

**THE HARDER THEY FALL:  
HOW THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA LOST ITS ELECTORAL  
DOMINANCE IN CANADA'S IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES**

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The Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) has formed the national government for 54 of the last 77 years. It won 19 of the 29 general elections held in the last century—a record few other parties have matched in the democratic world. In the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, several noted scholars anticipated that the Liberals would continue to dominate electoral competition (Clarkson 2005; Gidengil et al., 2006), due to the party's uncanny ability to attract large segments of the population for a disproportionate amount of support. These demographic groups included Catholics, women, visible minorities, and immigrants (Blais et al., 2002; Blais 2005; Gidengil et al., 2012). The Liberals' steady decline in support since 2000 and their defeat in the last three elections raise questions about whether the LPC continues to attract voters from groups that have been indispensable to its historic success.

This paper will examine the vote choice of foreign-born Canadians, with a view to tracking the extent to which immigrant voters defected from the Liberals between 2000 and 2011, and to identifying possible reasons for the attrition. It will do this by identifying which types of immigrants were more or less likely to vote for the Liberals in 2008—the second federal election held following the 2006 launch of the Conservatives' ethnic outreach program (Breaking Through: Building the Conservative Brand, 3 March 2011). A focus on 2008 will show whether signs of growing Liberal weakness among immigrant voters can be linked to the subgroups of immigrant voters who were targeted by the Conservatives: namely—members of certain visible minorities, religious minorities, and the religiously-inclined. As other pillars of Liberal support, namely, its advantage with Catholics and women have eroded over time, the immigrant electorate will become increasingly important to the party's efforts to reclaim its hegemony (Bilodeau & Kanji 2010; Gidengil et al., 2012).

### **Immigrants Walking Through the Red Door**

Almost a half-century ago it was remarked that at the centre of the image of Canada is its diversity—whether it be geographic, historical, or cultural (Lower 1965, 564). Moreover, it was once espied that “Canada has long been a country both of immigration and emigration” (Bothwell et al., 1989, 13)—a fact that remains true today and will continue to shape the country's demography. The foreign-born population was projected to comprise just over 21 percent of the total population by 2010. By 2031, at least one quarter of the Canadian population could be foreign born (Milan 2010). The 2006 census identified 200 distinguishable ethnic groups (Statistics Canada 2008), many of which (34) had reached a critical mass whereby they could claim more than 100,000 immigrants in their community (Statistics Canada 2008). Recent immigration has reached some of the highest levels in Canadian history—over the last half-decade Canada has admitted a quarter million immigrants annually (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2009). Furthermore, Canada is in a historically atypical position because for the first time since the Laurier era, immigration is the main driver of population growth rather than the domestic birthrate (Stevenson 2009, 283).

Although he was criticised at the time for making the statement, former Prime Minister Joe Clark's comments about Canada being a community of communities have proven to be quite veracious. The ethno-cultural composition of the Canadian population has changed significantly in recent decades. Whereas immigration was once dominated by individuals of Anglo-European stock, the removal of racially discriminatory provisions from immigration selection criteria in the 1960s opened the doors to more immigration from non-western source countries with very different political traditions (Carty 2010, 232). The increasingly heterogeneous nature of

Canadian society will have implications for elections and political parties. By 2001 more than one-half of the 308 electoral districts had a composition of 10 percent of electors who were immigrants; thirty-five percent of electoral districts had 20 percent of voters who were immigrants; and almost one-fifth of electoral districts had 30 percent of electors who were immigrants (Black 2011, 1162). In response to these transformations, political parties have tried to become more inclusive institutions to better represent the country's increasing ethnic diversity (Carty et al., 2000).

Until recently, the LPC had achieved the most success in winning support from most immigrant communities. During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Liberals were able to convince a plurality of immigrants that they were best able to represent their views and interest; that being said, accounting for newcomers' voting preferences has been a far more difficult task (Blais 2005). In the post-war period, the cities were where immigrants largely chose to settle. This was an advantage for the Grits overall, but particularly in large urban centres such as the Greater Toronto Area, Vancouver, and Montreal, where there are high concentrations of immigrants and visible minorities. These seat-rich jurisdictions gave the Grits a huge advantage when battling their rivals nationally. During the Chrétien years, the Liberals would withdraw from some rural areas and concentrate on more immigrant-rich ridings that were more likely to go their way. In British Columbia "[...] the Liberals' strategy was to focus on the metropolitan areas of Vancouver and Victoria, whose multi-ethnic composition made their party more attractive than the Canadian Alliance and whose traditional NDP voters might be persuaded to abandon ship out of fear of Stockwell Day's social values" (Clarkson 2001, 27). Although the Alliance did very well in BC during the 2000 general election the Liberals were able to win five seats, all but one of which was in Vancouver.

