

## Introduction to Civics

### What is Civics?

#### Origin

The word "**civics**" has its origins in the Latin language. • It is derived from the Latin word "**civicus**," which relates to the concept of a citizen or being a member of a community or city. In ancient Rome, a "**civis**" was a citizen, and "**civicus**" referred to matters or attributes related to being a citizen or living in a community.

### What is Civics?

Over time, the term "**civics**" evolved to refer to the study of the rights and duties of citizens, as well as the functioning of government and civic institutions. It encompasses the study of how a society organizes and governs itself, the rights and responsibilities of individuals within that society, and the role of government in shaping the community's values and policies.

*"Civics" is commonly associated with the education and understanding of these principles.*

*Civics, in simple terms, is the study of how a community or country works.*

*It covers things like how the government operates, what rights and responsibilities citizens have, and how people can participate in making decisions that affect their society.*

- Essentially, it's about understanding how the rules and systems of a community or nation function.

### Civics and Citizenship

Civics and citizenship are two closely related terms that play a crucial role in understanding how societies and nations function. • In a civics, students learn about their rights and responsibilities, the principles that underlie their government, and the rules that govern their society. They explore the fundamental concepts of democracy, participation in the political process, and the ethical considerations involved in public policies. In essence, civics provides

the knowledge base, teaching individuals the "how" and "why" of their country's systems.

## **Civics and Citizenship**

On the other hand, citizenship is the practical application of what is learned in civics. Once individuals have a solid understanding of their country's rules, they are expected to put that knowledge into action, just like playing a game using the rules learned in a classroom.

What does it mean to be a citizen?

**Citizenship** is a legal status that grants individuals certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities within a particular country or nation. It is a formal recognition of a person's membership in a specific political community, and it often entails a set of legal and social obligations, as well as various entitlements. In simple terms we can say citizenship is a legal status given by the state to an individual, and it comes with a certain set of rights and duties. Citizenship can be acquired in several ways, including through birth, descent (family or ancestral background), marriage, or naturalization, depending on the laws of the specific country.

**Naturalization** is the process through which someone who is not originally a citizen of a country becomes a citizen of that country. It involves going through specific legal procedures, such as applying for citizenship, meeting certain requirements (like residency and knowledge of the country's language and laws), and taking an oath of allegiance.

### **Rights of Citizens**

- In a democracy, citizens typically have a wide range of rights and freedoms that are designed to protect their individual liberties and ensure their participation in the political process. These rights can vary somewhat from one democratic country to another, but they generally include:
- Freedom of Speech
- Freedom of Religion
- Freedom of Association

- Right to Vote
- Right to Run for Office
- Right to a Fair Trial
- Right to Privacy
- Property Rights
- Equal Protection under the Law
- Right to Education
- Freedom from Torture and Inhumane Treatment
- Right to Social Welfare
- Freedom from Discrimination
- Freedom of Information
- Freedom of Petition

It's important to note that the specific rights and their scope can vary from one democracy to another, as legal systems and cultural norms differ.

### **Duties of Citizens**

- Voting
- Actively engaging in the civic and political life
- Respect for the Rule of Law
- Jury Duty
- Paying Taxes

- Community Service
- Environmental Responsibility: Taking measures to protect the environment and conserve natural resources.
- Respect for the Rights of Others
- Military Service (if applicable).
- Participation in Local Government
- Responsibility for Personal and Family Well-being.
- Responsible Use of Freedom.

### **Forms of Citizenship**

There are three major forms of citizenship;

1. Civil Citizenship
2. Political Citizenship
3. Social citizenship

### **Forms of Citizenship**

#### **Civil Citizenship**

Civil citizenship refers to the legal status and rights of individuals within a state. It encompasses the legal and constitutional aspects of being a citizen. It implies not only the recognition of an individual's legal rights but also their willingness to participate in the affairs of their community and contribute to its betterment. In a democratic society, civil citizenship typically includes rights such as protection, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and access to due process of law. Responsibilities may include obeying laws, paying taxes, and participating in jury duty.

#### **Political Citizenship**

Political citizenship refers to the status and rights that individuals have in a particular political community, typically a nation-state, that allow them to participate in the political processes and governance of that community.

### **Social Citizenship**

It refers to the social and economic rights and benefits that citizens are entitled to. Social citizenship goes beyond political citizenship by including more social and economic rights and benefits that the government provides to its citizens. While political citizenship primarily focuses on an individual's rights and responsibilities in the political realm, social citizenship concerns an individual's rights and entitlements in the social and economic spheres. These rights and entitlements include access to healthcare, education, social assistance, housing, employment opportunities, welfare activities, reducing inequalities and community engagement.

- These three forms of citizenship (civil, political and social) are interconnected i.e. they can mix and overlap in various ways.

### **New Forms of Citizenship**

New forms of citizenship that are emerging:

- Digital citizenship and;
- Transnational, global, and cosmopolitan citizenship. • Digital citizenship refers to the use of digital tools and platforms to engage in civic and political action, as well as to produce and disseminate civic knowledge.
- Transnational, global, and cosmopolitan citizenship refers to citizenship that transcends state boundaries and is based on shared values and identities that cut across national borders.

### **Civic Education**

Civic education is the process of teaching people about their rights, responsibilities, and duties as citizens of a community or country. It helps individuals understand how their government

works, how to participate in the democratic process, and how to make informed decisions about issues that affect their society.

## **Civic Education**

- Civic education can take place in multiple settings, not just schools.
- **Civic socialization**: is the process by which individuals learn and develop their understanding of how a society and its government work.
- It's like the way you learn about the rules, values, and norms of your community and how your government operates. • This learning can happen through various means, such as families, schools, religions, governments, media, and social interactions.

## **Why is Civic Education Important?**

Civic education is important for several reasons. First, it helps individuals understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and prepares them to participate in democratic processes such as voting and engaging in public debate. Second, it helps individuals develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be productive and virtuous members of society. Third, it helps individuals navigate the complexities of digital citizenship and develop the skills necessary to engage in online civic and political action responsibly and constructively. Finally, advocates of cosmopolitan or global citizenship see civic education as essential for developing broad-minded, mutually respectful citizens of the world who can work across cultural, linguistic, or geographic boundaries to solve problems of collective concern.

## **Goals of Civic Education in a Democracy**

- Teaching respect for the law, honesty, literacy, and willingness to sacrifice for the greater good.
- Development of mutual toleration and respect, commitments to freedom of speech and other core democratic rights and values. • Acknowledgement of the legitimacy of democratically-achieved decisions even if one is on the losing side.

- The capacities and inclination to deliberate with diverse others, and the ability to recognize and elect good political leaders.