

Voters and Nonvoters in Canadian Federal Elections

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Voter participation in Canadian elections has dropped precipitously in the last three decades. The average voter turnout was 74.5% in the three elections in the 1970s, 73.3% in the three elections in the 1980s, 69.0% in the two parliamentary elections in the 1990s, and 63.2% (adjusted) in the three elections this decade. (Elections Canada, 2007). Election officials and scholars have concluded that the source of much of the decline lies in generational change, as younger Canadians are not entering the electorate at the same rates as earlier cohorts did. (Pammett and LeDuc 2003) In part, younger cohorts' participation in elections appears to have been dampened by reduced competitiveness in ridings across much of the country, which has provided a weaker incentive to participate among young adults who have not already "learned to vote." (Johnston, Matthew, and Bittner, 2007) The combination of the decline in competitiveness across Canada and the recent increase in competitiveness at the presidential level in the U.S. (both nationally and in many states) contributed to the fact that, in 2004, voter turnout in Canada was actually lower than in the United States when comparable measures are used. (Martinez 2008, 354-356.)

The large decrease in turnout naturally leads to questions about who the nonvoters are, and whether the decrease in turnout signals a threat to the democratic system. Most conceptions of democracy include an expectation that citizens will participate in shaping the country's political agenda, and high rates of electoral abstention may pose a concern to democratic theorists if the collective attitudes of nonparticipants differ substantially from those of participants. Two basic concerns might arise.

First, do the unequal proclivities to vote on the part of some groups in society skew the policy preferences that are represented in government? In other words, do voters and nonvoters

significantly differ in their opinions on policy? To the extent that they do, elections may be failing in their function to represent the diversity of views in the population, and the concern is particularly acute given that turnout (like other forms of participation) tends to be related to social class, both in Canada (Martinez 2008) and in democracies generally. If the upper classes are voting and the lower classes are not, and if preferences on policy are related to class, fears that elections are failing to represent lower class policy concerns naturally emerge.

Empirical analyses of the policy skew in the largest low turnout democracy (the United States) have generally found negligible differences of opinion between voters and nonvoters on most issues. There is a slight tendency for US nonvoters to be more supportive of redistributive policies than voters (in large part due to the class-turnout correlation), but even on these issues, the between-group differences are generally rather small. (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, 108-114; Bennett and Resnick 1990; Gant and Lyons 1993; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 204-206; Bennett 2007) Based on an analysis of the 2000 Canadian Election Study, Rubenson et al. (2007) found no significant differences between nonvoters' and voters' opinions on 44 of 49 issues, controlling for age, gender, education, income, and country of origin, and on the five issues on which differences between the two groups were statistically discernible, there was no clear pattern; voters were less progressive on three issues (\$20 user fee for medical services, gender quotas for MPs, and adapting morals to a changing world) but *more* progressive on two others (immigration and the salience of the crime issue). For the most part, these results echo the findings in the earlier studies in the United States. However, for the purposes of assessing the question of whether all views are fully represented in the active electorate, it might have been more informative for Rubenson et al. (2007) to report the zero-order relationship between

turnout and policy preferences, without the demographic controls. Education, income, and age are known correlates of turnout, but if one or more of them are also correlated with a policy position, it is possible that the total “effect” of the policy position on turnout would be partially obscured in a multivariate analysis.

Answers to a related question, whether Canadian election results were likely to have been any different under conditions of higher turnout, vary somewhat in magnitude but are generally consistent in the direction of the findings. There have been (to my knowledge) two separate analyses of the question that compared the distributions of actual reported votes to the simulated votes under conditions of higher turnout. Martinez and Gill (2006) employed a multinomial logit model to generate predicted probabilities of voter choice in the 1997 federal election, and estimated that higher turnout would have hurt the Liberal vote in Quebec, to the benefit of the Bloc Québécois, but would have helped the Liberals outside of Quebec, at the expense of Reform. Rubenson et al.’s (2007) analysis of the 2000 election in Quebec is generally consistent with those findings, though the magnitude of the Bloc’s partisan advantage from universal turnout is not as great. Nationally, simulated vote shares of the parties do not change much under Rubenson et al.’s analysis, again confirming Martinez and Gill’s (2006) findings that Liberal losses from higher turnout in Quebec would be offset by gains in the rest of the country.

