

Candidate Diversity and Racialized and Indigenous Political Engagement in Canada

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Executive Summary

Racialized and Indigenous persons are consistently underrepresented among political candidates and elected officials in Canada. They also tend to be less politically engaged than those Canadians who have greater sociopolitical power, though there is significant variation across ethnocultural communities. For example, racialized Canadians are 6 to 7 percentage points less likely than the rest of the population to vote in elections and participate in non-electoral political activity as well as less likely to demonstrate political interest and efficacy and to engage in different types of political participation compared to other Canadians (Statistics Canada 2022c). One potential explanation for this gap is the limited number of candidates who share their social identities. Such candidates may play both substantive mobilization and symbolic roles, acting as role models for racialized or Indigenous individuals (Gay 2001; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). This study therefore assesses the impact of affinity—when voters share salient social identities with candidates—on political engagement.

We ask the following question: Do racialized and Indigenous persons in Canada show greater interest in elections, more political empowerment, and satisfaction with democratic processes when they see local riding candidates with whom they share social identities? We test the impact of candidate/voter affinities on political engagement in Canada by using a unique dataset combining information about all candidates who ran for office in the 2021 federal election with the results of the 2021 Canadian Election Study.

Employing both descriptive and multiple regression analysis, we uncovered minimal evidence for affinity effects. In many cases, the presence of racialized and Indigenous candidates was associated with *lower* levels of political engagement of racialized and Indigenous persons. However, we maintain that more robust data collection, conceptualization, and analysis of factors such as candidate competitiveness, electoral systems, and local context might reveal anticipated affinity effects and strengthen our understanding of their role in Canada.

Introduction

This study investigates whether candidate diversity impacts the political engagement of racialized and Indigenous persons in Canada, in the context of the 2021 general election. As per the 2021 census, 26.3% of Canadian residents and one in five Canadian citizens are a racial or ethnic minority (Statistics Canada 2023). By 2041, racialized Canadians are projected to make up about 40% of the population (Statistics Canada 2022a). The Indigenous population represents 5% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada 2022b), a figure that is expected to reach up to 7% in the next two decades (Statistics Canada 2021).¹

Racialized and Indigenous groups are and will continue to be the fastest-growing segments in the Canadian population in the coming decades. If one measure of the health of our democracy is its capacity for inclusion and representational diversity, then it is worrying that racialized and Indigenous people are consistently underrepresented among political candidates and elected officials in Canada. They also tend to be less politically engaged than those Canadians with greater sociopolitical power, though there is significant variation across ethnocultural communities. For example, racialized Canadians are 6 to 7% less likely to vote in elections, compared to other Canadians, and to participate in non-electoral political activity; they also express lower political interest and efficacy. (Efficacy refers to an individual's sense of their ability to understand and influence politics [Statistics Canada 2022c].)

One potential explanation for this engagement gap is the limited social diversity of candidates seeking elected office historically. Such candidates can bolster engagement substantively, through active mobilization of specific communities, and symbolically, by acting as role models to demonstrate that politics is open to marginalized voices (Gay 2001; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). However, a growing number of racialized and Indigenous individuals are now seeking office, enabling us to explore the role of affinity—where voters and candidates share salient social identities—on political engagement in Canada.

¹ Statistics Canada bases the concept of “racialized” as derived from the term “visible minority,” denoting “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” It defines “Indigenous” as individuals who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit.

Our research question is the following: Do racialized and Indigenous people show greater interest in elections, feelings of political empowerment, and satisfaction with democratic processes when they see candidates who share these social identities? We test the impact of these “affinity” candidates on political engagement in Canada by combining sociodemographic information about candidates in the 2021 federal election with voter responses to the 2021 Canadian Election Study (CES) (Stephenson et al. 2022). For practical purposes, we focused on Indigenous respondents as well as Black, Chinese, and South Asian respondents—the three largest racialized groups in Canada. We identified candidates’ social characteristics, including ethnicity, to enable us to examine if these voters have higher levels of political engagement, empowerment, and satisfaction with democracy when they have Black, Chinese, South Asian, or Indigenous candidates in their riding versus when they do not. We report both descriptive results and estimates from regression models, controlling for relevant sociodemographic and political variables such as respondents’ age, gender, education, and party identification.

Overall, we found minimal evidence of affinity effects between voters and candidates, which is in keeping with previous research on racialized and Indigenous gaps in political engagement compared to other groups. In many cases, the presence of racialized and Indigenous candidates was associated with *lower* levels of political engagement of racialized and Indigenous citizens. However, we urge caution in interpreting this result. Affinity effects might be uncovered with the inclusion of intervening factors such as candidate competitiveness, Canada’s “first past the post” electoral system, and local context that could not be captured in this analysis. Uncovering such effects would have significant implications for the value of candidate diversity on political and democratic engagement and would support growing calls for political parties to diversify their candidates.

Racialized and Indigenous Candidates in Canadian Elections

The political inclusion of many racialized groups and Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the presence of racialized and Indigenous candidates, is relatively new, primarily because of a history of disenfranchisement and discrimination. For example, British Columbia excluded its significant Chinese and Japanese populations from the franchise until 1948; because of the electoral laws in place at the time, this also meant national disenfranchisement. First Nations

people acquired the unconditional right to vote only in 1960, and Inuit gained this right in 1950 but were effectively denied ballot access until 1962 (Elections Canada 2020).

The first racialized member of Parliament (MP) was Chinese Canadian Douglas Jung in 1957. Lincoln Alexander became the first Black MP in 1968, later becoming the first Black federal cabinet minister (Operation Black Vote Canada 2020). Since then, only 19 other Black Canadians have been elected to Parliament, or 0.06% of all MPs (Johnson-Myers and Everitt 2022). The first South Asian MPs were elected in 1993. Since then, South Asian engagement as voters and candidates has been significantly stronger relative to other racialized communities (Bird 2005; Matheson 2006). In fact, South Asians were overrepresented as candidates and MPs in recent federal elections (Black and Griffith 2022). In contrast, Chinese representation has consistently lagged relative to its population; after Jung, only 22 others have been elected to the House of Commons (Lim 2018).

One of the challenges of studying racialized and Indigenous political engagement is the lack of complete background information on candidates until recently. Johnson and colleagues (2021) produced such a dataset on all candidates in the 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2019 federal elections, coding for their various social identities. The authors found modest improvements in the racialized share of federal candidates, from 11% in 2008 to 17% in 2019. However, the 21% of racialized candidates *elected* in 2019 is almost identical to the 20% in 2008.

The situation did not improve in 2021. In this election, Black and Griffith (2022) determined that about 18% of candidates were racialized, while Tolley and colleagues (2022) indicated it was 21.9%.² Of about 300 racialized candidates, 53 were elected (or 15.7% of the House of Commons). The representation ratio of the racialized population to MPs is 0.59, while for the white population it is 1.18.³ As mentioned above, South Asians are overrepresented as candidates, particularly in some party slates: almost 10% of Liberal candidates, for example, were of South Asian background (Black and Griffith 2022). Interestingly, the 2021 election saw the

² Minor variations among sources are due to differences in coding and scope. For example, Black and Griffith (2022) examined candidates from the Liberal, Conservative, New Democrat, Bloc Québécois, Green, and People's parties, while Tolley et al. (2022) excluded the People's Party. The overall racialized percentage discrepancy can be attributed to the low 8.4% of People's Party candidates who were racialized.

³ The representation ratio is a standardized index that allows us to compare the level of under- (or over-) representation across groups. It is calculated by dividing a group's share of seats in Parliament by its population share. A score of 1.0 indicates that a group is proportionately represented.

share of both Black candidates (70) and Black MPs (9) almost double from the two prior elections. Chinese Canadians continue to be underrepresented: only 22 candidates, or 1.3% of all party candidates, were of Chinese background, and only eight were elected. Considering the share of MPs from these groups relative to their respective population shares, South Asians achieved a representational ratio of 1.07, Blacks reached 0.63, while those of Chinese background attained a ratio of just 0.57. Other racialized groups, such as Filipinos, have even lower representation ratios.

Indigenous political representation in Canada has a deeper history than that of racialized groups, as Métis candidates won in the first federal elections after 1867, including Louis Riel in 1874. However, the first Status First Nations MP, Leonard Marchand, was not elected until 1968 (Hunter 2003). Overall, the share of Indigenous candidates and elected MPs has been low; however, since 2008, the number of Indigenous candidates has increased substantially, from 19 in 2008 (1.9% of all candidates) to 56 in 2019 (3.9%) (Johnson et al. 2021).⁴ In 2021, media reports indicated that at least 77 candidates were Indigenous (Hobson 2021). Our own coding identified 56 Indigenous candidates, of whom 12 were elected, constituting 3.6% of MPs. Considering their population share of 5%, this gives Indigenous people a representation ratio of 0.72.

Racialized and Indigenous Engagement in Politics

In addition to the relative lack of diverse representation in Canadian politics, research shows that, on average, racialized and Indigenous Canadians' level of political engagement is lower than that of other Canadians. Racialized Canadians, for instance, are 6 to 7% less likely to vote compared to other citizens (Statistics Canada 2022c), but age might be a factor here. The racialized population is about seven years younger on average compared to the Canadian population (Statistics Canada 2011), and younger people are less likely to vote. South Asians now have the highest turnout rates and the second-highest non-voting political engagement among Canadians, but that was not always the case. Tossutti's (2007) analysis of the 2002 Statistics Canada Ethnic Diversity Survey found much lower turnout rates in elections at all levels of government for Chinese, South Asian, and Black respondents compared to white respondents. For example, almost 80% of white respondents reported voting in the prior federal election, while only 47% of Black respondents did so.

