**Canada**

Canada ([/ˈkænədə/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English)) is a country, consisting of [ten provinces and three territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provinces_and_territories_of_Canada), in the northern part of the continent of North America. It extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific and northward into the Arctic Ocean, covering 9.98 million square kilometres (3.85 million square miles) in total, making it the world's [second-largest country by total area](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area) and the [fourth-largest country by land area](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area). Canada's [common border with the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada%E2%80%93United_States_border) forms the world's longest land border.

The land now called Canada has been inhabited for millennia by various [Aboriginal peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aboriginal_peoples_in_Canada). Beginning in the late 15th century, [British](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_colonization_of_the_Americas) and [French colonies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_colonization_of_the_Americas) were established on the region's Atlantic coast. As a consequence of [various conflicts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_Canada), the United Kingdom gained and lost North American territories until left, in the late 18th century, with what mostly comprises Canada today. Pursuant to the [British North America Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_Act,_1867), on July 1, 1867, three colonies [joined](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederation_of_Canada) to form the autonomous [federal Dominion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_federalism) of Canada. This began an [accretion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_Canada) of provinces and territories to the new self-governing [Dominion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion). In 1931, Britain granted Canada near total independence with the [Statute of Westminster 1931](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statute_of_Westminster_1931) and full sovereignty was attained when the [Canada Act 1982](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada_Act_1982) severed the vestiges of legal dependence on the [British parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_the_United_Kingdom).

Canada is a [federal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation) [parliamentary democracy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_democracy) and a [constitutional monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), Queen [Elizabeth II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II) being the current head of state. The country is [officially bilingual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Official_bilingualism_in_Canada) at the federal level. It is one of the world's most ethnically diverse and [multicultural](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism_in_Canada) nations, the product of large-scale immigration from many countries, with a population of approximately 35 million as of 2015. Its advanced economy is [the eleventh largest in the world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)), relying chiefly upon its abundant natural resources and well-developed international trade networks. Canada's [long and complex relationship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada%E2%80%93United_States_relations) with the United States has had a significant impact on its economy and culture.

Canada is a [developed country](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developed_country) and one of the wealthiest in the world, with the [tenth highest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita) nominal per capita income globally, and the [eighth highest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index) ranking in the [Human Development Index](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Development_Index). It [ranks among the highest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_rankings_of_Canada) in international measurements of government transparency, civil liberties, quality of life, economic freedom, and education. Canada is a [Commonwealth Realm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_realm) member of the [Commonwealth of Nations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations), a member of the [Francophonie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation_internationale_de_la_Francophonie" \o "Organisation internationale de la Francophonie), and part of several major international and intergovernmental institutions or groupings including the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO), the [G8](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G8), the [Group of Ten](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_of_Ten_(economic)), the [G20](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G-20_major_economies), the [North American Free Trade Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_American_Free_Trade_Agreement) and the [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia-Pacific_Economic_Cooperation) forum.

Canada occupies most of the continent of North America, sharing [land borders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_border) with the [contiguous United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contiguous_United_States) to the south (the longest border between two countries in the world) and the US state of [Alaska](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska) to the northwest. Canada stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west; to the north lies the Arctic Ocean. [Greenland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenland) is to the northeast. By total area (including its waters), Canada is the [second-largest country](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_total_area) in the world, after Russia. By land area alone, however, Canada [ranks fourth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_outlying_territories_by_land_area), the difference being due to its large proportion of lakes, which constitute 60% of all the lakes in the world. The country lies between latitudes [41°](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/41st_parallel_north) and [84°N](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/84th_parallel_north), and longitudes [52°](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/52nd_meridian_west) and [141°W](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/141st_meridian_west).

Since 1925, Canada has claimed the portion of the Arctic between [60°](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/60th_meridian_west) and 141°W [longitude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longitude), but this claim is not universally recognized. Canada is home to the world's northernmost settlement, [Canadian Forces Station Alert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CFS_Alert), on the northern tip of [Ellesmere Island](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellesmere_Island) – latitude 82.5°N – which lies 817 kilometres (508 mi) from the North Pole. Much of the Canadian Arctic is covered by ice and [permafrost](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permafrost). Canada has the longest coastline in the world, with a total length of 202,080 kilometres (125,570 mi); additionally, its border with the United States is the world's longest land border, stretching 8,891 kilometres (5,525 mi).

Since the end of the last [glacial period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glacial_period), Canada has consisted of eight distinct forest regions, including extensive [boreal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiga) forest on the Canadian Shield. Canada has around 31,700 large lakes, more than any other country, containing much of the world's [fresh water](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fresh_water). There are also fresh-water glaciers in the [Canadian Rockies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Rockies) and the [Coast Mountains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coast_Mountains). Canada is geologically active, having many earthquakes and potentially active volcanoes, notably [Mount Meager](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Meager), [Mount Garibaldi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Garibaldi), [Mount Cayley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Cayley), and the [Mount Edziza volcanic complex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Edziza_volcanic_complex). The volcanic eruption of the [Tseax Cone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tseax_Cone" \o "Tseax Cone) in 1775 was among Canada's worst natural disasters, killing 2,000[Nisga'a people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nisga%27a_people) and destroying their village in the [Nass River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nass_River" \o "Nass River) valley of northern British Columbia. The eruption produced a 22.5-kilometre (14.0 mi) [lava](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lava) flow, and, according to Nisga'a legend, blocked the flow of the Nass River. Canada's population density, at 3.3 inhabitants per square kilometre (8.5/sq mi), is among the lowest in the world. The most densely populated part of the country is the [Quebec City – Windsor Corridor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quebec_City_%E2%80%93_Windsor_Corridor), situated in Southern Quebec and [Southern Ontario](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Ontario) along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.

