



### If I could vote, would I?

## To Vote or Not to Vote



Why do you think some people choose to vote and others do not? Explore the following list of reasons. Rank each list in the order that you think is most common.

Rank	Common Reasons for Voting	Rank	Common Reasons for Not Voting
	<p>To exercise the right – we live in a democracy and we have the right to vote – why not use it</p> <p>Out of duty – many people feel that it is their job as citizens to participate in elections</p> <p>To support a particular candidate or their political party</p> <p>To have a voice – to have a say in how things are done</p> <p>To change things, to make a difference</p> <p>The system does not work if people do not vote</p>		<p>Do not have time</p> <p>Forget</p> <p>Have to work</p> <p>Do not like any of the choices</p> <p>Do not know who to vote for</p> <p>Out of town</p> <p>Not interested</p> <p>Do not think it matters</p> <p>Do not know when or where to vote</p>



## Survey

Use the questions on the Survey form to interview one or two individuals who are of voting age (18 and older). Add your own questions to the interview.



## Survey

(Circle one that applies)

Gender: Male Female

Age: 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 >55

### Part I: Participation

Do you discuss politics and government with your family?

Do you believe that it is important to vote? Why or why not?

Have you ever voted in an election (federal, provincial or municipal)?

Was there ever a time that you did not vote? Could you explain why?

At what age did you first vote?

When you vote, what is the number one thing that you consider when making your decision?

(Continued on next page)

## **Part II: Knowledge**

How often are provincial elections held?

What is an electoral division? In what electoral division do you live?

What is voter registration? How is it conducted?

Why are voters registered?

What does MLA stand for?

Who is your current MLA?

What is a political party?

What political party does your MLA belong to?

What are the current political parties in Alberta? Which of these parties are represented in the Legislature?

What advice would you give future voters about participating during an election?

## ■ Exploring the Survey Questions

### **When you vote, what is the number one thing that you consider when making your decision?**

People provide different reasons to explain why they vote the way they do. Some vote for a **candidate**, a person running for election, if they think he or she is most qualified. Others vote for both their candidate and the political party that candidate represents, unless he or she is running as an **independent**, a person who is not a member of a specific political party.

Some vote for the party leader through the candidate. Party leaders indicate what their party intends to do if they are elected to form a government. Individual candidates tend to focus on what they want to do for their electoral division.



### **Pause and Reflect**

Why do you think governments must call an election every five years? Why do you think the times between elections can vary?

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### **How often are provincial elections held?**

The *Constitution Act* requires provincial elections to be held at least once every five years. Elections are usually held approximately every four years.

In Alberta, the government in power can decide when to call an election. Sometimes the government calls an election early.

Once an election is called, each electoral division goes through the election process. Candidates and political parties campaign to get support from voters. During four days of advance polling and on polling day, voters can cast their ballots from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### **What is an electoral division? In what electoral division do you live?**

In order to run an election, the province must be divided into electoral divisions, also called **constituencies**. Each electoral division elects one MLA. In 2016, there were 87 constituencies for over 3 million Albertans.

Electoral divisions are determined by a special organization called the Electoral Boundaries Commission. This organization is made up of a chairperson appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and four members, who are called commissioners.

The boundaries of an **electoral division** are established mainly on the basis of population. However, electoral divisions also take into account common community interests, the geographical area, natural boundaries such as rivers, political boundaries such as municipalities and other factors.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission's decisions are guided by a law called the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act*. When the Commission adjusts boundaries, the changes must become law before they can take effect.

### **Find Out More**



You can find maps of each electoral division on the Elections Alberta website. You can also search for the name of your MLA. Go to <http://streetkey.elections.ab.ca>.

### What is voter registration? How is it conducted?

Elections Alberta records the names of eligible voters on a permanent Register of Electors. A List of Electors is provided for each electoral division during an election.

Elections Alberta provides an online voter registration service called Voterlink. Find this service at [www.voterlink.ab.ca](http://www.voterlink.ab.ca).

Eligible voters can add their names to the List of Electors on voting day. Provincial voters must be registered to vote. They must provide identification to prove who they are when they register. Voters can register at the **polling station**, the place where they vote, by completing a declaration. They can also register online or by phone outside of an election period.

In some areas, Elections Alberta will conduct an **enumeration**, or a door-to-door canvass, to register eligible voters.

### Pause and Reflect



Why do you think it is important to keep track of who has voted on polling day?

