

Demographic Divides Analysis: Group Report and Presentation

Sample Assignment Instructions – CVPA Teaching Resource

Note: This assignment was successfully piloted by Dr. Tyler Romualdi in upper-year undergraduate courses at Western University and Queen's University. Questions or inquiries may be directed to tyler.romualdi@queensu.ca.

1. Assignment Overview

An essential skill for political scientists is the ability to communicate complex findings clearly and effectively to diverse audiences, including academic peers at conferences, government officials in policy consultations, civil society organizations, and members of the general public. These “knowledge mobilization” exercises – translating sophisticated theories and data into accessible and intuitive forms of communication – are crucial for success in both academic and professional settings.

The purpose of this assignment is to develop students’ skills in *telling stories with data* using a newly available interactive webpage: [Canadian Voting and Policy Attitudes Explorer](#) and the [CVPA R Package](#). These resources generate long-term estimates of demographic differences in Canadians’ support for federal political parties. Developed by political scientists David Armstrong (Western University), Jack Lucas (University of Calgary), and Tyler Romualdi (Queen’s University), they incorporate 672 historical surveys conducted in Canada from 1945 to 2026, drawn from major academic and commercial sources, such as Gallup Canada, Environics, Pollara, the Canadian Election Study, and the Consortium on Electoral Democracy. With more than one million individual responses, the dataset provides an extensive set of demographic variables along with measures of Canadians’ vote intentions and choices.¹

Students will use pre-generated results from these tools to answer novel empirical questions about the long-term development of demographic divisions in Canadians’ voting behaviour.

In this sample assignment, students work in groups to investigate one demographic divide in Canadians’ **voting intentions**. Each group focuses exclusively on its assigned demographic, submits a written report, and delivers an in-class presentation. Instructors may assign groups and presentation dates according to their course schedule. Possible demographic divides to examine include:

- Language
- Education
- Union membership
- Gender
- Age group
- Community size
- Region

2. Assignment Instructions

This evaluation consists of *two* major components: a written report and an in-class presentation. The expectations for each component are outlined below.

¹Students interested in learning more about this dataset can access additional information [here](#).

2.1 Group Report Guidelines

- **Length and Format:** The report should be four to six pages in length, double-spaced, written in complete sentences, and formatted using 12-point font and 1-inch margins. It must include a title page listing the full names and student numbers of all group members, as well as a reference page. The title and reference pages do not count toward the required page length.
- **Theoretical Rationale (2-3 pages):** Students will be provided with *three* core readings on the voting behaviour of their chosen demographic. Using evidence and arguments from **all three readings**, this section should clearly explain *why* the chosen demographic group's voting patterns may differ from other segments within the same group (e.g., women vs. men within the gender demographic).
- **Empirical Evaluation (2-3 pages):** Students will use provided visualizations of their selected demographic divide in political party support over time. Using these graphs, students will answer *three* empirical questions and forecast trends for the next Canadian federal election. Importantly, responses to the questions below must be based on the patterns displayed in the provided graphs, not on the secondary literature used in the Theoretical Rationale.
 - *Which* political parties have traditionally received the strongest support from specific segments of this demographic group over time?
 - *When and how much* of an advantage have Canadian political parties held among specific segments of the demographic group since 1945?
 - *To what extent* is this demographic divide still important for understanding party support today, or has its influence diminished?
 - Looking ahead to the next Canadian federal election, do you anticipate this demographic divide in voting patterns to increase, decrease, or remain stable among the major federal parties, and why?

2.2 Group Presentation Guidelines

- **Length/Format:** A 15–20 minute PowerPoint presentation. Every group member must present equally.
- **Presentation Structure:** The presentation should be approximately 10 slides in length and follow the format outlined below.
 - **Slide #1 Introduction:** Introduce the presentation title and group members.
 - **Slide #2 Framing Importance:** Explain why the chosen demographic is important for elections and voting behavior. Students are encouraged to use real-world examples from Canada or other established democracies.
 - **Slide #3 Theorizing the Gap:** Summarize potential reasons why this demographic's voting patterns may differ from other segments within the same group, based on the core readings.
 - **Slide #4 Visualizing the Gap:** Present the pre-prepared visualization, providing a high-level overview of the trends before detailed analysis.
 - **Slide #5 Descriptive Analysis:** Answer the first empirical question.
 - **Slide #6 Descriptive Analysis:** Answer the second empirical question.
 - **Slide #7 Descriptive Analysis:** Answer the third empirical question.
 - **Slide #8 Forecast:** Forecast future trends.

- **Slide #9 Future Research Question:** Pose one question that your research on this demographic division raises.
- **Slide #10 Conclusion:** Summarize the main takeaways and conclude.

