

Governments

How do countries decide how to organize their government, and who gets to make the decisions?

The Basics

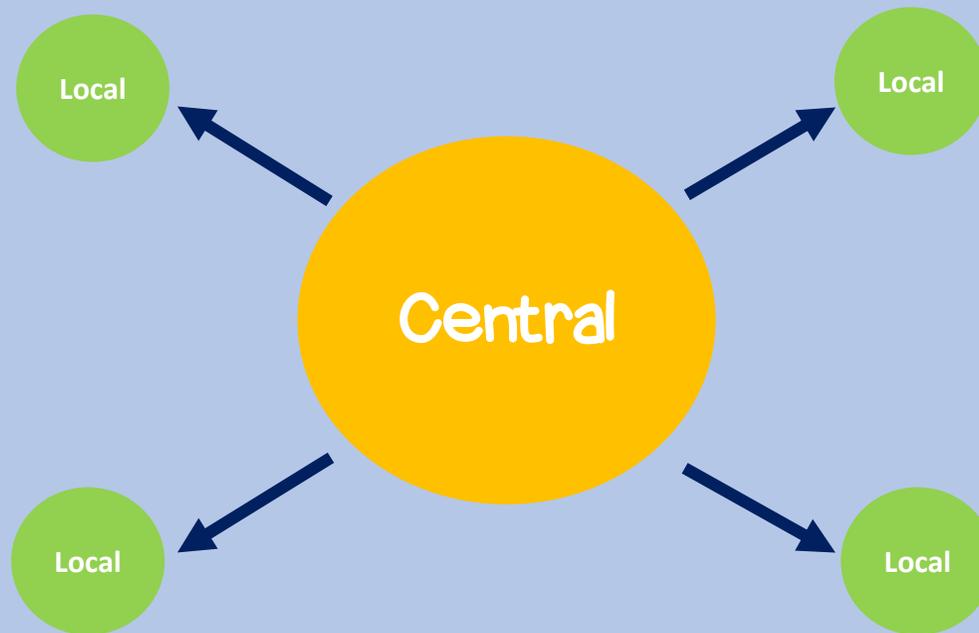
According to Merriam-Webster, a **government** is a group of people who control and make decisions for a country or state/province/territory.

- Government systems tell us how the power is distributed.
- There are three government systems:
 - Unitary
 - Confederation
 - Federal
- Government types tells us who has the power in the government.
- There are three government types:
 - Autocracy
 - Oligarchy
 - Democracy

Government Systems

Government Systems - Unitary

- A unitary system is where the central government has all of the power.
- Power can be given to lower levels (like state governments), BUT it can be take away at any time.



Pros and Cons for Unitary

Advantages:

- Unified country
- Easy to settle problems
- Easy to know who makes the decisions/laws

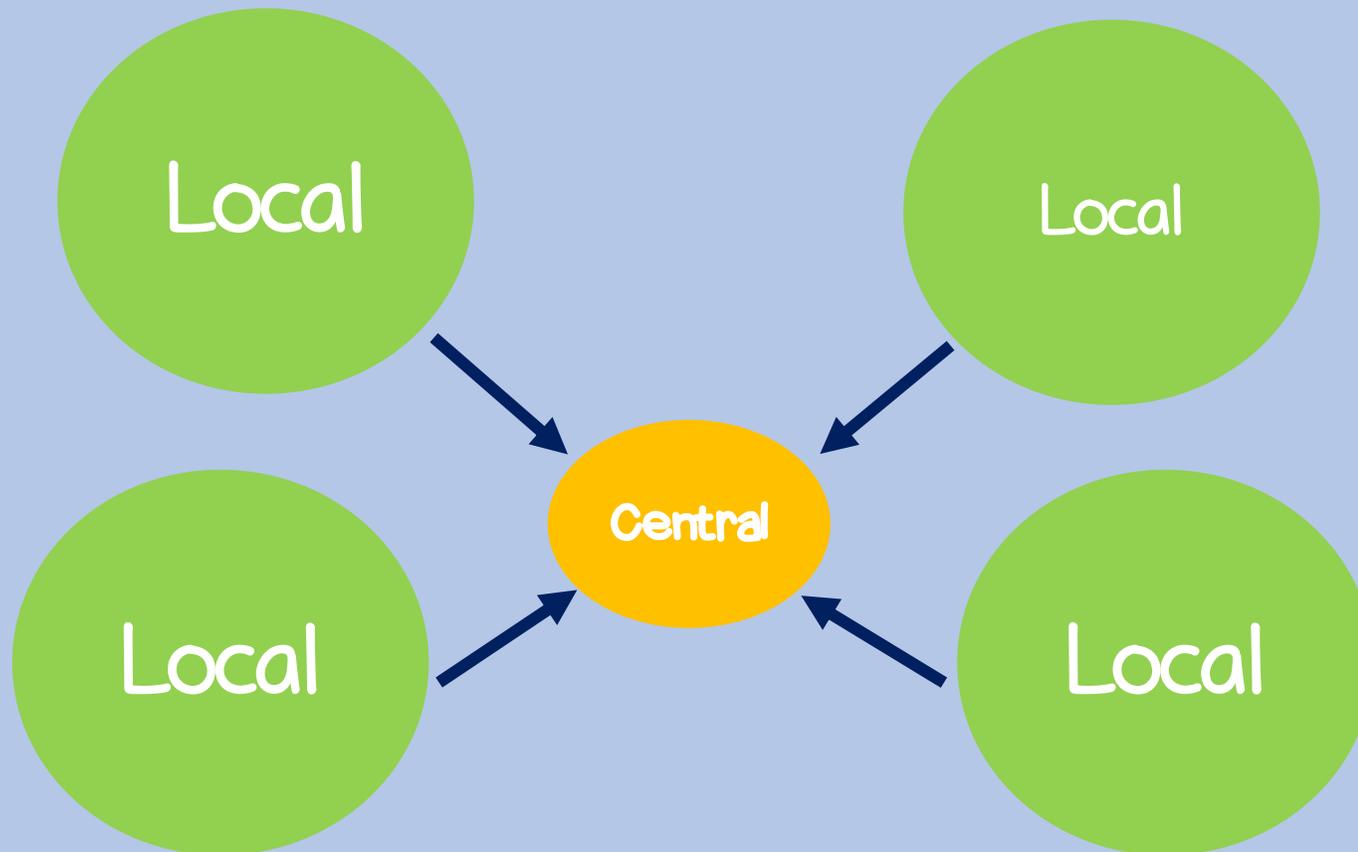
Disadvantages:

