

What is Representative Democracy?



Representative democracy is a political system where citizens within a country are given the opportunity to vote into power those they wish to represent them and make decisions for them in parliament.

In a representative democracy citizens hand over the responsibility of decision making to these elected representatives.

Consider this...

- By handing over the right to participate in decision making to an elected representative, citizens are removing themselves from the process of decision making.

Furthermore...

- Two types of representatives usually emerge from this system
- Those that believe that they should act and react to what the political party and citizens wish. These representatives believe that they have been elected to represent both the party and the citizens who elected them.
- Those that believe they should act and react in accordance with their conscience regardless of the wishes of the political party or the citizens who elected them. These representatives choose to have the flexibility to ignore both the political party's leadership and the people who elected them.

However...

- Is it realistic for members of parliament to do what the people who elected them want in all instances?
- If the representative follows the wishes of the majority, what happens to those in the minority?

Finally...

Does an elected member in a representative democracy only represent the *majority* view and therefore state that the wishes of a democratic society have been fulfilled?