New immigrants to Canada—especially visible minorities—were part of the coalition that contributed to the Grits' success in the third (1963-1993) and fourth party (1993-present) systems. Blais noted that non-Europeans preferred the Liberals: from 1965 to 1990 a voter who had an African, Asian, or Latin American background was 19 points more likely to support the LPC (Blais 2005, 830); from 1990 to 2005 the propensity to vote for the Grits from these demographics had widened to 28 points (Blais 2005, 831). This trend continued to hold for the Liberals at the last general election on the cusp of the new century. In 2000, the Grits had a commanding lead with visible minority voters that included a likelihood of voting for the party that was 44 points higher than its rivals (Gidengil et al., 2012, 24).

Theories related to the development of partisan attachments have been proposed to account for the Liberal Party's historic appeal to immigrants. Partisan identification is largely influenced by one's parents and that their political and policy preferences will—more often than not—be passed down generationally (Campbell et al., 1960; Sears 1993, 120). It has been argued that immigrants from non-traditional source countries (where political institutions and parties are dissimilar to Canada's) are unlikely to have a partisan attachment when they arrive to their new homeland. However, with the passage of time, they are likely to assume the features of a 'classic partisan voter' similar to the general population (Bilodeau & Kanji 2010, 69). Harell, for instance, has argued that many immigrants vote Liberal because of an attachment to the brand (Harell 2010, 13).

Another factor that may account for the Liberals' historic advantage with new Canadians is their vigorous courting of the immigrant vote:

While the Conservatives were consistently able to win the support of immigrants from Northern Europe who settled in the West ... it was the Liberal party that really came to be the party of recent immigrants. The Liberals' multicultural recruitment manual warned that "the party is often seen to be remote, unapproachable, and closed to new members. Instead it is necessary to get across the message of an active, vigorous, and open party... [this] serves the double purpose of encouraging Canadian citizenship and bringing potential members of the Liberal party into contact with established associations ["] (Carty et al., 2000, 90).

In addition to its active immigrant outreach program (when in government) the Grits maintained a number of programs that bolstered their support from ethnic communities. Carty has written that the exploitation of the state to build the party machinery was effective in winning the loyalty of most new Canadian ethnic groups (Carty et al., 2000). Likewise, Bilodeau and Kanji wrote in 2010 that the LPC was able to create a special relationship between itself and new immigrants because it was seen—through liberal immigration policies and multiculturalism—as reflecting immigrants' interests (79).

Despite this success, signs of an eroding visible minority support base were observed as early as 2004. Between 2000 and 2004, the visible minority vote for the Liberals dropped by a massive 23 points. The main beneficiary in that election was the NDP. In 2008, the Liberals lost another 10 points; in that instance, it was the Conservatives who benefited (Gidengil et al., 2012, 24-25). That being said, the Grits still had residual strength with visible minorities, receiving 26 points more support from this group than from the general population. The ever-growing numbers of Canadians from non-traditional source countries meant that the Liberals received a two-point boost to their overall portion of the popular vote (Gidengil et al., 2012, 25). Considering the narrow margins of victories that many Liberal MPs had during the 2008 election the party benefitted immensely from the disproportionate amount of support from this demographic.

The upheaval of federal politics surrounding the handover of power from Chrétien to Martin—along with the Sponsorship Scandal and the formation of the new Conservative Party—appears to have changed the zeitgeist of the Canadian political climate. Recent electoral trends suggest that the LPC's rivals have made inroads into many of its traditional demographics of support. Before the formation of the new Conservative Party, immigrants and visible minorities supported the Grits almost by default. The PC, Reform, and Alliance Parties spent little time and resources trying to charm these groups; however, since 2006 the CPC has spent considerable energy and effort trying to move certain ethnic demographics—South Asians, Chinese, Jews, and East Europeans—away from the Liberals (Ellis & Woolstencroft 2009, 37-38).

Shortly after forming government, CPC strategists recognized that the party's Anglo-Saxon and Protestant base was too narrow and that only through gaining support from ethnic communities would the party be able to win its coveted majority (Roberts 2011, 2). As Ellis and Woolstencroft have argued, making inroads among these voters was seen as crucial to securing urban seats and dispelling lingering perceptions about the Conservatives' "anti-urban reputation among non-immigrant urbanites" (2011, 20). The party's ethnic outreach project fell largely to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, whose workaholic pace often saw him attend six or seven cultural events in a single day (Cohen 2010). On the immigration file the Tories reduced the cost of landing fees for newcomers and moved towards fuller recognition of the credentials of foreign-trained workers (Flanagan 2007, 281).

