

Youth and Satisfaction with Democracy

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Table of Contents

List of tables	3
List of Figures	4
Executive Summary	5
Literature Review	7
Data and Methods	9
Results	11
Conclusion	18
References	21
Appendix	26

List of Tables

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics.....	27
Table A2: Age Results.....	28
Table A3: Age x Personal Retrospective Evaluations Results.....	29
Table A4: Generation Cohort Results.....	31
Table A5: Generation Cohort x Personal Retrospective Evaluations Results.....	32
Table A6: Duty to Vote Robustness Check.....	34

List of Figures

Figure 1: Mean levels of satisfaction with democracy	12
Figure 2: Mean levels of satisfaction with democracy by age group over time (1993–2021)	13
Figure 3: Mean levels of satisfaction with democracy by generation cohort over time (1993–2021)	14
Figure 4: Age coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy	15
Figure 5: Interaction coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy	16
Figure 6: Coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy for millennials and Generation Z	17
Figure 7: Coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy for millennials and Generation Z interacted with personal retrospective evaluations	18

Executive Summary

- This report examines whether there is a relationship between age and satisfaction with democracy (SWD) in Canada.
- An analysis of the past 10 federal elections (1993–2021) using data from the Canadian Election Study found that SWD has been on a slight downward trend since the 42nd general election in 2015.
- Canadian youth have experienced the largest declines in SWD, decreasing roughly 6 and 8 percentage points for youths aged 18–24 and 25–39 respectively from 2015 to 2021.
- Younger cohorts are also more dissatisfied relative to older cohorts at comparable stages of the life cycle. Millennials (born 1981–1996) have experienced the largest decline in SWD, dropping roughly 9 percentage points from 2015 to 2019.
- People’s evaluation of their own financial situation was not a strong predictor of SWD. However, evaluations of the wider economy are stronger predictors of SWD, specifically in recent years.
- The findings reveal an increasing generational divide in SWD. Although SWD has decreased by an average of 5 percentage points since 2015, this decrease is more apparent in younger generations relative to older generations. However, when compared over a longer period of time (1993–2021), SWD has decreased approximately 1 percentage point for all age groups together.

Introduction

Some scholars have argued that the young are less satisfied with and less committed to democracy than older citizens (Foa and Mounk 2016; Foa et al. 2020; Wuttke 2022). Young people continue to vote at significantly lower rates than the rest of the population cross-nationally (Holbein and Hillygus 2020; Schäfer et al. 2020; Smets 2012, 2016) and within Canada (Blais et al. 2004; Blais and Loewen 2011; Mahéo and Bélanger 2021; Pammett and LeDuc 2003; Stockemer and Rocher 2017). This report aims to provide a comprehensive answer to questions regarding political disaffection in Canada among youth, as measured through satisfaction with democracy (SWD). The scope of analysis focuses on youth, defined foremost as those aged 18–24 and as members of Generation Z, but also on a secondary category of youth aged 25–39 and members of the millennial generation.

Dissatisfaction with democracy has also been linked with negative economic outcomes at the individual and societal level (Claassen and Magalhães 2022; Kornberg and Clarke 1992; Loveless and Binelli 2020; Nadeau et al. 2019; Quaranta and Martini 2017), which is particularly applicable for millennials due to an intergenerational divide in life opportunities stemming from rising wealth inequality, youth unemployment, and asset and home ownership exclusion. For example, according to Statistics Canada, the median earnings for 25-to-34-year-olds have fallen by \$3,400 (a 9.3 percentage point decline) adjusting for inflation from 1978 to 2018, while all other age groups have experienced increases, including those aged 65+, who have nearly doubled their income, gaining \$15,200 in median earnings (Statistics Canada 2023). As a result, millennials fare worse on household debt, home ownership, and financial stress than older generations (Dujay 2022; Greer 2023; Hollingsworth 2022). For an individual aged 25–34, the ratio of median full-time income relative to average home costs increased from 4:1 in 1976 to 10:1 as of 2017 (Kershaw 2018: 588). And the proportion of 25-to-34-year-olds who own a home declined 7 percentage points between 2011 and 2021, whereas the drop was minimal for older Canadians (Statistics Canada 2021). Youth also experience higher unemployment rates relative to older Canadians, and youth employment has become more precarious since the 1990s (Morissette 2021).

These economic disparities have fueled anxiety regarding the cost of living among youth. A 2021 Abacus survey found that millennials were the most concerned of any generation about the cost of living: it was their most important issue by a gap of 25 percentage points over the next issue, relatively large compared to other generations (Kishchuk 2021). This report investigates the relationship between age and SWD in Canada by examining whether it has changed over time and for younger generations, as well as testing whether personal economic evaluations have undermined youth SWD. It does so by analyzing the Canadian Election Study (CES) for the past 10 federal elections (1993–2021), since SWD questions first became available.

The report finds that SWD is on a downward trend since the 2015 election. However, it has declined substantially among youth, and younger generations have become more dissatisfied with democracy compared to older generations, beginning in 2019. They are also more dissatisfied relative to older cohorts at comparable stages of the life cycle. The report also finds that in recent years, personal evaluations of the wider economy have been slightly larger predictors of political dissatisfaction for younger age groups relative to older citizens. However,

it does not appear that personal economic evaluations are a driver for increasing dissatisfaction with democracy among youth in Canada.

This report carries important implications for the robustness of democracy in Canada by revealing that younger Canadians appear to be losing faith in it. It remains to be seen if the trends identified here continue among Generation Z and millennials, and if they spill into future generations. However, the results lend more support to the notion of increasing generational divides in political attitudes, and to the idea that our political system is not resonating as well with youth in recent years, which could weaken faith in democracy in Canada over the long term.

The next section reviews the state of the existing literature on the relationship between SWD and age, as well as intergenerational economic divides as the consequence of life cycle, both cross-nationally and within Canada. The research design and modelling strategy is then outlined, followed by a series of graphical techniques and regression estimations to analyze life cycle (age), cohort (generation), and period effects. The study concludes with a discussion of the key implications and avenues for future enquiry.

Literature Review

SWD is a core measure of political attitudes that appears in 13 cross-national survey series (Claassen and Magalhães 2022: 875). Most studies where SWD has appeared are cross-national among democracies. Thus, there is an important gap in the literature for country case studies, including for Canada.

A new direction in SWD research has emerged in recent years centred around age, as the study of age effects is becoming increasingly important in political behaviour. For example, age gaps have widened in party vote choice in many countries (with younger voters moving towards leftist parties and older voters moving towards rightist parties), alongside pronounced differences in turnout (Blais and Rubenson 2013; Schäfer et al. 2020; Smets 2012; 2016). Conventional wisdom in political behaviour holds that as people grow older, they tend to become more conservative (Glenn 1974), although the evidence is mixed (Peterson et al. 2020). Some support for the social aging hypothesis has come in the form of the cultural backlash hypothesis, which posits that, due to long-term value transformations, each younger cohort is less socially conservative than the previous one (Grasso et al. 2019; Inglehart 2008; Norris and Inglehart 2019).¹ However, Schäfer (2022) finds counterevidence in that younger citizens are more likely than older ones to vote for authoritarian-populist parties while the interwar generation, individuals born 1918–1945, are the least likely cohort to do so. There is also growing evidence that the millennial generation has developed different values than previous generations, shaped by period events such as the financial crisis of 2008 (Burn-Murdoch 2022).

¹ Value transformations refer to the changing of public opinion over time to be less conservative regarding values issues such as gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights.

Some researchers posit that SWD in Western societies is declining, which has given rise to the democratic deconsolidation thesis.² Younger generations are posited to be at the vanguard of this phenomenon. Foa and Mounk (2016) find that millennials are less committed to democracy than older citizens. However, their findings are less applicable to countries outside the United States, as the results are driven by the United States and have been linked to their dysfunctional political system as well as their exceedingly high and increasing levels of income inequality (Inglehart 2016). Wuttke et al. (2022: 426) find in a 1981–2018 study that the younger generation in some European countries displays “evidence of increased susceptibility to alternative forms of government”. Foa et al. (2020) find notable intergenerational declines in four regions: Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, southern Europe, and Anglosphere. However, the Anglo decline is concentrated in the United Kingdom and United States, with very little decline detected in Canada. Relatedly, Kwak et al. (2020) shows that, relative to older cohorts, youth institutional trust declined from 2009 to 2017, in the aftermath of the financial crisis.

In contrast, some authors fail to support these findings. Claassen (2019) finds in a large, pooled survey analysis of 135 countries over 30 years that SWD ebbs and flows in line with a negative thermostatic effect.³ Using European Social Survey data from 2002 to 2017, Zilinsky (2019) finds SWD declined during the financial crisis in the late 2000s, but rebounded after 2012, particularly among the young. Further doubt is cast by Voeten (2017), who uses World Values Survey (WVS) data from 1995 to 2014, collected from 14 Western democracies, finding that “trends in overall support for non-democratic alternatives have been flat.”

Furthermore, SWD has been consistently positively associated with perceptions of macroeconomic conditions. Links have been found between SWD and economic growth, inflation, and unemployment (Claassen and Magalhães 2022; Loveless and Binelli 2020; Quaranta and Martini 2017). Specifically, during periods of poor economic performance as measured via a growth, inflation, and unemployment index, people display significantly lower SWD (Quaranta and Martini 2017). Recently, Nadeau et al. (2019) find nuance cross-nationally in that a person’s long-term expectations, i.e., hope for a better economic future, is associated with positive SWD, but primarily for lower-income individuals. This suggests a person’s socioeconomic status matters for economic expectations in predicting SWD.

A related important research stream of SWD is the winner-loser gap. It posits that a voter will be more satisfied with democracy if the party they voted for wins the most recent election, and vice-versa for a voter for a losing party. Anderson and Guillory (1997) first theorized and demonstrated a winner-loser gap of SWD based on the content of one’s vote in national elections, which Blais and Gélinau (2007) verified in the 1997 Canadian federal election. The winner-loser gap literature has also been extended into the economic realm. Han and Chang (2016) find that the winner-loser gap widens as income inequality increases, because inequality is more noticeable.

