[Rechtsstaat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rechtsstaat%22%20%5Co%20%22Rechtsstaat)*, i.e. a state that follows the principle of [rule of law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law). Governmental authority is legitimately exercised only in accordance with written, publicly disclosed [laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laws) adopted and enforced in accordance with established procedure. Many democracies use [federalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalism), also known as vertical separation of powers, in order to prevent abuse and increase public input by dividing governing powers between municipal, provincial and national governments (e.g. Germany, where the [federal government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bundestag) assumes the main legislative responsibilities and the federated *[Länder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A4nder_of_Germany%22%20%5Co%20%22L%C3%A4nder%20of%20Germany)* assume many executive tasks).

Liberal democracy traces its origins—and its name—to the European 18th-century, also known as the [Age of Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment). At the time, the vast majority of European states were [monarchies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy), with political power held either by the [monarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarch) or the [aristocracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristocracy). The possibility of democracy had not been a seriously considered political theory since [classical antiquity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_antiquity) and the widely held belief was that democracies would be inherently unstable and chaotic in their policies due to the changing whims of the people. It was further believed that democracy was contrary to [human nature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_nature), as human beings were seen to be inherently evil, violent and in need of a strong leader to restrain their destructive impulses. Many European monarchs held that their power had been [ordained by God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_right_of_kings) and that questioning their right to rule was tantamount to [blasphemy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blasphemy).

These conventional views were challenged at first by a relatively small group of Enlightenment [intellectuals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellectual), who believed that human affairs should be guided by [reason](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reason) and principles of liberty and equality. They argued that [all people are created equal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_people_are_created_equal) and therefore political authority cannot be justified on the basis of "noble blood", a supposed privileged connection to God or any other characteristic that is alleged to make one person superior to others. They further argued that governments exist to serve the people—not vice versa—and that laws should apply to those who govern as well as to the governed (a concept known as [rule of law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law)).

Some of these ideas began to be expressed in England in the 17th century. There was [renewed interest in Magna Carta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta#17th%E2%80%9318th_centuries), and passage of the [Petition of Right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petition_of_Right) in 1628 and [Habeas Corpus Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habeas_Corpus_Act_1679) in 1679 established certain liberties for subjects. The idea of a political party took form with groups debating rights to political representation during the [Putney Debates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Putney_Debates) of 1647. After the [English Civil Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Civil_War) (1642–1651) and the [Glorious Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glorious_Revolution) of 1688, the [Bill of Rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_of_Rights_1689) was enacted in 1689, which codified certain rights and liberties. The Bill set out the requirement for regular elections, rules for freedom of speech in Parliament and limited the power of the monarch, ensuring that, unlike much of Europe at the time, [royal absolutism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_absolutism) would not prevail. This led to significant social change in Britain in terms of the position of individuals in society and the growing power of [Parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_England) in relation to the [monarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_monarchs#House_of_Stuart_(restored)).

 By the late 18th century, leading philosophers of the day had published works that spread around the European continent and beyond. One of the most influential of these philosophers was English empiricist [John Locke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke), who refuted [monarchical absolutism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchical_absolutism) in his [*Two Treatises of Government*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_Treatises_of_Government). According to Locke, individuals entered into a [social contract](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_contract_theory) with a [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_%28polity%29), surrendering some of their liberties in exchange for the protection of their [natural rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_rights). Locke advanced that governments were only legitimate if they maintained the [consent of the governed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consent_of_the_governed) and that citizens had the [right to instigate a rebellion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_of_revolution) against their government if that government acted against their interests. These ideas and beliefs inspired the [American Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution) and the [French Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution), which gave birth to the ideology of [liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberalism) and instituted forms of government that attempted to apply the principles of the Enlightenment philosophers into practice. Neither of these forms of government was precisely what we would call a liberal democracy we know today (the most significant differences being that voting rights were still restricted to a minority of the population and slavery remained a legal institution) and the French attempt turned out to be short-lived, but they were the prototypes from which liberal democracy later grew. Since the supporters of these forms of government were known as liberals, the governments themselves came to be known as liberal democracies.

