

Reasons for not voting in the federal election, October 19, 2015

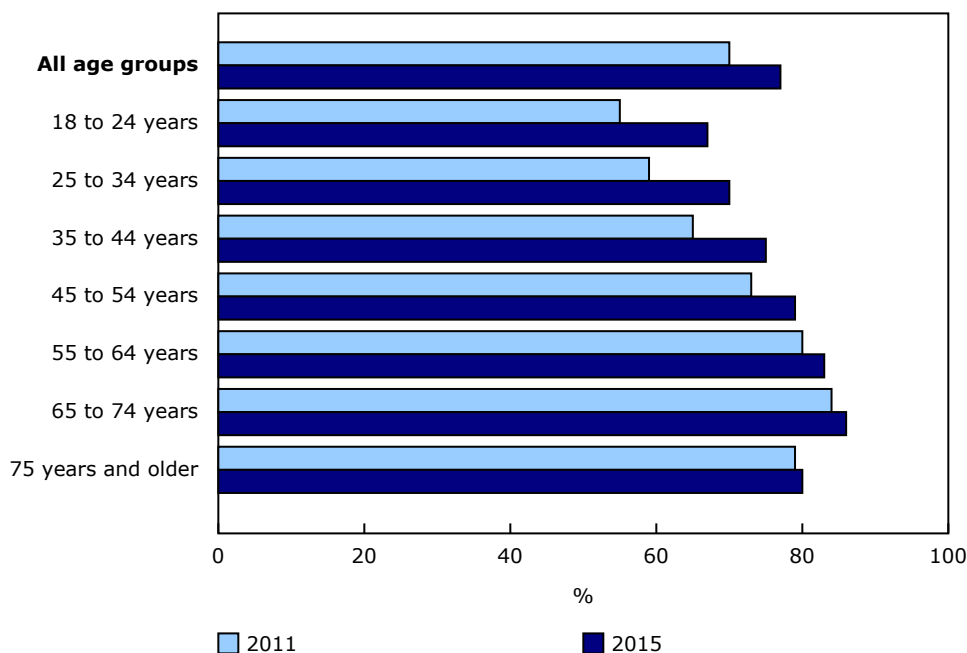
Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Monday, February 22, 2016

A higher proportion of Canadians reported that they had voted in the 2015 federal election (77%) compared with 2011 (70%), with the largest increase among younger voters. Among people aged 18 to 24, the voter turnout rate increased from 55% in 2011 to 67% in 2015, and among those aged 25 to 34, it rose 11 percentage points to 70%.

Among the 23% of eligible Canadian voters who reported that they did not vote in the October 2015 federal election, the most common reason reported for not voting was 'not being interested in politics,' followed by being 'too busy.'

There were no notable differences in the reasons for not voting between men and women in the 2015 federal election. The reasons for not voting were also similar for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. However, there were differences across age groups, regions and immigrant statuses.

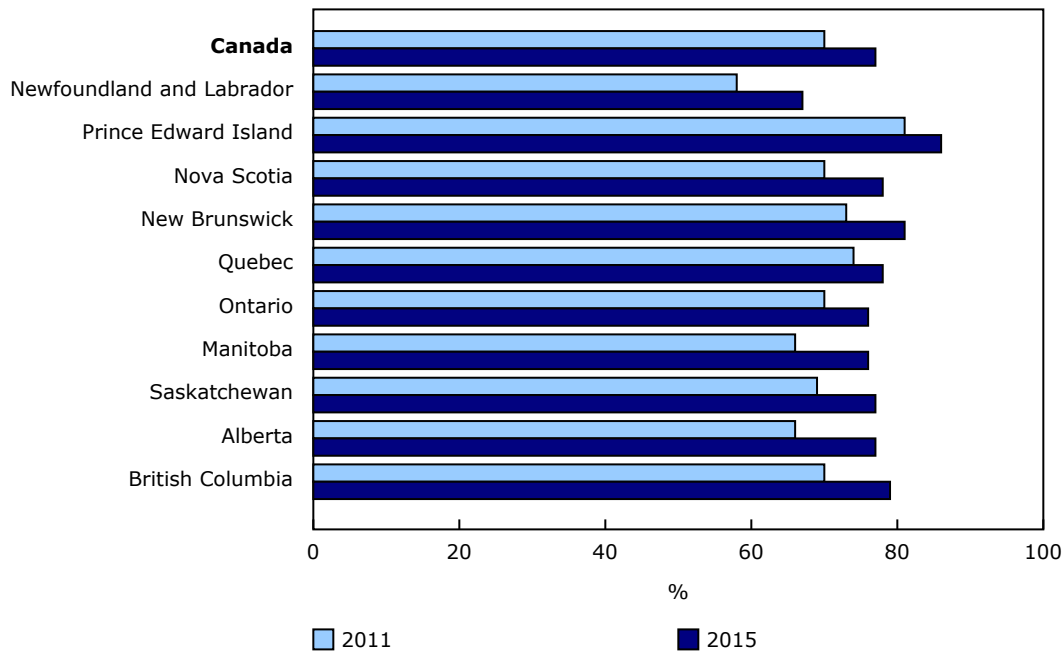
Chart 1
Voter turnout rates by age group, 2011 and 2015 federal elections



Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

Overall, Prince Edward Island (86%) had the highest proportion of respondents who reported having cast a ballot in the October 2015 federal election, while Newfoundland and Labrador (67%) reported the lowest. Compared with 2011, voter turnout rates increased in all provinces, led by Alberta (+11 percentage points) and Manitoba (+10 percentage points). Quebec reported the smallest increase (+4 percentage points).

Chart 2
Voter turnout rates by province, 2011 and 2015 federal elections



Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

By immigrant status, the largest increase was among immigrant Canadians with citizenship who had been in Canada for 10 years or less, as their turnout rate went up from 56% to 70%. The turnout rate for immigrant Canadians with citizenship who had been in Canada for more than 10 years increased from 71% to 76%. Among Canadian-born citizens, the rate also increased, up from 70% to 78%.

One in three non-voters reports not being interested in politics

The single largest reason provided for not voting was 'not being interested in politics,' with 32% of non-voters giving this as the reason for not casting a vote in the October 2015 federal election. This held true for all age groups between the ages of 18 and 64. For those aged 75 and older, 18% of non-voters reported not being interested in politics as a reason for not voting.

Canadian-born citizens were most likely to report a lack of interest in politics (34%) as a reason for not voting, compared with 25% of immigrants with citizenship who had been in Canada for more than 10 years.

Everyday life or health reasons commonly reported for not voting

In almost half of all cases (48%), non-voters cited everyday life or health reasons as a cause for not casting a ballot. These reasons included being too busy (23%), being out of town (12%), or having an illness or disability (12%).

Canadians aged 25 to 34 (30%) and aged 35 to 44 (30%) were the most likely to indicate that they did not vote because they were too busy.

Residents of Ontario (25%), Manitoba (25%) and Saskatchewan (25%) were the most likely to report being too busy to vote. On the other hand, those from Newfoundland and Labrador (18%) and Nova Scotia (19%) were the least likely to report that reason.

The proportion of those who did not cast a vote because of an illness or disability was higher among the older age groups, ranging from 14% for those aged 55 to 64, to more than 50% for those aged 75 or older.

Youth most likely to report reasons related to the electoral process

During the 2015 federal election, 8% of non-voters identified reasons related to the electoral process as the cause for not voting. This included reasons such as not being able to prove one's identity or address, or not being on the voters list.

Younger Canadians were more likely to report not voting because of electoral process issues than those in older age groups. Among those aged 18 to 24 years, 11% reported not voting for these reasons.

Note to readers

Data for this study were derived from five questions added to the November 2015 Labour Force Survey (LFS), commissioned by Elections Canada, to determine the reasons Canadians did not vote in the October 19, 2015, federal election.

These questions were:

1. Are you a Canadian citizen?
2. Did you vote in the recent federal election?
3. Why did you not vote?
4. Did you go to a polling station and try to vote? (if the survey respondent answered "could not prove identity or address" to question 3)
5. In the past 12 months, did you use Elections Canada's online service to check, update or complete your voter registration?

The question 'Why did you not vote?' included 17 categories that were divided into four broad groups for this publication. Because of quality issues for some data, the following categories have not been discussed in this study in detail:

Political reasons: Lack of information about campaign issues and parties' positions; did not like candidates/parties/campaign; felt voting would not make a difference; did not know whom to vote for.

Electoral process-related reasons: Could not prove identity or address; not on voters list; transportation problem / polling station too far; lack of information about the voting process; lines were too long; issues with the voter information card.

All other reasons: Forgot to vote; religious or other beliefs; other reasons.

