



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.

Interest and Involvement in Politics: 2000-2005						
“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
Nationally	71%	17	54	66	09	57
British Columbia	78	22	56	74	10	64
SK-MB	78	18	60	69	05	64
Alberta	73	23	50	72	10	62
Quebec	70	10	60	58	06	52
Ontario	69	19	50	67	10	57
Atlantic	64	14	50	75	17	58
Males	78	19	59	75	11	64
Females	64	15	49	58	07	51
55+	82	15	67	80	09	71
35-54	70	15	55	66	09	57
18-34	61	23	38	54	09	45
NDP	84	35	49	75	18	57
Conservative	77	19	58	72	09	63
Bloc Quebecois	76	08	68	59	04	55
Liberal	74	16	58	68	05	63
Weekly	71	20	51	74	12	62
<Weekly	71	16	55	64	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".