When the first prototypical liberal democracies were founded, the liberals themselves were viewed as an extreme and rather dangerous fringe group that threatened international peace and stability. The conservative [monarchists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchism) who opposed liberalism and democracy saw themselves as defenders of traditional values and the natural order of things and their criticism of democracy seemed vindicated when [Napoleon Bonaparte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_Bonaparte) took control of the young [French Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_First_Republic), reorganised it into the [first French Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_French_Empire) and proceeded to conquer most of Europe. Napoleon was eventually defeated and the [Holy Alliance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Alliance) was formed in Europe to prevent any further spread of liberalism or democracy. However, liberal democratic ideals soon became widespread among the general population and over the 19th century traditional monarchy was forced on a continuous defensive and withdrawal. The [dominions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion) of the [British Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire) became laboratories for liberal democracy from the mid 19th century onward. In Canada, responsible government began in the 1840s and in Australia and New Zealand, parliamentary government elected by [male suffrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Male_suffrage) and [secret ballot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secret_ballot) was established from the 1850s and [female suffrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_suffrage) achieved from the 1890s.

Reforms and revolutions helped move most European countries towards liberal democracy. Liberalism ceased being a fringe opinion and joined the political mainstream. At the same time, a number of non-liberal ideologies developed that took the concept of liberal democracy and made it their own. The political spectrum changed; traditional monarchy became more and more a fringe view and liberal democracy became more and more mainstream. By the end of the 19th century, liberal democracy was no longer only a "liberal" idea, but an idea supported by many different ideologies. After [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) and especially after [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), liberal democracy achieved a dominant position among theories of government and is now endorsed by the vast majority of the political spectrum.

Although liberal democracy was originally put forward by Enlightenment liberals, the relationship between democracy and liberalism has been controversial since the beginning and was problematized in the 20th century. In his book *Freedom and Equality in a Liberal Democratic State*, Jasper Doomen posited that freedom and equality are necessary for a liberal democracy. In his book [*The End of History and the Last Man*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_End_of_History_and_the_Last_Man), [Francis Fukuyama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Fukuyama) says that since the [French Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution), liberal democracy has repeatedly proven to be a fundamentally better system (ethically, politically, economically) than any of the alternatives, and that democracy will become more and more prevalent in the long term, although it may suffer "temporary" setbacks. The research institute [Freedom House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_House) today simply defines liberal democracy as an electoral democracy also protecting [civil liberties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_liberties).

**Rights and freedoms**

In practice, democracies do have limits on certain freedoms. There are various legal limitations such as [copyright](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copyright) and laws against [defamation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defamation). There may be limits on anti-democratic speech, on attempts to undermine [human rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights) and on the promotion or justification of [terrorism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism). In the United States more than in Europe, during the [Cold War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War) such restrictions applied to [communists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism). Now they are more commonly applied to organisations perceived as promoting terrorism or the incitement of group hatred. Examples include [anti-terrorism legislation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-terrorism_legislation), the shutting down of [Hezbollah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hezbollah) satellite broadcasts and some laws against [hate speech](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hate_speech). Critics claim that these limitations may go too far and that there may be no due and fair judicial process. The common justification for these limits is that they are necessary to guarantee the existence of democracy, or the existence of the freedoms themselves. For example, allowing free speech for those advocating mass murder undermines the right to life and security. Opinion is divided on how far democracy can extend to include the enemies of democracy in the democratic process. If relatively small numbers of people are excluded from such freedoms for these reasons, a country may still be seen as a liberal democracy. Some argue that this is only quantitatively (not qualitatively) different from autocracies that persecute opponents, since only a small number of people are affected and the restrictions are less severe, but others emphasise that democracies are different. At least in theory, opponents of democracy are also allowed due process under the rule of law.