The second basic concern for democratic theorists is that low turnout might be indicative of declining political support for the regime. Empirically, the question is whether nonvoters in Canadian elections represent a reservoir of political discontent that could, depending on one’s perspective, either undercut support either for incumbents or the political regime? In part, the question is prompted by the observation of many in the United States that “when one recalls that

the downturn in turnout after 1960 coincided with a dramatic decline in public trust and confidence, the temptation to assume the two are related is understandable.” (Bennett and Resnick 1990, 779) For some, nonvoting may be a symptom of a withdrawal of support for the political system as a whole. In Eastonian terms, beliefs that the democratic process is fair to all and that government is responsive engenders political trust, which in turn catalyzes individual interactions with governmental authorities and mandates (see, for example, Scholz and Lubell 1998). If distrust is strongly related to nonvoting, turnout decline could signal greater difficulties in “making democracy work” (to borrow a phrase from Putnam 1993), or be an even more ominous warning of the potential unraveling of the regime (see Miller 1974).

Previous research in the United States has shown that voters do tend to have attitudes that are more supportive of the political regime, though the between-group differences are not especially impressive. Compared to nonvoters, U.S. voters are slightly, but not substantially, more patriotic, less enthusiastic about wholesale change in the replacing leadership in Washington, and trusting. Put another way, most nonvoters in the U.S. don’t score particularly high on standard measures of political trust, but neither do most voters (Bennett and Resnick 1990).

Moreover, there is evidence of within group heterogeneity among voters. Those who vote for winning candidates report higher levels of political trust, satisfaction with democracy, and perceptions of government responsiveness, than those who vote for losing candidates (Anderson and LoTiempo 2002; Anderson et al. 2005; Banducci and Karp 2003; Craig et al. 2006).¹ Given that elections are intended, in part, to provide some legitimacy to the resulting constitutional government, a more compelling question might be how the level of system support compares

between voters who supported the winning parties, those who voted for losing parties, and nonvoters. Those who vote for losing parties may inevitably be disappointed in election outcomes, but they may at least feel that they had the opportunity to participate and, in some political systems, that they still can voice their preferences through other institutions. Thus, the key question seems to be whether nonvoters are significantly less supportive of the political system than are supporters of losing parties.

Data

I examine these basic questions using data from the 1997 and 2006 Canadian Election Studies.² The 1997 election resulted in a second consecutive Liberal majority government, a continuation of two regionally based parties, the Bloc Québécois in Quebec and the Reform Party in the West, and a very modest recovery of the Progressive Conservative Party, which had been decimated in the 1993 elections.(Nevitte et al. 1995) The 1997 CES survey included several questions that tap respondents' preferences on a variety of issue dimensions, including the tradeoff between taxes and social services, Quebec's place in the constitutional system, women's place in society, the role of government in creating jobs, immigration, and support for racial minorities. The survey also included measures of various aspects of system support, including satisfaction with democracy, external efficacy ("First, those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people,"and "I don't think the government cares much what people like me think"), political trust ("Politicians are ready to lie to get elected" and a feeling thermometer for "politicians in general"), and affect for Canada (also measured on a feeling thermometer). As might be expected, these indicators are correlated with one another and with two measures of internal efficacy ("People like me don't have any say about what the government does" and

“Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on”). Of course, the post-election survey also included measures of voter turnout and voter choice, and, as usual, the survey report of turnout³ was much higher than the official reports (see Martinez 2006).

