



Accounting for the Age Gap in Turnout

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We explore a number of explanations for the sharp difference in voter turnout between the post-generation X cohort and older citizens, using data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study. The gap in turnout between these groups is more than 27 percentage points. Controlling for socio-demographic factors reduces the age gap by almost a third. If we control for respondents' perception of the closeness of the race in their riding, whether they were contacted during the campaign and whether they identify with a political party, the age gap decreases by a further three points — a reduction of 43% in the original gap. Contrary to conventional wisdom, we find that cynicism and negative attitudes toward politics and politicians are poor explanations for the discrepancy in turnout between young and old. Finally, if we include political information and interest in the model, there is no statistically significant difference in turnout between young and old citizens.

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Introduction

In this article, we attempt to account for the gap in voter turnout in Canada between those under 30 years of age and those 30 years and older.¹ Voter turnout in Canada has been in steady decline since the late 1980s, having averaged around 75% after the Second World War up until the 1988 federal election. In the 2000 federal election, turnout fell to an historic low with only 61.2% of the electorate voting. However, it is incorrect to assume that turnout has dropped uniformly among all Canadians. Turnout decline has largely been confined to those people born after 1970 — that is, people who were younger than 30 years old at the time of the 2000 election. Blais *et al.* (2002, 46–48) show that there are no clear trends in rates of non-voting for generations born



prior to 1970. There are some minor fluctuations between the 1993 and 1997 elections but these stabilize by 2000. The post-generation X cohort (those born after 1970) stands out, however. Non-voting among this group increased by 14 points between 1993 and 2000 (Blais *et al.*, 2002, 46). Past work has focused on teasing apart the effects of period, life cycle and generation in explaining why turnout has eroded (Blais *et al.*, 2002, 2004). That is, is it because of something particular about a certain election — a period effect — or is it caused by shifts within a given cohort as they grow older — a life-cycle effect — or is it that cohorts differ even when compared at the same time in their life cycle — a generational effect? While the answer appears to be a combination, the strongest evidence is for that of a generational effect. In the 2000 federal election, turnout among Canadians born in 1970 was or earlier 27.4 percentage points higher than for those in the electorate who had yet to turn 30. What accounts for this sharp difference? We address this question by focusing on a number of different types of factors that have been shown to be related to turnout in general, and which we therefore hypothesize will be able to account for the turnout gap, albeit to varying degrees. We look at the impact of socio-demographic factors; political mobilization, party identification and political competition; political cynicism; and political interest and information in our effort to account for the age gap.

We use data from the 2000 Canadian Election Study (CES). The dependent variable in our study is self-reported vote from the post-election survey. It is well known that surveys tend to overestimate turnout. The CES is no exception. The official turnout in the 2000 election was roughly 61%; however, more than 83% of respondents to the 2000 CES reported having voted. There are several reasons for this overestimation of voting. Being interested in politics (and thus more likely to vote) also makes it more likely that one responds to surveys. Panel studies such as the CES, where individuals are interviewed before the election and then re-interviewed after the election, also contribute to overestimation of turnout because the very act of participating in a survey about elections makes one more likely to vote (Granberg and Holmberg, 1992; Blais and Young, 1999). Misreporting of voting due to social desirability is also a problem, however, there is evidence that this misreporting is not correlated with specific traits of individuals and thus does not alter the findings appreciably (Brady *et al.*, 1995). We have weighted our data to reflect the official turnout for the 2000 federal election, in order to avoid some of the problems associated with the overestimation of turnout.²

The Socio-demographic Determinants of Turnout

We begin our analysis by examining the effects of socio-demographic variables on turnout. What is the effect of socio-demographics — that is, characteristics



of individuals such as their level of education, income, gender and marital status — on their propensity to vote? And more importantly for our purposes in this article, what is the effect of these individual characteristics on the age gap in turnout — how much of the difference between young and old Canadians in the probability of voting is accounted for by socio-demographics? Table 1 presents the results of a socio-demographic model of turnout.³ Model 1 is simply a bivariate model where we regress *Age* on self-reported turnout in order to get an estimate of the difference in turnout between young and old citizens. The dependent variable — self-reported turnout — is a dummy variable that takes the value 0 (did not vote) or 1 (voted). *Age* is also a dummy variable, coded 0 if respondents are younger than 30 years and taking a value of 1 if respondents are 30 years of age or older. Converting the logit coefficient of this model to probabilities, we find that for those under 30 the probability of voting is 0.437 while people over the age of 30

