

### 7.3 Athens during the Age of Cleisthenes and Pericles (c. 500 BC)

**Source:** <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-greece/ancient-greece-democracy>; Singer, A. (2002). "Are We Teaching 'Greek Myths' In The Global History Curriculum?" *Social Science Docket*, 2 (1), 4-9.



Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates* (1787). In 399 BC, Socrates was convicted of corrupting the minds of the youth of Athens. He chose death by poisoning over exile from Athens.

**Background:** In year 507 BC, the Athenian leader Cleisthenes introduced a system of political reforms that he called “demokratia,” or “rule by the people.” Cleisthenes’ system was comprised of a sovereign governing body that wrote laws and dictated foreign policy (the ekklesia); a council of representatives from the ten Athenian tribes (the boule); and popular courts in where Athenian male citizens argued cases before a jurors of their peers (the dikasteria). Cleisthenes also introduced ostracism or exile as a form of punishment for people who were convicted of threatening Athenian democratic institutions. But Athenian “democracy” was also severely limited. Examine the chart below and answer questions 1-4.

Adult male citizens who could participate in decision-making	40,000	9%
Disenfranchised citizens (women, children and some men)	80,000	18%
Free Foreign-born residents of Athens	80,000	18%
Enslaved people	250,000	55%
Estimated total population	450,000	100%

#### Questions

1. What percentage of the population of Athens could participate in decision-making?
2. What was the status of women?
3. Who else was barred from participation in decision-making?
4. In your opinion, should Athenian society in the age of Cleisthenes be considered democratic? Explain.