⁴ Johnson et al.'s (2021) data includes all candidates for the Liberal, Conservative, New Democratic, and Bloc Québécois parties for 2008 to 2015; Green candidates were added in 2019.

Although racialized citizens in general are less likely than white citizens to vote, research indicates that their participation in other political activities varies depending upon immigration status. A recent Statistics Canada (2022c) report indicates that white Canadians are more likely than racialized immigrants—but not more likely than native-born racialized Canadians—to engage in non-voting political activities such as seeking information, signing petitions, or volunteering for a party. Pooling data from the 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2008 CES, Gidengil and Roy (2016) revealed that racialized immigrants reported slightly *higher* political and campaign interest than native-born white people, while native-born racialized people expressed the lowest interest (Gidengil and Roy 2016). Their study also found that both categories of racialized respondents reported lower levels of activities such as discussing the election and boycotting relative to white respondents. While some of these differences disappeared when controlling for relevant variables, it remained clear that “lower levels of political activity on the part of visible minority immigrants reflect the racial biases that still permeate Canadian society” (Gidengil and Roy 2016: 150). Some of the inconsistencies in results relate to the challenges of data collection. For example, Canadian Election Studies have seldom surveyed significant numbers of racialized respondents, causing researchers to pool samples, draw from surveys designed for other purposes, or adopt more narrow study parameters (Bird et al. 2011). Moreover, academic interest in racialized political behaviour in Canada has been relatively limited and racialized scholars largely absent.

For their part, many Indigenous individuals contest the idea that inclusion in Canadian political institutions is a good idea. They see participation as candidates or voters as legitimating the authority of settler-colonial institutions and undermining Indigenous assertions of sovereignty (Cowie 2021; Gabriel 2021; Palmater 2019). Given this view, it is unsurprising that the few studies of Indigenous political engagement in Canada consistently show lower electoral participation of Indigenous persons and communities (Fournier and Loewen 2011; Harell et al. 2010; Ladner and McCrossan 2007). Explanations for the markedly lower rates of Indigenous engagement draw on “resource-based” theories of turnout (Fournier and Loewen 2011; Harell et al. 2010): namely, that socioeconomic deprivation—lower income and education levels—depresses turnout. Along with other factors, such as age (the Indigenous population is significantly younger than the non-Indigenous population in Canada) and weaker senses of civic duty, socioeconomic differences explain much of the engagement gap. Fournier and Loewen (2011) also note that on-reserve

turnout is lower than off-reserve turnout, contradicting Harell and colleagues' (2010) previous finding that these rates were nearly identical.

This brief review suggests that efforts to understand the political behaviour of racialized groups must account for considerable heterogeneity both across and within ethnic or racial groups. This includes attention to socioeconomic resources, social networks and mobilization capacity, political ambition, and familiarity with democratic practices. Furthermore, we need to account for variations in cultural and societal attitudes toward different social groups, as well as structured relations of privilege and disadvantage, including sexism and racism. However, the literature suggests that, overall, racialized and Indigenous individuals are underrepresented in Canadian politics as both candidates and politicians and that they engage in political activities (e.g., voting) at lower levels than other groups of Canadians.

This raises the question of whether a greater (or lower) presence of racialized or Indigenous candidates increases (or reduces) political engagement among voters who share their identities. Specifically, does having a candidate who shares one's racialized or Indigenous identity impact voters' interest in politics, raise their sense of efficacy, reduce their alienation from politics, and increase satisfaction with democratic processes? It is this concept of voter–candidate affinity that we turn to next.

Candidate–Voter Affinities in Canada

The lack of diverse representation may be both a cause and an outcome of the political engagement gap between racialized and Indigenous individuals and other Canadians. Underrepresentation might lead voters to internalize the idea that politics is not for them, resulting in lower levels of political interest, turnout, and efficacy and, with it, a lack of support for racialized and Indigenous candidates and lower interest in running for office. In contrast, the presence of racialized and Indigenous candidates can result in a sense of empowerment among voters and, with it, enhanced interest, turnout, efficacy, and satisfaction with democracy. While this question has received limited attention in Canada, evidence from the United States and elsewhere provides support for the “minority empowerment” argument (Banducci et al. 2004; Bobo and Gilliam 1990).

This argument captures the idea of affinity: that people have “baseline preferences for candidates on the grounds of shared gender, racial or other highly visible sociodemographic characteristics” (Bird et al. 2016: 361). In other words, people are more likely to vote for or engage

with candidates when the two groups share salient identities. This might be for “interest-based” reasons—voters use shared identity as an ideological or policy cue regarding how the candidate is expected to act—or “identity” reasons related to positive in-group bias (Besco 2019).

Voting affinity has received widespread treatment in the American context, particularly regarding Black and Latinx identities, but the Canadian literature is much smaller and relatively recent (Besco 2015, 2019; Bird 2016; Bird et al. 2016; Goodyear-Grant and Tolley 2017). Besco (2019) found significant evidence of racial voting affinity in an experimental study. Compared to other respondents, racialized respondents were 8% more likely to prefer a fictional affinity candidate as well as 6% more likely to prefer a racialized but not affinity candidate compared to a white candidate. Besco’s work also emphasized the importance of self-identification: affinity effects “are strongly conditional” on how strongly an individual feels a sense of ethnic identity (Besco 2015: 324). In another experimental study, Bird (2016) found that South Asian affinity effects between respondents and a fictional candidate were significant, compared to white affinity effects, both in voting preferences and in the belief that the candidate would “speak on behalf of me and my concerns”: the differences were about 1 point on a 10-point scale (Bird 2016: 192). Goodyear-Grant and Tolley (2017) found that Chinese voters’ preference for a hypothetical affinity candidate is significant but also depends on the politicization of ethnic identity for its effect. Looking at political donations, Besco and Tolley (2022) discovered that Chinese and South Asian donors disproportionately donated to affinity candidates in the 2015 federal election and that these donations constituted large shares of these candidates’ fundraising.

The 2014 Toronto Election Study provided a real-world opportunity to assess these affinity effects given the presence of Olivia Chow, a well-known racialized mayoral candidate (later elected mayor, in 2023), the high ethnic diversity of the city, and the non-partisan nature of Toronto municipal elections. Bird and colleagues’ (2016) study demonstrated strong affinity voting in this context: Chinese voters were much more likely to support Chow relative to both non-Chinese racialized voters and white voters. Meanwhile, McGregor and colleagues (2017) found a strong incumbency advantage at play in the city council races, observing racial affinity effects only when an incumbent did not seek re-election in one of the Toronto wards. This finding is problematic at the local level, as racial minority representation is dramatically worse than at other levels of government in Canada. Additionally, due to the very high incumbency rate, existing

underrepresentation tends to be perpetuated rather than disrupted, and potential minority candidates may be discouraged from running for office or otherwise not succeed (McGregor et al. 2017; Tolley 2018; Lucas 2021).

The context of studying affinities between Indigenous voters and candidates is different to that of other groups. As Gidengil (2022) notes, we know relatively little about Indigenous voting behaviour in general for both normative and methodological reasons. Normatively, a fundamental tension exists between belief in Indigenous self-government and inherent sovereignty and participation in the settler-colonial institutions of the Canadian state (Cowie 2021; Dabin et al. 2019; Fournier and Loewen 2011). This tension has only strengthened as Indigenous self-identification and decolonization efforts have grown. Thus, our general assumption that inclusion and engagement are positive values might not be true for Indigenous people. Methodological issues also create challenges in measuring Indigenous voting affinity. Few opinion surveys have focused on Indigenous voting behaviour (Fournier and Loewen 2011). Additionally, the CES has typically had few Indigenous respondents. Dabin and colleagues (2019) produced a rare study of Indigenous affinity: they relied not on individual survey data but on aggregate voting results from specific ballot boxes (those for which > 95% of the electorate was Indigenous) from the 2006 to 2015 elections. They showed that turnout was significantly higher in polls with at least one Indigenous candidate on the ballot and that turnout increased as the number of Indigenous candidates increased. In an earlier study, Berdahl and colleagues (2011) found limited support for Indigenous affinity effects: on average, on-reserve turnout was 3% higher when there was at least one Indigenous candidate. The large variation across ridings suggests a non-systematic difference; however, affinity might have strengthened on-reserve support for the specific parties that ran Indigenous candidates.

Research therefore suggests that affinity effects might be present in both racialized and Indigenous contexts. However, most of the scholarly attention is on the impact of candidate/voter affinities on vote choice and far less on their implications for political engagement, voter efficacy, political trust, and satisfaction with democracy. Furthermore, much work needs to be done to establish the strength of affinity in real-world settings, particularly beyond the municipal level.

