

DIGITAL DEMOCRACY PROJECT

Research Memo #4 Talking Past Each Other on Immigration

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DIGITAL DEMOCRACY PROJECT

The Digital Democracy Project is a joint initiative led by the Ottawa-based Public Policy Forum and the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University.

The project will study the media ecosystem in the run-up to and during Canada's October 2019 federal election by monitoring digital and social media and by conducting both regular national surveys and a study of a metered sample of online consumption. The project will communicate its preliminary research findings publicly on a regular basis from August to October 2019, and will work with journalists to analyze the spread and impact of misinformation. The study will culminate in a final report to be published by March 2020. Both the project's preliminary findings and final report will be publicly available.

The project director is Taylor Owen, Associate Professor and Beaverbrook Chair in Media, Ethics and Communications in the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University. The online data analysis team is led by Derek Ruths, Associate Professor in the School of Computer Science at McGill University, and the survey analysis team is led by Peter Loewen, Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.

The project is funded by The Rossy Foundation, the McConnell Foundation, and the Luminare Group and with support from the Mozilla. The project is also participating in the Digital Elections Research Challenge, a collaborative research project led by Taylor Owen and Elizabeth Dubois, Assistant Professor at the University of Ottawa, and funded by a grant from Heritage Canada. The DDP will be sharing survey and online data with the 18 research projects funded through this collaboration and will highlight select findings from these projects in our regular briefings.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the Digital Democracy Project began surveying Canadians earlier this summer, immigration has consistently ranked around the middle of the list of political issues of concern to the public. Canada has a long history of embracing immigrants and refugees, but with rising populist and nativist sentiment in the United States and Europe—and the emergence of the People’s Party of Canada at home—politicians and analysts have been watching closely to see if immigration is becoming a consequential election issue.

The short answer is that it is starting to, though not in the strictly polarizing manner that is usually feared. The good news is that Canadians across the political spectrum have somewhat complex and nuanced views on immigration, and that these views can be influenced by relevant information (such as the correct number of immigrants being admitted into the country.)

The bad news, perhaps, is that because the politics of immigration is so multi-dimensional, it means much of the public debate around it tends to be at cross purposes.

KEY FINDINGS: IMMIGRATION AND NATIVISM

1 The most important dimension of immigration for Canadians is its impact on jobs and the economy. Aside from that, priorities vary by party allegiance, and partisan views reflect the issue areas emphasized by candidates on social media.

2 Nativism—feelings of support for native-born citizens over immigrants—is more common among conservatives, but also among those who feel the economy or their personal finances are getting worse.

3 Most Canadians do not have a clear idea of how many immigrants and refugees Canada admits, and many assume the number of refugees is higher than it is. But providing people with facts about immigration and the economy affects their perceptions of immigration, their opinions about immigration policy and their levels of nativist sentiment. These effects are especially pronounced for conservatives.

KEY FINDING: CASE STUDY

When it comes to social media outreach, Facebook and Twitter are the social platforms of choice for most candidates. Aside from Liberals and Conservatives, candidates have a limited presence on Instagram, and candidates across the board are virtually absent from YouTube.

ISSUE FINDINGS

For Canadians, the political salience of immigration varies according to their partisan allegiances. We asked our survey respondents to choose which of eight different aspects of immigration was of concern to them. Jobs and the economy was the top-ranked issue area overall at 47%, followed by integration (45%) and cultural values (40%). Both Conservative and Liberal partisans put jobs and the economy in their top three, but right- and left-wing supporters diverge beyond that. While Liberal and NDP partisans prioritize integration and diversity, Conservatives put cultural values in the top spot (43%). Conservatives were also far more likely to identify national security (43%) and illegal immigration (42%) as key aspects of immigration, compared to Liberals (28%, 28%) and NDP partisans (17%, 27%).

Canadians also tend to overestimate the number of immigrants and refugees admitted to the country. We asked respondents how many immigrants the federal government was planning to admit in 2019 and how many refugees Canada admitted in 2018. In both cases, the majority said they were unsure. Only 15% got the first question right, and 12% answered the second question correctly. Respondents who guessed wrong about refugees were more likely to assume the number is higher than it is. In the case of refugee intake, 24% of respondents believed Canada accepted more refugees than it did last year, while 3% thought the number was lower.

One factor that could influence public opinion about immigration policy is the prevalence of nativism, or the idea that the needs of native-born Canadians should be prioritized over immigrants. We measure nativism with a battery of questions that tap into respondents' perceptions of whether immigrants are costly to society. Overall, Canadians exhibit modest levels of nativism, with an average score of 0.45 out of 1. Liberal and NDP partisans score far lower than Conservatives in their expressed nativist sentiment (0.38 and 0.38 vs. 0.55). The PPC and other smaller parties were not included in this question because the sample size was too small.

Aside from partisan leanings, the factors most strongly correlated with nativism are economic. We asked respondents whether they perceived the economy and their personal finances to be getting better, getting worse or staying the same over the past year. Respondents who perceived the economy to be getting worse had nativism scores 0.2 points higher than those who thought the economy was getting better. Similarly, those who believe their personal finances are getting worse have nativism scores 0.14 points higher than those who thought their finances were improving.

Generally speaking, candidates' posts on Twitter and Facebook are likely to reflect the top issues identified by their respective partisans. These findings suggest that the parties may be talking past each other on the issue of immigration.

INFORMATION FINDINGS

The link between economic perceptions and nativist sentiment raises the question of whether providing Canadians with information about the economic benefits of immigration could lead them to see immigration in a more positive light. We randomly provided half of our respondents with an excerpt from a 2018 Conference Board of Canada report that says immigrants are needed to keep the economy growing. For respondents who did not receive this information, 23% thought immigration was bad for the economy and 57% thought it was good. Those numbers shifted to 19% and 63% for respondents who read the excerpt. The results were similar when respondents were asked whether they wanted to see immigration levels increase or decrease, and when they were given the battery of questions that indicate levels of nativism—those who read the excerpt were more likely to support raising immigration levels and less likely to rank highly on our nativism index.

Interestingly, while theories of motivated reasoning suggest that partisan respondents will reject information that doesn't conform to their existing values or beliefs, the effect of this intervention was stronger for right-leaning partisans than for left-leaning partisans. All of this suggests that providing the public with relevant information could also influence their opinions on public policy, and that nativism is not as much of an immutable sentiment as commonly believed.

CASE STUDY: CANDIDATES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Finally, our data research team tracked candidates' social media activity across a range of platforms. Social media activity jumped by about 20% after the campaign officially started on Sept. 11. The Liberals reach far more people with their messaging across social media platforms, but the Conservatives are competitive in their Facebook engagement, having by far the most shares on Facebook. The Bloc Québécois also outpace the Liberals on engagement in Quebec.

Not surprisingly, Twitter continues to be the platform of choice for candidates, with the vast majority of social media posts being shared there. Most candidates' accounts are on Facebook and Twitter; aside from the Liberals and Conservatives, comparatively few candidates have Instagram accounts, and political YouTube activity was so sparse that the platform was excluded from this study. A recent report from the [Ryerson Leadership Lab](#) found that 65% of Canadians age 18-29 watch YouTube daily and 52% use Instagram daily, while just 24% are daily Twitter users. If politicians are looking to reach voters under 30 through their social media outreach, they might want to rethink this strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Our survey data team conducted an online panel survey of 1,559 Canadian citizens 18 years and older using the online sample provider Qualtrics. The sample was gathered from Sept. 11-16. Data was weighted within each region of Canada by gender and age to ensure it adequately represented the Canadian public. Survey respondents were asked questions related to basic demographics, as well as their partisan, ideological and issue preferences. We present 90% confidence intervals for each of our figures below. Partisan sub-groups are restricted to the Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP for sample size considerations.

For our online data research, this week we tracked activity from candidate accounts on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. We collected a list of candidate accounts from party lists hosted on their websites, supplemented by automated searching for remaining candidates. Since Aug. 1, 2,378 candidate accounts have shared content. We collected information on engagement—such as retweets, replies, comments, likes, favourites, etc.—and present summary statistics here to give a portrait of the social media battleground in Canada. We used text from candidate posts on Twitter and Facebook to gauge issue and immigration-dimension emphasis by party, using keyword-in-context analysis.

More details about our methodology can be found in the Appendix.

