


# Geography of Elections

Understanding  
ridings as electoral  
communities

# Geography of Elections



## Big Idea

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Each federal electoral district has its own election. The community of voters chooses one candidate to represent the whole district in Parliament.

**Inquiry Questions:**

**What is my federal electoral community?  
How does it compare to others?**

# Overall description

This activity is designed for a geography, social studies, civics or citizenship class.

In this activity, students reflect on the different communities they belong to and then consider the idea of their electoral community. They examine their own federal electoral district and compare it to at least one other, using maps and fact sheets. They consolidate their learning by considering questions like which electoral community is easier to represent in Parliament.

## ✘ Time needed

60 min

## ✘ Student competencies

- Students will use map literacy skills to demonstrate understanding of both the physical and human geographical factors unique to each electoral district
- Students will work collaboratively to manage information and think critically in analyzing, interpreting and making reasoned judgments using federal electoral maps by:
  - examining the demographic data for their own federal electoral district
  - comparing the demographic data between two electoral districts
  - asking questions and making inferences from maps of election results

- Students will apply citizenship skills in identifying geographic, demographic and political characteristics of communities
- Students will communicate their thinking in small groups and their conclusions in whole-class discussions and through personal reflection to become self-aware of any changes in their thinking since the start of the activity

## ✘ Materials

- *Federal Electoral Districts Map of Canada\**
- *Federal election results map\**
- Helpful vocabulary for fact sheet (page 9)
- Fact sheets for six electoral districts of Canada (pages 10–15)\*\*
- Comparison chart of electoral districts (page 16)
- Exit cards (page 17)
- Optional assessment rubric (page 18)
- Sticky notes (not included)

\* In your kit or online at [electionsanddemocracy.ca](http://electionsanddemocracy.ca)

\*\*Access all electoral district fact sheets online at [electionsanddemocracy.ca/district-fact-sheets](http://electionsanddemocracy.ca/district-fact-sheets)



# Instructions

To set up for this activity, post the large maps around the room in places where the students can easily gather and examine them.

In this activity, students will work in small groups to compare their own electoral district to another one, using maps and fact sheets. This teacher's guide includes fact sheets for six very different electoral districts.

Fact sheets for all of Canada's electoral districts are available online at [electionsanddemocracy.ca/district-fact-sheets](https://electionsanddemocracy.ca/district-fact-sheets). Before the activity, download and print the fact sheet for the electoral district where your school is located. (Need to find your electoral district? Look it up on Elections Canada's website at [elections.ca](https://elections.ca)).

## × Minds on

5–10 min

Ask students: What communities are you a part of? Invite students to turn and talk to a peer to brainstorm some groups and communities they belong to. If students are stuck, prompt them to think about their school community, neighbourhood, city, cultural group(s), faith community, online communities, sports teams, etc. Ask students to make a list of all the communities they belong to. Invite them to share some of their responses orally; write these on the board or on chart paper.

Ask: Did you know that you are part of a community that elects a representative to Parliament? That community is called an electoral district (also known as a riding or constituency). Students who know who their member of Parliament is may connect to that information more readily.

Introduce the inquiry questions and write them on the board:

- What is my electoral community?
- How does it compare to others?

Explain that students will be examining maps to gain a deeper understanding of this question.

## × Activity

40 min

### 1. Map literacy

Divide students into groups and have them take turns examining the federal electoral districts and federal election results maps. They should discuss, consider and report on some or all of the following questions. You may wish to give each group a few sticky notes to label the map features.

- a. What is the purpose of this map?
- b. Who published it?
- c. What does this map show?
- d. What does this map not show?
- e. Does anything surprise you?

## 2. Finding and examining your electoral district

Have students locate the electoral district of the school on one or both large maps. (Hint: If your school is in an urban area, students may have to look at the insets.) Take a moment for some quick observations. Ask students: What do you notice about our electoral district?

Invite students to place a sticky note on the large map(s) indicating your school's electoral district.

Distribute the fact sheet on your electoral district to each student. If possible, project the map from the fact sheet. Ask students: Do you live in the same district as the school?

Invite students to read the fact sheet in their small groups. Ask them to discuss which facts they found to be surprising or unique, and which ones they have questions about.

Ask: How do you think our school's electoral district will compare to others?