The political landscape in 2006 was much different than it had been nearly a decade earlier. The Liberals entered the 2006 elections not as a majority government as it had been in 1997, but as a minority government embroiled in a political scandal. The political right was finally more or less united under the Conservative banner, and its leader, Stephen Harper, emerged from the 2006 election as Prime Minister of his own minority government. Turnout in 2006 rebounded a little from 2004, but remained low. The 2006 CES included several items that were identical to the policy questions asked in 1997, including questions on Quebec, women's place in society, and immigration, as well as some questions on “new” issues, such as gay marriage.

Do Voters and Nonvoters Differ on Issues?

Table 1 presents the distributions of opinion on several issues in the 1997 and 2006 CES studies on several public policy issues. Not surprisingly, larger proportions of nonvoters were more likely to confess that they “don't know” what they think (or decline to provide an answer to the interviewer) on most issues. But substantively, voters' and nonvoters' preferences were generally quite similar on most issues, and where there were differences, the direction of the differences sometimes changed between 1997 and 2006. For example, in 1997, voters were slightly more sympathetic to “doing more for Quebec” (21.3% to 14.2%) and (among respondents outside Quebec) recognizing Quebec as a distinct society within Canada (31.2% to

27.5%). By 2006, the direction of the differences had changed such that nonvoters had become more supportive of “doing more” (33.9% to 26.8%). Similarly, in 1997, larger proportions of voters were more likely to strongly agree that “Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children” (22.8% to 17.0%), but in 2006, a larger proportion of nonvoters agreed with that traditionalist sentiment (22.6% to 17.1%). The direction of differences also changed on the question of whether job creation should be left entirely to the private sector, as voters were more supportive of that position than nonvoters in 1997 (39.7% to 33.6% in agreement), but nonvoters (oddly) more supportive in 2006 (38.8% to 32.7%). On other issues, nonvoters’ opinions on assisting racial minorities were quite similar to those of voters, slightly less supportive of liberal immigration policies in both years, and less supportive of allowing gay and lesbian marriages in 2006. The largest difference of opinion in either year is on the retrospective evaluation of Canada’s economy. In both 1997 and 2006, nonvoters’ sociotropic assessments were significantly bleaker than those of voters.

Table 1 about here

On the whole, as previous research has shown, the aggregate policy differences between nonvoters and voters in these two Canadian elections were slight. On each of the policies examined here, the positions of the median nonvoter and the median voter were identical, and differences between the overall distributions of preferences were generally small, as the largest absolute τ_c value on a non-valence issue was 0.05. Looking over a broader range of questions in 2006, Rubenson et al. (2007) found that, on the few issues where differences between nonvoters and voters were noticeable, there was no clear ideological pattern to the differences, as nonvoters were more progressive on some issues but less progressive on others. These findings

show that not only are differences between nonvoters and voters inconsistent across issues, the direction of differences are also unstable over time on several issues.

Despite the overall similarity in issue preferences between voters and nonvoters in 1997 and 2006, it is still possible that there could be issue differences among the “newly eligible” who are beginning to learn either to vote or not to vote. In other words, are the young people who are entering the electorate distinctive in their issue preferences from those who fail to vote? A replication of the analysis presented in Table 1 for those eligible to vote in only their first, second, or third federal elections (those born after 1967 for the 1997 election, and those born after 1980 for the 2006 election) reveals few striking dissimilarities between young voters and nonvoters. The one exceptional finding was that young nonvoters in 1997 were notably more reluctant to “do more for Quebec” than young voters (11.4% to 28.5%), but that appeared to be unique to 1997. By 2006, the newly eligible voters and nonvoters again had similar opinions on doing more for Quebec, as they did on other issues. (Table not shown, but available from the author upon request.)

Thus, on the whole, nonvoters and voters in both 1997 and 2006 look pretty similar to one another in terms of their issue preferences. The sources of turnout decline in Canada have apparently not resulted in a serious under-representation of some issue positions in the active electorate, despite the class and generational correlates of voter participation. Moreover, the attitudinal biases in voter participation that are evident do not appear to be especially stable over time in Canada.