Average winter and summer high [temperatures across Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperature_in_Canada) vary from region to region. Winters can be harsh in many parts of the country, particularly in the interior and Prairie provinces, which experience a[continental climate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continental_climate), where daily average temperatures are near −15 °[C](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celsius) (5 °[F](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fahrenheit)), but can drop below −40 °C (−40 °F) with severe [wind chills](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wind_chill). In noncoastal regions, snow can cover the ground for almost six months of the year, while in parts of the north snow can persist year-round. Coastal British Columbia has a temperate climate, with a mild and rainy winter. On the east and west coasts, average high temperatures are generally in the low 20s °C (70s °F), while between the coasts, the average summer high temperature ranges from 25 to 30 °C (77 to 86 °F), with temperatures in some interior locations occasionally exceeding 40 °C (104 °F).

Canada has a [parliamentary system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_system) within the context of a [constitutional monarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), the [monarchy of Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy_of_Canada) being the foundation of the executive, [legislative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature), and [judicial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judiciary) branches. The sovereign is Queen [Elizabeth II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II), who also serves as head of state of [15 other Commonwealth countries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_realm) and each of Canada's ten provinces. As such, the Queen's representative, the [Governor General of Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governor_General_of_Canada) (at present [David Lloyd Johnston](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Johnston)), carries out most of the federal royal duties in Canada.

The direct participation of the royal and viceroyal figures in areas of governance is limited. In practice, their use of the executive powers is directed by [the Cabinet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Cabinet), a committee of [ministers of the Crown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_the_Crown) responsible to the elected [House of Commons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_House_of_Commons) and chosen and headed by the [Prime Minister of Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Canada) (at present [Stephen Harper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Harper)), the [head of government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_government). The governor general or monarch may, though, in certain crisis situations exercise their power without ministerial [advice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advice_(constitutional)). To ensure the stability of government, the governor general will usually appoint as prime minister the person who is the current leader of the political party that can obtain the confidence of a [plurality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plurality_(voting)) in the House of Commons. The [Prime Minister's Office](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Office_of_the_Prime_Minister_(Canada)) (PMO) is thus one of the most powerful institutions in government, initiating most legislation for parliamentary approval and selecting for appointment by the Crown, besides the aforementioned, the governor general, [lieutenant governors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lieutenant_governor_(Canada)), senators, federal court judges, and heads of [Crown corporations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_corporations_of_Canada) and government agencies.[[107]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada#cite_note-Forseyp1-108) The leader of the party with the second-most seats usually becomes the [Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leader_of_the_Official_Opposition_(Canada)) (presently [Thomas Mulcair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Mulcair)) and is part of an adversarial parliamentary system intended to keep the government in check.[[111]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada#cite_note-112)

Each of the 308 members of parliament in the House of Commons is elected by simple plurality in an [electoral district](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_electoral_district) or riding. [General elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Canada) must be called by the governor general, either on the advice of the prime minister, within four years of the previous election, or if the government loses a [confidence vote](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidence_vote) in the House. The 105 members of the Senate, whose seats are apportioned on a regional basis, serve until age 75. Five parties had representatives elected to the federal parliament in the 2011 elections: the [Conservative Party of Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Party_of_Canada) (governing party), the [New Democratic Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Democratic_Party_of_Canada) (the [Official Opposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Official_Opposition_(Canada))), the [Liberal Party of Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_Party_of_Canada), the [Bloc Québécois](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloc_Qu%C3%A9b%C3%A9cois), and the [Green Party of Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Party_of_Canada). The list of [historical parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_federal_political_parties_in_Canada#Historical_parties_that_have_won_seats_in_Parliament) with elected representation is substantial.

[Canada's federal structure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_federalism) divides government responsibilities between the federal government and the ten provinces. [Provincial legislatures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislative_Assemblies_of_Canadian_provinces_and_territories) are [unicameral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unicameralism) and operate in parliamentary fashion similar to the House of Commons.[[108]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada#cite_note-Montpetit-109) Canada's three territories also have legislatures, but these are not sovereign and have fewer constitutional responsibilities than the provinces. The territorial legislatures also differ structurally from their provincial counterparts.

The [Bank of Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bank_of_Canada) is the [central bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_bank) of the country. In addition, the [Minister of Finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Finance_(Canada)) and [Minister of Industry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Industry_(Canada)) utilize the [Statistics Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistics_Canada) agency for financial planning and economic policy development.