Eligible voters as defined in this study exclude people aged 18 and older who were not Canadian citizens, including "permanent residents" (landed immigrants) who had not yet obtained Canadian citizenship and "non-permanent residents" (people from another country who lived in Canada and had a work or study permit, or who were claiming refugee status, as well as family members also living in Canada with them) at the time of the survey.

Previous studies and post-elections surveys have consistently shown that voter turnout rates reported in those studies are higher than official voter turnout rates. The estimate for the voter turnout rate in this special LFS study (77.0%) was 8.5 percentage points higher than the official figure published by Elections Canada (68.0%) following the October 19, 2015, federal election. In a similar survey conducted following the 2011 federal election, the turnout rate from the survey was 70.0%, 8.6 percentage points higher than the official figure of 61.4% published by Elections Canada.

As the question on reasons for not voting was changed between 2011 and 2015, data for the two periods are not comparable.

Table 1
Voter turnout rates by age group, province and immigrant status, 2011 and 2015 federal elections

	2011	2015	2011 to 2015
	voter turnout rate in %		difference in percentage points
Canada	70	77	7
Newfoundland and Labrador	58	67	9
Prince Edward Island	81	86	5
Nova Scotia	70	78	8
New Brunswick	73	81	8
Quebec	74	78	4
Ontario	70	76	6
Manitoba	66	76	10
Saskatchewan	69	77	8
Alberta	66	77	11
British Columbia	70	79	9
Age group			
18 to 24 years	55	67	12
25 to 34 years	59	70	11
35 to 44 years	65	75	10
45 to 54 years	73	79	6
55 to 64 years	80	83	3
65 to 74 years	84	86	1
75 years and older	79	80	1
Immigrant status			
Immigrants with Canadian citizenship, 10 years or less	56	70	14
Immigrants with Canadian citizenship, more than 10 years	71	76	5
Canadian-born citizens	70	78	8

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

Table 2
Reasons for not voting by age group and sex, 2015 federal election

	Total	Men	Women	18 to 24 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 54 years	55 to 64 years	65 to 74 years	75 years and older
	%									
Everyday life or health reasons	48	47	49	47	48	47	44	44	53	63
Too busy	23	24	23	28	30	30	22	17	12	3 ^E
Out of town	12	13	10	13	11	11	12	14	16	8 ^E
Illness or disability	12	10	15	5	6	7	10	14	25	51
Political reasons	39	41	38	38	40	42	44	43	36	24
Not interested in politics	32	33	30	33	33	33	34	34	27	18
Electoral process-related reasons	8	7	8	11	8	6	7	6	5^E	8^E
All other reasons	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	6	6^E	6^E

^E use with caution

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

Table 3
Reasons for not voting by province, 2015 federal election

	Canada	Newfoundland and Labrador	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec
	%					
Everyday life or health reasons	48	48	44	45	45	45
Too busy	23	18	19 ^E	19	21	22
Out of town	12	19	11 ^E	9	9	11 ^E
Illness or disability	12	11	14 ^E	17	14	12
Political reasons	39	41	37	42	37	44
Not interested in politics	32	36	33 ^E	36	32	37
Electoral process-related reasons	8	6^E	12^E	8^E	12^E	7
All other reasons	5	5	7^E	4^E	6^E	4
	Canada	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
	%					
Everyday life or health reasons	48	50	45	50	48	48
Too busy	23	25	25	25	23	23
Out of town	12	12	9	14	12	12
Illness or disability	12	13	11	11	13	13
Political reasons	39	38	40	36	35	35
Not interested in politics	32	31	32	28	25	25
Electoral process-related reasons	8	7	8	7^E	11	11
All other reasons	5	5	6	7	7	7

^E use with caution

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

Table 4
Reasons for not voting by immigrant status and Aboriginal group, 2015 federal election

	Immigrants with Canadian citizenship, 10 years or less	Immigrants with Canadian citizenship, more than 10 years	Canadian-born citizens	Non-Aboriginal population	Aboriginal population
	%				
Everyday life or health reasons	54	56	46	48	41
Too busy	29 ^E	25	23	24	21
Out of town	17 ^E	14	11	12	10
Illness or disability	8 ^E	18	11	13	11
Political reasons	28^E	31	42	39	43
Not interested in politics	20 ^E	25	34	32	35
Electoral process-related reasons	14^E	7	7	8	9
All other reasons	4^E	5	5	5	6^E

^E use with caution

Source(s): Labour Force Survey (3701).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3701](#).

For more information, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca).

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