

POLITICAL SPACES: URBAN-RURAL AND DIGITAL DIVIDES
IN THE POLITICAL PRACTICES AND VIEWS OF ATLANTIC CANADIANS

by

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Abstract

Divides in political participation and political views are often explained “spatially,” where space can be either physical, as in urban-rural divides, or digital, as in “cyberspace.” These divides are more commonly invoked conceptually than tested empirically, particularly in secondary regions such as Atlantic Canada, where high-quality data is often scarce. How are these spaces, urban/rural and digital, affecting political practices and views in the region? This thesis offers a more nuanced story than is commonly told about the effects of these so-called divides and spaces on the political sphere. The analysis offered in the thesis finds that there are spatial effects, but gaps are often relatively small, especially for political participation. Moreover, despite higher levels of social conservatism in rural areas and greater polarization among digital citizens, the majority of Atlantic Canadians share relatively progressive attitudes. Fears of discord and disengagement abound, but, overall, there is a great deal of consensus in the region, as well as participation in a wide variety of political actions across urban/rural and digital spaces.

List of Abbreviations Used

OR	Odds ratio
PCCF+	Postal Code Conversion File Plus
US	United States

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Chapter One: Introduction

The past decade has seen a surge of global protest and social movement activity (Akaev et al., 2017; Ortiz et al., 2013), along with the deepening of ideological divisions in Canada, the US, and around the world (Dahlgren, 2018). “Extreme” political views are said to be increasingly commonplace (Dixon, 2012; Blee & Creasap, 2010; Halikiopoulou, 2018), and repertoires for political action and the expression of these views have expanded with the proliferation of digital communication technologies and new models of political citizenship. In other words, how people practice and view politics is said to be changing in a number of important ways.

Many scholars and pundits argue that increasing polarization is the central dilemma of contemporary politics. They likewise attribute this trend to “economic anxiety” or “identity politics” (Inglehart & Norris, 2017). Both are often explained “spatially,” with some researchers focusing on physical or geographic space, including urban-rural divides (Speer & Jivani, 2017) and regionalism (Béland, 2019; Fitjar, 2009), while others focus on digital spaces— “cyberspace,” or the online and social media worlds inhabited by digital citizens (Dahlgren, 2018). Few have examined whether and how these two spaces, physical and digital, are playing a role in Atlantic Canadian politics.

Pervasive concerns about political polarization, patterns of engagement and disengagement in politics, and the future of democracy mean that these are important issues to explore. As a result, my thesis will assess the effects of different “spaces,” urban/rural and digital, on the political views and practices of Atlantic Canadians. These two spaces are empirically overlapping, but conceptually separate. Both are social, in the sense that individuals who exist in them orient themselves with respect to larger communities. However, unlike urban and rural spaces, “digital space” is often treated as a metaphor rather

than a legitimate place where one can actually *be*. As many people are spending more and more of their lives in digital spaces, both shaping and being shaped by a social world that may or may not resemble the one they encounter in physical space, I propose the usefulness of understanding the digital “spatially,” analogous to physical social spaces like “urban” and “rural.” For this reason, I examine the effects of these physical and digital spaces in Atlantic Canada. As a region with higher proportions of rural-dwellers, persistently higher unemployment, and lower median wages than the rest of the country, and which has also experienced a great deal of demographic change in recent years as a result of immigration (Gosse et al., 2016), Atlantic Canada serves as a valuable case to better understand the relationships among these spaces and how they relate to people’s views on the economic and socio-cultural issues that are shaping contemporary politics.

To understand politics spatially and to assess how urban/rural and digital spaces might be affecting politics, it is important to analyze the relationships of these spaces to both practices and views, including how these relationships may have changed in recent years. I will begin, in this chapter, by reviewing research on changing ideas about political participation and political citizenship, their connections to geographical and virtual spaces, and their purported effects on politics. Next, I will explore how “spatial” divisions are shaping people’s views on political and social issues and potentially deepening ideological divides. In Chapter 2, I describe the data and methods used to determine whether, and to what degree, urban/rural and digital spaces are shaping politics in Atlantic Canada. In Chapters 3 and 4, I provide the results of my univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses, and, in Chapter 5, I discuss the implications of the results and present my conclusions. It is my hope that this thesis can offer a clear picture of the politics of Atlantic Canadians, and

that this case study will contribute to an understanding of how politics in rural and peripheral regions are affected by urban/rural and digital spaces.

1.1: Political Participation and Citizenship

Ideas about political participation have changed a great deal over the last several decades, as ideas about what it means to be a political citizen have evolved. In T. H. Marshall's (1950) classic articulation, citizenship is a "status that is bestowed on those who are full members of a community," endowing those members with certain civil, political, and social rights (p. 28). Specifically, the political aspect of citizenship, for Marshall, is captured by the right to vote or to hold office. Declining voter turnout across Western democracies, however, has prompted scholars to increasingly look to extra-institutional political action or expression as forms of political citizenship in addition to voting. While many have viewed these declines as the abnegation of the responsibilities of citizenship and expressed concern (Howe, 2011; Putnam, 2000; Wattenberg, 2015), others, such as Dalton (2008), frame these changes as part of a generational shift from "duty-based" citizenship to an "engaged" style of citizenship, encompassing political actions and behaviours that are more self-expressive, individualized, and direct than voting (see also Bennett, 2008).

Formal, electoral politics have thus been deemphasized, while extra-institutional actions and "lifestyle" politics have become increasingly popular (Dalton, 2008; Stolle & Hooghe, 2004). Scholarly focus on engaged citizenship comes on the heels of the influential "social movement society" thesis (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998), which views political actions like demonstrations, boycotts, and petitions as increasingly routinized and mainstream (Caren et al., 2011). Movement tactics have, over time, merged with conventional politics. Within the engaged model of citizenship, personal choices are seen as highly political, and simple, daily

actions are understood to have wide-ranging effects on conditions around the world (Manning, 2014). For example, behaviours like recycling, buying local produce, or “liking” a political Facebook post are seen as political actions (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010). This “politics of everyday life,” of individual lifestyle choices, is especially common among younger people and often occurs online or is supported or enabled by social media and other digital tools (Manning, 2014, p. 497). As a result, contemporary analyses of political participation examine multiple dimensions of political action in addition to voting, including behaviours like boycotting, signing petitions, discussing political issues, and engaging politically online.

The “lifestyle politics” of engaged citizens are typically less group-oriented in character than previous forms of political practices; they can usually be carried out independently, and they express the tastes, values, and choices of individuals (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010; Manning, 2014; Stolle & Hooghe, 2004). Collective action still occurs, however; as Micheletti (2003) notes, it occurs in heterogeneous mobilizations and “*individualized* collective action,” wherein “large numbers of people join in loosely coordinated activities centered on more personal emotional identifications and rationales” (Bennett, 2012, p. 26). Sometimes these mobilizations are clearly directed at governments, with specific policy demands, but often they are not, focusing instead on messaging and consciousness-raising (Leonhardt, 2016; Shirky, 2011). They may even be aimed at non-governmental institutions like corporations and universities, instead of the state (Caren et al., 2011; Dixon, Martin, & Nau, 2016; Yue, Hayagreeva, & Ingram, 2013). With a broad repertoire of actions considered to be political, democratic accountability is, at least in theory, exerted continuously by engaged citizens against a variety of powerful actors—not only by voting (Dalton, 2008; Norris, 1999).

Despite this optimistic view of its potential, it is difficult to predict the consequences of the shift toward engaged citizenship norms, or whether it will ultimately bolster or undermine democracy. Some have argued that shifting political action to forms of personal development or lifestyle choices obscures the role of larger systems in perpetuating large-scale harm and injustice, framing complex social problems in terms of overly simplistic and individualized solutions (Fenton & Barassi, 2011). This process, often referred to as the individualization of responsibility, coincides with the rise of politics and policies that have sought to erode the authority and legitimacy of states and social welfare systems. Such policies seek to limit the role of the state in dispensing social rights, transferring power to the market (Somers, 2008; Stasiulis, 2002). Thus, the rise of engaged citizenship, as well as individualized and extra-institutional political action, is said to be linked to the rise of neoliberal politics.

Market-based solutions to large-scale systemic problems have drawbacks; for example, they require that individuals be aware of a multitude of issues and “vote with their dollars” (Buchanan, 1954; Godfrey, 2017). This form of politics demands consumers’ constant vigilance to police institutions’ behaviours and infractions on a case-by-case basis. This burden of responsibility is extreme, and it helps to explain why many, and especially young people, are opting to disengage from politics altogether (Parvin, 2018). It is not easy to be a “good” engaged citizen. Individualized ways of being political are not only more burdensome than institutional forms like voting, but they can also be less effective in shaping institutional political outcomes. Haggart (2013), for example, finds that the effectiveness of protest in Canada for achieving policy change is contingent on electoral politics—that is, the responsiveness of politicians to movement demands depends on whether they perceive necessary votes to be at risk, which pose a greater and more imminent

threat to power. This matters because, despite declines in the power of the state over time, it continues to exert real power over people's lives, especially in matters of membership and citizenship (Lister, 1997). If engaged citizens opt out of collective and institutional forms of political participation, then politics and power will be disproportionately shaped by the interests of those who practice old-fashioned citizenship norms.

Thus, political behaviours and conceptions of citizenship have changed over time: while duty-based citizenship has historically prioritized voting as the key form of democratic political action, engaged citizens increasingly favour extra-institutional actions, such as signing petitions, boycotting, protesting, or even simply discussing issues online. These changes have consequences for political outcomes. They expand the field of political participation to include a much broader repertoire of political actions, but researchers have questioned the effectiveness of certain political actions and the long-term effects of this shift on democracies, especially if there are gaps in *who* is participating and *how* they do so. Are different forms of participation linked to different spaces? If so, do these divides also reflect ideological divisions and, therefore, affect how different views are represented in government and in the public sphere? To answer these questions, it is important to consider the economic and social contexts in which these changes have occurred.

1.2: Polarization of Political Views

The changes in political practice have also been linked to shifts in political views. Both have occurred within a global context of increasing economic inequality and the concentration of wealth among the super-rich (Piketty, 2015). In the West, partly in recognition of the challenges of globalization and large-scale migration, citizenship has become increasingly “cosmopolitanized” (Benhabib, 2007) or globalized. But tiers of

citizenship have emerged that perpetuate growing national and global inequalities (Nash, 2009). A class of “super-citizens” has the means to move freely across borders because their wealth grants them security in transnational mobility; marginal citizens, by contrast, may (or may not) be granted full citizenship rights, but they do not enjoy many of its privileges (Nash, 2009). The lower-tier status of marginal citizens is conferred either economically, through relative poverty, or socially, by racism (Nash, 2009)—or both. Such deepening inequalities have bred resentment among those who have been left out of these transitions, or who view other social groups as benefitting to a greater degree (Cramer, 2016).

The rise of right-wing nationalist and populist movements in the West are often cited as a product of these tensions (Inglehart & Norris, 2017), as racism is mobilized in addition to resentment towards the global elite. The economic, cultural, and political divides between those who have benefited from contemporary power structures and those whose communities have stagnated has been inciting pockets of communitarian resistance among those whose status is threatened and who have been denied the spoils of shifting power structures (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Harvey, 2008); racialized groups have been used as scapegoats for this fear and anger. Much of the resistance, according to both popular media and scholarly research, is occurring in rural areas (Hochschild, 2016; Cramer, 2016; Vance, 2016). Recent evidence from the US has shown vast differences in political affiliations between those in urban and rural spaces, and this explanation has been applied in other countries, including Canada (Speer & Jivani, 2017; Radwanski, 2013). This means that polarization of political views is correlated with geographic spaces; this phenomenon is commonly known as the “urban-rural divide.” In this divide, the urban cosmopolitan elite is considered liberal or progressive compared to the more traditional and conservative rural base.

1.3: The Urban-Rural Divide

The evolution of citizenship discourse from dutiful and state-centred to engaged, neoliberal, or cosmopolitan is often associated with rural and urban areas, respectively. Cities have long been linked to rising individualism and cosmopolitanism (Donald, Kofman, & Kevin, 2009; Simmel, 1903) and new forms of politics, while smaller communities are seen as “old-fashioned,” more tight-knit and collectivistic (Geys, 2006), as well as slower to change how they practice politics. Voter turnout, for instance, is typically higher among rural populations than urban ones, reflecting the persistence of duty-based citizenship norms in more “bounded” communities (Geys, 2006; Verba & Nie, 1972). Protest, in contrast, is largely an urban phenomenon (Brym et al., 2014; Castells, 2015). Newer forms of politics, such as ethical consumption practices, are said to be linked to the economic prosperity and consumer choice that is available in cities (Harvey, 2008). As these examples illustrate, political practices vary across geographic spaces.

Researchers have also found that the engaged citizenship of city-dwellers is associated with progressive or liberal values and cosmopolitanism, while conservative values are more frequently associated with the dutiful citizens of rural regions (Scala & Johnson, 2017; Maxwell, 2019; Knoke & Henry, 1977). Cities are spaces of economic development and comparative wealth, giving rise to what Inglehart (1977) calls post-materialist values, which emphasize the individual’s personal development and existential well-being. Rural spaces are often considered relatively poor and underdeveloped (Noack, 2016)—sites from which resources are extracted for the benefit of wealthy urbanites (Harvey, 2008). They are not spaces where wealth tends to accumulate or be distributed. Rural populations are, therefore, linked to materialist values like economic stability and personal security over loftier post-materialist ideals (Inglehart, 1977). Inglehart and Norris (2017) argue that, in

recent years, these values have triggered backlash and xenophobic populism among those who have experienced declining existential security and little economic gain (Inglehart & Norris, 2017).