Table 1 The socio-demographic determinants of turnout^a

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Age	1.153*** (0.099)	2.520*** (0.371)
Income		1.773*** (0.296)
Education		2.473*** (0.486)
New immigrant		0.362* (0.165)
Religiosity		0.626*** (0.144)
Married		0.320** (0.107)
Male		-0.095 (0.095)
<i>Age × Income</i>		-0.756* (0.352)
<i>Age × Education</i>		-2.151*** (0.550)
Constant	-0.252*** (0.085)	-2.290*** (0.359)
<i>N</i>	2411	2411
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.04	0.10
Log likelihood	-1497.0298	-1409.233

^a*Source:* CES (2000). The dependent variable is self-reported turnout in the 2000 Federal Election (1 = voted, 0 = did not vote). Estimates are unstandardized logit coefficients, standard errors in parentheses; ***significant at 0.1%; **significant at 1%; *significant at 5%.



have a probability of turning out of 0.711 — a gap of 27.4 percentage points. The average probability of turning out for the entire sample is 0.659.

In Model 2 we add a number of socio-demographic factors that are known to have an impact on turnout. From previous research we know that, aside from age, education and income are the next most important factors affecting the propensity of individuals to vote — a relationship that holds both in Canada as well as across a large range of established democracies (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Franklin, 1996; Blais, 2000; Blais *et al.*, 2004). Our findings confirm this. Both income and education have positive effects on turnout, controlling for other factors. That is, more educated citizens and higher earners are more likely to vote than those with less formal education and lower income. The effect of income on voting may be explained by the fact that the more time and energy is spent looking after one's basic needs, the less is left over for secondary pursuits such as voting (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980, 20, 26). Education has an even stronger positive impact on the likelihood of voting. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980, 18) argue that the relationship between education and turnout is such that education creates moral pressure to vote on the one hand, and, more importantly, imparts basic knowledge and skills that make voting more likely. This latter theme of skills and resources is echoed by Verba *et al.* (1995, 433–37) who argue that education fosters political participation by increasing individuals' skills, as well as by fostering "psychological and cognitive engagement with politics," making it more likely that one is recruited into political activity and increasing one's income.

Being a recent immigrant has a positive effect on voting. Canadians who immigrated to Canada since 1990 (more precisely, within 10 years of the 2000 election) have a higher likelihood of turning out than immigrants who have lived in the country for over 10 years and people born in Canada. Religion also has an effect on the likelihood of voting. The more important religion is in one's life, the more likely one is to vote. The finding that religiosity increases political participation is in line with previous research, both in the Canadian context (Blais *et al.*, 2001) as well as in other democracies (Oppenhuis, 1995; Verba *et al.*, 1995; Blais, 2000). Religiosity may help to develop a sense of duty to vote and thus increase the likelihood of turning out at election time. Being married also has a significant and positive impact on voting, perhaps again caused by norms or duty — if nothing else, being married or living with a partner makes it more likely that someone will notice if one does not vote. Marriage may also be a proxy for stability and connection to the community. With a greater stake in the community, people are more inclined to engage in community events such as voting. We find no statistically significant relationship between gender and turnout.

Aside from these main socio-demographic effects, we also include a number of interactions in order to test whether the impact of socio-demographic



variables is different for young and old people.⁴ As the results in Table 1 show, education has a larger effect on young citizens' likelihood of voting than it does for older people. The coefficient for the *Age* × *Income* interaction also has a negative sign indicating that like education, income has a bigger impact on the probability of voting among the young than it does for the old. In other words, the effect of education and income on one's propensity to turnout is diminished with age.