Data and Methods: The 2021 Canadian Election Study and Identification of Racialized and Indigenous Candidates

To explore candidate/voter affinities, we incorporated demographic data on all of the racialized and Indigenous candidates into the 2021 Canadian Election Study (CES). The CES consists of an online campaign period survey (N = 20,968) and an online post-election follow-up survey (N = 15,069) where campaign-period respondents were recontacted (Stephenson et al. 2022). As part of a larger project, the authors manually identified all racialized and Indigenous candidates in the 2021 federal election. The identification process involved examining social media, website profiles, and news reports. We identified 214 racialized candidates and 56 Indigenous candidates. These candidates were then matched with CES respondents by federal electoral district to enable us to compare the responses of those voters who were presented with affinity candidates in the election campaign to the responses of those who were not.

CES respondents were asked a standard demographic question on their “visible minority” status. It asked, “Do you identify as any of the following?” The options were Arab, Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latino/Latina, South Asian, Southeast Asian, West Asian, white, other, none of the above, and prefer not to answer. We focus on the four racialized groups with the most frequent response, excluding white and none/other/prefer not to answer: Asian (N = 1,450), South Asian (N = 669), Indigenous (N = 667), and Black (N = 450).⁵ We acknowledge that these respondents might not be wholly representative of their racial group’s attitudes. Given Indigenous outlooks or perspectives toward participation in Canadian state processes, Indigenous respondents might include people who are more willing to engage in these processes and might exclude those who are more ambivalent or who reject engagement with settler-colonial institutions.

In terms of the dependent variables, respondents were asked questions about their interest in and attention to the election, whether they voted in the election, their sense of political efficacy, and their satisfaction with democracy. The three efficacy questions asked respondents their level of agreement to these statements: “Sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on”; “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does”; and “The government does not care much about what people

⁵ The valid sample in the analyses below varies due to missing data.

like me think.” While these questions are interrelated, we consider them separately as they measure distinct aspects of a person’s political engagement and might be differently impacted by candidate–voter affinity. The first question probes an individual’s “internal” efficacy—perceptions of their own capabilities—while the other questions prove “external” efficacy—perceptions of the responsiveness of and connection to governments (Bowler and Donovan 2002).

Interest and Turnout in Elections, Political Efficacy, and Satisfaction with Democracy

Our primary research question asks whether the presence of racialized or Indigenous candidates substantively impacts these voters’ interest in elections, likelihood of voting, sense of political efficacy, and satisfaction with democracy. We thus consider different modes of participation and orientations to engagement with politics in Canada. We begin with descriptive analysis before discussing results of multivariable regression analysis.

Interest and Turnout in Elections

Interest in the federal campaign was measured in two ways. First, during the campaign period, CES respondents were asked to rate their interest in the 2021 election from 0 to 10, with 0 indicating no interest and 10 a great deal of interest. Racialized respondents expressed a slightly lower level of average interest relative to white respondents (6.5 vs. 6.7), but notable differences existed between racialized subgroups. South Asians had the highest average interest at 6.9, exceeding the overall average of 6.6 for all CES respondents, supporting previous research (Bird 2005; Matheson 2006). Almost two thirds of South Asian respondents reported interest of 7 or higher, while less than half of Asian respondents did so. Black and Indigenous respondents reported only slightly less interest in the election than white respondents (6.4 and 6.5 vs. 6.7).

In the post-election survey, respondents were asked how much attention they paid to the campaign on a three-point scale: a lot, some, or not at all. Overall, 81% of respondents said they paid a lot or some attention, but racialized respondents were about 6% less likely to have paid at least some attention compared to white respondents. The gap is starker among the most highly engaged: 35% of white respondents reported paying a lot of attention to the campaign compared to only 20% of racialized respondents. Again, we observed major differences in political interest when comparing racialized subgroups: 85% of South Asian respondents reported some campaign

attention, which was 8% higher than Black respondents and 14% higher than Asian respondents. This pattern was replicated among the most highly engaged. South Asian respondents were 12 percentage points more likely to pay a lot of attention to the campaign compared to Asian respondents. Surprisingly, Indigenous respondents were the most highly engaged subgroup, with almost 30% reporting a lot of campaign attention, coming in second to white respondents. Both measures of political interest indicate that racialized Canadians were slightly less engaged than non-racialized Canadians, but the gap is driven by relatively low interest among Asian respondents. South Asians were generally more interested than all other groups, while Indigenous respondents' strong interest was broadly equal to that of white respondents.

We turn now to the question of affinity effects: whether interest in and attention to the campaign varied by the presence and number of racialized and Indigenous candidates. If candidate–voter affinity is evident, we should see stronger interest in the presence of local candidates with whom a racialized or Indigenous voter shares a group identity, and that interest should increase with the number of affinity candidates. Overall, the results suggest that affinity has no demonstrable impact on political interest for racialized or Indigenous persons in Canada. Racialized respondents who had one or more affinity candidates in their local riding were no more interested in the election than respondents who had no such candidates. Racialized respondents also reported *less* attention to the campaign in the presence of affinity candidates: only 18% reported a lot of campaign attention in the affinity condition, compared to 21% in the non-affinity condition. This pattern is supported in Figure 1, which shows average interest in the 2021 election by the number of affinity candidates for (a) racialized and (b) Indigenous respondents. Interest does not increase with the number of affinity candidates in either case.⁶ We also examined potential differences among racialized subgroups but did not find any groups where interest was higher when more affinity candidates were present.

⁶ Attention to the campaign does increase among racialized respondents who had three racialized candidates, but it drops among Indigenous respondents who had more than one Indigenous candidate. However, the number of respondents in these cases is very small: only 23 racialized respondents had three racialized candidates, and only 10 Indigenous respondents had two Indigenous candidates. Thus, we do not draw any conclusions about interest at these values.

(a) Racialized

(b) Indigenous

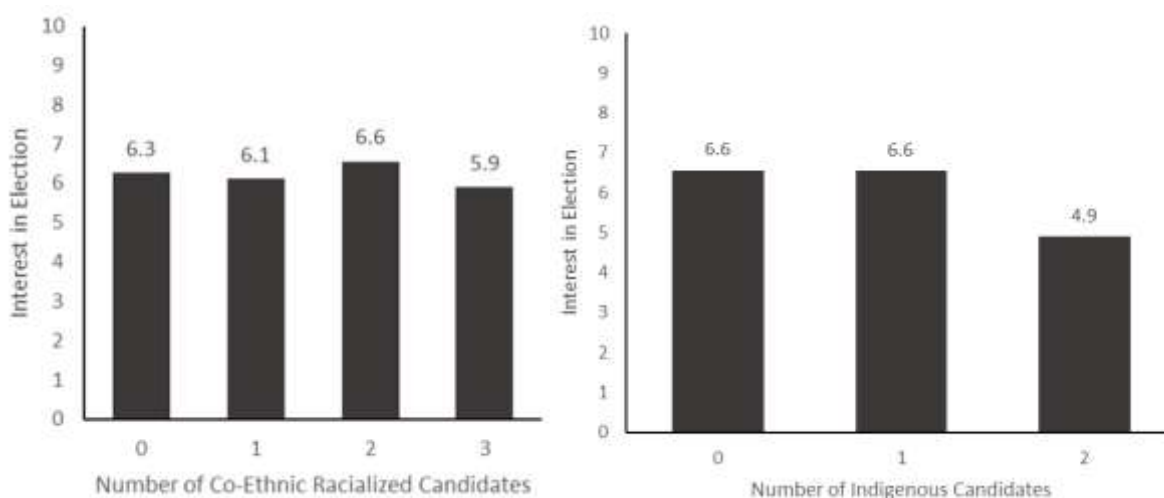


Figure 1. Average interest in 2021 election for racialized respondents by number of racialized candidates and Indigenous respondents by number of Indigenous candidates.

Standard deviations for (a) are: 0 candidates = 2.5, 1 candidate = 2.7, 2 candidates = 2.4, 3 candidates = 3.0; for (b): 0 candidates = 2.8, 1 candidate = 3.2, 2 candidates = 3.7.

Source: Authors' calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. N = 2489 for racialized respondents and 656 for Indigenous respondents. Interest in election is on a 0–10 scale, with 0 indicating “no interest” and 10 “a great deal of interest.”

We also gauge political interest by the measure of “campaign attention.” Overall, one third of respondents said they paid “a lot” of attention to the campaign, almost one half said they paid “some” attention, and less than one fifth said they paid “no” attention. Figures 2 and 3 show the percentage of racialized or Indigenous respondents for each campaign-attention response by the number of local affinity racialized candidates (Figure 2) and Indigenous candidates (Figure 3). These figures reinforce our finding that political interest might not increase when voters share identities with local candidates. The share of racialized respondents who reported paying a lot of attention to the campaign is lower relative to the overall share and declines as the number of affinity candidates increases, dropping from 21% with no affinity candidates to 11% with two candidates. The share does increase for three candidates, but this is based on only 14 responses. The “some” and “none” responses show no apparent trend. The negative relationship for racialized individuals is also evident in the Indigenous context, as seen in Figure 3. These results indicate

that affinity does not play a straightforward role in generating political engagement among racialized and Indigenous people.

