

**Clarifying the Shrinking Liberal Core: Visible Minorities, Immigrants, and Vote
Choice in Canada**

by

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Clarifying the Shrinking Liberal Core: Visible Minorities, Immigrants, and Vote Choice in English-Speaking Canadaⁱ

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Throughout the 20th Century, the Liberal Party of Canada was arguably the most effective political machine in the post-industrial world. However, the 2008 federal election marked the end of this period of dominance, in part because visible minorities no longer supported the party as they had in the past (Gidengil et al. 2009). This paper uses exit poll data made available by the Laurier Institute for Study of Public Opinion and Policy (LISPOP) to examine the vote choice of visible minorities in 2008 and 2011 in greater detail than is possible with the Canadian Election Study. Results show that the traditional Liberal core outside Quebec based on region (Ontario), religion (Catholics), and ethnicity (visible minorities) no longer exists. Though voters in Ontario remain more likely to vote Liberal than do their peers in other regions, the effects of this regionalism on vote choice appears to be stronger for visible minorities than it is for non-minorities. Furthermore, neither religious affiliation nor immigrant status have a considerable effect on vote choice outside on Ontario.

Region, Religion, and Ethnicity: What we know about the Liberal Core

Between 1945 and 2006, the Liberal Party of Canada dominated federal electoral politics in Canada (Blais, 2005). Outside of Quebec, this support is predicated on three sources: region, religion, and ethnicity. Catholics and visible minorities were key pillars of Liberal support, and they tended to be concentrated in vote-rich regions such as Ontario. And yet, though we understand where Liberal support came from during their period of dominance, we do not have a good understanding of *why* it exists.

Similarly, we can describe how Liberal electoral dominance at the federal level waned by 2008. In their analysis of federal elections between 2000 and 2008, Gidengil *et al.* (2009) conclude that the Liberal's electoral woes rested, in part, with the fact that neither Catholics nor visible minorities supported the Liberals as they had in the past. This trend carried forward to 2011, where the strength of Liberal support among (visible minority) immigrants was further weakened (Soroka *et al.*, 2011).ⁱⁱ This is a noteworthy shift, as a subset of visible minority voters – immigrants from non-European countries – are characterized as becoming more stable Liberal supporters over time (Bilodeau and Kanji, 2010: 74). Thus, we know that key demographic groups once were, but are no longer Liberal supporters. Yet, like their existence in the first place, we still do not have a good understanding why these bases of Liberal support shifted.

This puzzle raises many questions. Here, I focus on voter ethnicity, and examine the voting behaviour of visible minorities. Do visible minorities continue to vote Liberal, even if in lower numbers than in the past? If not, where have they transferred their support? Does the vote calculus used by visible minority vote differ considerably from that of non-minority voters, or are the electoral divisions found among non-minority voters replicated among visible minorities?

To answer these questions, I analyze exit poll data gathered by Ipsos Reid's Public Affairs Division – made generously available by the Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy (LISPOP). These data allow for the study of the political behaviour of visible minorities in 2008 and 2011 in greater detail than is possible with more conventional data sources, notably the Canadian Election Study.

Given the differences in the party system, data from Quebec are not analyzed here. Similarly, because of small numbers, supporters of the Green Party of Canada are excluded from the analysis.

Who are “Visible Minorities” in Canada?

Visible minorities are defined in the Canadian Census and *Employment Equity Act* as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada, 2007). This definition is certainly problematic: it has been critiqued by the United Nations and others for assuming that “whiteness” is a standard against which to judge racialized groups, and it wrongly suggests that racialized Canadians are homogenous, and masks the ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity of non-white Canadians (United Nations, 2007; Siemiatycki, 2011; Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst, 2011). Despite these problems, this definition serves as Canada’s only official measure of non-white, non-Aboriginal Canadians; as a result, it serves as the statistical starting point for research investigating racialized Canadians (Siemiatycki, 2011).

The measure of visible minority status used here rests on self-identification. Survey respondents indicated they self-identified as a visible minority. As noted in other studies of voting behaviour, visible minorities are more likely than white Canadians to be immigrants (Soroka *et al.*, 2011). This does not mean that all or even most visible minorities in Canada are immigrants. Statistics Canada reports that one-third of visible minorities are Canadian-born (Chui and Maheux, 2011); this distribution is replicated in the data used here.ⁱⁱⁱ

What Do We Know about the Political Behaviour of Visible Minorities?

