

THE RELIGION ENIGMA: Theoretical riddle or classificational artifact?

Barry J. Kay, Ph. D.
Andrea M.L. Perrella, Ph. D.
Steven D. Brown, Ph.D.

Abstract

The debate about religion's impact upon Canadian voting has long focused on the cleavage between Protestants and Catholics. Drawing upon data from a 35,000 sample online survey conducted during the 2006 federal election, as well as past Canadian Election Studies, analysis presented here, however, suggests that the disproportionate Protestant-Conservative association is largely an artifact of Evangelical voters, rather than members of such mainstream denominations as Anglican, United and Presbyterian. In fact, certain of these mainstream groupings are hardly distinctive from Roman Catholics, at least in voting patterns (outside of Quebec). This discussion is theoretically contextualized by the Evangelical experience in the United States, and the study also examines the distinctive behaviour of non-Christians and the non-religious in Canada.