## 3. Examining and comparing other electoral districts

Give each group one fact sheet for a different electoral district, and a sticky note. We recommend that each group examine a different fact sheet to allow for a richer discussion in the consolidation phase.

Invite students to go back to the maps on the wall and locate this new electoral district. They should write the name of the district on a sticky note and place it on one of the big maps to indicate the district's location.

In their small groups, have students read their fact sheet. A helpful vocabulary guide is provided in this kit to help language learners understand the terminology. Invite them to note similarities and differences between this fact sheet and the one for your school district.

Distribute one comparison chart of electoral districts per group. Have students work together to complete the Venn diagram, comparing this new electoral district with the school's electoral district. Instruct them to place similar features in the middle section of the diagram. (You may need to clarify that things should be similar, but don't need to be exactly the same, to go in the centre of the diagram. Also, students do not need to put all the information on the diagram, but can select 3 to 5 facts that show the uniqueness of each district.)

## × Consolidation

10 min

Ask a representative from each group to share one or two interesting or surprising similarities and differences between the two districts. Ask:

- Do you know how many people these districts each send to Parliament?  
**(Answer: 1)**
- Of the two districts you compared, which one is the easiest to represent? Why?

Invite each student to reflect and write on their exit card in response to the following prompts:

1. What new information did you learn to answer the inquiry question: What is my electoral community? How does it compare to others?
2. One thing I learned is...
3. One question I have now is...

## × Optional extension activities

- Invite students to examine the federal election results map again. Ask: What does it show us? You might have students compare the specific districts (labelled with the sticky notes) to ask what they notice about how the districts compare. You might also ask some of the following questions:

- What colour is most prominent on this map?
- What does it represent?
- What do you find surprising?

You may wish to point out to students that the geographical size of an electoral district does not equal greater representation in Parliament.

- Investigate how the boundaries of electoral districts relate to treaty lands and traditional Indigenous territories in your region. What do you notice? What do you wonder?
- Refining inquiry questions: Using criteria for a good inquiry question, students could refine and improve on the questions asked by all students during this activity. Teachers could collect questions for analysis using sticky notes or an electronic tool (such as a shared document or a polling app).
- Students could further investigate, using other sources, the answers to some of the questions that this activity generated and respond in more depth to the overall inquiry question.

- Students could investigate the challenges and opportunities facing someone who is running to be a member of Parliament in the school's electoral community, and someone who is running in another electoral community. This investigation can be further extended by engaging in the online activity *Setting the Agenda*, an educational game created by the Library of Parliament that helps students experience a typical day in the life of a parliamentarian.
- You may be able to connect this work to other geographic tools and concepts, such as population pyramids and other demographic human geography concepts.
- Exit cards help students to consolidate their understanding and engage in metacognition. The cards can give teachers feedback about what students have really learned, and what questions they have that can help teachers plan meaningful instruction based on student needs and interests. Students can use exit cards to build their understanding over time and to see their own growth as learners.
- Sentence stems (such as "One thing I learned is...") are useful especially for English language learners, since they help to model sentence structures. It is also helpful for reluctant or struggling learners, as it is more invitational than a question, which can be perceived to have a right or wrong answer.

## ✘ Teaching tips

- Turn-and-talk is a simple protocol to help students verbalize their thinking. It is helpful when trying to build a safe space to share ideas. This protocol gives students confidence in their ideas and builds trust and community in the classroom.
- Mind-mapping is a type of graphic organizer that could be used in the *Minds on*. It can help you see relationships between pieces of information. It is helpful to categorize examples and/or show specific examples in a category. You might have school as a community, and clubs, class and sports as sub-categories of that community. You might add specific clubs or sports as a further sub-category.
- A Venn diagram (referred to in this guide as comparison chart of electoral districts) is a graphic organizer that can help students compare similarities and differences in a clear and visual way.



# Materials

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To be photocopied



## × Helpful vocabulary for fact sheet

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### Population

All the people who live in a district.

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### Area (km<sup>2</sup>)

The size of the land within a boundary – in square kilometres.

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### Population density (/km<sup>2</sup>)

The average number of people who live in each square kilometre.

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### Population change (%)

How much the population has increased or decreased since the last time we counted.

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### Average age

The number you get when you add the ages of everyone in the district and divide by the number of people.

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### Average income (\$)

The number you get when you add the salaries of everyone in the district and divide by the number of people.