However, many governments considered to be democratic have restrictions upon expressions, such as [Holocaust denial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_denial) and hate speech, including prison sentences, ofttimes seen as anomalous for the concept of free speech. In some countries, members of political organisations with connections to historical totalitarian governments (for example formerly predominant communist, [fascist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism) or Nazi governments in some European countries) may be deprived of the vote and the privilege of holding certain jobs. [Discriminatory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discrimination) behaviour may be prohibited, such as refusal by owners of public accommodations to serve persons on grounds of race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. For example, in Canada a printer who refused to print materials for the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives was fined $5,000, incurred $100,000 in legal fees and was ordered to pay a further $40,000 of his opponents' legal fees by the Human Rights Tribunal.

In some cases, rights considered fundamental in one country may be foreign to other governments. For instance, the constitutions of Canada, India, Israel, Mexico and the United States guarantee freedom from [double jeopardy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_jeopardy), a right not provided in other legal systems. Also, legal systems that use politically elected court jurors, such as [Sweden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_Sweden), view a (partly) politicised court system as a main component of accountable government, distinctly alien to democracies employing [trial by jury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trial_by_jury) designed to shield against the influence of politicians over trials. Similarly, many Americans consider [the right to keep and bear arms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) to be an essential feature to safeguard the [right to revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_to_revolution) against a potentially abusive government, while other countries do not recognise this as fundamental (the United Kingdom, for example, [having strict limitations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun_politics_in_the_United_Kingdom) on the gun ownership by individuals). In 1971, one writer summarized the fundamental rights and freedoms shared by all liberal democracies as eight rights:

1. Freedom to form and join organisations.
2. Freedom of expression.
3. Right to vote.
4. Right to run for public office.
5. Right of political leaders to compete for support and votes.
6. Freedom of alternative sources of information
7. Free and fair elections.
8. Right to control government policy through votes and other expressions of preference.

**Preconditions**

1. For a political regime to be considered a liberal democracy it must contain in its governing over a nation-state the provision of civil rights- the non-discrimination in the provision of public goods such as justice, security, education and health- in addition to, political rights- the guarantee of free and fair electoral contests, which allow the winners of such contests to determine policy subject to the constraints established by other rights, when these are provided- and property rights- which protect asset holders and investors against expropriation by the state or other groups. According to Seymour Martin Lipset, although they are not part of the system of government as such, a modicum of [individual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individual_rights) and [economic freedoms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_freedom), which result in the formation of a significant [middle class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_class) and a broad and flourishing [civil society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society), are seen as pre-conditions for liberal democracy.
2. For countries without a strong tradition of democratic majority rule, the introduction of free elections alone has rarely been sufficient to achieve a transition from dictatorship to democracy; a wider shift in the political culture and gradual formation of the institutions of democratic government are needed. There are various examples—for instance, in [Latin America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_America)—of countries that were able to sustain democracy only temporarily or in a limited fashion until wider cultural changes established the conditions under which democracy could flourish.
3. One of the key aspects of democratic culture is the concept of a "[loyal opposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyal_opposition)", where political competitors may disagree, but they must tolerate one another and acknowledge the legitimate and important roles that each play. According to Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, this is tied to another key concept of democratic cultures, the protection of minorities,where the losers are safe in the knowledge that they will neither lose their lives nor their liberty and will continue to participate in public life. They are loyal not to the specific policies of the government, but to the fundamental legitimacy of the state and to the democratic process itself.

**Liberal democracies around the world**

The [European Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union) (with the exception of [Poland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland) and [Hungary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungary)), [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), [Norway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norway), [Iceland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland), [Switzerland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland), [Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan), [Argentina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argentina), [Brazil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil), [Chile](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chile), [South Korea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Korea), [Taiwan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiwan), the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), [Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada), [Uruguay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruguay), [Costa Rica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costa_Rica), [Israel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel), [South Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa), [Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia) and [New Zealand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand) are liberal democracies, with India currently having the largest population among the democracies in the world.

Freedom House considers many of the officially democratic governments in [Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa) and the former [Soviet Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) to be undemocratic in practice, usually because the sitting government has a strong influence over election outcomes. Many of these countries are in a state of considerable flux.