System Support among Nonvoters and Voters

Despite the overall similarity in policy preferences between nonvoters and voters,

democratic theorists still might be concerned about low turnout if measures of system support are significantly lower among nonvoters. Of course, some of the differences in system support appear to be attributable to support of the incumbents, so the relevant comparisons are between the levels of system support offered by nonvoters, those who voted for losing parties, and those who voted for the winning party. In 1997, the winning party was unambiguously the Liberals, who held majorities in the House of Commons both before and after the election.

Not surprisingly, those who reported voting for the Liberals in 1997 had more supportive attitudes across the board than those who had voted for other candidates. More importantly, however, nonvoters' expressions of support for the political system looked very much like those of those who voted for the "losers." Table 2 shows that nearly three-quarters of Liberal supporters reported at least a fair amount of satisfaction with democracy before the election, compared to barely half of both nonvoters and supporters of other parties. The election itself had a "warming and fuzzying" effect (see Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978), raising satisfaction in the post-election survey by roughly the same amount for those who voted to return the Liberals to office, those who voted against them, and those who confessed that they had not participated in the election. Not many Canadians were "very" satisfied (either before or after the election), but most, including nonvoters and "losers", were at least "fairly" satisfied, especially following the democratic ritual of the election.

Table 2 about here

At the same time, large majorities of Canadians expressed feelings of low external efficacy and trust. Four out of five agreed (somewhat or strongly) that most MPs lose touch, two-thirds agreed that the government doesn't seem to care much about "people like me", and 85%

agreed that “politicians are ready to lie to get elected.” On all three questions, Liberal supporters were less likely to agree, and much less likely to strongly agree, with those statements than were supporters of other parties, and nonvoters again closely resembled “losing” voters in the distributions of their answers to those questions. For example, on the most direct measure of political trust in this battery, 56% of nonvoters and 55% of non-Liberal voters strongly agreed that “politicians are ready to lie,” while “only” 39% of Liberal voters did so. Patterns on the feeling thermometer ratings for “politicians in general” were slightly different; Liberal voters again had the highest rating (mean = 51.2), but nonvoters rated generic politicians even more coolly than did non-Liberal voters (36.9 to 43.1). Liberal voters also had higher mean affect for Canada than non-Liberal and nonvoters, though that effect was largely due to the very low mean feeling thermometer scores for Canada among Bloc voters (52.4) and Quebec nonvoters (60.4). Outside Quebec, Liberal supporters had slightly higher affect for Canada than supporters of other parties, who in turn had slightly higher scores than nonvoters. But taken together, these results suggest that nonvoters in 1997 as a group did not feel especially alienated from the Canadian political system, at least not any more so than those who had voted for parties other than the majority Liberals.

The 2006 election replaced a minority Liberal government with a minority Conservative government, so to the degree that CES respondents were thinking of the incumbent government in answering the system support questions in the pre-election survey, they were likely thinking of Prime Minister Martin and the Liberals. Responses to these questions in the post-election might be colored by thoughts of either the outgoing Liberal government or the incoming Conservative government (or both), so Table 3 shows comparisons between those who did not

vote, those who voted for the incumbent Liberals, those who voted for the winning Conservatives, and other voters.

Despite the differences in the political landscape between 1997 and 2006, the pre-election survey revealed remarkably similar patterns on the satisfaction with democracy question. Not very many people described themselves as “very satisfied,” but most were at least fairly satisfied, and again, nonvoters were about as satisfied as were those who would end up voting against the incumbent Liberals, and Liberal voters were significantly more satisfied. As in 1997, the level of satisfaction increased for all groups in the post-election survey, including nonvoters, Liberal supporters, and non-Liberal supporters. This time, however, the change in government also resulted in larger increases in satisfaction among Conservative voters.