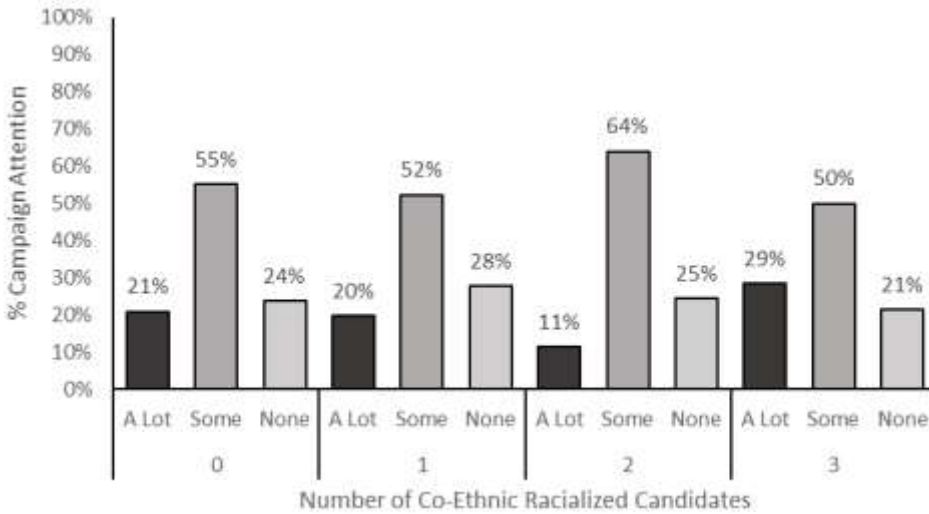


Figure 2. Attention to 2021 election campaign, racialized respondents by number of racialized candidates.

Source: Authors' calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. N = 2489. Outcome is percentage of each response to the question "How much attention did you pay to the election campaign?"

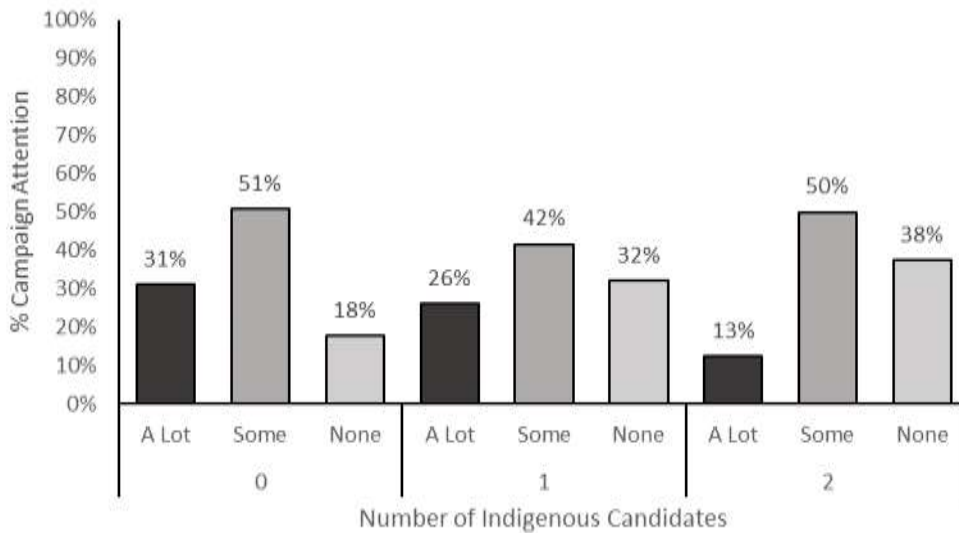


Figure 3. Attention to 2021 election campaign, Indigenous respondents by number of Indigenous candidates.

Source: Authors' calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. N = 444. Outcome is percentage of each response to the question "How much attention did you pay to the election campaign?"

While candidate–voter affinity might not have a direct impact on political interest, turning out to vote might be different. Interest and attention are important measures of political engagement, but scholars typically consider voting to be the fundamental act of participation in a democratic society. Previous research indicates that racialized Canadians are less likely to vote than other Canadians, though with considerable variation across groups (Statistics Canada 2022c). The 2021 CES data supports this pattern: racialized respondents were about 4 percentage points less likely to vote and Indigenous respondents were 2.5% less likely to do so compared to white respondents.

In short, does the presence of affinity candidates increase the likelihood of voting among racialized and Indigenous persons in Canada? The answer appears to be no. Voter turnout is not systematically associated with the presence or number of affinity candidates. In fact, only Asian respondents answer in the expected direction: they reported a 4% increase in turnout from zero local Asian candidates to two. In all other subgroups, turnout is either unchanged or significantly decreases.

Figure 4 displays the difference between group turnout and overall turnout. Compared to the overall rate, white respondents reported slightly higher turnout while the combined group of racialized and Indigenous respondents had a lower turnout regardless of any affinity candidates on the ballot. When examining specific racialized groups, Black and Indigenous respondents reported noticeably lower turnout in the presence of an affinity candidate compared to the absence of such a candidate, with decreases of 11% and 6.5%, respectively. We return to these puzzling results in our conclusion. In short, we do not find much evidence supporting the positive impact of identity affinities on measures of political interest or voting, at least in the context of the 2021 Canadian election and the CES respondent sample.

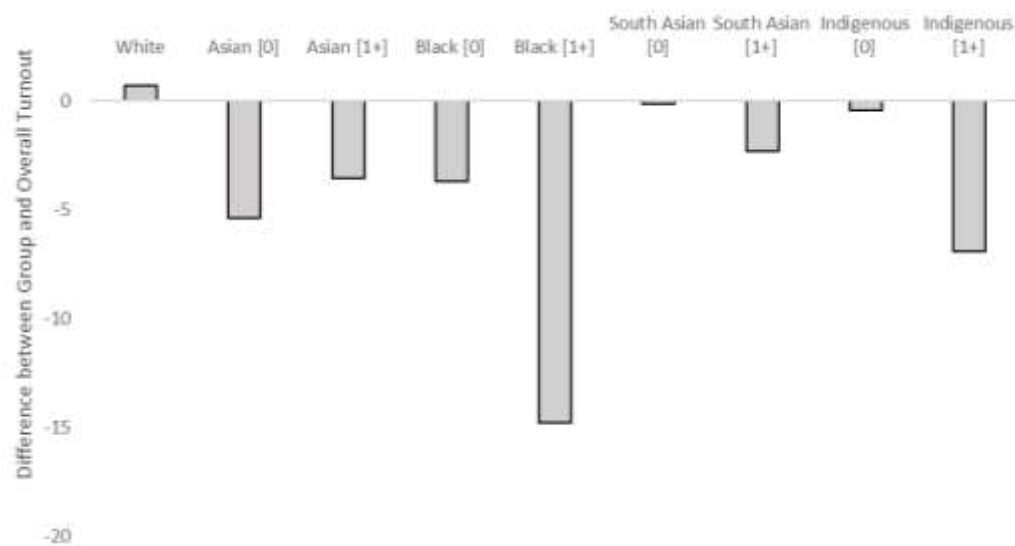


Figure 4. Differences between group and overall voting turnout, with and without racialized and Indigenous candidate presence.

Source: Authors' calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. N = 11614 white, 919 Asian, 248 Black, 368 South Asian, 413 Indigenous.

Political Efficacy

Our second area of investigation concerns political efficacy: the extent to which people feel competent to engage as political actors and perceptions of how responsive the political system is to their interests and preferences. A person with high efficacy feels that they understand politics well, they have a voice in politics, and their preferences influence government decisions, while a person with low efficacy feels that politics is difficult to follow and government is not responsive to their concerns. In other words, they are alienated from the political process. These attitudes are measured in the CES survey by Likert-scale (disagree-agree) responses to the three efficacy statements stated earlier. One explanation for generally lower levels of political engagement is low efficacy: people who are alienated from politics will not show interest in politics or participate in electoral processes. Thus, efficacy might explain why racialized and Indigenous people are less engaged.

Overall, the 2021 CES election data reveal the presence of efficacy gaps between racialized, white, and Indigenous respondents. Among racialized respondents, 69% indicated they somewhat or strongly agreed that government is too complicated to understand, whereas sizable but significantly lower shares of both white and Indigenous respondents felt this way (53% and

54%, respectively). Racialized respondents were 7% more likely to report not having any say in government than white respondents: 60% versus 53%. Indigenous respondents were still higher, at 67%. Finally, 60% of racialized respondents agreed that government does not care about their views, but this was the lowest share of agreement: 65% of white respondents and 71% of Indigenous respondents agreed with the statement. On average, racialized Canadians showed mixed feelings of political efficacy: not very confident in their understanding of how government works and lacking a sense of voice, yet less alienated in terms of their sense of government not caring. By contrast, Indigenous respondents were much more confident in their understanding of government but much more politically alienated, both in terms of lacking voice and having a sense that government is unresponsive to their views.

If affinity effects exist on this measure, we would expect political efficacy to increase when racialized and Indigenous people share salient group identities with local candidates. But our evidence suggests muted or absent affinity effects on efficacy. Tables 1 to 3 show the percentage of racialized and Indigenous respondents who agreed or disagreed with each efficacy statement. For racialized respondents, no clear pattern emerges for the “understanding government” measure of efficacy. The presence of more racialized local candidates increases disagreement with “having no say,” but the increase is small and is based on declining numbers of respondents. Compared to no affinity candidate, disagreement with the statement that “government doesn’t care about what people like me think” is lower among racialized respondents with one affinity candidate but increases for two candidates. We also assessed but do not display results for Black, Asian, and South Asian respondents separately; nothing in these results showed significant variation from the broader trend. Overall, results indicate that the presence of affinity racialized candidates has a complicated impact on feelings of political efficacy.