Officially non-democratic forms of government, such as single-party states and dictatorships, are more common in [East Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asia), the [Middle East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East) and [North Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Africa).

Most recently, the Freedom House 2019 report has noted a fall in the number of countries with liberal democracies, citing declines in 'political rights and civil liberties' over the 13 years from 2005 to 2018.

**Types of Liberal Democracies**

1. **Proportional vs. plurality representation**
2. **Presidential vs. parliamentary systems**

**Political stability**

1. The political stability of liberal democracies depend on strong economic growth, as well as robust state institutions that guarantee free elections, the [rule of law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law), and individual liberties.
2. Democracy aims at reducing political uncertainty and instability and assuring citizens that however much they disagree with present policies, they will be given a regular chance to change those in power, or change policies with which they disagree.
3. One notable feature of liberal democracies is that their opponents (those groups who wish to abolish liberal democracy) rarely win elections. Advocates use this as an argument to support their view that liberal democracy is inherently stable and can usually only be overthrown by external force, while opponents argue that the system is inherently stacked against them despite its claims to impartiality.
4. **Effective response in wartime:** A liberal democracy implies that power is not concentrated. This could be a disadvantage for a state in [wartime](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War), when a fast and unified response is necessary. The legislature usually must give consent before the start of an offensive military operation, although sometimes the executive can do this on its own while keeping the legislature informed. If the democracy is attacked, then no consent is usually required for defensive operations. The people may vote against a [conscription](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription) army.
5. **Better information on and corrections of problems:** A democratic system may provide better information for policy decisions. Undesirable information may more easily be ignored in dictatorships, even if this undesirable or contrarian information provides early warning of problems. [Anders Chydenius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anders_Chydenius) put forward the argument for [freedom of the press](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press) for this reason in 1776. The democratic system also provides a way to replace inefficient leaders and policies, thus problems may continue longer and crises of all kinds may be more common in autocracies.
6. **Reduction of Corruption:** Research by the [World Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Bank) suggests that political institutions are extremely important in determining the prevalence of [corruption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_corruption): (long term) democracy, parliamentary systems, political stability and freedom of the press are all associated with lower corruption. [Freedom of information legislation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_information_legislation) is important for [accountability](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accountability) and [transparency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transparency_%28humanities%29). The Indian [Right to Information Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_to_Information_Act) "has already engendered mass movements in the country that is bringing the lethargic, often corrupt bureaucracy to its knees and changing power equations completely".
7. **Famines and refugees:** Prominent economist [Amartya Sen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amartya_Sen) has noted that no functioning democracy has ever suffered a large scale [famine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Famine). Refugee crises almost always occur in non-democracies. From 1985 to 2008, the eighty-seven largest refugee crises occurred in autocracies.
8. **Human development:** Democracy correlates with a higher score on the [Human Development Index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Development_Index) and a lower score on the human poverty index. Democracies have the potential to put in place better education, longer life expectancy, lower infant mortality, access to drinking water and better health care than dictatorships. This is not due to higher levels of foreign assistance or spending a larger percentage of GDP on health and education, as instead the available resources are managed better. Several health indicators (life expectancy and infant and maternal mortality) have a stronger and more significant association with democracy than they have with GDP per capita, rise of the public sector or income inequality.
9. **Democratic peace theory:** Numerous studies using many different kinds of data, definitions and statistical analyses have found support for the democratic peace theory. The original finding was that liberal democracies have never made war with one another. More recent research has extended the theory and finds that democracies have few [militarized interstate disputes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militarized_interstate_dispute) causing less than 1,000 battle deaths with one another, that those militarized interstate disputes that have occurred between democracies have caused few deaths and that democracies have few [civil wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_wars). There are various criticisms of the theory, including at least as many refutations as alleged proofs of the theory, some 200 deviant cases, failure to treat "democracy" as a multidimensional concept and that correlation is not causation.
10. **Minimization of political violence:** [Rudolph Rummel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolph_Rummel)'s *Power Kills* asserts that liberal democracy, among all types of regimes, minimizes political violence and is a method of nonviolence. Rummel attributes this firstly to democracy instilling an attitude of tolerance of differences, an acceptance of losing and a positive outlook towards conciliation and compromise. A study published by British Academy, on *Violence and Democracy,* argues that in practice Liberal Democracy has not stopped those running the state from exerting acts of violence both within and outside their borders. The paper also argues that police killings, profiling of racial and religious minorities, online surveillance, data collection, or media censorship are a couple of way in which successful states maintain a monopoly on violence.

