

Federal Elections ✕

Comparison Table



Comparable	Canada	US
Size of country	40.5 million people 9.98 million km2	335.9 million people 9.8 million km2
Type of country	Federation	Federation
Type of democracy	Representative democracy	Representative democracy
System of government	Constitutional monarchy	Federal republic
Head of State	His Majesty King Charles III (represented in Canada by the Governor General)	President
Head of government	Prime Minister	President
Federal representatives	Elected representatives to Parliament: 343 343 members of Parliament (MPs) elected to the House of Commons 105 senators, appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister	Elected representatives to Congress: 535 435 members of the House of Representatives (congressional representatives) 100 senators
Who can vote?	Canadian citizens who are at least 18 years old. The rules are the same across Canada.	Most US citizens who are at least 18 years old. Each state has its own rules. For example, some people with a felony conviction cannot vote.

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How do you get on the voters list?	You can register at any time to be on the National Register of Electors, including on election day. The rules are the same across Canada.	In most states, voters have to register before election day to be able to vote. The process differs from state to state.
How often do federal elections happen?	While Canada's fixed-date election law calls for a federal election to be held every four years, an election can be called sooner or later, as long as it is not more than five years from the previous election. This happens most commonly in a minority government situation.	All elections are on a fixed schedule: President and Vice-President: every four years Members of the House of Representatives: every two years Senators: every six years (every two years, one third of the Senate's seats are up for election).
What type of election system does the country have?	First-past-the-post. In this system, the candidate with the most votes is elected.	First-past-the-post. In this system, the candidate with the most votes is elected.
What does a ballot look like?	Same format across Canada. There is only one person to vote for: your local representative in Parliament. The ballot: • includes the names of the candidates in your riding and the party they belong to, if any • is in both official languages • is in alphabetical order	Different format in every state. There are several items to vote for, including candidates and laws. The ballot includes: • presidential and vice-presidential candidates • candidates for the House of Representatives • candidates for the Senate • candidates for the state legislature The ballot can include: • candidates running for local positions (judges, school board members, etc.) • referendums on laws or bills

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Who do you vote for?	Your local representative in Parliament (not for the Prime Minister).	• the President and Vice-President • your congressional representative • your senator • your state representatives • other
How does your vote count?	Citizens vote directly for the member of Parliament in their riding. The party with the most seats forms the Government and its leader becomes the Prime Minister.	Citizens vote indirectly for the President and Vice-President through the Electoral College. The officials of the Electoral College vote directly for the President and Vice-President. Citizens vote directly for local Congress and Senate candidates.
How many political parties can there be?	No limit to the number of parties. The current House of Commons has representatives from five parties and independents. Most senators are independent, but some are affiliated.	No limit to the number of parties. The House of Representatives is currently split between Democrat and Republican seats. The Senate is divided between Democrats and Republicans
Who organizes the federal election?	One organization, Elections Canada. This non-partisan, independent agency reports directly to Parliament. Elections Canada makes sure that elections are carried out the same way across the country.	Because elections are state-run, a different organization organizes the election in each state. This means that elections are run differently in every state and sometimes even at the local level. There are about 13,000 entities involved in organizing a US federal election.
What voting options are available?	Voting options are the same for all electors. They can vote on election day, at their advance poll, at a local Elections Canada office or by mail.	Voting options vary by state. For example, in some states all voters are sent a ballot to vote by mail. In others, you can vote by mail only if you request a ballot or if you have a valid reason.