- Central government may not have all of the solutions
- Central government may not be able to resolve problems in a timely manner.
- Less people in government roles

Examples: United Kingdom, Cuba

Government Systems - Confederation

- Local governments have more power than the central government.



Pros and Cons for Confederation

Advantages:

- Members can choose the best option for local issues

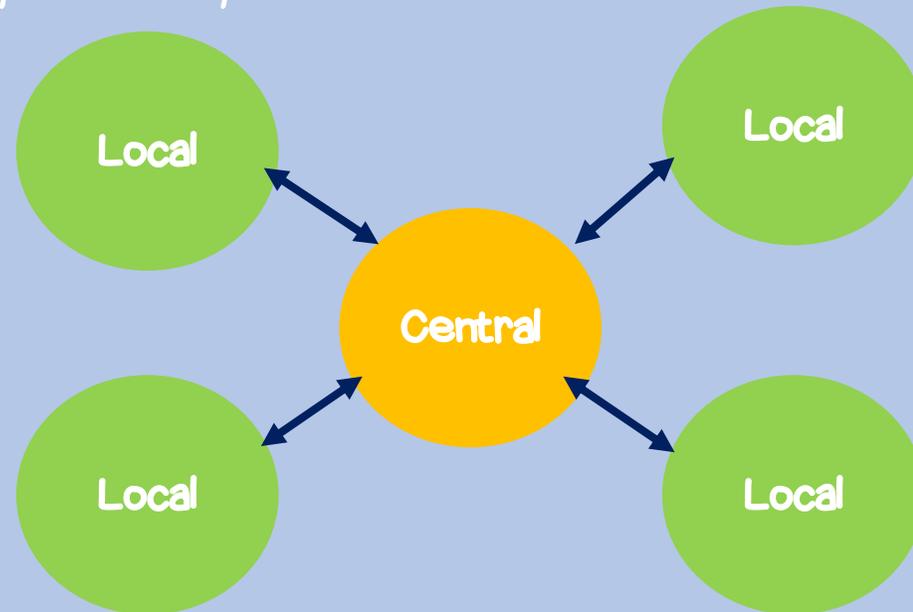
Examples: European Union,
Confederate States of America,
British Commonwealth

Disadvantages:

- Historically has not been successful
- Less unified country
- Do not have to agree with others laws
- Membership is voluntary so issues may not be settled right away.

Government Systems - Federal

- A unitary system is where the central government has all of the power.
- Power can be given to lower levels (like state governments), BUT it can be taken away at any time.



Pros and Cons for Federal

Advantages:

- Issues can be divided among central and local governments
- Governments can "check" one another for bad decisions
- Many opportunities for citizens to have a government role.

Disadvantages:

- Less unified
- Confusion on who has what roles
- Local/State governments may have different laws
- Slow to process and amendment

Examples: USA, Canada, Germany, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Australia

Government Types

Government Types - Autocracy

- An autocracy or autocratic government has 1 person who makes ALL of the decisions.
- This is often called a dictatorship.
- This person has unlimited power.
- The leader usually comes to power through a bloodline or military force. There are no elections in this type of government, therefore no one can vote on any issues in the country.
- Examples: Cuba, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Czar Nicholas II

Government Types - Oligarchy

- An autocratic government is where a small group of people govern.
- To be apart of the government, you must be wealthy, own a very large amount of land, or have a strong military background.
- To be elected or have a vote, you must be within the ruling group. No one outside of the ruling group can be elected or can vote.
- Examples: Ancient Greece and Rome, and governments during the Medieval times.

Government Types - Democracy

- A democracy is where the citizens hold the power because they vote and elect their leaders.
- Although there are restrictions like place of birth and age, anyone can be elected or vote in a democracy.
- There are also two types of democracies: Parliamentary democracy and Presidential democracy
- Examples: USA, United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Australia

Parliamentary Democracy

In a parliamentary democracy, citizens elect the parliament and parliament elects the prime minister. There are a lot of political parties in a parliamentary democracy. The prime minister is the leader of the military and head of the government. The prime minister is also dissolve the parliament at anytime. There is a head of state in a parliamentary democracy often called a president or king/queen. Parliamentary democracies are common in Europe.

Presidential Democracy

In a presidential democracy, citizens vote directly for the legislature and the president. There are a small amount of political parties in a presidential democracy. The president is the leader of the military and head of the government. The president cannot dissolve the legislature, but can use checks and balances to make sure things are running properly. Parliamentary democracies are common in the Americas.