

# Analytical essay: voting: is it a human right?

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The world currently has an “ I need” and “ I deserve” attitude. For many, the newest I-phone update is a needed and desired product, as is the latest Ford car. So it can be hard to determine what is necessary and what is excess.

Are there things in this world that people take for granted that they truly need? And, on the flip side, are there things that people don't need but feel is their undeniable right? When speaking on the issue of voting, there is an instinctive response that it is a human right, granted from birth for all people. But is that true? The importance of voting has to do with the power it has to influence government decision making. Invented in ancient Athens, democracy came from the words “ demos” and “ crata” and meant ‘ power of the people.’ For the first time ever, citizens were in control of how their community was run. They were no longer told how to live, but could decide for themselves what decisions should be made. In modern countries such as Canada and the US, voting is used to give citizens this same power.

With people voting for the candidate they want (and the ideas they stand for) government is told the desires of its citizens. People have seen voting as so important that different groups have historically fought for the right to vote: women, Asians, prisoners, etc. People have emphatically claimed that they deserve to have their say, and the United Nations would agree. Since 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has recognized the role of open, transparent elections and the fundamental role of participatory government. The UN acknowledges the role that people play in the decisions of their government: safeguarding basic human freedoms, and preventing

totalitarian rule. But it is interesting to note that the UN does not list one of its Human Rights as the “ Right to Vote”.

Instead, it lists “ The Right to Democracy” as a universal human right instead. What’s the difference? Well, people can participate in government without voting. They can complete surveys to help officials learn what citizens want. They can send around petitions, attend meetings, or wear a button to support a cause. As well, people can give a speech, write a letter to the editor, or lobby for a cause. In a democracy, citizens are even allowed to protest wrong decisions of its government officials in peaceful ways.

But voting is placed on a pedestal, and more important than other participatory acts, because it allows people to choose their leaders. Or, more precisely, it is an act that the government can’t ignore. Letters to the editors can be glanced over, and surveys can be contested. But most democratic countries have written laws about voting, with specific procedures in place. Therefore, it is the most powerful act of citizens. So is voting a basic human right? No.

Humans have the right to make decisions about their lives, however, and have several means to do so. Voting is just one such method - and a powerful one.