There are areas of public policy where common ground was found between the CPC and immigrants who have devout religious beliefs. Although in recent years the Conservative Party has been less vocal about social conservative issues than its Reform and Alliance predecessors (Roberts 2011, 6), it is still a natural constituency for social conservatives when compared to the other mainstream federal parties. From the perspective of religious immigrants who happen to hold social conservative positions some recent policy changes could have placed the Liberal Party at odds with devout immigrants. Although ultimately upheld, when the House of Commons voted on the motion to repeal the *Civil Marriage Act* in 2006, a majority of Tory MPs voted in favour of its redaction, whereas a majority of Grit MPs voted in favour of the law; during this time the CPC took out advertisements in ethnic community papers advocating the party's support for the traditional definition of marriage (Flanagan 2007, 200-201). Stopping the creation of a federally mandated childcare program in favour of a child care allowance emphasized the focus on family-centred policies; this again helped to contrast the CPC from the LPC by suggesting that the Tories believe that parents know better than government in what is best for families (Roberts 2011, 10-11). Additional programs that could be received as being more traditional was the government's enactment of a national anti-drug strategy and raising the minimum age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age (Bastein 2009, 5).

Since taking office, the Conservative Government undertook other symbolic, legislative, and international diplomatic initiatives aimed at winning over immigrant and ethnic minority voters who had traditionally shunned conservative parties. Some examples of these ethnic outreach efforts include Prime Minister Harper's 2006 apology to the Chinese community for the Dominion's head tax; his attendance of the 2008 opening of Calgary's Baitun Nur Ahmadiyya mosque (the largest in Canada); and his staunch support of Israel on the foreign policy front. Overall, these and other initiatives have been based on the Conservatives' calculation that immigrant groups share social conservative values, such as the foundation of strong families, the value of faith, a strong capitalist work ethic, and the necessity of excellence in education (Kheiriddin & Daifallah 2005; Flanagan 2007; Roberts 2011). Furthermore, the new pillar of the Conservative strategy has focussed on wooing traditional Catholic Liberal voters, as well as members of certain ethnic communities and new Canadians, with "family friendly", limited state policy agenda embedded in a broader appeal to suburban middle class families (Farney & Malloy 2011, 264).

The Conservatives' breakthrough in the Greater Toronto Area during in the 2011 federal election suggests that its multi-pronged initiatives to court immigrant and ethnic voters have yielded results (Roberts 2011). That being said, some research suggests that Liberal support among visible minority voters has remained high in the province where it is most beneficial for the party—Ontario (Harell 2010, 10-11). Harell writes that the CPC has made gains mainly within the white, more established segments of the immigrant population (11-12).

Bilodeau and Kanji once wrote that new immigrants were the key to the Liberals' future success (78). Given that immigrants have been a mainstay of support in the 20th century, it is more likely that the retention and expansion of support from foreign-born Canadians is not only necessary for success, but it is necessary for the simple survival of the LPC. Previous research suggests that although the Liberal advantage with visible minorities—many of whom are immigrants—has eroded in recent elections, they were still more inclined to support the Liberals

than other parties. Beyond that, we know little about whether Liberals continue to appeal to foreign-born voters, and about the key drivers of the immigrant vote.

## **Research Design and Data**

The paper is based on a statistical analysis of the Canadian Election Studies (CES) survey data from 2000 to 2011, and on the Ipsos Reid 2008 election-day poll, an opt-in web survey of 36,141 voters from among a standing web panel of over 230,000 members. The CES surveys will be used to track the proportion of the Liberal vote that came from immigrants in each of the five elections held over this period. This will establish a baseline for comparing longitudinal trends in immigrant voting behaviour.

Data from the analysis of the drivers of the immigrant vote originate from the Ipsos Reid online survey. Its large sample sizes of immigrants (n=3689), visible minorities (n=5382), and Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Sikh Canadians (n=914) permit robust generalizations about immigrant voting behaviour and the potential impact of visible minority status and minority religious affiliation on immigrant voters [Data File: Final Data Exit Poll 2008, *Ipsos Reid 2008*]. This choice seemed prudent in light of the Conservative Party's "ethnic outreach" initiatives in selected visible minority (i.e. Chinese and South Asian) and ethno-religious communities (i.e. Jewish Canadians).

Despite these advantages, there are well-established concerns about coverage errors and the representativeness of non-probability web surveys (Couper 2000; Malhorta & Krosnick 2007). While coverage biases would seem to be diminishing due to the high level of internet penetration in Canada (Statistics Canada 2011), demographic and "self-selection" biases remain significant issues (Roster et al., 2004; Malhotra & Krosnick 2007). The issue related to survey representativeness was addressed by comparing the distribution of five demographic variables in the weighted Ipsos Reid data—age, gender, region of residence, household income, and visible minority status—to 2006 census data. The analysis revealed that the survey estimates were nearly identical or very close to census counts and estimates.<sup>i</sup> Another concern about internet surveys is that the sample may be biased due to survey data mode effects (Stephenson & Crête 2010). However, a comparison of the same company's 2006 election-day online sample to a subset of voters in the CES 2006 detected few and modest sample effects relative to the CES (Perrella et al., 2012).

Given the extant literature on the traditional bases of support for the Liberal Party and the Conservatives' outreach efforts we formulated the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Catholic immigrants will be more likely to vote for the LPC than immigrants who do not express a religious affiliation.

