



■ Opportunities and Rights

Do rights protect our opportunities to participate in a democracy?
You decide.

All Canadians have certain rights and responsibilities. They are based on Canadian laws, traditions and shared values. Many of these rights are defined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which is part of Canada's Constitution.

■ Citizenship Rights

The *Charter* attempts to summarize fundamental freedoms while also setting out additional rights. The most important of these include:

- Mobility rights mean that Canadians can live and work anywhere they choose in Canada, enter and leave the country freely, and apply for a passport.
- Aboriginal Peoples' rights ensure that the rights guaranteed in the *Charter* will not adversely affect any treaty or other rights or freedoms of Aboriginal peoples.
- Official language rights and minority language educational rights ensure that French and English have equal status in Parliament and throughout the government.
- Multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity. Canadians celebrate the gift of one another's presence and work hard to respect pluralism and live in harmony.

Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship Study Guide (2012).

Citizenship and Immigration Canada: pp. 8-9. www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/discover.pdf

Some citizenship rights are defined in Canadian laws. One such right is the right for citizens to be given preference for jobs in the federal government. Many of these rights and freedoms existed in earlier laws. However, with the creation of the *Charter* in 1982, they became better defined and better protected.

Under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Canadian citizens also have the right to:

- Be candidates in federal, provincial and territorial elections
- Be educated in either official language
- Vote in federal and provincial or territorial elections

2 How do our votes influence government decision-making?

responsibilities
votes
rights
opportunity



Did You Know

This is Canada's Oath of Citizenship. What does the Oath tell you about Canadian citizenship?

I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Did You Know

To become a Canadian citizen, a person must:

- Be 18 years old or older
- Be a permanent resident of Canada
- Have lived in Canada for at least three of the four years before applying for citizenship
- Speak either English or French
 - Know Canada's history and geography
- Know about Canada's system of government and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship

Find Out More

Find out more about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in **Voter Influence** on the **Building Future Voters** junior high webpage at www.buildingfuturevoters.ca.

■ Citizenship Responsibilities

In Canada, rights come with responsibilities for everyone. Individual Canadians and the levels of Canadian government have the responsibility to respect the rights and freedoms of all Canadians. The rights of a single Canadian or a group of Canadians cannot interfere with the rights of any other. For this reason, courts are sometimes asked to interpret the *Charter* to make sure that it is applied fairly in all situations.

Citizenship also brings responsibilities. For example, voting in elections is considered both a right and a responsibility by some.

- **Obeying the law.** One of Canada's founding principles is the rule of law. Individuals and governments are regulated by laws and not by arbitrary actions. No person or group is above the law.
- **Taking responsibility for oneself and one's family.** Getting a job, taking care of one's family and working hard in keeping with one's abilities are important Canadian values. Work contributes to personal dignity and self-respect, and to Canada's prosperity.
- **Voting in elections.** The right to vote comes with a responsibility to vote in federal, provincial or territorial and local elections.
- **Serving on a jury.** When called to do so, you are legally required to serve. Serving on a jury is a privilege that makes the justice system work as it depends on impartial juries made up of citizens.
- **Helping others in the community.** Millions of volunteers freely donate their time to help others without pay – helping people in need, assisting at your child's school, volunteering at a food bank or other charity, or encouraging newcomers to integrate. Volunteering is an excellent way to gain useful skills and develop friends and contacts.
- **Protecting and enjoying our heritage and environment.** Every citizen has a role to play in avoiding waste and pollution while protecting Canada's natural, cultural and architectural heritage for future generations.

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Use the Triple T-Chart to explore different perspectives on rights and responsibilities. Use the chart below or get one from your teacher. Record your own opinions in the first column. Then, find out what two other individuals think. Make sure at least one individual is of voting age. Record their opinions in the second and third columns.

	My Opinions	Person 1	Person 2
What do you think the most important responsibility of a citizen should be? Why do you think this?			
To what extent do you think responsibilities should be mandated? What responsibilities would you make mandatory ?			
Do you think voting is more of a right or a responsibility? Why do you think this?			
Should voting be mandatory? Why do you think this?			
Is it appropriate to mandate something that is a right? Why or why not?			
Do you think everyone has the same opportunities to influence decisions that the government makes? Why or why not?			



What do you think? Are opportunities to participate with government, and in communities, protected and ensured? In what ways? Or why not? Write a response in the format of:

- A letter to the editor
- An opinion feature for a youth newsletter
- An internet blog