Does low turnout matter? Evidence from the 2000 Canadian federal election

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Abstract

We examine whether turnout has a partisan bias; specifically whether higher turnout would benefit parties and policies of the left. Using data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study, we analyze differences in opinion between voters and non-voters across a wide spectrum of policy areas in order to assess the extent of divergent views between voters and abstainers. Next, by simulating universal turnout we test the hypothesis that the outcome of the 2000 Canadian Federal Election would have been appreciably different if all citizens were to have voted. We find scant evidence for a partisan effect of turnout in Canada. Voters' opinions are, by and large, representative of the larger population and universal turnout would not have changed the election result.
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1. Introduction

Voter turnout in many Western democracies has been in decline for the past decade or longer (Blais et al., 2004; Gray and Caul, 2000). Canada has been no exception to this trend. Turnout[1] in Canadian federal elections has dropped steadily since 1988, having averaged around 75% after the Second World War. In the 1993

federal election turnout fell to 70%, 67% in 1997, and in 2000 slightly more than 61% of registered voters went to the polls (Pammett and LeDuc, 2003, 4). The media, academics and politicians alike lament this lack of civic participation and express concern over what is generally seen as a bellwether for the health of democracy. In this article we investigate whether levels of turnout have implications for Canadian election results. That is, we test the conventional wisdom that higher turnout would benefit parties and policies of the left.

While the view that low turnout constitutes a democratic dilemma is widely held and oft stated (Lijphart, 1997; Piven and Cloward, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Verba et al., 1995), few of these studies provide empirical evidence for the accuracy of this assumption. Citrin et al.

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[1] Turnout is measured here as the percentage of registered electors who cast a ballot.

(2003), Grofman et al. (1999), Highton and Wolfinger (2001) and the articles in this special issue are recent exceptions. If few studies provide empirical evidence, even fewer examine the question outside the American context. We test these propositions using data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study (CES). Our analysis—which applies a similar method to that used by Highton and Wolfinger (2001) in their analysis of US presidential elections—entails two steps. First, we analyze differences in opinion between voters and non-voters across a wide spectrum of policy areas covering economic and social policy, national unity and others in order to assess the extent of divergent views between voters and abstainers. Next, by simulating universal turnout we test the hypothesis that the outcome of the 2000 Canadian federal election would have been substantially different if all citizens were to have voted.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section we outline briefly the argument for turnout's partisan bias. Section 3 compares the policy preferences and opinions of voters and the entire CES sample in order to establish to what degree voters are representative of the entire population. In section 4 we present results from a simulation of full turnout in the 2000 Canadian federal. Section 5 concludes.

2. The argument for turnout's partisan bias

The argument that turnout can have an effect on electoral outcomes and public policy has been set out in the introductory article in this issue (Lutz and Marsh, 2007); we will only briefly recount it here before turning to our analysis. Essentially, the reasoning is the following: some groups in society are less likely to vote than others; these groups' policy preferences differ from those of voters; and election outcomes would be different if these non-voters were to cast ballots. As Lutz and Marsh point out, low turnout can have both direct (election outcomes change) and indirect (policy outcomes change) consequences. In this article, we focus mainly on direct effects.

It is generally assumed that the groups that are underrepresented at the polls—most prominently, low socioeconomic status (SES) citizens—are more likely to support left-of-centre political parties and policies. Higher status citizens tend to vote more regularly and vote for right-of-centre parties (DeNardo, 1980; Pacek and Radcliff, 1995, 138). Thus, any increase in turnout will increase the number of low SES citizens in the pool of voters and since these will tend to vote on the left, parties to the left of centre will gain. Canada provides an interesting case to test this argument because of

the presence of a traditional social democratic party— the New Democratic Party (NDP). Unlike the United States, which has been the focus of much extant literature, in Canada there is a natural choice for citizens with progressive or left-leaning preferences. Hence, if there is a political bias to turnout, its potential effects ought to be larger in a country like Canada than in the US.

