

# Canadian Election Study Methodological Briefs

Methodological Brief #2013-B

## Characteristics of Survey Waves in the 2011 CES

Jessica Behnke, McGill University

CES Working Papers and Methodological Briefs are available at  
<http://www.ces-eeec.org/working>

This methodological brief compares the socio-demographic characteristics and political attitudes of the four waves of the 2011 Canadian Election Study (CES). It also compares the socio-demographic characteristics of the CES with 2006 Canadian census data.<sup>1</sup> Coding information<sup>2</sup> and question wording are available in the Appendix.

Table 1 (below) illustrates the distributions for Gender, Education, Age, Income and Minority Status. The campaign (1<sup>st</sup>) wave somewhat over-represents females, with almost 56% respondents female, compared to 52% in the general population. Moving along the following waves of the CES, the proportion of female respondents decreases, until the web-wave approximates the census levels with 52% female.

In terms of the age distributions, the CES tends to under-represent younger individuals and over-represent older individuals. In the first wave, 14% of respondents are between the ages of 18-34, whereas this age group constitutes 28% of the general population. The first wave does a better job representing individuals between the ages of 35 and 54, only under-representing them by around 4%. Finally, around half of the campaign wave participants are 55 years of age or older, which is 18% higher than the census proportion of 32%. In the subsequent three waves of the CES, fewer respondents fall in the 18-34 age category, and more in the 55+ age category, with the middle category of 35-54 remaining relatively constant.

Before unpacking the education descriptives, it should be noted the education variables vary slightly between the CES and the Census. The age of the sample in the CES begins at 18, whereas the age of the sample for the Census begins at 15. Thus comparisons with Census level data should be made with caution, as the Census is likely skewed towards lower levels of education, since younger respondents are more likely to fall into the high school or less category. Thus it may exaggerate how under-representative the CES is of lower education individuals. Keeping this in mind, the first wave of the CES under-represents individuals with a high school education or less by roughly 15%, and over-represents individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher by the same margin. More educated respondents are also more likely to stay on for subsequent waves of the CES. By the web wave half of respondents have at least a bachelor's degree, whereas 17% have high school or less. Throughout all four waves, the proportion of respondents with college or some university stays stable around 32%, which is the same as the Census proportion.

Trends in household income are somewhat similar to education. In the campaign wave of the CES, individuals with a household income of less than \$29 999 account for 16% of respondents, whereas in the census they account for 26%. The other three income categories come close to the Census values, although there is a slightly higher proportion of respondents with a \$90 000+

---

<sup>1</sup> 2011 National Household Survey data is not completely released, so the 2006 Census is used. \*Note: National Household Survey statistics will be available August 14<sup>th</sup> for all of these variables.

<sup>2</sup> For all variables, responses of don't know or refused are recoded as missing values. So the N values listed in the tables are for the entire sample for each wave, as the number of missing values varies for each response.

household income in the Campaign wave compared to the census. Throughout the subsequent three waves, we see attrition in the two lower income categories, with the 0-29 000 category falling by half to 8% of respondents and the 30 000-59 000 category falling slightly from 31% in the first wave to 26% in the web wave. There are no real changes in the proportion of individuals with 60 000 to 89 000 household income, whereas the proportion of individuals in the 90 000+ category increases in each wave.

The Canadian Election Study Campaign Wave does reasonable well at representing minorities. Almost 15% of respondents in the 1<sup>st</sup> wave identify as immigrants, compared to 20% in the Census. Almost 24% reside in Quebec, and according to the 2006 census almost 24% of Canadians reside in Quebec. Over the course of the subsequent three waves, the proportion of immigrant respondents remains stable, increasing slightly to almost 16%. Conversely, the proportion of respondents from Quebec decreases substantially, from almost 24% in the Campaign Survey to 13% in the Web Survey.

Turning to political attitudes, Table 2 (below) illustrates the distributions for political interest, political duty, party identification, economic attitudes, political knowledge and satisfaction with democracy for each of the four waves of the study.