Moreover, rural communities in Canada, as well as in the US and Western Europe, are more culturally homogeneous than urban areas, predominantly white, and stereotyped as resistant to cultural diversity (Cairns, 2013; Noack, 2016). One explanation offered for this resistance to difference draws upon Putnam's (2000) concepts of "bridging" versus "bonding" social capital or the development of in-group bonds compared to those that extend across groups. Sorensen (2014), for instance, finds that rural communities have higher levels of "bonding" social capital, and therefore more tight-knit in-groups, emphasizing a shared history and culture. Urban areas, by contrast, display more "bridging" social capital, which prioritizes loose connections among disparate groups (Sorensen, 2014). Racism and xenophobia can result from strong in-group attachments, particularly when groups are experiencing declining existential security and economic precarity (Inglehart & Norris, 2017). Cultural or demographic changes that are occurring contemporaneously with economic struggle enable the scapegoating of immigrants and minorities for any dissatisfaction with change. Support for right-wing populist leaders in rural areas is a product not only of the resentment felt towards "liberal elites," whose urban progressive values are seen as out-of-step with rural political consciousness and social identity (Cramer, 2016), but also of fear of minorities and immigrants, whose rising social status under liberal cosmopolitanism is taken as a threat (Hochschild, 2016).

Thus, previous research has found spatial divisions in both the forms of political participation chosen by urban and rural populations as well as their political views and ideologies. Based on this research, I have developed the following hypotheses:

H1: Atlantic Canadians living in urban areas are more likely to take part in “engaged” forms of participation, such as protesting, signing petitions, and boycotting, while those living in rural areas are more likely to vote.

H2: Atlantic Canadians living in urban areas are more likely to have progressive political views and be open to socio-cultural diversity, while those living in rural areas are more likely to have conservative views and negative attitudes toward diversity.

1.4: Digital Divides

Just as urban and rural spaces have been linked to types of political participation and ideological differences, digital spaces have also been facing increasing scrutiny for their role in perpetuating ideological and political divisions as well as access to and types of political participation. “Digital citizenship,” like “engaged citizenship,” has emerged as another way to update Marshall’s (1950) ideas about citizenship for the contemporary era. Digital citizens are those who “use the internet regularly and effectively,” participating in social life online (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008, p. 1). Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal (2008) argue that digital participation is an integral part of what it means to be a citizen in the information age. It has also been framed both as a right and responsibility: the right to use the internet and the responsibility to use the technology “appropriately” or to be a “good citizen” online (Nebel, Jamison, & Bennett, 2009). This often includes political engagement and participation via social networking sites or other social spaces online (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008; Bennett, 2008). In its early days, many scholars were optimistic about the role the internet could play in sharing information and facilitating communication and

political participation in a modern deliberative democracy; however, much of this optimism has since faded.

The unprecedented accessibility of information, which ought to have many social and democratic benefits, has led to the upending of many conventional processes of knowledge production. Distrust of the media, concerns over “fake news,” and, as Dahlgren (2018) describes, “political turbulence [and] a sort of epistemic cacophony, where even the descriptions of basic social realities are often contested” (p. 25), have been linked to digital technology. This is fueled by the intentional or unintentional sharing of “disinformation” online (Vaidhyanathan, 2018), as well as by the prevalence of online “echo chambers,” in which groups of like-minded people “collectively screen out information and views that do not sit well with the group consensus” (Dahlgren, 2018, p. 25; see also Sunstein, 2001). The erosion of common ground on which to discuss issues and negotiate solutions poses a serious threat to democracy. Not only is the polarization it produces in mainstream political discourse a difficult hurdle to overcome, online spaces have become sites for the growth of dangerous ideologies and violent extremism, especially around issues of racial and cultural identity (see, e.g., Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Massanari, 2015). While social justice activists have taken advantage of online tools for disseminating information, so too have white nationalists and the “alt-right,” who have embraced reactionary and racist politics to express their resentment of the contemporary social order (Nagle, 2017; Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Moreover, the incredible amount of personal data collected by Facebook, originally used to “personalize” consumer advertising, has been mined and used for microtargeting political messages (Brym, Slavina, Todosijevic, & Cowan, 2018; Kreiss, 2016). In the case of the 2016 US presidential election, targeted appeals made to “persuadable” demographics in swing

states were, arguably, key to the success of Donald Trump's campaign (Brym et al., 2018; Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

Thus, when considering effects of digital citizenship, there is not only the traditional "digital divide," between those who have access to the internet and those who do not (Della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Norris, 2001), but also a multitude of "digital divides," or ideological divisions that occur in, and as a result of engagement with, particular online spaces or virtual communities (Bowman-Grieve, 2009). Even though differing opinions are always only "a click away," the prevalence of crosscutting interactions among partisans of different stripes is dwarfed by that of highly fragmented and customized echo chambers (Hong & Kim, 2016). Evidence overwhelmingly points to online spaces and social media as deepening ideological divides. Vaidhyanathan (2018) argues that Facebook, in particular, does this by prioritizing content that evokes emotional reactions, often relying on hyperbole and alarm; "filter bubbles" can further create the illusion of consensus, and thus amplify certain kinds of engagement and activism, but at a cost to public discourse (Vaidhyanathan, 2018). Thus, echo chambers are not only products of voluntary community selection and data-driven manipulation (Brym et al., 2018; Kreiss, 2016), but also an effect of the very algorithms that make social media content appealing or addictive (Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

Questions around the relationship between social media and political participation, however, have yet to be answered satisfactorily. According to Jost et al. (2018), claims that social media is the *cause* of many profound changes in participation have often gone unsupported. That is, it is unclear whether, and to what extent, the political actions taken online correspond to action offline. That being said, when social media is viewed as contributing positively to political activity, it is often in two primary ways: first, by facilitating the exchange of political information, and second, by facilitating the exchange of emotionally

charged political content, both of which can motivate political action (Castells, 2012; Jost et al., 2018; Vaidhyathan, 2018). Shirky (2011) argues for this “environmental” view of social media’s impact on political action by facilitating communication in the public sphere, instead of the “instrumental” view, which sees social media as a more direct cause of political change (Shirky, 2011).

But there are concerns about the informal, individualized nature of participation generated by social media (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Koc-Michalska et al., 2015; Polletta, 2016). For example, “liking” and “sharing” a political Facebook post is considered a weak form of participation, highly unlikely to effect political change (Brym et al., 2014). Some scholars fear that, instead of engaging in vibrant participatory action networks online, many people seem to be engaging in “clicktivism” (Halupka, 2014) or even “slacktivism” (Gladwell, 2010), which consists of small actions like sharing political information on social media or signing online petitions; these may *replace* rather than supplement offline political action. For this reason, some scholars argue that the potential of online communities and social media hinges on its capacity to act as a launching point for *other* actions in offline spaces (Castells, 2015; Koc-Michalska, Lilleker, & Vedel, 2015). But its actual effectiveness in doing so remains unclear (Jost et al., 2018; Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Fenton & Barassi, 2011).

Thus, as with physical space, digital spaces have also been linked to patterns in political participation and divisions in ideology among digital citizens, but in a much less straightforward manner compared to the urban-rural divide. This is due to the inherent multiplicity of digital spaces; digital divides exist not only between those who make use of digital technology and those who do not, but also between any number of online spaces or communities, which generate polarized positions by amplifying group consensus and

screening out dissent (Dahlgren, 2018; Vaidhyathan, 2018). Because of the complexity of digital spaces, several gaps exist in scholars' understanding of how political practices and views are shaped by these spaces. Does digital citizenship affect either the form(s) or extent of people's political participation? How is it linked to more extreme or polarized views and ideologies? Has this polarization increased over time? My thesis aims to answer these questions within the context of Atlantic Canada, uncovering to what extent online communities and digital citizenship may be shaping political participation and views in the region. Based on the previous research discussed above, I offer the following hypotheses:

H3: Atlantic Canadians who engage in “digital citizenship” are more likely to take part in “engaged” forms of political participation—such as protesting, signing petitions, and boycotting—but are not more likely to vote than those who do not participate online.

H4: Atlantic Canadians who engage in “digital citizenship” are more likely to have polarized views on political and socio-cultural issues than those who do not participate online.

1.5: Why Atlantic Canada?

My research explores these hypotheses using Atlantic Canada as a case study. The four provinces that make up the region—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador—each have a greater proportion of rural residents than any of the other Canadian provinces (Statistics Canada, 2019). The region has long been treated as “peripheral” in the Canadian context (Sacouman, 1981). Although rural regions in

Western Canada and the US have been linked to the growth of right-wing populist movements (Eneas, 2019; Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016), this has not been the case in Atlantic Canada. Rather, it has historically been known for its *progressive* conservatism, which differs in important ways from the conservative traditions of other places. The region's Red Tory tradition is socially conservative but comparatively progressive on economic issues, supporting government and social spending.

The region has faced profound economic, social, and cultural changes in recent years, including an increase in immigration to the region, rapid urbanization, and economic restructuring (Baldacchino, 2012; Gosse et al., 2016; O'Neil & Erikson, 2003). However, despite stereotypes of Atlantic Canada as socially conservative and averse to change, polling data consistently shows that its residents are more progressive and open to diversity than other regions of Canada (e.g. Gunn, 2019; EKOS Politics, 2019). Thus, the unique history and character of the region, including its complexities and apparent contradictions, make Atlantic Canada an interesting case study for examining spatial divisions in political practices and views.

Because of the significant changes facing the region, Atlantic Canada is an interesting site for examining how social transformation in peripheral or secondary regions may affect political practices and attitudes. Understanding trajectories of change can help researchers not only to understand what the region's political practices and views are today, but where they may be heading. For these reasons, I will also analyze whether Atlantic Canadians' political participation and views have been changing in these spaces over the last few years. Based on the literature, I hypothesize:

H5A: Atlantic Canadians living in urban areas are less likely to report increasing participation in the last few years compared to those living in rural areas; and

H5B: Atlantic Canadians living in urban areas are less likely to report changing political views in the last few years compared to those living in rural areas; and

H6A: Digital citizens are more likely to report increasing participation in the last few years compared to those who do not use online spaces.

H6B: Digital citizens are more likely to report changing political views in the last few years compared to those who do not use online spaces.

The remainder of this thesis will address my six hypotheses regarding the effects of urban/rural and digital spaces on political participation, attitudes toward socio-cultural diversity, and political change. It will test whether or not Atlantic Canada is following the trends of other parts of the country and around the world by assessing how these different “spaces” are linked to politics in the region.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In order to answer the hypotheses established in Chapter 1, I will analyze data collected in 2019 as part of the Perceptions of Change project. This chapter will begin by briefly describing this dataset. Next, I will describe the variables that are analyzed, operationalizing the various aspects of political participation, political views, spaces, and other demographic characteristics in order to conduct my analysis. I also explain the statistical methods I will be using in Chapters 3 and 4 and how these techniques can offer insights that will help to answer questions about spaces and politics in Atlantic Canada.

To answer these questions, I draw upon survey data collected through a telephone survey of 1,072 Atlantic Canadians. The survey was conducted between January and March 2019 by researchers with the Perceptions of Change project at Dalhousie University. The survey has a 95% confidence level and a sampling error of 0.025. Participants were recruited through a random selection of telephone numbers assigned to the region; 77.4% were landlines and 22.6% were mobile phones. Only residents of Atlantic Canada who were 18 years or older when contacted were invited to participate, in order to represent the population of adults in region. The survey asked participants a number of questions about their participation in political activities and discussions, their views on a variety of political and social issues, and any changes they have noticed in either their participation or their views over the last few years. Most surveys were completed in English, but 4% were completed in French.

2.1: Operationalization and Variables

To understand the forms of citizenship and types of political practices in Atlantic Canada, I look at several measures of institutional and extra-institutional political action.

First, I look at *voting in the most recent federal, provincial, and municipal* elections. Participants were asked whether they voted in the election, yes or no, and those who said no were also asked whether they were eligible to vote in that election. The variables I use are dichotomous and exclude those who said they were ineligible to vote. Because all three forms of voting have similar predictors, I focus only on voting at the federal level in the multivariate analysis. For other political practices, I examine whether participants reported *protesting* within the last year, whether they reported *signing a petition* within the last year, and whether they reported *boycotting or choosing a product for ethical reasons* within the last year. After being asked whether they had ever participated in these practices, participants who said yes were asked whether they had done so in the last year. In order to focus on recent political action, as with voting variables, these political action variables are also dichotomous, combining those who had not taken the actions recently with those who had never taken them. Because the discussion of political or social issues is also a kind of political practice, I also examine how frequently participants reported *in-person political discussions* and *online political discussions*. Participants were asked to choose “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” or “often.” To provide a cleaner portrait of trends, I combine the categories “never” with “rarely” and “sometimes” with “often” to make these dichotomous variables.

To understand participants’ views on social and economic issues, the survey asked them to rate their agreement with statements on political and social issues on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “strongly disagree” and 5 meaning “strongly agree.” To get an overall picture of these differences, I created two indexes: first, the *socio-cultural index*, measuring participants’ openness to diversity and attitudes towards multiculturalism, members of minority groups, immigrants, and refugees; and second, the *economic index*, measuring participants’ views on economic issues. To create these indexes, I added participants’

responses (1–5) and sorted these tallies into categories. Most statements were worded favouring the more progressive stance: that is, agreement signified a liberal or progressive view, while disagreement signified a more conservative view. For statements where the opposite was true, I instead added the inverse of participants' responses to the final tally for the index (e.g. if their answer was 1, we added 5; if it was 2, 4; etc.). Seven statements were used to create the openness index, which ranges from 7 to 35. Scores from 7 to 14 were coded as “very conservative”; from 15 to 21, “somewhat conservative”; from 22 to 28, “somewhat progressive”; and from 29 to 35, they were treated as “very progressive.” The final variable used in the analysis is this ordinal variable with four categories. These statements, as well as their point value in the index, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Statements used to create the socio-cultural index and their point values

	Level of agreement				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Multiculturalism is an important part of Canadian society.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for Canadian society to be open to diverse lifestyles and forms of self-expression.	1	2	3	4	5
The country would benefit from having more members of minority groups in positions of power.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important that Canada allows entry for all asylum seekers fleeing violence or persecution.	1	2	3	4	5
Immigrants bring vital skills and resources that benefit the Canadian economy.	1	2	3	4	5
Immigrants need to do more to integrate into Canadian society.	5	4	3	2	1
It is important that the federal government put the needs of Canadian citizens who were born in Canada first in policy decisions.	5	4	3	2	1

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

I also re-categorized this index into binary variables for use in logistic regressions. In the first of these models, I combine “very conservative” with “somewhat conservative” and “very progressive” with “somewhat progressive” to make two categories: 0) “conservative” and 1) “progressive.” Next, in order to understand not only how urban/rural and digital spaces affect general political leanings, but also how they may be linked to more *extreme* or polarized attitudes on socio-cultural issues, two other models are used. One tests for very

progressive views on socio-cultural issues, combining “conservative” views with “somewhat progressive” views to create the following categories: 0) “not very progressive” and 1) “very progressive.” The other tests for very conservative views on socio-cultural issues, combining “somewhat conservative” views with “progressive” views to create the following categories: 0) “not very conservative” and 1) “very conservative.”