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### Voter turnout (%)

The percentage of people who had the right to vote and who voted in the election.

## ✘ Electoral district fact sheet

Electoral District:

**Cardigan**

Province/Territory:

**Prince Edward Island**

- Population: **39,236**
- Area: **2,518 km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population density: **16/km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population change: **n/a**
- Average age: **43**
- Average income: **\$47,680**
- Voter turnout: **72%**
- Language spoken most often at home:
  - English: **36,965**
  - French: **205**
  - Indigenous languages: **0**
  - Most popular other language:
    - Mandarin: **1,570**
  - All others: **850**



Cardigan is district number 11001 on the Federal Electoral Districts map.

All data are taken from Elections Canada administrative data and from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population. Due to the 2023 representation orders, new boundaries and electoral districts come into effect at the 45th federal election. For this reason, some data are estimated by Elections Canada and others are not available. For the purpose of this educational exercise for students, all data are simplified to show a snapshot of the electoral district.

## ✖ Electoral district fact sheet

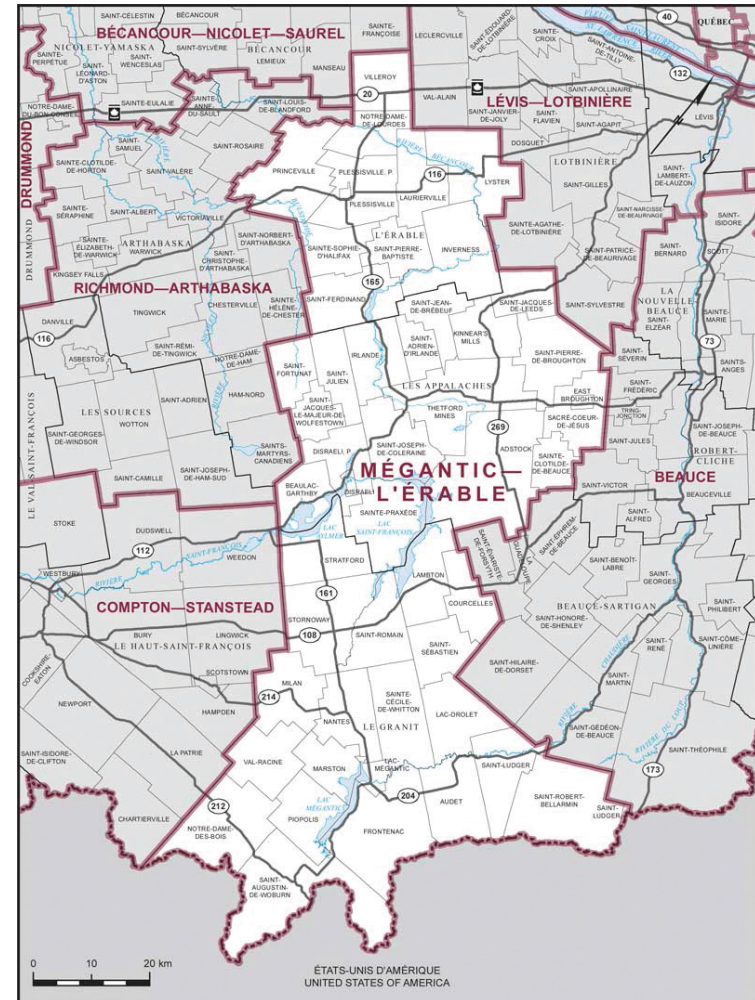
Electoral District:

**Mégantic–L'Érable–Lotbinière**

Province/Territory:

**Quebec**

- Population: **103,114**
- Area: **6,898 km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population density: **15/km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population change: **n/a**
- Average age: **47**
- Average income: **\$42,000**
- Voter turnout: **65%**
- Language spoken most often at home:
  - English: **825**
  - French: **99,335**
  - Indigenous languages: **0**
  - Most popular other language:
    - Spanish: **550**
  - All others: **375**



Mégantic–L'Érable–Lotbinière is district number 24046 on the Federal Electoral Districts map.