While these results present some interesting findings, such as the different impact of education and income on the turnout of young and old people, our main concern in this article is to explain the large gap in turnout between these two groups. As mentioned above, the bivariate model gives us a turnout gap of 27.4 points — the difference in the average probability of turning out to vote among those 30 and over and those under 30 years old. The question now is, given that socio-demographics have such a strong impact on individuals' turnout, can they explain the gap between young and old? In order to answer this question we compute the conditional probabilities for the *Age* variable again, this time controlling for the other variables in the model. In order to isolate the conditional effect of the *Age* variable, we first set the variable at its minimum value (0, i.e. younger than 30), while letting the values of all the other variables fluctuate. Second, we compute the probability of voting for each case that contains information on all the variables in the model with the help of the 'predict' command in *Stata* (2004). Third, we compute the average probability for the entire sample. We then repeat these three steps while setting *Age* at its maximum value (1, i.e. 30 years and older).

The probability of turning out for young people is 0.502 after controlling for socio-demographic factors. For those 30 years of age and older, the probability is 0.690, taking into account the other variables in the model. Thus, controlling for socio-demographics increases the probability of voting for the young by some 6.5 points from 0.437 while slightly decreasing it for the old by 2.1 points. The combined effect of socio-demographic factors is to shrink the gap in turnout between the two groups by 8.6 points to 18.8 percentage points — a decrease of over 31%. Close to a third of the gap in voting between the post-Generation X cohort and Canadians born in 1970 or earlier is accounted for by socio-demographics. Thus, it is partly because the young share some traits that do not favor turnout, such as low income, low religiosity and low marriage rates, that they tend to vote less than their elders.

Connection with Politics, Attitudes and Turnout

The gap between the turnout levels of the youngest generation and those of the rest of the electorate is reduced to some extent by taking into account



socio-demographic factors. However, most of the gap still remains. If socio-economic status and other demographic characteristics do not fully account for the age gap, we must look to alternative explanations. Therefore, we now turn to examining whether — and to what extent — people's connection with, and attitudes toward, politics and the political system can account for the remaining two-thirds of the gap in turnout. We examine the impact on the age gap of three groups of factors.

The first includes measures of mobilization and how connected people are to the political system — party identification and whether respondents were contacted by a political party during the campaign — as well as a measure of the perceived closeness of the race in the respondent's constituency. Having a connection with a particular political party and identifying oneself as a Liberal, NDP, Tory, Alliance or Bloc supporter ought to make people more likely to vote. Party ID may also have an impact on the age gap given that roughly 50% of the electorate younger than 30 identify as partisans compared to 59% of those 30 years of age and older. Mobilization is another important factor in turnout. As Verba *et al.* (1995, 15) put it, one reason that people might not participate in politics is that they were never asked. Gerber and Green (2000) also find that being contacted during an election campaign has a strong positive effect on turnout. Finally, political competition might boost turnout. In elections where the result is a foregone conclusion, people may well decide that staying home will have no effect on the outcome while a very close race might induce participation. Franklin *et al.* (2004) argue that uncompetitive elections affect younger cohorts more since they are less set in their ways and can abandon voting more easily than can older people for whom voting has become more habitual.

Second, we want to examine the impact of cynicism on the age gap in turnout. It is an oft-stated concern that the electorate is becoming turned off of politics and that younger people in particular, are more cynical and thus more likely to abstain from voting. We test both a general cynicism index as well as a looking at the effect of having negative views of all political parties. This is a measure of cynicism but can also be thought of as a measure of alienation.

The third group of factors that we analyze is political information and political interest. Turnout has been shown to be strongly related to both of these variables. As Blais *et al.* put it:

On the one hand, interest and information are both important indicators of motivation to vote. ... On the other hand, the act of voting requires some cognitive resources, and the fact that a person has been able to acquire some politically relevant information is an indicator that he or she possesses those



resources. ... [Furthermore, S]ome minimal level of information is required in order to choose not just to vote but who to vote for. So where cognitive engagement helps to motivate the act of voting, cognitive resources facilitate it. (Blais *et al.* 2002, 61)

Since we feel these three groups of factors are distinct from each other, we assess their impact on the age gap by adding them to successive models.