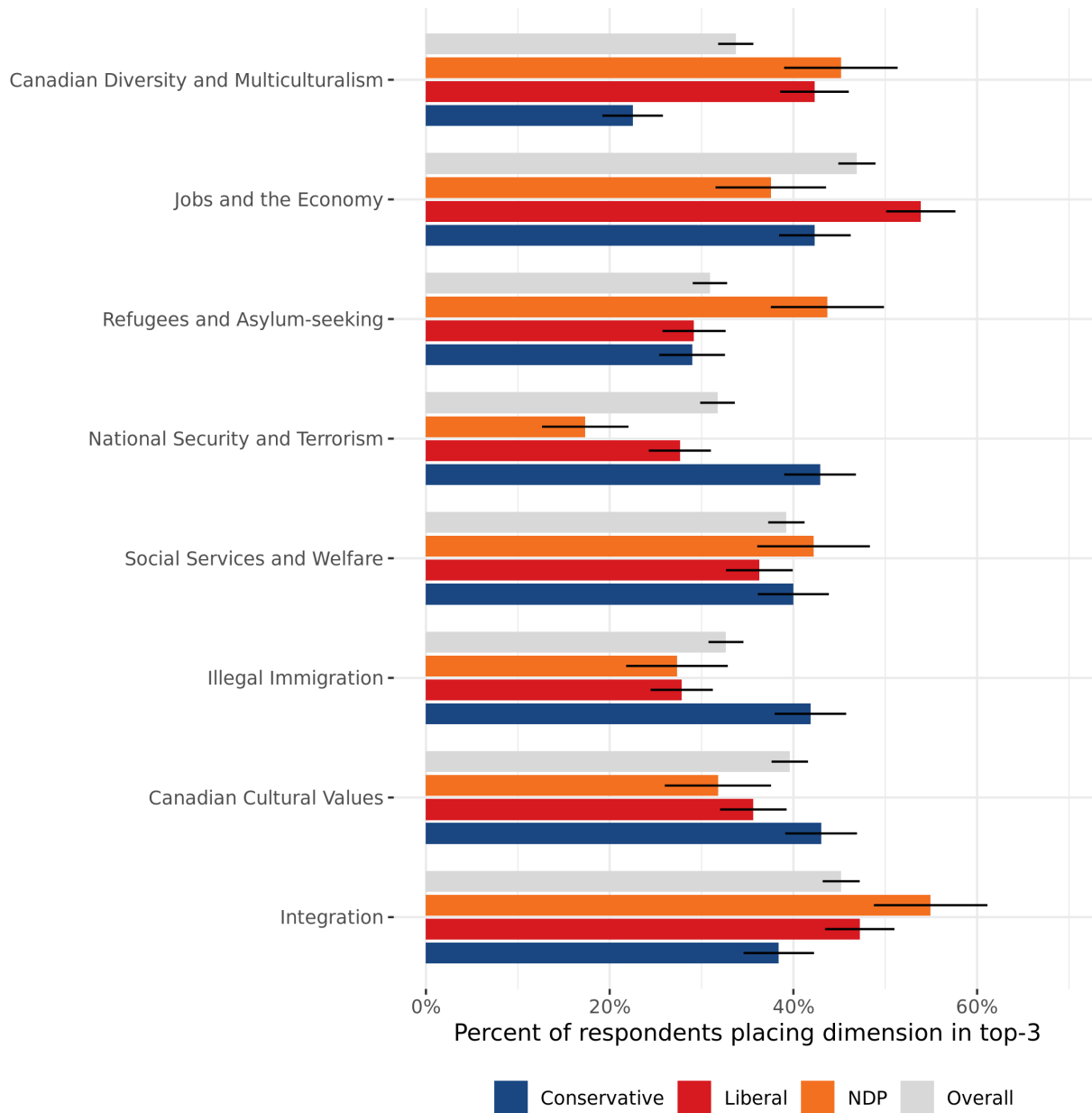
GENERAL FINDINGS: DIMENSIONS OF IMMIGRATION

Immigration is a complex issue. Canadians who report that immigration is important to them may consider different aspects of the issue important. As with [Research Memo 2](#) on the environment, we are interested in what our respondents think of when they consider immigration as a political issue. We provided our respondents a list of eight different, but related, dimensions of immigration policy: jobs and the economy; Canadian diversity and multiculturalism; Canadian cultural values; social services and welfare; refugees and asylum-seeking; illegal immigration; national security and terrorism; and integration (e.g. language training, settlement services). Respondents were asked to choose the top three issues they think of when they consider immigration as a political issue.

Jobs and the economy was the top dimension chosen by our respondents, picked by 47%. This was followed closely by integration (45%) and cultural values (40%). Refugees and asylum-seeking and national security were ranked comparably lower (31% and 32%).

These averages mask large differences among major party supporters. Liberal partisans prioritize jobs (54%), integration (47%) and diversity and multiculturalism (42%), but aren't particularly concerned about refugees (29%). NDP partisans are less attentive to jobs and the economy (38%), but are highly attentive to integration (55%), diversity (45%) and refugees (44%).

FIGURE 1. Share of Respondents Placing Immigration Dimension in Top 3

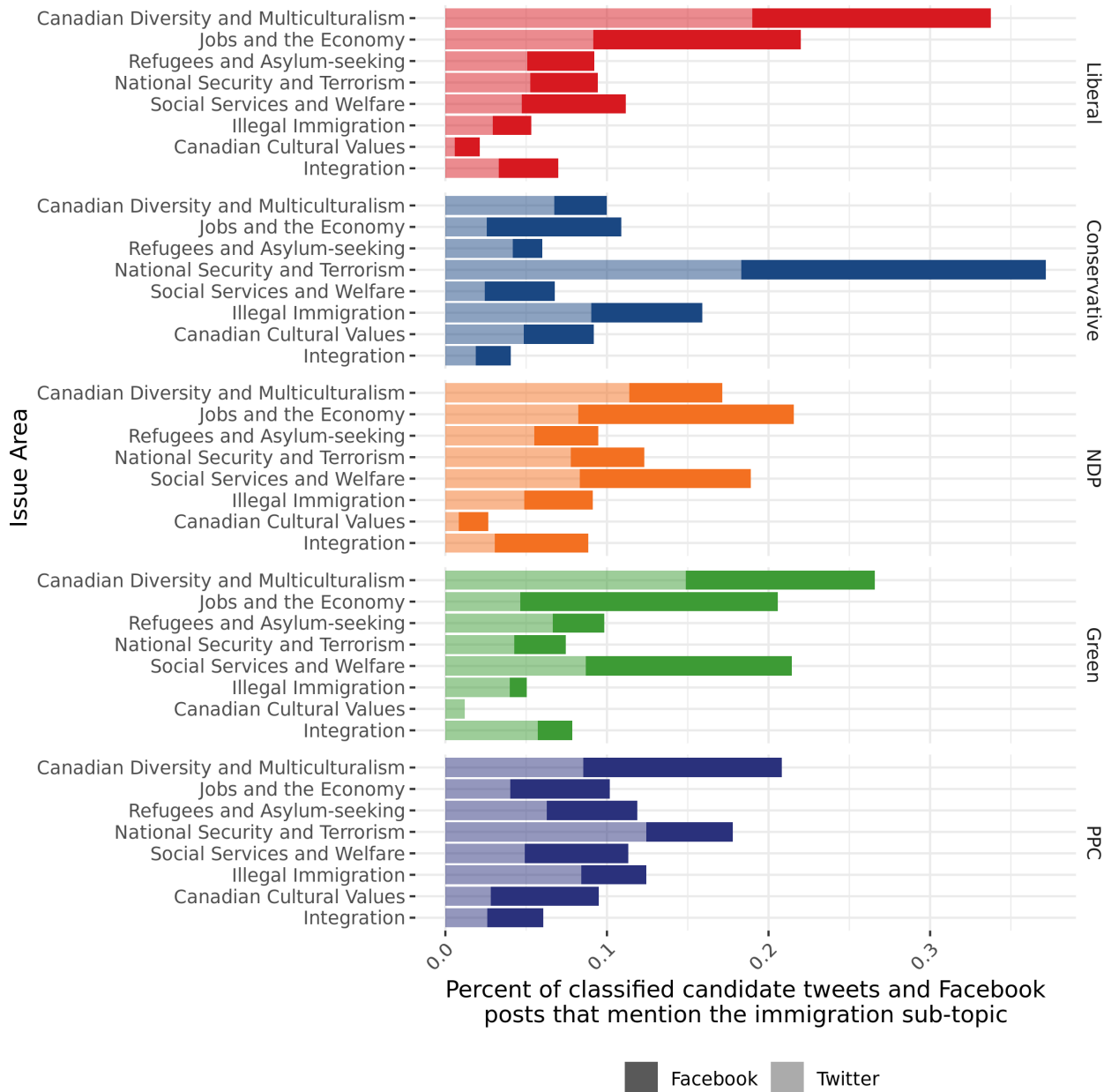


The sharpest contrast comes from Conservative partisans, who prioritize cultural values (43%), national security (43%) and jobs (42%), followed closely by illegal immigration (42%). Liberal and NDP partisans are much less concerned about national security (28 and 17%) and illegal immigration (28 and 27%).

The issue focus of partisans reflects the issue focus of party candidates and officials on social media. Figure 2 shows the relative issue emphasis for all English-language immigration-related posts on Twitter and Facebook from candidates from major parties. As with Liberal survey respondents, Liberal candidates heavily emphasize

diversity and multiculturalism, as well as jobs and the economy, above all other dimensions of immigration. Meanwhile, Conservative candidates are far more likely to emphasize national security and terrorism, cultural values, and jobs and the economy. NDP candidates generally cover a range of immigration dimensions but have a heavy focus on jobs and the economy, social services and welfare, and refugees, which they emphasize more than either of the other top parties.

FIGURE 2. Percentage of Candidate Posts on Twitter and Facebook Mentioning Various Dimensions of Immigration



Aside from a common emphasis on jobs and the economy, partisans may be talking past one another to some extent on the issue of immigration. Conservative partisans prioritize cultural values, national security and illegal immigration, while Liberal and NDP partisans care much more about diversity and integration.

WHAT DO CANADIANS KNOW ABOUT IMMIGRATION?

In [Research Memo 1](#), we asked our respondents a series of fact-based questions related to important areas of public policy. We found that more often than not, Canadians are *uninformed* about policy rather than *misinformed*. That is, they report they don't know the answer to a question rather than giving an incorrect response. We also found that respondents are more likely to be both misinformed *and* correctly informed as their exposure to traditional and social media increases.