Table 3 about here

We see a slightly different perspective on the questions related to external efficacy (“I don’t think the government cares much ...”) and trust (“politicians are ready to lie ...”). As in 1997, overall levels of efficacy and trust appears pretty low, and supporters of the incumbent government expressed greater support on these questions than did either nonvoters or those who would vote against the Liberals. This time, however, nonvoters expressed even less efficacy and trust than did those who voted against the Liberals. Nonvoters in 2006 were slightly more likely to strongly agree that the government doesn’t care and that politicians lie than they were in 1997, and opposition voters were slightly less likely to strongly agree, resulting in gaps between those groups on both questions that had not appeared in 1997. The post-election feeling thermometer measure of affect toward “politicians in general” actually increased a bit from 1997 to 2006 among nonvoters and voters alike, with the biggest increase among non-Liberal voters. Post-

election feeling thermometers for Canada remained high for all groups outside Quebec, again with nonvoters rating Canada a few points lower on average than those who had voted for the incumbents or the opposition that finally unseated them.

The pattern of political support in 2006 is a little clearer in multivariate analyses that control for age, formal education, gender, French language, political knowledge (as assessed by the interviewer), and province of residence. Table 4 presents the expected values for a “typical” respondent (a 42 year old female resident of Ontario with some university education and average political knowledge) derived from OLS regressions of the feeling thermometers and ordered logistic regressions of the satisfaction with democracy, external efficacy, and trust items. Although nonvoters tend to be younger, less educated, and less politically astute than voters, those factors do not account for the patterns of political support that we see in 2006. “Typical” nonvoters and voters of all parties were fairly satisfied with Canadian democracy in the pre-election survey, but the typical Liberal voter was significantly more satisfied than the nonvoter (and further from the “not very satisfied” threshold), though other voters were not. That changed after the election, when both the “new” winners, the Conservatives, and the “old” winners, the Liberals, reported higher levels of satisfaction than nonvoters. The Liberal voter was also the only typical respondent who did not “strongly agree” with the “politicians are ready to lie” statement, though Conservative voters were also closer to the “agree” threshold than voters for other parties. On other questions, typical nonvoters were less efficacious than typical voters of all persuasions, and had significantly cooler feeling thermometer scores for “politicians in general” than all except Green Party voters.

Thus, it appears that the more nationally competitive electoral environment in 2006

shaded responses to the system support questions differently than in 1997. Perhaps a widespread expectation of a competitive election between the Liberals and Conservatives in 2006 among parties, candidates, and the public at large gave attentive opposition supporters some hope that their opinions might matter even before the election, but that feeling was lost on the unmobilized nonvoters. Whatever the reason, nonvoters in 2006 felt a little less efficacious and a little less trusting than opposition voters and, of course, those who still supported the Liberals in the wake of the Gomery scandal. Nonvoters' affect toward politicians in general and toward their country were also lower than those of voters.

Still, it is worth emphasizing that majorities of voters of all stripes shared with majorities of nonvoters doubts about the government's responsiveness and complete honesty of politicians in general. The typical Liberal supporter was not as deeply skeptical about politicians as were nonvoters and other parties' supporters, but she was still skeptical.⁴ If these results might be interpreted by some as suggesting that nonvoters are ready to storm the gates of the regime, voters appear to be close behind them. But based on the fact that large majorities of both groups were also at least fairly satisfied with Canadian democracy, especially in the afterglow of an election, it seems more likely that the Canadian electorate and non-electorate are both a little grumpy, but mostly convinced that their democratic institutions work at some level. Winning makes some voters a bit less grumpy and even more pleased with the political mechanisms that resulted in their party's win, but nonvoters don't seem especially more anxious than voters whose parties have lost.