Table 1. Efficacy: “Government Is Complicated”—Racialized and Indigenous Respondents

Racialized Respondents				
<i>Number of Candidates</i>	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
0 (N = 1786)	7.4	23.3	49.1	20.2
1 (N = 429)	9.6	18.2	49.0	23.3
2 (N = 164)	7.3	30.0	39.6	23.2
3 (N = 23)	17.4	13.0	47.8	21.7
Indigenous Respondents				

0 (N = 514)	20.9	27.1	39.1	13.0
1 (N = 120)	17.9	20.3	43.9	17.9

Source: Authors' calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. Table entries are percent of respondents within each "number of co-ethnic candidates" group giving labelled response (Strongly Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Somewhat Agree / Strongly Agree). Survey question is "Sometimes, politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on."

Table 2. Efficacy: "People Like Me Don't Have Any Say"—Racialized and Indigenous Respondents

Racialized Respondents				
<i>Number of Candidates</i>	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
0 (N = 1760)	10.3	28.9	41.4	19.4
1 (N = 428)	9.8	31.8	35.7	22.7
2 (N = 167)	12.6	29.3	40.7	17.4
3 (N = 23)	13.0	30.4	43.5	13.0
Indigenous Respondents				
0 (N = 518)	19.3	24.7	34.0	22.0
1 (N = 126)	11.1	25.4	36.5	27.0

Source: Authors' calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. Table entries are percent of respondents within each "number of co-ethnic candidates" group giving labelled response (Strongly Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Somewhat Agree / Strongly Agree). Survey question is "People like me don't have any say about what the government does."

Table 3. Efficacy: "Government Doesn't Care"—Racialized and Indigenous Respondents

Racialized Respondents					
<i>Number of Candidates</i>	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
0 (N = 1232)	2.4	14.8	24.5	37.1	21.3
1 (N = 314)	1.6	11.8	24.2	38.9	23.6
2 (N = 113)	5.3	14.2	15.0	44.2	21.2
Indigenous Respondents					
0 (N = 345)	2.61	8.99	16.23	35.07	37.10
1 (N = 86)	3.49	13.95	12.79	37.21	32.56

Source: Authors' calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. Table entries are percent of respondents within each "number of co-ethnic candidates" group giving labelled response (Strongly Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Somewhat Agree / Strongly Agree). Survey question is "The government does not care much about what people like me think."

For Indigenous respondents, the presence of Indigenous candidates had interesting but somewhat conflicting associations with efficacy measures. Among Indigenous respondents, 48% somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement that "government is too complicated to understand," but this share drops to 38% with a local Indigenous candidate. Similarly, disagreement with the idea that one has "no say" drops 8 percentage points, from 44% to 36%. Both measures indicate that, on average, Indigenous respondents report *lower* efficacy in the presence of Indigenous candidates. However, the opposite pattern emerges for the third efficacy measure. Disagreement with the statement "government doesn't care" is higher when Indigenous candidates are present. Given the relatively low sample sizes, these results might be driven by specific contextual circumstances, but they might also suggest complexities in Indigenous orientations to Canadian government. Seeing local Indigenous candidates might suggest a more broadly responsive political system while not necessarily increasing the sense of individual influence over decisions.

Satisfaction with Democracy

Our final set of results concerns the effects of identity affinities on satisfaction with democracy. While related to feelings of efficacy, views on democracy directly speak to the legitimacy of the Canadian political system. If voters from historically marginalized groups report lower levels of democratic satisfaction and institutional trust, it speaks to fundamental exclusion from, or even rejection of, the core democratic idea that the state belongs equally to all citizens (Held 2006; Kymlicka 2003). However, if affinities between voters and candidates are demonstrated to have a beneficial impact on marginalized voters' attitudes toward democracy, we can at least suggest a way to make this core idea more of a reality.

Racialized respondents were significantly more satisfied with democracy than white respondents, and this holds for all racial subgroups. Less than 65% of whites were satisfied compared to Asian (71%), South Asian (75%), and Black (74%) respondents. This is consistent

with Bilodeau’s (2017) finding that foreign-born racialized persons expressed significantly higher democratic satisfaction in the Quebec context, which he attributes partly to the higher proportion of foreign-born racialized people with university degrees compared to both native-born racialized and other Quebecers. These findings are not evidence that democracy works better for racialized people than for white people. Rather, in addition to any demographic factors, we believe that white Canadians, especially native-born ones, might have different expectations of democracy and might be more disillusioned by the gap between normative ideals and the reality of Canadian democracy. Additionally, it may suggest that racialized persons, especially immigrants, might assess Canadian democracy in comparison to non-democratic or less democratic countries. This expectation argument also rings true for Indigenous respondents, who were the least satisfied with democracy, at 53%.

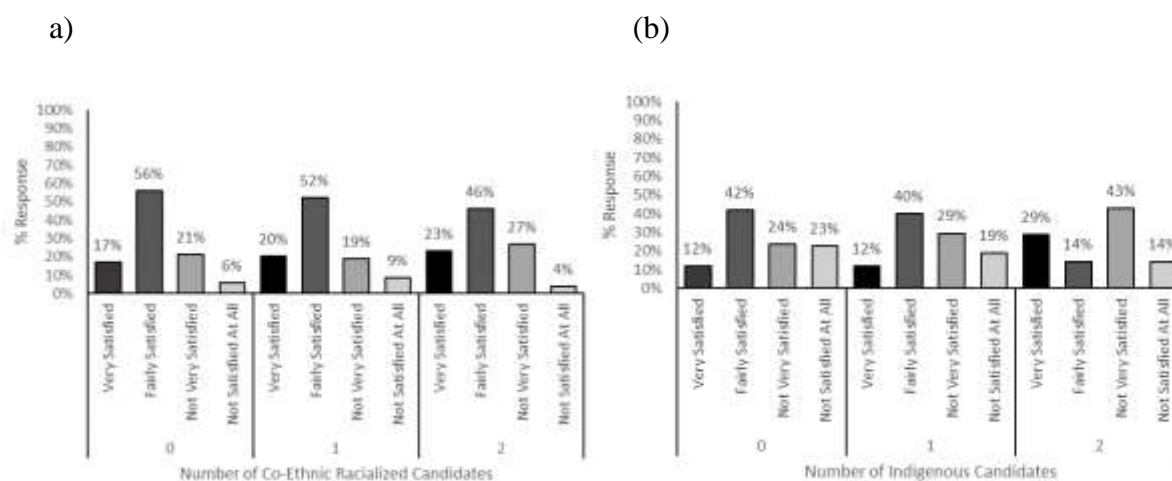


Figure 5. Satisfaction with democracy, racialized and Indigenous respondents by number of affinity candidates.

Source: Authors’ calculations from Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset. N = 1606 racialized, 427 Indigenous. Outcome is percentage of each response to the question “On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all with the way democracy works in Canada?”

Figure 5 plots satisfaction with democracy responses for (a) racialized and (b) Indigenous respondents by the number of affinity candidates. While we see a small upward trend for racialized

respondents in terms of being very satisfied with democracy (from 17 to 23%), we see lower overall satisfaction with one or more affinity candidates in the riding: the total share for “very” or “fairly” satisfied is 73% when there are no racialized affinity candidates, 72% when there is one affinity candidate, and 69% for two racialized candidates. Indigenous respondents demonstrate difference at the extremes: the share who are very satisfied more than doubles at two Indigenous candidates while the share who are not satisfied at all declines along with the number of candidates. However, the overall proportions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not change systematically. We therefore conclude that affinity does not play a major role in driving satisfaction or dissatisfaction with democracy as a systemic attitude.

Multivariable Models of Engagement, Political Efficacy, and Democratic Satisfaction

The descriptive comparisons demonstrate that a consistent pattern emerged in which affinity effects are minimal or absent. To control for other possible explanations for these findings, we conducted a series of multivariable regressions in which engagement, efficacy, and democratic satisfaction variables are the dependent variables and affinity candidate presence is the main independent variable. We employed two measures of affinity: a binary measure of affinity candidate presence (whether one or more affinity candidates were in the respondent’s riding vs. no such candidate) and an ordinal measure of the number of affinity candidates. The first measure assesses a basic affinity effect of having any candidates with whom one shares salient identities, while the second measures the extent to which this effect is strengthened when more affinity candidates are present. For both measures, we estimated three models. The first model includes only sociodemographic controls such as racialized/Indigenous group identity, age, income, gender identity, university attendance, and immigrant status. The second model adds party identification and co-partisanship (whether a respondent’s partisan affiliation aligns with an affinity candidate), while the third model includes interactions between racialized group identities and affinity candidate presence. Ordinary least squares regression was used to estimate affinity effects, except for turnout, which is a binary variable and thus estimated with a logistic regression model. We present only the affinity effects results here. The full models are in the Appendix.

Table 4 presents a summary of affinity candidate effects for political interest and voter turnout. The model estimates for interest in and attention to the campaign indicate that affinity effects are not present. In fact, the only statistically significant results suggest that the presence of affinity candidates *reduces* campaign attention. This is true both for baseline candidate presence (models 1 to 3) and for the number of candidates (models 4 to 6). The presence of two affinity candidates is shown to have a substantively stronger negative effect on campaign attention relative to one or no such candidates. The results suggest that the presence of an affinity candidate *depresses* the likelihood of turnout relative to the baseline of no affinity candidate. Thus, the pattern observed in the earlier descriptive results is supported here. Contrary to expectations, the relationship between the presence and number of affinity candidates and electoral engagement—interest and voting—is negative. Racialized and Indigenous people do not seem to be more interested in elections, campaigns, or voting when presented with candidates who share salient group identities, at least as compared to racialized and Indigenous persons in non-affinity contexts.