How do they fare on immigration? In the first wave of our survey we asked respondents whether immigration levels have increased (correct), decreased or remained at the same level compared to 2015. Fifty-seven percent answered correctly, while only 14% answered incorrectly. We also asked whether they believed Canada admitted more (correct), fewer or the same number of refugees as the United States as a share of its population. Sixty-four percent of our respondents got that answer right, while only 9% got it wrong. Canadians have some understanding of immigration policy, particularly when making comparisons to other countries or over time.

But how much do Canadians know about absolute levels of immigration or refugee intake? It turns out, very little. In a multiple-choice question, we asked respondents how many immigrants the federal government was planning to admit in 2019. Fifty-six percent of respondents reported they were unsure, while only 15% got the answer right (330,000). The same is true when asking respondents how many refugees Canada admitted in 2018. Sixty-one percent of respondents reported they were unsure about the answer, while only 12% got it right (28,000). The direction of misinformation is clearly in one direction here: 24% of respondents believed refugee intake is higher than in reality, while only 3% thought it was lower.

FIGURE 3. Respondent Impressions of Immigration and Refugee Intake in Canada

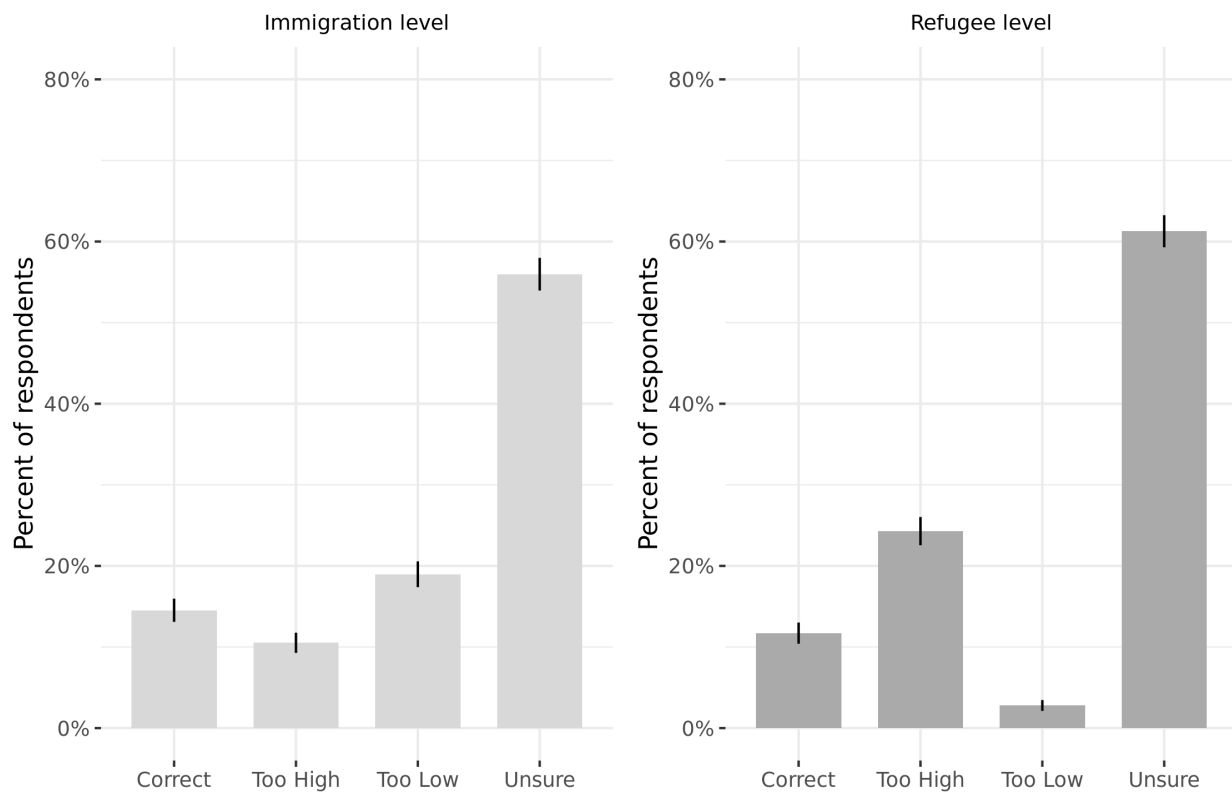


TABLE 1. Media Exposure and Information or Misinformation on Immigration

	Correct	Incorrect	Net
High Traditional News Exposure	0.40	0.81	-0.41
Low Traditional News Exposure	0.14	0.32	-0.18
Difference	0.26	0.49	-0.23
High Social Media Exposure	0.43	0.91	-0.48
Low Social Media Exposure	0.24	0.50	-0.26
Difference	0.19	0.41	-0.22

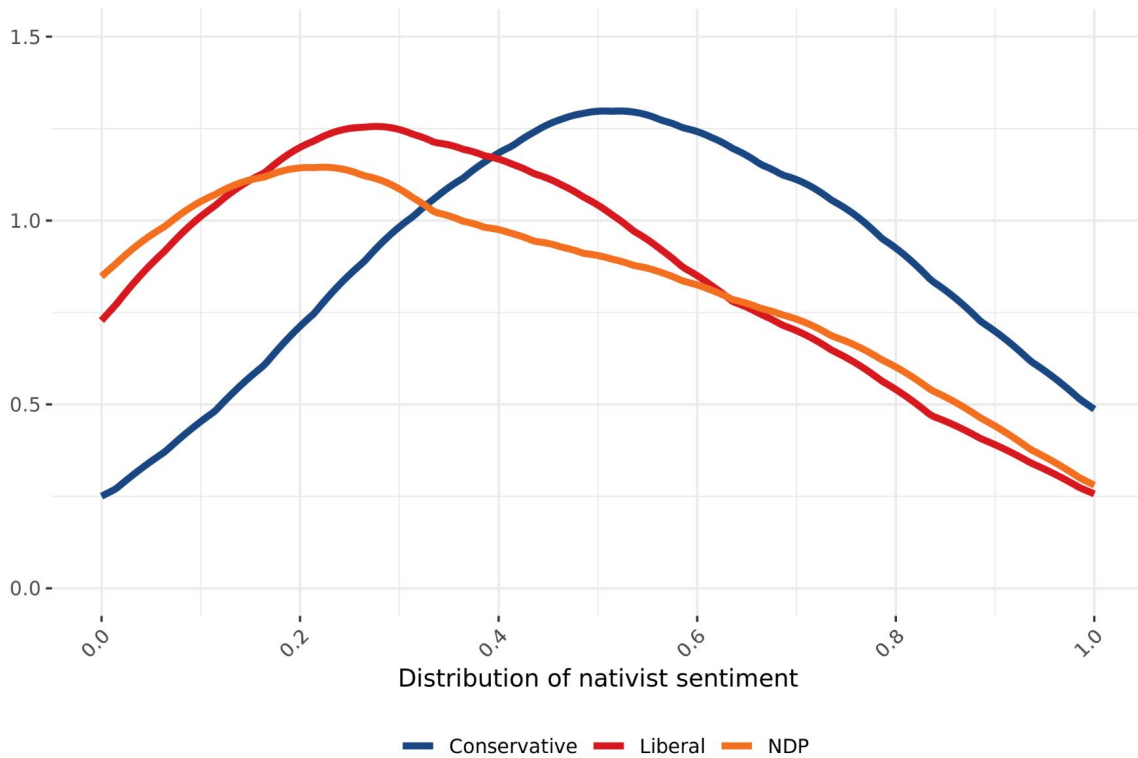
We also find striking evidence that news and social media consumption is associated with both misinformation and correct information when it comes to immigration. Respondents with high traditional news consumption got 0.40 out of 2 answers correct, compared to only 0.14 for those with low news exposure. However, these respondents also answered 0.81 questions incorrectly, compared to only 0.32 for those with low news exposure, meaning that news consumption is associated with a 0.23 net *increase* in misinformation on these immigration questions. The same pattern holds with social media exposure. Respondents with high social media exposure got 0.43 answers right on average, compared to only 0.24 for those with low exposure. However, these respondents got 0.91 answers wrong, compared to only 0.50 for those with low social media exposure, meaning this exposure led to a 0.22 net *increase* of misinformation.

In short, Canadians have low levels of knowledge of immigration and refugee levels, and misinformation on these questions is strongly associated with news and social media exposure.

FINDINGS: NATIVISM AND POPULISM IN CANADA

The rise of Donald Trump in the United States and far-right parties in Europe, and the emergence of the People's Party of Canada, have led to renewed popular discussion around nativism and populism in Canada. In this report, we aim to measure the prevalence of these sentiments in the Canadian public. We measure nativism—defined as a sentiment oriented around support for native-born citizens over immigrants—with a battery of questions that tap into respondents' perceptions of whether immigrants are costly to society.¹ We construct an index of these questions that ranges from 0-1, where 1 is having the maximum possible nativist sentiment.

FIGURE 4. Distribution of Nativist Sentiment Across Partisan Groups



¹ Respondents were asked to respond to the following six statements on a 5-point (strongly agree to strongly disagree) scale: 1) Immigrants take jobs away from real Canadians; 2) Immigrants take important social services away from real Canadians; 3) When jobs are scarce, employers should prioritize hiring people of this country over immigrants; 4) Canadians would be better off if we let in all immigrants who wanted to come here (reverse coded); 5) Canada would be stronger if we stopped immigration; 6) Immigrants take jobs from people I know.

Overall, Canadians exhibit modest levels of nativism, with an average score of 0.45. However, there is a striking partisan divide in levels of expressed nativist sentiment, as seen in Figure 4. Liberal and NDP partisans score far lower than Conservatives in their expressed nativist sentiment (0.38 and 0.38 vs. 0.55).