² The democratic deconsolidation thesis posits that support for democracy is on the decline in recent years in consolidated democracies such as those in Europe and North America.

³ The thermostatic model connects government to public opinion by predicting that government action will generate a public opinion response. In this case, a negative thermostatic response is shown through increases in democracy that generate reduced SWD in the public, while decreases in democracy would increase SWD.

Canadian scholars have tended to pay less attention to the role of the economy and economic evaluations in attitudes toward democracy. Kornberg and Clarke (1992) are an early exception, finding in a 1990 survey a positive relationship between economic evaluations and SWD. Kanji and Tannahill (2017) find further evidence of a positive relationship for a case study in the province of Quebec. Although retrospective evaluations of the wider economy are most commonly used in economic voting, retrospective personal financial evaluations have also been found to have strong effects in recent Canadian elections (Daoust and Dassonneville 2018).

Some have argued that recent birth cohorts are especially susceptible to growing democratic disaffection and changing political attitudes because they have been hit the hardest by recent economic crises, which may be undermining their confidence in the prevailing political system. Laaker finds, using the European Social Survey, that an economic shock during young adulthood causes a significant increase in anti-immigration attitudes, which is a relationship not found for other ages. Evidence from southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain), a region that has been particularly hit hard by the financial crisis, shows that millennials have been more susceptible to the period effects of the crisis in SWD (Tsatsanis et al. 2022). This report extends this research on how economic factors shape political attitudes beyond Europe by offering a Canadian case study using the CES.

Spanning the breadth of our CES sample, in 1993, youth aged 18 to 24 made up 11.9% of the Canadian population and those aged 25 to 39 comprised 25.9%. These have decreased to 8.6% and 20.9% respectively in 2021 (Statistics Canada 2022). Although the Canadian population is aging, there is a growing intergenerational divide in life opportunities in Canada. Increasing wealth inequality has left younger citizens facing growing difficulty in finding secure employment, owning a home, starting a family, or getting ahead in life independent of inherited wealth and privilege. Rising income inequality has been linked to negative political outcomes in Canada, such as political alienation and reduced voter turnout (Dash et al. 2023; Polacko 2020). Income inequality has also been negatively linked to SWD cross-nationally (Andersen 2012; Huang 2023). Relying on World Values Survey (WVS) data from 2010 to 2020, Huang (2023) finds that inequality particularly undermines SWD for young people and senior citizens. Therefore, this report tests whether younger generations have become less satisfied with democracy in Canada and whether retrospective personal financial evaluations are a driver of this relationship, as perceptions of a person's own economic situation best capture economic anxiety (Klandermans et al. 2010).

Data and Methods

To examine SWD in Canada, this report relies on merged data from the Canadian Election Study (CES), consisting of the most extensive surveys on public opinion and elections in Canada. I draw on the past 10 elections from the CES, which provides an extensive temporal range that is necessary for age-period-cohort analysis. I utilize the telephone interview version of the CES from 1993 to 2019 (Blais et al. 2000, 2004, 2007; Fournier et al. 2012, 2016; Gidengil et al. 2010; Johnston et al. 1995) and the online version of the CES for the 2019 and 2021 elections (Stephenson et al. 2020, 2022). The phone survey mode was ended in 2021; therefore, both the phone and online versions are used in 2019 as a robustness check on the transition of interview

mode from phone to fully online. These elections were chosen because the main variable of interest, SWD, is only available from 1993 onwards.

The dependent variable is a widely used measure of SWD based on five-point responses ranging from “not satisfied at all” to “very satisfied,” for the question: “How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Canada?” Responses are rescaled 0–1 (low to high). Unfortunately, the survey in which the SWD question appeared (campaign period or post-election wave) was inconsistent throughout the CES. Typically, the question is part of both portions of the CES, with the exclusion of the post-election periods in 2008 and 2011 and the campaign period of 1993. When available, I rely on the post-election portion for consistency and to better reflect respondents’ recent experience with democracy—voting in a federal election.⁴ As the dependent variable is ordinal, I estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models separately for each election.

The key independent variables measure age. For life cycle and period analysis, I divide age into five categories (18–24, 25–39, 40–54, 55–69, and 70 and above). These brackets define youth as aligning with Elections Canada’s and Statistics Canada’s definitions of people aged 18–24. I also distinguish people aged 25–39 as a secondary youth category. For cohort analysis, I divide age into five generational cohorts:

- Generation Z (born 1997 and after);
- millennials (born 1981–1996);
- Generation X (born 1965–1980);
- baby boomers (born 1946–1964);
- the interwar generation (born 1918–1945).

Some members of Gen Z first became eligible to vote in 2015, and a 1997 birth year aligns perfectly with the 2021 election to provide a suitable temporal comparison. Millennials came of age in the 21st century, providing at a maximum eight eligible elections to vote (2000–2021). Gen X came of age in the late 1980s and 1990s when voter turnout began to decline significantly in Canada. Both the baby boomers (who are the 1960s and 1970s generation) and the interwar generation were born too late to be considered as youth in the available dataset but provide a useful cohort comparison.

The statistical model relies on a range of standard demographic controls known to influence attitudes towards democracy in Canada. Education is represented in binary fashion, coded 1 for degree holders and 0 for non-degree holders. Household income is distributed in five groups ranging from low to high.⁵ Region is coded as a four-category variable (Atlantic, Ontario, Quebec, and West). Women and foreign-born variables are also included, with 1 representing

⁴ Campaign period and post-election SWD display a similar relationship as they are correlated ($r = 0.62$), and the difference between mean campaign period SWD and post-election SWD is 0.02 (0.62 vs. 0.60).

⁵ Income quintiles (low to high) were chosen because they are the most common form of measuring income in the literature, as an individual’s ranking in the income distribution is more comparable over time than absolute income levels and because throughout the CES, respondents were given the option of providing total household income or identifying their placement within categories that are inconsistent over time. The coding of income is complicated due to this lack of consistency and because the real value of the dollar changed substantially from 1993–2021. As a remedy, respondents are divided into quintiles that come closest to matching the boundaries provided by the values for total household income found in the nearest five-year census or national labour market survey.

their presence and 0 representing their absence, as immigrants have been found to have higher SWD in Canada (Blais and G lineau 2007).

Key attitudinal controls are also added. A respondent’s political interest is included, as people more interested in politics tend to have higher SWD (Blais and G lineau 2007; Singh and Mayne 2023). The variable is based on responses to a 10-point (low to high) level of political interest question, which is rescaled 0–1. Extensive research has found a pronounced winner-loser gap in SWD; thus, an election winner variable is included, whereby respondents who voted for the election winner are coded as 1 (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Anderson et al. 2005; Blais and G lineau 2007). Retrospective economic evaluations of a respondent’s personal financial situation, as well as of the wider economy, have been positively linked with SWD (Kornberg and Clarke 1992; Nadeau et al. 2019; Quaranta and Martini 2017). They typically exert a much stronger effect on SWD than demographic variables (Singh and Mayne 2023). Therefore, a variable for each is added based on rescaled three-point responses (worse, same, or better) to a question assessing respondent perceptions of their own personal finances over the past 12 months and the state of the national economy over the past 12 months. Both variables are rescaled 0–1 for consistency. Last, individuals who believe it is their duty to vote are more likely to have higher SWD (Kostelka and Blais 2018). Therefore, as a robustness check in Appendix A6, I also include a binary duty to vote variable in the elections where it is available, whereby respondents who believe it is their duty to vote are coded as 1.⁶

Results

Descriptive Analysis

First, I explore SWD by examining mean levels of SWD in the general population over time. Figure 1 shows that mean levels of SWD have not fluctuated a great degree from 1993 to 2021 in the CES. SWD ranges between peaks of roughly 0.64 in 1997 and 2006 to a low of roughly 0.58 in 2021 on the scale of 0–1. There does appear to be a downward trend over time and, save for an uptick in 2015, SWD has ranged between 0.58 and 0.59 in the four elections held in the decade between 2011 and 2021. This suggests that the “sunny ways” election of 2015 is an outlier in SWD in Canada in the post-financial crisis era.

⁶ Duty to vote is not available in the CES until 2000. The variable is positively related to SWD and displays increasingly significant results, but the main results all hold when it is included in the main models (see Appendix A6).

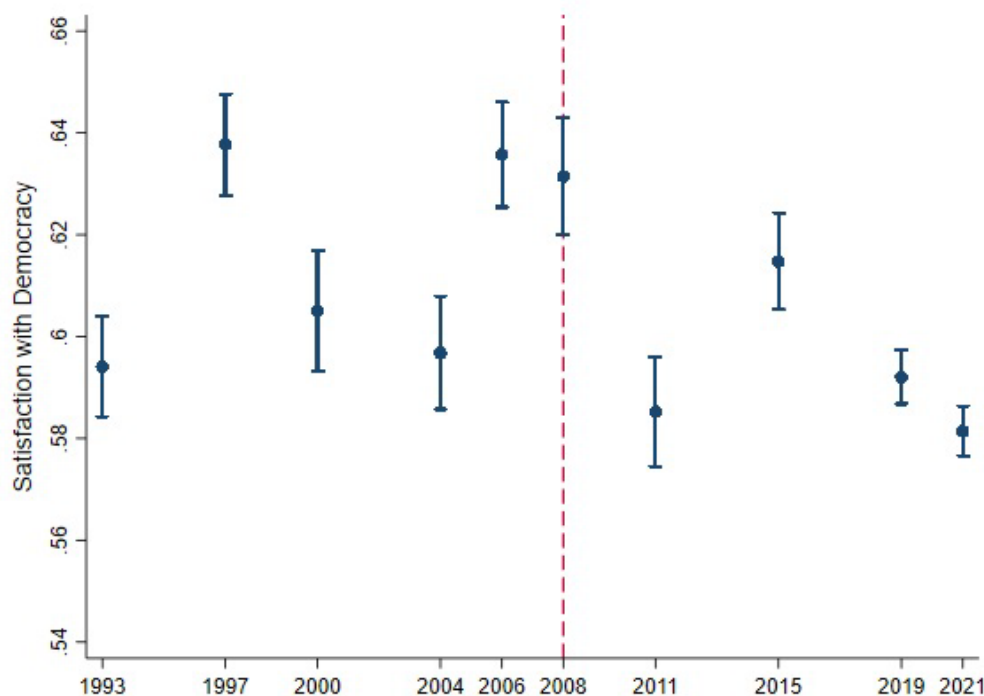


Figure 1: Mean levels of satisfaction with democracy. Dashed line denotes the 2008 financial crisis.