As noted above, we know very little about the political behaviour of visible minorities in Canada. Studies show that non-European immigrants are more likely to vote Liberal than Canadian-born voters, and that non-minority Canadians are less likely to support the Liberals than are visible minorities. We also know that these patterns have changed over time, and in particular, waned since the 2000 federal election (Blais *et al.*, 2002; Blais, 2005; Bilodeau and Kanji, 2010; Gidengil *et al.*, 2006; Gidengil *et al.*, 2009). Results show this support was rooted in positive affect – Canadians of non-European origin “like the Liberals” (Blais, 2005: 831), though these positive feelings cannot be explained by when minority immigrants arrived in Canada, or by Liberal incumbency (Blais, 2005). Though visible minority Canadians are significantly more likely to support expansive immigration policies, this issue does not appear to drive their electoral support of the Liberals. Though minorities report being more socially conservative than Canadians of European origin, issues related to this, notably same-sex marriage, do not appear to have a meaningful effect on changes in minority support for the Liberals from 2004 on (Gidengil *et al.*, 2006).

Unique aspects of Canadian politics such as regionalism may condition the relationship between minority status and vote choice. Bilodeau, White, and Nevitte (2010) argue that immigrants’ acculturation processes include internalizing provincial norms. Though these processes appear to vary for immigrants of European and non-European descent, immigrants from both broad source categories replicate regional cleavages, though there is some variation in the

intensity of this regionalism. This suggests that regionalism may influence the voting behaviour of immigrants in different ways than it does for the Canadian-born population.

Furthermore, though it would be misleading to conflate immigrants from non-traditional sources with all visible minority voters, research suggests that regionalism may influence the voting behaviour of Canadian-born visible minorities differently than the non-minority population as well. For example, Blais (2005) notes that Liberal dominance of Ontario is predicated on visible minority support, while Bird (2009) argues that visible minorities in Atlantic Canada are more likely to support the New Democratic Party (NDP).^{iv} Understanding the dynamics of these regional variations may shed light on how the Liberal core has changed over time.

Finally, the Liberals may have enjoyed an advantage in the past because they were more likely to field visible minority candidates than were other political parties. Over time, this candidate distribution changed, and as of 2004, the Conservative Party of Canada was most likely to nominate visible minority candidates (Black and Hicks, 2006; Black, 2011; Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst, 2011). Evidence from experimental research shows that visible minority voters may be considerably more likely to vote for visible minority candidates. For example, visible minorities are both more likely to indicate they would vote for a visible minority than a non-minority candidate, and to report that they perceive the minority candidates to be someone who could understand their problems (Bird, Saalfeld, and Wüst, 2011). When party labels are attached to these hypothetical candidates, these effects are significantly larger for the Conservatives than they are for the Liberals or the NDP. No comparable effects are found when candidate ethnicity is varied for non-minority voters.

These results suggest two things. First, that changes in candidate slates may be part of the reason why visible minorities no longer support the Liberals in numbers they once did. Second, in keeping with Bilodeau, White, and Nevitte, it may be that the political socialization process is different for visible minority Canadians than it is for non-minorities. While vote decisions are complex, these differences in socialization may lead to broad differences in the vote decisions of visible minority and non-minority Canadians.

Expectations

The research outlined above grounds four predictions about the voting behaviour of visible minorities in Canada. These relate to regionalism and local considerations, immigrant status, and religion.

In light of Bilodeau, White, and Nevitte's (2010) findings, it is plausible that visible minority status may interact with region. Thus, racialized voters in regions known to support the Liberals – in Ontario more generally, and the Greater Toronto Area more particularly – may still be strong Liberal supporters. Over 95 per cent of visible minorities live in a census metropolitan area, compared to approximately two-thirds of the total Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2008). This may lead immigrant and Canadian-born visible minorities alike to favour federal or municipal considerations over provincial or regional considerations, and comparably weaken traditionally defined regional effects on minority vote choice. These data allow me

to investigate these regional effects in greater detail than is possible more conventional data sources.

Similarly, in light of the experimental evidence highlighted above, it is plausible to expect that visible minorities may be more likely than non-minorities to emphasize local considerations in their vote choice. These data allow me to test whether visible minorities are more likely to indicate that local considerations were key in determining their vote. If this is the case, the primary beneficiary may be the Conservatives, as they are more likely to nominate visible minority candidates in 2008 and 2011 than the other political parties.

We have good reason to expect that effect of immigrant status on vote choice is conditioned by minority status. Research investigating the connection between immigrant status and vote choice is quick to note that immigrants of non-European origin are more likely to support the Liberals compared to Canadian-born voters and immigrants of European origin alike (Blais *et al.*, 2002). Thus, I expect that the effect of immigrant status on vote choice will be stronger for visible minorities than it is for non-minority votes.

Finally, our understanding of the effects of religion on vote choice revolve around the Catholic-Liberal, Protestant/fundamentalist-Conservative connections (Blais, 2005; Gidengil *et al.*, 2006). I do not anticipate that these relationships will be conditioned by visible minority status. Instead, I expect that adhering to a religion other than Catholicism or Protestant Christianity may have a unique effect on vote choice. Visible minorities are more likely than non-minorities to have a religious affiliation outside Catholicism and Protestantism, and minorities are more likely than non-minority Canadians to be religious (Clark and Schellenberg, 2006). Thus, while I expect religious affiliations other than Catholicism and Protestantism will influence vote choice, I am agnostic as to the direction that influence takes. That said, in keeping with past research, I expect that higher levels of religiosity will be associated with Conservative votes for visible minorities and non-minorities alike. Both effects, if present, should be clear for visible minority voters.

