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## **On the Backs of Immigrants? Conservative Politics and New Canadian Voters**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores whether and the degree to which the Conservative Party's success in the 2011 federal election was driven by the support of new Canadians. We focus especially on the Greater Toronto region because (a) 20 of the 23 seats gained in the 2011 election were located there, and (b) 41 per cent of foreign-born Canadians live there. Of the 20 new Conservative seats, eight were majority-immigrant and none had less than 30 per cent immigrant population. Similarly, three of the six seats picked up by the NDP were majority immigrant and none had less than 35 per cent immigrant population. Our analysis uses individual-level survey data from several waves of the Canadian Elections Study and aggregate socio-demographic Census data and 2011 election returns to make individual and ecological inferences regarding immigrant voting behaviour.

Our findings suggest that the Conservative Party enjoyed marked gains among immigrant voters in the 2011 election, and that these gains appear to have come largely at the expense of the Liberal Party. Taken together, this evidence suggests that the party's ethnic outreach strategy may have indeed borne fruit in 2011. The NDP also appears to have benefited from the support of a different segment of support that overlaps with the immigrant electorate: visible minorities. Our paper highlights the growing importance of immigrant voters in one of the most politically consequential regions in the Canadian federation.

## Introduction

The new Conservative Party was formed in 2003 and contested its first general election in 2004. The earlier failure of the Reform Party and its successor, the Canadian Alliance, to make headway in Ontario during the 1990s and early 2000s was based in part on the parties' failure to connect with immigrant voters who form a significant proportion of the electorate in southern Ontario and especially the Greater Toronto region, which is host to fully one in six federal ridings. The May 2011 election was a breakthrough. For the first time since 1988, the Conservatives won a substantial number of seats in immigrant-dense metropolitan areas that previously had supported the Liberals.

Since 2003 the Conservatives have put substantial effort into wooing immigrant voters, especially in the large metropolitan areas where most of them live (Marwah, Triadafilopoulos and White, forthcoming). The Conservative Party and some media commentators claim that the 2011 victory demonstrated the effectiveness of the party's aggressive “ethnic outreach” strategy (Friesen and Sher, 2011; Kenney, 2011). We may think of Conservative efforts to recruit immigrant voters as the “supply side” of the story.

There is also anecdotal evidence that recent immigrants, many of whom come from societies known for their social conservatism, may be attracted to parties offering more conservative policy platforms. Indeed, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney (2011) crowed that the 2011 election marked “the creation of a new, durable and diverse Conservative electorate” based on shared “conservative values”: an emphasis on entrepreneurialism, personal responsibility, market-based rather than government solutions to policy problems, and respect for traditional family structures. We can think of this as the “demand side.”

Our paper probes the degree to which the Conservative Party's success in the 2011 federal election was based on the support of immigrant voters. We draw on several sources of information and combine the method of ecological inference with individual-level analysis of survey data and qualitative research. We confirm that the road to the Conservative's majority government ran through several of the most culturally diverse and politically important parts of Canada — particularly parts of the Greater Toronto region that had long been Liberal Party strongholds. (Indeed, the Conservative majority was achieved by picking up 23 seats nationwide; 20 of these were in the Greater Toronto region.) Yet, we also note that the NDP made gains in immigrant-dense ridings that had also long been the preserve of the Liberal Party. This suggests, *pace* Kenney, that there is no “immigrant vote” per se, but rather a diverse array of new Canadian voters whose preferences may differ according to their wealth/status and ethnicity/race.

Party politics in Canada is unique. Unlike all other industrialized democracies, electoral success at the federal level depends on reaching out to immigrants, which prevents parties from using concerns about immigration as a wedge issue with which to mobilize voters (Bale, 2008;

Hopkins, 2009; Triadafilopoulos and Zaslove, 2006). This is especially interesting as regards the Conservatives, as they alone among center-right parties in the western democracies have sought to craft a distinctively conservative, pro-immigration position with which to reach out to new Canadian voters. While not conclusive, our paper offers evidence that their strategy may indeed be working. This spells trouble for the federal Liberal Party. The party had come to rely on the support of immigrants, especially in Greater Toronto and in Québec, in winning elections through the 1990s and early 2000s (Bilodeau and Kanji, 2010; Blais, 2005; Gerber, 2006; Harrell, forthcoming). In the absence of such support, the party’s fortunes moving forward are likely bleak. The new Canadian “Liberal partisan” voter (Bilodeau and Kanji, 2011), who faithfully delivered seats to the federal Liberal Party in election after election has been eclipsed by a more variegated voter, whose allegiance *en bloc* cannot be taken for granted.

### *Outline of the Paper*

Our paper proceeds in four parts. First, we outline the implications of immigrants’ concentration in — and within — metropolitan areas for parties’ electoral strategies and political attitude formation. Second, we provide an overview of electoral change since 2004 in the Greater Toronto region, demonstrating that the Conservatives and NDP have eroded Liberal support in immigrant-dense ridings.

Third, we present an analysis of whether, and how much, immigrants’ voting behaviour played a role in driving these results. We do so using two techniques. To begin, we analyzed immigrants’ political preferences as recorded in the Canadian Election Study, the most important national individual-level survey of voting intentions and political attitudes. Then, we employed a GIS-based ecological analysis to improve understanding of the relationship between aggregate voting behaviour and socio-demographic characteristics at the neighbourhood scale.

The analysis points to Conservative success on the “supply” and the “demand” side — the party appears to have both actively reached out to and attracted immigrant voters. At the same time, we are careful to note that there has not been a wholesale shift away from the Liberal Party to the Conservatives. Rather, increased competition for the support of new Canadian voters has made the traditional battleground ridings in the Greater Toronto region all the more competitive.

## **1. Immigrant Political Behaviour in Canada**

### *The Geography of Canadian Immigration*

It is a truism that Canada is a nation of immigrants, and increasingly so. In absolute and relative terms, the foreign born population in Canada is about as high as it has ever been.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, 21.3

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census*. <<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/pdf/97-557-XIE2006001.pdf>> p. 7.

per cent of Canadians were international migrants, up from 16.2 per cent only two decades previously (Kobayashi et al., 2012: xv). Canada’s citizenship regime, which features a short (three-year) residency requirement and is tolerant of dual citizenship, has been highly successful at transforming immigrants into Canadians: 94.1% of foreign-born who arrived before 1961 are citizens, as are 89.1% of those arrived between 1961 and 1981, and 84.1% of those who arrived in the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Research also shows that new Canadians vote at the same rate as citizens born in Canada (Anderson and Black, 2008: 56–57). This means that relatively newly arrived and established foreign-born citizens form a key segment of the electorate — one that was largely owned by the Liberals from the 1960s through the early 2000s, but which is now in play.

The vast majority of immigrants live in urban areas. Over two-thirds live in Canada’s three largest metropolitan areas: Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver, and over 40 per cent of the national immigrant population resides in the Toronto-Hamilton-Oshawa region. Since the 1970s, an increasing number of foreign-born residents are also “visible minorities” — Statistics Canada’s term for “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” Approximately 45 per cent of Canada’s visible minority population resides in Greater Toronto. (See **Table 1.**)

The populations of these metropolitan areas are correspondingly diverse. Approximately 40 per cent of the population in Greater Toronto and Greater Vancouver is foreign-born, and about 20 per cent in Montréal.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, about 40 per cent of Greater Toronto and Greater Vancouver residents are visible minorities, versus about 12 per cent in Montréal.