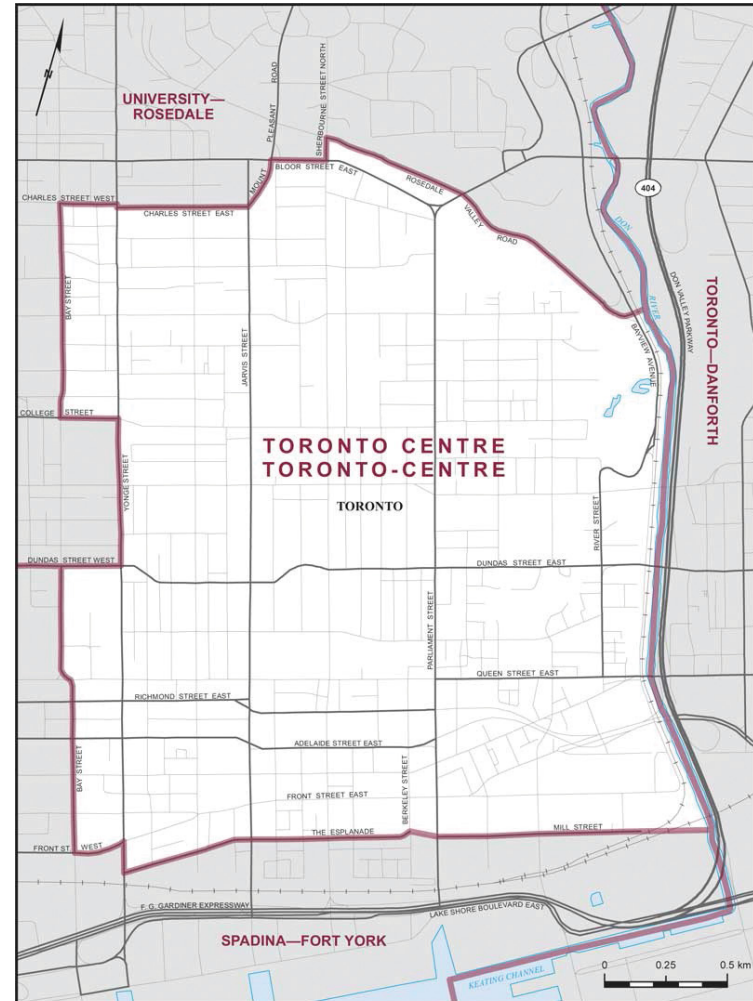
All data are taken from Elections Canada administrative data and from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population. Due to the 2023 representation orders, new boundaries and electoral districts come into effect at the 45th federal election. For this reason, some data are estimated by Elections Canada and others are not available. For the purpose of this educational exercise for students, all data are simplified to show a snapshot of the electoral district.

## ✖ Electoral district fact sheet

Electoral District:  
**Toronto Centre**

Province/Territory:  
**Ontario**

- Population: **121,703**
- Area: **6 km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population density: **20,284/km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population change: **n/a**
- Average age: **40**
- Average income: **\$61,700**
- Voter turnout: **57%**
- Language spoken most often at home:
  - English: **87,435**
  - French: **1,495**
  - Indigenous languages: **10**
  - Most popular other language:
    - Mandarin: **3,600**
  - All others: **19,035**



Toronto Centre is district number 35109 on the Federal Electoral Districts map.

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## ✖ Electoral district fact sheet