Discussion

The decline in turnout in Canadian elections in recent decades has raised questions about

both its cause and consequences. Part of the latter includes normative concerns about whether nonvoters' policy preferences are distinctive, and therefore under-represented as inputs in the policymaking process. This investigation of public opinion in 1997 and 2006 suggests that nonvoters' policy preferences were, in fact, pretty similar to those of voters. While there were some differences, most were neither very large nor consistent in direction over time. Moreover, most nonvoters, like most voters, were somewhat satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada, despite skepticism about the responsiveness of the government and the honesty of its officials. As in other democracies, "winners" were more supportive than "losers", but nonvoters' beliefs were not all that different from those of "losers." In a sense, these findings suggest that the decline in turnout in Canada does not appear to be an exit strategy on the part of the extremely disaffected, and they complement Johnston, Matthews, and Bittner's (2007) conclusion that the lack of a competitive pull may be at the root of generation Y's failure to enter.

This is not to say that low turnout is inconsequential, either for Canada or for other democracies. Electoral outcomes can vary, under some conditions, under higher or lower levels of turnout. A large scale mobilization of young Québécois with sovereigntist sympathies might have very well worked to the Bloc's advantage in the 1997 and 2000 elections (Martinez and Gill 2006; Rubenson et al. 2007), and the mobilization of people with very low levels of trust can undermine support for incumbent or other well-established candidates or parties. (Hetherington 1999; Bélanger and Nadeau 2005) Moreover, the political institutions of liberal democracies ideally balance majoritarianism with the freedoms to express intensely held preferences. Generally, participants in political activities that require large investments of time

and money (such as lobbying, campaign contributions, and working in campaigns) are distinctively well-endowed in those resources, and most activists have different preferences and concerns than people who are not so well endowed. Elections ensure that everyone can have at least some input into the policy process, thereby providing a majoritarian check on the activists. But low turnout can undermine the power of the electoral check, as the bias in participation in elections starts to approximate the bias in participation in other more demanding forms of political activity. Similarly, low turnout might weaken the linkage between constituents and their representatives. Higher turnout may one of several signals to elected representatives that the public is watching, and encourage them to be more attentive to its needs and faithful to its wishes (Martin 2003; Griffin and Newman 2005). When representatives perceive that the public is not watching as carefully, representatives may be tempted to pay more attention to their own political goals, or be more responsive to lobbyists and interest groups who articulate policy agendas that differ from those in the public at large. Lest the principal findings in this paper lead Canadian voters and nonvoters, and us, to become too sanguine, it is important for us to continue to investigate the possible consequences of low voter turnout.

Table 1
Policy Preferences of Nonvoters and Voters
1997

2006

How much do you think should be done for Quebec: more, less or about the same as now?

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
More	14.2%	21.3%	33.9%	26.8%
About the same as now	49.7%	45.0%	27.5%	33.5%
Less	26.1%	28.2%	27.6%	32.0%
Don't Know / Refused	10.0%	5.5%	11.0%	7.7%
Number of cases	548	2603	308	2923
Tau _c	-0.02		0.03	

Society would be better off if more women stayed home with their children.

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Strongly Agree	17.0%	22.8%	22.6%	17.1%
Agree	23.9%	22.3%	17.2%	19.4%
Disagree	18.1%	19.4%	20.6%	20.9%
Strongly Disagree	38.2%	32.4%	35.0%	38.7%
Don't Know / Refused	2.8%	3.0%	4.6%	3.9%
Number of cases	548	2603	308	2923
Tau _c	-0.05		0.02	

The government should leave it entirely to the private sector to create jobs.

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Strongly Agree	11.8%	15.6%	12.7%	11.0%
Agree	21.8%	24.1%	26.1%	21.7%
Disagree	30.9%	31.5%	34.2%	34.1%
Strongly Disagree	28.4%	26.2%	19.2%	30.3%
Don't Know / Refused	7.0%	2.6%	7.9%	2.9%
Number of cases	548	2603	308	2923
Tau _c	-0.03		0.04	

Over the past year, has Canada's economy gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Gotten better	28.0%	35.7%	25.3%	44.6%
About the same	38.9%	43.0%	46.1%	39.1%
Gotten worse	26.9%	18.1%	22.7%	13.6%
Don't Know / Refused	6.2%	3.2%	5.9%	2.8%
Number of cases	548	2603	308	2923

Tau_c

-0.07

-0.07

Table 1 (cont.)