Beyond this, I am uncomfortable making further deductive predictions about the voting behaviour of visible minority Canadians. The literature, in its current state, is silent on whether or not there are plausible reasons to expect, *a priori*, that factors known to be important for non-minority vote choice – including gender, age, language,^v sexual orientation, education, income, occupational status, marital status, or parental status, issue positions, party identification, and leader evaluations – would affect the vote choice of visible minorities differently than non-minority Canadians (see also Gidengil *et al.*, 2009). I do not want to assume that the effects of these factors will be the same for minorities as they are for non-minorities, as doing so would trivialize the discrimination and marginalization visible minorities face in Canada.^{vi} However, though it seems more reasonable to assume that the experiences of Canadian visible minorities can be very different from that of non-minority Canadians, specific predictions about vote choice variation do not follow from this assumption. In effect, outside the expectations noted above, this study is a knowledge discovery exercise.

Data and Methods

To assess visible minority vote choice in Canada, and whether it differs from that of non-minority Canadians, I use data gathered from “exit poll” surveys administered to Ipsos Reid’s online panel on October 14, 2008 (N=36 141) and May 2, 2011 (N=39 261). Though considerable issues arise when dealing with non-parametric, opt-in samples, the data generated from this sampling method are particularly useful for exploring differences between groups (Perrella, Brown, and Kay, 2012). It is also important to note that for each question, respondents who answered “don’t know” are coded as missing. This response option is explicitly included for most questions. Including an explicit “don’t know” option drives up the number of these responses (Mondak and Anderson, 2004). In these data, this results in considerable portions of respondents being excluded from the analysis. This, combined with the sampling technique suggests that these results likely will be more representative of Canadians who are very politically engaged, rather than the population as a whole. Thus, these results should be interpreted with caution. These data were generously provided by LISPOP at Wildred Laurier University.

Vote choice is measured as a decision between the Liberals, Conservatives, and NDP to more fully capture the dynamics of partisan support outside of Quebec (Gidengil *et al.*, 2006).^{vii} The distribution of vote choice in these data matches the official voting results for 2008. The 2011 data over-represent NDP support nationally by about 4 percentage points, and under-estimate Liberal support by about 2 percentage points (Elections Canada, 2008, 2011).

Because vote choice is a nominal level variable, a multinomial probit estimator is used. The coefficients generated by any probit estimator are difficult to interpret outside of sign and statistical significance. To make the results intelligible, the average effect of any given variable in the model is estimated, with every other variable held at its mean. This provides the average effect of each predictor in the model, net of the others. These average effects should be interpreted as percentage changes in the propensity to vote for a political party.^{viii} The full regression results are presented in Appendix A.

I apply the conventional vote choice model developed by scholars associated with the Canadian Election Studies (Blais *et al.*, 2002; Gidengil *et al.*, 2006; Gidengil *et al.*, 2009) separately to samples of visible minority (N=1 566) and non-minority voters (N=13 401).^{ix} This model examines the effects of several “blocks” of potentially relevant factors, including sociodemographic factors, values and beliefs, party identification, economic perspectives, issue opinions, and leader evaluations on vote choice. I present the results of the model containing all the “blocks” here. The full list of predictors included in the model, and the coding used to build each indicator can be found in Appendix B.

Finally, the samples from 2008 and 2011 are pooled to ensure a sufficient number of cases for the analysis. To account for differences across those elections and the possibility that responses are not independent across elections, a control for the 2011 election is included in the model and the standard errors are clustered on election year.

Findings

Are visible minorities still more likely to vote Liberal than non-minorities? The answer is, “not really.” A plurality of Canadians outside Quebec voted Conservative in 2008 and 2011, regardless of their ethnicity. Despite this, when the relationship between minority status and vote choice is examined without statistical controls, visible minorities were 7 percentage points less likely to vote Conservative than their non-minority peers. This difference was split roughly evenly across the Liberals (3 percentage points) and the NDP (4 percentage points). In addition to this, when other factors that might be relevant to vote choice are taken into account, visible minorities remain significantly more likely to vote Liberal than non-minority Canadians. However, this effect is trivially small, increasing their propensity to vote Liberal by a paltry 3 per cent. This suggests that the advantage Liberals once had among visible minorities has waned, and that support has transferred to both the Conservatives and the NDP.

This leads to a second set of questions: does the vote calculus employed by most visible minorities vary considerably from that used by non-minority voters? Here, the answer is yes, but with some contingencies. As expected, these differences map roughly onto the four predictions highlighted above.