**Issues and criticism**

1. **Dictatorship of the bourgeoisie:** [Marxists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism), [communists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communists), as well as some [socialists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism) and [anarchists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism) argue that liberal democracy under [capitalist ideology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism) is constitutively [class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_class)-based and therefore can never be democratic or [participatory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_democracy). It is referred to as [bourgeois](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourgeois) democracy because ultimately politicians fight only for the rights of the bourgeoisie.
2. **Campaign costs:** The cost of political campaigning in representative democracies favors the rich, a form of [plutocracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutocracy) where only a very small number of wealthy individuals can actually affect government policy in their favor and toward [plutonomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutonomy). Liberal democracy has also been attacked by some [socialists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_socialism) as a dishonest farce used to keep the masses from realizing that their will is irrelevant in the political process. Stringent [campaign finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campaign_finance) laws can correct this perceived problem.
3. **Media:** Critics of the role of the media in liberal democracies allege that [concentration of media ownership](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_of_media_ownership) leads to major distortions of democratic processes. Media commentators also point out that the influential early champions of the media industry held fundamentally anti-democratic views, opposing the general population's involvement in creating policy. Furthermore, the notion that the media is used to indoctrinate the public is also shared by Yascha Mounk's *The People Vs Democracy* which states that the government benefits from the public having a relatively similar worldview and that this one-minded ideal is one of the principles in which Liberal Democracy stands. Defenders responding to such arguments assert that constitutionally protected [freedom of speech](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_speech) makes it possible for both for-profit and non-profit organisations to debate the issues. They argue that media coverage in democracies simply reflects public preferences and does not entail censorship. Especially with new forms of media such as the Internet, it is not expensive to reach a wide audience, if an interest in the ideas presented exists.
4. **Limited voter turnout:** Low voter turnout, whether the cause is disenchantment, indifference or contentment with the status quo, may be seen as a problem, especially if disproportionate in particular segments of the population. Although turnout levels vary greatly among modern democratic countries and in various types and levels of elections within countries, at some point low turnout may prompt questions as to whether the results reflect the will of the people, whether the causes may be indicative of concerns to the society in question, or in extreme cases the [legitimacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legitimacy_%28political_science%29) of the electoral system.

Several nations have forms of [compulsory voting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compulsory_voting), with various degrees of enforcement. Proponents argue that this increases the legitimacy—and thus also popular acceptance—of the elections and ensures political participation by all those affected by the political process and reduces the costs associated with encouraging voting. Arguments against include restriction of freedom, economic costs of enforcement, increased number of invalid and blank votes and random voting.

Other alternatives include increased use of [absentee ballots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absentee_ballots), or other measures to ease or improve the ability to vote, including [electronic voting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_voting).

1. **Ethnic and religious conflicts**

For historical reasons, many states are not culturally and ethnically homogeneous. There may be sharp [ethnic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic), [linguistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linguistic), [religious](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious) and [cultural](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural) divisions. In fact, some groups may be actively hostile to each other. A democracy, which by definition allows mass participation in decision-making, theoretically also allows the use of the political process against 'enemy' groups.

