

SECTION 1

FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

There are many different types of government around the world. Who is in charge of these governments? In this section, you will learn about the three main forms of government.

VOCABULARY

constitutional monarchy

a government that has a king or a queen, but the king or queen has no real power because another person or group makes the laws

democracy

a government that is run by the people

dictatorship

a government that is run by one person

elected

chosen by getting the most votes

head of state

the person or people in charge of a country's government

monarch

a government leader who inherited his or her job through his or her family

monarchy

a government whose leader inherited his or her job

representative

an elected person who speaks for a group of people

A country's form of government depends on how the **head of state** came to power. The head of state is the person or people in charge of the government. There are three main forms of government.

Monarchy

In a **monarchy**, the head of state has inherited his or her job. This means the head of state got the job through his or her family. Usually, a monarchy is run by a king or queen. In a true monarchy, the king or queen makes the laws and all major government decisions. Before 1900, most countries were monarchies. Today, about 28 countries have **monarchs**.

Most of today's monarchies are **constitutional monarchies**. This means the monarch does not have any real power. The power in a constitutional monarchy is held by another part of the government. For example, Great Britain has a monarch, but he or she does not make government decisions. The real power is held by Parliament, a group of **elected** lawmakers that makes the laws and other major decisions.

Democracy

The people run the government in a **democracy**. **Representatives** are elected by the people. These representatives make up the government. The people also elect the head of state.

In a democracy, the government makes decisions based on what the people want. Citizens in a democracy control their government by voting. The United States is a democracy. A constitutional monarchy, like Great Britain, can also be a democracy. Great Britain is a democracy because the people vote for the representatives in Parliament.

Dictatorship

The head of state of a **dictatorship** is called a dictator. In a dictatorship, the people have little or no control over the government. All the power is held by one person.

Dictators get and keep power through force. Sometimes a dictator will try to control the citizens by deciding what they should and should not know. For example, a dictator might tell reporters what news they can and cannot report. A dictator might even decide what is taught in schools. People who speak against the government can be put in prison or killed.

Did you know?

Democracy was invented in ancient Athens, Greece. One part of the government of Athens was called the Assembly. The Assembly was made up of all the adult, male citizens of Athens. This group met about 40 times a year to vote on things that concerned the city. In order to meet, the Assembly needed to have at least 6,000 people at the meeting. Can you imagine having 6,000 people talking about and voting on important issues?

Forms of Government

Monarchy

- head of state inherits job through his or her family
- government is controlled by one person

Constitutional Monarchy

- head of state inherits job through his or her family
- real power is held by another part of government

Democracy

- head of state is elected by the people
- government is made up of representatives

Dictatorship

- head of state gets power through force
- government is controlled by one person

SECTION 2

LEVELS OF POWER

You have learned about the different types of leadership that governments have. Governments are different in other ways too. In this section, you will learn about the levels of power in different types of government.

VOCABULARY

alliance

a group of countries with the same goals

chief executive

the leader of the executive branch

confederate system

a government in which independent countries join together with a common goal

executive branch

the part of a government that carries out the laws

federal system

a government in which the national and state governments share power

legislative branch

the part of a government that makes the laws

parliamentary system

a government in which the chief executive is a member of the legislative branch

presidential system

a government in which the legislative and executive branches are separate from each other

unitary system

a government in which the national government has all the power

National, regional, and local levels of government have different amounts of power in different countries. The power of each level depends on the type of government a country has.

Unitary System

In a **unitary system**, the national government has all the power. Local governments have no power of their own. The local governments simply carry out laws made by the national government. Great Britain has a unitary system of government. Parliament has all the power, and local governments carry out Parliament's decisions.

Federal System

Powers are shared between the national government and state governments in a **federal system**. Some powers belong only to the national government, and some powers belong only to the state governments. There are also powers that both levels share. Each level has the power to elect officials and make laws. The United States has a federal system of government.

Confederate System

In a **confederate system**, or a confederation, independent countries come together to form an **alliance**. These countries share a common goal. In a confederation, the countries are separate

from each other. The confederation might set up a central government to run things, but the individual countries are more powerful than the central government. The European Union is an example of a confederate system.

Governments are also different because of the relationships between their executive and legislative branches. There are two basic types of relationships: the **presidential system** and the **parliamentary system**.

Presidential System

The **executive branch** and the **legislative branch** are separate in the presidential system. The two branches have separate powers. The leader of the executive branch is usually a President, or **chief executive**. This President is not a member of the legislative branch. The President is elected by the people and serves for a certain amount of time. He or she represents the country as the head of state. The United States invented the presidential system of government.

Parliamentary System

In the parliamentary system, the chief executive is a member of the legislative branch. The legislative branch votes for one of its members to become prime minister, or chief executive.

Since the prime minister is a member of the legislative branch, he or she must follow that branch's rules. The prime minister does not have any powers separate from the powers of parliament. Also, the prime minister, or chief executive, is not the head of state. In the parliamentary system, the head of state and chief executive positions are separate. For example, in Great Britain, the prime minister is a member of Parliament. The head of state is the king or queen.

Presidential System vs. Parliamentary System

Presidential System

- chief executive is the President
- chief executive is not a member of the legislative branch
- head of state is the President

Parliamentary System

- chief executive is the prime minister
- chief executive is a member of the legislative branch
- head of state is the king or queen