While the immigrant and visible minority populations are not identical, they strongly overlap (Bilodeau and Kanji 2010). Given that virtually all of the increase in the Toronto CMA population since 1971 has been of people of non-European ancestry, it is reasonable to use visible minorities as a proxy for recent immigration.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census*. <<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/pdf/97-557-XIE2006001.pdf>> p. 23. See Bloemraad (2006) for a sophisticated effort at explaining Canada’s uniquely high naturalization rate.

<sup>3</sup> Greater Toronto is defined as the Toronto, Hamilton, and Oshawa census metropolitan areas (CMAs). Greater Vancouver is defined as the Vancouver and Abbotsford CMAs.

<sup>4</sup> Between 1971 and 2001, persons of non-European ancestry accounted for 85 per cent of the net increase in the Toronto CMA population (calculated from Ornstein, 2006: table 1.2).

**Table 1: The metropolitan geography of immigration**

Region (CMAs)	Population 2006	%	Immigrant pop. 2006	%	Immigrants arrived 2001–06	%	Visible minority pop.	%
Toronto-Hamilton-Oshawa	6,083,595	19.5%	2,540,715	41.1%	472,860	42.6%	2,292,055	45.2%
Vancouver-Abbotsford	2,254,605	7.2%	868,335	14.0%	157,645	14.4%	911,015	18.0%
Montreal	3,635,571	11.6%	740,355	12.0%	165,345	14.9%	165,345	3.3%
<i>Three regions total</i>	<i>11,973,771</i>	<i>38.3%</i>	<i>4,149,405</i>	<i>67.1%</i>	<i>795,850</i>	<i>71.7%</i>	<i>3,368,415</i>	<i>66.5%</i>
Canada	31,241,030	100.0%	6,186,950	100.0%	1,109,980	100.0%	5,068,090	100.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

### *The Political Implications of Immigrant Residential Concentration*

Within metropolitan areas, many immigrants, and especially those recently arrived, tend to settle in spatially proximate communities. In an aggregate analysis of the ten largest Canadian CMAs, Darden and Fong (2012) show that the Latin Americans, South Asians, West Asians (principally Iranians), Chinese, and Filipino immigrants tend to be more or less segregated from the Caucasian population. Clustered settlement in immigrant enclaves provides a means of adjustment for new immigrants through community-driven self-help organizations and the provision of settlement services by governments (Hiebert, 1999; Murdie, 2008; Murdie and Skop, 2012; Murdie and Teixeira, 2003). (Whether residential segregation is transitory or permanent — i.e., whether concentrations are gateways to social and geographical mobility or ghettos — is the subject of considerable study. While the nature of segregation may have long-term implications for political incorporation, it is not analyzed here.) The overlapping geographies of immigrant and visible minority settlement in Greater Toronto reveal significant concentrations, especially in the outer suburban areas of the City of Toronto. (See **Figures 1 and 2.**)

The spatial concentration of immigrant communities has two implications for party strategy and political behaviour. First, the concentration of immigrant populations may lead them to be crucial voting blocs in particular ridings (Black and Hicks, 2008: 248). Canada’s single-member plurality (SMP) electoral system generally rewards regionally concentrated support at the expense of broad diffuse support, and particularly at the expense of support that is spread evenly across the country (Cairns 1968). Given the regional concentration of immigrant populations in Canada, the potential pay-off for targeting immigrant-dense ridings magnified by the electoral system. As SMP systems reward the first-place parties with all the spoils (making a second place finish largely inconsequential), even small swings in the vote preferences of regionally concentrated groups may translate into a relatively large swing in the seat share of competing parties (Linzer, 2012; Rogowski and Kayser, 2002). In short, parties may reap a high electoral return on investment by concentrating recruitment efforts on particular immigrant groups.

This is especially salient in the Greater Toronto region. Eighteen of the 53 ridings that overlap with the Toronto, Hamilton, and Oshawa CMAs have majority immigrant populations and immigrants make up between 30 and 50 per cent in another 20 ridings. Similarly, 16 of the 53 ridings have majority-visible-minority populations, while visible minorities comprise between 30–50 per cent of the population in 14 more.<sup>5</sup>

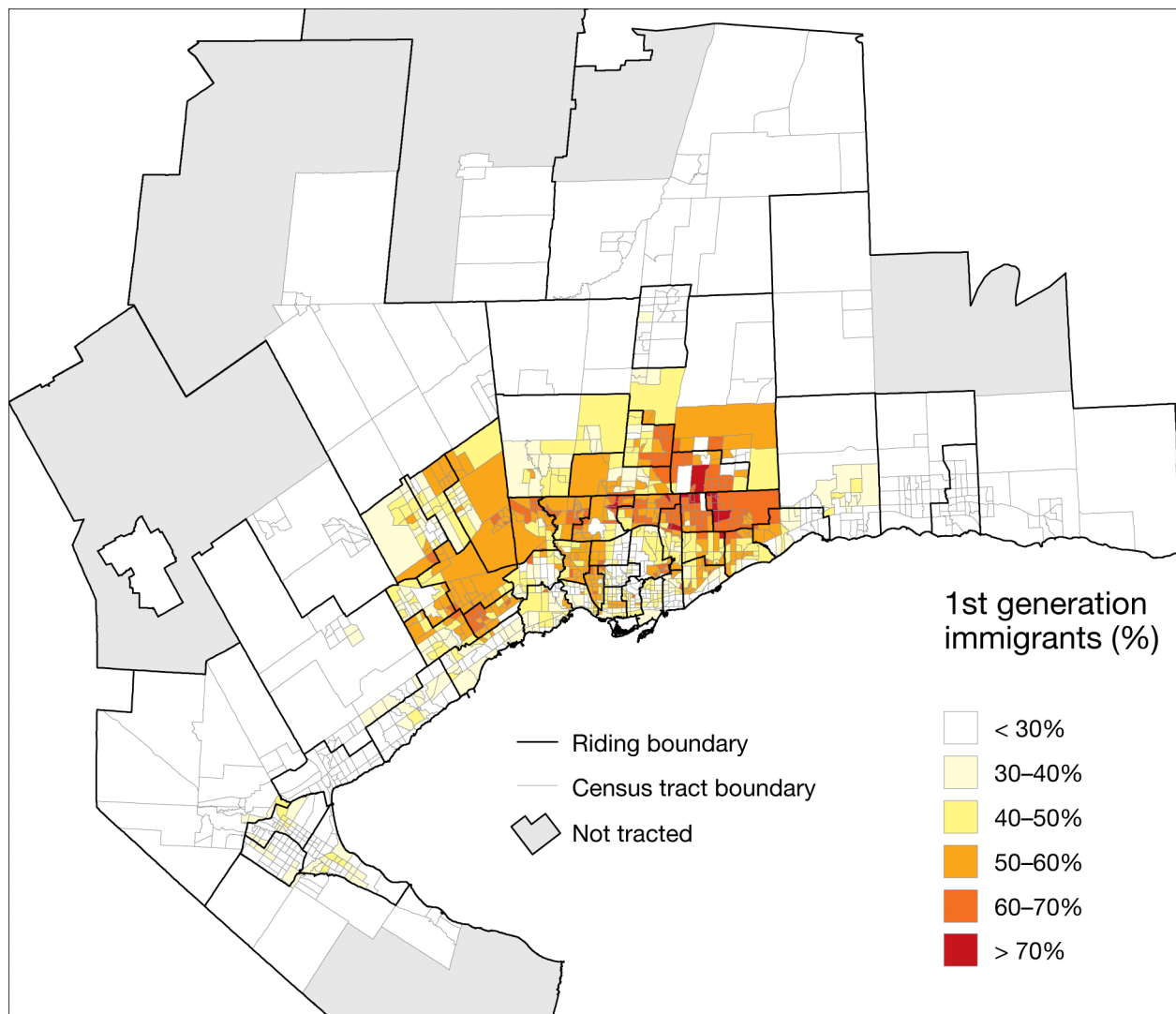
Second, the spatial concentration of immigrants aids voter recruitment by parties. The concentration of immigrants sharing a common language and cultural origins permits the formation of community-oriented institutions such as social clubs, self-help organizations, religious organizations, and media outlets (Lapp, 1999). Political parties may cultivate the leadership of these institutions with the expectation that they may favourably influence voters’ political opinions, raise campaign funds, and aid election-day voter mobilization efforts. Accepting that political attitudes and opinions are in part socially constructed through interpersonal interaction (Gamson, 1992; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987; Walsh, 2004), we hypothesize that the influence of community leaders and own-language media will be especially strong in communities where the populations are not yet fully incorporated into mainstream social and economic life and lack facility in the majority language. As Bloemraad (2006) has demonstrated, the support of such institutions through Canada’s policy of official multiculturalism has enhanced political participation among immigrants and ethnic minorities in Canada.

