

Ancient Athenian life and democracy has many parallels with the modern world. If you were a citizen you were allowed the right to vote, however, you were not forced to do so. But, in Ancient Athens voting was a key part of people's lives and therefore, civic rights were important.

Idiōtēs can make reference to someone in the military force who does not exercise their political rights. It typically alludes to those who are of a lower status compared to their commanders¹. To refer to someone as an *idiōtēs* is in regard to negative terminology, especially within the judicial system. This therefore means that it is a derogatory term when related to those who choose not to vote in ancient Athenian society². For a person to attain the authority of political rights they had to be a citizen. To be a citizen you needed both parents to already have full citizenship³. It is also claimed that "Athenian citizens wished to share their privileges with as few others as possible"⁴, indicating that they held civic rights as something very special to them.

Athenian democracy allowed every male citizen to have a say. Rather than just allowing the elite to project their ideas, those from poorer backgrounds were allowed to propose their own ideas and concerns too. This resulted in politics not just being a sole reflection of the top part of society and therefore made it fairer⁵. Consequently, this suggests that exercising civic rights was important because it can be alluded that democracy was created with equal opportunities and the right to express opinions in mind.

Those classed not as elite are right to have more power than those considered at the top of the food chain because they are the backbone of society. They fight the wars and man the ships and therefore they should have the right "to speak his mind if he wants to"⁶. As a result, democratic society and decision may not have been completely based on the top half of society because even very poor citizens could stress their political opinions. Furthermore, some titles in the magistracies come with both political power and a salary, and some men were keen to hold these⁷. This alludes that political rights were classed as important in ancient Athens because the jobs related to them were considered paramount and because there was a monetary exchange included. This suggests that the exercise of political rights would have been valuable because it led to more financial stability.

To conclude, exercising political rights in ancient Athens was important because of the entitlement of citizenship being necessary. This meant that people were expected to vote because of the status that said citizenship held.

¹ Burckhardt, 2006, *Idiotes*

² Landauer, 2014, p.146

³ Siclair, 1993, p. 31

⁴ MacDowell, 1978, p.67

⁵ Xen. Const. Ath. 1.6

⁶ Xen. Const. Ath. 1.2

⁷ Xen. Const. Ath. 1.3

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