Other Important Information:

- **Submission Deadline and Details:** Presentation slides and the written report must be submitted through the course learning management system by the deadline established by the instructor. One group member may submit on behalf of the group, provided that the full names of all group members appear on the title page. Instructors should specify any requirements for printed copies, slide submission, and late penalties.
- **Statement on AI Usage:** Students must follow the instructor's stated policy on the use of generative AI for written work, presentations, and data analysis. Any permitted use must comply with institutional academic integrity requirements. Students experiencing difficulties with the readings or the interpretation of data are encouraged to contact the instructor for guidance.
- **Administrative Notes:** Each group member is expected to attend and participate on the date of their presentation. In the event of illness or other extenuating circumstances, students should follow their institution's academic consideration or accommodation procedures and contact the instructor regarding alternative arrangements.
- **Peer Evaluation:** Students are expected to be active and valued contributors to their group in the development of the report and in-class presentation. Instructors may invite students to submit confidential peer evaluations following their presentations and should communicate any procedures for assessing individual contributions in advance.

3. Core Readings

As noted above, students must read and integrate insights from all three core readings on their chosen demographic in both their report and presentation. The following readings are organized by topic:

Language:

1. Medeiros, M. (2017). "Refining the influence of language on national attachment: Exploring linguistic threat perceptions in Quebec." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 23(4), 375-390.
2. Chassé, P. & Taylor, M. (2025). "Bridging the Gap: Bilingualism and the End of the Two Solitudes." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, pp.1-21.
3. Polèse, M. (January 7, 2025). *The Quiet Separation / La séparation tranquille. Policy Options*. [Link](#).

Education:

1. Ford, R. and Jennings, W. (2020). "The changing cleavage politics of Western Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23(1), pp.295-314.
2. Zingher, J.N. (2022). "TRENDS: Diploma divide: Educational attainment and the realignment of the American electorate." *Political Research Quarterly*, 75(2), pp.263-277.
3. Kiss, S., Polacko, M., & Graefe, P. (2023). "The education and income voting divides in Canada and their consequences for redistributive politics." *Electoral Studies*, 85, 102648.

Union Membership:

1. Savage, L. (2010). "Contemporary party–union relations in Canada." *Labor Studies Journal*, 35(1), 8–26.
2. Polacko, M., Kiss, S., & Graefe, P. (2022). "The changing nature of class voting in Canada, 1965–2019." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, 55(3), 663–686.
3. Westlake, D., Savage, L., & Butovsky, J. (2025). "The labour vote revisited: Impacts of union type and demographics on electoral behaviour in Canadian federal politics." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, 58(3), 642–665.

Gender:

1. Erickson, L., & O'Neill, B. (2002). "The gender gap and the changing woman voter in Canada." *International Political Science Review*, 23(4), 373–392.
2. Giger, N. (2009). "Towards a modern gender gap in Europe? A comparative analysis of voting behavior in 12 countries." *The Social Science Journal*, 46(3), 474–492.
3. Langsæther, P.E. and Knutsen, C.H. (2025). "Are women more progressive than men? Attitudinal gender gaps in West European democracies." *International Political Science Review*, 46(3), pp.442–453.

Age Group:

1. O'Grady, T. (2023). "Is ideological polarisation by age group growing in Europe?" *European Journal of Political Research*, 62(4), pp.1389–1402.
2. Rekker, R. (2024). "Electoral change through generational replacement: An age-period-cohort analysis of vote choice across 21 countries between 1948 and 2021." *Frontiers in Political Science*, 6, p.1279888.
3. Dassonneville, R., & McAllister, I. (2026). "Is there a "Youthquake"? The structure of party competition and age differences in voting." *Comparative Political Studies*, Advance online publication [here](#).

Community Size:

1. Walks, R.A. (2004). "Place of residence, party preferences, and political attitudes in Canadian cities and suburbs." *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 26(3), 269–295.
2. Armstrong II, D.A., Lucas, J., & Taylor, Z. (2022). "The urban–rural divide in Canadian federal elections, 1896–2019." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, 55(1), 84–106.
3. Borwein, S. and Lucas, J. (2025). "Place Types." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, pp.1–17.

Region:

1. Cairns, A. C. (1968). "The electoral system and the party system in Canada, 1921–1965." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 1(1), 55–80.
2. Gidengil, E., Blais, A., Nadeau, R., & Nevitte, N. (1999). "Making sense of regional voting in the 1997 Canadian federal election: Liberal and Reform support outside Quebec." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 32(2), 247–272.

3. Cochrane, C., & Perrella, A. (2012). "Regions, regionalism, and regional differences in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, 45(4), 829–853.