Hypothesis 2: Visible minority immigrant voters will be more likely to vote for the LPC than immigrants who do not self-identify as visible minorities.

Hypothesis 3: Given CPC discourse about faith and its outreach initiatives in faith communities, it is expected that immigrants who attend religious institutions frequently will be less likely to vote for the Liberals than immigrants who do not attend religious institutions.

In our case, the dependent variable was vote choice, where Liberal=1 and other parties=0. We employed binary logistic regression to estimate each variable's independent impact on the probability of an immigrant voting for the Liberals, while holding the values of all other predictor variables constant. Binary regression is used when the dependent or response variable is categorical and dichotomous (Liao 1994; Long 1997; Menard 2002). Although multinomial regression has been used when the dependent variable has more than two categories—as is the case with vote choice in Canada—we chose a binary rather than multinomial model specification because our primary interest is identifying which types of immigrants were more or less likely to vote for the Liberals, rather than why they preferred the Liberals to their main competitors. Binary logistic regression was also used by Gidengil, Blais, Fournier, Nevitte, and Everitt in their analysis of changes in the Liberal Party's electoral fortunes between 2000 and 2008 (Gidengil et al., 2009) and by Clarke and his colleagues in their analysis of voting behaviour in the 2004 and 2006 federal elections (Clarke et al., 2009).

The key independent and control variables will be entered into the regression model for the immigrant sub-group, using the bloc-recursive approach developed by Miller and Shanks (1996). This involves adding four blocs of variables that are known to affect vote choice to the model, in sequential order. The strength of estimating the model in stages is that it allows for each variable to be examined in isolation, and then in relation to, the combination with other items.

Since the sociological, Michigan (socio-psychological) and rational choice models of voting behaviour account for vote choice in Canada, the first three blocs featured items that help operationalize these theoretical models. According to the sociological model, the electoral choices of individuals are influenced by their social group affiliations: class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residency, among other demographic attributes (Kanji & Archer 2002, 162). The Michigan model emphasizes the primacy of party identification, conceptualized as voter loyalties to a party that typically develop early in life. These psychological attachments affect voting behaviour directly and indirectly by functioning as a screen through which candidates, leaders, and issues are evaluated (Clarke et al., 2009).

Rational choice theorists propose that individuals compare the positions or performance of parties and vote for the parties that offer the best policies, candidates, and benefits (Clarke et al.). The fourth bloc includes items measuring values and moral beliefs, which are increasingly relevant to any discussion of voting behaviour. As has been argued elsewhere, voters hold fundamental or underlying attitudes about politics that can affect their voting decisions (Blais et al., 2002; Anderson & Stephenson 2010, 18). A full discussion of the variables and coding procedures for these variables is available in the endnotes.<sup>ii</sup>

We ran diagnostic tests in order to detect possible collinearity or multicollinearity problems that occur when independent variables are correlated with each other. As collinearity increases among the independent variables, logistic regression coefficients will be unbiased, but the standard of error for the coefficients will tend to be large, thereby reducing the efficiency of the estimates (Menard 2002). Large standard errors make it more difficult to reject the null hypothesis of a relationship between the dependent and independent variable, even when the null hypothesis is false. Following the diagnostic tests, we removed one item with a tolerance value of .20 and a Variance Inflation Factor of 5.0 from the final model. All survey data were weighted and refusals or do not know responses were declared as missing data.

When evaluating a regression model, researchers are also interested in knowing how well the overall model fits. The overall fit of the logistic regression model was assessed with the following summary statistics: the -2 Log Likelihood statistic (-2LL) shows whether a large portion of unexplained variance still remains in the model. Smaller values of the -2LL statistic indicate better predictions of the dependent variables. The model Chi-Square statistic provides a test of the null hypothesis and the model coefficients = 0. If the model Chi-Square is statistically significant, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the independent variables allow for better predications of P (Y=1) than without the independent variables. Other measures of model fit include the Nagelkerke pseudo R-square, an analogue to the linear regression r-square (Pampel 2000, 51-52; Menard 2002, 24-25).

### **Immigrant Voters: A Red Door or a Blue One?**

A bivariate statistical analysis of the proportion shows immigrant respondents who voted for the Liberals and their main competitors in the 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011 federal elections. This was done in order to establish whether and how immigrant support for the Liberals has been lost over the preceding decade. Since 2000, the LPC has lost at least half of its immigrant support—a remarkable shift in the political landscape (Table 1). Although the Grits still received a higher percentage of support from immigrants than from the native-born population in all five elections (data not shown), the gap between the voting behaviour of these two groups was greatest the last time the party received a majority government—2000—and the narrowest when it was reduced to third-party status in 2011. The new Conservative Party and the NDP are the two parties that benefited the most from the decline. In the case of the former, 2011 marked the first time that the Tories won a higher percentage of the immigrant vote than their overall popular vote. As discussed in the literature review, the immigrant vote was central to the LPC's 2000 election victory; with so many marginal seats in the 2011 general election it would appear that Grits still have foreign-born Canadians to thank for their meagre wins in the most recent election.