Similar to the socio-cultural index, five statements were used to create the economic index, which ranges from 5 to 25. Scores from 5 to 10 were “very conservative”; from 11 to 15, “somewhat conservative”; from 16 to 20, “somewhat progressive”; and from 21 to 25, “very progressive.” These statements and their point value in the economic index are shown in Table 2. Because research points to views on socio-cultural issues and diversity, not economic issues, as the principal source of divisiveness and polarization in urban/rural and digital spaces (see, e.g., Cramer, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Massanari, 2015), the multivariate analysis focuses on the socio-economic index and does not treat economic views as a dependent variable.

Table 2: Statements used to create the economic index and their point values

	Level of agreement				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
A balanced budget should be a top priority for the Canadian federal government.	5	4	3	2	1
I would support raising taxes to expand or improve government services such as health care and education.	1	2	3	4	5
When services are provided by private businesses instead of by the government, they are usually more efficient and less expensive.	5	4	3	2	1
The minimum wage should be raised substantially to ensure that people who are employed are able to make ends meet.	1	2	3	4	5
It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that everyone in Canada has access to essentials, including things like food, shelter, heat, and health care.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

The univariate results for each of the statements comprising these indexes are provided in Appendix A. These indexes are intended to be useful constructs for examining broad similarities and differences in political views along conventional lines, but they are not without limitations. First, they take for granted that most people will answer truthfully, but it is impossible to know the extent to which social desirability bias could be influencing participants' responses (see, e.g., Phillips & Clancy, 1972). Second, they assume that participants responded with relative consistency between questions, and they do not account for the possibility that participants' responses could vary widely within the socio-cultural or

economic dimensions (although they do allow for variation *across* these two dimensions). Moreover, there is no true “centrepoin” between agreement and disagreement across questions; instead of presuming exactness or perfect alignment between questions, therefore, it is patterns of agreement or disagreement which are seen as highly likely to indicate participants’ overall positions and attitudes toward socio-cultural and economic issues. A third limitation of this research, and of social science research more generally, is the possibility that shared meanings are being assumed where they do not, in fact, exist—especially with a subject as nebulous as “politics,” where the validity of the data depends on a more-or-less common understanding of abstract, even academic, concepts. What is a “balanced budget”? What falls under the umbrella of a “political or social issue”? What counts as an “ethical” reason to buy a product? The possibility that meanings could be shared within, rather than across, demographic categories being studied (in this case: urban and rural) should also be considered. For example, “multiculturalism” could carry different meanings and implications in areas with a great deal of homogeneity compared to those which are already highly diverse. Such considerations are important to keep in mind when interpreting results; however, they cannot be measured or controlled for in this analysis. Despite these limitations, the survey offers a unique opportunity to assess political participation and views in the region.

In addition to analyzing the indexes, I also consider participants’ reported *changes in political participation* and their *changes in political views* over the last few years. This is done in order to assess whether these spaces have played a role in recent mobilization and polarization, as popular narratives have suggested. For changes in political participation, participants were asked whether their engagement in political activities had “decreased,” “stayed about the same,” or “increased” in the last few years. For changes in political views,

participants were asked whether their views on political or social issues had changed “not at all,” “somewhat,” or “a lot” over the last few years. To facilitate the use of logistic regression, these are recoded into binary variables for the multivariate analysis in Chapter 4. The two categories for understanding *changes in participation* are “decreased or stayed about the same” and “increased.” Assessing changes in views is done in two ways, in order to understand if spatial factors are linked to *any* change in views or, more particularly, to *a lot* of change. Thus, *any change in views* combines “somewhat” and “a lot” to create the categories “not at all changed” and “changed,” while *a lot of change in views* combines “not at all” and “somewhat” to create the categories “not at all or somewhat changed” and “changed a lot.”

To compare urban and rural residents, participants were assigned to one of these geographies based on their postal codes. Using the Postal Code Conversion File Plus (PCCF+), Version 7A, I consider participants’ locations as “urban” when their postal code places them in either a large (100,000+) or medium-sized (30,000-99,999) population centre, while those living in small (1,000-29,999) population centres or outside of population centres are classified as “rural.” Because postal codes outside of cities often cover large geographical areas, the PCCF+ cannot distinguish with certainty those who live within small population centres from those who live outside of them; for this reason, we do not attempt to break down participants’ locations into smaller categories.

To consider whether participants engage with online spaces as digital citizens, I created an ordinal variable with three categories: “not a digital citizen,” “uses online spaces,” and “discusses politics online.” Beginning with two dichotomous variables, showing whether participants say they have any social media accounts and indicating whether they use the internet to follow news and current affairs, I combined these to create a new variable showing whether participants are *using online spaces*. If they responded positively to either

having a social media account or using the internet to follow news and current affairs, this indicates some amount of engagement with online spaces and, thus, some degree of digital citizenship. But, because these variables do not measure frequency of use, the variable measuring the use of online spaces is a fairly “low bar” for digital citizenship; it coarsely separates out those who, by neither using social media nor using online sources for information on news and current affairs, show a strong likelihood of being disengaged from online spaces, overall. A more stringent definition of digital citizenship should also be applied; therefore, I created a third category which separates those who engage in *online political discussion* from those who simply use online spaces. This category is itself a type of political action, but I include it in order to consider separately how simply “being online” affects political practices and views compared to actually engaging online.

In the analysis, to examine the impacts of rural residence and digital citizenship on political practices and views, I used several variables as statistical controls linked to alternative explanations that might account for practices or views. *Interest in politics* is included in full regression models, and this was measured in the survey using four categories based on self-reported levels of interest: “not at all interested,” “not very interested,” “somewhat interested,” and “very interested.” I combine “not at all” with “not very” and “somewhat” with “very” to create two categories: “not interested” and “interested.” I also include a number of demographic variables in order to better understand the effects of the spaces themselves, independent of their demographic compositions. These also contribute to a more complete understanding of politics in the region. First, I include age, which is analyzed using four categories: 18 to 34 years, 35 to 49 years, 50 to 64 years, and 65 years and older. Participants’ highest levels of education are measured using five categories: no degree, certificate, or diploma; high school diploma; college certificate or diploma; undergraduate

degree; and graduate degree. Participants' total household income last year, before tax, is included in the following six categories: \$30,000 or less; \$30,000 to \$49,999; \$50,000 to \$79,999; \$80,000 to \$99,999; \$100,000 to \$119,999; and \$120,000 or more. Because of the high number of cases with missing data in this field, a category for "refused" and "don't know" is also included in regression analyses to maintain sample size, but these results are suppressed from the finished tables. Gender is also included, and all participants self-identified as either a man or a woman. Additionally, two binary variables were included noting whether participants identify as visible minorities and whether they immigrated to Canada.

2.2: Analytic Approach

To analyze my research questions and core hypotheses, I begin my analysis with univariate tables and summary statistics in order to better understand the sample collected and the overall trends observed in the region. Next, I provide bivariate tabular analysis to investigate the relationships between both urban/rural and digital spaces, political practices, views, and change. I then conduct a series of logistic regressions, controlling for several demographic variables. These will help assess the salience of each kind of space in determining people's political practices and views, as well as changes in both, addressing my six hypotheses. Information on statistical significance (p value) is provided with my analysis of regression models; however, it should be noted that it offers insight only on the statistical relationship and not the size of the effect. As a result, both size and significance are interpreted, and one should use caution in interpreting significant terms that have small effects and, conversely, note the size of effects of variables that are not significant.

Chapter Three: Univariate & Bivariate Analysis

This chapter begins with a brief overview of participants' political participation and views using univariate tabular analysis. The analysis will also describe participants' "spaces" and other demographic information. This is done in order to better understand the sample. Next, through bivariate analysis, I break down participation and views by urban and rural differences and by participants' digital citizenship, including whether they simply use digital space or whether they participate in online political discussion. The results of this basic analysis will begin to answer questions about how both spaces are linked to political practices and political views in Atlantic Canada, addressing the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 1.

3.1: Univariate Tabular Analysis

I begin the analysis by looking at the first set of dependent variables, participants' political practices. Table 3 shows the overall percentages of survey participants who have recently taken part in various forms of political action. For voting in federal, provincial, and municipal elections, I report the percentage of eligible voters who said they voted in the most recent election at each level of government. For protesting, petition-signing, and boycotting/"buy"-copping, I include the percentage of all participants who said they had taken that action in the past year. For discussing politics in person and online, percentages reflect those who said they do this "sometimes" or "often."

Table 3: Forms of political action

	%
<i>Voting in recent elections</i>	
Federal (n=1035)	93.1
Provincial (n=1032)	91.6
Municipal (n=962)	77.2
<i>Extra-institutional actions</i>	
Protesting (n=1054)	7.0
Petition-signing (n=1031)	25.5
Boycotting & ethical consumerism (n=1030)	38.3
Discussing politics (in person) (n=1048)	80.0
Discussing politics (online) (n=1046)	20.2

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

The vast majority of participants, 93.1% and 91.6%, reported voting in the most recent federal and provincial election (in their province of residence), respectively, and 77.2% also reported voting in the most recent municipal or local election. These percentages are much higher than actual voter turnout in the region (Elections Canada, 2016), and this can be explained by two main factors. First, the telephone survey was voluntary; therefore, our sample is skewed towards those who are more interested and, likely, engaged in politics than average. Second, these voting rates are self-reported, and some people may have simply forgotten that they did not vote, confused the most recent election for another previous election, or been influenced by social desirability bias to say that they voted when they did not. This limitation is unavoidable in survey research that asks participants to report on their behaviours, and it is important to keep this in mind in the analysis.

A much smaller proportion of participants, 7.0%, reported protesting within the last year, while 25.5% reported signing a petition in the last year, and 38.3% reported boycotting or choosing a product for ethical reasons in the last year. These figures are mostly in-line

with those from the most recent national-level survey data looking at political participation, the 2013 General Social Survey, Cycle 27, which found that 5% had protested, 28% had signed a petition, and 23% had boycotted or chosen a product for ethical reasons in the last year (Statistics Canada, 2014). Thus, although boycotting and ethical consumption appears to be a popular type of “engaged” participation, it is clear that voting is still the most common form of political action by a wide margin. The majority of participants, 80.0%, also reported discussing their views on political or social issues with people they know in person; discussing issues online, however, was much less common, at only 20.2%.

Turning from participation to participants’ political views, Table 4 provides the breakdown of participants into categories for both the economic index and the socio-cultural index.

Table 4: Views indexes

	%
<i>Economic index</i> (n=954)	
Very conservative	4.5
Somewhat conservative	28.3
Somewhat progressive	55.5
Very progressive	11.7
<i>Socio-cultural index</i> (n=950)	
Very conservative	4.2
Somewhat conservative	22.0
Somewhat progressive	49.8
Very progressive	24.0

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

The modal category was “somewhat progressive” in both the economic and socio-cultural indexes, at 55.5% and 49.8%, respectively. On the economic index, “somewhat conservative” was the second largest category (28.3%), while “very progressive” and “very

conservative” together made up only 16.3% of the sample. On the socio-cultural index, the “somewhat progressive” category was followed by “very progressive” (24.0%) and “somewhat conservative” (22.0%), and only 4.2% were “very conservative.” These results provide important contextual information for understanding any spatial differences that may emerge from bivariate and multivariate results: on both economic and socio-cultural issues, political views in the region are mostly progressive leaning, particularly on socio-cultural issues, and only a small minority are considered to be very conservative.

Table 5 shows change in participants’ political participation and political views over the last few years. Looking first at political participation, about two-thirds of participants reported no change, while 15.8% said it had decreased and 17.3% said it had increased. When it comes to participants’ views, nearly half reporting that their views had changed “somewhat” in the last few years, and an additional 15.6% said their views had changed “a lot.” Thus, according to participants’ self-reports, political participation in the region is not changing much overall in the last few years, except within a small minority of the population reporting increases and decreases. Views, on the other hand, are changing among nearly two-thirds of participants. The importance of these changes can be better understood by exploring the spaces and views associated with them, which I will do later in this chapter and in Chapter 4.

Table 5: Changes in participation and views

	%
<i>Political participation</i> (n=1048)	
Decreased	15.8
Stayed about the same	66.9
Increased	17.3
<i>Political views</i> (n=1046)	
Stayed about the same	35.4
Changed somewhat	49.0
Changed a lot	15.6

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Regarding independent variables, Table 6 shows that more survey participants live in rural areas than urban areas: 68.1%, compared to 31.9% in cities. The majority of participants use online spaces, either by having one or more social media accounts or by following news online: combined, 65.0% meet these criteria for being considered “digital citizens” by using online social space, while only 14.6% do not. An additional 20.4% of participants not only use digital space but participate in its politics by discussing political and social issues online; these participants form the group that meets the “higher bar” for digital citizenship, where citizenship demands not only presence in a space but participation in its civic affairs. This concludes the overview of core dependent and independent variables that will be used in the subsequent analyses to test my hypotheses and answer my research questions about spaces and politics in the Atlantic region.

Table 6: Urban/rural and digital spaces

	%
<i>Urban/rural space</i> (n=953)	
Urban	31.9
Rural	68.1
<i>Digital space</i> (n=1043)	
Not a digital citizen	14.6
Uses online space	65.0
Discusses politics online	20.4

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

For other variables, a summary table is offered in Appendix B. While results are mostly in-line with the demographic characteristics of Atlantic Canada, there are a few points that should be highlighted to contextualize the results. First, age has a substantial impact on political engagement, and the sample consists of a disproportionately high number of older people: among those surveyed, 37.0% were 65 years or older, compared to 19.8% of the total population according to the 2016 Census. The mean age of participants was 58 years, compared to an average age of 43 years in the 2016 Census. More women participated than men: 54.8%, compared to 45.2% men. The sample was also more educated than the general population, with the majority of participants, 69.6%, having completed some post-secondary education, and 43.7% having obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. The modal category for participants’ household income was \$50,000 and \$79,999, and this is in-line with actual income data for the region. Nearly 40% of participants’ household incomes fell between \$50,000 and \$100,000, while 34.5% earned below \$50,000 and just over one-quarter earned more than \$100,000. The sample also included 9.9% who self-identify as visible minorities and 6.6% who immigrated to Canada. These characteristics should be kept in mind when interpreting results.

