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# Canadian law and justice - Canada.ca

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada : 3-4 minutes

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In Canada, the law applies to everyone, including:

- the police
- the government
- public officials

Canadian laws recognize and protect basic rights and freedoms, such as liberty and equality.

## Public law and private law

Law can be divided into public and private law.

Public laws set the rules for the relationship between a person and society and for the roles of different levels of government. This includes:

- criminal law
- Constitutional law
- administrative law

Private or civil law deals with the relationships between people. Civil laws set the rules for:

- contracts
- owning property
- rights and duties of family members
- damage caused by others to someone or to their property

## Courts

Courts in Canada help people resolve disputes fairly and within the law. Courts:

- set standards
- interpret laws and put them in place
- raise questions that affect all parts of Canadian society

Most people settle their differences outside of court, such as through:

- mediation
- arbitration

## Legal representation

If you need help in a Canadian court, it's a good idea to hire a lawyer. There are services that can help you find a lawyer, such as:

- referral services from [provincial and territorial law societies](#)
- [JusticeNet](#) (telephone: 1-866-919-3219)

Depending on your income, you may be able to get a lawyer for free. This is called legal aid. Each province and territory has a [legal aid society](#). You can also ask an [immigrant-serving organization](#) in your city or town for help hiring a lawyer.

## Police

The police in Canada keep people safe and enforce the law. There are different types of police, including:

- federal
- provincial
- territorial
- municipal

You should call the police if you:

- are the victim of a crime
- see a crime taking place
- know about criminal activities

The number for your local police is in the front pages of the telephone book. If you need to call the police in an emergency, dial 911.

If the police question or arrest you:

- be calm
- **don't** resist
- look directly at the officer
- speak as clearly as possible
- be ready to show some kind of identification
- make sure you know why you've been arrested
- ask to have a lawyer and a translator present (if you need one)
- **don't** offer money, gifts or services in exchange for special treatment

Under Canadian law, you're presumed innocent until proven guilty.

## Labour laws

Get information on [labour laws](#).

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