[Insert Table 1 Here]

In light of the 23 percent decline in the immigrant share of the Liberal vote nationally between 2004 and 2011, we now turn to an analysis of the drivers of the immigrant vote in 2008. The goodness of fit statistics show that the model performed very well in assessing the probability of an immigrant voting for the Liberals or their competitors. The Nagelkerke R-squared increased from .12 after the first bloc of variables to .71 by the fourth and final bloc. The -2 log likelihood statistic moved steadily towards zero, and the percentage of correctly classified cases increased from 51.8 percent to 81.8 percent (Table 2).

Unstandardized logistic regression B-coefficients were used to interpret whether the variables had an effect on the dependant variable of a Liberal vote choice. The importance of each variable will be evaluated by examining its statistical significance, which expresses the likelihood of relationships in the sample, along with the odds ratios. An odds ratio greater than one (1) indicates that the odds of an immigrant voting Liberal increase when the values of the independent variable increase, while an odds ratio of less than one (1) indicates that the odds of being a Liberal voter decrease when the independent variable increases. In the interest of simplifying the presentation of the regression models, the odds ratios for each variable will not be reported, but will be discussed at key points.

The first bloc assessed the impact of social-demographic factors on immigrant voting behaviour (Table 2). In keeping with research on the general population, the demographic items were significant predictors of vote choice, but collectively accounted for a small reduction in prediction errors. Just 51.8 percent of all cases were correctly classified, although the model did a relatively better job of correctly classifying Liberal voters (89 percent). The initial results provided support for two of the three hypotheses. Catholic and visible minority immigrants were significantly more likely than immigrants who did not express a religious affiliation and who did not self-identify as a visible minority, to cast a vote for the Liberals, with all else held constant. An affiliation with the Muslim or Other (i.e. Hindu, Sikh) faiths was also positively associated with a Liberal vote, while the coefficient for Jewish Canadians was positive, but insignificant.

The findings concerning non-Christian immigrants merits some discussion. Historically, Jewish Canadians preferred the Liberal Party because of its support for Israel and the party's progressive social policies (Barry 2010). By 2008, the Liberal advantage with Jewish voters—at least those born abroad—was no longer present. While a full analysis of the Jewish Canadian vote is beyond the scope of this paper, several authors have argued that the Harper government's strong support for Israel and the Liberals' move under Chrétien to a "balanced" foreign policy in the Middle East have helped the Conservatives make inroads with Jewish Canadians (Ellis & Woolstencroft 2009; Barry 2010). At this stage, no support was found for the hypothesis that immigrants who attended a religious ceremony at least one or more times a week were less likely to support the Liberals than other parties (Table 2).

Table 2 also shows that younger immigrants aged 18-24 years, with household incomes at or above the median and a completed university degree were more likely to vote for the Liberals than middle aged (35-54 years) immigrants with less education and household incomes below the median, with all else equal. Immigrants residing in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, and Ontario were also significantly more likely to vote for the Liberals than immigrants in the Prairies. Gender, language, marital status, and timing of arrival in Canada were not significant predictors of vote choice for immigrants.

[Insert Table 2 and 3 here]

One of the drawbacks of the Ipsos Reid survey is that it lacks the direct measure of partisan identification that is available in the CES. Thus, the second bloc of socio-psychological controls introduced just one item—perceptions of who would make the best Prime Minister—to the model. Since partisanship indirectly influences voting behaviour by shaping evaluations of leaders, this was deemed to be a suitable—albeit limited—measure of socio-psychological effects. The addition of this variable did reduce the model's prediction errors (Nagelkerke R-square=.28) and improved the correct case classification rate to 61.2 percent. It also affected the signs and/or p-values of several demographic coefficients (Table 2).

With respect to the research hypothesis, Catholic and visible minority immigrants were still more likely to prefer the Liberals. The inclusion of the prime ministerial preference item caused the religious attendance coefficient to become significant; as expected, immigrants who attended religious services at least once a week were less likely to vote for the Liberals than their competitors (Table 2). Conversely, a separate analysis of the Conservative vote revealed that religiously active immigrants were more likely to prefer the CPC to other parties (Table 3). Some possible explanations of this finding is that the Conservative Party had spent a considerable

amount of time and resources courting specific immigrant groups by highlighting the fact that many of their traditional values were also conservative values. This includes the idea that faith plays an important role in one's life (Kheiriddin & Daifallah 2005, 164-165; Flanagan 2007, 279-280; Roberts 2011, 15).

Support from Muslims, university degree holders, higher income households, and residents of Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada also held. Not surprisingly, immigrants who believed that Dion would be a good First Minister were significantly more likely to vote for the LPC than those who preferred the leaders of the other parties. With the addition of the leadership item, language emerged as a significant predictor of the probability of a Liberal vote (English-speaking immigrants were more likely to vote for the Liberals than francophone immigrants), while the item representing the Hindu and Sikh religious minorities became insignificant.

