

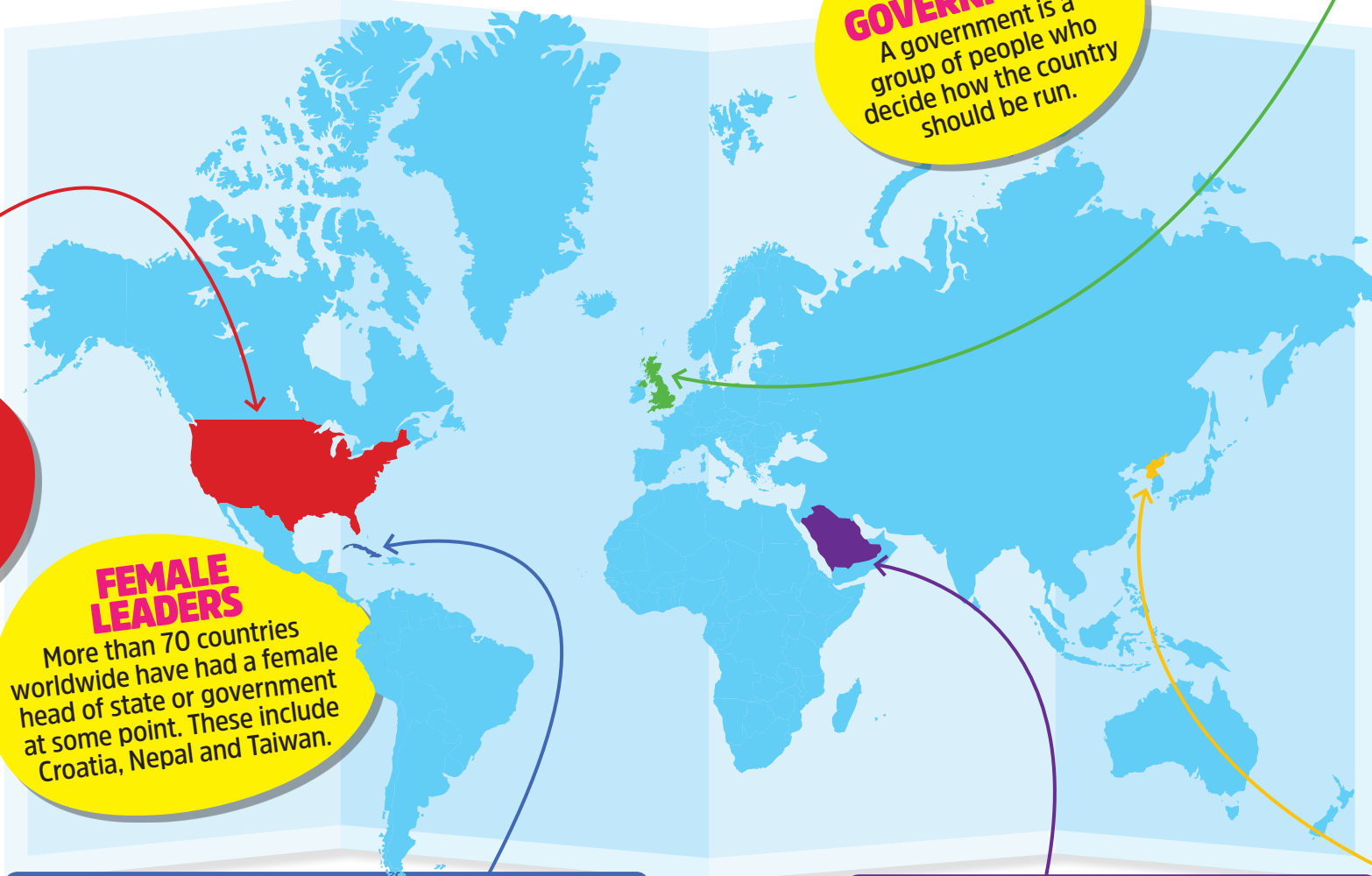


Political systems around the world

Not every country has the same type of government. Find out how it works in five different parts of the globe.