Party identification, political competition and mobilization

We now estimate a model in which we add a measure of party identification, one of how close respondents judge the race in their constituency to be and whether or not they were contacted by a political party during the campaign. The results are presented in Table 2 under Model 3. The addition of these variables does not seem to have an effect on the socio-demographic factors, the impact of which remains more or less unchanged from the previous, simpler model. Party identification has a positive effect on people's likelihood of voting, net the effect of all other variables. If one identifies with a particular political party, one is more likely to vote. The closeness of the race — or more accurately, electors' perception of the closeness of the race in their constituency — appears to have no influence on the probability of turning out. This non-result is interesting in that it casts some doubt on the argument that people did not turnout in the 2000 election because the result was a fore-gone conclusion. In line with a growing body of literature on the importance of mobilization for political participation, we find that being contacted by a political party during the election campaign had a highly significant and positive effect on the probability of voting, even after controlling for a host of socio-demographic and other factors (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1994; Gerber and Green, 2000).

How much of the age gap is explained by the addition of these variables? Combined with socio-demographics, party identification, perceptions of party competitiveness and mobilization reduce the turnout gap between post-generation X Canadians and their older counterparts by a further 3.2 percentage points, a reduction of 17%, over socio-demographics alone, leaving a gap of 15.6 points. Compared to the original 27.4 point gap, Model 3 cuts the difference in turnout by 43%. The probability of voting for a person born after 1970 is 0.535 after controlling for the other variables in Model 3. For those people 30 or older at the time of the 2000 election, the probability of voting is 0.691, net other variables. Thus, connection to politics as measured by party ID and mobilization does quite well in explaining the age gap. However, after controlling for these factors, along with socio-demographics, more than half of the original gap in turnout between young and old still remains.



Table 2 The political and attitudinal determinants of turnout^a

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
Age	2.327*** (0.375)	1.794*** (0.524)	0.923 (0.548)
Income	1.705*** (0.304)	1.563*** (0.308)	1.464*** (0.323)
Education	2.183*** (0.495)	1.835*** (0.504)	0.571 (0.528)
New immigrant	0.353* (0.168)	0.446** (0.173)	0.392* (0.178)
Religiosity	0.623*** (0.149)	0.596*** (0.153)	0.646*** (0.159)
Married	0.320** (0.110)	0.335** (0.111)	0.326** (0.116)
Male	-0.072 (0.098)	-0.115 (0.100)	-0.379** (0.107)
<i>Age × Income</i>	-0.820* (0.362)	-0.726* (0.366)	-0.793* (0.382)
<i>Age × Education</i>	-1.989** (0.560)	-1.848** (0.571)	-1.243* (0.591)
Party identification	0.604*** (0.094)	0.325** (0.101)	0.297** (0.106)
No race	0.059 (0.154)	0.067 (0.157)	-0.315 (0.164)
Contacted during campaign	0.693*** (0.099)	0.689*** (0.100)	0.637*** (0.105)
Negative party sentiment		-1.008*** (0.134)	-0.987*** (0.140)
Political cynicism		-1.035 (0.551)	-1.026 (0.582)
<i>Age × Cynicism</i>		0.948 (0.616)	1.303* (0.645)
Political information			2.051*** (0.205)
Political interest			0.945*** (0.196)
Constant	-3.249*** (0.366)	-2.126*** (0.487)	-2.796*** (0.515)
<i>N</i>	2411	2411	2411
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.13	0.15	0.20
Log likelihood	-1361.0852	-1324.3322	-1247.5449

^aSource: CES (2000). The dependent variable is self-reported turnout in the 2000 Federal Election (1 = voted, 0 = did not vote). Estimates are unstandardized logit coefficients, standard errors in parentheses; ***significant at 0.1%; **significant at 1%; *significant at 5%.