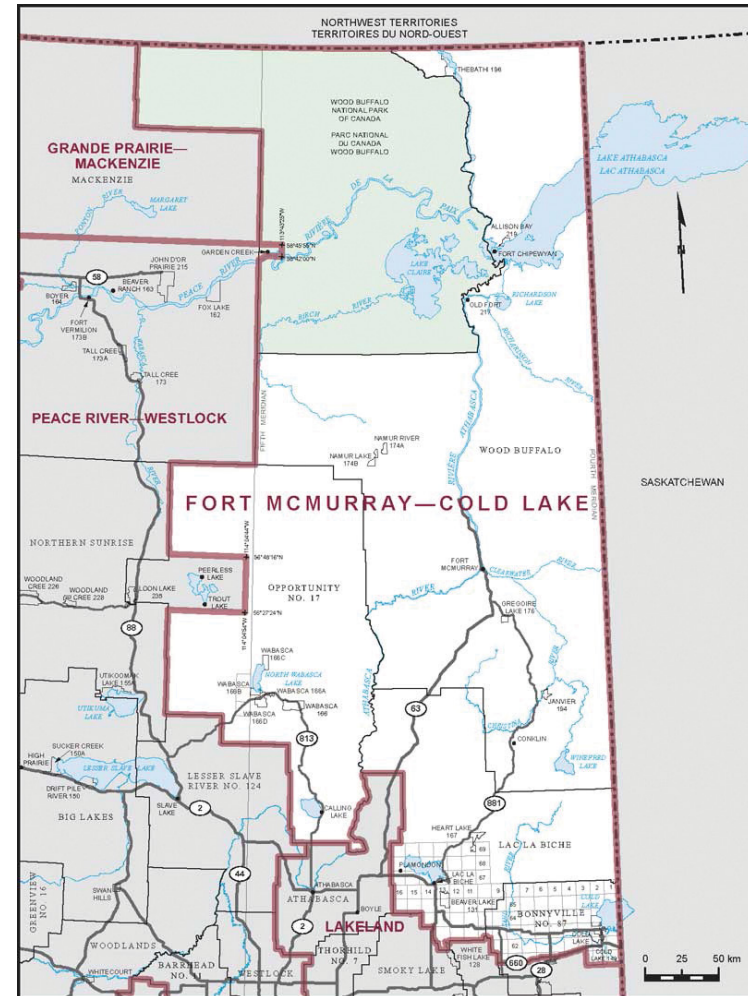
Electoral District:

**Fort McMurray–Cold Lake**

Province/Territory:

**Alberta**

- Population: **110,504**
- Area: **142,981 km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population density: **1/km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population change: **n/a**
- Average age: **34**
- Average income: **\$84,400**
- Voter turnout: **56%**
- Language spoken most often at home:
  - English: **96,185**
  - French: **1,145**
  - Indigenous languages: **810**
  - Most popular other language:
    - Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino): **2,230**
  - All others: **5,975**



Fort McMurray–Cold Lake is district number 48025 on the Federal Electoral Districts map.

All data are taken from Elections Canada administrative data and from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population. Due to the 2023 representation orders, new boundaries and electoral districts come into effect at the 45th federal election. For this reason, some data are estimated by Elections Canada and others are not available. For the purpose of this educational exercise for students, all data are simplified to show a snapshot of the electoral district.

## ✖ Electoral district fact sheet

Electoral District:

**Electoral District: Richmond Centre–Marpole**

Province/Territory:

**British Columbia**

- Population: **116,380**
- Area: **44 km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population density: **2,645/km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population change: **n/a**
- Average age: **43**
- Average income: **\$45,920**
- Voter turnout: **47%**
- Language spoken most often at home:
  - English: **51,150**
  - French: **270**
  - Indigenous languages: **0**
  - Most popular other languages:
    - Mandarin: **23,310**
  - All others: **31,490**



Richmond Centre–Marpole is district number 59027 on the Federal Electoral Districts map.

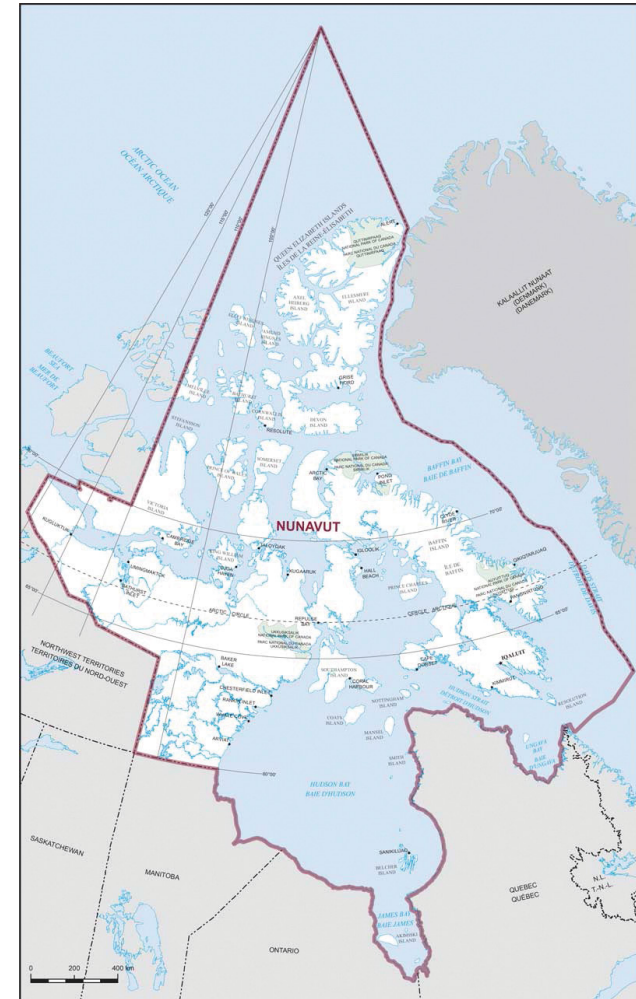
All data are taken from Elections Canada administrative data and from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population. Due to the 2023 representation orders, new boundaries and electoral districts come into effect at the 45th federal election. For this reason, some data are estimated by Elections Canada and others are not available. For the purpose of this educational exercise for students, all data are simplified to show a snapshot of the electoral district.

