

1 Why is voting both an individual and collective responsibility?

■ Power to Choose

A **democratic society** is based on the belief that all citizens have a voice in decision-making. However, individuals have differing perspectives about how and when they should participate politically.

The participation of **electors**, or those eligible to vote, as well as the results of their vote, can send important messages to and about government.

Many people find it rewarding to make sure that they are informed about **public issues**, which are issues that concern society.



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. Compare your ranking with two of your classmates.

Find Out More

Explore additional perspectives on voter participation in **Individual or Collective** on the **Building Future Voters** senior high webpage at www.buildingfuturevoters.ca.

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

The issues of low voter turnout and voter apathy in elections for all levels of government – federal, provincial and local – has increasingly become a matter of concern for governments, politicians and many Canadians. The reasons are many – some based on opinion and some based on evidence and statistics. The following is a sampling of perspectives and statistics on these issues from across Canada.



The excerpts that follow come from a variety of sources. As you explore each source, consider the following questions:

- What issues do the excerpts present?
- What different perspectives are represented in the source excerpts?
- How reliable or valid do you think the sources are?

What's the best way to increase voter turnout?

Voter apathy results in unfair and inequitable representation

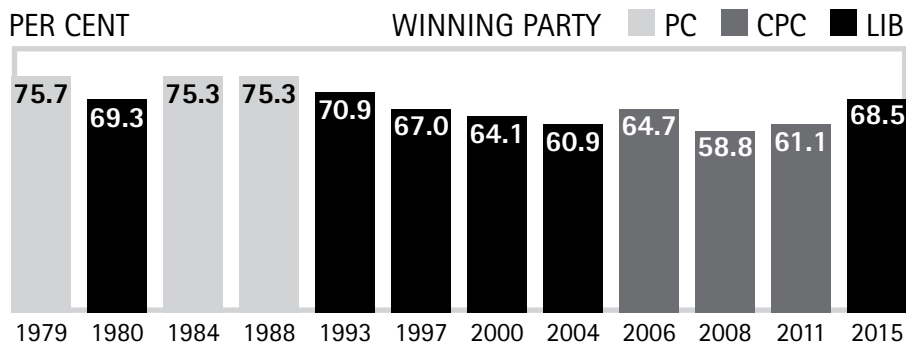
Pause and Reflect



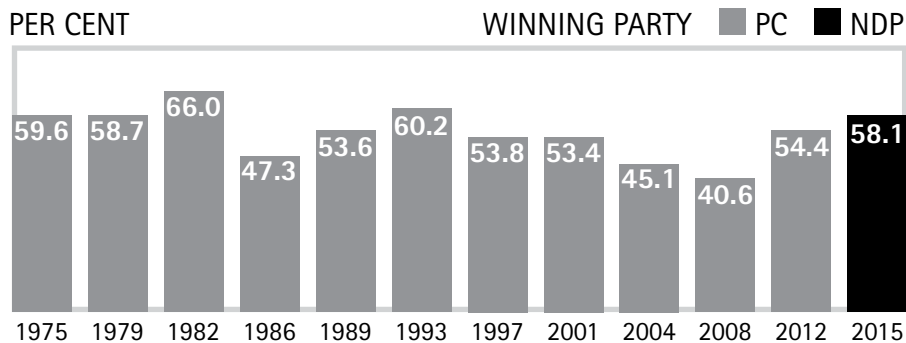
How important do you think it is for citizens to participate in elections at different levels of government? Why?

Canadian Voter Turnout in Federal Elections

In 2003, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada (PC) joined to form the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC).



Alberta Voter Turnout in Provincial Elections



Most Canadians think that Canada's system for electing members of Parliament needs to change. Forty-two per cent thought that the system needs major changes or needs to be changed completely. A plurality of respondents (41%) thought that the system only needs minor changes, while about one in five (17%) were satisfied with the status quo and felt no changes were needed.