Cynicism, age and turnout

As we mentioned above, popular accounts of the decline in turnout frequently link it with a loss of confidence in politicians and parties and widespread political cynicism. The conventional wisdom when it comes to cynicism and turnout is that the younger generations are particularly cynical about politics and therefore less likely to vote. If this is the case we should expect there to be a strong negative effect of cynicism on voting in general, a stronger effect on the young (that is, the *Age* × *Cynicism* interaction ought to be significant with a negative sign) and the addition of cynicism to our model should have the effect of reducing the gap in turnout between our two groups.

In order to test this argument, we created a cynicism scale based on questions that ask respondents about whether they believe that government does not care much what people like them think; whether they agree that all parties are basically the same; and whether they gave low ratings to politicians and political parties in general (see the Appendix for an explanation of the coding for this variable). In addition to this overall cynicism scale, we included a variable tapping negative feelings toward parties. In Model 3 we used party identification and argued that people who develop a connection to, and identify with a particular party will be more likely to vote. As important as this positive connection to parties is, the presence of negative feelings toward parties in general may also be connected to voting, or rather, non-voting. *Negative party sentiment* here refers to respondents who gave negative ratings to *all* the political parties (see Appendix for specific coding).

Including these two variables, as well as the interaction between *Age* and *Cynicism* in the model (Model 4), we see that a negative feeling toward parties in general has a negative impact on people's propensity to vote. The coefficient for our measure of overall cynicism does have a negative sign; however, it fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. When we test whether political cynicism affects the probability of turning out differently for young and older Canadians, we see again that the effect is not statistically significant.

How much then of the gap in turnout between the young and the old does cynicism and negative party sentiment account for? Converting the coefficient for *Age* into conditional probabilities for young and old given all the other variables in the model, results in a probability of turning out of 0.527 for those younger than 30 years old and 0.698 for those 30 years and older. This is a gap of some 17.1 percentage points. Thus, the age gap actually *increases* after we control for cynicism and negative feelings toward political parties. Granted the increase is only 1.5 points compared to the model with socio-demographics and measures of connectedness to politics. Nevertheless, if cynicism had the strong negative impact on particularly the youth vote that conventional wisdom tells us it has, we ought to see a reduction of the age gap after controlling for it. To



be sure, there exists widespread cynicism in the Canadian electorate. Almost two-thirds of the respondents to the CES agreed with the statement that: ‘the government does not care much what people like me think’. However, it does not seem that this cynicism is related to abstaining from voting. Moreover, we find no evidence that the young are disproportionately more cynical about politics. Indeed, the older group is slightly *more* cynical. The mean score on the cynicism index for those not yet 30 is 0.52 while for those who are 30 or older, the mean is 0.54. This is by no means a large difference but of importance here is that the young are no more cynical than the old, a fact that may account for the slight increase in the age gap after including cynicism.

Political interest and political information

Finally, we turn to information and interest. Past work has shown political interest and political information to be strong predictors of voting in Canada (Blais *et al.*, 2002, 52–53). The higher one’s interest is in politics and the more political information — knowledge — one has, the more likely one is to vote. In Model 5 we use a measure of information based on the number of correct responses to four factual questions about the names of the premier in the respondent’s province, Canada’s Finance Minister, Canada’s Prime Minister at the time of the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the capital of the United States. The younger group averaged 62% correct responses compared to 79% for the older group. Political interest is also higher among older Canadians. When asked to rate their interest in politics on a 0–10 scale, the 30 and above group averaged 5.9, while the post-generation X cohort had an average score of 4.4. Thus, there exists a considerable disparity between age groups in knowledge of and interest in politics. Our results from Model 5, where we include the measures of political information and interest, indicate that these are indeed strongly related to turnout. Both coefficients are positive and statistically significant. It is also interesting to note that the coefficient for *Age* × *Cynicism* does reach levels of statistical significance once we also control for interest and information. The sign of this coefficient is positive, however, indicating that cynicism has a greater effect on older Canadians’ turnout than it does for younger Canadians. This is further evidence against the conventional notion that cynicism affects the young more than the old.

