



**Politics & Boomers**  
 by Reginald W. Bibby

**Jump in Interest in Politics – National Study**

**Over the past five years, the activities of Canada’s politicians have caught the attention of growing numbers of Canadians. And those who say they are actively involved in politics has doubled. It could all translate into a modest increase in voter turnout in Monday’s federal election.**

Surveys carried out by well-known sociologist and trend tracker Reginald Bibby of the University of Lethbridge have found that the number of Canadians who say they are interested in politics has increased over the past five years from 66% to 71%. What’s more, the percentage of people who say they are taking an active part in politics has jumped from 9% to 17%. Those findings suggest that, weather permitting, the voter turnout for Monday’s federal election should exceed the 61% level for the 2004 election, which was the lowest since 1896.

Bibby’s two latest national surveys have been tracking political interest from 2000 through the end of 2005. What is striking about the upsurge in political interest and involvement, he says, is its pervasiveness. It characterizes people from across the country, females as well as males, and people of all ages. The interest upturn also is found among people who identify with all four of Canada’s major political parties. Further, involvement increases have taken place among people active in religious groups along with those who are not.

<b>Interest and Involvement in Politics: 2000-2005</b>						
“Which of the following best describes how you feel about politics?”						
	1 Interested and take an active part			3 Not very interested		
	2 Interested but not taking an active part			4 Not interested at all		
	2005			2000		
	INTERESTED	Active		INTERESTED	Active	
	TOTAL	Yes	No	TOTAL	Yes	No
<b>Nationally</b>	<b>71%</b>	17	54	<b>66</b>	09	57
British Columbia	<b>78</b>	22	56	<b>74</b>	10	64
SK-MB	<b>78</b>	18	60	<b>69</b>	05	64
Alberta	<b>73</b>	23	50	<b>72</b>	10	62
Quebec	<b>70</b>	10	60	<b>58</b>	06	52
Ontario	<b>69</b>	19	50	<b>67</b>	10	57
Atlantic	<b>64</b>	14	50	<b>75</b>	17	58
Males	<b>78</b>	19	59	<b>75</b>	11	64
Females	<b>64</b>	15	49	<b>58</b>	07	51
55+	<b>82</b>	15	67	<b>80</b>	09	71
35-54	<b>70</b>	15	55	<b>66</b>	09	57
18-34	<b>61</b>	23	38	<b>54</b>	09	45
NDP	<b>84</b>	35	49	<b>75</b>	18	57
Conservative	<b>77</b>	19	58	<b>72</b>	09	63
Bloc Quebecois	<b>76</b>	08	68	<b>59</b>	04	55
Liberal	<b>74</b>	16	58	<b>68</b>	05	63
Weekly	<b>71</b>	20	51	<b>74</b>	12	62
<Weekly	<b>71</b>	16	55	<b>64</b>	08	56

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, Project Canada Surveys.

Why the increase, particularly in involvement? Bibby suggests that it is tied directly to growing numbers of people being concerned about government integrity and competence, as well as the desire to have more input into issues such as same sex marriage. In addition, the resurgence of the Conservative party under Stephen Harper, he points out, appears to have awoken people who are pro-Conservative and anti-Conservative. Diverse efforts on the part of the government and private organizations to engage Canadians politically also appear to be contributing to the upward trend in both interest and involvement.

Bibby's research findings are based on large-scale national surveys completed in late 2000 and late 2005. The latest sample consists of 1,600 Canadians, and is accurate within about 3 percentage points, 19 times in 20.

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Reginald Bibby holds the Board of Governors Research Chair in Sociology at the University of Lethbridge. He has been monitoring Canadian social trends since the mid-1970s, making his findings available through a large number of media and personal appearances and ten best-selling books. His most recent book, <i>The Boomer Factor: What Canada's Most Famous Generation is Leaving Behind</i> , was released in October of 2006. Details on Bibby and his work can be found at "reginaldbibby.com".
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