

# Uncertainty and economic voting

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## Summary

Overarching question: How does uncertainty about sociotropic economic assessments effect economic voting?

### Goals:

- Propose an alternative measure of sociotropic economic assessment that differs from the standard question used in surveys and test if there are differences in uncertainty
- Replicate Dettrey and Palmer's (2013) work on the moderating effect of certainty on economic voting
- Analyze a set of exploratory questions, such as about the degree to which partisanship affects the different types of economic measures, for which we did not yet have formal expectations

### Results:

Results based on data collected as part of CES and additional data from a survey fielded in Canada at the end of November suggest a) alternative indicator does not make a difference, b) uncertainty does not moderate relationship between economic assessment and incumbent support, and c) there is little differences to suggest, for example, that partisan contagion is markedly different for our two indicators.

### Questions for the group:

- What should the next steps be?
- Should we pursue trying to publish this as a replication?

Below, we briefly recap some of the hypothesis and expectations we presented in the first session of the bi-weekly meetings earlier this year. We also show some basic results for people who might find them helpful.

## **Pre-Registered Expectation and Hypotheses**

Expectation 1: *People are more certain of the economic situation of average Canadians than the economy more generally.*

Hypothesis 2a: *The more certain voters are in their retrospective sociotropic general economic assessments, the stronger the effect of these assessments on support for the incumbent.*

Hypothesis 2b: *The more certain voters are in their retrospective sociotropic economic assessments for the Average Canadian, the stronger the effect of these assessments on support for the incumbent.*

## Exploratory Research Questions

- 1) In addition to certainty, do economic assessments differ between the general (classic) economic assessment question and the question that focuses on the average Canadian?
- 2) Does partisanship affect one of the two indicators more (i.e., are answers on one of both indicators more driven by motivated reasoning)?
- 3) Does one indicator affect vote choice more than the other either because it is less contaminated by partisanship or because people are generally more certain about their assessment of one indicator?

## Data

- Collected as part of 2021 Canadian Election Study and a survey fielded in Canada at the end of November (N~2,000). Variables:

Economic Assessment (General Economy)	Over the past year, has Canada's economy...	1 = got better 2 = stayed about the same 3 = got worse
Economic Assessment (Average Canadian)	Over the past 12 month, do you think the economic situation of the average Canadian...	1 = got better 2 = stayed about the same 3 = got worse 4 = DK 5= Prefer not to answer
Uncertainty - Self-Reported	Are you very certain of this belief, fairly certain, or not very certain?	1 = Not very certain 2 = Fairly certain 3 = Very certain 4= Prefer not to answer

## Results - Expectation 1

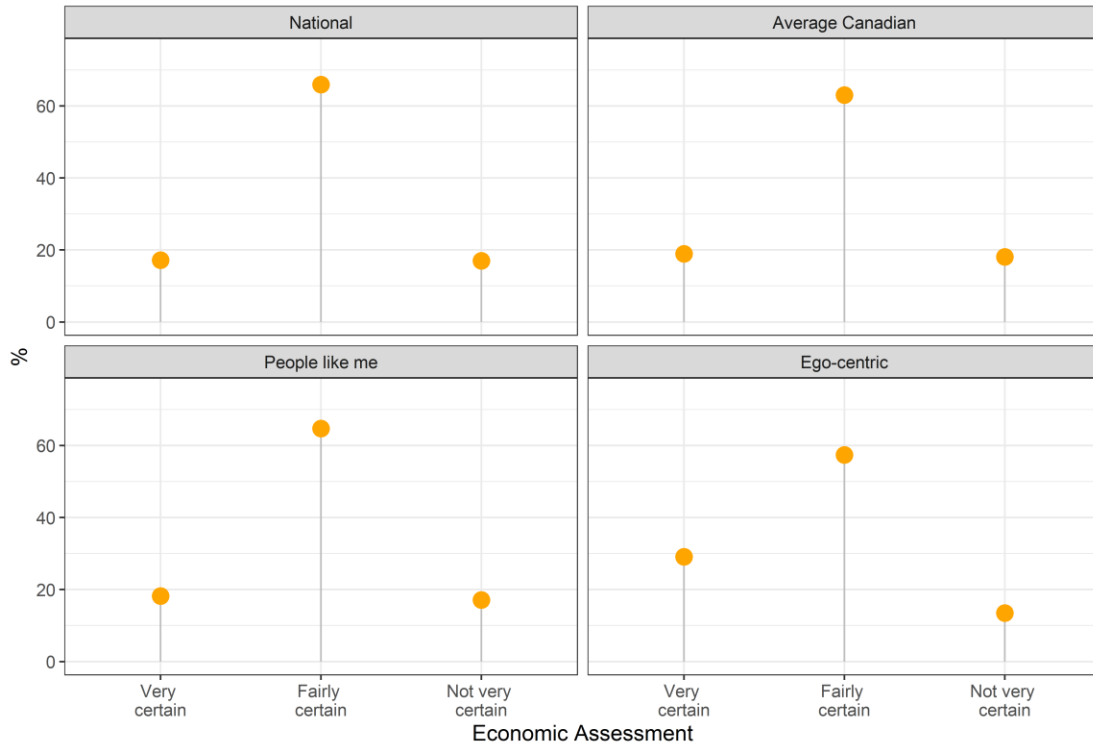
*Table 1* Cross tabulation of self-reported certainty in economic evaluations indicates people who are more certain in their general economic assessment, are also more certain in their assessment of the average Canadian's economy and vice-versa