On 8 June the UK will hold a general election. Voters over the age of 18 will head to the polls and their votes will decide which political party will run the country for the next five years. The reason voters have this opportunity is because the UK's form

of government is a democracy. This means that the citizens of the UK get a say in how their country is run. However, not every country in the world has a democratic government. Find out how political systems work in five very different countries.



WHAT IS A GOVERNMENT?
A government is a group of people who decide how the country should be run.

US PRESIDENTS
George Washington, who was elected in 1789, is considered to be the first US president. Since then, 44 people have served as US president.



US president, Donald Trump.

FEMALE LEADERS
More than 70 countries worldwide have had a female head of state or government at some point. These include Croatia, Nepal and Taiwan.

Democracy

In a democracy, citizens of a country get to elect their leaders and have a say in how a country is run. Free elections are one of the most important aspects of a democracy. They allow people to vote for whoever they want. Most British people over the age of 18, can vote in a UK election.

In a democracy, there are limits on the power of politicians. This means that elected officials, such as the prime minister, only have certain powers and are only allowed to be in power for a certain amount of time before there must be another election. In the UK, a new government is elected every five years at the most. The UK is a parliamentary democracy, which means that the leading political party forms the government. The leader of that party becomes prime minister.

PEOPLE POWER
The word democracy comes from the Greek language, and means rule by the people.



UK Prime Minister Theresa May.

Why are free and fair elections important?

Free and fair elections allow people to decide which political party will lead their country. There is no discrimination in a free and fair election. Free and fair elections are really important because they usually allow power to be handed over peacefully to the winner.



Republic

In a republic, representatives are chosen by the country's citizens. These representatives make decisions on behalf of the public. A republic is very similar to a democracy, and the US is also referred to as one. However, in a republic the head of state is not a monarch (king, queen or emperor). The US is sometimes referred to as federal republic. Federal means a system of government controlled by one central authority. There are 50 states in the US and each state has its own government, responsible for local services such as police, libraries and schools. The federal government is responsible for decisions that affect the whole country, such as security.

Communism

In a communist country, the government owns and controls things like property and public services. It also decides what goods can be bought and sold, and where. Communists believe that if everyone shares a country's wealth, then no one will be poor. Ideally in a communist country, everyone gets paid a similar wage, no matter what job they do; a taxi driver might get the same as a surgeon.

Cuba is a communist country. Raúl Castro is the current leader, but it was his brother and former leader, Fidel, who created a communist government. When Fidel came to power in 1959, he



Raúl Castro, left, and his brother Fidel, in Cuba.

began to control every aspect of Cuban life. He created free healthcare and good education, but many Cubans are also very poor and there is little political freedom to oppose the government. Some people think Fidel Castro was a dictator.

Monarchy

More than 40 countries are ruled by a monarchy. Most of them, including the UK, are constitutional monarchies. This means that the king or queen does not have any real power and the country is run by a separate government. However, a few have an absolute monarchy, where the king or queen controls the country.



King Salman

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, although its religious leaders also hold power. King Salman is Saudi Arabia's head of state, and many government decisions are made by the royal family. Criticism of the royal family can lead to punishment.

Dictatorship



Kim Jong-un

A dictatorship is when the government is run by one person or a small group of people who have complete power over the country. In this system, the ruler doesn't have other departments or opponents checking up on their decisions.

North Korea has a dictatorship. Since 1948, the country has been run by the Kim family; its current leader is Kim Jong-un. The country is very secretive, and visitors must be accompanied by official guides. The media (TV and newspapers, etc) is only allowed to report things that make the government look good. Reporters from other countries are not welcome. It is thought that around 25 million North Koreans live in severe poverty.



The Oval Office in the White House.

DID YOU KNOW?
The White House has been the official home of the US president since 1800.