Regionalism

Minority status conditions some, but not all, effects of regionalism on vote choice. Table 1 shows the effect of living in the named region on vote choice, relative to southern Ontario. Recall that Ontario was key to the original Liberal core. Here, three observations can be made regarding vote choice in that vote-rich province. First, contrary to expectations, visible minority voters in some parts of Ontario are not necessarily more likely to support the Liberals. Instead, the propensity of voting Conservative is 24 per cent higher if a voter is a visible minority living in the 905 Belt. A comparable effect is not found for non-minorities. Second, living in 416-Toronto core has only a trivial effect on the vote choice of minorities and non-minorities alike, while non-minorities living in Toronto have a slightly great propensity to vote NDP (6 per cent). Finally, apart from these two effects, living in Ontario appears to similarly influence the voting behaviour of visible and non-minorities.

Another conditional effect is found in Atlantic Canada: residing in this region reduces the likelihood that visible minorities will vote Liberal by 25 per cent, while trivially increasing non-minorities’ propensity to vote Liberal.

The other effects of regionalism on vote choice are in the same direction for minorities and non-minorities alike. However, the intensity of these effects appears to be larger for visible minorities. For example, living in British Columbia rather than southwestern Ontario reduces the likelihood a visible minority will vote Liberal by 21 per cent, and a non-minority by 11 per cent. Living in Alberta increases the propensity for visible minorities to vote Conservative by 25 per cent, and non-minorities by 15 per cent. Living on the Prairies increases the likelihood non-minorities will vote NDP by only 9 per cent. The comparable effect for visible minorities is 32 per cent.

Table 1: The Estimated Impact of Regionalism on Vote Choice, by Party and Minority Status (Outside Quebec)

	Liberals		Conservatives		NDP	
	Visible Minority	Non-Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Minority
BC Resident	-21%	-11%	-10%	0% (NS)	31%	10%
Alberta Resident	-36%	-18%	25%	15%	0% (NS)	3%
SK/MB Resident	-39%	-11%	7%	2%	32%	9%
Toronto Resident	-2%	-1 %	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	6%
905 Belt Resident	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	24%	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)
Rest of Ontario	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)
Atlantic Resident	-25%	3%	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)

Note: all cell entries are the differences in mean estimated propensity of voting for a party. All estimations are based on multinomial probit.

Three broad conclusions can be drawn from Table 1. First, regionalism outside Quebec sometimes affects the voting behaviour of visible minorities and non-minorities in similar ways, though this is not always the case: the 905 Belt and Atlantic Canada are important exceptions. Second, though the direction of these regional effects on vote choice may be the same for both broad groups, the magnitude of these effects may be considerably larger for visible minorities than they are for non-minority voters. Third, the Liberal core still rests in Ontario, as living in another region considerably reduces the propensity to vote Liberal for all Canadians who reside outside Quebec.

Local and Leader Evaluations

Contrary to predictions, in both election years, visible minority voters outside Quebec were no more likely to cast their ballots for local candidates than were non-minority voters. When the local candidate determined the vote, it increased the propensity of both groups to vote Liberal. Furthermore, basing their vote decision on the local candidate had no significant effect on visible minorities' propensity to vote Conservative (Table 2). This suggests that the 2011 Conservative targeting of ten "very ethnic ridings" did little to bolster Conservative support among visible minority voters. Interestingly, basing one's vote on the local candidate instead of on issues or the party leader reduced the propensity for non-minorities to vote Conservative by 15 per cent.

As is apparent from Table 2, leader evaluations have a great deal of influence on the vote decisions of visible minorities and non-minorities alike. The only difference in the effect of leader evaluations on vote choice across minority status appears for the NDP. The propensity to vote NDP increases by 26 per cent when visible minority voters based their decision primarily on the party leader. No comparable effect is found for non-minorities. And, as was the case with may regional effects, though the direction of the effect of leader evaluations on vote choice is the same for visible and non- minorities, the magnitude of these effects is often larger for visible minorities than they are for non-minorities. The only instance when this is not the case is with respect to evaluations of Stephen Harper.

Table 2: The Estimated Impact of Local Considerations and Leader Evaluations on Vote Choice, by Party and Minority Status (Outside Quebec)

	Liberals		Conservatives		NDP	
	Visible Minority	Non-Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Minority
<i>Local Considerations</i>						
Voted Primarily for Local Candidate	13%	17%	0% (NS)	-15%	0% (NS)	0% (NS)
Voted Primarily for Party Leader	-30%	-12%	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	26%	0% (NS)
<i>Leader Evaluations</i>						
Harper	-54%	-55%	104%	119%	-50%	-63%
Layton	-24%	-7%	-60%	-28%	84%	36%
Dion/Ignatieff	78%	52%	-87%	-30%	9%	-22%

Note: all cell entries are the differences in mean estimated propensity of voting for a party. All estimations are based on multinomial probit.

It is worth noting that though the effect of leader evaluations on vote choice is very much the same for visible and non-minorities, the evaluations themselves are not. Stephen Harper's evaluations varied consistently by minority status, as visible minority voters consistently rated Harper lower than did their non-minority peers (not shown). This may contribute to visible minorities' lower levels of support for the Conservatives, as noted above.