Our survey data can also allow us to examine other factors that correlate with nativist sentiment, such as populism—an ideology that, generally speaking, promotes the interests of “the people” in opposition to elites. We ask our respondents a variety of questions designed to tap into populist sentiment, and construct an index of these questions that ranges from 0-1, where 1 is having the maximum possible populist sentiment.² Overall, we find that populism is a common sentiment in Canadian society. On average, our respondents score 0.60 on the 0-1 scale. Only 5% of all respondents score lower than 0.33.

Much of the attention directed to populism in Canada has been focused on right-wing populism. However, populist sentiment does not break down along partisan lines the way we might expect. The kernel density plot in Figure 5 shows the distributions of populism by partisan group. Populist sentiment is most common among NDP partisans (0.65) and least common among Liberals (0.53), with Conservatives falling somewhere in between (0.61).

² Respondents were asked to respond to the following seven statements on a 5-point (strongly agree to strongly disagree) scale: 1) The Canadian economy is rigged to advantage the rich and powerful; 2) Traditional parties and politicians don't care about people like me; 3) Experts in this country don't understand the lives of people like me; 4) To fix Canada, we need a strong leader willing to break the rules; 5) Canada needs a strong leader to take the country back from the rich and powerful; 6) Politicians should be able to say what's on their minds regardless of what anyone else thinks about their views; 7) I trust the government to do the right thing. We used the resulting first dimension identified from a principal components factor analysis.

FIGURE 5. Distribution of Populist Sentiment Across Partisan Groups

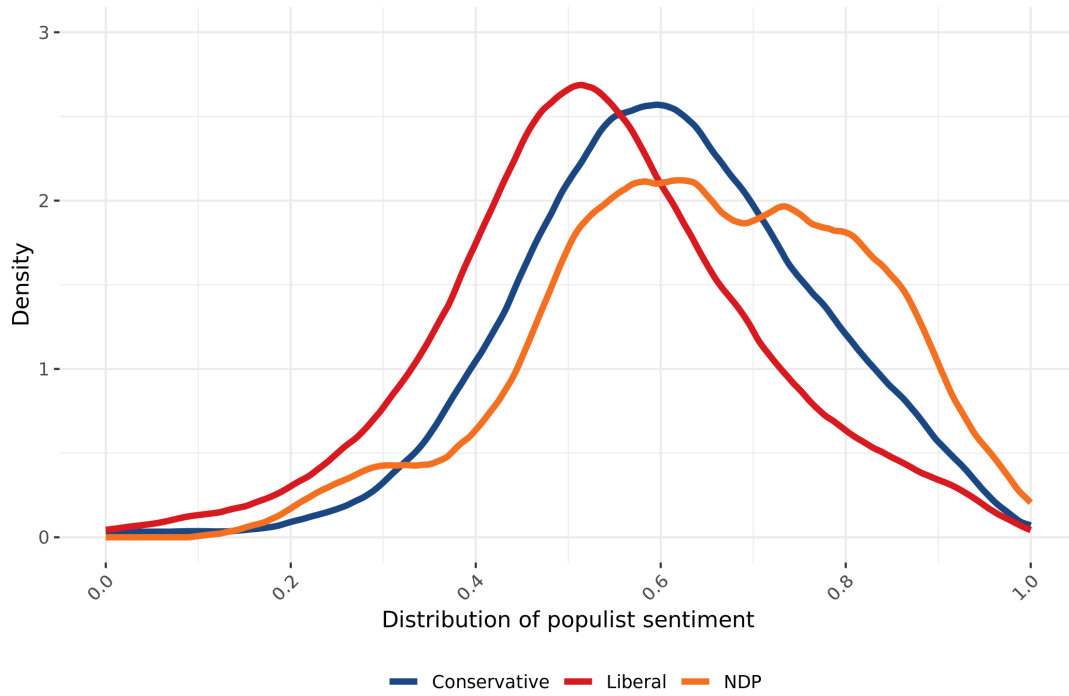
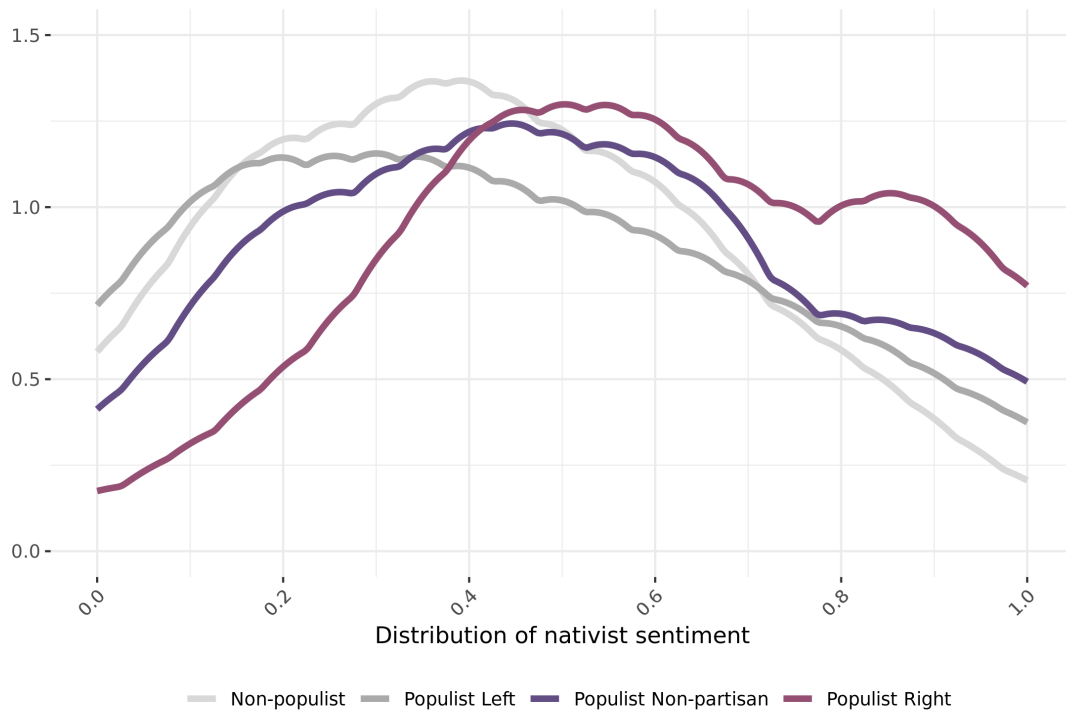


FIGURE 6. Distribution of Nativist Sentiment Across Populist Groups



This tells us that the relationship between nativism and populism is perhaps more complicated than popular discourse suggests. To be sure, there is a correlation between populism and nativism: respondents with below-median levels of populist sentiment have lower levels of nativist sentiment (0.41) than those who are more populist (0.50). However, this link is stronger among Conservative partisans. The kernel density plot in Figure 6 shows that populist left-leaning (Liberal and NDP) partisans and populist non-partisans show similar levels of nativism as non-populists, while right-leaning (Conservative) populists have starkly higher levels of nativist sentiment.

It is a mistake to reduce populism to its right-leaning variant and, as a result, presume a close connection between populism and nativism. Populist sentiment is commonly shared in Canadian society and is more strongly connected to nativism on the political right.

What else drives nativist sentiment in Canada? As Table 2 shows, there are notable differences in nativism between right- and left-partisans (0.16), and between populists and non-populists (0.09) on our 0-1 index of nativist sentiment. Information, in contrast, appears to be negatively associated with nativism. Respondents with high political knowledge have nativism scores 0.13 points lower than those with low political knowledge.³ Those with high levels of political interest have nativism scores 0.05 points lower than those with lower levels of interest, while respondents with high traditional news exposure have lower levels of nativist sentiment (0.45) than those with low exposure (0.52). The only exception is that social media exposure appears positively related to nativist sentiment, but this 0.05-point gap is modest in size.⁴

³ Respondents were asked a series of fact-based questions about politics, including the unemployment rate, the name of the Secretary General of the United Nations, and the relative ideological placement of the political parties. Respondents in the bottom third of the distribution were classified as low in political knowledge, while respondents in the top third were labelled as high in knowledge.

⁴ Respondents rated their general interest in politics on a 0-10 scale. The distinction between high and low interest was made by splitting respondents at the median of the scale. We are tracking a self-reported exposure to a number of different traditional news outlets and social media applications, which is described more fully in our first report. We classify those who have high exposure as being in the top third of the distribution and those who have low exposure as being in the bottom third.

TABLE 2. Correlates of Nativism in Canada

	Nativism
Right-partisan	0.55
Left-partisan	0.39
Difference	0.16
High populism	0.50
Low populism	0.41
Difference	0.09
High knowledge	0.39
Low knowledge	0.52
Difference	-0.13
High interest	0.43
Low interest	0.48
Difference	-0.05
High traditional news exposure	0.45
Low traditional news exposure	0.52
Difference	-0.07
High social media exposure	0.51
Low social media exposure	0.46
Difference	0.05
Economy Worse	0.55
Economy Better	0.35
Difference	0.20
Personal finances worse	0.53
Personal finances better	0.39
Difference	0.14

The most notable correlates of nativism aside from partisanship are national and personal economic evaluations. We asked respondents whether they perceived the economy and their personal finances to be getting better, getting worse or staying about the same over the past year. Respondents who perceived the economy to be getting worse had nativism scores 0.2 points higher than those who thought the economy was getting better. Similarly, those who believe their personal finances are getting worse have nativism scores 0.14 points higher than those who thought their finances were improving. Economic perceptions may play a role in fostering nativist sentiment.