<i>Economy - General</i>	<i>Economy - Average Canadian</i>		
	Not very certain	Fairly certain	Very certain
Not very certain	311 <i>37.02</i>	481 <i>57.26</i>	48 <i>5.71</i>
Fairly certain	298 <i>9.86</i>	2,374 <i>78.56</i>	350 <i>11.58</i>
Very certain	51 <i>3.24</i>	522 <i>33.16</i>	1,001 <i>63.6</i>
Total	660 <i>12.14</i>	3,377 <i>62.12</i>	1,399 <i>25.74</i>

*Note 1* Table shows unweighted data from 2021 Canadian Election Study; Entries are absolute numbers (top) and row percentages (bottom; italic).

In the follow-up study at the end of November, we randomly assigned people to either one of the two questions (plus two additional questions about the economic situation of “people like me” and the classical ego-centric) to ensure none of this is a consequence of question order in the CES but we did not find much difference there either. See the following graphic:

*Figure 1* Distribution of certainty about National Economy, the average Canadian's economy, the economy of "people like me", and people's own economic situation (sociotropic; past 6 months)



## Results - EQ 1

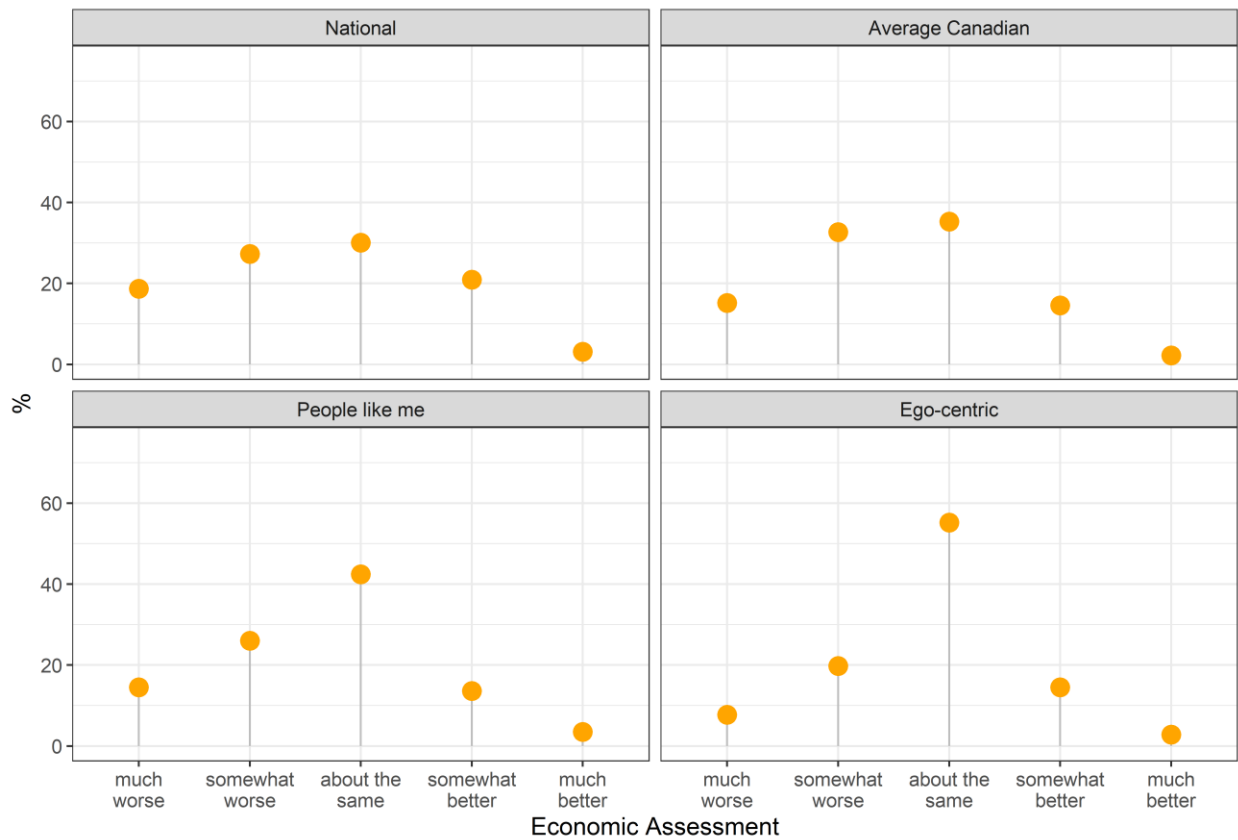
*Table 2* Cross tabulation of perceived general economic situation and perceived economic situation of the average Canadian shows no overall substantial differences in the two evaluations