Finally, both Liberal leaders – Stéphane Dion and particularly Michael Ignatieff – received very poor ratings from voters outside Quebec in these data. Future research will probe how much of an effect this has on the Liberal's electoral woes.

Religion and Immigrant Status

The effects of religion and immigrant status on vote choice were different in 2008 and 2011 than they were in the past, helping to explain, in part, why the partisan dynamics of Canadian federal politics shifted during this period. Recall that two of the pillars of Liberal electoral dominance in the 20th Century were Catholics and visible minorities. Importantly, those minorities were primarily characterized in the literature as immigrants. Table 3 shows that, net of the other factors in the model, immigrant status has either no, or a trivial effect on vote choice for Canadians outside Quebec, regardless of ethnicity. Furthermore, the propensity for Catholics to vote Liberal is very small (5 per cent), and the effect is restricted to non-minorities.

Gidengil et al. (2009) observed both patterns in their analysis of the 2008 election, and attribute some of the erosion of Catholic and visible minority Liberal support to a decline in party identification. This cannot be confirmed with these data. Instead, these data show that voters who identify as "liberal" or on the political left are considerably more likely to vote Liberal, and less likely to vote Conservative (not shown). Identifying on the political left has no significant effect on the likelihood of voting NDP for visible minorities and non-minorities alike. Interestingly, identifying as Conservative has no significant effect on Liberal or

Conservative vote. The only meaningful effect Conservative identification has is to reduce the propensity for visible minorities to vote NDP.

Table 3: The Estimated Impact of Religion and Immigrant Status on Vote Choice, by Party and Minority Status (Outside Quebec)

	Liberals		Conservatives		NDP	
	Visible Minority	Non-Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Minority	Visible Minority	Non-Minority
Catholic	0% (NS)	5%	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	-3%
Protestant	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	15%	0% (NS)	-7%	-3%
Other Religion	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	5%	0% (NS)	0% (NS)
Immigrant	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	-1%	-3%	0% (NS)

Note: all cell entries are the differences in mean estimated propensity of voting for a party. All estimations are based on multinomial probit.

Two other findings regarding religion are worth noting. First, Table 3 shows that the Protestantism increases the propensity to vote Conservative for visible minorities alone, and decreases the propensity to vote NDP for visible and non-minorities alike. Second, contrary to expectations, adhering to a religion other than Catholicism or Protestantism has no significant effect on visible minority vote choice. Instead, adhering to other religions has a small, positive effect on non-minorities' propensity to vote Conservative.

The results regarding immigrant status are particularly striking given past research. To further probe this null result, the full sample is pooled together to test if immigrant and minority status interact to affect vote choice. These results are presented in Table 4. Three clear findings emerge. First, the relationship between immigrant status and vote choice appears to be confined to visible minority voters. Second, one would expect from past research, visible minority immigrants are more likely to vote Liberal than are Canadian-born non-minorities. However, this effect is small. Finally, Canadian-born visible minorities are *not* more likely to support the Liberals when compared to Canadian-born non-minorities. Instead, Canadian-born visible minorities appear to be less likely to vote Conservative and more likely to vote NDP, though these effects are trivially small. This underlines the importance of analytically separating visible minority immigrants from their Canadian-born peers.

Table 4: The Estimated Impact of Minority and Immigrant Status on Vote Choice, by Party (Outside Quebec)

	Liberals	Conservatives	NDP
Non-Minority Immigrant	0% (NS)	0% (NS)	0% (NS)
Visible Minority Immigrant	7%	0% (NS)	0% (NS)
Canadian-born Visible Minority	0% (NS)	-5%	2%

Note: all cell entries are the differences in mean estimated propensity of voting for a party. All estimations are based on multinomial probit.

Other Noteworthy Findings

Though I had no expectations about how other factors may influence visible minority vote choice, there are other findings that are worthy of note. First, the propensity for French-speaking visible minorities who live outside Quebec to vote Liberal is considerable, as is their propensity to *not* vote Conservative. Comparable findings are not found for non-minority Francophones outside Quebec. Second, university education increases the propensity for visible minorities to vote Conservative, while decreasing their propensity to vote NDP. Higher education has no significant effect on minorities' likelihood of voting Liberal. By contrast, university education increases Liberal votes, and decreases Conservative votes for non-minorities. Third, while lower levels of education are associated with voting Conservative for all Canadians, they are also associated with a lower likelihood of voting Liberal for visible minorities, and for voting NDP for non-minorities.

In their analysis of the 2008 election, Gidengil et al. (2009, ftnt 14) note that Catholics opposed to same-sex marriage were significantly less likely to vote Liberal. These data show that this effect is confined to visible minority Catholics.

Region, Religion, and Ethnicity: The Liberal Core Revisited

During their period of dominance, region, religion, and ethnicity characterized the Liberal bases of support outside Quebec. These bases have, for the most part, abandoned the Liberals. This study, with its focus on visible minority voters, identifies some reasons why this is the case.