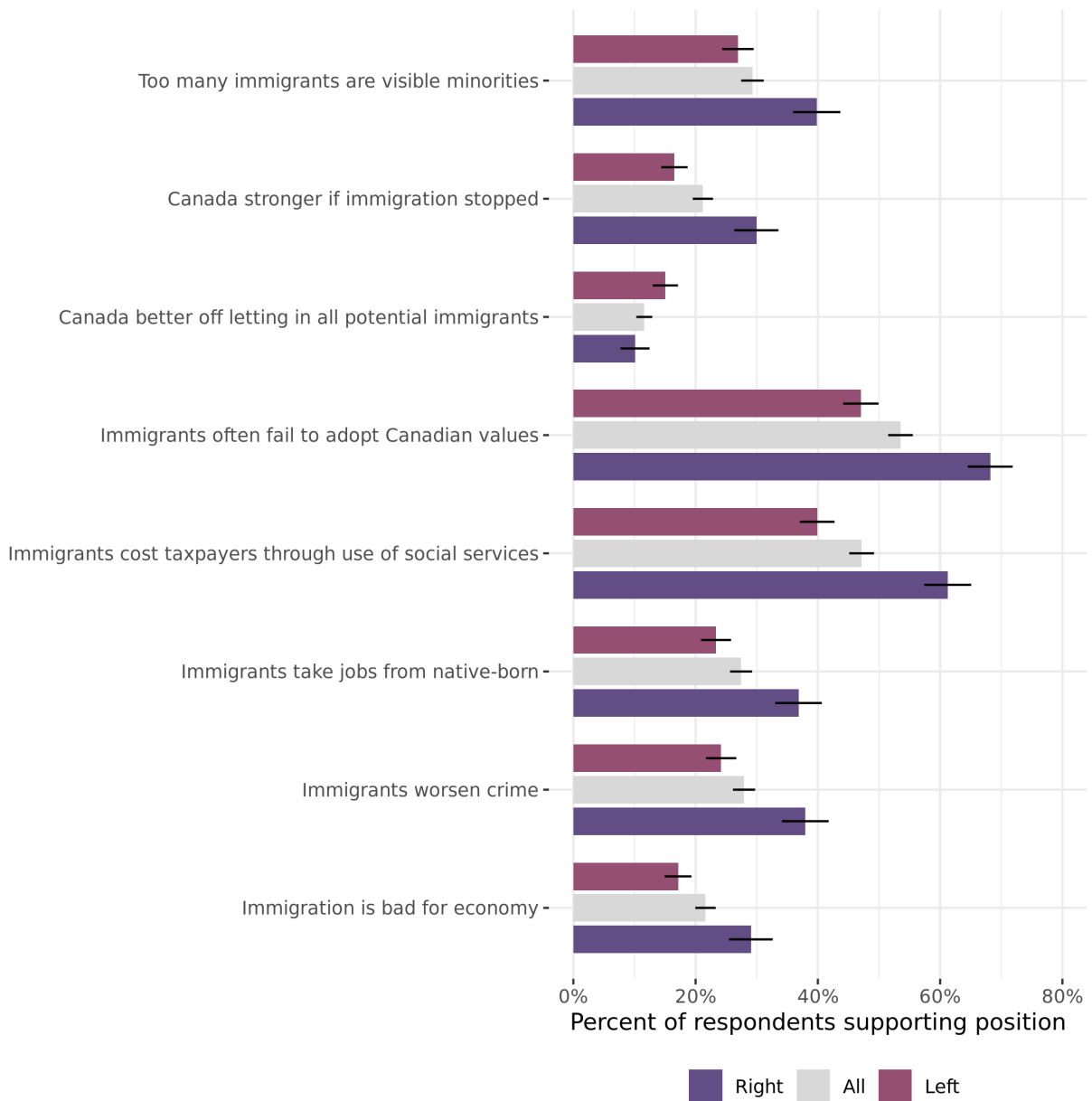
In addition to right-wing partisanship and populism, poor economic evaluations and lower levels of political knowledge are strongly associated with nativist sentiment.

Nativist sentiment may have different sources. Some citizens may be concerned about the economic impact of immigration on native-born Canadians, others about the cost to taxpayers, and yet others about the effects of immigration on Canadian culture. We asked respondents a number of questions tapping into different dimensions of nativism.

On the whole, relatively few Canadians think immigration is bad for the economy (22%) or that immigration is linked to higher crime rates (28%). Nor do most Canadians see immigrants as a threat to jobs for native-born Canadians (27%). Only a minority agree that too many immigrants are visible minorities (29%), although given the sensitive racial nature of this question, we have to interpret this finding with caution due to social desirability bias - the tendency of respondents to provide answers that are socially acceptable but not a reflection of their true sentiment. Our respondents expressed much more support for the notion that immigrants cost taxpayers through their use of social services (47%) and do not adapt to Canadian values (54%). Additionally, there appears to be relatively little appetite for open borders (12%) or a complete shutdown of immigration to Canada (21%).

Once again, there are stark partisan differences across these dimensions. Across the board, right-leaning partisans are more skeptical of immigration than left-leaning partisans, as shown in Figure 7. However, only a minority of Conservative partisans think immigrants are bad for the economy (29%), increase crime (38%) or take jobs from native-born Canadians (37%), or think too many immigrants are visible minorities (40%). Conservative partisans are more universally concerned about the cost of immigration to taxpayers (61%) and immigrants' adaptation to Canadian values (68%). It is worth noting that this latter concern is shared by a sizable minority of left-leaning partisans as well (47%).

FIGURE 7. Share of Respondents Supporting Position on Immigration



All told, Canadian attitudes towards immigration are nuanced. Nativist sentiment is largely muted, but there are potential flashpoints related to the effect of immigration on taxpayers, social services and cultural values. Fewer Canadians express concern that immigration is a threat to the economy or jobs; however, the strong link between nativism and economic perceptions suggests this is a motivating impulse of nativist sentiment.

FINDINGS: EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC INFORMATION ON IMMIGRATION

Our survey data shows a strong connection between respondents' perceptions of economic conditions and their own financial well-being, on the one hand, and nativist sentiment, on the other. This raises the question of whether providing Canadians with arguments about the economic benefits of immigration can build support for immigration. We randomly assigned to respondents the following segment of a report by the Conference Board of Canada on the economic effects of immigration, lightly edited for clarity:⁵

“Canada’s aging population and low birth rate is hindering economic growth. In the decades to come, economic growth is expected to average 1.9 per cent assuming Canada continues to gradually increase its inflow of newcomers.

However, if Canada does not welcome any immigrants over the next 20 years, Canada’s economic growth would slow to an average 1.3 per cent annually. Boosting immigration to 1 per cent of Canada’s population (about 400,000 immigrants per year) would help to keep Canada’s population, labour force, and economy growing at a modest rate. Immigration is beneficial for the long-term health of the Canadian economy.”

Half of our respondents received this passage, while the other half did not.⁶

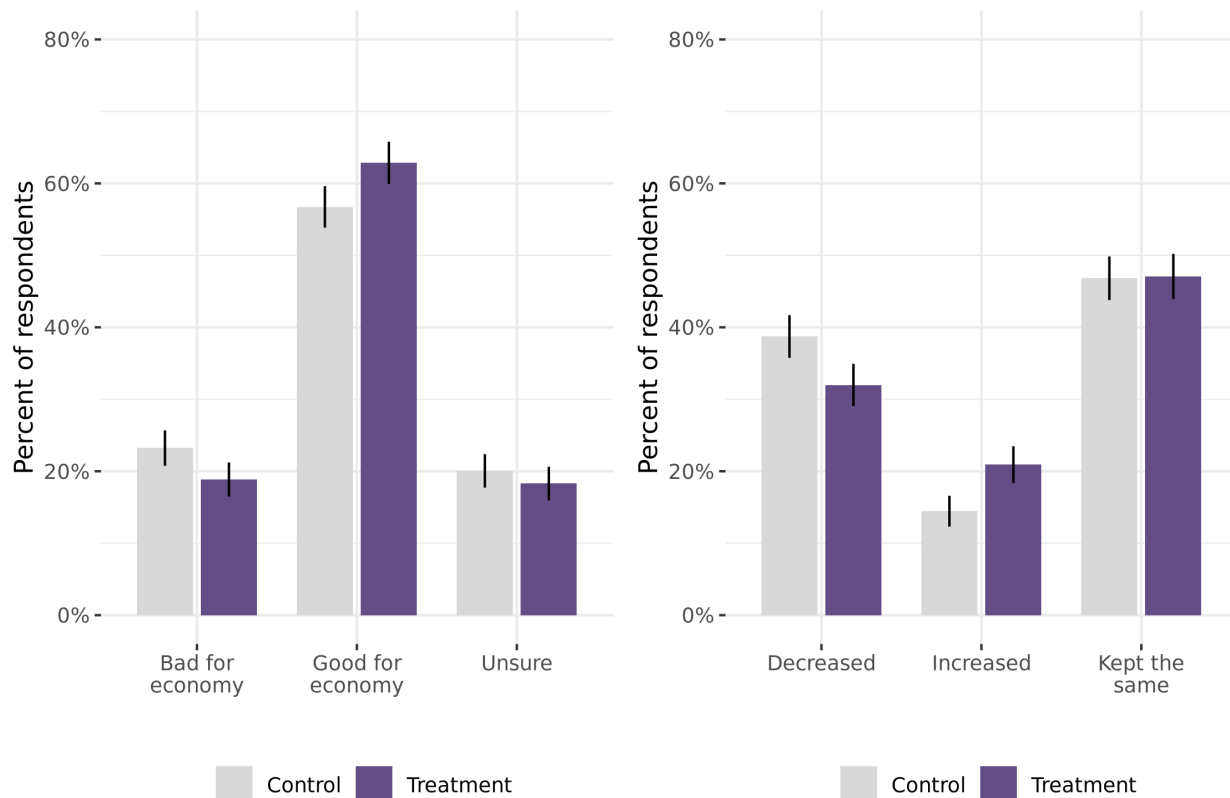
It turns out that this information mattered to our respondents. Twenty-three percent of respondents who did not receive the information thought immigration was bad for the economy, compared to only 19% of those who did receive the information. In contrast, 57% of respondents who did not receive the information thought immigration is good for the economy, compared to 63% of those who did. These differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

This information also had spillover effects for respondent preferences about immigration levels. Thirty-nine percent of respondents who did not receive the information wanted immigration levels decreased, compared to only 32% of those who received the information. In contrast, 14% of respondents without the information wanted immigration levels increased, compared to 21% of those with the information. These differences are also statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

⁵ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/newsrelease/2018/05/15/imagining-canada-s-economy-without-immigration>

⁶ We drop respondents who viewed the information for two seconds or less.

