

***Who changed their mind and why?  
Use of panel data to understand the  
movement in voting intentions  
during the 2008 federal election in  
Quebec.***

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# Outline of presentation

- Research goal and design
- Likely evolution of voting intentions and impact of events
- Use of panel design to estimate voting intentions : is it appropriate?
- Estimating the level of change at the aggregate and individual level
- Understanding changing of minds and its determinants

# Research goal

- In view of substantial change in voting intentions,
  - Examine patterns of change
  - Examine the possible impact of polls on these patterns
  - Better understand the process and reasons for change.
- See whether using a panel, instead of another poll, gives a good estimate of voting intentions.

# Research design

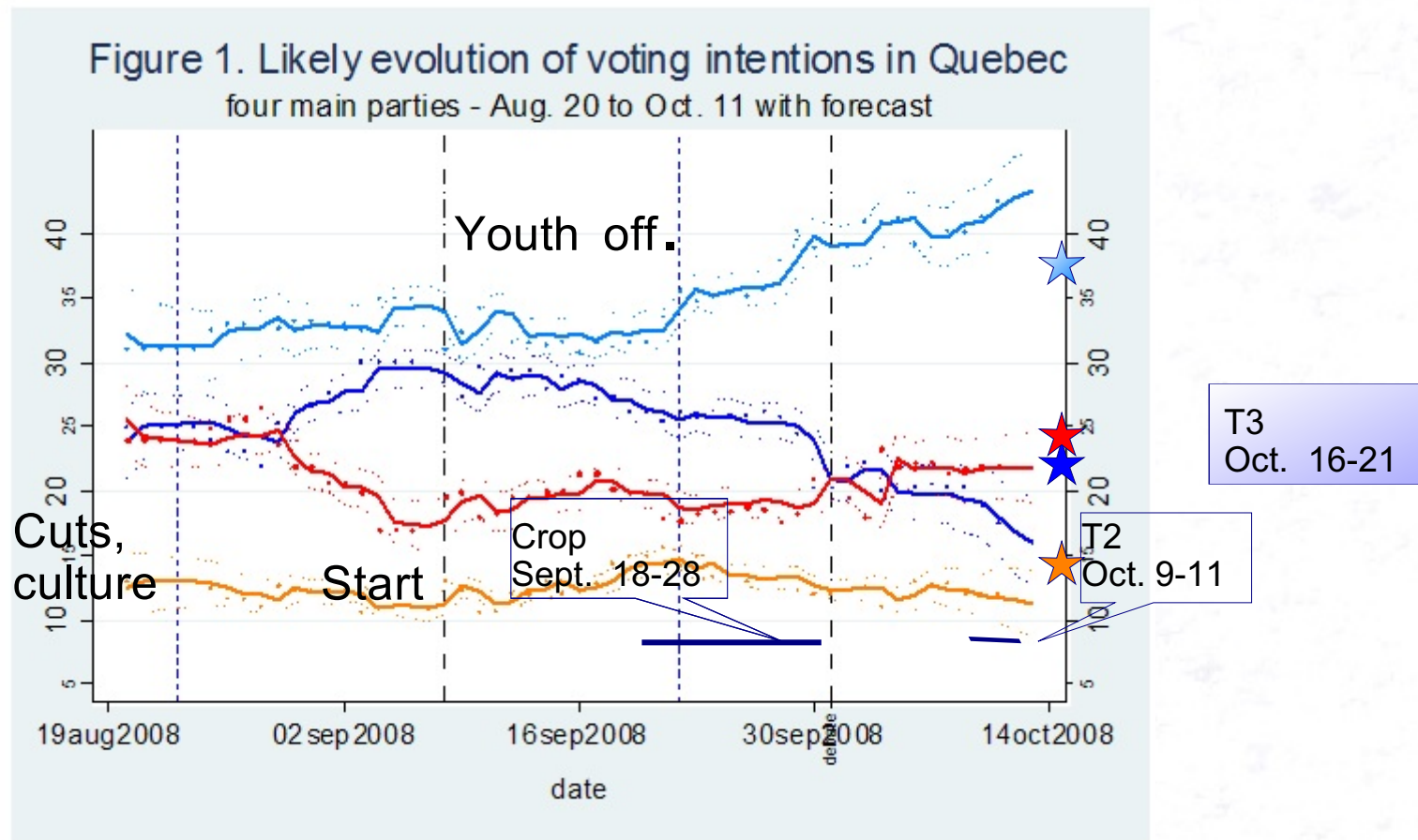
- A first poll conducted at the beginning of the campaign, between Sept. 18-28.
- A second poll among respondents to the first poll as close as possible to election day (Oct 9-11) to measure voting intentions again and the possible impact of the debate.
- A final poll after election day to measure voting behavior, reasons for change and perceived impact of poll on self.

# Measures

- **At time 1,**
  - Attitudes towards polls
  - Knowledge, evaluation of the race in Canada as a whole, in Quebec and in the specific constituency in order to be able to identify strategic voting
  - Voting intention
- **At time 2,**
  - Listen to the debate, interest in campaign, voting intention
- **At time 3 (post election),**
  - Voting behavior
  - Possible impact of polls on the final decision
  - Main reason for change for those who changed their mind between voting intentions at time 1 or time 2 and final vote.