Next, we explore the relationship between SWD and age groups in the CES, through age-period-cohort (APC) analysis. In this analysis, three different trends can be found:

- Age effects suggest that a person's SWD is likely to increase as they age.
- Period effects suggest that SWD is likely to increase or decrease for all age groups in certain periods, such as the aftermath of the financial crisis.
- Cohort effects suggest that the context of an individual's socialization is the key factor in understanding differences in SWD relative to age or period effects.

They can best be determined by comparing the initial youth turnout rates of the various cohorts.

Figure 2 provides the mean level of SWD from 1993 to 2011, sorted by our five age categories (18–24, 25–39, 40–54, 55–69, and 70 and above). Here we see more fluctuation, and the mean range of SWD roughly doubles in size compared to Figure 1, from 0.06 to 0.12. We can see that the oldest age group (70 and above) has the highest SWD at both the beginning and end of the sample, but fluctuates substantially during the period, attaining the lowest level of 0.54 in 2000. SWD for the 55–69 age group fluctuates the least but experiences the biggest decline in the post-financial crisis election of 2011. It is notable that the three youngest age groups (under 55) had the highest SWD from 2008 to 2015. However, all three experience a substantial decline in SWD of roughly 6–8 percentage points from 2015 to 2021. Most pronounced is the drop-off for youths aged 18–24, of roughly 10 percentage points in 2019 and for 25-to-39-year-olds, a roughly 9-percentage-point drop. Both groups uptick somewhat in 2021 from 2019. Therefore, we see a pronounced shift in SWD by age over the past decade, where SWD tends to increase for older people and tends to decrease for younger people.

We also see some evidence of period effects, as most of the age groups tend to either decrease or increase in unison throughout most of the period under study. For instance, SWD decreased for

all age groups from 1997 to 2000 and from 2008 to 2011, while it increased for all age groups from 2011 to 2015. SWD also increased for all age groups except 70+ from 1993 to 1997 and from 2004 to 2008. We also see that from the financial crisis of 2008 until 2021, SWD has decreased for all groups, except for 70+.



Figure 2: Mean levels of satisfaction with democracy by age group over time (1993–2021). Dashed line denotes the 2008 financial crisis.

We continue our APC analysis by next examining cohort effects. Figure 3 presents the mean level of SWD by generation cohort over time. Similar to the previous effect for those aged 70 and above, we see substantial fluctuation, as well as the highest levels of SWD at the beginning and end of the temporal period. The baby boomer trend closely follows the interwar generation until 2021, when they proceed in opposite directions, as SWD declines roughly two percentage points from 2019 for the baby boomer cohort but increases the same amount for the interwar cohort. We can track millennials since 2000 and see that SWD increases for the cohort until 2015, and then substantially declines from a high of roughly 0.64 to 0.55 in 2019. Considering 2015 was the first year that Gen Z was able to vote, the sample for Gen Z is too small in 2015 to include, but we see that this youngest generation had the lowest reported SWD in 2019, before climbing roughly 3 percentage points in 2021 to slightly surpass millennials and Gen X. It should be noted that SWD also declines for Gen X substantially post-2015, although it is a gradual decline, unlike the steep decline for the younger generations in 2019.

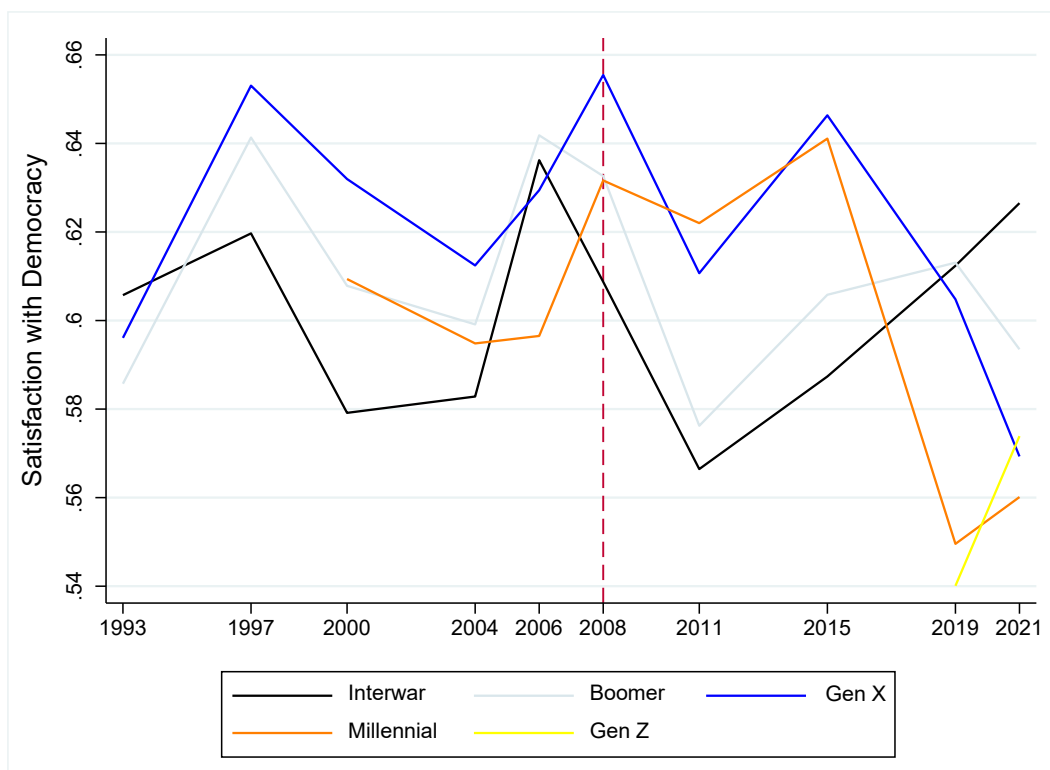


Figure 3: Mean levels of satisfaction with democracy by generation cohort over time (1993–2021). Dashed line denotes the 2008 financial crisis.

Overall, these descriptive insights reveal that youth in Canada (ages 18–39) have experienced the largest declines in SWD since 2015. It appears that period effects influence SWD somewhat more than cohort effects since both Gen Z and millennials did experience a modest increase in SWD from 2019 to 2021. We also see that period effects outweigh age effects because, prior to 2015, younger age groups tended to have higher SWD than older age groups. However, the key takeaway is that this is no longer the case, as a generational reversal in SWD appears to have occurred post-2015.

SWD Life-cycle Estimations

We now expand our analysis of the relationship between SWD and age by estimating a series of OLS regressions, one election at a time. First, I explore age effects by incorporating age categories as the explanatory variables in 11 models from 1993 to 2021, in order to predict SWD (see Appendix A2 for full results).

We detect notable findings regarding age. Figure 4 displays the age coefficients from Table 1 for the two youngest age categories (18–24 and 25–39) from 1993 to 2021, which are conditional on the reference group (55–69). SWD was negatively related for both age groups in 1993, but non-significant. Between 1997 and 2015, SWD was positively related for both age groups and even statistically significant in 2011 at ($p < 0.05$). However, starting in 2019, we see evidence of a negative relationship between SWD and both age groups. The relationship was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) for ages 25–39 in all three surveys, and at ($p < 0.01$) for 18-to-24-year-olds

in the 2019 web survey and ($p < 0.1$) in the 2019 phone survey. Last, we see a null effect in 2021 for 18-to-24-year-olds.

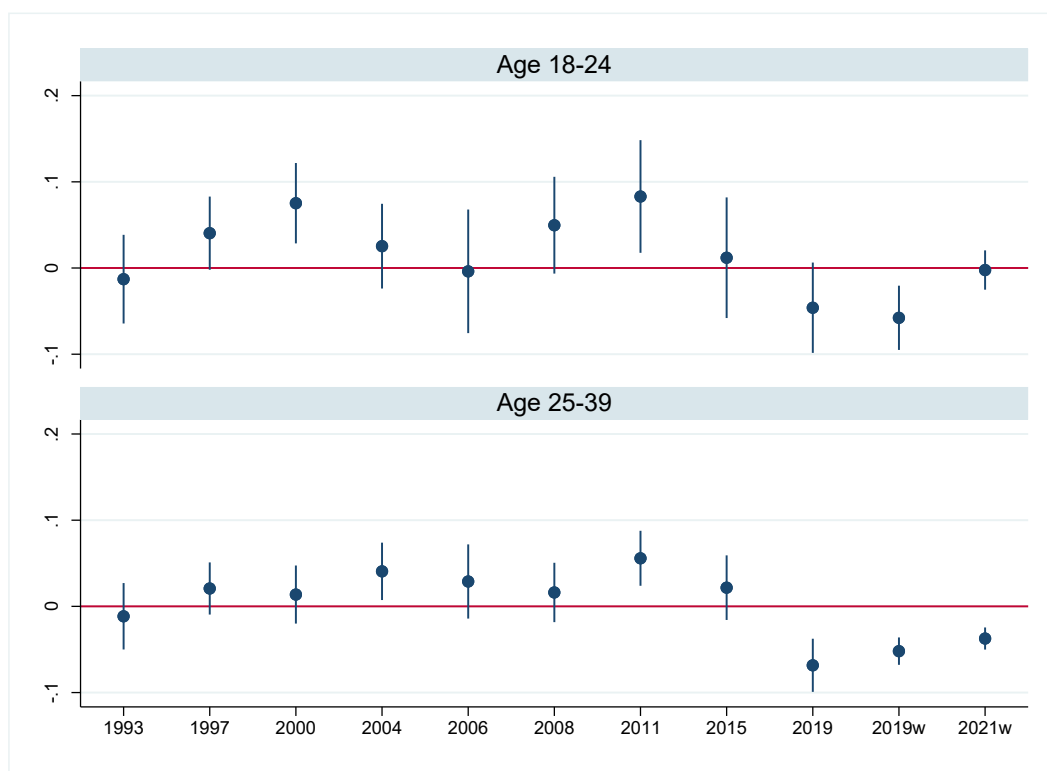


Figure 4: Age coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. 95% CI's displayed.