FIGURE 8. Respondent Attitudes Towards Immigration with (Treatment) and Without Economic Information (Control)



The information we provided appears to have persuaded some of our respondents about the economic benefits of immigration, and heightened their support for immigration more broadly. But how do these persuasive effects vary by partisanship? Theories of motivated reasoning suggest that partisan respondents will reject information that doesn't conform to their existing values or beliefs.⁷ In light of this, we might expect persuasive effects to be confined to left-leaning partisans.

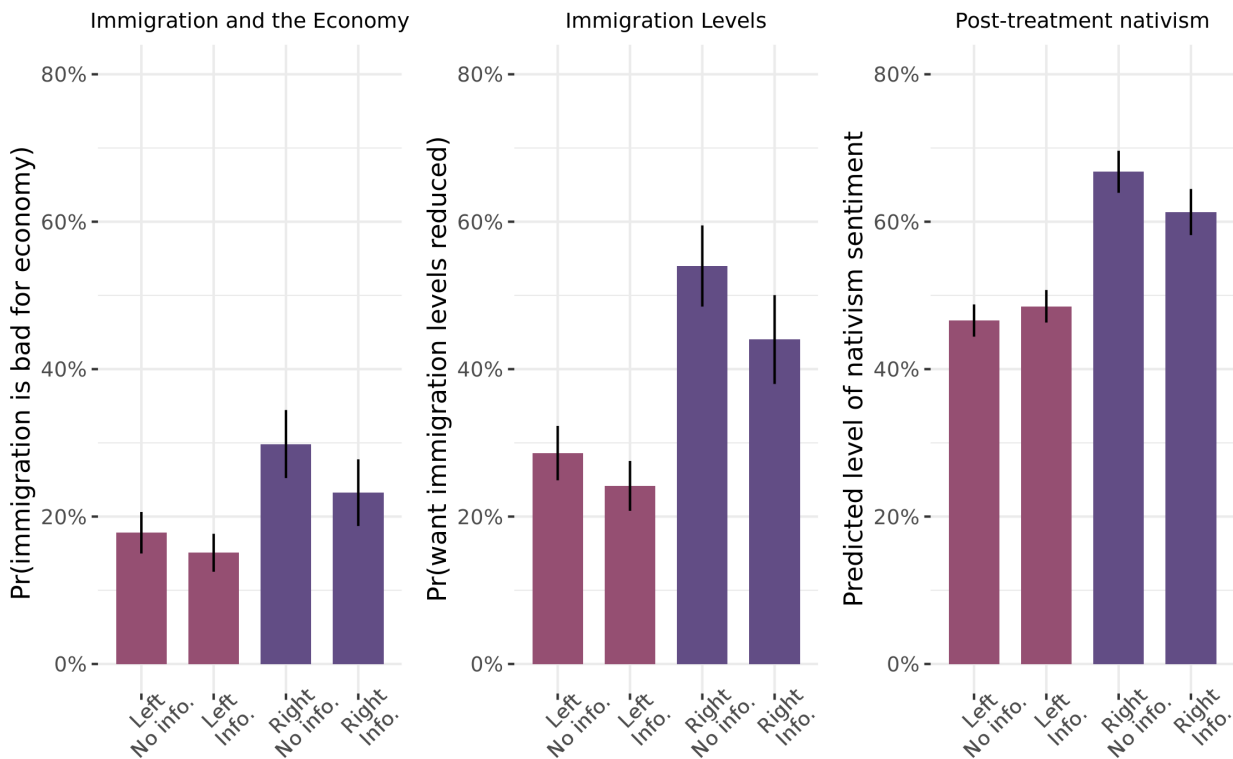
Interestingly, this is not what we found: the effects were actually strongest among right-leaning partisans. As Figure 9 shows, the estimated share of right-leaning partisans who thought immigration is bad for the economy was 7 points lower among those who received the information compared to those who did not (0.30 vs. 0.23), which is a marginally significant difference ($p=0.08$). Similarly, the estimated share of right-leaning partisans who thought immigration levels should be reduced was 10 points lower among those who received the

⁷ Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), 480-498. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.480; Kahan, D. M., Jenkins-Smith, H., & Braman, D. (2011). Cultural cognition of scientific consensus. *Journal of Risk Research*, 14(2), 147-174. doi:10.1080/13669877.2010.511246; Flynn, D. J., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2017). The nature and origins of misperceptions: Understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics. *Political Psychology*, 38(S1), 127-150. doi:10.1111/pops.12394

information (0.54 vs. 0.44), which is a significant difference ($p < 0.05$). The treatment did not have a significant influence on attitudes of left-leaning partisans.

We asked several questions to those who received the information that can allow us to construct an index of nativism (rescaled from 0-1, where 1 is the most nativist) to see if our intervention could have spillover effects on nativism more broadly. Importantly, these particular questions *do not* speak to the economic effects of immigration. Again, our treatment appeared to have an influence on right-leaning partisans. Among these respondents, nativism dropped 6 points from respondents without the information to those with the information (0.67 vs. 0.61), which is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

FIGURE 9. Estimated Immigration Attitudes for Left- and Right-Leaning Respondents With and Without Economic Information



In summary, providing respondents with information about the economic benefits of immigration made respondents more aware of those benefits, more supportive of higher levels of immigration, and less nativist, particularly among Conservative partisans. This suggests that nativism might not be as much of an immutable sentiment as commonly believed.

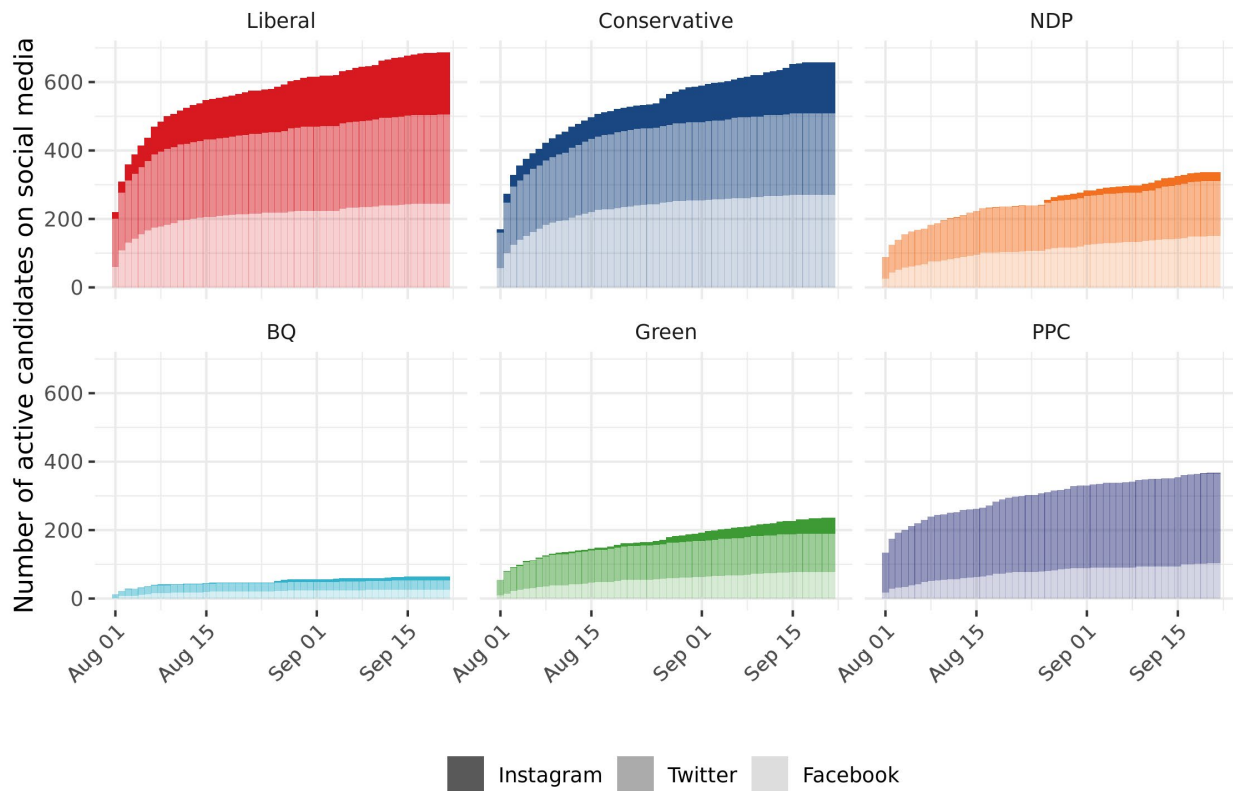
CASE STUDY

CANDIDATES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Contemporary elections are fought on numerous battlegrounds, with social media emerging as an effective way for candidates and parties to share their messaging to persuade and mobilize voters. For this election, we have been tracking candidates' activities across a range of social media platforms. The data shared in this report is based on candidates' use of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. (The data research team performed an automated search for YouTube channels using party and candidate names but found mostly inactive accounts, so analysis of that platform is not included here.) Candidate social media accounts were compiled from party-provided lists as well as computer-assisted name searches across the three platforms, with the list complete as of Sept. 21. The data includes all posts and engagement across the three platforms from Aug.1 to Sept. 22, and thus reflects the activity in the run-up and first two weeks of the election period.

