

Change in Scouter – Youth Ratio: Qs and As

Why is Scouts Canada changing Scouter – Youth Ratios?

- The Canadian Path emphasizes the use of the patrol (team) system, 6 to 8 youth of various ages, as the primary unit in which Scouting takes place. Given the importance of the patrol (team) system within the Scout Method, and The Canadian Path, now is the ideal time to align the Scouter-youth ratio for all Sections with one Scouter assigned to support each small team or patrol.

My Section has 16 youth and three Scouters. Does this mean that I will have another 8 youth assigned to my Section?

- Your Council will not be “assigning” youth to your Section – this policy change establishes a new minimum requirement for ratio. Many Scouters have advised that the current ratios of 1:5 for Beaver Scouts and 1:6 for Cub Scouts and Scouts are too restrictive for them to run successful Scouting programs in the Canadian Path the patrol (team) system. Others have indicated that the old ratio was leading to long waiting lists of youth who wanted to join Scouting but were unable to. The updated minimum ratio will help address this.

Does this mean that we are not allowed to have a patrol of only 5 youth?

- 6 to 8 youth is the ideal size of a patrol (team) but if the size of your Sections doesn't allow for teams of 6-8 youth, smaller patrols should be used. It's extremely important that Sections operate using patrols so that youth have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills. That said, safety remains paramount and ratios can be increased based on the activity or facility, the skills of the Scouters and the experience and maturity of the youth.

How does the new Scouter-Youth Ratio impact the Two-Scouter Rule?

- The change in Scouter-Youth Ratio does not impact the Two-Scouter Rule. The Two-Scouter Rule is the requirement for two registered Scouters to be with youth at all times. Notwithstanding Scouter-Youth ratio, two Scouters must always be within the field of view and within earshot of one another when with youth. For example, if a patrol (team) conducted an activity independent from the rest of the Section they would be supervised by at least two Scouters. For more information about the Two-Scouter Rule and Section supervision, please read the [Two-Scouter Rule FAQ](#).

This change suggests that Scouts require the same level of supervision as Beaver Scouts.

- It all depends upon the nature of the activity, but ultimately the decision on ratio will be made by the Group Commissioner, in consultation with the Section Scouters. For a weekly meeting, the Scouter may determine that a 1:8 ratio is adequate, while for an outdoor adventure a decision may be made to increase the ratio. This is where the Group Commissioner and Section Scouters' experience and judgement should be applied.



Can 3 Scouters run a Section with 24 Beaver Scouts?

- Yes, but keep in mind that this policy defines Scouts Canada's minimum requirement for Scouter-Youth Section Ratio. Ratios may continue to be increased by Section Scouters depending upon the nature of an activity, but of course they may not be decreased beyond 1:8. Safety remains of paramount importance. Scouters should discuss supervision considerations with their Group Committee and agree on an appropriate number of Scouters based on the type of activity, the nature of the location, and/or the needs of the youth enrolled in the program.

How do we determine the appropriate ratio for each activity?

- Scouters and youth should consider the nature of the adventure and reflect on the level of supervision required when planning. Will patrols (teams) need to split up at any point? Can this be done while maintaining the Two Scouter Rule and Scouter-youth Ratio? This is also a great opportunity for your Group to reflect upon the number of Scouters within each Section and determine if there is an opportunity to grow and allow new youth an opportunity to experience Scouting.

When can we implement this new change in policy?

- You can do so immediately. Scouts Canada has updated its Bylaws, Policies and Procedures, training materials and supporting documentation to reflect this change. For those who purchased a Scouters' Manual for The Canadian Path, stickers with the new ratio will be available in Scout Shops for free. These stickers are meant to be placed on the front cover; informing all who read the manual of the correct ratio. By aligning our Scouter-youth ratios with The Canadian Path's emphasis on the patrol (team) system, we will help Scouting youth draw the greatest learning, the best value and the biggest adventure from our new program.

How do other youth-serving organizations handle ratio?

- The approach taken by a number of youth organizations was researched before the change in ratio was proposed to Scouts Canada's Board. We learned that the generally accepted practice for youth activities is a lower ratio of adults to youth than Scouts Canada policy had directed. By way of example:
 - UK Scouts have graduated ratios for activities away from Scout Halls, but only require two Scouters for weekly meetings. For activities away from the Scout Hall, Beavers are 1:6, Cubs 1:8 and Scouts 1:12;
 - Girl Guides of Canada also applies graduated ratios based upon the nature of the activity. Ratios for regular meetings range from 1:8 (Sparks, Brownies) to 1:15 (Guides, Pathfinders), while ratios at camp are 1:5 and 1:7 respectively;
 - The Alberta Camping Association standards require a ratio of 1:8 for overnight camping (7-14 year olds).