3.2: Bivariate Tabular Analysis

The relationships between spaces and both political participation and political views are examined in the bivariate analysis. It is used to offer a baseline of information to explore my hypotheses and offer initial insights into these relationships.

3.2.1: Political Actions, By Urban/Rural Space

The analysis examining the effects of urban/rural space on political participation offers results relating to my first and second hypotheses on the “urban-rural divide” in participation and views. Table 7 summarizes the results for political practices. These results show that rural participants reported voting in the last federal election at slightly higher rates than city-dwellers, at 94.3% compared to 92.2%; a similar gap is also shown for provincial voting, with 92.5% of rural residents and 90.5% of urban residents. For municipal voting, however, percentages of participants who reported voting were similar in urban and rural areas: 77.1% urban, compared to 76.8% rural. These findings offer weak support for my first hypothesis, which proposes that rural residents vote at higher rates than urbanites, although this gap is very small.

Table 7: Forms of political action, by urban/rural

	Rural	Urban
<i>Voting in recent elections</i>		
Federal (n=926)	94.3%	92.2%
Provincial (n=924)	92.5%	90.5%
Municipal (n=862)	76.8%	77.1%
<i>Extra-institutional actions</i>		
Protesting (n=951)	7.6%	6.3%
Petition-signing (n=932)	27.4%	25.3%
Boycotting & “buy”-copping (n=931)	36.2%	45.4%
Discussing politics (in person) (n=953)	80.0%	83.6%
Discussing politics (online) (n=953)	20.2%	21.4%

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Looking at extra-institutional political actions, results show that rural residents are more likely than city-dwellers to have attended a protest in the last year, with 7.6% saying they had, compared to 6.3% in urban areas. This gap, of less than 1.5 percentage points, is very small and suggests no substantial differences between the regions. Protests are often characterized as urban phenomena, and their success is typically seen as dependent on attracting large crowds, which can assemble, in part, due to cities’ population density (Castells, 2015). This finding suggests that the subject of rural protest may call for further study, as this may help us to better understand the role and purpose of demonstrations in the contemporary political repertoire. Rural residents also report signing petitions at slightly higher rates than city residents, at 27.4% compared to 25.3%; however, this gap is, once again, very small. Urbanites, however, showed substantially higher participation in ethical consumption practices: 45.4% boycotted or chose a product for ethical reasons in the last year, compared to 36.2% of rural residents. Some of this difference may be attributed to the wider variety of consumer choices that are available in cities. However, with the increasing prevalence of online shopping, that difference may be less important than it once was.

Altogether, these results show that urban participants are more active in consumer-based forms of political action, but there is little difference in protest participation and petition-signing. These findings, therefore, provide mixed support for my first hypothesis.

But another aspect of “engaged” citizenship, beyond traditional forms of political action, is participation via political expression and taking part in political discussions; this kind of participation, though indirect, has consequences for the public sphere. When it comes to the frequency of political discussion, Table 7 also shows very little difference between rural and urban participants. Both for in-person and online discussions, differences are small, but discussion appears to be slightly more common among urban residents. Thus, these findings on political participation in Atlantic Canada offer limited support for the hypothesis that rural residents participate more frequently in electoral politics, whereas urban residents participate in “engaged” forms such as boycotting and online discussions. However, many of the differences between these groups are small, and rural residents also show signs of “engaged” participation by signing petitions and protesting at similar rates compared to their urban counterparts.

3.2.2: Political Views, By Urban/Rural Space

Next, I address the second hypothesis on the “urban-rural divide” in participants’ political views, which proposes that urban residents are more progressive and open to diversity than rural residents. Table 8 shows that, on economic issues, there is no substantial difference in the distribution of views. For both groups, more than half of participants—55.6% of rural residents and 55.9% of urban residents—fall into the “somewhat progressive” category, followed by 28.2% and 27.4% in the “somewhat conservative” category, respectively. Within the “extreme” categories, it was rural participants who tended

to be slightly more progressive than urban participants, with 12.8% considered “very progressive” and only 3.5% “very conservative,” compared to 10.0% of urban residents being “very progressive” and 6.8% “very conservative.” Thus, these results do not offer support for the second hypothesis.

Table 8: Views indexes, by urban/rural

	Rural	Urban
<i>Economic index</i> (n=884)		
Very conservative	3.5%	6.8%
Somewhat conservative	28.2%	27.4%
Somewhat progressive	55.6%	55.9%
Very progressive	12.8%	10.0%
<i>Socio-cultural index</i> (n=885)		
Very conservative	4.3%	4.6%
Somewhat conservative	24.4%	14.5%
Somewhat progressive	49.9%	49.6%
Very progressive	21.4%	31.2%

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

However, the socio-cultural index shows that rural Atlantic Canadians were noticeably less likely than their urban counterparts to be “very progressive” on issues of diversity and immigration. Although half of participants in both regions were “somewhat progressive,” the prevalence of “very progressive” views in urban areas is nearly 10 percentage points higher than in rural areas: 31.2%, compared to 21.4%. Urbanites were also less likely to be “somewhat conservative,” at 14.5% compared to 24.4%. Thus, the hypothesis that rural residents are more conservative and resistant to diversity than urban residents is supported by this data on Atlantic Canada.

3.2.3: Political Actions, By Digital Space

In the next part of this analysis, I assess how participants' political practices and views vary depending on whether or not they are “digital citizens”—that is, whether they spend time in online spaces, either by using social media or by following internet news sources, and whether they participate online by discussing political issues. This analysis will address my third and fourth hypotheses, regarding the effects of digital space on political participation and views. Table 9 shows that those who use online spaces participate in all political actions measured here at higher rates than those who do not use online spaces. When it comes to voting, particularly at the federal and municipal level, this gap is negligible: 93.0% compared to 92.0% in the most recent federal election, and 91.6% compared to 89.4% in the most recent provincial elections. The gap is slightly larger in recent municipal elections: 78.6%, compared to 70.5%. In contrast, for extra-institutional political actions, gaps between digital citizens and those who are not are much clearer. Results for protesting could not be reported due to the low number of protestors among those who are not digital citizens, but signing petitions, boycotting/“buy”-coting, and discussing political issues in person are much more common among those who use online spaces than those who do not.

Table 9: Forms of political action, by digital citizenship

	Not a digital citizen	Uses online spaces	Discusses politics online
<i>Voting in recent elections</i>			
Federal (n=1008)	92.0%	93.0%	--
Provincial (n=1007)	89.4%	91.6%	93.4%
Municipal (n=938)	70.5%	78.6%	76.9%
<i>Extra-institutional actions</i>			
Protesting (n=1040)	--	4.7%	18.3%
Petition-signing (n=1016)	7.4%	21.3%	53.4%
Boycotting & “buy”-cotting (n=1015)	24.2%	36.6%	55.8%
Discussing politics in person (n=1043)	73.0%	77.4%	94.4%

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

These differences are, in most cases, even greater between those who participate in online political discussion compared to those who do not use online space. Results for federal voting could not be disclosed due to the small number of non-voters in this category, but 93.4% said they voted in the last provincial election, compared to 89.4% of those who are not digital citizens. Municipal voting rates are also higher among those who discuss political issues online (76.9%) compared to those who do not use online spaces (70.5%), although they are highest among those who use online spaces but do not discuss politics online (78.6%). Looking at other political actions, 18.3% of those who take part in online political discussion said they protested in the last year. Signing petitions and boycotting or “buy”-cotting both show similarly large gaps between this category and the others, with more than half of online participants reporting having done these actions in the last year. Nearly all (94.4%) participants who discuss issues online do so in person, as well. Given that those who use online space to discuss politics are likely to be more political than those who do not, these findings are expected. However, these results also show that digital citizens, even those who do *not* participate politically in online space, participate in extra-institutional

political actions more frequently than those who are not digital citizens, while there is no substantial gap between these groups when it comes to federal and provincial voting. This is generally in line with the third hypothesis.

3.2.4: Political Views, By Digital Space

Next, I compare participants' political views between those who are digital citizens and those who are not in Table 10. There is some gap on economic issues, where those who are not digital citizens are slightly more conservative leaning than those who use digital spaces or who discuss politics online. "Very" and "somewhat" conservative categories are combined among those who are not digital citizens in order to maintain minimum category sizes, but 36.8% of this category leans conservative, compared to 32.4% of those who use online spaces (2.9% are "very" and 29.5% are "somewhat") and 31.5% of those who discuss politics online (9.0% are "very" and 22.5% are "somewhat"). With respect to my fourth hypothesis, there does appear to be evidence of polarization, but this is only seen among those who discuss politics online: one-quarter of those who engage in political discussions online are either "very conservative" or "very progressive," compared to only 13.3% of those who simply use online spaces.

Table 10: Views indexes, by digital citizenship

	Not a digital citizen	Uses online spaces	Discusses politics online
<i>Economic index</i> (n=953)			
Very conservative	36.8%*	2.9%	9.0%
Somewhat conservative		29.5%	22.5%
Somewhat progressive	51.2%	57.3%	55.5%
Very progressive	12.0%	10.4%	16.0%
<i>Socio-cultural index</i> (n=949)			
Very conservative	34.4%*	3.7%	6.1%
Somewhat conservative		20.7%	20.2%
Somewhat progressive	57.8%	50.2%	43.4%
Very progressive	7.8%	25.4%	30.3%

* Categories combined due to small sample size.

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

On socio-cultural issues, differences between digital citizens and those who are not digital citizens are much clearer. Like on economic issues, digital citizens are, overall, more progressive on socio-cultural issues, and these differences are most evident in the “very progressive” category: only 7.8% of those who are not digital citizens fall into this category, compared to 25.4% of those who use online spaces and 30.3% of those who participate in online political discussions. There is also greater polarization evident in the latter category on the conservative side as well, with 6.1% of those who participate in online discussions being considered “very conservative,” compared to only 3.7% of those who use online spaces. Thus, the polarization I hypothesized in Chapter 1 is more clearly supported among those who discuss politics online, but it is also evident in the high proportion of “very progressive” users of online space.

3.2.5: Political Change, By Urban/Rural and Digital Space

Next, I examine reported changes in frequency of political participation in order to determine whether spatial trends in participation are changing and affecting political outcomes. Beginning with urban/rural space, Table 11 shows that, while the majority of participants from both regions say they participate about the same amount as they did a few years ago, more rural participants report their participation increasing: 19.0%, compared to 13.5% of urban participants. This offers support for Hypothesis 5A.

Table 11: Changes in participation and views, by urban/rural

	Rural	Urban
<i>Political participation</i> (n=950)		
Decreased	16.1%	14.2%
Stayed about the same	64.9%	72.3%
Increased	19.0%	13.5%
<i>Political views</i> (n=952)		
Stayed about the same	35.5%	34.5%
Changed somewhat	47.4%	54.3%
Changed a lot	17.1%	11.2%

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

When it comes to changes in political views, the greatest proportion of participants said these had changed “somewhat” in the last few years, but a larger proportion of rural participants reported “a lot” of change than urban participants, at 17.1% and 11.2%, respectively. These findings, in accordance with recent literature and popular narratives (e.g., Scala & Johnson, 2017; Speer & Jivani, 2017), point to the possibility of increasing mobilization and polarization among a minority of rural residents and offer support for Hypothesis 5B.

Digital citizenship is also associated with increases in political participation, as shown in Table 12: 14.0% of those who use online spaces reported increased participation, compared to 10.7% of those who do not use online spaces, while 32.9% of those who discuss politics online reported increases. Likewise, smaller proportions of internet users reported decreases in these measures: 9.4% of those who discuss politics online, compared to 26.2% of those who are not digital citizens.

Table 12: Changes in participation and views, by digital citizenship

	Not a digital citizen	Uses online spaces	Discusses politics online
<i>Political participation</i> (n=1039)			
Decreased	26.2%	15.4%	9.4%
Stayed about the same	63.1%	70.6%	57.8%
Increased	10.7%	14.0%	32.9%
<i>Political views</i> (n=1039)			
Stayed about the same	42.1%	34.7%	32.9%
Changed somewhat	40.1%	52.8%	43.2%
Changed a lot	17.8%	12.5%	23.9%

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

When it comes to changing views on political and social issues, smaller proportions of internet users (34.7% of those who use online spaces and 32.9% of those who discuss politics online) said their views had stayed the same compared to those who do not use online spaces (42.1%). But the majority of those who use online spaces said their views had changed “somewhat,” while only 12.5% said their views had changed “a lot,” compared to 17.8% among those who do not use online spaces and 23.9% of those who discuss politics online. These findings suggest that online spaces are linked to increased participation and changing views, especially among those who actively participate in political discussions online. Thus, both Hypotheses 6A and 6B are supported by these results.

3.3: Summary of Bivariate Analysis

The bivariate tabular analysis of the relationships between urban/rural and digital spaces and political participation, views, and change offer a number of interesting findings. First, results offer mixed support for my first hypothesis: rural residents do report voting at higher rates, as hypothesized, but they also report more protesting and signing petitions. However, the observed differences are very small. Urban residents only show higher rates in political consumption and in discussing political issues, both in-person and online. Thus, rural residents can be seen as both dutiful and “engaged” citizens. However, these differences in participation between urban and rural participants were generally small, suggesting that urban/rural space may only have limited effects on participation. On the other hand, reflecting my second hypothesis, an “urban-rural divide” was evident in participants’ views on socio-cultural issues: rural residents were more likely to have conservative views on these issues, while urban residents were more open to diversity.

