

FAQ:

Students Asked, WE ANSWERED

We get asked some pretty tough questions from inquisitive young Canadians who want to know more about how our democracy works.

Below, we've listed our top 10 actual questions from high school students, along with our answers.

Is Canada introducing online voting?

Not right now.

Canadians can do just about everything online, but they still can't vote online at the federal level. Why are we still using old-fashioned pencil and paper to mark our ballots? Because pencil and paper can't be hacked.

Online voting is just not secure enough. Given the consequences of an election being hacked, it's still too risky.

Some other cons of online voting to think about:

- Privacy and secrecy concerns, such as information getting out about your identity or how you voted
- Fraud – for example, someone voting under a false identity, or voting multiple times
- Lack of transparency – since no one is there to observe the vote, people may have less confidence in the voting process and results

There would also be some benefits to online voting, such as:

- Convenience – imagine voting from the couch in your pajamas!
- More options for voters on when and how they cast their ballots
- Easier access for people who have a hard time getting to the polls

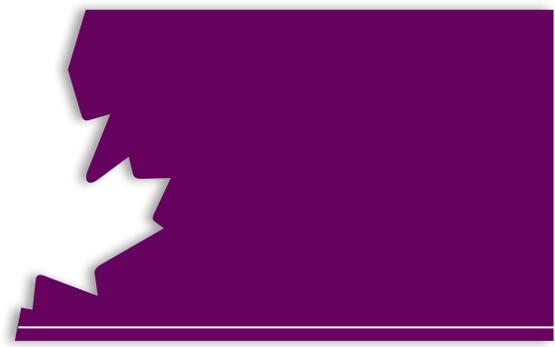
What do you think?

Are the potential benefits of online voting worth the risks?



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In Australia, it's mandatory to vote. Why don't we have a law like that in Canada?

Canadian citizens can choose whether or not they want to vote.

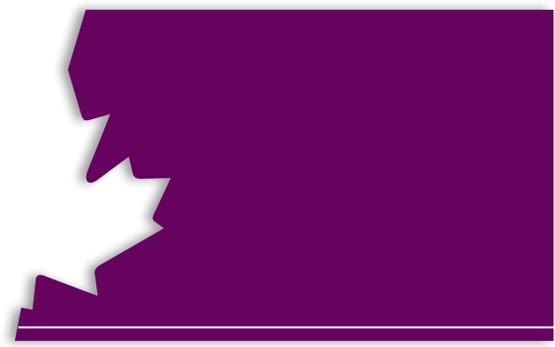
Mandatory voting works very well in Australia. They've had it for a long time, almost since their first election. Because of this, it is widely accepted, just like jury duty, or paying taxes. However, what works in one country may not work in another. In Canada, taking the choice away would likely not be a popular decision. It may even be considered undemocratic by some. The right to vote in Canadian elections is protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The responsibility to exercise that right is up to each of us.

Mandatory voting has been shown to increase voter turnout by about 20 percent. However, there has been criticism of the idea of casting a ballot only to avoid a fine.

Can you think of some other ways to encourage people to vote?

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Why can't people under 18 vote?

Voting age is a topic that Parliament revisits from time to time. Some of the arguments for lowering the voting age to 16 include:

- Sixteen-year-olds are considered responsible enough to drive a vehicle
- They can work, and some pay taxes. They should have a say in how their tax dollars are spent
- Voting for the first time while they're still in school will encourage young people to be lifelong voters

Meanwhile, those who are against lowering the voting age argue:

- Sixteen-year-olds are still minors and do not have full responsibilities as citizens
- They have not completed their education and may not have the judgment they need to exercise the right to vote
- Young people (18–24 year olds) vote far less than the rest of the population. Lowering the age even further would lower the overall participation rate and weaken our democracy

Did you know?

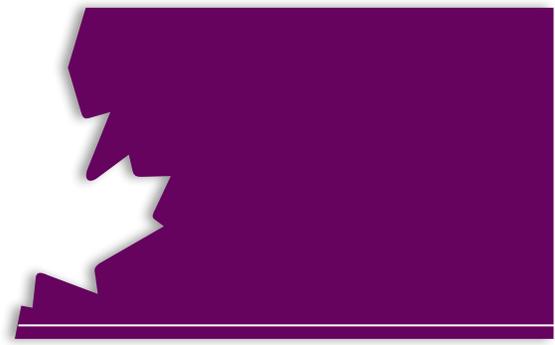
There was a time when the voting age was 21. It was lowered to 18 in 1970. At the time, many people thought that 18-year-olds were not mature enough to vote.