The mean interest in the federal election (on a 0-10 scale) for the Campaign Period Study is 6.37, which increases along each wave to 7.05 in the Web Study. In the Campaign Period, 71.34% of respond “yes” to the question that asks if voting is a duty. This percentage increases in each wave, and by the fourth wave fully 84% state that they believe voting is a duty.

In terms of party identification, there are two clear trends across the waves. In each subsequent wave, there is a higher proportion of Liberal partisans, increasing from 26% in the Campaign wave to 31% in the Web wave. Blocs supports tend to be fewer and fewer, declining from 9% in the first wave to 7% in the final wave. None of the other categories of partisanship change much over the course of the four waves. However, there is attrition among non-partisans. In the campaign wave, 21% do not identify with a political party, and this decreases to 16% by the web wave.

Economic attitudes are captured through opinions on personal and corporate taxes. Over the course of the four waves, more respondents think personal taxes should be kept about the same. In the first wave 54% hold this opinion, and in the fourth wave 64% hold this opinion. Conversely, over the course of the four waves fewer and fewer respondents believe personal taxes should be decreased. In the campaign wave nearly 41% hold this opinion, and in the fourth wave 30.81% hold this opinion. There are no real changes in the proportion who think personal taxes should be increased. On the other hand, attitudes about corporate taxes are much more stable throughout the four waves. There is a slight increase in individuals who think corporate taxes should be increased, and a slight decrease in individuals who think they should be decreased.

Political knowledge is measured by how many of the following the respondent correctly identifies: their premier, the finance minister and the former Governor General. Individuals with

higher political knowledge are more likely to stay on in subsequent rounds of the CES. In the first wave, nearly 24% answer all three correctly, whereas nearly 37% of the fourth wave respondents do so. On the other hand, almost 19% of the respondents in the first wave do not get any questions correct, whereas only 8% of the fourth wave cannot identify any of the three individuals.

Finally, satisfaction with the way democracy works in Canada is fairly stable over the course of the CES, with percentages only changing by a few points. There are more individuals who are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with democracy in each subsequent wave, and less individuals who are not satisfied at all.

In sum, the Canadian Election Study does a reasonably good job at representing gender, immigrants, 25-54 year olds, individuals with college/some university education, and with incomes between 30 000 and 89 999. Nevertheless, on average, the CES tends to attract and retain respondents who are older, from outside Quebec, more educated and wealthier than the rest of the Canadian population. These discrepancies are further exasperated as individuals with the aforementioned characteristics are more likely to stay on for subsequent waves of the study. In terms of attitudes, the CES seems to retain respondents who are more liberal, both in term of partisanship and economic attitudes, as well as more knowledgeable about and interested in politics. Respondents who stay on for additional waves after the campaign study also see voting as a duty, and are slightly more satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada.

It is also worth noting that substantial changes in the distributions of sociodemographics and attitudes do not really occur between the first and second waves of the CES. Instead, it is often between the post-election study and the mail back study, and/or between the mail-back study and the web-wave study where notable changes occur. For example, the proportion of university educated respondents increase by roughly 1.5% between the first and second wave, but by 6% between the second and third, and by another 9% between the third and fourth. Given that the campaign period and post election study are both telephone interviews, it makes sense that respondent retention is higher. Conversely, the mail back study and the web wave require much more motivation on behalf of the respondent.

Table 1. Sociodemographics, by Wave

	Census 2006	1st Wave CPS	2nd Wave PES	3rd Wave MBS	4th Wave WEB
<u>Gender</u>					
Female	51.58	55.55	54.40	53.92	51.63
<u>Age</u>					
18-34 years	27.97	14.05	12.64	7.14	8.76
35-54 years	39.63	35.42	34.96	29.39	34.12
55+ years	32.40	50.53	52.40	63.47	57.12
<u>Education</u>					
High School Education	49.30	35.25	32.85	27.74	17.25
College/Some University	32.56	32.54	33.35	31.97	33.59
University	18.14	32.21	33.80	40.29	49.15
<u>Income</u>					
0-29 999	25.73	16.32	15.42	13.69	8.51
30 000-59 999	29.70	30.67	29.50	30.59	25.80
60 000-89 999	20.47	23.28	23.99	23.53	25.94
90 000+	24.10	29.74	31.08	32.19	39.74
<u>Minority Status</u>					
Immigrant	19.80	14.55	14.04	14.68	15.91
Quebec	23.87	23.91	21.33	16.85	13.30
~N		4 308	3362	1567	767