In short, the political geography of Canadian immigration, which features high concentrations of politically efficacious immigrants in electorally salient regions, in combination with a very efficient citizenship regime and Canada’s SMP electoral system, creates incentives for all parties to court new Canadian voters. The question is whether the Conservatives have succeeded in competing for this important segment of the Canadian population.

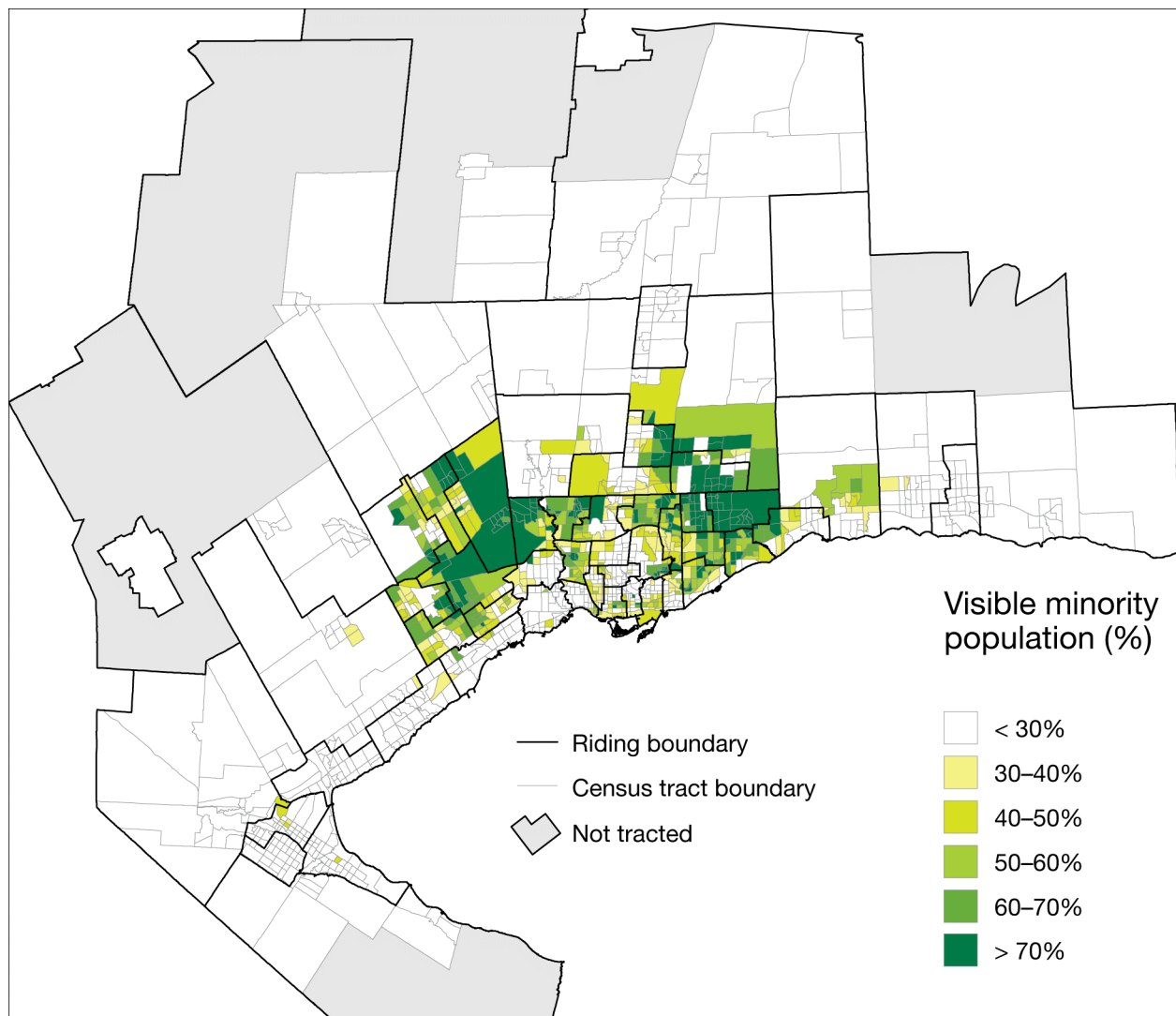
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<sup>5</sup> Note that the portions of the ridings contained within the CMAs, and hence are covered by census tracts, account for 96 per cent of the population of the 53 ridings.

**Figure 1: Location of first-generation immigrants over age 15 in Greater Toronto by census tract, 2006**



**Figure 2: Location of visible minority residents in Greater Toronto by census tract, 2006**



### *The Conservative Ethnic Outreach Strategy*

Media accounts suggest that the Conservatives have taken full advantage of the spatial concentration of immigrants. Their strategy comprises two elements. As noted, the first is an aggressive ethnic outreach strategy that includes frequent visits to key ridings by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Jason Kenney (Diebel, 2011; Friesen and Sher, 2011; Wente, 2011). During the 2011 election, Kenney was often flanked by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who praised his largely immigrant audiences’ devotion to Canada and commitment to hard work and traditional values (Geddes, 2011; Weese, 2011), Harper also took the opportunity to extol his passion for cricket and don religious attire during these stops.

The Conservatives have also drawn on members of their caucus from ethnic groups (e.g. Sikhs, Chinese) to craft television commercials in the groups’ languages. These commercials were aired



on multicultural broadcasters such as Omni TV. The Conservatives have used the ethnic media to get their message to their intended audiences without having it filtered through the national news media. Indeed, Stephen Harper’s reluctance to engage with members of the national media while on the campaign trail in 2011 was offset by his very cordial and generous interviews with members of the ethnic media. Thus “when Harper made his second swing through the Toronto area [on April 6], he allowed two sit-down television interviews: one with the Chinese-Canadian broadcaster Fairchild TV, the other with Omni Italian news” (Friesen, Chase and Bailey, 2011). Harper used these occasions to hammer home the message that the party had been sending since 2004: the Conservatives were a pro-immigrant party that stood for the interests of new Canadians and could be trusted to follow through on commitments (such as reducing the immigration “landing fee”) that the Liberals had promised but not delivered.