Next, we investigate the relationship of age and perceptions of financial status with SWD. Although not shown in Figure 4, personal economic evaluations are positively related to SWD throughout the period under study and are statistically significant at ($p < 0.001$) in every election except 2006 and 2008. To see if personal economic evaluations are driving lower SWD for younger people, I estimate interactions between age and personal retrospective evaluation for each of the same models (see Appendix A3 for full table). I focus on personal financial evaluations as the primary economic explanatory variable of interest because the effects of growing intergenerational economic divides on political attitudes and SWD should be best captured via this subjective measurement of one's economic situation, rather than perceptions of the wider economy.

Figure 5 plots the interaction coefficients for the two youngest age categories again. For youths 18–24, we can see that the interaction is negative in seven of 10 elections, with a null effect in 1993 and 2008, and a positive effect only in 2011. However, statistical significance is only attained in 1997 to 2004 at ($p < 0.05$). A very similar pattern is attained for the 25–39 age group for each election and a significant negative interaction occurs in the 2004 and 2021 elections at ($p < 0.05$). In comparison, the interactions for the older age groups are more mixed and only attain significance at ($p < 0.05$) in 1993 for the middle age group (40–54) and 2008 for the elderly (70+), with lessening effects in recent elections. These results suggest that retrospective evaluations of a person's financial situation are not much of a driver of SWD for young people, although this has not really increased in recent elections.

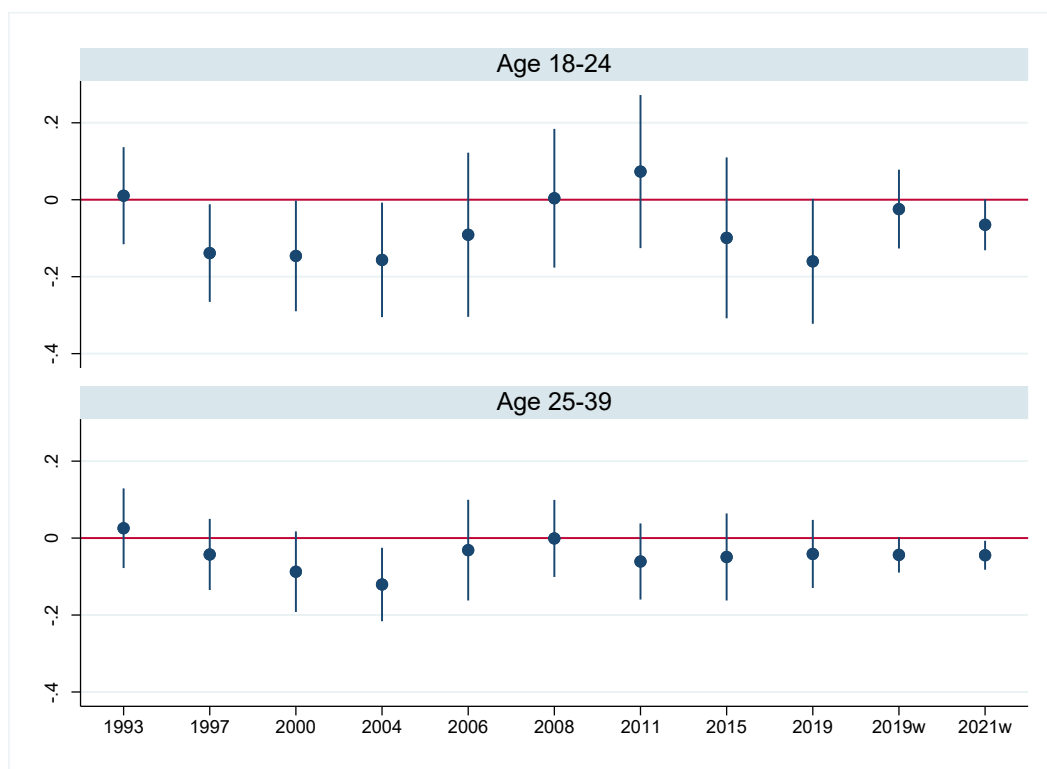


Figure 5: Interaction coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. 95% CI's displayed.

SWD Cohort Estimations

Turning now to generation cohort effects, I estimate each of the models again by substituting the age category variable with the five generation cohorts. Generation Z is only included for 2019 to 2021 and millennials after 2000, because those were the first elections each respective cohort was eligible to vote in. This allows us to trace the entire vote eligibility lifespans of both millennials and Generation Z in our youth categories. See Appendix A4 for full results.

Figure 6 plots the SWD coefficient estimates for both millennials and Generation Z. Millennials are more likely to have higher SWD up until 2015, and this effect is statistically significant in 2011 at ($p < 0.01$). A pronounced switch occurs after 2015; millennials then become more likely to have lower SWD at the highest significance level ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, Generation Z is more likely to have lower SWD in the web surveys for 2019 and 2021, and this effect is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, when we compare millennials in the 2000 and 2004 elections, where the cohort is in the equivalent age group (18–24) to Generation Z now, there is a positive relationship with SWD.

Unfortunately, our sample does not allow us to trace the equivalent lifespan for when the older three generations were at a young age, due to the sample beginning in 1993. But in 1993, Generation X respondents were between the ages of 13–28, so we can at least trace Generation X's relative youth in the age 25–39 bracket for the 1993 to 2004 elections. The results show that Generation X exhibits a null SWD effect in 1993 and a positive and significant effect from 1997

to 2004 (1997= $p<0.01$; 2000-2004= $p<0.05$). Therefore, comparing Generation X to millennials when both cohorts were the same age reveals somewhat similar positive effects in their relationships to SWD until their mid-30s, but there is a stark contrast after this age, due to millennials becoming more dissatisfied with democracy. However, SWD is significantly negatively related for Gen X in the two web surveys (2019= $p<0.01$; 2021= $p<0.001$), which provides more support for period effects. In sum, we do not find any evidence for cohort effects in predicting SWD, and we again see evidence in favour of period effects post-2015.

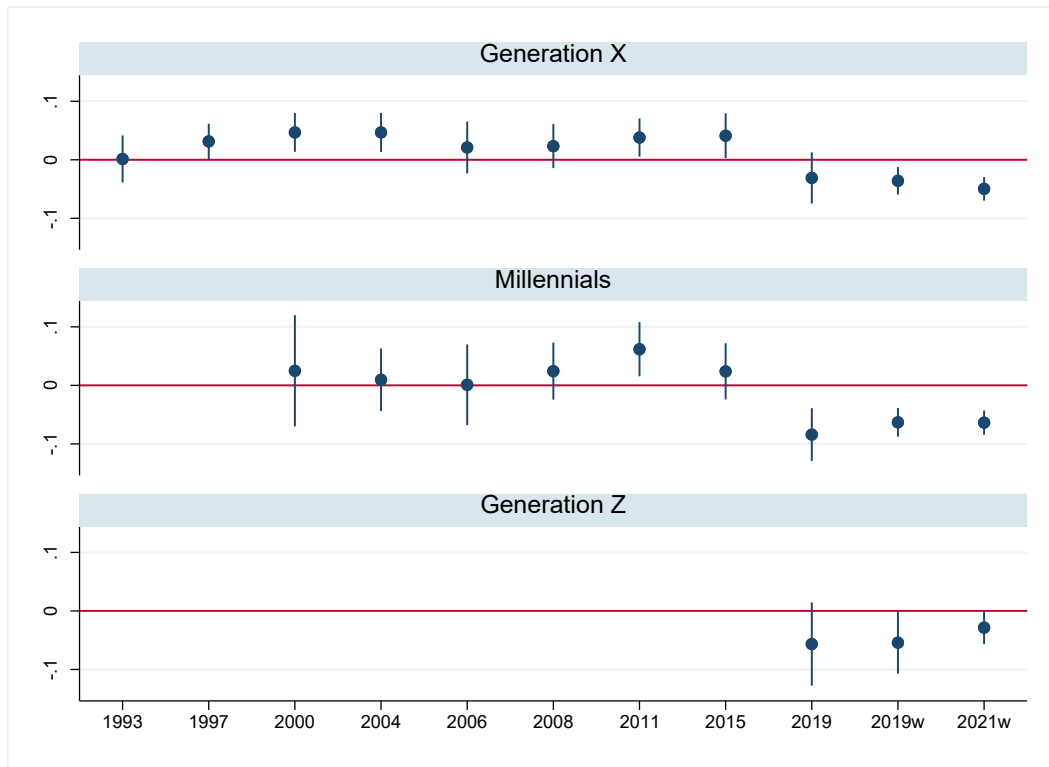


Figure 6: Coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy for millennials and Generation Z. 95% CI's displayed.

To test personal retrospective finance evaluations in analyzing the relationship between age and SWD, I estimate interactions between age cohorts and personal retrospective evaluation for each of the same models (see Appendix A5 for full table). Figure 7 plots the interaction coefficients for Generation Z and millennials. For millennials, the interaction between personal retrospective financial evaluations and SWD is negative for every election except 2021. However, statistical significance is not attained in 2008. Generation Z displays mixed results, with a significant negative effect in the 2019 phone survey at ($p<0.01$) but a positive effect in the 2019 and 2021 web surveys. In contrast to the age analysis, these mixed cohort results cast doubt on whether retrospective financial evaluations are driving lower SWD for young people.

