



Important Information about Research Involving People

At NIC, the **Research Ethics Board (REB)** is responsible for ethics review and approval.

What usually does need ethics approval?

- Unless specifically excluded below, you need to apply for research-ethics approval if you are conducting research with human participants and/or human biological material.

What usually does not need ethics approval?

- Research that relies exclusively on publicly available information, where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy.
- Activities where data is gathered as part of normal learning requirements (i.e., where students collect information as part of learning how to “do” their future job) and the data is not shared beyond the normal learning environment. This exception does not apply where deception is used; any research activities involving deception must be reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Research involving the observation of people in public places that meets all of the following three conditions:
 - 1) the researcher does not interact with individual(s)/groups
 - 2) individuals or groups under observation have no reasonable expectation of privacy
 - 3) the written or oral reporting of results from the research does not identify anyone

Examples include studying crowd behaviour at a sporting event or the way people place themselves in an elevator.

- Research that relies exclusively on secondary use of anonymized information, so long as the process of data linkage or recording or dissemination of results does not generate identifiable information. An example here might be original research on an anonymized data set purchased from Statistics Canada.
- Creative practice activities, unless the creative practice is used to obtain responses from participants as part of a study.

If you are unclear on your ethics approval requirements, contact the [REB Chair](#).

Level of Risk

Research projects are distinguished by risk to participants. **Minimal risk**¹ research is where the stress or harm faced by a participant during a study is fairly similar to the stress or harm they experience in their everyday life. Examples include professionals talking about how they do their job, students describing why they chose their program, or consumers explaining why they shop at some stores and not others.

Research is deemed **above minimal risk** if it uses deception, involves sensitive issues or stress-causing questions, cannot guarantee anonymity, and/or studies a historically marginalized or disadvantaged group.

The Application Process

All applications for ethics approval must be submitted to the [REB Chair](#) well in advance of planned data collection, allowing time for formal review, edits, and approval. Applications must be received two weeks prior to an REB meeting in order to be considered at that meeting (meetings are held monthly – see [REB meeting schedule](#)).

Contact the [REB Chair](#) regarding any application-related matters.

For research involving animals, contact NIC's [Centre for Applied Research, Technology and Innovation \(CARTI\)](#)

¹ Minimal risk research is defined as “research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research are no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research” (TCPS2, 2018, p. 22). More information on minimal risk and other issues related to research ethics can be found at: [TCPS2 2018](#)