

Elements of Democratic Elections

Seven key differences between
democratic and undemocratic elections

1. Eligible Voters

- *Democratic*: universal suffrage--all adult citizens are eligible to vote and able to register
- *Undemocratic*: barriers to voter registration

2. Power of Elected Officials

- *Democratic*: the most powerful decision makers are elected
- *Undemocratic*: unelected leaders hold significant power (military, king, etc.)

3. Candidates

- *Democratic*: no restrictions on who can run for office (voters have full range of choices)
- *Undemocratic*: some candidates are excluded (Iran)

4. Campaigns

- *Democratic*: candidates and parties can campaign freely (voters fully informed)
- *Undemocratic*: opposition campaigns are restricted (Kazakhstan)

5. Free Choice of Voters

- *Democratic*: secret ballot--voters make choice free of coercion
- *Undemocratic*: violence, intimidation, or vote-buying (Zimbabwe)

6. Integrity of Elections

- *Democratic*: one person, one vote--and votes counted honestly
- *Undemocratic*: malapportionment or electoral fraud (Malaysia)

7. Election Outcome Respected

- *Democratic*: winners take office and exercise full power
- *Undemocratic*: election outcome reversed