Rational choice items measuring voter evaluations of: whether Canada was on the right track or headed in the wrong direction; the leaders and parties that were most capable of managing the economy, reducing taxes, and keeping streets safe; and whether Dion and the Liberals had a solid economic plan for dealing with the impacts of the global economic crisis, were introduced in the third bloc (Table 2). These items collectively improved the model *r*-square and the overall correct classification of cases (85.6 percent). Regardless of one's policy evaluations, the Liberals' advantage with Catholics, visible minorities, Atlantic Canadians, Ontarians, and Quebecers remained—as did its relative weakness with frequent attendees at religious institutions (Table 2).

Immigrants who felt that Dion and the Liberals were best-placed to address the impacts of the global economic crisis, manage the economy, reduce taxes, and keep the streets safe, were also more likely to support the LPC than voters who preferred other leaders and parties. As with the inclusion of the prime ministerial control in the previous model, the rational choice items altered the significance and signs of certain coefficients. Muslim immigrants were now no more likely to vote for the Liberals than the non-religious. Although the coefficient for Protestant immigrant voters was statistically insignificant, the sign reversed from the previous model. Whereas Protestant immigrants used to be less inclined to vote Liberal, they preferred the Liberals once policy evaluations were taken into account. The coefficient for Jewish Canadians, which was negative and significant in the previous model became positive and significant (Table 2).

Three values items were introduced in the fourth bloc: perceptions about which leader was closest to the respondent's values, about which party and leader were best-placed to manage moral issues like abortion and same-sex marriage, and the importance of religious beliefs in casting one's vote. The inclusion of the fourth bloc of variables contributed to a reduction in prediction errors (Nagelkerke *r*-squared = .71) and an improved correct classification rate of cases of 87.8 percent. The results showed that values mattered for immigrant voters. With all else being equal, the odds of voting Liberal increased by 673 percent for immigrants who identified Dion as closest to their values (odds ratio not shown). Those who felt that Dion and the Liberals were best-placed to manage moral issues were also more likely to vote Liberal than those who named other parties and leaders. Distinctions between immigrants who agreed or disagreed about the importance of religious beliefs in casting their vote were statistically insignificant (Table 2).

The inclusion of value-based predictor variables did not wash out the significant and positive association between Catholicism and a Liberal vote, and the significant and negative association between frequent attendance at religious institutions and a Liberal vote (Table 2). The odds of voting Liberal increased by 120 percent for Catholic voters compared to the non-religious, while the odds of voting Liberal decreased by 67 percent for frequent attendees at religious services compared to immigrants who never attended these ceremonies (odds ratio not shown). Further inspection of the Conservative vote (where 1=Conservative and 0=others) revealed that the Grits' areas of weakness were the mirror image of Tory strength (Table 3). The CPC enjoyed a strong and significant advantage with immigrants who attended religious services once a week or more. Historical trends for the general population, namely, the Tories' relative weakness with Catholics, were largely maintained during the 2008 general election.

Interestingly, the values item washed out the Liberals' significant advantage with visible minority immigrants. Although the CPC did not attract these voters in significant numbers (Table 3), it can be argued that its outreach program in selected visible minority communities helped cut into the Liberals' advantage with this demographic. The rejection of Dion as the leader with values closest to immigrant voters (Table 3) suggests that the Tories were able to connect with visible and religious minorities who share many traditional values with the party (Roberts 2011, 18). Other important changes to note were that Jewish Canadian immigrants were now no more likely to prefer the Liberals than the non-religious (Table 2). An examination of the full model for the Conservative vote suggests that the government party has made advances in its war of attrition with the Liberals over the visible minority and Jewish Canadian vote (Table 3), eroding the advantages the Liberals once held. While these are ominous signs for the Liberals, the party can take heart that the coefficient for post-1990 arrivals was positive, albeit insignificant (Table 2). This suggests that it is doing no worse among recent arrivals, compared to previous immigrant cohorts, thus providing a window of opportunity for the party to rebuild its base.

Finally, while immigrants in Atlantic Canada were now no more likely to vote Liberal than their Prairie counterparts; Ontario and Quebec continued to provide a reserve of support for the Grits. Foreign-born Canadians with higher household incomes, and who preferred Dion and the Liberals on three issues—community safety, economic management, and managing the impacts of the global economic crisis—were still more likely to prefer the Liberals over their rivals (Table 2).

