

✖ Teacher fact sheet

How are federal electoral boundaries decided in Canada?



A note about terms

Federal riding, federal electoral district and constituency can all be used interchangeably.



When and why do the boundaries need to change?

According to the Constitution of Canada, federal electoral boundaries must be reviewed every 10 years based on the most recent census to reflect Canada's ever-changing population.



Who decides where the boundaries go?

An independent electoral boundaries commission is created for each province, for a total of 10 commissions. The commissions use demographic data from Statistics Canada and spatial data from Natural Resources Canada to determine if the boundaries need to be changed.



What about the territories?

Due to their limited population size and the *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act*, the territories are each allocated only one federal electoral district, which is not reviewed.



Who is a part of a federal electoral boundaries commission?

Each commission has three key players: one judge, who chairs the commission, and two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Commons (usually academics and researchers).

**What criteria are used to determine the new boundaries?**

The main criterion is population equality (plus or minus 25%); however, other criteria are also considered by the commission, such as:

- Communities of interest or identity
- Historical patterns of previous boundaries
- Manageable geographic size

**Do citizens get a say?**

Of course! Once the commission has prepared proposals for the revised boundaries, there are public hearings held in the affected districts for the public to participate in the process. Members of the House of Commons can also participate in the hearings.

**Does Elections Canada decide where the boundaries go?**

Elections Canada plays an impartial support role, such as providing data and assisting with mapping. It then implements the boundary decisions made by the commissions and produces new electoral district maps.

For more information: *Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c. E-3)