

# The Law in Different Times and Places

## Exercise



Is the law in Quebec the same as in Ontario, the United States, or Peru? Is the law today the same as it was 50 years ago? Of course not! The law is constantly changing over time and across countries.

## The Law Around the World

### The Law in Different Countries

Over 7 billion people live in 197 countries.

Within each country, people interact in various ways. These interactions are governed by rules that everyone must follow. These rules are mainly found in the **law**.

Since each country governs its own people, **its laws apply only within its borders**. This is called the **territoriality principle**.

Territoriality ensures a country's laws are well-suited to the needs of its people. History, traditions, and culture differ from one country to another and sometimes even within the same country. These differences must be respected when laws are made. This is why there is Canadian law, Cuban law, Senegalese law, Chinese law, etc.

Whether you're allowed to do something or not **depends on what country** you're in. Take abortion, for example. It's allowed in Canada, but in Brazil it's a crime in most cases.

## The Law in Canada

**The law differs from country to country and sometimes even within the same country.**

This is true in Canada, where the power to make laws is divided between the federal parliament in Ottawa and the parliaments of each province and territory.

The federal parliament makes laws that apply across Canada. A provincial or territorial parliament makes laws that apply only in that province or territory. For example, the Civil Code of Québec applies only in the province of Quebec.

**Important!** Provincial and territorial parliaments can't make laws in all areas. They must respect the Canadian Constitution which divides the power to make laws among the different levels of government.

**The Canadian Constitution determines which level of government can make laws in which areas of law.** For example, only the federal parliament can make criminal laws, laws on Indigenous affairs, and laws on national defence. So, the Quebec parliament, called the National Assembly, can't make laws on the Canadian army because the federal government is responsible for national defence. In contrast, only provincial parliaments can make municipal laws and laws about hospitals and education..

## International Law

As explained above, each country's laws govern interactions among its own people. But what about interactions between different *countries*? On a global scale, countries are governed by international law.

International law helps countries reach agreements and govern their interactions on shared issues, such as the environment, the global economy, and human rights. International laws apply to all countries that have officially accepted them (but not those that refuse). This means that in international law the same rules can apply to many different countries.

## The Law Over Time

Years ago in Quebec, stores were not allowed to open on Sundays, only people who were legally blind were allowed to use white canes, women were not allowed to vote or sign contracts, and children only became adults at age 21.

All this might seem ridiculous today, yet this is how it was. These are examples of laws that existed when your grandparents, or maybe even your parents, were your age.

The important thing to remember is that laws change not only **from place to place** but also **over time**. This makes perfect sense. The world is constantly changing. Values, technology, society, and the economy evolve over time, so the law must evolve with them.

In your grandparents' (or great-grandparents') time, people were not allowed to let their horses gallop down a street near a church. Today, the law sets speed limits for cars. Who knows? Maybe a hundred years from now, the law will control how high cars can fly!

# The Law in Different Times and Places

## Quiz

1. Name three areas of law in which only the federal government of Canada can create laws.

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2. Name three areas of law in which only provincial governments can create laws.

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3. a) Explain in your own words what the territoriality principle is.

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b) Explain why this concept is important.

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4. a) Explain what international law is.

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b) Give examples of situations in which international law applies.

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5. Do you think laws will change over the next few decades? Which areas of law do you think will see the most change?

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