### **Immigrant Voters: Exiting the Red Room?**

The LPC's historic success was based on a solid coalition of regional and demographic groups—at the centre of that support were immigrants and newcomers to Canada. The results of recent federal elections—and the findings presented in this paper—suggest that this pillar of support has been severely eroded. From 2000 to 2011 the Grits bled at least one-half of their immigrant support to their political rivals. That being said, the CES series suggests that the Liberals continue to receive proportionally more support from immigrant voters. The analysis of the Ipsos Reid poll has shown that Catholics, and higher income immigrants living in Ontario and Quebec are the bedrock of support for the party. The LPC also continues to do well with visible minority immigrants, although it does not enjoy a statistically significant advantage with this group over its rivals. Two of the three hypotheses proposed in this paper were confirmed: the Grits maintained their Roman Catholic advantage and the Conservatives have become the party that appeals to strongly religious immigrants. These findings suggest that the Conservatives'

partial focus on faith and tradition as part of its ethnic outreach efforts have borne some fruit. Given the Liberals' historic third-place finish in the most recent federal election, it is not improbable that the shifts emerging in 2008 came to full realization in the spring of 2011.

## Tables

**Table 1: Percentage of Immigrant Vote by Party, 2000-2011 Federal Elections (8720)**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2011</b>
Liberal	49.0 (73), ROC; 65.8 (25), PQ	47.5 (141)	48.0 (83)	38.5 (111)	24.5 (69)
Progressive Conservative/ Canadian Alliance combined (2000)	21.8 (65), ROC; 5.25 (4), PQ	30.6 (91)	31.2 (54)	33.7 (97)	40.8 (115)
Conservative Party (2004-2011)					
New Democratic Party	7.4 (11), ROC; 2.6 (1), PQ	20.5 (61)	19.7 (34)	19.8 (57)	30.5 (86)
Bloc Québécois	21.1 (8), PQ only	1.3 (4)	1.2 (2)	2.8 (8)	1.1 (3)
Green Party	-	-	-	5.2 (15)	3.2 (9)

Source: Canadian Election Study: 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011

**Table 2: Model of Liberal Voting in the 2008 Federal Election, Immigrant Sample**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<b>Age</b> (18-34 years):				
55 years+	-.01	-.05	.21	.33
35-54 years	-.31**	-.24*	.19	.44
<b>Male</b> (Female)	-.04	-.11	.01	-.09
<b>English</b> (French)	.28	.44**	.56	.43
<b>Married/Partner</b> (single)	-.13	-.09	.`	.03
<b>Hhld income median and above</b> (below median)	.20**	.29***	.36*	.54**
<b>Religious attendance</b> (none):				
Frequent	-.15	-.28*	-.94***	-1.09***
Infrequent	.15	.08	-.05	.23
<b>Religious affiliation</b> (none):				
Roman Catholic	.28**	.26*	.85***	.79**

Protestant	-.16	-.14	.38	.29
Muslim	.70**	.56**	.41	.53
Jews	.04	-.14	.82*	.53
Other religious denominations	.55	.55	.21	-.05
<b>Arrival since 1990</b> (arrived before 1990)	-.09	-.18	.11	.40
<b>Visible Minority</b> (non-visible minority)	.35***	.37***	.51**	.39
<b>University Education</b> (less than a university education):	.54***	.45***	.30*	.05
<b>Region (Prairies):</b>				
Atlantic Canada	1.09***	1.16***	.93*	.99
Quebec	1.43***	1.35***	.90*	.97*
Ontario	1.06***	1.08***	.99***	1.10***
British Columbia	.29	.26	.10	.54
<b>Dion Best Prime Minister</b> (other leaders)		2.27***	.25	-.32
<b>Canada right track</b> (wrong direction)			-.28	-.35
<b>Reducing Taxes/Liberals best</b> (other parties)			.58**	.20
<b>Keep Streets Safe/Liberals best</b> (other parties)			1.10***	.47*
<b>Managing the Economy/ Liberals best</b> (other parties)			1.73***	1.32***
<b>Managing the Economic Crisis/Liberals best</b> (other parties)			1.63***	1.41***
<b>Dion closest to my values</b> (other leaders):				2.04***
<b>Moral issues management/Liberals and Dion</b> (prefers other parties and leaders)				.96***
<b>Religious beliefs important to my vote</b> (disagree)				-.05
<b>Constant</b>	-.53	-2.47	-4.85	-5.18***
<b>Model Chi Square</b>	.000	.000	.000	.000
<b>-2 Log Likelihood</b>	4588.71	4069.08	1337.54	968.91
<b>Nagelkerke R-squared</b>	.12	.28	.64	.71
<b>Percent correctly classified</b>	51.8	61.2	85.6	87.8
<b>N (weighted)</b>	3689	3666	1970	1605

Source: Ipsos Reid Survey. Note: Estimates are from a binary logistic analysis of Liberal versus voting for all other parties; \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05

**Table 3: Model of Conservative Voting in the 2008 Federal Election, Immigrant Sample**

	Full Model
<b>Age</b> (18-34 years):	.059
55 years+	
35-54 years	-.268
<b>Male</b> (Female)	.172
<b>English</b> (French)	.311
<b>Married/Partner</b> (single)	.096
<b>Hhld income median and above</b> (below median)	-.160
<b>Religious attendance</b> (none):	1.032***
Frequent	