Overall, visible minorities appear to be slightly more likely to support the Liberals than are non-minority voters. However, this effect is trivially small, and is confined to visible minority immigrants. Canadian-born visible minorities are no more likely to vote Liberal than Canadian-born non-minorities.

Though most Liberal support is still found in the province of Ontario, there are important intra-provincial variations in this support. Living in the 905 Belt considerably increases the likelihood that visible minority voters will support the Conservatives. Similarly, living in Atlantic Canada reduces the propensity for visible minorities to vote Liberal, but not non-minorities, by a considerably margin. Living in a region outside Ontario considerably reduces the propensity for voters to support the Liberals. These regional effects on vote choice outside Quebec appear to be similar for visible and non-minorities, though the magnitude of these effects appears to be considerably larger for visible minorities.

The local candidate positively influenced Liberal support for visible and non-minorities alike. Contrary to expectations, local candidates did not increase the propensity for visible minorities to vote Conservative. Instead, local candidates reduced the likelihood non-minorities outside Quebec would cast a Conservative ballot. Given the small number of visible minority candidates in the 2008 and 2011 elections, this finding warrants further investigation. Future research will probe if the competitiveness of the local contest and the ethnicity of the candidate condition these local effects on vote choice.

Religion still affects vote choice outside Quebec, though not always in the expected direction. Non-minority Catholics remain more likely to vote Liberal, while visible minority Protestants are more likely to vote Conservative. Contrary to

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expectations, religious affiliations outside Catholicism and Protestantism have few effects on vote choice outside Quebec.

Overall, these findings add to our understanding of both visible minority voting behaviour and the erosion of Liberal support in 2008 and 2011. These results show that the voting decisions taken by visible minorities are in some ways different from, and in other ways similar to that of non-minority Canadians. In order to fully understanding these patterns, different research techniques may be required. As for the Liberals, the problems that were identified in 2008 – leadership woes and the loss of their stable base of support – continued in 2011. It seems what little of their base was left coming out of 2008 was gone by 2011.

APPENDIX A**A1: Multinomial Estimation of Liberal vs. Conservative Vote Choice Outside Quebec**

	Visible Minorities		Non-Minorities	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Gender	0.218+	(0.131)	-0.184+	(0.098)
Age	-0.021*	(0.005)	-0.002	(0.003)
High School or Less	0.336*	(0.034)	0.051	(0.126)
University Degree	0.026	(0.091)	-0.318*	(0.098)
Lowest Income Tercile	0.593*	(0.011)	0.254	(0.193)
Highest Income Tercile	0.174	(0.209)	-0.137*	(0.041)
Occupational Status	-0.019	(0.038)	0.062	(0.106)
Union Household	-0.870*	(0.409)	-0.061*	(0.024)
Marital Status	0.009	(0.374)	0.189	(0.213)
Children under 6	-0.268	(0.907)	-0.052	(0.435)
Children under 12	0.369	(0.743)	0.173	(0.114)
Rural Resident	-0.088	(0.059)	0.312*	(0.070)
Francophone	-2.464*	(0.191)	-0.137	(0.084)
LGBTQ	-0.152	(0.147)	-0.123	(0.211)
Catholic	0.530	(0.713)	-0.187*	(0.050)
Protestant	0.497*	(0.191)	-0.003	(0.046)
Other Religion	-0.211	(0.324)	0.180	(0.171)
Immigrant Status	-0.000	(0.096)	-0.079	(0.058)
British Columbia Resident	0.330*	(0.052)	0.399*	(0.015)
Alberta Resident	1.373*	(0.070)	0.830*	(0.063)
SK/MB Resident	1.104*	(0.394)	0.383*	(0.034)
Ontario Resident (outside GTA)	0.476*	(0.016)	0.076*	(0.010)
Toronto Resident	-0.101	(0.235)	-0.036	(0.064)
905 Belt Resident	0.492*	(0.109)	-0.026	(0.215)
Atlantic Resident	0.737*	(0.271)	-0.253*	(0.001)
2011 Election	-0.023	(0.081)	-0.029	(0.290)
Religiosity	0.283	(0.283)	0.203	(0.207)
Religion helped determine vote	-0.118	(0.252)	0.075*	(0.035)
Business Orientation	0.420	(0.427)	0.444*	(0.039)
Equal Marriage	0.254*	(0.010)	-0.047	(0.155)
Government has no impact on me	-0.273*	(0.021)	-0.060	(0.070)
Conservative/Right	0.296	(0.631)	-0.028	(0.696)
Liberal/left	-0.996*	(0.200)	-0.936*	(0.136)
Personal Economic Prospective	-0.156*	(0.035)	0.232*	(0.059)
Worried about Losing Job	-0.030	(0.347)	0.046	(0.073)
Most Important Issue: Health Care	-0.958*	(0.202)	-0.194*	(0.040)
Most Important Issue: Economy	-0.121	(0.075)	0.357*	(0.022)
Harper	3.363*	(0.673)	3.708*	(0.100)
Layton	-0.603	(0.625)	-0.220	(0.319)
Dion/Ignatieff	-3.630*	(0.216)	-2.191*	(0.432)
Voted Primarily for Local Candidate	-0.653+	(0.379)	-0.797*	(0.295)
Voted Primarily for Party Leader	0.827	(0.522)	0.426+	(0.225)
Log Pseudo Likelihood	-531.4		-4017.8	
N	1566		13401	

Cell entries are multinomial probit regression coefficients. Positive coefficients indicate a greater probability to vote Conservative.