# Evolution of voting intentions in Quebec (Federal election, Oct. 14, 2008)

as measured by the polls



# Evolution of voting intentions in panel and vote

	Sept.18-28	Oct 9-11	Polls' avg	Vote Oct. 14	Post Oct.16-21
Bloc	30,9	38,9	41,3	38,1	41,2
Cons.	29,6	19,4	19	21,7	20,7
Liberals	15,8	23,3	22	23,7	22
NDP	16,1	14,4	12	12,2	10,3
Green+ot>	7,7	4,1	5,7	4,3	5,8
DK-NA	(7,5)	(10,5)		na	(7,3)
non voter	(2,1)	(2,6)		(38,9)	(18,5)
N	1000	671			800

# Is the use of a panel design appropriate to estimate voting intentions?

- **Our estimates from the panel data at time 2**
  - Correspond to the average of other polls carried at the same time though the response rate is around 70 p.cent .
  - Are within the confidence interval of election results.
- **Estimates from the post-election poll are also within the confidence interval of the results.**



# Movement at the aggregate level

- **From time 1 to time 2,**
  - Increases of
    - 8 points for the Bloc
    - 7.5 points for the CLP
  - Losses of
    - **10.2 points for the CP**
    - 1.7 points for the NDP
    - 3.6 points for the Greens + others
- **From time 2 to time 3 (post),**
  - Increases of
    - 2.3 points for the Bloc
    - 1.3 points for the CLP
    - 1.7 points for the Greens
  - Losses of
    - **4.1 points for the NDP**
    - 1.3 points for the CP

# **Movement at the aggregate level**

- Most of the movement towards the Bloc and the Liberals occurred during the campaign.
- Most of the movement away from the Conservatives occurred during the campaign.
- Most of the movement away from the NDP occurred in the voting booth (at least as declared).

# At the individual level

Looking for a typology

- There is an incredible variability in the movements
- Attempts at categorizing give 5 types:
  - **The stable** : 38.3 p.cent of the sample (59.3 p.cent of the resp. who voted) among which some thought about voting for another party at time 2 but finally stayed with their 1st choice (3.5 p.cent)
  - **The changers** : 17.0 p.cent of the sample (26.3 p.cent of the resp. who voted): they finally did not vote for their stated preference at time 1 or at time 2.
  - **The non disclosers** or “undecided”: 9.3 p.cent of the sample. They do not disclose their vote or preference at time 1.
  - **The non voters** : 13.3 p.cent of the sample
  - **The “non respondents”** : 22.2 p.cent of the sample.

# Synthesis at the individual level

	Change t1 - t2	Change t2 - t3	Change t1 - t3	Total
stable	37.3	35.3	38.3	38.3
changer	16.0	5.4	16.7	17.0
hesitant-decides	2.7	3.6	3.1	
refusal	13.4	8.3	10.3	9.3
Non voter		13.0	13.0	13.3
not reached t2 only		13.8		
not reached t2-t3	30.7	20.6	18.6	22.2

Most of the movement occurred between time 1 and time 2

# Change and choice

Weighted by weight for time 1

	Bloc	CLP	CP	NDP	Greens
Intent. T1	30.9	15.8	29.6	16.1	7.7
Stable	45.4	15.9	25.8	10.2	2.6
changers	11.8	11.8	32.5	30.2	13.6
Intent. T2	40.3	22.7	19.3	14.3	3.4
stable	47.9	16.3	21.3	11.3	3.2
changers	35.2	29.6	8.3	23.1	3.7
Decl. vote	43.6	21.9	20.7	10.1	3.8
Stable	45.4	15.9	25.8	10.2	2.6
Changers	42.2	29.8	11.2	10.6	6.2

- Change comes from the NDP, the Greens and the CP
- Goes to the Bloc and the CLP (in greater proportion)

# The changers

Patterns of change?

- Among the 170 changers, the largest groups are...
- Those who left the CP for the CLP at time 2 (15)
- Those who left the NDP for the Bloc at time 2 (12)
- Those who left the CP for the Bloc at time 2 (12)
- Other configurations :
  - Left Bloc for CLP (8) but were not joined at time 2
  - Left NDP for the Bloc (7) but were not joined at time 2.
  - Left the CP for the Bloc (6) but were not joined at time 2.
  - Left the Greens for the Bloc (6) at time 2.

# **To what do respondents attribute their change of minds?**

- **Not much to the debate or to the polls :**
  - Changers are less interested in the campaign, less likely to have seen the polls or listened to the debate
  - Note that the “undecided” were more likely to have listened to the debate, at least in part.
  - BUT, changers are somewhat more likely to say that the polls influenced them (33%) than the stable (25.8%) and above all, the “undecided” (21,4%).
- **Not to ... cuts in subsidies for culture or to proposed changes to the youth offenders act : no trace of these topics in answers to the open ended questions.**

# Respondents attribute their change of mind to...

Very varied reasons...

- Those who went to the BLOC (68):
  - Wanted to block Harper (13)
  - Were happy with the candidate in their constituency (11)
  - Thought it was the less bad...(7)
  - Thought it was the best party to “protect Qc’s interests” (6)
  - Liked Duceppe (6),...
- Those who went to the CLP (49):
  - Wanted to block Harper (17)
  - Liked the party (5), their candidate(4), the program (4), the chief(3), think it was the less bad (3), voted strategically (3), wanted to block the Bloc (3), were disappointed with the CP (3),...



## To conclude

- The panel design gave us
  - A good estimate of voting intentions at time 2 and at low cost
  - An interesting insight into change of minds
- Though it was an election with a high level of movement, there is no obvious pattern of change. Change goes in some directions more than others but paths are varied.
- However, “blocking Harper” was the most important reason invoked for change of minds.