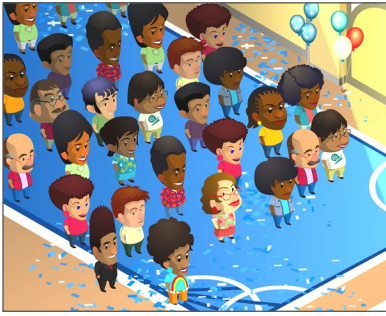


# Party Systems

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Everyone Loves a Party

Political parties, that is! A **political party** is an organized group of people who share similar political views and work to influence the government in support of those views. Countries all across the world have political parties. Why? Because organizing into parties is a powerful way for groups of people with similar views to work together to influence government. Political parties play different roles in different countries depending on the kind of party system a country has.

## No Democracy, No Party

Some countries have **no political parties** at all. Most of these countries are not democracies, so citizens have limited influence on government. For example, political parties are banned in the Middle East nation of Qatar. The nation is led by a monarch, who gets his position by birth and appoints most government officials.

A few countries that are not democracies have a **single-party system** with one major political party. China is a communist state with one political party, called the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Technically there are a few other parties, but they are all controlled by the CCP. In most single-party systems, it is illegal to oppose the main political party. The Chinese government does not allow citizens to form parties that oppose the CCP.

COUNTRY	# PARTIES IN OFFICE
Brunei	1
Eritrea	1
Kuwait	0
North Korea	1
Saudi Arabia	0
Vietnam	1

Source: The World Factbook, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

COUNTRY	# PARTIES
Australia	12
Brazil	28
Canada	5
Denmark	9
Germany	4
Israel	10
Turkey	4

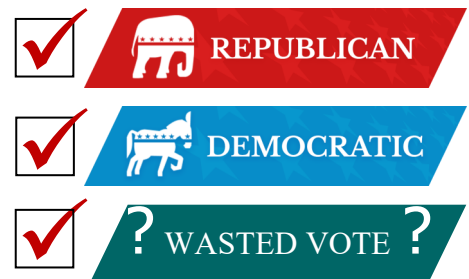
Source: The World Factbook, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

## Party On!

Most countries have **multi-party systems** where three or more political parties share power. In many of these countries, lawmakers are elected by **proportional representation**—each party gets a number of seats that corresponds to the amount of support the party gets from voters. Almost all European governments work this way. In other countries, such as Japan and Australia, voters elect individual candidates to each seat. However the voting works, multi-party systems always have at least three parties with members elected to government office. There may be one or two parties with more support and influence, but many parties are represented. Often no party has a clear majority, so parties must work together in government.

## Either This Party or That One

A few countries with multi-party systems have developed into a **two-party system** with two major political parties that hold most of the power. Other parties exist, and they sometimes gain enough support to win a few seats in the nation's legislature, but they never get enough representation to have any national influence. This is the least common system around the world—and it's the one we have in the United States. Here, the vast majority of Americans identify with either the Democratic or Republican parties. The U.S. has many "third parties" that often put candidates on the ballot. Some are occasionally elected, but none of these parties has gained a foothold in national government.



*In a two-party system, voters may worry that a vote for a party with little influence is a wasted vote. This is one reason the two-party system can be difficult to change.*