Figure 10 shows the number of candidates using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram since Aug. 1. Generally, most candidates are using Twitter and Facebook, although Instagram use is increasingly popular among the Liberal and Conservative candidates. We see that the Liberals and the Conservatives are neck-and-neck for social media accounts, with more than 600 each. The NDP is still building its social media activities, with many late nominations and candidates who may have not yet begun campaigning on social media. The strong PPC presence on Twitter is noteworthy as well.

FIGURE 10. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter Use by Candidates of Six Main Parties



Presence on these sites alone does not indicate popularity or relevance, however. Here we highlight three additional measures: frequency of posts (normalized by candidate), reach of content shared on social media, and engagement with content posted in these media. Figure 11 below shows the frequency of posts by candidates of the six major parties across all three platforms in the pre- and post-writ periods. While Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are all being used, it appears that Twitter is preferred for regular updates by candidates. In fact, while many candidates have Instagram accounts, there is relatively little activity there, with no party having more than 0.5 posts per candidate per day, on average. While there are more Liberals and Conservatives on social media, NDP candidates are the most active of the three main parties. Again, the PPC is an outlier in that its social media activity is driven almost entirely by Twitter use.

After the writ was dropped on Sept. 11 there was a clear uptick of social media activity as all parties moved, with an overall increase of about 20% in candidate activity. The NDP has seen the largest net increase.

FIGURE 11. Number of Daily Posts per Candidate on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter from Aug. 1 to Sept. 19

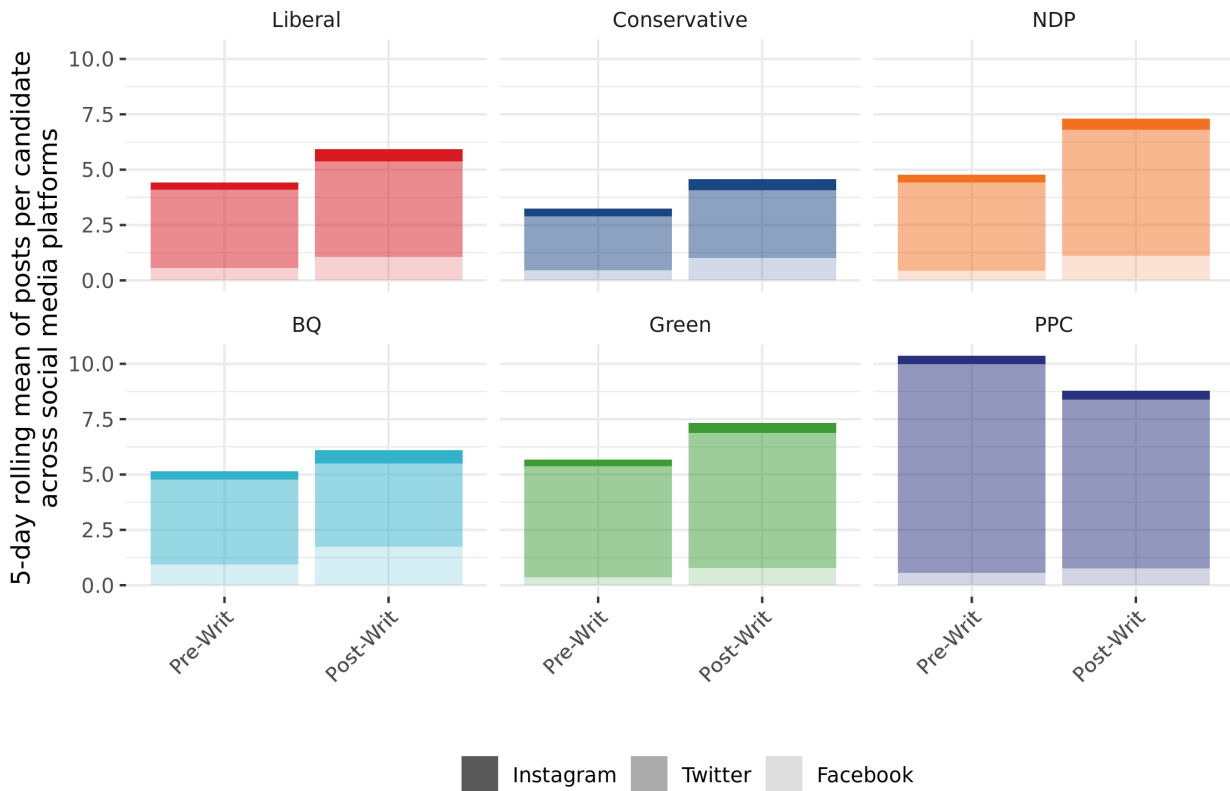
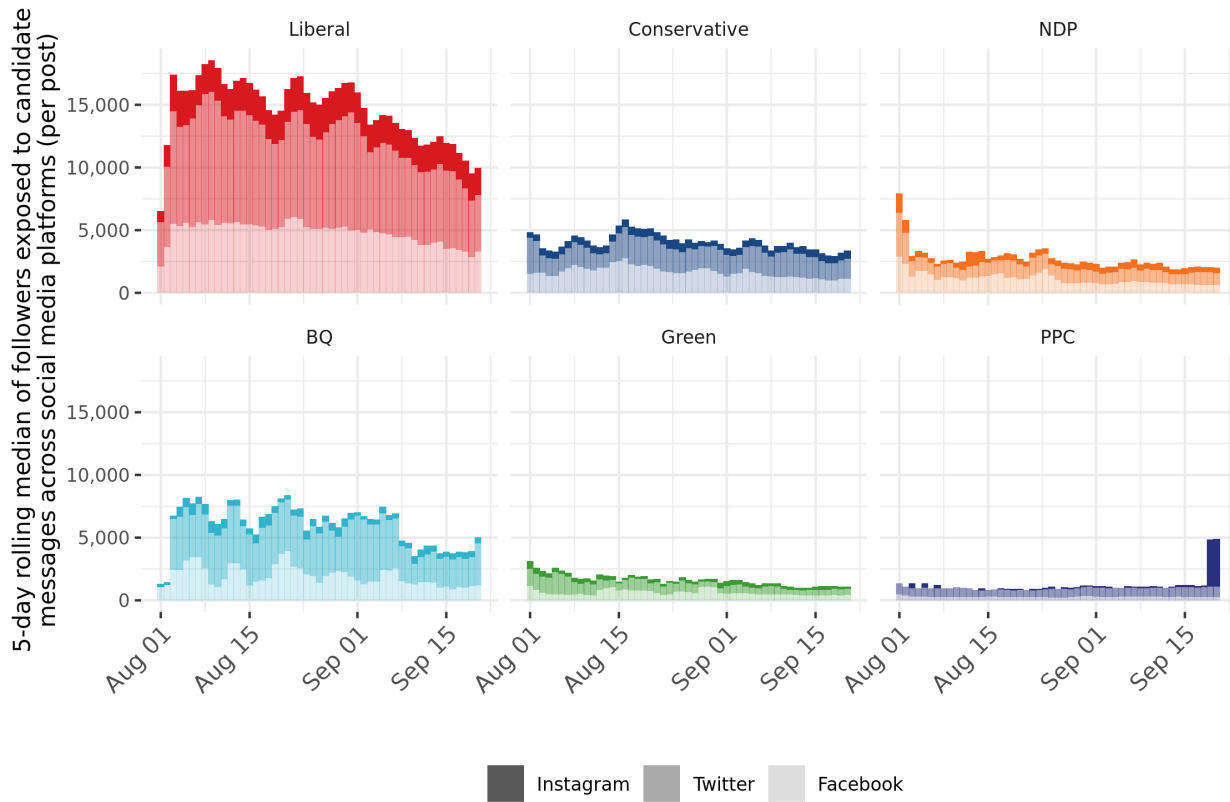


