

Young Canadians @ the polls?

Youth engagement in Canadian Federal Elections

C2D2 Conference Presentation

October 24, 2009

About Elections Canada

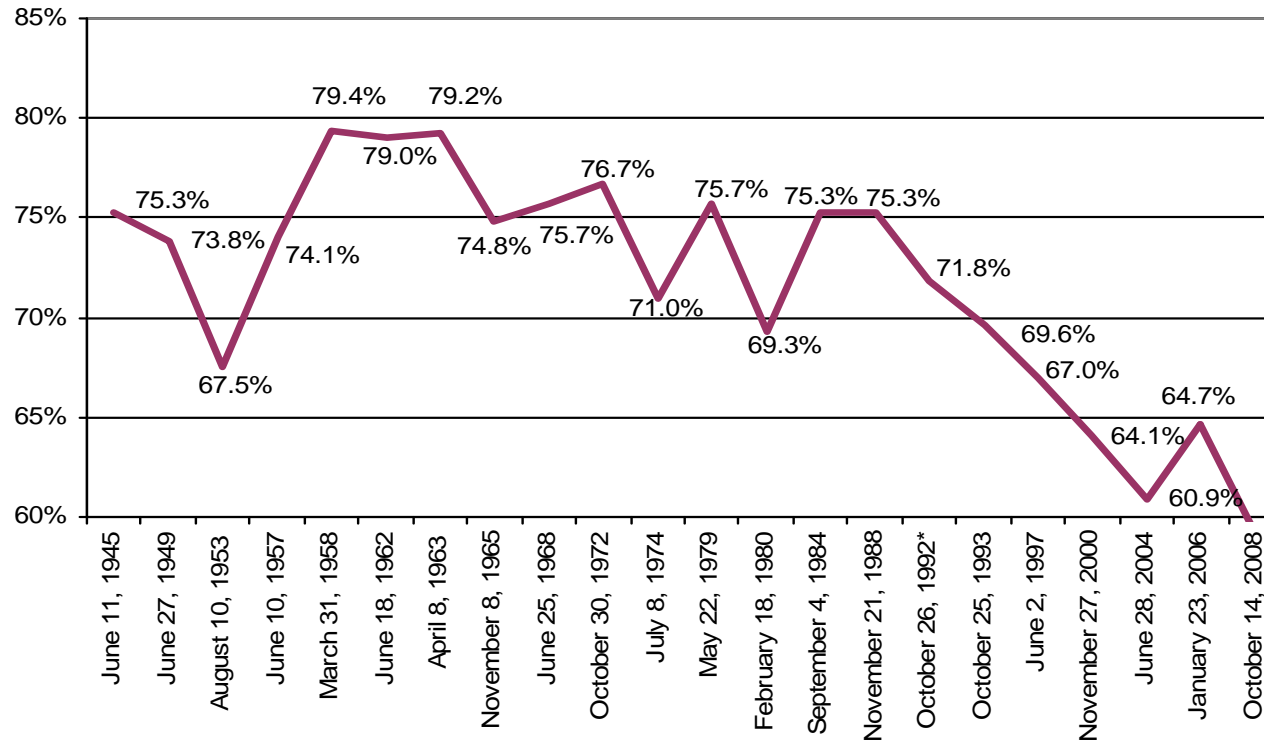
- An independent, non-partisan agency that reports directly to Parliament
- **Mission:** Ensuring that Canadians can exercise their democratic rights to vote and be a candidate.
- **Vision:** An accessible electoral framework that Canadians trust and use.