Ethnic outreach is also pursued via candidate selection<sup>6</sup> During the 2004 campaign, the Conservatives ran 29 visible minority candidates — more than any other party (Bird, 2005). During the 2011 campaign, Liberal Byron Wilfert’s riding in Richmond Hill (which Wilfert had held for five terms) went to the Conservatives, who ran the former head of the Greek Community of Toronto, Kostas Menegakis.<sup>7</sup> In Brampton-Springdale, Conservative candidate Parm Gill hosted several visits from Kenney during the period between his close loss to Liberal Ruby Dhalla in 2008 and the 2011 election. Indeed, Gill was accused of using his connection to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to assist local residents in obtaining visas, thus doing what in effect amounted to constituency work (Geddes, 2011). The Conservatives’ efforts to gain the support of the Brampton-Springdale’s Sikh community took on a transnational dimension in 2009, when Stephen Harper visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar during his short trip to India (Grewal, 2011).

At the same time, the Conservatives have mollified their non-immigrant base, particularly in Western Canada, by emphasizing “law and order” and a territorially rooted patriotism in their immigration and citizenship policies. Refugees, illegal immigrants and human smugglers have borne the brunt of the Conservatives’ law-and-order initiatives, while citizenship policy — and naturalization in particular — has provided the Conservatives with a means of demonstrating their patriotic bona fides. Examples of the latter include the revision of Canada’s citizenship guide for naturalization candidates and curbs on the passage of citizenship to children born outside of Canada (Marwah, Triadafilopoulos and White, forthcoming). The Conservatives’ strategy in this regard is clear: win enough of the immigrant vote where it counts (i.e. in closely contested ridings) without losing the support of non-immigrant Conservative voters whose opinions on the desirability of immigration and multiculturalism are lukewarm (Reitz, 2001: 19–20; W.W., 2011).

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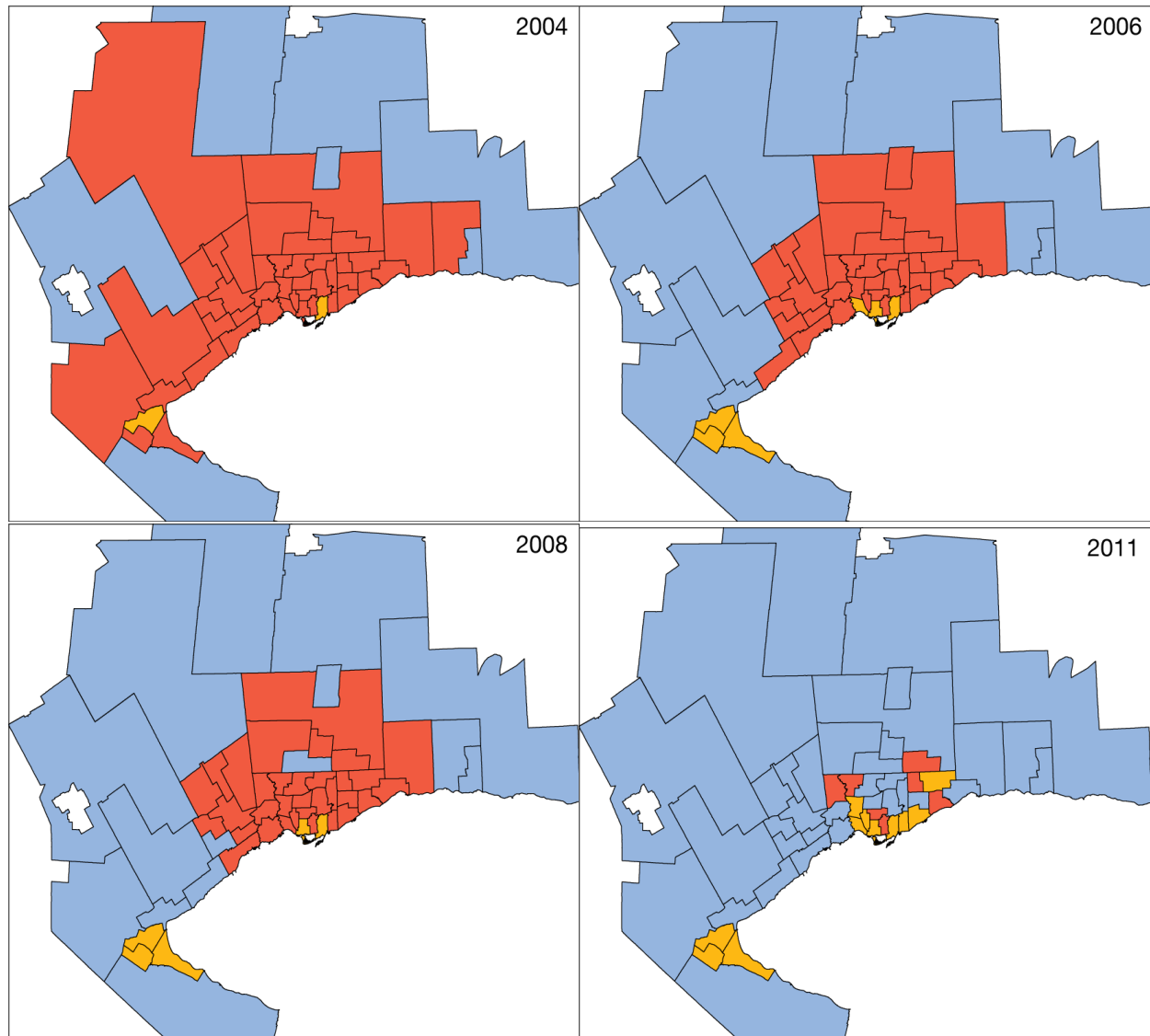
<sup>6</sup> The mechanics of “ethnic outreach” are underappreciated and understudied. A proper survey would require analyses of ethnocultural media sources and, perhaps, access to Mr. Kenney’s schedule, which is purported to be filled with countless visits to ethnic associations and media, especially in the Greater Toronto region.

<sup>7</sup> Co-author Triadafilopoulos, who lived in the riding and still has a large network of family and friends there, was struck by how many Greek immigrant voters who had voted for no other party than the Liberals shifted to the Conservatives to support Menegakis.

## 2. Electoral change in Greater Toronto, 2004–11

The four elections held in 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011 show a clear pattern of Conservative and NDP encroachment on Liberal hegemony in Greater Toronto. While the Conservatives expanded from rural areas into the city, the NDP expanded outwards from central Toronto and Hamilton. The Liberals were squeezed in the middle. (See **Figure 3**.)

**Figure 3: Electoral change in Greater Toronto, 2004–2011**



Seats	2004	2006	2008	2011	Change, 2004–11
Conservative	7	11	15	35	+ 28
Liberal	44	36	33	7	– 37
NDP	2	6	5	11	+ 9

Values are for the 53 ridings that overlap with the Hamilton, Toronto, and Oshawa CMAs.

