



YOUR VOTE

📄 LEARNING OUTCOME

In this lesson you will learn about voting and why it is important in a democracy. You will see examples of how close elections have been in the past and do activities to show your understanding of the topic.

📺 VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Voting is an essential element of democracy. Resident Irish citizens aged 18 and over can vote at all elections – Presidential, Dáil, European and Local. Your vote is important. It is your constitutional right to vote.

Sometimes just a handful of votes can make the difference. In the general election in February 2011 in the Galway West constituency Seán Kyne from Fine Gael was elected to the fifth seat in that constituency with a margin of just 17 votes. On the 13th Count he had 9,112 votes and his nearest challenger, Catherine Connolly (Independent) had 9,095.

But in the May 2002 general election the result in one constituency was even closer. In the Limerick West constituency there was just one vote separating two candidates! However, not everybody uses their vote at an election and if just a couple of more people turned out to vote, the result could have been completely different!



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MORE ELECTION FACTS

Dan Neville of Fine Gael won the seat from his party colleague, Michael Finucane, on the Fourth Count by one vote. Imagine what might have been if just a few more people had voted!

In 1995 1,633,942 people voted in the Divorce referendum. The result was very close. 818,842 people voted in favour of Divorce, while 809,728 people voted against divorce. The referendum was carried by just 9,114 votes.

2002 general election [\[edit\]](#)

In the final count Dan Neville beat Michael Finucane by only one vote to win the last seat.

| 2002 general election: Limerick West ^[23] | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|---------|--------------|
| Party | Candidate | % 1st Pref | Count 1 | Count 2 | Count 3 | Count 4 |
| Fianna Fáil | John Cregan | 30.3 | 10,823 | | | |
| Fianna Fáil | Michael J. Collins | 23.1 | 8,236 | 9,526 | | |
| Fine Gael | Dan Neville | 20.9 | 7,446 | 7,678 | 7,862 | 8,564 |
| Fine Gael | Michael Finucane | 20.8 | 7,410 | 7,684 | 7,867 | 8,563 |
| Green Party | Marcus Briody | 2.7 | 948 | 1,002 | 1,138 | |
| Independent | Mike MacDomhnaill | 1.9 | 662 | 710 | 789 | |
| Christian Solidarity | Patrick O'Riordan | 0.4 | 144 | 151 | 177 | |
| Electorate: 53,879 Valid: 35,669 Spoilt: 476 (1.3%) Quota: 8,918 Turnout: 36,145 (67.1%) | | | | | | |

ACTIVITY

Divide students up into groups to do the following:

- 1) Create a Tweet (up to 140 characters, including spaces, commas and full stops) encouraging people to vote
- 2) Create a Facebook page encouraging people to vote
- 3) Create a Poster encouraging people to vote
- 4) Create a cover for a DVD entitled Why You should Vote!
- 5) Prepare the script (no more than 100 words) for a Radio advertisement encouraging people to vote

A key element of living in any democracy is that citizens have a vote. In Ireland many people take this for granted, but around the world people have struggled for the right to vote.

Activity: In groups find out about the following struggles:

- a) Saudi Arabia
- b) Burma
- c) South Africa
- d) The Suffragettes, Britain and Ireland