There are two related, underlying assumptions to the partisan bias argument. The first is that voters and non-voters in fact differ significantly in their policy preferences and that non-voters are more likely to hold progressive views. The second is election results would be appreciably different from what they are at present that if these non-voters were to cast ballots. A feature of these propositions is that the second does not depend on the first. That is, even if voters and non-voters share preferences, the act of voting may be associated with a change in non-voters' preferences, thereby altering election results (Lijphart, 1997, 4). In the remainder of this article we turn our attention to an empirical assessment of these propositions.

3. Voters and non-voters compared

We begin our analysis by asking to what extent voters and non-voters differ in their preferences for various policies and in their opinions on an array of relevant issues. While past empirical work comparing voters and non-voters has uncovered few differences,[2] we contend that it is still useful to conduct such a comparison. Much of that earlier work used American data; it may be the case that Canadian abstainers actually do hold significantly different views from those who vote. While Lijphart's (1997) argument is that abstainers will alter their preferences once mobilized to vote—an argument we test later in the paper—the conventional wisdom has been that voters differ significantly in their preferences. The contention is that voters are less likely to hold left-leaning opinions, meaning that electoral and policy outcomes will tend to benefit better-off citizens to the detriment of others.

Slightly more than 83% of respondents to the 2000 CES reported that they voted in the 2000 general election. However, the official turnout for that election is considerably lower—indeed more than 20 percentage points lower—at around 61%. Over-reporting of voting is a common problem in survey research and especially problematic in our case (Silver and Anderson, 1986; Swaddle and Heath, 1989). If we are interested in

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[2] For a review of the literature, see Lutz and Marsh (2007).

analysing differences between voters and non-voters and do not take into account that voters may be over-represented we will bias our estimates. To get around this, we simply re-weight the CES sample to reflect the official turnout.

Our results show little difference between voters and abstainers when it comes to policy preferences. Table 1 contains results comparing the opinions of voters and non-voters on various issues. What we have done here is to determine whether turning out to vote is related significantly to holding opinions, one way or the other, on these issues. The top part of the table shows results for different spending areas. Respondents were asked whether they thought the federal government should spend more, less or about the same amount on these areas.[3] The next part of the table displays a wide variety of issues ranging from economic and social policy to healthcare and immigration. Finally, we have included the battery of questions on issue salience from the CES. The cell entries in Table 1 are logit coefficients from separate regressions where self-reported turnout is regressed on the issue of interest as well controls for age, gender, education, income and country of origin. We are interested mostly in whether or not having either left or right leaning preferences is statistically related to turning out or not, and are therefore less concerned with the size of the coefficients in the table.

The first thing to note is that few of the coefficients are statistically significant. Of the 50 issues we examine, only five reach conventional levels of statistical significance; for the vast majority, holding opinions one way or the other is unrelated to whether a respondent voted. Second, there is no clear pattern among the significant relationships indicating that left, or rightwing preferences are more strongly related to turning out. Respondents in favour of a $20 user fee for medical services are more likely to turnout. Given Canada's history of public healthcare, this is a relatively conservative view to take, as is being against quotas for female Members of Parliament and believing that we ought not to adapt our morals to reflect a changing world, both of which are positively and significantly correlated with turning out to vote. On the other hand, being supportive of increased immigration and holding the view that crime is a relatively unimportant issue in the election—two more liberal or progressive views—are also positively and significantly related to turning out. Thus, there are no really telling patterns emerging