**Do you think teens are mature enough to vote?
Would you vote if you were able to?**



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How can I work in the next election? Would I have to give up my right to vote?

There are over 250,000 jobs available during a federal election. That means that on election day, Elections Canada is the largest employer in the country!

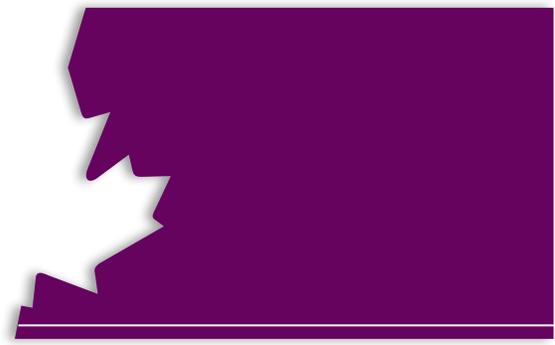
Visit [Elections Canada's Employment](#) page to learn about job opportunities available during an election, and to submit an application. Any Canadian citizen who is at least 16 years old on election day is eligible to apply; however, priority is given to workers who are at least 18 years old and who live in the riding.

All the positions are paid, and you do not have to give up your right to vote. In fact, there is only one Canadian citizen over 18 who is not allowed to vote: The Chief Electoral Officer of Canada.



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Young people are the future of our country, but they vote less than other age groups. What is Elections Canada doing to get more youth voting?

Elections Canada is committed to making voting more accessible to all Canadians, including youth. Here are a few steps that Elections Canada has taken to make voting easier for young people:

- Putting polling places and pop-up Elections Canada offices on select university and college campuses
- Conducting outreach to campuses and youth organizations
- Offering education programs for elementary and high school students
- Commissioning studies, such as the [National Youth Survey, to better understand why some young people don't vote](#)

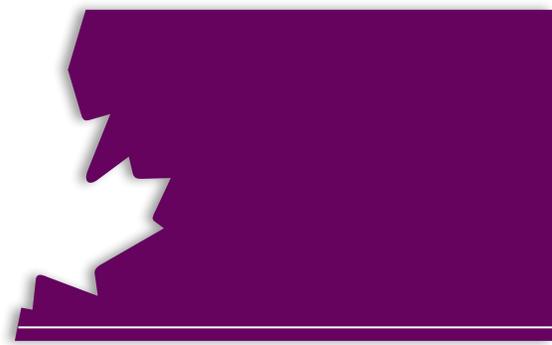
In the 2015 election, young people voted in strong numbers that haven't been seen in decades, but they still vote less than any other age group.

Do you think the high youth voter turnout from 2015 is a one time thing, or the start of a new trend?



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If schools gave civics classes the same importance as some other subjects, like math or science, would we see an impact on youth voter turnout?

While it's hard to know for sure, many studies show that the more you know, the likelier you are to be an engaged citizen.

Part of being a future voter is having the knowledge you need to understand the issues and make an informed decision when you go to the polls. This is called civic literacy, and it includes:

- Voting
- Understanding how government works
- Knowing how to be an active citizen, at all three levels of government

Studies have shown that the better your civic literacy, the more likely you are to vote. We also know that young people can benefit by simply having conversations about politics with friends, teachers and family. That could have an impact on voter turnout, too.

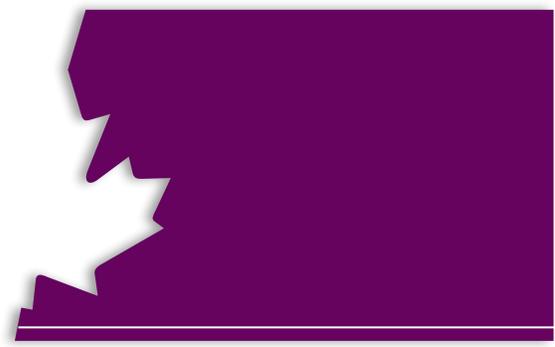
Even if you're not studying civics in school, talk to people about the issues that matter to you!

**Looking for teaching tools on citizenship and democracy?
[Here's a good place to start.](#)**



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What factors do you consider when creating ridings?

Canada's population is always changing. People move around for work, babies are born, some communities grow and others shrink. That means that our electoral districts, or ridings, need to change too. This happens every ten years, after the Census.