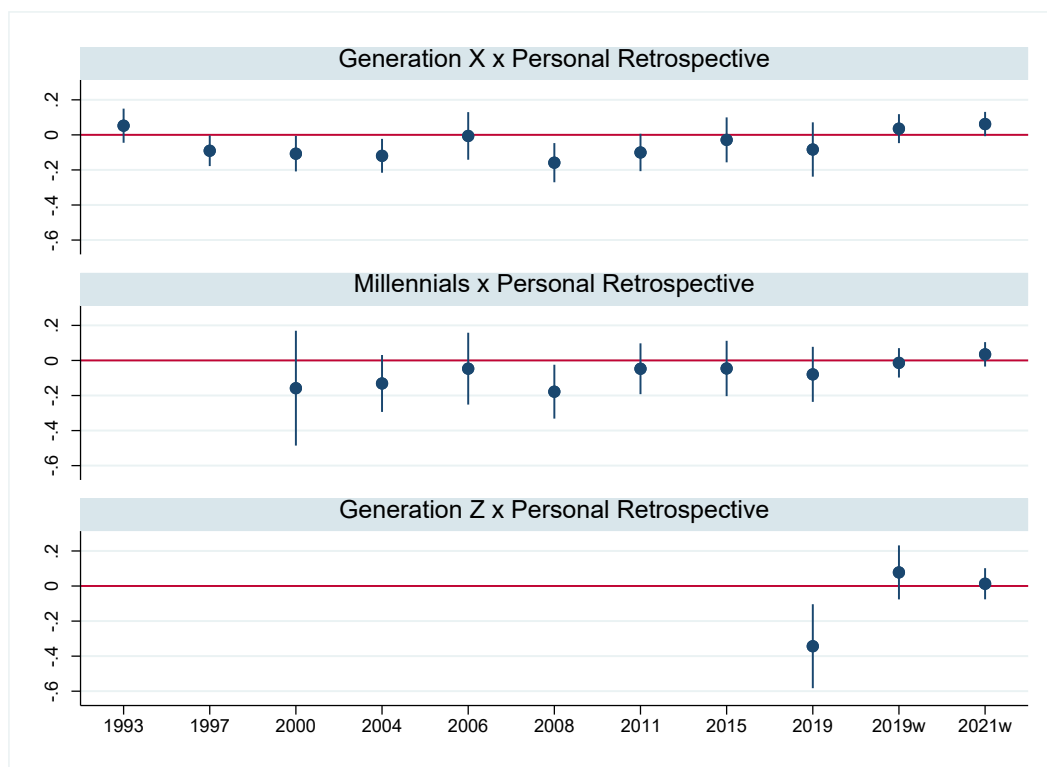


Figure 7: Coefficients from OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy for millennials and Generation Z interacted with personal retrospective evaluations. 95% CI's displayed.

Conclusion

Democratic backsliding has been evident in a number of countries in recent years. Some cross-national evidence shows that the young are less satisfied with and less committed to democracy than older citizens (Foa and Mounk 2016; Foa et al. 2020; Wuttke 2022). This report examines the relationship between age and SWD in Canada by undertaking graphical techniques and regression estimations using the CES. Through an analysis of the past 10 federal elections (1993–2021), it finds clear evidence of a negative relationship between SWD and younger generations starting in 2019. Canadian youth have experienced the largest declines in SWD, plummeting roughly 6 and 8 percentage points for youths aged 18–24 and 25–39 respectively from 2015 to 2021. Regression analysis shows that SWD was null or positively related for this age group in each election from 1993 to 2015 relative to older Canadians (55–69) but demonstrated a negative and statistically significant relationship in 2019 and 2021. Cohort analysis shows that millennials have experienced the largest decline in SWD, dropping roughly 9 percentage points in 2019, and that millennials and Generation Z have the lowest generational SWD after 2015. Cohort regression estimations show that SWD is negative and statistically significant for both generations after 2015.

Furthermore, it appears that period effects outweigh cohort effects, since both Gen Z and millennials did experience modest increases in SWD from 2019 to 2021. We also see that period effects outweigh age effects, as younger age groups tended to have higher SWD than older age groups prior to 2015. However, post-2015, a generational reversal in SWD appears to have

occurred. The timing of this reversal fails to lend support to the notion that the 2008 financial crisis could be a driver of dissatisfaction with democracy for youth. The report does find that personal economic evaluations are larger predictors of dissatisfaction with democracy for the younger age categories relative to older citizens in recent years (via the negative interactions), but the difference is small and generational differences are undetectable. Thus, evidence is lacking that they are a driver for increasing youth dissatisfaction with democracy.

The report has a few limitations stemming from data sampling and availability. It would have been beneficial to span a longer temporal range, so that SWD of older generations could have been compared to millennials and Generation Z when they were of an equivalent young age, but SWD has only been available in the CES since 1993. The survey portion (pre- or post-election) where SWD was asked also varied in a few of the waves, which raises some concerns about temporal consistency in the dependent variable (although pre- and post-election SWD is correlated and displays similar means in the study). The sample sizes are also much larger in the two online samples, which do coincide with the key trend of lower SWD for youth starting in 2019 (although the findings are robust due to the inclusion of both survey modes).⁷ Election surveys such as the CES also tend to overrepresent respondents who are already interested in politics, and those who are not interested in politics (and who are less inclined to be satisfied with democracy) are less prone to respond to election surveys (Brehm 1993). However, this limitation likely underestimates the results and trends outlined in this report, due to the oversampling of people with high SWD.

There are many recommendations that policy-makers can look at to bridge the gap of lower SWD in youth.

First, improving civics education in school curriculums needs to be explored further by provincial and federal voting officials in collaboration with educators. In high schools, a healthier civic culture could be fostered by reminding youth who are near voting age of the importance of voting.

Second, further improvement in this area could be fostered through lowering the voting age to 16, as evidence from Latin America shows that lowering the voting age increases satisfaction with democracy among teenagers (Petrarca 2020).

Third, policy-makers and Elections Canada should aim to make politics as accessible and convenient as possible by embracing new ways of doing politics, such as e-voting. For example, the world leader in e-voting, Estonia, has recently achieved one of the largest intergenerational SWD shifts in the world (Foa et al. 2020: 11). Young people are at the forefront of engagement with new technologies and have embraced e-voting more than other age groups in Estonia (ERR News 2023). Thus, Elections Canada should conduct rigorous experiments with randomly allocated treatment and control groups, and with groups of young Canadians, during by-elections to determine if Canadians, and especially younger citizens, would be more likely to vote online.

⁷ The much larger sample size in the online surveys increases the statistical power substantially compared to the phone surveys. This possibly accounts for the detection of significant effects in the online surveys and not in most of the phone surveys.

Fourth, greater survey data is also needed to better ascertain why SWD is on the decline in youth. Therefore, Elections Canada and academics should collaborate on fielding new surveys to better understand the democratic values and beliefs of younger Canadians.

In sum, this report carries important implications for democracy in Canada by suggesting that younger citizens appear to be losing some faith in it. A common view in the literature is that general youth dissatisfaction is simply a life-cycle effect, whereby people start out their lives critical of prevailing institutions, but then mellow with age (Foa et al. 2020). However, the evidence presented in this report for millennials contradicts this assumption with regard to dissatisfaction with democracy, as millennials have become increasingly dissatisfied with age (specifically post-2015). Future research might further investigate the determinants of declining SWD within Canada, especially among youth. In particular, future work may probe potential economic factors at the aggregate level, such as unemployment, income inequality, and inflation, as well as perceptions of democratic representation or accountability.

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Appendix

Youth and Satisfaction with Democracy

- A1 Descriptive Statistics**
- A2 Age Results**
- A3 Age x Personal Retrospective Evaluations Results**
- A4 Generation Cohort Results**
- A5 Generation Cohort x Personal Retrospective Evaluations Results**
- A6 Duty to Vote Robustness Check**

A1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Satisfaction with democracy	54,632	0.5982162	0.3099784	0	1
(Age) 18-24	6,476	0.0700676	0.2552623	0	1
(Age) 25-39	22,845	0.2471734	0.4313707	0	1
(Age) 40-54	24,498	0.2650582	0.4413666	0	1
(Age) 55-69	26,050	0.2818501	0.4499031	0	1
(Age) 70+	12,556	0.1358507	0.3426318	0	1
(Cohort) Generation Z	68,377	0.0541556	0.2263262	0	1
(Cohort) Millennial	85,469	0.2078414	0.4057651	0	1
(Cohort) Generation X	92,758	0.2574118	0.4372105	0	1
(Cohort) Baby boomers	92,758	0.3816275	0.4857885	0	1
(Cohort) Interwar generation	92,758	0.1223722	0.3277169	0	1
(Region) Atlantic	8,307	0.0898744	0.2860033	0	1
(Region) Quebec	23,106	0.2499865	0.4330072	0	1
(Region) Ontario	28,955	0.3132675	0.4638246	0	1
(Region) West	32,061	0.3468717	0.4759771	0	1
Women	92,331	0.5503352	0.4974626	0	1
Income	85,731	2.991007	1.359579	1	5
Degree	91,139	0.3630169	0.4808723	0	1
Foreign	88,009	0.1532343	0.3602153	0	1
Political interest	86,250	0.6321212	0.2600739	0	1
Winner	92,758	0.1782272	0.382706	0	1
National retrospective	92,546	0.3756402	0.3538531	0	1
Personal retrospective	92,654	0.4410279	0.3311079	0	1