Table 1
Voters' and abstainers' preferences compared

	Logits
Spending	
Defence spending	0.122
Welfare spending	0.155
Pension/old age security spending	−0.188
Healthcare spending	−0.149
Unemployment insurance spending	0.023
Education spending	0.027
Foreign aid spending	−0.014
Issues	
Unions should have more power	−0.046
Business should have less power	−0.071
Canada's ties to the US should be more distant	−0.105
Oppose private hospitals	0.042
Oppose $10 user fees for medical services	0.025
Oppose $20 user fees for medical services	0.547**
"Everyone benefits from business profits"	0.068
Oppose free trade with the US	0.051
Cut funding to provinces with medical service user fees	0.021
"Welfare state leads to apathy"	−0.019
"Blame yourself if you don't get ahead"	−0.035
The environment is more important than creating jobs	0.004
The lack of women MPs is a problem	0.024
We should have quotas for women MPs	−0.567**
The lack of minority MPs is a problem	0.031
We should have quotas for minority MPs	0.017
Access to abortion should be made easy	0.064
Feminism is positive	0.055
Make gun control stricter	−0.052
Oppose the death penalty	−0.132
Immigration should be increased	0.197*
"Equal rights have gone too far"	0.009
Same sex marriage should be legal	−0.117
Tolerance toward alternative lifestyles	−0.219
Discrimination is a barrier for women	0.069
Alternative lifestyles do not lead to social breakdown	−0.050
Adapt morals to changing world	−0.252*
"Fewer social problems if more family values"	0.050
"It is harder to succeed for non-whites"	0.206
"Quebec has the right to separate"	0.023
"Look after Canadians first, others second"	−0.096
"The Bible is the word of God"	0.048
"Minority groups need special rights"	−0.014
More women MPs is best way to protect women's interests	0.104
Issue salience	
Crime	−0.240*
Reducing debt	0.042
Family values	−0.078
Improving healthcare	0.027
Improving social welfare programs	−0.018
Cutting taxes	−0.129
Creating jobs	0.079
Defending Quebec interests	0.054

Entries are unstandardized logit coefficients from separate regressions, dependent variable is turnout with controls for age, gender, education, income and country of origin; ***significant at 0.1%; **significant at 1%; *significant at 5%. Source: CES 2000.

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[3] See Appendix A for full question wordings and the coding of the variables.

except to say that voting or abstaining seems unrelated to the opinions and preferences of respondents.

The argument that low turnout presents a democratic dilemma rests largely on the claim that governments that are elected by relatively few citizens are unrepresentative. Specifically, it is claimed that low turnout excludes the views of poor and less educated citizens, leading to policies favouring the rich. Milner (2001, 29) sums up this view when he writes:

A society with 40 percent of its citizens excluded by a lack of the basic resources needed for civic competence from active, informed citizenship will ultimately choose policies—and reinforce the institutions underlying these policies—significantly different from those of a society with only 15 percent excluded.

We now turn to a first attempt at assessing the accuracy of this sentiment. To what extent does the exclusion of non-voters' preferences have an effect on aggregate preferences? Is it the case that taking account only of the preferences of those that voted skews preferences toward the right and away from the "progressive" end of the political spectrum?[4] Replicating Highton and Wolfinger's (2001) comparison of voters and the entire population in the United States—albeit with a larger number of issues—Table 2 compares preferences of voters and the entire CES 2000 sample in order to get some idea of how representative voters are. Again, we took the most cautious approach by re-weighting our sample to reflect the official turnout rate. Thus, as Highton and Wolfinger (2001, 183, emphasis in original) point out, "the result is to *overestimate* any differences between self-reported voters and the entire sample. Therefore, differences [reported in Table 2] should be regarded as the upper limits of the effects of universal turnout".

Again, the clear pattern of over-representation of right-leaning preferences and attitudes among voters predicted by the theory of turnout's bias is not evident. On issues of spending, voters are somewhat less progressive than the entire sample; however, these differences are generally very small. Among voters, fewer are in favour of increased spending on foreign aid, education, unemployment insurance and pensions spending, while, compared to the entire sample, a greater proportion of voters support increased defence. These differences are never larger than three percentage points. Going against this pattern, a greater proportion

of voters—by two percentage points—are in favour of spending more on welfare programs.

On most of the issues we examine, voters do not differ in substantively important ways from the entire sample. Voters are slightly more conservative when it comes to unions, various policies relating to private healthcare, the benefits of business, free trade, the environment, gun control, equal rights and Quebec separatism. Voters also tend to be somewhat more socially conservative than the population at large, as measured by questions on whether new lifestyles lead to social breakdown; whether we should adapt our morals to a changing world; whether we would have fewer social problems if we paid more attention to traditional family values; and the issue of same sex marriage. However, voters are more liberal or "progressive", by one percentage point, when it comes to abortion and 17% of voters believe immigration should be increased, compared to 14% of the entire sample. The largest differences between voters and the entire sample are on questions of quotas for MPs. Forty-four percent of voters believe quotas for ethnic minorities are the best way to solve the problem of under-representation in parliament versus 49% of the entire sample. On the question of whether quotas for women MPs are the best way to ensure the representation of women, the difference is 8 percentage points, with 34% of voters agreeing versus 42% of the entire population. Interestingly, voters display more progressive views on the question of whether it is harder for minorities than whites to succeed in Canada and the differences between the two groups on the question of whether the lack of women and minority MPs is a problem are a mere one and two points, respectively.[5]