Regarding my third hypothesis, digital citizenship was associated with increased participation in “engaged” forms of political action and, to a lesser degree, in voting. These effects were stronger among those who not only use digital spaces but participate in online political discussions. A divide in political views was also evident, especially on socio-cultural issues: digital citizens were much more likely to have very progressive views, whether they simply used online spaces or participated in online political discussions. Greater polarization among digital citizens was hypothesized in Chapter 1, and there is some evidence of this beyond the prevalence of these very progressive views: among those who discuss politics online, the proportion with very conservative views was also notably higher.

Changes in participation and views were also considered here in relation to these spaces, and results showed that participation is increasing and views are changing most

frequently among rural and digital citizens. For digital citizens, increased participation is especially seen among those who participate in online discussions. These findings accord with recent narratives around the mobilization and polarization occurring within these spaces; however, further analysis is needed to determine the extent to which differences in demographic composition are influencing these results. For this reason, in Chapter 4, I will probe these relationships further, controlling for these potential influences in a series of logistic regressions. In addition, multivariate analysis of political participation will consider the effects of political views on participation; this is done in order to better understand *who* is participating in various forms within these spaces and how their views are affecting political outcomes.

Chapter Four: Multivariate Analysis

To further understand the relationships between urban/rural and digital spaces and political participation, views, and change in Atlantic Canada, this chapter analyzes the results of several logistic regression analyses, addressing the hypotheses and research questions on the politics of Atlantic Canadians laid out in Chapter 1. Multivariate analysis is needed because, unlike bivariate analysis, it can assess the strength of relationships between variables of interest while also controlling for other variables that could plausibly explain patterns and variations in results. I will begin with a set of five models corresponding with the main types of participation examined in previous chapters; these will be used to address my first and third hypotheses, regarding the effects of each space on political participation. The next three models will show the effects of spaces and other factors on socio-cultural views, addressing my second and fourth hypotheses. Next, I examine self-reported changes in political participation and political views to see whether and how urban/rural and digital spaces may be linked to changes in the region's political landscape, addressing my fifth and sixth hypotheses.

4.1: Logistic Regressions on Political Participation

To understand how urban/rural and digital spaces affect political participation, I run logistic regression for each of the principal forms of political participation identified and measured in this research: voting, protesting, signing petitions, boycotting or “buy”-coting, and discussing political issues. Results for full models, including demographic control variables, are shown in Table 13; however, additional baseline models are provided in Appendix C for the purpose of comparison.

4.1.1: Voting

Beginning with federal voting in Model 1, living in a rural area increases odds of voting by 115% compared to living in an urban area, controlling for all other variables in the model, and this is significant at the 0.05 level. Using online space has little effect on voting, increasing odds by 12% compared to the reference category (“not a digital citizen”), while discussing politics online increases odds by 129%. Although these results are not statistically significant, they nonetheless show a substantial increase in odds of voting associated with discussing politics online. In this model, being “very conservative” on socio-cultural issues decreases odds by 58% and being “somewhat conservative” decreases odds by half relative to the reference category (“somewhat progressive”). Being “very progressive,” on the other hand, increases odds by 146%. Although none of these results are statistically significant, these are substantial differences. On economic issues, having “very conservative” views doubles odds of voting compared to the reference category (“somewhat progressive”), while being “very progressive” decreases these odds by 17%. As with socio-cultural views, these relationships are not statistically significant. However, “very progressive” views on socio-cultural issues and “very conservative” views on economic issues have substantial positive effects on voting.

Being interested in politics more than triples the odds of voting in this model, and this is significant at the 0.05 level. Turning to demographic variables, age also has a positive effect on voting. Compared to the reference category (50–64 years), being an eligible voter under 35 years of age decreases odds by 74%, whereas being 65 years or older more than triples these odds. Higher levels of education also increase odds of voting somewhat, especially having an undergraduate degree, which increases these odds by 76% compared to those with a high school diploma. Household income is also positively associated with odds

of voting in this model: compared to the reference category (\$50,000–\$79,999), having a household income under \$30,000 decreases odds by about 61%. Being a woman increases odds by 32%, while being a visible minority decreases odds by 10%, and being an immigrant to Canada decreases odds by 77%. Of these demographic variables, only age and being an immigrant are statistically significant.

Table 13: Logistic regressions on forms of political participation

	Model 1: Voting		Model 2: Protesting		Model 3: Signing petitions		Model 4: Boycotting		Model 5: Discussing	
	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.
Urban/rural										
ref: Urban										
Rural	2.149*	0.771	1.237	0.403	1.476*	0.288	0.797	0.140	0.778	0.183
Digital citizenship										
ref: Not a digital citizen										
Uses online space	1.123	0.563	1.359	1.084	2.183	0.888	0.847	0.236	1.195	0.368
Discusses politics online	2.293	1.488	6.113*	4.874	9.655***	4.089	1.349	0.420	8.944***	4.457
Socio-cultural index										
ref: Somewhat progressive										
Very conservative	0.418	0.269	--	--	0.764	0.369	1.911	0.781	0.416	0.201
Somewhat conservative	0.501	0.188	1.447	0.637	0.858	0.214	1.191	0.261	1.139	0.307
Very progressive	2.455	1.316	2.160*	0.773	1.086	0.241	2.090***	0.421	1.075	0.306
Economic index										
ref: Somewhat progressive										
Very conservative	2.140	1.890	2.963	1.913	1.863	0.863	1.240	0.508	1.321	0.781
Somewhat conservative	0.914	0.340	1.081	0.432	0.868	0.188	0.654	0.127	1.022	0.241
Very progressive	0.828	0.464	2.190*	0.868	1.590	0.439	1.595	0.419	1.405	0.545
Interest in politics										
ref: Not interested										
Interested	3.130*	1.135	2.189	1.431	2.286**	0.729	1.995**	0.525	3.896***	0.958
Age										
ref: 50-64 years										
18-34 years	0.256*	0.135	2.395	1.191	2.137*	0.708	1.361	0.438	0.374**	0.134
35-49 years	0.385*	0.158	0.701	0.273	1.224	0.291	1.074	0.244	0.594	0.173
65+ years	3.437*	1.658	0.349*	0.151	0.501**	0.118	0.603*	0.124	1.601	0.425
Education level										
ref: High school diploma										
No diploma, certificate, or degree	0.894	0.494	1.890	1.506	1.033	0.463	0.986	0.386	0.782	0.308
College certificate or diploma	1.199	0.521	1.196	0.669	1.370	0.380	1.513	0.378	0.840	0.247
Undergraduate degree	1.756	0.914	1.851	0.971	1.324	0.368	2.551***	0.627	0.774	0.240
Graduate degree	1.186	0.798	3.408	1.927	2.303*	0.758	2.643**	0.801	1.629	0.759
Household income										
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999										
<\$30,000	0.387	0.213	0.516	0.320	0.592	0.211	0.865	0.270	0.557	0.198
\$30,000-\$49,999	0.505	0.260	1.177	0.579	0.938	0.279	0.562*	0.154	1.237	0.425
\$80,000-\$99,999	2.128	1.544	1.525	0.775	1.442	0.438	1.108	0.308	1.490	0.571
\$100,000-\$119,999	1.165	0.755	0.921	0.523	0.793	0.270	0.966	0.302	1.439	0.599
\$120,000+	1.563	0.962	0.965	0.465	1.033	0.303	0.999	0.271	1.922	0.742
Gender										
ref: Male										
Female	1.315	0.463	1.857	0.604	1.268	0.239	1.360	0.233	0.912	0.204
Visible minority identification										
ref: Not a visible minority										
Visible minority	0.897	0.433	1.933	0.983	0.605	0.211	0.345**	0.117	0.605	0.193
Immigrant status										
ref: Not an immigrant										
Immigrant	0.232*	0.142	1.149	0.674	1.221	0.453	1.379	0.470	1.337	0.666
Constant	3.225	2.540	0.004	0.005	0.038	0.023	0.258	0.119	1.378	0.711
n	782		769		791		790		807	

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

4.1.2: Protesting

Next, Model 2 in Table 13 shows how the same variables influence the likelihood of protesting. Living in a rural area is shown to increase the odds of protesting slightly, by 24% compared to living in an urban area, controlling for other variables in the model. Using online space increases odds of protesting by 36% compared to the reference category (“not a digital citizen”), and this is not statistically significant; however, discussing politics online is associated with higher odds of protesting, increasing them more than sixfold, and this finding is significant at the 0.001 level. Having “very progressive” views on socio-cultural issues more than doubles the odds of protesting relative to the “somewhat progressive” reference category in this model, and this is significant at the 0.05 level. Controlling for other factors in the model, having “very conservative” views on economic issues triples odds of protesting, while having “very progressive” views on economic issues more than doubles odds; due to small sample size in the former category, however, only the latter result is statistically significant. Thus, it is digital space, not urban/rural, which has a greater effect on protesting; both actions are more likely among those with “very progressive” views on socio-cultural issues, but protesting is strongly linked to “very progressive” and “very conservative” views on economic issues, too.

Interest in politics more than doubles the odds of protesting in this model. Being under 35 years increases odds by 140% compared to the reference category (50–64 years), while being over 65 years decreases odds significantly, by 65%. Having a university education affects odds of protesting: having an undergraduate degree increases odds by 85% compared to the reference category (high school diploma), while having a graduate degree more than triples odds, although neither result is statistically significant. Household income, controlling for other factors in the model, does not strongly affect odds of protest, although

earning under \$30,000 per year reduces odds by 48% and earning \$80,000 to \$99,999 increases odds by 53% relative to the reference category (\$50,000–\$79,999). Being a woman increases odds of protesting by 86% and being a visible minority increases odds by 93% in this model, while being an immigrant has only a slight positive effect. These results are not statistically significant.

4.1.3: Signing Petitions

The next form of participation examined is petition-signing, with results shown in Model 3. In this model, living in a rural area increases odds of signing petitions by nearly 50% compared to living in an urban area, and this finding is statistically significant. Using online space more than doubles the odds, and online political discussion increases odds nearly tenfold, which is significant at the 0.001 level. Having more conservative views on socio-cultural issues decreases odds slightly; on the other hand, having “very conservative” views on economic issues increases odds by 86% relative to the “somewhat progressive” reference category, and having “very progressive” views on economic issues also increases odds by 59%. Thus, like voting, signing petitions is significantly linked to rural space, but its relationship to digital space is even stronger than that of voting and protesting. Unlike protesting, however, this action is not strongly linked to any particular political views.

Being interested in politics more than doubles odds compared to having no interest, and this is significant at the 0.01 level. Looking at demographic factors, being under 35 years more than doubles odds of signing petitions compared to the reference category (50–64 years), while being over 65 years decreases odds by half. Higher education also has a positive effect: in particular, having a graduate degree increases odds of signing a petition by 130% compared to having a high school diploma. Earning a household income of \$80,000 to

\$99,999 increases odds of signing petitions by 44% and earning less than \$30,000 decreases odds by a similar margin relative to the reference category (\$50,000–\$79,999). Being a woman increases odds by 27% compared to men, while identifying as a visible minority decreases odds by almost 40%, and being an immigrant increases odds by 22% relative to their non-immigrant counterparts, controlling for all other variables in the model.

4.1.4: Boycotting and Ethical Consumption

The next form of participation examined in Table 13 is boycotting and ethical consumption (or “buy”-cotting), shown in Model 4. Unlike in the previous models, living in a rural area *decreases* odds of boycotting, but only by 20% compared to living in an urban area. Using online spaces also decreases odds in this model, by 15% compared to the reference category (“not a digital citizen”), and discussing politics online increases odds by just 35%. These results are not substantially different, nor are they statistically significant. Having “very progressive” views on socio-cultural issues doubles odds of boycotting compared to the reference category (“somewhat progressive”), and this result is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Having “very conservative” views on socio-cultural issues also nearly doubles odds, but this is not statistically significant. Having “very progressive” views on economic issues increase odds of boycotting in this model by 60%. Thus, unlike other forms of participation, boycotting does not seem to be strongly affected by either urban/rural or digital spaces, but it is linked to “very progressive” and “very conservative” views on socio-cultural issues.

Having an interest in politics doubles odds of boycotting compared to being uninterested, and this result is statistically significant. Age is also a factor: being 65 years or older decreases odds by 40% compared to the reference category (50–64 years). Higher

levels of education increase the odds of boycotting significantly relative to those with high school diplomas: having either an undergraduate or graduate degree increases odds by more than 150%. Household income, on the other hand, shows little effect on odds of boycotting, but earning \$30,000 to \$49,999 decreases odds by 44% compared to the reference category (\$50,000 to \$79,999). Being a woman increases odds by 36% relative to men, while identifying as a visible minority decreases odds by 65% compared to those who are not visible minorities. Having immigrated to Canada increases odds relative to non-immigrants by 38%.

4.1.5: Political Discussions (In Person)

The final form of political participation examined is discussing political issues in person, with results shown in Model 5. Like boycotting in Model 4, living in a rural area decreases odds of discussing political issues by a small margin. Using online spaces increases odds slightly compared to the reference category (“not a digital citizen”), but discussing politics online is strongly and significantly linked to discussing politics offline as well, increasing odds ninefold. Having “very conservative” views on socio-cultural issues decreases odds by nearly 60% compared to the reference category (“somewhat progressive”); on economic issues, however, having either “very conservative” or “very progressive” views increase odds somewhat, by 32% and 41%, respectively. Thus, overall, it is discussing politics online that is most strongly linked to offline political discussions in this model, while neither urban/rural space nor political views have notable effects, except that those with “very conservative” views tend not to discuss politics in person.

Being interested in politics increases odds nearly fourfold in this model, and this result is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Being under 35 years old decreases odds by 63% compared to the reference category (50–64 years), while being 65 years or older increases odds by 60%. Having a graduate degree increases odds of discussing political issues by 63%. Having a higher household income also increases these odds: earning \$120,000 or more nearly doubles odds compared to earning \$50,000 to \$79,999, while earning less than \$30,000 decreases odds by 44%. In this model, gender has very little effect on odds of discussing political issues. Being a visible minority decreases odds by nearly 40%, while being an immigrant increases odds by 34%.