If political interest and political information is as unevenly distributed between the young and the old as our data indicate, we should expect the inclusion of these variables to have a big reductive impact on the age gap in turnout. This is indeed what we find. Specifying the full Model 5 gives us conditional probabilities of turning out of 0.602 and 0.698 for those under 30 years of age and those 30 years and older, respectively. Thus, controlling for interest and information serves to boost the turnout of the youngest members



of the electorate by a sizable 16.5 percentage points. The gap between the two groups of interest is reduced appreciably by 17.9 points, a reduction of 38% compared to the model with socio-demographics, party identification, competition and contact and a reduction of 65% of the original 27.4 point gap. The age gap after controlling for all the previous factors together with political interest and information is a modest 9.6 percentage points. Indeed, given that the coefficient for the main effect of age fails to reach statistical significance in this model, the 9.6 point gap may not be statistically significant. Thus, political information and interest — in combination with the other variables in the model — would seem to have a very large reductive effect on the age gap. At worst, these factors account for two-thirds of the difference in the probability of voting for those younger than 30 and citizens who are 30 years of age or older.

Although our measures of interest and information have strong effects on the odds of voting and on the age gap, we believe there is reason to treat these results with caution. First, an argument can be made that the two measures are conceptually very closely related to the dependent variable. This is particularly the case when it comes to political interest — political participation and political interest both would seem to be part of a dimension of political engagement. Second, and related to this concern, there is a problem of causality. It is not clear whether it is the case that one decides to gather information and that one subsequently decides to vote or whether one decides to vote and then endeavors to collect some information in order to finally choose which party to vote for. Given these concerns, we need to be careful in drawing conclusions about the impact of these factors on the age gap.

Conclusion

The low turnout in Canada's 2000 federal election and the decline in turnout since the late 1980s can in large part be explained by generational effects — differences in turnout between cohorts that persist even if we compare members of different cohorts at the same stage of their life cycle. The biggest cause of turnout decline in Canada comes from the much lower rates of voting among the very youngest cohort. Table 3 summarizes the effect of each subsequent model on the age gap. The gap in turnout between the post-generation X cohort and Canadians 30 years of age and older was 27.4 percentage points in the 2000 federal election. We find that socio-demographic factors such as income, education, marital status and religiosity combine to account for just under one-third of this gap. We also estimate that factors relating to mobilization and how connected one is to politics reduce the gap further. Including these variables in the model decreases the gap between those



Table 3 The effect of age on turnout^a

<i>Model</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>Old</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Bivariate model	0.437	0.711	0.274
Socio-demographics	0.502	0.690	0.188
Perceptions and contact	0.535	0.691	0.156
Attitudes	0.527	0.698	0.171
Information and interest	0.602	0.698	0.096

^a*Source:* CES (2000). Cell entries are conditional probabilities of voting and the difference in probability of voting between young and old from each model. See the text for an explanation of how they were calculated.

younger than 30 and those 30 and older by a further 8.6 points to 18.8 percentage points.

Increased cynicism among the electorate is a popular argument among the media and commentators for the decline of turnout and especially young people's failure to vote. We are able to debunk this notion. We find no relationship between cynicism and abstaining. Moreover, levels of cynicism in the electorate are actually slightly higher among the older group than they are among those under 30. Cynicism does not account for the age gap and, in fact, including measures of it have the effect of slightly increasing the gap compared to the model with mobilization and party identification. Finally, we look at political interest and political information, or knowledge, and their impact on the gap in turnout. While these two factors do very well, accounting for two-thirds of the gap in combination with the other variables, we are reluctant to draw any firm conclusions. Moreover, it remains to be explained *why* younger people are less interested in and informed about politics than their older fellow citizens.

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Appendix

The dependent variable is self-reported turnout (0 = did not vote, 1 = voted).