Infrequent	-.006
<b>Religious affiliation</b> (none):	-.449
Roman Catholic	
Protestant	.596**
Muslim	.737
Jews	.451
Other religious denominations	.095
<b>Arrival since 1990</b> (arrived before 1990)	.025
<b>Visible Minority</b> (non-visible minority)	-.353
<b>University Education</b> (less than a university education):	-.114
<b>Region</b> (Prairies):	.113
Atlantic Canada	
Quebec	-.266
Ontario	-.278
British Columbia	-.278
<b>Dion Best Prime Minister</b> (other leaders)	.212
<b>Canada right track</b> (wrong direction)	3.624***
<b>Reducing Taxes/Liberals best</b> (other parties)	.322
<b>Keep Streets Safe/Liberals best</b> (other parties)	-1.705***
<b>Managing the Economy/ Liberals best</b> (other parties)	-1.842***
<b>Managing the Economic Crisis/Liberals best</b> (other parties)	-1.993***
<b>Dion closest to my values</b> (other leaders):	-1.307***
<b>Moral issues management/Liberals and Dion</b> (prefers other parties and leaders)	.027
<b>Religious beliefs important to my vote</b> (disagree)	.498
<b>Constant</b>	-2.014
<b>Model Chi Square</b>	.000
<b>-2 Log Likelihood</b>	902.972
<b>Nagelkerke R-squared</b>	.769
<b>Percent correctly classified</b>	88.1
<b>N (weighted)</b>	3689

Source: Ipsos Reid Survey. Note: Estimates are from a binary logistic analysis of Conservative versus voting for all other parties; \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05

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<sup>i</sup> The weighting method provided sample estimates of key demographic variables that were identical or very close to census counts or population estimates. The gender distribution in the survey sample (52.1% female/47.9% male) was very similar to 2006 census counts (51% female/48.9% male). With respect to the age distribution, 11.7% of survey respondents were aged 65 years and over, closely approximating census counts of the same age group (13.7%). The regional provenance of survey respondents (BC: 12.5%; AB: 9.6%; SK/MB: 6.6%; ON: 38.1%; PQ 25.1% and Atlantic Canada: 8.1%) was nearly identical to census population estimates (BC: 13%; AB: 10.4%; SK/MB: 6.7%; ON: 38.5%; PQ: 23.9%; Atlantic Canada: 7.2%). Visible minority respondents comprised 15.5% of the survey sample, nearly identical to the census population estimate of 16.2%. The survey reported household income data in grouped categories. The median income of \$60,000-64,999, corresponded with census estimates of the median household earnings for an economic family (2005) of \$60,270 (Statistics Canada 2006).

<sup>ii</sup> The variables in the models presented in Tables 2 and 3 were coded as follows: **Liberal vote choice:** Liberals=1; Others (i.e. Conservatives, NDP, Bloc, Green)=0. **Conservative vote choice:** Conservatives=1; Others (i.e. Liberals, NDP, Bloc, Green)=0. **Age** was recoded into two dummy variables representing older (55 years and older) and middle-aged (35-54-year-olds) Canadians. The reference category was 18-34-year olds. **Gender:** Males=1; Females=0. **Language:** English=1; French=0. **Household income:** Median and above=1; Below Median=0. **Education:** Bachelor's Degree or higher=1; Less than a completed university education=0. **Marital status:** Married/legal partnership=1; Other (i.e. single, separated, divorced, widowed)=0. **Region:** Four dummy variables representing Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia were created. The reference category included

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residents of the Prairie provinces. **Visible minority status:** Visible minority=1; non-visible minority=0. **Year of Immigration:** Year of arrival 1990 or later=1; Before 1990=0. **Religious attendance:** Two dummy variables representing Frequent (once or more a week) and Infrequent (once a month to a few times a year) attenders were created. The reference category represented respondents who do not attend religious services. **Religious identity:** Five dummy variables were created for Roman Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jewish Canadians, and Others (i.e. Hindus, Sikhs), with no religious affiliation as the reference category. **Best Prime Minister:** Dion=1; Other leaders=0. **Reducing Taxes:** Dion and the Liberals=1; Other leaders and parties =0. **Making Canadian streets safer:** Dion and the Liberals=1; Other leaders and parties=0. **Manage the economy:** Dion and the Liberals=1; Other leaders and parties=0. **Managing Impacts of economic crisis:** Dion and the Liberals=1; Other leaders and parties=0. **Overall direction of Canada:** On the right track=1; Wrong direction=0. **Leader reflects my values:** Dion=1; Other leaders =0. **Managing moral issues like same sex marriage and abortion:** Dion and Liberals=1; Other leaders and parties=0. **Religious beliefs important to vote:** Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree=1; Strongly/Somewhat Agree =0.