In work we alluded to earlier, Lijphart (1997) and others argue that such findings are a result of non-voters not having thought much about the issues and not having strong opinions on them because they have not been politically mobilized. A test of this proposition was conducted by simply examining the prevalence of "no opinions" among non-voters and voters on the issues analyzed in the previous tables. We find only scant differences in the prevalence of "no opinions" among abstainers and voters; non-voters are overwhelmingly more likely to have an opinion than not. While voters do tend to be more likely to express an opinion, the difference is only

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[4] We use the term "progressive" to mean what in the American context would be referred to as "liberal".

[5] We also examined whether the difference between voters and the entire CES sample across all the issues together was statistically significant by conducting a *t*-test; the means of the scores for the two groups are not statistically significantly different.

Table 2
'Progressive' preferences among voters and entire CES sample compared

	Percentage with 'progressive' preferences[a]		
	Voters	Entire sample	N[b]
Spending			
Decrease defence spending	22	25	2753
Increase welfare spending	33	31	2748
Increase pension/old age security spending	58	61	2792
Increase healthcare spending	87	88	2825
Increase unemployment insurance spending	33	36	2719
Increase education spending	82	83	2807
Increase foreign aid spending	18	20	2692
Issues			
Unions should have more power	12	14	2776
Business should have less power	30	28	2726
Canada's ties to the US should be more distant	16	16	2783
Oppose private hospitals	56	57	2655
Oppose $10 user fees for medical services	60	63	1335
Oppose $20 user fees for medical services	74	77	1335
Disagree with "Everyone benefits from business profits"	65	68	2770
Oppose free trade with the US	33	35	2572
Cut funding to provinces with medical service user fees	35	35	2620
Disagree with "Welfare state leads to apathy"	35	37	1431
Disagree with "Blame yourself if you don't get ahead"	28	29	2719
The environment is more important than creating jobs	54	56	1331
The lack of women MPs is a problem	35	36	1401
We should have quotas for women MPs	34	42	1315
The lack of minority MPs is a problem	34	36	1367
We should have quotas for minority MPs	44	49	1247
Access to abortion should be made easy	65	64	2548
Feminism is positive	68	68	2599
Make gun control stricter	56	58	2790
Oppose the death penalty	48	48	1943
Immigration should be increased	17	14	2754
Disagree with "Equal rights have gone too far"	59	62	1345
Same sex marriage should be legal	54	57	2182
Tolerance toward alternative lifestyles	71	74	1436
Discrimination is a barrier for women	55	55	1420
Alternative lifestyles do not lead to social breakdown	47	49	1376
Adapt morals to changing world	46	51	1440
Disagree with "Fewer social problems if more family values"	26	27	1448
Agree with "It is harder to succeed for non-whites"	45	41	1396
Agree with "Quebec has the right to separate"	21	22	1814
Disagree with "Look after Canadians first, others second"	59	57	1427
Disagree with "The Bible is the word of God"	79	79	1386
Agree with "Minority groups need special rights"	17	17	1423
More women MPs is best way to protect women's interests	50	50	1378

[a] See Appendix A for question wordings and definitions of "progressive" preferences.
[b] N, unweighted sample size.

about 1 percentage point on the items discussed in Table 2. It should be noted that the samples become very small for these groups and it is uncertain whether we can reliably infer much from the results (that is, the differences between the two groups); nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that non-voters do seem to have opinions on issues.

4. Simulating universal turnout in the 2000 Canadian federal election

One of the ways to answer the counterfactual question of what election outcomes would look like under different turnout conditions is to simulate turnout. As Lijphart (1997) argues, and Lutz and Marsh (2007)

point out, it is difficult to know if the preferences of non-voters would change if they voted. The approach we take attempts to come to grips with this problem by examining the revealed preferences of individuals in different groups who actually did vote.