A2 Age Results

<i>SWD</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	1993	1997	2000	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019	2019web	2021web
Age 18–24	-0.013 (0.026)	0.040 (0.022)	0.075** (0.024)	0.025 (0.025)	-0.004 (0.037)	0.050 (0.029)	0.083* (0.033)	0.012 (0.036)	-0.046 (0.027)	-0.058** (0.019)	-0.002 (0.012)
Age 25–39	-0.011 (0.020)	0.021 (0.015)	0.014 (0.017)	0.041* (0.017)	0.029 (0.022)	0.016 (0.018)	0.056*** (0.016)	0.022 (0.019)	-0.068*** (0.016)	-0.052*** (0.008)	-0.037*** (0.007)
Age 40–54	-0.022 (0.021)	0.021 (0.016)	0.018 (0.016)	0.018 (0.015)	-0.003 (0.020)	0.008 (0.017)	0.027* (0.014)	0.037* (0.015)	-0.014 (0.015)	-0.025*** (0.008)	-0.026*** (0.006)
Age 55–69	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Age 70+	0.053 (0.037)	-0.034 (0.026)	-0.046 (0.028)	0.015 (0.022)	0.011 (0.032)	-0.031 (0.024)	0.013 (0.018)	0.003 (0.019)	0.015 (0.021)	0.009 (0.011)	0.014 (0.008)
Atlantic	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Quebec	-0.036 (0.024)	-0.019 (0.019)	-0.129*** (0.019)	-0.060** (0.021)	0.028 (0.030)	-0.038 (0.020)	-0.085*** (0.018)	-0.048* (0.020)	0.019 (0.018)	0.031* (0.013)	0.051*** (0.011)
Ontario	-0.040 (0.023)	0.015 (0.019)	-0.046* (0.020)	-0.040 (0.020)	-0.047 (0.031)	0.027 (0.021)	-0.012 (0.018)	0.018 (0.018)	-0.038* (0.018)	-0.047*** (0.011)	-0.016 (0.010)
West	-0.014 (0.022)	0.004 (0.018)	-0.125*** (0.020)	-0.086*** (0.020)	-0.016 (0.030)	0.003 (0.020)	-0.014 (0.018)	0.026 (0.019)	-0.066*** (0.016)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.053*** (0.011)
Female	-0.015 (0.013)	0.012 (0.011)	0.037** (0.012)	0.009 (0.012)	-0.036* (0.016)	0.023 (0.013)	0.019 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.012)	-0.004 (0.012)	0.006 (0.006)	0.023*** (0.005)
Income	0.016** (0.005)	0.016*** (0.004)	0.004 (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.007)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.014** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Degree	0.035* (0.017)	0.026 (0.013)	0.015 (0.015)	0.012 (0.013)	-0.013 (0.018)	0.043** (0.014)	0.017 (0.012)	0.000 (0.013)	0.031* (0.012)	0.013* (0.006)	0.019*** (0.005)
Foreign	0.063** (0.020)	0.031 (0.017)	0.025 (0.018)	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.022 (0.023)	-0.002 (0.020)	0.044* (0.017)	0.014 (0.018)	0.055*** (0.017)	0.034*** (0.008)	0.035*** (0.006)
Pol interest	0.120*** (0.022)	0.046* (0.020)	-0.020 (0.022)	-0.006 (0.021)	-0.014 (0.029)	0.120*** (0.024)	-0.049* (0.024)	-0.130*** (0.028)	-0.091** (0.028)	0.034** (0.013)	-0.024* (0.010)
Winner	0.095*** (0.014)	0.105*** (0.012)	0.150*** (0.013)	0.193*** (0.013)	0.190*** (0.017)	0.100*** (0.014)	0.114*** (0.012)	-0.013 (0.013)	0.131*** (0.014)	0.127*** (0.007)	0.231*** (0.005)
Nat. retro.	-0.025 (0.023)	0.104*** (0.016)	0.159*** (0.019)	0.079*** (0.017)	-0.036 (0.024)	0.075*** (0.019)	0.158*** (0.016)	0.179*** (0.021)	0.114*** (0.018)	0.203*** (0.010)	0.171*** (0.008)
Per. retro.	0.057*** (0.016)	0.074*** (0.016)	0.085*** (0.019)	0.083*** (0.017)	0.034 (0.025)	0.060** (0.020)	0.087*** (0.019)	0.080*** (0.021)	0.091*** (0.019)	0.103*** (0.010)	0.088*** (0.008)
Constant	0.445*** (0.033)	0.409*** (0.026)	0.470*** (0.029)	0.496*** (0.028)	0.645*** (0.039)	0.386*** (0.029)	0.395*** (0.027)	0.534*** (0.030)	0.523*** (0.028)	0.427*** (0.016)	0.443*** (0.013)
<i>N</i>	1850	2644	2460	2614	1276	2064	2911	2574	2666	9000	15218
<i>R</i> ²	0.08	0.10	0.15	0.13	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.19	0.21

Table A2: OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A3 Age x Personal Retrospective Evaluations Results

<i>SWD</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	1993	1997	2000	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019	2019web	2021web
Age 18–24	-0.024 (0.038)	0.111** (0.039)	0.162** (0.049)	0.106* (0.050)	0.049 (0.070)	0.047 (0.059)	0.040 (0.065)	0.065 (0.071)	0.044 (0.054)	-0.047 (0.031)	0.029 (0.020)
Age 25–39	-0.024 (0.026)	0.037 (0.025)	0.059 (0.032)	0.096*** (0.028)	0.051 (0.044)	0.016 (0.031)	0.089** (0.031)	0.045 (0.035)	-0.048 (0.028)	-0.033* (0.013)	-0.016 (0.011)
Age 40–54	0.012 (0.026)	0.036 (0.024)	0.017 (0.030)	0.050* (0.024)	-0.046 (0.037)	0.027 (0.027)	0.040 (0.024)	0.065* (0.027)	0.007 (0.026)	-0.022 (0.012)	-0.018 (0.010)
Age 55–69	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Age 70+	0.060 (0.051)	-0.021 (0.042)	-0.030 (0.055)	0.018 (0.041)	0.035 (0.063)	-0.121** (0.045)	0.010 (0.034)	0.003 (0.038)	-0.005 (0.041)	0.027 (0.021)	0.028 (0.016)
Atlantic	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Quebec	-0.038 (0.024)	-0.018 (0.019)	-0.128*** (0.019)	-0.060** (0.021)	0.031 (0.030)	-0.039 (0.020)	-0.086*** (0.018)	-0.049* (0.020)	0.019 (0.018)	0.031* (0.013)	0.051*** (0.011)
Ontario	-0.042 (0.023)	0.016 (0.019)	-0.045* (0.020)	-0.037 (0.020)	-0.044 (0.031)	0.027 (0.021)	-0.012 (0.018)	0.018 (0.018)	-0.038* (0.018)	-0.047*** (0.011)	-0.016 (0.010)
West	-0.015 (0.022)	0.005 (0.018)	-0.123*** (0.020)	-0.084*** (0.020)	-0.015 (0.030)	0.002 (0.020)	-0.015 (0.018)	0.026 (0.019)	-0.066*** (0.016)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.053*** (0.011)
Female	-0.013 (0.013)	0.012 (0.011)	0.036** (0.012)	0.008 (0.012)	-0.036* (0.016)	0.022 (0.013)	0.019 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.012)	-0.004 (0.012)	0.006 (0.006)	0.023*** (0.005)
Income	0.016** (0.005)	0.016*** (0.004)	0.004 (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.014** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Degree	0.033 (0.017)	0.026 (0.013)	0.016 (0.015)	0.013 (0.013)	-0.015 (0.018)	0.044** (0.014)	0.016 (0.012)	0.000 (0.013)	0.031* (0.012)	0.013* (0.006)	0.019*** (0.005)
Foreign	0.064** (0.020)	0.032 (0.017)	0.024 (0.018)	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.023 (0.023)	0.001 (0.020)	0.043* (0.017)	0.014 (0.018)	0.055*** (0.017)	0.034*** (0.008)	0.035*** (0.006)
Pol interest	0.120*** (0.022)	0.046* (0.020)	-0.021 (0.023)	-0.006 (0.021)	-0.014 (0.029)	0.121*** (0.024)	-0.049* (0.024)	-0.130*** (0.028)	-0.091** (0.028)	0.035** (0.013)	-0.023* (0.010)
Winner	0.093*** (0.014)	0.105*** (0.012)	0.149*** (0.013)	0.193*** (0.013)	0.190*** (0.018)	0.101*** (0.014)	0.114*** (0.012)	-0.012 (0.013)	0.131*** (0.014)	0.127*** (0.007)	0.230*** (0.005)
Nat. retro.	-0.025 (0.023)	0.104*** (0.016)	0.158*** (0.019)	0.078*** (0.017)	-0.039 (0.024)	0.073*** (0.019)	0.159*** (0.016)	0.178*** (0.021)	0.112*** (0.018)	0.203*** (0.010)	0.170*** (0.008)
Per. retro.	0.074 (0.047)	0.117** (0.040)	0.130** (0.043)	0.158*** (0.037)	0.022 (0.047)	0.064 (0.038)	0.105*** (0.031)	0.109*** (0.031)	0.121*** (0.031)	0.119*** (0.015)	0.109*** (0.012)
Age 18-24 x per retro	0.010 (0.064)	-0.139* (0.065)	-0.146* (0.073)	-0.156* (0.076)	-0.091 (0.109)	0.004 (0.092)	0.073 (0.101)	-0.099 (0.107)	-0.160 (0.083)	-0.024 (0.052)	-0.065 (0.034)
Age 25–39 x per retro	0.026 (0.053)	-0.043 (0.047)	-0.087 (0.053)	-0.121* (0.049)	-0.031 (0.067)	-0.001 (0.051)	-0.061 (0.050)	-0.049 (0.058)	-0.041 (0.045)	-0.044 (0.023)	-0.045* (0.019)
Age 40–54 x per retro	-0.115* (0.057)	-0.039 (0.049)	-0.001 (0.053)	-0.078 (0.045)	0.078 (0.061)	-0.039 (0.048)	-0.029 (0.044)	-0.061 (0.049)	-0.044 (0.044)	-0.007 (0.023)	-0.018 (0.019)
Age 55–69 x per retro	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Age 70+ x per retro	-0.024 (0.120)	-0.034 (0.088)	-0.033 (0.102)	-0.012 (0.079)	-0.052 (0.115)	0.217* (0.091)	0.008 (0.068)	0.000 (0.075)	0.044 (0.078)	-0.040 (0.041)	-0.031 (0.028)
Constant	0.442*** (0.036)	0.391*** (0.030)	0.451*** (0.035)	0.467*** (0.031)	0.651*** (0.044)	0.385*** (0.033)	0.387*** (0.029)	0.522*** (0.031)	0.511*** (0.030)	0.420*** (0.017)	0.434*** (0.014)

<i>N</i>	1850	2644	2460	2614	1276	2064	2911	2574	2666	9000	15218
<i>R</i> ²	0.09	0.10	0.15	0.13	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.19	0.21

Table A3: OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A4 Generation Cohort Results