Table 4. Summary of Model Estimates for Political Interest and Affinity, 2021 Election

Interest in Election						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Candidate Presence	-0.150	-0.192	-0.206			
	(0.110)	(0.124)	(0.174)			
1 Candidate				-0.184	-0.210	-0.153
				(0.124)	(0.131)	(0.266)
2 Candidates				0.035	-0.080	-0.029
				(0.205)	(0.222)	(0.330)
3 Candidates				-0.756	-0.961*	-0.943*
				(0.541)	(0.545)	(0.570)
Intercept	5.226***	4.078***	4.081***	5.221***	4.077***	4.086***
Attention to Campaign						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Candidate Presence	-0.050***	-0.058***	-0.041			
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.026)			
1 Candidate				-0.046**	-0.052**	-0.023
				(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.044)

2 Candidates				-0.070**	-0.085**	-0.064
				(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.052)
3 Candidates				-0.015	-0.046	-0.027
				(0.089)	(0.092)	(0.096)
Intercept	0.315***	0.240***	0.236***	0.316***	0.240***	0.237***
Turnout						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Candidate Presence	-0.240	-0.323	0.263			
	(0.183)	(0.201)	(0.294)			
1 Candidate				-0.381**	-0.445**	-1.170***
				(0.194)	(0.209)	(0.445)
2 Candidates				0.424	0.352	-0.493
				(0.439)	(0.459)	(0.603)
3 Candidates				-0.075	-0.335	-0.814
				(1.069)	(1.131)	(1.177)
Intercept	1.162***	0.534	0.347	1.178***	0.553	0.365
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01						

Notes: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses from full models, provided in appendices below. Interest in Election and Attention to Campaign models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Turnout models estimated using survey-weighted logistic regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Interest in election is a 0–10 scale, with 0 indicating no interest and 10 a great deal of interest. Attention to Campaign is an ordinal scale with responses “A Lot,” “Some” or “None at All.” Turnout is a binary response (Yes/No) indicating whether the respondent reports voting or not.

Table 5 tells much the same story of affinity effects on feelings of political efficacy. The presence or absence of affinity candidates did not have a demonstrable impact on racialized and Indigenous feelings of “having no say” and “government not caring” about their views or the views of “people like them.” The few statistically significant effects suggest a negative affinity effect: the presence of an affinity candidate is associated with lower efficacy for the measure of government being too complicated to understand.⁷ Finally, no statistically significant results

⁷ The variable is coded from “Strongly Disagree” (1) up to “Strongly Agree” (4), so higher values indicate lower efficacy scores.

emerged in the models of satisfaction with democracy, so we present these models only in Appendix Table A7. Overall, regression results consistently indicate either no affinity effects or effects in the opposite direction of our expectations.

Table 5. Summary of Model Estimates for Political Efficacy and Affinity, 2021 Election

Government Too Complicated to Understand						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Candidate Presence	0.063*	0.070	0.012			
	(0.037)	(0.043)	(0.061)			
1 Candidate				0.085**	0.085*	0.075
				(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.093)
2 Candidates				-0.006	-0.0005	0.016
				(0.069)	(0.078)	(0.116)
3 Candidates				0.042	0.041	0.035
				(0.181)	(0.190)	(0.199)
Intercept	3.038***	3.128***	3.140***	3.039***	3.130***	3.141***
People Like Me Don't Have Any Say						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Candidate Presence	0.028	0.053	0.004			
	(0.040)	(0.047)	(0.065)			
1 Candidate				0.066	0.076	-0.002
				(0.045)	(0.049)	(0.100)
2 Candidates				-0.078	-0.056	-0.121
				(0.074)	(0.083)	(0.124)
3 Candidates				-0.053	0.024	-0.040
				(0.196)	(0.204)	(0.214)
Intercept	2.730***	2.779***	2.788***	2.731***	2.782***	2.790***
Government Doesn't Care						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Candidate Presence	0.028	0.017	0.00005			
	(0.055)	(0.061)	(0.083)			

1 Candidate				0.044	0.036	0.118
				(0.061)	(0.065)	(0.138)
2 Candidates				-0.054	-0.081	-0.037
				(0.102)	(0.110)	(0.164)
3 Candidates				0.313	0.418	0.421
				(0.297)	(0.300)	(0.314)
Intercept	3.766***	3.884***	3.889***	3.768***	3.886***	3.888***
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01						

Notes: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses from full models, provided in appendices below. Models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Government Too Complicated to Understand is an ordinal scale with responses “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.” People Like Me Don’t Have Any Say is an ordinal scale with responses “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.” Government Doesn’t Care is an ordinal scale with responses “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree.”

Conclusion

Using an original dataset of racialized and Indigenous candidates combined with the 2021 Canadian Election Study survey data, we assessed the effects of affinity candidate presence on people’s interest in and attention paid to the election campaign, reported voter turnout, sense of political efficacy, and satisfaction with democracy. Overall, we found largely consistent results in terms of racialized and Indigenous group deficits in engagement compared to white people. Counter to our expectations, we did not uncover much evidence for the impact of candidate–voter affinities. In many cases, the presence of racialized and Indigenous candidates was associated with *lower* levels of political engagement of racialized and Indigenous persons. However, it is important to mention that our descriptive statistics and models are based on a dataset, the 2021 Canadian Election Study, which had a limited number of respondents from ridings with higher numbers of affinity candidates; these ridings are those that may be “most likely” to produce affinity racialized or Indigenous empowerment effects because they tend to have higher racialized and Indigenous populations (Black and Griffith 2022). This context likely attenuates our present ability to assess racialized and Indigenous affinity and its effects on engagement in Canada.

Despite these findings, our study should not be interpreted as showing that affinity effects are not important or that measures to increase candidate diversity and outreach to racialized and Indigenous communities are futile. The operation of candidate–voter affinity is extremely complex and might be more subtle than could be detected in this study. For instance, the election study sample is limited in terms of numbers of respondents from contexts in which affinity could operate. The data also do not allow us to present the hypothetical question of whether affinity candidates *would* bolster political engagement for those respondents without such candidates: we can only compare with their counterparts, who may systematically and contextually differ. We also did not examine interactions between racialized and Indigenous groups, other sociodemographic or contextual factors, and affinity candidates, given length and scope considerations. This would be a fruitful direction for future research. Despite these limitations, we argue that affinity effects might still exist for several reasons.

First, we did not assess the sacrificial lamb thesis (Thomas and Bodet 2013). Political parties have historically nominated women and racialized candidates in uncompetitive ridings where they are not likely to win. In this context, the presence of affinity candidates may be associated with higher senses of frustration and disenchantment of affinity voters, who might prefer to support affinity candidates but are incentivized not to do so. Related to this are electoral systems: Canada’s first-past-the-post system might produce pressures between ideology and identity-based engagement that undermine the role of affinities; an alternative electoral system might better align those preferences.

Second, even though candidates and campaigns are local in nature, we know that politics in Canada is not. Many voters might have stronger perceptions of, and stronger behavioural responses to, candidate diversity across the country or region compared to the local candidate context. In other words, a person’s political engagement—their interest, whether they vote, and so on—might be more tied to the number of affinity candidates across the country rather than just in their own riding. This broader, more diffuse affinity effect would not be detected when considering only local candidate–voter affinities.

Third, our data and practical considerations did not allow us to examine characteristics of local contexts and how they shape the political behaviour of racialized and Indigenous citizens. It is plausible that ridings with more racialized and Indigenous affinity candidates differ in systemic ways from ridings in which such candidates are less common, and these systemic differences could

influence how racialized and Indigenous people behave. Local contextual factors such as ethnocultural heterogeneity and socioeconomic conditions could play significant roles in shaping prior levels of behaviours like political interest, voting, or alienation. Indeed, there is an ongoing debate about the existence and extent of ethnic enclaves and linkages to higher poverty and lower economic opportunity (Goel 2023; Shields et al. 2011; Walks and Bourne 2006). One study, for example, shows that areas in Toronto with predominantly racialized populations—such as Brampton, Markham, and Glenfield-Jane Heights—are comparatively poorer than predominantly white areas on indicators such as income, unemployment, housing quality, and housing value (Goel 2023). As a result, our most important conclusion is that much more attention to, and data collection within, racialized and Indigenous communities in Canada is needed to strengthen understanding of the role of affinities and candidate diversity in engagement of historically marginalized individuals and groups. As well, the subtleties and complexities of shared candidate–voter identities—how they are expressed, how they are strengthened or weakened, and their substantive impacts—should provide fertile ground for scholarly research in Canada.