How much of this was due to change in the immigrant vote? Of the 28 seats the Conservatives gained from the Liberals between 2004 and 2011, 18 had an immigrant population of over 40 per cent, of which 10 were majority immigrant. Of the nine seats the NDP gained from the Liberals, three were majority-immigrant and two more had an immigrant population of between 40 and 50 per cent. Similarly, the Conservatives picked up nine majority-visible-minority seats from the Liberals, and the NDP two. (See **Table 2**.) In short, the Conservatives and the NDP both gained support in immigrant-dense ridings, while the Liberals lost support.

**Table 2: Majority-immigrant and majority-visible-minority seats, 2004 and 2011**

	Majority-immigrant seats			Majority-visible-minority seats		
	2004	2011	Change, 2004–11	2004	2011	Change, 2004–11
Conservatives	0	10	+ 10	0	9	+ 9
Liberals	18	5	– 13	16	5	– 11
NDP	0	3	+ 3	0	2	+ 2

### 3. Individual and Ecological Analysis

#### *Evidence from the Canada Election Study, 1997–2011*

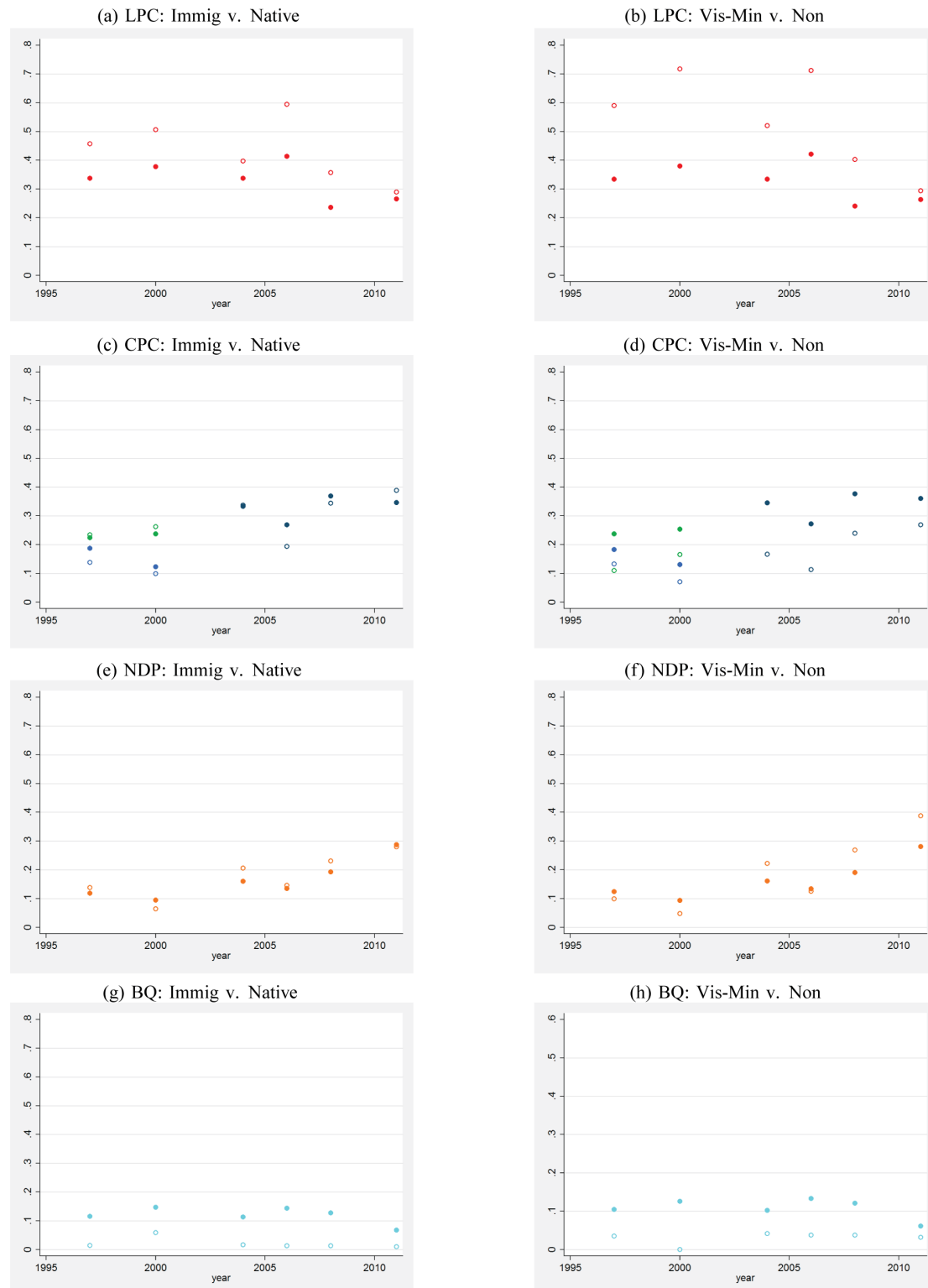
The Canadian Election Study (CES), an on-going public opinion survey of Canadian elections, is useful for examining individual-level covariates of reported party electoral support. For each Election Study since 1997 **Figure 4** summarizes the share of native-born and foreign-born respondents, as well as visible minority and non-visible minority respondents, who indicated that they had voted for each of the major political parties. The share of the vote that each party received is represented along the vertical axis, and the year of the election is represented along the horizontal axis. The share of non-immigrant and non-visible minorities voting for voting for each party is symbolized by the solid markers; the correspondent percentages for foreign-born and visible minority respondents are represented by the hollow markers.

Three critically important findings emerge from the analyses summarized in these figures. First, the advantage that the Liberal party has long enjoyed among immigrant Canadians appears to have disappeared all but completely in the 2011 federal election. As the points on the graph indicate, the Liberal party has traditionally done substantially better among immigrant respondents than among native-born respondents ( $p < .001$ ), but that advantage disappeared in the 2011 election. Liberal support among immigrants declined from about 50 percent in the elections between 1997 to 2006, to under 40 percent in the 2008 election and to less than 30 percent in the 2011 election. To be sure, support for the Liberal party has declined among immigrant and native-born alike. In recent elections, however, the cross-time collapse in Liberal support among immigrant respondents has been steeper than it has been among the native-born. The timing of the collapse — after the Conservatives gained power in 2006 — suggests that the

party's ethnic outreach strategy, combined with the advantages of incumbency, may have played a party in eroding immigrant support for the Liberals.

A second important finding is that the Conservative Party appears to have reversed altogether its electoral fortunes among immigrants. Although it is important to emphasize that these data provide very little evidence for a large difference in recent elections between immigrant and native-born Canadians in their level of support for the Conservative Party and its predecessors, the national picture may well belie important regional dynamics. Indeed, outside of Québec, Conservative parties have consistently done somewhat better among native-born respondents than among foreign-born respondents. The Liberal advantage among immigrants came predominantly at the expense of the Conservative parties outside of Québec, and at the expense of the Bloc québécois in Québec. The NDP broke even in both contexts. These data suggest that by 2011, the Conservative had overcome any disadvantage among immigrant voters. Indeed, Conservatives appear to have done somewhat better among immigrant than among native-born respondents in the 2011 election, even if this difference ( $p = .121$ ) does not quite reach the conventional threshold of statistical significance.