Standard errors are in parentheses and are clustered on election year.

+p<0.10 *p<0.05

Draft

A2: Multinomial Estimation of Liberal vs. NDP Vote Choice Outside Quebec

	Visible Minorities		Non-Minorities	
	Coefficient	SE	Coefficient	SE
Gender	0.163*	(0.082)	-0.003	(0.054)
Age	-0.010*	(0.001)	-0.002	(0.004)
High School or Less	-0.078	(0.137)	-0.149	(0.137)
University Degree	-0.316+	(0.189)	-0.133*	(0.052)
Lowest Income Tercile	0.259	(0.207)	0.318*	(0.017)
Highest Income Tercile	0.211*	(0.088)	-0.177*	(0.076)
Occupational Status	-0.236	(0.209)	0.078*	(0.010)
Union Household	-0.197	(0.167)	0.206*	(0.104)
Marital Status	-0.099	(0.112)	0.129	(0.087)
Children under 6	0.009	(0.844)	-0.030	(0.276)
Children under 12	-0.299	(0.337)	-0.181	(0.199)
Rural Resident	-0.012	(0.028)	0.012	(0.113)
Francophone	-1.265*	(0.189)	0.108	(0.202)
LGBTQ	-0.239	(0.398)	-0.052	(0.108)
Catholic	-0.074	(0.135)	-0.246*	(0.035)
Protestant	-0.004	(0.203)	-0.146*	(0.008)
Other Religion	-0.065	(0.154)	0.019	(0.294)
Immigrant Status	-0.128*	(0.010)	-0.074	(0.074)
British Columbia Resident	1.413*	(0.025)	0.740*	(0.098)
Alberta Resident	1.166	(0.935)	0.707*	(0.132)
SK/MB Resident	1.903*	(0.714)	0.662*	(0.009)
Ontario Resident (outside GTA)	0.120	(0.776)	-0.050	(0.169)
Toronto Resident	0.352	(0.297)	0.251*	(0.094)
905 Belt Resident	-0.674	(1.128)	-0.131*	(0.058)
Atlantic Resident	1.153*	(0.324)	0.139	(0.227)
2011 Election	0.329*	(0.138)	0.459*	(0.192)
Religiosity	0.139	(0.180)	-0.016	(0.062)
Religion helped determine vote	-0.386*	(0.039)	-0.183	(0.122)
Business Orientation	-0.279	(0.293)	-0.104	(0.070)
Equal Marriage	0.035	(0.085)	-0.112*	(0.031)
Government has no impact on me	0.128*	(0.025)	-0.257*	(0.024)
Conservative/Right	-0.328	(0.276)	-0.227	(0.153)
Liberal/left	-0.739*	(0.343)	-0.300	(0.201)
Personal Economic Prospective	0.059*	(0.019)	0.114*	(0.010)
Worried about Losing Job	0.045	(0.294)	0.045	(0.027)
Most Important Issue: Health Care	-0.600	(0.559)	0.218	(0.177)
Most Important Issue: Economy	-0.486*	(0.114)	-0.337*	(0.165)
Harper	-0.117	(0.313)	-0.534*	(0.222)
Layton	3.045*	(0.396)	1.553*	(0.212)
Dion/Ignatieff	-1.642*	(0.068)	-2.526*	(0.290)
Voted Primarily for Local Candidate	-0.246*	(0.048)	-0.622+	(0.347)
Voted Primarily for Party Leader	1.495*	(0.299)	0.741*	(0.144)
Log Pseudo Likelihood	-531.4		-4017.8	
N	1566		13401	

Cell entries are multinomial probit regression coefficients. Positive coefficients indicate a greater probability to vote NDP.

Standard errors are in parentheses and are clustered on election year.