## ✖ Electoral district fact sheet

Electoral District:  
**Nunavut**

Province/Territory:  
**Nunavut**

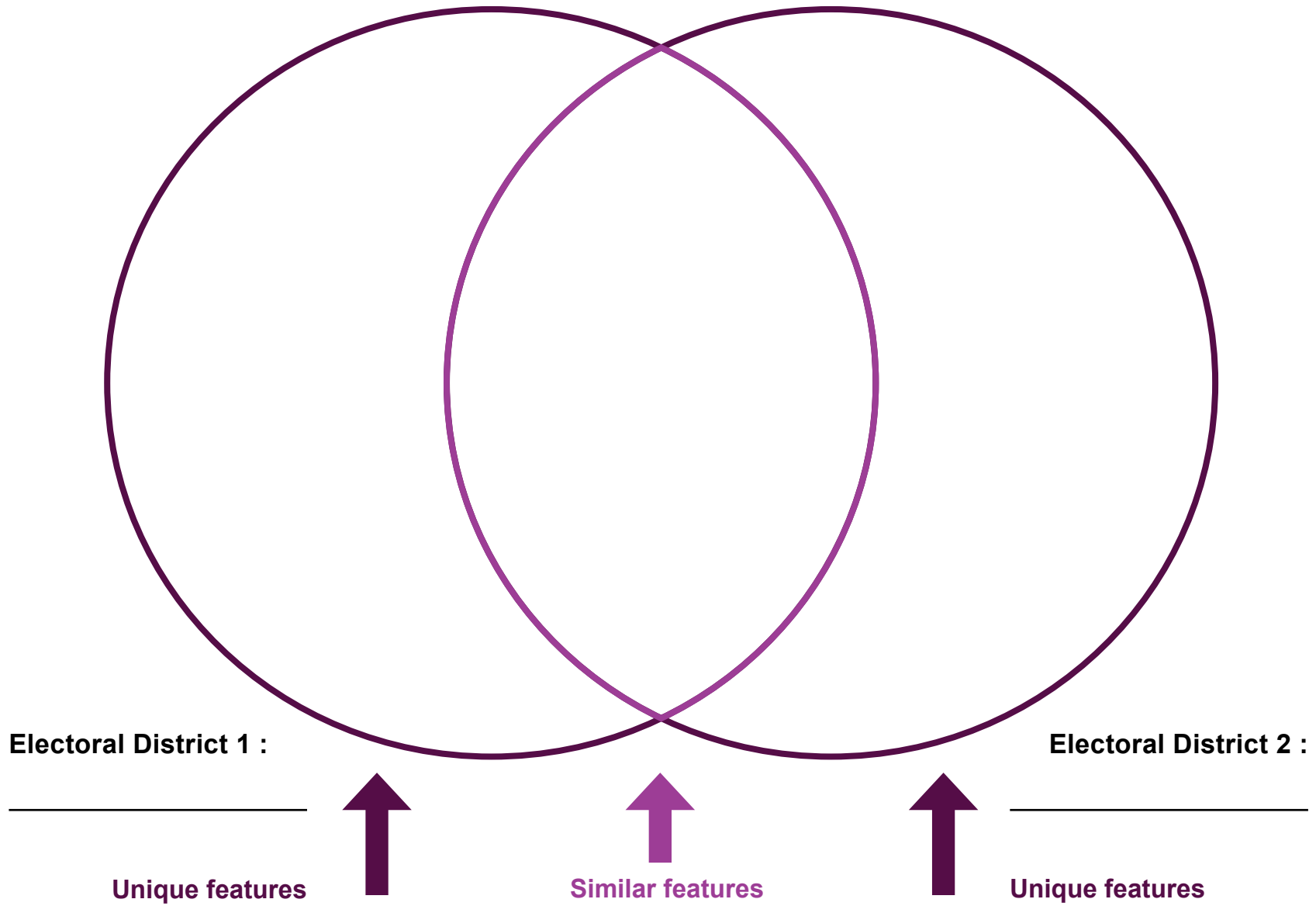
- Population: **36,858**
- Area: **1,836,994 km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population density: **0.02/km<sup>2</sup>**
- Population change: **+2.5%**
- Average age: **28**
- Average income: **\$57,200**
- Voter turnout: **34%**
- Language spoken most often at home:
  - English: **17,055**
  - French: **340**
  - Indigenous languages: **15,190**
  - Most popular other language:
    - Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino): **100**
  - All others: **190**