**Figure 4: Party support by native-born/foreign-born, visible minority/non-minority**



The Liberals lost their traditional advantage among immigrants and visible minorities between 1997 and 2011. Most of the “immigrant advantage” was lost to the Conservatives, while most of their “visible minority” advantage was lost to the NDP. Source: *Canada Election Study, 1997–2011*.

Third, however, the results suggest that somewhat different dynamics may be at play when it comes to immigrants, on the one hand, and visible minorities at the other. The Conservative outreach campaign is not targeted purely at immigrants exclusively; it is also targeted at members of minority ethnic communities, regardless of their country of birth. In one respect, the changing patterns of electoral support among visible minorities are similar to the changing patterns among immigrants. In both cases, these communities are moving away from the Liberal party—much more quickly, even, than other Canadians. As a result, the traditional Liberal advantage among both groups has disappeared altogether. In the case of immigrants, however, the decline in Liberal support occurs alongside the emergence of a Conservative advantage; whereas, in the case of visible minorities, the decline in Liberal support occurs alongside the emergence of an NDP advantage.

In sum, the individual level results from the CES are consistent with the argument that the Liberal party has traditionally enjoyed advantages among immigrant and visible-minority communities—both inside and outside Québec—but that they lost these advantages in the 2011 election, principally to the Conservative Party in the case of immigrants, and to the NDP in the case of visible minorities. Even though conservative parties have traditionally done somewhat worse among immigrant voters than among the native born, the Conservative Party appears to have rectified this pattern, and perhaps even reversed it, in the most recent election.

#### *Ecological versus individual-level analysis*

The number of valid immigrant respondents in the Canada Election Surveys is relatively small, with a high of 585 immigrant respondents in the 2004 election study, to a low of 328 in the 2006 survey. Even so, numbers of this size permit reasonably reliable inferences, and many of the trends observed in these data approach or exceed conventional levels of statistical significance. Still, the sample size is too small to generate reliable statistical inferences about spatially concentrated urban populations of immigrants and visible minorities. Ecological analysis, on the other hand, is well suited to capture refined spatial dynamics, but is vulnerable to an important manifestation of the ecological fallacy—namely, the assumption that an observed relationship between two aggregate-level characteristics is evidence for a connection between two individual-level characteristics. An observation that conservative parties do better in regions with higher proportions of immigrants, for example, does not justify the inference that immigrants are more likely to vote conservative. Indeed, it may well be the case—particularly in non-Canadian contexts—that the presence of immigrants in a region mobilizes native-born populations to vote for conservative parties. When carefully interpreted, however, and when supplemented by individual survey data and qualitative research, ecological analysis has the potential to generate reasonably reliable inferences about the political behavior of neighborhood groups at a fine geographic scale. Indeed, in the absence of massive and costly representative random samples of populations, ecological analysis is the only option available.

### *GIS-based Ecological Analysis: Methods*

To begin, election-day voting results in stationary polling stations were assigned to census tracts using a geographical information system (GIS). There were 11,642 stationary polling stations in the three CMAs in the 2011 federal election. As the 2011 National Household Survey is not yet available, the data were standardized to 2006 census tract boundaries. There are 1,254 census tracts in the three CMAs, each containing an average of 3,627 registered voters. The assignment process occurred in two steps. First, single-building polling stations were assigned to the census tract in which they are located. Second, census dissemination blocks with zero population were subtracted from the remaining polling station areas. Election returns for these polling stations were then assigned to the census tracts in which their centroid is located.<sup>8</sup> Since the boundaries of polling divisions crosscut census dissemination blocks (the smallest geography for which census data are made available) it was not possible to decompose polling station into blocks and then aggregate votes to census tracts, however as most polling station areas are completely contained within census tract boundaries, the problem of improper assignment is minimized. Mobile polling stations were omitted because they have no fixed location. Data for advance polls was omitted because they use different boundaries. The next step was to run a series of OLS regression models to assess the strength and direction of relationships between relevant variables and voting behaviour.

### *Mapping the sub-riding geography of the 2011 election in Greater Toronto*

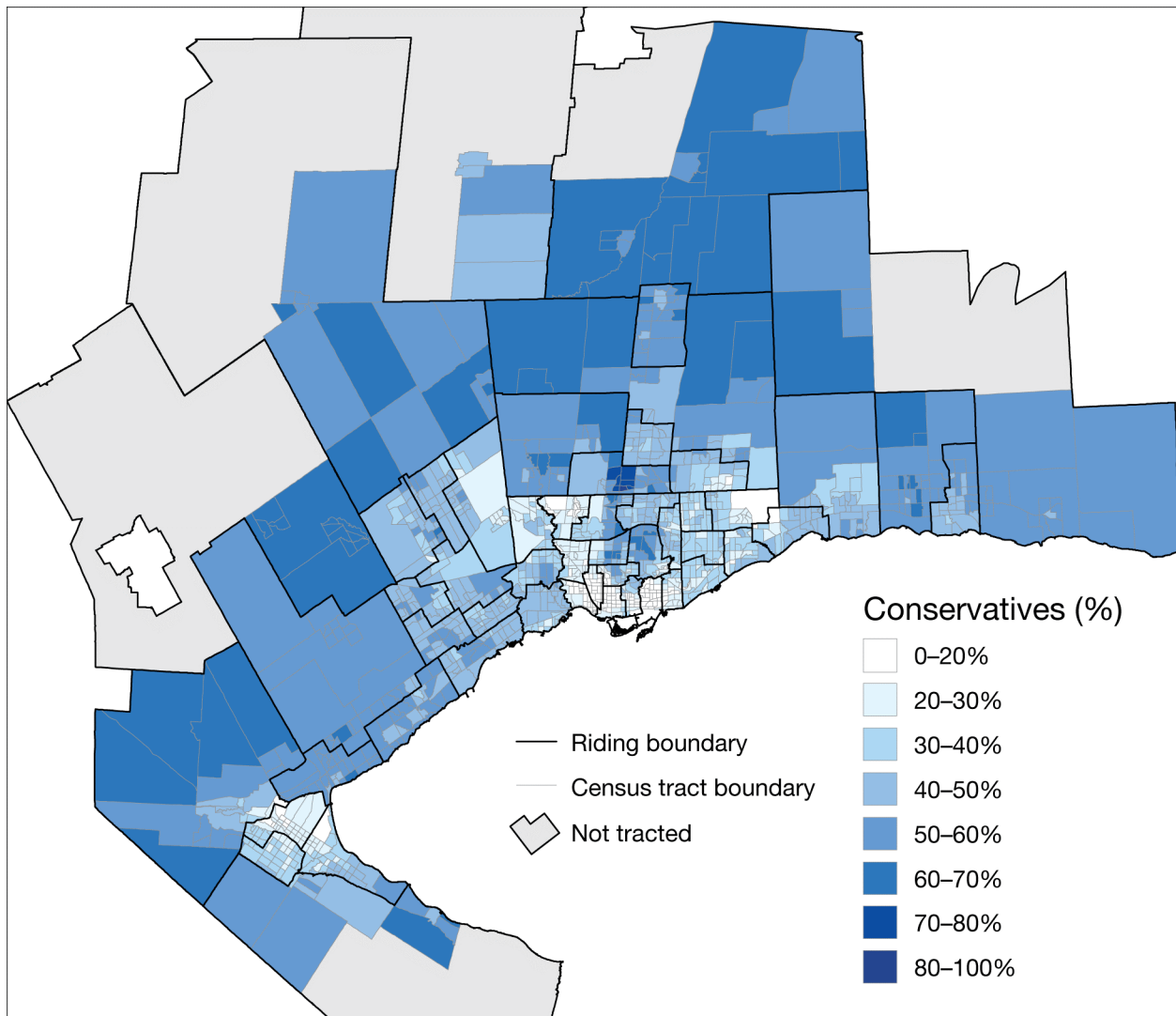
First, however, we mapped party support by census tract (See **Figures 5, 6, and 7**). While Conservative support is strongest in outer, rural areas, the party has also made inroads into the City of Toronto’s outer suburbs of Etobicoke, central North York, and Scarborough. The Conservatives are weakest in central Hamilton and a “U”-shaped zone in the City of Toronto — an area generally recognized in other studies as being home to disproportionate numbers of low-income residents, tenants, and older (mostly European) immigrants.