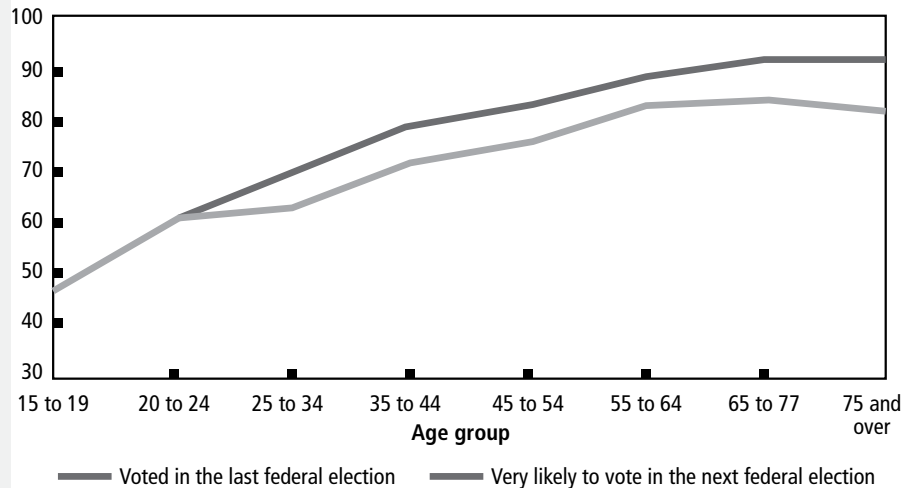
Coletto, D. & Czop, M. (December, 2015). Canadian Electoral Reform: Public Opinion on Possible Alternatives. Prepared for the Broadbent Institute. Abacus Data. https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/broadbent/pages/4770/attachments/original/1448994262/Canadian_Electoral_Reform_-_Report.pdf?1448994262

Find Out More



Find information from a survey of 1 000 Canadians aged 18 to 25 about recent history of youth engagement in Canadian politics and the consequences of increased voting rates in *The Next Canada: Politics, political engagement, and priorities of Canada's next electoral powerhouse: young Canadians* (2016), commissioned by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. <http://abacusdata.ca/the-next-canada-politics-political-engagement-and-priorities-of-canadas-next-electoral-powerhouse-young-canadians/>

Participation in the last federal election and likelihood of voting in the next election, by age group, 2013



Turcotte, M. (2015). *Political participation and civic engagement of youth*. Statistics Canada. www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.htm

Political participation and civic engagement of youth

"This study, which was based on data from the 2013 General Social Survey (GSS) on Social Identity, has shown that younger people are less likely to vote than older individuals and are also less likely to report that they intend to vote in the next election. Younger people also tend to be less interested in politics than their older counterparts. These trends, however, conceal a relatively high degree of engagement in other activities. For example, many young Canadians are politically and civically engaged, but in different ways. The youngest of them—those aged 15 to 19—were the most likely of all age groups to be members of or participants in groups, organizations or associations. They were also the most likely to participate at least once a week in group activities or meetings.

Youth aged 20 to 24 are among the most engaged of all in political activities such as signing petitions and participating in demonstrations or marches. Young university students stood out in particular, as they had the highest participation rates for almost all these types of activities. In short, when alternative ways of participating in political and civic activities are considered, it is clear that a significant portion of young individuals are interested in public affairs.

However, the proportion of politically inactive individuals—those who did not participate in any political activity in the past 12 months and who were not highly likely to vote in the next election—was larger among youth. The lower voter turnout among younger individuals promises to be a topic of interest and concern in the coming years."

Turcotte, M. (2015). *Political participation and civic engagement of youth*. Statistics Canada. www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.htm

Reasons for not voting by age group

	18 to 24 years (%)	25 to 34 years (%)	35 to 44 years (%)	45 to 54 years (%)	55 to 64 years (%)
Everyday life or health reasons	47	48	47	44	44
Too busy	28	30	30	22	17
Out of town	13	11	11	12	14
Illness or disability	5	6	7	10	14
Political reasons	38	40	42	44	43
Not interested in politics	33	33	34	34	34
Electoral process-related reasons	11	8	6	7	6
All other reasons	4	5	5	5	6

Find additional statistics for other age groups in this source.