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Appendix

Table A1. Full Model Estimates for Interest in Election, 2021 Election

	Interest in Election					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Affinity Candidate Presence	-0.150	-0.192	-0.206			
	(0.110)	(0.124)	(0.174)			
1 Affinity Candidate				-0.184	-0.210	-0.153
				(0.124)	(0.131)	(0.266)
2 Affinity Candidates				0.035	-0.080	-0.029
				(0.205)	(0.222)	(0.330)
3 Affinity Candidates				-0.756	-0.961*	-0.943*
				(0.541)	(0.545)	(0.570)
Black	0.512***	0.504***	0.502***	0.534***	0.528***	0.502***
	(0.142)	(0.137)	(0.163)	(0.142)	(0.137)	(0.163)
South Asian	0.884***	0.654***	0.632***	0.886***	0.660***	0.632***
	(0.123)	(0.120)	(0.141)	(0.124)	(0.120)	(0.141)
Indigenous	0.690***	0.835***	0.841***	0.701***	0.844***	0.843***
	(0.143)	(0.138)	(0.151)	(0.144)	(0.139)	(0.151)
Age (Years)	0.017***	0.017***	0.017***	0.017***	0.017***	0.017***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Income	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Gender: Female	-0.653***	-0.648***	-0.648***	-0.654***	-0.648***	-0.649***
	(0.098)	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.098)	(0.095)	(0.095)
Gender: Trans/Non-binary	-1.312**	-1.119**	-1.119**	-1.320**	-1.125**	-1.126**
	(0.582)	(0.559)	(0.560)	(0.582)	(0.559)	(0.560)
Gender: Other	0.092	0.482	0.480	0.105	0.479	0.477
	(1.281)	(1.231)	(1.233)	(1.282)	(1.231)	(1.233)
University Education	0.503***	0.419***	0.418***	0.505***	0.421***	0.420***
	(0.107)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.107)	(0.103)	(0.103)
Immigrant	0.194*	0.269**	0.270**	0.194*	0.268**	0.270**
	(0.110)	(0.107)	(0.107)	(0.110)	(0.107)	(0.107)
Affinity Candidate x Black			0.013			-0.096
			(0.296)			(0.301)
Affinity Candidate x South Asian			0.079			0.106
			(0.266)			(0.268)
Affinity Candidate x Indigenous			-0.028			0.002
			(0.284)			(0.287)
Constant	5.226***	4.078***	4.081***	5.221***	4.077***	4.086***
	(0.194)	(0.202)	(0.203)	(0.194)	(0.202)	(0.203)
N	2,951	2,951	2,951	2,951	2,951	2,951
R ²	0.062	0.137	0.137	0.062	0.137	0.138

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Note: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Interest in Election is a 0–10 scale, with 0 indicating no interest and 10 a great deal of interest.

Table A2. Full Model Estimates for Campaign Attention, 2021 Election

	Attention to Campaign					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Affinity Candidate Presence	-0.050*** (0.017)	-0.058*** (0.019)	-0.041 (0.026)			
1 Affinity Candidate				-0.046** (0.019)	-0.052** (0.020)	-0.023 (0.044)
2 Affinity Candidates				-0.070** (0.032)	-0.085** (0.035)	-0.064 (0.052)
3 Affinity Candidates				-0.015 (0.089)	-0.046 (0.092)	-0.027 (0.096)
Black	0.079*** (0.022)	0.079*** (0.022)	0.074*** (0.027)	0.078*** (0.022)	0.079*** (0.022)	0.074*** (0.027)
South Asian	0.132*** (0.019)	0.114*** (0.019)	0.118*** (0.023)	0.132*** (0.019)	0.114*** (0.019)	0.118*** (0.023)
Indigenous	0.099*** (0.022)	0.111*** (0.022)	0.129*** (0.024)	0.098*** (0.022)	0.110*** (0.022)	0.128*** (0.024)
Age (Years)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)
Income	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Gender: Female	-0.057*** (0.015)	-0.057*** (0.015)	-0.057*** (0.015)	-0.057*** (0.015)	-0.057*** (0.015)	-0.057*** (0.015)
Gender: Trans/Non-binary	0.007 (0.111)	-0.003 (0.110)	-0.011 (0.110)	0.006 (0.111)	-0.003 (0.110)	-0.012 (0.110)
Gender: Other	0.155 (0.233)	0.171 (0.231)	0.199 (0.231)	0.153 (0.233)	0.166 (0.231)	0.195 (0.231)
University Education	0.056*** (0.017)	0.050*** (0.016)	0.050*** (0.016)	0.056*** (0.017)	0.050*** (0.016)	0.050*** (0.016)
Immigrant	0.003 (0.017)	0.008 (0.017)	0.008 (0.017)	0.002 (0.017)	0.008 (0.017)	0.008 (0.017)
Affinity Candidate x Black			0.012 (0.048)			-0.010 (0.048)
Affinity Candidate x South Asian			-0.017 (0.043)			-0.016 (0.043)
Affinity Candidate x Indigenous			-0.077* (0.045)			-0.084* (0.045)
Constant	0.315*** (0.031)	0.240*** (0.033)	0.236*** (0.033)	0.316*** (0.031)	0.240*** (0.033)	0.237*** (0.033)
N	2,068	2,068	2,068	2,068	2,068	2,068
R ²	0.066	0.090	0.091	0.066	0.090	0.092
	* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01					

Note: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Attention to Campaign is an ordinal scale with responses “A Lot,” “Some,” or “None at All.”

Table A3. Full Model Estimates of Vote Turnout, 2021 Election

	Turnout					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Affinity Candidate Presence	-0.240 (0.183)	-0.323 (0.201)	0.263 (0.294)			
1 Affinity Candidate				-0.381** (0.194)	-0.445** (0.209)	-1.170*** (0.445)
2 Affinity Candidates				0.424 (0.439)	0.352 (0.459)	-0.493 (0.603)
3 Affinity Candidates				-0.075 (1.069)	-0.335 (1.131)	-0.814 (1.177)
Black	-0.031 (0.234)	-0.060 (0.240)	0.441 (0.335)	-0.017 (0.235)	-0.049 (0.241)	0.441 (0.336)
South Asian	0.659*** (0.246)	0.374 (0.255)	0.545* (0.312)	0.641*** (0.247)	0.373 (0.256)	0.542* (0.312)
Indigenous	0.204 (0.263)	0.351 (0.270)	0.672** (0.313)	0.238 (0.264)	0.386 (0.271)	0.677** (0.313)
Age (Years)	0.015** (0.006)	0.014** (0.006)	0.014** (0.006)	0.015** (0.006)	0.014** (0.006)	0.014** (0.006)
Income	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)
Gender: Female	-0.112 (0.175)	-0.113 (0.179)	-0.089 (0.180)	-0.119 (0.175)	-0.127 (0.180)	-0.100 (0.180)
Gender: Trans/Non-binary	13.139 (506.632)	13.026 (496.400)	12.848 (496.897)	13.138 (505.877)	13.008 (496.485)	12.848 (497.102)
Gender: Other	12.870 (1,026.011)	13.103 (968.728)	12.925 (1,001.908)	12.912 (1,026.140)	13.142 (977.162)	12.955 (1,005.440)
University Education	0.621*** (0.182)	0.588*** (0.186)	0.611*** (0.188)	0.628*** (0.183)	0.595*** (0.186)	0.615*** (0.188)
Immigrant	-0.624*** (0.197)	-0.595*** (0.204)	-0.595*** (0.204)	-0.626*** (0.198)	-0.600*** (0.204)	-0.595*** (0.205)
Affinity Candidate x Black			-1.319*** (0.505)			-1.302** (0.508)
Affinity Candidate x South Asian			-0.661 (0.537)			-0.666 (0.539)
Affinity Candidate x Indigenous			-1.119** (0.490)			-1.008** (0.495)
Constant	1.162*** (0.357)	0.534 (0.380)	0.347 (0.386)	1.178*** (0.358)	0.553 (0.380)	0.365 (0.386)
N	1,833	1,833	1,833	1,833	1,833	1,833
Log Likelihood	-535.218	-510.256	-505.185	-533.398	-508.599	-504.037
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,094.436	1,052.511	1,048.370	1,094.796	1,053.198	1,050.073

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses models estimated using survey-weighted logistic regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Turnout is a binary response (Yes/No) indicating whether the respondent reports voting or not.

Table A4. Full Model Estimates for Government Too Complicated—Political Efficacy, 2021 Election

	Government Too Complicated to Understand					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Affinity Candidate Presence	0.063*	0.070	0.012			
	(0.037)	(0.043)	(0.061)			
1 Affinity Candidate				0.085**	0.085*	0.075
				(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.093)
2 Affinity Candidates				-0.006	-0.0005	0.016
				(0.069)	(0.078)	(0.116)
3 Affinity Candidates				0.042	0.041	0.035
				(0.181)	(0.190)	(0.199)
Black	-0.197***	-0.203***	-0.216***	-0.199***	-0.204***	-0.216***
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.057)
South Asian	-0.135***	-0.123***	-0.126**	-0.132***	-0.121***	-0.126**
	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.049)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.049)
Indigenous	-0.377***	-0.384***	-0.430***	-0.381***	-0.388***	-0.430***
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.053)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.053)
Age (Years)	-0.005***	-0.005***	-0.005***	-0.005***	-0.005***	-0.005***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Income	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Gender: Female	0.244***	0.242***	0.243***	0.244***	0.242***	0.243***
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Gender: Trans/Non-binary	0.227	0.211	0.215	0.230	0.215	0.217
	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)
Gender: Other	-0.615	-0.657	-0.684	-0.625	-0.668	-0.692
	(0.429)	(0.428)	(0.429)	(0.429)	(0.429)	(0.429)
University Education	-0.247***	-0.243***	-0.242***	-0.248***	-0.244***	-0.243***
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Immigrant	0.155***	0.150***	0.151***	0.154***	0.149***	0.150***
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Affinity Candidate x Black			0.055			-0.052
			(0.104)			(0.105)
Affinity Candidate x South Asian			0.020			0.025
			(0.093)			(0.094)

Affinity Candidate x Indigenous			0.211**			0.201**
			(0.098)			(0.099)
Constant	3.038***	3.128***	3.140***	3.039***	3.130***	3.141***
	(0.065)	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.065)	(0.071)	(0.071)
N	2,927	2,927	2,927	2,927	2,927	2,927
R ²	0.079	0.084	0.085	0.080	0.084	0.085
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01					

Note: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Government Too Complicated to Understand is an ordinal scale with responses “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.”