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voter registration

MLA

voting

elect

political party

### Why are voters registered?

The **Register of Electors** is used to maintain an accurate and up-to-date list of eligible voters. The **List of Electors** is used to keep track of who voted on polling day and to ensure that people vote only once.

### What does MLA stand for?

MLA stands for Member of the Legislative Assembly. When a candidate gets elected, he or she becomes an MLA. An MLA represents all people in their electoral division, regardless of how a person voted in the last election or whether he or she voted at all.

### Who is your MLA?

A list of current MLAs can be found on the Legislative Assembly of Alberta's website at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca).

## What is a political party?

When a group of people have similar ideas about the major issues affecting people in a democratic society, they may form a political party. A **political party** is formed to present candidates who will run in an election. If the candidate is elected to office, he or she will have a chance to put their party's ideas into practice.

In an election campaign, candidates concentrate on promoting policies that they believe will represent the best interests of the people in their electoral division. Political parties begin the work of choosing candidates long before an election. Each party **nominates**, or selects, one candidate to run in each electoral division. Candidates who don't belong to a political party are called independents.

## What political party does your MLA belong to?

Alberta's major political parties are the Progressive Conservatives, Wildrose, the Liberals and the New Democrats, although there are other parties. These parties are also prominent in federal politics and in the politics of other provinces. They have both federal and provincial divisions, and each division has its own members and selects its own candidates.

## Find Out More



Young adults can get involved with a political party by joining its youth association. Most of Alberta's political parties have their own websites, with information about their activities and events. You can also find contact information on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca/parties-and-candidates/parties/](http://www.elections.ab.ca/parties-and-candidates/parties/).

## How many political parties do we currently have in Alberta? How many are represented in the Legislature?

In 2016, there were ten registered political parties in Alberta:

- Alberta First Party
- Alberta Liberal Party
- Alberta New Democratic Party
- Alberta Party
- Alberta Social Credit Party
- Communist Party – Alberta
- Green Party of Alberta
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
- Reform Party of Alberta
- Wildrose Party

After the 2015 provincial election, there were five political parties represented in the Alberta Legislature. The New Democrat Party formed the government with 54 seats. The Wildrose Party formed the Official Opposition with 22 seats. The Progressive Conservative Party had 9 seats, the Liberal Party had 1 seat and the Alberta Party had 1 seat.

## What advice would you give future voters about participating during an election?

Political parties and candidates use many strategies to **campaign**, or promote their positions and ability to represent the people in their electoral division. All people can actively participate in election campaigns. How effective do you think each of these strategies are?

- Candidates often go door-to-door during campaigns. If you meet a candidate, ask questions. Remember that candidates compete for votes, and a chance to explain the advantages of their party's policies is a chance to convince you to vote for them.
- Focus on the issues that interest you and find out what your candidates and parties plan to do about them.
- If you don't get a chance to talk to candidates face-to-face, call campaign headquarters.
- Find out how candidates or their political parties handle issues by reading copies of *Hansard*, which are found on the Legislative Assembly's website at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca). You can search by keyword. The more you know about an issue, the better your questions will be. You can then judge how much the candidates know about that particular issue and whether their views reflect yours.
- One of the best ways to find out about a party's election **platform**, or their views, principles and policies, is at online, in-person or phone-in community meetings, town halls or open houses. Listen to find out how candidates would deal with your concerns and those of your community.
- Watch candidates' panel discussions or party leaders debates on television or online. Watch for statements about important issues in the newspaper.
- Political parties and candidates also do their own advertising, including television and radio commercials, newspaper advertisements, lawn signs and posters. Check out the messages on these different forms of advertising.



Design a **Poster** or **Storyboard** for a television ad that encourages people to register to vote for the next election.



### Did You Know

Canada uses a voting system called **single-member plurality**, or “first-past-the-post.” In other words, the candidate who gets the most votes in an electoral division wins, even if he or she received less than 50% of the “**popular vote**,” or the total number of votes cast.

An alternative voting system used in some democracies is **proportional representation**, in which parties win seats according to the percentage of the total votes cast in their favour. An additional system is **preferential voting**, in which voters can rank candidates in order of preference.

When the election is over, the Chief Electoral Officer prepares a report, with the official results of the election and statistics on voter turnout. These reports are published on the Elections Alberta website at [www.elections.ab.ca/reports/](http://www.elections.ab.ca/reports/). Immediately after an election, Elections Alberta also provides unofficial results.