Our simulation is a slightly modified version of the approach taken by Highton and Wolfinger (2001) in their analysis of the effects of turnout on US presidential election outcomes. They argue that simply comparing the stated political preferences non-voters with the revealed preferences of voters does not directly address the argument made by Lijphart (1997) that the act of voting actually crystallizes preferences and heightens awareness (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001, 198). Therefore, we begin by disregarding the stated preferences of non-voters, as given by answers to survey questions, and instead ascribe to them the preferences of voters— i.e. citizens who had been mobilised—who are similar to them along other dimensions. As has already been made clear, some groups in society are less likely to vote than others. However, we do observe that a proportion of these low-probability voters do participate in elections. That is, while individuals with high levels of income are far more likely to turnout than those with little income, there are people with low levels of income that do vote. The same goes for other categories of low-probability voters, such as the young. Furthermore, we have information on these people's vote choice. We can assume that, insofar as there is a "crystallization" of preferences through the act of voting, the people who cast ballots have gone through it. Therefore, assigning the revealed preferences of voters in different groups to non-voters in those same groups allows us to draw conclusions about how election results would have looked had everyone voted.

In dividing CES respondents we need to be aware of two related, yet distinct, issues in political behaviour: on one hand, we are interested in determinants of voter participation; on the other hand, vote choice. While it is important that the categories we use are related to vote choice, the fact that they are will not necessarily lead to effects on vote choice in the simulation. Whether or not they do so is an empirical question. Were we to focus only on variables related to vote choice it is possible that individual effects could cancel each other out at the aggregate level. Thus, factors related to vote choice are necessary but insufficient to answer our question. Indeed, the explicit proposition about the electoral effect of turnout that we are trying to test is that the individuals least likely to vote would alter results were they to be added to the pool of voters. Therefore we need categories related to both participation and vote choice.

The three dimensions on which we divide our sample are income, age, and gender. These are factors in both turnout and vote choice (Nevitte et al., 2000; Blais et al., 2002). While income is seen as the most salient dimension in the US work on this topic (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001; Lijphart, 1997), we take a somewhat broader approach. The effect of age on turnout is an important one (Blais, 2000; Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980) and there was a considerable age gap in voter participation in Canada in the 2000 election. While rates of non-voting among people born prior to 1970 have remained fairly steady in elections since 1988, those of the post-1970 generation have declined markedly. Non-voting increased by 14 percentage points between 1993 and 2000 for the post-generation X cohort (Blais et al., 2002, 48; Rubenson et al., 2004). Given this gap between generations, we want to test the proposition that increasing the number of young voters will influence election results. Beyond the strong relationship between age and turnout, Blais et al. (2002) found that age had a significant impact on vote choice, particularly in Quebec. Likewise, these authors and others have shown that gender is an important factor in vote choice in Canada, women being more likely to support the left-of-centre New Democratic Party and men voting more for the rightwing Canadian Alliance (formerly Reform Party) (Blais et al., 2002; Gidengil et al., 2005). Therefore, instead of only using income quintiles to ascribe preferences to non-voters we combined income (above and below $30,000), age (above and below 30 years), and gender to create eight groups. Thus, non-voters who are low income, young and male were assigned the preferences of low income, young male voters; high income, young male non-voters those of high income, young male voters and so on. This method for creating a simulated population, introduced by Highton and Wolfinger (2001, 189), involved first determining the distribution of vote choices for voters in each of the eight groups. Next we ascribed these choices to non-voters in that group. Finally, we combine the preferences of voters and non-voters. The electoral choices presented to citizens differ somewhat between the province of Quebec and the rest of Canada; the Bloc Québécois party does not run candidates outside Quebec. Therefore, we conducted separate simulations for each of these regions and then combined the two by weighting the estimates according each region's share of the population.