Table A5. Full Model Estimates for People Like Me Have No Say—Political Efficacy, 2021 Election

	People Like Me Don't Have Any Say					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Affinity Candidate Presence	0.028 (0.040)	0.053 (0.047)	0.004 (0.065)			
1 Affinity Candidate				0.066 (0.045)	0.076 (0.049)	-0.002 (0.100)
2 Affinity Candidates				-0.078 (0.074)	-0.056 (0.083)	-0.121 (0.124)
3 Affinity Candidates				-0.053 (0.196)	0.024 (0.204)	-0.040 (0.214)
Black	-0.154*** (0.051)	-0.124** (0.051)	-0.113* (0.061)	-0.156*** (0.052)	-0.127** (0.052)	-0.113* (0.061)
South Asian	0.017 (0.045)	0.063 (0.045)	0.046 (0.053)	0.023 (0.045)	0.067 (0.046)	0.046 (0.053)
Indigenous	-0.126** (0.052)	-0.153*** (0.052)	-0.194*** (0.057)	-0.133** (0.052)	-0.160*** (0.052)	-0.195*** (0.057)
Age (Years)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)
Income	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Gender: Female	0.004 (0.036)	0.016 (0.036)	0.017 (0.036)	0.005 (0.036)	0.017 (0.036)	0.018 (0.036)
Gender: Trans/Non-binary	0.085 (0.228)	0.099 (0.227)	0.103 (0.227)	0.091 (0.228)	0.106 (0.227)	0.108 (0.227)
Gender: Other	-0.408 (0.464)	-0.365 (0.461)	-0.402 (0.461)	-0.425 (0.464)	-0.382 (0.461)	-0.416 (0.461)
University Education	-0.134*** (0.039)	-0.119*** (0.039)	-0.119*** (0.039)	-0.134*** (0.039)	-0.120*** (0.039)	-0.120*** (0.039)
Immigrant	0.017 (0.040)	0.007 (0.040)	0.007 (0.040)	0.016 (0.040)	0.006 (0.040)	0.006 (0.040)
Affinity Candidate x Black			-0.022 (0.111)			0.032 (0.113)
Affinity Candidate x South Asian			0.066 (0.100)			0.073 (0.101)
Affinity Candidate x Indigenous			0.179* (0.105)			0.157 (0.106)
Constant	2.730*** (0.071)	2.779*** (0.076)	2.788*** (0.077)	2.731*** (0.071)	2.782*** (0.076)	2.790*** (0.077)
N	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907	2,907
R ²	0.009	0.027	0.028	0.010	0.028	0.029

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Note: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. People Like Me Don't Have Any Say is an ordinal scale with responses "Strongly Agree," "Somewhat Agree," "Somewhat Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree."

Table A6. Full Model Estimates for Government Doesn't Care—Political Efficacy, 2021 Election

	Government Doesn't Care					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Affinity Candidate Presence	0.028 (0.055)	0.017 (0.061)	0.00005 (0.083)			
1 Affinity Candidate				0.044 (0.061)	0.036 (0.065)	0.118 (0.138)
2 Affinity Candidates				-0.054 (0.102)	-0.081 (0.110)	-0.037 (0.164)
3 Affinity Candidates				0.313 (0.297)	0.418 (0.300)	0.421 (0.314)
Black	-0.077 (0.072)	-0.017 (0.070)	-0.049 (0.084)	-0.084 (0.072)	-0.027 (0.070)	-0.049 (0.083)
South Asian	0.025 (0.063)	0.118* (0.062)	0.063 (0.072)	0.022 (0.063)	0.114* (0.062)	0.064 (0.072)
Indigenous	0.180** (0.072)	0.097 (0.070)	0.141* (0.077)	0.175** (0.072)	0.090 (0.070)	0.139* (0.077)
Age (Years)	0.001 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Income	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Gender: Female	-0.057 (0.049)	-0.040 (0.048)	-0.042 (0.048)	-0.056 (0.049)	-0.038 (0.048)	-0.040 (0.048)
Gender: Trans/Non-binary	0.203 (0.324)	0.301 (0.313)	0.272 (0.314)	0.204 (0.324)	0.303 (0.313)	0.271 (0.314)
Gender: Other	-0.689 (0.751)	-0.615 (0.727)	-0.507 (0.728)	-0.693 (0.751)	-0.616 (0.727)	-0.513 (0.728)
University Education	-0.181*** (0.054)	-0.156*** (0.052)	-0.157*** (0.052)	-0.182*** (0.054)	-0.157*** (0.052)	-0.159*** (0.052)
Immigrant	-0.070 (0.056)	-0.094* (0.054)	-0.093* (0.054)	-0.071 (0.056)	-0.095* (0.054)	-0.093* (0.054)
Affinity Candidate x Black			0.108 (0.151)			-0.079 (0.153)
Affinity Candidate x South Asian			0.186 (0.135)			0.174 (0.135)
Affinity Candidate x Indigenous			-0.199 (0.141)			-0.228 (0.142)
Constant	3.766*** (0.100)	3.884*** (0.104)	3.889*** (0.105)	3.768*** (0.100)	3.886*** (0.104)	3.888*** (0.105)
N	2,033	2,033	2,033	2,033	2,033	2,033
R ²	0.023	0.090	0.092	0.023	0.091	0.094

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Government Doesn't Care is an ordinal scale with responses "Strongly Agree," "Somewhat Agree," "Neither Agree nor Disagree," "Somewhat Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree."

Table A7. Full Model Estimates for Democratic Satisfaction, 2021 Election

	Satisfaction with Democracy					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Affinity Candidate Presence	-0.018 (0.043)	-0.012 (0.047)	0.017 (0.063)			
1 Affinity Candidate				-0.003 (0.047)	-0.001 (0.048)	-0.104 (0.104)
2 Affinity Candidates				-0.071 (0.082)	-0.073 (0.086)	-0.189 (0.126)
3 Affinity Candidates				-0.009 (0.220)	0.087 (0.215)	0.008 (0.226)
Black	-0.192*** (0.056)	-0.139*** (0.052)	-0.100 (0.063)	-0.193*** (0.056)	-0.143*** (0.053)	-0.100 (0.063)
South Asian	-0.124** (0.049)	-0.027 (0.046)	-0.034 (0.054)	-0.123** (0.049)	-0.027 (0.046)	-0.034 (0.054)
Indigenous	0.284*** (0.056)	0.189*** (0.053)	0.202*** (0.058)	0.281*** (0.056)	0.185*** (0.053)	0.201*** (0.058)
Age (Years)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Income	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Gender: Female	0.028 (0.038)	0.048 (0.036)	0.048 (0.036)	0.028 (0.038)	0.048 (0.036)	0.049 (0.036)
Gender: Trans/Non-binary	0.788*** (0.261)	0.902*** (0.243)	0.895*** (0.243)	0.787*** (0.261)	0.902*** (0.243)	0.893*** (0.243)
Gender: Other	-0.683 (0.577)	-0.597 (0.537)	-0.597 (0.539)	-0.688 (0.577)	-0.603 (0.538)	-0.601 (0.539)
University Education	-0.118*** (0.042)	-0.088** (0.039)	-0.089** (0.039)	-0.119*** (0.042)	-0.089** (0.039)	-0.090** (0.039)
Immigrant	-0.095** (0.043)	-0.117*** (0.041)	-0.118*** (0.041)	-0.095** (0.043)	-0.118*** (0.041)	-0.118*** (0.041)
Affinity Candidate x Black			-0.126 (0.113)			0.140 (0.115)
Affinity Candidate x South Asian			0.020 (0.101)			0.017 (0.102)
Affinity Candidate x Indigenous			-0.060 (0.106)			-0.075 (0.107)
Constant	2.418*** (0.079)	2.560*** (0.079)	2.552*** (0.080)	2.419*** (0.079)	2.562*** (0.079)	2.553*** (0.080)
N	1,972	1,972	1,972	1,972	1,972	1,972
R ²	0.065	0.193	0.194	0.065	0.193	0.194

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Note: Entries are regression coefficients and standard errors in parentheses models estimated using survey-weighted generalized linear regression. Data source is Canadian Election Study 2021 dataset, with additional calculations by authors. Satisfaction with Democracy is an ordinal scale with responses “Very Satisfied,” “Fairly Satisfied,” “Not Very Satisfied,” or “Not Satisfied at All.”