Table 2. Attitudes, by Wave

	1st Wave CPS	2nd Wave PES	3rd Wave MBS	4th Wave WEB
<u>Political Interest</u>				
Mean Interest in Election (0-10)	6.37	6.54	6.94	7.05
<u>Political Duty</u>				
Voting is a duty	71.34	73.64	80.41	84.01
<u>Party Identification</u>				
Liberal	25.74	26.20	27.90	31.41
Conservative	28.68	29.85	30.29	28.59
NDP	11.19	11.29	12.18	11.68
Bloc	8.83	8.30	7.72	6.98
Green	2.52	2.77	2.93	3.22
Other	1.95	2.17	2.60	2.28
None	21.08	19.41	16.38	15.84
<u>Economic Attitudes</u>				
Personal taxes should be...				
Increased	5.65	5.56	4.98	5.44
Kept about the same	53.69	55.89	60.20	63.75
Decreased	40.66	38.55	34.82	30.81
Corporate taxes should be...				
Increased	46.58	47.26	48.95	49.80
Kept about the same	41.52	41.95	41.53	40.19
Decreased	11.91	10.78	9.52	10.01
<u>Political Knowledge</u>				
3 of 3 questions correct	23.72	25.67	32.50	36.90
2 of 3 questions correct	33.94	34.62	36.50	37.42
1 of 3 questions correct	23.51	23.23	20.42	17.60
0 of 3 questions correct	18.83	16.48	10.72	8.08
<u>Satisfaction with Democracy</u>				
Very satisfied	13.67	13.99	15.25	14.83
Somewhat satisfied	51.47	51.88	50.58	54.33
Not very satisfied	23.66	23.08	24.35	23.23
Not satisfied at all	11.20	11.05	9.82	7.61
~N	4 308	3362	1567	767

## Appendix

### *Sociodemographic Coding*

Item	Census 2006	Canadian Election Study
<u>Education</u>		
High School or Less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No certificate, diploma or degree</li> <li>- High School certificate or equivalent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No schooling</li> <li>- Some elementary school</li> <li>- Completed elementary school</li> <li>- Some secondary/high school</li> <li>- Completed secondary/high school</li> </ul>
College/Some University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma</li> <li>- College, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma</li> <li>- University certificate or diploma below bachelor level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some technical, community college</li> <li>- Completed technical, community college</li> <li>- Some university</li> </ul>
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- University certificate, diploma or degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bachelor's degree</li> <li>- Master's degree</li> <li>- Professional degree or doctorate</li> </ul>

### *Attitudes Question Wording*

Item	Question
<u>Political Interest</u>	How interested are you in this FEDERAL election? Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no interest and 10 a great deal of interest.
<u>Political Duty</u>	People have different views about voting. For some, voting is a DUTY. They feel that they should vote in every election. For others, voting is a CHOICE. They only vote when they feel strongly about that election. For you, is voting FIRST AND FOREMOST a Duty or a Choice?
<u>Party Identification</u>	In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a: Liberal, Conservative, N.D.P, Bloc Québécois, Green Party, or none of these?
<u>Personal Taxes</u>	Should PERSONAL INCOME TAXES be increased, decreased, or kept about the same as now?
<u>Corporate Taxes</u>	Should CORPORATE INCOME TAXES be increased, decreased, or kept about the same as now?
<u>Political Knowledge</u>	We would like to see how widely some political figures are. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you happen to recall the name of your Premier?</li> <li>- And the name of the federal Minister of Finance?</li> <li>- And the name of the Governor-General of Canada who just finished her term last December?</li> </ul>
<u>Satisfaction with Democracy</u>	On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all with the way democracy works in Canada?