The results from this simulation are presented in Table 3. We compare the simulated population to the CES sample and also present the official Elections Canada results. The conventional wisdom as well as

Table 3
Canadian federal election 2000: simulated population and CES results compared

	CES results[a]	Simulated results	Official results[b]
Liberal	39.0	40.2	40.8
Conservative	12.9	10.6	12.2
Alliance	25.8	26.1	25.5
NDP	9.9	10.1	8.5
Bloc	10.4	11.0	10.7
Other	1.9	2.1	2.2

[a] Source: CES 2000.
[b] Source: Elections Canada (2000).

predictions by Lijphart (1997) and others is that full turnout would mean an increase in the vote share of left-of-centre parties at the expense of the right. Had everyone voted in Canada in the 2000 general election the New Democratic Party (NDP), the traditional party of the left, would have gained 0.2 percentage points, moving from 9.9 to 10.1%. Not a large shift by any measure. Likewise, the shares of votes for the rest of the parties do not change markedly. The Liberals gain 1.2 percentage points nationally and the western based rightwing Alliance Party gain 0.3 percentage points. The Progressive Conservative Party experiences a drop in support by 2.3 percentage points under universal turnout. Finally, the separatist Bloc Québécois (BQ) party would have received 0.6% more votes had everyone voted.

This is somewhat misleading, however, as what we have here is a national measure of support and the BQ did not compete outside the province of Quebec. If we break down the simulation to look at Quebec separately, we get a more accurate picture of how the BQ—in addition to the other parties in Quebec—would fare under conditions of universal turnout. Conventional wisdom has it that the BQ are traditionally punished by low turnout while the Liberals in Quebec are rewarded when citizens stay away from the polls. Table 4 gives a somewhat positive verdict on this proposition.

While the BQ would not benefit massively if everyone voted, they do gain 2.1 percentage points in our simulated results. This is more or less in line with other

Table 4
Universal turnout in Quebec

	CES sample	Simulated population
Liberal	37.8	35.0
Conservative	5.1	4.4
Alliance	6.9	7.1
NDP	3.1	4.1
Bloc	43.4	45.5
Other	3.7	3.9

Source: CES 2000.

empirical work on this question. Martinez and Gill, using a different simulation method, estimate a gain of 6.6 percentage points in the BQ's vote share at 98.1% turnout (Martinez and Gill, 2006, 353). The Liberals experience a somewhat larger effect than our estimate for the BQ. Moving to universal turnout would entail a loss of 2.8 points for the Liberals across the province of Quebec.

5. Conclusion

According to conventional wisdom, low turnout biases election outcomes such that rightwing parties gain at the expense of left-of-centre alternatives. The logic behind this reasoning is that electoral participation is unequal; better off citizens are more likely to vote than less well off citizens and there are assumed to be clear differences in policy and party preferences between these groups. We tested this argument using Canadian Election Study data by first comparing the opinions and preferences of voters and non-voters as well as comparing voters to the entire population. We found scant evidence for the contention that voters and abstainers hold significantly different views or that voters are less likely to hold progressive views on issues. This is consistent with the empirical evidence from the United States and elsewhere. Second, we simulated universal turnout to determine the effect of higher turnout on election results in the 2000 Canadian general election. Again, our results fail to confirm the conventional wisdom that increasing turnout would bring with it a shift in the electoral fortunes of the main parties in Canada. At the national level, party support shifts at most by 2.3 percentage points for the Tories and considerably less for the other parties. When we looked at Quebec separately, we found somewhat more positive results for the conventional wisdom that the Bloc Québécois gains at the expense of the Liberals when turnout goes up.

Given the arguments presented in favour of a turnout bias, we would expect this effect to be stronger in countries where class cleavages are stronger. That is, where there exist left-of-centre parties who traditionally have as their constituency lower SES citizens we ought to see more pronounced shifts as more of these conventional non-voters are added to the pool of voters. While Canada may not stand out as a country with massive class cleavages, it is safe to say that the party system in Canada reflects stronger socioeconomic cleavages than its southern neighbour. The presence of the NDP, a party that is a natural home for lower SES citizens ought to mean that the effect of higher turnout on

election results will be larger than in, say, the United States, where neither major party has these citizens as its natural constituency. However, as our results show, universal turnout in Canada would not have a radically greater effect than in the US.

Does low turnout matter? When it comes to the question of whether turnout skews election outcomes one way or the other, the answer appears to be no. While our results from Quebec indicate that turnout has an effect, it is a marginal one and unlikely to be large enough to effect the election in terms of government formation.

Acknowledgements

Appendix A: data

The question wordings and coding of variables were as follows.