Socio-demographics

Age is a dummy variable for respondents' age (1 = 30 years of age and older, 0 = below 30 years of age); *Income* is respondents' income on a 10-point scale (1 = <\$20K, 2 = \$20–29,999, 3 = \$30–39,999, 4 = \$40–49,999, 5 = \$50–59,999, 6 = \$60–69,999, 7 = \$70–79,999, 8 = \$80–89,999, 9 = \$90–99,999, 10 = >\$100K) this variable was recoded to a 0–1 scale; *Education* is the highest level of education obtained, measured on a ten point scale (1 = no schooling, 2 = some elementary school, 3 = completed elementary school, 4 = some high school, 5 = completed high school, 6 = some technical, cegep, 7 = completed technical, cegep, 8 = some university, 9 = bachelor's degree, 10 = graduate degree or professional degree or higher) this variable was recoded to a 0–1 scale; *New Immigrant* is a dummy variable for whether the respondent has lived in Canada for more or less than ten years (0 = immigrated more than 10 years ago, or non-immigrant, 1 = immigrated within the last 10 years); *Religiosity* measures the importance of religion in respondents' lives on a four point scale (0 = not important at all, 0.33 = not very important, 0.67 = somewhat important, 1 = very important); *Married* is a dummy variable for respondents' marital status (0 = not married nor living with partner, 1 = married or living with partner); *Male* a dummy variable for respondents' sex (0 = female, 1 = male).



Attitudes

Party Identification is measured by the question: 'In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, alliance, conservative, NDP or other?' *No Race* is a measure of the perceived closeness of the race in the respondent's constituency. It is created by standardizing respondents' ratings on a 0–100 scale of each party's chances of winning in their constituency by dividing each party's score by the total scores given to all the parties so that the perceived chances of winning add up to 1. The variable is the difference between the two front-runners' standardized chances of winning. If a person gave a score of 100 to one party and 0 to all others, the variable equals 1, indicating no race at all; if the two front-runners were perceived to have equal chances of winning, the variable takes a value of 0, indicating the closest possible race; if the front-runner was given a 50% chance of winning and the next best party was given a 30% chance, the variable would take the value 0.2 (0.5–0.3). *Contacted during the campaign* is a dummy variable (1 = was contacted by a political party during the campaign, 0 = was not contacted by a political party during the campaign). *Negative party sentiment* is a dummy variable (1 = respondents gave negative ratings on a 100 point scale to all parties, 0 = did not give negative ratings to all parties), we interpret all scores of 50 or below as negative; *Political cynicism* is an index made up of responses to four questions: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement? (a) I do not think government cares much what people like me think; (b) All federal parties are basically the same; there is not really a choice. How do you feel about politicians in general? How do you feel about political parties? (The latter two are measured on a 100-point scale, 0 = really dislike, 100 = really like.) The index is the sum of the four scores divided by 4 and takes values between 0 and 1. *Political information* is the number of correct responses to four factual questions about the names of the premier in the respondent's province, Canada's Finance Minister, Canada's Prime Minister at the time of the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the capital of the United States, the variable takes on values between 0 and 1. *Political interest* is respondents' rating of their interest in politics on a 0–10 scale (0 = no interest at all, 10 = a great deal of interest); this variable has been recoded to a 0–1 scale.

Notes

- 1 We thank François Gélinau for comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this article.
- 2 The weight we use is derived by combining the national weight for the CES with a new weight variable produced by simply dividing the official abstention rate by the reported abstention rate. By using this weight we are able to reflect the true distribution of voters and non-voters.



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- 3 Because we analyze the impact on the age gap of adding groups of variables in successive models, we use a restricted sample of the CES. In later models that include questions on perceptions and attitudes the N is reduced due to fewer respondents answering such questions. Therefore, all the models in the study use the most restrictive sample in order to avoid the possibility of introducing bias in the results due to differences in samples. The original N for the campaign period survey is 3,651 and for the post-election survey it is 2,860. The reduction in sample size to 2,411 did not affect point estimates.
- 4 We originally included interactions between *Age* and all of the other variables in the model. We first estimated a model equivalent to Model 5 below, including interaction terms between the dummy variable for age and all other variables in the model. We then ran a model with only the main effects and introduced one interaction term at a time in order to avoid problems of multicollinearity associated with the inclusion of so many interaction terms at once. The interactions that were kept in the final models are those that were significant when included alone.