<i>SWD</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	1993	1997	2000	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019	2019web	2021web
Gen Z									-0.057 (0.036)	-0.054* (0.027)	-0.029* (0.014)
Millennial			0.025 (0.048)	0.010 (0.027)	0.001 (0.035)	0.024 (0.025)	0.062** (0.024)	0.024 (0.024)	-0.084*** (0.023)	-0.063*** (0.012)	-0.064*** (0.011)
Gen X	0.001 (0.021)	0.031* (0.015)	0.047** (0.017)	0.047** (0.017)	0.021 (0.023)	0.023 (0.019)	0.038* (0.017)	0.041* (0.020)	-0.031 (0.022)	-0.036** (0.012)	-0.050*** (0.010)
Boomer	-0.018 (0.016)	0.014 (0.013)	0.021 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)	0.003 (0.021)	-0.001 (0.018)	0.005 (0.015)	0.010 (0.017)	-0.015 (0.021)	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.026** (0.010)
Interwar G	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Atlantic	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Quebec	-0.036 (0.025)	-0.017 (0.019)	-0.129*** (0.020)	-0.059** (0.021)	0.028 (0.030)	-0.036 (0.020)	-0.083*** (0.018)	-0.050* (0.020)	0.017 (0.018)	0.031* (0.013)	0.050*** (0.011)
Ontario	-0.041 (0.024)	0.017 (0.019)	-0.047* (0.021)	-0.038 (0.020)	-0.047 (0.031)	0.026 (0.021)	-0.010 (0.018)	0.017 (0.018)	-0.039* (0.018)	-0.047*** (0.011)	-0.016 (0.010)
West	-0.014 (0.022)	0.004 (0.018)	-0.125*** (0.020)	-0.085*** (0.020)	-0.015 (0.030)	0.003 (0.020)	-0.012 (0.018)	0.026 (0.019)	-0.067*** (0.016)	-0.004 (0.011)	-0.054*** (0.011)
Female	-0.013 (0.014)	0.017 (0.011)	0.034** (0.012)	0.009 (0.012)	-0.037* (0.016)	0.022 (0.013)	0.019 (0.011)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.004 (0.012)	0.006 (0.006)	0.024*** (0.005)
Income	0.015** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.004)	0.004 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.007)	0.019*** (0.005)	0.014** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Degree	0.033 (0.017)	0.025 (0.013)	0.010 (0.015)	0.009 (0.014)	-0.012 (0.018)	0.042** (0.014)	0.017 (0.012)	0.000 (0.013)	0.032* (0.012)	0.013* (0.006)	0.019*** (0.005)
Foreign	0.050* (0.021)	0.029 (0.017)	0.026 (0.018)	-0.012 (0.017)	-0.022 (0.023)	-0.002 (0.020)	0.043* (0.017)	0.015 (0.018)	0.056*** (0.017)	0.034*** (0.008)	0.035*** (0.006)
Pol interest	0.117*** (0.022)	0.043* (0.020)	-0.017 (0.023)	-0.003 (0.021)	-0.016 (0.029)	0.116*** (0.024)	-0.050* (0.024)	-0.129*** (0.028)	-0.090** (0.028)	0.034** (0.013)	-0.024* (0.010)
Winner	0.099*** (0.014)	0.105*** (0.013)	0.148*** (0.013)	0.195*** (0.013)	0.190*** (0.018)	0.099*** (0.014)	0.113*** (0.012)	-0.012 (0.013)	0.130*** (0.014)	0.126*** (0.007)	0.230*** (0.005)
Nat. retro.	-0.019 (0.024)	0.104*** (0.016)	0.157*** (0.019)	0.080*** (0.017)	-0.035 (0.024)	0.075*** (0.019)	0.160*** (0.016)	0.180*** (0.021)	0.114*** (0.018)	0.204*** (0.010)	0.171*** (0.008)
Per. retro.	0.057*** (0.017)	0.071*** (0.016)	0.083*** (0.019)	0.083*** (0.017)	0.035 (0.025)	0.060** (0.020)	0.090*** (0.019)	0.080*** (0.021)	0.092*** (0.019)	0.103*** (0.010)	0.087*** (0.008)
Constant	0.445*** (0.032)	0.405*** (0.026)	0.465*** (0.029)	0.498*** (0.028)	0.645*** (0.040)	0.384*** (0.030)	0.398*** (0.028)	0.530*** (0.031)	0.539*** (0.033)	0.436*** (0.019)	0.470*** (0.016)
<i>N</i>	1796	2590	2430	2595	1272	2060	2904	2572	2666	9000	15218
<i>R</i> ²	0.08	0.10	0.14	0.13	0.11	0.09	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.19	0.21

Table A4: OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A5 Generation Cohort x Personal Retrospective Evaluations Results

<i>SWD</i>	(1) 1993	(2) 1997	(3) 2000	(4) 2004	(5) 2006	(6) 2008	(7) 2011	(8) 2015	(9) 2019	(10) 2019web	(11) 2021web
Gen Z									0.135 (0.075)	-0.089* (0.044)	-0.034 (0.026)
Millennial			0.125 (0.122)	0.076 (0.056)	0.030 (0.066)	0.102* (0.049)	0.080 (0.045)	0.051 (0.048)	-0.047 (0.045)	-0.057* (0.023)	-0.080*** (0.020)
Gen X	-0.028 (0.030)	0.075** (0.026)	0.109*** (0.032)	0.102*** (0.028)	0.030 (0.044)	0.088** (0.032)	0.084** (0.030)	0.056 (0.036)	0.007 (0.043)	-0.051* (0.022)	-0.079*** (0.020)
Boomer	-0.010 (0.020)	0.030 (0.021)	0.017 (0.027)	0.049* (0.024)	-0.051 (0.038)	0.075** (0.029)	0.036 (0.027)	-0.010 (0.032)	0.005 (0.041)	-0.027 (0.021)	-0.064*** (0.019)
Interwar G	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Atlantic	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Quebec	-0.035 (0.025)	-0.017 (0.019)	-0.129*** (0.020)	-0.059** (0.021)	0.029 (0.030)	-0.037 (0.020)	-0.084*** (0.018)	-0.050* (0.020)	0.017 (0.018)	0.031* (0.013)	0.050*** (0.011)
Ontario	-0.041 (0.024)	0.017 (0.019)	-0.047* (0.021)	-0.036 (0.020)	-0.047 (0.030)	0.026 (0.021)	-0.011 (0.018)	0.018 (0.018)	-0.040* (0.018)	-0.047*** (0.011)	-0.016 (0.010)
West	-0.012 (0.022)	0.005 (0.018)	-0.124*** (0.020)	-0.083*** (0.020)	-0.016 (0.030)	0.002 (0.020)	-0.012 (0.018)	0.026 (0.019)	-0.067*** (0.016)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.053*** (0.011)
Female	-0.012 (0.014)	0.016 (0.011)	0.032** (0.012)	0.008 (0.012)	-0.036* (0.016)	0.022 (0.013)	0.018 (0.011)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.012)	0.007 (0.006)	0.023*** (0.005)
Income	0.015** (0.005)	0.018*** (0.004)	0.004 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.020*** (0.005)	0.014** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Degree	0.032 (0.017)	0.025 (0.013)	0.011 (0.015)	0.011 (0.014)	-0.013 (0.018)	0.043** (0.014)	0.016 (0.012)	0.000 (0.013)	0.031* (0.012)	0.013* (0.006)	0.019*** (0.005)
Foreign	0.051* (0.021)	0.029 (0.017)	0.025 (0.018)	-0.012 (0.017)	-0.022 (0.023)	0.002 (0.020)	0.044* (0.017)	0.014 (0.018)	0.057*** (0.017)	0.033*** (0.008)	0.035*** (0.006)
Pol interest	0.116*** (0.022)	0.043* (0.020)	-0.018 (0.023)	-0.004 (0.021)	-0.018 (0.029)	0.118*** (0.024)	-0.049* (0.024)	-0.129*** (0.028)	-0.089** (0.028)	0.035** (0.013)	-0.024* (0.010)
Winner	0.100*** (0.014)	0.105*** (0.013)	0.147*** (0.013)	0.195*** (0.013)	0.191*** (0.018)	0.101*** (0.014)	0.112*** (0.012)	-0.012 (0.013)	0.131*** (0.014)	0.127*** (0.007)	0.230*** (0.005)
Nat. retro.	-0.019 (0.024)	0.103*** (0.016)	0.156*** (0.019)	0.079*** (0.017)	-0.038 (0.024)	0.075*** (0.019)	0.160** (0.016)	0.179*** (0.021)	0.112*** (0.018)	0.202*** (0.010)	0.170*** (0.008)
Per. retro.	0.058 (0.035)	0.117*** (0.033)	0.116** (0.040)	0.155*** (0.038)	-0.004 (0.053)	0.207*** (0.048)	0.155*** (0.044)	0.074 (0.054)	0.165* (0.073)	0.079* (0.039)	0.031 (0.033)
Gen Z x per retro									-0.343** (0.122)	0.078 (0.079)	0.013 (0.045)
Millennial x per retro			-0.158 (0.167)	-0.131 (0.083)	-0.047 (0.104)	-0.178* (0.078)	-0.047 (0.074)	-0.046 (0.081)	-0.079 (0.080)	-0.014 (0.043)	0.035 (0.036)
Gen X x per retro	0.052 (0.050)	-0.091* (0.045)	-0.107* (0.052)	-0.120* (0.049)	-0.006 (0.069)	-0.159** (0.057)	-0.100 (0.054)	-0.029 (0.065)	-0.083 (0.079)	0.035 (0.042)	0.062 (0.035)
Boomer x per retro	-0.023 (0.042)	-0.043 (0.040)	0.007 (0.048)	-0.065 (0.045)	0.102 (0.064)	-0.186*** (0.055)	-0.072 (0.051)	0.046 (0.061)	-0.044 (0.078)	0.040 (0.041)	0.082* (0.035)
Interwar G x per retro	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Constant	0.444*** (0.034)	0.387*** (0.028)	0.453*** (0.033)	0.470*** (0.031)	0.665*** (0.047)	0.322*** (0.035)	0.370*** (0.033)	0.533*** (0.038)	0.507*** (0.045)	0.447*** (0.025)	0.498*** (0.022)