1997

2006

Do you think Canada should admit more immigrants, fewer immigrants, or about the same as now?

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Admit more immigrants	7.3%	8.8%	11.8%	16.1%
About the same	39.9%	43.3%	51.4%	56.5%
Fewer immigrants	47.8%	44.4%	27.8%	21.9%
Don't Know / Refused	5.0%	3.4%	9.0%	5.4%
Number of cases	548	2603	308	2923
Tau _c	-0.03		-0.03	

How much do you think should be done for racial minorities: more, less, or about the same as now?

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
More	28.5%	28.0%	26.9%	30.6%
About the same as now	47.5%	51.0%	48.4%	47.2%
Less	16.5%	15.3%	16.1%	16.0%
Don't Know / Refused	7.5%	5.7%	8.6%	6.2%
Number of cases	548	2603	308	2923
Tau _c	0.00		-0.01	

Should Quebec be recognized as a distinct society?

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Yes	27.5%	31.2%
Depends	3.0%	3.7%
No	60.4%	59.9%
Don't Know / Refused	9.1%	5.1%
Number of cases	436	1921
Tau _c	-0.02	

We face tough choices. Cutting taxes means cutting social programmes and improving social programmes means increasing taxes. If you had to choose, would you cut taxes, increase taxes, or keep taxes as they are?

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Cut taxes	29.3%	25.2%
Kept as they are	50.9%	55.2%
Increase taxes	14.0%	12.1%
Don't Know / Refused	5.8%	7.5%
Number of cases	548	2603
Tau _c	0.01	

Table 1 (cont.)

	2006	
Which of these five issues is most important to you personally in this election?	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Health	42.7%	40.3%
Taxes	16.1%	11.5%
Social welfare	11.0%	11.4%
Environment	4.7%	7.4%
Corruption	21.6%	27.4%
Don't Know / Refused	4.0%	2.0%
Number of cases	307	2923
Gays and lesbians should be allowed to get married.		
	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Voters</u>
Strongly Agree	27.5%	33.9%
Agree	25.9%	25.8%
Disagree	7.9%	10.3%
Strongly Disagree	32.4%	23.7%
Don't Know / Refused	6.3%	6.4%
Number of cases	308	2923
Tau _c	-0.04	

Frequencies and numbers of cases are weighted. Tau_c statistics are computed on the weighted data, excluding "Don't know / Refused" responses.

Table 2
System Support by Vote Choice, 1997

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Not Liberal Voters</u>	<u>Liberal Voters</u>
Satisfaction with Democracy (pre)			
- very	8%	10%	21%
- very or fairly	53%	54%	74%
Satisfaction with Democracy (post)			
- very	12%	14%	27%
- very or fairly	70%	68%	89%
MPs lose touch (pre)			
- strongly agree	38%	41%	29%
- strongly agree or agree	84%	84%	80%
I don't think the government cares (pre)			
- strongly agree	40%	37%	22%
- strongly agree or agree	74%	71%	56%
Politicians are ready to lie (pre)			
- strongly agree	56%	55%	39%
- strongly agree or agree	90%	86%	78%
Mean Feeling Thermometer Politicians	36.9	43.1	51.2
Mean Feeling Thermometer Canada	79.2	80.4	88.7
Mean Feeling Thermometer Canada (excluding Quebec)	84.0	87.6	89.6