Mandate

- Conduct federal general elections, by-elections and referendums
- Administer the political financing provisions of the *Canada Elections Act*
- Monitor compliance and enforce electoral legislation
- Conduct voter education and information programs
- Support the independent boundaries commissions in charge of adjusting the boundaries of federal electoral districts following each decennial census
- Study alternative voting methods and, with the approval of Parliament, test electronic voting processes for future use during electoral events

Voter Turnout in Canada

- Federal general elections, 1945–2008



*Constitutional Referendum

Youth Voter Turnout in Canada

Estimated turnout by cohort and election (CES data)

	1965	1968	1974	1979	1980	1984	1988	1993	1997	2000	2004	2006
Cohort												
1965	69	70	70	79	74	82	84	84	81	78	78	80
1968		71	72	80	75	83	85	85	83	80	80	82
1972			60	71	65	75	78	79	75	72	73	75
1974			57	68	62	73	77	78	74	71	73	75
1979				61	54	66	71	72	69	63	67	69
1980					43	56	61	63	60	56	58	61
1984						58	63	65	62	58	61	64
1988							54	56	53	50	53	56
1993								52	49	46	49	52
1997									42	39	43	46
2000										31	35	38
2004											33	37

Source: Reproduced from “Youth Electoral Engagement in Canada”, by André Blais and Peter Loewen (available at www.elections.ca). Data are drawn from Canadian Election Studies conducted for every election between 1965 and 2006, except 1972. Each cell presents the probability of an individual voting given their cohort and the election. The estimates are drawn from the model reported in Table A2 of the report.

Reasons for lower youth turnout: what we know so far

1. Lower levels of **political interest** and **political knowledge**
 - understanding of how the political process affects their daily lives
2. Lower levels of **civic duty**
 - 11% of youth (18-24) thought it was a duty to vote, compared to 41% of older Canadians (55-64)
3. **Administrative** and **personal** factors
 - too busy to vote; not sure if registered; higher levels of mobility, leading to confusion about where to vote
4. **Less likely to be contacted** by parties or candidates

Challenges

- Declining youth turnout is a long-term trend:
 - we aren't going to turn it around in 1-2 elections
- Multiple causes:
 - not all are fully understood
 - elections agencies can't address every one
- “Youth” are not a homogeneous population:
 - We need to better understand the views and behaviours of different segments of the youth population

Opportunities

- Young people are less cynical about politics than older Canadians
- Education is a key factor supporting turnout
- There are many more tools available today for reaching out to young people (but...)

Our focus to date: Accessibility

LEAVE YOUR MARK. PRENEZ VOTRE PLACE.

**REGISTER TO VOTE
NOW!**

**INSCRIVEZ-VOUS MAINTENANT
POUR VOTER!**

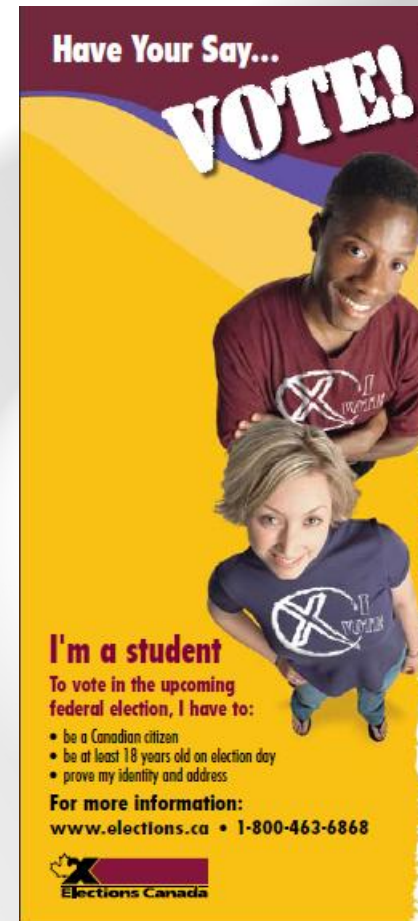


A federal election is now taking place. Une élection fédérale est en cours.

- Registration initiatives and mailings to young Canadians
- Targeted revision in student areas
- Polling sites in residences on campus
- Service Standards for Student Electors
- Youth election officers

Our focus to date: Communications

- Mainly one-way (advertising, web, posters, pamphlets)
- Some community-level interaction (Community Relations Officers)
- Some audience targeting (e.g. e-bulletins to student associations)



Our focus to date: supporting civic education

- Providing tools to educators, students: kits, materials
- Partnerships (e.g. Student Vote)



Practice
makes **PERFECT.**

Student Vote 

Register your school today.

www.studentvote.ca
1-866-488-8775