Economy - Average Canadian			
Economy - General	Stayed about		
	Got better	the same	Got worse
Got better	186 <i>37.35</i>	216 <i>43.37</i>	96 <i>19.28</i>
Stayed about the same	86 <i>6.81</i>	648 <i>51.31</i>	529 <i>41.88</i>
Got worse	83 <i>2.23</i>	659 <i>17.67</i>	2,987 <i>80.10</i>
Total	355	1,523	3,612
	100	100	100

Note: Table shows unweighted data from 2021 Canadian Election Study; Entries are absolute numbers (top) and row percentages (bottom; italic).

➔ Again, in the follow-up study at the end of November, we randomly assigned people to either one of the two questions (plus two additional questions) to ensure none of this is a consequence of question order in the CES but we did not find much difference there either (see Figure 2 below) between the national economy and the average Canadian.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 2 Distribution of economic assessments of the National Economy, the average Canadian's economy, the economy of "people like me", and people's own economic situation (sociotropic; past 6 months)



<sup>1</sup> Predictably, people have a difficult time evaluation their own trajectories, leading to the high number of “about the same” in the ego-centric category

### Results EQ 3

Table 3 Cross tabulation of perceived economic situation, general and for the Average Canadian, by partisanship shows marginal differences in evaluations of the different economic situations.

	General Economy			Average Canadian		
	PiD - Who			PiD - Who		
	None	Other	Liberal Party	None	Other	Liberal Party
Got better	131 <i>6.51</i>	769 <i>6.36</i>	803 <i>16.25</i>	28 <i>4.87</i>	184 <i>5.54</i>	146 <i>10.28</i>
Stayed about the same	408 <i>20.29</i>	2,373 <i>19.62</i>	1,814 <i>36.71</i>	139 <i>24.17</i>	849 <i>25.14</i>	527 <i>37.11</i>
Got worse	1,472 <i>73.2</i>	8,950 <i>74.02</i>	2,325 <i>47.05</i>	408 <i>70.96</i>	2,344 <i>69.41</i>	747 <i>52.61</i>
Total	2,011 100	12,092 100	4,942 100	575 100	3,377 100	1,420 100

Note: Table shows unweighted data from 2021 Canadian Election Study; Entries are absolute numbers (top) and column percentages (bottom; italic).

Again, we don't see too much going on here - we suspected that asking about the average Canadian might be less contaminated by partisanship but there are minor differences at best. Again, here is a plot from the follow-up data collection where we randomly assigned people to one of the economic questions by Liberal partisanship:

Figure 3 Economic assessment indicators by partisanship