Table 3
System Support by Vote Choice, 2006

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>~ Liberal</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>~ Conservative</u>	<u>Conservative</u>
Satisfaction with Democracy (pre)					
- Very	9.0%	10.3%	24.4%	15.1%	12.3%
- Fairly or very	57.2%	56.9%	76.8%	66.7%	55.2%
Satisfaction with Democracy (post)					
- Very	10.3%	18.7%	26.5%	19.7%	22.3%
- Fairly or very	72.8%	83.6%	82.6%	79.1%	89.9%
I don't think the government cares much (pre)					
- Strongly agree	44.5%	34.9%	20.4%	27.4%	36.9%
- Strongly agree or agree	80.3%	69.5%	56.0%	62.2%	71.8%
Politicians are ready to lie to get elected (pre)					
- Strongly agree	61.5%	51.9%	37.3%	46.4%	50.6%
- Strongly agree or agree	93.8%	90.1%	77.6%	85.3%	89.2%
FT Politicians (post)	41.9	53.7	55.8	53.7	55.1
FT Canada (post)	81.1	86.2	88.8	86.5	87.4
FT Canada (post, excl Quebec)	83.7	89.2	88.7	89.5	88.4

Table 4
System Support by Vote Choice for a "typical" respondent, 2006

	<u>Nonvoters</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>NDP</u>	<u>Bloc</u>	<u>Green</u>
Satisfaction with Democracy (pre)	0.07 fairly	1.14* fairly	0.08 fairly	0.34 fairly	-0.10 fairly	0.13 fairly
Satisfaction with Democracy (post)	0.08 fairly	0.73* fairly	0.81* fairly	0.30 fairly	0.16 fairly	0.04 fairly
I don't think the government cares much (pre)	0.53 agree	-0.75** agree	0.12** agree	-0.18** agree	-0.05** agree	0.40** agree
Politicians are ready to lie to get elected (pre)	0.37 str agree	-0.71** agree	0.05** str agree	0.03 str agree	0.53 str agree	0.26 str agree
FT Politicians	44.6	56.4*	56.1*	51.3*	60.1*	45.0
FT Canada	86.0	92.2*	90.3*	93.8*	80.1**	88.2

Entries are expected values for a 42 year old female resident of Ontario with some university education and average political knowledge. Expected values for feeling thermometers were derived from OLS regressions; expected values for other variables are from order logistic regressions, and include categorical placements.

* indicates a significant ($p < .05$) positive difference from a typical nonvoter;

** indicates a significant negative difference.

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Endnotes

1. Those differences appear to be greater in majoritarian political systems, as opposed to political systems that might preserve losers' input through federalism, strong bicameralism, separation of powers, or coalition formation. (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Anderson and Tverdova 2001)
2. The principal investigators of the 1997 Canadian Election Study were André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau, and Neil Nevitte. The survey was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), grant number 412-96-0007 and was completed by the Institute for Social Research, York University. The principal co-investigators of the 2006 Canadian Election Study were André Blais, Joanna Everitt, Patrick Fournier, Elisabeth Gidengil and Neil Nevitte, through funding provided by Elections Canada. Data for these and other CES surveys are available at <http://ces-eec.mcgill.ca/> The principal investigators, funding agencies, and data collectors bear no responsibility for errors in my analyses or interpretations.

Both studies were panel surveys, with pre-election and post-election waves, and were conducted by telephone using a CATI system.

3. The 1997 survey included a survey experiment on the measurement of turnout, in which roughly half the respondents were asked a standard question ("Did YOU vote in the election?") and the other half were asked an experimental question that invokes both the right to vote and the right not to vote ("In a democracy, citizens have the right to vote. They also have the right not to. And some people who intend to vote end up not voting for one reason or another.") There were no significant differences between the reported turnout rates in the two groups (respective weighted proportions of reported voters = 82.0% and 83.2%), though both far exceeded the official turnout rate of 67.0%.

4. I use the word "skeptical" here to refer to Cook and Gronke's (2005) argument that low levels of trust on traditional survey measures may not necessarily imply high levels of distrust among citizens. Rather, citizens may be more skeptical (believing that politicians *might be* lying) than cynical (believing that politicians *are* lying). Skepticism may be healthy on the part of any principal, including citizens watching their government.