Ridings are created by independent electoral boundaries commissions in each province, not by Elections Canada. Drawing a riding can be complicated. There are many factors that the commissions have to consider to keep the ridings fair and impartial, including:

- Population size
- A community's shared culture and identity
- The history of the riding
- Size and geography

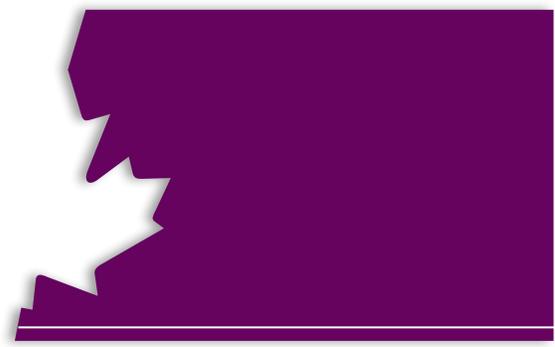
Because of this, every riding is unique. For example, the largest riding is Nunavut, which measures 2,093,190 km². In contrast, the smallest is Toronto Centre, at only 6 km².

There are 338 ridings in Canada.
[Enter your postal code here to find your riding.](#)



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If election day were a day off work, would more people vote?

It's hard to predict whether or not more people would vote if election day were a day off work, like a statutory holiday.

Right now, federal elections are always held on a Monday. However, that doesn't mean that election day is the only time you can vote. Voters have a few different options to choose from:

- 1.** Vote at an advance poll, held over a weekend
- 2.** Vote in person at an Elections Canada office any day leading up to the election
- 3.** Vote by mail

With all these options, voters can choose what works best for their schedule.

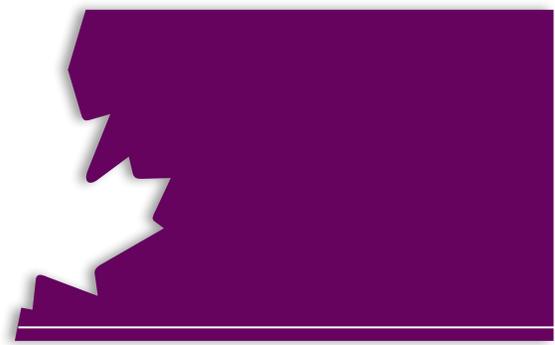
Did you know?

By law, your employer must give you time off to vote on election day if your work schedule doesn't give you three hours in a row while the polls are open.

**For more information on the ways to vote, visit the
[Elections Canada website.](#)**



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What is Elections Canada’s stance on electoral reform?

Elections Canada does not take a position on electoral reform.

As a non-partisan agent of Parliament, the role of Elections Canada is to run federal elections, by elections and referenda. Regardless of the electoral system in place, this means making sure that Canadians are able to exercise their democratic rights to vote and to be a candidate.

Parliament revisits this issue from time to time to make sure that our system is working in the best interests of citizens. This continued discussion is just one of the ways that our democracy stays healthy.

Although Elections Canada doesn’t take a stance on electoral reform, future voters should stay curious and informed. Take a look at some of the [other electoral systems](#) in use around the world.

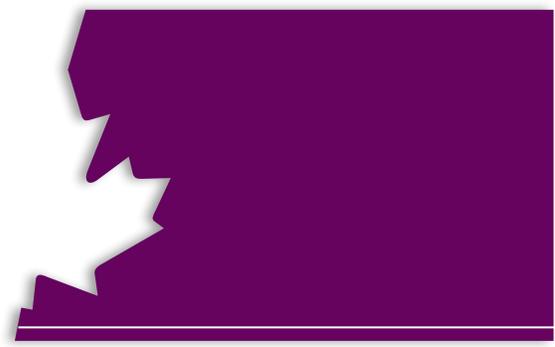
Do you think any of them would work in Canada?





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How does Elections Canada keep our elections secure?

From voter registration to the counting of the ballots—and everything in between—each step of the electoral process has a number of safeguards in place. This is what keeps our elections safe and secure. Some of these safeguards include:

- Ballots are printed on special paper
- Serial numbers are printed on the ballots. That means the election worker can make sure the ballots are not switched
- Voters must prove their identity and address when they go to vote
- After someone has voted, the poll clerk crosses their name off the voter's list
- Once voting is done, election workers must go through a series of steps to count the ballots

These and other measures are protected and enforced by law through the *Canada Elections Act*.