Overall, these models show moderate effects of both spaces on the forms of political participation measured here, controlling for political views, interest, and demographic characteristics. Living in a rural area is positively linked most strongly to voting, but also to protesting and signing petitions, while living in an urban area is linked to boycotting and discussing political issues. These findings are similar to those in Chapter 3, once again providing mixed and limited support for my first hypothesis: that voting is more prevalent in rural space, but “engaged” forms of participation are more prevalent in urban space. I find that living in rural space is linked to voting, but also to “engaged” citizenship practices like protesting and petition-signing; meanwhile, urban space is more strongly linked to ethical consumption practices and political discussions. Only results for voting and signing petitions were statistically significant, however, and the sizes of the effects were very small for the most part.

Using online spaces has a positive, but very weak, relationship to most forms of participation in the models. In contrast, actively engaging in online political discussions has much stronger effects on all forms of action—especially protesting, signing petitions, and

discussing politics in person. Thus, if digital citizenship is defined as the use of online space, these findings do not strongly support my third hypothesis: that digital citizenship increases “engaged” forms of participation, but not voting. Rather, using online space is linked to small, insignificant increases in odds of participating in most political actions, including voting. The strongest effects are seen on petition-signing, which may reflect participants’ use of online petitions, which are often shared on social media.

Digital citizens who participate in online political discussions are highly likely to be engaged in other forms of action as well, especially protesting, signing petitions, and discussing politics offline. Because discussing politics online is itself a political action, it may be unsurprising to learn that engaging in one form of action is linked to increased engagement in other forms. However, these results nonetheless reflect a key aspect of digital citizenship and suggest that political *engagement* in digital space increases participation in other forms of political action—especially “engaged” forms—even if simply existing in digital space does not. This counters the perception that online forms of political action are “slacktivism,” serving as a substitute for more meaningful, offline actions.

Finally, before moving ahead to an examination of spatial effects on political views, I briefly consider the effects of political views on participation. Understanding how these views are linked to participation paints a more complete picture of politics in Atlantic Canada, as well as the forces shaping political outcomes in the region. When it comes to socio-cultural issues, those with very conservative views are found to be the least likely to participate in all forms of action except boycotting. Because of the small number of very conservative protestors in the sample, the statistical software excluded this category because of issues around convergence. For this reason, results are not reported. Those with very progressive views, on the other hand, are the most likely to participate in these models,

especially in protesting and boycotting, where these relationships are statistically significant. Controlling for other variables in these models, relationships between economic views and forms of participation are less straightforward and, generally, insignificant; however, it is those with very conservative and very progressive views with the highest odds of participating in most forms.

4.2: Logistic Regressions on Political Views

The next set of logistic regression models aims to determine how spaces and other factors affect political views, and, in particular, attitudes toward socio-cultural diversity, as this is the issue at the heart of many of the current concerns around political polarization. These models use the socio-cultural index as the basis for all outcome variables. I assess views in three different ways. The first of these, Model 6, seeks to evaluate how these spaces affect openness to diversity in general. To understand whether these spaces are having polarizing effects, Model 7 looks at their relationships to “very progressive” attitudes toward socio-cultural diversity, while Model 8 looks at their relationships to “very conservative” attitudes. These results are shown in Table 14.

4.2.1: Openness to Diversity

Looking at how spaces are linked to openness to diversity in general—that is, to those with “somewhat progressive” or “very progressive” views in the socio-cultural index, compared to those with “somewhat conservative” or “very conservative” views—Model 6 in Table 14 shows that living in a rural area decreases odds of being open to diversity by almost 35% compared to living in an urban area, and this difference is statistically significant. Using online social spaces is associated with higher odds of openness to diversity, increasing them

by 22% compared to those who do not use online spaces, but online political discussion has no effect on the odds of being open to diversity. Thus, even after controlling for other factors, the marginal negative effect of rural residency on progressive views toward diversity stands. These findings support my second hypothesis, on an “urban-rural divide” in attitudes wherein rural space is more conservative; they also suggest that, controlling for other factors, there is very little effect of digital space on overall political leanings.

In addition to these spatial relationships to openness, being under 35 years or over 65 years both increase odds of being open to diversity compared to the reference category (50–64 years), controlling for other variables in the model. University education increases odds of being open to diversity: compared to having a high school diploma, having an undergraduate degree increases odds by more than 2.5 times, while having a graduate degree more than triples odds of being open to diversity. These results are statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Having either a higher or lower household income decreases the odds of being open to diversity compared to the middle-income reference category (\$50,000–\$79,999); earning \$30,000 to \$49,999 decreases odds by 37%, while earning \$100,000 to \$119,999 decreases odds significantly, by 58%. Being a woman increases the odds by 47% relative to men, and identifying as a visible minority decreases the odds by 26% relative to those who are not visible minorities, while being an immigrant has no notable effect in this model.

Table 14: Logistic regressions on political views

	Model 6: Openness (overall)		Model 7: Very progressive		Model 8: Very conservative	
	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.
Urban/rural						
ref: Urban						
Rural	0.655*	0.125	0.691*	0.122	0.985	0.391
Digital citizenship						
ref: Not a digital citizen						
Uses online space	1.218	0.312	2.424*	0.924	2.910	1.971
Discusses politics online	0.978	0.289	3.148**	1.281	4.422*	3.139
Age						
ref: 50-64 years						
18-34 years	1.743	0.609	2.427**	0.740	0.534	0.364
35-49 years	0.922	0.212	1.024	0.245	0.519	0.289
65+ years	1.438	0.297	0.838	0.184	0.965	0.421
Education level						
ref: High school diploma						
No diploma, certificate, or degree	1.071	0.340	0.577	0.283	0.909	0.570
College certificate or diploma	0.964	0.217	0.794	0.221	1.768	0.811
Undergraduate degree	2.583***	0.647	1.655	0.429	0.290*	0.177
Graduate degree	3.484***	1.186	3.276***	0.987	0.0987*	0.108
Household income						
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999						
<\$30,000	0.914	0.279	0.591	0.201	6.699**	4.490
\$30,000-\$49,999	0.628	0.170	0.891	0.253	2.150	1.473
\$80,000-\$99,999	0.945	0.289	1.155	0.335	1.369	1.102
\$100,000-\$119,999	0.419**	0.137	0.516	0.178	1.758	1.622
\$120,000+	0.859	0.261	1.022	0.286	5.304*	3.506
Gender						
ref: Male						
Female	1.465*	0.253	1.733**	0.311	0.167***	0.073
Visible minority identification						
ref: Not a visible minority						
Visible minority	0.738	0.193	0.361*	0.146	1.844	0.944
Immigrant status						
ref: Not an immigrant						
Immigrant	0.943	0.345	1.109	0.398	2.738	1.752
Constant	2.211	0.853	0.115	0.056	0.015	0.015
n	850		850		850	

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

4.2.2: Very Progressive Views

In Model 7, holding “very progressive” views on socio-cultural issues—that is, being strongly open to diversity—is regressed on the same measures. Similar to Model 6, living in a rural area decreases odds by just over 30% compared to living in an urban area, when other

factors in the model are held constant. Using online social space increases odds by nearly 150% compared to the reference category (“not a digital citizen”), and online political discussion has an even greater effect on these odds, increasing them more than threefold. All of these “spatial” effects are statistically significant. These findings suggest that the same “urban-rural divide” in openness hypothesized in Chapter 1 and demonstrated above in Model 6 is present in “extreme” progressive views, as well. Moreover, they provide support for my fourth hypothesis, that digital spaces are linked to polarized views on socio-cultural issues—at least when it comes to “very progressive” views.

Being under 35 years old significantly increases odds of being strongly open to diversity, by 143% compared to those aged 50 to 64 years, while being a senior citizen decreases these odds slightly. Holding a graduate degree more than triples these odds compared to those with high school diplomas; having an undergraduate education also increases odds by 66%, and having less than a high school education decreases odds by 42%. Looking at household income, earning under \$30,000 decreases odds by 41% and earning \$100,000 to \$119,999 decreases odds by 48% compared to the reference category (\$50,000–\$79,999). Being a woman significantly increases odds of being strongly open to diversity in this model, by 73% compared to men, and identifying as a visible minority decreases odds by 64% compared to non-minorities. Being an immigrant has no notable effect on “very progressive” views in this model.

4.2.3: Very Conservative Views

Model 8 shows the other side of polarization on socio-cultural issues; that is, this model shows how variables are related to “very conservative” attitudes, or to being strongly negative toward diversity. Interestingly, living in a rural area has no effect on the odds of

holding very negative attitudes toward diversity in this model (OR=0.985). Using online social spaces, on the other hand, has a very strong positive effect, with odds of holding “very conservative” views nearly three times greater compared to those who do not use online spaces; discussing views online increases odds further, by 342%. These findings provide important information about the nature of the “urban-rural divide” in Atlantic Canada: while rural spaces have lower odds of very progressive views on socio-cultural issues and of progressive views overall, they are not linked to more “extreme” conservative views. On the other hand, digital space does seem to be linked to very progressive *and* very conservative views, supporting my fourth hypothesis, that online space is linked to greater polarization on socio-cultural issues.

Looking at the other factors included in the model, being under 50 years of age decreases odds of holding very negative views toward diversity by almost half compared to the reference category of 50–64 years, while being 65 years or older does not affect these odds. Looking at the effects of education, having an undergraduate degree decreases odds by more than 70%, while having a graduate degree decreases odds by more than 90%, compared to the reference category (high school diploma). Having a college education, on the other hand, increases these odds by more than 70%. Having a high or low household income is also linked to significant increases in the odds of holding strongly negative attitudes toward diversity: earning less than \$30,000 increases odds sevenfold, while earning more than \$120,000 increases odds fivefold, compared to those making \$50,000–\$79,999. Being a woman significantly decreases odds, by 84% compared to men, while being a visible minority increases odds by 90% compared to those who do not identify as visible minorities, and being an immigrant increases odds 170% compared to non-immigrants.

Overall, these models suggest interesting links between spaces and political attitudes. First, supporting my second hypothesis, Models 6 and 7 show that living in a rural area is linked to more conservative views toward socio-cultural issues in general as well as decreased odds of having very progressive views. However, Model 8 shows no relationship between region and having very conservative views. This suggests that, while those living in rural areas are more likely to lean conservative on socio-cultural issues than urbanites, “extreme” conservatism may not, after all, be linked to urban/rural space. Digital space, on the other hand, is not shown here to have a strong effect on general leanings regarding socio-cultural issues and openness to diversity; it is, however, linked to extreme views, which supports my fourth hypothesis on the polarizing effects of digital space. Interestingly, unlike in the participation models, it is not only those actively engaging in politics online who show strong “spatial” effects, but everyone using online social space.

4.3: Logistic Regressions on Changes in Political Participation and Views

Beyond these analyses of political participation and views, at the heart of this thesis is an analysis of change, both in participation and in views, in order to better understand politics in Atlantic Canada in the contemporary moment. The last set of models, presented in Table 15, explores these changes. Participation rates shown here have been based on *past* behaviour—that is, voting in previous elections (the most recent federal election, in 2015, occurred more than three years before this data was collected) and extra-institutional political participation within the previous year. Thus, understanding trends in *whose* participation may be increasing or decreasing, and in which spaces, is essential to understand how these changes are likely to affect political outcomes in the future. For example, the factors linked to abstention from voting in 2015 may no longer apply, depending on where

changes in participation are observed. Moreover, because many concerns regarding spatial divisions in political views centre on *increasing* polarization, it is important to assess which spaces and ideologies are associated with changing views. This analysis will help to answer my research questions on the effects of urban/rural and digital spaces on political change in Atlantic Canada, and on what these changes could mean for the future of politics in the region. Beginning with increased political participation in Model 9, Table 15 shows the results of three logistic regressions on change.

4.3.1: Participation Increasing

In Model 9, living in a rural area increases the odds of participating more compared to a few years ago by almost 70%, and this finding is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Using digital spaces, on the other hand, has a slight negative effect on increasing participation in this model (OR=0.865), but participating in online political discussion has a large positive effect, increasing odds of participating more by 162%. When it comes to political views, odds of greater participation increase by more than 150% for those with “somewhat conservative” views on socio-cultural issues compared to the reference category (“somewhat progressive”), and this is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Having “very conservative” and “very progressive” views also increase these odds, by 33% and 43%, respectively. On economic issues, odds of increased participation in the “very conservative” group increase by 241% compared to those with “somewhat progressive” views.

Being interested in politics increases odds of participating more in recent years by nearly 350%, and this is significant at the 0.001 level. Being under 35 years old increases odds almost eightfold compared to the reference category (50–64 years). Education level is shown in the model to have very little relationship to increasing participation, although odds

increase slightly among those with lower levels of education compared to those with university degrees. Earning under \$30,000 in household income decreases odds of participating more by almost 85% compared to the middle-income reference category (\$50,000–\$79,999), and this result is statistically significant. Being a woman increases odds by nearly 40% compared to men. Being a visible minority or an immigrant have no notable effect.