A.1. Spending

The same question was asked for defense; welfare; pension and old age security; health care; unemployment insurance; education; aid to developing countries. Answers were coded as follows: 1, spend less; 2, about the same as now; 3, spend more.

[progressive coded as 1 for defense; 3 for all others]

A.2. Issues

Union and business power. How much power do you think unions/business should have: 1, much less; 2, somewhat less; 3, about the same as now; 4, somewhat more; 5, much more [progressive coded 4 or 5 for unions; 1 or 2 for business].

US-Canada relations. Do you think Canada's ties to the United States should be: 1, much more distant; 2, more distant; 3, about the same as now; 4, somewhat closer; 5, much closer [progressive coded 1 or 2].

Private hospitals. 0, oppose; 1, favour [progressive coded 0].

$10 user fee for healthcare. 0, oppose; 1, favour [progressive coded 0].

$20 user fee for healthcare. 0, oppose; 1, favour [progressive coded 0].

Lack of women MPs a problem/lack of minority MPs a problem. 1, not a problem at all; 2, not a serious problem; 3, quite a serious problem; 4, very serious problem [progressive coded 3 or 4].

Quotas for women/minority MPs. 0, oppose; 1, favour [progressive coded 1].

Abortion. Getting an abortion should be: 1, very difficult; 2, quite difficult; 3, quite easy; 4, very easy [progressive coded 3 or 4].

Feminism. 1, not sympathetic at all to feminism; 2, not very sympathetic; 3, quite sympathetic; 4, very sympathetic [progressive coded 3 or 4].

A.3. Statements

Respondents were asked whether they agree with the following statements: (1) People who don't get ahead should blame themselves; (2) when businesses make a lot of money everyone benefits; (3) overall, free trade with the US has been good for the Canadian economy; (4) Quebec has the right to separate no matter what the rest of Canada says; (5) Federal government should cut funding to provinces that allow user fees for medical services; (6) we have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country; (7) we should be more tolerant of people who choose to live according to their own standards; (8) the first workers to be laid off should be women whose husbands have jobs; (9) the welfare state makes people less willing to look after themselves; (10) discrimination makes it extremely difficult for women to find jobs equal to their abilities; (11) protecting the environment is more important than creating jobs; (12) newer lifestyles are contributing to the breakdown of out society; (13) the world is always changing and we should adapt out view of moral behaviour to these changes; (14) this country would have many fewer problems if there more emphasis on traditional family values; (15) it is more difficult for non-whites to succeed in Canadian society than it is for whites; (16) if people really want work, they can find a job; (17) we should look after Canadians born in this country first and others second; (18) the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally word for word; (19) minority groups need special rights; (20) the best way to protect women's interests is to have more women in Parliament.

All items coded: 1, strongly disagree; 2, somewhat disagree; 3, somewhat agree; 4, strongly agree [responses 1 and 2 coded as progressive for statements 1–3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16–18; responses 3 and 4 coded as progressive for statements 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 19, 20].

Death penalty. 0, oppose; 1, favour [progressive coded 0].

A.4. Policy

Respondents were asked whether they agree with the following policies:

1) Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children; 2) gays and lesbians should be allowed to get married; 3) government should leave it entirely up to the private sector to create jobs; 4) only the police and military should be allowed to carry guns; 5) if people can't find work in the region where they live, they should move to where there are jobs.

All items coded: 1, strongly disagree; 2, somewhat disagree; 3, somewhat agree; 4, strongly agree [responses 1 and 2 coded as progressive for statements 1, 3, 5; responses 3 and 4 coded as progressive for statements 2, 4].

Immigration. 1, Canada should admit fewer immigrants; 2, about the same as now; 3, more immigrants [progressive coded 3].

A.5. Issue salience

Respondents were asked whether various issues were important to them personally: (1) protecting the environment; (2) fighting crime; (3) reducing the Federal debt; (4) promoting traditional family values; (5) improving health care; (6) improving social welfare programs; (7) cutting taxes; (8) creating jobs; (9) defending the interests of Quebec.

All items coded: 1, not very important; 2, somewhat important; 3, very important [progressive coded as 1 for issue 4 and 7; coded as 3 for issue 1—3, 5, 6, 8].

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