

Three Types of Citizens

Joel Westheimer, researcher at Ottawa University reports there are three categories of citizenship were identified from a study of democratic citizenship. Examine the table below to learn the description of each category, as well as a sample action and the core assumptions.

Kinds of Citizens

Personally Responsible Citizen	Participatory Citizen	Justice-Oriented Citizen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts responsibly in his/her community • Works and pays taxes • Obeys laws • Recycles, gives blood • Volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts • Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment • Knows how government agencies work • Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface outcomes • Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice • Knows about social movements and how to effect systemic change
Sample Action: Contributes food to a food drive	Sample Action: Helps to organize a food drive	Sample Action: Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
Core Assumption: To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community.	Core Assumption: To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures.	Core Assumption: To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time.

In summary, if Participatory Citizens are organizing the food drive and Personally Responsible Citizens are donating the food, the Social Justice-Oriented Citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover.