Table 15: Logistic regressions on changes in political participation and views

	Model 9: Increased participation		Model 10: Views changed (any)		Model 11: Views changed (a lot)	
	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.	O.R.	S.E.
Urban/rural						
ref: Urban						
Rural	1.709*	0.411	0.890	0.151	1.473	0.361
Digital citizenship						
ref: Not a digital citizen						
Uses online space	0.865	0.348	0.966	0.245	0.627	0.202
Discusses politics online	2.619*	1.098	1.197	0.352	1.429	0.505
Socio-cultural index						
ref: Somewhat progressive						
Very conservative	1.327	0.730	0.469	0.184	0.999	0.492
Somewhat conservative	2.522***	0.681	1.050	0.223	1.157	0.297
Very progressive	1.432	0.388	0.822	0.165	0.799	0.237
Economic index						
ref: Somewhat progressive						
Very conservative	3.413**	1.545	0.483	0.188	1.161	0.569
Somewhat conservative	0.961	0.243	1.148	0.216	0.995	0.239
Very progressive	1.506	0.493	0.771	0.191	0.762	0.289
Interest in politics						
ref: Not interested						
Interested	4.468***	1.032	2.732***	0.616	1.105	0.349
Age						
ref: 50-64 years						
18-34 years	7.715***	2.857	1.895	0.639	1.019	0.427
35-49 years	1.767*	0.491	0.789	0.174	0.982	0.284
65+ years	0.905	0.256	0.913	0.177	0.921	0.240
Education level						
ref: High school diploma						
No diploma, certificate, or degree	1.189	0.618	0.681	0.220	1.398	0.571
College certificate or diploma	1.043	0.323	1.250	0.300	1.470	0.433
Undergraduate degree	0.832	0.265	0.711	0.168	0.840	0.271
Graduate degree	0.956	0.366	0.770	0.222	0.799	0.334
Household income						
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999						
<\$30,000	0.167**	0.092	0.539*	0.154	1.011	0.392
\$30,000-\$49,999	0.770	0.259	0.848	0.219	1.241	0.415
\$80,000-\$99,999	1.522	0.513	0.910	0.254	0.986	0.369
\$100,000-\$119,999	0.974	0.368	1.162	0.376	1.694	0.658
\$120,000+	0.749	0.258	0.902	0.245	0.942	0.350
Gender						
ref: Male						
Female	1.391	0.309	0.834	0.140	0.883	0.152
Visible minority identification						
ref: Not a visible minority						
Visible minority	0.957	0.376	0.845	0.455	0.692	0.489
Immigrant status						
ref: Not an immigrant						
Immigrant	0.974	0.438	1.606	0.161	1.522	0.198
Constant	0.015	0.011	1.370	0.577	0.164	0.093
n	805		806		806	

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

4.3.2: *Views Changing (Any)*

To understand changing views, Model 10 in Table 15 examines how various factors are related to any change in views (including views changing either “somewhat” or “a lot”), and Model 11 shows how these factors affect more drastic changes (focusing only on views changed “a lot”). In Model 10, none of the spatial factors significantly affect changing views: that is, living in a rural area, using online spaces, and participating in online political discussion are all shown to have no notable effect. When it comes to both socio-cultural and economic views, it is the “somewhat conservative” and “somewhat progressive” categories with the highest odds of change, while being “very conservative” decreases odds by more than 50% and being “very progressive” decreases odds by about 20%.

Being interested in politics, on the other hand, significantly increases odds of changing views. Being under the age of 35 nearly doubles the odds of having views change compared to those aged 50 to 64 in this model, although this is not statistically significant. Having a college education increases odds slightly compared to those with high school diplomas, while having less than a high school education decreases odds by 32%; having a university education also decreases odds. Earning less than \$30,000 of household income decreases odds by 46% relative to the reference category (\$50,000–\$79,999), but there is little effect shown across other income categories. Being a woman decreases odds slightly in this model, as does identifying as a visible minority, while being an immigrant increases odds by 61% compared to non-immigrants.

4.3.3: *Views Changing (A Lot)*

Results are slightly different in Model 11, when we focus our attention on how these factors relate to more “extreme” changes in political views. Spaces are shown to affect views

changing “a lot,” although not significantly: living in a rural area increases odds of views changing a lot by 47%. Using online spaces is associated with lower odds than those who do not use online spaces, decreasing odds by 37%, but participating in political discussions online increases odds by 43%. Controlling for other factors in the model, “extreme” view change is not strongly associated with either progressive or conservative views on socio-cultural and economic issues, although being “very progressive” decreases odds slightly compared to the reference categories (“somewhat progressive”).

Unlike in Model 10, neither interest in politics nor age show any notable effects. Lower levels of education show increased odds of views changing a lot, while having a university education decreases odds compared to having a high school diploma. Earning between \$100,000 and \$119,999 annually as a household increases odds of extreme view change by nearly 70% compared to those earning \$50,000 to \$79,999. Being a woman decreases odds slightly, and identifying as a visible minority decreases odds by 31% compared to non-minorities. Being an immigrant increases odds by 52% compared to those who were born in Canada. None of these demographic control variables are statistically significant.

Altogether, these findings suggest that increased participation and “extreme” changes in views on political and social issues are linked to rural space and to online political discussion, but not to using online social space in general. This accords with popular narratives of increasing mobilization and polarization occurring in these spaces (see, e.g., Eneas, 2019; Maxwell, 2019; Nagle, 2017). Increased odds of participation are also linked to more conservative views on both socio-cultural and economic issues. Interestingly, having views change a lot is not shown to be linked to any particular ideology or political leaning, and it is not shown to be more common among those with more “extreme” leanings than it

is among those who are only somewhat progressive or conservative on economic or socio-cultural issues. On the other hand, having views change at all is linked primarily to political interest, as well as to younger adults, rather than to any particular spatial or ideological factor. Thus, it may be increased *participation* among particular demographic or ideological groups, not changes in views, that accounts for the appearance of increasing polarization on political issues in recent years. That is, those with more polarized (and polarizing), right-wing views on socio-cultural issues may be louder and more politically active than they were in the past, but there is no evidence that their underlying views have changed substantially.

4.4: Summary of Multivariate Analysis

Where my bivariate results offered preliminary observations about the relationships between spaces and political participation, views, and change, these multivariate analyses have provided a more robust analysis and additional contextual information to consider as I addressed, once again, the hypotheses and research questions laid out in Chapter 1. Controlling for other factors, I find that there are three primary effects of urban/rural space on political participation, views, and change in Atlantic Canada: first, compared to urban space, rural space is more strongly linked to voting; second, it is more strongly linked to conservative—but not *very* conservative—views on socio-cultural issues; and third, it is more strongly linked to increases in political participation. But political outcomes in the region are not likely to reflect this rural conservatism; instead, logistic regressions on voting and other political actions showed that it is those with more progressive views who are participating most in political life.

When it comes to digital citizenship, different effects were observed for those who simply use online spaces compared to those who actively participate in online political

discussions. Regarding the former, their participation had no significant relationship to their use of online space; however, their views on socio-cultural issues were more likely to be polarized (that is, “very conservative” or “very progressive”) than those who were not considered digital citizens. On the other hand, digital citizens who participate in online discussions are more likely to participate in all forms of action, especially protesting, signing petitions, and discussing politics offline; this group also showed even greater polarization in socio-cultural views, as well as increasing political participation.

In addition to these spatial relationships, however, multivariate results point to several additional factors that are shaping Atlantic Canadian politics in important ways. While these factors are not the focal point of my analysis, they nonetheless contribute to this research by offering a more complete picture of what is affecting political practices and views in the region; in some cases, they may point to directions for future research. Beginning with political participation, political interest plays a key role across all forms of action. Age is also an important factor, with older people being more likely to vote and discuss political issues, while younger people are more likely to protest, sign petitions, and boycott; thus, there is undoubtedly a significant generational component to the prevalence of many “engaged” forms of politics (Dalton, 2008). Socio-economic status makes a difference, as well: higher education increases all forms of participation, while having a low household income decreases the likelihood of participation. Women are shown here to be actively engaged in many forms of participation, with higher odds of protest participation than men; this is a notable change from historical trends in protest participation (see, e.g., Sherkat & Blocker, 1994).

For political views, several non-spatial “divides” were evident in regression results: in particular, age, education, income, and gender are having significant effects on political views

and polarization in the region. While those over 65 years are more likely to lean progressive on socio-cultural issues than middle-aged people, it is younger people who are the most likely to have very progressive views on these issues, while those aged 50 and older are more likely to have very conservative views. University education increases openness in general and decreases the likelihood of having very conservative views; postgraduate education, in particular, is strongly linked to having very progressive views. When it comes to household income, very conservative views are associated with very low (under \$30,000) as well as very high (\$120,000 or more) income categories. Finally, women are linked to openness and to very progressive views, while men are much more likely to have very conservative views on socio-cultural issues. Thus, beyond spatial effects, there are a number of other factors heavily influencing politics in Atlantic Canada, many of which could also be explored in light of factors such as changing citizenship norms, economic anxieties, and identity politics in future research. Together with this spatial analysis, I believe they offer a relatively comprehensive (if necessarily condensed) overview of the principal demographic “divides” in the political participation and views of Atlantic Canadians.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The analysis of spatial effects on politics in Atlantic Canada conducted in my thesis offers a more nuanced story than is commonly told about the so-called “urban-rural divide” and the impact of digital spaces on the political sphere. My findings suggest that there are indeed spatial effects, but differences are often relatively small. Beginning with political participation, I find that rural participants not only vote at slightly higher rates than urban residents, they also protest more. Urban residents participate more in consumer politics and in online political discussions. These findings align with the popular and scholarly view of rural areas as more highly mobilized (Eneas, 2019; Noack, 2016) and engaged in group-based forms of political action (Geys, 2006; Verba & Nie, 1972) in comparison to cities, which may be spaces for individualized political forms that reflect their economic advantage (Harvey, 2008). The alignment of protest with rural regions suggests that rural citizens may in fact be both highly engaged *and* dutiful citizens; the difference lies, more specifically, in their decreased engagement in consumer politics and political discussions, both online and offline.

Political participation was also affected by digital citizenship. But simply being online, either by using social media or following online news sources, only had a notable effect on increasing petition-signing. Participating in online discussions increased other forms of participation across the board—*especially* protesting, petition-signing, and discussing politics offline, but also voting and boycotting. Thus, it seems that simply being present in online space does not greatly affect political participation, but actively engaging politically in this space *is* linked to offline engagement. These findings reflect the competing and contradictory results observed in previous research regarding the effects of online spaces, including social media, on political participation. Although simply *existing* in online social spaces does not lead to increased political participation (Jost et al., 2018; Fenton & Barassi,

2011), taking advantage of these spaces as forums for political discussion is linked to increased participation. This accords with Shirky's (2011) "environmental" view of the effects of social media on the public sphere, and points to the potential of online engagement as a launching point for other political actions (Koc-Michalska, Lilleker, & Vedel, 2015).

Considering differences in political views, I find that rural residents were no more conservative than urban residents on economic issues. This reflects Atlantic Canada's long tradition of "progressive conservatism" and Red Tory leadership, which tends to be more conservative on social issues but moderate in its economic policies. In other words, if the political left aims to make inroads in rural areas, the best route could be through economic policies that reduce inequalities. Rural and urban residents have much in common around these issues. However, a divide was observed on socio-cultural issues, reflecting participants' openness to diversity and immigration. These findings align with previous research and popular narratives that propose a cultural gap between urban and rural spaces (Hochschild, 2016; Cramer, 2016), in which city residents tend to espouse more cosmopolitan values (Inglehart, 1977). Those in rural areas may be more likely to focus on the concerns of in-group members, remaining wary of, or even antagonistic towards, perceived "outsiders" (Sorensen, 2014). But it is important to note that rural residents, though more likely to lean conservative on these issues, were no more likely to hold *extreme* conservative views than urban residents. Right-wing extremism remains relatively rare in the region—less than 5% of participants had very negative attitudes toward socio-cultural diversity—and it does not appear to be a product of urban/rural space.

Digital space appears to be linked to both strong negative and strong positive views on diversity. Thus, there is evidence here to support the hypothesis that online spaces are

linked to polarization. Where digital citizenship is not linked to progressive or conservative leanings overall, it *is* linked to both very progressive and very conservative views, and this polarization occurs not only among those who participate in online political discussions: simply using online spaces also increased the odds of holding these polarized views. This may well reflect the prevalence of so-called “echo chambers” and “filter bubbles” in online spaces (Dahlgren, 2018; Vaidhyanathan, 2018), which affect all those who use these spaces, not only those who are actively participating in their politicization. Susceptibility to manipulation in these spaces, via microtargeted political messaging, is, therefore, a serious concern.

Despite significant relationships between spaces and views, my analysis of change shows neither urban/rural nor digital spaces to be significantly linked to self-reported change in views. This could mean that changes as a result of using digital space occurred less recently than the past few years, or that opinion formation is happening less consciously than expected. Both spaces are linked to increasing participation, as are conservative views on socio-cultural and economic issues. It is very possible, therefore, that these increases will be reflected in future political outcomes and election results, with more negative views attitudes toward diversity and immigration on display, as well as less support for social spending. However, there is no evidence that a sea-change is occurring—*yet*—in Atlantic Canadians’ political views, which are predominantly progressive-leaning on both economic and socio-cultural issues. Moreover, the proportion with “extreme” conservative views on socio-cultural issues, which could manifest in right-wing nationalism or populism, is very small, and so unlikely to shape political outcomes in the region, absent some form of intervention or manipulation.

Overall, my findings point to important spatial divisions in participation and political views, including rural conservatism and polarization in digital spaces. But they do not indicate any kind of democratic crisis or rising threat resulting from them. Despite higher levels of social conservatism in rural areas, the majority of people in the region share relatively progressive attitudes toward socio-cultural diversity, and these views have been reflected in political outcomes. While online spaces are linked to more polarized viewpoints, only a small minority of Atlantic Canadians indicated very negative attitudes toward socio-cultural diversity. Fears of discord and disengagement abound, but, overall, these findings point to a great deal of consensus in the region, as well as to participation in a wide variety of political actions across urban/rural and digital spaces.