<i>N</i>	1796	2590	2430	2595	1272	2060	2904	2572	2666	9000	15218
<i>R</i> ²	0.08	0.10	0.15	0.13	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.19	0.21

Table A5: OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

A6 Duty to Vote Robustness Check

Age Analysis

<i>SWD</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	1993	1997	2000	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019	2019web	2021web
Age 18–24	-0.013 (0.026)	0.040 (0.022)	0.097** (0.035)	0.030 (0.025)	-0.005 (0.037)	0.054 (0.029)	0.092** (0.034)	0.016 (0.036)	-0.045 (0.027)	-0.054** (0.019)	0.001 (0.012)
Age 25–39	-0.011 (0.020)	0.021 (0.015)	0.028 (0.023)	0.042* (0.017)	0.028 (0.022)	0.018 (0.018)	0.060*** (0.016)	0.027 (0.019)	-0.066*** (0.016)	-0.049*** (0.008)	-0.034*** (0.007)
Age 40–54	-0.022 (0.021)	0.021 (0.016)	0.020 (0.021)	0.020 (0.015)	-0.006 (0.020)	0.010 (0.017)	0.027 (0.014)	0.039** (0.015)	-0.012 (0.015)	-0.024** (0.008)	-0.022*** (0.006)
Age 55–69	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Age 70+	0.053 (0.037)	-0.034 (0.026)	-0.017 (0.038)	0.018 (0.023)	0.005 (0.032)	-0.032 (0.024)	0.011 (0.018)	0.001 (0.019)	0.012 (0.021)	0.008 (0.011)	0.011 (0.008)
Atlantic	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Quebec	-0.036 (0.024)	-0.019 (0.019)	-0.096*** (0.026)	-0.062** (0.021)	0.031 (0.030)	-0.039 (0.020)	-0.090*** (0.018)	-0.054** (0.020)	0.013 (0.018)	0.030* (0.013)	0.046*** (0.011)
Ontario	-0.040 (0.023)	0.015 (0.019)	-0.026 (0.027)	-0.041* (0.020)	-0.044 (0.031)	0.029 (0.021)	-0.013 (0.018)	0.013 (0.018)	-0.040* (0.018)	-0.049*** (0.011)	-0.016 (0.010)
West	-0.014 (0.022)	0.004 (0.018)	-0.109*** (0.026)	-0.088*** (0.020)	-0.013 (0.030)	0.005 (0.020)	-0.016 (0.018)	0.024 (0.019)	-0.070*** (0.016)	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.055*** (0.011)
Female	-0.015 (0.013)	0.012 (0.011)	0.035* (0.017)	0.009 (0.012)	-0.038* (0.016)	0.022 (0.013)	0.018 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.012)	-0.006 (0.012)	0.006 (0.006)	0.020*** (0.005)
Income	0.016** (0.005)	0.016*** (0.004)	0.002 (0.007)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.007)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.014** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)	-0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)
Degree	0.035* (0.017)	0.026 (0.013)	-0.002 (0.020)	0.013 (0.013)	-0.013 (0.018)	0.042** (0.014)	0.015 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.013)	0.029* (0.012)	0.012 (0.006)	0.018*** (0.005)
Foreign	0.063** (0.020)	0.031 (0.017)	0.009 (0.026)	-0.009 (0.017)	-0.022 (0.023)	-0.004 (0.020)	0.046** (0.017)	0.015 (0.018)	0.055*** (0.017)	0.033*** (0.009)	0.037*** (0.007)
Pol interest	0.120*** (0.022)	0.046* (0.020)	-0.035 (0.031)	-0.010 (0.022)	-0.011 (0.030)	0.106*** (0.025)	-0.059* (0.025)	-0.143*** (0.029)	-0.107*** (0.028)	0.021 (0.014)	-0.040*** (0.010)
Winner	0.095*** (0.014)	0.105*** (0.012)	0.164*** (0.018)	0.191*** (0.013)	0.192*** (0.018)	0.099*** (0.014)	0.113*** (0.012)	-0.012 (0.013)	0.125*** (0.014)	0.125*** (0.007)	0.228*** (0.005)
Nat. retro.	-0.025 (0.023)	0.104*** (0.016)	0.182*** (0.026)	0.078*** (0.017)	-0.041 (0.024)	0.077*** (0.019)	0.156*** (0.016)	0.178*** (0.021)	0.110*** (0.018)	0.202*** (0.010)	0.169*** (0.008)
Per. retro.	0.057*** (0.016)	0.074*** (0.016)	0.116*** (0.026)	0.083*** (0.018)	0.034 (0.025)	0.059** (0.020)	0.085*** (0.019)	0.076*** (0.021)	0.095*** (0.019)	0.102*** (0.010)	0.086*** (0.008)
Vote duty			0.000 (0.017)	0.015 (0.014)	0.001 (0.021)	0.031 (0.018)	0.032* (0.013)	0.031* (0.014)	0.054*** (0.014)	0.023** (0.007)	0.041*** (0.006)
Constant	0.445*** (0.033)	0.409*** (0.026)	0.427*** (0.040)	0.486*** (0.030)	0.645*** (0.042)	0.367*** (0.032)	0.384*** (0.028)	0.528*** (0.031)	0.500*** (0.029)	0.425*** (0.016)	0.431*** (0.014)
<i>N</i>	1850	2644	1325	2597	1268	2059	2891	2549	2644	8884	14975
<i>R</i> ²	0.08	0.10	0.17	0.13	0.11	0.10	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.19	0.21

Table A6a: OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Cohort Analysis

<i>SWD</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	1993	1997	2000	2004	2006	2008	2011	2015	2019	2019web	2021web
Gen Z									-0.059 ⁺	-0.047 ⁺	-0.022 ⁺
									(0.036)	(0.027)	(0.014)
Millennial			0.057 ⁺	0.014	0.003	0.027	0.069 ^{**}	0.033	-0.079 ^{***}	-0.059 ^{***}	-0.057 ^{***}
			(0.086)	(0.028)	(0.036)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.013)	(0.011)
Gen X	0.001	0.031 [*]	0.044	0.049 ^{**}	0.022	0.024	0.040 [*]	0.046 [*]	-0.026	-0.033 ^{**}	-0.042 ^{***}
	(0.021)	(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.012)	(0.010)
Boomer	-0.018	0.014	0.028	0.025 ⁺	0.004	-0.001	0.005	0.013	-0.012	-0.008	-0.023 [*]
	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Interwar G	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Atlantic	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>	<i>ref</i>
Quebec	-0.036	-0.017	-0.094 ^{***}	-0.061 ^{**}	0.030	-0.037 ⁺	-0.088 ^{***}	-0.056 ^{**}	0.012	0.029 [*]	0.046 ^{***}
	(0.025)	(0.019)	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.011)
Ontario	-0.041 ⁺	0.017	-0.021	-0.039 ⁺	-0.045	0.028	-0.011	0.012	-0.041 [*]	-0.049 ^{***}	-0.016
	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.020)	(0.031)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.010)
West	-0.014	0.004	-0.106 ^{**}	-0.086 ^{***}	-0.012	0.004	-0.014	0.023	-0.071 ^{***}	-0.006	-0.055 ^{***}
	(0.022)	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.030)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Female	-0.013	0.017	0.032 ⁺	0.009	-0.039 [*]	0.021 ⁺	0.017	-0.003	-0.007	0.006	0.020 ^{***}
	(0.014)	(0.011)	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Income	0.015 ^{**}	0.017 ^{***}	0.001	-0.001	-0.004	0.020 ^{***}	0.014 ^{**}	0.021 ^{***}	0.009 [*]	-0.000	0.000
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Degree	0.033 ⁺	0.025 ⁺	-0.007	0.010	-0.012	0.041 ^{**}	0.015	-0.002	0.029 [*]	0.012 ⁺	0.018 ^{***}
	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.014)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Foreign	0.050 [*]	0.029 ⁺	0.006	-0.009	-0.022	-0.004	0.045 ^{**}	0.016	0.056 ^{***}	0.033 ^{***}	0.036 ^{***}
	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.026)	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Pol interest	0.117 ^{***}	0.043 [*]	-0.033	-0.007	-0.014	0.103 ^{***}	-0.060 [*]	-0.142 ^{***}	-0.107 ^{***}	0.021	-0.040 ^{***}
	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.032)	(0.022)	(0.030)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.014)	(0.010)
Winner	0.099 ^{***}	0.105 ^{***}	0.160 ^{***}	0.194 ^{***}	0.192 ^{***}	0.097 ^{***}	0.111 ^{***}	-0.012	0.124 ^{***}	0.125 ^{***}	0.228 ^{***}
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.005)
Nat. retro.	-0.019	0.104 ^{***}	0.182 ^{***}	0.079 ^{***}	-0.040	0.077 ^{***}	0.158 ^{***}	0.178 ^{***}	0.110 ^{***}	0.202 ^{***}	0.169 ^{***}
	(0.024)	(0.016)	(0.026)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.008)
Per. retro.	0.057 ^{***}	0.071 ^{***}	0.119 ^{***}	0.083 ^{***}	0.035	0.059 ^{**}	0.088 ^{***}	0.077 ^{***}	0.097 ^{***}	0.102 ^{***}	0.085 ^{***}
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.027)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.010)	(0.008)
Vote duty			-0.002	0.014	0.001	0.029	0.032 [*]	0.033 [*]	0.054 ^{***}	0.023 ^{**}	0.041 ^{***}
			(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Constant	0.445 ^{***}	0.405 ^{***}	0.428 ^{***}	0.489 ^{***}	0.643 ^{***}	0.367 ^{***}	0.386 ^{***}	0.520 ^{***}	0.513 ^{***}	0.433 ^{***}	0.454 ^{***}
	(0.032)	(0.026)	(0.040)	(0.029)	(0.042)	(0.033)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.019)	(0.016)
<i>N</i>	1796	2590	1308	2578	1264	2055	2884	2542	2644	8884	14975
<i>R</i> ²	0.08	0.10	0.17	0.13	0.11	0.09	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.19	0.21

Table A6b: OLS regression models predicting satisfaction with democracy. Standard errors in parentheses.

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$