1. **Bureaucracy:** A persistent [libertarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarianism) and [monarchist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchism) critique of democracy is the claim that it encourages the elected representatives to change the law without necessity and in particular to pour forth a flood of new laws (as described in [Herbert Spencer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Spencer)'s [*The Man Versus The State*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Man_Versus_the_State)). Supporters of democracy point to the complex bureaucracy and regulations that has occurred in dictatorships, like many of the former communist states. The bureaucracy in liberal democracies is often criticised for a claimed slowness and complexity of their decision-making. The term "[red tape](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_tape)" is a synonym of slow bureaucratic functioning that hinders quick results in a liberal democracy.
2. **Short-term focus:** By definition, modern liberal democracies allow for regular changes of government. That has led to a common criticism of their short-term focus. In four or five years the government will face a new election and it must think of how it will win that election. That would encourage a preference for policies that will bring short term benefits to the electorate (or to self-interested politicians) before the next election, rather than unpopular policy with longer term benefits.

Besides the regular review of governing entities, short-term focus in a democracy could also be the result of collective short-term thinking. For example, consider a campaign for policies aimed at reducing environmental damage while causing temporary increase in unemployment. However, this risk applies also to other political systems.

1. **Majoritarianism:** The [tyranny of the majority](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyranny_of_the_majority) is the fear that a direct democratic government, reflecting the majority view, can take action that oppresses a particular minority. Theoretically, the majority is a majority of all citizens. If citizens are not compelled by law to vote, it is usually a majority of those who choose to vote. If such of group constitutes a minority, then it is possible that a minority could in theory oppress another minority in the name of the majority. Several *de facto* dictatorships also have compulsory, but not "free and fair" voting in order to try to increase the legitimacy of the regime, such as [North Korea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea).

 Possible examples of a minority being oppressed by or in the name of the majority:

* Those potentially subject to [conscription](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription) are a minority possibly because of socioeconomic reasons.
* The minority who are wealthy often use their money and influence to manipulate the political process against the interests of the rest of the population, who are the minority in terms of income and access.
* Several European countries have introduced bans on personal religious symbols in state schools. Opponents see this as a violation of rights to freedom of religion and supporters see it as following from the separation of state and religious activities. This may also go as far as restricting religious garments and clothing which may violate the rights of citizens, like in France with the Burqa ban.
* Prohibition of [pornography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pornography) is typically determined by what the majority is prepared to accept.
* The private possession of various [weapons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weapons) (i.e. [batons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baston_%28weapon%29), [nunchakus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nunchakus), [brass knuckles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brass_knuckles), [pepper spray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pepper_spray), [firearms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firearm) and so on) is made legally complicated with background checks and other preventative measures put in place to reduce unnecessary ownership (i.e. the United Kingdom, Belgium and others), with such laws motivated by attempts to increase safety in the society, to reduce general violence, instances of homicide or perhaps by moralism, classism and/or paternalism.
* [Recreational drug, caffeine, tobacco, and alcohol use](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recreational_drug_use) is often [criminalised](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Drugs%22%20%5Co%20%22War%20on%20Drugs) or otherwise suppressed by majorities. In the United States, recreational drug use was popular in the United States throughout most of the 19th century. By century’s end, [drug abuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_abuse) became recognized as a significant social problem and source of concern for the public, which pressured the federal government to intervene legally.[[86]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy#cite_note-Sacco-86) Beginning in the late 20th century, American drug policy was criticized for having potentially had racist, classist, religious, or paternalistic origins.[[87]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy#cite_note-repealing-87)[[88]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy#cite_note-88) Now we see a social shift away from the war on drugs as more and more states look at legalising recreational drugs like marijuana.
* Society's treatment of [homosexuals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality) is also cited in this context. Homosexual acts were widely criminalised in democracies until several decades ago and in some democracies like Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Nigeria, Malaysia, Singapore they still are, reflecting the religious or sexual mores of the majority.
* The Athenian democracy and the early United States had [slavery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery). Even proponents of liberal democracy in European powers, in the 17th and 18th century, were often pro slavery which is contradictory of a liberal democracy.
* The majority often taxes the minority who are wealthy at [progressively higher rates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_tax), with the intention that the wealthy will incur a larger tax burden for social purposes.
* In prosperous western representative democracies, the poor form a minority of the population and may not have the power to use the state to initiate redistribution when a majority of the electorate opposes such designs. When the poor form a distinct [underclass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underclass), the majority may use the democratic process to in effect withdraw the protection of the [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_%28polity%29).
* An often quoted example of the "tyranny of the majority" is that [Adolf Hitler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolf_Hitler) came to power by "legitimate" democratic procedures. The [Nazi Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Party) gained the largest share of votes in the democratic [Weimar Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar_Republic) in 1933. Some might consider this an example of "tyranny of a minority" since he never gained a majority vote, but it is common for a [plurality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plurality_voting_system) to exercise power in democracies, therefore the [rise of Hitler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rise_of_Hitler) cannot be considered irrelevant. However, his regime's large-scale human rights violations took place after the democratic system had been abolished. Furthermore, the [Weimar Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar_Constitution) in an ["emergency" allowed dictatorial powers and suspension of the essentials of the constitution itself without any vote or election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enabling_Law).
* Proponents of democracy make a number of defenses concerning "tyranny of the majority". One is to argue that the presence of a [constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution) protecting the rights of all citizens in many democratic countries acts as a safeguard. Generally, changes in these constitutions require the agreement of a [supermajority](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supermajority) of the elected representatives, or require a judge and jury to agree that evidentiary and procedural standards have been fulfilled by the state, or two different votes by the representatives separated by an election, or sometimes a [referendum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum). These requirements are often combined. The [separation of powers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers) into [legislative branch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislative_branch), [executive branch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_branch) and [judicial branch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judicial_branch) also makes it more difficult for a small majority to impose their will. This means a majority can still legitimately coerce a minority (which is still ethically questionable), but such a minority would be very small and as a practical matter it is harder to get a larger proportion of the people to agree to such actions.