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Appendix A

Table 1A: Univariate results, socio-cultural index

	n	%				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
Multiculturalism is an important part of Canadian society. (n=1029)	1029	3.1	3.7	13.5	34.7	45.0
It is important for Canadian society to be open to diverse lifestyles and forms of self-expression.	1024	2.3	4.3	13.2	43.7	36.6
The country would benefit from having more members of minority groups in positions of power.	1018	7.6	10.4	26.6	31.3	24.1
It is important that Canada allows entry for all asylum seekers fleeing violence or persecution.	1019	9.4	14.5	18.2	34.3	23.7
Immigrants bring vital skills and resources that benefit the Canadian economy.	1021	3.5	6.7	16.2	39.2	34.5
Immigrants need to do more to integrate into Canadian society.	999	3.3	12.3	26.8	34.4	23.1
It is important that the federal government put the needs of Canadian citizens who were born in Canada first in policy decisions.	1021	15.8	19.6	19.1	21.9	23.6

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 2A: Univariate results, economic index

	n	%				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
A balanced budget should be a top priority for the Canadian federal government.	1034	3.0	7.7	26.3	29.0	34.0
I would support raising taxes to expand or improve government services such as health care and education.	1035	13.9	17.4	21.6	27.8	19.2
When services are provided by private businesses instead of by the government, they are usually more efficient and less expensive.	967	15.6	24.2	24.0	21.3	14.9
The minimum wage should be raised substantially to ensure that people who are employed are able to make ends meet.	1031	4.2	7.9	17.7	28.6	41.7
It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that everyone in Canada has access to essentials, including things like food, shelter, heat, and health care.	1035	2.0	4.4	8.7	26.7	58.3

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Appendix B

Table 1B: Participant demographics

	%
<i>Age</i> (n=999)	
18-34 years	8.0%
35-49 years	18.3%
50-64 years	36.6%
65+ years	37.0%
 <i>Education</i> (n=1024)	
Less than high school	8.5%
High school diploma or equiv.	21.9%
College cert. or dip.	26.0%
Undergraduate degree	29.9%
Graduate degree	13.8%
 <i>Household income</i> (n=1035)	
Less than \$30,000	13.5%
\$30,000-49,999	15.9%
\$50,000-79,999	20.4%
\$80,000-99,999	12.6%
\$100,000-119,999	8.6%
\$120,000+	14.2%
Refused/don't know	14.9%
 <i>Gender</i> (n=1034)	
Male	45.2%
Female	54.8%
 <i>Visible minority ident.</i> (n=1025)	
Not a visible minority	90.1%
Visible minority	9.9%
 <i>Immigrant status</i> (n=1033)	
Not an immigrant	93.4%
Immigrant	6.6%

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Appendix C

Table 1C: Logistic regressions on federal voting

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural			
ref: Urban			
Rural	1.411	1.662	2.149*
Digital citizenship			
ref: Not a digital citizen			
Uses online space	1.169	1.112	1.123
Discusses politics online	2.193	2.208	2.293
Socio-cultural index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		0.275*	0.418
Somewhat conservative		0.392*	0.501
Very progressive		1.902	2.455
Economic index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		2.060	2.140
Somewhat conservative		1.055	0.914
Very progressive		0.937	0.828
Interest in politics			
ref: Not interested			
Interested			3.130*
Age			
ref: 50-64 years			
18-34 years			0.256*
35-49 years			0.385*
65+ years			3.437*
Education level			
ref: High school diploma			
No diploma, certificate, or degree			0.894
College certificate or diploma			1.199
Undergraduate degree			1.756
Graduate degree			1.186
Household income			
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999			
<\$30,000			0.387
\$30,000-\$49,999			0.505
\$80,000-\$99,999			2.128
\$100,000-\$119,999			1.165
\$120,000+			1.563
Gender			
ref: Male			
Female			1.315
Visible minority identification			
ref: Not a visible minority			
Visible minority			0.897
Immigrant status			
ref: Not an immigrant			
Immigrant			0.232*
Constant	9.318	10.620	3.225
n	926	813	782

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 2C: Logistic regressions on protesting

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural			
ref: Urban			
Rural	1.309	1.320	1.237
Digital citizenship			
ref: Not a digital citizen			
Uses online space	3.223	2.161	1.359
Discusses politics online	15.42***	9.797**	6.113*
Socio-cultural index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		--	--
Somewhat conservative		1.253	1.447
Very progressive		3.193***	2.160*
Economic index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		3.119*	2.963
Somewhat conservative		0.964	1.081
Very progressive		1.674	2.190*
Interest in politics			
ref: Not interested			
Interested			2.189
Age			
ref: 50-64 years			
18-34 years			2.395
35-49 years			0.701
65+ years			0.349*
Education level			
ref: High school diploma			
No diploma, certificate, or degree			1.890
College certificate or diploma			1.196
Undergraduate degree			1.851
Graduate degree			3.408
Household income			
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999			
<\$30,000			0.516
\$30,000-\$49,999			1.177
\$80,000-\$99,999			1.525
\$100,000-\$119,999			0.921
\$120,000+			0.965
Gender			
ref: Male			
Female			1.857
Visible minority identification			
ref: Not a visible minority			
Visible minority			1.933
Immigrant status			
ref: Not an immigrant			
Immigrant			1.149
Constant	0.013	0.011	0.004
n	951	799	769

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 3C: Logistic regressions on signing petitions

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural			
ref: Urban			
Rural	1.208	1.266	1.476*
Digital citizenship			
ref: Not a digital citizen			
Uses online space	3.470***	3.128**	2.183
Discusses politics online	15.08***	13.440***	9.655***
Socio-cultural index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		0.589	0.764
Somewhat conservative		0.748	0.858
Very progressive		1.529	1.086
Economic index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		2.975**	1.863
Somewhat conservative		1.047	0.868
Very progressive		1.279	1.590
Interest in politics			
ref: Not interested			
Interested			2.286**
Age			
ref: 50-64 years			
18-34 years			2.137*
35-49 years			1.224
65+ years			0.501**
Education level			
ref: High school diploma			
No diploma, certificate, or degree			1.033
College certificate or diploma			1.370
Undergraduate degree			1.324
Graduate degree			2.303*
Household income			
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999			
<\$30,000			0.592
\$30,000-\$49,999			0.938
\$80,000-\$99,999			1.442
\$100,000-\$119,999			0.793
\$120,000+			1.033
Gender			
ref: Male			
Female			1.268
Visible minority identification			
ref: Not a visible minority			
Visible minority			0.605
Immigrant status			
ref: Not an immigrant			
Immigrant			1.221
Constant	0.071	0.072	0.038
n	932	821	791

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 4C: Logistic regressions on boycotting and ethical consumption

	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural			
ref: Urban			
Rural	0.699*	0.758	0.797
Digital citizenship			
ref: Not a digital citizen			
Uses online space	1.844**	1.452	0.847
Discusses politics online	3.842***	2.650***	1.349
Socio-cultural index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		1.155	1.911
Somewhat conservative		1.017	1.191
Very progressive		2.849***	2.090***
Economic index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		2.040	1.240
Somewhat conservative		0.764	0.654
Very progressive		1.469	1.595
Interest in politics			
ref: Not interested			
Interested			1.995**
Age			
ref: 50-64 years			
18-34 years			1.361
35-49 years			1.074
65+ years			0.603*
Education level			
ref: High school diploma			
No diploma, certificate, or degree			0.986
College certificate or diploma			1.513
Undergraduate degree			2.551***
Graduate degree			2.643**
Household income			
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999			
<\$30,000			0.865
\$30,000-\$49,999			0.562*
\$80,000-\$99,999			1.108
\$100,000-\$119,999			0.966
\$120,000+			0.999
Gender			
ref: Male			
Female			1.360
Visible minority identification			
ref: Not a visible minority			
Visible minority			0.345**
Immigrant status			
ref: Not an immigrant			
Immigrant			1.379
Constant	0.409	0.387	0.258
n	931	821	790

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 5C: Logistic regressions on discussing politics in person

	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15
	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural			
ref: Urban			
Rural	0.796	0.801	0.778
Digital citizenship			
ref: Not a digital citizen			
Uses online space	1.105	1.121	1.195
Discusses politics online	5.837***	7.349***	8.944***
Socio-cultural index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		0.426*	0.416
Somewhat conservative		0.912	1.139
Very progressive		1.235	1.075
Economic index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		1.564	1.321
Somewhat conservative		1.171	1.022
Very progressive		1.740	1.405
Interest in politics			
ref: Not interested			
Interested			3.896***
Age			
ref: 50-64 years			
18-34 years			0.374**
35-49 years			0.594
65+ years			1.601
Education level			
ref: High school diploma			
No diploma, certificate, or degree			0.782
College certificate or diploma			0.840
Undergraduate degree			0.774
Graduate degree			1.629
Household income			
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999			
<\$30,000			0.557
\$30,000-\$49,999			1.237
\$80,000-\$99,999			1.490
\$100,000-\$119,999			1.439
\$120,000+			1.922
Gender			
ref: Male			
Female			0.912
Visible minority identification			
ref: Not a visible minority			
Visible minority			0.605
Immigrant status			
ref: Not an immigrant			
Immigrant			1.337
Constant	3.731	3.522	1.378
n	953	838	807

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 6C: Logistic regressions on openness to diversity

	Model 16	Model 17
	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural		
ref: Urban		
Rural	0.598**	0.655*
Digital citizenship		
ref: Not a digital citizen		
Uses online space	1.349	1.218
Discusses politics online	1.218	0.978
Age		
ref: 50-64 years		
18-34 years		1.743
35-49 years		0.922
65+ years		1.438
Education level		
ref: High school diploma		
No diploma, certificate, or degree		1.071
College certificate or diploma		0.964
Undergraduate degree		2.583***
Graduate degree		3.484***
Household income		
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999		
<\$30,000		0.914
\$30,000-\$49,999		0.628
\$80,000-\$99,999		0.945
\$100,000-\$119,999		0.419**
\$120,000+		0.859
Gender		
ref: Male		
Female		1.465*
Visible minority identification		
ref: Not a visible minority		
Visible minority		0.738
Immigrant status		
ref: Not an immigrant		
Immigrant		0.943
Constant	3.296	2.211
n	885	850

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 7C: Logistic regressions on “very progressive” socio-cultural views

	Model 18	Model 19
	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural		
ref: Urban		
Rural	0.626**	0.691*
Digital citizenship		
ref: Not a digital citizen		
Uses online space	3.853***	2.424*
Discusses politics online	5.275***	3.148**
Age		
ref: 50-64 years		
18-34 years		2.427**
35-49 years		1.024
65+ years		0.838
Education level		
ref: High school diploma		
No diploma, certificate, or degree		0.577
College certificate or diploma		0.794
Undergraduate degree		1.655
Graduate degree		3.276***
Household income		
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999		
<\$30,000		0.591
\$30,000-\$49,999		0.891
\$80,000-\$99,999		1.155
\$100,000-\$119,999		0.516
\$120,000+		1.022
Gender		
ref: Male		
Female		1.733**
Visible minority identification		
ref: Not a visible minority		
Visible minority		0.361*
Immigrant status		
ref: Not an immigrant		
Immigrant		1.109
Constant	0.120	0.115
n	885	850

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 8C: Logistic regressions on “very conservative” socio-cultural views

	Model 20	Model 21
	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural		
ref: Urban		
Rural	0.940	0.985
Digital citizenship		
ref: Not a digital citizen		
Uses online space	1.130	2.910
Discusses politics online	1.902	4.422*
Age		
ref: 50-64 years		
18-34 years		0.534
35-49 years		0.519
65+ years		0.965
Education level		
ref: High school diploma		
No diploma, certificate, or degree		0.909
College certificate or diploma		1.768
Undergraduate degree		0.290*
Graduate degree		0.0987*
Household income		
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999		
<\$30,000		6.699**
\$30,000-\$49,999		2.150
\$80,000-\$99,999		1.369
\$100,000-\$119,999		1.758
\$120,000+		5.304*
Gender		
ref: Male		
Female		0.167***
Visible minority identification		
ref: Not a visible minority		
Visible minority		1.844
Immigrant status		
ref: Not an immigrant		
Immigrant		2.738
Constant	0.038	0.015
n	885	850

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 9C: Logistic regressions on increased participation

	Model 22	Model 23	Model 24
	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural			
ref: Urban			
Rural	1.570*	1.698*	1.709*
Digital citizenship			
ref: Not a digital citizen			
Uses online space	1.405	1.627	0.865
Discusses politics online	3.994***	4.241***	2.619*
Socio-cultural index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		1.425	1.327
Somewhat conservative		2.085**	2.522***
Very progressive		2.016**	1.432
Economic index			
ref: Somewhat progressive			
Very conservative		4.250***	3.413**
Somewhat conservative		1.132	0.961
Very progressive		1.073	1.506
Interest in politics			
ref: Not interested			
Interested			4.468***
Age			
ref: 50-64 years			
18-34 years			7.715***
35-49 years			1.767*
65+ years			0.905
Education level			
ref: High school diploma			
No diploma, certificate, or degree			1.189
College certificate or diploma			1.043
Undergraduate degree			0.832
Graduate degree			0.956
Household income			
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999			
<\$30,000			0.167**
\$30,000-\$49,999			0.770
\$80,000-\$99,999			1.522
\$100,000-\$119,999			0.974
\$120,000+			0.749
Gender			
ref: Male			
Female			1.391
Visible minority identification			
ref: Not a visible minority			
Visible minority			0.957
Immigrant status			
ref: Not an immigrant			
Immigrant			0.974
Constant	0.085	0.042	0.015
n	950	836	805

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019

Table 10C: Logistic regressions on changing views

	Model 25: Any	Model 26: A lot	Model 27: Any	Model 28: A lot	Model 29: Any	Model 30: A lot
	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.	O.R.
Urban/rural						
ref: Urban						
Rural	0.968	1.631	0.940	1.526	0.890	1.473
Digital citizenship						
ref: Not a digital citizen						
Uses online space	1.161	0.661	1.248	0.747	0.966	0.627
Discusses politics online	1.265	1.364	1.411	1.437	1.197	1.429
Socio-cultural index						
ref: Somewhat progressive						
Very conservative			0.487*	1.092	0.469	0.999
Somewhat conservative			1.015	1.229	1.050	1.157
Very progressive			0.833	0.645	0.822	0.799
Economic index						
ref: Somewhat progressive						
Very conservative			0.636	1.405	0.483	1.161
Somewhat conservative			1.214	0.961	1.148	0.995
Very progressive			0.730	0.642	0.771	0.762
Interest in politics						
ref: Not interested						
Interested					2.732***	1.105
Age						
ref: 50-64 years						
18-34 years					1.895	1.019
35-49 years					0.789	0.982
65+ years					0.913	0.921
Education level						
ref: High school diploma						
No diploma, certificate, or degree					0.681	1.398
College certificate or diploma					1.250	1.470
Undergraduate degree					0.711	0.840
Graduate degree					0.770	0.799
Household income						
ref: \$50,000-\$79,999						
<\$30,000					0.539*	1.011
\$30,000-\$49,999					0.848	1.241
\$80,000-\$99,999					0.910	0.986
\$100,000-\$119,999					1.162	1.694
\$120,000+					0.902	0.942
Gender						
ref: Male						
Female					0.834	0.883
Visible minority identification						
ref: Not a visible minority						
Visible minority					0.845	0.692
Immigrant status						
ref: Not an immigrant						
Immigrant					1.606	1.522
Constant	1.629	0.151	1.697	0.155	1.370	0.164
n	952	952	837	837	806	806

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

Source: Perceptions of Change Project, 2019