



Preparing to vote

ACTIVITY



60 minutes

Voting: a step that counts!

In this activity, the voters in training question the right to vote of young people aged 18 to 35 as a means of expressing their views in a democratic society. They create an advertisement to get these people to go vote.

Objectives

*Understand why it is important
to exercise your right to vote*

Find ways to promote voting

MATERIAL REQUIRED

- ✓ Whiteboard or large piece of poster board
- ✓ Material for the creation of an advertisement (variable depending on the chosen format)

LINKS WITH THE QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

French field

Competency: write a variety of texts and verbal communication

Field of history and citizenship education

Competency: construct his or her consciousness of citizenship through the study of history

Broad area of learning: living together and citizenship

Axis of development: awareness of the importance of rules of social conduct and democratic institutions and Involvement in action in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity

Broad area of learning: media

Axis of development: understanding of media representations of reality

Cross-curricular competencies: *Implement creative thinking, take advantage of information, structure your identity, cooperation, communicate appropriately*

**Voting: a step that counts!****ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY**

Read this sentence aloud to young people:

In the last provincial general elections in 2018, only 53% of electors under the age of 35 took advantage of their right to vote. In the entire population, the participation rate was 66%.

Then ask them:

What are your impressions of these statistics? Do they surprise you? What do you think accounts for the low participation rate of young people?

A BIT OF THEORY

Voting is the basis of our democracy. It is an important symbol of citizen participation in the government's operation. However, exercising one's right to vote has not always been easy. This right was obtained after several struggles and demands.

In Canada and Québec, citizens have not always been able to exercise their right to vote. Even when this right was granted, some people did not have access to it in the first place, in particular women, First Nations and Inuit people. In Canada's early history, there were far fewer people who could vote than people who could not.

Voting today

Many countries are still fighting for democracy, but here, the right to vote is protected by the *Québec Charter of Human Rights* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Voting is not compulsory; it can be considered as much a privilege as a duty.

The exercise of the vote conditions have improved over time. For most of the 19th century, elections were held over several days, sometimes even weeks. The vote was taken orally or by a show of hands, in front of the other electors. This often led to arguments between political opponents.

Voting: a step that counts!

Today, we ensure that the vote is secret and that electors vote freely, without fear or intimidation. Several measures have been implemented to facilitate and promote the participation of as many people as possible to the poll. Advance poll, for example, allows people to vote before election day. There are also voting days in health care facilities for residents and in educational institutions for students. In addition, employers must allow their employees to vote: they must release them for at least four consecutive hours during the hours where the polling stations are open. Finally, all polling stations must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Voting allows us to:

- Express our opinion on issues that are important to us and on decisions that affect our lives;
- Elect the MNA (member of the National Assembly) who will represent our interests and voice our concerns;
- Voice our opinion on the administration of social programs and our collective revenues, which amount to over \$100 billion annually;
- Help financially the candidate or political party that meets our priorities, since every vote has a financial value (for more information, consult the **Things to know about political financing** on the Élections Québec website);
- To ensure the vitality of our democracy.

To abstain from voting means:

- Letting others choose and decide for us;
- Giving more power to those who vote: if 40% of people vote, a minority of people decide for the entire population;
- Running the risk that the elected candidates will not represent our interests;
- Giving up a right that some people are still fighting for today;
- Letting those who vote decide which political parties receive the most public funding.



Voting: a step that counts!

SUGGESTED STEPS

1. Complete the icebreaker activity.
2. Ask youth to name reasons why it is important to vote. Write their answers on a chart or large board. You can enhance their answers by highlighting the information in the **A Bit of Theory** section above.
3. Invite youth to create an advertisement urging people of 18-35 year old to vote in the next provincial elections. Determine with them the format of this advertisement. This could be an insert, poster, video, social media post, etc.
4. Invite them to create teams to do this work. They can use the answers on the chart or on the large board in their advertisement. Encourage them to be creative and come up with an appealing slogan about the importance of exercising their right to vote.
5. Ask each team to briefly present their advertisement to the others. Then, ask the young people which advertisements would make them more likely to vote and why.
6. Suggest that they test the advertisements with people they know to get them to vote.