Nunavut is district number 62001 on the Federal Electoral Districts map.

All data are taken from Elections Canada administrative data and from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population. Due to the 2023 representation orders, new boundaries and electoral districts come into effect at the 45th federal election. For this reason, some data are estimated by Elections Canada and others are not available. For the purpose of this educational exercise for students, all data are simplified to show a snapshot of the electoral district.

## × Comparison chart of electoral districts





## × Exit card

### Geography of Elections

1. What new information did you learn to answer the inquiry question:  
*What is my electoral community?*
  
2. How does your electoral community compare to others?
  
3. One thing I learned is...
  
4. One question I have now is...

## × Exit card

### Geography of Elections

1. What new information did you learn to answer the inquiry question:  
*What is my electoral community?*
  
2. How does your electoral community compare to others?
  
3. One thing I learned is...
  
4. One question I have now is...

## × Elections Canada Civic Education Assessment Rubric

### Task: Geography of Elections

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Group: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Absent / Incomplete</b>	<b>Level 1 (Below expectations)</b>	<b>Level 2 (Approaches expectations)</b>	<b>Level 3 (Meets expectations)</b>	<b>Level 4 (Exceeds expectations)</b>
<b>Understanding Content</b> (e.g., ideas, opinions, concepts, relationships among facts)		Demonstrates limited understanding of content	Demonstrates some understanding of content	Demonstrates considerable understanding of content	Demonstrates thorough understanding of content
<b>Understanding Context(s)</b> (e.g., relationship of content to big ideas, such as “fairness,” “democracy,” and “inclusion vs. exclusion;” themes; frameworks)		Demonstrates limited understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates some understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates considerable understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates thorough understanding of context(s)
<b>Applying Critical Thinking Skills</b> (e.g., analyzing, evaluating, inferring, interpreting, revising, refining, reviewing, reflecting, forming conclusions, detecting bias, synthesizing)		Uses critical thinking skills with limited effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with some effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with a high degree of effectiveness
<b>Using Collaborative Group Learning Skills</b> (e.g., communication skills, questioning, active listening, problem solving, focus on task, level of engagement, teamwork)		Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with limited effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with some effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with considerable effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with a high degree of effectiveness
<b>Demonstrating Civic Disposition</b> (e.g., respects diversity of opinion, recognizes that rights come with responsibilities, considers what is good for society as a whole)		Expresses few civic dispositions	Expresses some civic dispositions	Expresses many civic dispositions	Expresses a considerable number and range of civic dispositions

Comments:

## Learn more

If you and your students enjoyed this lesson, we encourage you to use Elections Canada's other educational resources. These cross-curricular materials can be taught in a variety of subjects. Find the right fit for your class using our online Curriculum Connections tool ([electionsanddemocracy.ca/curriculum-connections](http://electionsanddemocracy.ca/curriculum-connections)).

All resources are available in English and French, and there are versions for language learners.

Visit [electionsanddemocracy.ca](http://electionsanddemocracy.ca) to browse our complete list, download or order. You can also contact us using the information beside.

## Contact us

To share comments or ask questions, or if some of your kit components are missing, write or call us:

**Email:** [education@elections.ca](mailto:education@elections.ca)

**Telephone:** 1-800-463-6868

**TTY:** 1-800-361-8935

**Fax:** 1-888-524-1444

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