The NDP vote pattern is the inverse of the Conservatives’. Their support is strongest in the City of Toronto’s “U”-shaped zone, in traditional labour strongholds in Hamilton and Oshawa, and in some specific locations. (The significant concentration of support in Oshawa was not enough to tip the riding in the NDP’s favour.) The riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton (in northeast Brampton) came within a point of turning NDP due to the strong performance of Jagmeet Singh, while Rathika Sitsabaiesan won Scarborough-Rouge River. These two cases point to the potential salience of ethnic solidarity in immigrant voting behaviour. NDP support was practically non-existent everywhere else. The Liberals had diffuse support everywhere in urban and suburban areas, but little in rural areas. Viewed in conjunction with **Figures 1 and 2**, these maps suggest, but do not prove, that immigrant voting behavior played a role in improving the results of the Conservatives and NDP at the expense of the Liberals.

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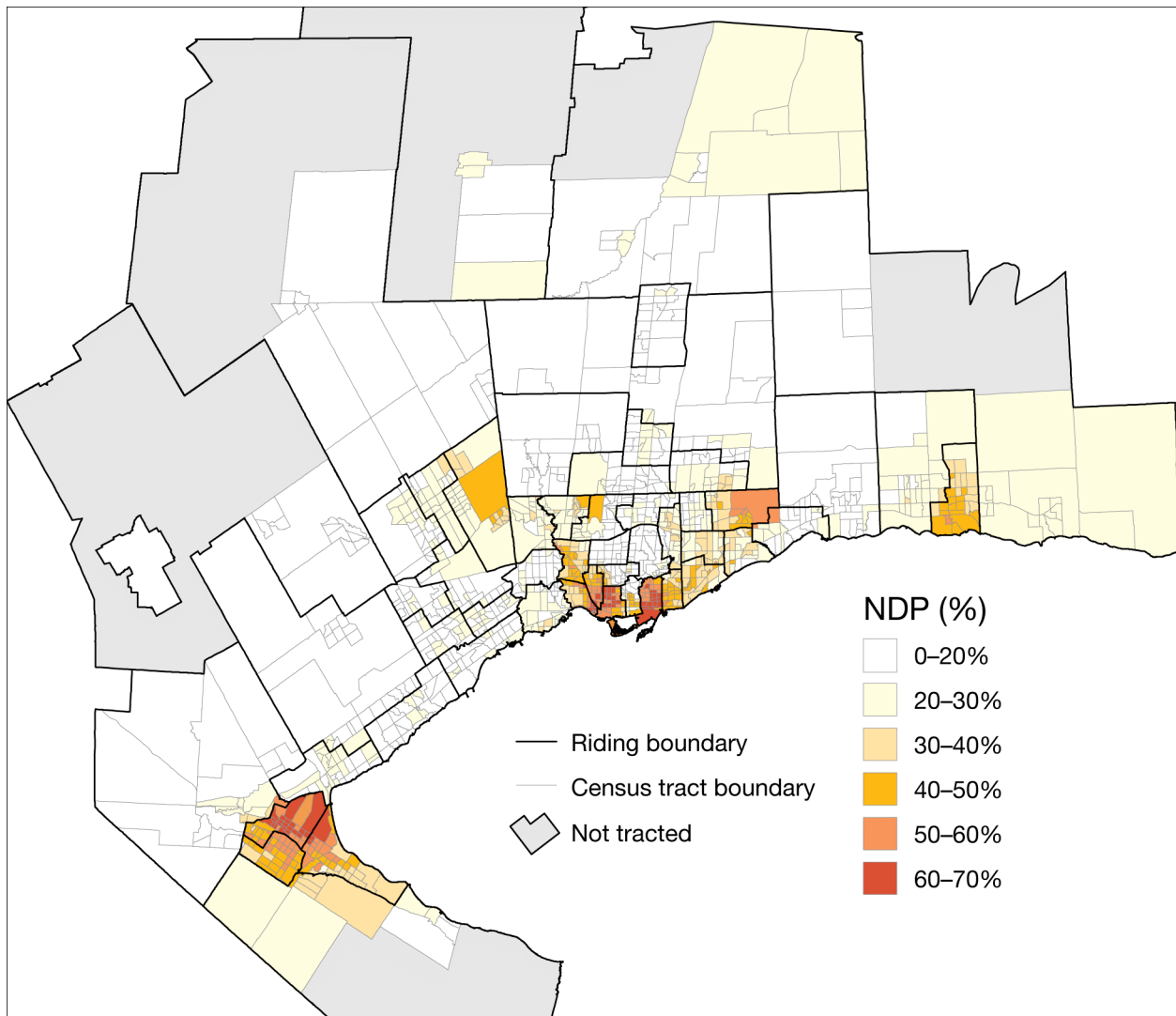
<sup>8</sup> The centroid refers to the geographic centre of a shape — in this case, the polling station area.