Statistics Canada (February 22, 2016). *Reasons for not voting in the federal election, October 19, 2015: Reasons for not voting by age group and sex.* www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/160222/t002a-eng.htm



Explore an Issue

Use the issue consideration cards on the page that follows to explore the issue that you identify. Use each card to assign responsibilities to each group member. Some group members may share a responsibility.

Explore the issue - define, brainstorm, explain and question

Mandatory Voting?

In many countries across the world, voting is not only a right. It is considered a duty that governments enforce through mandatory voting.

In Canada, retired politician Mac Harb is an advocate of compulsory voting.

Writing in the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, the former Liberal MP and senator recalled that mandatory voting was introduced in Australia in 1924.

“Now, Australia has consistently boasted a turnout of over 90 per cent,” Harb wrote. “Compulsory voting in Belgium dates back to 1893. Currently, voter turnout in Belgium is over 90 per cent.”

“The most recent election in the European Union revealed the tremendous power of mandatory voting legislation and the pro-voting culture it brings along,” Harb continued. “Member states with mandatory voting during the last European Union elections had remarkable turnouts, with 90.8 per cent in Belgium, 89 per cent in Luxembourg, and 71 per cent in Cyprus, as compared with countries with no compulsory voting, voter turnout was only 42.7 per cent in France, 45.1 per cent in Spain and a mere 38.8 per cent in the United Kingdom.”

Pablo, C. (October 7, 2015). *Is it time for mandatory voting?* The Georgia Straight. www.straight.com/news/551946/it-time-mandatory-voting-canada

Consider these issue examples as you decide on one to research:

- Should the electoral system be reformed to increase political participation of youth? How?
- Should the electoral system be reformed to ensure proportional representation?
- To what extent should politicians be accountable to the electorate?
- Should voting be mandatory?
- Should we have regularly scheduled elections in Canada?



Issue Consideration Cards

Strengths–Weaknesses

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of different positions on the issue
- Consider how the strengths and weaknesses are supported by evidence, examples and data

Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a position or stance on the issue using a Retrieval Chart.

Consider the Evidence

- Collect evidence – sources, statistics, opinions and data – that supports identified positions on the issue
- Organize the evidence

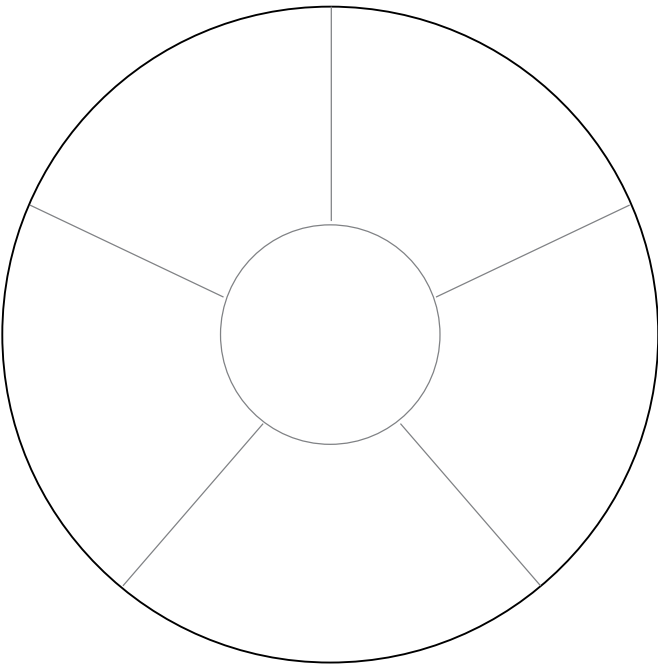
Collect and organize the evidence in a format that you choose. Consider using:

- A database
- A chart
- A file of index cards.

Perspectives

- Identify the perspectives that influence different positions on the issue
- Describe the individuals or groups who have these perspectives

Identify different perspectives that influence positions on this issue. Record each perspective in a spoke on a wheel chart.



Solutions–Alternatives

- Identify possible solutions or alternatives that could resolve the issue
- Consider ways that the issue can be acted upon

Identify and describe the solutions or alternatives for resolving or taking action on this issue. Organize these in a format you choose. Consider using:

- A database
- A chart
- A file of index cards.