Another argument is that majorities and minorities can take a markedly different shape on different issues. People often agree with the majority view on some issues and agree with a minority view on other issues. One's view may also change, thus the members of a majority may limit oppression of a minority since they may well in the future themselves be in a minority.

A third common argument is that despite the risks majority rule is preferable to other systems and the tyranny of the majority is in any case an improvement on a tyranny of a minority. All the possible problems mentioned above can also occur in non-democracies with the added problem that a minority can oppress the majority. Proponents of democracy argue that empirical statistical evidence strongly shows that more democracy leads to less internal violence and mass murder by the government. This is sometimes formulated as [Rummel's Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rummel%27s_Law%22%20%5Co%20%22Rummel%27s%20Law), which states that the less democratic freedom a people have, the more likely their rulers are to murder them.

**Vulnerabilities of Liberal Democracy**

1. **Authoritarianism:** Liberal democracies introduce more authoritarian measures to counter authoritarianism itself, citing monitoring elections and more control on media in an effort to stop the agenda of undemocratic views. As such authoritarian states pose a threat to liberal democracy as they seek to remake the world in their own image. Various authors have also analysed the authoritarian means that liberal democracies use in order to defend economic liberalism and the power of political elites.
2. **War:** War may have some effects on liberal democracy, and whether it cultivates or inhibits democratization. War may cultivate democratization by "mobilizing the masses, and creating incentives for the state to bargain with the people it needs to contribute to the war effort". An example of this may be seen in the extension of [suffrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffrage) in the UK after [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I). War may however inhibit democratization by "providing an excuse for the curtailment of [liberties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberties)".
3. **Terrorism:** Studieshave concluded that terrorism is most common in nations with intermediate [political freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_freedom), meaning countries transitioning from autocratic governance to democracy. Nations with strong autocratic governments and governments that allow for more political freedom experience less terrorism.
4. **Populism:** Populism is a form of majoritarianism, threatening some of the core principles of liberal democracy such as the rights of the individual. Examples of these can vary from Freedom of movement via control on Immigration, or perhaps opposition to Liberal Social Values such as gay marriage. Populists do this by appealing to the feelings and emotions of the people whilst offering solutions- often vastly simplified- to complex problems. Populism is a particular threat to the liberal democracy because it exploits the weaknesses of the liberal democratic system.

Another reason why populism is a threat to Liberal Democracy is because it exploits the inherent differences between 'Democracy' and 'Liberalism'.