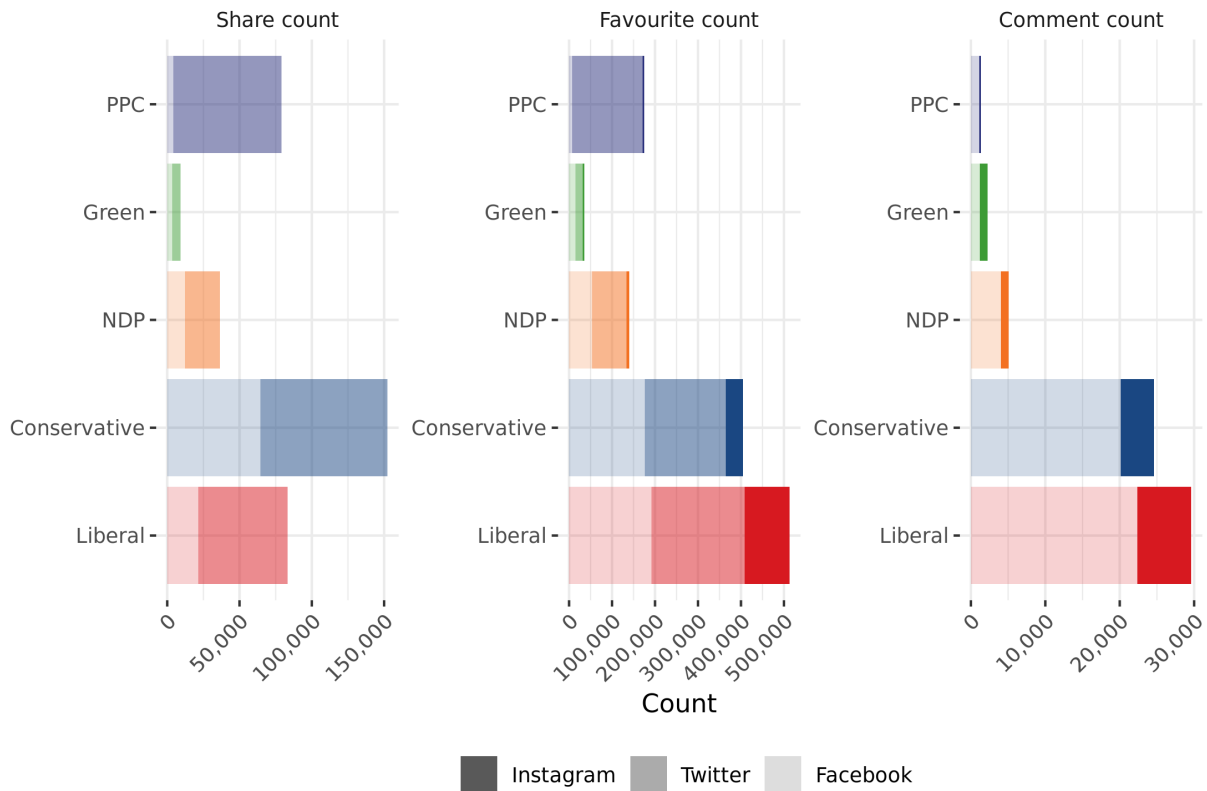
Figure 12 shows a measure of candidates' reach on these social platforms: the median number of followers reached per post per party per day. Here the Liberals have a distinct advantage, with many prominent candidates having large followings across all three platforms. Due to the posting frequency and high number of followers, Twitter is the platform where candidates receive the most exposure, with fewer followers overall on Instagram and Facebook. The slight decrease over time is a consequence of more new candidates joining social media in the run-up to the election. These new candidates have fewer followers and thus the median number of followers per post decreases. In terms of overall exposure, the Liberals are far ahead of every other party, with three to four times more followers when party leaders are excluded and 10 to 12 times more followers when leaders are included.

FIGURE 12. Median Follower Count by Post for Candidates Across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter from Aug. 1 to Sept. 19



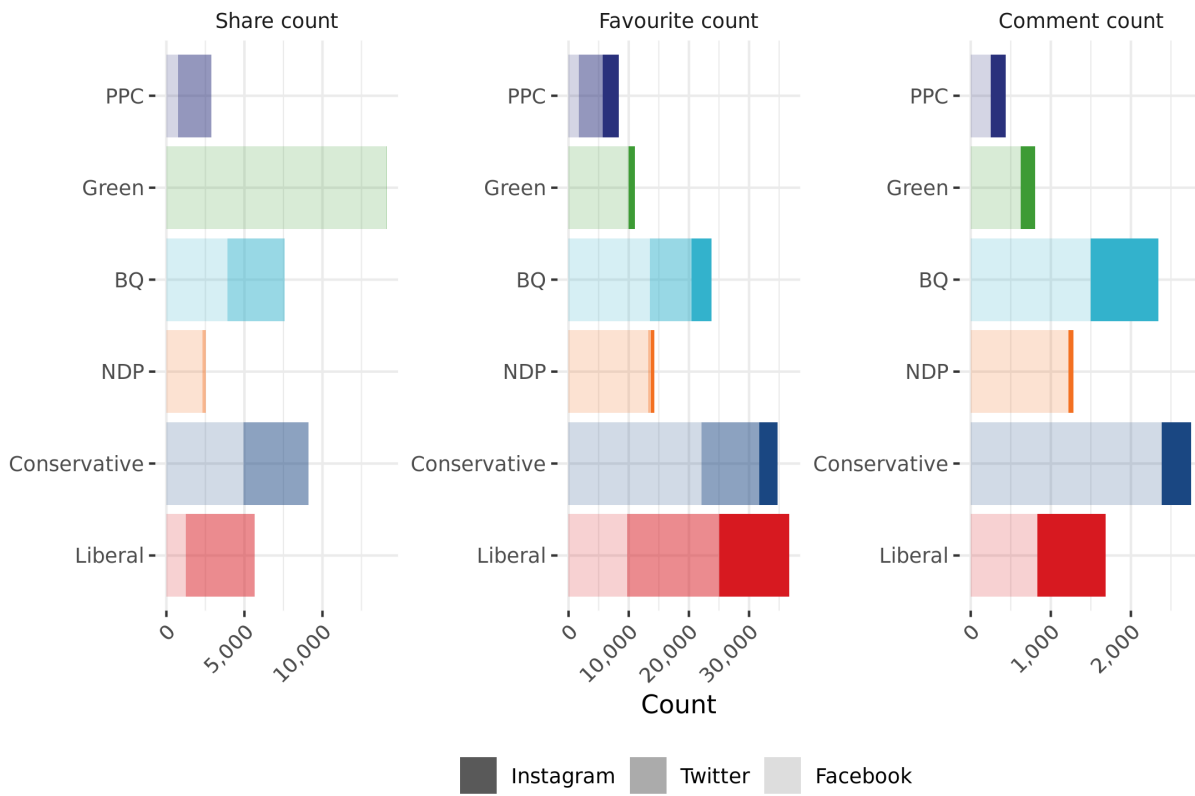
While the Liberals lead on number of active candidates and the number of followers reached, liking, sharing or commenting on a post or tweet indicates more active engagement with an account's messaging than simply following it. While Twitter may be an effective medium for sharing partisan content, Facebook and Instagram elicit similar levels of positive reinforcement through likes and comments, as shown in Figure 13. Looking at the number of likes across the three platforms shows a mixed story. While Conservative candidates' content is shared on Facebook and Twitter, Liberal content tends to receive more likes on those platforms, and the party especially differentiates itself on Instagram. Liberal candidate posts elicit the most comments, with the Conservatives close behind. The other three national parties receive significantly less engagement, although the PPC has very strong engagement on Twitter.

FIGURE 13. Total Number of Shares, Favourites and Comments on Posts by Candidates Outside Quebec Across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter from Sept. 11



While five parties are battling in most of Canada, Quebec has a sixth contender: the Bloc Québécois. Figure 14 shows the same numbers as above but limited to Quebec-based candidates. Here the Bloc Québécois has a significant social media presence that surpasses the Liberals in share count and comments. Meanwhile, the Greens and the NDP each have a slightly larger share than in the rest of Canada. The high share count of the Green party is due to one viral post by Green candidate Stéphanie Dufresne. A single viral post can garner a lot of exposure for a candidate or a party but does not necessarily translate into electoral success. What is certain is that candidates and parties are spending a lot of time and energy cultivating their social media presence and may be betting on turning clicks and comments into votes.

FIGURE 14. Total Number of Shares, Favourites and Comments on Posts by Quebec Candidates Across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter from Sept. 11



APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

Our survey data team conducted an online panel survey of 1,559 Canadian citizens 18 years and older using the sample provider Qualtrics. The sample was gathered from Sept. 11-16. Data was weighted within each region of Canada by gender and age based on data from the 2016 Canadian census. We used an iterative proportional fitting algorithm for our weighting procedure with a minimum weight of 0.51 (N=7) and a maximum weight of 1.35 (N=34).

Survey respondents were asked questions related to basic demographics, as well as their partisan, ideological and issue preferences. They were also asked to identify their recent exposure to the news media. The median time it took respondents to complete the survey was 23 minutes. The survey instrument is available upon request. We present 90% confidence intervals for each of our figures. Our analyses of the influence of traditional news and social media exposure on correct responses can generalize to the full population +/- 0.03-0.06 at 90% confidence. Our analyses of the influence of traditional news and social media exposure on incorrect responses can generalize to the full population +/- 0.04-0.10 at 90% confidence. Our analyses on the correlates of nativism can be generalized to the full population +/- 0.01-0.03 at 90% confidence.

Facebook and Instagram data is sourced from CrowdTangle, a social media analytics tool owned by Facebook. CrowdTangle tracks public posts on Facebook, Instagram and Reddit, made by public accounts or groups. The tool does not track every public account and does not track private profiles or groups, so this data is not representative of performance across the entire platform. The numbers shown here reflect public interactions (likes, reactions, comments, shares, upvotes and three-second views), but do not include reach or referral traffic. It does not include paid ads unless those ads began as organic, non-paid posts that were subsequently "boosted" using Facebook's advertising tools. Because the system doesn't distinguish this type of paid content, note that some high-performing content may have had paid distribution. CrowdTangle also does not track posts made visible only to specific groups of followers.

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