Democracy is not the right to vote, it is the responsibility to act in the best interests of the community and to help steer it on the best path for all. In ancient Greece every citizen had to take his turn in government or lose his citizenship. Government was constitutionally designed to be an unpaid onus that nobody wanted to ensure longer than necessary. Corruption was treasonous and punishable by death. Once a year citizens would consider individuals too powerful or dangerous to the city and by vote, exile them for 10 years. They then had 10 days to put their affairs in order and leave.

Democracy contrasts with forms of government where power is either held by an individual, as in an [absolute monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_monarchy), or where power is held by a small number of individuals, as in an [oligarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oligarchy). Nevertheless, these oppositions, inherited from Greek philosophy,[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy#cite_note-11) are now ambiguous because contemporary governments have mixed democratic, oligarchic and monarchic elements. [Karl Popper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Popper) defined democracy in contrast to [dictatorship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictatorship) or [tyranny](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrant), thus focusing on opportunities for the people to control their leaders and to oust them without the need for a [revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolution).[[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy#cite_note-12)