+p<0.10 *p<0.05

APPENDIX B: Predictors and Coding Decisions

Most sociodemographic variables are binary, and capture respondent sex, levels of education and income, occupational status, union households, marital status, parental status, Francophones,^x rural residents, sexual orientation (Perrella, Brown, and Kay, 2012), religious affiliation, immigrant status, and region of residence. Age is measured with a continuous, mean centred variable.^{xi}

Values and beliefs are measured by four variables. Religiosity is a binary variable that captures respondents who attended religious services once a week or more in 2008. In 2011, respondents who indicated that religion was “very important” to them are coded as 1.^{xii} Respondents were also asked the extent to which their religious beliefs were important for their vote choice. In theory, this is a distinct attitude from religiosity, as voters could be deeply religious but believe in a strong separation between church and state. Thus, anyone who indicated that his or her religious beliefs were important to their vote choice is coded as 1. Support for same-sex marriage is also included; if respondents were opposed to equal marriage, or wanted a qualification on same sex unions, they were coded as 0. Fiscal conservatism is an index of two questions. Respondents who agree that ‘government does more harm than good’ when it intervenes with the economy are scored 1, as are respondents who think it is “very important” that the government maintain a balanced budget. The scores were added and divided by 2; the resulting index ranges from 0 to 1. Finally, respondents who believe the government has “no impact” on them are coded as 1.

Unfortunately, these data do not include measures of party identification. Thus, ideological self-placement is used as a proxy. This is admittedly less than ideal, as past research shows that a decline in partisans is one reason why the Liberals have fared poorly in recent elections. Importantly, visible minorities have been identified as a group where Liberal partisanship has waned (Gidengil *et al.*, 2009). In addition to this, the response categories vary considerably between 2008 and 2011. Respondents in 2008 were asked to self-identify as liberals, conservatives or moderates, while the 2011 question referred to being on the left, right, or centre of the political spectrum. Despite these issues, the indicators are strongly correlated.

Two questions measure economic perspectives. The first is a personal prospective evaluation. This variable ranges from -1 to 1; respondents who think their personal finances will worsen in the next year are coded as -1, while those who think their finances will improve are coded as 1. Those who anticipate no change in their economic situation are coded as 0. The second indicator measures respondent fears about losing their jobs, with those who are worried about their job security coded as 1.

While the issues voters identify as most important to them are diverse, the top two issues were the same in both elections. As a result, respondents who indicated the economy was the most important issue to them are coded as 1, as are those who prioritized health care.

The final block is comprised of leader and local evaluations. Respondents were asked to identify the leader they thought **best** matched the following characteristics: ‘intelligent,’ ‘trustworthy,’ ‘competent,’ ‘understands complex

economic and social issues,' and 'reflects my values.' These traits tap perceptions of both the competence and character of the leaders.^{xiii} When a respondent identified a particular leader as most befitting a particular trait, that leader was awarded a point. These points were tallied, and then rescaled to range between 0 and 1 where 0 means that voters always indicated other leaders best matched these traits and 1 means that voters indicated that leader was the best fit for each trait examined here. Respondents were also asked if their vote was cast mostly for the party leader, their local candidate, or on issues. Binary variables capture those who indicated they voted based in the leader, as well as those who indicated they voted based on the local candidate.

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ⁱ I would like to thank the Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy (LISPOP) for the generous use of their data.

ⁱⁱ Soroka *et al.* (2011) do not comment on the voting patterns of Catholics in this piece.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the 2008 data, 27 per cent of visible minorities were Canadian-born. In 2011, 29 per cent were Canadian-born.

^{iv} Though beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that regional considerations play an important role in the voting behaviour of visible minorities and immigrants in Quebec (Bird, 2009; Bilodeau, White, and Nevitte, 2010).

^v These data only record if a respondent's primary language is English or French. Thus, the effects of allophone status on vote choice cannot be tested here.

^{vi} For example, visible minorities are underrepresented in Canada's democratic political institutions (Black and Hicks, 2006). Canadian-born visible minorities are more likely to be victims of violent crime than non-minorities and visible minority immigrants alike (Perreault, 2004). Visible minorities earn 81 per cent of non-minorities. This race-earnings gap increases considerably among the university-educated, as visible minorities with degrees earn roughly two-thirds of their non-minority peers (Statistics Canada, 2006: author's calculations).

^{vii} Because the proportion of Green voters is so small relative to the other parties, they are excluded from the analysis. Aboriginal voters are also excluded from the analysis.

^{viii} These average effects are calculated using the post-estimation command `margins` in Stata 11.

^{ix} Visible minorities comprise 16 per cent of the sample in 2008, and 11 per cent in 2011.

^x These data do not capture whether respondents speak a language other than English or French at home.

^{xi} The average age in 2008 is 46; in 2011, it is 47.

^{xii} Both indicators tap into the same religious cleavage, though reports of whether religion is "very important" is deemed to be a superior indicator to attendance at a place of worship (Jagodzinski and Dobbelaere, 1995).

^{xiii} Research suggests that the character and competence dimensions of leader evaluations should be treated as distinct categories (Bittner, 2011). However, when these traits were subject to a factor

analysis, only one dimension emerged. The Cronbach's alpha scores for the indices containing both the competence and the character questions is 0.96 for Stephen Harper in 2008 and 2011, and 0.91 for Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff. Layton's alpha scores are 0.91 (2008) and 0.93 (2011).