**Figure 5: Conservative support by census tract, 2011 election**

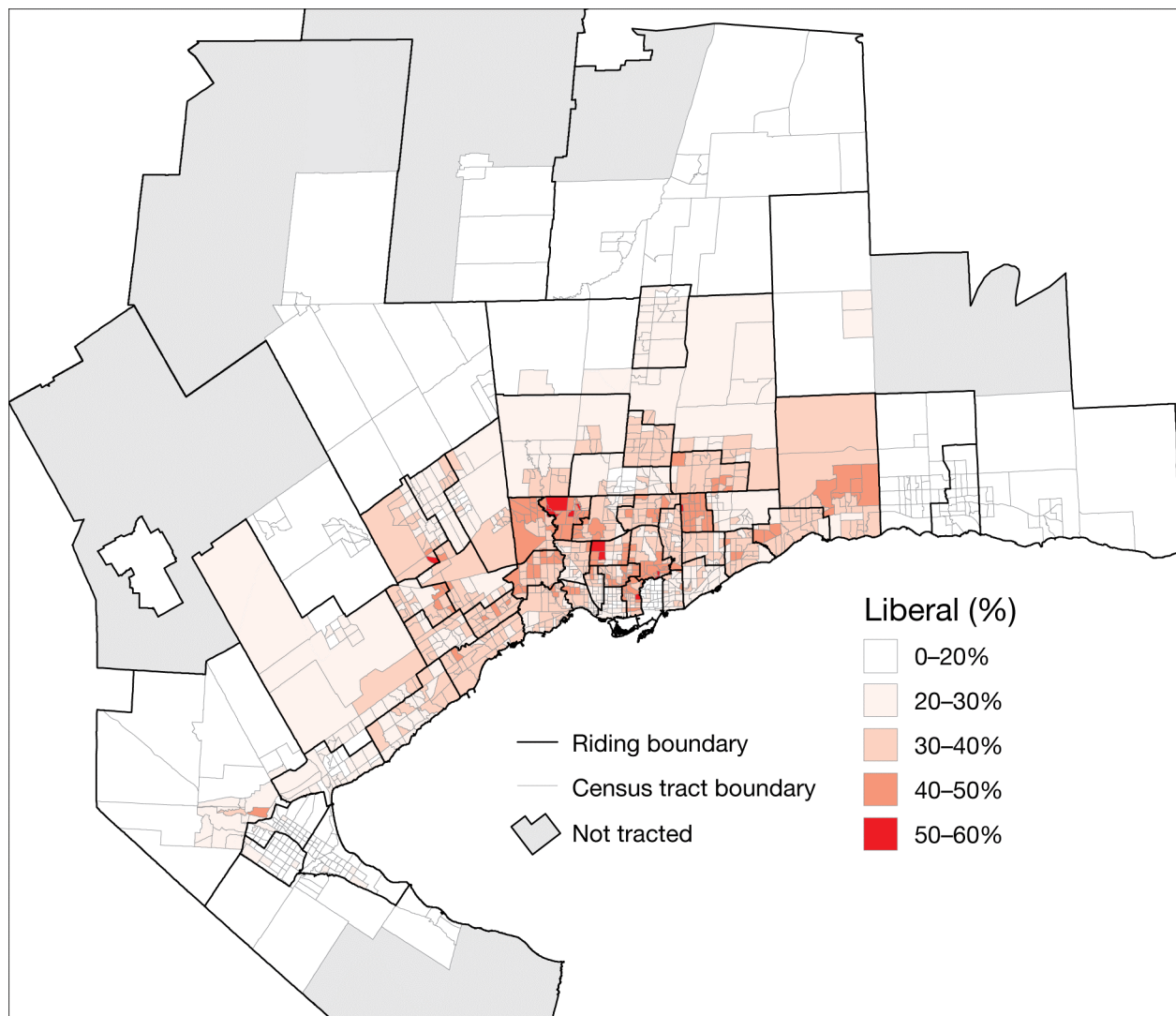




**Figure 6: NDP support by census tract, 2011 election**



**Figure 7: Liberal support by census tract, 2011 election**



### *Regression Analysis*

The next step was to look for statistical relationships between key socio-demographic characteristics and party support at the census tract level. We estimate separate regression models for the Conservative Party, the NDP and the Liberals. The dependent variable in these models is the share of the popular vote that each party received at the census tract level. The independent variables include the proportion of visible minorities and immigrants in these areas, including the total proportion of immigrants and the proportion of immigrants that arrived prior to 1990. We also control for a battery of other demographic characteristics that we expect to be associated with the size of the immigrant and visible minority populations, on the one hand, and party vote shares on the other. These control variables include the level of turnout in the area, as well as the proportion of the population with high and low levels of education, and high and low levels of household income.

This kind of ecological analysis does not permit direct inferences regarding individual-level behaviour. Even so, two important findings emerge from the analysis.

First, and reinforcing the findings of the national CES analysis, it appears that there is no monolithic immigrant vote. All things being equal, the coefficient for immigration appears to suggest that the Conservatives fare better in neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants. Yet, it is important to note that all things are not equal. Neighborhoods with high levels of immigrant populations are far more likely to have high proportions of visible minorities, as well as high proportions of immigrants that arrived before 1991, and both of these variables are associated with lower levels of Conservative support. Indeed, taken together, the Conservatives do substantially better in neighborhoods with *low* concentrations of immigrants. Nonetheless, these data suggest that the “immigrant vote” may be quite heterogenous. The NDP appears to have done somewhat better in areas with high proportions of visible minorities, while the Liberals performed best in areas with high proportions of established immigrants.

**Table 3: OLS regression models**

	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>NDP</b>	<b>Liberal</b>
Number of census tracts	1241	1248	1241
Adj. R-sq	0.69	0.50	0.57
Constant	82.43	13.52	6.12 *
Turnout (%)	−0.527 ***	0.408 ***	0.101 *
Visible minority (%)	−0.448 ***	0.308 ***	0.150 ***
1 <sup>st</sup> -gen. immigrant (%)	0.742 ***	−0.765 ***	—
Immigrants arrived pre-1991 (%)	−0.758 ***	0.354 ***	0.442 ***
Education – no certificate or diploma (%)	−1.523 ***	1.865 ***	−0.526 ***
Education – university diploma (%)	−0.844 ***	0.615 ***	0.212 ***
Household income < \$50,000 (%)	−0.118 **	—	—
Household income > \$90,000 (%)	0.478 ***	−0.574 ***	—

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Second, both in the maps and in the regression table, we find that the strength and direction of NDP support is the mirror image of Conservative support. This suggests that the two parties may not compete for the same segments of the electorate, either at the level of the individual or in the communities in which they live. Liberal support, however, appears to be a weaker version of NDP support. This suggests that the Liberals and NDP may be competing for the same segments of the immigrant vote.

## 4. Conclusion

Focusing on Greater Toronto, where almost half of all foreign-born residents live, this analysis used quantitative and qualitative methods to explore whether a shift in the behavior of the immigrant electorate was responsible for the Conservative majority victory in the 2011 federal election. The analysis confirmed that the Conservatives were newly successful in ridings containing substantial numbers of immigrants. The Conservatives were not the only party to benefit from a shift, however. The NDP also gained significant support from visible minorities.

The ecological analysis suggests the importance of social geography in structuring party strategy and electoral behaviour. The immigrant and visible minority populations are not evenly distributed across space, nor is party support. Rather, both are spatially clustered. While the ecological analysis is not definitive, it, in combination with the mapping, suggests that particular social groups favoured particular parties, either because they were targets of outreach strategies (the “supply side”) or because their political attitudes were congruent with party platforms (the “demand side”).

The dispersal and potential realignment of the new Canadian vote marks an interesting turn in Canadian politics. The 2011 election demonstrated that the votes of new Canadians are not reserved for any one party and that their support must be won through “hand-to-hand combat” in very competitive urban ridings. We expect that competition for new Canadians’ support will only increase in future elections. Indeed, shortly after the May 2011 election, the Liberal Party pledged to “get back to basics,” assigning long time Scarborough MP and expert retail politician, Jim Karygiannis, as its multiculturalism critic. Karygiannis pledged that the Liberals would get “back to making sure we know ... every nook and cranny, back to make sure that we speak to all the communities, to make sure that nobody's left out” (The Canadian Press 2011). One would expect that the NDP, keen to build on its historic success in the 2011 election, will follow suit, perhaps by elaborating its own brand of “ethnic outreach.” Thus Canada’s exceptionalism as regards the politics of immigration is likely to become even more pronounced as parties respond to the incentives generated by Canada’s distinctive political geography. In a broader global context in which immigration and multiculturalism have become sources of populist mobilization for extreme and moderate parties of the right, Canada will continue to stand out as a site of a complex but largely pro-immigration party politics.

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