Ballots in B.C. provincial elections are counted in two phases – initial count and final count.

Initial count

Initial count is the count of ballots that takes place on election night. **Results reported at initial count are preliminary.**

Initial count happens as soon as possible after voting closes at 8 p.m. (Pacific time) on Final Voting Day. If voting hours are extended at a voting place under the *Election Act*, initial count for that voting place starts after the extension ends.

Most ballots are counted at initial count. This includes all ballots from advance voting, district electoral office voting, in-district special voting, and at assigned voting places on Final Voting Day.

Following initial count, preliminary results reported on election night are verified for accuracy and completeness before the start of final count.

Final count

Some ballots are counted at final count, which takes place about two weeks after election day.

Ballots counted at final count require additional integrity checks before being counted. These integrity checks ensure that only eligible voters vote, and that they only vote once.

Ballots counted at final count include:

- vote-by-mail ballots,
- assisted telephone voting ballots,
- ballots cast by out-of-district voters on Final Voting Day, and
- ballots cast by in-district voters on Final Voting Day at a voting place other than their assigned voting place.

Ballots counted at final count are placed in certification envelopes during voting. Certification envelopes include information about the voter who cast the ballot, which helps election officials ensure the voter was eligible and only voted once.

To prepare for final count, election officials at district electoral offices and Elections BC headquarters assess certification envelopes to ensure they meet legislated requirements. Ballots are then separated from certification envelopes before being counted to preserve the secrecy of the vote. This process takes time but is important to ensure an accurate and secure election.

The final results of an election are determined at final count based on the votes accepted at initial count and final count. At the end of final count, a candidate is officially declared elected in each electoral district.

For more information about initial and final count, see the Guide to Voting and Counting.